

# friends OF SAINT-GAUDENS

CORNISH | NEW HAMPSHIRE | FALL / WINTER 2014

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## DEAR FRIENDS,

**Although the 2014 season ended October 31, staff at the park is busier than ever with new projects and programs and for next year.**

Megan O'Malley, the Acting Superintendent through the end of this year, is overseeing park operations as well as planning for next year's interpretive and educational programs and special events, that will celebrate the park's 50 anniversary—Congress established the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in 1965—and mark the 150th anniversary of the death of Abraham Lincoln (more on Saint-Gaudens' standing *Lincoln* in upcoming issues). Although the concerts are over, the galleries closed and the leaves gone, work continues. You can read in this issue, for example, about an ongoing natural resource project and conservation work on important items in the collection. Also featured are articles about winter at Aspet in Saint-Gaudens' time and the history of the Chickering piano heard during many concerts in the Little Studio.

We thank you for your interest and for your support of so many programs at the park that promote understanding of Saint-Gaudens, his work and the Cornish Colony.

Sincerely,

Byron Bell  
President of the  
Board of Trustees  
Saint-Gaudens Memorial

Megan O'Malley  
Acting Superintendent  
Saint-Gaudens  
National Historic Site

## SAINT-GAUDENS BEATS THE 'WINTERTIME BLUES'

By Jake Buttery, SCA Intern 2014

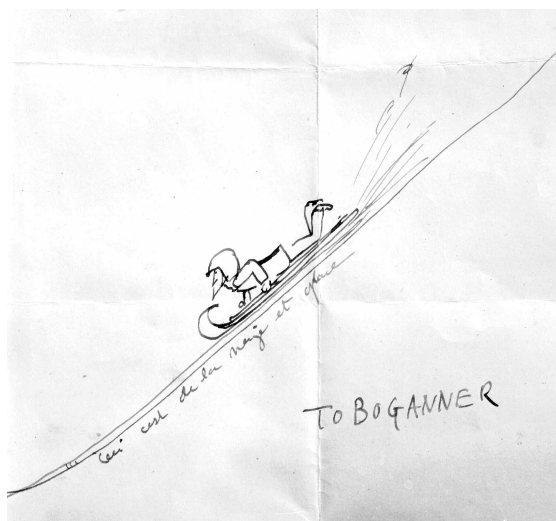
**The historic buildings at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site close for tours on October 31st, but the off-season at the park still has something to offer. For example, visitors are welcome to explore the park site's grounds, view outdoor sculptures and take in the beauty of Cornish's wintery terrain. Outdoor recreational opportunities are one way to beat the 'wintertime blues' and are traditional at the park.**

Augustus Saint-Gaudens lived in Cornish year-round from 1900-1907, a decision made after learning he had intestinal cancer. This reality did not deter him from making the most of his time in Cornish. Despite the physical drain attributed to the cancer which would ultimately end his life, Saint-Gaudens organized and participated in recreational activities, entertaining his cohorts throughout the winter.

Activities included sleigh-riding, skating, tobogganing, and ice hockey. These had a two-fold effect: heightening the camaraderie between year-round Cornish Colony members, by fostering a feeling of togetherness; and invigorating Augustus Saint-Gaudens, as the wintertime fun may have provided a temporary respite from his illness.

Saint-Gaudens recalls his year-round stays in Cornish as some of the fondest years of his life. Though at first he was unsure how he would take to the formi-

dable Cornish winters. **"The winter was well on by this time and I soon learned that this season in the North Country, instead of being one of gloom and slush so dreaded by inhabitants of large cities, was one of cheerfulness and lightness of spirit."**



"This is snow and ice." Cartoon sketch by Augustus Saint-Gaudens of him on a toboggan, ca. 1900. (SAGA 920). Archival image.

A vast array of recreational activities, brightened the winter months in Cornish, NH; **"But for my first winter in Cornish I was deeply impressed and delighted by its exhilaration and brilliancy, its unexpected joyousness, the sleigh-riding, the skating, and what not. I was as happy as a child."** Considering that Saint-Gaudens was

("Saint-Gaudens Beats the 'Wintertime Blues'" cont. on page 2)

diagnosed with cancer in 1900, *before* he began wintering in Cornish, his happiness is all the more powerful. For example, Saint-Gaudens experienced a well-earned measure of pride after being roughed up in an ice hockey game—a game which likely took place on the frozen surface of Blow-Me-Down pond. **“Skating once more after thirty-five years and playing hockey like a boy, I was knocked down twice, receiving a magnificent black eye the first time and a swelled and cut forehead the second. In these I took great pride.”**



Augustus Saint-Gaudens and assistants playing hockey on Blow-Me-Down Pond, ca. 1903-04, Elsie Ward Hering from Scrapbook of Elsie Ward Hering, (SAGA 9227). Gift of Mrs. Noel Leisentritt and Mrs. Lois Moore.



The toboggan run, ca. 1907-08. (SAGA 2935c). Featured in article in “Country Life in America” vol. XIII by Homer Saint-Gaudens. Archival image from Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

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**Saint-Gaudens recalls his year-round stays in Cornish as some of the fondest years of his life.**

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One of the more involved activities was tobogganing. Saint-Gaudens erected a thirty foot toboggan slide, near to where the present day park site’s Atrium complex stands. The slide and run were both steep enough to propel tobogganers all the way to the bottom of the lower field. His son Homer noted that **“...perhaps even more vital to my father’s happiness than these friends about him... were his studio assistants... all shared in his play as well as his work... tobogganed with him.”** On particularly restless winter days, Saint-Gaudens was wont to yank all of his assistants from their work in the Large Studio and invite them to embark on these toboggan runs. Saint-Gaudens even employed horse-drivers to tow the tobogganers from the bottom of the lower field back up the hill!

Saint-Gaudens, through his charismatic nature and zeal for life, refused to allow winter hibernation to descend on Cornish. **“...I am enjoying the rigorous young winter up here keenly, snow all over, sun brilliant and supreme, sleighs, sleighbells galore, and a cheerfulness that brings back visions of the halcyon winter days of my boyhood.”** His liveliness and exuberance inspired others to make the most of the glistening winter landscape of Cornish.

Sources: Saint-Gaudens, Homer. *The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens*. New York: Century Co., 1908. Print. Pp 228, 231 and 234. Letters

## THE STORY OF A CHICKERING PIANO

Fern K. Meyers, Concert Series Director

A recent visitor to Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, NH inquired about the Chickering and Sons grand piano located in the Little Studio. She offered to look up its registration number #92519 in the Chickering Company ledger, now archived at the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution. Like champion dogs and many string instruments and their bows, the Chickering piano at Aspet has pedigree papers and a name.

Important instruments are often given names. For example Guarnieri del Gesu made “Il Cannone” (The Cannon) in 1742 later acquired by the legendary violin virtuoso Niccolò Paganini (1784-1840) who named the Guarnieri for its powerful, resonant tone. Chickering #92519 has long been referred to as “Maxfield Parrish’s piano” and its papers reveal an interesting history.

According to Chickering and Sons records, the piano was completed in 1899. Its papers describe the piano as follows: “Style, C Rose; Color of case, Medium Box; figure of veneer, plain; voice as selected, clear/medium; action regulating, even; touch, medium; hammers, CSonS; wire, Poehlmanns and Pitch, sharp.

Maxfield Parrish’s granddaughter recalls that chimney swifts sang when she played the piano in the music room. Gail Jennings has performed on it in the Little Studio since 1976 and describes it as “very



The Chickering grand piano in the Little Studio at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site.

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**The Chickering piano  
#92519 completed in 1899,  
has long been referred to  
as “Maxfield Parrish’s piano”**

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special” with a beautiful tone, booming bass and “lovely colors in the upper register, especially.” Mr. Dale Howe of Frederick Johnson Pianos, Inc. knows the piano very well having tuned it for many years. He claims that it is the nicest Chickering he ever tuned. To give further credence, Chickering became the standard for piano manufacture and its cast iron frame a model for the Steinway concert grand design.

Jonas Chickering developed his skills as a piano builder in Boston, then

America’s musical hub, and in 1823 started his own business. The company quickly gained a reputation for making superb pianos. By 1859 the firm had received 38 medals for superiority of manufacture. At the Paris Exposition of 1867 Chickering and Sons received the highest award ever given to a piano company. Upon first playing a Chickering piano Franz Liszt said: “It is imperial. I never thought a piano could possess such qualities.”

But after World War II Steinway pianos came into favor and today, most concert artists prefer Steinways. Yet some Chickering pianos made from the 1890’s to the 1920s are still valued for their exceptionally powerful and rich tones, particularly in the bass register,

*(“The Story of a Chickering Piano” cont. on page 4)*

Style <i>C Rose</i> Scale <i>11018</i> Number <i>92,519</i>	
Date Shipped <i>Dec 13, 1900</i>	
Consignee <i>Harry F. Fay</i>	
Inspected by _____	Destination <i>73 Monmouth St., Longwood, Mass.</i>
INSPECTION:	DESCRIPTION:
Varnish,—checks, scratches, finish	Color of case <i>medium Rose</i>
Finish of touched-up places	Figure of veneer <i>plain</i>
Matching of legs, lyre, top, fall, key slips, key blocks, stretchers, etc. to case	Voice <i>as selected, clear, medium</i>
Putting in of locks, hinges, screws, pulls and buttons	Action regulating <i>even</i>
Noises in hinges, pedals, and other parts	Touch <i>medium</i>
Nickle and gilt work on hardware	Hammers <i>Edwards</i>
Transfer on name-board	Wire <i>Reckmann</i>
Even color of ivory; checks, scratches, etc.	
Ivory joints—perfect sharps	
Sides of keys	
Working of Desk	
Plate and machine shop work	
Plate bronzing and varnishing	
Dust and spots on plate	
Board and plate transfers and number	
Dust on board and bridges	
Rust on strings and damper heads	
Finish, mouldings and joints of skeleton	
Cloth fittings	
Overtones and noises in strings	
Scale break	
Regulation of action	
Touch and feeling	
Tuning	
Tuning	
	REMARKS:
	<i>Pitch sharp.</i>
	<i>Returned Oct 27, 1902</i>
	<i>Maxfield Parrish Sept. 18, 1908</i>
	<i>Thurs., Vt.</i>

Shipping document recording the shipping history, condition and details of the Chickering #92519 to Maxfield Parrish in Windsor, VT., in 1908.

confirmed by Mrs. Jennings. Chickering and Sons continued to manufacture pianos in Boston until 1983. The Company changed hands and became a brand name of the Baldwin Piano Company until 2008. Although no longer used, the Chickering name still stands for fine quality.

It is worth explaining the words "Pitch sharp" noted on the Chickering papers since this may be confused as a defect in the piano. In traditional Western music all instruments are tuned to a standard pitch. Over the past five hundred years the accepted standard of pitch has moved considerably higher to accommodate modern instruments and changes in materials used to make and play them. When Bach was alive and Stradivarius was producing violins, instruments were tuned to the standard pitch of 415 (number of vibrations per second).

pitch which occurs during the winter months. It is not known whether the new Chickering piano #92519 was tuned to 435, 440 or even higher but reasonable to assume the latter since the records indicate the pitch was sharp when it was consigned on December 13, 1900 to Harry F. Fay of 73 Monmouth Street, Longwood, MA.

From census records, newspaper articles and other archives we find that Mr. Fay was a cigar merchant and president of the Mayflower Mining Company, a copper mine located in Calumet, Michigan with a Boston office on State Street. He is also listed as a piano student of Benjamin Lang; a piano teacher at Chickering Hall in 1889 (located above the Chickering factory); a member of an elite part-song male chorus called Apollo Club; a concert pianist; author of the book *Ornaments in Music* published in



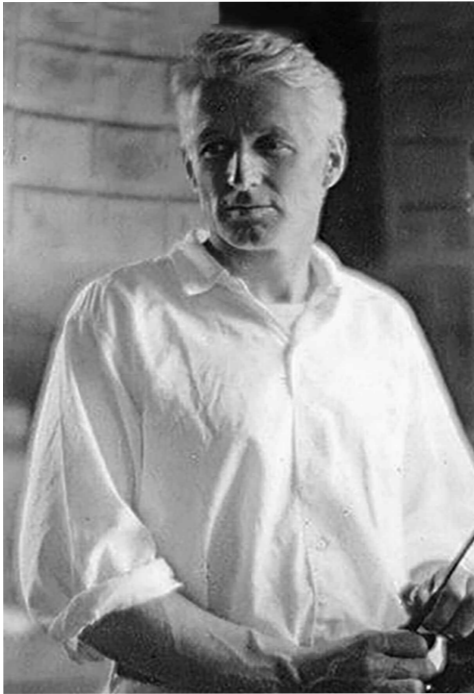
By the mid-19th century standard pitch had moved from 415 to 435. In 1899, when Chickering made Maxfield Parrish's piano, the new standard was accepted as 440 vibrations per second for concert pitch "A." However, new pianos are generally tuned sharper to allow for the natural process of settling to a lower

1893; new owner of a lot in Lexington, MA and "building an expensive country home" there and, in 1907, the owner of a Greek Revival summer mansion on Morrissey Boulevard in Boston. Is it possible that this was a single individual or could there have been more than one Harry F. Fay living in the Boston area in 1900?

**Maxfield Parrish's Chickering was rebuilt and refinished in 1971 then donated to the Saint-Gaudens Memorial.**

One could conjecture that Fay used the piano for teaching in his studio at Chickering Hall but, for accounting purposes, the factory consigned it to his home address in Longwood. Or perhaps Mr. Fay wanted to "try out" the piano at home over an extended period but did not ultimately purchase it. For whatever reason and regardless of who Harry F. Fay actually was, Chickering records show that piano #92519 was returned on October 27, 1902. The next record shows the piano was sent on September 18, 1908 to the famous Cornish Colony artist Maxfield Parrish in Windsor, VT.

Maxfield and Lydia Parrish had a lovely home, studio and gardens in Plainfield, NH, located just across the Connecticut River from Windsor. They named their estate "The Oaks" and, in 1906, added a west wing music room that measured 20x40 by 14 feet high. Both of them loved music—Maxfield is known to have enjoyed playing chords and arpeggios



Maxfield Parrish circa 1908.

on his Chickering piano. Parrish wrote a letter later in his life stating he wished music had been his main creative expression rather than “bad pictures.” (Parrish became a very wealthy commercial artist and some of his paintings bring over 7 million dollars today.) Lydia was interested in folk music and spent years compiling information for her book *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands*. It is not readily apparent whether Lydia played the piano or read music (although there are indications in her book that she did) but likely that the Chickering was used while she, Creighton Churchill and Robert MacGimsey worked on transcribing tape recordings of songs sung by slaves.

Maxfield and Lydia Parrish loved entertaining with music at The Oaks. They hosted a musicale on September 9, 1907 performed by the Colony’s resident pianist and composer Arthur Whiting who did much to advance an appreciation for chamber music in America. Whiting’s concert in the new music room implies that the Parrishes

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**Upon first playing a Chickering piano Franz Liszt said: “It is imperial. I never thought a piano could possess such qualities.”**

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owned a piano that was replaced a year later by Chickering #92519. The Olive Mead quartet, America’s first fully professional women’s quartet, also performed in the music room at The Oaks just before the Chickering was shipped to Windsor. Their decision to buy a seven and a half foot mahogany Chickering grand piano may have been influenced by their acquaintance with a member of the Chickering family.

Stephen Parrish, Maxfield Parrish’s father and an ardent music lover, noted in his daily log that Rebecca (“Becky”) Chickering was in the Cornish Colony on Sept 3, 1903 and again on July 20, 1904 and that there was “a day of music” provided by Whiting and other musical members of the Colony. Becky was the great granddaughter of Jonas Chickering and appears to have been musical because Parrish’s log implies that she was among those who provided entertainment.

The piano was used on August 24, 1909 with Grace Arnold singing (she was an alto) and the following summer Arthur Whiting returned to The Oaks to play duets with Otto Roth, principal second violin with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Two weeks later the Olive Mead Quartet returned for a concert and three years later the Parrish’s hosted a small dinner and dance attended by President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson’s

daughters on July 30, 1913, the first year that the summer White House was in the Cornish Colony. The popular Fuller Sisters from England sang and played folk music at The Oaks in 1915 and the illustrious Isadora Duncan danced there in 1925 or 1926. It is unknown if she danced to live piano music or recorded music since the Parrish’s had acquired a Victrola in 1906 and gathered an extensive record collection.



The inscription reads: “The Maxfield Parrish Piano Given to the Trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial by Philip Burling, January 1972”

Joanna Maxfield Parrish has fond recollections of playing the Chickering during childhood summers spent at The Oaks. She became a music teacher. We know from various accounts that Grace Lawrence Taylor played for several musical events at The Oaks and that her daughter Rosamond Taylor Edmondson played the piano there as a child. Mrs. Edmondson became a Trustee of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial and its concert series administrator for many years.

Mrs. Edmondson’s family continues to maintain vital interest in the piano and the concert series at Saint-Gaudens. Thanks to their generosity, Maxfield Parrish’s Chickering #92519 was rebuilt



Augustus Saint-Gaudens, plaster sketches from the Boston Public Library Groups. 1692-1907. In their cases at the National Historic Site, *Law supported by Power and Love*, on the left, and *Labor supported by Science and Art* on the right. Close-up of *Law supported by Power and Love* (right).

## CONSERVATION: THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY GROUPS

**The park completed work on a \$4000 conservation project to repair and better house the plaster “Boston Public Library Groups” left incomplete at the death of Saint-Gaudens in 1907.**

Originally intended for the entrance to the public library in Boston, the work was still in a preliminary stage at the artist's death. A new commission for the public library decoration was awarded to Bella Pratt, a former student of Saint-Gaudens.

The work of conserving this unique piece was accomplished with funding from the New Hampshire State Council on the

Arts, Moose Plate Conservation Program and matching funds from the Memorial. The plasters are to be rehoused in a new display case fabricated by Skylight Studios, a company which has worked with the park in the past. This will ensure their protection by reducing exposure to dust and other contaminants, as well as accidental contact by park visitors.



## TEACHER-RANGER-TEACHER PROGRAM

**Over ten years ago, the National Park Service began a Teacher to Ranger to Teacher program (TRT), in which a teacher works at a park for eight weeks during the summer primarily with that site's education program. The teacher works on development of curriculum having to do with that particular park, and then brings his or her class to visit the site.**

The Saint-Gaudens 2014 TRT, Lisa Holtz, is a third grade teacher in the nearby Claremont School district. While here this summer, she utilized the natural areas of the site to develop a stream and pond ecology curriculum for 2nd – 5th grades. The lesson plans incorporate visits to the park three times over the school year. The students will hike the nature trails and collect and identify insect life found in the Blow-me-Down Brook, which wanders through then ravine along the edge of the park. When school began, Lisa arranged for the entire third grade at her school (80 students) to come to the park in September. They were involved with the ecology lesson plans that she developed and also toured the site and met with the Sculptor-in-Residence. Lisa plans to return with her class in February, to see the Civil War monuments, and perhaps hike the trails on snowshoes.



## RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTION

### WILL HOLLINGSWORTH'S PORTRAIT OF FRANCES GRIMES

**The Saint-Gaudens Memorial presented a portrait of the artist Frances Grimes to the park this past summer. Painted in 1947 by Will Hollingsworth, Curator of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial in the 1940s, this is an evocative look at one of the most trusted assistants of Augustus Saint-Gaudens.**



Will Hollingsworth, *Frances Grimes*. An important sculptural assistant to Saint-Gaudens, painted by a Curator of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, the work is a significant addition to the park's collection.

Frances Grimes (1869-1963) first came to Cornish in 1894 as the studio helper for the sculptor Herbert Adams. Around 1900 she began working with Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and remained one the most active assistants until his death in 1907. As a member of the Cornish

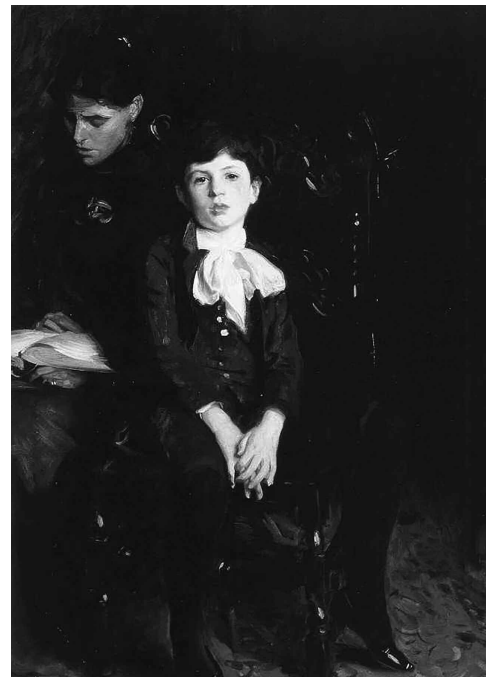
Colony, Miss Grimes continued to be active as a Trustee of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, until her death in 1963.

Will Hollingsworth (1891-1975) was an established artist when he was chosen as Curator of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial in 1947. His art was broad in scope, from commercial posters for the Canadian Railroad, to art in the style of regionalist painters of the American heartland. His portraits tended to be traditional, as this one, concentrating on the intense focus of Miss Grimes as she works in needlepoint.

### JOHN SINGER SARGENT'S PORTRAIT OF AUGUSTA SAINT-GAUDENS

**The interpretation of Aspet has been enhanced by the addition of a replica of John Singer Sargent's portrait of Augusta Saint-Gaudens and Homer Saint-Gaudens.**

Originally featured in the dining room of the house, the original now hangs in the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh. It was removed by Homer Saint-Gaudens when he went to Pittsburg to live permanently and work as the Director to the art institute. The replica returns this image to its place in the house, and allows the visitor to understand more about the life of the inhabitants. A setting of the dining room table has also been added to reflect daily living of the Saint-Gaudens' family. Where possible original objects are used with similar antique pieces to enhance the overall effect. Both displays are meant to give a lively interpretation to the house, and encourage more audience participation during tours.



Replica Portrait of Homer Saint-Gaudens and his Mother by John Singer Sargent, 1890. Original at Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburg.



The portrait of Augusta and Homer Saint-Gaudens now hangs in Aspet's Dining Room. The dining table is also set to reflect the family's presence.

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## INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT MEGAN O'MALLEY

In a temporary shift of Park Service personnel, SGNHS Superintendent Rick Kendall has been tapped to serve as Acting Superintendent at Gettysburg National Military Park from mid-August into December while that park's superintendent is on a special assignment.



Aby filling Mr. Kendall's position here at Saint-Gaudens, we have welcomed Megan O'Malley as Interim Superintendent. For the last five years, Ms. O'Malley has been serving at two co-managed parks, the Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site and Johnstown Flood National Memorial, where she is Chief of Interpretation and involved in planning as well as in youth, community and educational outreach. Prior to

that she was supervisor of the Visitor Center at Old Faithful visitor center at Yellowstone National Park. Megan's interest in arts programming in the parks stretches back to her first NPS position at the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

These temporary assignments allow the NPS to fill temporary vacancies in leadership positions and also provide selected NPS staff to experience different, and sometimes more challenging, leadership positions.

("The Story of a Chickering Piano" cont. from page 5)

and refinished in 1971 then donated to the Saint-Gaudens Memorial. It replaced the 1888 black Steinway (A6 #63480) on loan from the Whittemore Littell family. The 1899 Chickering is still used for concerts in the Little Studio and played each summer by fine pianists whose music is appreciated by many people

from around the world.

The author gives special thanks to those who provided information including Greg Schwarz and park staff at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Dartmouth College librarians Barbara Krieger and Reinhart Sonnenberg, Christine Windheuser, Smithsonian Institution, Dale Howe, Martha Sachs, Joanna Maxfield Parrish, Phil Burling, Gail Jennings, Danny Dover and Helen Taylor Davidson.



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National Historic Site

The Saint-Gaudens Memorial is a private, non-profit corporation chartered to advise and support the National Historic Site and sponsor programs and activities that promote public awareness of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, his work and sculpture in general.

Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site

The site is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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