

Lift Every Voice, an exhibit **presented by the Saugerties Historical Society**

February 17, 2018, 2p.m. to 5 p.m.

Kiersted House 119 Main Street, Saugerties, NY

PRESS RELEASE

Saugerties, New York, *Lift Every Voice*, an exhibit presented by the Saugerties Historical Society featuring seven sculptures created by Augusta Savage, Sculptor, Educator, Civil Rights Activist and Saugerties resident will open on February 17, 2018, 2p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Kiersted House, 119 Main Street, Saugerties, NY.

Augusta Savage, 1892-1962, was a resident of a small hamlet known as Katsbaan in the Town of Saugerties from 1945 until shortly before her death in 1962. "Gus" as she was known locally by her friends and neighbors retired from the New York art world in 1945 choosing a simpler life. To support herself in her new surroundings, Gus raised chickens and pigeons that were sold in NYC, and worked at the laboratory of Herman Knaust taking care of mice. Knaust also kept her supplied with clay so that she could continue to create sculptures. Her subjects were the children who came to visit her frequently as well as animals. Ms. Savage accepted commissions when she could get them, one of those commissions was a bust of the reclusive author and journalist, Poultney Bigelow who resided at Malden on Hudson.

A gifted teacher, to augment what little income she could earn, Gus taught art to local children and spent some of her time writing children's books and poetry. She was also invited on occasion to give talks, one in particular was a talk about the Congo that she presented at the Atonement Lutheran Church in 1961.

Before relocating from NYC to Saugerties, Ms. Savage led a trailblazing career. She was considered to be one of the leading artist of the Harlem Renaissance, an African-American literary and artistic movement during the early 20th century. During the Depression she lobbied the WPA (Works Projects Administration) to help find work for young artists and was appointed as a director at the WPA's Harlem Community Center.

In 1929 she was awarded an opportunity to study in Paris and while there traveled to other European countries. Upon returning to the US in 1932 she established the Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts and became the first black artist to join the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors (now called the National Association of Women Artists). Ms. Savage was an active spokesperson for African American artists and in 1935 was a principal organizer of the Harlem Artists Guild.

In 1939 Savage was commissioned to create a sculpture for the New York World's Fair. Inspired by a poem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" by James Weldon Johnson she created *The Harp*. The sculpture was 16 feet tall and featured 12 singing African-American youth in graduated heights as the strings. The figure of a young man kneeling in front offered music in his hands. Although considered one of her major works, *The Harp* was destroyed at the end of the fair.

Lift Every Voice, the exhibit presented by the Saugerties Historical Society, is in celebration of the life of Augusta Savage and Black History Month. It will continue from its opening on February 17 through August, 2018. This exhibit is made possible through the generosity of the Baran family to whom these sculptures were given by Ms. Savage. For operating hours and directions visit the society's website www.saugertieshistoricalsociety.org.