

friends OF SAINT-GAUDENS

CORNISH | NEW HAMPSHIRE | SPRING / SUMMER 2010

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FROM THE MEMORIAL AND THE SITE

DEAR FRIENDS,

The 2010 season marks a very exciting moment in the life of the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site for its Friends and supporters.

This is the 125th anniversary of the Cornish Colony, which flourished from 1885, when Saint-Gaudens and his family first sojourned here, until after the First World War. The first exhibition of the season in the Picture Gallery will highlight works by Cornish Colony artists that are included in the Site's collection.

This is also the year in which ownership of Blow-Me-Down Farm is being transferred from the Saint-Gaudens Memorial to the National Park Service to become part of Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site. The farm – which played a key role in the life of the Colony – was purchased in 1998 to ensure its preservation and with the intention that it would eventually become part of the historic site.

And, this will be the Site's first season with new Superintendent, Rick Kendall. Rick brings a wealth of experience and a passion for this wonderful place.

(*'Dear Friends'* continued on page 8)

BLOW-ME-DOWN FARM

Although the land comprising what is now Blow-Me-Down Farm has a long and rich history, relatively recent events have prompted its purchase and preservation by the Saint-Gaudens Memorial and transfer to Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site.

The most significant legacy of Blow-Me-Down Farm is its connection with the late 19th – early 20th century Cornish Colony; and the catalyst for its acquisition came from Mary Beaman Lagercrantz, granddaughter of Charles C. Beaman. Mary loved Blow-Me-Down Farm and her fond wish was to see it preserved, as much as possible, as it was during her time there.



Early owners

Cornish was officially established in 1763, when Governor Benning Wentworth granted a 6-square mile tract of land on the east side of the Connecticut River to Rev. Samuel McClintock of Greenland, New Hampshire, and 69 others. These were mostly well-to-do citizens from the provincial capital of Portsmouth who let land-hungry “plain people” settle these acres in return for a profit from their labors.

Moses Chase (1729-1799), his brothers Samuel and Caleb and their families, were among the first settlers in Cornish in 1765, and in 1772 Moses petitioned for and received 500 acres in Cornish – including what is now Blow-Me-Down Farm – from the New Hampshire General Assembly. It was here that he established a farm and built what is believed to be the first wood-framed house in Cornish.

(*"Blow-Me-Down Farm..."* continued on page 2)

Chase was a Cornish Selectman at the 1st town meeting held in 1767; he fought in the Revolutionary War; and later became a member of the New Hampshire Executive Council, which shares executive authority with the governor. Upon Moses's death in 1799, his son **Caleb Chase** became owner of the 350-acre farm by buying out his brothers's & sisters's interests. Beginning in 1805, **Abijah Porter** ran an inn at the farm and by 1835 he was owner of the property, which he sold to **Reuben Davis** in that same year. Davis built a saw mill on Blow-Me-Down Brook near where a later owner, Charles Beaman, built the Mill and Dam that still exist today.



Charles C. Beaman

Chester Pike, grandson of Revolutionary War Captain Sylvanus Bryant and Moses Chase's daughter, purchased this farm in 1868. He built a new house on the property that same year,

using the former house built by Moses Chase as a barn. Pike's house burned in 1875. **Charles Beaman** purchased the property from Pike in 1882, for \$8,000.

The Beamans

Charles Cotesworth Beaman was born in Houlton, Maine, in 1840, son of a Congregational minister who served as pastor for several churches throughout New England. Beaman worked briefly in Washington, DC, as a secretary to Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts



Mary Beaman standing at left, looking at the Casino and Dance Hall, circa 1928.

before moving to New York City in 1867 to practice law. In 1872 he was appointed Solicitor for the U.S. before the Arbitration Tribunal in Geneva, the tribunal which determined that Britain owed the US \$15.5 million in gold for damages caused by the British-built ship Alabama during the Civil War. In Geneva, Beaman met and became friends with the William M. Evarts family. Evarts was well known, having served as U.S. Secretary of State, U.S Attorney General and as a Senator from New York, and his family had close ties to Windsor, Vermont. Beaman married Hettie Evarts, one of the Evarts' 12 children, in Windsor in 1874. The couple lived in New York but frequently traveled to Windsor and in 1892 purchased the Blow-Me-Down Farm property from Chester Pike.

Development of Blow-Me-Down Farm

Beaman called this property "Blowmedown" and right away began building his "**Blowmedown**" cottage, which was completed in 1884. The

name Blow-Me-Down originated with the 1763 surveyors of the Wentworth land grant and "Blow-Me-Down Brook" is labeled on the 1763 Plan of Cornish.

In August of 1884, the Beamans held an old fashioned **barn-raising**, with 75 people participating in the event. At one time the large red barn seen today was even more massive, containing several additions that no longer exist.

Beaman continually improved his Blow-Me-Down Farm, adding several buildings and houses including the Chauncey Cottage in 1890. He developed orchards and gardens and had considerable livestock, including Jersey milk cows, which were the farm's specialty.

In 1884 he also bought the land to the east that is now Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, including the old inn known as **Huggins' Folly**. He leased this property to Augustus Saint-Gaudens and his family, who came to Cornish for the first time in 1885 at Beaman's invitation. Beaman continued to buy properties in Cornish, later selling many of these properties to friends and artists

In the 1770's the house built on the land that became Blow-Me-Down Farm had what is believed to be the first wood-framed house built in Cornish.

attracted to the area, leading to the organic creation of the Cornish Colony.

In 1887, Beaman had Joseph Wells of the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White remodel the original Moses Chase house. It was moved to the northwest and redesigned and called the **Casino**. It was essentially used as a summer house for parties and featured a large billiard table and an addition with ten-pin bowling lanes.

That same year he also reached an agreement with the Town of Cornish for the construction of the Stone Arch Bridge across Blow-Me-Down Brook. Beaman paid the cost difference to construct it out of stone rather than wood.



Helen Beaman and her uncle and aunt enjoying billiards in the Casino, after 1888.



Wedding at Blowmedown House, circa 1890.

The bridge was designed by Wells and completed in 1888. He also built a stone dam upstream of the stone arch bridge and had Wells begin the design for the **Blow-Me-Down Mill**, which was completed in 1891, after Wells' death, by architect George Fletcher Babb, a friend of Saint-Gaudens. In

addition to grinding grain from Blow-Me-Down Farm and selling corn, oats, bran, and mixed feed, the Mill offered grinding services to close to 100 local farmers and families. By 1910, it was the last operating mill in the area.

In 1892 Beaman had the Mill outfitted to produce electricity for his house, the Casino and the barn, and on September 17, 1892, the Beamans held their first party in the Casino lighted with electric lamps.

The 20th Century

Beaman died in December 1900 in New York City, after which time agricultural activities on the farm were cut back and the cattle and livestock sold. Though the family continued to spend summers in Cornish, his widow began renting the various buildings on the property to friends and relatives, as well as to new families joining the artist's community. Son **William Beaman** inherited much of the Beaman lands following the death of his mother in 1917, including Blow-Me-Down Farm. His sisters inherited other adjacent lands, most of which William later purchased from them.

("Blow-Me-Down Farm..." continued on page 6)

THE *Cornish Colony*: HIGHLIGHTS

The opening exhibition for the 2010 season highlights the park's collection of art by members of the Cornish Colony.



Augusta Homer Saint-Gaudens (1848-1926) *Pico, Azores*, Oil on canvas 12" x 16", 1875 (SAGA 4764).

An informal gathering of artists, performers, writers, musicians and public figures, the Cornish Colony began in 1885 with the arrival of Augustus and Augusta Saint-Gaudens in New Hampshire.

Initially composed of the sculptor's friends from New York, the Colony eventually widened to include a broad spectrum of the cultural life of New York. Unlike other art colonies that were created as a school for a particular style, the Cornish Colony never had a planned program or set of rules. It was simply a group of like-minded people who enjoyed the striking natural beauty of

the Connecticut River valley as an escape from the heat and congestion of the City. The only caveat amongst the members was that no one interrupted another artist's work until after 4:00 in the afternoon. But visits were encouraged after that time. Then, as now, a network of carriage trails and footpaths connected the various houses through the surrounding woodland and fields.

The Colony was a working environment, but there were also entertainments. Private theatricals, poetry readings, garden parties, and dinners were held.



(Left) Frances C. Lyons Houston (1851-1906), *Summer*, Oil on canvas, 76" x 44 1/4", 1905 (SAGA 4402), Gift of Sara Rue Fairchild.



Edith Prellwitz (1865-1944) *Aspet Garden*, Oil on canvas, 19" x 23", 1898 (SAGA 1567).

Augustus Saint-Gaudens had a passion for sport, and built a toboggan run in the winter, and later a golf course that is believed to have been the first irrigated course in the United States.

While visual artists were the mainstay of the Colony, performers and musicians also came. Composer Arthur Whiting was a prominent member of the group,

During the Woodrow Wilson presidency the Cornish Colony became the Summer White House, visited regularly by Edith Wilson, her daughters, and the President.



Maxfield Parrish (1870 - 1966), Stephen Parrish and Friends at "Northcote", photograph, 3 5/8" x 4 5/8", ca. 1890, (SAGA 1819), Gift of Maxfield Parrish, Jr.



Maxfield Parrish (1870-1966), *Memento*, Watercolor and ink on envelope, 4 1/2" x 5 1/2", ca. 1902 (SAGA 1602), Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Saint-Gaudens II.

and actress Ethel Barrymore and dancer Isadora Duncan visited as well.

In the early twentieth century, First Lady Edith Wilson and her daughters came, bringing President Woodrow Wilson up as well. Cornish became the Summer

White House during those years, before Edith's death brought President Wilson's visits to a close.

Modern artists such as William and Marguerite Zorach, Paulanship, and others visited later, extending the Colony through the years of the First World War, and almost until the Second World War. By then the style of American classicism espoused by the first Colonists had grown out of favor, and with it the Cornish Colony faded into history.

It is primarily due to the energy of Augusta Saint-Gaudens that her and Augustus's home, "Aspet," was preserved after his death in 1907, until the present time. Founding the Saint-Gaudens Memorial in 1919, she kept the spirit of the Cornish Colony alive.

Primarily due to the energy of Augusta Saint-Gaudens the Saint-Gaudens Memorial was founded in 1919 to maintain and preserve "Aspet" and in doing so she kept the spirit of the Cornish Colony alive.

After Augusta died in 1926 the Saint-Gaudens Memorial continued to maintain the property at "Aspet" until 1965 when the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site was formed. The exhibition and the accompanying catalogue are part of the park's celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the Colony. Drawn exclusively from the park's collection, the thirty-six objects include paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculpture and ceramics.

Many of these works will be shown for the first time – including three paintings



Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851-1927), *Portrait of Augusta H. Saint-Gaudens*, Oil on canvas, 18 1/4" x 17 1/4" x 2 1/2" (frame), 1886 (SAGA 1607) Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Saint-Gaudens II.

by Augusta Homer Saint-Gaudens, the sculptor's wife; and two life-sized portraits by Frances Houston. Additionally, a striking Autochrome by Arnold Genthe, an early print by Maxfield Parrish, and a drawing by Louise Mears are among works that are seldom seen. Connections will be seen between several of the artists – a drawing by Kenyon Cox of a medal by Louis St. Gaudens is an example.

Although the collections of sculpture by Augustus Saint-Gaudens are well known, the park also has smaller holdings of works by his family and other Cornish Colony members. This exhibition allows highlights from those works to be shown. The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue.

(“Blow-Me-Down Farm...” continued from page 3)



Eric Lagercrantz

In 1926 a fire destroyed the main house at Blow-Me-Down Farm and the next year William Beaman had the former “Casino” renovated as the main dwelling. The bowling alley was moved and made into the present-day dance hall.

A gift from Eric Lagerantz in memory of his late wife Mary made possible the purchase of Blow-Me-Down Farm by the Saint-Gaudens Memorial.

William Beaman died in 1945. Blow-Me-Down Farm remained in the family until 1950, when it was sold to **James Campbell Lewis**. In 1968, following Lewis’s death, the property was subdivided into a number of smaller parcels.

One parcel, the 40-acre **Blow-Me-Down Mill**, was purchased at auction by the National Park Foundation in 1971. It was held until 1984 when it became part of the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site.

Another parcel, Blow-Me-Down Farm, was purchased in 1972 by **Helen and Bernard Stearns**, who renamed it, “Just a Plain Farm.” The property was sold to **Don and Vera MacLeay** in 1976.

In 1998, a gift from Eric Lagercrantz in memory of his late wife Mary Beaman Lagercrantz, (daughter of William Beaman), made possible the purchase of Blow-Me-Down Farm by the Saint-Gaudens Memorial. In an early communication to the Memorial in 1996, Mr. Lagercrantz proposed that: *The Memorial would hold the property until such time as the National Park Service could acquire the lands and buildings from the Memorial, for use in conjunction with the future plans and development of the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site...*

He said further: *This is especially interesting to me as the widower of Mary Beaman Lagercrantz. I know that if my late wife were alive today, that this would have been her fond wish.*”



View of Mt. Ascutney from Blow-Me-Down Farm.

With thanks to Steve Walasewicz. Information compiled from This Land of Pure Delight: Charles C. Beaman and Blowmedown Farm by John H. Dryfhout Cornish, NH; 2000).

EXHIBITIONS IN THE PICTURE GALLERY

SAINT-GAUDENS
MEMORIAL
CORNISH, NH

*The Cornish Colony:
Highlights of the Collection*
Dr. Henry Duffy, Curator

MAY 29 – JULY 6

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Wild and Wary Ways
2009 Saint-Gaudens Fellow
Rachel Hayes

JULY 10 – AUGUST 3

.....

Two Northeast
Shona Macdonald
AUGUST 7 – SEPTEMBER 1

.....

*Civil War Drawings
from the Becker Collection*
Judy Bookbinderand Sheila
Gallagher, Curators
SEPTEMBER 4 – OCTOBER 11



125 Years OF THE *Cornish Colony*
BLOW-ME-DOWN CELEBRATION

All are invited to a community event
SUNDAY, JULY 11, 2010
Noon to 4:30pm
at Blow-Me-Down Farm, Cornish, NH
Bring your picnic and blanket

Music
Heritage
Brass
Ensemble

Speakers

**Blowmedown
Exhibition**

**Farmers
Market**

THIS EVENT IS FREE TO THE PUBLIC

**BLOW-ME-DOWN
FARM BECOMES
PART OF THE
SAINT-GAUDENS
NATIONAL
HISTORIC SITE**

The Trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, a non-profit operating partner of the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, are very pleased to announce a gift of the almost — 43-acre Blow-Me-Down Farm (across Route 12A from the Site on the Connecticut River) to the historic site.

Once the home of Charles Beaman — who first invited Saint-Gaudens and others to come to Cornish, New Hampshire — the property has a rich history relating to the Cornish Colony, whose 125th anniversary is being celebrated this year.

A generous donation in 1998 enabled the Memorial to purchase Blow-Me-Down Farm, preserving it from inappropriate development while holding the property in trust for eventual inclusion as part of the historic site. A small portion of the land (5.2 acres at the north end) has been subdivided and is currently for sale. Private development of this parcel will benefit the Town of Cornish by keeping it on the tax rolls.

It has long been a desire of both the Site and the Memorial to expand the park's educational and interpretative programs beyond the life and work of Saint-Gaudens to include more focus on Cornish Colony. Blow-Me-Down Farm provides a perfect place for the eventual development of these and other programs.

Become a friend OF SAINT-GAUDENS

www.sgnhs.org

All members receive a twice-yearly newsletter and announcements of exhibits, lectures, concerts & other programs.

- Individual \$ 50
Family \$ 75
Supporter \$ 100
Sponsor \$ 25
Bronze Patron \$ 500
Gilded Benefactor \$ 1,000

I would like a FREE annual park pass to the Saint-Gaudens Site. (\$25 value. This part of your membership fee is not tax deductible.)

CHECK VISA MASTERCARD

CARD #

EXP DATE

SIGNATURE

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

I do not wish to join at this time but would like to make a contribution.

Please send me more information

Gifts are tax-deductible

Please make checks payable to: THE SAINT-GAUDENS MEMORIAL Mail Membership forms and checks to: Saint-Gaudens Memorial 34 South Highland Avenue Ossining, NY 10562

SGNHS SUPERINTENDENT RICK KENDALL

At the end of 2009, Rick Kendall was named by the National Park Service as Superintendent of the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site



Rick replaces BJ Dunn, who moved in October to the position of deputy superintendent at Independence National Historical Park in

Philadelphia and Acting Superintendent Lewis Rogers who served for several months in the fall and winter.

Rick brings experience from a variety of Park Service sites including Olympic National Park, and Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, WA; Death Valley National Park, CA; and the USS Arizona Memorial, HI. He also has experience serving the National Park Service in Washington, DC: as the NPS Bevinetto Congressional Fellow, which included work as a member of the legislative staff on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources; and as the liaison between the NPS Director and the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, working on national issues for the NPS and the Department of the Interior.

Memorial President, Byron Bell said, "Rick has already proven himself to be an excellent leader and partner who is open, collaborative and inclusive. He has a thoughtful and creative approach to caring for the park, as well as to looking toward its future. The park is clearly in good hands."

Rick has a BA in archaeology from the University of Georgia and an MA in archaeology from the University of Arizona. Rick and his family — wife Laura, and two children, ages 6 and 3 — are living in Quechee while they look for a permanent home in the area.

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 Memorial 914 - 944 -1608 tel & fax SGMemorial@aol.com www.sgnhs.org

Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site

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

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('Dear Friends...' continued from page 1)

More details can be found inside this issue. It is our hope that you and other members of the community will come and celebrate all of these events with us on Sunday, July 11th at Blow-Me-Down Farm.

Sincerely,

Byron Bell PRESIDENT Saint-Gaudens Memorial