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# " ASPET "

## SAINT-GAUDENS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

### HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT - PART II

#### Historical Data



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# " ASPET "

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## SAINT-GAUDENS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT - PART II

Historical Data

By  
JOHN W. BOND

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DENVER  
LIBRARY



DIVISION OF HISTORY

Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

February 20, 1969





## Preface

The purpose of this study is to provide the structural history of "Aspet," the Cornish, New Hampshire, home of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the leading American sculptor of the nineteenth century. Moving to Cornish in the summer of 1885, Saint-Gaudens rented the country place of Charles C. Beaman so that he could escape from the hot and crowded New York City. He liked the country place so well that he made considerable improvements to it and bought it from Beaman in 1891.

The noted sculptor used "Aspet" as his summer residence and place of work from 1885 to 1900, except for the three years from 1897 to 1900 when he was in Paris. From 1900 to the time of his death in 1907, Saint-Gaudens lived there year round.

Because Saint-Gaudens' life and work at "Aspet" are covered comprehensively in John W. Bond, Augustus Saint-Gaudens: The Man and His Art, this study is limited to the structural history of "Aspet". No bibliography is included in this study because it would only duplicate the extensive bibliography in the above study.

## Chapter I

### A Home in the Country

During the summer of 1885, the prominent American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens discovered a "new world"--a home in the country. As he said, he had been a person of streets and sidewalks all of his life, but he always had enjoyed the out-of-doors. As a young cameo-cutter apprentice he had delighted in the hunting trips with his employer, Avet, and during his student days in Paris and Rome, he took long walking trips for the exposure to nature they afforded.

Having achieved an income which could afford him the luxury of a summer place, considered essential by those with sufficient means, and after much urging from Mrs. Saint-Gaudens, Augustus began shopping, in the spring of 1885, for a place to escape the heat of New York City during the summer. His good friend, Charles C. Beaman, a prominent lawyer with the New York firm of Evarts, Choates, and Beaman, had a house in the Cornish hills of New Hampshire which he was confident would provide a perfect place for the sculptor and his family to spend their summers. Located approximately 200 miles north of New York City, Beaman's place offered a cool haven where the sculptor could work or relax.

Beaman, hoping the Saint-Gaudenses would purchase one of his farms, invited them to Cornish to look over the former



William Mercer property as a prospective "Shangri-la." Saint-Gaudens was not impressed when he first saw "Huggins Folly." This century-old house supposedly had served as a tavern on the stage road between Windsor, Vermont and Meriden, New Hampshire. The building appeared "so forbidding and relentless" on that dark, rainy day in April 1885 that one "might have imagined a skeleton half hanging out of the window, shrieking and dangling in the gale, with the sound of clanking bones."<sup>1</sup> The city-bred sculptor was all for fleeing at once and returning to his beloved sidewalks of New York, whereupon Mrs. Saint-Gaudens, seeing the future of sunny days, detained him until Mr. Beaman agreed to rent the house for a low price for as long as Saint-Gaudens wished.

Beaman had offered to sell the house to Saint-Gaudens for five hundred dollars, the price he had paid for it in July 1884, when he bought it from William W. Mercer.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Beaman, knowing that Saint-Gaudens was working on a statue of Lincoln, persuasively told him that there were "plenty of Lincoln-shaped men up there." Thus, with Mrs. Saint-Gaudens' interest and Beaman's powerful persuasion, Augustus relented

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1. Homer Saint-Gaudens, ed., The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, (2 vols., New York, 1913), 1, p. 312.

2. Ibid., 1, 311, and Sullivan County (New Hampshire) Land Records, Deed Book 119, p. 403.

and agreed to rent the place for the summer of 1885. The Saint-Gaudens' permanent residence at that time was a rented place at 22 Washington Place, New York City.<sup>3</sup>

Augustus' first summer and part of the fall at Cornish were a productive season. He enjoyed work at Cornish so intensely that he waited until November to return to New York. In the one-hundred-year-old barn he made sketches for his standing "Lincoln" and for a seated "Lincoln" (his original idea). He also worked on the monument to Dr. Henry Bellows for the Church of All Souls, New York; and completed the bas-relief of the children of Jacob H. Schiff. Assisting him in his work that summer and fall were Frederick MacMonnies, Philip Martiny, and Louis Saint-Gaudens.<sup>4</sup>

Work on the standing "Lincoln" was Saint-Gaudens' principal concern during his first summer in Cornish. After all, hadn't Beaman assured him that there were Lincoln-shaped men in the vicinity of Cornish? Just across the Connecticut River, Saint-Gaudens found his Lincoln model--"An angular giant, exactly of Lincoln's height."<sup>5</sup>

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3. Alice W. Shurcliff, ed., Lively Days: Some Memoirs of Margaret Homer Shurcliff, (Taipei, 1965), p. 87. Cited hereafter as Shurcliff, Lively Days.

4. Saint-Gaudens, Reminiscences, 2, p. 6.

5. Frederick L. Bullard, Lincoln in Marble and Bronze (New Brunswick, 1952), p. 80; Frank E. Stevens, "The Story of a Statue," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, April 1, 1931, pp. 20-25.



In the production of the standing "Lincoln," Saint-Gaudens discovered that country living was conducive to productivity and contentment. The peace and quiet of the country allowed him to work long, undisturbed hours. As time passed, he became increasingly interested in buying "Huggins Folly," the retreat he almost rejected in 1885. The sculptor noted that he had done such a lot of work, and was so enchanted with the life and scenery there, that he told Mr. Beaman that, if his original offer to sell the place for \$500 was still open, he would purchase it. Much to the sculptor's dismay, Beaman replied that he preferred not to sell the place as it had developed in a way far beyond his expectations, and because he thought it his duty to reserve it for his children.

Beaman proposed that Saint-Gaudens continue to rent as long as he wished under the same liberal conditions. But the sculptor, who had become so attracted to the house and the life there that he had spent considerable money on fixing up the place, was not inclined to take lightly Beaman's new proposal. Furthermore, many of Saint-Gaudens' friends had bought homes in the surrounding areas, making the place he was renting even more desirable to buy. Finally, Saint-Gaudens explained to Beaman that he could not continue to rent, and that he must sell to him, or he would look elsewhere for "green fields and pastures new." The result was that for a certain amount of

money and a bronze portrait of Mr. Beaman by Saint-Gaudens, the sculptor was able to buy "Huggins Folly."<sup>6</sup>

On August 8, 1891, six years after first coming to Cornish, Saint-Gaudens took possession of his own place in the country. Twenty-two acres of the former William Mercer property were transferred to Saint-Gaudens on the above date.<sup>7</sup> In addition to acquiring a new owner, the house received a new name--"Aspet"--after the ancestral home town of Augustus' father, in southern France.

Ownership of the property on which "Aspet" was located has been traced to 1824 when Samuel Huggins sold it to Austin Tyler and John Gove, Jr.<sup>8</sup> When Tyler and Gove sold the property to Walter and John Mercer on April 20, 1839, it consisted of fifty-one acres.<sup>9</sup> Because the Mercer family had extensive land holdings around Cornish it is difficult to establish precisely which member of the large family owned which piece of property. Land records indicate that on January 24, 1865, John Mercer transferred to Melinda Mercer the Samuel Huggins

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6. Saint-Gaudens, Reminiscences, 1, p. 316.

7. Sullivan County (New Hampshire) Land Records, Deed Book, 133, p. 230.

8. Sullivan County Land Records, Deed Book 26, p. 100. Sullivan County was organized from Cheshire County in 1827.

9. Ibid.



farm and another tract of ten acres with a woolen factory.<sup>10</sup> On the same day, George and William W. Mercer and Elizabeth Barker transferred to John Mercer one-half of the Huggins farm and all of the ten acre tract with the woolen factory.<sup>11</sup> In March 1866 William Mercer granted to Emma Mercer the "undivided  $\frac{1}{2}$  Samuel Huggins farm, and 10 acres with woolen factory."<sup>12</sup>

While it is not entirely clear as to what member of the Mercer family owned "Aspet" from 1839 and 1884, its ownership as of 1884 is fairly certain. Sullivan County land records indicate that W. Mercer transferred sixty-two acres to William W. Mercer on July 21, 1884.<sup>13</sup> On the same day William W. Mercer sold fifty-one acres of the former Huggins place to Charles C. Beaman for \$2500.<sup>14</sup> On August 19, 1891, Beaman

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10. Sullivan County Land Records, Deed Book 82, p. 426.

11. Sullivan County Land Records, Deed Book 82, p. 427.

12. Sullivan County Land Records, Deed Book 85, p. 188.

13. It is conceivable that W. Mercer is Walter Mercer, one of the purchasers of the property in 1839. Sullivan County Land Records, Deed Book 116, p. 421. The deed noted that the sixty-two acres and buildings were known as the Huggins Place. Ten acres and buildings known as the Sir Walter and John Mercer place on Blow-Me-Down Brook were acquired by William W. Mercer from W. Mercer on the same date.

14. Sullivan County Land Records, Deed Book 119, p. 403. The deed book erroneously listed the name of the grantor as Wm. W. Messer, possibly the result of misinterpretation of the handwriting on the original recording.

and his wife Hettie sold twenty-two of the fifty-one acres to the Saint-Gaudenses. Beaman reserved for himself and his heirs a right of way on the wagon road over the west part of the land from the highway (running past the Saint-Gaudens' house) to Beaman property lying north and west.<sup>15</sup>

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15. Sullivan County Land Records, Deed Book 133, p. 230. The metes and bounds were described inaccurately in this deed. They were corrected in October 1968 in a new deed from Hettie S. Beaman, Charles Beaman's widow. See Deed Book 172, p. 65.



## Chapter II

### Structural Changes Made by Saint-Gaudens

When Augustus Saint-Gaudens came to Cornish for the first time on a rainy, gloomy day in April 1885, he was not impressed with the place his friend Charles C. Beaman offered to sell him for five hundred dollars. Insisting that he was not wealthy enough to spend that amount of money, Saint-Gaudens rejected his friend's offer. Mrs. Saint-Gaudens, however, visualized that the place would be much more appealing during the sunny days and encouraged her husband to rent it for a nominal price.<sup>1</sup>

The sculptor's early rejection of the Cornish house changed to strong approval after he had had a chance to do some remodeling. While there were features of the house that he disliked, Augustus greatly appreciated its setting, with its spectacular view of majestic Mount Ascutney in nearby Vermont. The basic house Saint-Gaudens liked, but "it stood out bleak, gaunt, austere, and forbidding," he said, "without a trace of charm." The "puritanical austerity" of the house irritated Saint-Gaudens. He wanted the house to smile, he told his architect friend, George Fletcher Babb.<sup>2</sup>

Though essentially well built, the house, according to

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1. Saint-Gaudens, Reminiscences, 1, p. 312.

2. Ibid., p. 316.

Saint-Gaudens' own account, was at least one hundred years old when he acquired it. Because of age alone, the house undoubtedly was in need of structural rehabilitation, and because of the new occupants' more sophisticated tastes there was need for a general overhaul of the interior of the house. If the house had served as a tavern, as it reputedly did for many years, numerous changes would have been required to convert it into a full-fledged residence.

The sculptor disliked particularly the manner in which the house seemed to rise abruptly from the barren field. As photograph number two clearly illustrates, the house had indeed a cold, austere, and forbidding appearance before Saint-Gaudens began altering it. The starkness of the house could be remedied, the sculptor thought, by lowering and spreading the building, "holding it down to the ground, so to speak." This harmonious relationship between the house and the grounds was achieved by adding porches to the front and west ends of the house and eventually developing a wide terrace around three sides of the house.<sup>3</sup>

Photograph number two shows the house as it looked before the summer of 1885. Possibly this is the way it looked when Saint-Gaudens saw it for the first time in April 1885.

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3. Ibid.



This photograph shows the building as very unadorned; it had very little trim, was without shutters, and had doors opening directly into the field. At each of the two gable ends there were two "rabbit ear" chimneys which seem to have been carefully planned as an architectural feature. The roof was wooden shingled with a single raking parapet between each chimney and the cornice and a square parapet between the two chimneys. The dominant feature on the front of the house was the attractive topped front door with a full-length sidelight on each side and a semicircular arched fanlight at the top. A similar fanlight was above the door opening onto the lawn at the west side of the building. This type of fanlight is characteristic of the late Georgian style of architecture, the inception of which is usually considered to be about 1750.<sup>4</sup> One writer has noted that "the Georgian doorways remained square-topped till 1756 or so, when semicircular arches were used to surmount them." "Elliptical fanlights," the same author says, "were not used until post-Revolutionary days."<sup>5</sup>

The fact that the fanlight over the front door to Saint-

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4. Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period (New York, 1952), p. 316.

5. Henry Lionel Williams and Ottalie K. Williams, Old American Houses And How to Restore Them (Garden City, 1946), p. 54.

Gaudens' house is semicircular rather than elliptical tends to support a pre-Revolution construction date. But the presence of the sidelights suggests a post-Revolution construction, because "there were no sidelights around the doors till after the Revolution."<sup>6</sup> The type of windows, however, are indicative of the pre-Revolution era. Photograph number two shows the windows in "Aspet" with twenty-four panes of glass in each, twelve in each sash, except the two windows on each of the first and second floors on the southeast corner of the front of the house. Because there were no curtains on the windows at the time the photograph was made, it is possible to see through one of these windows to a window on the south end of the first floor, east side. The latter window, likewise, had four large panes (two over two), rather than the twelve over twelve small panes in the remainder of the house. Houses built a decade after the Revolution usually had only twelve lights to a window, six in each sash, while those built before the Revolution commonly had from eighteen to twenty-four "4x6" panes to the window.<sup>7</sup>

The presence of pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary features does not necessarily date the construction of the

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 53

house in either of the periods, since architectural styles which had their greatest popularity in a given period were often used in isolated instances long after the peak period. Considering, however, that the basic house is late Georgian in architectural style and that it has both pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary features, one could say with reasonable assurance that construction of the basic house pre-dated 1800.

Apparently structural changes were made to the house about the time the Saint-Gaudenses spent their first summer there. The sculptor's discouragement with the house because of the bleak appearance it presented obviously brought about some hasty improvements. Photograph number three which Homer Saint-Gaudens titled "House in Cornish, the First Summer," in The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens shows the house looking much less austere than it must have looked to Saint-Gaudens on that rainy day in April 1885. Shutters had been added to windows and a porch had been built in front of the main doorway. The seven steps leading from the front lawn to the edge of the porch indicate the manner in which the ground sloped away from the house. The date which Homer Saint-Gaudens gave to this particular photograph is supported by documentary evidence. For instance, it is known that Frederick MacMonnies, who is pictured in the photograph, worked for Saint-Gaudens during the summer of 1885, but was in Paris during several succeeding summers. Also, Homer Saint-Gaudens, the small child



in the center of the photograph, has the appearance of a five year old, which he would have been in 1885.

Photograph number four, which appears to have been made about 1885, shows a porch having been added to the west end of the house. In contrast to the veranda added later, this porch did not extend the entire width of the house. Instead, it extended from the inside of the two end windows. The porch had a three-sided hipped roof, coming to a point just beneath the second floor center window. As in the case of the porch on the front of the house, the porch on the west end of the house had several steps leading from the ground up to the porch level.

The 1885 date for this photograph has been arrived at principally by comparing one of the figures in the right center. The figure on the left of the two figures is obviously Homer Saint-Gaudens. General appearance, including clothing, hair, and age of the figure on the left, seems to be identical to that of Homer Saint-Gaudens in photograph number two.

Close examination of the north side of the house as shown in photograph number four discloses a window arrangement on the second floor which is different from today's arrangement. This photograph shows the windows on the second floor as being in two groups of two windows each in the northeast and northwest second floor rooms. Originally, a relatively

large space was between the two window groupings. Today there is only one window facing north on the northeast end of the house, while there are three windows grouped close together on the northwest end. The window in the center of the north side as of today opens off the stairway. The relocation of this window suggests that previously the stairway may have been in another location.

This same photograph reveals at least one significant feature that was altered by Saint-Gaudens. A door was located approximately in the center of the north side. This door would have been directly opposite the main doorway on the front of the house. A door arrangement such as this suggests the possibility of a center hall which ran the full width of the house. That this was the case, is substantiated by Helen W. Henderson in her article "An Impression of Cornish," which appeared in The Lamp in 1903. Regarding the early history of the building, the author noted: "During its career as a tavern it contained four square rooms on the first floor, opening upon a large hall." The upstairs, Henderson wrote, contained a dance hall that ran the length and breadth of the house, which was fitted with a continuous wall-bench around its four sides.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Helen W. Henderson, "An Impression of Cornish," The Lamp, October 1903, pp. 186-67.

The most striking architectural change Saint-Gaudens made to "Aspet" was the addition of the piazza on the west end of the house. This feature, called a piazza by the Saint-Gaudenses, is often referred to as a porch, veranda, or pergola. The piazza with its classic balustrade and fluted Ionic columns was designed and constructed by the New York architectural firm of Babb, Cook, and Willard. The senior member of the firm, George Fletcher Babb, being a close friend of the sculptor, took personal charge of this alteration of the Saint-Gaudens' house.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the piazza, the alteration included adding a single dormer to both the front and rear of the house, changing the gable ends of the house from a raked parapet to a stepped parapet (see photograph number five).

Although I have been unable to document the date of the addition of a glass enclosed porch on the east end of the house, it is highly probable that it was added at the same time as the piazza. For one thing, it adds architectural balance to the front of the house. While the latter was an enclosed area, from the road it bore close resemblance to the open piazza on the west end of the house. Too, the Roman fence which was placed along the edge of the terrace on the

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9. Saint-Gaudens, Reminiscences, L, p. 316; Charles G. Baldwin, Stanford White (New York, 1931), p. 356; Ernest Peixotto, "A Saint-Gaudens Pilgrimage," Scribner's Magazine, 63, (April 1918), pp. 424-431.



west, front, and part of the rear, was repeated in character along the base of the east end of the enclosed porch and on the porch just off the kitchen on the east end of the house.

The date for the addition of the piazza and other features mentioned above has been fairly well established as late 1893 and the first half of 1894. A good source of information on the extensive remodeling of the house is a letter Mrs. Saint-Gaudens wrote her mother, Mrs. T. J. Homer. The letter is undated, but internal evidence points to 1893 or early 1894 as the date. In the letter, Mrs. Saint-Gaudens referred to "Gus" getting his Chicago money, and noted that "Gus says the Fair is a dream." She was obviously referring to the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1893, for which Saint-Gaudens was a major advisor for the sculpture work represented there. With specific reference to construction underway at "Aspet" at that time Mrs. Saint-Gaudens told her mother: "They are working on the new piazza, but have only the foundations. The columns we expect next week and then the carpenters will commence--It has been such a heavy job that the place is all cut up by the hauling."<sup>10</sup>

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10. Augusta Saint-Gaudens to Mrs. T. J. Homer, n.d., Saint-Gaudens Collection. Augusta mentioned in her letter that the wife of the Cornish artist, George de Forest Brush "had a baby yesterday morning." An unsuccessful attempt has been made to establish the birthdates of Brush's children: Alfred Paine, Gerome, Nancy Douglas, Tribbie, Georgia, Mary, Jane, and Thea. It

The best source, however, for the dating of the extensive alteration of "Aspet" is the Vermont Journal, Windsor, Vermont. On February 3, 1894, the Windsor paper called its readers' attention to the fact that "F. B. Waite and his force of carpenters have begun the work of remodeling Augustus St. Gaudens' house. It is to be almost entirely changed inside the brick walls." On June 9 the paper announced that the carpenters were nearly through at the Saint-Gaudens house.<sup>11</sup>

The most probable date for these major structural changes is 1894. It is a known fact that in 1894 the Saint-Gaudenses planted lombardy poplar trees at the four corners of the edge of the terrace.<sup>12</sup> If the trees had been planted at the time photograph number four was made (which shows the completed piazza), they were not tall enough to show in the photograph. The absence of the poplar trees and the presence of the piazza helps to establish that the piazza was completed before that time in 1894 when the poplar trees were planted. Lombardy

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was hoped that the birthdate of one of Brush's children would help to establish more firmly the date of construction of the piazza. An examination of the birth records of Sullivan County, New Hampshire, may reveal this information.

11. Vermont Journal, Windsor, Vermont, February 3, 1894; June 9, 1894. These references to the Vermont Journal were made possible through the courtesy of Mr. James Farley, Cornish, New Hampshire, who permitted Mr. Hugh Gurney, former historian at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, to examine his manuscript collection re the Cornish Colony.

12. Augusta Saint-Gaudens to Ellsworth Barry, May 2, 1894, personal check, Saint-Gaudens Collection, Dartmouth College.



poplars are a very fast growing tree. Good evidence of this is the fact that the lombardy poplars the Saint-Gaudenses planted in 1894 had grown so rapidly that by 1903 the poplars at the northwest and southwest corners of the terrace were ten inches in diameter and forty-five feet high.<sup>13</sup>

Not only did the piazza add significantly to the architectural embellishment of the sculptor's Cornish home, it was a very enjoyable and practical expansion of the living area of the house. The Saint-Gaudenses often ate their meals on the piazza and sometimes slept out there. The late Barry Faulkner, an eminent muralist in his own right, recalled with pleasure his memories of his visits to "Aspet" and his work there for the "Saint" as the sculptor was affectionately called. Faulkner recalled that summer mornings at "Aspet" were a delight: "The Saint rose at six and wrote letters, and I often took a swim in the brook north of the place, the shock of whose icy waters was delicious in the summer heat. Then came breakfast on the wide veranda, with perhaps Thomas Dewing or Norman Hapgood dropping in for a chat."<sup>14</sup>

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13. John W. Bond, Historical Base Map, Detail of the Principal Portion of Augustus Saint-Gaudens Estate, "Augustus Saint-Gaudens: The Man and His Art" (Washington, D. C., National Park Service report, 1967). This map was based upon the "Topographic Plan of Property of Augustus Saint-Gaudens" surveyed by French and Bryant, Engineers, Boston and Brookline, Massachusetts, December 1903. Original blueprint is in the Saint-Gaudens Collection, Dartmouth College.

14. Barry Faulkner, "Autobiography," unpublished manuscript, Saint-Gaudens Collection.



One of Saint-Gaudens' most able assistants, James Earle Fraser, remembered with nostalgia that "many nights with the stars shining brightly over [Mount] Ascutney, Saint-Gaudens and I sat on the long wide veranda looking across the [Connecticut] River at the evening light on the mountain. He having now been close to death and having always been a mystic would wonder at the mystery of life and the Universe."<sup>15</sup> The view which Saint-Gaudens had from the wide piazza is one of the most beautiful to be found anywhere along the Connecticut River. Looking across the Connecticut, the sculptor saw, as can be seen today, 3000 foot Mount Ascutney, just south of Windsor, Vermont. Fraser described Mount Ascutney as "a beautiful mountain, which from morning to evening changes its color with the lights of the day--dark blue, grey, somber and gay, and across it, great cloud shadows pass and bend into the valleys and over the ridges--a never ending source of delight."<sup>16</sup>

While the Saint-Gaudens' house before the extensive alterations were made was a stately structure, it was one of the most impressive of the houses in Cornish after architect

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15. James Earle Fraser, "Autobiography," unpublished manuscript, Saint-Gaudens Collection.

16. Ibid.

George Fletcher Babb completed his work on it. When Barry Faulkner first visited "Aspet" during the summer of 1900 with his Harvard classmate, Homer Saint-Gaudens, he was unprepared, he said, "for the ordered beauty of the Saint-Gaudens place, the long clipped hedges, the fine brick house with lofty thorn acacia shading it, the lombardy poplars at the corners of the terrace and the handsome veranda with ionic columns." To young Faulkner, "Aspet" presented "a new and delightfully sophisticated world."<sup>17</sup> "I came out of the woods," Faulkner told this writer, "and came into that beautiful formality of the place."<sup>18</sup>

Saint-Gaudens, who had the reputation for constantly changing things, indicated in 1902 that he wanted to alter the house extensively. In writing to his old friend George Fletcher Babb, Saint-Gaudens said that he wanted to replace the roof with a red one and have three dormers on each the front and rear of the house. The stepped parapet gable he wanted replaced with a straight gable. Each gable would have one large rectangular window in the center with circular

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17. Faulkner, "Autobiography."

18. Personal Interview, Barry Faulkner, August 10, 1966, with author. In speaking of coming out of the woods, Faulkner was referring to the great difference in the appearance of "Aspet" and grounds and the primitive place of his relative, artist Abbot H. Thayer. Faulkner had spent some time at Thayer's place near Dublin, New Hampshire.

windows on each side. At the same time, Mrs. Saint-Gaudens wanted to add bay windows on the south side of the house both in the dining room and in the parlor. The bay windows would run up both stories.<sup>19</sup> These changes, obviously, were never made.

### Painting of the House

The sculptor's inclination to change things around "Aspet" did not restrict itself to structural alterations. While Mrs. Saint-Gaudens was away on one of her frequent trips abroad Augustus decided to paint the house white to match the piazza and the fence running along the edge of the terrace. According to Barry Faulkner, Saint-Gaudens made so many changes to the place because "You see the poor devil was always thinking of things to occupy his mind . . . to amuse his loneliness."<sup>20</sup>

The original house has been described by Frances Grimes as being "handsome red brick"<sup>21</sup> but close examination of photographs depicting the house before it was painted white suggests that the original house was natural brick rather than painted any particular color. Margaret Homer Shurcliff, a niece of Mrs. Saint-Gaudens, in writing her memoirs, Lively

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19. Saint-Gaudens, Reminiscences, 2, p. 240; Saint-Gaudens to George Fletcher Babb, October 2, 1902. Saint-Gaudens Collection, Dartmouth College.

20. Personal Interview, Barry Faulkner, Aug. 10, 1966, with author.

21. Frances Grimes, "Reminiscences," Saint-Gaudens Collection, Dartmouth College.



Days, recalled that her uncle had a passion for white, and that during one of her aunt's absences from "Aspet" the sculptor painted the house a glistening white.<sup>22</sup> It appears that the house was painted during the fall of 1903. In a letter to the sculptor on November 16, 1903, George Fletcher Babb told Saint-Gaudens, "You told me the last thing when you left the office that you would let me know immediately on reaching Cornish honestly how you like the white paint. Now honestly, why this unsaint-like evasion?"<sup>23</sup> This note from Babb suggests that he was instrumental in having the house painted white. It also indicates that it must have been a fairly lengthy time since the work had been accomplished; Babb appeared slightly provoked that Saint-Gaudens had not written him commenting on the new appearance of the house. Babb's letter corroborated Mrs. Shurcliff's statement that the house was painted during Mrs. Saint-Gaudens' absence, for it is known that she was in Paris at that time. In fact, "Gussie" was in Europe from early summer of 1903 until January 1904.<sup>24</sup>

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22. Alice W. Shurcliff, ed., Lively Days: Some Memoirs of Margaret Homer Shurcliff, (Taipei, 1965), p. 88.

23. George Fletcher Babb to Saint-Gaudens, November 16, 1903. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

24. Saint-Gaudens to Mrs. Saint-Gaudens, November 30, 1903. Saint-Gaudens Collection. In his November 30 letter, "Gus" told "Gussie": "I miss you very much Gussie but I am getting on all right and I hope you will stay over all you can if you are enjoying yourself."

Mrs. Saint-Gaudens was not greatly displeased with the house being white. Writing to Homer from Cornish on January 29, 1904, she expressed her feelings on the new appearance of "Aspet". "The house looks very well painted white," she said, "altho' I still feel that I prefer the brick but it is by no means spoiled."<sup>25</sup>

#### Addition of Sun Room off Mr. Saint-Gaudens' Bedroom

The date of construction of the sun room off the east end of Mr. Saint-Gaudens' bedroom is not known. It is known, however, that it was after 1903 and before 1907. Photograph number seven which was taken after the house was painted does not show this addition. This photograph could not have been taken before the summer of 1904 because mid-summer flowers, such as gladiolus, are blooming in front of the house. In Babb's letter, previously mentioned, we learn that Saint-Gaudens had not written the architect by November 16, 1903, regarding the white paint. It is not very likely that the house would have been painted in the early summer of 1903 and that Saint-Gaudens did not write his friend about how he liked it until November of that year. Barry Faulkner distinctly remembered that the bedroom on the southeast

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25. Augusta Saint-Gaudens to Homer Saint-Gaudens, January 20, 1904. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

26. See Jerry Shimoda, "Historic Structures Report, 'Aspet', Part I," pp. 21, 29 for photographs of the sun room.

end of the house was the sculptor's and that he would often sleep in the sunny room just off his bedroom, particularly after he became so very ill.<sup>27</sup> Since Faulkner so vividly remembered Saint-Gaudens' using the sun room, it is most likely that it was built during 1904, when so much construction was underway on the new studio. An additional reason for believing that it was added in 1904 was that Faulkner was at "Aspet" much of that summer working around the studio, painting statues and the reproduction of the Parthenon frieze on the Little Studio.

The new room was not only sunny, it was quite breezy. Three sets of floor to ceiling French doors on each the east and south sides opened to allow the crisp New England air to flow through the room. Cool air, sometimes even very cold air, was a delight for the sculptor. Sometimes he would sleep with his window partly open even when the outside temperature was as low as ten below zero.

#### Laundry Room

The semi-detached room just off the back porch is referred to as the old laundry. It is not known whether Saint-Gaudens added it or if he moved an existing structure to that site. Photograph number four shows a small building just to the rear and slightly to the east of the main building.

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27. Personal Interview with Barry Faulkner, August 12, 1966.



It is possible that this building was moved and became the laundry room. There is no documentary evidence, however, to positively support this.

Until recently this room was known as "the old laundry room." The Trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial Association reported at their meeting on July 12, 1958, that during the preceding year the old laundry had been renovated into a playroom at a cost of \$225. Almost exactly one year later the Trustees reported that "The old laundry room was made over into a room for the curator and his family."<sup>28</sup>

#### Bathrooms

At the time of Saint-Gaudens' death "Aspet" had three bathrooms. Barry Faulkner recalled that when he was doing some work for the sculptor during the summer of 1904 and was living in the house, he used the northwest room on the second floor as his bedroom and the bath at that end of the hall as his bath. He seemed to recall that there was another bath at the opposite, east, end of the second floor hall--between the individual bedrooms used by Mr. and Mrs. Saint-Gaudens. Mr. Faulkner did not remember if there was a bathroom on the third floor. In answer to my inquiry about the possibility of a bathroom on

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28. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees, Saint-Gaudens Memorial Association, July 12, 1958, and July 11, 1959.

the third floor, Mr. Faulkner replied: "I don't know, I never slept on the third floor."<sup>29</sup>

It is an established fact that Saint-Gaudens had a bathroom added in late 1904. Michael Stillman, the person who was supervising the construction of the large studio (to replace the one which burned in October 1904) wrote the sculptor on November 23:

Another point which I want to bring up is this, the plumbers must get into the attic of the house to put in the vent pipes from the new bath room; they must either cut a hole in the roof to get there or one in the ceiling inside of the house. Do you not think that the best thing to do would be to put in a permanent scuttle in the ceiling of the upper floor, about 3 feet by 3 feet square, which could be accessible by a step ladder, so that if fire were to break out there through defective chimneys, it could be got at?<sup>30</sup>

Work on the bathroom had been completed by late December. Mrs. Saint-Gaudens wrote her husband on the 29th that "the new bathroom works all right. The furnace in the house heats it all well."<sup>31</sup>

The bathroom added in November 1904 must have been the

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29. Personal Interview with Barry Faulkner, August 12, 1966.

30. Michael Stillman to Saint-Gaudens, November 23, 1904. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

31. Mrs. Saint-Gaudens to Saint-Gaudens, December 29, 1904. Saint-Gaudens Collection. In the same letter Mrs. Saint-Gaudens noted that "the new studio only drags. . . . Stillman has done his work on the new studio well but he has succeeded with his aggressive manner in antagonizing everyone but the carpenters on the place."

one for the servants' quarters on the third floor. When I asked Mrs. Martha Nelson Smith, a cook in the Saint-Gaudens house during 1903-04, if there was a bathroom on the third floor for the use of the servants, she replied: "No, there was no bath up there. That was on the second floor--the floor below."<sup>32</sup>

## Utilities

### Heating

When Saint-Gaudens moved into "Aspet" in 1885 the sole source of heat was the fireplace, of which there were seven--one in the dining room, one in each of the two parlors, and one in each of the four bedrooms on the second floor. It is highly likely that there was a large fireplace in the kitchen. Currently the east wall of the kitchen has the appearance of having had a fireplace that ran almost the entire width of the room.

The fireplaces throughout the house are quite shallow, apparently characteristic of houses of the same vintage as "Aspet." When I talked with Barry Faulkner about the shallowness of the fireplaces he commented that they were built that way so that most of the heat would be thrown out into the room rather than being wasted up the chimney. Faulkner recalled

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32. Personal Interview with Martha Nelson Smith, August 6, 1966.



that when he visited in the Saint-Gaudens home a maid would come into the bedrooms and light the fires.<sup>33</sup>

It appears that Saint-Gaudens was either constructing a new chimney or was repairing the flue of an existing fireplace in 1902. In answer to an inquiry Saint-Gaudens had made to his fellow sculptor Daniel Chester French, the latter wrote Saint-Gaudens giving him detailed instructions on how to construct fireplaces to make them draw better. French emphasized that the more shallow fireplaces seemed to draw better. French told his Cornish friend: "In building the fire-place [keep in mind] that smoke acts very much as water does . . . , that is, it spatters unless it has a chance to flow smoothly. I was very much interested to hear that you were building."<sup>34</sup>

Saint-Gaudens had some work done on chimneys in the fall of 1905. He even consulted the eminent architect Stanford White on his chimney problems. White wrote his good friend the sculptor: "I have just telegraphed you that John Whitley, 215 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, is the man to fix chimneys. He is all right, but nobody can be all right unless the flue is made the proper proportion to the area of the fireplace

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33. Personal Interview with Barry Faulkner, August 10, 1966.

34. Daniel Chester French to Saint-Gaudens, December 10, 1902. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

opening. That is, the flue should be one-fifteenth the area of the fireplace opening."<sup>35</sup>

It is not known just how long Saint-Gaudens used fireplaces exclusively for heat. It is probable that he installed a furnace in the fall of 1900, after his return from Europe and after he had decided to live at Cornish the year round. It is definitely known that there was a furnace in "Aspet" during the winter of 1903-04. In writing to "Gussie" who was on one of her frequent extensive trips, the sculptor noted on November 30, 1903: "The storm windows go up tomorrow altho we have not suffered from the need--in fact I'm thinking of sticking to wood in the furnace right along. The cold is steady now, 5 and 6 above zero."<sup>36</sup> This letter suggests that he probably used coal sometimes for fuel. A letter from Mrs. Saint-Gaudens to her son Homer indicates an extensive use of coal in the Cornish operation. In answer to her son's inquiry about using the horses and wagon for a trip, Mrs. Saint-Gaudens wrote: "We just had a car [freight car] load of coal in [at Windsor, Vermont] and they will be busy drawing that way into next week and there is a lot of cement then to be drawn so we can't use the work horses at all--so you will see that as your father must have one horse,

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35. Stanford White to Saint-Gaudens, October 12, 1905. Saint-Gaudens Collection. Saint-Gaudens wrote White on October 27 that Whitley had arrived on that date.

36. Saint-Gaudens to Mrs. Saint-Gaudens, November 30, 1903. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

the pair with one wagon is all that you can count on."<sup>37</sup>

It appears that very little work was done on the furnace after Saint-Gaudens' death. This is evidenced by the fact that Homer Saint-Gaudens wrote Mrs. W. B. [Juliana] Force, a member at that time of the Board of Trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, "The house has not been heated for forty years. Whether or not it would be safe to start the furnace is a matter for us trustees to decide. I doubt its feasibility."<sup>38</sup>

### Electricity

Certain references in the Saint-Gaudens Collection would lead one to believe that the Saint-Gaudenses had electricity as early as 1898. For example, in a letter Mrs. Saint-Gaudens wrote to Samuel Isham who was going to rent the house for the summer of 1898 she told Mr. Isham, a painter of some note, "I think you will find the house in good order. So far as I know the only essential lacking is electric bells and we did

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37. Mrs. Saint-Gaudens to Homer Saint-Gaudens, n.d., Saint-Gaudens Collection. Although the letter is undated its contents suggest that it was written after 1900. More likely it was written at a time when there was construction of a studio underway, considering that mention was made of a lot of cement being hauled.

38. Homer Saint-Gaudens to Mrs. W. B. Force, October 24, 1945. Saint-Gaudens Collection. Homer was in error in saying that the house had not been heated for forty years. But, his emphasis upon the length of time implies at least that the furnace had not been used a great deal since the time of his father's death.



not want them in that oldtime house."<sup>39</sup> Further research into the subject revealed that Mrs. Saint-Gaudens had to be referring to battery-operated bells. Account books which Mrs. Saint-Gaudens kept for purchases from the general store in Windsor, Vermont, operated by Dwight Tuxbury and Sons, showed numerous purchases of oil, lamps, or lamp accessories. The following such purchases were recorded for the period July 1896 to September 1902:<sup>40</sup>

July 3, 1896	-- 5 gals. oil	
August 4, "	-- 1 gal. oil	
September 1, 1896	-- 1 gal. oil	
September 10, 1896	-- 1 lamp wick	
November 8, 1901	-- 2 lamps	\$4.50
	2 chimneys	
December 9, 1901	-- 2 lamps	\$3.00
December 10, 1901	-- 2 chimneys	.20
	1 large lamp	\$3.50
December 13, 1901	-- 4 wicks	.04
	2 chimneys	.18
December 14, 1901	-- 3 lamps	\$10.50
January 2, 1902	-- 1 lamp globe	.05
January 3, 1902	-- 1 oil barrel	
February 7, 1902	-- 1 oil barrel	
March 14, 1902	-- 52 gallons of oil	\$5.20
September 9, 1902	-- 2 chimneys	.20

That the Saint-Gaudenses did not have electricity during the lifetime of Mr. Saint-Gaudens was further verified by Martha Nelson Smith and Barry Faulkner. Mrs. Smith vividly

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39. Mrs. Saint-Gaudens to Samuel Isham, May 30, 1898. Saint-Gaudens Collection. Mrs. Saint-Gaudens was in Paris with her husband at this time.

40. Account Books with Dwight Tuxbury and Sons, Windsor, Vermont. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

remembered that when she worked for the Saint-Gaudenses they had oil lamps for light and a wood burning stove for cooking.<sup>41</sup>

Especially valuable in establishing that "Aspet" did not have electricity prior to Saint-Gaudens' death was the interview the writer had with Mrs. Fannie Littell, a neighbor of the Saint-Gaudenses. Mrs. Littell thought it may have been as late as 1926, the date of Mrs. Saint-Gaudens' death, or later when she and her neighbors had their houses wired for electricity. "We were later in having it than any of the other people around here," Mrs. Littell commented, "because they [the electric power company] wouldn't come up this road until the Saint-Gaudens place went in. And Homer wasn't ready to do that. So that we were rather later."<sup>42</sup> Mrs. Littell recalled that when she and her husband, Philip Littell, literature and drama critic for the New Republic, moved into their house in 1917, "we didn't have electricity. We had lamps for quite a while."<sup>43</sup>

#### Telephone

Information in the Saint-Gaudens Collection indicates

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41. Personal Interview with Martha Nelson Smith, August 6, 1966.

42. Personal Interview with Mrs. Fannie Littell, with author, Cornish, New Hampshire, August 6, 1966.

43. Ibid.

that the Saint-Gaudenses had a telephone installed in their house on September 30, 1900, by the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company. The telephone number was 1299951, Windsor, Vermont, exchange. Transmitter number was 811311 and the bell number 529372. The subscription rate was \$11.33 a year.<sup>44</sup>

### Water

The principal sources of water for "Aspet" for many years were Little and Big Beaman springs located across the road from the Saint-Gaudens residence.<sup>45</sup> Saint-Gaudens secured ownership of the Little Beaman Spring on September 25, 1897. For the sum of "\$1.00 and other good and valuable considerations" C. C. Beaman sold Saint-Gaudens a 1500 sq. ft. tract of land (25 ft. wide and 60 ft. long). This tract of land, located about 900 feet south of Saint-Gaudens' property, was part of the acreage Beaman had bought from William Mercer. The agreement not only transferred ownership of the land on which the reservoir was located, it gave the sculptor the right to lay pipe over Beaman's land. The agreement was in keeping with a long-standing practice. The Saint-Gaudens

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44. Telephone Bill, Saint-Gaudens Collection.

45. See John W. Bond, "Augustus Saint-Gaudens: The Man and His Art," Historical Base Map, Detail of the Principal Portion of the Augustus Saint-Gaudens Estate.



residence had been connected by pipe line to the reservoir for quite some time.<sup>46</sup>

Saint-Gaudens acquired the right to the use of the Big Beaman Spring in an agreement between himself and C. C. Beaman on September 24, 1897.<sup>47</sup> This agreement, involving no transfer of ownership of land, allowed Saint-Gaudens and his heirs to maintain a reservoir about 1500 feet south of the Saint-Gaudens house in the woodland Beaman had bought from Chester Pike. The reservoir, limited to twenty-five feet square and to one place (that is, it was not subject to relocation), was to be used jointly by Saint-Gaudens and Beaman. The sculptor had the right to connect a pipe not exceeding one inch in diameter. He was to draw not more than one-half of the water unless the other one-half was not needed by Beaman.

In August 1903 Saint-Gaudens purchased 7.19 acres of land from his neighbor and editor of the New Republic, Herbert Croly, so that he could have the use of the spring on that piece of property and have enough land surrounding the spring so as to prevent contamination of the water through Croly's cultivation of the land and applying manure to it or allowing livestock to graze too close. Saint-Gaudens paid Croly an

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46. Sullivan County, New Hampshire, Land Records, Deed Book 147, p. 181.

47. Sullivan County, New Hampshire, Land Records, Deed Book 147, p. 280.

amount above the price of the land so that he could guarantee Croly's using land adjacent to the spring in such a way as not to contaminate the water.<sup>48</sup> Croly asked Homer Saint-Gaudens in July 1908 to be relieved of the restriction on the 7.28 acres of his land surrounding the 7.19 acres on which the spring was located and which Saint-Gaudens had purchased from him in 1903. Croly told the younger Saint-Gaudens: "It has occurred to me recently that inasmuch as you are cultivating the land immediately above the spring, you may not have any objection to releasing my land across the road from the restriction against cultivation. Your father induced me to sell him the land above the spring and to restrict the land sloping towards the spring."<sup>49</sup>

In August 1904 Saint-Gaudens bought slightly more than an acre of land from Edward Bryant because of the spring which was located on it.<sup>50</sup> The sculptor obviously had access to use of the water from the Bryant spring before 1904, for the survey of the Saint-Gaudens estate done by French and Bryant in December 1903 showed the Croly and Bryant springs

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48. Sullivan County, New Hampshire, Land Records, Deed Book 156, p. 529. See several letters between Saint-Gaudens and Croly during the summer of 1903. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

49. Herbert Croly to Homer Saint-Gaudens, July 13, 1908. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

50. Sullivan County, New Hampshire, Land Records, Deed Book 158, page 288.

as sources of water.<sup>51</sup>

When Homer Saint-Gaudens sold in 1954 an 8.73 acre tract of land "on the southerly side of highway leading from the River Road to the house formerly of William Westgate, joining Bryant and Beaman," to Herbert J. Sevigny, he reserved continued use of the spring, by that time known as the Big Johnson Spring, for himself and the Saint-Gaudens Memorial.<sup>52</sup>

In September 1954 Homer Saint-Gaudens sold "Tree-Tops" (the house his mother bought for him in 1906) and a small tract of land "on the north side of the road leading from the River Road on the property of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial to the house formerly owned by William Westgate, joining the center of Blow-me-up Brook." This transfer of property to Clarence and Eleese Bortree provided that the new owners would have the right to one-fourth of the Johnson Spring.<sup>53</sup>

When Homer Saint-Gaudens sold his Cornish residence, "Barberry House," to Frances D. and Michael M. Yatsevitch in August 1955, he transferred to the new owners all of the Croly Spring and 5/12 interest in Elm Spring, otherwise known as the Big Johnson Spring.<sup>54</sup>

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51. See Historical Base Map, Augustus Saint-Gaudens Estate, for details on the water and sewer lines.

52. Sullivan County, New Hampshire, Land Records, Deed Book 359, p. 518.

53. Ibid., Deed Book 362, p. 104.

54. Ibid., Deed Book 370, p. 233.



The water situation at the Saint-Gaudens Memorial caused some concern for the board of trustees during the summer of 1954. Trustee William Platt reported at the meeting of the board of trustees, July 10, 1954, that "The water used at the Memorial is an inferior quality for drinking. This water comes from what is known as the Johnson Spring. . . . The Memorial owns a one-third right to this spring. Since no one else is interested, the Memorial bears a regular annual expense for having the spring put in order every year and it is now in need of expensive major alterations which the Memorial would have to pay." Mr. Platt proposed that the Memorial should look into the possibility of using the Beaman Spring, to which the Memorial had sole right. This would be an expensive job, noted Mr. Platt, but he said that part of the cost could come out of the \$1,000 allocated to general repairs. By the time of the next board meeting on July 9, 1955, the Memorial had spent \$1,103.76 repairing the Beaman Spring and re-laying necessary piping.<sup>55</sup>

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55. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Saint-Gaudens Memorial, July 10, 1954, and July 9, 1955. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

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1. "Aspet" as it appears today.





2. The House at Cornish, pre-1885. South and West Elevations. Saint-Gaudens Collection.

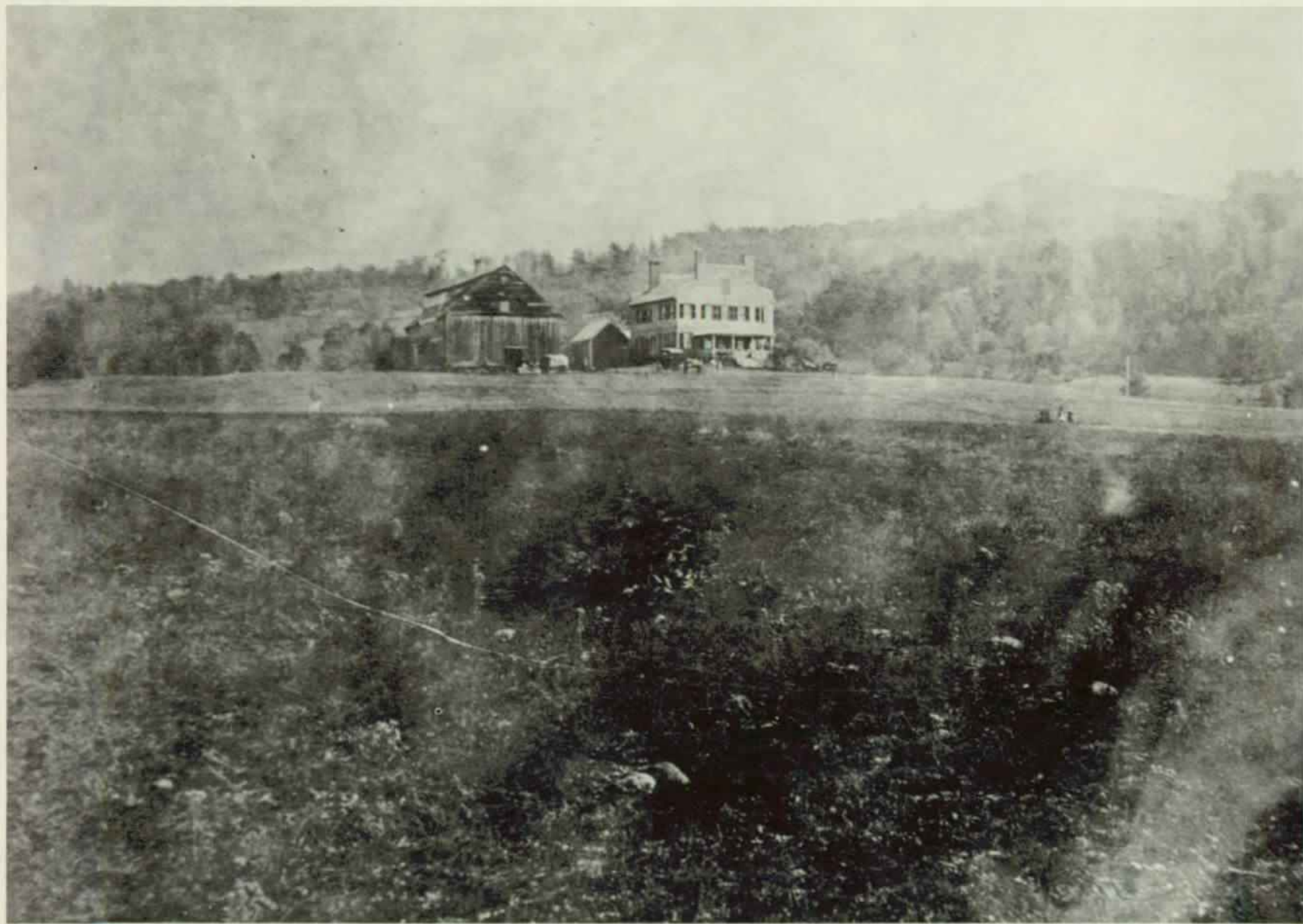


3. Taken at "Aspet", Summer, 1885. Louis Saint-Gaudens, Frederick MacMonnies, Homer Saint-Gaudens, Augusta (Mrs.) Saint-Gaudens, Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Homer Saint-Gaudens, Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, II.





4. "Aspet", Summer of 1885. West and North Elevations.  
Saint-Gaudens Collection.





5. West elevation of "Aspet", 1894 (?) The people in the photograph are not positively identified, but from comparisons with other photographs identifiable people seem to be Marie Saint-Gaudens (daughter of Augustus' brother, Andrew) with goat and Homer Saint-Gaudens. Mrs. Saint-Gaudens appears to be the lady at the head of the steps.

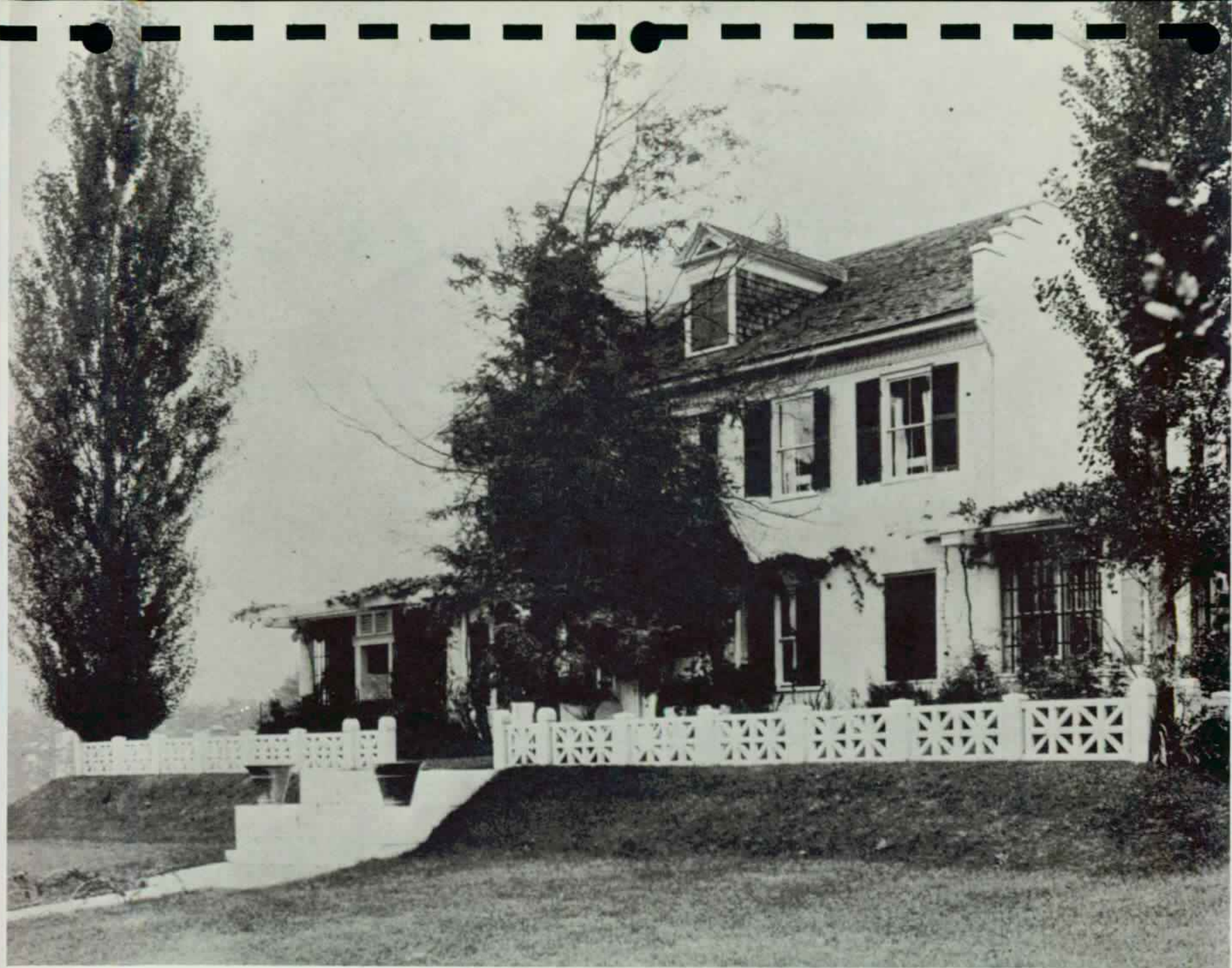


6. "Aspet", Circa 1903. South (front) Elevation.  
Saint-Gaudens Collection.





7. "Aspet" After 1903, But Before 1907. Saint-  
Gaudens Collection.





8. "Aspet", June 1967. North elevation.  
National Park Service Photograph.

9. Entrance foyer as seen from dining room,  
1966. Photo by Charles Pope, National  
Park Service.



8.



9.

10. Dining Room. Looking east, 1966. Photo by Charles Pope, National Park Service.
11. Stairway to Library and Second Floor, 1966. Photo by Charles Pope, National Park Service.





10.



11.

12. Library on landing between first and second floors, 1966. Photo by Charles Pope, National Park Service.
13. Second floor hallway, looking east, 1966. Photo by Charles Pope, National Park Service.



12.



13.



14. Third floor, looking east, 1966. Photo by  
Charles Pope, National Park Service.



14.