



Department of Landscape Architecture  
May 16, 2008

## **PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT**

### **Hedge Management Plan for Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site**

Cornish, New Hampshire

Project dates: September 30, 2006 –December 31, 2007

Great Lakes-Northern Forest CESU Task Agreement J1851-06-0017 (SUNY 17)  
SUNY ESF Co-Principal Investigators

George W. Curry, FASLA, Distinguished Teaching Professor

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National Park Service Partners:

Margie Coffin Brown, Historical Landscape Architect and Project Lead, Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation

James Haaf, Gardener, Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site

Through this task agreement, SUNY ESF in partnership with staff from the NPS Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation and Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site (NHS) developed a management plan for the extensive system of historic hedges at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, located in Cornish, New Hampshire. The project was a collaborative effort that built upon prior hedge studies, examples of hedge management practices at other sites, and draft analysis & evaluation and treatment components of a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) developed by the Olmsted Center. The project included two site visits in which SUNY ESF principal investigators met with Saint-Gaudens NHS and Olmsted Center staff at the site to examine the hedges and discuss management alternatives. Donald Leopold, SUNY ESF Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Department of Forest and Environmental Biology, accompanied the project team to assess the hedges and followed up with a report that detailed health and vigor, environmental conditions, and potential diseases and pests. Throughout the project, SUNY ESF worked closely with James Haaf, Gardener at Saint-Gaudens NHS, and Olmsted Center staff in the development of treatment recommendations, maintenance procedures, and replacement strategies. Through this project, SUNY ESF also assisted the Olmsted Center in refining the analysis & evaluation and treatment components of the CLR related to the hedges.

Saint-Gaudens NHS preserves the home, studios, and gardens of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, one of the foremost American sculptors of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The hemlock and white pine hedges, extending over one-half mile in length and consisting of some 1,500 plants upwards of 110 years old, frame garden rooms and views into the landscape. Over the years, plants have been replaced, hemlock has taken over white pine, and sections have been allowed to mature to dimensions far larger than existed historically. Certain hedges have also lost lower limbs due to inadequate environmental conditions and improper maintenance so that they no longer provide the intended spatial character in the landscape. Maintaining the hedges in a manner that reflects their historic character while also



retaining their health and vigor has long posed a management challenge. This challenge has resulted from the fact that the hedges are dynamic natural vegetation that serves largely static architectural functions.

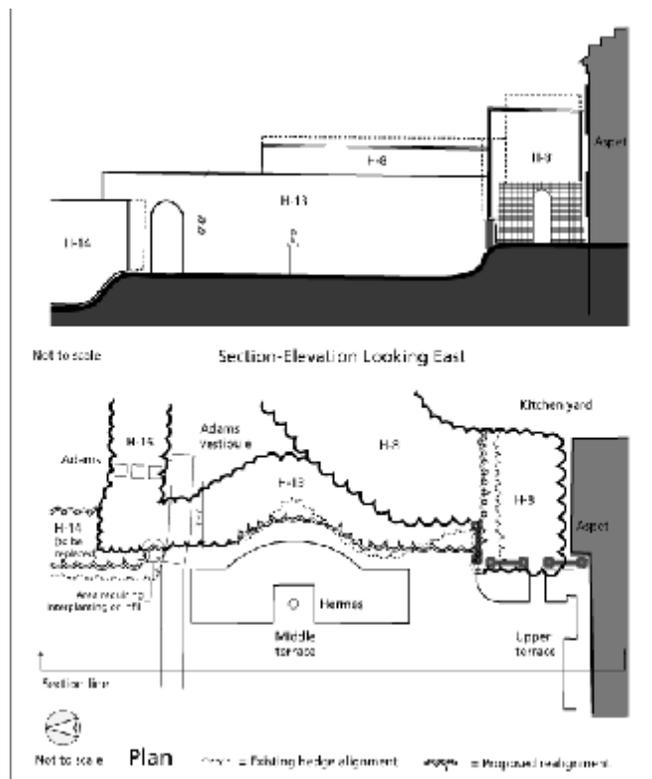
This project documented existing and historic conditions and addressed appropriate maintenance, renovation, and replacement strategies to preserve and enhance the historic character of the hedges in the short and long term. The treatment approach defined in the CLR focuses on retaining and enhancing the historic character of the landscape as it had evolved through the period of significance beginning in 1885, when Augustus Saint-Gaudens moved to Cornish, and ending in c.1950 during stewardship by the Trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial. This hedge management plan expands upon this treatment approach by further detailing treatment by individual hedge sections, and by establishing guidelines for treatment implementation and preservation maintenance. The findings of this research reveal that over the past twenty years, Saint-Gaudens NHS has made great strides toward improving the condition and historic character of the hedges through improved pruning, shearing, and replanting. Today, the hedges are overall in good condition, but several management challenges remain aside from staffing and funding limitations, in particular how to plan for hedge replacement and how best to retain the historic species composition. Building on the prior hedge studies and the recently completed CLR, this plan provides direction for hedge management that balances the original design intent, subsequent changes made during the historic period through c.1950, and changed environmental conditions toward the overall goal of preserving and enhancing the historic character of the landscape. The plan also recognizes the value of retaining aged plant material and provides direction on potential diseases and pests, particularly hemlock wooly adelgid.

The findings are documented through narrative and graphic formats in a 140-page report. The graphics include historic and existing conditions photographs; diagrams illustrating proposed changes; and graphic plans based on a base map prepared by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation as part of the CLR. SUNY ESF submitted the final (second) draft report to the National Park Service in April 2008. Once Saint-Gaudens NHS provides final comments, anticipated within the next six months, the report will be finalized and published by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. The final document will be posted on-line under the Saint-Gaudens NHS listing on the National Park Service History webpage, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/park\\_histories/index.htm#s](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/park_histories/index.htm#s).

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May 16, 2008



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Top: The project team examining the white pine hedge adjoining the Saint-Gaudens studio, November 2006. Below: Diagram of proposed treatment of the hedges along the terrace garden. SUNY ESF.