



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM
MUSEUM OF ART

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Media Contact: Kim Hugo, (860) 838-4082
Kim.Hugo@thewadsworth.org

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**Avangrid Foundation Awards Grant to Wadsworth Atheneum
For Restoration of Sculpture on Main Street**

Hartford, Conn. (May 13, 2020)—The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art announced today that it has received a grant from the Avangrid Foundation to fund the restoration of Enoch Smith Woods’s *Nathan Hale* (1889), the bronze figure displayed on the Main Street lawn of the museum. Avangrid’s award of \$50,000 will fund the conservation of the slightly-larger-than-life portrait of the Revolutionary War martyr, perhaps the first such intervention since its installation in front of the museum in 1894. The grant will also realize a plan to illuminate the restored sculpture.

Deep Roots in Connecticut History

Nathan Hale is Connecticut’s official state hero and a national patriotic symbol. Since no life portraits of him exist, Woods’s bronze creatively memorializes Hale’s youthful vigor and moral courage. The portrait shows twenty-one-year-old Nathan Hale approaching execution with his right hand placed solidly across his chest, respectfully saluting his

country. The Connecticut-born schoolteacher became a national legend when he volunteered for a dangerous mission to go behind enemy lines and report on British troop movements. The plan proved fatal—Hale was captured and sentenced to hang for spying. A British engineer in attendance at Hale’s execution purportedly heard Hale proclaim, “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.”

Created for a state-run sculpture competition where Woods’s depiction of Hale was judged the runner-up, the design caught the eye of museum trustee James J. Goodwin, who then commissioned Woods to realize the sculpture, later donating it to the Wadsworth. The eight-foot tall bronze was cast by M.H. Mosman Foundry in Chicopee, Massachusetts, and placed atop an equally tall base made from New England granite. The sculpture’s placement at 600 Main Street is an echo of the Revolutionary-era role the site played, when the residence of founder Daniel Wadsworth’s family stood there. The nearly seventeen-foot-tall sculpture is complemented by two smaller-scale, commemorative bronze plaques near the museum’s entrance memorializing Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth’s meetings with General George Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette, and Count de Rochambeau.

“The renewal of this important sculpture—at once a public monument and an important work of art—continues our commitment to connecting and enlivening the cityscape,” said Thomas J. Loughman, Director and CEO of the Wadsworth. “We are thankful to have this opportunity, made possible with the help of the Avangrid Foundation, at a time when appreciation for the arts in our lives and public spaces is so essential.”

Nathan Hale has been out in the elements on Hartford’s Main Street for 126 years. The green corrosion, typical of outdoor works made with copper alloys, has significantly altered the appearance of the original bronze surface. Francis Miller, directing conservator of Conserve ART will lead the conservation treatment, in collaboration with the Wadsworth’s objects conservator. Expected to begin in the summer of 2020, treatments will correct discoloration and prevent deterioration of the metal.

During the restoration process, interpretive resources about the work of art and the conservation treatment will be installed on the protective fence surrounding the perimeter of the sculpture. The on-site treatment process and accompanying interpretive materials will provide exciting opportunities for museum staff and the Conserve ART team to interact with the public and share knowledge about the care required to preserve public art. Upon completion, exterior lighting designed by George Sexton Associates will be installed ensuring that the restored work of art remains a focal point on Main Street into the future.

“Institutions like the Wadsworth Atheneum and their initiatives to reduce barriers to access—such as their dedication to public art—help make our communities viable and are imperative for cultural endurance,” said Nicole Licata Grant, Director of the Avangrid Foundation. “The story of Nathan Hale’s heroism and sacrifice lives on through this monument. Through the restoration and illumination of this iconic work of art we honor our collective heritage, perseverance, and renewal.”

Woods's *Nathan Hale* was the first public monument to be featured on the Wadsworth's grounds. Over the years, various sculptures from the collection have been installed on the surrounding perimeter of the museum, such as Tony Smith's *Amaryllis* (1965) which remains on view today. Presently, a new initiative involving rotating loans of large-scale contemporary sculpture is revitalizing the presence of public art, and expanding the museum experience beyond the gallery walls. Today, Conrad Shawcross's *Monolith (Optic)* (2016) and William Turnbull's *Large Horse* (1990) accompany *Nathan Hale* and *Amaryllis* on the Wadsworth's front lawn for all to enjoy.

About the artist Enoch Smith Woods (1849–1919)

Born in Nova Scotia, Enoch Smith Woods became a U.S. citizen in the late 1860s. A self-taught artist, Woods is believed to have started working as a sculptor following an injury that put an end to his career as a mason. His work displays prominently throughout Hartford: in addition to the sculpture of *Nathan Hale* (1889), a plaque dedicated to *Horace Wells* (1894) is installed at the corner of Main and Asylum Streets, opposite the Old State House; and outside the State Capitol stands *Colonel Thomas Knowlton* (1895). Beyond these works, little is known about Woods, who left Hartford in 1901, and died in Manchester, New Hampshire in 1919.

About the Avangrid Foundation

The Avangrid Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization that funds philanthropic investments that primarily impact communities where AVANGRID, Inc. and its subsidiaries operate. Since 2002, the Avangrid Foundation and its predecessors have invested more than \$24 million in partnerships that focus on building sustainable, vital and healthy communities; preserving cultural and artistic heritage; advancing education; and improving people's lives. The Avangrid Foundation is committed to advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the United States. For more information, visit avangridfoundation.org.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

COVID-19 Response

To support the effort to contain the spread of COVID-19 the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is temporarily closed effective March 14. All programs, tours, and films are canceled during this time. Programs and events will be rescheduled when possible.

Images (left to right): Detail of Enoch Smith Woods's *Nathan Hale*, 1889. Bronze. Gift of James J. Goodwin, 1892.1; View of public sculpture installed on the Main Street lawn outside the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2020.

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