Dear Friends,

It has been a wonderful season at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, one of the highlights of which was the transfer of Blow-Me-Down Farm to the National Park Service and the day-long celebration there with the community in July. (See inside for more details.)

We would like to extend thanks to all of our Friends, to those who visit and participate in events here, and to those who have a passion for sculpture and the great work of Augustus Saint-Gaudens. We appreciate your help in supporting this living historic site and keeping the memory of Saint-Gaudens and the Cornish Colony alive.

Sincerely,

Rick Kendall
Superintendent
Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site

On June 20, 1898, John Singer Sargent hosted a dinner in honor of Augustus Saint-Gaudens at London’s Reform Club. The invited consisted of six sculptors, four painters, and two writers. For most, it was their first acquaintance with Saint-Gaudens who had relocated from New York to Paris in 1897.

Was Sargent’s gesture just another example of artistic bonhomie or was the painter also pushing a larger agenda concerning the presence and patronage of American artists in England? As it turns out, Saint-Gaudens’s relationship with Britain was not a self-fashioned campaign to enhance his reputation, but built through unsystematic collegial interventions such as this dinner.

Saint-Gaudens was wary of London. He admired it for its “extraordinary impression of power and also of order.”

Saint-Gaudens’s relationship with England was haphazardly constructed. His period of greatest association with Britain occurred during his three-year tenure in Paris from 1897 to 1900. Yet throughout his career, London was a passing-through point to or from the port of Liverpool on the way to Paris. One of his better documented visits took place in January 1899 during which he went to see the ballet twice and had meetings with Sargent as well as Sidney Colvin, keeper of prints and drawings at the British Museum (the former about Sargent’s work for the Boston Public Library, the latter about the Robert Louis Stevenson memorial for Edinburgh). Nevertheless, the sculptor’s description of the visit could well sum up his overall sentiments towards the city: “two of the most miserable days of my life….I roamed around the streets under the gloomy sky.”

The truth is Saint-Gaudens was wary of London. He admired it for its “extraordinary impression of power and also of order.” And he enjoyed close friendships with...
British cultural figures, for instance, the actress Ellen Terry, to whom he presented a bronze cast of his portrait of Jules Bastien-Lepage (fig. 1). But his roots and priorities were different from other American artists: he summed it up in his Reminiscences: “I hear constantly spoken of […] the love of England that so many of my friends of Anglo-Saxon origin have when they go there for the first time. I have not a trace of it for England, though a great lover of its dignity and beauty, but I have it in a singular way for France.”

Saint-Gaudens showed no sustained interest in cultivating his career in Britain. And so his presence in Britain was orchestrated by cultural celebrities who submitted his work to exhibitions and nominated him for honors in their quest to spread his name.

Richard Watson Gilder and Hamo Thornycroft

Several case studies of Saint-Gaudens’s interactions with leading British figures demonstrate how he earned inner-circle recognition. The first was instigated through Saint-Gaudens’s advocate, Richard Watson Gilder, who launched the sculptor’s reputation in New York in the late 1870s in Scribner’s Monthly. Gilder spent extended time in London in 1878-79, and it was likely he who encouraged Saint-Gaudens to show his work at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1880. Saint-Gaudens exhibited six bas-relief portraits, including those of the Gilder family (fig. 2) and Bastien-Lepage. Unlike the rapturous critical response greeting Saint-Gaudens in New York, his contributions to the Grosvenor show were all but ignored by the London press. However, Saint-Gaudens’s work apparently did catch the eye of Alexandra, Princess of Wales, when she visited the exhibition. Bastien-Lepage, who was the intermediary between sculptor and royal, wrote to Saint-Gaudens that “she strongly admired your medallion and asked me your name. She seemed to wish to know you and […] also to possess some such little work such as those you have exhibited.” For whatever reason—indifference, geographical constraints, or preoccupation with the completion of the Farragut Monument, Saint-Gaudens, who returned to New York in July 1880, never cultivated a potential commission from Princess Alexandra.

The Grosvenor showing produced at least one substantial lasting contact for Saint-Gaudens—the sculptor Hamo Thornycroft. Among Gilder’s connections in London was Edmund Gosse, who would become Century’s London agent in 1881. In 1880 Gosse alerted Gilder that his friend Thornycroft had admired Saint-Gaudens’s work at the Grosvenor. As their ensuing correspondence confirms, Saint-Gaudens and Thornycroft
shared an admiration of each other's sculptures to the extent that they exchanged photographs. For fifteen years before meeting his American confrere at Sargent's 1898 dinner, Thornycroft loyally observed Saint-Gaudens's developing stateside career and promoted his name in England. For instance, in 1888 he asked Saint-Gaudens if he would display his work in London; Saint-Gaudens refused, noting he did not want to exhibit plasters and that he was contemplating having his own exhibition in New York (this never took place).

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Thornycroft's enthusiasm continued and he lobbied for Saint-Gaudens's election in 1906 as an honorary foreign academician of the Royal Academy. Soon thereafter Saint-Gaudens wrote to Thornycroft, a full academician since 1888, that the English sculptor's involvement in his nomination added to the honor of the distinction. Thornycroft subsequently pressed Saint-Gaudens to display work in the 1906 Royal Academy exhibition, but Saint-Gaudens, gravely ill with intestinal cancer, declined. Thornycroft's ambitions led him to write later that year reminding Saint-Gaudens of a promise to send a plaster model of the Sherman Monument, then located in Paris, to the next Royal Academy exhibition at Burlington House for installation in the outdoor courtyard. This ambitious scheme never came to pass and Saint-Gaudens died just a few months later, in August 1907.

Robert Louis Stevenson and Sidney Colvin

Another personal connection, one that led to Saint-Gaudens's most prestigious artistic production for Britain, was his friendship with Scottish-born Robert Louis Stevenson. Saint-Gaudens greatly admired Stevenson's writings and told their mutual friend, the American painter Will Low, that if Stevenson ever came to the United States he would be honored to model his portrait. When Stevenson visited New York in autumn 1887, Low orchestrated their meeting. Stevenson ordered two 36-inch replicas of the resulting portrait, "as gilt-edged and high-toned as it is possible to make them." One reached him in Samoa in July 1894 shortly before his death (presumably the cast now at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.) and the other was given to Sidney Colvin, his editor, and keeper at the British Museum. This superlative cast (fig. 3), with its personalized inscription TO SIDNEY COLVIN, was built into a wall over a mantelpiece in his house.

Following Stevenson's death in 1894, Colvin was largely responsible for Saint-Gaudens earning the coveted commission for the writer's memorial for St. Giles Cathedral in his native Edinburgh. Out of loyalty to Stevenson, Saint-Gaudens accepted a $5,000 payment at no personal

Figure 4. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial, 1899–1903, bronze, St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh.
profit to himself. He did not work intensively on the memorial (fig. 4) until 1899, when he enlarged and revised his original rectangular composition, replacing the ivy border with a garland entwined with Scottish heather and native Samoan hibiscus. For the inscription he substituted Stevenson’s poem dedicated to Will Low for excerpts from Stevenson’s ‘Prayer’ and ‘Epitaph.’

From Paris Saint-Gaudens made occasional trips to London and Edinburgh to meet with committee members, including its head Archibald Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery. The sculptor, with his customary irreverence, wrote his niece: “It seems as if all the elite and nobility of England are associated with the Stevenson monument.” Colvin remained the liaison with Saint-Gaudens, assuaging the committee through endless compositional changes and an initial failed bronze casting. After ten years, the Stevenson memorial was finally unveiled on June 27, 1904. The dedication was a lengthy affair with speeches by Colvin and Lord Rosebery who saluted “the memorial of a man of genius by a man of genius.” For Saint-Gaudens, a sculpture that evolved out of admiration for the sitter evoked in him a sentimental expression of friendship and an uncustomary display of pride. Too ill to attend, he wrote to Colvin: “This work is so much associated with you and my misgivings as to what I produce are always so great that I assure you it was particularly encouraging to find that it appealed to you. I am never satisfied but with the exception of some arrangements of the folds of the shawl, I have expressed myself in this memorial to our friend to the fullest of my ability.”

John Singer Sargent and James McNeill Whistler

Expatriate American artists, namely Sargent and Whistler, constituted another avenue of third-party image construction for Saint-Gaudens in England. His friendship with Sargent was renewed when he moved to Paris in 1897, and, as evidenced earlier, Sargent was Saint-Gaudens’s entrée to British society. But the principle interaction between the two artists in the late 1890s was a work-based one. Sargent took advantage of Saint-Gaudens’s proximity to tap his expertise for ‘The Dogma of Redemption’ (1890-1916), part of a mural cycle on the development of Western religious thought for the Boston Public Library. Saint-Gaudens encouraged Sargent to make his nine-foot multi-figured crucifixion in high relief and offered frequent technical guidance. Further, in 1899, when he was in the frenzied final stages of completing the Sherman Monument, he dispatched his trusted technician Gaëtan Ardisson to London to help Sargent enlarge and patinate the plaster. Later that year, Saint-Gaudens reported to his niece: Sargent has “done a masterpiece.” Sargent also relied on Saint-Gaudens to oversee the casting of several reduced bronze casts in Paris, one of which he requested that the sculptor keep for himself as a souvenir (fig. 5).

In November 1897, Saint-Gaudens met Whistler and found the notorious eccentric a delightful conversationalist, “much more human than I imagined him to be.” At the same moment London’s newest alternative art establishment, the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, was founded, with Whistler serving as its first president until his death in 1903. Being global in name and practice, the International Society soon nominated distinguished artists abroad to honorary foreign membership. Whistler’s invitation to Saint-Gaudens and Frederick MacMonnies, and their subsequent election in February 1898, ensured that the leading American sculptors were represented.

Saint-Gaudens participated in just one International Society exhibition—the first,
friendship in Britain were the prevailing factor. Spearheaded by Whistler's biographer, the American-born artist Joseph Pennell, with the cooperation of Saint-Gaudens's widow Augusta, the display included nineteen busts, statuettes, and reliefs in bronze and plaster. By several accounts, including Augusta Saint-Gaudens's, the selection was too small to be representative. The London critics were unkind: the Art Journal opined: "Augustus Saint-Gaudens is not seen as the master sculptor he is held to be in America"; and the Morning Post remarked: "Clever, ingenious though the American 'Gunter in marble' may be, he does not come into the sheeifold of art." 10 Compared to the glowing critical reception in the United States and in Paris, this was among the most substantively damning criticism that Saint-Gaudens ever received.

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While Saint-Gaudens was embraced by England's cultural elite, it is fair to say he made no great inroads there as a sculptor. Within a limited inner circle, he was a personality riding on considerable artistic reputation, the best sculptor that the United States had to offer. He was elected to the Royal Academy, the highest honor England conferred on its artists. So in one sense, Saint-Gaudens 'made it' in the eyes of the establishment. Yet, on the other hand, he was virtually unknown by the public and had no private patrons there who collected his work. He attracted almost no critical attention when his sculptures exhibited. If the intent of Saint-Gaudens's friends had been to get his work before the larger British public, whether that effort succeeded is certainly debatable.


7 Saint-Gaudens to Colvin, July 18, 1904 (draft), Saint-Gaudens Papers, Dartmouth College.


which opened in May 1898. He sent four portrait reliefs—including The Children of Jacob R. Schiff (fig. 6), which was commissioned in 1884 by Englishman Sir Ernest Casell in honor of his boyhood friend Schiff. Saint-Gaudens traveled to London to see the exhibition and it was during this trip that Sargent held the dinner in the sculptor's honor. However, any interest Saint-Gaudens had in the International Society was permanently diverted first by his activities in Paris, and later by his return to America in 1900.

In 1909, the International Society memorialized Saint-Gaudens in the form of an exhibition within its ninth annual exhibition. It is ironic that it was London, not Paris that served as the one international venue for the posthumous lionizing of this American sculptor, but once again ties of
HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW ACQUISITIONS AT THE PARK

Several interesting new acquisitions entered the park collection this year. They are all objects that help tell a story about the Saint-Gaudens family or the Cornish Colony.

Dr. Henry Duffy, Curator SGNHS

Plaster Bust of Anne Dunn
By Frances Grimes

The park purchased a plaster bust of Anne Dunn by Frances Grimes from a Cornish Colony collection this summer. Frances Grimes was one of the most relied upon assistants of Augustus Saint-Gaudens in his later years. She was an artist of great skill and sensitivity in her own right, and this portrait bust of a local person is a fine example of her individual style. Dated 1930, the work helps to tell the broader story of the Colony after the death of Augustus Saint-Gaudens in 1907.

The park’s exhibition of 1907 Gold Coinage was helped this year by the gift of a 2009 reissue of the 1907 Ultra High Relief Twenty Dollar Coin made by the U.S. Mint. This slightly smaller version of the original gold coin provides a wonderful addition to the collection, and will help the visitors understand Saint-Gaudens’s achievement in coin design.

Two works of Paul St. Gaudens entered the collection this year. One is a unique item – a turquoise-glazed sink made as a special gift from Paul St. Gaudens to the Huttligs, close friends of his in Florida, with whom he maintained a life-long correspondence. For a utilitarian object, it is a technically advanced piece. The second object, purchased for the park through the assistance of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, is a plate with an African style mask design. Dated 1940, this expresses the new interest in non-western cultures that began during the twentieth century.

African-style Ceramic Plate
By Paul St. Gaudens

The piece helps expand the story of the Saint-Gaudens family of artists, showing how Paul, the nephew of Augustus, brought a new artistic vision to the classical style of his parents Louis and Annetta St. Gaudens, and the work of his uncle Augustus.
The park and the Memorial had much to celebrate this year; 2010 marked the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Cornish Colony of artists and the Memorial completed the donation of Blow-Me-Down Farm to the park. These two events were the focus of a public celebration at Blow-Me-Down Farm in July. After several weeks of work beautifying the grounds and cleaning out the hay-barn, a big tent and bandstand were installed and Blow-Me-Down Farm was ready for its public debut. The Heritage Brass Ensemble entertained a crowd of more than 700 visitors. At a ceremony between concert sets, Saint-Gaudens Memorial President Byron Bell handed over the ceremonial key to Blow-Me-Down Farm to National Park Service Regional Director Dennis Reidenbach. A representative from Senator Jeanne Shaheen’s office also shared a commemorative proclamation from the Senator. The day’s events were extremely successful. Visitors enjoyed the opportunity to explore the farm, see the interior of the hay barn, and view historic exhibitions and re-enactments in the barn and the dance hall. Ice cream and baked goods provided by Walpole Creamery and Stone Arch Bakery were a big hit on the hot afternoon.

Over Labor Day weekend, Saint-Gaudens NHS also hosted its first ever “Star Party” in partnership with the Springfield Telescope Makers of the Stellafane Observatory in Springfield, Vermont. Though the urban centers of the eastern seaboard make the northeast one of the most light-polluted areas of the United States, the area around Saint-Gaudens NHS is fortunate to have clear, dark night skies. The Springfield Telescope Makers brought nearly a dozen telescopes, many of them crafted by hand, to the park and more than 70 people came out to the park after dark.
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www.sgnhs.org

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filling the park’s auditorium to standing-room-only capacity. Visitors heard a presentation on the night sky and then headed out to the telescopes to get a glimpse of galaxies, nebulae, star clusters and the planets Jupiter and Uranus.

Finally, on National Public Lands Day, Saint-Gaudens NHS hosted the annual Sculptural Visions event.

More than 300 people visited the park on a gorgeous autumn Saturday and enjoyed meeting a variety of artists and discussing their works with them. This year, the park hosted a wood carver, a stone carver, two metal workers, a paper caster, a bas relief sculptor, and a gilder. Two bronze pours were demonstrated over the course of the day and a fire organ was played throughout the event. Younger visitors also had the chance to make their own clay sculptures, fashion sculptures out of found objects, and create a plaster cast of their hands.

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 Interior, National Park Service

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