



# Foundation Document Overview

## Weir Farm National Historic Site

Connecticut



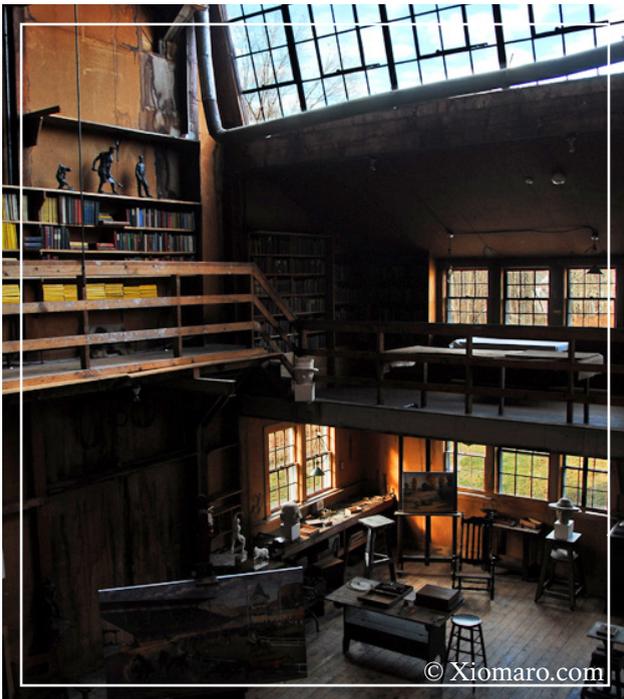
### Contact Information

For more information about the *Weir Farm National Historic Site Foundation Document*, contact: [wefa\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:wefa_superintendent@nps.gov) or (203) 834-1896 x 0 or write to: Superintendent, Weir Farm National Historic Site, 735 Nod Hill Road, Wilton, CT 06897

## Purpose



*WEIR FARM NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE preserves the house, studio, farm buildings, and rural Connecticut landscape that inspired Julian Alden Weir's transition into American Impressionism and the artistic expression of generations of artists that continues to inspire and educate visitors.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Weir Farm National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Weir Farm was the home, workplace, and rural retreat of Julian Alden Weir (1852–1919), a leading figure in American art and the development of American Impressionism. The farm was a focal point for fellow artists to experiment with Impressionism.
- Since the 19th century, Weir Farm has been a source of inspiration for generations of artists, including Weir's daughter, Dorothy Weir Young, her husband Mahonri Young, and Sperry and Doris Andrews.
- The landscape designed by Weir and his family is integral to the art created there and remains largely intact. The views captured in hundreds of paintings are still identifiable at Weir Farm National Historic Site.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Archeological Resources**
- **Collections and Archives**
- **Continuity of Artists Working in the Park**
- **Cultural Landscape**
- **Historic Structures**
- **Views – Historic Painting Sites**

Weir Farm National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Viewsheds Outside Park Boundary**
- **Natural Resources**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Weir Farm's history as a creative haven for nurturing the transformation of artistic expression sheds light on how and why artistic ideas and techniques take root and mature.
- Beginning with the ownership of Julian Alden Weir, Weir Farm continued to function as a retreat, a place apart, that now provides the 21st-century artist and visitor with a setting that nurtures inspiration, reflection, collaboration, and community.
- Weir Farm has a continuing tradition of artistic expression and imagination built on a foundation established by Julian Alden Weir and his experimentation with color and light. This tradition continued for several generations through the talents of owners/artists and today is preserved and sustained by the National Park Service and partners for visitors today and in the future.
- The artistry of Julian Alden Weir and the many artists associated with Weir Farm challenge us to look carefully and observe purposefully the palette of light, color, and pattern in nature all around us.



# Description

Weir Farm National Historic Site, a National Park for the Arts, was associated with the development of American Impressionism during the height of the artistic movement in the 1890s and early 1900s. The farm was home to three generations of American artists. Julian Alden Weir (1852–1919), a leading figure in American art and the development of American Impressionism, acquired the farm in 1882. After Weir, the artistic legacy was continued by his daughter, painter Dorothy Weir Young and her husband, sculptor Mahonri M. Young, followed by New England landscape painters Sperry and Doris Andrews. The views and buildings that inspired the artistic works of Weir, Young, Andrews, and others—the house, studios, outbuildings, and domestic areas and the surrounding gardens, animal enclosures, and agricultural features, as well as the woodlands, pond, and meadows—are expertly preserved. Designed by artists, the park welcomes everyone to enjoy the power of creativity, art, and nature as part of the American experience.

Weir Farm National Historic Site was established by the 101st Congress on October 31, 1990, through Public Law 101-485. The park is in a residential neighborhood in the towns of Ridgefield and Wilton in the Southwest Hills Ecoregion of southern Connecticut. It includes successional old fields, mesic successional hardwood forests, vernal wetland areas, streams, a pond, and exposed bedrock ridges. The park boasts a 60-acre cultural landscape consisting of 15 historic structures as well as historic gardens, orchards, terraces, fields, stone walls, and hundreds of historic painting sites. There are 3 miles of trail on park property and more than 7 miles of trail in two bordering open spaces—the 110-acre Weir Preserve to the southwest (including 37 acres donated by Cora Weir Burlingham), and the 29-acre Nod Hill Refuge to the northeast. The Weir Preserve is owned by the Weir Farm Art Center, a private partner of the park, and managed by the Weir Preserve Stewardship Committee. Additionally, the park maintains a museum collection of more than 200,000 archives and objects including original paintings, prints, sculptures, decorative arts, and furnishings associated with the site and the history of the Weir, Young, and Andrews families.

The famously artistic Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio officially opened to the public in May 2014, fully restored and historically furnished. Park grounds are open year-round from sunup to sundown with access to historic structures offered seasonally. The park welcomes more than 40,000 annual recreational visitors with 80% visiting May through October. The artistic tradition at Weir Farm National Historic Site continues through a variety of park programs including the Artist-in-Residence program, which is managed in partnership with the Weir Farm Art Center; the Visiting Artist Program; the Weir Farm Art Academy; Impressionist Painting and Art Therapy Workshops; and Take Part in Art. Thousands of artists travel to the park every year to be inspired by the rare quality of painter's light unique to Weir Farm National Historic Site and to paint and draw *en plein air* (a French term referring to painting outdoors and use of light) in the paintable landscape. The National Park Service, together with the Friends of Weir Farm National Historic Site, the Weir Farm Art Center, other partners, and a dedicated team of volunteers, create a visitor experience that empowers everyone to appreciate why a visit to the park is essential to personal creativity and inspiration.

