Dear Friends,

This season, amid all of the other events — contemporary exhibitions, concerts, lectures and education, sculpture workshops and Sculptural Visions, there has been particular celebration of “The “Puritan” (officially the Deacon Samuel Chapin Monument). Completed 125 years ago, this is one of Saint-Gaudens’ most iconic sculptures.

Banners of the “Puritan” graced the park; a new book, In Homage to Worthy Ancestors: The Puritan/The Pilgrim was completed; and to mark this event a book talk and signing by three of the authors was held in July. The first-page article here provides an overview of these important works from the book’s introduction.

Publication of another noteworthy book, The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris, which features a section on Saint-Gaudens, was celebrated with a talk and book-signing at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author David McCullough. (see p. 7)

Looking ahead, plans are in the works to re-design the interior of the New Gallery, where a plaster version of the “Puritan”, slightly re-worked after 1900, is exhibited. This will help improve sight lines to the monument so that the viewers can better appreciate the artistry of this masterful work.

The Puritan & The Pilgrim

Adapted from the Introduction to the new book, In Homage to Worthy Ancestors: The “puritan” / The Pilgrim

By Henry J. Duffy Curator, Saint-Gaudens NHS

One of my enduring memories from childhood is seeing a large photograph of Saint-Gaudens’ “Puritan” sculpture in my classroom as the iconic image of the early settlers of New England.
The powerful pose of this striding figure, enveloped in a flowing cape and holding a Bible in one hand and a heavy cudgel in the other, expressed the zeal of the early Colonial settlers who would one day lead an extraordinary revolt against the ways of Europe in favor of a new democratic ideal.

The idea of the new book was borne out of a meeting with Sarah Chapin Langham, Executive Director of the Laurence Levine Charitable Fund, in New York City, at the opening of the retrospective exhibition of Augustus Saint-Gaudens at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.\(^1\) From that introduction, came the project to devote significant new research to discovering the story of how this sculpture came to be. There are really three stories to tell: the first two are about the “Puritan” in Springfield and the Pilgrim in Philadelphia.*

In creating the “Puritan” Saint-Gaudens’ created not just a personal commission, but a striking image of how the young nation saw itself.

They are similar, but really different icons — one the tale of a city and a family, and the other the more generalized iconography of the American State being formulated at the turn of the Twentieth century as President Theodore Roosevelt, among others, strove to create a new, more powerful public face of America as a politically strong and morally upright nation.

The third story is about the reductions produced by Saint-Gaudens for sale. The sculptor saw this as a source of income, but because Saint-Gaudens was the man he was, these small sculptures became works of art in themselves. He never made simple mechanical reductions of his large works – each edition was a separate, smaller work.

In these works, Saint-Gaudens voiced the spirit of patriotism newly emerging as the country began to find its way on the world stage. In creating the “Puritan” for the Chapin family in Springfield, the sculptor created not just a personal commission, but a striking image of how the young nation saw itself. The commission was unusual as well in that the Chapin family was an equal partner in the

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creation of this monument to Deacon Samuel Chapin, one of the earliest settlers of the city of Springfield, in western Massachusetts.

Not much is known of the historical figure of Samuel Chapin. He was born in England, came to the Massachusetts Colony around 1635, and settled in Roxbury. His link to Springfield came in 1642-43, when he brought his family west to join the settlement of Agawam founded by William Pynchon in 1636. Chapin’s public role as a founder of what would become Springfield comes with his appointment as a Selectman or magistrate in 1652. He died in November, 1675 shortly after an attack by neighboring Native Americans who burned the town. Saint-Gaudens’ sculpture of Deacon Chapin represented a family and a city.

The Civil War monuments of Saint-Gaudens often come to mind when we think of his work, but it was the “Puritan” sculpture that stayed in the artist’s studio from the moment of its creation in 1887 until his death. The piece was exhibited time and again, in America and Europe, and it quickly took on iconic status.

By the 1880s Augustus Saint-Gaudens was well-established as an artist of note. Important and innovative monuments such as the Farragut in New York City and Lincoln: The Man (called “Standing Lincoln”) in Chicago brought new life to American sculpture. Personally, and professionally Saint-Gaudens seemed set on a course of success and well-being.

In this atmosphere, he accepted a commission from the Chapin family to produce a monument to Deacon Samuel Chapin, a seventeenth-century immigrant from England who had followed his faith to the New World. Like so many of his commissions this one came through what we would call “word of mouth”. Saint-Gaudens and his wife Augusta had

("Puritan” continued on page 4)
known the Chapins since his earliest
days in New York. One of his first portrait
reliefs was of Emelia Ward Chapin
(1842-1922), wife of Chester W. Chapin, Jr.
This relief was made in 1879, when
Saint-Gaudens was still living primarily
in Paris, working on the Farragut.
Two years later, Saint-Gaudens followed
with a bust in plaster (later in marble)
cut by himself and his brother Louis St.
Gaudens, of Emelia’s father-in-law,
Chester W. Chapin, Sr. It was this bust
that would serve as a model for the face
of the Deacon Samuel Chapin Monument.
The Chapin family would play an extraor-
dinary role in the completion and dedica-
tion of the monument. It was, from the
start, a family piece. Saint-Gaudens
called Chester Chapin, Jr. his friend. The
father, a Massachusetts Congressman
and railroad developer, asked Saint-
Gaudens to honor his
ancestor Samuel Chapin.
His own bust was used
as a model for the face,
since no one knew what
the Deacon looked like.
Saint-Gaudens wanted
from the beginning to
depict the strength of
Chapin through the fig-
ure. For this, he used a Dutch model
named Van Orten, a tall, heavy-set man
of imposing physical strength and size.

The details of costume came to him from
the women of the Chapin family, who
looked through old books and prints for
details. They helped create the costume
worn by the model.

Saint-Gaudens’ photographer DeWitt
Ward recorded some of the early clay
sketches for the “Puritan”². In them, we
see the characteristic appearance of the
model Van Orten, solid, heavy features
and a stocky build. He sits or stands with
a ponderous quality that speaks of determination and stolid faith. We see Saint-Gaudens experimenting with what the model should hold – a short stick or a cane. In some he holds a cape, carelessly and a bit awkwardly at his side. These first poses are overly detailed in costume and expression. It was only near the end of the creative process that the simplified shapes we know today emerged. The pose of a simple stride forward, holding a massive bible and a knotty stick give purpose to the figure. And the enveloping hat and cape give purpose to the figure. And the sense of opening up from enclosure to light.

In the small clay sketches one can see Saint-Gaudens experimenting with other poses such as a seated figure, a man standing at a lectern, a deer standing next to the man, or a dog curled up at this feet. The cape appears in a few early sketches, once on the man’s shoulders, several times held bunched in his arm. The hat came, according to a posthumous story printed in the newspaper, from William Merritt Chase, who had left over from a masquerade. Saint-Gaudens always liked more interesting drapery on figures. Modern clothing, especially men’s clothing, he found pedestrian and boring. He could not make it sparkle in a relief or figure. The early Colonial dress could be more interesting, and that is likely the reason that he first came to the hat and cape in the “Puritan”. But they are also elements that work visually and compositionally. Without them the figure, already large and imposing, would be heavy. With those elements, the figure achieves a grace and lightness that seems to make the monument move.

The piece was exhibited so often that it became known as the iconic American image of the “Puritan”.

The sculptor Philip Martiny assisted Saint-Gaudens with the “Puritan”. He had met Saint-Gaudens early, while working on the Cornelius Vanderbilt house in New York. He was also French, and had an exceptional facility in carving wood. He could bring lightness and volume and texture to the material. It says something about Saint-Gaudens’ goal for the piece that he chose Martiny to help him. Perhaps he felt that this was the man to provide the detail and crispness to the costume and figure to prevent it from being ponderous.

As always, Saint-Gaudens was unsatisfied with the final bronze, and took the opportunity to make adjustments to it soon after it was unveiled in 1887, when he returned to Paris. He took the plaster of the “Puritan” with him where a young art student photographed him and his plaster workers in front of the newly formed cast. The piece was exhibited successfully in the Salon of 1898, receiving a medal, and in 1900 was placed outside the Grand Palais during the Exposition Universelle. To make it water-resistant, an ingenious metallic finish was devised that gives the piece the look of aged bronze.

The piece was exhibited so often – constantly after its dedication in Springfield – that it became known as the iconic American image of the “Puritan”. Very quickly Saint-Gaudens added it to the works that he created in reduced form. Casts were sold to private and public collections, including schools.

In 1902, Saint-Gaudens was asked by The New England Society of Pennsylvania to create a new sculpture destined for Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, but first to be exhibited outside City Hall. The Society, which included city leaders and members of President Roosevelt’s Administration (the chairman was James M. Beck, Assistant Attorney General) initially asked for a replica of the “Puritan”, but Saint-Gaudens took the opportunity to recreate...
In June, Jim Percoco, history teacher from West Springfield High School in Springfield, Virginia, was inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, Kansas.

Percoco has written extensively about Saint-Gaudens, including the well-received *Summers with Lincoln: Looking for the Man in the Monuments*. He has used examples of Saint-Gaudens’ work in his classroom for more than two decades and authored the Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan for the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site. Percoco and his students appeared in the extended version of the film, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens: Master of American Sculpture*, which was shown on PBS.

As part of a year-long exhibit in the National Teachers Hall of Fame Museum, items related to Percoco’s teaching are on display including a copy of the film and images of Percoco and his students at works of art by Saint-Gaudens with text explaining Percoco’s passion for and use of Saint-Gaudens in his classroom. In his formal induction Percoco invoked the memory and legacy of Saint-Gaudens in shaping his style of instruction and the Saint-Gaudens motto that has guided his teaching: “You can do anything you please; it’s the way that a thing is done that makes a difference.”

Jim Percoco with his exhibition at the Teachers Hall of Fame Museum.
A crowd of 500 people listened to the two-time Pulitzer Prize winning author describe his own journey in exploring the effect of the city of Paris, France, on American artists, authors, doctors and others. From the pivotal visit of Samuel Morse (who found the inspiration for the telegraph in Paris) to the later visits of Mary Cassatt and Robert Henri in the early twentieth century, American artists were drawn to the bustling city of culture on the Seine. Augustus Saint-Gaudens figures large in the book. He went to Paris as a young boy, dragging his suitcase up the long Champs Elysées in 1867, bewildered by the dazzling spectacle before him. He was educated at the École des Beaux-Arts, the first American to be admitted to the school in sculpture. As a newly-married artist in 1877 he and his bride Augusta Homer Saint-Gaudens returned to Paris to work on his first important commission The Farragut Monument. Still later, he would make numerous trips to Paris, becoming an established and important artist and cultural icon himself.

After the talk, Mr. McCullough signed books and chatted with many of the attendees. It was a delightful day that introduced many people to the park for the first time.
Exciting New Acquisition: The Scrapbooks of Henry Hering and Elsie Ward

The park was recently presented with the gift of two scrapbooks made by husband and wife Henry Hering and Elsie Ward, both assistants to Augustus Saint-Gaudens. The gift, by the artists’ grand-nieces Mrs. Noel Leisentritt and Mrs. Lois Moore, includes photographs, letters, and other memorabilia. To be featured in an upcoming Newsletter, the new archive gives us a better look at the studio of Augustus Saint-Gaudens and the artist’s home, “Aspet”.

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.