



A Successful Nomination: Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site

**Betsy Igleheart
Northeast Region National Register Coordinator**

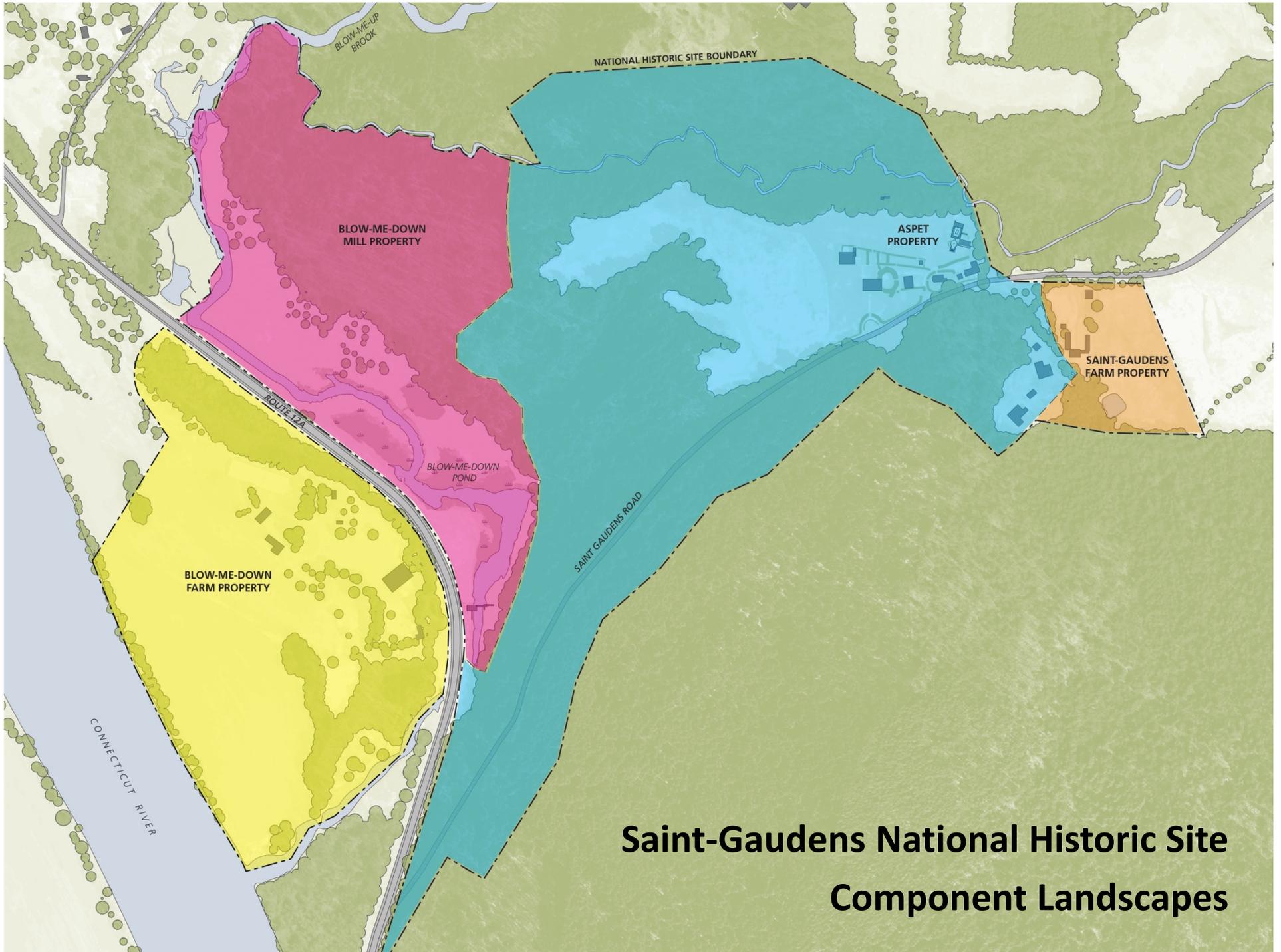
**Bob Page
Director, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation**

Saint-Gaudens NHS

Significance Summary

- Art, Cornish Art Colony (A)
- Conservation, Saint-Gaudens Memorial (A)
- Art, Augustus Saint-Gaudens (B)
- Landscape Architecture, Saint-Gaudens and Ellen Shipman (C)
- Architecture (C)
- Historic Archeology (D)





**Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site
Component Landscapes**



Aspet (102 acres)



Saint-Gaudens Farm (6.5 acres)



Blow-Me-Down Mill (40 acres)



Blow-Me-Down Farm (43 acres)

Professional Qualifications of Key Personnel

Key personnel shall have proven professional experience in:

- Preparing National Register documentation
- Undertaking the evaluation of historic buildings and structures, cultural landscapes and archeological resources of similar scale, significance and complexity



Blow-Me-Down Farm

Technical Requirements

- Past Performance shall include experience of proposed project personnel to include at least 3 similar, successfully completed projects with the last 5 years.
- Projects submitted must have been reviewed and signed by the respective State Historic Preservation Officer and/or the Keeper of the National Register.



Blow-Me-Down Farm Bank Barn

Contracting Stipulation

All resources and features listed in NPS List of Classified Structures (LCS) and Cultural Landscape Inventories (CLI) as contributing, whether or not countable for purposes of the National Register, will be described.



Blow-Me-Down Mill

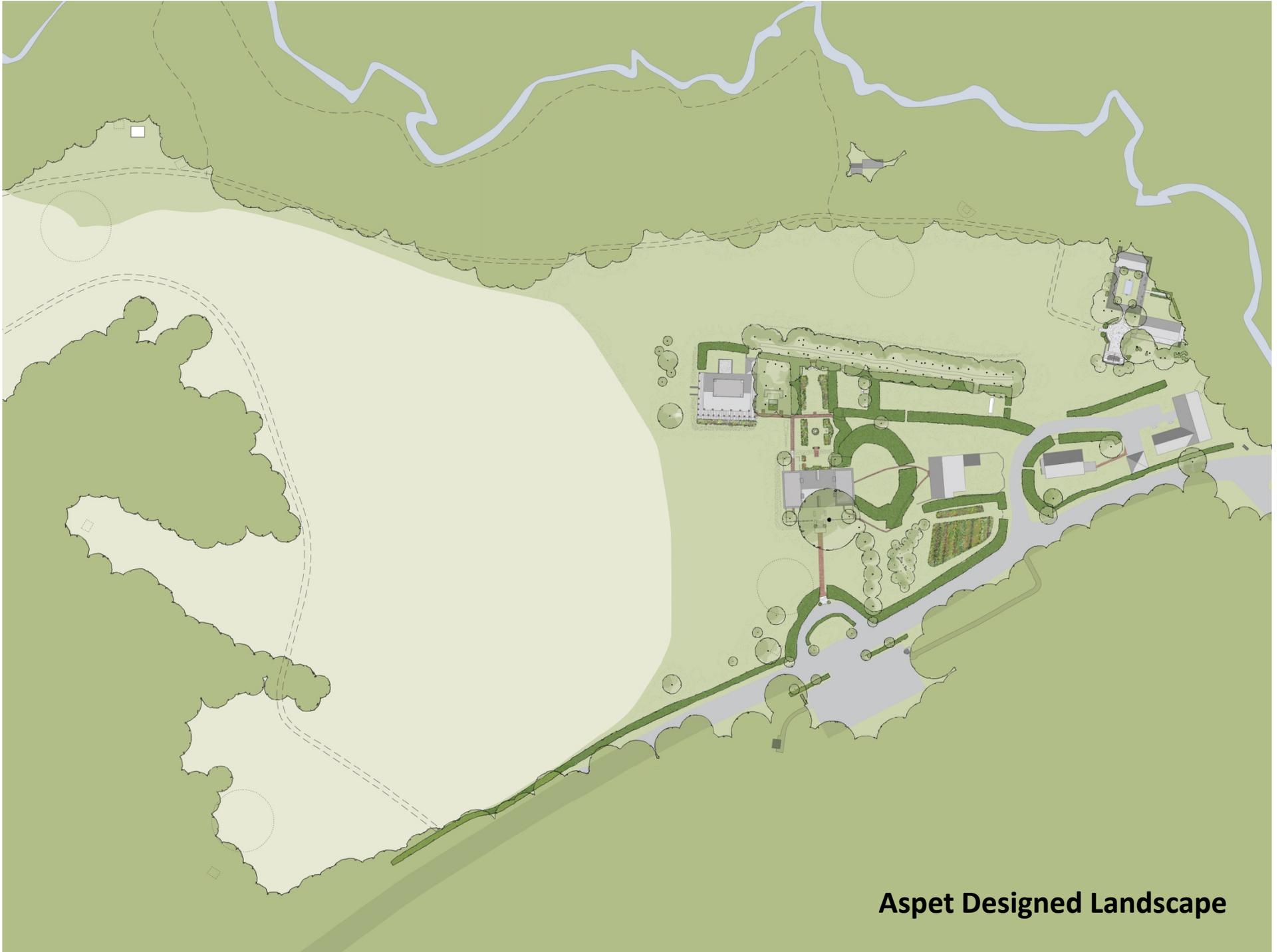
Mechanism

“Historic associated feature” is a term developed to reconcile the requirements of the NPS List of Classified Structures (LCS) and Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) with National Register documentation guidelines.

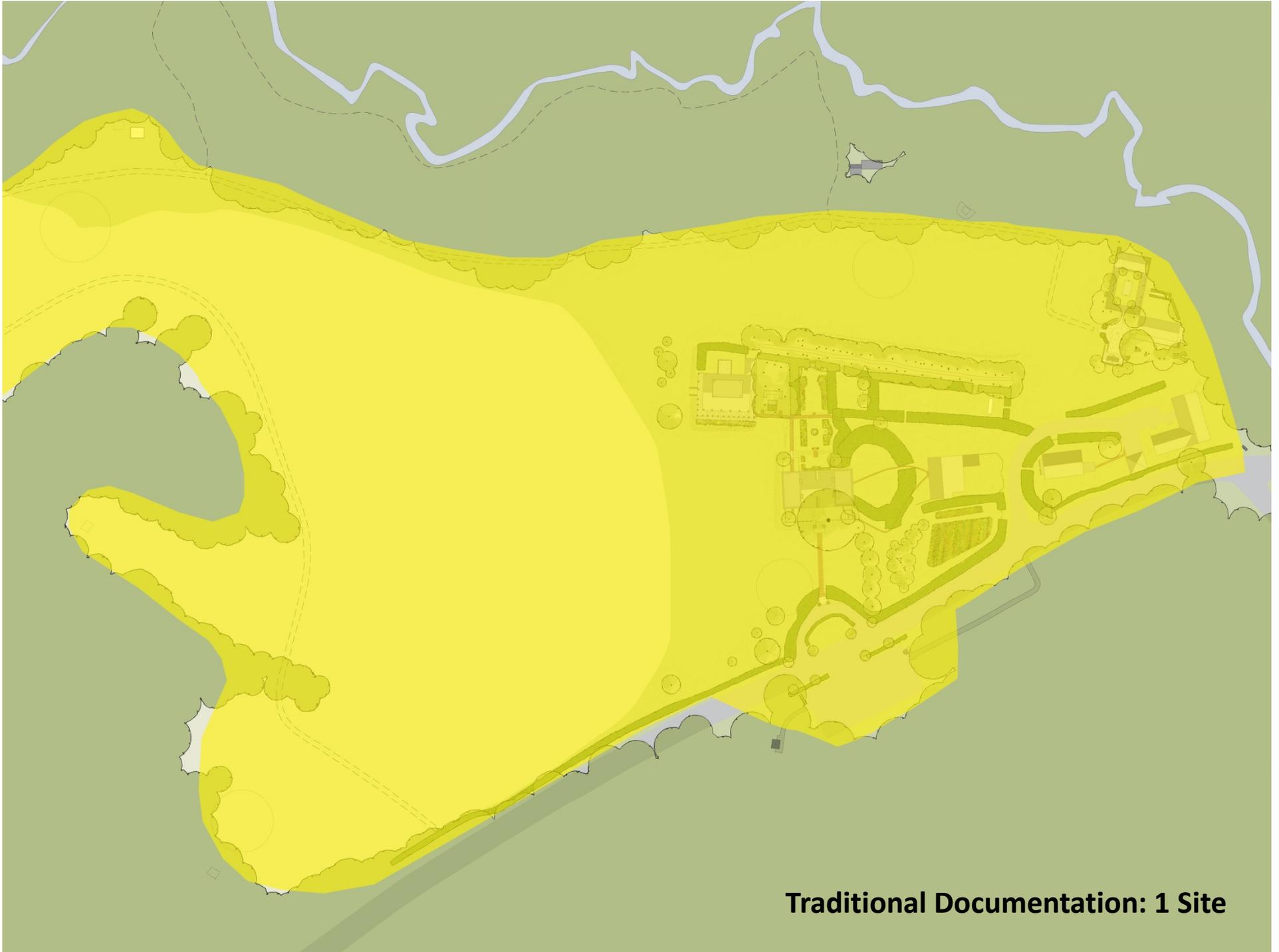
The term is used to enumerate and describe component or small-scale features of a landscape, or a system of features that are not individually countable according to National Register guidelines but that collectively comprise a single countable resource.



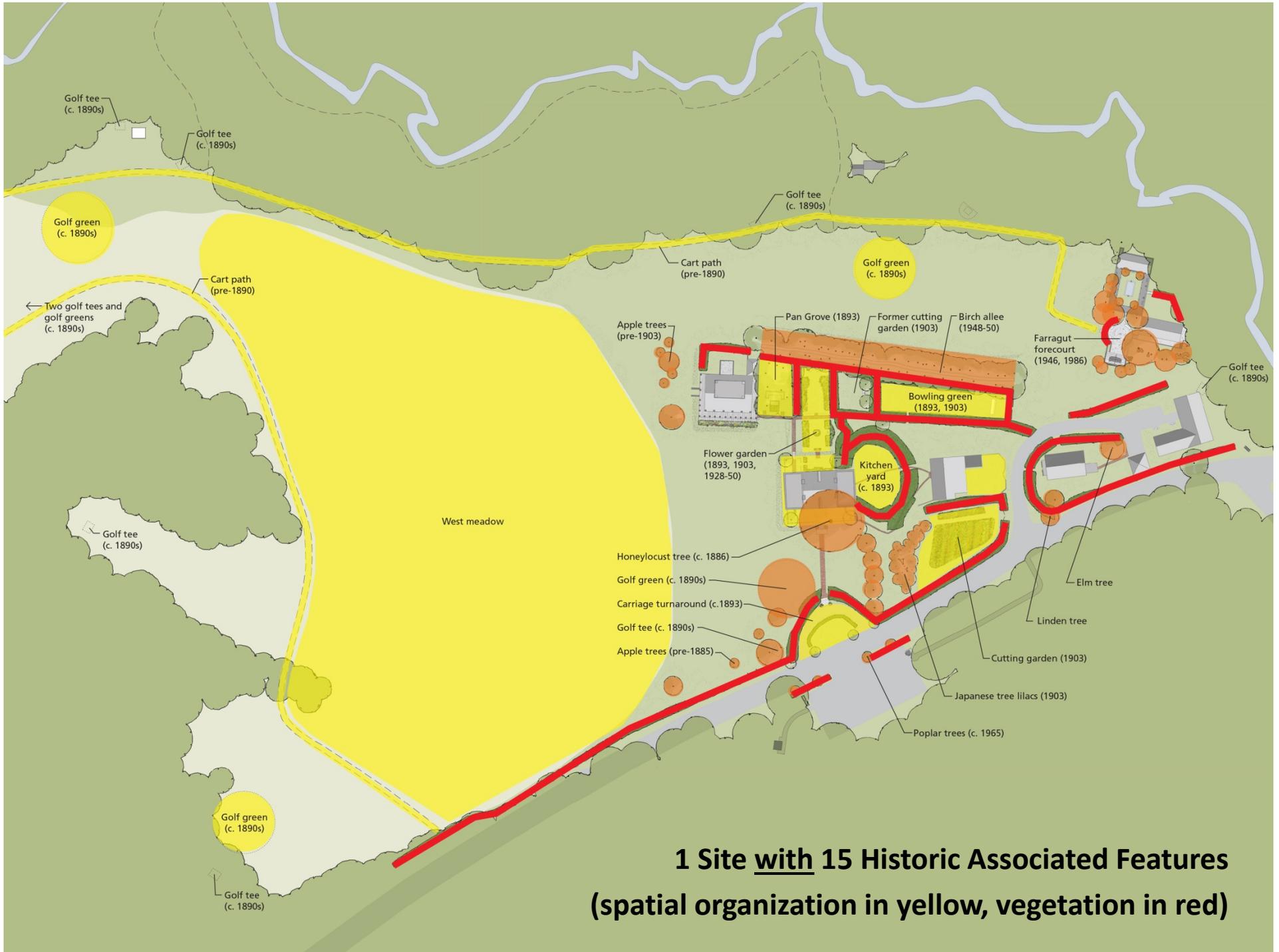
Aspet



Aspet Designed Landscape



Traditional Documentation: 1 Site



Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site (NHS) is a 190.6-acre historic district in Sullivan County, New Hampshire that developed as part of the Cornish Art Colony (colony) beginning in the late-nineteenth century. It is located within the Connecticut River Valley in the town of Cornish. The district boundaries encompass three adjacent properties, including Aspet, the summer home and studio of sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens; Charles Cotesworth Beaman Jr.'s seasonal estate, Blow-Me-Down Farm and Mill; and the Saint-Gaudens Farm. A total of 59 contributing and 16 non-contributing resources are located within the district. Contributing resources consist of 21 buildings, 22 structures, 10 objects, and 6 sites. The 16 non-contributing resources include 7 buildings, 1 structure, and 8 objects. The Aspet property at Saint-Gaudens NHS was designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) under the name of Saint-Gaudens Memorial on June 13, 1962. Saint-Gaudens NHS was authorized on August 31, 1964, and administratively listed in the National Register on October 15, 1966. National Register documentation for the site was prepared and accepted by the Keeper of the National Register on November 15, 1985. Subsequent to that time, the National Park Service (NPS) acquired the adjacent Saint-Gaudens Farm and Blow-Me-Down Farm properties. The authorized boundary of the NHS was correspondingly expanded in 2000. This National Register documentation was prepared to update the information contained in the original Registration Form, taking into account changes to the boundary and resources added to the Saint-Gaudens NHS since its establishment. The following 10 contributing resources were previously listed in the National Register: Aspet Main House, Little Studio, Stable, Caretaker's Cottage, New Studio (New Gallery), Ravine Studio, Blow-Me-Down Mill, Blow-Me-Down Stone Arch Bridge, the Temple, and the Aspet Designed Landscape.

Narrative Description

Setting

Saint-Gaudens NHS is located in a rural section of southwest New Hampshire, set within a scenic river valley defined by low mountains and sparsely developed land. It lies along New England's Connecticut River, which separates New Hampshire and Vermont. The district encompasses 190.6 acres of land in the Town of Cornish that extends along both sides of State Route (SR) 12A between Claremont and Plainfield, New Hampshire. A covered bridge south of the district carries traffic across the river into Windsor, Vermont. The district has an irregular shape that includes three distinct properties bordered by forest and the Connecticut River to the west. Cornish has a low population density with only 1,640 year-round residents and limited development of single-family homes on large land tracts. Views between properties are buffered by intervening topography and vegetation, which contributes to the tranquil setting of the area. Much of the forest within the district has grown up since Saint-Gaudens's occupancy. SR 12A runs north-south along the east side of the river, with Interstate 91 running parallel along the west side. The district is located 60 miles northwest of Concord, New Hampshire, 100 miles northwest of Boston, Massachusetts and 250 miles northeast of New York City. The portion of SR 12A that passes through the NHS is designated as part of the national Connecticut River Scenic Byway.

Aspet, Augustus Saint-Gaudens's home and studios, forms the core of the district. Aspet consists of 101.5 acres of cultivated land and peripheral woodland, accessed by Saint Gaudens Road, which originates at SR 12A. The property contains a cluster of buildings used by Saint-Gaudens during his occupancy that are set within a classically inspired garden landscape. Original landscape features and bronze sculptures are placed throughout the lawn near the main buildings. Ornamental plantings and hedges shape intimate outdoor spaces and enhance the natural setting. Historic and contemporary visitor facilities, along with a historic caretaker's quarters are designed so as not to detract from the serene, Classical character of the property. The setting of Aspet is defined by its designed landscape and location in the Connecticut River Valley. Pristine views of Mt. Ascutney, Juniper Hill and Hunt Hill looming in the distance historically contributed to the artistic inspiration of the Cornish Art Colony. The district is also crossed by a tributary of the Connecticut River, which enhanced the woodland character and recreational opportunities at Aspet. Blow-Me-Up Brook winds west through the north side of the district, where it joins with Blow-Me-Down Brook, then continues south toward SR 12A. The brook flows along the road where it feeds a mill and pond associated with Charles Cotesworth Beaman, Jr.'s



Aspet flower garden

Section 7

**Narrative Description, Setting:
Spatial Organization**

The **Aspet Designed Landscape (contributing site)** encompasses the cultivated portion of the Aspet property improved by Saint-Gaudens from 1891 to 1907 and by the Saint-Gaudens Memorial through 1950. Saint-Gaudens infused the pre-existing rural landscape at Aspet with elements expressive of Italian Renaissance Revival design in an effort to integrate the buildings with the landscape and create an inspirational setting. The designed landscape includes man-made and natural features incorporated into Saint-Gaudens's improvements as well as features maintained or added during the memorial period in the decades after his death. The Saint-Gaudens Memorial and landscape architect Ellen Shipman retained the classical, Italian garden aesthetic at Aspet in keeping with Saint-Gaudens's vision. Key characteristics of the landscape are the open meadow views and the presence of intimate outdoor spaces. The house and studios are surrounded by a series of gardens defined by distinctive evergreen hedges, including a formal perennial garden and a birch grove. The historic placement of tall shrubs or trees and secondary buildings were considered so as to screen more utilitarian spaces from view of the main complex. Historic associated features of the Aspet Designed Landscape are described below and are generally organized in geographic order, clockwise from the Aspet Main House.^{iv}

Saint-Gaudens and George Fletcher ~~Dobb~~ designed **Terraces (LCS No. 750426, historic associated feature) and Terrace Balustrades (LCS No. 040878, historic associated feature)** in 1893-1894 to tie the Aspet Main House to the landscape. The terraces consist of graded fill surrounding the house and provide a transition from the building to the grounds. Wood balustrades identical to those on the piazzas enclose grass spaces on the south side of the house and near the piazzas. The balustrades consist of panels of 3-inch square white painted beams installed in a Roman star pattern. Part of the balustrade was removed along the north terrace in 1903-1904 to make room for brick stairs, lattice panels, and planting beds. A wood **Lattice Screen and Trellis (LCS No. 750422, historic associated feature)** installed by Saint-Gaudens in 1904-1905 is located on the terrace north of the house. The lattice extends across the east end of the terrace from the northeast corner of the house and screens the view of the adjacent stable building from a garden behind Aspet. An arched opening in the trellis provides access to a path leading toward the Stables.

Views from the house's west piazza look toward the **West Meadow (historic associated feature)**, which is an intermittently mowed field cleared of woody vegetation that is maintained as open space to protect the viewshed. The meadow dates from the early nineteenth century domestic agricultural use of the property. It is defined by woodlands on its west and north sides, St. Gaudens Road to the south, and the structures and gardens of Aspet to the east. A mix of grasses and forbes grow in the meadow. A portion of its southwest corner is dominated by grasses and is mowed more frequently for use as overflow visitor parking. Traces of a historic **Cart Path (LCS No. 040891, historic associated feature)**, dating from approximately 1875-1900, are visible at the west edge of the meadow. The path extends north from Saint Gaudens Road toward trails in the woods and a temple where Saint-Gaudens's ashes are interred. Saint-Gaudens's former **Golf Course Greens (historic associated feature)** are also visible at the edge of the west meadow. The greens were part of a nine-tee, five-hole course built by Saint-Gaudens in 1903. The golf course was located on the edges of the property and extended from the west meadow north around the Little Studio, before turning east in the vicinity of Picture Gallery.

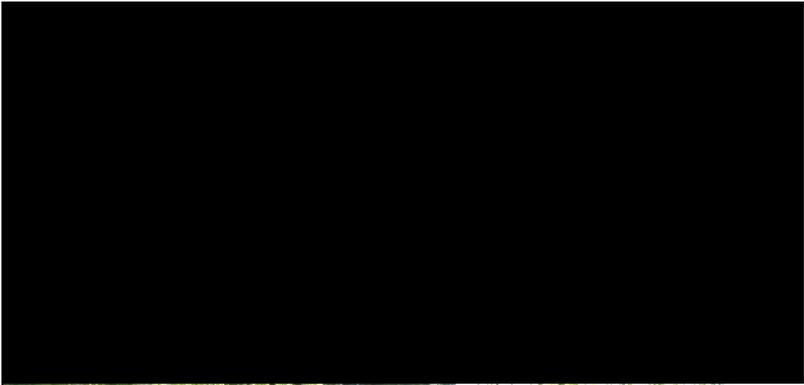
Fruit and Ornamental Trees and Shrubs (historic associated feature) located throughout the lawn surrounding the main buildings at Aspet contribute to the property's historic scenic character. A few of these specimens existed when Saint-Gaudens began occupying the property. He retained select trees and shrubs and planted others as part of his landscape improvements. Additional plantings were completed during the memorial period and the NPS replaced select trees and shrubs in-kind as necessary. A large, thornless honey locust tree south of the house dates to the mid-1880s and may have been planted by Saint-Gaudens. Apple trees south of the house and west of the Little Studio that were part of the landscape in the late-nineteenth century were maintained by Saint-Gaudens. Many of these trees were replaced by the NPS in the 1980s. Lombardy poplars planted from 1893 to 1907 form major components of Saint-Gaudens's landscape designs. These trees punctuate the corners of the terraces surrounding the house and Little Studio, frame the entrances to

^{iv} "Historic associated feature" is a term used to enumerate and describe small-scale component features of a landscape, or a system of features that are not individually countable according to National Register guidelines but that collectively comprise a single countable resource. The term was developed to reconcile the requirements of the NPS List of Classified Structures (LCS) and Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) with National Register documentation guidelines. The LCS is an evaluated inventory of all historic and prehistoric buildings, structures, and objects that have historical, architectural, and/or engineering significance. The CLI is an evaluated inventory of all cultural landscapes within the National Park System that have historical significance. All LCS and CLI entries must be included in National Register documentation either as a countable resource (building, district, site, structure, or object) or as a historic associated feature.



Bowling green

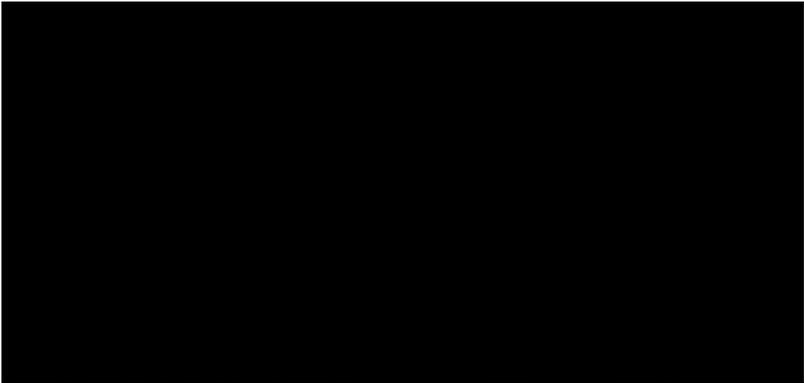
Section 7 Narrative Description, Contributing Resources: Spatial Organization



Farragut forecourt

**Section 7
Data Sheet:
Spatial Organization**

SITES = 6					
Aspet Designed Landscapes*	n/a	Site	1885-1950	Aspet	1-2, 6-8, 9-12, 14-16, 18
<i>Historic Associated Features</i>					
• Terraces and Terrace Balustrades	750426, 040878	n/a	1893-1894	Aspet	7-8
• Lattice Screen and Trellis at Aspet's North Entrance	750422	n/a	1904-1905	Aspet	8
• West Meadow	n/a	n/a	Early 19 th c.	Aspet	1-2
• Cart Path	040891	n/a	1875-1900	Aspet	1
• Golf Course Greens	n/a	n/a	c. 1902	Aspet	1-2
• Terrace Garden	n/a	n/a	1903-1950	Aspet	10
• Hedges	n/a	n/a	1893-1950	Aspet	6-7, 10, 18
• Jars, Containers and Planters	040871	n/a	1893-1894	Aspet	15
• Wood Benches - Types A, B and C	040882	n/a	1905-1907, 1948, 1951-1954, 1955-2000	Aspet	7, 29
• Birch Grove	n/a	n/a	1891, 1938	Aspet	14
• Birch Allée	040898	n/a	1948-1950	Aspet	11
• Fruit and Ornamental Trees and Shrubs	n/a	n/a	1903-1950	Aspet	7-8, 11
• Bowling Green	n/a	n/a	c. 1903	Aspet	30
• Stables & Cutting Garden Lattice Fences & Gates	040884	n/a	1886-1906 (6 panels on S. side original; gate & rest of fence rehabbed 1984)	Aspet	16
• Cutting Garden	n/a	n/a	c. 1903	Aspet	n/a
Studio of the Caryatids Subsite	SAGA 00001.001	Site	c. 1900-1944	Aspet	n/a
Root Cellar	040894/ SAGA 00010.000	Site	1885-1907	Aspet	n/a



Birch allee, 1966

**Section 7
Data Sheet:
Birch Allee**

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• Terrace Garden	n/a	n/a	1903-1950	Aspet	10
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• Jars, Containers and Planters	040871	n/a	1893-1894	Aspet	15
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• Cutting Garden	n/a	n/a	c. 1903	Aspet	n/a
Studio of the Caryatids Subsite	SAGA 00001.001	Site	c. 1900-1944	Aspet	n/a
Root Cellar	040894/ SAGA 00010.000	Site	1885-1907	Aspet	n/a

hedged garden rooms, and line the carriage turnaround. Saint-Gaudens planted a **Birch Grove (historic associated feature)** east of the Little Studio in the 1890s as part of his and Babb's landscape design with the intent of adding visual interest in the background of the garden. The grove is comprised of 10 white birch trees, some of which were replaced by the Saint-Gaudens Memorial after a hurricane in 1938. The Saint-Gaudens Memorial also created a **Birch Allée (LCS No. 040898, historic associated feature)** in 1948-1950 to enhance pedestrian circulation and visual interest between the Little Studio and New Gallery complex. A double row of approximately 61 white birches placed about eight feet apart forms the linear allée, which flanks a mulch-covered path. The allée and path follow the alignment of a pre-existing path on the property. Notable shrubs in the landscape include a grove of Japanese tree lilacs planted southeast of the house after 1903, grape vines at Aspet and Little Studio, and lilacs and clusters of birch trees planted as part of the New Gallery complex c. 1948.

A **Terrace Garden (historic associated feature)** extends north from the house toward the Little Studio and comprises the first of a series of defined outdoor spaces. The garden was completed from 1903 to 1950 and contains components of Saint-Gaudens's original design, which was redesigned by Ellen Shipman. It has a long, rectangular shape and incorporates geometric flower beds on three distinct terraces. A varied palette of perennials and annuals is used in flower borders on the terraces and small-scale sculptures are placed at axis points throughout the garden. Low plantings adorn the upper terrace along the north side of the house. Brick **Garden Steps (LCS No. 040880, contributing structure)** built into a grass slope extend from the upper terrace to the middle terrace, which includes linear planting beds on the east and west sides. The steps were constructed between 1884 and 1903 and incorporate low piers at their base that are often used to support terra-cotta planters. Designed by Saint-Gaudens in 1893-1894, a **Marble Pool with Bubbler (LCS No. 040872, contributing object)** is centered on the middle terrace. This small round pool is flush with the ground and operates with a continuous gravity-fed water supply. It was moved to its current location in 1903-1904 and is surrounded by flowers. Linear flower beds continue on the lower terrace and flank tall hedges. The terminal axis of the garden on the lower terrace is framed by hedging, with unimpeded views between the garden spaces. A curve in the north hedge mimics the curved shape of the **Semicircular Zodiac Bench (LCS No. 040876, contributing object)** at the north end of the lower terrace. The bench is an accurate reconstruction of 1893-1894 bench, completed in 2001. It consists of a solid board seat supported by polygonal shaped wood board legs and a wood-slat back that spans between 4-inch by 4-inch end posts. Two of six **Zodiac Heads and Posts (LCS No. 040877, contributing object)** are mounted on the posts at either end of the bench and the remaining four heads are mounted on high posts flanking the bench. The zodiac heads are historic (1940-1948) concrete replicas of female figure heads designed by Saint-Gaudens. He placed them on posts in the garden and on the posts of the terrace balustrades. The current placement of the heads and posts is representative of a possible historic configuration. The plain posts were replaced in-kind during the late-twentieth century due to deterioration.

Garden Paths and Steps (Aspet - Garden - Little Studio Path) (LCS No. 040869, contributing structure) constructed from 1894 to 1903 connect the Aspet Main House to the terrace garden and Little Studio. This pedestrian circulation system includes a flight of marble steps in the middle terrace leading from the west piazza to the lawn north and west of the house. The marble steps connect to a north-south section of a red brick walkway leading toward the Little Studio. A second section of the walkway extends east-west from the Little Studio through the middle terrace of the garden. The intersection of these two sections is ornamented by brick pavers laid in a circular pattern.

A mixture of white pine and hemlock **Hedges (historic associated feature)** added to the landscape between 1893 and 1950 define distinct spaces within the Aspet Designed Landscape. The Terrace Garden Hedge outlines the lower terrace of the garden and forms a curved terminus at the garden's north end. It consists of 6- to 12-foot-wide, 7- to 10-foot tall hemlock and white pine that is supplemented within infill planting. The west and north sections of the hedge date from the 1930s. An opening is located in the center of the north hedge. The Terrace Garden Hedge is adjacent to the Adams Hedge, which creates an intimate outdoor room around the Adams Memorial, following the style of the original Stanford White siting plan for the sculpture in Washington, D.C. The oldest and tallest portions of the Adams Hedge are approximately 18 feet tall and form the south and east sides of garden room. Its north and west sections measure 8 to 10 feet tall by 12 feet wide. The Adams Hedge is part of a system of hedges extending east from the Little Studio to enclose a series of rooms aligned with the building. These rooms are arranged linearly and transect the terminus of the terrace garden. The Little Studio Hedge forms an L-shaped screen north of the building providing privacy around a former swimming pool. One of the first hedges established on the site is the adjacent U-shaped Pan Grove Hedge immediately east of the Little Studio. It is maintained at between 7 and 10 feet tall. The Shaw Hedge, located east of the Adams Hedge encloses a narrow lawn west of the bronze Shaw Memorial. It originally enclosed a vegetable garden, but was modified with various openings.



Birch allée, 2013

Section 7

Narrative Description:

Birch Allée

**Area of Significance: Criterion C
Landscape Architecture**

The Saint-Gaudens Aspet property within the district exhibits the classicist idiom of the Italian Renaissance Revival in landscape design that achieved widespread popularity from about 1890 to 1930. Interest in “Italian” gardens appeared in Boston-area gardens loosely modeled after Italian precedents in the 1850s, and became formalized in the 1890s. The first landscape designer to deeply study Italian design principles, New York-based artist and architect Charles Adams Platt began designing his own garden and the High Court property for Miss Annie Lazarus when he came to Cornish as a summer resident in 1889. He finalized his garden design following a trip to Italy in 1892 and published his seminal and influential illustrated book, *Italian Gardens* in 1894. The many other books and authors that followed, such as Edith Wharton’s *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* of 1904, spread the popularity of Italian-inspired residential design into the first decades of the twentieth century.

Although Platt was not directly associated with the Saint-Gaudens property landscape design, his presence in Cornish and his central role in the establishment of Italian-based designs contemporary with Saint-Gaudens’s development of the Aspet landscape reinforces the importance of Platt’s influence and its reflection in the district. The initial landscape improvements in the early 1890s were completed with design collaboration from New York architect George Fletcher Babb who was also working on the Aspet buildings. Saint-Gaudens and Babb began implementing Aspet landscape in 1893, and the main garden at Aspet was first laid out in 1903. Like most colony residents, Saint-Gaudens had traveled to Italy and may have selected an Italian design model for his summer home independent of his friend Platt. Additionally, many references and sources for inspiration were available to him through his own work and classic-toned settings designed for his monuments, such as the *Puritan*, by Stanford White. The Saint-Gaudens landscape differs markedly from the strict architectonic and correct rendition of Italian models espoused by Platt, and manifests in a freer interpretation of the garden prototype that included hedged rooms, lush flower beds, water features, and garden statuary (Nowak and Brown 2009:78-79; Pressley and Zaitzevsky 1993:48-79).

Classically inspired gardens rejected the informal, pastoral, and gardenesque residential landscape styles of the mid- and late-nineteenth century in favor of axial and architectonic designs. The Aspet landscape is an excellent and early example that displays hallmark qualities of Italian-derived designs that were frequently used for summer houses and country estates, comprised of formal gardens adjacent to the house with informal fields and woodland grounds beyond. The gardens in the district are conceived with a formal and axial plan composed of drives, walkways, intimate spaces or outdoor “rooms,” and terraced vertical level changes. Carefully framed views within the small-scale gardens open to broad vistas across fields and meadows to span mixed evergreen and hardwood forest and culminate to the west at Mount Ascutney across the Connecticut River Valley. The landscape design presents a seamless integration of architecture and the landscape; the verandas of Aspet and the Little Studio project from the main buildings into the landscape, framing views and providing semi-outdoor circulation and living areas. Hedge borders and poplar trees were frequently employed in classical designs of the period and are a distinctive feature of the district landscape in defining spaces and views. Outdoor rooms and courtyards, formed by building walls and hedges, are frequently employed in the district to create discrete spaces or frame outward views.

Following the death of Saint-Gaudens in 1907, Ellen Shipman was instrumental in the continuing development of the Italian-inspired gardens during the Augustus Saint-Gaudens Memorial period. Shipman, also a Cornish resident from the mid-1890s to about 1920, collaborated with Platt starting in 1910. She first worked as an assistant incorporating her strong knowledge of horticulture into planting plans. She learned drafting and design from Platt and developed a distinguished independent career based in New York. Shipman completed more than 400 projects throughout the United States. Shipman’s simplified redesign of the flower garden in 1928 and revision of the middle terrace at Aspet in 1941 changed but did not compromise the spatial organization and articulation of the original Saint-Gaudens plans. She became a Trustee of the Memorial in the 1940s and remained so until 1948, close to the end of her life. The **Birch Allée (LCS No. 040898, historic associated feature)**, most likely installed between 1948 and 1950, is not a documented Shipman design, but fits in the general Italian-inspired framework of the Aspet gardens. Shipman, possibly in her role as a Trustee, also contributed to the New Studio (New Gallery) complex that was designed by architect John W. Ames and opened in 1948 (Nowak and Brown 2009:80-81; Pressley and Zaitzevsky 1993:77-78, 124-125).



Birch allee (at left)

**Section 8
Narrative Description:
Birch Allee**

Challenges

- Landscape features convey significance, yet are not given full accord with buildings, structures, and objects.
- The inclusion of landscape resources in National Register documentation is not required for listing.
- The “historic associated feature” mechanism was developed out of necessity to fulfill LCS and CLI requirements and fully document all resources that convey National Register significance in our documentation.

