



28: Augustus Saint-Gaudens *Charles Cotesworth Beaman* (1894) *Hettie Sherman Evarts Beaman* (1900)

Henry J. Duffy

Hettie Evarts Beaman (1852–1917) first met the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens¹ in Rome in 1872 when she visited his studio with some friends and patrons of the young American artist.² Her father (Senator William Maxwell Evarts, 1818–1901)³ ordered a marble bust of Cicero, which so pleased him that he commissioned a portrait bust of himself (completed in 1874), thus becoming one of Saint-Gaudens's first important clients.⁴ Other family commissions would follow. Some twenty years later Saint-Gaudens would portray Hettie's husband, Charles Cotesworth Beaman (1840–1900), and six years after that, in 1900, Hettie Evarts Beaman herself.

Saint-Gaudens also stands at the forefront of nineteenth-century art as a creator of iconic images of Civil War heroes and as a chronicler of literary and social leaders of his time. Such monumental sculptures as the *Admiral David Farragut Monument* (New York, completed 1880), *The Puritan* (Springfield, Mass., completed 1886), *Adams Memorial* (Cambridge, Mass., completed 1891), and the *Robert Gould Shaw Memorial* (Boston, completed 1897), form the basis of his renown. But his principal artistic contribution is in the art of portraiture.

Born in Dublin of a French father and Irish mother, but raised in New York City, Saint-Gaudens received his training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and in Rome, where he worked in the early 1870s. In Italy he was introduced to the art of Renaissance medals, and dreamed as a young man of one day achieving in a large-scale format what the early masters already knew in small form. Low-relief portraiture is one of the most difficult forms of sculpture to achieve, and Saint-Gaudens would become a master at the technique (notably his portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson, 1887–88).

The Memorial Art Gallery's two fine bronze portraits underscore a number of characteristic features of his work and career, beginning with the importance of Saint-Gaudens's personal relations with his subjects. In this case the Beamans were not only longtime friends and patrons, but were directly responsible for the artist's taking up residence in Cornish, New Hampshire, providing a congenial location for the creation of some of his greatest works. Saint-Gaudens created over seventy bas-relief portraits. Most are bronze, having been carved first in clay and then cast. Typically, and the Beaman portraits are no exception, they are in profile and have inscriptions. Charles Beaman's portrait is inscribed:

CHARLES·COTESWORTH·BEAMAN
BY·HIS·FRIEND·AVGVSTVS·SAINT-GAVDENS

Mrs. Beaman's portrait is inscribed:

CORNISH NEW HAMPSHIRE
OCTOBER NINETEEN HVNDRED

and her name is contained within a classical wreath.

Charles Cotesworth Beaman was Saint-Gaudens's lawyer in New York, and became a close friend.⁵ In 1883, the Beamans began construction on "Blowmedown Farm" in Cornish, New Hampshire, not far from the property owned by Mrs. Beaman's family in Windsor, Vermont. Beaman's vision for his significant property holdings in Cornish transformed the region into an inviting colony for



(Facing page)

Augustus Saint-Gaudens,

1848–1907

Charles Cotesworth Beaman, 1894

Bronze, 26½ x 15 x 1/16 in.

Gift of Mary Ellen Gaylord,

94.51

Augustus Saint-Gaudens,

1848–1907

Hettie Sherman Evarts Beaman

(detail), 1900

Bronze, 22¼ x 20¾ in.

Gift of Mary Ellen Gaylord,

94.50



artists and writers. He first suggested Cornish as an ideal location for Saint-Gaudens to work and for the family to escape the summer heat of New York City. Beaman owned property along the Connecticut River in a beautiful valley centered on Mt. Ascutney, and he persuaded Saint-Gaudens to come see an old disused inn on the property. The Saint-Gaudenses visited the property in April, 1885.⁶ At first the artist thought it looked “so forbidding and relentless 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.”⁷ He was eventually convinced by his wife, and by Beaman’s promise of “Lincoln-shaped men” in the neighborhood who could model for Saint-Gaudens’s Chicago sculpture commission, to take up residence there the summer of 1885.

In the old hay-barn Saint-Gaudens, his brother Louis Saint-Gaudens, and his assistants Frederick MacMonnies and Philip Martiny completed the early sketches for the *Standing Lincoln*, *Seated Lincoln*, *Bellows Monument* and the portrait of the *Children of Jacob Schiff*. *Standing Lincoln*, for which, as promised, a model was found in the neighborhood—Langdon Morse, of Windsor, Vermont—was one of Saint-Gaudens’s masterpieces (it was installed in Chicago in 1887). The summer was so productive that the artist changed his mind about the place, wanting to come back again. In his reminiscences, he said that country life was “the beginning of a new side of my existence.”⁸

By this time, however, Beaman himself had turned reluctant, and was only persuaded by the promise of his portrait, along with some payment, to sell the property to Saint-Gaudens. The artist wrote,

So much for the first summer. But as the experiment had proved so successful, I had done such a lot of work, and I was so enchanted with the life and scenery, I told Mr. Beaman that, if his offer was still open, I would purchase the place under the conditions he originally stated. He replied that he preferred not, as it had developed in a way far beyond his expectations, and as he thought it his duty to reserve it for his children. Instead he proposed that I rent it for as long as I wished on the conditions first named, which were most liberal. But the house and the life attracted me until I soon found that I expended on this place, which was not yet mine, every dollar I earned, and many I had not yet earned, whereas all of my friends who had followed had bought their homes and surrounding land. So I explained to Mr. Beaman that I could not continue in this way, and that he must sell to me, or I should look elsewhere for green fields and pastures new. The result was that, for a certain amount [\$2500, which was five times the original asking price] and a bronze portrait of Mr. Beaman, the property came to me.”⁹

Augustus Saint-Gaudens,
1848–1907
Hettie Sherman Evarts Beaman,
1900
Bronze, 22¼ x 20 x ⅞ in.
Gift of Mary Ellen Gaylord,
94.50

Saint-Gaudens purchased the property in 1891.¹⁰ Many artists followed Saint-Gaudens to Cornish, including painters Thomas and Maria Dewing, and sculptors James Earle Fraser and Henry Hering.

Beaman tried to negotiate at least one other portrait, perhaps that of his wife, as part of the purchase price, but was unsuccessful. Saint-Gaudens wrote that “My time is so occupied by my larger work that I am refusing to do medallions for a price that would more than pay for the entire property and I could not agree to execute for you in connection with this agreement, a portrait of anyone but yourself”—which may explain why the two portraits were not done as a pair and look so different.¹¹ By the time of Mrs. Beaman’s portrait, the price was \$2500.¹²

Hettie Sherman Evarts Beaman was the great-granddaughter of Roger Sherman, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and a cousin of General William T. Sherman, whose portrait and monument Saint-Gaudens also made.¹³ While she is not as publicly documented as her husband, Hettie Beaman had a lively and full life. In addition to her early European tour, Mrs. Beaman, her husband, and children took a six-month trip around the world in the 1890s. Life in

Cornish was exceedingly full with four children and all the attendant activities that the summer colony encouraged—parties, picnics, as well as the routine farming matters to be overseen. She was forty-eight years old when she began the first of twenty sittings for her portrait in October 1900.¹⁴

The MAG portraits¹⁵ display Saint-Gaudens's skill in capturing not only likeness but also personality in the linear, almost-drawn technique of low-relief. While the figures barely rise above the flat surface, nuances of hair, clothing, and facial expression are beautifully delineated. The artist skillfully uses light and shadow to indicate form, depending on it to fill in details not physically present.

The portraits, in their different poses and degrees of formality, express how Saint-Gaudens saw his two friends—Charles stands upright, self-assured, in a pose befitting the public status of the man, an important lawyer with ties to government and industry. Hettie is depicted seated in a Windsor chair—perhaps in a more domestic environment—to give homage to her family's Colonial roots. The personalities are evident, reflecting Saint-Gaudens's warm understanding of his friends.¹⁶

In addition to his friends' portraits, Saint-Gaudens had much earlier (in 1885) depicted the Beamans' young son William in a portrait meant as a kind of payment for the use of the farm in Cornish that the artist would later purchase. William was the same age as the Saint-Gaudenses' young son Homer, and the two boys became friends. At the time of the portrait, William's health was in question, and the portrait was inscribed with words of Stoic philosophy by Seneca. It is in many ways the most personal of the three family portraits.

Through his long relationship with the Evarts and Beaman families, Saint-Gaudens achieved professional and personal goals. Early commissions for these families helped to establish his reputation and brought him into contact with other clients of means. Charles Beaman, known as a "true bon vivant,"¹⁷ drove a hard real estate bargain but swept the Saint-Gaudens family into a bucolic and vivifying community that celebrated and nurtured artists and the arts. In his *Reminiscences* Saint-Gaudens acknowledged the important role that Beaman played in his life:

*Much of pleasure in life has happened here in the past twenty years, but nothing so delightful and in every sense as remarkable as the Fête Champêtre, which was given on my place to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Colony. The real founder was Mr. C. C. Beaman; there is no doubt of this, for he subsequently brought friends here directly, and it was through him and the foresight of Mrs. Saint-Gaudens that I came.*¹⁸

In his career Saint-Gaudens experimented often with portraiture, trying different surface patinas and positions. He tried both high and low relief, and unusual poses—such as an arm reaching out beyond the frame. The portraits of the Beamans are not his most adventurous, but they are quiet, intimate reflections of personal friends who remained life-long companions and supporters of the artist. In the large view of Saint-Gaudens's achievement they are fine examples of the skill and sensitivity that marked his mature style.

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