

Daniel Chester French's Summer Home, Studio and Gardens: *A Site for Creativity* | The Pedestal Winter 2021

GREETINGS FROM CHESTERWOOD'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Photo: Cassandra Sobn

It's a new year and a new beginning! I wish to thank all of you for your generous support throughout 2020. Your contributions not only support operations but will also enable us to engage regional artists in outdoor programming when Chesterwood officially opens its 52nd season on **Saturday, May 1**. During our off-season the grounds are open for free to visitors every day from dawn until dusk. Please come enjoy the beauty of the landscape and magnificent views from a winter perspective.

Based on the success of our outdoor programming last season we have asked Dr. Owen Lewis, an award-winning poet, to chair a new 2021 Arts Committee comprised of creative individuals from local non-profit organizations. Together they will curate programs in the fields of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and the spoken word. We will launch this new series with an intimate fundraising event on **Sunday, May 30**. I look forward to sharing the details with you soon!

Warmest regards,



Donna Hassler | dhassler@savingplaces.org



Chesterwood is delighted to welcome **Dr. Michele Cohen** to our Advisory Council. Michele is the Curator of the Architect of the Capitol where she is responsible for the stewardship of heritage assets throughout the Capitol campus. Michele has recently contributed a chapter entitled "The Preservation Dilemma: Confronting Two Controversial Monuments from the United States Capitol," for the forthcoming anthology, *Teachable Monuments* (Bloomsbury, 2020). Dr. Cohen lives part-time in Becket, MA.

HISTORIC ARTISTS' HOMES & STUDIOS: A PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic Artists' Homes and Studios (HAHS) proudly announces the addition of four new sites to its membership program that represent women who were groundbreaking in art and arts education, and contributed their talent, mentorship, and influence upon generations of younger upcoming artists. Collectively these sites expand women's narratives within the HAHS network while also increasing its geographic diversity. They are all strong examples of preserved 20th-century sites, representing not only painting and sculpture, but also furniture, textiles, and other decorative arts disciplines which provide a broader lens through which to examine our nation's artistic legacy.

The sites include:

- **Hilltop House and Studio** in rural New York, the former home of sculptor, ceramicist, and preservation activist, **Dorothy Riester**
- **Mabel and Victor D'Amico's Studio and Archive** on Long Island, NY, where the artist couple taught generations of students and pioneered modern, progressive art education
- **Eliel and Loja Saarinen's House** in Michigan, which represents a home as a total work of art through its design, textiles, and furniture
- **Pond Farm Pottery**, an art colony in California established by influential ceramicist and Bauhaus-trained master potter **Marguerite Wildenhain**.

In making its most recent selections the HAHS executive committee recognized the recent 100th anniversary of the signing of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, and as such, focused on sites with strong women artist narratives. The selections also align with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's national campaign, *Where Women Made History*, which identifies, honors,

and elevates places across the country where women have changed their communities and the world. These four new additions bring the total membership of HAHS sites to forty-eight, representing 22 states across the country.

We welcome these sites into the program and hope that you will explore their fascinating histories and engaging programming.

Valerie A. Balint, Senior Program Manager, Historic Artists' Homes and Studios | vbalint@savingplaces.org



Hilltop House and Studio, photo courtesy Stone Quarry Hill Art Park



Saarinen House, photo James Haefner, Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research

The HAHS program is generously supported by the Henry Luce Foundation and the Wyeth Foundation for American Art.

Are you an artist or have an artist in your life?

Consider the gift of full access to the grounds and gardens of Chesterwood to paint, draw, photograph, and be inspired. For a special rate of \$45 the **artist pass** includes access 7-days a week from dawn to dusk and automatic entry to a juried exhibition and sale over Columbus Day weekend.

www.chesterwood.org/join





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BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS PROJECTS

With the generous support of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Historic Site Fund of the National Trust, the Nancy Woodson Spire Foundation, and the Stockbridge Preservation Commission, Chesterwood is moving forward with its plans to increase its impact as a community asset through the rehabilitation of the Residence into an **artists' residency center**. The 1901 building, which has served as a house museum since it was opened to the public in 1969, is being reimagined in a way that honors its original use as a place of creative retreat. The **first two phases** have been completed already (exterior stucco work and upgrades to exterior utilities) and this spring we enter the **third phase**, which will address installing modern systems, meeting life-safety codes, and providing increased access for persons with disabilities within the interior.

We look forward to keeping you up to date on the progress of these critical improvements to the historic Residence.

Gerry Blache, Senior Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds | gblache@savingplaces.org



The Residence, 1922

IN MEMORIAM With great sadness we mourn the unexpected passing of our dedicated colleague and friend, Chris Chamberlin. Chris had worked on the Buildings and Grounds staff since 2018, supporting important projects such as the construction of the new Daniel Chester French Study Collection Gallery in the Barn. Chris's quick wit and warm, generous spirit will be greatly missed by all of us.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The proliferation of online content offered by our colleagues working in cultural organizations has kept us engaged with the physical places we miss, but just as importantly we have been engaged in contemporary topics related to the work we do. Daniel Chester French was in the national spotlight during a series of discussions hosted online this winter by the **National Archives Foundation**, which considered French's monumental, allegorical depictions of the four continents of *Africa, America, Asia, and Europe* (US Customs House, New York City), through a contemporary lens. Harold Holzer, DCF biographer, Michele Cohen, Curator to the Architect of the Capitol, and Brent Leggs, Director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, discussed the conditions in which these statues were created and how their troubling depictions can be re-contextualized.

www.archivesfoundation.org

Next season Chesterwood will continue to offer a safe, outdoor haven with many opportunities to learn and engage in the creative arts.

We look forward to seeing you at Chesterwood starting **May 1st** when tickets can be reserved online for tours of the Studio and Barn Gallery.

Margaret Cherin, Manager of Marketing & Business Operations | mcherin@savingplaces.org



“Talented Daughter of a Famous Father”: The Life and Sculpture of Margaret French Cresson

Dana Pilson, Curatorial Researcher
March 8 at 7pm *[via Zoom]*

Sponsored by the Joyce Milne Public Library, Williamstown, MA

Access at www.milnelibrary.org

CURATORIAL NEWS

We continue to augment our online educational content with the new exhibition **Highlights of the Chesterwood Studio** which offers visitors a virtual tour of Daniel Chester French's unique and magnificent studio in Stockbridge. The exhibition features images and explanatory text of some of French's most recognizable works, such as the 6-foot model of the seated *Abraham Lincoln* for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, and the exquisite marble *Andromeda*, which French was working on up until his death in 1931. Lesser known works, such as the first design for the Spencer Trask Memorial in Saratoga Springs, NY, and a plaster portrait of the model Audrey Munson, are also included. While nothing compares with experiencing the Studio in person, this exhibition aims to give the viewer a more up close and intimate view of key works and broaden the understanding of French's working methods.

This exhibition can be viewed at www.chesterwood.org/the-studio

Dana Pilson, Curatorial Researcher | dpilson@savingplaces.org



The Studio, detail, photo Don Freeman