

# **Augustus Saint-Gaudens and the Cornish Colony**



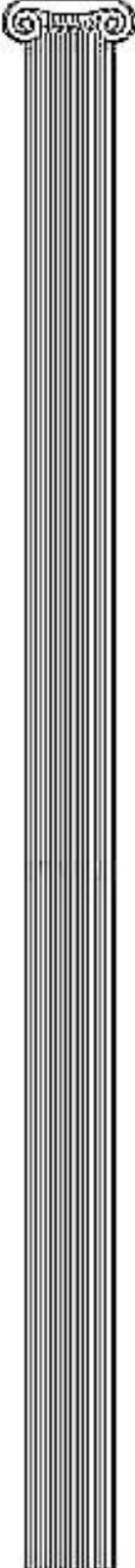
## **Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site**

A Curriculum for Grades 7-12

Prepared by

**Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site**

**Cornish, New Hampshire**



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Carol Bennett, Principal of the Alstead Attendance Area, NH

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The Interpretive Staff at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site

# INTRODUCTION

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To the Teacher:

The National Park Service has developed this curriculum to introduce students to the remarkable Cornish Colony and the more than 75 sculptors, painters, writers, musicians, and public figures who lived and worked in the Cornish hills during one of the most exciting periods in American history. These artists were the "tastemakers" of their day and the intellectual leaders of the period known as the "Gilded Age."

These curriculum materials fall within "Era #6" (1870-1900) of the National Standards for History. Because the members of the Colony represent so many different media, the material presented is entirely interdisciplinary and includes content areas in History, Art History, Language Arts, Math, Science, and Studio Art. (See "The Gilded Age" diagram which follows.) We will engage students through readings, discussions, visual exercises, and hands-on activities appropriate to grades 7-12 that will provide experiential learning and understanding of the period. Each lesson will be linked to specific concepts and skills to aid teachers in compliance with State Curriculum Frameworks and Standards.

- ♦ **Unit 1 examines the "Gilded Age" and provides a historic context.**
- ♦ **Unit 2 takes a closer look at the Cornish Colony.**
- ♦ **Unit 3 takes an in-depth study of sculpture.**

**Each unit includes:**

- ♦ A reading followed by interpretive questions
- ♦ Follow-up activities
- ♦ Glossary words (appear in bold type)

We hope you and your students will enjoy the information presented in this curriculum. A **video**, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens, an American Original* [28 min.] may be used as an introduction to the work of the sculptor and to the subsequent development and understanding of the Cornish Colony. Call 603-675-2175 x100 to check one material and have it mailed to you.

When you use any part or the entire curriculum, please help us by completing the evaluation form (this form can be found at [www.nps.gov/saga/forteachers/curriculummaterials.htm](http://www.nps.gov/saga/forteachers/curriculummaterials.htm)). Download the form, fill it in, and then email it back to us as an attachment. We welcome your comments and suggestions.



**Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site  
Division of Interpretation**

**139 Saint -Gaudens Road  
Cornish, NH, 03745**

**Web: [www.nps.gov/saga](http://www.nps.gov/saga)  
Telephone: (603) 675-2175 x 100**

In this curriculum, you will find the following content areas pertinent to the Gilded Age.

### Art

- Read and discuss sculpture
- Understand the role of the arts in supporting the “Gilded Age”
- Learn about some of the significant Cornish Colony Artists
- Recreate popular forms of amusement from the era like charades and “tableaux vivants”
- Work in sculptural techniques through hands-on activities

### Language Arts

- Complete readings and questions in each of the three different units either individually or in class discussion
- Sharpen observation skills as you analyze, draw conclusions and express what you see
- Read independently from a list of selected books about the era included in the curriculum

### Social History

- Describe the “Gilded Age” including the conditions which produced it
- Explain the phenomenon of world expositions

## The Gilded Age 1885-1915

### Math

- Learn the mathematical proportions of the human head
- Plan and draw to scale a landscape/garden design using geometric principles

### Science

- Discuss inventions and technological advances that shaped 19th century life
- Understand the chemical process of patination

### Music

- Listen to popular music typical of the era like band music, music hall songs, and ragtime

# Educational Frameworks and Standards:

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It is the hope of Saint-Gaudens NHS that the needs and interests of you and your students are met in regard to our curriculum materials. National and the State of New Hampshire Educational Frameworks and Standards are listed for each unit on its individual page.

## Other Resources of Interest:

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The teacher and school librarian can try to make the following resources available. An asterisk indicates those materials included in the curriculum package.



### Books:

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Belfer, Lauren, *City of Light*.

- A novel which takes place in 1901 Buffalo, NY, during the Pan-American Exposition.

Colby, Virginia and James Atkinson, *Footprints of the Past: Images of Cornish, NH and the Cornish Colony*.\*

- Concise biographies of the entire Cornish Colony.

Doctorow, E.L., *Ragtime*.

- A novel depicting life in the Gilded Age; made into a Broadway musical.

Dryfhout, John, *The Work of Augustus Saint-Gaudens*.

Finney, Jack, *Time and Again*.

- A novel, whose time-warp theme takes readers into late 19th-century New York City.

McCauley, David, *The Way Things Work*.

- Although primarily a children's book, it describes and diagrams the technology behind many mechanical functions.

Musée des Augustins, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens 1848-1907: A Master of American Sculpture*.

- The latest scholarship on the sculptor, heavily illustrated exhibition catalog.

Norris, Frank, *The Octopus*.

- This is a story about the development of the railroad industry.

Smithsonian Institution Press, *Smithsonian Book of Invention*.

- A look at inventions ranging from safety pins to satellites and their effects on society.

Tharp, Louise Hall, *Saint-Gaudens and the Gilded Age*. Little, Brown & Co., 1969.

- A biography of the sculptor.

Wharton, Edith, *The Age of Innocence* and *The House of Mirth*.

- Novels about New York society of the Gilded Age; Wharton won the 1921 Pulitzer prize for *The Age of Innocence*.

University of New Hampshire and Keene State College, *A Circle of Friends: Art Colonies of Cornish and Dublin*. \*

- Documents the visual artists of the colonies.

Van Ryzin, Robert R., *Twisted Tails: Sifted Fact, Fantasy and Fiction from U.S. Coin History*, Krause Publications, 1995.

- An anecdotal history of United States coinage, including information about the twenty-dollar gold piece by Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

Wilkinson, Burke, *The Life and Works of Augustus Saint-Gaudens*.

- The definitive biography of the sculptor.



## Films:

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*America 1900*, produced by WGBH in its *American Experience* series, 1998.

- Documents life at the turn of the century.
- For an on-line teacher's guide see: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/1900/tguide>.

*American Visions*, narrated by Robert Hughes for PBS, 1997.

- Eight hour miniseries telling the history of America through its art.

*Augustus Saint-Gaudens: An American Original*, Our Town Films, 1986.

- The orientation video for the site. Close captioning available.

*The Medal Maker: Master Sculptor Laura Gardin Fraser*, produced by Mike Craven, 1997.

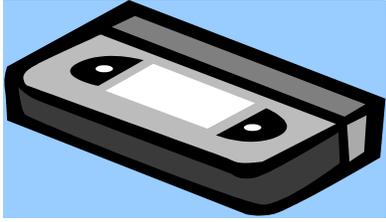
- Details the complete process of medallic art.

*Public Sculpture: America's Legacy*, from the series *America Past and Present* by the Smithsonian Institute, Robert Pierce Productions, 1994.

- Discusses the many roles of public sculpture in the United States.

*Wax Blood/Bronze Skin*, produced by Spofford Films, 1994.

- Explains the lost wax process of bronze casting using the Farragut Monument.



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# Introduction to the Video

Viewing the video, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens, An American Original* [28 min.], will give your students an introduction to the foremost sculptor of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Selected examples of his sculpture will help to underscore the lasting significance of his work in American cultural history today. Explain to your students that a second objective of the video is to examine the growth of the Cornish Colony, a summer retreat of artists that developed in rural Cornish, NH around this dynamic and highly respected artist. Teachers are encouraged to read through the discussion questions before showing the video to students.

*Supports NH Social Studies Curriculum Standard 17♦ Knowledge of chronology and significance of community and NH history, p.27 and NH Framework for the Arts Curriculum Standard 6: especially describe how the visual arts are used in the world around us and how they are part of our daily life, p.42.*

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## Discussion Questions:

**After watching the video, discuss with your class some of the main events of Saint-Gaudens' life and the significance of his work.**

**1) Examine Saint-Gaudens' education, keeping in mind that his formal schooling ended at age thirteen (about grade 8 today).**

- His tradesmen parents encouraged his artistic talents and apprenticed him to a cameo cutter. Consider why this early apprenticeship was so important to his later success as a relief sculptor.
- Saint-Gaudens took drawing classes at the Cooper Union and the National Academy of Design in New York City after work.
- Saint-Gaudens became a student at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Speculate as to why it was a typical American practice for artists to study in Europe and why aspiring artists felt they should study in Europe.
  - America was still a young nation and looked to Europe for cultural leadership.
  - A European education could validate an artist's worth and reputation.
  - Americans could measure their talents alongside European students.
- What is significant about Saint-Gaudens' time spent in Rome?
  - He discovered the beauty of Classical art and adopted the classical aesthetic in his work (the search for "the ideal," beauty, perfection, strength, and balance).

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**2) List some of Saint-Gaudens' most important public monuments (Admiral Farragut, General Sherman, Abraham Lincoln, and Colonel Robert Gould Shaw Memorials). Why were these important to his career?**

- These sculptures represent Civil War heroes who were symbols of victory and pride in a newly united country following the Civil War
- Consider why people create monuments:
  - To remind the public of a historic event.
  - To create a civic memory and shared pride in the Nation's accomplishments.
  - To honor a leader and/or commemorate a hero or event.

- To teach a shared set of values from a collective experience. In this sense, art is used to promote civic virtues.
- Can you think of some modern monuments that serve similar functions? (Iwo Jima, the Vietnam Memorial, the F.D.R. Memorial, the Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, etc.). Have students contribute their own ideas.

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**3) Why was the video entitled “...An American Original?” Why was his sculpture so popular and what was unique about his style?**

- He injected naturalism into his sculptures' poses and gestures and richly textured surfaces in an effort to portray contemporary dress and factual accuracy. The public could identify with his figures.
- He strove for a new psychological expressiveness in his portraits in an effort to achieve realism.
- He was a perfectionist and reworked many of his sculptures until he was completely satisfied (he worked over 14 years on the Shaw Memorial). His dedication to craftsmanship was unparalleled.
- He was modern in his use of the written word, which he incorporated into his overall design.
- He was modern in his concern for the landscape and architectural settings of his public sculpture. He collaborated on site plans with the most important architects of his day. He worked on over 20 projects with the architect Stanford White (1853-1906).

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**4) Why did Saint-Gaudens choose Cornish for his summer home? Why did a colony of artists develop in this rural New Hampshire community?**

- Charles Beaman, Saint-Gaudens' good friend and lawyer, first invited the sculptor to Cornish in 1885. Beaman's law practice brought many important associations with leading New Yorkers.
- Saint-Gaudens chose Cornish as a retreat from the noise, dirt, and distractions of New York City. He valued the quiet, the isolation, and beauty of the environment.
- Saint-Gaudens' reputation as a skilled sculptor with an energetic personality brought other artists to Cornish. The beauty of the countryside and the rural, affordable life-style attracted many people as a summer retreat. The Colony eventually included visual artists (sculptors and painters), then literary artists (novelists, poets, journalists, editors), musicians, actors, and finally politicians, public statesmen, and patrons of the arts.

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**5) Why do you think artists often feel the need to escape the pressures of daily life?**

- Art is often a reflective process. Artists find renewal in a retreat, which allows them time for the creative spirit to develop.