

# **The Saint-Gaudens Memorial: A Centennial History (1919–2019)**

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Front cover: Atrium with Augustus Saint-Gaudens's *Amor Caritas*, 1880–98; cast 1975.

Back cover: Saint-Gaudens Memorial poster, ca. 1948 (detail).

### Photo credits

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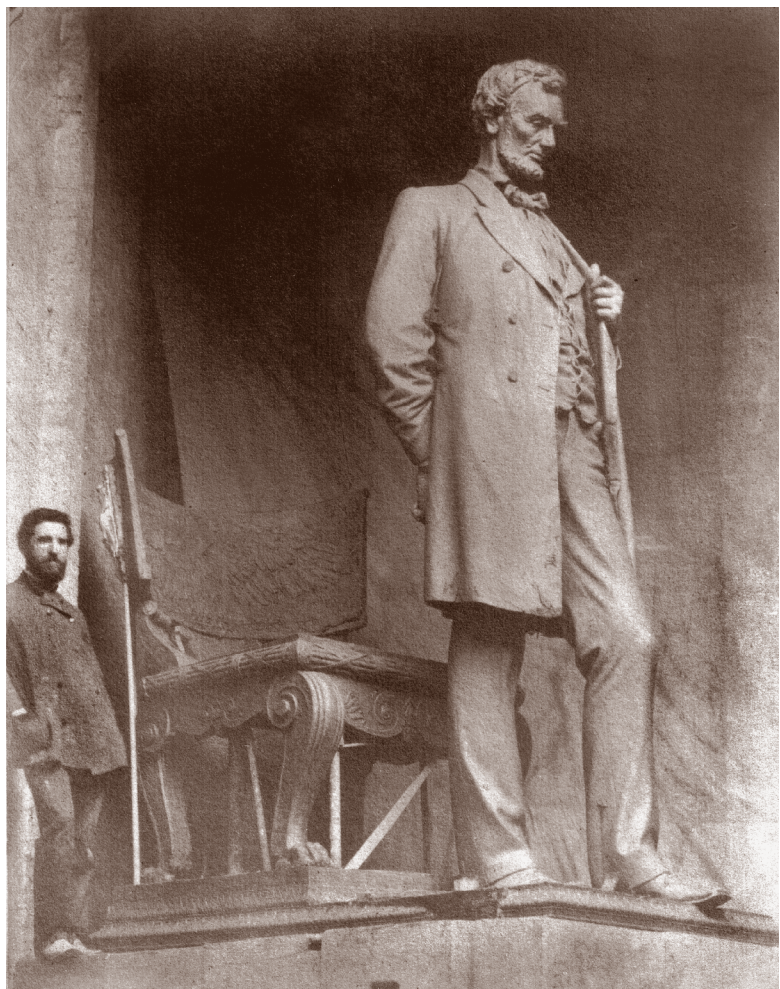
Fig. 15: Courtesy of Saint-Gaudens Memorial

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## FOREWORD

In 2019 we marked the centennial of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, a nonprofit organization incorporated in 1919 to promote the legacy of the artist Augustus Saint-Gaudens and to preserve his home and studio in Cornish, New Hampshire. The Memorial gifted that property to the federal government in 1964, and the National Park Service now operates the estate as the Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park, attracting some 40,000 visitors annually. Today the Memorial continues as an active partner with, and advocate for, the park. We encourage appreciation of the arts, past and present, through temporary exhibitions, Sunday afternoon concerts, artists' fellowships, and educational programs. As we enter our second century, we are pleased to celebrate the Memorial's rich history with this publication. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Henry J. Duffy, Curator and Chief of Cultural Resources, Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park, as coauthor of the text.

Thayer Tolles  
President, Saint-Gaudens Memorial



## THE SAINT-GAUDENS MEMORIAL: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY (1919–2019)

Henry J. Duffy and Thayer Tolles

More than one hundred historic homes and studios around the United States preserve, present, and promote the legacies of significant artists. One of the earliest and most celebrated is the Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park (SGNHP), a National Park Service property in bucolic Cornish, New Hampshire, open seasonally from late May to late October. It comprises the home, studios, grounds, and artworks of Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907; fig. 1), a sculptor of French-Irish immigrant roots best known for his monuments to Civil War heroes and his designs for the US \$10 and \$20 gold coins. The park's remarkable story, beginning in 1965, grows out of its predecessor and ongoing partner, the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, a private, nonprofit organization that has advocated for this distinguished American artist for more than a century.

Fig. 1. Augustus Saint-Gaudens in his Cornish studio with the completed clay model of the *Standing Lincoln*, 1887.





Fig. 2. Augusta Saint-Gaudens at Aspet, the couple's home in Cornish, ca. early 1920s.

When Saint-Gaudens died in 1907 in Cornish, his death was front-page news nationwide. The following year a memorial exhibition opened at New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art; it traveled to four additional venues until 1910. Behind the organization and presentation of these displays was Saint-Gaudens's widow, Augusta (1848–1926; fig. 2), herself an artist and the skilled manager of his estate. She also was authorized to posthumously cast Saint-Gaudens's small bronze statuettes (fig. 3) and low-reliefs, some



Fig. 3. Augustus  
Saint-Gaudens,  
*Victory*, 1902–12;  
cast 1912.  
Bronze, gilt,  
40 x 14 x 22 in.  
Gift of Charles D.  
Norton, 1924.

of which she strategically sold to public institutions to ensure his lasting reputation. However, Augusta Saint-Gaudens's greatest efforts were reserved for the preservation of the Cornish property (fig. 4), where her husband had first worked during the summers between 1885 and 1897, and then year round after 1900, with the vibrant Cornish Colony of artists developing around him.

Augusta Saint-Gaudens, with her son, Homer (1880–1958), conceived of the property as a memorial to her husband—a place to exhibit his art and to educate

Fig. 4. Little Studio and Aspet.











visitors and artists about both his work and the creative arts in general. By the early 1910s she regularly opened two spaces to the public during the summer: the Studio of the Caryatids (fig. 5) and the Little Studio. Together these constituted a veritable museum of Saint-Gaudens's work, displaying both original sculptures and replicas. Her successive wills from these years record her desire to leave the studios, the house, and their contents intact, and she initiated efforts to do so.<sup>1</sup> The creation of the Memorial was part of an early twentieth-century cultural trend of individuals fulfilling their civic duty by protecting American heritage. The National Park Service itself began in 1916, and Augusta and Homer

Fig. 5. Studio of the Caryatids, before 1944.

moved in historic preservationist circles that were safeguarding a variety of sites.

On February 26, 1919, the New Hampshire legislature incorporated the Saint-Gaudens Memorial by special act:

To maintain a permanent memorial to the late Augustus Saint-Gaudens on the site of his homestead estate in Cornish, New Hampshire; to collect, preserve, and there exhibit . . . a collection as complete as possible of originals and replicas of the works of Augustus Saint-Gaudens; to aid, encourage and assist in the education of young sculptors of promise under regulations promulgated by the trustees, and generally to foster and encourage the art of sculpture and public appreciation thereof.<sup>2</sup>

Among its first trustees, in addition to Augusta and Homer Saint-Gaudens, were such distinguished cultural figures as architects William R. Mead and Charles A. Platt; sculptors Herbert Adams and Daniel Chester French; and painters Edwin H. Blashfield and John Singer Sargent. In addition, the governor of New Hampshire and the president of Dartmouth College were named *ex officio* members, an arrangement that continues to this day. For a time, so was the president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who in the Memorial's early years was Robert de Forest.

In 1921 Augusta Saint-Gaudens deeded the property and the original eighteen acres to the Memorial, contingent upon the Memorial's building an endowment to support it; otherwise it would revert to Saint-Gaudens's heirs. Thus the Memorial's earliest years were dedicated to establishing a \$100,000 fund to underwrite the maintenance of the property, acquisition of artworks, and development of programs. To raise awareness of the Memorial, not to mention the necessary funds, the trustees embarked on an impressive public relations campaign with inner-circle supporters publishing in national journals and newspapers, as well as circulars and brochures.

Correspondence preserved in the Saint-Gaudens Memorial's records, now held at Dartmouth College Library, attests to the trustees' determination to succeed, one donation at a time. Beginning with the first contribution from Daniel Chester French, the gifts ranged from large ones from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and John D. Rockefeller Jr. to smaller ones from the Dartmouth community and local schoolchildren. In all, more than nine hundred people made pledges from 25 cents to \$10,000. In 1927, the year after Augusta Saint-Gaudens's death, the trustees finally met their goal, obtained full title, and assumed management of the property.<sup>3</sup>



## An Organization's Journey

In the 1920s and 1930s, several thousand people came to see the Cornish property each summer. During the World War II years, however, visitation and admissions income fell precipitously, particularly because of gasoline rationing for automobiles. The Memorial also suffered a devastating blow when, on June 6, 1944, fire destroyed the Studio of the Caryatids as well as the art and contents within. Board members determinedly moved forward by creating the New Gallery and the outdoor colonnaded Atrium that were dedicated in 1948, the one-hundredth anniversary of Saint-Gaudens's birth. Among the featured objects today are a large-scale plaster of *The Puritan* (1884–87; cast ca. 1900); a gilded bronze *Amor Caritas* (1880–98; cast 1975; see cover); and a heroic-size portrait bust of Abraham Lincoln (1885; cast 1910). Then as now, visitors to SGNHP also could visit the Little Studio (1903–4), the artist's personal studio, and Aspet, the family home (fig. 6), all the while enjoying the spectacular natural surroundings that include a dramatic vista of Mt. Ascutney (fig. 7).

Fig. 6. Aspet dining room.

Fig. 7 (following page). Aspet and Mt. Ascutney from the formal gardens.

















Beginning in the 1930s, Memorial trustees sought to selectively acquire, preserve, and cast the large-scale works of Saint-Gaudens, and to install them in architectural or landscaped settings on the grounds. The bluestone base for the monument to Admiral David Glasgow Farragut (1877–80; Madison Square Park, New York), which had deteriorated and was replaced with a new carving, arrived in Cornish in 1941 and went on view in 1948. Today this original base is surmounted by a 1994 bronze recast and installed under a protective enclosure (fig. 8). Following the 1944

Fig. 8. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Admiral David Glasgow Farragut Monument, 1877–80; cast 1994, on original bluestone base.



fire, trustees redoubled their efforts to acquire sculptures for display, and in 1948 acquired as gifts plaster casts of *The Puritan* from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and *Amor Caritas* from Pittsburgh's Carnegie Institute, from which the bronze now on view was made.

A 1968 bronze recast of the Adams Memorial (1886–91; fig. 9), a replacement of sorts for an early plaster lost in the 1944 fire, went

Fig. 9. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Adams Memorial, 1886–91; cast 1968.

on view in 1969 in a hedged, room-like space. The trustees also acquired a plaster cast of Saint-Gaudens's masterful monument to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment (1884–97) as a gift from Buffalo's Albright-Knox Art Gallery in 1949; after assembly and treatment, it went on display on the former bowling green in 1960. In the mid-1990s the deteriorated plaster was conserved and put on long-term loan at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. A mold taken from the plaster allowed for creation of a bronze recast, dedicated in 1997 (fig. 10), its production underwritten by the Memorial.

In 1962 the Saint-Gaudens Memorial was named a National Historic Landmark in acknowledgment of its importance to American cultural heritage. By that time, its trustees, led by president William Platt, were assessing the feasibility of transferring the Cornish property to the federal government in order to more effectively ensure its maintenance and to allow the Memorial to carry out a wider range of mandates. In 1964 the property—now expanded to eighty-three acres, and including all structures and works of art on the site—was donated for public ownership



OMNIA PELINQVIT  
SERVARE REPELLE

REPRESENTING THE ASSAULT ON FORT WAGNER, JULY 17, 1863, BY THE 54TH MASSACHUSETTS INFANTRY, 1863





following legislation passed by the US Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on August 31, 1964. The Memorial's charter was revised and approved by the New Hampshire legislature on March 30, 1965, to allow in autumn 1965 the conveyance of the property to the US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, as the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site. Under this arrangement, the Saint-Gaudens Memorial is autonomous in its charter, organization, finances, and decision-making powers, while operating in close partnership with the Park Service staff to promote the goals set down in the Memorial's original 1919 charter.

Fig. 10. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Monument to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, 1884–97; cast 1997.



In 2019, through the Memorial's advocacy, federal legislation renamed the property the Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park in recognition of its expanded cultural import. For instance, the Memorial's gift of nearby historic Blow-Me-Down Farm in 2010 not only increased the park's acreage, which now constitutes 190 acres owned in-fee, with an additional 175 acres included in the authorized boundary, but also broadened its story to encompass the many artists and intellectuals who were part of the Cornish Colony. SGNHP remains the only unit in the National Park Service system devoted to an American artist that has extensive art holdings, and the only national park in New Hampshire.

## A Living Legacy

Before 1965 the trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial had developed several initiatives for public benefit that connect past with present in order to promote the living legacy of Augustus Saint-Gaudens as a creative artist and cultural role model. In 1948 the Memorial launched an exhibition program that thrives to this day, relocating and repurposing a chicken coop into the Picture Gallery.

The earliest exhibitions were remarkable in their range and scale of ambition. For instance, shows in 1952 featured paintings by popular Cornish Colony artist Maxfield Parrish and by folk painter Grandma Moses, drawing record attendance. In 1956 the Memorial presented eighteen abstract works on loan from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, making “its first bow to non-objective paintings of the ultra-modern variety,”<sup>4</sup> and beginning the ongoing practice of showing art of all styles, themes, and media. Other exhibitions have focused on the wealth of regional creative talent, including *A Circle of Friends: Art Colonies of Cornish and Dublin* (1985), organized by the park’s longtime curator and superintendent John H. Dryfhout (on staff 1966–2003), and *A New Augustan Age: 1905–2005* (2005), a centennial celebration of the masque that Cornish Colony members held in honor of Augustus and Augusta Saint-Gaudens.

Today’s roster of exhibitions—usually three each season—is conceived by the Memorial’s Exhibitions Committee and exhibitions director in collaboration with SGNHP staff. In recent years, the program has featured work by living artists in a range of media, frequently made specifically for the venue and in response to the collections and other local artistic and natural stimuli. Historic

exhibitions, often with accompanying scholarly catalogues, have assessed the achievements of other members of the Saint-Gaudens family. These include shows devoted to ceramist Paul St. Gaudens, Augustus's nephew (2001), and to Augusta Homer Saint-Gaudens (2019), both organized by SGNHP curator Henry J. Duffy. From time to time, exhibitions are sited on the historic landscape in dialogue with surrounding buildings, gardens, and natural features (fig. 11).

Each year since 1952 the Saint-Gaudens Memorial has sponsored a series of concerts on the site. The performances carry on a tradition of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, who held concerts in his New York studio for family and friends, and himself played the flute. Routinely attracting hundreds, these concerts are held on Sunday afternoons during the summer months. As a 1952 newspaper noted: "One of Saint-Gaudens's favorite relaxations was music and he would have enjoyed knowing that people could listen to it in the studio where he once worked so hard at his sculpture."<sup>5</sup> Today,

Fig. 11. Rosalyn Driscoll, *The One That Got Away*, 2018.  
Cloth, epoxy resin, wire, tubing, paint, 285 x 10 x 6 feet.  
Sited in Birch Allée, 2018.





the audience gathers in the sculptor's Little Studio, under the adjacent pergola, and on the lawn, where picnicking is a welcome accompaniment (figs. 12, 13). Since its inception, the music program has featured instrumental and vocal offerings from classical to





Fig. 13. Visitors outside the Little Studio enjoying a Sunday afternoon concert, July 23, 2017.

Fig. 12 (left). The Art of the Duo: Kinan Azmeh and Dinuk Wijeratne performing in the Little Studio, July 9, 2017.



popular and traditional music. It has also presented works by such Cornish Colony musicians as Sidney Homer and Arthur Whiting. The Memorial's Music Committee and concert director are committed to bringing a diverse range of talents and sounds to the region, as well as to encouraging young musicians.

Since turning the property over to the National Park Service in 1965, the Memorial has firmly adhered to its mission of keeping relevant the ideals of Saint-Gaudens as an innovative sculptor and as a mentor to emerging artists. In 1978 it initiated the Saint-Gaudens Fellowship, an annual award presented to artists who are practicing primarily in the United States, with an exhibition record that attests to their exceptional talent, but who are not yet firmly established. In addition to receiving a monetary grant, the fellows exhibit representative examples of their work in the Picture Gallery the year following their fellowships (fig. 14). These artists are selected by a committee consisting of trustees and artist advisors, including past fellows. Many fellows, including Petah Coyne (1987), Alison Saar (1997), Do Ho Suh (2001), and Tara Donovan (2003), have gone on to enjoy successful careers.



Fig. 14. Claire Watkins, 2008 Saint-Gaudens fellow, discusses her installation *The Space Betwixt* in the Picture Gallery, 2009.

Established in 1988, the Saint-Gaudens Medal (fig. 15) is awarded from time to time to “persons who, by their talents and beneficence, have made a distinguished contribution to the arts in America in the high tradition of Augustus Saint-Gaudens.” It is the Memorial’s practice to award the medal to those whose efforts have added to our collective understanding and appreciation of Saint-Gaudens and the Cornish Colony. The Saint-Gaudens Medal has been given ten times, including, in 2016, to historian and author David McCullough in recognition of his book *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris* (2011), in which he introduced Saint-Gaudens to a broad audience, and for his other books that feature significant historical figures and topics related to National Park Service properties. In 2019 the Saint-Gaudens Medal was presented to the Dartmouth College Library in recognition of its stewardship of the papers of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, other members of the Cornish Colony, and the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, preserving them and making them accessible to researchers.

The ideal of the park as a living memorial is also promoted in public programs cosponsored by the Saint-Gaudens Memorial and the SGNHP. Each season since 1969 they have appointed

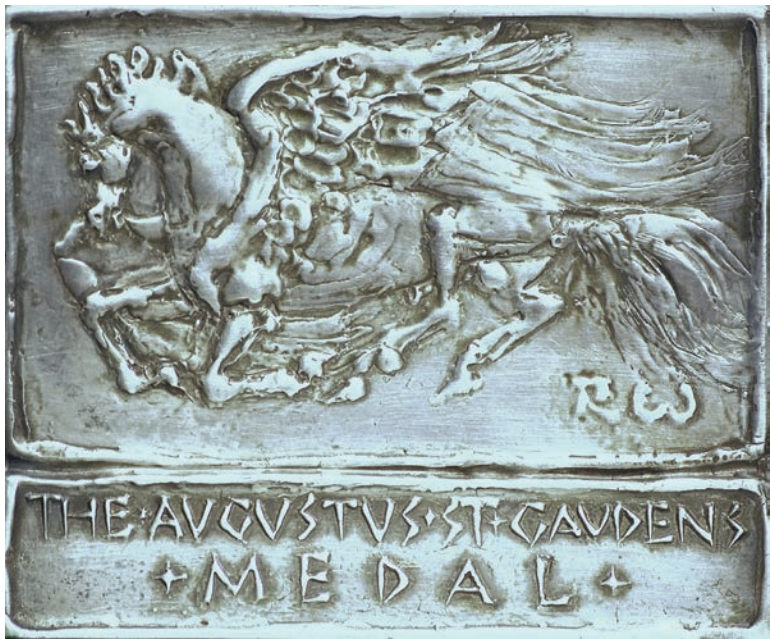


Fig. 15. Robert W. White, *Saint-Gaudens Medal*, 1992. Silver,  $3\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$  in.

a sculptor-in-residence who works in the figurative tradition, to create art on site and interact with park visitors. Based in the Ravine Studio, this artist also leads regular workshops (fig. 16) that introduce beginners to the figurative sculpture process, from clay modeling to mold making, while also providing more advanced instruction for those with experience. An annual highlight is



Sculptural Visions, a daylong program held in September featuring bronze casting, artists' demonstrations in a variety of media, and hands-on art projects (fig. 17). Programs for local youth include a weeklong summer STEAM camp, integrating the sciences, math, and the arts, as well as school-group visits with Memorial-funded transportation grants.



Fig. 17. Bronze pour at Sculptural Visions, September 22, 2018.

Fig. 16 (left). Portrait bust sculpture workshop, led by Sculptor-in-Residence Bill Williams, ca. 2009.



During its centennial year the Saint-Gaudens Memorial celebrated its history in several tangible ways. *On View in Cornish: American Art at the Picture Gallery, 1948–2019* featured a selection of works by notable artists who have exhibited at the park. The concert program also honored the Memorial's history with new compositions inspired by Saint-Gaudens, and with music that was performed during key Memorial events over the last century. The Memorial, which periodically funds acquisitions to enhance the SGNHP collections, presented the gift of Saint-Gaudens's exquisite high-relief bronze portrait of Louise Miller Howland (fig. 18). Long held by the original owner's family, it joined a distinguished collection of more than 10,000 objects at the park.

As the Saint-Gaudens Memorial enters its second century, it is dedicated to its partnership with the SGNHP to preserve and interpret its cultural resources and to bring the legacy of Augustus Saint-Gaudens to 40,000 park visitors annually—and to those far afield. As art critic and former Saint-Gaudens Memorial trustee Royal Cortissoz wrote in his 1926 obituary of Augusta Saint-Gaudens, the Memorial “does more than commemorate an artist. It beautifully invokes the influence of that standard by which [Augustus Saint-Gaudens] enriched American art.”<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 18. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Louise Miller Howland*, 1888. Bronze, 39 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

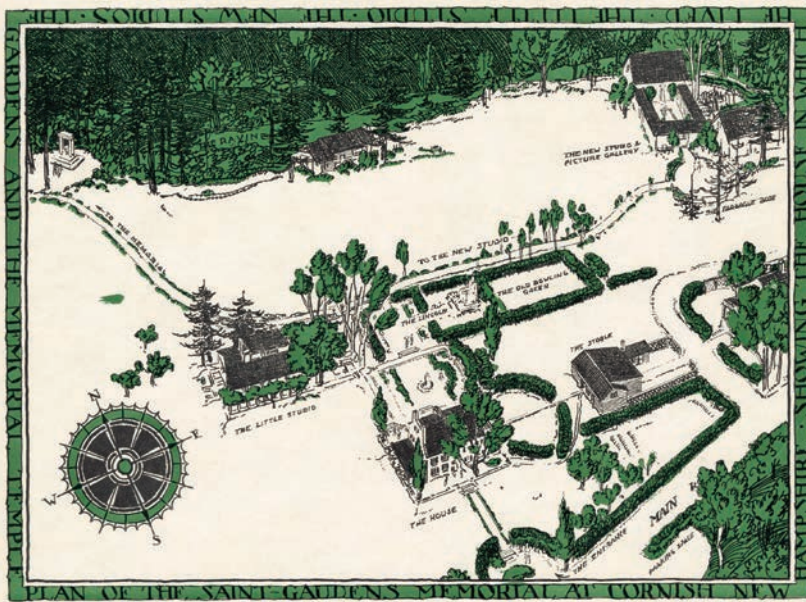
## NOTES

- 1 Copies of Augusta Saint-Gaudens's wills are held in ML-4, box 23, Augustus Saint-Gaudens Papers, Dartmouth College Library, Rauner Special Collections Library.
- 2 "An Act to Incorporate Saint-Gaudens Memorial (Approved February 26, 1919)," held in MS-1209, box 1, folder 1, Records of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial (1919–1984), Dartmouth College Library, Rauner Special Collections Library (hereafter, Saint-Gaudens Memorial Records).
- 3 "Memorial Assured for Saint-Gaudens," *New York Times*, April 30, 1927; and Minutes of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial trustees annual meeting, September 7, 1927, box 1, folder 32, Saint-Gaudens Memorial Records.
- 4 Saint-Gaudens Memorial press release, May 26, 1956, box 5, folder 31, Saint-Gaudens Memorial Records.
- 5 "Piano Recital at Saint-Gaudens," *Hanover Gazette*, July 24, 1952; clipping in box 3, folder 55, Saint-Gaudens Memorial Records.
- 6 [Royal Cortissoz], "Mrs. Augustus Saint-Gaudens," *New York Herald Tribune*, July 8, 1926; clipping in box 1, folder 30, Saint-Gaudens Memorial Records.

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