

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Weir Farm National Historic Site  
Wilton, Connecticut



# AN ARTISTS' RETREAT

## J. ALDEN WEIR'S FARM IN CONNECTICUT



WEIR FARM NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY



# **AN ARTISTS' RETREAT**



J. Alden Weir, *The Fishing Party*, ca. 1915, oil on canvas, 28"x23 1/8", The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. In 1896, Weir created a large pond on his Branchville, Connecticut farm. Here he depicts a group on the rustic bridge leading to the pond.

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**Deborah S. Gardner  
Christine G. McKay**

**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Printed 2009**

Cover illustration: In front of the Weir House, Branchville, Connecticut, October, 1901.  
Left to Right: Caroline Weir Ely, Cora Weir Burlingham, unidentified friend, Ella Baker Weir,  
John Ferguson Weir, Dorothy Weir Young, Julian Alden Weir.  
(WEFA 9445)

This report was completed in 2005 but not edited and formatted for printing until 2009.

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Deborah S. Gardner  
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U.S. Department of the Interior

2009

Recommended:

  
Louis P. Hutchins

6/3/09  
Date

Senior Curator, Northeast Museum Services Center

Concurred:

  
Paul O. Weinbaum

6/3/09  
Date

History Program Manager, Northeast Region

Approved:

  
Linda Cook

6/3/09  
Date

Superintendent, Weir Farm National Historic Site



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## PREFACE

The Weir Farm National Historic Site in Ridgefield and Wilton, Connecticut is a significant part of our national heritage. Established in 1990, it is the only national park dedicated to the stewardship of a property associated with an American painter.

As the home and workplace of the noted American impressionist painter J. Alden Weir (1852-1919), the landscape of Weir Farm was the subject of many of his paintings and sketches. Other eminent American artists, including Albert Pinkham Ryder, John Twachtman, Theodore Robinson, and Childe Hassam also found inspiration for their art at the farm and in the surrounding countryside. Weir acquired 153 acres in 1882, and by his death in 1919 had expanded it to 238 acres. Weir's daughter Dorothy inherited the farm, painted in her father's studio, made improvements to the house, built a new studio for her husband, Mahonri Mackintosh Young, and became the biographer of her father. Mahonri Young, a noted sculptor in the realist tradition, sketched the farm and the countryside, and completed major works in his studio. His children, Mahonri Sharp "Bill" Young, and Cecelia Agnes Young Lay, inherited the property in 1957. They sold a portion of it, including the Weir house, to their father's friends, the young artists Doris and Sperry Andrews. Additional land was sold to other individuals. The Andrews cared for the property until 1990 when it was acquired by the Trust for Public Land and subsequently the National Park Service.

This report was commissioned by the National Park Service to provide information about the social, cultural, and commercial context of Weir's work as an artist and teacher; the significance of various locations for his work and family life, including Ridgefield (Wilton) and Windham, Connecticut, New York City, and the Adirondack region in New York State; critical and marketplace assessments of Weir's work as an artist; comprehensive biographical portraits of his wives, Anna Baker Weir and Ella Baker Weir, as well as of his middle daughter, Dorothy Weir Young, including her work as an artist, as her father's biographer, and as the caretaker for Branchville; Mahonri Young's career, marriage to Dorothy, and his relationship to Branchville; and the ownership of the Branchville property by Doris and Sperry Andrews and their cooperation with preservation groups and the extended Weir family, particularly Weir's youngest daughter, Cora Weir Carlin Burlingham, to save the land and the buildings.

The report contains much new information about a number of topics which has not appeared in either previous NPS reports on the site or in other secondary sources. These include: Weir's friendships, his teaching career, the marketplace for his art, and critics' assessments of his art from 1879 to 2003; the role of Weir's extended family in shaping his career and the legacy of Branchville; Dorothy Young's life and career; Mahonri Young's life at Branchville; and biographical and career data about Doris and Sperry Andrews.

## METHODOLOGY

The report is divided into three sections which coincide with the changing ownership of Weir Farm. Part I surveys the life and career of J. Alden Weir (1852-1919). Part II coincides with the management and ownership of the farm by Dorothy Weir (1919-1931), Dorothy Weir Young and Mahonri Young (1931-1947), and Mahonri Young (1947-1957). Part III documents the ownership of the farm by Doris and Sperry Andrews, and its transfer to public ownership (1958-1990).

Both authors conducted research and wrote the report. They used the valuable and comprehensive archival collections at the Weir Farm National Historic Site (WEFA), and more than half a dozen other repositories. Additional useful archives and manuscript collections were found at: the Archives of American Art, New York City Branch; the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California; Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah; and the Frick Art Reference Library in New York City. Other important primary sources included oral histories in the archival collections of the Weir Farm National Historic Site (WEFA), the *New York Times* (1878-2004), and conversations with family members and scholars on various topics. Critical secondary sources included National Park Service reports, and comprehensive biographies of Weir by his daughter, Dorothy Weir Young, who wrote *The Life & Letters of J. Alden Weir*, and by Doreen Bolger Burke, author of *J. Alden Weir, An American Impressionist*. Norma Davis's biography, *A Song of Songs. A Biography of Mahonri Mackintosh Young*, was essential for Young's career and his marriage to Dorothy Weir. Many studies of individual artists, such as William Merritt Chase, Childe Hassam, Willard Metcalf, John Singer Sargent, and John Twachtman, and of particular places and movements, such as the art colony at Cos Cob, Connecticut, or American Impressionism, and of Weir friends, such as Charles E. S. Wood, were also extremely helpful. Information was also derived from websites which were deemed reliable because of their sponsorship by, for example, museums, libraries and archives, government agencies, and historic sites. All sources are listed in full in the footnotes and generally all sources except newspaper articles are listed in the bibliography.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

### *Personal Names*

ABB	Anna Bartlett Baker (mother of Anna, Ella and Cora Baker)
ADB	Anna Dwight Baker
ABW	Anna Baker Weir
CESW	Charles Erskine Scott Wood
CH	Childe Hassam
CL	Charles Lay
DA	Doris Andrews
DW	Dorothy Weir
DWY	Dorothy Weir Young
EB	Ella Baker
EBW	Ella Baker Weir
JAW	Julian Alden Weir
JHT	John Henry Twachtman
JFW	John Ferguson Weir
JS	Jack Sears
MC	Minere Cunningham
MMY	Mahonri Mackintosh Young
MMY II	Mahonri Mackintosh Young II
SBF	Sara Bard Field
SBFW	Sara Bard Field Wood
SA	Sperry Andrews

### *Collections and Titles*

AAA	Archives of American Art
BYU	Brigham Young University
CLR	<i>Cultural Landscape Report</i>
Frick	Frick Art Reference Library
HSR	<i>Historic Structures Report</i>
Huntington	Henry E. Huntington Library
WEFA	Weir Farm National Historic Site Archival Collections



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This report could not have been written without the gracious assistance of many individuals. In particular, Louis Hutchins, Senior Curator/Historian, National Park Service, Northeast Museum Services Center, has helped shepherd the project from start to finish.

The staff of the National Park Service at the Weir Farm National Historic Site has also been of great assistance with the research. In particular, Museum Technicians Hope Kocian and Dolores Tirri of the Weir Farm NHS helped the authors find their way through voluminous collections and were always available to answer extra questions. Anne DeGraaf, former Chief of Visitor Services at Weir Farm NHS, also helped introduce us to the site and resources; Ranger Clifford Laube gave us a helpful tour as an introduction to the site. Careful review of the various drafts of the manuscript were provided by: Randy Turner, Superintendent, Weir Farm NHS; Maria Abonnel, Chief of Visitor Services and Collections Management, Weir Farm NHS; Gay Vietzke, former Museum Technician at Weir Farm NHS; Elliot Foulds, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation; Paul Weinbaum, Northeast Regional Office of the NPS; and Louis Hutchins, Northeast Museum Services Center. Constance Evans, Executive Director of the Weir Farm Trust, also provided information and suggestions to the authors.

Members of the Weir, Young, and Andrews families were generous in talking with us and answering many questions. These included the late Doris Andrews, Charles Burlingham Jr., William B. Carlin, Barbara and John McGrath, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II.

A number of archivists and librarians provided invaluable assistance: at Brigham Young University, Russ Taylor and Haybron Adams of the Harold Lee Library; and at the BYU Museum of Art, Senior Registrar Susan G. Thompson; at the Henry E. Huntington Library, Peter J. Blodgett, Curator of Western Historical Manuscripts; at the Frick Art Reference Library, Sally Webster, Curator of Archives and Special Collections, and her staff, especially Susan Chore; at the Archives of American Art, New York branch, Trina Yeckley; at The Century Club, Russ Flinchum; at the Salmagundi Club, John Morehouse; at the New York Junior League, Leah Osborne; and at the New York University Archives, Nancy Cricco.

A number of other scholars and experts took the time to talk with us and provide valuable advice about many topics in the study. These include: John Claghorn, Nicholas Cunningham, Norma Davis, Elizabeth Goldberg, Patricia Hills, Beth Harrington, Julia Gatta, Robin Pell, Lisa Peters, Meg Stocker, Deedee Wigmore, and the late Vance Jordan. Many of their particular contributions are found in more detail in the text.

Finally, we also want to thank our families for their tremendous support and patience, particularly Kevin McKay and Gregory Nolan. They provided technical assistance, incidental observations, and often accompanied us on field trips. They now know almost as much about the Weirs, the Youngs, and the Andrews as the authors.



## INTRODUCTION

Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919) - variously described as an American Impressionist, tonalist, realist, conservative, liberal, academic, dreamer, mentor, teacher, perpetual student, ardent fisherman, lover of the outdoors, steady and affectionate friend, loyal club man, congenial host, connoisseur with eclectic tastes, delightful storyteller, beloved family member, and as deeply religious, lucky, unlucky, cheerful, dissatisfied - was an artist and a man who defied easy classification. This was particularly true in the complexity of his relationships to the numerous sites that were important to his work during the course of many years, ranging from New York City and Weir Farm to Windham, Willimantic, and West Point. Even brief sojourns in other locations near and far, including the Adirondacks, Old Lyme, the English countryside, the Bahamas, and the Oregon wilderness, touched him emotionally and artistically. His association with Weir Farm had many elements - as a family home, as a place of artistic production, as a source of personal renewal, and as an economic resource. The complicated orchestration of these locales and his work and family life was but another aspect of his personality and artistic legacy. These personal traits are recognizable in several observations, drawn from different historical vantage points by those who knew him or his work well.

In 1952, artist and Weir son-in-law Mahonri Mackintosh Young recalled his surprise at a comment that Weir made toward the end of his life, "I have never had any luck except in my family-I have been very fortunate there," for it contrasted so greatly with his own sense of the artist as a buoyant person, "the Weir of the hearty laugh, the Weir of the generous handshake, the courageous, forward-looking Weir, the handsome and ever-youthful Weir." This was the artist, noted Mahonri, who was respected for his achievements in American art by both his peers and the younger generation of artists, and also for his commitment to change:

from his early years he was in the van[guard]; his sympathy and participation were always ready for any new movement that promised greater liberty for the individual and that would postpone the evil day when the setting bonds of criticism and official inertia would cramp and circumscribe the free and joyous activities of the artists. He was concerned, always, for the best, as he saw it, in the art of the past, and the most promising in the art of the present.<sup>1</sup>

Young saw Weir's leadership in creating the Society of American Artists and Ten American Painters, and his encouragement of colleagues and students to find their own artistic vision,

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<sup>1</sup> "I have never" and all remaining quotes in paragraph and block quote from Mahonri M. Young, "Julian Alden Weir, An Appreciation," in *J. Alden Weir, 1852-1919, Centennial Exhibition* (New York: American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1952), n.p. Hereafter cited as Young, "Appreciation," in *Weir Centennial*.

as reflecting intensely felt beliefs.

Thirty years later, Charles Burlingham Jr., Weir's grandson, offered a compact assessment of the artist's intent, which refers to yet another framework for assessing his achievements. In a letter intended for the *New York Times* but never published, he responded to what he considered a mean-spirited article by art critic John Russell about a major Weir retrospective in 1983 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Russell, said Burlingham, did not recognize "Weir's unaffected and personal evocation of a gentler, quieter age in which family, friends and colleagues were the core of life, and sunlit fields could still be seen across a country road."<sup>2</sup> With this observation, Burlingham identified a different set of values at the heart of Weir's work. That these could co-exist with Mahonri Young's ideas about Weir's art is further evidence of Weir's complexity.

A third perspective, which allowed for a more sophisticated analysis of his work, has emerged from the last two decades of research on Weir and his contemporaries who were experimenting with a variety of styles and subject matter in the 1880s and 1890s, influenced by French Impressionism, Japanese prints, and other trends. Paying less attention to such absolute labels as "Impressionist," or "realist," scholars found more nuanced interpretations of the accomplishments of American artists in that era. Looking at Weir from this point of view, art historian Nicolai Cooksey Jr. wrote that Impressionism was

part of something larger in his intellectual, artistic, and perhaps even his emotional make-up . . . But surely his greatest, most appealing, and most significant virtue is his perpetually youthful curiosity, his restless discontent, his willingness always to do something new or even try something old if he had not done it before. He may have paid a price for his variability, during his life and after his death, but he had no choice and could not be otherwise.<sup>3</sup>

The occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of J. Alden Weir on August 30, 2002 provided an appropriate moment for commissioning this historic resource study. Using this new scholarship, as well as unmined primary materials, to explore the range of social and cultural factors that influenced the artist, has resulted in a richer and more complete portrait of his personal and professional life. In undertaking this study, it is not the authors' purpose to duplicate past Weir Farm reports, the work of Weir's daughter and biographer Dorothy Weir Young, or the publications of art historian Doreen Bolger Burke and other scholars, or

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<sup>2</sup> "Weir's unaffected," in Charles Burlingham Jr., "To the Editor," October 19, 1983, in Frick Art Reference Library Archives & Special Collections, Peter H. Davidson & Co. Weir Records 1957-1991, Weir Family, Box 5, Folder 3. Hereafter cited as Frick, Davidson, Weir Family. Boxes and files hereafter cited as B/F, 5/3.

<sup>3</sup> Nicolai Cikovsky Jr., "J. Alden Weir and Impressionism," in Constance Evans, ed., *A Connecticut Place: Weir Farm, An American Painter's Rural Retreat* (Wilton, CT: Weir Farm Trust, Wilton, Connecticut, in collaboration with the National Park Service, Weir Farm National Historic Site, 2000), 17. Hereafter cited as Cikovsky in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*.

to engage in the debates concerning the place of Impressionism in Weir's overall artistic style.<sup>4</sup> Rather, it is our decision to use a chronological narrative as the best way to provide a context and relate to other secondary studies in addressing the issues outlined in the *Historic Resource Study Scope of Work*:

1. Discuss the significance and role of Weir among his contemporaries and his stature within the art world since his death,
2. Provide a context for understanding Weir Farm as a late nineteenth/early twentieth century artist's retreat,
3. Evaluate Weir's relationship to Weir Farm in the context of his other properties,
4. Explain the significance of Mahonri Young as an American artist and his artistic relationship to the Branchville property, 1931-1957, and
5. Trace the preservation of the Weir legacy at Weir Farm, 1919-1990.

With the chronological format, we provide a general guide as to where the material for each topic in the Scope of Work is located.

### **Part I. Julian Alden Weir, His Life and Career**

Part One focuses primarily on the nearly 40-year period from Weir's acquisition of the Branchville farm in 1882 until his death in 1919, ending with an assessment of his stature since his death. The result should be a better sense of Weir in the larger context of his times and in trends of the art world and art markets.

Considering Weir's significance among his contemporaries and stature within the art world posthumously, Chapters One through Six discuss aspects of Weir's life that have not generally been considered at length in the past, such as his close relationship with his brother and the family of his wife Anna Baker, the importance of his artistic and non-artistic friendships and his social and professional networks, his participation in all aspects of the art profession (including teaching, jury work, and holding office in art organizations), and his dealings with galleries and dealers in the art marketplace. The analysis of Weir's stature after his death also continues in Chapters Seven and Nine, and also in Chapter Ten, where it is the main subject.

Providing the context for understanding Branchville as an artist's retreat is addressed

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<sup>4</sup> The most comprehensive biographical information on J. Alden Weir is found in Dorothy Weir Young, *The Life & Letters of J. Alden Weir*, edited with an introduction by Lawrence W. Chisholm (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), hereafter cited as Young, *Life & Letters*; and in Doreen Bolger Burke, *J. Alden Weir, An American Impressionist* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1983), hereafter cited as Burke, *Weir*. Burke will be referred to in the footnotes and the text as Burke although as the Director of the Baltimore Museum of Art she was subsequently known as Doreen Bolger. Additional insights are provided in a number of studies by Nicolai Cikovsky Jr., Hildegard Cummings, Helen K. Fusscas, William H. Gerdts, Susan G. Larkin, Lisa Peters, and H. Barbara Weinberg, and in National Park Service reports, all of which will be cited in full on the following pages.

largely in Chapter Five in a discussion of Weir's teaching and entertainment of fellow artists there, as well as with an overview of the art colony movement and Weir Farm's place in it. This topic is also interwoven in Chapters Three, Four, and Six, and in Part Two, Chapters Seven and Nine, and in Part Three, Chapter Eleven.

The relationship of Branchville to Weir's other properties, particularly his in-laws' home in Windham, Connecticut, his property in Keene Valley located in New York's Adirondack region, and his homes in New York City, is examined in Chapter Three and, in fact, throughout Part One as Weir travels continually from place to place. Although he came to love Branchville best of all, this study finds that the importance of Windham in his life and art should not be understated, and it should, in fact, be elevated in any future interpretive activities. The house in Windham was frequented by Julian and his family (often two months a year and more). He entertained his friends at Windham, he was a member of the church vestry there, and he buried his infant son and first wife Anna in the cemetery near-by. It was an important site in awakening his love for the Connecticut landscape and shaping his art. He painted in a studio there and some of his most famous works of art were depictions of places in neighboring Willimantic. In sum, Windham was very important emotionally and artistically for Weir. Although he did not control or reshape the property as he did at Branchville, he was inspired by the landscape to create some of his best known works, and nurtured by his in-laws, the Baker family, who provided him with warmth and encouragement, and financial assistance, so that he could pursue his art. Therefore, in Chapter Three, we have provided a brief history of the Baker family and its home in Windham, Connecticut because it is germane to the importance of Windham in Weir's life and art. Also relevant is a more serious consideration of his Baker family resources, the focus of the last section in Chapter Six, "Financial Resources for the Next Generation." The family fortune that came to Weir in his marriages to two Baker sisters, Anna and Ella, permitted him to pursue his career as a painter, and to pursue it in comfort and style. Eventually, those financial resources allowed the second generation, through Dorothy Weir Young, to preserve the farm at Branchville.<sup>5</sup>

## **Part Two. The Second Generation at Branchville**

Assessing the significance of Mahonri Mackintosh Young and his relationship to the property focuses broadly on the second generation at Branchville under the stewardship, first of Ella Baker Weir and Dorothy Weir, then Dorothy and her sisters, followed by Dorothy and Mahonri Young, and finally, Mahonri Young alone. Fairly complete portraits of Dorothy and Mahonri are included here as they have not been similarly set forth in any previous narrative studies of the site. Dorothy's reticence about her role in the family left her (as well as her siblings, mother and stepmother) out of the *Life & Letters* that she published

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<sup>5</sup> The portion of the Baker family assets that went to the third Baker sister, Cora, assisted Weir's children during her lifetime and after Weir's death, and later after her demise. Cora's portion of the Baker inheritance was augmented by marriages to three wealthy men: Henry S. F. Davis, John A. Rutherford, and Paul D. Laighton. See Chapters 6 and 7 for additional detail on Cora's life and assets.

about her father. Yet the trajectory of her early life complements the portrait of her father, and establishes the background for her marriage to Mahonri Young and their life together at Branchville. A realistic assessment of Mahonri's tenure at Branchville after Dorothy's death (1947-1957), and his own family's relationship to Branchville, is also missing from previous publications. That understanding is important as background for the transition to Part Three.

**Part Three. The Legacy of J. Alden Weir and Weir Farm**

Weir's significance and stature in the profession is addressed in chapter Ten, although the topic is also covered in Chapters Seven and Nine. The analysis of Weir's reputation after his death is traced from the 1920s, when Dorothy Weir Young began to handle estate matters, through the scholarship, exhibitions, and market conditions of the first years of the twenty-first century. Chapter Eleven briefly touches on the preservation of the legacy of Weir Farm. It considers the ownership and then continuing residency of the Sperry and Doris Andrews family at the site and their continuation of the use of Branchville as a home for artists; the evolution of the land and site preservation movement; and the activities and events that culminated in the establishment of the Weir Farm National Historic Site under the aegis of the National Park Service and the Weir Farm Trust.



## **PART ONE**

### **JULIAN ALDEN WEIR, HIS LIFE AND CAREER**



## CHAPTER ONE

### PREPARATION FOR A CAREER IN THE ARTS, 1852-1877

#### FAMILY BACKGROUND

Julian Alden Weir was born on August 30, 1852 at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, located on the Hudson River 50 miles north of New York City. He was the son of Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889), a distinguished painter and the academy's professor of drawing, and his second wife, Susan Bayard Weir (1817-1900). Robert Weir was a self taught artist whose youthful work so impressed two New York businessmen that they provided the funds for a year's sojourn in Europe to develop his potential. He spent 1824-25 in Italy, then the center for aspiring American artists, studying classical and renaissance art by sketching and copying. He also did original work, chiefly in Rome where he shared quarters with sculptor Horatio Greenough. During his stay abroad, he traveled to Florence and other Italian cities, and collected prints to bring home with him as a reference collection. The paintings he produced upon his return to New York were so well received that he was elected in 1829, at age 26, a full academician of the relatively new National Academy of Design. The Academy had been founded three years earlier, dedicated to promoting the arts in America, a pioneering effort in a young nation. Membership in the Academy was limited to artists who were provided with a place to meet and exhibit their work, and to offer instruction to students.<sup>6</sup>

In 1829, Weir married Louisa Ferguson (1807-1845). Within a few years, he had a growing family to support. At a time when the art market was small and slow, Robert Weir welcomed an appointment in 1834 as the Instructor of Drawing at West Point, the start of a 42-year career there. The ability to draw well, which included learning how to depict terrain and make maps, was an important skill for the engineers being trained at the military academy, and Weir eventually taught every student who matriculated. Even so, he had time for painting in the studio provided to him. In addition to portraits, and the industrial scenes that were atypical for the era, he developed an interest in landscape painting, inspired by the beauty of the Hudson River Highlands. He was passionate about his profession and, as his

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<sup>6</sup> Information about Robert Weir from Irene Weir, *Robert W. Weir, Artist* (New York: House of Field-Doubleday, 1947), hereafter Weir, *Robert Weir*; the *Dictionary of American Biography*; and from various articles and books on his son Julian. See also *Robert W. Weir of West Point: Illustrator, Teacher and Poet* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1976). Irene Weir (1862-1944) was the daughter of Julian's older brother Walter Weir, and was a trained artist. For additional information about her, see below, "Recommendations for Further Research." On the National Academy, see Eliot Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

granddaughter Dorothy Weir Young noted, “in the days before public art galleries and art libraries, before photographs and easy reproductions, Robert Weir’s collections, particularly the engravings of old masters and contemporaries, gave his artist sons John and Julian a rare background.”<sup>7</sup> In addition to offering his children access to these unusual resources, which had been purchased during his studies abroad, Robert Weir set an example of adherence to high standards, hard work, and a strong religious faith.

Robert Weir had been raised in a religious home, but his own commitment had been deepened during his preparation to paint the *Embarkation of the Pilgrims*, which he worked on from 1836 to 1843. “From that time on,” reported his granddaughter Irene Weir, “his life was characterized by great religious earnestness.”<sup>8</sup> The large history painting (14’ x 20’) was one of four commissioned for the Capitol Rotunda in Washington DC. It depicted the Pilgrims’ 1620 departure from Delft-Haven in the Netherlands for England, prior to their momentous journey to the New World in search of a place to practice their religion without interference by the state. The picture was widely exhibited before its installation and contributed to Weir’s national reputation. He donated his \$10,000 fee to help pay for the construction of the Church of the Holy Innocents in Highland Falls, near West Point, which he designed. Young observed that Robert Weir’s creed was not “set apart from everyday life, but a living thing that entered into his every act and deed.” Robert admonished his son Julian, when he was far from home, to “try to keep yourself pure and avoid all Godlessness. I am glad that you adhere to keeping Sunday holy; sin comes on little by little, so that you must always be watchful.” Young added that not until late in his life did Julian Weir draw on Sundays.<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Young’s nephew, Charles Burlingham Jr., the son of her sister Cora, recalled that his mother described Sundays where prayers were said in the living room and no games were played. Julian’s friend Theodore Robinson noted in his diary after visiting Branchville: “Sunday, as is his wont, he read the church service - the grown-ups listening and the babies crawling over him the while.”<sup>10</sup> In Windham, Julian served as a vestryman of St. Paul’s Church for decades.

Robert Weir’s wife, Louisa, died in 1845, leaving nine children. She was the first of the family to be buried in Highland Falls. The following year Weir married Susan Martha Bayard (1817-1900), a clergyman’s daughter who had come to West Point as governess to the Weir children. They had an additional seven children. Of the sixteen that Robert Weir fathered, thirteen survived to adulthood and Julian was the tenth and the youngest son. He

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<sup>7</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 5. John was Julian’s next oldest half-brother, John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926).

<sup>8</sup> Weir, *Robert Weir*, 148.

<sup>9</sup> “set apart from” and “try to keep,” Young, *Life & Letters*, 6 and xix. The main vignette of the *Embarkation* later became part of the design of the five dollar bill.

<sup>10</sup> Burlingham, Interview with Charles Burlingham Jr., March 17, 1989, Weir Farm National Historic Site archival collections, Oral History, Book I, 14, hereafter Weir Farm OH I. Also, Burlingham in conversation with authors, August 8, 2002. “Sunday,” Robinson diary, June 11, 1894, quoted in Susan Larkin, “A Curious Aggregation: J. Alden Weir and His Circle,” in Hildegard Cummings, ed., *J. Alden Weir: A Place of his Own* (Storrs, CT: The William Benton Museum of Art at the University of Connecticut, 1991), 70. Hereafter cited as Cummings, *A Place of His Own*.

spent his youth at West Point, where, even with its distance from the city, he met leading art and literary figures of the day, including poet and journalist William Cullen Bryant, novelist Washington Irving, and many painters of the Hudson River school who traveled up the river to visit his father.

## ART STUDIES

Julian Weir received his first instruction in art from his father. In his teens, he would stay with his older half-brother John Ferguson Weir, who had taken a studio in the Tenth Street Studio Building in New York, take lessons from him, and study the work of other artists in the building. When John traveled to Europe during the winter of 1868-1869, the teenage Julian used the studio during his visits to the city. In 1870, Julian was admitted to the school of the National Academy of Design, which had just hired its first full-time instructor, Lemuel Everett Wilmarth (1835-1918). Wilmarth, known for his still life and genre paintings, had spent several years training in Munich and also in Paris, where he was the first American to study with Jean-Léon Gérôme at the École des Beaux-Arts. Wilmarth's attention to detail and fine finish may have influenced Julian's early work. A fellow student at the Academy was Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917), a native of Massachusetts with little formal schooling, who had moved to New York City, like many other young men, to study at the center of the American art world. He and Julian soon became close friends, the beginning of a lifelong bond. However, they were to be parted for several years. Julian, after two winters at the Academy, and a third in Rochester, Minnesota, recovering from a lung illness at the home of an uncle, sailed for Europe on September 10, 1873 to begin art studies in Paris.<sup>11</sup>

During his four years abroad, Julian was supported in large measure by Mrs. Bradford R. Alden, the widow of his godfather, a former commandant at West Point. In gratitude to Mrs. Alden, he began to sign his work "J. Alden Weir," although his family and friends would always refer to him as "Julian." It was his brother John who was instrumental in obtaining Mrs. Alden's support. While John had not had the resources to study abroad for more than one year, he knew how important such foreign training was for a career as a painter and so helped Julian find the means for a prolonged stay. Although John and Julian

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<sup>11</sup> A detailed listing of Gérôme's students is contained in H. Barbara Weinberg, *The American Pupils of Jean-Léon Gérôme* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1984), hereafter Weinberg, *American Pupils*. Wilmarth biographical data from Raymond J. Steiner, *The Art Students League of New York: A History* (Saugerties, NY: CSS Publications, 1994), 31, hereafter cited as Steiner, *Art Students League*. On the National Academy school see Steiner, *passim*, and Lois M. Fink and Joshua C. Taylor, *Academy: The Academic Tradition in American Art* (Washington, DC: National Collection of Fine Arts, 1975). On Ryder, Young, *Life & Letters*, 36. See also Elizabeth Broun, *Albert Pinkham Ryder* (Washington DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Museum of American Art, 1990); and William Innes Homer and Lloyd Goodrich, *Albert Pinkham Ryder: Painter of Dreams* (New York: Abrams, 1984). As a general guideline, biographical and bibliographical information is provided at the first extended reference to the person in this text.

were eleven years apart in age, they were drawn together through their mutual interests and talents in art, in contrast to several of their brothers who had chosen military careers.

The timing of Julian's entry into the art world would make him a participant in an era of innovation and transformation in American art. By the 1870s, as art historian Lisa Peters has written,

the detailed and panoramic wilderness scenes of the Hudson River School, which had embodied the optimism and expansionist sentiments of the emerging nation, had recently fallen from favor. Rejecting what they perceived to be a provincial tradition, the rising generation of artists sought innovative modes of expression that would lift American painting onto a cosmopolitan stage.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the younger artists of Julian's generation believed that the best way to achieve this change was to study in Europe. In Paris, Julian studied principally under Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) in his atelier (studio) at the École des Beaux-Arts. Gérôme was a successful and honored painter by the time Weir became his student. The Frenchman was a product of the rigorous French studio system, with its hours of drawing from casts of classical art and live models, and slow introduction to technique in perspective, anatomy, composition, and color. His oversight of his pupils' work was meticulous. Gérôme's frequent travels to the Middle East, to Turkey, Egypt, and North Africa, provided him with subject matter that was rendered in an academic classicism, with an overlay of romanticism, sometimes characterized as "peintre ethnographique." He also painted history and genre scenes drawn from the European past that were finely detailed and almost photographic in their effect. Julian would benefit from Gérôme's emphasis on the mastery of basic technique and skill in drawing the human form, and began his own efforts in oil with genre scenes. Weir later characterized Gérôme's advice as a teacher as "just, severe, and appreciative."<sup>13</sup>

The first half of Dorothy Weir Young's biography about her father provides a detailed account of her father's time in Paris with extensive excerpts from his letters home to his parents, brother John, and godmother. These letters are an extraordinary source of information about Weir's studies, the contemporary art scene in Paris, his friendships, and his social life. His father and brother offered advice and criticism, and kept Julian informed about the state of the American art market. They inquired about his friends, who were so vividly described by Julian that his family came to know them well. In October 1874, for example, Weir wrote to his mother about a new acquaintance, 18-year-old John Singer Sargent,

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<sup>12</sup> Lisa Peters, *John Henry Twachtman: An American Impressionist* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1999), 13, hereafter cited as Peters, *Twachtman*.

<sup>13</sup> Weir's view of Gérôme in "Open Letters – American Artists on Gérôme," *The Century Magazine* 37 (February 1889), 636. On Gérôme, see Gerald M. Ackerman and Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme with a Catalogue Raisonné* (London: Wilson, Philip Publishers, 1986). Also, on Gérôme, and more generally on the attraction of Parisian training, see H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), hereafter, Weinberg, *Lure of Paris*, and Weinberg, *American Pupils*.

one of the most talented fellows I have ever come across; his drawings are like the old masters, and his color is equally fine. He was born abroad and has not yet seen his country [the United States]. He speaks as well in French, German, Italian as he does in English, has a fine ear for music, etc. Such men wake one up, and as his principles are equal to his talents, I hope to have his friendship.<sup>14</sup>

Both Sargent (1856-1925) and Weir shared a relatively conservative lifestyle, compared with the antics and carousing some students engaged in, and soon became friends. Often Sargent, Weir, and J. Carroll Beckwith painted together on Sunday afternoons at Sargent's home. The Missouri-born Beckwith (1852-1917) shared a studio with Sargent and may have introduced him to Julian, his classmate at the National Academy school in New York prior to their studies in Paris. Beckwith and Sargent were enrolled at the atelier of Émile-Auguste Carolus-Duran, another influential instructor popular among the Americans who was known for his portraits.<sup>15</sup>

Julian also became friends with several other American students in Paris, such as Will H. Low (1853-1932), a Carolus-Duran student who would become known as a muralist and art critic, and those who were also working under Gérôme's tutelage in that period, including Edgar Ward (1839-1915), Theodore Robinson (1852-1896), Wyatt Eaton (1849-1896), and George de Forest Brush (1855-1941). All would continue their careers in tandem with Julian in the decades to come. Although Julian enjoyed the company of his countrymen, he developed a special friendship with the French painter Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884) who had already finished his studies, influenced by the realism of Manet. Bastien-Lepage had established himself, and was winning awards for his naturalistic style of painting urban and rural genre scenes at the time Julian came to know him. Julian became the only American closely connected to Lepage's circle although the Frenchman influenced other American painters too. Julian and Lepage remained close until Lepage's untimely death of stomach cancer at age 36, an event that devastated Weir. John Henry Twachtman wrote Weir from Paris at the time:

You remember that project you had of buying a chateau in company with Bastien-Lepage. His illness was the talk amongst the painters and everybody but himself knew that it must prove fatal. But death is a thing with which we never become familiar and when he died it seemed as if he had not been ill at all - it was

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<sup>14</sup> Julian Alden Weir (JAW) to Susan Bayard Weir (SBW), October 4, 1874, Young, *Life & Letters*, 50. A list of the most common name abbreviations is provided in the Preface.

<sup>15</sup> On Sargent, there are dozens of good sources. See Carter Ratcliff, *John Singer Sargent* (New York: Artabras, 1982) and Patricia Hills, ed., *John Singer Sargent* (New York: Harry N. Abrams with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986). Almost all Sargent books mention Weir briefly. On Beckwith, see Pepi Marchetti Franchi and Bruce Weber, *Intimate Revelations: The Art of Carroll Beckwith, 1852-1917* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1999), hereafter Franchi, *Intimate Revelations*. Beckwith disliked using his first name, James. During Weir's student life, he was apparently not as observant of the Sunday Sabbath as he would be during much of his adulthood; hence, painting with his friends.

felt by the whole artist community . . . He was a wonderful force in art and will no doubt live as long as his canvas will last.<sup>16</sup>

A few years before Lepage's demise, Weir had secured the Frenchman's place in American art circles by brokering the sale of his large historical painting, *Joan of Arc* (1879), to New York collector Erwin Davis, who would later donate it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Of Davis, more will be heard below. Eventually Weir wrote his own revealing epitaph for Lepage, "He was uneven at times, and sometimes failed entirely; yet who but mediocre men do not make failures? He who dares and fails is often greater than he who enjoys popular renown."<sup>17</sup>

Julian spent four years in Paris and, like his father and brother before him, also traveled in France, Belgium, Holland, Spain, and England to study and paint. In the summers, as did many of the French artists, Julian went to the countryside to paint and sketch, a habit he would continue for the rest of his life. One of his favorite destinations was Cernay-la-Ville, a village popular with American artists that was about 25 miles southwest of Paris. By the fall of 1877, having refined his skills and absorbed as much as he could from his contemporaries and respected teachers, it was time for Julian to return to the United States and begin his career.

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<sup>16</sup> John Henry Twachtman (JHT) to JAW, January 2, 1885, Young, *Life & Letters*, 166. Burke, *Weir*, discusses Lepage's aesthetic influence on Weir's style, 104-108. On Lepage, see also D. Scott Atkinson, "Theodore Robinson: Pioneer of American Impressionism," in *Theodore Robinson: Exhibition of Paintings* (New York: Owen Gallery, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> J. Alden Weir, "Jules Bastien-Lepage," in J. C. Van Dyke, ed., *Modern French Masters* (New York: Century Company, 1896), 232.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BEGINNINGS IN THE ART WORLD, 1877-1881

#### STUDIOS IN NEW YORK

Julian Weir returned to New York from his four years in Paris on October 4, 1877, after a short visit to London with his half sister Louisa Weir Seymour. During his time in England, he met James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Weir found him “a first class specimen of an eccentric man,” an opinion shared by many in the art world although his paintings and espousal of Japanese art were influential.<sup>18</sup> Julian went to live with his parents, and younger sisters Nell and Carrie, in Hoboken, New Jersey, where they had settled following Robert Weir’s 1876 retirement after more than 40 years at West Point. In April 1879, the Weir family moved to Manhattan to a townhouse at 24 East 10th Street. (Figure 1) Julian was fortunate to be able to make the transition from student life to professional painter supported in part by his family. The move to Manhattan provided him with a base even closer to the city’s art community.<sup>19</sup>

Julian first commuted from Hoboken by ferry to a small studio at 11 East 14th Street. The building, about two blocks west of Union Square, is no longer extant and has not been documented. Weir’s friend Carroll Beckwith had a studio there, too, for which he paid \$25 a month when he returned from Paris in 1878.<sup>20</sup> After the Civil War, many artists found work spaces in commercial buildings and former residential structures along Broadway, north of Houston Street, and along Fourth Avenue. With rooftop skylights, originally installed to accommodate photography studios, the light-filled spaces of such buildings suited painters as

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<sup>18</sup>Young, *Life & Letters*, 133. Although his career is associated with England, where he resided for much of his adult life, Whistler (1834-1903) was American-born. He had attended West Point in the early 1850s which meant that he probably studied drawing with Robert Weir. Whistler left the United States in 1855 to study art in Paris and moved to London a few years later. See Ronald Anderson and Anne Koval, *James McNeill Whistler: Beyond the Myth* (London: Carroll & Graf, 1994).

<sup>19</sup>The Weir family routine in the late 1870s of dinners, visits to friends, keeping up with correspondence, furnishing various residences, and concerns about Robert Weir’s health is documented in the journals of Julian’s mother, Susan Bayard Weir. She began writing her journals in 1875 and continued almost until her death in 1900. Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library, Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 511, Weir Family papers, Box 2, hereafter BYU 511, Weir Family. Twenty-one volumes of Susan Weir’s journals were catalogued as those of Louisa Weir Seymour (1832-1919), Julian’s half sister, who was married to General Truman Seymour (1824-1891).

<sup>20</sup>Pepi M. Franchi, “Carroll Beckwith, Passionate Conservative of American Art,” in Franchi, *Intimate Revelations*, 21. Julian’s sister Carrie Mansfield Weir (1855-1937) remembered 11 West 14th Street as a brownstone with high steps; see WEFA 4093, 1.

well. As soon as space was available, Julian rented a studio in the University Building, at Washington Square East and Waverly Place. The building had been an important locus of artistic activity in New York for 60 years and was still, in the late 1870s, a strategic location for launching a young artist's career.

The Gothic-style University Building, completed in 1835, housed the University of the City of New York.<sup>21</sup> From the time the building opened, space had been rented to cultural organizations and to artists and writers. Samuel F. B. Morse had painted and experimented in his rooms, discovering the principles of the telegraph there. Daniel Huntington had studied painting with him, and under Morse's tutelage Mathew B. Brady had learned how to make daguerreotypes, the beginning of his success as a photographer. Alexander Jackson Davis, the architect of the building, had rented space in it, and in 1856, Richard Morris Hunt, newly returned from Paris as the first American architect trained at the École des Beaux Arts, opened his office in the building beginning his long and influential career. During the 1860s and 1870s, many other painters moved in, including Eastman Johnson, Winslow Homer, and George Inness, and the illustrator Edwin Austin Abbey.

By the late 1870s, although somewhat rundown, the University Building was still considered desirable location when Weir took a studio there in 1878. Rents averaged between \$50 and \$175 for a six month lease, depending on the size of the room. He was soon joined by John Henry Twachtman (1853-1902), a native of Cincinnati who had studied painting in Munich and Venice. He had most likely met Julian several months earlier, about March 1878, in connection with their participation in the first exhibition of the Society of American Artists. Their friendship, one of Weir's closest, lasted until Twachtman's early death in 1902 at age 49. By renting space in the building, Weir became part of a community of artists who would introduce him to patrons, encourage him in his work, and partake in discussions that would lead to new artistic organizations.<sup>22</sup> Weir probably knew of the University Building from his brother John, who maintained his working quarters a few blocks away in the Tenth Street Studio Building at 15, later 51, West 10th Street. Designed by Richard Morris Hunt in 1857, the Studio Building was the first American structure to

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<sup>21</sup> The University of the City of New York, now known as New York University, was incorporated in 1831 as a non-denominational alternative to the conservative, Episcopalian-affiliated Columbia University. Moses King, *King's Handbook of New York City* (Boston: Moses King, 1893), 275, hereafter *King's Handbook*. The University Building was demolished in the 1890s. See also Joan M. Dim and Nancy M. Cricco, *Miracle on Washington Square: New York University* (Langam, MD: Lexington Books, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Rent, New York University, Bobst Library, NYU Archives, *University Building Ledger, 1854-1871* [it includes material of a later date]. Twachtman, see Lisa Nicol Peters, *John Henry Twachtman (1853-1902) and the American Scene in the Nineteenth Century: The Frontier within the Terrain of the Familiar*, Ph.D. dissertation (The City University of New York, 1995), 61-63, 112 (especially note 58), hereafter Peters, *Twachtman* (1995). University Building, see *King's Handbook, passim*; Paul R. Baker, "The Cultural and Bohemian Community," in Mindy Cantor, editor, *Around the Square 1830-1890: Essays on Life, Letters, and Architecture in Greenwich Village* (New York: New York University, 1982), 64-73, hereafter Baker in Cantor, *Around the Square*.

combine living, work, and gallery space for artists. Many of the best known and most successful painters of the day worked at Tenth Street, several of whom had “moved up” from the University Building. Albert Bierstadt, William Merritt Chase, Frederick Church, Winslow Homer, John La Farge, and John Kensett had high-ceilinged studios, and hosted open houses on Saturday afternoons to welcome visitors, including art critics and potential buyers. Large scale exhibitions of paintings and sculpture in the main gallery, scheduled during the winter months, showcased the work of the residents. As noted earlier, Julian had painted in a studio at the Tenth Street building, at his brother John’s invitation, during the late 1860s and early 1870s. He would return to the Tenth Street building in the late 1890s.<sup>23</sup>

In 1880, Weir moved one block south of the University Building to the new Benedick Building at 80 Washington Square East. (Figure 2) It was also known as the Tuckerman Building after Lucius Tuckerman, the developer who financed it. He selected the firm of McKim, Mead & Bigelow (soon to be McKim, Mead & White) to design it, and named it “The Benedick” after the bachelor in Shakespeare’s comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*. It was one of many kinds of multiple dwellings that evolved in New York during the 1880s, including tenements, French flats, apartments, and apartment-hotels, as the housing market sought to serve various types of families from different social classes. A number of buildings were constructed catering to single men, or single women, for members of the working class or for professionals. The Benedick was the first for bachelors, as the *New York Times* noted in an 1879 article published while the building was nearing completion:

A new order of domestic architecture has grown out of the demands of modern society, or of that portion of it which seeks either to escape the high rents of the conventional three or four story brown-stone front houses, or to find something less rigidly commonplace and gloomy. Of this variety of architecture Mr. Tuckerman’s building will be a pleasing specimen.<sup>24</sup>

A fairly simple red brick building with terra cotta trim and large iron framed window bays, the Benedick contained five floors with thirty-three so-called bachelor apartments, each composed of a large parlor, a bedroom and (most with) private bath; a sixth floor had two apartments and four studios “with a north light,” all served by an elevator and a freight lift and supervised by a live-in janitor. Julian and George W. Maynard, just returned from studies in Paris, rented two of the sixth floor studios even before the building opened. The

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<sup>23</sup> On the Tenth Street building, see Baker in Cantor, *Around the Square*, note 5; Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio Building* (Southampton, NY: Parish Art Museum, 1997); and Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins and David Fishman, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999), 533-535, hereafter cited as Stern, *New York 1880*. The studios had bedrooms on the mezzanine level balconies. Julian in John’s studio, see Burke, *Weir*, 34-35.

<sup>24</sup> “A Home for Bachelors. The Needs for Single Men Provided For,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1879, 5. The Benedick is sometimes incorrectly called “The Benedict.” Information on the Benedick, see Baker in Cantor, *Around the Square*; Stern, *New York 1880*, 542-543; Christopher Gray, “Bachelors as Artists in Residence,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1997, X:5; and Young, *Life & Letters*, 142, 150.



**Figure 1.** Robert Weir family house at 24 East 10th Street, New York City. The Weir house (gray house at left), retains its original, mid 19th-century appearance as do most of the adjacent row houses. Photograph, 2004. (Courtesy Deborah S. Gardner)

rents were \$300 to \$500 per year and an additional \$6 to \$10 a week for housekeeping services.<sup>25</sup> The generously sized parlors with fireplaces could also serve as studios making the building particularly attractive to artists, among them painters Winslow Homer and John La Farge, and the building's architect William Rutherford Mead. Mead would introduce his new Parisian-trained partner, Stanford White, to Julian thereby laying the foundation for a warm friendship between two young men who shared many interests, including fishing, club life, and enthusiasm for new artistic endeavors. Weir would be a pleased witness as White became one of the greatest architects in America during his thirty-year career.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Maynard's occupancy and the rents from "A Home for Bachelors," op. cit. note 7. George W. Maynard (1843-1923) had earlier studied in Antwerp and Florence, as well as at the National Academy of Design. In 1876 he worked as an assistant, with Augustus Saint-Gaudens, to John La Farge on the frescoes at Trinity Church in Boston. He became known as a portrait painter and muralist; in New York he joined several of the same art organizations as Weir. See Ronald G. Pisano, ed., *The Tile Club and the Aesthetic Movement in America* (New York: The Museums at Stony Brook in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1999), *passim*, hereafter cited as Pisano, *Tile Club*, and [www.sgnhs.org](http://www.sgnhs.org) (Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site). Rents of \$300 to \$500 are approximately \$5,400 to \$9,000 in 2005 currency. Conversion calculations of historical currency done here and elsewhere in the text at [www.westegg.com/inflation](http://www.westegg.com/inflation).

<sup>26</sup> On Mead, White, and their partner Charles Follen McKim, see Leland Roth, *McKim, Mead and White, Architects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983) and Samuel G. White and Elizabeth White, *McKim, Mead & White: The Masterworks* (New York: Rizzoli International, 2003). On White, see Paul R. Baker

Among Weir's other friends who also had spaces in the building were sculptor Olin Warner, and painters Wyatt Eaton and Albert Pinkham Ryder. The Canadian-born Eaton (1849-1896) had also studied in Paris at the same time as Weir and would combine journalism with his career as a painter of landscape, portraits, and allegorical subjects. Olin Levi Warner (1840-1896) was another alumnus of Paris who had lived through the violent uprising of the Paris Commune of 1871 a few years before Weir's arrival. Warner returned to New York, and after a slow start, had his work recognized and then promoted by the art dealer Daniel Cottier, thus launching his career. One of Warner's earliest and most praised portrait busts was a head of Julian. Weir was also joined at the Benedick by John Twachtman when he was in New York intermittently during the early 1880s. Artists shared the building with unmarried lawyers and businessmen.<sup>27</sup>

Weir's sixth floor aerie comprised a studio with a fireplace and a small adjacent room for private students. In the winter of 1882, he also rented a ground floor space for teaching an art class.<sup>28</sup> (Figure 2) The top floor studio was handy to the roof where Julian took his paintings out to dry. His friend Charles Erskine Scott Wood (1852-1944), whom Julian had met when Wood was a cadet at West Point in the early 1870s, later told Dorothy Weir Young of an incident that occurred because of this practice by the young artist:

J. put one of his best flower pictures on the roof of the Benedict [sic] to dry. It was just on the stretcher & he propped it up to dry & a big wind came along and blew it off. He did not know this and when he went to get it, it was gone. No one had seen it. He inquired but no one knew anything about it & he finally gave it up. One day a month or 6 weeks later he went into an Italian bar & restaurant, called the Garibaldi . . . somewhere around McDougall Street. He went in to get a drink of Italian Vermouth, & there over the bar was his picture. He said: "Where did you get it?" & the man said that someone had brought it in & sold it to him for \$5.

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Stanny: *The Gilded Life of Stanford White* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), and David Garrard Lowe, *Stanford White's New York* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1992). Homer's studio at the Benedick was one of many during the course of his years in New York. See Nicolai Cikovsky Jr. and Franklin Kelly, eds., *Winslow Homer* (New Haven: Yale University Press with the National Gallery of Art, 1995), *passim*, hereafter Cikovsky, *Homer*. Homer's workspaces illustrate the concentration of artists' studio buildings located in the Washington Square area: in 1866-67 he was in the University Building, in 1868 in the Mercantile Library Building/Clinton Hall between Astor Place and 8th Street, in 1872 at the Tenth Street Studios, and in 1882-83 at the Benedick, his last before he forsook the city and moved to Prout's Neck, Maine. Baker in Cantor, *Around the Square*, 67, identifies another artists' workplace at No. 3, Washington Square North, situated in a 1830s row house remodeled in 1884 as "The Studio Building."

<sup>27</sup> On Eaton, see Weinberg, *American Pupils* and *The Lure of Paris*. On Twachtman at the Benedick, Young, *Life & Letters*, 142. See also Peters, *Twachtman* (1995), 169ff. and 540, "Remember me to all in the Benedict [sic]," JHT to JAW, March 5, 1882. Twachtman sometimes shared space with Weir there, as noted in the 1882 catalogue of the Society of American Artists, found in BYU 511, Weir Family, 4/4.

<sup>28</sup> The ground floor space: the Benedick was designed with two stores at the front. Perhaps these did not rent and Weir was able to rent one as a studio which made it easy for students to enter from the street.



**Figure 2.** Benedick Building at 80 Washington Square East, New York City. Weir rented a studio in the new red brick building when it opened in 1880. Photographs, 2004. (Courtesy of Deborah S. Gardner).

*Top:* Flanked by former loft buildings, which are now filled with New York University classrooms, the Benedick, also owned by NYU, retains much of its original appearance.

*Bottom:* Street level facade of Benedick Building. Two large windows have replaced the original storefronts. Weir rented one ground floor space in 1882 as a teaching studio for classes.

J. said it is my picture . . . & I will repay you, which the Italian agreed to. He saw he [Weir] was a reliable person and a gentleman. J. said: "You see the Gods take care of the artists & works of art. Here this picture was blown off into the streets of N.Y. & it comes back without even a hole in it."<sup>29</sup>

Weir's studio, like his brother's at Tenth Street and his father's at West Point, and similar to those of many of his contemporaries, was filled with props, decorative objects, paintings, prints, tapestry, and furniture, all of which were potentially useful in still life or portrait paintings.<sup>30</sup> In 1882, while on leave from the Army, Charles Wood was studying at Columbia Law School (then known as the Law School of Columbia College), located near Washington Square on Great Jones Street. He often dropped by to see Julian at the Benedict studio and forty years later he recalled its appearance:

As Weir and I have looked around the bare studios of his later years-warm gray walls, a chair for the model on a movable platform, one easel, a perfectly plain folding screen, and nothing else, we have laughed at the luxurious studio of the young man just back from Paris, fitted up by Cottier-velvets, tapestries, brocades, Gothic cabinet, Louis Quatorze chairs, a couch, rugs, armor, a full length copy of a Velasquez by Weir himself over the mantel, and a great yellow Venetian glass bowl filled with goldfish and hung by brass chains from a rough ceiling of darkest blue studded with stars of varying magnitudes and one impossible comet, all exceedingly decorative. Weir had colored his windows to imitate stained glass, and altogether it was a studio out of a French novel, but I need not say that, though elegant, luxurious, even sensuous, it was in perfect taste.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Enclosure "C.E.S. Wood on J.A.W. 1st dictated to Dorothy Weir Young & then gone over and enlarged by him" with letter of May 10, 1937 from Dorothy Weir Young to Sara and Col. Wood, hereafter DWY to SBF and CESW, May 1937, Henry E. Huntington Library, Manuscript Department, Charles E. S. Wood Collection, 287/44; hereafter Huntington, Wood. On Wood meeting Weir, Robert Hamburger, *Two Rooms: The Life of Charles Erskine Scott Wood* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 28, hereafter Hamburger, *Charles Wood*. Wood graduated from West Point in 1874.

<sup>30</sup> On Weir's studio, see Young, *Life & Letters*, 129.

<sup>31</sup> Quote, "A Letter" by C. E. S. Wood, in *Julian Alden Weir, An Appreciation of His Life and Works*. Privately published by The Century Association in 1921 and then republished with added illustrations as The Phillips Collection, Number One. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1922), 103, hereafter, Wood in Century, *Weir Appreciation*. This is similar to an account Wood provided to Young some years later, "All the time Wood was at West Point he saw a lot of J. at the Benedict [sic] Studio which was gorgeously fitted up in a way Julian liked to laugh at later in his bare barnlike workshop," Huntington, Wood, DWY to CESW, May 1937. Cottier was Daniel Cottier (1838-1891), an art dealer who had a gallery at 144 Fifth Avenue, Hamburger, *Charles Wood*, 73. Weir's sister Carrie reported that Stanford White had decorated the studio. See WEFA 409, Dorothy Weir Young research papers, 1813-1947, 3/1, hereafter WEFA 409, DW Young. White may have acquired the decorative items from Cottier.

## THE COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

Both the University and Benedick buildings at Washington Square were located in the midst of several intersecting neighborhoods. Wealthy old New York families still lived in the beautiful Greek Revival-style row houses on the north edge of the Square, and in brownstones on surrounding blocks. The writers and artists who congregated in the immediate vicinity of the Square and in neighboring blocks to the west and north were also aware of the ethnic sections to the south and east, populated by Italians and Germans, whose restaurants and saloons were popular gathering places.<sup>32</sup> The Greenwich Village of progressive art and radical social and political thought, which would emerge in the 1910s and 20s, had its origins in the bohemian art community which evolved in the area of Washington Square, and in the vicinity of Union Square just a few blocks north, in the 1870s and 1880s. Some of this sense of the heterogeneous flavor of the neighborhood, and the high spirited artist culture, is captured in a letter Charles Wood wrote to Dorothy Weir Young describing Weir's active social life as a bachelor during this period:

We went to a [French] restaurant on the south side of Washington Square, on the corner of south Fifth Avenue. He was particularly fond of some Beaune - 'My gracious this is as fine as you would get in France.' Another place, a German beer saloon, University Place and 14th Street, had sage cheese he was devoted to. Another place was somewhere on Fourth Avenue near Union Square. We would go there often alone, for beer and Swiss cheese and rye bread, but sometimes there was a group, old Bunce, Wyatt Eaton, Warner, Jimmy Ingles of Cottier's and sometimes Ryder, but Ryder was rather shy. We used to go there and talk over everything, his canvasses, his art and the deplorable condition of American art and the photographic quality of the Hudson School. Julian was a formidable antagonist of photographic art and the rebellion had begun . . . I can see him forgetting to taste his Beaune while he went on expounding what should be the future of American art.<sup>33</sup>

What might be termed the "genteel bohemianism" of Weir and his cohorts did not encompass their personal lives in the same way that a later generation experienced its rebellion from society in Greenwich Village through political radicalism, experimental lifestyles, and avant garde arts, literature, and theater. The bohemianism of Weir and his friends expressed itself in a more limited way. In their private lives, many were married or aspired to be. In their professional lives, they could not risk being seen as too at odds with

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<sup>32</sup> On Greenwich Village in this period, see Baker in Cantor, *Around the Square*, and Linda Henefield Skalet, "Bohemians and Businessmen: American Artists' Organizations of the Late Nineteenth Century," in Pisano, *Tile Club*, 85-95.

<sup>33</sup> WEFA 422, Burlingham/Weir Archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, hereafter WEFA 422, Burlingham. See also Young, *Life & Letters*, 142 and DWY to CESW, May 1937, op.cit., Huntington, Wood, 287/44. "Beaune" was a French wine (either red or white) from the area near Dijon in Burgundy.

established custom or they would lose their respectability and their wealthy patrons.<sup>34</sup> So within carefully defined parameters, artists could express themselves with ornate studio decor, experiment with new styles, or join a group such as the Tile Club, which was founded in 1877 and which Weir joined in 1878.

The members of the Tile Club dabbled in several artistic mediums, first with ceramic tiles and then with sketching and etching, while socializing on Wednesday evenings, first in their own studios and later in a hidden clubhouse at 58 ½ West Tenth Street which was across the street from the Tenth Street Studio building. An enclosed passage through a building led to the backyard where the small clubhouse was located, its hidden location adding to the sense of its exclusivity and secret nature. The Tile Club deliberately limited its membership, although it sought publicity for its activities. Young observed that “The Tile Club, in particular, offered its young members good talk and the companionship of men who spoke the same artistic language.”<sup>35</sup>

In his definitive study of the Tile Club, Ronald G. Pisano wrote that American artists returning from Europe had difficulties in obtaining exhibition space because collectors still preferred European works and the galleries catered to this market demand. Therefore, to supplement their income, many American artists became teachers (as would Weir) and illustrators:

Still other fledgling artists turned to the decorative arts, responding to the collecting frenzy that had been sparked by the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876 . . . The result was the ‘Aesthetic Movement,’ a period which roughly spanned a decade from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s and was characterized by an emphasis on handcrafted objects and paintings with a refined sense of design.<sup>36</sup>

Based on the theories of British design reformers of the day, products exhibited at the Exposition showed that everyday objects could be both beautiful and useful, improving the lives of those who owned them.

The Tile Club was formed in this atmosphere in the fall of 1877, about the same time as the Society of American Artists (see below), and Weir was inducted into the club in April 1878. Its members included William Merritt Chase, Winslow Homer, George W. Maynard, Francis D. Millet, Arthur Quartley, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, R. Swain Gifford, John H. Twachtman, and Stanford White. Pisano counted a total of 34 members over the ten years of the club’s existence, each with his own nickname. Weir’s was “Cadmium,” after his use of

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<sup>34</sup> On this finely calibrated dynamic between artistic lifestyle and patronage, see Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 147.

<sup>36</sup> Ronald G. Pisano, “Decorative Age or Decorative Craze? The Art and Antics of the Tile Club, 1877-1887,” in Pisano, *Tile Club*, 11-12. For additional discussion of the Aesthetic Movement, see Amelia Peck and Carol Irish, *Candace Wheeler: The Art and Enterprise of American Design, 1875-1900* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), hereafter Peck, *Candace Wheeler*.

cadmium yellow in his paintings. Twachtman's was "Pie," whose meaning has never been explained. Art historian Hildegard Cummings has observed that the group met

ostensibly to decorate ceramic tiles but mostly to socialize. Although these men wanted their profession taken seriously, so normally dressed like businessmen, they made well-publicized annual excursions that were paeans to the bohemian life. In 1879, when they traveled the length of the Erie Canal, they decorated the canal boat so elaborately and costumed themselves so fancifully that they drew crowds all along the way. All was not play, however, and when Weir's sketches were shown to a newspaper reporter at the end of the trip, he marveled both at their number and their vibrant color . . . the Tile Club experience encouraged ways of seeing for Weir and for the others that were direct, personal, and inventive.<sup>37</sup>

Cummings also noted that although a Tile Club excursion to Branchville was reported, no details have been found. Letters written in the summer of 1880 place Tile Club members Chase, Twachtman, and Gifford on Block Island and it would appear that there were several informal sketching trips by members of the club which could have been the case a few years later with the Branchville trip.<sup>38</sup>

These sketching trips garnered publicity for the artists' antics and costumes, especially during an outing that took them up the Hudson on a comfortably outfitted barge where meals and other services were provided by servants. The Tile Club group dabbled in a bohemian or artistic lifestyle, but did not embrace it. On other nights in the city, for example, Weir and his friends were in attendance at the more socially conservative organizations such as The Century Association, more familiarly known as the Century Club, which Weir joined in 1881.

Weir's membership in The Century, a club of artists, writers, and businessmen, would become one of the anchors of his life in New York. The club was founded in 1847, as a successor to the Sketch Club, by William Cullen Bryant and Asher B. Durand, among others, "to promote the advancement of art and literature." It brought together artists and writers, and educated professionals from all ranks of life, "amateurs of letters and fine arts," to socialize. Over time, those "amateurs" also promoted the fine arts through their patronage. John Ferguson Weir had been a member since 1864 and was probably his brother's sponsor for membership. When Julian joined, the club was located at 109 East 15th Street, a short distance from his home at the Benedick on Washington Square. Ten years later, in 1891, the club would leave its cozy headquarters and move to a Renaissance-style palace at 7 West 43rd Street, designed by Stanford White. The new building had much more gallery space which functioned as an important exhibition venue for its members.

Several other clubs, including the Union League and Lotos clubs, also hosted such art

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<sup>37</sup> Hildegard Cummings, "Art and Nature in the Landscapes of Nod," in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 78, hereafter Cummings in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*.

<sup>38</sup> Excursion to Branchville, Cummings in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 104, fn. 5. Letters of 1880, Peters, *Twachtman* (1995), 45.

shows, and preference was given to their artist members for hanging space; therefore the membership fees were equally professional expenses. The Union League, for example, was founded during the Civil War to express support for the Union cause but its members were also interested in the arts from its earliest days. League members initiated the founding of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1871. Some of Weir's friends, such as the talented and flamboyant William Merritt Chase and other American Impressionist artists, preferred less conservative associations like the Salmagundi Club or the Players' Club, but for Weir, the Century was central to his personal and professional life.<sup>39</sup> He lectured and exhibited there, participated in many special events such as the New Years Eve celebrations, and enjoyed the company of his Centurion friends, including Stanford White, Olin Warner, painters J. Appleton Brown, Howard Russell Butler, J. Carroll Beckwith, and Edwin Blashfield, and architect Charles A. Platt. The Century would frequently be part of his daily routine when he was in the city.

## FIRST EXHIBITIONS

The art exhibitions organized by various clubs gave artists opportunities to display and sell their work and to meet potential patrons in genial surroundings. Shows were mounted on a regular schedule from the fall to the spring, and included items loaned by artists and collectors. These club shows were often open to the public and reviewed in the newspapers thus giving the artists much broader exposure. Socializing at the club often led to socializing outside in the city or country homes of collectors, and this activity and friendship might also lead to commissions. Newspaper society pages increasingly wrote about the activities of wealthy collectors. Julian Weir's name began to appear in these articles, as well as in the art columns. In December 1880, for example, Weir, Olin Warner, painter William Gedney Bunce, and the art dealer Daniel Cottier were among the "many artists and art connoisseurs" who were guests at a wedding tea given by Mr. and Mrs. I[chabod] T. Williams, described as art lovers with a "very large collection of handsome pictures."<sup>40</sup> Julian Weir and his family would be mentioned in the society pages throughout

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<sup>39</sup> The Lotos Club was founded in 1870 as a literary club. The Salmagundi (Sketch) Club was founded in 1871 by a group of artists and others interested in supporting the arts. The Players' Club, founded in 1888, brought together men involved with the arts, theater, music, and literature. Basic information on the clubs from Kenneth T. Jackson, editor, *Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and *King's Handbook*.

<sup>40</sup> "Events in the Metropolis. Thursday Receptions and Teas," *New York Times*, December 17, 1880, 5. The *Times* also reported on the arrival and departure of passenger ships, selectively listing prominent names from society and the professions. Julian and other members of the Weir family appear on these lists. His first appearance in the *Times* was his arrival from Liverpool on the steam-ship "Scythia," reported August 19, 1880, 8. The *Times* was surveyed through its on-line database for every mention of Weir from 1879 to 1999, and selectively 2000-2003. It is the only journalistic or periodical source that covered the arts in depth in New York (and elsewhere) for the entire period. By the end of the first quarter of the 20th century, the views of its critics were extremely influential and probably

his life, underscoring both their high social status (discussed further below) as well as the fact that successful artists enjoyed such status in the late 19th century even if their income was not always on a par with that of their patrons.

In order to gain recognition as a serious professional, it was equally important for the work of a young artist to be selected for exhibition in the galleries of art organizations, in commercial galleries, and in museum exhibitions. While still in Paris as a student, Weir had submitted paintings to exhibitions at the National Academy of Design, in order, as Doreen Burke observed,

to establish his artistic reputation at home . . . The display of these paintings may have served to introduce Weir to the progressive painters working in America. Writing from New York, his painter friend Wyatt Eaton had assured him, ‘Your things in the Academy have attracted a good deal of attention & most favorable. You will find yourself less unknown in this country than when you left- & I believe that things will go easily with you.’<sup>41</sup>

During his early years back in New York, Julian’s paintings at the Academy shows were often noted in the reviews, a singular honor given that there were several hundred items on display. In 1881, for example, his “beautifully painted” portrait of a little girl, *Peggy*, was “one of those portraits in which Mr. Alden Weir unites Velasquez with Frans Hals.” However, since the reviewer thought the child looked somewhat grumpy, he was concerned that “in his ardor to paint like a master does not Mr. Weir sometimes forget the sitter and the sitter’s family.”<sup>42</sup> This was not merely an aesthetic judgment but one that referred to the artist’s need to delicately balance his or her desire to satisfy both the demands of art and the wishes of the client.

These annual exhibits at the National Academy had often resulted in disputes. Even with a juried system to select works for display, there was the potential for favoritism that affected what art was picked and where it was displayed. Often, more established artists were given prime locations and the younger generation of artists less desirable hanging space. As it was the practice to stack paintings vertically on the wall, if a painting was not hung at eye level, “on the line,” but high above, it was difficult to see, especially in poorly lit settings, and therefore impossible to appreciate. A similar problem arose with younger sculptors whose work might be placed at the end of a corridor or in a dusty corner. In 1877, a group of the younger and more progressive artists, including Olin Warner, founded the Society of American Artists to conduct their own exhibitions, and as the *New York Times* noted, “as a protest against the manners and morals of the Academy of Design.” Shortly after Weir’s return from Paris, he was elected to the Society and exhibited seven paintings in its first show

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representative of the spectrum of opinion about artists, trends, and exhibitions. The discovery of *Times* material that documented the social history of Weir and his family was an unanticipated bonus during the search for art topics.

<sup>41</sup> Burke, *Weir*, 88.

<sup>42</sup> “one of these” and following quotes from “The Academy Exhibition,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1881, 2.

in 1878. In the Society's 1880 show at the Miner Gallery, Weir gained one of his first notices in the press for his own submission. In addition, Warner's portrait bust of Julian was "pronounced the finest, most virile piece of work yet exhibited in New York," comparable to the work of the ancient Romans. Julian's large painting of the *Good Samaritan* was singled out for its "excellence in details . . . with parts beautifully painted." The reviewer, however, suggested that there was some weakness in the whole conception, and that "one hour of inspiration might have bound the whole together."<sup>43</sup> Among the others who exhibited with the Society during these years were William Merritt Chase, John Singer Sargent, Thomas Eakins, Abbott Thayer, John Twachtman, James M. Whistler, Albert Pinkham Ryder, and Winslow Homer.

Weir immersed himself in the New York art scene. The Tile Club and the Society of American Artists were variants of many formal organizations and informal groups that flourished in the last quarter of the 19th century alongside the well established National Academy. Some had as their purpose organizing exhibits; others to improve artists' skills in a specific medium, and yet others emerged to make a statement about artistic style or practice. Weir joined a number of these new organizations, including the Art Club, the Society of Painters in Pastel, the American Water Color Society, and the Etching Society, although he continued to exhibit at Academy shows. As Burke pointed out, "Few of these clubs were continuous in their existence or in their activities, but they nevertheless provided a forum in which the young artists could work together informally, profiting from mutual support that was especially invaluable in the first years after their return from Europe."<sup>44</sup>

Weir's studios at Washington Square were also within easy walking distance of the art galleries located along Broadway north of Eighth Street and along lower Fifth Avenue. In the post-Civil era known as "the Gilded Age," newly wealthy American collectors had vast sums to spend to develop their private collections, and for gifts to the public collections they supported, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, founded in 1870, and the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (now the Brooklyn Museum), organized in 1890. Numerous commercial art galleries exhibited and sold European and American paintings, and thus they served a dual function for Weir and his fellow New York artists. They were exhibition spaces for the artists to view the latest European work, as well as the Old Masters, and they were important showrooms for the sale of American art. Some served as the branches of European galleries. Cottiers, for example, which had provided the decorative objects for Weir's Benedick studio, was a branch of the Scottish firm of Daniel Cottier that had opened in New York in 1873.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> All quotes, from "Varnishing Day Scenes. The Society of American Artists," *New York Times*, March 16, 1880, 5. On the Society, see Jennifer Martin Bienenstock, *The Formation and Early Years of the Society of American Artists, 1877-1884* (Ph.D. dissertation, The City University of New York, 1983).

<sup>44</sup> Burke, *Weir*, 92. See, for example, Dianne H. Pilgrim, "The Revival of Pastels in Nineteenth Century America: The Society of Painters in Pastel," *American Art Journal* 10 (November 1978), 43-62.

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Cottier was one of the principle promoters of American interest in interior design. See Barbara Dayer Gallati, *William Merritt Chase: Modern American Landscapes, 1886-1890* (New York:

Weir seems to have placed his early work with several galleries. In passing one of these displays, a reporter commented on Julian's expanding repertoire, as he turned his attention to "flower paintings, which he finished with all the *brio* and surety of hand that characterizes his best work." In 1882, he was lucky to be slow in sending a picture out for display at the gallery of William Schaus. He reported in a letter, "There was quite a large fire this afternoon on Broadway near Schaus' picture store & I do not know whether or not it was destroyed, if so, I will consider myself fortunate as I intended sending a picture around there."<sup>46</sup> Some years later, he had an exhibition and successful sale at Ortgies & Co., one of the major sales and auction galleries in the city with thousands of feet of hanging space. It was located at Fifth Avenue and 35th Street, near the wealthy Murray Hill neighborhood, in the Fifth Avenue Art Galleries building which it shared with the galleries operated by another important dealer, Samuel P. Avery Jr. Avery (1822-1904), one of the first art dealers in the United States, had opened his gallery in 1864 and was a friend of many collectors.<sup>47</sup>

### CONTINUING STUDIES AND TRAVELS

Even as Julian was enjoying his life in New York in elegantly fitted out studios, and surrounded by a community of fellow artists, he had continued to return to Europe during the summers to look at new work, to sketch, and to purchase art for collectors. In 1878, he traveled to England and France with Mrs. Alden and her son, Weir's lifelong friend Percy, renewing old acquaintances and viewing the latest exhibitions. To his parents he wrote:

We spent a whole day together both in the Salon and in the grand Exposition; we went through all the different schools. This is what I wanted to see the Exposition for, to know exactly where the French school stood, compared with the rest of Europe . . . I had a rare treat in the exhibition in the hotel Durand-Ruel [an art gallery], where were collected together the works of Rousseau, Corot, Daubigny, Millet, Courbet, Diaz and others of worth. To see these works one is really inspired to work immediately . . . I am anxious over my work now, for fear that I will not be able to carry things on as I want to.<sup>48</sup>

Weir was still in thrall to the powerful skills of European artists and did not yet feel the confidence that would grow as he practiced his craft. Nonetheless, he was confident in his judgment as a connoisseur and while in Europe acted as a purchasing agent and personal

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Harry N. Abrams with the Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2000), 35, hereafter Gallatie, *Chase*. The Brooklyn Museum dates its origins to the founding of a mechanics institute in 1823 and its successor organizations. But in 1890, a museum on the model of the Metropolitan was called for by civic leaders, who raised funds, and commissioned a plan from McKim, Mead & White. The original plan was so large that it was never completed; the first section was opened in 1897.

<sup>46</sup> "flower paintings," from "Notes on Art," *New York Times*, December 6, 1880, 2. "quite a fire," JAW to Anna Dwight Baker, hereafter ADB, May 24, 1882 [copy of WEFA, DW Young typed transcript], J. Alden Weir papers, Archives of American Art, Reel 195, hereafter AAA-JAW.

<sup>47</sup> Information on Ortgies and other galleries, *King's Handbook*, 314-315.

<sup>48</sup>Young, *Life & Letters*, 143.

curator for successful businessmen, such as Erwin Davis, a mine owner and financier, and Henry G. Marquand (1819-1902), a railroad financier, who collected art. On a trip to Paris in the summer of 1880, Weir visited with Bastien-Lepage and purchased Lepage's *Joan of Arc* for \$4,000, which Davis later gave to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The following year, Julian sketched in Holland with his brother John and with John Twachtman, and visited with Whistler. He acquired for Davis a number of items, including Rembrandt etchings, paintings by the English artists Gainsborough and Reynolds, and works by the French painters Courbet and Manet. Julian called on Manet and, as Cummings observed, "He came also to appreciate the controversial and complex avant-garde art of Edouard Manet, which he had rejected in his student days."<sup>49</sup>

During these same years, Weir also went to the American countryside to paint, as he had done while a student in France. Painting *en plein air* - attempting to capture the momentary light or spirit of a place, focusing on the local landscape or everyday scenes (rather than classical or mythological subjects), and considering what was caught on canvas as finished work rather than merely the sketch to be reworked totally in the studio - had been introduced in France in the 1850s and became the touchstone for new movements, like the Impressionists in the 1870s and 1880s. Artists still prepared rapid sketches to be the source of new work in the traditional manner indoors during the fall and winter seasons but art created out-of-doors work became a dominant mode of expression. In 1878 and 1879 Julian visited Cos Cob, Connecticut, then a rural section of Greenwich, following in the footsteps of his parents who had stayed there several times following Robert Weir's retirement. Julian and John Twachtman boarded at Holly Farm, as did other visiting artists. Cos Cob was only an hour by train from New York, and the train stopped just up the hill from the Holley family's second boarding house (known as Holley House) overlooking the harbor, which opened in 1882. It could not have been more convenient, and that factor, plus the fresh, undiscovered aspect of the surrounding landscape, made the area attractive to many New York-based artists like Weir.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cummings in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 81. *Joan of Arc* was first exhibited at the Metropolitan in 1890; see "Gifts and Loans to the Museum," *New York Times*, May 5, 1890, 4. \$4,000 would be approximately \$75,000 in 2005 currency. Gallatie, *Chase*, 35, states that William Merritt Chase is credited for introducing Weir to the Manet pictures, *Boy with a Sword* and *Woman with a Parrot* that Weir purchased in 1881 for Davis from the Parisian art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel (1831-1922). Durand-Ruel inherited his father's gallery in 1862 and promoted the work of the Barbizon artists, and later the Impressionists.

<sup>50</sup> Weir was in Cos Cob in 1878 and 1879 according to the later reminiscences of Constant Holley MacRae, the owner of the boarding house, as reported in Susan G. Larkin's study, *The Cos Cob Art Colony: Impressionists on the Connecticut Shore* (New Haven: Yale University Press with the National Academy of Design, 2001), 15, hereafter Larkin, *Cos Cob*. Larkin and Twachtman scholar Lisa Peters presents slightly varying dates concerning Weir's visits to Holly Farm and its successor Holley House in Cos Cob. Larkin believes he boarded at Holly Farm with Twachtman in 1878 and 1879 and taught with him at Holley House in 1892 and 1893 and possibly in 1890 and 1891, as well as painting in Cos Cob in October 1880. Peters dates Weir's visits to Holley House between 1890 and 1896, just before Weir started his own classes at Branchville. See Larkin, *Cos Cob*, 206-207, and Peters, *Twachtman*, 107.

The countryside was a source of renewal for Julian not only for his career but in his private life too during this period. As he struggled to launch his career, and to define his aesthetic objectives, he mourned several deaths among his close knit family. His older brother (by three years), 30-year-old Lieutenant William Bayard Weir, was killed in October 1879, while serving with the army in Colorado. He had been searching for a better trail south from his camp near the White River when he and a scout left their party to hunt deer and were killed in a skirmish with Ute Indians. Press reports at first suggested they may have been scalped, but this was not the case although their clothes were taken. Julian and William's sister Nell had also traveled to Colorado to keep house for him. She was unharmed, but another family member traveled west to bring her home and to escort William's body back for burial in the family plot at Garrison, New York. The following year, in the summer of 1880, Weir and his parents were equally distressed when Julian's 19-year-old nephew Harry Weir Casey, son of his half-sister Emma Weir Casey, drowned while vacationing in Rhode Island. In October, Julian sought solace in the autumn landscape of Cos Cob. He would return there a number of times in the 1880s and 1890s to paint for himself and to give private instruction to art students.<sup>51</sup>

### TEACHING AT COOPER UNION

Teaching provided a necessary part of Julian's income. He was popular and professionally active, but, like many of his contemporaries, he was also continuously worried about supporting himself. He wrote to his brother John his first winter back in New York: "It is a dogged battle I have been fighting, trying to get things off and rent paid . . . Up to the present time I exist, and have some prospects of getting a portrait; but pictures can't be painted without models, which requires money." Friends like Olin Warner and Wyatt Eaton, as well as family--his sister Helen, and his father--posed for him and thus he had "samples" of his work for potential clients.<sup>52</sup> Although his portrait commissions increased, he found it necessary, like many of his contemporaries, to supplement his income by teaching.

While living at the Benedick, Weir began teaching a few blocks away at Cooper Union, located at Astor Place and Fourth Avenue. Founded in 1859 by Peter Cooper to

<sup>51</sup> Family history, BYU 511, Weir Family, 3/2, and *Dictionary of American Biography*. William Bayard Weir (1849-1979). Helen "Nell" Rutgers Weir (1857-c.1930s) eventually married Thomas Sturgis (1846-1914). A former Civil War prisoner-of-war, Sturgis was later a developer of Cheyenne, Wyoming, and a controversial financier, politician, and fire commissioner in New York City. Emma Weir (1834-c.1910s) married General Thomas Lincoln Casey (1831-1896), chief engineer of the Washington Monument and the Library of Congress, whose 18th-century, 300-acre working family farm in Rhode Island is now owned by Historic New England (formerly known as the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities).

<sup>52</sup> JAW to John Ferguson Weir (hereafter JFW), Young, *Life & Letters*, 140. Young doesn't provide a date for this letter, but it is probably the winter of 1878-79. Sample paintings might have included such portraits as *Helen Weir Sturgis* (c.1878), *Robert W. Weir* (1878), *Olin Levi Warner* (1879), and *Wyatt Eaton* (c.1879), all illustrated in Burke, *Weir*, 96, 89, 123, and 98.

provide free education in the arts and sciences, it had absorbed the Female School of Design (founded in 1846) which then became the Women's Art School of the Cooper Union Free Night Schools of Science and Art. Its announced purpose was "to supply to women of taste and capacity from anywhere, a free education in some professional branch of art." Courses were offered day and evening to prepare over 1,400 women for teaching or making a living through commercial art. Weir secured a job at the Women's Art School through the recommendation of his friend Wyatt Eaton who had preceded him home from Paris. From 1880-83, Julian taught the 'Life' and 'Cast Drawing' courses, and from 1888-95, he taught the afternoon class in 'Oil Painting.' Among the other instructors at the Women's Art School during the time that Weir was teaching there were R. Swain Gifford, Will H. Low, Walter Shirlaw, Willard L. Metcalf, Robert Reid, and the Philadelphia-based artist, Thomas Eakins, who was the "Lecturer on Anatomy." A number of these men would later join Weir as members of the exhibition group, the Ten American Painters.<sup>53</sup>

The Cooper classes were part of the flourishing art education scene in New York in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There were numerous schools, addressing the needs of different audiences. Middle and upper class women, in particular, could attend classes at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Brooklyn Institute of Arts & Sciences or the Harlem Art Association. Then there were the schools with a much more pragmatic bent, like Cooper, such as the Society of Decorative Art or the School of Industrial Art and Technical Design for Women; or the New-York Institute for Artist-Artisans, which aimed to prepare students to earn their living in a number of fields such as textile and wallpaper design, book illustration, ceramics, painting, drawing, and architectural drafting. Those who had the means and aspirations to practice the fine arts took their instruction at the National Academy of Design, at Fourth Avenue and 23rd Street, or at the relatively new Art Students League founded in 1875.

With the cooperation of Weir's former instructor, Lemuel Wilmarth, the Art Students League was started by students and teachers who were dissatisfied with the National Academy School, and it was governed jointly by instructors and students. Weir first taught at the League in 1878 when it was located at 105 Fifth Avenue, at 16th Street, substituting for Wyatt Eaton who had become ill, and later became a regular instructor. This job brought prestige as well as income, as many of the best known artists of the time were employed there too, such as William Merritt Chase. The school experienced rapid growth, and rented new quarters at 38 West 14th Street in 1882, moved again to 143-47 East 23rd

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<sup>53</sup> On Weir's teaching at Cooper, see notes on teaching compiled in WEFA 409, DW Young, 1/14. Weir may have begun teaching the 'Cast Drawing' course at Cooper in 1878-79, according to Young's notes (in the same file) from an article in *Scribner's* magazine of October 1878, "Art Schools in New York," "Mr. J. Alden Weir is to be associated with Mr. Eaton during the coming year, and, as he is in entire sympathy with Mr. Eaton's method of instruction, the schools are to be congratulated." For teaching, see also Young, *Life & Letters, passim*. On the Ten, see Chapter 5 and *Ten American Painters* (New York: Spanierman Gallery, 1990), hereafter cited as *Ten American Painters*.

Street, and then in 1891 finally settled into its own building space in the new Fine Arts Building on West 57th Street.<sup>54</sup>

Even as a young instructor, Weir's pedagogy and personality were memorable. Philip L. Hale, a painter who had been a Weir student in 1883 at the League's 14th Street building, later recalled:

I had the honor and pleasure of working under Mr. Weir . . . I remember we thought him quite an old and venerable man, but on looking up dates, I find he was 31 years of age. Naturally we all adored him. It was not only what he said, but his stimulating way of saying it. Some teachers brought terrible depression with them, but Mr. Weir had about him a spirit of joy and cheerfulness, that made us all feel what a wonderful thing is art - what a fine thing it is to be an artist. He made us all want to paint. His favorite rallying cry was 'Paint! man, paint!' He inspired us with a deep admiration and respect for the work of the Old Masters, and at the same time he was the first to point out to us the admirable qualities of the Impressionists.<sup>55</sup>

The League's school year ran from October through May, with classes during the day and in the evening. Regular instructors like Weir spent a great deal of time supervising their students' work and had only weekends for their own projects during the school term. As soon as classes were over in May, both students and their teachers migrated to the countryside, to favorite locales or art colonies, or went abroad to paint. Although teaching enabled Weir to paint what he liked, as Young wrote, it "seldom came easily to him and he grudged the time it took from his own work."<sup>56</sup> Fees for teaching private students supplemented Weir's income. He used his street level studio for small class instruction and the studio in his apartment for individual instruction. An account book for the winter of 1882-1883 lists his income from private lessons as \$1,311.<sup>57</sup> How fitting it was that through teaching he would find his life transformed when he fell in love with a new pupil, Anna Dwight Baker.

That event was one of several that occurred in the years 1881 to 1883, among the most pivotal of Weir's life: he was elected to membership in the Century Association in 1881; he acquired his farm in Branchville in 1882; and he married Anna in 1883. He had established himself in New York as a gifted portrait painter who was also becoming known for still life paintings. Indeed, his paintings set a standard that others might aspire to, as one journalist suggested when speaking well of the portrait of a woman by Emily Seatrain on

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<sup>54</sup> On the League, see Steiner, *Art Students League, passim* and Chapter 4 below.

<sup>55</sup> WEFA 409, DW Young, 1/4 and Notes on teaching, 1/14. The Boston-born Hale (1865-1931) was the son of the famous author and Unitarian clergyman, Edward Everett Hale, and a descendant of the patriot Nathan Hale; see *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. "Philip L. Hale." Also, William H. Gerdts, *American Impressionism* (Seattle, WA: The Henry Art Gallery with the University of Washington Press, 2001), Chapter 14. Hereafter, Gerdts, *American Impressionism*.

<sup>56</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 141.

<sup>57</sup> WEFA 441, J. Alden Weir diaries, 1, Account book, 1882-1883. \$1,311 was worth about \$23,000 in 2005 currency.

display at the National Academy, “she may almost claim fellowship with Mr. J. Alden Weir.”<sup>58</sup> He had a large and supportive group of artist friends, and he was acquiring patrons who liked his work and were willing to loan it for public display when asked. Thus, in the spring of 1882, a collector made available Julian’s *Boston Interior*, which a critic approvingly characterized as “broadly painted,” for a loan show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Weir had also loaned one of his own paintings, *Music*, and another he owned by his friend Gedney Bunce, *Hills of New England*, which was noted as “one of the finest landscapes” on display.<sup>59</sup> Weir recognized the importance of participating in exhibitions that would make his work known to a larger audience. The loan of Bunce’s picture was the type of gesture of friendship and support that permeated the artist community of New York. Bunce (1840-1916), a native of Connecticut, had fought in the Civil War before studying art at Cooper Union and then taking further studies in Europe where he lived and worked for about a dozen years, based in Italy. He became known for marine and landscape paintings and was a late member of the Tile Club.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, by the early 1880s, with regular access to several exhibition spaces through his organizational memberships and acceptance of his work for special shows, Weir’s name was becoming familiar to those who counted in the art world. He wasn’t yet earning a substantial income by selling his art, but he was doing everything right to make sure that he was known in the art market. Teaching would help sustain him until his sales increased.

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<sup>58</sup> “The Academy of Design,” *New York Times*, March 30, 1882, 5. Emily Sartain (1841-1927) came from a noted Philadelphia family of artists. She studied at the Pennsylvania Academy and in Paris, and was a companion to Mary Cassatt who influenced her style. Sartain was principal of the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (later renamed the Moore College of Art) for over thirty years but continued to exhibit and won prizes for her paintings at major exhibitions. See Katherine Martinez and Page Talbott, eds., *Philadelphia’s Cultural Landscape: The Sartain Family Legacy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

<sup>59</sup> Spring 1882 exhibition, “The Loan Collection, Pictures at the Metropolitan Museum. Pictures by Weir, Bunce and Eaton,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1882, 7.

<sup>60</sup> On Bunce, see Pisano, *Tile Club*, 56-57, and [www.sgnhs.org](http://www.sgnhs.org) (Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site). Bunce and Augustus Saint-Gaudens were good friends and the sculptor did a low relief portrait of the painter.



## CHAPTER THREE

### COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE, AND PLACES IN THE COUNTRY, 1881-1883

#### COURTSHIP OF ANNA DWIGHT BAKER

On December 3, 1881, Anna Dwight Baker wrote from New York City to her mother at her home in Windham, Connecticut: "The evenings are rather stupid here, for as I do not like to read by gaslight I do not have much to do. Ernestine [Fabbri] is delighted at the idea of my taking drawing lessons with her. She says that Mr. Weir teaches entirely from casts." It was to Julian's sixth floor studio at the Benedict Building that Ernestine brought Anna one winter day. "It was for him a *coup de foudre*," Fabbri later reported to Dorothy Weir Young. Within a few weeks, Julian, nearly 30, and Anna, not yet 20, became engaged. Both regarded the studio as a magical place. Upon her return to Windham, Anna wrote to Julian, "I can imagine no place of its kind more fascinating than your studio of a moonlight night. Sometime I shall ask you to take me there; and . . . we can hold converse sweet together." He quickly responded, "The Benedict [sic] is becoming empty now . . . I shall be the monarch of the building and when you come here again we will do as you suggest, if there is still a moon."<sup>61</sup>

The Baker and Weir families had known each other at West Point, starting in the 1840s. Robert Weir was the drawing teacher there when Anna's father Charles Taintor Baker, Class of 1842, served as an instructor for six years until 1851, when he resigned for reasons of health. He married Anna Bartlett Dwight that same year. His father, Lieutenant Colonel Rufus L. Baker, born in 1790 in Brooklyn, Windham County, Connecticut, had also served in the army and married Eliza Taintor, the daughter of a prosperous Windham merchant, Charles Taintor, in 1818. Taintor had built a paper mill in 1810 and had supplied the government with clothing and other provisions for the American troops during the War of 1812. After his military service, Rufus Baker returned to Windham to the Taintor family home where generations had lived in a farmhouse built about 1750. In order to better enjoy the view, in 1840 Col. Baker had had the house moved up the hill from its original location next to the main road, with the help of townsfolk pulling teams of oxen. He added a large Victorian wing to the house about 1860 with a parlor suitable for entertaining many guests. (Figure 3) One family story linked the history of the house to important events in American history:

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<sup>61</sup> "The evenings are," ADB to Anna Bartlett Baker (hereafter ABB), December 3, 1881, WEFA 198, 2/1. "*coup de foudre*," Young, *Life & Letters*, 151. The phrase means "love at first sight." "I can imagine," "The Benedict [sic] is," ADB to JAW and JAW to ADB, May 2 and May 4, 1882, Young, *Life & Letters*, 153-154. The building was empty as artists left for their summers abroad or in the country.

In Lebanon [close to Windham Center], still stands the little gambrel roofed war office where Lafayette and Rochambeau, with their officers, settled the army questions which helped to win that war. Lafayette and his friends sleighed over the snowy roads to dance and make merry in our old homestead. In later years the house was moved back from the road, but was left halfway up the hill. The eight pair of oxen who dragged it so far, gave out.<sup>62</sup>

Col. Baker, as Dorothy Young wrote, "added to the family's finances by wise investment, for he was a good businessman as well as an excellent army officer." The Colonel's financial acumen meant that his son, Charles Taintor Baker (1821-1881), "was not obliged to earn his own living; he and his wife soon joined the ranks of those Americans to whom Europe became a second home."<sup>63</sup> Charles and Anna had three daughters: Ella, born in 1852 in Newport, Rhode Island, Cora in 1858 in Windham, and Anna in 1862 after the Bakers had settled in Madison, New Jersey, about 25 miles west of New York. (Figure 4) Young continued:

They made their first [trans-Atlantic] crossing in 1856 and after that went back and forth frequently, sometimes staying for a year or more at a time. As a family they all loved to be on the move; travel seemed to be in their blood, and Charles' uncertain health offered a good excuse for a trip to the Riviera or into Italy or to some German spa for the waters. Paris became most like home because Charles' only brother, Rufus, lived there. When they were in America, the Bakers spent their summers in the old home in Windham, although the hot weather usually gave them another excuse to be on the move, and they would go to the seashore or the White Mountains or perhaps take a trip to Canada for a few weeks. In the winter they moved into New York, where they either rented a house or stayed in apartments at the Hotel Brunswick.<sup>64</sup>

With Julian's engagement to Anna early in 1882 commenced a close and loving relationship for him with all the members of the Baker family, especially her mother Anna and her two older sisters, Ella and Cora. (Her father had died a year earlier, on February 28, 1881.) By April 1882, Julian was asked to be one of six ushers at Cora's wedding to Henry S. F. Davis. Davis was descended from several of the oldest Dutch families in Manhattan, including the Spinglers and Van Beurens. After the American Revolution, his family acquired much of the land around the Union Square area and their large home at 21 West 14th Street was one of the last great mansions standing in Manhattan in the late 19th century. When Davis's aunt, Elizabeth Spangler Van Beuren, died in 1908, the *New York Times* wrote of the home where he was born:

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<sup>62</sup> Caroline Weir Ely, "Grandmother's Attic," in *Lest We Forget* (Privately printed, 1965), n.p., hereafter Ely, "Grandmother's Attic." The authors are grateful to the current owners of the Windham house, Barbara and John McGrath, for information about the property during a visit in January 2002. Barbara McGrath is the stepdaughter of Charles Burlingham Jr. The village of Windham is now referred to as Windham Center.

<sup>63</sup> "added to the family" and "was not obliged" from Young, *Life & Letters*, 150.

<sup>64</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 150-151.



**Figure 3.** Baker family house, Windham, Connecticut. The original building (c.mid 18<sup>th</sup> century to early 19<sup>th</sup> century) is in the foreground, and the taller, 1860 Victorian wing at the left. Barns, studios, and fields were located on land behind the house.  
Photograph, 2002. (Courtesy of Deborah S. Gardner).



**Figure 4.** Baker sisters.  
*Left to right, Ella, Anna, and Cora.*  
Photograph, early 1870s. (WEFA 2290,  
AHP00237)

In a district now given up to department stores, with the trolleys crashing by and the elevated railway within a few yards, it stood, an excellent example of the stately brownstone family homes of a century ago. Its garden is still kept up. Its fine trees give a pleasant shade, and its old fashioned wooden gate and railings speak of the fashion of a bygone age. Until a very few years ago it was maintained as a small farm and the visitor to the city was often brought to see the very last cow which ever browsed in lower Manhattan as it cropped the little stretch of turf.<sup>65</sup>

Davis decided to try his hand at ranching and soon he and Cora settled in Strong, Kansas, where they would live for about ten years, although Cora would often return to New York in the winter and to Windham to visit her mother in the summer. The social status of the well-established Davis family would be of long-term value to Julian and his immediate family, as would, too, the money Cora Baker Davis would inherit at her husband's death.

Right after Cora's wedding, Mrs. Baker, Ella, and Anna left their winter residence at the fashionable Brunswick Hotel, located in Manhattan at the bustling corner of Fifth Avenue and 26th Street, to spend the summer in Windham. Windham was then a quiet country place that had gradually declined economically from its pre-Civil War prosperity as neighboring Willimantic thrived as a mill town and railroad center. "Though shorn of its ancient honors and business prosperity," wrote a local historian in 1880, "Windham Green is a well-preserved and attractive village, a pleasant home for public spirited citizens, and a favorite summer resort for many of its wandering children, who enjoy its pure air and historic associations."<sup>66</sup> Julian was soon invited to visit Anna. He wrote to his fiancé on May 14, 1882, the first of several letters expressing his delight with Windham's country setting: "I have been picturing this afternoon only a week ago, which seems ages since, when we went to church and afterwards walked down the main road and through the fields." On May 16, he wrote, "I recall those few hours we had in the charming village of Windham, this is really the first Connecticut village that I have ever really known." A week later, he wrote again to Anna, "Oh, how I would like to be there to walk with you through the large old trees that stand like sentinels in the ancient homestead of the Taintors . . . I begin to think of myself a boy now, [more] than ever, for when I return from your lovely place, I am homesick."<sup>67</sup> (Figure 5)

In turn, Julian took Anna to visit his childhood home at West Point that June. Their trip included a visit to his older half-brother Henry Cary Weir (1839-1927) and his wife Josephine at their nearby farm Sugar Loaf. Henry Weir, a Civil War veteran who had been wounded at the Battle of Peebles' Farm in Virginia in the fall of 1864, had become a

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<sup>65</sup> Van Beuren obituary in *New York Times*, July 23, 1908, 7. Cora's wedding, "Weddings," *New York Times*, April 12, 1882, 5. The bridesmaids were Davis's sister "Miss Davis" and one of Cora's sisters "Miss Baker."

<sup>66</sup> Ellen D. Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut* (2d ed., Pomfret, CT: Swordsmit Books, 2000), Vol. 2, 461. Windham was located along a major route between Hartford, Connecticut, and Providence, Rhode Island, and had been, until 1820, the county seat of Windham County.

<sup>67</sup> "I have been picturing," JAW to ADB, May 14, 1882, Young, *Life and Letters*, 155. "I recall" and "Oh, how I would," JAW to ADB, May 16 and 24, 1882, AAA-JAW, Reel 125.



**Figure 5.** Anna Baker [Weir] and Julian Weir.

Photograph, nd. (WEFA 3069 AHP00664)

gentleman farmer. He remained close to Julian, thirteen years his junior, and in later years, before his death at age 87, rented a home on the Baker property in Windham, where several Weir sisters were also frequent visitors.<sup>68</sup>

By the time Dorothy Weir Young began compiling material for her biography of her father in the late 1920s, there were only a few people left who could share personal memories of Anna, who had been dead for nearly 40 years. Dorothy quotes reminiscences sent to her by Lilly Hamilton French, sister of John Ferguson Weir's wife Mary and a longtime writer for *Harper's Bazaar*, *Scribner's* and *Century* magazines. French recalled Anna's beauty, her white skin and liquid voice. "There was always something of the other world about her," quoted Dorothy. In the original letter, French added, "I don't think she had any knowledge of the wrong side of life. Nothing like that entered her consciousness."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Julian would often return to West Point for visits, particularly to nearby Garrison, New York, where his mother, Susan Bayard Weir, lived with her daughters in the last years of her life; she died there in 1900. Henry Weir obituary, *New York Times*, April 23, 1927, 17; Henry's visits to Windham, WEFA 3075, Windham scrapbook, "Houses and Barns owned by Ella Baker Weir, also livestock, 1912." Peebles' Farm was considered a Union victory. See the National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program, [www2.cr.nps.gov/abpp/battles/va074.htm](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/abpp/battles/va074.htm).

<sup>69</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 151. For the original letter, see BYU 511, Weir Family, 5/8. Lillie French also sent Dorothy a vivid portrait of young Julian at West Point, quoted in Young, *Life & Letters*, 14-15.

Jean C. Ross, a childhood friend of Anna, recalled that Anna always wore “dove colored” corduroy dresses and in the evening, gray crepe with white sleeves. John Twachtman’s wife, Louise, told Dorothy that Anna usually wore white in the house, which Twachtman admired. He tried to persuade Louise to do the same, she recalled, but that it was impossible with a household full of children. Louise observed that she never saw a married couple so much in love with each other as Julian and Anna. “She was completely absorbed in Julian’s painting, she loved to pose for him.” Dorothy noted that, like Lilly French, Louise “would dwell on the exquisite ethereal quality of Anna, [that she was] not like other people.”<sup>70</sup>

Among the materials that Dorothy collected, but did not use at length in the biography, were the numerous letters that Anna and Julian exchanged during their year-long engagement. These letters document their relationship but also reveal much about Julian’s artistic aspirations and his evolving plans for their family life. These plans included, in that magical spring and summer of 1882, his almost simultaneous purchase of property in the Adirondacks and the acquisition of the farm in Branchville, Connecticut.

Weir was deeply in love with Anna. This led to an almost daily correspondence when they were apart, he in New York City, furthering his career, she in Windham or visiting family and friends in Troy, New York. Their love letters revealed a tender and romantic side of Weir, not explored elsewhere, which complements his paintings over the next decade and contrasts with the image of him as a social club man and urbane artist. His declarations of feeling were prolific and intense and his letters in the spring and summer of 1882 reflected his longing to be with Anna and how she had captured his heart, "were it necessary to choose between considered great & arriving at fame, or having your love, I should not hesitate an instant to choose the latter." He referred often to poetry and drama, especially Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, to help him express the true dimensions of his feelings. He spent hours looking at her photograph and spoke with his friend, sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, about modeling a medallion of her image.<sup>71</sup>

Weir loved reading Anna’s descriptions of the grounds of her home and the adjoining countryside in Windham, not only because her words recalled their time together there but also because he loved that landscape and looked forward to returning. He spoke of "passing by the hawthorn trees & so following the little brook until we came to the corner fence, when I helped dear Anna over" and of "walking in the shadows of the pines & cypresses, by some still moonlight, when we can wander & watch the beautiful forms that the shadows will make."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Louise Twachtman to DWY, WEFA 409, DW Young, 2/5.

<sup>71</sup> “were it necessary,” and Saint-Gaudens, JAW to ADB, May 13 and 14, 1882, AAA-JAW, Reel 125.

<sup>72</sup> JAW to ADB, May 14 and 19, 1882, AAA-JAW, Reel 125.

## THE ADIRONDACK VENTURE

At the same time, Julian's letters to Anna began to discuss his acquisition of property in the Adirondack village of Keene Valley, New York, and his plans to visit, survey the property, and build a house. They both shared hopes for spending part of each summer there. Dorothy Weir Young does not refer to the Adirondacks episode, even though it is frequently discussed in Julian and Anna's letters from May through October 1882. Perhaps Young left it out because it seemed a distant chapter in her father's life, a project that just disappeared, or was linked with sorrowful memories of her mother. With only a few surviving paintings from Julian's stay in the Adirondacks, Burke had little reason to include the venture in her comprehensive art historical survey of Weir's life. In contrast, more recent accounts by Elizabeth Milroy and Hildegard Cummings do consider this period and suggest the cultural contexts that might have inspired Weir's pursuit of land in the Adirondacks. Their findings are expanded on in this text because his letters contain much that explain his work as an artist and cultural figure generally, as well as information about summer art colonies and local culture, and lead to somewhat different conclusions from what Milroy and Cummings have drawn.<sup>73</sup>

In late May 1882, Weir referred for the first time to a property he had acquired in the Adirondacks, for which he had engaged Stanford White, his close friend and neighbor, to design a house so that he and Anna might spend about two months a year there:

I want to try & get the architect to make me a drawing for a nice little house, which will do us for a two months cruise, as I doubt my little princess would be willing at present to spend more than that length of time in any one place, yet it may be what she would enjoy & that is what I intend to try & make it if possible!<sup>74</sup>

Weir suggested Anna think about visiting the Adirondacks for a week to see what he termed "this little foot-hold." This would be a precautionary measure, he wrote to her, "for should we build & then after find that it is too far or not interesting enough to you, it would be immediately abandoned, & still I imagine it might be just the sort of a place my dear little Anna would like, if not too inaccessible." She immediately tried to reassure him, as she would do several more times, in the face of his doubts, "I wish you would not be afraid about

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<sup>73</sup> Burke, *Weir*, very briefly refers to the possibility that Julian may have gone to Keene Valley with painter Robert C. Minor Sr. (1839/40-1904), 143-44. This is inaccurate in light of the information in Julian's extensive correspondence with Anna. Burke was apparently also unaware of Weir's surviving art work from the trip. Additional information on Weir's Adirondack art work follows in a few pages. See Cummings in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 94, and Elizabeth Milroy, "The Land of Nod: J. Alden Weir and His Neighbors," 33-34, in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*. We argue that Keene Valley area was not the isolated, uncivilized, or unpopulated place that Milroy suggests was the reason Julian and Anna decided against keeping the property. It had a genuine appeal for Weir and his ultimate decision not to build a house there was related to other factors discussed in this text.

<sup>74</sup> JAW to ADB, May 25, 1882, AAA-JAW, Reel 125. Also, "I received a note today from the man who sold me the land in the Adirondacks." White was Weir's neighbor in the Benedick building.

my not liking the place, for of course I shall enjoy it, if you do, besides everyone says it is delightful." She found the idea of a trip "charming" but probably didn't go at that time because she was recovering from a bad cold.<sup>75</sup>

The idea of a summer place in the Adirondacks must have seemed particularly appealing to Weir in the summer of 1882 as he concluded his affairs in a city beset with a heat wave, "Last night [June 26] was I think the hottest I ever spent, tonight I will spend at Manhattan beach, & I do not believe I will be caught in town over night again before cool weather." He continued to discuss plans for the house with Stanford White. Julian told Anna: "He is anxious to have an exact drawing of the trees on the place, & to know if the pine grows there as he thinks somewhat in the shape of a long house with the big room 20 X 30 & the big fireplace & a tiled floor, three bedrooms, besides the servants [rooms]." It is clear that Weir was anticipating creating a summer place that was comfortable and civilized enough to make his future wife happy. In his plan to live in the wilderness but bring along the accouterments of a modern life, Weir was not alone. As he would later assure Anna, she would be close enough to the village for services and supplies yet able to explore the forest with experienced help. "This place is really the best point possible in the valley as you are near enough not to have difficulty in keeping house, & the excursions are easy to make from this place."<sup>76</sup>

Weir did leave the city in July to visit his family in Garrison, New York, and he returned to an unpleasantly warm city again where temperatures were in the 90s. It would be several weeks before he could travel to the Adirondacks. He was expecting his friend John Twachtman to go with him, but as it turned out the latter had to delay his departure from his family in Cincinnati for a few weeks. At least Julian had Stanford White's enthusiasm and promise to come up "after things get started to see about matters." White's interest had grown more personal as Weir had asked him to be an usher at his wedding.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, at the end of July, Weir was ready to go, eager "to find out about the character of the place, and all this I hope soon to find out . . . [for] the building will greatly

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<sup>75</sup> JAW to ADB, June 17, 1882 and ADB to JAW, [June] 1882, WEFA 2891 Dorothy Weir Young Scrapbook, hereafter WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>76</sup> "Last night," and "He is anxious," JAW to ADB, June 27, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. Manhattan Beach had been developed as a summer resort in the late 1870s. It was reached by boat or street car from Manhattan. Weir found it appealing because it was located on the eastern end of Coney Island, surrounded by Sheepshead Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, where breezes off the waters cooled the air. "This place," JAW to ADB, August 8-9, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>77</sup> Garrison, JAW to ADB, July 11, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook, and "I shall begin to pack up my sketching things today, ready for my trip & hope that Mr. Twachtman will be on, for it was partially by agreement that I saw to the land in the Adirondacks during the month of July." Weir must be referring to sale arrangements, not an actual visit, since in a later letter he talks about finally seeing the land, July 30, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. ADB to JAW, July 26, 1882, WEFA 190, Weir Family, 2/6, Twachtman will join him later. ADB to JAW, July [?], 1882, WEFA 191, Weir Family, 2/ 6, "I enclose a telegram this moment received from Mr. Twachtman, saying he cannot go with you next week." "after things get started," JAW to ADB, July 29, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

depend on what the character of the [illegible] or rocks are." He had packed his painting materials and books and sent them on ahead. He brought with him a beautiful silver flask from Tiffany & Co. that Anna had sent him as a gift for the trip, at first hesitating to take it: "It is however almost too beautiful to be useful in mountain tramps, for one would naturally not care to leave such a gem in his tent, nor boarding place, so that the mind which delights sometimes in throwing all care aside, would simply worry about its safety." However, as both a romantic and a pragmatist, he happily took it along, telling Anna "it is your gift & I shall carry it with me, for I have always abhorred the idea of possessing things simply to stow away."<sup>78</sup>

It was a long trip to Keene Valley, but perhaps not quite as onerous as traveling to areas further north and west in the Adirondacks such as Saranac Lake or Upper St. Regis Lake. To get to Keene Valley, New Yorkers boarded a train at the Grand Central Depot on 42nd Street and, about ten hours later, disembarked at Westport, New York. The first leg of this journey, on the Harlem & Hudson Line, followed the scenic eastern edge of the Hudson River. At Albany, passengers transferred to the rail cars of the Delaware & Hudson Line, which eventually carried them comfortably along the western shore of Lake Champlain, treating them to a preview of the beauty of the Adirondack region.

On Weir's trip at the beginning of August, he made the entire journey something of an adventure. He took the night boat to Albany, and under a bright moon, "watched the changing Highlands, with the varying lights & shades." He then boarded the train at Albany, which he left at the ruins of Fort Ticonderoga at the southern end of Lake Champlain, and then switched to a boat for "a lovely sail of about seventy five miles up the lake to Westport." From there, the twenty-odd miles west and slightly south to Keene Valley entailed a demanding ride over primitive roads. Weir traveled by carriage about six or seven miles to Elizabethtown and rather than taking the regular stage, delayed his departure until dark. Hiring a buckboard, he left at 9 p.m. and "drove twelve miles over the mountains, one of the most charming moonlight rides, & I might say the longest I ever took," arriving after midnight at Keene Valley. He had difficulty securing a room at that hour but within a day was comfortably settled in Blinn House, a new hotel on Adirondack Street, not far from his property, as it turned out, the second major hostelry to be built in the village to accommodate the growing numbers of tourists.<sup>79</sup>

Weir had bought his land from Norman Dibble. Dibble had built the first hotel in

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<sup>78</sup> All quotes, JAW to ADB, July 30, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>79</sup> All quotes, JAW to ADB, August 4, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. On Blinn House and Keene Valley, see Richard Plunz, ed., *Two Adirondack Hamlets in History: Keene and Keene Valley* (Purple Mountain Press/Keene Valley Library Association, 1999), 46, 115, 151-53, 323, hereafter Plunz, *Two Adirondack Hamlets*. For additional background, see: Paul Schneider, *The Adirondacks - History of America's First Wilderness* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1997); Robin Pell, *Keene Valley - The Landscape and Its Artists* (New York: Gerald Peters Gallery, 1994); Patricia C. F. Mandel, *Fair Wilderness: American Paintings in the Collection of The Adirondack Museum* (Blue Mountain Lake, NY: The Adirondack Museum, 1990), hereafter Mandel, *Fair Wilderness*. Gardner site visit to Keene Valley, August 2001.

Keene Valley, known as Tahawus House, in 1872 and enlarged it over the next decade for summer visitors. He had been buying, selling, and developing property in Keene Valley since 1844, when he moved there from Vermont and had been one of the people most instrumental in the growth of the town after the Civil War. By the time Weir arrived, there were numerous buildings along Main Street, including several boarding houses and inns, a school, houses, and stores. The Keene Valley Congregational Church, built in 1878 with the financial assistance of summer residents, was shared by all Christian denominations and Weir attended its services. There were sawmills in the vicinity, supplying lumber for the construction of homes in the village and its environs.<sup>80</sup>

Weir's property was south of Adirondack Street, where there was little development before his purchase. A few houses bordered the street close to town, and one of the first summer homes in Keene Valley, situated on a hill north of the street, had been built by the Presbyterian minister, Rev. William Henry Hodge of Philadelphia. Hodge was among the early arrivals of a wave of clergy in the 1870s who followed the well known Hartford theologian Horace Bushnell and another Connecticut intellectual, Noah John Porter, President of Yale from 1871 to 1886. Summers in Keene Valley allowed them to explore a new theology that linked the natural environment, the "wilderness," with the human dimensions of the city. Weir told Anna that his property was convenient to the village "& a number of pleasant people are near by, so that you will always [have] agreeable neighbors." He had met President Porter and several artists and noted, "It is quite astonishing to find so many nice people here."<sup>81</sup>

While the clergy found the village and its beautiful surroundings congenial and thought provoking for their work, the "discovery" of the Adirondacks, and Keene Valley specifically, had also been promoted to the wider public over several decades by geologists, journalists, and artists. In reports, articles, and pictures, they portrayed a region whose character was totally different from what Eastern artists were used to in the Catskills, with hundreds of lakes and ponds, miles of rivers, dense forests, and almost four dozen high peaks. All the artists drawn to this relatively unexplored and uninhabited region, such as Thomas Cole at Schroon Lake in 1835, Asher B. Durand and John Kensett in the 1840s, and Jasper Cropsey and Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait in the 1850s, had painted and exhibited scenes of the area. These in turn attracted attention and brought more artists to what was regarded as primeval forest, wild, dramatic, and untrammeled, compared to the landscape of the Hudson River Valley (and other accessible areas) that had inspired several generations of American

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<sup>80</sup> On Dibble, Tony Goodwin, "An Historical Overview," in Plunz, *Two Adirondack Hamlets*, 15, 32, 34-40. Weir's experience in the village of Keene Valley, JAW to ADB, August 7, 1882, WEFA 191, Weir Family, 2/1, and Elizabeth Courrier Andrews, "Origins of the Summer Community," in Plunz, *Two Adirondack Hamlets*, 112-115.

<sup>81</sup> Weir quotes, JAW to ADB, August 4, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. On Hodge and others, Richard Plunz, "Urban Intellectuals in the Valley," 197-199; "Appendix One: Inventory of Hamlet Buildings," 325; Goodwin, 44-46, op.cit; and Andrews 105-106, op.cit, all in Plunz, *Two Adirondack Hamlets*.

landscape painters in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1870, Winslow Homer made the first of many trips to the Adirondacks when he went to Elizabethtown. He exhibited his earliest painting of the area, *The Adirondack Lake*, with an emblematic Adirondack guide and his canoe in the foreground, at the Century Club in the spring of 1871.<sup>82</sup>

A number of artists, including, John Hart, Alexander Lawrie, George Henry Smillie, William Trost Richards, and John Lee Fitch, had “discovered” Keene Valley in the 1860s and created the nucleus of a summer artists’ colony. The Valley was surrounded by high peaks, and Mount Marcy, the tallest mountain in the state at 5,344 feet, was visible to the west. The Ausable River came down from the Upper Lake in the mountains, shooting through narrow gorges, and emptying into the lower Ausable Pond. To share this wonderland, Fitch brought along his artist friends Alexander H. Wyant and Roswell M. Shurtleff in 1866, and they were both entranced. Shurtleff (1838-1915) moved there for summers in 1868 and returned every year until his death. It was Shurtleff’s enthusiasm that persuaded Weir to purchase land in Keene Valley. Fitch (1836-1895) was known for his landscapes of the Adirondacks, particularly the Keene Valley area where he spent his summers from the mid 1860s to the mid 1870s. He was a member of the Century Club, on its Exhibition Committee, and showed *Eagle Lake* there in the winter of 1882. Wyant (1836-1892), a native of Ohio, was one of the first artists to build a home in Keene Valley, “a location above the Ausable River in the edge of a cliff,” and painted a number of well-received landscapes of the region. He had studied at the National Academy and in Germany and England before setting up a studio in New York in the late 1860s. He, too, was a member of the Century Club. His Adirondack landscapes sold well in the 1880s and 1890s, often at higher prices than Weir’s landscape art. Shurtleff (1838-1915), another student of the National Academy, who then worked as a lithographer, engraver, and illustrator before serving in the Union army in the Civil War, eventually settled in Hartford, Connecticut. His long tenure in the Adirondacks led him to be considered “the dean of Keene Valley artists.” All the artists were exhibitors in the same New York art and social organizations as Weir and they must have known one another from those activities.<sup>83</sup>

On his first morning in the village, Weir went to see the land Shurtleff had selected for him. Shurtleff owned the next knoll over and intended to build the following year on his 160 acres “on a little height on the west side of the valley near . . . Washbond’s Flume, about half a mile back from the main road.” Weir anticipated that Anna would enjoy meeting

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<sup>82</sup> There are 46 high peaks in the Adirondacks, ranging in height from 3,820 feet to 5,344 feet; see [www.adirondacks.com](http://www.adirondacks.com). On Homer, see Cikovsky, *Homer*, 126-127, 394-95. Homer, who also loved to hunt and fish, visited Keene Valley in 1870 and stayed there to work in the late summer of 1874. He knowledgeably depicted the guide with a dugout canoe and canoe paddle, still a popular choice for transport even as the “Adirondack guideboat” was evolving with a broader (and more stable) bottom and oars. See Hallie E. Bond, *Boats and Boating in the Adirondacks* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press with The Adirondack Museum, 1995). Homer kept a birchbark canoe in his studio.

<sup>83</sup> See Robin Pell, “The Artists of Keene Valley and Their Milieu,” in Plunz, *Two Adirondack Hamlets*, for background. Additional information on these artists from Mandel, *Fair Wilderness*, 56 (Fitch), 104-105 (Shurtleff), and 125 (Wyant); the essay by Mandel, “What is Adirondack in Adirondack Art?” 13-30, is also valuable.

Shurtleff's wife, Claire Eugenia, and learning "many little things about this country" from her. He was pleased with "the beautiful view up the Valley for miles" on his land and immediately thought to purchase more property to protect the panorama: "I want to buy the whole hill to prevent any one ever building any where near us, there are so many pretty rambles over the hill that I am beginning to feel that you may like it as much as I do."<sup>84</sup>

Even as Weir sought to increase his holdings, he realized that completing the house that year was unlikely because, with so much other building going on, seasoned timber was in short supply. He thought it possible to put in a foundation, lay water pipes, and build a cellar and ice house, as well as to survey the property to see what supplies of wood and stone were available. He was pleased to find that there was more than enough water on the property to pipe it to the house for all needs. He told Anna he was eager to do some sketching, but it is clear that his attention was elsewhere.<sup>85</sup> In early August, he wrote to her that

I have at last completed my purchase, having bought the whole hill. There are maple trees on it larger than any I have ever before seen & spruce & hemlock near where I expect to place the house...a beautiful large rock, & the plateau where the house will be placed looks as if it had been made expressly for that purpose . . . behind the house, I have about an acre of beautiful rich soil, which will be the kitchen garden . . . On the very top of the hill is a large flat rock, about forty feet may some day build a studio on, but that we will leave square, surrounded by pine, this place I for the future, as I would rarely use it, except on rainy days, & the way we will build the large living room will be ample, I have no doubt.<sup>86</sup>

Weir found himself in the middle of a heated land market. The canny natives knew how to play with the eager purchasers who, like Weir, wanted to protect their romantic vision of unspoiled countryside by purchasing land adjacent to their original property. Weir reported on their behavior:

I saw two of the parties, of whom I wanted to buy, as they own strips adjoining my land, they are to give me an assurance tomorrow, the third I will see tonight. They are all crazy here, & knowing that you want any land, ask more than they would ever think of getting under any circumstances, & yet if they hold it there is a chance of their taking it into their heads to cut the timber off; this one man threatened me with doing, but he is not as bad as he makes out to be.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> "on a little height" and "many little things," JAW to ADB, August 8, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. "the beautiful view" and "I want to buy," JAW to ADB, August 7, 1882, WEFA 191, Weir Family, 2/1. It is not clear how Weir financed his land purchases. He may have saved enough money from his teaching and his commissions as an art dealer for Erwin Davis. Adirondack land was relatively inexpensive compared with city real estate. On Shurtleff's land, Mandel, *Fair Wilderness*, 104.

<sup>85</sup> Water and sketching, JAW to ADB, August 8, 1882 and August 4, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>86</sup> JAW to ADB, August 5, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>87</sup> JAW to ADB, August [8-9], 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

The timber was valuable, with all the construction going on, so the local residents needed to decide if the price of the land uncleared was worth more than the sale of the trees for lumber. By the time Weir concluded all of his land deals, he felt that “Mr. Shurtleff’s point & my own are the prettiest in the Valley, & on our place there are so many of the old trees of the primeval forest, that this alone to me makes it of great beauty.” Weir kept himself occupied by looking for even more land, having it properly surveyed, and bargaining with the sellers.<sup>88</sup>

Weir’s letters sparkle with his excitement about sharing the Adirondacks with Anna: “The air is splendid here, & you can go out camping & fishing, which is quite the fashionable thing - ladies go just as well as the men, they take one or two guides & go off for a week or two.” The guides he referred to were the people who mediated between the wilderness and “civilization” for urban visitors, including the artists. Guide Orson S. Phelps (1817-1905), for example, was a larger-than-life personality whose renown went far beyond the borders of Keene Valley, his reputation enhanced by his newspaper columns, by reporters who featured him as “local color” in their articles on the region, and by the photographers and painters, like Winslow Homer, who depicted him in their work. Phelps, like other guides, took his charges into the wilderness for hunting and fishing, or hiking and sketching, knowledgeable about the best stream or the most expansive view or beautiful setting. The guides built shelters, secured and cooked food, portaged boats, and entertained their temporary employers in the evening. One guide accommodated an artist’s desire for a better view by chopping down trees that interfered with the prospect.<sup>89</sup>

The guides’ work was an important part of the village economy and endowed them with status in the community. Weir told Anna that in the Congregational Church local guides “pass the plate, & are in fact the pillars of the edifice.” Hence, Weir wrote to Anna, whom he seemed to regard, in typical late Victorian fashion, as somewhat fragile (although their letters reveal that she seems quite capable of extended walks in the Windham countryside), that she would be able to enjoy carefully calibrated and supervised outdoor

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<sup>88</sup> “Mr. Shurtleff’s point,” JAW to ADB, August [8-9] 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. Weir occupied, “I have to write a note tonight to the surveyor to come over from Elizabethtown to survey my land. I want to buy tomorrow another piece near the left hand side of the hill running back to another brook, as I will then secure two different ways for procuring water,” August 10, 1882, Ibid. “I am going tomorrow (to) see two men who own separate [?] places adjoining mine, & try & purchase the one of wh. had a house & would be a good place for a gardener, which also he might possibly make,” August 11, 1882, Ibid. “This afternoon was spent with the surveyor & when this is finished I shall get the deed - the Title deed of the property in Connecticut came yesterday,” August 16, 1882, Ibid. “[T]omorrow, I will be through my work by eight, & then stake out the late purchase for the surveyor, who will survey it all together,” August 21, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> “the air is splendid,” JAW to ADB, August 8, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. Phelps appears in Homer’s *The Two Guides* (ca.1875), Mandel, *Fair Wilderness*, 20. Phelps pioneered the trail up Mt. Marcy and led many groups to the top, including the first group of women climbers. The 4,161 foot Phelps Mountain is named after him. Sources on Phelps and guides generally: Charles Brumly, *Guides of the Adirondacks: A Heritage* (Utica, NY: North Country Books, 1994); and [www.adirondackmuseum.net](http://www.adirondackmuseum.net), on-line exhibit “Adirondack Life.” See also Cikovsky, *Homer, passim*.

activity, “as here you have the guides who do the cooking & carry the packs, build the camp & in fact do all the drudgery.”<sup>90</sup>

The guides provided similar assistance to their male employers during fishing, camping, and boating expeditions. The guides’ social status vis-à-vis their employers was, however, unique. They were not quite servants, as their clients might have in their city homes, subject to a strict regimen, low wages, and social distance due to their immigrant background. Because the guides shared the same ethnic background as many of their clients, including Weir, which might be categorized as Anglo-Saxon or Yankee New England, they were part of the same social group and were accorded better treatment although they worked long, hard hours. Orson Phelps and others were almost celebrities in their time, and Weir’s observations reveal the challenge of negotiating this exception to the class structure with which he was familiar.

As much as Weir longed for Anna to be near, he wanted everything to be perfect for her arrival, “This trip would have been ideal were you here, & yet I would not have you come as I want to have the little house all ready, & with a big fire, have you arrive here on a moonlight night in the latter part of August.” He was anxious about her reactions: “You cannot imagine how I have wondered & imagined your impressions of the place, hoping you will like it & fearing you might not care for it, yet I am prepared, I will spend no pains & thought to make it comfortable within my means, & yet the luxury of so pleasant a home as you have may spoil you for a mountain lodge.” She countered and assured him, “Of course I shall like the Adirondacks . . . I am convinced from all you have told me in your letters, that it is perfect, and have no doubt that after having been there, I will be as enthusiastic as you are.”<sup>91</sup>

A few days after Weir’s arrival, he set out to explore his property and the surrounding area through the Valley, walking for miles and pausing along the way to bathe in the river and visit the house of a new neighbor, a “Mr. Matthew.” Possibly he was John Matthews from New York City, the inventor of the soda fountain, whose house had been built in 1875 with cedar logs attached to a balloon frame, a sort of *tromp l’oeil* style of architecture that resulted in a Gothic-style rustic lodge. Passing by a well-known trout stream, Weir, ever the enthusiastic fisherman, envisioned “bringing my dearest little Anna a surprise home for her breakfast.” He saw maple trees, some of which “have been tapped for over a hundred years,” which were among so other many large trees that he told Anna “you can imagine what a fine forest primeval still exists here.” Weir subsequently purchased the land on which the maple trees stood, but Mr. Dibble, the seller, reserved the right to continue tapping the trees in the spring, since he obtained 600 pounds of sugar from them, a valuable commodity. As this activity would be completed well before any August visits, Weir told Anna he saw no inconvenience in this arrangement. During the same week, he had also reported on his drive

<sup>90</sup> “pass the plate,” JAW to ADB, August 7, 1882, WEFA 191, Weir Family, 2/1. “as here you have,” JAW to ADB, August 8-9, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>91</sup> “This trip” and “You cannot,” JAW to ADB, August 10, 1882, and “Of course,” ADB to JAW, August 13, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

through the Valley to see the lower falls of the Ausable River, “all the way there were beautiful effects & pretty wild flowers & up & down the Valley, the large hills which look so grand were in sunshine & shadow.”<sup>92</sup>

Weir found Keene Valley a convivial village, “there are a great many very nice people, which is one of the accidental good qualities of the place, for you need never be lonely even if you do not have your friends staying with you.” As much as he valued the wilderness for the view and for its role in his art, he never contemplated truly losing himself from society by remaining in an isolated setting, or placing himself beyond human company. And he would have been aghast at the thought that Anna could survive without “society.” For all his concerns about Keene Valley being overrun with people, he did not want to live much beyond the village edge. In this way, he faced the same artistic dilemma of the Hudson Valley painters, and of Bierstadt and others in the West. That is, Weir sought inspiration in nature, wanting to capture it in its grandeur but without really leaving behind amenities and comforts, and the social and economic system that gave him his livelihood. For Weir, and many artist friends, the solution would be country house or the art colony, located within easy reach of New York or Boston or other large cities.<sup>93</sup>

In Keene Valley there were planned and impromptu social events which Weir was mostly happy to attend. When a circus came to a neighboring town, he told Anna he planned to go and “hunt up the small poor children & give them a treat, & probably be the first they have ever seen.” Receiving an invitation to an afternoon tea written on birch bark, he sent it to Anna, “people are always getting up such performances, which I do not altogether enjoy, & yet as I want to know & meet all the residents here, hoping that it may be of benefit for you some day, I will go tomorrow.” He enjoyed visiting with the wives of his fellow artists, Messrs. Wyant and Minor, to prepare a welcome for Anna. Wyant’s house had already been built in the vicinity of Moss Cascade. Weir also encountered other acquaintances from his New York circles. He mentions Mr. Robbins, a fellow member of the Century Club, who was probably Horace Wolcott Robbins Jr. (1842-1904), a veteran of the Civil War who studied in New York with James M. Hart and exhibited many of his paintings of the Keene Valley area at the National Academy of Design. Robbins had also bought land, on the west side of the valley, but couldn’t move forward with building either. “I fear unless one makes definite arrangements immediately,” bemoaned Weir, “next year will be the same.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Walk and quotes, JAW to ADB, August 8, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. “all the way there,” JAW to ADB, August 7, 1882, WEFA 191, Weir Family, 2/1.

<sup>93</sup> “there are a great many,” JAW to ADB, August 11, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. Regarding the choice between isolation and civilization, it is interesting to note that while much of the outside world thought Winslow Homer lived in isolation, in reality his home at Prout’s Neck, Maine, to which he would retreat from New York, was not far from Bangor, Maine. Even in the Adirondacks Homer enjoyed the amenities of the wilderness social clubs that had been set up by city businessmen. Patricia Hills’ helpful comments on Homer, Gardner conversation of November, 2002. See also Cikovsky, *Homer, passim*. Art colonies are discussed below.

<sup>94</sup> “hunt up,” JAW to ADB, August 11, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. Obviously generous, Weir sent enough money to a friend [Albert Ryder?] in the city to get away for three weeks, JAW to ADB,

Weir eagerly explored his property and the adjacent area, appreciating everything from the grand sweep of beautiful views from the high points to the small growths on the forest floor, observing during one hike “some fungi which is very rare & curious, being of a dark red.” He was accompanied by Shurtleff, whose dozen plus years in the area had made him familiar with the terrain. They cleared timber together, undergrowth and small trees, as Weir was “averse to cutting trees unless necessary.”<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, in order to build on the scale he was contemplating, Weir was willing to blast rocks and remove large trees that encumbered his ideal building site. Later, he would reshape the far more tempered landscape in Branchville to meet his aesthetic needs.

While he waited for his friends White and Twachtman to join him and concluded his land purchases, Julian tried to settle into a routine but found it difficult. There were interruptions due to the vagaries of the weather, which could change from comfortable sunshine to rain and autumn temperatures in a matter of hours, yet might have an aesthetic bonus: “We have had magnificent showers here all day, the great hills are half hidden in the mist, & now & then a break in the clouds & you see the peak of a mountain, as it were suspended in the air.” Broken appointments too disrupted plans. “So the days go here,” he reported to Anna, “no one can be made, among the natives, to keep their promise to the day, but when a surveyor promises to come, it is sometime during the week.” He was experiencing the cultural differences between city people and country people, “A man here, I [am] infd [informed], never likes to make a bargain & close matters up, but they talk & talk & small matters often run over a week.”<sup>96</sup>

Once Weir had explored the area and completed his real estate transactions, he was able to turn to his art. He had written to Anna, “I arose this morning about half past five & went out & made a water color sketch & shall feel now as if I can get at work regularly.” The next day he reported, “I have just come in from my afternoons work, the effects of the hills & valley was beautiful. I began a study of a wood road on our hill, which remains yet to be named.” Anna tried to encourage him and keep up his spirits: “[T]here is your painting, you know I expect to see great results in that line.”<sup>97</sup>

Yet Weir found it hard to maintain his focus, “My painting has been very much at a discount, as I have spent much time in dreaming.” Anna had actually admonished him at one point, “In all your letters you have hardly said a word about your painting. I have quite come

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August 16, 1882, Ibid. “people are always” and visiting, JAW to ADB, August 14 and 16, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. Robert C. Minor Sr. also studied in Europe, painted in New York, and was a member of the Society of American Artists and the Salmagundi Club. Burke, *Weir*, 143, mentions that Minor was an admirer of the Barbizon School and that Weir might have been influenced by him. But Weir may also have been introduced to the Barbizon painters by way of the paintings of Bastien-Lepage. On Robbins, Mandel, *Fair Wilderness*, 99, and Cummings in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 94. “I fear,” JAW to ADB, August 11, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>95</sup> Both quotes, JAW to ADB, August 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>96</sup> All quotes, JAW to ADB, August 9, 1882 and August 8[9], 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>97</sup> JAW to ADB, August 8 and 9, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. “There is your,” ADB to JAW, August 1882, WEFA 190, Weir Family, 3/1.

to the conclusion that America in summer has a demoralizing effect on you, and that it would have been far better if you had followed my advice and gone to Europe.” Weir had mentioned not returning to New York for a portrait commission and she suggested he should have taken the break and done so, returning again to Keene Valley when finished, “I imagine it is pleasant there until October, and you know you are perfectly free until that time.” Nonetheless she continued to have faith in him, offered him sympathy, and mirrored his progress in her letters, believing that once he immersed himself in his work, it would cure his homesickness. Inspired by a cheerful letter from her, he made an early start at 6 a.m., “The day was fine & I made a sketch of a very interesting bit which I regret that I have no large canvas here to begin immediately for next year’s Salon picture, yet I fear there is too much pleasure in store for me this coming year to worry about that exhibition.”<sup>98</sup>

But Weir was a man in love. He was distracted and he felt torn between Anna at Windham and his work in Keene Valley: “How unfortunate it is that one cannot be at two places at once, that one might do that which one felt he ought & then do that which he craved.” His trip had become an obligation bearable only with the thought of his future life with Anna, “let us hope that the necessity of this trip will be only to insure our future happiness. I know the air here will benefit you for the short time you will probably spend here, & then you can have a small place where you can always invite your friends to, which will not be hackneyed.” He awaited White’s arrival “& then I shall feel that my mission here is about over, although I will probably not have any studies of great value.”<sup>99</sup>

Weir found the combination of his conscience and Anna urging him to paint, daunting, “your saying this makes me feel as if I am weak, which is possibly the case,” for he had done little to date and he regretted how he had misjudged the situation,

while I by having conceived the idea of coming here to stay so long & foolishly thinking that work & interest in making arrangements would occupy myself so much that I would not find the time long, had it been that I could have found timber enough & have begun immediately to build, I might have found enough, for I would have thought of everything as yours & watched with great pleasure every nail which was driven in.<sup>100</sup>

Her letters motivated him to try to work, as he acknowledged on August 15, “on receiving your note I sent off for ten yards of canvas,” but he could not guarantee that he would have something to show in the end, “This however, does not indicate anything as I yet might not produce much, although I may work hard.”<sup>101</sup>

Weir disciplined himself to get up at daybreak to work with the early morning light, arising at 4 a.m. “so that I was off bright & early, I was at work by five & had a splendid

<sup>98</sup> “My painting,” JAW to ADB, August 8, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. “In all your,” ADB to JAW, August 10, 1882, Ibid. “I imagine” and homesickness, ADB to JAW, August 11, 1882, WEFA 190, Weir Family, 3/1. “The day was fine,” JAW to ADB, August 11, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>99</sup> All quotes, JAW to ADB, August 11, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>100</sup> JAW to ADB, August 14, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>101</sup> Both quotes, JAW to ADB, August 15, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

morning, getting back about nine o'clock when the sun broke out." Not enjoying his work in water color, he began a small oil study. Hearing that the canvass he had ordered had been sent, he pledged to "give up on the idea of doing any sight seeing, hunting or fishing, until you come here, & I shall then enjoy it more, but will begin to work hard, & try & do something worthy of you." Once he had his new supplies, he stretched a large piece of canvas and seemed to work steadily after those first weeks of difficulty, although the early morning temperatures augured a change of season and hindered his ability to paint fluidly, "This morning when I went out to work I could scarcely hold my brushes in my hand, as it was so cold, it really seemed as if fall must be very close at hand." However, the cold might have a beneficial effect, "The Valley must be very beautiful when the frost nips all the maple trees."<sup>102</sup>

Weir's mood lightened considerably when his older brothers, John Ferguson Weir, Dean of the Department of Fine Arts at Yale, and Robert W. Weir Jr., came to visit him. He immediately took them around the valley and they reassured him that he had selected a beautiful, if not the most beautiful, site. They all went to a picnic together and after the feast and singing watched the splendid sunset with Mount Marcy clearly visible in the distance. One morning his brothers recited Shakespeare's sonnets while he painted, and then John did some sketching too. They toured Julian's land to discuss possible building sites, enjoying with him "The fine thick trees & the fir, balsam & spruce abound to such an extent, that the odors in the woods are very delightful." The three brothers went off on a deer hunt with guides and dogs but were unsuccessful. Weir was grateful for the flask Anna had given him in which he had "*spiritus vino fermenti*" on the cold morning venture: "I actually thought I would never get warm."<sup>103</sup>

During his brothers' visit he sought their opinion about siting his home, as he reported to Anna, "Today a waggon [sic] road was cut to the high outlook, where I thought after all would be the pleasantest place for an outlook, there you could see the sunsets & have a magnificent view towards the east & south as well, but my brother thought you might think it too isolated." Weir sketched plans showing her the location of his land in relation to the village, including the physical features and the views, and asked her whether she would prefer being closer to the village or further away, with the house oriented for beautiful sunset and moonlight views. He still awaited the arrival of Stanford White, who might help make such a decision. He also looked forward to seeing John Twachtman, hoping he would buy the land between his and that of Shurtleff, whom he called "a noble fellow & the kind of man to have as a near neighbor."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> "So that," August 16, 1882, "give up," August 17, 1882, and "This morning" and "The Valley," August 21, 1882, all JAW to ADB, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>103</sup> Robert W. Weir Jr. (1836-1905) had seen naval service during the Civil War, and had a varied career as whaler, engineer, writer, and illustrator. Source: [www.whalingmuseum.org/kendall/states/newjersey.htm](http://www.whalingmuseum.org/kendall/states/newjersey.htm). On the visit, JAW to ADB, c. August 15, 16, 17, and 19, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>104</sup> All quotes, JAW to ADB, August 21, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

Following his brothers' departure, Weir finally gave in to his feelings and around August 22 made a short visit to Connecticut to see Anna in Windham. For his return to Keene Valley, he arranged to meet Stanford White at Grand Central but their signals got crossed:

I met with Mr. White at the Depot & found that he had been there last night & waited, expecting to leave on Friday [August 24] with me. I was very sorry as the poor fellow is overcrowded with work. We arrived at Westport about 4 A.M. & the team which I had ordered was on hand, so we started immediately for Elizabethtown, arriving about six thirty, then we had our breakfast, & again were wending our way about eight o'clock, arriving here at eleven [on Sunday, August 26].<sup>105</sup>

Twachtman arrived within a day from Cincinnati, which pleased Weir. At last, the three friends went with Shurtleff and the contractor to tour Weir's property:

We visited all the sites, discussed all the feasibilities of the different places . . . they all seemed to think that the place which I thought would be the best, was too isolated for you, & that the lowest plateau with the big trees would be the best, that then there would be no trouble about water & [there are] two big rocks for the entrance. The big room would be 20 X 40 & the walls of stone, the chimney to be seven to nine feet long by six high. Tomorrow the contract will be let, I suppose, as the contractor will be there, the stone mason, the rock blaster, the trees which are to be cleared will be blazed, & it looks now that things are taking a different shape. It is possible that Twachtman will buy the land adjoining my place . . . this is the piece which I made an offer on last week. The surveyor has not yet come & I have not as yet that matter settled. I shall not know how much land the place contains, but I imagine it to be about thirty acres. White & Twachtman think I have the best of all the places here by far, they are very enthusiastic, which I am delighted about.<sup>106</sup>

Soon after this happy consultation, Weir returned to New York and his beloved Anna. During the fall, he told her about the progress reports he had received from Shurtleff concerning work on the site:

Mr. Shurtleff wrote me another letter saying that he hears blasts going off continually in the direction of our little house & expect they are hard at work at it, they have written however, that they will not be able now to lay the wall of the house until the spring as the mortar would freeze, they will however be able to lay the pipes, make the road, haul the stone & make preparations so that when the spring comes it would not take long to get all together, as usual however, the contractors are asking about twice what they first thought they would & almost three times what the architect thought it could be done for, however it if does not entirely disable me I intend to try & have it in such shape, that I can have it for

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<sup>105</sup> Trip, August 22, 1882, and "I met with," August 26, 1882, JAW to ADB, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook.

<sup>106</sup> JAW to ADB, Aug 26, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. See also August 26 and August 27, 1882, WEFA 190, Weir Family, 3/3.

your wedding present...I think we will have a very delightful time this winter talking over & looking for things for the little Box.<sup>107</sup>

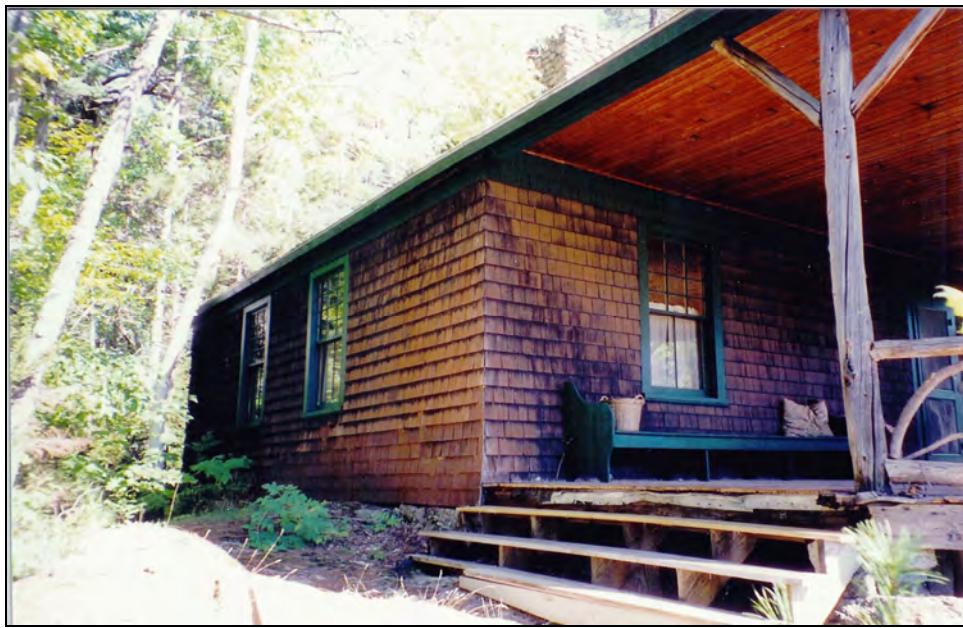
But the project did not go forward. After all of his excitement and planning, Weir apparently never returned to the Adirondacks and he eventually sold the property. (Figure 6) Whatever the deciding factors, whether Keene Valley was too far away, requiring at a minimum eighteen to twenty-four hours of travel (compared with less than three hours to Branchville), or whether the costs of building a house were too high, the reason for the abandonment of Keene Valley and its artists' colony is still a matter of speculation. Even before he attempted to build there, Weir had lamented to Anna, "How will we ever do one quarter of what we have talked of doing. House in the Adirondacks, Europe in August, Salon picture in July, -& visits innumerable"<sup>108</sup> So scheduling may have been an issue as time went on, as well as the financial obligations of the Branchville property and a growing family, and Weir's happiness visiting Windham too.

Weir had been homesick almost as soon as he arrived at Keene Valley, missing Anna in spite of their almost daily correspondence. On his second day there he wrote "I am one of the most homesick men in the Valley." He believed that he had not accomplished much during his stay although records show that he produced at least two oil paintings of the area, Adirondacks' Woods, which came to be owned by his daughter Cora and her husband Charles Burlingham Sr., and In the Adirondacks, which was purchased for \$100 in 1889 by

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<sup>107</sup> JAW to ADB, October 11, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. There was one letter from Julian to Anna reporting that work had begun, October 3, 1882, AAA-Weir, Reel 125. The *Essex County Republican* noted on October 28, 1882, "A Mr. Wier [sic], of New York, has purchased of N. M. Dibble a lot, or ledge, and workmen are busy building roads and blasting rock, preparatory to laying the foundation of a house. The first story, we understand, is to be built of cobble stone, and the outside surface it to be left in its rough state, like a stone wall. What next?" Yet, on July 17, 1884, it was reported that "J. Alden Weir will build soon." Articles courtesy of Robin Pell, Keene Valley historian.

<sup>108</sup> "how will we," JAW to ADB, June 17, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. Robin Pell believes the studio on the rock at the highest point of the property, where Weir found the best view, was Weir's. A simple wood shingled building with a large window looking out on a large porch affords glorious views of the surrounding forests and peaks. This arrangement would have provided the perfect setting for painting indoors or in the open air. The age and location of the building suggest that he might be correct. Gardner visit and tour, Keene Valley, NY, August 2001. Given Pell's familiarity with local records, he makes a convincing argument and research presented in Plunz, *Two Adirondack Hamlets* seems to support his view. In "Origins of the Summer Community," Elizabeth Andrews says Weir sold the house and studio in 1891 to Salvador de Mendonca, the first Brazilian ambassador to the United States who brought his wife to the Adirondacks with the hope that she could recover from tuberculosis. She was being treated by Dr. Edward Trudeau at his sanatorium in Saranac Lake, 106, 119. The "Inventory of Hamlet Building" in Plunz, 326, reports that Weir built a studio on the rock to the south and may have built a "caretaker's cottage" near the road at the gate to the property. The information in this section differs somewhat, suggesting that Mendonca began buying property in the vicinity in 1891 and then bought additional acreage from Weir in 1899. If this is the case, then it is still a mystery as to why Weir held onto the property so long. Did he retain hope of using it? If the land rush that he was part of led to a decline in property values, was he encouraged to hold the land until the market strengthened and he could recoup his investment?



**Figure 6.** Studio building believed built for J. Alden Weir in Keene Valley, New York, on former Weir property.

Photographs, 2001. (Courtesy of Deborah S. Gardner)  
*Top:* Side view of building.  
*Bottom:* Porch with view of surrounding countryside.

collector Edward S. Clark.<sup>109</sup> Perhaps Weir found the landscape inhospitable or even too challenging. Perhaps he missed the companionship of Twachtman for much of his stay. Anna had noted early on the important role his friend played in Weir's life, "I should think it would add greatly to your enjoyment if he did, especially as you say he always inspires [sic] you with so much enthusiasm for art." It may have been that he found the gentler Connecticut landscape more appealing and suitable to an evolving aesthetic framework which was influenced by European developments. Anna had commented to Julian on this affinity "I have thought of you often today as enjoying yourself at Ridgefield, and surrounded once again with those green hills and fields of which you are so fond." It was a time when he was rebelling, as Charles Wood later noted, "against the Academy and the 'Hudson River School.'"<sup>110</sup> Perhaps Weir feared he could not depict the Adirondacks without falling into similar landscape conventions. Any one of these may have played a factor in Weir's final departure from the Adirondacks.

### THE FARM AT BRANCHVILLE

While Weir was eagerly making plans to spend summers in the Adirondacks after his marriage, in June 1882 he was offered the Branchville property by its owner art collector Erwin Davis. As noted above, Weir had acted as his agent and purchased important paintings for him in Europe on several occasions.

The story of the acquisition of Branchville has been told in varying detail by several Weir scholars, as well by Weir relatives and friends. There may never be a definitive version that is proven beyond a reasonable doubt, but the account provided by Julian's older brother Charles Gouverneur Weir (1851-1935), and detailed below, appears to be the most reliable. Dorothy Young merely referred to "their new farm home in Branchville where Julian had acquired some hundred and fifty acres from Erwin Davis in exchange for a painting." Doreen Burke mentioned the "Branchville farm he had acquired in 1882."<sup>111</sup> The *Weir Farm*

<sup>109</sup> "I am one," JAW to ADB, August 7, 1882, WEFA 191, Weir Family, 2/1. Ownership of oil paintings noted in Frick, Davidson, Weir Family, 6/15, "List of J. Alden Weir Works, Landscape and Genre," *Adirondack Woods* owned by Cora Weir Burlingham, 1, and *In the Adirondacks*, 4. Also, Ortgies & Co. Sale, Fifth Avenue Art Gallery, "Catalogue of Paintings in Oil and Pastel by J. Alden Weir and John H. Twachtman, February 7, 1889," #21, *In the Adirondacks* (21 ½ x 13 ½") sold for \$100 to Edward S. Clark. \$100 was approximately \$1,900 in 2005 currency. In the files of WEFA 422, Burlingham, there is a reference to *Adirondack Woods* (22 ½ x 13") owned by Cora Weir Burlingham, inscribed "Weir - August 19, '82." There is a citation to a letter from JAW to ADB begun on August 18, 1882, "I began a study early this morning" followed by another note by Weir of August 19, "This afternoon I put to good [illegible] at my easel in the woods." Burke annotated this file, referring to the painting, "possibly by JF [John Ferguson] Weir." Given the evidence from the Frick records as above that Julian painted *In the Adirondacks*, it is almost certain that he also painted *Adirondack Woods*.

<sup>110</sup> "I should think," ADB to JAW, August 6, 1882, WEFA 190, Weir Family, 3/1. "I have thought," ADB to JAW, [June] 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. "against the Academy," Wood in Century, *Weir Appreciation*, 104.

<sup>111</sup> "their new farm," Young, *Life & Letters*, 159. "Branchville farm," Burke, *Weir*, 17.

*Historic Structures Report* discusses the early history of the property, owned from 1789 to 1880 by the Beers family, followed by Erwin Davis and his wife Emily from 1880 to 1882. In his agricultural study for the *Cultural Landscape Report*, Jack Larkin described the landscape around Ridgefield and noted

the power of the ideal rural life when married by the railroad to the proximity of the metropolis. . . Railroad service to Branchville began in 1852 with the completion of the Danbury to Norfolk Railroad. Thus Branchville initially became a place with considerably better metropolitan connections than Ridgefield Center, and causing the building of a much better road between the center and the long-time peripheral district. By 1870 a branch line had been built to Ridgefield Center. This station may have become the primary access to the farm on Nod's Hill; the route was far more level, although considerably longer, than the steep climb and descent to the Branchville station.<sup>112</sup>

The *Weir Farm Historic Structures Report* then continues the story:

The Davis's sold the Beers homestead to J. Alden Weir in 1882 for the purchase price of a painting. In June 1882 Weir wrote to Anna: 'Yesterday I went out for a walk & visited a gallery where I found a very fine picture which I could not resist the temptation of buying for which I paid \$560, & last evening I had an offer for it from a gentleman who saw it, of the price and a farm of 150 acres in Connecticut.'<sup>113</sup>

Hildegard Cummings recounted the story in more detail. She quoted the June 1882 letter to Anna concerning the \$560 painting and Weir's hope to "see the place when I go to see my family, if not too much out of the way." Coincidentally, his family was vacationing in nearby Ridgefield just then." Cummings' research found no record of Davis giving Weir the farm for the \$560 painting:

Weir paid the Davises the token sum of ten dollars when the property was deeded to him on July 19, 1882. If Davis gave Weir \$560 for a painting, in addition to the farm, there is no indication of it in the official property transfer. But payment for the painting may have been privately made, Weir may have been mistaken about the terms of the offer, or an original agreement that Davis would give Weir \$560 and the farm might have changed.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Jack Larkin, *The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860-1940*. An essay prepared as the agricultural history component of the *Cultural Landscape Report* for Weir Farm National Historic Site. (Draft, 1996), 13-14; hereafter JLarkin, *Weir Farm*. See Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Cultural Landscape Report for the Weir Farm National Historic Site*. (Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1996); hereafter, CLR.

<sup>113</sup> Marie L. Carden, Richard C. Crisson, Maureen K. Phillips, *Weir Farm Historic Structures Report*, (Lowell, MA.: National Park Service, Draft 1995, 1998), Vol.1, 3; hereafter HSR. \$560 was approximately \$10,000 in 2005 currency.

<sup>114</sup> "see the place" and "Weir paid," Cummings, "Home is the Starting Place: J. Alden Weir and the Spirit of Place," in Cummings, *A Place of His Own*, 21-22.

Elizabeth Milroy's essay in *A Connecticut Place* adds to the speculation about Weir's acquisition of the farm:

Weir never explained the full circumstances of Davis's unusual offer. He may have offered the farm to Weir as a wedding present. Or it may have been payment to Weir for services rendered . . . Davis was a cunning financier who had made and lost several fortunes. He was also notorious for arranging complex and self-serving financial deals and he may have negotiated the property transfer in order to avoid paying Weir in cash for his work in Europe or for recent family portrait commissions.<sup>115</sup>

Some additional information has been uncovered in the notes of Dorothy Weir Young, which include the reminiscences of Weir's close friend Charles Wood and those of his brother, Charles Gouverneur Weir (1851-1935), an engineer. Wood reported to Dorothy that her father "told me how he had swapped a wonderful flower piece (which I bought at the Davis sale) for the farm in Branchville. He used to laugh as he told of the deal. 'The old rascal thought he was swindling me, but I got more canvases, beauty, etc. out of this place, so I think I swindled him!'" In the 1889 auction of the Davis art collection, there were six floral still lifes, one of which could have been the painting purchased by Wood, for which Davis had traded the farm. The floral artists were: Jean Chardin, Louis Mettling, Narcissa Diaz de la Pena, Hendrik Mesdag, Anatole Vely, and J.C. Cazin. Only the Cazin sold for more than \$560. Neither the name Preyer, which is mentioned in Charles Weir's account below, nor the name Proctor which is mentioned in other accounts, appear.<sup>116</sup>

Weir's brother Charles remembered a different painting than Wood did. He told Dorothy that Davis came to Weir's studio "one day and saw a picture of some fruit by Preyer that he had just bought. He had paid \$580 for it and had only \$800 in the bank. Charles reprimanded him for buying it. Davis bought the picture for what he [Julian] had paid for it, and gave him Branchville beside. The family was staying in Ridgefield at the Inn that summer and Julian came up and he and Charles went for a drive and he said, 'You thought I was a fool for buying that picture from [Samuel] Avery, but I am going to show you the farm he proposed giving me,' and they drove up to the farm house which also had 155 acres of land. He then said, 'Would you take it? Charles said, 'By all means,' and they concluded the property was worth \$10,000."<sup>117</sup> As there was no painting by Preyer, presumably Johann W.

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<sup>115</sup> Milroy in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 32-33. See also Milroy, 40, fn.15, on Davis.

<sup>116</sup> "told me how," CESW to DWY in WEFA 422, Burlingham, 16. An early draft of Young's *Life & Letters* at BYU also recounts the purchase story at length, BYU 1291, Dorothy Weir Young Collection, 3/2, hereafter BYU 1291, DW Young. Wood is referring to himself when he says "I bought at the Davis sale," meaning the sale of Davis's collection. Catalogue of Erwin Davis sale, 1889, WEFA 422, Burlingham, 61. Proctor is mentioned in Jay Axelbank, "From a Bartered Farm, An Impressionist Haven," *New York Times*, January 10, 1999, 545.

<sup>117</sup> Charles Weir's account to Dorothy, WEFA 409, DW Young, 3/1. Cummings refers to the Inn at Ridgefield as Keller Tavern in her essay in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 76. The inn was later purchased by architect Cass Gilbert, renowned designer of the Woolworth Building, who converted it into his residence. \$10,000 was approximately \$182,000 in 2005 currency.

Preyer (1803-1889), in the Davis sale, Wood may have mistakenly remembered the painting as one by Weir himself. One of Julian's floral still lifes did appear at the auction of Davis paintings in 1889, but Weir's own correspondence confirms that the painting in question (that Davis acquired from Weir) was done by someone else.

Art dealer Frederic Newlin Price recalled much of Charles Weir's story in an article on Julian in *International Studio* several years after the artist's death, although with some errors of chronology. Charles, who was staying with Julian at the Benedick in the summer of 1882, asked him what his plans were for the summer:

By Jove,' said Julian, 'I have eight hundred dollars-I'll sketch and enjoy myself.' But his eight hundred dollars were destined for other channels, for one day Charles discovered on his brother's easel a little painting that he had never seen before. Taxing Julian, he finally received the admission that it had just been purchased. 'By Jove, I found it in a little book store on Broadway and bought it.'<sup>118</sup>

According to Price, Weir paid \$600 for the painting and when Charles asked his brother, "What about your summer?" he replied, "That painting will be my summer." Price then described Julian's reluctance to sell the painting to a visitor, Erwin Davis, whom the article implied did not know Weir until that time. However, this was not the case, as Weir had been purchasing art for Davis for several years. In another version, Price referred to a still life by an artist named Proctor. No American artist by that name has been found.<sup>119</sup>

When Weir later showed Charles the farm, which Price dated at Thanksgiving, he said, "See that old farmhouse and all the land? I got all this and my six hundred dollars for that little painting from the bookstore." It is clear, however, from Weir's letters to Anna and from his mother's diary, that he and Charles saw the property in June. He wrote to Anna on June 17, 1882: "If I go up to Ridgefield tomorrow, I will look at the 155 acres & see if they are habitable, if so we might have that as sort of a hunting lodge for part of the season." The next day Susan Bayard Weir recorded in her diary that "the boys took a drive in the afternoon to look at some place belonging to Mr. Davis." Additional details concerning Weir's purchase of Branchville may be uncovered in the future, but Charles's version of events as recounted to Dorothy, most of which he witnessed firsthand that summer, appears to be the most complete. It is possible that a journalist's conclusion about the identity of the painting may remain the last word for some time: "About the painting that started it all," wrote Jay Axelbank in the *New York Times* in 1999, "the one that Weir traded for his farm - little is known . . . Its fate has been swallowed in the mists of art history, its whereabouts unknown."<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> F. Newlin Price, "Weir-The Great Observer," *International Studio*, April 1922, 128.

<sup>119</sup> Quotes, Price, op.cit., 128. In 1915, Price had founded the Ferargil Gallery which specialized in American art. See also CLR, which repeats the \$560 story and cites 153 acres.

<sup>120</sup> "See that old farmhouse," Charles Weir's account to Dorothy Young, WEFA 409, DW Young, 3/1. "If I go up," JAW to ADB, June 17, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY Scrapbook. "the boys," June 18, 1882, Susan Weir Diaries, BYU 511, Weir Family, 2, vol.15. Axelbank, January 10, 1999, op.cit. fn.56.

## MARRIAGE

About two weeks before Julian's wedding to Anna in 1883, his brother Henry sent a message to him in New York to have a "man" go to the foot of the Franklin Street pier on Manhattan's West side in a few days to pick up two cows for Branchville, "Maud of Perry Farm" and "Nellie," that he was shipping down the Hudson River on a barge from Newburgh as a wedding present. Weir collected the cows himself at 5 a.m. and marched them to the other side of Manhattan, much to the delight of onlookers, for transfer to a barge that would travel up the East River to Long Island Sound and Connecticut. Henry had sent careful instructions to feed and water the cows at once and to drive them slowly. Susan Weir had commented in her journal that day, "Julian got up early to see to his cows," leaving a researcher to wonder initially what he was doing with cows one early April morning in the middle of Manhattan.<sup>121</sup>

The Friday before the wedding, Weir was given a bachelor party by thirty of his friends, including Percy Alden, Carroll Beckwith, Erwin Davis, Wyatt Eaton, Will Low, art dealers Daniel Cottier and James Inglis, Charles McKim, George W. Maynard, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Loyall Farragut, and Olin Warner. Beckwith recorded in his diary at 5 a.m. the next morning: "Weir's dinner was a great success and very few fellows are launched into matrimony with such a brilliant feast from their friends. It is dawn. I have just left Roosevelt at his door. Davis and I rode out to the West End Hotel this morning." Weir's mother also noted the event in her journal: "Our dear Julian went to a dinner given him by a large number of his friends. He got in at 2 o'clock a.m. Was escorted home by his friends who serenaded him."<sup>122</sup>

Anna and Julian were married on Tuesday, April 24, 1883 at the Church of the Ascension in New York, by the rector, the Rev. E. Winchester Donald. (Figure 7) The bridesmaids were Henry Davis's sister Lilla, Weir's sister Carrie, and Anna's friends Tessie Lansing and Ernestine Fabbri. The ushers included a group of noteworthy young men: Stanford White, William Merritt Chase, Elliott Roosevelt, Poultney Bigelow, Archibald Russell, Charles Nourse, and William Bingham, with Lindley Johnson as best man. Mrs. Baker hosted a reception at her winter residence at 64 West 35th Street. Guests included a combination of family and old West Point and New York friends.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> April 17, 1883, Susan Weir Diaries, BYU 511, Weir Family, 2, vol.16. Dorothy Young also refers to this incident in an early draft of her father's biography. See BYU 1291, DW Young, 3/2.

<sup>122</sup> Beckwith diary, April 21, 1883, 5 a.m., James Carroll Beckwith papers, 1852-1917, AAA, Reel 4798. April 21, 1883, Susan Weir Diaries, BYU 511, Weir Family, 2, vol.16.

<sup>123</sup> Wedding notice, *New York Times*, April 25, 1883. Young, *Life & Letters*, 158, notes 4 and 5, identifies some of these ushers. Elliott Roosevelt was the brother of future president Theodore Roosevelt and later the father of Eleanor Roosevelt. Originally Weir had hoped to invite Jules Bastien-Lepage to be best man but the distance and Lepage's poor health did not permit him to attend; see JAW to ADB, October 9, 1882, WEFA 2891, DWY, Scrapbook 1882-December 1883. Lepage died in December 1884.



**Figure 7.** Church of the Ascension, New York City, Fifth Avenue and 10th Street.  
Photograph, 2003. (Courtesy of Deborah S. Gardner)

Julian and Anna spent a few days at Branchville, then sailed to England for a planned trip of several years duration to Europe, where they would revisit favorite places and friends; buy furniture, art, and decorative objects for their homes in Branchville, the Adirondacks, and New York; and acquire paintings for collector Henry G. Marquand (1891-1902). After a few months, they began to feel homesick, especially for Branchville. Julian wrote to his mother-in-law: "It seems but a very little time since we were saying goodbye, quietly revelling [sic] in the idea of having slipped off for a two or three years trip . . . [Now] we are not overcome by the fascination of a wandering life, but long for the quiet, plain little house among the rocks, where we can feel and know not the nonsense of hotel life, and living in trunks, hurrying from one place to another, to be imaginary pleasure." The news of another family tragedy reached them. In June Anna heard from Kansas, where her sister Cora's infant twins had died.<sup>124</sup> Whether it was due to a general homesickness and a desire to be nearer their close family or Julian's need to begin painting and earning a living again, Anna and Julian returned from Europe in September 1883.

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<sup>124</sup> Honeymoon, Young, *Life & Letters*, 159-161. It was at this time that Julian bought Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Man* for Marquand, paying \$25,000 (approximately \$478,000 in 2005 currency) which was later donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art of which Marquand was a founder. See Young, *Life & Letters*, 159. "It seems but," Young, *Life & Letters*, 161. The reference seems to be to the Branchville house as the Adirondack house had not been built although the latter property was far more rocky than the Connecticut land. Death of twins, Cora Baker Davis to Anna Baker Weir (hereafter ABW), June 19, 1883, BYU 511, Weir family, 5/8.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FAMILY LIFE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT, 1883-1893

#### FAMILY ROUTINES, CHILDREN, AND THE FRIENDSHIP OF JOHN TWACHTMAN

When Anna and Julian returned from Europe, they visited Mrs. Baker in Windham, and then settled in Branchville until November, when they moved into a third-floor walk-up apartment at 31 West 10th Street, just a few blocks from the home of Weir's parents. Scholar Elizabeth Milroy points out that:

Like many of their contemporaries, the Weirs had mixed feelings about living in a city. 'We are again in this big turmoil of a city,' Weir wrote to his mother-in-law soon after returning to New York from Branchville in the fall of 1883, 'and already wish we were out of it.' Within the young couple's lifetimes, the pace of city life had accelerated rapidly. Immigrants crowding into inadequate tenements had transformed the racial and ethnic character of the population. Articles in popular books and magazines decried the decay of the cities and extolled the virtues of country living, now increasingly convenient thanks to expanded and improved rail service.<sup>125</sup>

However much country living was appealing, for an artist like Weir the city was essential to his professional life. There he had access to collectors and clients through his social and professional networks, and supplemented his income by teaching in any one of several art schools. In the city he had a marketplace for work through a number of new galleries that showcased American artists. In addition, he joined art organizations where he enhanced his skills and with other members, arranged exhibitions to display their art. Rather than abandoning the city and becoming disconnected from the sources of income and social contacts that supported his work as an artist, Weir eventually found a balance between the countryside and the metropolis.

On March 24, 1884, the Weirs' first child, Caroline Alden Weir (known as "Caro"), was born. In the fall of 1886 Anna's mother loaned them \$10,000 to purchase a small row house at 11 East 12th Street, where the family would live until 1908. (Figure 8) Both Caro and her sister Dorothy wrote of life on 12th Street, where Weir established a studio in a large room on the parlor floor, giving up his studio of six years in the Benedick Building. Dorothy recalled:

The main trouble with the room as a studio was that it was too much the center of the house; the dining room and parlor were both adjoining, and all the sounds of

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<sup>125</sup> Milroy in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 35.

a house full of children would crowd in where peace was imperative. By my childhood in the nineties the studio, although it still kept its name, had long since ceased to serve as such . . . But through the eighties it was the artistic center of the house.<sup>126</sup>

Caroline Weir Ely's memoir of 12th Street, *11 East 12 Street, New York*, described in detail the rooms and eclectic furnishings of the house, including the dark oak dining room table inlaid with ebony acquired by the Weirs on their honeymoon in Europe, on which "a table cloth was never used and the china was not the conventional Tiffany kind but English, French, Italian, or Dutch. The glasses were Venetian . . . On holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, Mr. Albert Pinkham Ryder, the John Twachtmans, [the Alfred Q.] Collins, [the Childe] Hassams, and other close friends, would gather."<sup>127</sup>

Julian and Anna worshiped nearby at the Church of the Ascension at Fifth Avenue and 10th Street, where they had been married. The Gothic Revival style building was finished in 1841 to a design by America's pioneering Gothicist, Richard Upjohn.<sup>128</sup> Weir's friend Stanford White had overseen a remodeling of the chancel in the late 1880s. The combined efforts of many of Weir's colleagues--a pulpit by one of White's partners, Charles F. McKim, marble reredos by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, mosaics by Maitland Armstrong, and stained glass by John La Farge--made the interior a demonstration of the era's interest in decorative integration as well as an extraordinarily rich composition, a fitting reflection of the Episcopalian liturgy. Weir may have found comfort in his religious observance in this building, drawn by the aesthetics as much as by the leadership of the congregation.

In May 1885, Weir was elected an associate member of the National Academy of Design. One year later, on May 12, 1886, he was a full academician. His happiness at achieving this honor must have been somewhat tempered, as less than two weeks later he was a pall bearer at the funeral of Arthur Quartley. Quartley, one of the first members of the Tile Club, had been elected to full membership in the Academy. Weir had painted his portrait in 1879, *The Marine*, in honor of his friend's interest in marine subjects.<sup>129</sup>

At the annual Academy show in 1886, Weir shared the complaints of his contemporaries concerning the placement of his paintings. He wrote to his friend J. Appleton Brown, "They have given me that same old heavenward bounce." He was referring to the vertical display of paintings, one above the other for several rows, so that those at the top were very difficult, if not impossible, to see. A critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* added,

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<sup>126</sup> Mrs. Baker's loan for the purchase of 11 East 12 Street, noted in HSR I, 34 and Young, *Life & Letters*, 168. "The main trouble," Young, *Life & Letters*, 169.

<sup>127</sup> Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969), n.p., hereafter Ely, *11 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street*.

<sup>128</sup> See Everard M. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn, Architect and Churchman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).

<sup>129</sup> On Quartley (1839-1886), see Pisano in Pisano, *Tile Club*, 38; "Academy of Design Officers," *New York Times*, May 13, 1886, 5, and "Artist Quartley's Funeral," May 23, 1886. The wake for Quartley was in the main gallery of the Academy.

"Eight hundred paintings have been pitchforked upon the walls."<sup>130</sup> Not surprisingly, some years later Weir would eagerly join with his friends to create the exhibition group, Ten American Painters. At its annual shows, the number of paintings were limited and all were displayed at an accessible, if not uniform, viewing level.



**Figure 8.** 11 East 12th Street, New York City. Row house purchased by Julian and Anna Weir in 1886.

Left: A late 19th century view.  
(WEFA 3067, AHP01099).

Right: The house is gray with a book store in the basement but retains much of its original appearance, with its high stoop and door enframement intact. The parlor floor windows have been shortened.

Photograph, 2003. (Courtesy of Deborah S. Gardner)

<sup>130</sup> Both quotes from Young draft, BYU 1291, DW Young, 3/4.

At about this time, Weir was concerned with his financial situation, and perhaps wondering if even the Society of American Artists was losing some of its earlier vitality. William Gerdts suggests, in his introduction to *Ten American Painters*, that by the late 1880s and early 1890s, “at least some of the painters perceived that the differences between the National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists were shrinking, and that the society was surrendering its more radical and liberal character.” It was still a time in which New York art dealers were more likely to be promoting European rather than American artists. Weir wrote to his brother John in March 1886: “Every day I wake up full of hope and the possibility of a portrait to paint or the sale of an old picture, but such comes not . . . Nothing seems to be going on. Everyone has the blues and I learned yesterday that Mr. Sherwood has put down the rents of the studios in his building. I wish Mr. T. [Tuckerman] would do the same with ours [the Benedick].” That July, another family tragedy occurred, adding to Weir’s gloomy mood. His half-brother, Gulian Verplanck Weir, a 48-year-old army captain, perhaps concerned with his ability to support his six children on a soldier’s salary and suffering from a depression that had plagued him since he was wounded at the Battle of Gettysburg in September 1863, shot himself to death in his quarters at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, New York.<sup>131</sup> Weir left Branchville to attend the funeral at West Point, a sad occasion, but not the last, nor in any sense the least, over the next six years.

Anna and Julian settled into a routine of city life in the winter, with summers and early autumn divided between Branchville and Windham. As Dorothy wrote: “New York, with its exhibitions, clubs, journals, and art schools offered Julian and his family many advantages, and their winters became somewhat more agreeable.”<sup>132</sup> Lawrence W. Chisolm’s introduction to Dorothy’s biography summed up Weir’s financial and social situation at this time:

If his bachelor’s prosperity seemed less elastic after his marriage to Anna Baker in 1883, combined family resources were at hand for emergencies. He lived comfortably enough, welcoming his friends at his New York house or more informally at the farm in Branchville . . . Winters in town were brightened by gatherings at the Century Club, The Players, and with artists’ groups of all sorts. His close friends were mainly painters, men of talent and character whose underlying seriousness is preserved in Weir’s portraits of them: Olin Warner, Wyatt Eaton, John Twachtman, and Albert Pinkham Ryder.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> “at least some,” from “The Ten: A Chronology,” in *Ten American Painters*, 9. “Every day,” Young, *Life & Letters*, 167. Gulian Verplanck Weir, BYU 511, Weir Family, Scrapbook, 3/2. Gulian Weir (1837-1886) was named after Gulian Crommelin Verplanck (1786-1870), New York attorney, author, congressman, state legislator, and promoter of the arts. Verplanck was probably responsible for Robert Weir’s appointment as drawing instructor at West Point and helped him get the commission to paint the *Embarkation of the Pilgrims* for the rotunda of the United States Capitol. On Verplanck, *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v., and on Weir’s commission, see [www.byu.edu/moa/exhibits/Current%20Exhibits/150years/840025700.html](http://www.byu.edu/moa/exhibits/Current%20Exhibits/150years/840025700.html).

<sup>132</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 168.

<sup>133</sup> Chisolm in Young, *Life & Letters*, xxi.

Childe Hassam described this period in the late 1880s and early 1890s, and the texture of the Weir family life:

I saw a great deal of Weir in town and country. The first dinner I went to in a New York painter's home [after Hassam's move to New York in late 1889] was at Weir's charming 12th Street house with its fine old furniture and pewter. His old pewter was a note in his dining-room. I remember a Thanksgiving dinner in the 12th Street house, with Weir and a turkey at one end of the old oak table (which was without a white cloth, most unusual this in New York at the time), and then there was Twachtman and another turkey at the other end. And there was old pewter on the table. It is handsome anywhere - old oak and pewter and fine blue and white porcelain. Few were on to it then.<sup>134</sup>

Weir had completed studios at his homes in New York and Branchville, enabling him to give up his rented one in the Benedick Building, although by the 1890s the distractions of a growing family forced him to seek additional rented studio space on West 55th Street. The dating of the completion of the Branchville studio is confusing due to the timing of the two letters which apparently refer to it. On July 7, 1885 from Branchville, Julian wrote to his sister-in-law Ella Baker, who was studying German in Amherst, Massachusetts: "My studio is now finished and I most sincerely hope that I will have some little things which may meet your liking." However, more than a year later, Anna wrote to Ella, who was then on a year-long European trip with her mother: "Julian's studio is finished and is as comfortable as possible."<sup>135</sup>

Ella and her mother traveled together often in those years. Unlike Julian on his honeymoon, Ella, her sister Cora, and their mother, and, seemed to relish "living in trunks and hurrying from one place to another." In 1886 and 1887, Ella and her mother took a year-long European trip, during which, Ella noted in her expense diary, she took painting lessons and produced a number of watercolors.<sup>136</sup> They visited France, England, Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Russia, and Switzerland. In 1889-90, they traveled again to Europe, as well as North Africa and Turkey, and in 1891-92 they took a six month trip around the world, from the West Coast of the United States through China, India, Egypt, and Europe.

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<sup>134</sup> Childe Hassam, "Reminiscences of Weir," in *Century, Weir Appreciation*, 69-70.

<sup>135</sup> "My studio," JAW to Ella Baker (EB), July 7, 1885, WEFA 190, Weir Family, 1/5. *National Park Service Cultural Landscapes Inventory, Weir Farm*. (Weir Farm Historic Site, 2003), 15, (hereafter, CLI) uses the 1885 date as does the HSR, xlivi. ABW to EB, August 6, 1886, WEFA 192, 1/3. The letter is postmarked August 5, 1886, although Anna dates it "August 6th." While she has not added the year, it is definitely 1886, as the postmarked envelope survived with the letter and is addressed (as was her next letter to Ella dated "August 24, 1886") to Paris, then forwarded to Dresden. Possibly Anna was referring to a studio in the new house at 11 East 12th Street in New York which she and Julian had purchased in 1886, or perhaps it was just not totally completed in 1885.

<sup>136</sup> WEFA 2535, 4.

Anna gave birth to her second child, Julian Alden Weir Jr., on January 30, 1888 at home in New York, and Young reports that about that time, John Twachtman became a frequent visitor to Branchville. Weir's neighbor Bill DeForest recalled family memories that one winter Weir and Twachtman boarded at his grandmother's house on Nod Hill Road to paint winter scenes when the unheated Branchville house was closed, but it is unclear, with a new baby in the family, whether it was that same winter of 1888.<sup>137</sup> It was a busy year. Weir exhibited with the Society of Painters in Pastel for the first time and at the annual exhibition of the New York Etching Club. His painting *Idle Hours* was awarded a \$2,000 prize at the fourth and last Annual Prize Fund Exhibition and was subsequently donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Twachtman scholar Lisa Peters noted that the "close friendship between Twachtman and Weir is reflected in their decision in the spring of 1888 to hold a joint show and auction of their works at the Fifth Avenue Galleries in New York." That summer Twachtman rented a house near Weir in Branchville enabling the two to work together. Cummings pointed out, "It is probably no coincidence that Weir turned to landscape painting just as his friend appeared on the scene." While their children played--among them Twachtman's son Alden--the fathers experimented with prints and pastels and created etchings on Weir's press. Some of Twachtman's paintings in the show, held in February 1889, included at least four depictions of Branchville, including *Apple Trees at Branchville* and *The House in Nodd*. Each man submitted ten pastels and fifty-two oil paintings for display. Critics praised the show, although the auction prices were not as high as the artists would have liked. Weir's oils sold for \$35 to \$330, his watercolors for \$55 to \$75, and his pastels for \$10 to \$31, for a total of \$3,826; Twachtman's art sold for \$3,585. As Burke observed, the sale, "even if not totally successful financially, brought a large segment of his [Weir's] work before the public for the first time. A few of the landscapes and the pastels in this exhibition showed that his work was beginning to react to French Impressionism."<sup>138</sup> By 1889, Twachtman had settled in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Only four weeks after the show, on March 8, 1889, the Weir's thirteen-month-old son Julian Jr. died of diphtheria and pneumonia, dealing a crippling blow to his parents. The child's grandmother, Susan Weir, whose husband was near death, had recounted in her diary each day how the child's fever and cough had become progressively worse. On Saturday, March 9, she wrote: "They [Julian and Anna] left at 10 o'clock for Windham. Ella

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<sup>137</sup> Twachtman friendship, Young, *Life & Letters*, 169. Interview with Bill DeForest, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT., Weir Farm OH II, 3. DeForest, born in 1900, grew up on a neighboring farm in Ridgefield.

<sup>138</sup> "close friendship," Peters, *Twachtman*, 81. "It is probably," Cummings in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 84. John Alden Twachtman was born March 5, 1882, Peters, *Twachtman*, 51. Information about the items in the show and the prices (hand annotated) came from the *Ortgies & Co. Sale, Catalogue of Paintings in Oil and Pastel by J. Alden Weir and John H. Twachtman. To be sold at auction Thursday Evening February 7th [1889]*, found in Frick, Davidson, Weir Family, 6/15. The paintings were displayed at the Fifth Avenue Art Galleries at 365 5th Avenue, near 34th Street, but the sale was arranged by Ortgies & Co. "even if not," Burke, *Weir*, 151.

Baker went with them. I received a telegram from Julian from Stanford that they had gone.”<sup>139</sup> Julian Jr. was buried with generations of Bakers in the Windham cemetery. John Ferguson Weir attempted to comfort his brother:

I am glad you will not yield to the inclination to avoid anything that recalls the dear one to you, even in these painful days; and I hope you will be able to go up to Branchville with Anna some bright day, and let all the holy influence pour in upon you . . . You are the same wonderful boy to me in all circumstances: in joy and sorrow there is such lucid clearness in your nature that often makes me wonder: I am so different with more to overcome . . . I hope you will have the portrait to paint that you may lose yourself in work.<sup>140</sup>

The loss of Julian Jr. was followed on May 1, 1889 by the death of Julian’s father, Robert W. Weir at age 86, after several years of declining health. Soon after, Anna and Julian left their daughter Caro in Windham with Mrs. Baker and Ella and sailed for England in an attempt to restore their broken spirits, their first trip to Europe since their honeymoon. They spent three weeks on the Isle of Man where Weir worked on etchings, as well as pastels and watercolors, and then went on to Paris to attend the Universal Exposition where his paintings won silver and bronze medals. In a New York newspaper report, Weir was singled out as “one of the best known” of fourteen painters who received silver medals.<sup>141</sup>

#### **HOUSEHOLD AND FARM EMPLOYEES**

When Julian and Anna returned to Branchville in October they hired a new farmer, Paul Remy, a native of Alsace, who would oversee the farm with his wife and sons, Carl and Willie, for the next fifteen years. For the first seven years of his ownership of the farm, Weir had difficulties employing a reliable farmer. A Mr. Holsten had been employed from 1883 to 1885, but according to Jack Larkin, was let go for letting 500 heads of celery freeze, a loss of a major cash crop. In August 1886, Anna wrote to her sister Ella: “We should have enjoyed going [to visit Mrs. Alden and Percy at Cornwall, Connecticut], but we do not feel as though we could go away until John [possibly a reference to Holsten] leaves and we get our new man when we expect to go up to Josie and Henry’s,” and soon after, “We are having a disagreeable time with John. We have not been able to get rid of him, and today had to go up to Danbury to see another lawyer. He tells us John has not any business to stay and I hope before long the

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<sup>139</sup> Baby’s death, “Notices,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1889, 5. March 9, 1889, Susan Bayard Weir Diaries, BYU 511, Weir Family, 2, vol.20.

<sup>140</sup> The first part of the quote (“I am glad”) is cited in CLR, 25, JFW to JAW, March 13, 1889 (see 62, note 47), and the remainder of the quote (“You are the same”) is cited in Young, *Life & Letters*, 170.

<sup>141</sup> “one of the best,” from “Our Artists in Paris,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1889, 4. See also Annette Blaugrund, *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition* (Philadelphia and New York: Harry N. Abrams with the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1989).

thing will be settled.”<sup>142</sup> Larkin detailed Paul Remy’s service, much of his evidence based on letters between Julian and his brother John in the 1890s:

Paul, from all accounts, was a hard worker - ‘always at work,’ John noted. He was apparently a skilled traditional plowman, working with the farm’s ‘two mighty oxen, who upturn huge boulders in the furrow.’ It was noted at various times that he brought in the hay, made haystacks in early August, cut oats, cleared a field for sowing winter rye, and dealt with wet corn overheating in the barn from spontaneous combustion. Apparently he at times corresponded with JAW about the work of the farm; of course, these missing letters would greatly have illuminated the details of farm operations.<sup>143</sup>

There were scattered references to the comings and goings of household employees in New York, as well. Caroline “Caro” Weir Ely, in her recollections, fondly recalled Mary Hanratty in a starched cap and apron. She “came to us at the age of eighteen and never left us until, forty years or more later, when she retired. She had the whole family on her mind, including dogs and cats - to say nothing of tame rabbits, etc. As I grew up she took me to dancing school, and, later, to balls at Sherry’s, and sat in the balcony no matter how long a party lasted.” Ely mentioned too that the “servants rooms were small and, I suppose, cold. Drama occurred in one of them when a new young waitress we had threw her basin and pitcher out of the window onto 12th Street, arousing the neighborhood and bringing two policemen running- and off to the hospital went the poor young woman.” The Weirs also employed a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Vogelgasang, who were tenants in the basement apartment and took care of the house when the Weirs were in the country or traveling. Once, in 1895, Julian wrote from New York to Ella in Branchville after she had temporarily moved the children to the country following a furnace malfunction and smoke condition. “I had the nursery carpet cleaned. It was sent home this morning . . . and Andrew will put it down today.”<sup>144</sup> Presumably, the family employed about three or four servants at one time.

Caroline Ely recalled in another essay, “Our household consisted of Father, Mother, three sisters, Mary Hanratty, our nurse and general manager, a cook, waitress and laundress.” The 1900 federal census, enumerated in June, listed the Weir family, Julian, Ella, and his three daughters, in Ridgefield, along with four servants, all single women born in Ireland: Mary Govern, 41, cook; Agnes Johnson, 30, waitress; Hellena Dunn, 20, nurse; and Alice Hughes, 32, laundress. The whereabouts of Mary Hanratty at that time is unclear, but it is possible she was visiting family in Ireland.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> On Holsten, JLarkin, *Weir Farm*, 34. “We should have,” ABW to EB, August 6, 1886, and “We are having,” August 24, 1886, WEFA 192, 1/3.

<sup>143</sup> JLarkin, *Weir Farm*, 36, drawing on letters from JFW to JAW in 1890, 1892, 1899, and 1903.

<sup>144</sup> Ely quotes from Ely, *11 East 12th Street*, n.p. “I had the nursery,” JAW to Ella Baker Weir (EBW), January 10, 1895, WEFA 192, 1/8.

<sup>145</sup> “Our household,” Ely, “Grandmother’s Attic,” in *Lest We Forget*, n.p. In the 1930 census, Mary Hanratty is listed as living in New York City with Ella and Dorothy at 1192 Park Avenue. As she was 62 years old at that time, according to Caro’s recollections, Mary would have come to work for the Weir

An upper middle class family, such as that of J. Alden Weir, could afford to employ so many workers because the cost was so low: the steady flow of hundreds of thousands of immigrants yearly to the United States in the 1880s and 1890s depressed wages and made household help affordable even on an artist's earnings. Women like Anna and Ella Baker had grown up with the expectation that others would take care of the basic work of the household, and that their husbands or families would have enough resources to employ all the help that was needed. At Branchville, there was no heat, no running water, and no electricity in the 1890s, all conditions that required a great deal of labor to provide for daily life. Household workers freed Anna to serve as Julian's model, and freed Ella to travel abroad for months at a time. The reality behind this situation was taken for granted, and was, with but a few early exceptions, not reflected in Weir's art, unlike that of some of his turn-of-the-century contemporaries such as Robert Henri and George Bellows who became known for their gritty realist scenes of urban life.<sup>146</sup>

### TEACHING AT THE ART STUDENTS LEAGUE

The family's schedule of travel between town and country was determined to a large degree by Julian's teaching schedule at the Art Students League. Located in the 1880s at 38 West 14th Street and then on East 23rd Street in a former piano factory, the League was not far from his home. Classes for the school's 400 plus students started in early October and ended in late May. This eight-month arrangement allowed both students and their instructors to take advantage of the good weather of June through September to paint in the country, either on their own or in summer art schools, or to travel abroad. In the early 1880s Julian had begun to teach a portrait class at the League, but by 1885 he had taken on a heavier teaching load in order to increase his income. In the 1885-86 season, the school catalogue boasted of its excellent faculty, emphasizing both their preparatory training in Europe and their non-doctrinaire approach, the latter to make the point that other schools were more limited in their offerings:

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family about 1885 or 1886, shortly after Caro was born. *Twelfth Census of the United States* (1900) Ridgefield CT, ED94, 4; *Fifteenth Census of the United States* (1930), New York, NY, ED31, 5B.

<sup>146</sup> JLarkin, *Weir Farm*, 38-39 also discusses domestic labor. No heat, etc., Ely, "My Father's Friends," in *Lest We Forget*, n.p. Gallati, *Chase*, 44-45, discusses Weir's 1879 painting of *In the Park*, set in Union Square with a mix of poor, working- and middle-class types, which garnered poor reviews, and his *Snowstorm on Mercer Street* of 1881. In contrast, Weir's friend Hassam did dozens of cityscapes, but mostly of well-to-do neighborhoods in New York City and Paris. See H. Barbara Weinberg, *Childe Hassam: American Impressionist* (New York and New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art with Yale University Press, 2004), passim, hereafter Weinberg, *Childe Hassam*. In a forthcoming article, Julia Myers argues that *In the Park* is unique among the works of Weir and his contemporaries in commenting on the reality of class differences. See Julia Rowland Myers, "J. Alden Weir's Essay on 'Modern Life': *In the Park* of 1879," *The American Art Journal*, XXXIV and XXXV (2003-2004), 144-185.

These instructors have studied under the masters of the best schools of Paris and Munich, which study, coupled with their own ability and knowledge as *artists*, renders them peculiarly qualified to encourage artistic study of the highest standard....The League does not limit itself to any one principle or set of principles. It fosters catholicity of method, purpose and aim, as may be seen from its . . . instructors, who represent the most progressive tendencies of modern art.<sup>147</sup>

The eclectic pedagogy on offer was apparent in the mix of instructors--some of whom were Weir's colleagues at Cooper Union--including Kenyon Cox, William Sartain, Walter Shirlaw, William Merrit Chase, J. Carroll Beckwith, Thomas Eakins, and Edwin H. Blashfield. They taught classes in the morning, afternoon, and evening for students who intended "to make Art a profession" and had already attained a certain proficiency in drawing. Fees were kept low, ranging from \$12 a month to \$50 for five months, and \$70 for eight months. The school was particularly proud that "the facilities for study offered to women studying art professionally, are greater than those afforded by any other school here or abroad."<sup>148</sup> This was yet another instance of New York's role as a place where social progress would first manifest itself.

Weir and Chase taught the painting classes that were open to men and women every afternoon from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., in the top floor studios lit by skylights whose walls were appointed with copies and reproductions of art. In the morning session, which ran from 9 a.m. to noon, and in the afternoon, Weir was also in charge of the "Head" classes, which were drawing classes preparatory to the painting classes. Weir set the lesson for the day, and then supervised the students, critiquing their work. He spent long hours every day with his students limiting his ability to paint during the school year and explaining why the summer painting season was his most productive time. His lessons were remembered long after the classes. As Mahonri Young later wrote, "Young men of talent were generously encouraged by him."<sup>149</sup> Elizabeth Spaulding, a former student, recalled Weir's advice many years later:

He said, in advising us to exhibit whenever possible, that it was valuable to students to see their own work with that of other artists, in order to learn to have a detached and critical point of view towards it, as a means of education. But he said, to have work accepted did not necessarily mean that the accepted work was good, nor that the work rejected was bad.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Catalogue and "These instructors," AAA, Art Students League records, Reel 4909/503-509, hereafter AAA-League. On the history of the League, Steiner, *Art Students League* and Edward Alden Jewell, "Art Group to Open Exhibition Monday. Students League Show to Mark Fiftieth Year of Residence in Fifty-seventh St.," *New York Times*, February 6, 1943, 14. "Art Notes. Art Students League," *New York Times*, May 3, 1885, 4, reported fifteen classes were taught by Weir and eight other instructors to 409 students during the 1884-85 school year.

<sup>148</sup> AAA-League, Reel 4909/503-509.

<sup>149</sup> Young, "Appreciation," in *Weir Centennial*, 2.

<sup>150</sup> WEFA 409, DW Young, Notes on teaching, 1/14.

In addition to the classes that Weir taught, he probably attended some of the monthly meetings where the work of various artists were displayed and discussed, or some of the special lectures that were offered during the school year. Thomas Eakins, for example, whom the catalogue introduced as from “Philadelphia (pupil of Gérôme), so widely known in connection with the Pennsylvania Academy of Art and Studies in Anatomy” and famous for his controversial medical painting, *The Gross Clinic* of 1875, gave a special series on “Artistic Anatomy” in the fall of 1885, and then lectures on “Perspective” in the spring. Julian might also have taken advantage of the Reading Room, where “the principal French, German, English and American art periodicals are kept on file.” He would teach at the League until the late 1890s and enjoy the new building which opened in 1892 at 215 West 57th Street, with vastly expanded and improved facilities for its students, which then numbered about 900, and faculty. High-ceilinged exhibition spaces lit with electric lights and spacious studios were finally available. Weir’s painting classes were located on the fifth floor in rooms with large skylights. The striking new building had been designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh, its architecture modeled after a sixteenth century French hunting lodge. The League was able to afford such quarters by banding together with two other cultural organizations, the Society of American Artists and the Architectural League, to create the American Fine Arts Society to develop and own the building. Upon completion, it was known popularly as the Fine Arts Building. At the time of its opening, the *New York Times* predicted, “The League has done much for American painting since its founding in 1875, and in its new quarters will in all likelihood exert a still wider influence.”<sup>151</sup>

## WIDOWER

When Julian and Anna returned to New York from Branchville after their European trip of 1889, Anna was expecting another child. She wrote to Ella who had left for Europe with Mrs. Baker: “I wish I had more to tell you about, but each day is exactly the same; painting, reading, walking, and people coming in to see us is the usual program.” On January 30, 1890, she wrote again: “I see Cora always on Tuesday and Friday. Most of my other days are taken up sitting for Julian.”<sup>152</sup> The Weir’s second daughter, Dorothy, was born June 18, 1890 and the family did not go up to the country until later that summer, following the seasonal routine that had been established to give Julian the time he needed for painting.

Early in 1891, Ella began making preparations for a six month trip around the world

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<sup>151</sup> “Philadelphia” and Reading Room, AAA-League, Reel 4909/503-509. “The League has done much,” from “The Art Students League. Its New and Elegant Quarters Thrown Open for Inspection,” *New York Times*, October 16, 1892, 8. See also “Art Notes. Art Students League,” July 11, 1892, and “The Society’s Retrospect[ive],” December 3, 1892, 4. On the building, see Andrew S. Dolkart, *Guide to New York City Landmarks* (New York: John Wiley & Sons and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1998), 105-06.

<sup>152</sup> “I wish I had,” Young, *Life and Letters*, 171. “I see Cora,” ABW to EB, January 30, 1890, WEFA 192, Weir Family, 1/4.

which she and her mother would take in the fall, traveling by train to Chicago, visiting Cora's ranch in Kansas, continuing to Denver, Vancouver, and then on to the Far East, India, Egypt, and Europe. Cora was by then spending most of the winter in New York, and she and her husband Henry Davis were trying to sell the ranch and return permanently. Ella was continuing her German and painting lessons and had also become interested in photography, a hobby she pursued for the remainder of her life. She spent the summer in Windham as usual and oversaw the setting of the gravestone for Julian Jr. "I took flowers to the cemetery and wrote to Julian and told him about the little stone. I sent him two newspaper clippings about Whistler and the new Art Association in Paris."<sup>153</sup> With the summer coming to an end, she visited Anna and the children in Branchville on September 28 and returned to New York on the 30th. She and her mother left for Chicago on October 3 and reached Cora's ranch on the 5th. Ella did some sketching and painting while there, then departed with Mrs. Baker for Denver. After visiting Vancouver, Tokyo, China, and Ceylon, they had reached India by the end of January 1892.

At the same time, on January 29, 1892, Anna gave birth at home in New York to a third daughter, Cora, named after Anna's sister Cora Baker Davis. Ten days later, on February 8, Anna was dead of childbirth complications. Dorothy Young's biography devotes only one paragraph to her mother's death: "To Julian it was a blow so complete and devastating that to expiate on it seems an intrusion." Lilly French later told her that Anna had "blended her existence into his."<sup>154</sup> She had sat as his model for so many studies and paintings that she was as much a part of his art as his soul mate in home and hearth.

The loss of Anna pervaded Julian's life in every aspect and his grief was so great that it was two weeks until he could bear to write to Ella and Mrs. Baker. They had been notified of Anna's death by Cora as they made their way from India to Rome:

I have not had heart enough to write before and Cora sent you the little journal I kept until I could write no more from sorrow, fear and despair. What anguish and suffering! . . . Cora was such a comfort to poor little Puss [Julian's nickname for Anna]. She came to see her nearly every day and made her so happy. God will bless her . . . I do not think she [Anna] was ever happy after the death of our little boy . . . While Anna was placed in the parlor I had the little child baptized. Carrie and Cora were godmothers and my brother John godfather. I placed some violets on her heart from you and Ella and the little boy's rattle and shoes and all the little things she had kept for they were so much a part of her. She looked more lovely than ever. There seemed to be a smile of peace on her beautiful face. In Windham the ground was all covered with beautiful snow and after she was laid to rest Twachtman and my brother John stayed with me there and we went over in the woods and gathered armfuls of laurel which she was so fond of and made the sacred spot look beautiful.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ella Baker diaries, May 30, 1891, WEFA 498, 4.

<sup>154</sup> "To Julian," Young, *Life & Letters*, 180. "blended her existence," Lilly Hamilton French to DW, August 15, 1929, BYU 511, Weir Family, Box 5/8.

<sup>155</sup> JAW to ABB and EB, February 22, 1892, WEFA 198, Weir Family, 2/6.

Two days later, Julian wrote another poignant letter to his mother-in-law and sister-in-law:

The joy of life is gone and I hope that work will be a solace but all my work had such a close relation with Anna that I cannot work . . . Like you I feel as if I could fly to the outermost parts of the earth but nowhere can this sorrow be escaped . . . Cora [Davis] has been so loving and kind to poor little Puss as it was possible to be. They loved each other and it was such a sweet comfort to have Cora with her . . . She used to take her out walking and always cheered her up. I do not know what I would have done had it not been for Cora.<sup>156</sup>

With Ella and Mrs. Baker scheduled to continue to Egypt and Paris, not returning until April, Weir depended on nursemaids for the children and the support of his extended family and friends, particularly his sister-in-law Cora, his brother John, John Twachtman, and Jean Ross. He wrote to his brother on March 28: “Mr. [Henry] Davis has gone back west. Cora will wait until her mother arrives.” Twachtman’s support of Julian at this time of great sorrow surely deepened their bonds. When the Bakers returned from Europe on April 22, Ella noted, “We have arrived. Ida left. Julian went to the country with Mr. Twachtman.” Julian had written to them asking if they would live with him to care for the children: “I am all alone but Cora comes in every day and plays with the children and comforts us. Will not you and Ella live here with me? There is so much more demand from these little ones than I can do and we will try to bring them up as Puss [Anna] would have them.” Anna’s friend, Jean Ross, later told Dorothy that she would go to see Julian and the children once a week during that period. The house was “dreary, there would be no lamps lit. Sometimes Julian would be sitting alone in his room in the dark.” The return of Mrs. Baker and Ella brought emotional strength as well as organization to the household. Jean Ross observed, “If you could have seen the difference Ella made when she came back and went there. It became once more a place to live in.”<sup>157</sup>

Although Julian had thought right after Anna’s death that he might never return to Branchville, according to Ella’s diary they went there in July, and Julian also taught with Twachtman at Cos Cob. In August, he took the children to Windham, then returned to Branchville, where his brother John was spending part of the summer.<sup>158</sup> His friend Theodore Robinson wrote from Giverny:

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<sup>156</sup> JAW to ABB and EB, February 24, 1892, WEFA 198, Weir Family, 2/6.

<sup>157</sup> “Mr. Davis,” JAW to JFW, March 28, 1892, WEFA 197, Weir Family, 1/7. “We have arrived,” Ella Baker diary, April 22, 1892, WEFA 498. Susan Larkin observed in her study of the Cos Cob art colony, that “Twachtman’s personality also attracted friends and students. Although he was moody, perhaps as a result of his heavy drinking, his letters and the testimony of his associates reveal that he was capable of both playful camaraderie and profound friendship,” Larkin, *Cos Cob*, 24, see especially 226, fn.36 for sources on Twachtman’s personality. “I am all alone,” JAW to ABB and EB, n.d. [c. March 1892], WEFA 198, Weir Family, 2/6. “dreary, there would be,” and following, Jean Ross to DWY, WEFA 409, DW Young, 2/5.

<sup>158</sup> Ella Baker diary, WEFA 498, 4.

I can understand that your loss must have come home to you with perhaps an additional sharpness at Branchville - where your life before was so complete . . . I feel almost guilty at times that I did not go to Branchville, even for a short time as Mrs. Weir said I must. Perhaps in the autumn if you are not already back in NY . . . Twachtman wrote a few days ago - he spoke of seeing you - what a fine nature is his - a friend that one is glad to have.<sup>159</sup>

### **RENEWAL AT THE CHICAGO FAIR AND REMARRIAGE**

Weir then departed for Chicago, grateful for a diversion arranged by his friend Stanford White: he was to work on the murals at the World's Columbian Exposition, organized to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' "discovery" of America.<sup>160</sup> Chicago had bested New York for the honor of hosting the world's fair and went all out to create a celebration that would allow it to claim a place in the front ranks of American cities. Frederick Law Olmsted's famous firm, Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot, designed the layout for the 686-acre site, some seven miles south of Chicago. Daniel Burnham, Chicago's leading architect, was given authority to engage the best architects and sculptors in the country to design the major buildings and the public spaces. Among those he selected were architects George B. Post, Richard Morris Hunt, McKim Mead & White, Louis Sullivan, and sculptors Daniel Chester French, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Frederick MacMonnies, many of them Weir's friends or acquaintances.

New Yorker George B. Post designed the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building, one of eleven huge buildings that would create the famed "White City" for which the Exposition would ever be known, an enclave that would influence American architecture for decades. The Manufacturers Building had a neo-Renaissance facade. Behind that ornate white front, there was an immense steel shed with steel trussed arches supporting a glass roof covering a space that could hold over 100,000 people, "destined to become in its short life the largest building in the world."<sup>161</sup>

The front facade of the Manufacturers building had four portals, each flanked by two domes, measuring 24 feet across. One painter was assigned to each dome (and its pendentives) and so Weir was joined by Kenyon Cox, Carroll Beckwith, Walter Shirlaw, Elihu Vedder, Edwin Blashfield, Charles S. Reinhart, and Edward Simmons. The artists were observed at work one day by a journalist. He found their studios in the Horticultural Building: "rude . . . wholly different from the ideal studio of a great artist . . . They are so bare and plain as to be inhospitable. Unpainted boards and sheets of canvas screen these artists

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<sup>159</sup> Theodore Robinson to JAW, August 14, 1892, BYU 511, Weir Family, 3.

<sup>160</sup> Information on the Chicago Exposition from the excellent exhibition catalogue edited by Carolyn Kinder Carr and Robert Rydell, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair [May 1-October 31, 1893]* (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art and the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1993), hereafter Carr, *White City*.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago, Architect and Planner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, orig. 1974), 111, hereafter Hines, *Burnham*.

from the public view . . . The walls are bare, the floors naked and the ceilings have not been touched by a brush. Even chairs are few, and when the sun blazes on the roof the rooms are like a furnace.”<sup>162</sup> Edwin Blashfield left a more personal account of the artists at work on the large canvases which would later be installed in the domes:

Weir’s pen came first, then mine and so on. Each morning Vedder knocked on Weir’s abode, and they chatted . . . then went on down the line visiting . . . Our two pessimists were Beckwith and Vedder - Beckwith a joyous pessimist, Vedder a melancholy one but seasoning his melancholy with unfailing charm. The common subject of their pessimism was Chicago . . . We all worked hard through the long summer days . . . In the evening we naturally discussed each other’s theories about mural painting as a novelty . . . the work was laborious, for we hadn’t learned to do it; it was most of it in the open air; ladders were new to most of us, and working upon curved surfaces overhead.<sup>163</sup>

Julian produced “a very charming composition of four draped female figures and two nude boys,” as it was reported to a distant audience. While his painting suffered a bit of rain damage one day, that was a minor problem compared to what happened to Walter Shirlaw’s project when a workman’s leg came through the ceiling while the artist was painting.<sup>164</sup>

From Chicago, Weir kept up with his children’s activities from Ella’s letters and sent her reports of his progress and his homesickness:

I have a little photograph of my little Dorothy and Caro both laughing. It was taken in Branchville and Dorothy is playing with a chicken which Caro holds. On my bureau I have all the lovely pictures of Mama and Cora which helps me to bear the separation which my dear little darlings, thank God, cannot dwell on. You must all be happy and try and make little Cora have as happy a time as a dear little baby can.<sup>165</sup>

Julian had taken some of Anna’s letters with him to read again and again. He wrote poetry and prose in which he imagined Anna in heaven with little Julian, as he had done in letters to the Bakers just after Anna’s death. Other members of his family stayed in touch to bolster his spirits. His brother John wrote to him from Branchville: “All here is bright and sacred, and I hope you will always keep it as a place to refresh your spirit.”<sup>166</sup>

Weir left Chicago in October. The following March, he attended a tribute to Daniel

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<sup>162</sup> “Is All American Art: Decorations at the World’s Fair, Sketches of the Artists in Charge of the Work of Embellishment of Great Buildings at Jackson Park - Portraits by Themselves” *The Sunday Herald*, Chicago, September 11, 1892, n.p.

<sup>163</sup> Cited in Young, *Life & Letters*, 182.

<sup>164</sup> “a very charming composition,” from “Art Notes,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1892, 4; Shirlaw, “Art Notes,” August 28, 1892, 17. Also, see “Art Notes,” October 22, 1892, 5. See Burke, *Weir*, for more material on Weir’s mural work at the Fair.

<sup>165</sup> JAW to children, September 20, 1892, WEFA 195, Weir Family, 4/1.

<sup>166</sup> JFW to JAW, August 28, 1892, cited in CLR, 44 (64, note 69). Letters to Bakers, see JAW to ABB and EB, March 6, 1892, WEFA 198, 2/6, and WEFA 2541.

Burnham at Madison Square Garden, which was organized by McKim and others, honoring the master planner of the White City. Two hundred artists, architects, and prominent citizens listened to speeches and toasts, and looked at slides of the Chicago buildings.<sup>167</sup>

The exposition opened on May 1, 1893 with President Grover Cleveland attending the ceremonies. Weir returned to Chicago to see it, one of 27 million people, a number equal to half the population of the United States, who would visit the fair during the five months it was open. In addition to looking at his finished work in the Manufactures Building, he visited the Fine Arts Building, where 10,000 works of art were displayed in 145,000 square feet. It was “the largest and most elaborately selected exhibition of American art ever assembled in this country,” noted art historian Elizabeth Broun, adding that visitors were invited “to reflect on what this revealed of the progress of culture in our land.” The art was arranged, wrote Carolyn Carr, to elicit from viewers particular conclusions: “The progress of American art since the 1876 Centennial, the lessons learned from study abroad, and the triumph of American over French art.”<sup>168</sup>

An elaborate system of juries had been convened to select the American art. Both Weir and Twachtman had been invited to serve on them, but declined. In the end, more than 1,000 paintings were exhibited, representing a full range of styles, subject matter, and tone. As Carr observed, “Palettes ranged from the sober and restrained of men like Stacy Tolman and Charles Webber to the fresh, brighter hues of J. Alden Weir and John H. Twachtman.” Julian had eight paintings on display, and there were three by his brother John. Twachtman and Hassam each exhibited five. Julian’s were all fairly recent works, including *Summerland*, *The Christmas Tree* (1890), *The Lane* (c.1890), *Autumn*, *The Young Student* (c.1892), *Portrait of Webb Weir* (1892), *The Open Book* (1891), and *Portrait of a Lady* (n.d.). For his achievements, Weir received a medal and diploma. He also won an award for an etching, an honor that was also accorded to Charles A. Platt, James McNeill Whistler, and a few other artists.<sup>169</sup> There was a smaller sculpture section where Julian’s close friend Olin Warner had a number of his works on display.

Ella kept a record of his sales in 1893, the year of the fair. Prices ranged from \$300 to \$3,500 for *The Hunter*. In the summer, Julian taught again with Twachtman at Cos Cob while

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<sup>167</sup> Hines, *Burnham*, 113, citing the *New York Times*, March 26, 1893, 2.

<sup>168</sup> Elizabeth Broun and Alan Fern, “Introduction,” 11, and Carr, “Prejudice and Pride: Presenting American Art at the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition,” 99, both in Carr, *White City*.

<sup>169</sup> “Palettes ranged,” Carr, “Prejudice and Pride,” 99, 100 in Carr, *White City*. On the works displayed, see Brandon Brame Fortune and Michelle Mead, “Catalogue of American Paintings and Sculptures Exhibited at the World’s Columbian Exposition Revised and Updated,” 194ff., in Carr, *White City*. Checking Burke for the missing dates on Weir’s paintings, there is no *Summerland* listed. There are two paintings which might have been *Autumn: Autumn Landscape* (c.1888-90) and *Autumnal Days* (1890), 146, 148-49. *Autumn* was retitled *A Fall Day in Connecticut* when it was displayed several months later in New York, “Pictures at the Union League,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1894, 4. Any of several pictures might have been *Portrait of a Lady*. That titles changed over time and paintings disappeared were not conditions unique to Weir’s career. Etching award, “Awards at the Fair,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1893, 5.

Ella and the girls were at Windham. Ernest Lawson was one of their pupils and later recalled that “his real training in art didn’t begin until he returned to America” (from Paris) and studied at Cos Cob. In an article, Lawson later reported on his experience and Weir’s influence on his work: “My first landscape there was so bad that Weir threw up his hands in amazement and said he’d never seen its equal!” There was a heart-to-heart talk between master and pupil, and a few days later Weir noticed another painting, declaring “This is fine! Who painted it?”<sup>170</sup>

While Julian was in Cos Cob, his brother John occupied Branchville, as he often did when Julian was away for long periods; in any event, he was a frequent visitor in all seasons. Later that year, Julian went to Boston where his and Twachtman’s works were on display at the St. Botolph Club, an exhibition venue comparable to the Century in New York, where Weir submitted pictures annually.<sup>171</sup>

Sometime during the fall of 1893, Weir decided to marry Ella, who had brought such comfort and stability to his life, as Dorothy later noted:

Hers was an unselfish and generous nature, and she gave herself unstintingly to make a home for the children, until the house that had at first been a dreary, desolate place to enter, with no lamps lit as the evening drew on and everything left at sixes and sevens, became, under her charge, once more a home and a happy place to live in. She loved the children, and they were devoted to her; and to Julian she gave the intimate companionship that he needed so badly. She had, besides, excellent taste and a real knowledge of art, for she was herself, an amateur painter of distinction.<sup>172</sup>

Julian’s letter to Ella of October 24, 1893, detailing the plans for their marriage several days later, could give the impression that it was planned rather quickly without informing too many people, so perhaps the idea was somewhat sudden. The wedding took place on October 28 in Boston, since the former rector of the Church of the Ascension in New York, E. Winchester Donald, who had married Julian and Anna, had recently moved to Boston’s Trinity Church. Donald had written to Weir, also on October 24, that Anna would not want him to be alone and asked who better to bring him peace and happiness than her sister. John Twachtman served as best man. A dozen friends of Julian and Ella attended and then all enjoyed a private luncheon at Young’s Hotel. “Later in the afternoon,” the *New York Times* reported, “Mr. and Mrs. Weir started for New-York.”<sup>173</sup>

This second marriage concluded a challenging, and at times tragic decade for Weir as he aspired to secure a solid place for himself as an artist in New York. He had aged from 30 to 40 years old, and changed physically from “the image of some young god or hero of classic

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<sup>170</sup> Prices, American Art Gallery record of exhibits, 1893, WEFA 2526. Lawson cited in Dorothy’s notes on teaching, WEFA 409, 1/14.

<sup>171</sup> “Art Notes. St. Botolph’s Club of Boston,” *New York Times*, December 3, 1893, 10.

<sup>172</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 186.

<sup>173</sup> JAW to EB and JAW to E. Winchester Donald to JAW, both October 24, 1893, BYU 1291, DW Young, 3/8. “Weddings,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1893, 5.

mythology,” as depicted in Olin Warner’s bust of him, to a stouter, comfortable-looking man who needed to wear eye glasses for close research.<sup>174</sup> Weir had married and become a father, suffered the deaths of friends, his father, a brother, an infant son, a nephew, and most painfully, his beloved wife Anna. He had become an admired and inspiring teacher, experimented with style and different mediums in his art, and established himself as a member of the artistic community, and finally, he had recovered from his grief to marry again.

### GROWING RECOGNITION

Through all of his personal travails, Weir drew strength from the many dimensions of his engagement with the arts. His interest in serving as a “committeeman” and leader for arts organizations became apparent during this period, and would take up more of his time and energy in the 1890s and years after. These roles reflected his love of socializing, a genuine interest in advancing the cause of artists, and perhaps a shrewd understanding that such engagement might also help his career. He both volunteered and was elected by his peers to positions which ranged from the most serious matters to light entertainment. Thus, for example, Julian served on exhibition, selection, and hanging committees for the Society of American Artists, was voted onto a competition committee to select an artist under age 30 to receive a scholarship for European study, served on the annual prize committee for the Woman’s Art School at Cooper Union, and was elected a trustee of the newly formed New York branch of the National Society of Arts, whose mission was “to protect and promote the interests of art in the United States.” He was a member, too, of the invitation committee of the American Water-Color Society to arrange a dinner to celebrate St. Valentine’s Day. The festivities aimed for the “effect of a bohemian supper given in a studio” and included arrangements for “two burly negroes in artistically designed Bedouin costumes [to] stand guard” at the entrance to the room.<sup>175</sup> This party was endowed with the same frivolous spirit that had infused the outings of the Tile Club and other events at the Century or National Arts Club. Clearly, Weir thrived on working with his peers to foster the arts and to provide opportunities to network in a relaxed setting among professional friends, along with the gallery owners, collectors, and “friends of the arts” who also frequented these events.

Weir’s work was exhibited steadily in New York galleries and elsewhere. His paintings were selected for shows in Boston, Cincinnati, and Chicago, and for international

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<sup>174</sup> “Artists in the Alcoves. Painters and Draughtsmen at the Astor Library,” *New York Times*, February 26, 1893, 20.

<sup>175</sup> Society of American artists, “Notes on Art and Artists,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1883, 4 and “Art Notes,” February 2, 1890, 13; art scholarship, “Good News for Art Students,” June 8, 1884, 3; Cooper Union, “Prizes for Young Women,” May 15, 1885, 4; National Society of Arts, March 20, 1885, 4; St. Valentine’s Day, “Artists Arrange a Supper,” February 8, 1890, 5.

exhibitions in Munich and Paris, a pattern that would persist for the rest of his career.<sup>176</sup> Even when his work was shown alongside dozens of other artists, he often attracted a brief mention by the reviewer. He seemed to receive his most positive accolades for his water colors and etchings, although even in these reviews, there is sometimes criticism of his technique. Thus, one reviewer singled out his *Dutch Sky* as “in some respects the best water-color in the collection,” at the 16th annual show of the Water-Color Society in 1883, continuing, “It is not elaborate, nor studied, nor niggled, but the quick effort to catch the look of Holland.” At a small show with another artist at the H. Wunderlich & Co. gallery at 868 Broadway, another writer observed “The work is not so even, not so good, as a rule, in perspective, not so careful in drawing, but it has a more individual look, and contains a few pictures that rise very much above the level of Mr. Gignoux,” and concluded, “[Weir’s] roses and other flowers will not disappoint his admirers.”<sup>177</sup> Yet in water colors, as in other mediums (particularly oil), when he turned in a new direction, there was an uneasy reaction to his efforts. Typical of this kind of response was the review of the 1884 show of the Water-Color Society,

Among the curious pictures, the two sendings of J. Alden Weir are not the least odd: they are full of Japanese influence, being drawings colored with water colors rather than water-color drawings, and the figures in them depend more on the outline than anything else . . . *La Cigale* is a nude . . . *Japanese Screen* is a nude with three cats . . . These are literally Japonerries and curios.<sup>178</sup>

Weir’s changing subject matter and style in his oil paintings drew mixed comments. The professional art critics struggled to reconcile Weir’s European influenced classical portraiture and still lifes that they had embraced during his debut years with the change in his palette, his subject matter, and his approach, which was then labeled “Impressionist,” as the decade wore on. In 1885, his *Portrait of a Lady* won a monetary prize, and the critic shared his pleasure at finding the Weir that he knew from earlier years, writing that the artist “regains the poise we expect of him . . . It is like looking at some old Dutch master of the good period.” Weir was expected to live up to his early promise, was generally treated as someone who had, and chastised when his work was not perfect, as an 1885 this review of the 60th anniversary exhibition of the National Academy of Design, “The portrait of Mr. Francis Lathrop by J. Alden Weir, also improves on acquaintance, though it remains somewhat chaotic and unrestful as to technique.” Three years later, amidst a strong group of

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<sup>176</sup> Cincinnati, “Art Notes, *New York Times*, June 3, 1883, 4; Munich, “Art Works for Munich,” May 5, 1883, 10; Chicago, “American Art. The Exhibition of the Chicago Art Institute,” May 28, 1888, 1.

<sup>177</sup> “in some respects,” Water-Color Society, “The Water-Color Again,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1883, 4. “The work is,” at the Wunderlich, “Art Notes,” December 2, 1883, 5. Regis Gignoux was a French artist, Burke, *Weir*, 152.

<sup>178</sup> “The American Water-Color Society. A Typical Exhibition of the Most Popular Art of the Day,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1894, 2. On Weir’s interest in Japanese art and its influence on his work, see also Chapter 5 below, Burke, *Weir, passim*, and William Hosley, *The Japan Idea: Art and Life in Victorian America* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1990), 96–98, hereafter Hosley, *Japan Idea*.

paintings in a show the reviewer considered a “triumph,” Weir’s entry is singled out among the full-fledged Academicians who have “put their best foot forward. . . One of the strongest male portraits is that of the veteran actor [John] Gilbert by Alden Weir.”<sup>179</sup>

But Weir, driven by his own interests and needs and influenced by Twachtman and Hassam, would not remain static in his work. He pursued the impressionist-influenced style, which was clearly a trend by 1890 as suggested in this comment about the Society of American Artists’ exhibition, “That the sympathies of the leading members of the Society of American Artists go with the later school of French impressionists is plain enough from the number of paintings more or less touched by the new fashion which have been accepted this year.”<sup>180</sup> Yet, Weir’s exploration of the style was not well received at first. There were a number of factors at work: a general lack of comfort by the critics for the style, a tentativeness in Weir’s technique as he went through a transition stage, and the difficulty for others to acknowledge his right to change his established image. One typically ambivalent observation appeared in early 1891 when he had two dozen paintings on view at the Blakeslee Galleries on Fifth Avenue and 26th Street, a fairly significant show. The critic began on a rather negative note:

Mr. Weir has gone over to the apostles of *plein air* impressionism . . . The transition has been easier for him because his work has been tending toward the pale and vapory. Though his reputation was made on what may fairly be called robust painting, not unlike that of the old Dutch masters, he has departed from that style, and some time ago began to show indifference to textures and a liking for tender rather than strong colors.<sup>181</sup>

The reviewer then went on to discuss several of the paintings, assigning praise and criticism. He finally arrived at a more balanced conclusion, willing to believe that he was looking at a work in progress:

Mr. Weir’s work is baffling, as if the artist himself had not yet obtained so complete a control of his purpose in art as to feel at ease and communicate that impression to the observer. This quality in his work may possibly mean that he is still groping for the best (because to him the most natural) vehicle for expression. At present the *plein air* impressionist method does not seem to fit him always and the results of using it are not as delightful as those of his earlier style. But the fact that he is still groping lends interest to his work, showing that he is thinking and striving instead of going to sleep in a routine. When an artist of his worth chooses this latest form of expression in painting it is significant. Lovers of pictures are recommended to examine these paintings and consider the problems they offer.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> “regains the poise,” in “The Prize Fund Exhibition,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1885, 5; “the portrait of Mr. Francis Lathrop,” in “At the Academy,” April 19, 1885, 6; “put their best,” in “The Spring Academy,” March 31, 1888, 5. On Gilbert’s portrait, see Burke, *Weir*, 124.

<sup>180</sup> “Society of American Artists,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1890, 4.

<sup>181</sup> “Impressions by J. Alden Weir,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1891, 4.

<sup>182</sup> “Impressions by J. Alden Weir,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1891, 4.

During this period, the late 1880s into the early 1890s, Julian's palette shifted to softer, lighter tones that expressed his growing interest in landscapes at Branchville and Windham. With Twachtman painting by his side, his work became closer to what was defined as "Impressionism" at the time.<sup>183</sup>

Over the course of the next few years, Weir would be characterized, along with Theodore Robinson, Robert Reid, William Merritt Chase, and Carroll Beckwith, as an "extreme Impressionist" but more tolerance among art critics began to manifest itself towards the new approach. At an exhibition sponsored by the Society of American Artists, one finally found a framework for acceptance, "One of the most delightful landscapes here is J. Alden Weir's *The Lane*, a true Connecticut countryside with inconspicuous farmhouse and shake fence. That Neo-Impressionist handiwork, which looks so out of place in his *Portrait* of a seated youth, fits this scene admirably." This kind of even-handed judgment would prevail in following years as Weir settled into his own, distinctive style. Pleasing the critics, however influential they might be in encouraging sales, was not in his character. And the critics themselves recognized that it was even beyond their power to truly sway the market, as one wrote upon seeing what he considered a beautiful show of landscapes and marine paintings at the National Academy where attendance and sales were slow, "The public that buys likes best a kind of picture which is abhorred by advanced artists and art critics who have traveled and thought. Crude sentimentality and cheap anecdote are the qualities that sell pictures here. Artists who strive for high art must arrange for support from something beside their profession."<sup>184</sup> The last sentence could not be a more accurate summation of Weir's experience.

In May 1893, Weir and Twachtman were included in a group exhibition of paintings and pastels with the French painters Paul-Albert Besnard and Claude Monet at the American Art Galleries at 6 East 23rd Street. Critics compared Twachtman and Weir to Monet, "the famous standard bearer of French *pleinairistes*," although their friend Theodore Robinson's association with Monet at Giverny made Robinson more of "a key figure in the translation of French Impressionism into an American idiom." The *New York Evening Post* wrote: "Weir and Twachtman, in their general point of view, affiliate very naturally with Monet. They are all pursuing effects of light, color, and air." The *Times* critic found Twachtman's pictures similar to French Impressionist work of ten years earlier, yet "remarkable . . . now brilliant with color beyond the wildest dreams of Delacroix." On the other hand, looking at Weir's 22 pictures, he found him still in transition but making progress, "rapidly learning to work under the new conditions for out-of-doors effects. He does not yet achieve strong sunlight, but hazy, soft sunshine." Weir's work was less even than Twachtman's, "but shows more

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<sup>183</sup> In Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 83-84, Cummings had an interesting observation about this period, noting that Weir's art for 1888-91 was poorly documented and that, although critics were calling him an Impressionist by 1891, "Very few works from those critical years have been located or identified."

<sup>184</sup> "One of the most delightful," in "Society of American Artists," *New York Times*, May 23, 1892, 2. "The public buys," in "Two Salons of New-York," *New York Times*, May 1, 1892, 17.

discontent and effort to achieve great things.”<sup>185</sup> The critic’s comments were prescient for Weir’s palette would remain more muted and his pictures filled with diffused light, rather than the brilliant sunshine and flickers of light that were characteristic of the canvases of the French painters and of his friend Childe Hassam.

Belonging to many arts organizations was another way for Weir to place his work before the public. One group, “Painters in Pastel,” existed to help its members work in a medium that was described as “a treacherous material, because it looks so easy,” and to hold an exhibition once a year. With Chase and Beckwith, Weir was by 1890 a “hardy perennial” in these shows, where his friends Twachtman, “none better than he,” and Hassam, displaying “astonishing versatility,” also were participants. In 1893, Weir resumed his membership in the New York Etching Club after a ten-year hiatus (although eyestrain prevented him from continuing etching beyond 1895, the year when Twachtman also stopped). The New-York Etching Club also offered fellowship and lessons in technique, and Weir’s works in this medium were quite well received during the years he produced them, and for decades after in the art market. In an 1891 exhibition of 152 works at the National Academy galleries, Whistler’s work had provoked the most attention, but Weir’s portrait of his brother, John F. Weir, was singled out as an “excellent likeness.” At the Etching Club’s 1893 exhibition of its 44 members and their guests, Julian’s work was deemed “the most stimulating of all. He has a round dozen, among which the portraits of his two brothers are the best . . . Very attractive indeed are *Portrait of a Young Lady, Head*, and *By the Evening Lamp*.” He seemed to be hitting his stride, for a few months later, the reviewer declares his etchings are the “largest and best ever made, showing him a master in the art such as rarely is found.”<sup>186</sup>

Well respected in the art world, valued as a friend and colleague, happy with Ella and his children, Weir would enjoy his blossoming career and the richness of personal and professional life during the next two decades.

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<sup>185</sup> “the famous standard bearer,” in “Some Dazzling Pictures. Two French and Two American Painters of Sunlight,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1893, 9. “a key figure,” Larkin, *Cos Cob*, 5; “Weir and Twachtman,” in “Some French and American Pictures,” *New York Evening Post* 8(May 1893), 7, as cited in Peters, *Twachtman*, 131; “remarkable,” and following in “Some Dazzling Pictures,” *op cit.* For an excellent summary of Weir’s Impressionist forays in this period, see Ulrich W. Hiesinger, *Impressionism in America: The Ten American Painters* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1999), hereafter, Hiesinger, *Impressionism in America*. McKay had the opportunity to see Weir’s palette, displayed in the collection of the Salmagundi Club, and found it reflected the muted colors noted in the reviews. Site visit, 2002.

<sup>186</sup> “a treacherous material,” and following in “Painters in Pastel at the Wunderlich Gallery,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1890, 4. Resuming etching, Cummings in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 87. “excellent likeness,” in “New-York Etching Club,” *New York Times*, February 1, 1891, 12; “most stimulating of all,” in “The Fine Arts. New-York Etching Club,” January 1, 1893, 16; “largest and best ever,” in “Some Dazzling Pictures. Two French and Two American Painters of Sunlight,” May 4, 1893, 9.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# BRANCHVILLE, THE ART COLONY, AND NEW DIRECTIONS IN ART, 1893-1900

### BRANCHVILLE AND A NEW PERSONAL LIFE

The years following Julian and Ella's marriage, as Dorothy observed, saw the household "settled into a welcome routine." Summers were divided between Branchville, in June and July, and Windham in August and September. The family traveled back and forth even more frequently all through the year between the city and the two Connecticut villages as transportation improved.<sup>187</sup> Caroline Weir Ely recalled many years later:

The most glorious Christmas I ever remember, we spent at Branchville in 1895. The snow was so deep – covering the stone walls completely and the road lost, so the oxen and sled were sent to meet Mr. Ryder and the Collins', who came laden with a huge trunk filled with presents and trimmings for the Christmas tree. It stood in the studio and all the country people, who lived on our hill, were asked to it . . . Those were the days when we had no electricity, no furnace, no running water in the house, and the path dug in the snow between it and the studio, was so deep I couldn't see over the sides.<sup>188</sup>

This continual round is reflected in letters to Weir from his friends which often began with the statement that the writer was not sure where he (Julian) was at that given moment.<sup>189</sup>

In the mid-1890s, during longer stays at Windham, Weir was painting some of his most highly regarded works. Between 1893 and 1897, he completed at least six scenes in the nearby industrial town of Willimantic, including *The Factory Village*, *Red Bridge*, and *U. S. Thread Company Mills*. The latter painting may have been one of the first, along with *The Laundry, Branchville* (ca.1894), that "incorporated features of Japanese composition," reflecting Weir's interest in Japanese prints.<sup>190</sup> This was a passion shared by John Twachtman and Theodore Robinson. Art historian Lisa Peters described this common interest:

They viewed [the prints] at the Boussod and Valadon gallery in New York and studied with former Tile Club member Hiromichi Shugio, who 'explained certain things about prints and books' at a dinner at Weir's that was attended by

<sup>187</sup> "settled," Young, *Life & Letters*, 186.

<sup>188</sup> Ely, "My Father's Friends," in *Lest We Forget*, n.p. The family also traveled to Windham so Ella could visit with her aging mother.

<sup>189</sup> Round of travel, see, for example, J. Appleton Brown to JAW, September 6, 1898, BYU 511, Weir Family, 3/6, and, Childe Hassam, hereafter CH, to JAW, July 17, 1903, *Ibid.*, 3/10.

<sup>190</sup> Hosley, *Japan Idea*, 98. Chapter 4, "Japan in the Artist's Eye," is an excellent overview.

Twachtman and Robinson. While art and intellectual matters clearly connected the three artists, their satisfaction also came from simply being in each other's company.<sup>191</sup>

Peters quotes also from Robinson's diary on February 16, 1893, which refers to the friends looking at different states of Japanese prints (impressions) together: "These are pleasant evenings - Weir's enthusiasm and criticisms on things and the pleasure of looking at good things with a friend, comparing impressions, etc."<sup>192</sup> Twachtman and Robinson both visited Branchville in 1894, and other visitors that year included Childe Hassam, Albert Pinkham Ryder, and Stanford White. His friend Emil Carlsen (1853-1932) also came to live nearby. The native of Denmark had lived in the United States since 1872, traveling to Chicago, Boston, New York and San Francisco, before returning permanently to New York to teach at the National Academy of Design School. He was known especially as a still life painter, but also did portraits and landscapes, and the latter may have drawn him to Connecticut to settle near Weir whose work he admired. In December, Weir served on an exhibition jury in Philadelphia and then spent Christmas in Branchville.

In 1895, after a summer at both Branchville and Windham, Weir moved back to Branchville until mid-November, when he again traveled to Philadelphia for an exhibition. He wrote to Ella that he also wanted to call on "Mr. Johnson" to see his collection. John G. Johnson, one of the preeminent Philadelphia lawyers of the day, had amassed a distinguished collection through years of European travel and correspondence with dealers, critics, and scholars. Like other wealthy collectors, he often opened his doors to artists and other guests. Weir was able to take advantage of this generosity and see art that was newly arrived from Europe. Johnson had written in 1892 that:

Art is not of one century only, nor of one country; that the best art is nearly upon the same plane, and that it is possible to hang without jar, side by side, works of the masters of the seventeenth and of the nineteenth centuries. As it would be a mistake to form a modern collection with the idea that modern art is represented but by five or six men, so it would be to fill a gallery with old masters alone. Art is many-sided, of all ages, and of many men.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Peters, *Twachtman*, 106.

<sup>192</sup> Peters, *Twachtman*, 106. For an extended discussion of the aspects of Japanese composition, such as asymmetry and unusual cropping that were adopted by American artists like Weir, see Burke, *Weir*, 202-212 and Larkin, *Cos Cob*, 2001, 39-43, 228, fn. 64. On December 10, Robinson wrote, "Twachtman and Weir are rabid just now of the Japanese," Larkin, op.cit, 41. Weir's collection was such that he loaned prints to an exhibition at Yale Art School on the occasion of a lecture by a specialist on Japanese culture, as noted in "Caps and Gowns," *New York Times*, June 3, 1895, 9. On Carlsen, see Ulrich W. Hiesinger, *Quiet Magic: The Still Life Paintings of Emil Carlsen*. October 28, 1998 - December 10, 1999 (New York: Vance Jordan Fine Art, 1998).

<sup>193</sup> Barnie F. Winkelman, *John G. Johnson: Lawyer and Art Collector, 1841-1917* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941), 160. Weir's visit with Johnson, JAW to EBW, November 18, 1895, WEFA 192, Weir Family, 1/8.

More than a thousand paintings filled every wall of Johnson's South Broad Street mansion, causing his friend George Biddle to remark after a visit: "I found two Chardins in his boot closet, many examples of the Barbizon School in his bathroom; and Sargents, Manets and French impressionists in the corridors of the servants' stairway." At Johnson's death in 1917, he bequeathed the collection to the city of Philadelphia leading to art critic's Royal Cortissoz observation, "It is not only a collection; it is a monument."<sup>194</sup>

When active family life proved too disruptive to concentration in his home workplace, Weir sought studio space elsewhere during that period. By 1896, he had rented a studio at 146 West 55th Street, near the new Art Students League building on 57th Street. Charles Wood, speaking of himself in the third person, described the studio to Dorothy:

Wood used to go up & leaf with him in the old 55 St studio, over a stable. Wood took a great fancy to a little snow scene & bought it for Mrs. Corbett in Portland, & he drew him a check for it. Some time after that - 3 weeks or a month - he said - "Wood, you will never know what selling that picture meant to me, I hadn't paid my studio rent for three months."<sup>195</sup>

This anecdote suggests how precarious an artist's income could be from year to year, even for a well known figure like Weir.

In 1896 Weir won the first prize of \$2,500 at the 53rd exhibition of the Boston Art Club for his painting *The Old Rock*, described in a newspaper article as "a highly impressionistic example in blues and grays, with two children under the shadow of a great rock."<sup>196</sup> At the same time, Hassam was awarded \$1,500 for his *Summer Sunlight*. Weir's prize enabled him to build what was dubbed the "Boston Art Club Pond" across the road from his Branchville house. This small body of water would provide his family and friends with much pleasure and would be depicted in several paintings. But success had been tempered by events of great sadness during the year. On April 2, Theodore Robinson died of the asthma that had plagued him for much of his life. In July, Weir had just returned from a fishing trip in Quebec when Olin Warner was killed after suffering a stroke while riding a bicycle in Central Park and then being hit by a horse and carriage. By the time of his death at age 52, Warner had made his name in American sculpture, a career that had been sparked by his beautiful portrait bust of Weir. Warner's commissioned design of magnificent bronze doors for the Library of Congress was under construction, and he was also known for his public statuary and a series of bronze medallions of Columbia River Indians which had been displayed at the Chicago Fair in 1893.<sup>197</sup> Weir mourned his loss along with many members of the American arts community. Wyatt Eaton died that year, too, and in September so did Mrs. Bradford Alden who had so generously paid for Julian's studies in Paris.

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<sup>194</sup> Biddle and Cortissoz, cited in Winkelman, *John G. Johnson*, 167 and 293.

<sup>195</sup> DWY to CESW, May 1937, Huntington, Wood, 287/44. 55<sup>th</sup> Street studio, WEFA 409, DW Young, 1.

<sup>196</sup> "Art Notes," *New York Times*, November 14, 1896, 2. Weir's painting *The Old Rock* has also been referred to as *The Truants*, as listed in Burke, *Weir*.

<sup>197</sup> On Warner, see Carr, *White City*, 380-82, for illustrations of these medallions.

Early in 1897, Weir had a major exhibition at the Boussod, Valadon Gallery. Ella's invitation list included a wide range of family friends, artists, and collectors, among them Lillie Hamilton French, the Fabbris, the Theodore Roosevelts, the Beckwiths, Platts, Twachtman, and Saint-Gaudens, and the Morgans and the Havemeyers, the latter the great benefactors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>198</sup> In May 1897, Weir encouraged one of his oldest friends, the reclusive genius Albert Pinkham "Pinky" Ryder, to recuperate from a minor illness at Branchville although Weir would not be there.

Albert Ryder was an eccentric whose exquisite art was appreciated by Weir and his circle, and the critics. His shyness and reticence, along with a perpetually disheveled appearance, cast him as an oddity for many others. Weir looked out for Ryder's health and welfare, making sure he was properly sheltered and cared for. During Ryder's stay in Connecticut, he wrote to Weir: "I feel it is my duty to drop you a line to let you know what good your kind interest and brotherly friendship have done for me. I sleep nights, Mr. and Mrs. Remy are as kind as possible." His letter of thanks to Julian was typical of his cryptic yet often poetic utterances:

I have never seen the beauty of spring before; which is something to have lived and suffered for. The landscape and the air are full of promise. That eloquent little fruit that we looked at together, like a spirit among the more earthy colors, is already losing its fairy blossoms. Showing the lesson of life; how alert we must be if we would have its gifts and values. If when I get cured I could only learn to have language so as to not to be continually misunderstood, except by you and those who have known me so many years.<sup>199</sup>

Ryder had been particularly affected by Olin Warner's death. Charles Wood, who cared about Ryder and assisted him as well, wrote to Julian that he saw Ryder as "another gentle, dreaming genius, not so robust and commanding as Warner. A timid man, whose soul shrinks from offending any one - café waiter or street walker - as his face would shrink from a blow, yet silently obstinate to his own gait in art." Two years later, Wood would write to Weir about Ryder's frailties: "Awfully sorry about the poor old fellow. He ought to have been a monk in a fifteenth century monastery - to live fit and unwashed and paint to his heart's content."<sup>200</sup>

By the summer of 1897, when Weir was no longer teaching at the Cos Cob art colony,

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<sup>198</sup> Ella's list in WEFA 2526.

<sup>199</sup> As quoted in CLR, 56. Original in Albert P. Ryder to JAW, May 5, 1897 in WEFA 409, DW Young Transcripts, 1892-1900.

<sup>200</sup> "another gentle," CESW to JAW cited in Hamburger, *Charles Wood*, 114. "Awfully sorry," CESW to JAW, May 5, 1899, AAA-JAW, Reel 125. Ryder painted *Weir's Orchard* during one of his stays at Branchville. He grew more reclusive, infirm, and eccentric with age, and "lived a largely nocturnal lifestyle and kept his apartment, which doubled as his studio, in a horrific display of piled trash," as noted in a recent study that suggests his symptoms of illness, which Ryder interpreted as strained nerves, were consistent with kidney disease. See Zachary Ross, "Linked by Nervousness. Albert Pinkham Ryder and Dr. Albert T. Sanders," *American Art* 17 (Summer 2003), 89.

he began teaching summer classes at Branchville, which continued for four years. Little is known of those classes or the identities of his students. John Weir wrote to his brother right after the first summer Julian had given those classes: "I enclose a letter Edith [his daughter] sent from Onteora, from your pupil Miss Cranston, which may interest you." When Dorothy was researching the biography of her father, she wrote to Maria Judson Stream (1865-1949), a former student of Weir's who painted portraits and landscapes during her career. Stream replied: "Lucy Booth wrote me that she studied at Cos Cob with your father and Mr. Twachtman in 1892 and '93. At Wilton with your father in 1894 and at Branchville in 1897 and 1898. I was there the last year Lucy Booth was there and next year 1899 - and the next year I think Alice Rushmore Wells managed it. That would make it 1900." Weir and Mary Cassatt both must have taught Wells earlier, as Cassatt wrote to Weir in 1894: "I have been trying to help Miss Wells your pupil, & and am glad she is willing to take my advice. Your pupils are always more open to advice than any other I see." The classes at Branchville were held in June and July, when the family was typically in residence there, and the students stayed nearby. At some point, it appears Weir taught in Wilton as well as at the farm. Dorothy observed that Weir's "classes were characteristically free of doctrinaire pronouncements."<sup>201</sup>

One Weir student, Joseph T. Pearson Jr., recalled his visits to Branchville and reminded Dorothy of Weir's generous spirit in teaching and hosting his students, and in revealing his love of the place through his relationship with the landscape:

Few artists of character I have known have escaped the diverting effect of the purchase and development of run down property. Your father was no exception. He had much property. It was lovely. It charmed him. He gave much thought, time and energy to its improvement. How he enjoyed clearing vistas, trimming trees well up from the ground revealing beautiful notes and things unseen before. The making of level places for tennis, working with his men who used great red oxen to haul the boulders to one side; the building of the pond . . . piling brush here and there and making a bon-fire now and then when the boy in him suggested it. That all of this was not diverting only may be readily understood when one recalls the pictures *Building the Pond*, *Noonday Rest* and *The Coon Hunt*.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> "I enclose," JFW to JAW, [September] 1897, AAA-JAW, Reel 529. Onteora was an art colony in the Catskill Mountains founded in 1887. More on Onteora below in text. "Lucy Booth," Maria Stream to DWY, August 22, 1933, WEFA 409, DW Young, 1/14. On Stream, see Robert Michael Austin, *The Artists of Litchfield Hills* (Waterbury, Ct.: Mattatuck Historical Society, 2003). Mary Cassatt to JAW, January 20, 1894, WEFA 409, DW Young, 1/4. June-July Branchville classes and Wilton classes are documented in Dorothy's notes. "Classes were," Young, *Life & Letters*, 192.

<sup>202</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 193. On Pearson see Brian H. Peterson with Sylvia Yount and William Gerdts, *Pennsylvania Impressionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press with the Michener Art Museum, 2002); material written by Roy Wood Jr., "Joseph Thurman Pearson Jr., A Painter in the Grand Manner" April 8-July 8, 2001, exhibit at Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia, available at [www.woodmeremuseum.org](http://www.woodmeremuseum.org); and Pearson's obituary, February 24, 1951, *New York Times*, 13.

Pearson (1876-1951) also studied with Weir several times when he taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art. Pearson subsequently studied abroad and with William Merritt Chase at the Pennsylvania Academy, but regarded Weir as his most important teacher. Adept at portraiture, Pearson gained the most recognition (and prizes) for his landscape work. He had a long teaching career at the Pennsylvania Academy. His great respect for Weir led him, like John Twachtman, to name one of his children "Alden" after his mentor. Pearson's story, as well as those of other former Weir students, is an important reminder of the role of the art teacher in developing the talent of the next generation. Weir may have found the teaching onerous occasionally because it took time away from his own creative work, but he was inspiring when he was with his students and many careers were shaped by his generous spirit.

### **ART COLONIES AND RETREATS: THE PLACE OF BRANCHVILLE**

Cos Cob and Onteora were only two of a number of art colonies which had burgeoned between 1890 and 1910 when the vast majority of these communities emerged on the scene. While Weir Farm at Branchville has never been considered an "art colony" – a town or area where groups of artists lived permanently or sojourned seasonally -- it is important to consider it in the context of the art colony movement and explore its possible connection with other retreats. At the same time, although Weir never founded a permanent summer art school at Branchville like Charles Hawthorne did in Provincetown in 1899, Weir conducted classes in Branchville from 1897 to 1901.<sup>203</sup> Karal Ann Marling, in her ground breaking essay in *Woodstock: An American Art Colony, 1902-1977*, wrote:

Provincetown, Taos, Old Lyme, the MacDowell Colony, Rockport, Woodstock - the vast majority of America's art enclaves, including those famous and long lived establishments, were founded in the years between 1890 and 1910. From then until the end of World War II, features on the 'straw-hat haunts' were obligatory rites for both artistic and popular periodicals. Journalists shared the tacit assumption that art colonies are, somehow, fundamental to the fabric and social history. Despite this consensus of opinion, however, no comprehensive account of the art colonial movement had been written, and the existing literature leaves unanswered the tantalizing questions of how and why scores of art colonies abruptly emerged on the national scene in the space of twenty years.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Charles W. Hawthorne (1872-1930), a native of Maine, studied at the Art Students League and attended William Merritt Chase's summer school at Shinnecock on Long Island. It was his inspiration for starting the Cape Cod School of Art in 1899 at Provincetown where he spent thirty years teaching students who revered his expertise and his art. He was known for marine scenes, landscape, genre and portrait work that could be realistic or impressionist. Provincetown eventually became the largest, and certainly one of the most influential, artists' colonies in America. See Christine McCarthy, "Provincetown: A Community of Artists," *American Art Review* (October 2003), *Provincetown Painters 1890s-1970s* (Syracuse: Everson Museum of Art, 1977) and Shipp, below.

<sup>204</sup> Karen Ann Marling, "Introduction," in *Woodstock: An American Art Colony, 1902-1977* (Poughkeepsie: Vassar College Art Gallery, 1977), n.p. (hereafter, Marling, *Woodstock*). Since Marling's publication, many essays and books have appeared, documenting the art colony movement

Marling offers several suggestions to explain the emergence of the art colonies. She divides them between resorts that sprang up almost casually from roots in *plein-air* landscape painting in Europe (like the concentrations of American artists in French communities near Paris at Barbizon, and Grez-sur-Loing, in Brittany, and at Giverny in Normandy) such as Old Lyme, Cos Cob, Provincetown, and Rockport, and those which were planned from their beginnings as a means to perpetuate the social ideals of their founders, such as Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York, Onteora in Tannersville, New York, and the MacDowall Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. A third category could be added: colonies, like Provincetown, that grew up around summer art schools.

The period of Weir's ownership of Branchville, from 1882 to 1919, coincided with the peak of this movement. In the East, it was rooted in the pre Civil War summer sketching trips to the White Mountains in New Hampshire and to the Catskills by the Hudson River School painters, and the later excursions of such groups as the Tile Club. But it received an important boost in 1891 from William Merritt Chase when he organized outdoor classes at the Shinnecock Summer School of Art in Southampton, Long Island, which then attracted more artists to the area and a century of artistic activity. After Weir's return in 1877 from France, where he first painted with his friends in the countryside, Weir taught and painted with the community of artists in the Cos Cob section of Greenwich, Connecticut. As noted above, he started painting there from its earliest days at Holly Farm in the 1870s to its most noteworthy period in the 1880s and 1890s at Holley House where, as Susan Larkin observed, "John H. Twachtman, Childe Hassam, Theodore Robinson, and J. Alden Weir participated in shaping American Impressionism." She added:

Back in the United States, the European-trained artists continued to seek out one another for support as they challenged the orthodoxies of the conservative art establishment. Twachtman, who had returned to his native Cincinnati, roamed the East Coast in the summer of 1880 searching not only for inspiring scenery but also for invigorating fellowship. Although he had intended to go to Maine's Mount Desert Island, he ended up in Nonquit Beach, Massachusetts, because, as he explained in a letter to Weir, he had learned that other artists were there, and 'I might as well have stayed West as to have gone to M.D. alone.<sup>205</sup>

But Twachtman and Weir, and so many of their peers were also very much influenced by the notion of an artist's retreat/colony by Claude Monet's search for a home in Normandy in the

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in America from coast to coast, from Maine to Wisconsin to New Mexico to Oregon and California. See for example Michael Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artists' Colonies in Europe and America* (Oxford, England: Phaidon Press, 1985); Steve Shipp, *American Art Colonies, 1850-1930: A Historical Guide to America's Original Art Colonies and Their Artists* (Greenwood Publications: 1996); and Jack Becker with William H. Gerdts, *The California Impressionists at Laguna* (Old Lyme: Florence Griswold Museum, 2000). The spontaneous start-up category would also include Keene Valley, NY, in the Adirondacks. For Weir's experience there, see Chapter 3, above. Americans also congregated in villages in England, Germany, and the Netherlands, Becker, *California Impressionists*, 10.

<sup>205</sup> Larkin, *Cos Cob*, 1-2.

early 1880s, the exact period that Weir was in search of a country home. “A place of retreat in storm and drought – is no bad thing to have - for an artist,” as his brother John put it. Monet wrote to his dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel in 1883, the year he moved into a house in Giverny: “Once settled, I hope to produce masterpieces, because I like the countryside very much.”<sup>206</sup> Monet was joined there a few years later by Weir’s friends, Theodore Robinson and Willard Metcalf. In his study of the Ten American Painters, Ulrich W. Hiesinger observed:

Robinson was among a group of Americans - including Metcalf - who about this time [the mid-1880s] established a small colony at Giverny, where Monet resided. Robinson had a uniquely close relationship to Monet and frequented his household. Twachtman and Weir became Robinson’s closest friends during his stay at Giverny. After he returned to America in 1892 Robinson paid weekend visits to Twachtman’s house in Greenwich . . . and dined regularly on Sundays with the Weir family; he often spent the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays as the guest of one or the other.<sup>207</sup>

Monet’s influence on Metcalf was equally strong: “Metcalf made his first trip to Giverny in 1885 and returned in late 1886 and 1887, and, as a result, he gradually adopted a lighter, high-keyed palette.”<sup>208</sup>

It was about this time, too, that the economies of many small New England towns and coastal villages had fallen on hard times. That circumstance, combined with the growth of railroads that enabled masses of urban dwellers to travel easily to places to escape the crowds and heat of the city, led to the development of many kinds of summer colonies, including the art colonies. As Marling suggested: “Artists clustered in sweltering flats around the Sherwood Building on 57th Street were every bit as susceptible to the call of the countryside as their blue-collar neighbors from the garment district.”<sup>209</sup> Weir acquired Branchville in almost the same haphazard fashion that *plein-air* painters sought a place with picturesque scenery and an inviting community outside the city to pursue their art; indeed, his residence there encouraged Twachtman and Carlsen to live nearby.

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<sup>206</sup> “a place of retreat,” John Weir cited in Milroy in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 34; Monet to Durand-Ruel, Daniel Wildenstein, ed., *Monet’s Years at Giverny: Beyond Impressionism* (New York: Harry N. Abrams with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978), 15-16.

<sup>207</sup> Hiesinger, *Impressionism in America*, 98.

<sup>208</sup> Richard J. Boyle, “Willard Metcalf: Genesis of an American Artist,” in *Willard Metcalf (1858-1925): Yankee Impressionist* (New York: Spanierman Gallery, 2003), 12. Giverny’s influence was so great that it suggested a possible model for interpreting Weir Farm as a retreat, and the National Park Service included a visit there as part of its Feasibility Study. See *Weir Farm Suitability/Feasibility Study*. National Park Service/North Atlantic Regional Office. (Boston, 1990), Appendix A. Comparison with Other Sites, 54-57, hereafter *WF Feasibility*.

<sup>209</sup> Marling, *Woodstock*, n.p. On the faltering economies of New England coastal towns and their redevelopment as art colonies, see William H. Truettner and Roger B. Stein, eds., *Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press with the National Museum of American History, 1999), *passim*.

Art historian William H. Gerdts traced the roots of these American colonies to Barbizon, south of Paris, where artists painted landscapes as early as the 1820s. American William Morris Hunt settled there from 1853 to 1855 and, when he returned to the United States, Gerdts credits him as the pioneer

in transferring to America the art colony concept and its corollary, art teaching out-of-doors. His location was Magnolia, at the entrance to Cape Ann on the North Shore of Massachusetts. While Magnolia was active as a center for artistic activity only from 1877 to the early 1880s, Cape Ann itself, in such various communities as Annisquam, Gloucester, and Rockport, remained a principal locus of American artists' colonies well into the twentieth century, and is still attractive to artists today.<sup>210</sup>

In its earliest days, Gloucester merchants had commissioned portrait painters to come to Cape Ann and local artists, such as Fitzhugh Lane, perhaps influenced others with their dramatic depictions of the harbor sunsets. Although trade had declined by the 1840s, the fishing industry brought new prosperity, and the advent of the railroads brought summer tourists in the 1860s and 1870s. Among the artists who joined the tourists were Sanford Gifford, Worthington Whitridge, and Winslow Homer, who painted his earliest watercolors there. Frank Duveneck, who visited Cape Ann from 1890 to 1917,

inspired the reunion at the turn of the century of a number of artists who had studied in Munich during the 1870s or who hailed from Ohio. This group included Joseph DeCamp, Edward Potthast, Charles Corwin, Albert Fauley, his wife Lucy Fauley, and John Henry Twachtman. Other Impressionists who visited include Childe Hassam, Willard Metcalf, John Leslie Breck, and Theodore Wendel. Widening the circle of artists further, Duveneck, DeCamp, and Twachtman all taught summer classes on the Cape, and their students added to the camaraderie and the delight in outdoor experimentation that typified the Gloucester experience.<sup>211</sup>

Twachtman spent the last three summers of his life in Gloucester teaching and experimenting with abstract principles, creating a legacy for the future: "Twachtman influenced many art students who emulated his direct and dynamic style. His work also had an impact on the art of his friends including that of Joseph DeCamp and Frank Duveneck."<sup>212</sup>

Of all Weir's colleagues and friends who traveled to coastal and mountain settings to paint each summer, perhaps the most peripatetic was Childe Hassam. His travels seemed to

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<sup>210</sup> "East Hampton, Old Lyme, and the Art Colony Movement," in William H. Gerdts, *En Plein Air: the Art Colonies at East Hampton and Old Lyme 1880-1930* (Old Lyme: Florence Griswold Museum and the Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, 1989), 16, hereafter Gerdts, *En Plein Air*. Regarding Cape Ann, see Karen Quinn and Lisa N. Peters, *Painters of Cape Ann, 1840-1940, One Hundred Years in Gloucester and Rockport* (New York: Spanierman Gallery, 1996), hereafter Quinn, *Cape Ann*.

<sup>211</sup> Quinn, *Painters of Cape Ann*, 5.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 8. For a detailed description of Twachtman in Gloucester, see Peters, John Twachtman and John Douglass Hale, Richard J. Boyle, and William H. Gerdts, *Twachtman in Gloucester: His Last Years, 1900-1902* (New York: Spanierman Gallery/Universe, 1987), hereafter Hale, *Twachtman in Gloucester*.

represent almost a panorama of the activities of artists at that time. In the summer and fall of 1906, for example, he visited Old Lyme and traveled to Isles of Shoals, Cos Cob, Branchville, and Wainscott, New York. Not surprisingly for the New-England born Hassam, a favored setting was Appledore House in the Isles of Shoals, the center of a small, rocky group of islands about ten miles off Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The resort, built by lighthouse keeper and politician Thomas Laighton in 1847, accommodated 500 guests who were able to sail, play tennis, and enjoy the ocean views, and also included separate studios for artists. Hassam joined artists, writers, and musicians at the Victorian cottage of Laighton's daughter, Celia Laighton Thaxter, an artist and writer who had studied painting with him. Hassam later recalled, "I spent some of my pleasantest days of summers at the Isles of Shoals and in [Thaxter's] salon there where I met the best people in the country . . . there was from New York Henry A. Alden, then editor of *Harper's*, Richard Watson Gilder, editor of *The Century*, then in its prime, William Mason the musician - and many others." Also present at Thaxter's were writer William Dean Howells, pianist William K. Paine, and artists Ross Turner and J. Appleton Brown. Brown, of course, was also a close friend of Weir's and frequent visitor to Branchville. As one guest wrote, the group was a "jolly, refined, interesting and artistic set of people . . . like one large family."<sup>213</sup>

Hassam did some of his most significant floral paintings in Thaxter's garden, with its dazzling colors, leading one biographer to observe that "these flowering Appledore landscapes are among Hassam's finest Impressionist performances in pure color and form, every flickering brush stroke registering the effects of light on each blossom, the myriad shapes of the leaves and petals, and even the movement of the wind."<sup>214</sup> Although Celia Thaxter died in 1894, Hassam continued to visit Appledore nearly every summer until a fire in 1914 destroyed many of its buildings. However, he also turned his attention to Gloucester, where, for example, he painted in 1899 with Duveneck, DeCamp, and Metcalf.

In 1903, Hassam came to Old Lyme for the first time, probably introduced to the village by fellow artists from his studio building in New York, if not by Weir himself. He wrote to Weir, "We are up here in another old corner of Connecticut and it is very much like your country. There are some very large oaks and chestnuts and many fine hedges. Lyme, or Old Lyme as it is usually called, is at the mouth of the Connecticut River, and it really is a pretty fine old town."<sup>215</sup> It was another New England town whose prosperity had declined

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<sup>213</sup> "I spent," Ulrich Hiesinger, *Childe Hassam: American Impressionist* (New York: Jordan-Volpe Gallery with Prestel-Verlag Publishers, 1994), 78. On Hassam at Appledore, and Thaxter, see also Weinberg, *Childe Hassam, passim*, Warren Adelson, Jay E. Cantor, and William H. Gerdts, *Childe Hassam, Impressionist* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1999), *passim*, hereafter Adelson, *Childe Hassam*, and especially, Gerdts, "Three Themes," in Hale, *Twachtman in Gloucester*, 178ff. On Thaxter (1835-94), see May Brawley Hill, *Grandmother's Garden: The Old-Fashioned American Garden, 1865-1915* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 111-119 and *passim*, hereafter Hill, *Grandmother's Garden*. Anna Baker visited Appledore in the summer of 1882 when she was engaged to Julian. "jolly, refined," Hiesinger, *Childe Hassam*, 78.

<sup>214</sup> Hiesinger, *Childe Hassam*, 86.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 124.

because steamers found the rivers too shallow, but artists were soon attracted to the beauty and light of these rivers. Susan Larkin wrote:

The art colony of Old Lyme, about seventy-five miles northeast of Greenwich, seems justifiably to have viewed Cos Cob, together with the groups at Barbizon and Giverny in France, as a progenitor. The artist who 'discovered' Old Lyme, Clark Voorhees, belonged to a prominent Greenwich family. He bicycled up the coast to Old Lyme in 1896 after spending a rainy month painting in Cos Cob. Apparently on Voorhees's recommendation, Henry Ward Ranger paid a visit three years later and returned in 1900 with five friends - the nucleus of the Old Lyme art colony. Hassam, who had painted in Cos Cob as early as 1896 and would return there until 1916, visited Old Lyme between 1903 and about 1907. Matilda Browne, Charles and Mary Roberts Ebert, Will Howe Foote, Henry Bill Selden, and Allen Butler Talcott all painted in both Cos Cob and Old Lyme.<sup>216</sup>

When Clark Voorhees discovered the area he said, "It looks like Barbizon, the land of Millet . . . It is only waiting to be painted."<sup>217</sup> Larkin also recounted examples of the artists who were connected with a number of varied communities, beginning with Hassam's travels to the Isles of Shoals, Cos Cob, Old Lyme, and Gloucester until he bought his house in East Hampton, and Twachtman's stays in Cos Cob and Gloucester.

Ebert worked in Gloucester, Old Lyme, and Monhegan [Maine]; D. Putnam Brinley was affiliated with both Woodstock and Silvermine [Connecticut]. The landscape painter Leonard Ochtman, who settled in the Cos Cob area in 1891, sometimes taught at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, where he became director of the summer school in 1905. Birge Harrison, who occasionally painted at the Holley House, is more closely identified with Byrdcliffe and Woodstock. Robert Reid and Walter Clark, who painted in Greenwich in the 1890s, later settled in the artsy Lawrence Park section of Bronxville, New York. Kerr Eby, Rose O'Neill, and Oscar and Lita Wheelock Howard- all of whom had previously lived and worked in Cos Cob - settled after World War I in Westport, Connecticut, the home of many artists and illustrators.<sup>218</sup>

In 1902, Bolton Brown had arrived in the Catskills, not "to open an ordinary painters' resort or an ordinary summer school. Acting as the agent for Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, a wealthy British follower of John Ruskin and William Morris, Brown had come instead to find Utopia." The colony would produce furniture and operate a school of arts and crafts. Brown supervised the construction of Byrdcliffe at Woodstock, where a curriculum would reflect Brown's ideas that instruction be "divided between the craftsman's skills and appreciation of the broader cultural and spiritual implications of the fine arts in American life."<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Larkin, *Cos Cob*, 4.

<sup>217</sup> Gerdts, *En Plein Air*, 18.

<sup>218</sup> Larkin, *Cos Cob*, 4-5.

<sup>219</sup> "to open" and "divided between," Marling, *Woodstock*, n.p. In England, John Ruskin and William Morris both espoused a return to the dignity of labor as embodied in pre-industrial values and hand

Woodstock, like many other sites of art colonies, had seen its main industries, tanning and bluestone quarries, collapse and the advent of summer boarders revitalized its economy. A manor house was built, with studios, a refectory, dance hall and workshops. The first few years saw a busy, but chaotic atmosphere of art classes, woodworking, weaving, printmaking and potting by students and craftsmen, and miscellaneous “visitors in residence.” By 1906, however, the furniture industry had collapsed and within a few years Byrdcliffe was almost deserted. That same year, the Art Students League summer school opened in Woodstock under the direction of Birge Harrison, a painter and member of the National Academy, who had run Byrdcliffe’s school for two years after Whitehead and Brown had fallen out. Originally under the instruction of Frank DuMond, the school conducted classes at Old Lyme from 1902 to 1905. But when Old Lyme did not tolerate well the throngs of students, the school “folded its tents with some haste and moved to Woodstock in 1905, to the relief of Lyme residents.”<sup>220</sup>

It is unclear what, if any, contact Weir had with the founders of Byrdcliffe, although he surely was acquainted with Birge Harrison, a fellow instructor at the League. But he was familiar with a similar enterprise, Onteora Park, founded on a nearby mountain in 1888 by Candace Thurber Wheeler, an important influence in textile and interior design in the last quarter of the 19th century, and her brother Francis Thurber. Marling described Onteora Park in the Catskills, which she also considered a likely model for the MacDowell Colony, as a “cottage colony for city dwellers in comfortable circumstances with a desire to retreat to the woods to meditate on art, nature and society.”<sup>221</sup> Wheeler had been inspired by the English embroideries of the Royal School of Art Needlework at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, and founded the Society of Decorative Art to teach applied arts to women. She became a partner of Louis Comfort Tiffany in an interior design firm, and in 1883, formed her own firm, Associated Artists. She and her brother, a successful wholesale grocer, had built rustic cottages on a mountain near Tannersville, New York, in 1883, and by 1887 decided to buy the surrounding property. At Onteora Park, Wheeler

installed those of her friends who shared her disgust with the mechanical products of contemporary technology and a devotion to the social ideals of the arts and crafts movement in a cluster of silvery, peeled log cabins, unconventionally bedecked with wasp’s nests, animal pelts, and wild flowers. Amid rustic splendor, a potpourri of poetry readings, chamber music, and

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production. Ruskin’s books and the work of the remarkably prolific Morris (furniture, wall paper, fabrics, jewelry, architecture, etc.) influenced the British, and then the American, Arts-and-Crafts movements.

<sup>220</sup> Marling, *Woodstock*, n.p. See also Steiner, *Art Students League*, 151ff. Starting in 1898, the League had tried summer classes in Connecticut at Norwich, Cos Cob, and Old Lyme before settling in Woodstock. On Birge Harrison (1854-1929), a native of Philadelphia, who had studied in Paris, traveled around the world to write and illustrate articles, and was known for his tonalist style and landscape, western genre scenes, and cityscapes, see Steiner, *Art Students League*, *passim*.

<sup>221</sup> Marling, *Woodstock*, n.p. On Wheeler, see Peck, *Candace Wheeler*. See also E. Davis Gaillard, *Onteora: Hills of the Sky, 1887-1987* (Tannersville, NY: Privately printed, 1987).

amateur theatricals, drowned out the jarring cadences of urban, industrial America.<sup>222</sup>

The first year at Onteora, roads and trails were laid out and an inn and three cottages built. During the first few summers, the guest ledger for The Bear and Fox Inn recorded many of Wheeler's New York friends, among them John Ferguson Weir, who returned a number of times, Lillie Hamilton French, Carroll Beckwith, who spent summers there until his death in 1917, architect Calvert Vaux, painters Jervis McEntee, Will H. Low, Lockwood DeForest, Wyatt Eaton, Eastman Johnson, Worthington Whittredge, and Oliver I. Lay (whose grandson would marry Mahonri Young's daughter, Agnes), and authors Mary Mapes Dodge and Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) and his family.<sup>223</sup> After the financial panic of 1893, Francis Thurber was forced to sell some of his holdings to people outside his social circle and his sister found that some of the newcomers did not meet her artistic standards. In 1895, the Onteora Club was incorporated and the directors insisted that a modern plumbing system be installed to eliminate the need to haul water up the mountain by oxen. As a result, "Wheeler felt that her Arcadian vision was beginning to fade."<sup>224</sup> Although Onteora continued to exist as a private community, including Candace Wheeler's original cottage *Pennyroyal*, little of its original atmosphere endured. Weir had personal ties to Onteora and its environs beyond his brother and friends who stayed at the Bear and Fox Inn. During the early 20th century, a number of his fellow Century Club members maintained homes there. These included Beckwith, portrait painter John W. Alexander, and Weir's close non-artist friend Harald de Raasloff. Another New York friend, Harold G. Henderson had a summer home just a few miles away.

In comparison with these communities, it is clear that neither Branchville nor Windham were art colonies--in the formal sense of numerous artists living and working together regularly in the same vicinity--although they served as retreats for entertaining artist friends and painting outdoors. There were other places in the East that would have been familiar to Weir that fell into that category of retreat. One was Cornish, New Hampshire, where his friend sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens had begun to summer in the mid-1880s. The beautiful location, "which recalled the hills of Tuscany to the European-trained artists there," as well as the inexpensive land, had subsequently drawn many other painters and writers, including another friend, architect Charles A. Platt. Platt built his own home and gardens and then designed many others in the town and vicinity.<sup>225</sup>

Another place which could be considered both a retreat and a nascent colony, was in

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<sup>222</sup> Marling, *Woodstock*, n.p.

<sup>223</sup> Bear and Fox Inn Ledger, Onteora Club archives.

<sup>224</sup> Peck, *Candace Wheeler*, 62.

<sup>225</sup> Quote from Hill, *Grandmother's Garden*, 102, and on Cornish, 101-109. On Cornish, see Shirley Good Ramsey, *A Circle of Friends: Art Colonies of Cornish and Dublin* (Dublin, NH: University Art Galleries, University of New Hampshire, 1985) and Keith N. Morgan, *Charles A. Platt, The Artist as Architect* (New York and Cambridge: The Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1985), hereafter Morgan, *Charles Platt*.

New Hope, Pennsylvania, where William Langson Lathrop was the pioneer in the late 1890s. Lathrop (1859-1938) was a friend of Weir and Twachtman, a member of the Society of American Artists, had progressed from etchings to water-colors and oil paintings, and was known for his landscapes and marine views. Before he moved to New Hope, he lived in Georgetown, Connecticut, not far from Weir who had assisted him in hard times. Like the Weirs, the hospitality of Lathrop and his wife attracted others:

Almost every Sunday afternoon, weather permitting, they congregated on the lawn of the Lathrops' house: artists, family members, and visitors alike—all were welcome as the English-born Mrs. Annie Lathrop served her legendary tea . . . their home at Phillips Mill became a favorite gathering place for a group of young landscape painters and their friends. It was Mrs. Lathrop's tea and Mr. Lathrop's popular art classes that brought people to the area. Often the genial painter would meet his students at the train station in nearby New Hope, then ferry them up the Delaware Canal (in his boat, *Sunshine*) to a favorite painting spot along the river.<sup>226</sup>

Not dissimilarly, Branchville was an informal locus of activity for Weir and his artist and non-artist friends who came and went regardless of season, and a model that encouraged Carlsen, Twachtman, and George H. Smillie, a landscape painter, to buy homes in the area.<sup>227</sup> Weir's original purpose, to foster such intimate gatherings of family and artist friends, would be maintained by the following generations at Branchville, a continuity that a number of art colonies lost.

Of course, at Branchville, Weir also had a somewhat different goal than that of other artist retreats or colonies. There, he created the environment of a traditional farm. Hay was the most important crop, followed by corn. Additionally, as Jack Larkin observed, presumably Weir "liked oxen and enjoyed the way they worked on the farm; they did after all, pull his mobile studio, the 'Palace Car', around the farm. This is a remarkably traditionalist, even romantic farm practice, continuing thirty years after the Federal Agricultural Census had ceased even recording oxen on farms." However, as Larkin added, "The true economics of the Weir farm were driven by art and the aspirations and household needs of cultivated late Victorian urban Americans, not agriculture. Julian Weir and his brother John were, after all, not farmers who gave their spare time to art, but artists who

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<sup>226</sup> Quote from [www.flogris.org](http://www.flogris.org), Florence Griswold Museum Exhibitions, text on "Earth, River, and Light: Masterworks of Pennsylvania Impressionism," June 28-September 28, 2003. On Lathrop see obituary, *New York Times*, October 9, 1938, 173; Brian H. Peterson, ed., *Pennsylvania Impressionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press for the James A. Michener Art Museum, 2002); Thomas C. Folk, *Pennsylvania Impressionists* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997); and [www.michenerartmuseum.org](http://www.michenerartmuseum.org), "Intimate Vistas: The Poetic Landscapes of William Langson Lathrop," October 16, 1999-January 9, 2000.

<sup>227</sup> Smillie, "Doctors Recommend Ridgefield," *New York Times*, July 22, 1894, 13. Smillie (1840-1921) exhibited two Connecticut landscapes at the 1893 Chicago Fair, including *Mill Pond at Ridgefield, Connecticut* (1887); see Carr, *White City*, 319.

found enjoyment, contemplation, a paintable landscape, and some exercise on the farm.”<sup>228</sup> This mixed purpose sets Branchville apart from all the other rural gathering places that were frequented by him as a young artist, by his friends, and three generations of American artists.

### FRIENDS OF FIELD AND STREAM

At Branchville, Weir enjoyed the company of his artist friends, but equally important were the friendships he fostered with non-artist members of the Century Club, particularly if they were devotees, like Harald de Raasloff and Harold Henderson, of Weir’s favorite avocation, fly-fishing. De Raasloff was a civil engineer, who lived within a few blocks of Weir for most of their adult lives, first near Washington Square and later at 471 Park Avenue. He and his wife also attended the Church of the Ascension. According to de Raasloff, he and Weir first met at a dinner for members of a newly formed fishing club.

I have never forgotten how he looked, and how he talked, and how he laughed, always ready to cap a story. Many were the places he had wetted his line, and various were the fish that had fallen to his skill. He knew the English streams almost as well as those of his native land, and his narratives were interesting because through all his stories ran that wonderful thread of artistic understanding which lifted his descriptions to a plane we philistines could not reach . . . Our first joint fishing was done from his place at Branchville . . . The country around Branchville is very ‘paintable,’ and on the way to the fishing place Weir was all ‘artist,’ pointing out to me the manifold beauties of the landscape . . . Weir was always ready to fish, as long as it did not interfere with his painting. From April 1st, when we would go to Connecticut and all but fish through the ice - we certainly fished through more than one snowstorm - his sport shaded from trout to bass, and in the fall from bass to sea-fishing.<sup>229</sup>

De Raasloff, whose father was the Danish minister in Washington and consul general in New York, had been born in the United States, in Poughkeepsie, New York. His summer home was located in Onteora Park. Henderson, a lawyer, had a summer home about five miles away in Hunter, New York, where Weir would fish in the nearby Schoharie and Esopus Creeks. He, too, had ties to Onteora, and his son Harold Jr. married Mary Benjamin, the daughter of an Onteora member. Both men’s wives, Louise Griswold de Raasloff and Agnes Henderson, were close friends of Weir’s second wife Ella, and the couples socialized together frequently. Julian’s and Ella’s correspondence and diaries record visits, dinners, and trips with both couples in New York and Branchville over many years. Henderson’s mother’s family, the Rapallos, had also been friends of the Weirs and the Bakers for generations.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>228</sup> “liked oxen,” and “The true economics,” JLarkin, *Weir Farm*, 22 and 41.

<sup>229</sup> Harold de Raasloff, “Weir the Fisherman,” in *Century, Weir Appreciation*, 89-90, 93.

<sup>230</sup> See de Raasloff obituary, *New York Times*, May 28, 1924, and correspondence of JAW and EBW, WEFA 499, 5; WEFA 190, Weir Family, 1; WEFA 192, Weir Family, 1.

Carroll Beckwith's diary for September 12, 1903 notes: "When Bertha [Mrs. Beckwith] was over at the Rossmassler's to a little causerie, a familiar voice called up to me, 'Becky,' and there was Weir as big as life. He with his wife and children had driven over from Mrs. Tracy's place near Hunter where they are staying with Mrs. Henderson who inherited it. Old Mrs. Rapallo was with them too." In 1912, John Ferguson Weir, who had visited Onteora often with his family after its opening in 1888, returned to sit for a portrait to be painted by John W. Alexander in honor of his retirement as Dean of the Yale University School of Fine Arts. He wrote to his brother Julian: "As we were strolling past the golf links here yesterday, a little way from the club, whom should we meet but your friend Henderson, whom I met with his wife at Branchville you remember . . . Beckwith has grown quite old - really looks like a little old man - but Mrs. B had changed little. They were glad to get back. He has a fine studio here. I think he said you visited them there."<sup>231</sup> How fitting that a century later, Beckwith's portrait of de Raasloff painted at Onteora, hung above the same mantel in the Century Club on which sat Olin Warner's famous bust of Weir.

Henderson, de Raasloff, and Weir were members of a number of fishing clubs, including the Anglers, Analomink, and Brooklyn Fly clubs, and would either acquire their own fishing rights along local streams or organize trips elsewhere. The three, with other friends such as painter Willard Metcalf, and architects Bertram Goodhue, Charles Platt, and Stanford White, made numerous trips together from the 1880s to the 1910s, particularly to Pennsylvania, New York State, and Canada, in addition to Weir's favorite locations in Connecticut. Every April, for example, he would join fellow fly fishermen for the opening of the trout season in the Poconos staying at the Henryville Inn. Histories of fly-fishing in that area list Weir by name among the most skilled.<sup>232</sup>

When Weir accompanied his ailing friend Percy Alden to Florida in 1899, following Alden's stroke, he also went fishing. He traveled with Alden, as he became more frail, to see him safely to his summer home. Dorothy Young quoted her father writing to Charles Wood in 1906, "I have gone with him every year since he has been paralyzed and I must not disappoint the poor fellow." Wood added that "this was a duty that Julian took on himself from his affection for Percy; each spring and fall he would take the long train trip with him to Cornwall, Pennsylvania never allowing any of his own plans - even for fishing - to interfere with the journey."<sup>233</sup> To those who knew Julian well, such devotion to his friend was completely in character. To those who knew the artist well, his passion for the rod was equally part of who he was. Julian's oldest child Caro, who inherited her father's love of fishing, described an outing with him:

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<sup>231</sup> "When Bertha," Beckwith diary, September 12, 1903, AAA-Beckwith, Reel 4798. "As we were strolling," JFW to JAW, July 30, 1912, WEFA 190, Weir Family, 5/3.

<sup>232</sup> See Ernest Schwiebert, *Henryville Flyfishers: A Chronicle of American Fly Fishing* (Far Hills, NJ: Meadow Run Press, 1998) and *The Compleat Schwiebert: A Treasury of Trout Fishing From Around the World* (New York: Dutton, 1990). McKay conversation with John W. Claghorn, Pocono Lake Preserve, Pennsylvania, August 13, 2003, and site visit to Henryville, PA.

<sup>233</sup> Both quotes, Young, *Life & Letters*, 224.

I cannot remember when I didn't love to go with my father when I saw him getting his tackle together. Intense was the joy of my first encounter with the gentle sport, about the age of 6, driving with him to a little stream in Connecticut, stopping on the way at the village store to get some crackers and what we called "ratcheese," tying old 'Diamond' to a tree in the meadow after unhitching him from the wagon, as he was a great kicker, and with rods, reels and baskets, mine of miniature size, clambering down to the brook.<sup>234</sup>

John Weir put it best when he wrote to his brother in jest, "What are you about? Are you painting? Or fishing?"<sup>235</sup> (Figure 9)



**Figure 9.** Julian Alden Weir and John Ferguson Weir with their mother, Susan Bayard Weir, at Branchville. Photograph, late 1890s. (WEFA 279, AHP00546)

<sup>234</sup> Caroline Weir Ely, "Fishing Memories II," from *Lest We Forget*, 1965

<sup>235</sup> JFW to JAW, June 8, 1895, WEFA 190, Weir Family 190, 4/5.

## THE TEN AND OTHER ART ACTIVITIES

Even with all of his fishing and other social activities, Weir maintained his productivity and his activity in arts organizations. At the very end of 1897, after he had completed some of his finest works, such as *The Red Bridge*, *The Factory Village*, *The Laundry*, and *Obweebetuck*, Weir, Hassam and Twachtman formed the group known as The Ten American Painters (The Ten), which would also include Frank W. Benson, Joseph DeCamp, Thomas W. Dewing, Willard L. Metcalf, Robert Reid, Edward Simmons, and Edmund C. Tarbell. Helen K. Fusscas observed:

All of them felt that the Society [of American Artists] had become as formal and traditional as the National Academy, from which it had split twenty years earlier. The Society's juries tended to select paintings that were inoffensive and competent rather than those which were challenging or progressive . . . these painters [The Ten] simply sought to present a forum where artists whose general outlook was compatible could exhibit together.<sup>236</sup>

In her essay on Weir in *Ten American Painters*, Doreen Bolger traced his growing philosophical differences with the Society, as well as his disappointment at the reception of paintings such as *Cutting Ice* and *The Red Bridge* at recent National Academy annuals.<sup>237</sup>

Although it is difficult to establish firmly the exact origins of the group, Hassam recalled after Weir's death that he

proposed the idea to Weir one evening in his house on 12th Street. I remember thinking the whole thing over on my walk down from 57th Street . . . 'The Ten' was my idea entirely. Weir fell for it like - well, like an artist! Twachtman was the first painter to whom we talked . . . Weir and Twachtman may be said to have contributed most to its artistic success, At least I thought so at the time, and I think so more than ever now.<sup>238</sup>

Yet another perspective on how the idea emerged was offered by Frank Benson who remembered it well because "the formation of the Ten was a big matter in our lives." In a letter to Dorothy Weir, Benson recalled that the idea "bloomed out suddenly at a jury meeting of the S.A.A." The very large jury of 25 or 30 people was reviewing a large show that it had just been hung and "we were pretty discouraged with the tone of the show." He

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<sup>236</sup> Helen K. Fusscas, "The Mystery of a New Path: The Art of J. Alden Weir," in Cummings, *A Place of His Own*, 55. Although the busy William Merritt Chase would probably not have accepted an invitation to join the group originally, in an effort to seek unity among American artists, in 1905 he replaced Twachtman who had died three years earlier: Ronald G. Pisano, "William Merritt Chase," in *Ten American Painters*, 90.

<sup>237</sup> Bolger, "J. Alden Weir," in *Ten American Painters*, 136. The Society "survived until the formation of The Ten in 1897 as the most avant-garde artists' group in America." See also Gerdts in *Ten American Painters*.

<sup>238</sup> Hassam, "Reminiscences of Weir," in Century, *Weir Appreciation*, 67-69.

continued, "I was with Twachtman and he was stating his feelings freely, and then and there the proposition was made that a small group of us should split off and make our own show the next year. We knew each other so well that there was no question who should come into the group, and I am sure it justified itself in its results."<sup>239</sup>

When the members gathered at the Players Club on December 17, 1897 to resign from the Society of American Artists, it was Weir's hand which wrote the statement and signed it first. Weir also became a public spokesman for the group when newspaper reporters inquired. He stressed the fact that the new group was not a rival to any existing organization, that its members, having "sympathetic tastes in a certain direction in art" wanted to work together, and added that "one object of his friends and himself, following the Japanese view, is to get rid of the barbaric idea of large exhibitions of paintings. And so they propose to give each year a small exhibition limited to the best three or four paintings of the men interested in the new movement." Another commentator believed that the group's actions were attracting unmerited attention because "the art season continues dull."<sup>240</sup> He contested the apparently popular view that the secession of The Ten was as significant as the organization of the Society of American Artists in 1877. To the contrary, he wrote:

The formation of the Society of American Artists was not only a protest against the antiquated methods and poor art standard of the old Academy, but was the birth of a new school as well as movement in American art life. It was the most important and significant event that has occurred in the history of American art, and its effects were far reaching. Who can say that the change in the Academy's methods, the gradual improvement in its exhibitions, and the retirement of many of its fossil officers has not been chiefly due to the founding of the Society of American Artists? The present secession is simply an incident, not an event.<sup>241</sup>

Whether this writer's opinion was shared or unique, the fact of the matter is that every yearly exhibition of The Ten was displayed in gallery spaces that would enhance, rather than detract from the work, and carefully reviewed.

Bolger observed that "Weir's involvement with The Ten must be considered in the

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<sup>239</sup> Frank W. Benson to DWY, July 8, 1938, WEFA 409, DW Young, Transcripts. See also Doreen Bolger, "J. Alden Weir," in *Ten American Painters*, 137, on the divergent accounts of the origins of The Ten.

<sup>240</sup> "sympathetic tastes," and "one object," Weir quoted in "Eleven Painters Secede. They Leave the Society of American Artists to Work Together in Their Art," *New York Times*, January 9, 1898, 12. This article listed Abbott H. Thayer as a member of The Ten although he was apparently not part of the final group. In his literary portrait of Weir, Frederic Fairchild Sherman made this point: "He believed that the best way to see pictures was in small group exhibitions where men of sympathetic tendencies showed their work together," *J. Alden Weir* (Privately printed, 1927), hereafter Sherman, *Weir*.

<sup>241</sup> "the art season" and "The Formation," from "In the Art World. The Resignations from the Society of American Painters," *New York Times*, January 15, 1898, BR46. For a discussion of the multiplicity of factors, motives, and issues that led to the organization of The Ten, see Ulrich Hiesinger, *American Impressionists: The Ten* (New York: Jordan-Volpe Gallery with Prestel-Verlag Publishers, 1994), Chapter 1. Another useful survey of the group is *Ten American Painters*.

context of his participation in other American groups that were responding to the independent movement that began in Europe, most notably with the exhibitions of French impressionists in the 1870s and 1880s . . . In the 1890s, when the National Academy of Design and the Society became increasingly similar in membership and aesthetic goals, new independent associations emerged." And Mahonri Young once noted that Weir "was always interested in and ready to join any movement which seemed to him to promise the advancement of Art." Another example of this was Weir's support, also in 1898, for the establishment of a National Art Club, which would bring together "artists, art lovers and collectors."<sup>242</sup>

A personal project for Weir at that time was the completion of a stained glass window he designed in memory of Anna and Julian Jr. for the Church of the Ascension in New York. Shortly after Anna died, he asked Dr. Donald, the rector, for permission to put up the window "near where she and I always sat and he said, it is strange, but every window in the church has been taken but that one, so with what a love and pleasure I shall have in doing it." The window, depicting a moment of rest during the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, was installed in the church in the spring of 1898. (Figure 10) The oil painting sketch (known as a cartoon) for its design, *The Flight*, was later hung in St. Paul's Church in Windham where Julian was a vestryman. (Figure 11) Dr. Donald wrote to Julian, "Yes! I not only liked the window, I saw in it the history of your soul quite as much as the evidence of your art."<sup>243</sup> What began as an emotional statement, however, was reviewed as a work of art, and Weir actually exhibited his drawings (or the cartoon) for it in 1899. Soon after the window was installed at the Church, it attracted the attention of Charles de Kay, the literary and art critic for the *New York Times*, who commented on it in an article on modern religion and church art. After noting that the window was a change from Weir's familiar landscapes, he wrote

Into the new field of stained glass he carries the same sturdy naivete one sees in his portraits; and the result, if not the best, in stained glass, or as good as he may some day reach, has the merit of directness and strength, of his own individuality. He has adhered faithfully to the use of the lead-lines to carry out the feeling of the surrounding church architecture; where he fails is in the richness of color . . . The entire window is in a light key.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> "Weir's involvement," in Bolger, *Ten American Painters*, 137. "was always interested," Young, "Appreciation," in *Weir Centennial*. "artists, art lovers," in "This Past Week in Society," *New York Times*, April 10, 1898, 15.

<sup>243</sup> "near where she," JAW to EB and ABB, n.d. [c. Spring 1892], WEFA 198, Weir Family, 2/6. "Yes, I not," Young, *Life & Letters*, 195. Another cartoon by Weir, *The Good Samaritan*, also hangs in St. Paul's. Visit to Windham in February 2002 with the Rector Julia Gatta.

<sup>244</sup> Charles de Kay, "Some Easter Figures," *New York Times*, April 10, 1898, IMS6. On Weir's exhibition of the window art, "Some of the Paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia," January 22, 1899, IMS3. Charles de Kay (1848-1935) also published (under the name Henry Eckford) important articles on painters George Inness (1882) and Albert Pinkham Ryder (1890), as well as Weir (April 1899) in *The Century Magazine*.



**Figure 10.** Weir memorial window (1898) at Church of the Ascension, New York City. *Flight of the Holy Family*, stained glass window in memory of Anna Baker Weir and Julian Alden Weir Jr., designed by J. Alden Weir. Photograph, 2003. (Courtesy of Deborah S. Gardner)



**Figure 11.** St. Paul's Church, Windham, Connecticut, where Julian was a vestryman for many years. Photograph, 2002. (Courtesy of Deborah S. Gardner)

De Kay explained that because the window was on the north side of the Church, with close, adjacent buildings, the design required pale colors so as to let in as much light as possible. He regretted that Weir did not have the option of using the rich colors of windows on the south side.

At the end of that year, Julian traveled to the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh to serve on a jury with William Merritt Chase and Edmund Tarbell. The Institute had been founded three years earlier, in 1895, by Andrew Carnegie who wanted to use his great fortune from steel manufacturing to improve public education and appreciation for the arts and transform his city's dark profile from smoke-belching industrial center to a business and cultural metropolis. He appointed as the Institute's first Director of Fine Arts John Wesley Beatty (1850-1924), a Munich-trained artist who had already served on the Pennsylvania Advisory Committee and Jury for the Chicago Fair, and had many contacts in the art world. Beatty immediately organized the first *Carnegie International*, which opened in 1896, a pioneering exhibition on the European model that showed more or less equal numbers of art work by American and European artists, and was an opportunity for the Institute to obtain contemporary art for its collections. Weir had exhibited at this first show and formed a friendship with Beatty which led to the invitation to serve on the selection jury in 1899; he would also serve on juries in Pittsburgh in 1905 and 1911, when he debated with press critics over the show's poor reviews. Through the course of these years, he helped Beatty with purchases and recommended artists for exhibits. Beatty arranged for the Institute to purchase *Ploughing for Buckwheat* which Weir had finished in 1898.<sup>245</sup>

In 1899, Weir was able to give up his teaching after twenty years to devote himself solely to his painting. He had found new studio space at the Tenth Street Studio Building, where he had shared space with his brother John more than thirty years earlier, and was exhibiting each year with The Ten and at the National Academy. He began to spend even longer periods in Branchville, often staying as late as December. When his daughters were attending school on a regular basis, they would stay with friends in New York for part of the fall until Julian and Ella returned. Ella's mother, Mrs. Anna Baker, had died in October 1899 at the age of 73 leaving her substantial estate to Ella and Cora. The sisters carefully managed the estate's assets, meeting frequently with their lawyers and advisers over the years.<sup>246</sup>

Mrs. Baker's bequest to Ella provided a level of financial security that had not been

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<sup>245</sup> See Diana J. Strazdes, *American Painting and Sculpture to 1945 in the Carnegie Museum of Art* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1992) and Vicky A. Clark with Bruce Altshuler, *International Encounters: The Carnegie International and Contemporary Art, 1896-1996* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum of Art 1996); also [www.carnegieinternational.org/html/history](http://www.carnegieinternational.org/html/history).

<sup>246</sup> The sisters' diaries often include references to meetings in downtown Manhattan at the Farmers Loan & Trust Company or at their brokers' offices. On February 9, 1907, Ella noted, for example, "Send Judge Seymore the probate accounting for 1906 by regular mail." Cora's entries included one on December 4, 1906, "Spent the day attending to business with Ella," another on December 31, 1908, "Ella came to go over accounts of Mama's estate," and on October 1, 1909, "Ella came down today and we were downtown attending to business." WEFA 499, Ella Baker Weir diary, 5, and WEFA 484, Cora Baker Davis diary, 6.

possible when the family was relying on sales of paintings, teaching fees, and intermittent gifts from Mrs. Baker. With the additional income, the Weirs returned to Europe in 1900 and 1901, after an absence of more than ten years, and commissioned Charles A. Platt (1861-1933) to design major alterations to the Branchville house. Platt, who was about ten years younger than Weir, was a friend who had shared the same history of wrenching loss of wife and child in childbirth. He had trained in Europe as a painter and etcher, became interested in landscape design, and finally added architecture to his portfolio about 1890, when he built his own house in Cornish, New Hampshire, as noted above. After that, Platt received numerous commissions for country estates, designing the grounds and the buildings, as well as city homes and commercial buildings. He frequented the same social organizations as Weir, such as the Century Association and the Players Club, as well as the Society of American Artists, and was also a fishing companion. Platt shared Weir's sensibilities about the countryside, understood the architecture of the house--a late 18th century building remodeled about 1830 to a Greek Revival style with some later modifications--and designed additions whose character blended with both. John Ferguson Weir participated actively in supervising the project, especially when Weir was in Europe with his family in 1901. The volume of the house was significantly enlarged and a porch and dormers were added, providing more space for hosting relatives and friends, one of Weir's most cherished activities.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> On Platt, see Morgan, *Charles Platt* and Keith N. Morgan, ed., *Shaping an American Landscape: The Art and Architecture of Charles A. Platt* (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, with the University Press of New England, 1995). On Platt's additions to the Branchville house, see the detailed chronology of the house's construction history in HSR, 44-45 and CLR, 67-68. Weir and Platt's shared aesthetics can be seen in Platt's purchase of one of Weir's pictures, *Landscape*, in 1911. See "List of J. Alden Weir Works - Landscape and Genre," 144, Frick, Davidson, Weir Records, 6/15.



## CHAPTER SIX

### FRIENDSHIPS, THE MARKETPLACE, AND THE END OF A CAREER

#### SOME LIFE CHANGES

Between the late 1890s and the 1910s, Weir's life was rich and fulfilling. He was still relatively healthy, was a respected and senior member of his profession and a mentor to young painters, and delighted in watching his daughters grow from children to young women. Dorothy Young wrote of this period that Weir

was thoroughly absorbed in the American art world during these years, busy with exhibitions and jury work, and sustained by summers with family and friends, summers that stretched from May to December now that he had stopped teaching. Europe had long since ceased to attract him strongly, but he did make one trip abroad in the summer of 1901. The purpose of the trip was to verify the authenticity of a Luini painting which Percy Alden wished to sell. The high spots of the journey were visits with Sargent, Whistler, and his old master Gerome.<sup>248</sup>

Dorothy, who was then 11 years old, vividly remembered those visits which she recounted in great detail in her *Life & Letters*. Weir reported to Charles Wood, "I dined with Whistler in London and we lunched on Sunday with Sargent and saw all their work and had a very good time. But I hate the English and was glad to leave. Sargent has done a Crucifixion in plaster that is the finest thing I have seen here. It belongs to his decoration for Boston."<sup>249</sup>

Weir continued to exhibit at established shows and won a gold medal for paintings and a silver for engravings in 1904 in St. Louis at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition; the fair commemorated the 200th anniversary of Jefferson's decision to buy all French possessions bordering on the then United States. By then Weir was again occupying a studio at the Tenth Street Studio Building at 51 West 10 Street and he had built a new studio at Windham, where he continued to spend considerable time, and to complain about the difficulties in hiring a farmer for Branchville. John wrote to him from there:

Paul works as steadily in the fields as the rain will allow . . . Willie keeps the gardens and the grounds in good order. It looks as if Willie would eventually fill Paul's place here, while Carl would grow into a similar office in Windham. You

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<sup>248</sup> Young, *Life & Letters*, 201. Visit in England, *Ibid.*, 201-205.

<sup>249</sup> JAW to CESW, September 2, 1901, WEFA 409, DW Young, Transcripts, 1900-1909.

must expect that as the girls grow older they will prefer Windham where there must be more to their taste and young life.<sup>250</sup>

The years from 1905 to 1908 were successful ones for Weir followed by several others in which he had difficulty selling his paintings. To aid victims of the tremendously destructive San Francisco earthquake of April 18, 1906 and the fire that followed, Ella and Julian attended an auction, sponsored by the Artist's Relief Fund, to which Julian had donated *Court at Windham*. In spite of his differences with the leadership of the National Academy of Design over the years, he joined its Council in 1907 (serving in that position until 1914.) In March 1907 he purchased the 50-acre farm adjoining his Branchville property from the estate of William Webb. Ella was also busy. She took a cruise with her sister Cora and Cora's second husband, John Rutherford, aboard their yacht *Inia*, to the Chesapeake and Potomac, and visited Norfolk in 1907 for the Jamestown 300th Exposition. Ella was painting too. She noted in her diary on October 29, 1906 that after the Hendersons and their son returned to town on early morning trains, "I painted on the outdoor portrait. They had all liked it." The next day she wrote: "I painted again on the white lady, it seems about finished." In her entry for February 26, 1908, she remarked, "Julian painted with me at the studio all morning."<sup>251</sup>

Later in 1908, the Weirs felt the effects of the financial downturn which had begun in 1907. They rented out their house in Greenwich Village on 12<sup>th</sup> Street and moved to a cooperative apartment at 471 Park Avenue, at the southeast corner of 58th Street.<sup>252</sup> In the years since they had purchased the house at 11 East 12th Street, fashionable New York had been moving slowly northward to midtown Manhattan, and its clubs, cultural organizations, and even religious congregations had also relocated. The apartment's location was much closer, for example, to The Century at 7 West 43rd Street just off of Fifth Avenue, and thus more convenient for Julian as he grew older. Its Renaissance palazzo style building had been built in 1891 to a design by Weir's friend Charles McKim, when the club left its previous quarters at 15th Street.

The expenses for Julian and Ella's apartment, which was in the same building as that of his friend Harald de Raasloff, were greater than Julian had anticipated and with Branchville and Windham to keep up, the financial burdens weighed on him. Paul Remy had left Branchville in 1904 and Weir had a series of farmers, a Mr. Milne and others of short duration. He wrote to Wood in November 1910 that he would be in Windham until Thanksgiving and was managing the place himself to save expenses, "The apartment I fear will swamp us. It is so much more expensive than I had any idea of." A few weeks later, Weir, who was experiencing symptoms of heart disease, admitted to Wood that "I did get a

<sup>250</sup> JFW to JAW, August 11, 1904, AAA-JAW, Reel 529. John may have thought that the girls preferred Windham because the Baker home was located in the village while the house at Branchville was some distance from the center of Ridgefield.

<sup>251</sup> EBW Diary, all references, WEFA 499, 5.

<sup>252</sup> The family continued to own the 12<sup>th</sup> Street house until after Julian's death. It was sold to Samuel Kilpatrick in May 1921, "Dwelling Demand Well Maintained," *New York Times*, May 5, 1921, 36.

fit of the blues and everything stands still.” Yet he continued to maintain his studio and his memberships in social clubs. In January 1911, he wrote to Wood that while he suffered from a bad valve in his heart, he worked in his studio two full days a week, followed by billiards at The Century for an hour. “This,” he noted, “is my main [form of] exercise.”<sup>253</sup>

### SIGNIFICANT FRIENDSHIPS: HASSAM, WHITE, AND WOOD

Before ill health slowed him down, a wealth of documentation for the period reveals the great pleasures Weir experienced in his friendships with a small group of men. Whether sharing joys or heartaches, the close circle of friends were constants in his life. They were supportive of his work, and many times supportive emotionally, too. And Weir reciprocated. Through these friendships with artists, collectors, businessmen, and others, it is possible to expand the portrayal of Weir as club man, teacher, juryman, or organization officer and see more of the person within. Mahonri Young observed how Weir’s “friends ran the whole gamut of the art world.” They respected his judgment and sought his approval, as this anecdote about the modern painter William Glackens suggests: “[He] used to fish at Henryville - [and] was most pleased at something Weir [said] about a picture of his and remarked ‘Well if Weir said that I don’t care what any body else says.’” With his friends Julian could engage in the most serious aesthetic debates or indulge in lighthearted entertainment. A good example of the latter is the St. Patrick’s Day dinner he attended at the Players Club, the “‘Caed Mille Failth’ Dinner of the James Waldorf Finn Association - Hail to the Chief!” Weir enjoyed a filling meal with oysters, Green Turtle soup, sea bass, sirloin, vegetables, salad, cheese, dessert -- a typical club repast of the time -- with Royal Cortissoz, Thomas Dewing, Finn, and others.<sup>254</sup>

When his friends died, Weir mourned and then did what he could to look after their interests. He served, for example, as the executor for the estate of painter Henry Ten Broeck Gammage and shepherded it through a year of litigation to preserve his legacy of 250 paintings for his family. In 1902, Weir, suffered two major losses. His friend and frequent visitor to Branchville, the painter J. Appleton Brown, died in January. A native of Massachusetts, Brown had studied in Paris, been influenced by the Barbizon school, and became known for his landscape pictures, particularly for spring scenes of orchards in New England. He, like Hassam, was a summer visitor to Appledore House on the Isles of Shoals. John Weir wrote to Julian from Rome about the sadness he felt in remembering Brown at Branchville. Brown had written Julian a year earlier from Europe: “And to think I have not

<sup>253</sup> “the apartment,” JAW to CESW, November 13, 1910, WEFA 409, Loose-leaf binder of Dorothy Weir Young letters, Vol. 3. See also CLR, 77. “I did get,” JAW to CESW, January 11, 1911, WEFA 409, Loose-leaf binder, Ibid. “This is my,” JAW to CESW, Henry E. Huntington Library, Manuscript Department, Charles E.S. Wood Collection Addenda, 22, hereafter Huntington, Wood Addenda.

<sup>254</sup> “friends run the gamut,” BYU 4, Mahonri Mackintosh Young collection, 1870-1957, 3/7, (hereafter BYU 4, MMY); Glackens, Schwiebert, *Henryville Flyfishers*, n.p. St. Patrick’s dinner, March 15, 1904, BYU 4, MMY, 3/7.

heard any agricultural talk this year. I have much missed our little meeting at the Century and [Alfred Q.] Collins must be pleased that he has not to hear about crops, etc.” A few months later Brown remarked that “your mention of that pleasant household at 11 E. 12 Street put Paris out and when you speak of fishing tackles I forgot the Louvre even and wished myself grabbing for worms by candle light out in your backyard.”<sup>255</sup> With Brown spending most of his time on a farm in Newburyport, Massachusetts, they did not see as much of each other as they would have liked, although Weir at one point had given Brown money to save his farm.

An even greater blow occurred in August 1902 when John Twachtman died at age 49 of a brain aneurysm in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where he had gone for the summer to teach with his colleague from The Ten, Joseph DeCamp. The surviving nine members of the group organized an estate sale of his works at the American Art Galleries the following year and arranged to have his paintings included in their exhibits for the two years after his death. In addition, Weir was joined by several of The Ten, including Dewing, Hassam, Reid, and Simmons, in preparing a tribute that appeared in the *North American Review* in April 1903, “John H. Twachtman: An Estimation.” Twachtman had influenced Weir’s palette and his development of landscape painting, and lent him emotional sustenance immediately after Anna Baker Weir’s death, but he had also received much from Weir. Like Theodore Robinson, wrote Mahonri Young, Twachtman “found in him [Weir] not only a sympathetic confrere but an anchor to windward.”<sup>256</sup>

There were also strong emotional ties between Childe Hassam and Weir that belied the convivial club-going they shared, or even their similar views on art. The men had met about 1890, soon after Hassam had returned from his studies in Paris.<sup>257</sup> Hassam’s bonhomie, gusto, and larger than life personality contrasted with Weir’s introspective and genial social organizer. Hassam’s enormous productivity--over 2,000 works of art in his lifetime--contrasted with Weir’s more deliberate and limited output. In their correspondence can be read a deep and complex friendship that delved into intellectual

<sup>255</sup> Gammage, who summered in Milford, PA, died in 1892. See “Henry Gammage’s Pictures,” *New York Times*, March 3, 1894, 11, and “Absolute Art Sale - American Art Galleries,” November 24, 1894, 5. Brown’s death, JFW to JAW, January 27, 1902, AAA-JAW, Reel 529. On Brown (1844-1902), see Carr, *White City*, 137, pl.15 and 212; Bruce Weber, *The Apple of America: The Apple in 19th Century American Art* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1993); Peter Birmingham, *American Art in the Barbizon Mood* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press,1975); and Sandra Lepore, *Mirror of the Times: Newbury Painters Around the Turn of the Century* (Boston: Lepore Fine Arts,1995). “And to think,” John Appleton Brown to JAW, January 19, 1901, BYU 511, Weir Family, 3/6. Alfred Quinton Collins (1855-1903) was another Paris-trained artist who specialized in portraiture and figure painting. See Carr, *White City*, 222 and 384 n.14. “your mention,” John Appleton Brown to Weir, May 24, 1901, BYU 511, Weir Family, 511, 3/6.

<sup>256</sup> Estate sale and Ten exhibitions, Lisa Peters, “John H. Twachtman” in *Ten American Painters*, 132. Tribute in *North American Review* 176 (April 1903):554-62 cited in Peters *Twachtman*, 133, note 29. Notice in the *New York Times*, March 31, 1903, 7. “found in him,” Young, “Appreciation,” in *Weir Centennial*, 1.

<sup>257</sup> Warren Adelson, “Childe Hassam: Cosmopolitan and Patriot,” in Adelson, *Childe Hassam*, 30.

matters, aesthetics, their work, and their mutual friends. Aside from Julian's brother John Ferguson Weir, and Twachtman before his death, Hassam was second only to Wood as the person with whom Weir would confide his deepest concerns.

Hassam was an artist whose productivity was unparalleled in Weir's closest circles. His work seemed effortless and he would return from his summer outings with numerous studies and finished paintings. Albert Pinkham Ryder, their mutual friend and beneficiary of assistance (especially by Weir), worked very slowly and his finished works had to be literally taken out of his hands for display and sale. (His total lifetime production was less than 150 pictures.) Weir was more typical in his pace, but delayed by doubts and sometimes gloom. Acknowledging his delay in writing back to Hassam, he wrote from Branchville in 1906, "You know my ways & struggles. I am not always of a happy temperament . . . I have been struggling with a large portrait which goes slowly & after work I go out with the dog & [gun] & tramp until dark, so played out that I am good for little in the evening." Sometime later, he wrote that he had taken an evening walk in the snow, "What beauties nature showed me. I came back filled with regret that I had not been at work. I do not seem to be able to carry on more than one [painting] at a time, this portrait has absorbed all my energy & while I am trying to complete it I seem not to be able to do anything else."<sup>258</sup>

Hassam was earthy, humorous, and energetic. He seemed invigorated by his surroundings, whether abroad or at Old Lyme or on the New England seacoast where he frequently painted in the summer. He seemed to think these places would inspire Weir too. From Appledore House he wrote with his usual enthusiasm, "The water is fine! Cold, but the sun is hot on your hide afterwards. It makes a Turkish bath look tame . . . I am painting away & enjoy things here as much as ever." A few years later, he again extolled the cooler climate, inviting Julian to come "in hot old August when you won't work anywhere else." He was always ready with a joke. From Old Lyme he wrote, "You are all well I hope and of course you are enjoying that bully studio! You should see mine here, just the place for high thinking and low living." From Gloucester, Massachusetts: "Here we are on the old coast. The merman coast. I am the merman, too - tho' I have to wear a bathing suit . . . On the coast you must understand literally. Twenty feet from the rocks."<sup>259</sup> On a trip to Europe in 1910, Hassam's letter from Paris to Weir displayed his enthusiastic embrace of every experience. His breezy charm never obscured his acute observations and he filled his letters with anecdotes and observations that he knew would interest Weir. He had traveled to London, then Holland, and finally France, where he reported on his adventures:

The Franz Hals in Harlem were very fine, old Rembrandt is good too! He seems to be as well represented in the Louvre as anywhere else. The Vermeer

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<sup>258</sup> "You know my ways," JAW to CESW, October 23, 1906 and "What beauties," JAW to CESW, n.d. AAA, American Academy of Arts & Letters Records, 1864-1942, Reel NAA2, f45, f49-50, hereafter AAA-AAAL.

<sup>259</sup> "water is fine," f71, August 14, 1906; "in hot old August," f66, July 20, 1911; "You are all well," f72, July 3, 1905; "Here we are," f69, July 22, 1918, all CH to JAW, AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2.

landscape at the Hague is a marvel for the time it was painted. They couldn't see landscape.

.....Paris is a huge Coney Island - noisy, dirty. The streets are ankle deep in advertising cards and bills and when it rains the whole thing becomes a pulp. The town is all torn up like New York. Much building going on. They out American the Americans! By the way the town is full of American shops. Shoe shops, Tiffany's, Insurance companies, Automobile and machinery - everything!<sup>260</sup>

Both Weir and Hassam loved the Connecticut countryside. Weir never tired of describing it to others and wrote to Hassam in 1906, "How beautiful the woods look in the fall, they always seem to be like jewels beautifully set." Hassam found Old Lyme similar to the Branchville countryside: "There are some very large oaks and chestnuts and many fine hedges. Lyme, or Old Lyme as it is usually called, is at the mouth of the Connecticut River and it really is a pretty fine old town." In an earlier trip, Hassam had reported working on two landscapes and two figure paintings, "I did work steadily there and I like the place."<sup>261</sup> He always invited Weir to visit and paint with him. In return, Weir frequently hosted Hassam at Branchville and Windham. (Figure 12)

Weir was generous in his admiration for Hassam's skills. In 1902, Julian and Ella enjoyed the warm weather and exotic fishing at the newly acquired home of Ella's sister Cora and her husband Henry Davis in Nassau, the Bahamas. Weir tried to capture on canvas the brilliant Caribbean light but could not, writing to Hassam, "This is the place that you would enjoy. The light & color are wonderful. I have made several attempts, but you are the colorist who can do this st[udy]." Hassam was always sending encouraging remarks to Weir as well. After a visit to an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he wrote to Weir, "After two months in the open air those things look pretty tough. There are about six canvases in the whole lot (yours is one) that are worth while." Among his remarks in later years, "May this find you all well and I am sure you have been doing some fine things too!" or "I hope you sold our friend Fleichner some pictures." As members of The Ten, they continually shared concerns about the quality of the shows and their promotion. In 1913, Hassam wrote to Weir that his pictures looked well, with a picture of Dorothy in the center, but he "didn't think much of the gallery as a whole - but let that go." More importantly nothing was selling. Two years later, Hassam's remarks were acid, as he saw too many egos at work among the other members of The Ten. Aside from Weir's work, "It is a rotten show on the whole and it will get Murray Hill from most everybody who knows anything. They are all there and the gallery is crowded - too many - there are very large canvases as a rule. Chase and Bob [Robert Reid] take the bum. Simmy [Edward Simmons] is a close third."<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> "The Franz Hals," CH to JAW, July 21, 1910, AAA-AAA, Reel NAA2, f66.

<sup>261</sup> "how beautiful," JAW to CH, October 23, 1906, AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f45; "There are some," CH to JAW, July 17, 1903, f67; and "I did work," CH to JAW, Aug 12, 1903, f68.

<sup>262</sup> "This is the place," JAW to CH, n.d. (probably 1902), AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f57. In spite of Julian's disappointment in his ability to capture the effect of the Caribbean light, as of this writing the highest price paid at auction for a Weir painting is for *Nassau*, which sold at auction for \$400,000 in May 1987. With the buyer's premium, the total was \$440,000. See Richard Hislop, ed., *Art Sales Index*,



**Figure 12.** Childe Hassam and J. Alden Weir at Branchville.  
Photograph, nd. (WEFA 279, AHP00315)

Hassam and Weir also had in common a love of serious literature. Away from the bright lights of the city and his club life, Weir read in the evenings at Branchville, mostly in the arts and history. In 1906, he reported to Hassam that he was reading the historian John Fiske and assessed him the "greatest writer of our [American] history." At the same time, he was working his way through the three volume journal of the French painter Eugene Delacroix, whose pictures he admired. Hassam was a serious reader too. Several years earlier, his summer choices had consisted of the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson and historian Thomas Carlyle and he urged Weir to read Eugene Materlinck's *The Life of the Bee*: "It is astonishing. I also have read again with the greatest pleasure Whistler's *Ten O' Clock*. I had not read it for ten years. How true it is! and it is reassuring too!"<sup>263</sup>

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1986-87 (Surrey, UK: Arts Sales Index, 1987), hereafter Hislop, *Art Sales*. "After two months," CH to JAW, September 27, 1901, AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f74; "May this find," CH to JAW, July 17, 1903, f67; "I hope you," CH to JAW, July 21, 1910, f66. "didn't think much," CH to JAW, First Day of Spring 1913, f75; "It is a rotten," CH to JAW, St. Patrick Day [March 17, 1915], n.f.

<sup>263</sup> "greatest writer," JAW to CH, October 23, 1906, AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f45. Fiske (1842-1901) was a philosopher and historian whose books about the colonial and early federal eras, as well as wide-

Hassam and Weir together mourned the 1906 murder of their friend, the brilliant architect Stanford White whose designs had helped elevate his firm, McKim, Mead & White, to the highest standing in the profession. White, just a year younger than Weir, had known him for at least 25 years, from the days when they were both beginning their careers in New York, and he had been a participant in many important episodes in Weir's life. He had been a fellow initiate of the Tile Club, nicknamed "Beaver," had redesigned the club rooms in 1883 and then designed the members' final joint venture, *A Book of the Tile Club*, in 1887. White had made the long journey to the Adirondacks in August 1882 and designed a house there for Weir. In 1883, he had been an usher at Weir's wedding to Anna and less than a decade later, he had consoled Weir on her death, helping to steer him to the mural work at the Chicago World's Fair as a diversion from his grief. They consulted each other on design and art projects and White left his mark at the Branchville house. Every time Weir walked through the front door, he was reminded of White who had painted John Weir's words over the door, "Here shall we rest and call content our home."<sup>264</sup>

In the city, White, Hassam, and Weir enjoyed many evenings together at The Century and at The Players' Club. Founded in 1887 by actors and others in the arts, the Players' quarters were created by White when he renovated a residence for that purpose at 16 Gramercy Park South. White also shared a love of fishing with Weir and kept him informed of his successes in the field. "I had very poor luck on the Restigouche [River], this year, only killing eighteen fish for my month's stay (somewhat different from last year, when I killed 111) but Mrs. White had the luck to kill her first fish a 43 pounder, which is the largest (actually authenticated) fish ever killed by the Restigouche Salmon Club. Pretty good luck, wasn't it?"<sup>265</sup>

Although White was not in good health at the time of his death, he was only 52 and may have had several more years of wonderful designs ahead of him. His dalliance with Evelyn Nesbit, the young, beautiful wife of millionaire Harry K. Thaw, had incensed the unbalanced Thaw who shot White at the rooftop garden of Madison Square Garden, the monumental Venetian-style entertainment center at Madison Avenue and 26th Street that the architect had also designed in 1889. Weir went to White's funeral and told Hassam, who missed the service because word did not reach him in time, "What a calamity has befallen us

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ranging overviews of American history, had great popular appeal. "It is astonishing," CH to JAW, August 12, 1903, AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f68, also, Young, *Life & Letters*, 218.

<sup>264</sup> White and Tile Club, Pisano in Pisano, *Tile Club*, 55, 58, 103. White at Branchville house: in about 1888, White may have overseen minor modifications. After his death his firm oversaw changes in 1911, including enlarging the dining room and adding a bathroom and dressing room on the first floor. See HSR, 39, 57, and Young, *Life & Letters*, 161. Charles Platt designed the expansion in 1900. See HSR, 44-46. The phrase "Here shall we..." originated in a letter of August 2, 1883, from JFW to JAW, Young, *Life & Letters*, 161.

<sup>265</sup> Players' Club, see Stern, *New York 1880*, 238-39. "I had very poor," White to JAW, July 6, 1897, WEFA 409, DW Young, Transcripts, 1892-1900. The Restigouche River is about 100 miles east and slightly north of Quebec City, and flows through wilderness sections of the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick.

& what a dastardly deed. I hope he [Thaw] will get his [just] reward . . . this case be [can bring] little satisfaction." As it happened, Weir was right. Thaw was judged insane and sent to an asylum, but he was released within a few years.<sup>266</sup>

One of Weir's most important friendships, as noted earlier, was with Charles Erskine Scott Wood, who Caroline Weir Ely described as "one of the oldest and dearest of friends" of her father. Wood also loved to fish and joined Julian on the East coast at his favorite streams. He wrote constantly inviting him to travel to the West and fish with him and his son. Wood was gratified in 1915 when Weir came to serve on a jury for the Panama-Pacific Exhibition in San Francisco. Unfortunately, Oregon was drought stricken and the fishing poor. Nonetheless, Weir was happy just to relax and enjoy the unfamiliar countryside and the company of his friend. But, as was the case with many of Weir's friends, his and Wood's shared love of fishing was just one aspect of their friendship. Their correspondence, from about 1897 until Weir's death in 1919, reveals just how central the friendship was to both men. They cared about each other's families, they monitored each other's health, they shared the arts in every possible way. Weir painted portraits of Wood's family, including his children, and Wood was an intrepid advocate for Weir's art on the West coast. He acted as dealer for Weir's paintings and helped promote his work to numerous clients in Portland, Oregon, where he made his home from 1884 until about 1919, and then in California. Weir and Wood also shared affection for Albert Ryder. Wood attempted to sell Ryder's paintings, and respected Weir's generous financial and emotional support of Ryder. Julian visited Ryder when he was ill in the hospital on occasion, once reporting to Wood that Ryder "looked like Rip Van Winkle his beard was [so] long."<sup>267</sup>

Weir read Wood's tracts and poetry, and agreed to disagree with the positions that did not accord with his own beliefs, about the most profound matters of politics, war, religion, lifestyle, and other serious topics, without causing harm to their relationship. They respected the depth of each other's commitment to different idea systems but trusted one another enough to joke about them. Weir was a religious person, and Wood teased him without inflicting hurt. "I have had the most amusing half hour with Mark Twain," Wood reported about 1910. "He is sitting up in bed abusing the follies of mankind, mingling humor and wisdom till I thought of Rabelais - some of his irreverence to the pulpit and matters religious would have shocked you but I am immune." Soon thereafter Weir acknowledged receipt of poetry that Wood had written requesting that Julian illustrate it for a small private

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<sup>266</sup> missed funeral, CH to JAW, July 7, 1906, AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f52; "What a calamity," JAW to CH, July 5 [1906], n.f. On Madison Square Garden, Stern, *New York 1880*, 695-70, and Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and John Massengale, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 221, hereafter Stern, *New York 1900*. The scandal of Thaw's trials, his attempts to manipulate the justice system with his wealth, and his early release provoked a major discussion in the criminal justice and medical communities, and resulted in changes in the law redefining insanity in criminal cases.

<sup>267</sup> "one of the oldest," Ely, "My Father's Friends," in *Lest We Forget*, n.p. "looked like Rip," JAW to CESW, July 24, 1915, Huntington, Wood, 23/7.

printing. Weir found that the content “appalled me . . . it is full of fine thought & the social sentiment is fine but for me I draw the line at Free Love. Old Mully [Hassam] I think has a strong belief in that faith, but he is losing his teeth & why not the rest. That sentiment belongs to Youth & the spirit of the 3 Musketeers. Hurrah for Anarchy! No this is all beyond my depth.”<sup>268</sup> Wood continued the discussion,

You misjudge Free Love as a “merry go round” - . . . It means no more than that people shall dwell together for love not law and when either one has grown away and the love has died that one must freely be permitted to go his or her own way seeking their own individuality . . . You are not in a position to accurately judge - you have had a most sympathetic and stimulating wife but I see other cases literally by the hundreds . . . To me it is unholy matrimony and hell - But I understand these ideas are long in forming and taking hold - so I am not surprised at your being shocked.<sup>269</sup>

Wood’s law practice included corporate clients, but at the same time he was engaged with unpopular or radical causes so much so that some considered him to be an anarchist although he believed he was merely defending free speech. He upheld the teaching of Charles Darwin’s ideas about evolution in Portland in 1916, and at the same time championed public health crusader Margaret Sanger’s right to inform women about methods of birth control. He summarized these activities in a letter to Weir: “The school Board has made a fool of Portland - and the City Council the same in the attacks on Margaret Sanger. I have been defending her in court and addressing meetings by night.”<sup>270</sup>

The men were honest with one another about all aspects of their lives. Wood urged Weir to conserve his strength for art, rather than dissipating it through various committee assignments or by holding office. “Your honors are all in your work - and while contemporary recognition is pleasant - It’s not very necessary to happiness - at least not to my mind. So take care of yourself.” Weir accepted Wood’s unconventional lifestyle. Wood had left his wife, who refused to give him a divorce, for his true soul-mate, Sara Bard Field, a suffragist and poet to whom he had been introduced in 1910 by celebrated attorney Clarence Darrow (who would later gain national fame in the Scopes trial). After Field divorced her husband, she and Wood moved to California to live together. Weir met Sara during his 1915 trip to San Francisco and she later recalled hearing Weir speak about the accomplishments of the Impressionists: “I remember Weir, who always talked as if he had a hot potato in his mouth, saying ‘Our great effort was to bring the old fellows out of the dark.’” When Wood was in an automobile accident that severely injured Sara, killed her son, and injured her daughter, Weir expressed sympathy for all involved and wrote to Wood, “What a calamity

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<sup>268</sup> “I have had,” and following, CESW to JAW, [1910], Huntington, Wood, 241/1. Weir was acquainted with Twain who had built a home in 1908 near Branchville, in Redding, Connecticut. “appalled me,” JAW to CESW, January 21, [1913], Huntington, Wood, 22. See also Young, *Life & Letters*, 244-45.

<sup>269</sup> “You misjudge,” CESW to JAW, January 29 [1913], Huntington, Wood, 241/21.

<sup>270</sup> CESW to JAW, July 6, 1916, Huntington, Wood, 241/40.

for one of your sensitive nature - I know the shock must have been terrible.”<sup>271</sup> And they exchanged professions of closeness and concern frequently in their letters as they aged together (they were born in the same year). Wood wrote to Weir in 1912 with a request:

Beyond its art quality I enjoy [Olin] Warner’s bust of you for it carries me back to our youth & I often sit and look at it. You know what a sympathetic and dear friend you are - no you don’t either. You darned old cuss - I fairly long for a good old Branchville visit. - Now I want your portrait as a matter of sentiment to look at now we are old and I want you to get in and do it and send the bill.<sup>272</sup>

The next year, Julian was as open about his sentiments: “[I] felt towards you as one nearer (if possible) than a Brother & am everlastingly indebted to you for all you’ve done & especially your friendship.”<sup>273</sup>

A few months later, Julian spontaneously gave *The Hunter’s Moon* to Wood in gratitude for helping him and Ella embark quickly for England upon receiving news that their daughter Cora was sick in London with typhoid (from which she soon recovered). The painting had been for sale at the Montross Gallery, and Julian thereby gave up several thousand dollars with this gesture. The year before he had offered Wood *The Building of the Dam* “as an expression of how I feel toward you and the many encouragements you have given me. So without saying anything more accept it with my love.” Wood appreciated the offer but admonished Weir, “but I’d be a Dam reprobate to do [accept] it. Why man - wait until you’re wealthy. I would not think of taking advantage of your generous nature.” Weir also gave Wood portraits of Wood’s family which were “supposed to be commissions, but,” as Wood wrote later, “I never could get him to take a penny. He had a way of ending the discussion by some such remark as this, very sincerely made: ‘See here, don’t deprive a fellow of one of the pleasures he has in his ability to paint.’”<sup>274</sup>

Wood was a patron of Weir’s art and promoted his work tirelessly to his friends and acquaintances among Portland’s elite. He had been a founder of the Portland Art Museum in 1892. He placed Weir paintings in the city’s private clubs so they would be seen by the prominent and affluent members. In May 1911, he urged Weir to send pictures so Wood

<sup>271</sup> “Your honors,” CESW to JAW, December 13 [1914], Huntington, Wood , 241/31. “I remember Weir,” *Sara Bard Field [1887-1974]: Poet and Suffragist*, An Interview by Amelia R. Fry, University of California Berkeley, Regional Oral History Office, available from the Online Archive of California, <http://texts.cdlib.org>. Interviews were done 1959-1963 and opened to readers in 1979. On Field, see Hamburger, *Wood, passim*. Wood and Field didn’t marry until 1938, five years after his wife had died, in order to protect Sara’s legal interests in their estate in the event of Wood’s death. Wood was 86 in 1938. “What a calamity,” JAW to CESW, December 2, 1918, Huntington, Wood, 23/38.

<sup>272</sup> “Beyond its art,” CESW to JAW, November 19, 1912, Huntington, Wood, 241/17.

<sup>273</sup> “I felt towards you,” JAW to CESW, April 16, 1913, Huntington, Wood, 22/49.

<sup>274</sup> “as an expression,” JAW to CESW, March 31, 1912, Huntington, Wood, 22/37; quoted in Young, *Life & Letters*, 241-242 without date. “but I’d be,” CESW to JAW, June 7, 1912, Huntington, Wood, 241/15. “supposed to be commissions,” in Wood, *Century, Weir Appreciation*, 109. “I never could,” CESW to DW, November 18, 1920, Huntington, Wood, 287/39.

could hang them at Portland's Arlington Club, frequented by "many wealthy summer tourists." He made sure Weir's work was accepted for the larger public exhibitions such as the Panama-Pacific Exhibition in 1915 in San Francisco where two were displayed, *The Spreading Oak* and *The Hunter's Moon*, both owned by Wood.<sup>275</sup> It was possibly one of Wood's arrangements for the display of Weir's art in the West that was the basis for the humorous tale Weir recounted at a Salmagundi Club dinner in his honor in 1914:

My picture was running neck to neck with Mr. Brown's. I thought that this was a mere mode of expression but I learned better from another letter. This informed me that every person who paid ten cents at the exhibition was entitled to vote for the most popular picture. And the writer concluded this way. 'You and Mr. Brown were running neck and neck until yesterday, when the inmates of the asylum for the half insane were let in to see the exhibition, and then you forged ahead.'<sup>276</sup>

Wood knew the market in Portland. Through their mutual friend, Albert Pinkham Ryder, he sent a message to Weir in 1897, during the midst of an economic depression, "Tell Weir, if he likes to put in any pictures salable at small figures, I'll do the best I can, but not to send out his best, highest priced things for people here are not used to paying large sums of money . . . I only wish times were good and this would be a new market for him." He constantly discussed pricing with Weir, and encouraged him to visit for the effect it would have on his sales, "You've no idea what the presence of the artist (a lion) does in this little town."<sup>277</sup>

Wood often bought Weir's paintings on the installment plan because of chronic cash flow shortages. In advancing Weir \$500 as a down payment for a future picture, during a time of extreme financial distress, Wood declared, "When a man owes \$125,000 he doesn't expect to apply every bean he gets to it." Weir was happy to make these arrangements for his friend and also reduced the cost. In a letter to Dorothy Weir in June 1922, Wood described how upset he was at the inaccurate information that appeared in his essay in the 1921 Century publication, *J. Alden Weir: An Appreciation*, honoring Weir. The price for *The Spreading Oak* had been \$5,000. When Wood offered to buy it (after a potential client refused it), Weir insisted that he pay only \$4,000 as a dealer would normally have taken a 20% commission and left the artist with the same amount of money. Wood was distressed because the book made it sound like he was only paying a few hundred dollars in total, which was actually the down payment "as I was very poor myself in that early day." Eventually Wood donated *The Spreading Oak* and other pictures he owned by Courbet, Hassam, and other artists to the Portland Art Museum. He had acquired quite an extensive collection through his work as a dealer and his friendships with a number of artists. In response to a letter of Weir's, he reported, "Speaking of hard times . . . they are hard to poets and lawyers

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<sup>275</sup> "many wealthy summer tourists," CESW to JAW, May 24, 1911, Huntington, Wood, 241/8. Panama-Pacific, CESW to DWY, May 1, 1933, Huntington, Wood, 287.

<sup>276</sup> "My picture," as reported in Sherman, *Weir*, 19.

<sup>277</sup> "Tell Weir," Ryder to JAW, June 16, 1897, WEFA 409, DW Young, Transcripts, 1892-1900; "You've no idea," CESW to JAW, March 24, 1912, Huntington, Wood, 241/13.

and artists," but not for railroad magnate James J. Hill who came to Wood's office and purchased a Corot and a Millet, paying \$20,000 for both: "I'll take im' said he. But talk of hard times - Evidently James J doesn't feel them."<sup>278</sup>

As dealer and agent, patron and friend, Wood felt free to tell Weir what he should paint, either for himself or for the market. He wanted a portrait of Weir, "Your family and the world ought to have a serious life sized portrait of you by yourself." He wanted Weir to do more of the etchings which Wood loved. And he thought, that by coming west, Weir could explore some new subject matter, not to speak of sharing their mutual passion for fishing. "I can camp and you can fish as you never dreamed of - paint and eat them and paint the primeval great solemn Oregon Forest which no one has risen to . . . You will see scenery unlike any in Europe or America." When he had more funds, he wanted a landscape and an ideal nude, following along the lines Weir had explored in *The Open Book*, a painting Wood had helped place in 1911 with a Portland collector, Mrs. Corbett, "I love your cool sweet treatment of flesh and I wish you'd start me a good size nude." At another time, he implored him again for a nude: "Paint me an important nude . . . I covet it more than anything I know. You must know there is a poetic quality in your work and a subtlety of flesh that no one I know has and I want it Weir." Later he wanted a watercolor, "You always were a rare water colorist . . . So I want one as a musician lives to hear different notes from the same composer."<sup>279</sup> When Mrs. Wood visited New York he asked Weir to paint her portrait, for Weir was

the only person known to me whose work I value for a spiritual quality is your own. You have said that likeness comes hard to you and that you are not always successful. I think you judge from the photographic quality. There is always something in your portraits that is deeper than mere photography, and every one that we have in this family by you is a most valued possession.<sup>280</sup>

Weir acceded to his friend's request and Wood was thrilled with the result. This friendship nurtured ties so strong that the Weir and Wood families remained close for several generations even after Wood's death in 1944 at age 92. His widow Sara, who was 35 years younger than Wood and lived until 1974, and Dorothy Young remained in touch with one another until Dorothy's death in 1947.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> "When a man owes," CESW to JAW, August 3, 1910, Huntington, Wood, 241/3. "as I was very poor," CESW to DW, June 3, [1922], Huntington, Wood, 287/40. Portland Art Museum, Erskine Wood to Legion of Honor Art Museum, San Francisco, April 17, 1943, Huntington, Wood, 255/26. "Speaking of hard times," CESW to JAW, December 1913, Huntington, Wood, 241/29.

<sup>279</sup> "Your family," CESW to JAW, December 7, 1904, Huntington, Wood, 240/42; etchings, CESW to JAW, March 18, 1907. "I can camp," CESW to JAW, May 11, 1910, Huntington, Wood, 241/2. "I love your," CESW to JAW, March 24, 1912, Huntington, Wood, 241/ 13; "paint me," CESW to JAW, April 21, 1913, Huntington, Wood, 241/22; "you always," CESW to JAW, January 26, 1914, Huntington, Wood, 241/30.

<sup>280</sup> "the only person," CESW to JAW, February 26, 1916, Huntington, Wood 241/38.

<sup>281</sup> Wood thrilled, CESW to JAW, August 2, 1916, Huntington, Wood, 241/38.

Charles Wood, of course, was not the only friend who promoted Weir's work. Julian and his painter friends promoted each others' efforts however they could. This often involved their roles as jurors in selecting paintings for exhibitions, or in awarding prizes. Childe Hassam served on a jury at the Carnegie Institute one year. "Your two things looked finely out at Pittsburgh," he reported to Weir on October 1903, "and I voted for them for the first two prizes but they went differently."<sup>282</sup>

Charles McKim, another friend and a partner of Stanford White, wrote to Julian about recommending him for a portrait commission. The prospective client wanted secrecy, and wanted to see some of Weir's work before making a decision, and McKim good naturedly undertook to negotiate this with Weir. The client wanted to know what Weir would charge, and McKim wrote, "I recognize that these questions are a good deal like asking you the size of a barrel of flour, or the height of a silk hat; but perhaps you can give me an approximate idea of about the length of time and the cost." Two days later he urged Weir to offer the client several portraits to look at, rather than just one, "Let me know when you will be ready, and I will arrange with the MYSTERIOUS ONE to go and see the portraits. The sooner the better, as she may go south, and the time to strike is while the iron is hot!"<sup>283</sup>

Weir maintained a personal relationship with collectors too. Albert E. McVitty (1876-1948) collected paintings and prints, and his acquisitions ranged from Rembrandt to Mary Cassatt, Winslow Homer, and other Weir contemporaries. In 1917 McVitty bought Weir's *A Bit of New England* for the Pennsylvania Academy of Art. When McVitty expressed an interest in acquiring two of Weir's etchings on display at the Milch Galleries, the artist had them sent to him "with his compliments." Weir later invited him to Branchville, "My section is known as the land of Nod."<sup>284</sup>

Even with all of the support of his friends, and the recommendations that came through his social circles at The Century and elsewhere, and his personal cultivation of collectors, it was the gallery system that played a central role in marketing Weir's work.

## THE GALLERY SYSTEM AND THE MARKET

A number of New York art galleries exhibited and sold Weir's paintings although he seemed to have ongoing, close arrangements with only a few.<sup>285</sup> Artists often had work on

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<sup>282</sup> "Your two things," CH to JAW, October 20, 1903, AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f73, and also CH to JAW, Oct 20, 1903, WEFA 409, DW Young, Transcripts, 1900-1909.

<sup>283</sup> McKim to JAW, March 5 and March 7, 1900, WEFA 409, DW Young, Transcripts, 1900-1909.

<sup>284</sup> "with his compliments," JAW to McVitty, May 27, 1918, and "My section," October 13, 1918, AAA, Albert E. McVitty papers, 1902-1971, Reel 2520, f33-36, hereafter AAA McVitty.

<sup>285</sup> This section is based on materials from several collections in the Archives of American Art which were reviewed on microfilm in the New York branch. While Weir's correspondence with the galleries is the focus in this chapter, correspondence (in the same collections) with other artists helped determine what common practice was. The most useful collections were the Macbeth Gallery records (hereafter AAA-Macbeth) and the Macbeth Gallery exhibition catalogues (hereafter AAA Macbeth)

display in a large number of galleries. New York galleries invited artists to participate in the numerous shows they mounted throughout the season, which ran from late September/early October into late May/early June. For most of Weir's professional life, the galleries were closed for long summer breaks, an interval that accommodated both the artists who departed to paint at country retreats, art colonies, or in Europe, and the potential art patrons who left for their vacation homes or foreign itineraries. During the season, gallery shows were just a few weeks in duration and it took some creativity on the part of the gallery owners to frequently assemble shows around new themes, involving the participation of many artists, or to arrange for solo shows. Weir, for example, had an important one-man show at the Montross Gallery in January 1907, with 23 oil paintings and 47 etchings on display.<sup>286</sup> An in-depth look at another gallery, the Macbeth Gallery, illustrates how these practices worked for Weir, who was using Macbeth's services by 1901, and for artists generally.

The Macbeth Gallery was located at 450 Fifth Avenue, at 40th Street, in Manhattan, close to a number of other art galleries along Madison and Fifth Avenues in the Murray Hill neighborhood. They had located in the area by the beginning of the 20th century because many potential clients, professionals and well-to-do families, lived close by. The Gallery had been founded in 1892 by William Macbeth (1851-1917) who had emigrated from Ireland to the United States in 1871 and learned the dealer business at the art firm of Frederick Keppel & Company. His gallery was the first in the city to specialize in American art, and he built up an impressive list of buyers that included wealthy collectors and major museums. Macbeth was also a founder of the *American Art News*, another venue for promoting the work of American artists. At his death, the *News* obituary declared, "He was the friend of the American artists among the dealers par excellence." Macbeth was also supportive of women artists, who often failed to gain exhibition places, and his gallery was the first "to introduce the 'one woman' show [which gave] Cecilia Beaux her first New York exhibit." The Gallery housed the first exhibition in 1908 of "The Eight," the group of modern painters led by Robert Henri who were rejecting the values of the National Academy of Design and the work of an older generation of artists. Macbeth's help often extended beyond the gallery doors. For the widow of painter Homer Martin, he organized a sale for which he took no commissions and helped raise funds for a gravestone. In an attempt to encourage Albert Pinkham Ryder to complete more canvases, he leased a studio for him near the artist's lodgings. William Macbeth was assisted by his son Robert who succeeded him as head of the firm.<sup>287</sup>

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exhibition). For another helpful discussion on the gallery system, see Linda Henefield Skalet, *The Market for American Painting in New York: 1870-1915*. (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1980).

<sup>286</sup> Catalogue *Montross Gallery, January 2 to January 15, 1907, 372 Fifth Avenue, corner of 35th Street*, Frick Art Reference Library. Among the paintings displayed were the highly regarded *Factory Village*, *The Red Bridge*, and *The Donkey Ride*.

<sup>287</sup> Information on the Macbeth Gallery and William Macbeth, from AAA-Macbeth ,Reel 4859; "He was the friend," William Macbeth obituary, Reel 3091/464; 3091/465, "William Macbeth, Art

The Macbeth Gallery had an annual series of thematic shows. This type of exhibition was appealing to artists who were placed in a select group reinforcing each other's reputation, thereby attracting attention and sales. One such instance was in 1908 when Macbeth launched a new series, "Forty Selected Paintings by Living American Artists" with Weir represented by *Willimantic Thread Mills*. In 1913, the Gallery asked him again to provide a picture for its annual "Thirty Pictures by Thirty Artists." The following year, Weir provided *The Orchid* and *Winter* for "A Group of Selected Paintings by American Artists." In an effort to attract new clientele and broaden its customer base, the Gallery solicited a canvas from Weir for its "Second Exhibit of 'Intimate Paintings.'" The goal, wrote Macbeth, was to attract "the large number of people who are anxious to own fine pictures but who have been prevented through lack of the wall space usually required for large examples, or the means necessary to procure them." Weir contributed *Dogs Before the Fire*, a modest size canvas (14x20"). It is hardly surprising that such a theme, acknowledging a lack of space, would emerge in Manhattan where apartment living had become the dominant mode. The Milch Galleries responded to the same conditions in their "Annual Holiday Exhibition of Selected Paintings of Limited Size by American Artists, December 18, 1918-January 16, 1919." Milch asked the artists to provide small (6 x 8") and medium size (25 x 30") canvases, "suitable for Home Decoration . . . [that would] appeal to the appreciative collector as well as the person who desires to beautify the home surroundings." For this show Weir sent *Old Norwich* and his friends Childe Hassam and Robert Henri had four paintings each on display.<sup>288</sup>

Galleries also used special events as reasons for organizing a show. In October 1917, Macbeth asked Weir for a painting completed the previous summer for an exhibition to celebrate the gallery's "Second Quarter Century" and Weir obliged with *Three Trees*. A year and a half later, Macbeth was asked to prepare an exhibit of "unusual interest" to open in conjunction with the annual conventions of the American Federation of Arts and the teachers of art (later known as the College Art Association), meetings which would also attract a number of museum directors. Macbeth wrote to Weir that he wanted to show "the historical development of some of our best artists, past and present" and was asking a half dozen of the "most prominent living men," Weir among them, to loan three pictures that represented their "earliest, middle and present day work." Macbeth predicted that the show "would be a really remarkable event with which to close a particularly good season." Weir's

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Samaritan," n.d.; and Reel 2823/425-28, list of buyers. Also, AAA-Macbeth exhibition, Reel Nmc12/143.

<sup>288</sup> *Willimantic*, March 1908, AAA Macbeth exhibition, Reel 4859/453-455. "Thirty Pictures," Macbeth to JAW, November 1, 1913, AAA Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f. "Selected Paintings," Macbeth to JAW, April 1914, AAA Macbeth exhibition, Reel 4859/459, 464; "Intimate Paintings" Macbeth to JAW, AAA Macbeth exhibition, Reel 4859/476-77, 481. "Annual Holiday," AAA Milch Gallery records, Reel 4859/602-03, 605, hereafter AAA-Milch. Another example of a series was that of the M. Knoedler & Company gallery at 556-558 Fifth Avenue near 46th Street. Weir participated in its "Annual Summer [late spring] Exhibitions of Paintings by American Artists." In 1916 he was represented by *The Old Sentinels of the Farm* and in 1918 by *The Letter*. AAA Knoedler & Co. records, Reel 4859/373, 375, 383, 385.

health problems prevented him from assisting the Gallery so Macbeth made his own selection of Julian's work.<sup>289</sup>

Because of its reputation in the field of American art, the Macbeth Gallery was also asked by museums to assemble exhibitions. In August 1913, Macbeth wrote to Weir and about a dozen of his colleagues including Maurice Prendergast, William Merritt Chase, Gifford Beal, and Childe Hassam, asking if he could have a "representative canvas about 25 x 30." He was assembling about thirty pictures for the New Museum in Los Angeles (later known as the Los Angeles County Art Museum). "Only the work of our best men is wanted," he wrote in a flattering letter, elaborating on why the artists might benefit from participating: "There is much latent art appreciation on the [West] Coast, and almost unlimited buying capacity." Furthermore, the local Art League was planning to buy pictures from the exhibition for the Museum's permanent collection. The pictures would also be shown in San Francisco, where, the dealer predicted, other sales might be expected. Unfortunately, for Weir, he had departed for England to care for his sick daughter, Cora, so the letter reached him too late for him to send his work. Nevertheless, the Gallery continued to solicit his work for other museum shows. In June 1914, Macbeth was organizing a show for the Kansas City Art Institute, seeking "thirty representative American figure subjects," and advising that the paintings might also be exhibited in New York. Macbeth assured Weir that "The Art Institute is in an excellent position for such a collection at this time, and the directors will do all in their power to make it a success from both the artist's and the public's point of view." A few months later, the Gallery was working on a show for Minneapolis and other Midwestern cities. Was Weir's *Pan and the Wolf* available? Learning that it was in London, Macbeth agreed to take two landscapes from Weir.<sup>290</sup>

Macbeth not only negotiated loans to museums, the gallery also negotiated sales. Macbeth proposed on one occasion that Weir give a museum discount of twenty percent--as did other artists and the gallery--to an institution considering "your *Branchville* for its permanent collection." As the museum had limited funds, the dealer noted, this might make a sale more likely. In turn, Macbeth would reduce its commission to twenty percent of the discounted price. Macbeth may have been unusually solicitous in seeking Weir's advice in its dealings with museums. According to Frederic Sherman, Weir believed that museums didn't seek the advice of artists enough in choosing works for purchase but rather relied too much, as did collectors, on the recommendations of dealers.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> "Second Quarter Century," Robert Macbeth to JAW, AAA Macbeth exhibition, Reel 4859/471-72, 479; "historical development" and following, Robert Macbeth to JAW, AAA Macbeth exhibition April 19, 1919, and May 14, 1919, Reel 4859/n.f.

<sup>290</sup> Los Angeles [perhaps the LA County Museum], "Only the work," and following, Macbeth to JAW, August 15, 1913, and JAW to Macbeth, September 14, 1913, AAA- Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.; "thirty representative" and following, Macbeth to JAW, June 11, 1914, Reel 2660/n.f.; Minneapolis, Macbeth to JAW, September 4, 1914 and September 17, 1914, Reel 2660/n.f..

<sup>291</sup> "your *Branchville*," Macbeth to JAW, January 19, 1918, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f. Sherman, *Weir*, 20.

Macbeth, like other galleries, undertook a number of tasks for artists in return for their commissions, which ranged from ten percent to twenty-five percent of the sale price. They arranged to transport art, whether it was to move a Weir painting from the Century Club back to his studio, or to send his work across country to the next exhibition venue. They arranged for framing pictures, and contracted for repairs or finishing work as needed. Typical were the instructions Weir sent from Windham to William Macbeth on May 26, [c.1901]. Before he went to the country, Weir had varnished a painting belonging to Mrs. [William] Pratt which he asked the gallery to retrieve from his studio at 146 West 55th Street and to have the frame retouched, the latter a service for which Weir would pay. The gallery identified itself in its brochures and catalogues as a purveyor of an artist's work by listing Weir, for example, as someone whose work was in regularly in stock. Macbeth promoted Weir in other publications. When the *International Studio* prepared to celebrate its twentieth anniversary with an article on American art, the editor asked Macbeth for illustrations. Macbeth proposed an Asher B. Durand landscape as representative of "old time tendencies" and Weir "for an up to date" example with a figure subject. Weir was pleased to help out.<sup>292</sup>

The gallery's hefty commission also represented the cost of maintaining an inventory of paintings which might not sell quickly. The inventory was one of several ways that galleries nurtured the loyalty of their artists. In 1918, Macbeth bought two Weir landscapes that had been on exhibit at the Century Association. *Afternoon by the Pond* was a view of the Branchville pond that Weir had built two decades earlier, and *The Ravine*, another depiction of the local landscape. Macbeth bought both for \$4,000, and agreed to pay Weir for them in monthly installments of \$1,000. The Gallery continued to buy from Weir in 1919. With the end of the war, the market seemed to improve and the Gallery may have had more cash available to invest and build up its inventory. For the *Lute Player*, Weir asked \$2,000, "a cheap price for that picture," and \$3,500 for *Branchville*. The Gallery purchased the *Lute Player*.<sup>293</sup>

In addition to displaying the artist's work, negotiating sales to museums, and providing services to the artist, the gallery owner cultivated its client collectors by informing them of the availability of a particular artist's work and working with them to reach a sale. In the spring of 1914, Macbeth admired Weir's new picture, *Approaching Rain*, which was priced at \$1,000, believing that he would be "able to find a good permanent home for it." It took four years but it was finally sold to Burr H. Brown who had seen it in the gallery and

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<sup>292</sup> Pratt painting, AAA Macbeth exhibition, Reel Nmc12/143-144. Work in stock, AAA Macbeth exhibition, Reel 4859/484, 493. "old time tendencies," Macbeth to JAW, February 17, 1917, and JAW to Macbeth, February 19, 1917, AAA Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f..

<sup>293</sup> Century Association, Macbeth to JAW, December 17, 21, and 26, 1918, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.; "a cheap price," re *Lute Player*, JAW to Macbeth, June 19, 1919, and Macbeth to JAW, May 14, June 16 and 23, August 7, and September 25, 1919, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f. The Gallery often paid on the installment plan but it is not clear if this was done for tax reasons (to help the artist), to help its cash flow, or for some other purpose. During World War I, the art market suffered due to inflation and uncertainty; more on this below.

then visited Weir in his studio on West 10th Street. The Gallery attention to collectors was a task that would be beneficial to the artists and dealer alike over the long run. As Macbeth wrote to Weir, “Mr. Brown is one of the younger collectors and we are all very anxious for him to add one of your pictures to his collection, as we are sure it will help him in his future collecting.” The Gallery’s role as an intermediary between the artist and the purchaser had many dimensions. When Weir’s painting *A Bit of New England* was bought while on display at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Macbeth relayed a request from the buyer: would Weir please write “telling him when and where it was painted.”<sup>294</sup>

Mr. Brown was not the only purchaser who took years to make up his mind, a factor which accounted for the unpredictable income of artists and their need to be represented by a gallery that would invest time in promoting their work and keeping it before the public eye. It was in the gallery’s best interests to sell a painting but it had to chart a careful course between the artist and purchaser, negotiating a price that would satisfy both. In January 1914, for example, Macbeth informed Weir that a potential buyer liked *Pan and the Wolf* but he had made an offer of \$2,750 on a selling price of \$4,000. Macbeth thought the customer might be willing to pay \$3,000. However, he continued, “We are still working with the figure you gave us but doubtful of success” as the client had earmarked another picture for possible purchase. The sale did not go through and Weir sent the picture to London for exhibition. Ten months later, after war had begun in Europe, Robert Macbeth was again in touch, noting that “if you had known how conditions were to be this year, you might have let your *Pan and the Wolf* go last season.” He advised that the client’s original offer might still be valid, and if Weir wanted to pursue it, the gallery would assist him by retrieving the picture from the shipper, as it was in transit from London to Washington DC for a showing at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington. Alas, the picture did not sell although the gallery remained optimistic that it would succeed. Its faith was rewarded two years later. The picture was sold to James L. Phillips, the older brother of Duncan Phillips. In March 1916 they forwarded a check for \$2963.60 to Weir. It represented his share of the original selling price (\$4,000) minus the \$1,000 commission, and \$36.40 for a frame and glass. In a difficult market, Weir had prevailed.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> The Brown painting was listed as *Approaching Shower* (28 x 23") in a list prepared by the Peter H. Davidson & Co. Gallery of “Landscape Paintings by J. Alden Weir possibly pertaining to Branchville.” There were 164 paintings on the list. Frick, Davidson Weir records, 6/15. “able to find,” Macbeth to JAW, May 18, 1914, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/nf.; “Mr. Brown is,” Macbeth to JAW, December 31, 1918, Reel 2660/n.f. “Telling him,” Macbeth to JAW, March 28, 1918, Reel 2660/n.f. The buyer of *A Bit of New England* was probably Albert E. McVitty.

<sup>295</sup> “We are still,” Macbeth to JAW, January 14, 1914, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.; “if you had known,” Macbeth to JAW, October 30, 1914; in transit, Macbeth to JAW, May 5, 1915; receipt, Macbeth to JAW, March 7, 1916. On Phillips purchase and his brother’s organization of an art gallery in honor of James (who died in 1918) and their father, see Erika D. Passantino, ed. *The Eye of Duncan Phillips. A Collection in the Making* (Washington DC: The Phillips Collection in Association with Yale University Press, 1999), hereafter Passantino, *Duncan Phillips*.

## THE WAR AND THE LAST YEARS

In spite of ill health, Weir was still working the last six years of his life and exhibiting old and new paintings. He was also enjoying the honors and attention accorded a senior member of the art community. After strong sales in exhibitions of 1911 and 1912, he displayed his work in the 1913 Armory Show, so-called after its location in the 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory building on Lexington Avenue between 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Streets, although its official title was the “International Exhibition of Modern Art.” Despite its reputation in the art historical literature as a hotbed of radical new art – it did, after all, introduce Cubist painting and the work of many European modernists including Cezanne, Kandinsky, Picasso, Matisse, Duchamps, Braque, and Brancusi to America -- it was actually more of a “big tent” taking under its roof the work of several generations, including those artists whose work was seen as somewhat old fashioned by the more “progressive” artists. Many American artists participated, including Weir’s friends Mary Cassatt, and Childe Hassam, and more from the generation who emerged in the 1910s, among them George Bellow, Oscar Bluemner, Stuart Davis, Edward Hopper, and John Sloan. Weir, solicited in 1912 as a charter member of the newly organized Association of American Painters and Sculptors who would plan and organize the show, declined to lead the group once he understood how it intended to break with the National Academy of Design in its sponsorship of such an event. His old loyalties were too strong.<sup>296</sup> Weir was unimpressed by the Armory show, indeed, could not understand the new work, as he wrote soon after:

In the Paris salon some years ago the clamor was so great that the refused pictures were hung on the walls of the staircase leading to the galleries. It was here that Whistler’s “Woman in White” became the object of enthusiastic interest. Degas with his wonderful art personality was one of the first to give him the accord which was his due. This was the awakening of that healthy movement in art known as Modernism. Since then new fads have come up in the Futurists and Cubists to which I must admit are outside the pale of my understanding. It reminds me of what astronomers in their observatories call the dark hole where no stars are visible. With all the mysteries of the Heavens, this added one I am told has caused many astronomers to go crazy.<sup>297</sup>

During his senior years Weir was honored to serve as president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and also as the president of the National Academy of Design (1915-1917). So in his last decade, Weir enjoyed the recognition of many in the New York art world, despite the fears he once confided to his friend the art critic Royal Cortissoz, “It may be indiscreet to admit that I have never drawn or painted a canvas but that it has fallen discouragingly short

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<sup>296</sup> On Weir’s decision to not participate in the Association of American Painters, see Passantino, *Duncan Phillips*, 151. On the Armory show, see Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), and J. M. Mancini, *Pre-Modernism: Art-World Change and American Culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>297</sup> “In the Paris salon,” BYU 511, Weir Family, 5/4, c.1915.

of what I tried for." Weir shared similar sentiments with another old friend, Frederick Van Wyck. Van Wyck wrote to Harry Watrous, Vice President of the National Academy, on April 19, 1926, about a conversation he had with Weir before his death. According to Van Wyck, Julian said, "Fred, I am a disappointed man. I have never painted a great picture." His friend responded, "You have painted a great many fine pictures." To which Julian answered: "Yes, but I have never painted a masterpiece as I hoped to, that would live after me, and I am dying a disappointed man."<sup>298</sup> Weir revealed himself as a man of the 19th century, indeed of his teachers' generation, when he thought in terms of the masterpiece. The Armory show and all that it did to introduce new art, also led to new ways of thinking about an artist's achievement in terms of a body of work, innovation, and an ongoing conversation among the works and the artists. Had he viewed his career in those terms, he might have been pleased by the overall quality and character of his work, by his willingness to experiment, and try new mediums and techniques.

Weir felt well enough in 1912 to take on a short term teaching assignment. He wrote to Wood in December that he would teach for two months at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, as he had several times in the past. The next spring, he was back at his easel, doing some studies of apple blossoms at Branchville before he departed for Windham. During the summer of 1913, his emergency trip to England to look after Cora, ill with typhoid, turned into a productive time to paint, once her recovery was assured. With Dorothy by his side, their easels were set up along the banks of the Itchen River in Hampshire, a chalk stream that flowed through Winchester to the coast at Southampton. Weir painted 26 watercolors, more than he had painted in a number of years, of the river and the nearby countryside. These included *Izaak Walton's Pool - Itchen River*, a favored casting spot of the revered patron saint of fly fishing, and thus a sacred spot for Weir, who undoubtedly took out his rod when conditions were favorable.<sup>299</sup>

Times became harder with the outbreak of war in Europe and made sales more difficult. Buyers were distracted as they were solicited for war bond subscriptions and war relief funds. The uncertain market was one reflection of the war's impact on the economy. Another aspect of the war, the promotion of patriotism, was evident in gallery activities too. In mid 1917, Weir agreed to accept Liberty Bonds in payment for any picture sold in a forthcoming Macbeth sale. The Gallery also relayed to him a request from Duncan Phillips

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<sup>298</sup> "It may be indiscreet," JAW to Royal Cortissoz, WEFA 422, Burlingham, 6/8, Royal Cortissoz, "Some Painters Reviving the [illegible] Our Golden Period," March 30, 193[7?]. "Fred, I am," and following, JAW to Frederick Van Wyck, WEFA 422, Burlingham, 6/8.

<sup>299</sup> Pennsylvania Academy, JAW to CESW, December 1, 1912, Huntington, Wood Addenda, 22/45. During a previous teaching assignment at the Academy, one of his students was Edgar L. Pearce (1886-1954), who later became known for his landscapes and maritime paintings of the New Jersey shore. Pearce obituary, *New York Times*, March 31, 1954, 27. Apple blossoms, JAW to CESW, May 10, 1913, Huntington, Wood, 215. On the number of watercolors, Sherman, *Weir*, 1927, "List of watercolor paintings by date," n.p. Isaac [spelled variously Izaak] Walton (1593-1683) was a successful ironmonger and writer who is best remembered for *The Compleat Angler*, first published in 1653, and available in more than 300 editions since that time. See [www.flyfishinghistory.com](http://www.flyfishinghistory.com).

for a loan of *The Girl Knitting*, to place in a small show of war pictures.<sup>300</sup>

Weir's finances were strained during the war years. He couldn't afford to buy a Daniel Huntington portrait of Samuel F. B. Morse to give to the National Academy of Design to commemorate Morse's role as one of its founders, and as a token of Weir's own long association with the Academy which he was then serving as president. He told the Macbeth Gallery he hoped Morse's son would be able to make the purchase. Even though he had some sales of his art during those years, he also felt the need to sell items from his personal collection, including a selection that mixed his own water colors with those of other artists like Winslow Homer. Robert Macbeth advised him about these sales, urging him to sell the items individually as "no museum that I know of is in the market for a collection of this kind." Nonetheless, the Gallery did show a group of pictures to the Brooklyn Museum which declined to buy them unless the price was reduced. When Duncan Phillips asked to purchase just one or two items, Weir agreed "reluctantly." The Gallery offered to lower its commission, as an incentive to Weir, from 20 percent rather than 25 percent, and *Sunlight on the Sea* (1890) by Homer was sold for \$2,000. It was a delicate matter to balance prices and commissions. Even when a dealer had worked with a painter for a long time, there were occasional slip-ups. Macbeth negotiated a sale to another dealer, discounting the work by essentially dropping its own commission. Weir reluctantly agreed to the price offer but admonished his dealer, "after this do not make any sales without consulting me."<sup>301</sup>

Macbeth and other galleries were not alone in experiencing difficulty selling Weir's work during the war years. Independent dealers, like Charles Wood, were also affected. Wood's cynicism about rich art patrons and what they were interested in permeates his letters during these years: "I have had poor luck in interesting anybody in the water-colors the real reason being the fearful hard time. I do not know anybody but the hard and [greedy] money-makers who feel that they can buy anything, and the hard and [illegible] money makers never want any pictures except steel engravings in the shape of bonds." The war played havoc with prices as money lost its purchasing power, so that, Wood noted, a picture worth \$5,000 in the pre-war period was priced in 1916 at \$10,000.<sup>302</sup>

It was not just sales that Weir and Wood wrote about during the war, but of their concerns generally. Wood was attentive to the political and economic dimensions of the European conflict. Weir engaged with the human dimensions of "this terrible war and the suffering it must entail." He took a portion of a \$2,000 prize he received and "sent it to the

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<sup>300</sup> Liberty bonds, JAW to Macbeth, June 3, 1917, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f. Phillips' request, Macbeth to JAW, May 8, 1918, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.

<sup>301</sup> Morse portrait, Macbeth to JAW, March 21, 1916, and JAW to Macbeth, March 27, 1916, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f. Macbeth on sales and Phillips purchase, Macbeth to JAW, December 4, 12, 21 and 26, 1918, and JAW to Macbeth, December 23, 1918, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2260/n.f. The Homer watercolor was later known as *Rowing Home*, see Passantino, *Duncan Phillips*, on purchase from Weir, 137-38. Dealer sale, Macbeth to JAW, February 25, 1919, and JAW to Macbeth, February 27, 1919, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.

<sup>302</sup> "I have had," CESW to JAW, November 20, 1915, Huntington, Wood, 241/36. Prewar prices, CESW to JAW, May 31, 1916, Huntington, Wood, 241/39.

families of the French painter[s] in Paris who must not only be hard up but [illegible]. Down with the Kizer [sic]." He reported that Mrs. Weir and his daughters "are all making stockings of heavy wool in hopes it may do some fellow good & help keep him warm." A few weeks later he reported that in New York "The artists have given liberally to the cause . . . to try and raise money to send to the many unfortunate men whose homes have been [destroyed]." In December 1915, Weir apparently lent work to an exhibition in New York sponsored by the Alliance des Artistes Français to benefit the families of French painters. "Such carnage going on at this season of the year," he wrote to Wood, "it seems most horrible."<sup>303</sup>

But slowly, during the next few years, Weir's output diminished even as he wanted to stay active. When the Macbeth Gallery wrote to him in January 1917 requesting a picture for its annual "Thirty Paintings" show, it hoped he would provide something "in spite of the fact that we hear on all sides that you have done nothing new from a long time." Weir replied that he would try to find a worthy canvas, "I have always had a personal interest in your exhibition of thirty artists and will do my best to join in this group." Apparently he did little work the winter of 1917-1918 because of ill health. Late in 1918 Weir was unable to write the introduction to a catalogue for a Twachtman show that the Macbeth Gallery was mounting. Instead of editing his work, Macbeth wished him well on his trip to Biloxi, Mississippi, where he hoped to recuperate from his heart and prostate problems: "[We] hope you will show decided results from your southern trip." He must have done some painting until his health finally deteriorated because in October 1919, just two months before his death, the Macbeth Gallery was writing to him about pictures he had mentioned working on at Windham the previous spring. Robert Macbeth asked if he could look at them.<sup>304</sup>

Before the trip south, he and Ella had given up the Park Avenue apartment and put their belongings in storage in order to economize. They intended to move to Branchville telling Wood, "the apartment is too much of a luxury and a burden." Weir's income had declined during the war and he suffered from the general depressed economic conditions that persisted even after the Armistice of November 1918, as well as the loss of discretionary income among collectors. To Wood he wrote, "the bottom has completely dropped out of the art business . . . I must believe it is the war." Earlier in 1918 he had written to Wood about the visit of Childe Hassam and his wife, "Prince Mully was over here the other day with Mrs. H looking fine and taking a weeks rest at Ridgefield, automobiling all about the country," but expressed continuing concern over his health. "Only two days fishing and not a sketch or

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<sup>303</sup> "this terrible war" and following, JAW to CESW, Dec 22, 1914, Huntington, Wood Addenda, 23. "The artists have given," JAW to CESW, January 13, 1915, Ibid., 23. "Such carnage," JAW to CESW, Huntington, December 29, 1915, Ibid., 23.

<sup>304</sup> "in spite of the fact," Macbeth to JAW, January 3, 1917, and "I have always," JAW to Macbeth, January 6, 1917, AAA-Macbeth, R2660/n.f. "We hope you will," and following, Macbeth to JAW, December 21 and 26, 1918, Ibid. JAW to Macbeth, December 23, 1918, and Macbeth to JAW, February 4, 1919, Ibid. Pictures at Windham, Macbeth to JAW, October 6, 1919, Ibid.

study of any kind this Spring and I often wonder if I can find ambition to go on.”<sup>305</sup>

As Weir’s condition worsened, his friends offered assistance in various ways. Robert Macbeth wrote to Ella Weir expressing his concerns and she wrote back that Julian had rallied though was still quite ill, “Naturally he is still very weak in body and mind.” When her own husband’s health was failing in the fall of 1919, his sister-in-law Cora Davis Rutherford went up to Windham to see Julian for the last time. The family was all there. “He seemed glad to see me,” she said. At about the same time, John Singer Sargent was one of the last old friends to visit the dying Weir at Windham - where Julian had spent the summer and fall. Dorothy noted, “the one bright spot of that autumn was a weekend visit from John Sargent and his sister Emily.” Sargent wrote to Julian on November 4: “I can’t tell you how much my sister and I enjoyed our visit to you and Mrs. Weir, and how much we appreciated your friendliness and hospitality. For my part, I feel the younger for this excursion in the old days of half a cen - no, not half a century, but thirty years ago.”<sup>306</sup> He was actually closer to the truth the first time. They had met in Paris almost exactly forty-five years earlier. (Figure 13)

Weir gradually grew weaker until he returned to a new apartment he and Ella had rented on the upper East Side at The Belmont, 116 E. 63 between Lexington and Park Avenues, where he died the morning of December 8, 1919. A few weeks later, Hassam wrote to Wood about the end, “grand [great?] old Weir ‘is hid in deaths dateless night.’ Everyone hoped that he would pull through. I saw him for a brief moment the day after he arrived here from Windham. He knew me though he was pretty well used up from the trip. He died after a few days.”<sup>307</sup> (Figure 14)

Many of Julian’s friends wrote to Ella with their condolences. Ella thanked Robert Macbeth for his “keen words of appreciation you have for Mr. Weir as a friend and as an artist touched us so deeply.” She continued, “He was so true to himself and hated deception in any form, that I feel he placed his stamp upon his Art as he did upon life. For Art and Life were for him one.”<sup>308</sup> Charles Wood wrote at great length. His letter was at once a eulogy, a memoir, and an attempt to pull together almost a lifetime of extraordinary friendship:

Julian has gone - I can not fully realize it - so far and so seldom seeing him yet so daily feeling him near in his pictures and my memories. I can hardly realize he is gone - forever and I shall never in this life see him again . . . it does cruelly force itself on me and I go about with a load that will not be lifted . . . of my own sense

<sup>305</sup> 471 Park Avenue apartment, JAW to McVitty, May 27 1918, AAA-McVitty, Reel 2520/34; the Weirs moved to the Hotel Belmont, JAW to McVitty, February 23, 1919, AAA-McVitty, Reel 2520/37-38; “the apartment,” JAW to CESW, May 22, 1918 and “the bottom has,” JAW to CESW, Dec 2, [1918?], Huntington, Wood Addenda, 23. “Prince Mully,” and following, JAW to CESW, [April 1918], Ibid., 23.

<sup>306</sup> “Naturally,” EBW to Macbeth, September 25, 1919, AAA Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f. “He seemed,” Cora Baker Davis Rutherford diary, September 27, 1919, WEFA 2502, 6. “the one bright spot,” Young, *Life & Letters*, 259. Also, last visit by Sargent, see Ely, “My Father’s Friends,” in *Lest We Forget*. “I can’t tell you,” Sargent to JAW, November 4, 1919, BYU 511, Weir Family, 3.

<sup>307</sup> CH to CESW, January 17, 1920, Huntington, Wood, 149/13.

<sup>308</sup> “keen words” and following, EBW to Macbeth, January 9, 1920, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.



**Figure 13.** John Singer Sargent and J. Alden Weir at Weir Pond, Branchville.  
Photograph, c.1900-10. (WEFA 2679 nd AHP00772)



**Figure 14.** Childe Hassam and his wife Maud with Julian and Ella Weir. Julian appears considerably diminished by his poor health.  
Photograph, c.1918-19.(WEFA 279 nd AHP00634)

of terrible, terrible loss irreparable. I think what it must mean for you and the girls and I grow dumb. I can only offer the profoundest sympathy and sorrow with you - And how terrible it does strike me - Julian and I were boys together for a short time at West Point and since then in spite of long separations - He in Paris I in the West - we have been friends you know - I loved him as everybody did - He was so true, so right so honest so gentle in all so loveable.

Not his great genius drew hearts to him - that the world admired and revered. Even strangers - but what made him even rarer than his genius was his great human qualities. The things we love - greatness and sympathy with strength - I cannot yet understand in a way the awful finality - I wish I could pay him some tribute . . . it would be a real kindness to me to allow me to do something.

I am too shattered from this blow to write more and this is no time to weight upon you with long letters when I have said that I loved him and I grieve and fell lonely and sorrow with you his loved ones I have said all.<sup>309</sup>

The summer after Julian died, Ella traveled with her sister Cora (whose second husband, John Rutherford, had died two months after Julian) to visit old friends at West Point, and then went on to see Mrs. Saint-Gaudens in Windsor, Vermont, and Mrs. Henderson in the Catskills.<sup>310</sup> These friends had known Julian almost as long, and in some cases longer, than the thirty-seven years that Ella and Cora had been part of his life. Sharing memories must have been soothing. The family would go on without him but Ella and daughter Dorothy, and later her younger sister Cora, would become the conservators of his heritage.

#### **FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION**

Dorothy Weir was able to make her great contribution to documenting her father's life, overseeing his estate, and maintaining Branchville because of a bequest she received from her Aunt Cora. As a result of the chronological and thematic arrangement of this text, Cora's story, and the stories of other individuals who played important roles in the life of Weir and of his close family, have sometimes been under emphasized. Such has been the case for Weir's children, Caroline (Caro), Dorothy, and Cora, although their importance is analyzed in Parts II and III. This has also been true for Ella and Anna's sister Cora, the middle Baker sister born in 1858. Other than her role after Anna's death, Cora Baker Davis Rutherford Laighton has been largely missing from the portraits, literally and figuratively, in J. Alden Weir's story, but she was a large part of the lives of his wives and children, and of his life as well. Her generosity had beneficial results for her nieces and for Julian and his wives. Therefore, it is appropriate to conclude this chapter with a summary of Aunt Cora's life and

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<sup>309</sup> CESW to EBW, Huntington, December 8, 1919, Huntington, Wood, 240/1.

<sup>310</sup> Cora Baker Davis Rutherford diary, WEFA 2501, 6.

influence, for the consequences of her actions would greatly influence the second generation of Branchville history.

In 1901, Weir's oldest daughter Caro, then 17, began to travel with her aunt Cora and uncle Henry Davis, who had no children of their own following the death of their infants in 1883. After selling the Kansas ranch where they had lived since their marriage, the Davises spent winters at their home overlooking the Hudson River on Riverside Drive and 108th Street in New York, where Davis helped manage his family's substantial real estate holdings. For much of the remainder of the year they traveled to Europe; to their home in Nassau, the Bahamas; to Newport, Rhode Island and the New Jersey shore, or went cruising on their 103 ft. yacht *Inia*. Caro, fascinated with photography like her step-mother Ella, kept scrapbooks of these voyages, and Cora Davis's diaries also detail her travels accompanied by one or more of the Weir daughters, who were the only grandchildren on the Baker side of the family. In 1898, the Davises visited Quebec and New Hampshire with Caro and Mrs. Baker. Other trips that Caro took with Aunt Cora included the American Southwest (California, Arizona, Colorado) and Hawaii in 1901, and the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo and Niagara Falls that same year; Quebec and Vermont in 1902; the Davis's home in Nassau, including a side-trip to Cuba in 1903; Europe, Italy, and Sicily from February to April 1904; and a trip round the world in 1909 and 1910.<sup>311</sup>

As Dorothy and Cora grew older, they also joined with Aunt Cora and her second husband, John A. Rutherford, on their travels (Henry Davis had died in 1905). Cora Weir went to Canada on the *Inia* in 1909 and to Florida and Alabama in 1915. Dorothy took a three-week trip motoring through New England in 1906 and spent part of the Weir family's 1912 European trip with the Rutherfords in Scotland before they all sailed home together. In 1913, the Weirs joined the Rutherfords in Nassau in the spring. That summer, when Cora Weir fell ill with typhoid fever in England, Julian and Ella rushed over on the next boat. Delighted to find her recovering, they sent for Dorothy and stayed another two months, again joining the Rutherfords. Ella and Julian visited Cora Davis Rutherford at her home in Nassau at least six times, usually in February and March, beginning in 1902, when Weir wrote to Dorothy: "Aunt Cora has a beautiful place looking out on the sea with an orange orchard and grapefruit just back of the house."<sup>312</sup> It was an ideal place to relax, where Julian could paint and deep-sea fish and Ella and the girls could participate in the whirl of winter social activities: teas, bridge, and receptions at the colonial governors' mansion. Among the Americans that they met there was the Carlin family. William Edward Carlin would later marry Julian's daughter Cora.

Aunt Cora's interactions with her sisters, Anna and Ella, and brother-in-law Julian, in addition to her role as a generous and loving aunt, have a key place in this study. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Anna had commented on her routine of seeing Cora twice a

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<sup>311</sup> These travels are documented in WEFA Scrapbook collection vols. 11, 23, and unnumbered; WEFA 6579; WEFA 195, 3 and Cora Baker Davis diaries, WEFA 484, 6.

<sup>312</sup> "Aunt Cora has," JAW to DW, January 31, 1902, WEFA 195, Weir Family, 4/1.

week in New York in the years before her death and Julian's letters afterwards were effusive in their praise for Cora's emotional support. After Ella's marriage to Julian, her diary as well as Cora's diary recorded the times the sisters and couples spent together, in Windham and Branchville, at the theater and social events in New York City, on their travels, and at family Christmases, often joined by Weir's sister Nell and her husband Thomas Sturgis.

Throughout the diaries are scattered entries such as Cora's for June 17, 1909: "Ella and Julian dined with us at the Metropolitan Club and we all went to the Victoria Roof Garden and had an amusing time." With substantial financial resources, as a result of her own and her husbands' family wealth, Cora became an important collector of Julian's work. It was she who donated one of his finest paintings, *The Red Bridge*, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1914. When Dorothy inventoried Weir's paintings after his death, she found that Cora also owned *Flowers*, *Woods in Snow*, *White Peonies*, *In the Woods*, *Puritan Maid*, and a portrait of herself that she had commissioned.<sup>313</sup>

Cora's life, for the most part, mixed travel and luxury with intermittent personal happiness. After suffering the loss of her infants, she had returned often to New York to be closer to her family, and by the late 1890s, she was unhappy in her marriage to Davis. Her diary for New Year's Day 1898, for example, found her "not one bit happier this new year than last." Henry was often out, perhaps at one of the numerous clubs to which he belonged, and she spent time with her close friends John and Louise Rutherford, or with John alone. In March 1898 she wrote: "I think of my utter inability to change my life. I think of the days to come - trying to fill up my life with what does not count, longing? for what seems an utter impossibility for me to have . . . I am so weary, so very weary - & oh so hopeless for anything better." Other than Cora's record of trips with the Cora and Henry Davis, the details of their life over the next seven years are somewhat unclear. On New Year's Day 1905, Henry suffered a massive stroke and died at home three weeks later at age 47. *The New York Times* reported that "he had been in poor health for some time and had spent much of his time on his yacht *Inia*."<sup>314</sup>

It was not long before Cora remarried. On May 8, 1905, the front page of the *Times* announced her marriage two days earlier to John A. Rutherford, a member of the New York Stock Exchange whose family in New York and New Jersey could be traced back to Colonial America: "Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford have known each other for years . . . While Mrs. Rutherford was alive and entertained at the Rutherford home, Mrs. Davis and her husband were frequent guests at dinners . . . Mrs. Rutherford had been a widow a little more than six months. Her husband left her a considerable estate."<sup>315</sup> Cora's fifteen years of marriage to John Rutherford appear to have been very happy. They spent winters in New York, followed

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<sup>313</sup> "Ella and Julian," Cora Davis Rutherford diary, WEFA 484, 6. Dorothy estate inventory, WEFA 422, Burlingham, Legal 1/5.

<sup>314</sup> "not one bit," Cora Baker Davis diary, WEFA 2530. "I think of my utter," March 28, 1898, *Ibid.* Henry Davis obituary, *New York Times*, January 23, 1905; NYC Municipal Archives, death certificate #2650, January 21, 1905, Henry S. F. Davis, "gentleman."

<sup>315</sup> "John A. Rutherford Weds Mrs. Cora Davis," *New York Times*, May 8, 1905, 1.

by two months at their home in Nassau, a month or so on Rutherford's property in Lehigh, Alabama, summers at his home in Sea Bright, New Jersey, mixed in with trips to Europe and visits to Windham, Branchville, and other locations in New York State and New England. After Rutherford suffered a stroke in 1917, they spent much of their time at a home they had purchased in Miami where he died in February 1920, only three months after Julian's death.

The following summer, Cora Rutherford and Ella traveled to the West and on the trip was Paul D. Laighton, four year's Cora's junior. A native of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he was a member of the family that had built Appledore on the Isles of Shoals where Hassam and other artists had painted in the summers; his own wealth came from his real estate business. At age 63, Cora married him at the old Baker house in Windham in October 1921; she was on crutches with a broken ankle. John Ferguson Weir wrote to Ella: "It is so nice that your sister could be married in the old house."<sup>316</sup>

When Cora died at her home in York Harbor, Maine in the summer of 1929, having outlived all three of her husbands, she left her nieces a substantial estate: a life income from three trust funds, her art collection, her apartment on Park Avenue (to Caro), two apartment buildings in the Inwood section of upper Manhattan (to Dorothy and Cora), property in Alabama (to Caro), and several buildings on West 71st Street (shared by Dorothy and Cora).<sup>317</sup> This last great bequest to Julian's daughters mirrored Cora's generosity in life to Julian, his wives, and their daughters. Her gifts enabled them to live in a manner that would have been beyond their income (even one that was already subsidized by Mrs. Anna Dwight Baker and later by her bequests to Anna and Ella), providing both tangible and intangible benefits. The tangible benefits are part of the story of the second generation at Branchville.

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<sup>316</sup> "It is so nice," JFW to EBW, November 7, 1921, BYU 511, Weir Family, 5/9. Also Cora Baker Davis Rutherford diary, WEFA 2501, Box 6. Whether Cora met Laighton on that trip or knew him in New York is unclear from her diary.

<sup>317</sup> Paul Laighton died in January 1929 at age 67 also in York Harbor, Maine. Cora died on July 10, 1929. See "Mrs. Laighton Left Estate of \$500,000," *New York Times*, August 3, 1929. The article reports that the estate was "considerably more than \$500,000." \$500,000 would be approximately \$5.1 million in 2005 currency.



## PART TWO

### **THE SECOND GENERATION AT BRANCHVILLE**



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# DOROTHY WEIR: DAUGHTER AND INDEPENDENT YOUNG WOMAN, 1890-1931

### CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Although the stock market crash of October 1929 occurred only a few months after Aunt Cora's death, Dorothy's inheritance still enabled her to live in comfortable circumstances. She managed Branchville for her step-mother, Ella Baker Weir, until Ella's death in December 1930 when Dorothy came into full control of the property. Dorothy Weir Young's ownership of the farm determined its future. Her decisions about the use of the land, and her marriage to sculptor Mahonri Mackintosh Young in early 1931, were the key factors that ultimately influenced the fate of Weir Farm. Yet, the *Historic Structures Report* notes that "little is known about what happened at the farm in the 1920s."<sup>318</sup>

In fact, little of Dorothy's life as a whole, other than her efforts to catalogue her father's work, transcribe his letters and write his biography, as well as care for her step-mother, has been described, particularly before her marriage to Young. Because of the significance of Dorothy's stewardship of Weir Farm, it is important to understand how she came to appreciate a life in the arts - as the daughter of an artist, as an artist herself, and as the wife of an artist - as well as the aesthetic and practical values of a country home. Existing sources have not given a complete portrait of Dorothy and her relationship to Weir Farm. Thus it is useful to summarize what is known and to present a more rounded picture. This chapter provides such an overview with new information on her childhood, young adulthood, friends, artistic training, and marriage, in addition to her lifelong relationship to Branchville and her stewardship of her father's estate and story.

Dorothy mentions herself only sporadically in her biography of her father. Doreen Bolger Burke, in her comprehensive study of J. Alden Weir's art, refers to Dorothy and her sisters as models for their father and writes of her:

Only the diligence of one of his daughters saved Weir's reputation from the oblivion that claimed so many of his contemporaries. Dorothy Weir Young, who had prepared a preliminary checklist of her father's works for the Century Association's 1921 publication, continued to compile information on their locations and histories, producing a multivolume manuscript record of notes and photographs. . . . The perspicacious Mrs. Young borrowed and collected letters and other documents relating to Weir's life, and transcribed and annotated their contents . . . Mrs. Young's biography of her father, based on a lifetime of faithful

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<sup>318</sup> HSR I, 68. Minor renovations are summarized on 68-69.

research, was published posthumously in 1960, and to this day is the most thorough and informative book on any of the American Impressionists.<sup>319</sup>

The *Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm* devotes several pages of text to summarizing Dorothy's life with Mahonri Young and to quoting his recollections of her. The latter include an introduction to an exhibition of her paintings held at the Cosmopolitan Club following her death in 1947 and in a handwritten memoir presumably to be used for a chapter in a never-completed autobiography. Mahonri's memoir begins with their first meeting in 1921 at a dinner organized by Duncan Phillips to form a planning committee for the Phillips Memorial Gallery which he had incorporated in 1920 as a memorial to his father and brother. The memoir also recalls a meeting in Paris in 1925 when Dorothy was traveling there with Ella and a friend. The memoir documents Dorothy and Mahonri's social life in New York and Branchville in the late 1920s, and their marriage on February 17, 1931 following Ella's death the previous December. Mahonri Young's biographer, Norma S. Davis, furnishes additional information about Dorothy before her marriage. Davis describes Dorothy's life at Branchville with her father's friends and fellow artists, painting side by side with Julian, and her continuing responsibility for the farm after his death, but her emphasis is on the relationship with Mahonri Young and their life together.<sup>320</sup>

To date there has been only one study of any length about Dorothy, *The Life and Art of Dorothy Weir Young: 'Celebrations of a Harmonious Ideal'* by Kristen Walsh Brotherson. Brotherson was the first to attempt a scholarly study of Dorothy's paintings and prints using Brigham Young University's extensive holdings, which were acquired in 1959 as part of the sale and donation of the Mahonri M. Young estate by his heirs. Although the biographical information on her early life adds little to what has previously been written and contains some errors of date and place, Brotherson's discussion of exhibitions in which Dorothy entered works is most helpful.<sup>321</sup>

Dorothy was the second daughter and third child of Julian Alden Weir and his first wife Anna Baker Weir. Her older sister Caroline (Caro) was born March 24, 1884 and a brother, Julian Alden Weir Jr., on January 30, 1888. The tragic death of Julian Jr. in March 1889, followed closely by that of his grandfather Robert W. Weir, caused Julian and Anna to

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<sup>319</sup> Burke, *Weir*, 20.

<sup>320</sup> CLR, 134-35, 139-40. Introduction to exhibition and memoir: the originals may be found in BYU 4, MM Young, 7/24. The Phillips group was the "Advisory Committee on Scope and Plan for the Phillips Memorial Art Gallery" and included artists, members of the Century Club, and others in the art world. It met December 21, 1921 in New York. See Passantino, *Duncan Phillips*, 28, 686 note #21. Norma S. Davis, *A Song of Songs: The Biography of Mahonri Mackintosh Young. Sculptor, Painter, Etcher.* (Provo, UT: Brigham University Museum of Art, 1999), 154-55, 168, and Chapter 13, hereafter Davis, *Song of Songs*.

<sup>321</sup> Kristen Walsh Brotherson, *The Life and Art of Dorothy Weir Young: 'Celebrations of a Harmonious Ideal,'* Master of Arts thesis, Brigham Young University, 1998, hereafter Brotherson, *Dorothy Young*. Norma S. Davis was Brotherson's thesis adviser. Exhibitions, Brotherson, *Dorothy Young*, 22-23. The Young sale to BYU is discussed in Chapter 11.

travel to England in an effort to lift their spirits. They spent three weeks on the Isle of Man where Weir painted and etched, then traveled to Paris for the Universal Exposition. When they returned to Branchville in October, Anna was expecting another child and gave birth to Dorothy on June 18, 1890. Julian's sense of renewal from his travels and the happy birth of his second daughter may have been reflected in his art. Influenced by his friends John Twachtman and Theodore Robinson, he now joined a circle of younger painters who were embracing Impressionism, characterized by lighter colors, broken brushwork and more informal composition. He had his first one-man show in January 1891 at the Blakeslee Galleries and that summer worked on landscapes in the Connecticut countryside.<sup>322</sup>

On January 29, 1892, Anna gave birth to a third daughter, Cora, but a week later, on February 8, Anna died of childbirth complications. Weir was completely devastated and, as discussed above, relied on his mother-in-law Anna Dwight Baker and his sister-in-law Ella Baker to care for the children while he resumed his work that summer painting murals at the World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. In October 1893, Weir married Ella, who had unselfishly cared for the children after their mother's death. With Ella by his side, Weir re-engaged with his children, and expressed his deepest feelings by painting them, much as he had so frequently used Anna as his model. As Brotherson notes,

Much of Dorothy's childhood was documented in her father's paintings. He frequently used his wife and children as models for his artwork. In one such portrait, *The Donkey Ride* (1899), he painted Dorothy and Cora at Branchville . . . Riding the donkeys was a favorite pastime of the girls while at Branchville and their mode of transportation to explore the hills and woods of southwestern Connecticut. The paintings also indicate that the children were familiar with modeling for their father.<sup>323</sup>

As a young child, Dorothy attended a small private school at 73 West 12th Street near the Weir home at 11 East 12th Street. Her sister Caro's recollections of the household in *11 East 12 Street New York* and *Lest We Forget*, described a place filled with artist and non-artist friends of her parents, furniture acquired on trips abroad, festive dinners with three wine glasses at each place, dogs, rabbits, a Persian cat named "Mike," servants, and the sounds of three children who made it impossible for their father to paint in his home studio after the first few years.<sup>324</sup>

From the time she was seven, Dorothy corresponded with her lifelong friend Mary Blair "Minere" Wardwell Cunningham, daughter of stockbroker and sheep breeder Henry L. Wardwell, who lived at 27 West 20th Street. While in later years both had agreed to destroy their correspondence, Minere's letters to Dorothy have survived. Perhaps Dorothy could not bring herself to part with letters so rich in anecdotes and observations about their lives

<sup>322</sup> For an additional perspective on this period in Weir's life, see Hiesinger, *American Impressionists*, 100ff.

<sup>323</sup> Brotherson, *Dorothy Young*, 11.

<sup>324</sup> See also Young, *Life & Letters*, 168-169, and Ely, *11 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street*, n.p.

from childhood to adulthood, particularly during the summers when they were not together in New York. The earliest letters concerned such topics as forming clubs, visits to each other, the activities of Minere's four sisters, and when Minere's family would leave for its country home. They are signed with all possible versions of Mary's name as well as "Chief Apprentice" or just "C.A."<sup>325</sup>

When Dorothy was nine, Julian gave up his teaching at the Art Students League and began spending May to December at Branchville and Windham, bringing about a change of routine for the family. As a result, the girls attended school in Connecticut in the fall and in New York in the spring. From July to October 1901, when Dorothy was eleven, the family traveled to Europe where Weir researched a painting for his friend Percy Alden and renewed his friendships with Sargent, Whistler, and his former teacher Gérôme. In her biography of her father, Dorothy vividly recalled their luncheon at the Sargents and the visit to his studios.

In 1903, Dorothy entered the prestigious Brearley School for Girls, then located at 17 West 44th Street, from which she graduated in 1908. Her father had been acquainted with the school for almost twenty years for he had taught art there in the later 1880s. A former student recalled that Weir came to school's top floor studio, "large and square with a bushy head of curls," and helped the students: "[He] pushed by and through the easels, grasped your charcoal, swiftly corrected your lines and careful shadings; happy the day when you got a laugh and a pat and were allowed to advance to something more articulate than the hand or foot or head you were working on-and to which you were returned if the advance proved to be too soon."<sup>326</sup>

Dorothy remained close to her Brearley classmates for the rest of her life. When the Weirs would remain at Branchville after the opening of school, Dorothy would often stay in New York with her friends, including Minere or Christina "Tina" Fisher. Others with whom she remained close for more than four decades were Katherine "Kay" Crane Montgomery, who lived nearby at 16 West 12th Street, and Caroline Auchincloss Fowler. Her schoolmates were the daughters of New York's most successful businessmen, social leaders, and cultural figures, such as painter Kenyon Cox, publisher Frank Doubleday, sculptor Daniel Chester French, architect Charles A. Platt, Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt, and financiers John W. Auchincloss, George W. Perkins, Henry W. Poor, and Felix Warburg.<sup>327</sup> Thus, through her Brearley friendships, her father's social standing, and her wealthy relatives, Dorothy was, from an early age, welcome in New York's upper class society.

Each summer, she would exchange visits with her Brearley friends at their country

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<sup>325</sup> McKay telephone conversation with Minere's son, Dr. Nicholas Cunningham, October 15, 2002. Letters in WEFA 195, Weir Family, 1.

<sup>326</sup> *The Brearley Bulletin*, 1934, 11, 13 in WEFA 409, DW Young, 1/14. Lena L. Severance to Mrs. McIntosh, op.cit., 11. George de Forest Brush was another of Weir's friends who was also employed as an art teacher at Brearley during this period.

<sup>327</sup> On Dorothy's classmates, Brearley School Archives, Class of 1908 file, and "Four Debutantes Introduced," *New York Times*, December 8, 1909, 11. Parents, *The Year-book of the Brearley School*, 1908.

houses, welcoming them to Branchville and visiting Minere in Springfield Center, New York (near Cooperstown), Tina Fisher in Westbrook, Connecticut, Caroline Auchincloss in Bar Harbor, Maine, and Kay Crane in Becket, Massachusetts. On one Fourth of July at Branchville, Ella noted in her diary: "Minere and Katherine Crane here. We had a picnic at 5 and clambake on the rocks and really lovely fireworks. A perfect day." During their visits, Dorothy and her friends went to house parties and picnics, rode, swam, went boating, played tennis, and, of course, when they returned home, exchanged letters full of gossip and tales of their social activities. Dorothy's younger sister Cora, who graduated from Brearley in 1911, was also part of Dorothy's circle. She too maintained a lifelong friendship with Minere lasting into their old age when one was nearly blind and the other deaf, until Cora's death at the age of 94 in 1986, two years before Minere died at 98, both sadly outliving Dorothy by forty years.<sup>328</sup>

As Dorothy and Minere grew older, their letters discussed current events, politics, their desire to be artists, their frustrations with the limited educational and employment opportunities for women, and, of course, gossip about their siblings and friends. Even as early as 1901, at age 11, Minere wrote to Dorothy, still in England, "Are you coming home soon? Is it not awful about poor Mr. McKinley? It's a disgrace to the nation I think, don't you? I wish pistols had not ever been invented." She was referring to President McKinley's assassination by an anarchist in September while he was visiting the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Five weeks later, with Dorothy still in Branchville, Minere describes the children in her class, "and 'listen' Suzette and I are not quite as good friends and when you come down I'll tell you all but its such a long tale that I hate to write it out."<sup>329</sup>

Dorothy studied at Brearley for five years from 1903 to 1908, although she was out of school with an illness during the 1904-1905 school year. Brearley offered a general academic curriculum, although in order to prepare a student for college, the school requested "at least two years notice, specifying the college which girls propose to attend." Dorothy took courses in English, French, Roman and Greek History, Latin, Math, Science, and German. Her grades ranged from As in History to Bs in Latin, Cs in French, and an F in Algebra. At one point she began preparations for Bryn Mawr College, an elite women's school near Philadelphia, but failed the algebra portion of the first entrance exam. Rather than retake it, she turned her thoughts to art school, as did her friend Minere.<sup>330</sup>

In her yearbook, Dorothy was voted handsomest, with best nose and best teeth and runner-up for most artistic, best read, and most attractive speaking voice. Minere, the class president, was voted the brightest, cleverest, with the best sense of humor, most

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<sup>328</sup> "Minere and Catherine Crane here," EBW diary, July 4, 1907, WEFA, Ella Baker Weir diary, 5. Old age, McKay conversation with Cora's son, Charles Burlingham Jr., August 8, 2002.

<sup>329</sup> "Are you coming home," Minere Cunningham (hereafter MC) to DW, October 6, 1901, WEFA 195, Weir Family, 1/4. William McKinley was shot on September 6, 1901 and died on September 14. "and listen Suzette," MC to DW, November 13, 1901, Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> "at least two years," *The Year-book of the Brearley School, 1908*, Brearley School Archives. Preparations, Brearley School Archives, and WEFA 195, Weir Family, 1/1.

individuality, and most interesting. In the class prophecy, the faces of the class of 1908 appear in a crystal ball to the Brearley girl of 2008. Serious thoughts about art, surely reflecting her upbringing in an artist's home, were ascribed to Dorothy by the narrator:

I was a connoisseur of art. I traveled a great deal and saw the art of many countries, but nowhere found anything to equal the artless simplicity of some of our American productions. Abroad, if a picture is meant to represent a certain subject, that is the subject it represents, and there is an end to it. Here it may represent anything you please, or several things if you like, and be all the more artistic. In this way we have far greater scope than that of the foreign painters.<sup>331</sup>

Next to her senior portrait the text reads: "Dear Dorothy, I only hope she will be there in the end to hear me read this document. O that the draught from the door may not have blown her away, and that we may yet once more, before we separate, hear her typical school-girl giggle, one which resembles strangely the kinkles in her hair. It is rumored that she paints, but then so do all her family. 'Keep it dark.'"<sup>332</sup>

### SOCIAL LIFE AND BECOMING AN ARTIST

Following graduation, Dorothy sailed on the ocean liner *Mauretania* with her friend Kay Crane and Kay's parents, Mr. and Mrs. George F. Crane, for a three-month trip to Europe. George F. Crane was the American representative for the London banking firm of Baring Brothers. While she was gone, her parents had moved to a duplex apartment in a cooperative building at 471 Park Avenue, renting their house in Greenwich Village. When Dorothy returned, she made her debut in December at an afternoon reception given by her step-mother. During the same season, her friends Minere, Tina Fisher, Caroline Auchincloss and her sister Joanna, and other Brearley classmates were also debutantes. Dorothy was invited to the debuts of her friends, and the many afternoon teas, dinners, and theater parties that were part of the social scene for well-to-do young women in that era. She and her sister Cora were honored by a dinner given by their Aunt Cora Rutherford at her home.<sup>333</sup>

Dorothy also participated in the charitable entertainment benefits that such young women (and men) put on to raise money for their families' favorite causes. Thus, in the spring of 1910, she was a "merry villager" in an Italian carnival scene at a benefit for the Stony Wold Sanitarium at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel. With Minere and Kay Crane, she helped sell programs at a benefit for the Chrystie Street Settlement House. Ella Weir was frequently

<sup>331</sup> Brearley School Archives, *Brearley 1908*, 15.

<sup>332</sup> "Dear Dorothy," Brearley School Archives, *Brearley 1908*, 15. "Keep it dark" was a phrase often used by Minere in letters to Dorothy to mean "keep it to yourself."

<sup>333</sup> Dorothy's debut, "Receptions for Three Debutantes," *New York Times*, December 9, 1909, 11, and Katherine Crane's, "Four Debutantes Introduced," December 8, 1909, 11. Social scene, "Social Field Day for Debutantes," December 6, 1908, 13. Rutherford dinner, "Social Notes," December 30, 1910, 11.

listed as a “patroness” of such events, along with other society figures, as much a reflection of the Weir’s social standing as was Dorothy’s membership in the New York Junior League. In the years following, she became a bridesmaid for many of her society friends, starting with the marriage of Caroline Auchincloss to Robin Fowler in November 1911.<sup>334</sup>

In contrast to this social whirl, Dorothy was also seriously pursuing her interest in the arts. She took courses at the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League, where her drawing instructor was Louise Howland Cox (1865-1945), wife of Kenyon Cox. One of the few women teaching art with a sound reputation in the male-dominated art world of the time, Louise Cox may have been a role model for Dorothy. She had studied at the National Academy of Design School, where she met her husband, and became known for her portraits of children and still lifes of flowers, and her work as an illustrator. The Coxes had a home in the Cornish art colony. Dorothy had begun her art education by drawing along-side her father at a young age. Her earliest sketches preserved at the Brigham Young University Art Museum were done about 1900 when she was ten years old. As Brotherson observed, “She grew up associating with some of America’s greatest artists without thinking about their stature within the art community. For her they were merely close friends of her family who did the same kind of work her own father did. It did not seem unusual to have expectations of an art career for herself.”<sup>335</sup>

Dorothy again traveled to England in July 1912 with her family. In August, she visited Scotland with her aunt and uncle, Cora and John Rutherford, and the two families sailed home together in September. Weir wrote to Charles Wood in December: “Dorothy has done some good water-colors this season in the [English] cathedrals and I think I will have her exhibit these. She and a friend [Minere] have taken a studio and are working very seriously.”<sup>336</sup> In March 1913, the Weirs visited the Rutherfords at their home, Edgerston-by-the-Sea, in Nassau. Minere wrote to Dorothy there expressing her frustrations at her inability to translate her ideas to canvas:

What I don’t understand is *why* when I have such perfectly good ideas, I *can’t* free myself from old mud when it comes to putting ideas into practice. I feel

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<sup>334</sup> Benefits, “Society in Italian Carnival,” March 31, 1910, 11, and “Society at Home and Abroad,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1912, X1. Bridesmaid, “Society at Homes and Abroad,” November 26, 1911, X4. Another interesting measure of one’s social status was a note in the *New York Times’* travel information column, which tracked the comings and goings of prominent New York families. Thus, Dorothy is mentioned as departing on the ship *Columbia* for Glasgow in “Ocean Travelers,” on February 25, 1911. Dorothy belonged to the Junior League from 1909 to 1929, New York Junior League Archives.

<sup>335</sup> On Dorothy’s course work and studies with Cox, Brotherson, *Dorothy Young*, 15. Mrs. Cox, see also BYU 4, MM Young, 1/24; Brochure, *Dorothy Weir Young 1890-1947* (New York: The Cosmopolitan Club, n.d.), Note by Mahonri M. Young, hereafter Cosmo Club, *Dorothy Weir Young*. On Cox, see “Louise Cox at the Art Students League,” *American Art* (July 1987), 12-20, and Alma Gilbert-Smith, *The Women of the Cornish Colony* (Cornish, New Hampshire: Cornish Colony Gallery and Museum, 2002). “She grew up,” Brotherson, *Dorothy Young*, 15.

<sup>336</sup> JAW to CESW, December 13, 1912, Huntington, Wood Addenda, 22/56.

stupid! I look at a thing and it looks perfectly confused - the shadows are free of colors and light yet are shadows - *how* to make paint look like that? What's dark and what's light? I really don't know! It seems hopeless, yet darn if I will give it up!<sup>337</sup>

Later in the spring, after the family returned to New York, Weir wrote to Wood that Dorothy was hard at work at the Art Students League.<sup>338</sup> That summer, Cora Weir was traveling in England with Kay Crane, when they both contracted typhoid fever. As noted above, Julian and Ella sailed over on the first boat, but found that Cora and Kay were recovering so they sent for Dorothy and the family stayed several months. Dorothy and her father each painted a number of watercolors along the picturesque Itchen River near Winchester.

Dorothy and Minere rented a studio together the winter of 1913-14, which was listed in Julian's address book at 132 E. 40th Street. They remained active alumnae of Brearley and about 1914 served on a four-person committee, chaired by Minere, "to investigate the teaching of art in the Brearley School and either approve it or recommend a system to replace it." The report echoed the frustrations of the young artists. They concluded, after surveying the principal art schools in the city, "that not one of these schools intending to teach Art, succeeded in teaching Art, either to us or to any of the other students there . . . The teachers' criticisms are unintelligible to [the student.] If they do not see what he sees, they cannot possibly understand what he is talking about."<sup>339</sup>

Dorothy and Minere had interviewed Dorothy's uncle John Ferguson Weir, former Dean of the Art School at Yale University, and John W. Alexander, a portrait painter and former head of the National Academy of Design, both men with decades of teaching experience between them. The two young women quoted Weir: "There is no system. It depends entirely who does it." Alexander said to his pupils, "I can't show you. The most I might do would be to steer you off the rocks. The more I leave you alone the better." The general conclusion, they wrote, "is the less teaching, the more Art." They argued that no one should force a student to take art, that no one can teach a student what art to like or dislike, that no teaching of technique will help express ideas that are not there. In the end, they concluded, "The only true point in favor of teaching Art is the training in use of the eye and hand, to accuracy and control. This could be accomplished to better advantage, we believe, by teaching some plain craft, for example carpentry, mechanical drawing or anything requiring the same exactness and skill, and equally free from aesthetics, art, beauty or any discussion of them."<sup>340</sup>

Throughout 1913 and 1914, Dorothy and Minere continued to discuss progressive political ideas about issues of class, feminism, and suffrage, as well as the books they were reading. These included the dense tomes of Karl Marx and the more accessible plays of

<sup>337</sup> MC to DW, March 13, 1913, WEFA 195, 2/1.

<sup>338</sup> Dorothy at League, JAW to CESW, April 16, 1913, Huntington, Wood Addenda, 22/49.

<sup>339</sup> Studio address, WEFA, J.Alden Weir diaries, 2. "to investigate," in "Report of the Art Committee," n.d. [c1914], WEFA 195, Weir Family. "that not one," Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> all quotes, "Report of the Art Committee," n.d. [c1914], WEFA 195, Weir Family.

George Bernard Shaw. Minere quoted Shaw, "All men aren't fitted for military life and all women aren't domestic," and commented on "the silly idea that women ought to sit around and be attractive." She announced to her father that she was a socialist, much to the alarm of the conservative Henry Wardwell, and told Dorothy of a friend who subscribed to *The New Masses*: "When she tried to talk religion to [her boy friend], he appeared scared." Dorothy was visiting Minere in Springfield Center when war broke out in Europe in August 1914 and the following year, Minere left home to take a nursing course at New York's Presbyterian Hospital: "My mind's made up! I'm leaving home and really going to be a real person and really do what I've thought about so long."<sup>341</sup>



**Figure 15.** J. Alden Weir and Dorothy Weir on the porch of the Windham house.  
Photograph, c.1910 - 1919. (WEFA 279 AHP00300)

<sup>341</sup> "All men," MC to DW, June 7, 1914, WEFA 195, Weir Family, 2/2. "When she tried," MC to DW, June 5, 1914, Ibid., 2/3. "My mind's made up," MC to DW, July [22], 1915, Ibid., 2/3.

Dorothy continued her painting with her father's encouragement. He wrote from Nassau in March 1915: "Don't work too hard but if you can put in 2 or 3 hours a day and then leave, you will be in a fine condition for work. Try and not work on the same canvas but every third day and you will find it will go better." (Figure 15) In 1916, John Weir wrote to Julian from his retirement in Providence, Rhode Island: "I have often thought of Dorothy's paintings in her studio - that charming old house." He was probably referring to the studio that she used in Windham.<sup>342</sup>

### WAR EFFORTS AND FATHER'S DEATH

As the war continued in Europe and American involvement became more likely, Dorothy, Cora, and Kay Crane took a Red Cross training course at the National Services School in Washington in May and June 1916. The course was sponsored by the Women's Section of the Navy League and over 300 young women enrolled, including almost 50 from socially prominent New York families. They were taught "first aid to the wounded, bandage making, telegraphy and other wartime arts." President Woodrow Wilson gave the opening address to the trainees and used it as an occasion to call for national unity even though the United States was not yet officially at war.<sup>343</sup>

While Dorothy and Cora were in the training course, they took time out to serve as maid of honor and bridesmaid, respectively, at the wedding of their sister, Caroline (Caro), to George Page Ely on June 7, 1916 at the Church of the Ascension in New York. Julian and Ella held the reception at their apartment at 471 Park Avenue. George Ely's mother lived in Old Lyme, Connecticut, and he was employed by an insurance and real estate firm.<sup>344</sup> Minere became engaged to a young attorney, Frederic Cunningham Jr., in the fall of 1916 and married early in June 1917. Cunningham practiced briefly in New York, but with the entry of the United States into the war, he soon took a job with the Justice Department in Washington DC, where Minere pursued her volunteer war work. (Figure 16)

Dorothy gave lectures Economics Director of the U. S. Food Administration, gave lectures and prepared exhibits on food for the Red Cross in Wilton, near Ridgefield. She then began working in Hartford for the Women's Division of the State Council for Defense, and as Assistant to the Home rationing. Along with Minere's older sister Florence, who was active in children's charities and Republican politics, she joined a group which raised funds

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<sup>342</sup> "Don't work too hard," JAW to DW, March 3, 1915, AAA-JAW, Reel 126. "I have often," JFW to JAW, AAA-JAW, November 26, 1916, Reel 529. Windham studio: a 1912 inventory of the Windham property listed a "dwelling South Road with shed," which Dorothy used as a studio, "Houses and Barns Owned by E.B.W.," 1912, WEFA 3075.

<sup>343</sup> "War Has Revived Our National Spirit and Shown Need of Unity, Says Wilson," *New York Times*, May 2, 1916, 1.

<sup>344</sup> "Weddings Crowd Month of Roses," *New York Times*, June 4, 1916, X4; "Caroline Weir Ely," June 10, 1916, 11. Ely, "June Weddings and Engagements," May 21, 1916, X3. Ely worked for Payson McL. Merrill & Co.

to support the children in a Belgian village for a year. She also volunteered at the 38th Street Soldiers Club in Manhattan and sent packages to soldiers she met there. One wrote back: "Tell the boys coming over here to have lots of smokes. And matches for they are scarce here." Minere was proud that Dorothy was helping the war effort, "it sounds as though you are an efficiency expert," but expressed her own frustration at her lack of employment in Washington. Her mood brightened when she took a job at the Justice Department reviewing alien applications for citizenship. She compared her work to reading spy novels: "I am so surprised to find the amount of wickedness that actually exists in the world, not only in movies and novels. Gosh, we certainly grew up very innocent, unsophisticated creat[ure]s. I feel as though we had been fooled."<sup>345</sup>



**Figure 16.** Dorothy Weir and friends, Branchville.  
Left to right, Dorothy, Frederic Cunningham, Page Ely, and Minere Wardwell Cunningham.  
Photograph, c.1917. (WEFA AHP00184)

<sup>345</sup> See Dorothy Weir's publication, Connecticut. State Council of Defense. Woman's Division. Weir, Dorothy. United States Employment Service. *Training Opportunities for Women* (Hartford: Women's Division, Connecticut Council of Defense, 1918). Belgian village: Secretary to Mr. Baker to Florence Wardwell, February 26, 1917, "Four Young Folks to play parents to 600 Belgians," n.d., WEFA 195, Weir Family, 4/7. "Tell the boys," Corp. John A. Fry to DW, January 27, 1918, Ibid., 4/3. "It sounds as though," MC to DW, November 2, 1918, WEFA 192, Box 3/1. "I am so surprised," MC to DW, November 25, 1918, Ibid.

Dorothy must have been extremely concerned about her father's health by the time the war ended in November 1918. He was suffering from heart disease and prostate problems. Julian and Ella gave up their New York apartment and traveled to New Orleans and Biloxi, Mississippi, in January and February 1919 in hopes of restoring his health. They were pleased with the news in February that Cora, their 27-year-old youngest daughter, had recently married William E. Carlin in Paris where she had been working for the Red Cross.<sup>346</sup> Weir's health continued to deteriorate and the family gathered in Windham in September. He returned to New York in November, where he died at 116 East 63 Street on December 8, 1919. He was 67 years old.

## ESTATE RESPONSIBILITIES

With her father's death, Dorothy gradually took responsibility for cataloguing his art, corresponding with dealers and museum directors, and assisting in the preparation of a memorial exhibit. This was a continuation and an expansion of a role she had played previously. She had served in an informal way as her father's secretary for years. When the Weirs made their emergency trip to England in 1913 to care for Cora, he wrote to Dorothy from the ship to ask her to open and answer his letters.<sup>347</sup> Dorothy initially assisted Ella in dealing with estate matters, particularly as Weir had died intestate, but she gradually took charge of all business matters and the documentation of her father's life work during the 1920s. She also began organizing and transcribing his letters, a lengthy project that would culminate in the biography, *The Life & Letters of J. Alden Weir*, published posthumously in 1960.

Between 1921 and 1924, Dorothy assisted with the organization and catalogues of several retrospectives of Weir's work: a Century Association tribute in 1921 (consisting of an exhibition and publication), an etching show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1922, and a major retrospective at the Metropolitan in 1924 which fulfilled the wishes of Dorothy and Ella for a substantial public salute to Julian's work. The Met exhibit pleased the family, as Ella Weir wrote to Robert Macbeth: "[The pictures] mean a great deal to us, having been the [illegible] part of our daily lives for many years and it is a great gratification to us to see them assembled in so dignified and beautiful a manner."<sup>348</sup> All the exhibitions were well received and kept Weir's name in the public eye.

The Century exhibition was not comprehensive but Dorothy was pleased with the book that was produced to accompany the exhibition, *Julian Alden Weir: An Appreciation of*

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<sup>346</sup> Additional details about Cora's adult life are found in Chapter 11 in the discussion about her role in the preservation of Weir Farm.

<sup>347</sup> JAW to DW, July 19, 1913, WEFA 195, Weir Family, 4/1.

<sup>348</sup> Exhibits: there had been a small exhibition of Weir's work at the Ferargil Gallery the year after he died but Dorothy preferred to wait a year for a major memorial exhibition, hoping it would be held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. DW to CESW, Nov 18, 1920, Huntington, Wood, 287/39. "the pictures mean," EBW to Macbeth, April 5, 1924, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.

*His Life and Works*, which was filled with reminiscences by Weir's friends and colleagues in addition to a catalogue of Weir's paintings (and their owners) which was prepared by Dorothy. Duncan Phillip's essay was a thoughtful and generous assessment of Weir's standing in the art world. Phillips, who owned at least eleven Weir paintings in the gallery he was about to open to the public, began the book with his capsule summary of his friend's destiny and character.<sup>349</sup>

Since the passing, so recently, from our midst of J. Alden Weir, the best critical opinion, in his own country at least, has crystallized rapidly and acclaimed him with a remarkable degree of confidence as a man for the ages, as one who now enters upon a splendid destiny if imperishable and ever increasing fame. I do not feel certain that Weir will ever be one of the popular painters who are appraised at or above their real value by the general public. He never carried his heart on his sleeve, never painted pictures which correspond to 'household words,' never tried to entertain nor to educate the crowd, nor to organize a following and start a 'movement.' He was contemptuous not only of sentimentality, but of sensationalism and of the notoriety which so often passes for fame, and in his own manner of painting, so marked was his restraint that he tended to an expression of unconscious austerity. Yet he was the most approachable of men. The very essence of his art-what makes it great-what will make it immortal-is the warm and glowing lovable ness which underlies the reserve.<sup>350</sup>

Once the tributes were completed, Dorothy worked mainly with the Macbeth Gallery to sell and lend his work, and to collect information about her father's art. The Gallery provided her with lists of all the Weir paintings it had sold. With Dorothy's cooperation, Macbeth arranged the loan of Weir items to the Brooklyn Museum for a 1922 exhibition of "important American water colors." At the Gallery's request, Dorothy arranged for her step-mother to write an authentication of an unsigned Weir piece, *The Return of the Fishing Party*, which included information about where and when it was painted. She also agreed to the Gallery's request to loan a Weir picture for the annual "Thirty Paintings by Thirty Artists" show that would be mounted at the opening of Macbeth's new quarters at 15 East 57th Street, in the heart of Manhattan's new art gallery district.<sup>351</sup> Dorothy negotiated sales of both her father's paintings, and those paintings he had collected

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<sup>349</sup> Duncan Phillips joined the Century in 1907 but probably knew Weir before that, "A Collection in the Making," by George Heard Hamilton in Passantino, *Duncan Phillips*, 26. In the same volume, 3, Elizabeth Tebow writes that Weir became "a cherished friend and respected advisor" and introduced Phillips to Twachtman's work. Some of Weir's paintings were among the earliest collected by Phillips, Hamilton, 27. By the republication of the Century tribute, Phillips owned *The Lane, Roses, Grapes, Knife and Glass, An Alsatian Girl, The Barn, Visiting Neighbors (aka After the Ride), The High Pasture, Pan and the Wolf, The Fishing Party, Knitting for Soldiers, and Woodland Rocks*. He had also owned *Building a Dam at Setauket* which he sold to the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1921. See Passantino, op.cit., passim.

<sup>350</sup> Phillips, in Century, *Weir Appreciation*, 3.

<sup>351</sup> Correspondence between DW and Macbeth, April 27, 1920 and March 18, 1927; September 22 and 28, October 10 and 16, 1921; January 12, 1922; January 24, 1924, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.

by other artists. She would be engaged intermittently with such transactions for the rest of her life.

During the last five years of Weir's life, he had obtained good prices for his paintings even with a somewhat depressed market because of the war. Some gallery sale prices from this period have been noted in previous chapters, ranging from \$1,000 for *Approaching Rain* to \$4,000 for *Pan and the World*. In July 1918, he priced *The Border of the Farm* at \$10,000. There was every reason to believe that Weir's paintings would hold their value as the death of an artist often led to increased prices given a new scarcity. Hassam had once noted this effect in a humorous aside to Weir when Whistler died in 1903, "Whistler I see has 'stepped over the ropes' now and I suppose that the dealers and collectors are now busy marking their Whistlers up. I am sorry that I never knew him - he is surely one of the big men." Upon the death of Weir, Hassam shared his prophecy about the long-term prospects for Weir's work with Wood: "Now they all want Weirs of course! I hope that the family will not sell his things at once, not for some time would be best. His place is secure and his best things will be worth a great deal I think. They were as fine as anybody did anywhere." Indeed, Mrs. Weir later turned to Hassam for advice about printing some more of Weir's etchings for future sale.<sup>352</sup> (It is ironic that it would be Hassam's work that would command the largest prices among his peers by the 1990s).

In the early 1920s prices remained strong and the galleries maintained their interest. Just a year after Weir's death, the Ferargil Gallery held an exhibition of 20 items, 19 oils and one pastel. Dorothy received a letter from Macbeth about acquiring a figure painting for a collector who intended to leave his collection to a museum. There were only a few finished figure paintings left in the estate, she replied, but her mother would let "a really important purchaser" have either of two paintings, *Head of a Young Girl*, or *The Fur Pelisse*, for \$10,000. She had a similar request from dealer Frank Rehn whose gallery specialized in American painting. Ella wrote to Rehn in 1922, "We consider the *Building of the Dam* one of the most important pictures Mr. Weir ever painted of which we now have but very few." She believed that \$15,000 was a "just price" for its sale. It was soon sold to Duncan Phillips for his Gallery. At the conclusion of that transaction, Rehn wrote to her, "I hope we may have as good success with our next endeavor."<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> "Border," JAW to Macbeth, July 1, 1918, AAA Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f. In a letter of January 7, 1914 to Macbeth, Weir set prices as follows: \$800 for *Spring*, \$2,500 for *The Oak*, and \$4,000 a piece for *Pan and the Wolf* and *Nocturne*, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f. "Whistler I see," CH to JAW, July 17, 1903, WEFA 409, DW Young, Transcripts, 1900-1909; also AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f67. "Now that all," CH to CESW, January 17, 1920, Huntington, Wood, 149/13. In the Century tribute, Duncan Phillips was also confident of Weir's standing: "[Weir's art] is highly esteemed today by fellow craftsmen, critics, and connoisseurs and of its popularity with the public there is no manner of doubt." Advice, CH to EBW, June 30, 1930, AAA-AAAL, Reel NAA2, f74.

<sup>353</sup> Ferargil, "An Exhibition of Paintings by J. Alden Weir, PNA," Ferargil Galleries, 607 Fifth Avenue at 49th Street, December 1920 in Frick, Davidson, Weir records. Museum collector and *Head of a Young Girl*, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f., Macbeth to Dorothy Weir, June 16, 1922. Five years later the gallery was back with a similar request, for a "client who is making a collection of the finest American

Through the 1920s, Weir's reputation was solid and the family's expectation that the paintings they owned would do well in the marketplace seemed to be justified. In 1926, Dorothy told Wood that there were several Weir pictures on the market for \$3,500 to \$5,000 but these were not among his most important works. They were holding back the few they had in that category although *Factory Village* was for sale for \$10,000 and the Rehn Gallery was offering one of Wood's favorite paintings, *The Open Book* for \$10,000 or \$15,000. The Macbeth gallery continued to feature Weir. In 1929, it offered a show of 15 figure and landscape paintings. Painter Emil Carlsen, Weir's friend and admirer -- he owned at least two Weirs -- wrote the foreword to the exhibition brochure. He spoke of the simplicity of Weir's art in its composition and subject matter, of the "able drawing, beautiful color, distinguished spacing, always a most harmonious whole," and all held together by a remarkable command of technique. Carlsen concluded, as only a long time companion and colleague could, "A fine canvas by Weir is a joy forever, will stay in the mind as a simple thought beautifully rendered by a very great artist."<sup>354</sup>

Even with the sales and positive reception of the art world and the collectors in the 1920s, there was one aspect of Weir's oeuvre that might prove challenging for continuing fame which is hinted at in what was essentially a supportive review of his work. In a 1925 article in *Art World Magazine*, Thomas Whipple Dunbar speculated:

Possibly it is too early to judge whether Weir will live through his works. He was an innovator. He followed no established school, and yet his work seems to embrace what is best in all the schools . . . As an original member of that group of distinguished men known as the "Ten American Painters," he aided most materially in bringing to the attention of the art-loving public that style known as Impressionism, and yet . . . after all, his work is not more impressionistic than tonal, or not more tonal than literal; in fact it is dominantly individual, expressing the mind and soul of an original thinker.<sup>355</sup>

The inability to classify Weir's work as belonging to one school or another, a factor that had troubled his transition years in the late 1880s and early 1890s when he turned from his

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paintings he can get to present to an institution," DW to Macbeth, December 7, 1927. "We consider," EBW to Rehn, October 39, 1922, Rehn Gallery, AAA Frank K[nox] M[orton] Rehn Galleries records (hereafter AAA-Rehn), Reel D290/153-154, f155; f429; "I hope," Rehn to EBW, January 2, 1924 and Rehn to EBW, January 18, 1923, Reel 291. The *Dam* sold for \$15,000 minus a 25% commission.

<sup>354</sup> *Open Book*, DW to CESW, October 18, 1926, Huntington, Wood, 287/40. Dorothy also told Wood that Frederic Fairchild Sherman was writing a book about Weir and wanted to include a list of his paintings. Carlsen quotes from the Foreword in "Figures and Landscapes by the late J. Alden Weir, P. N.A.," January 2d to 14th 1929, Macbeth Gallery 15 East 57th Street, NYC, located in Frick Library. Also in Frick, Davidson, Weir, in 6/15, "Lists of J. Alden Weir works with a possible connection to Branchville," notes that Carlsen owned *Branchville Landscape* (1887) and *The Boulder*. Carlsen had painted at Windham, and his *Night, Old Windham* is believed to be a view of the old Baker family house. See Vivien Raynor, "Impressionism: 'A Genteel Interlude,'" *New York Times*, March 30, 1980, CN16.

<sup>355</sup> From clipping, Thomas Whipple Dunbar, "Julian Alden Weir, of 'Ever Increasing Fame,'" Huntington, Wood, 215/56.

French influenced portraiture and still life to a freer style in landscape and other subjects, might also have affected how he would be perceived in the future. It was, after all, much easier for a collector, a museum visitor, or a critic to understand an artist's work in the context of a movement/style, like Impressionism, or a genre, such as still life, than to have to do the hard work of assessing something that didn't have an easily defined identity.

In 1927, Frederic Sherman had a more qualified assessment of Weir's career. He had known Weir, interviewed his friends and other artists, and studied Weir's work. His conclusion: that Weir was a "minor master" who had "perfect technic[que]." Sherman believed that because Weir had had an easy path to the profession -- tutelage by his family and years of study abroad -- he never had to struggle "beyond the farther reaches of fine craftsmanship . . . through the tangled growth of disappointment to the peak of genius and . . . a new world of beauty." Nonetheless, Sherman, concluded, Weir "managed to produce a very individual type of picture. Its distinguishing characteristics have more to do with a feeling as expressed in tone and values together with a superior technic[que], however, than with any real evidence of creative ability."<sup>356</sup>

Weir would also have the misfortune to have as his contemporaries painters like Chase, Homer, Twachtman, Sargent, and Hassam whose work was more easily understood and appreciated and thus more popular. As Weir's good artist friends died, there were fewer people who gave his work their unqualified approval or who perceived the work in a different way as that of a "poet," as Wood suggested or as a "painter's painter" whose ideas influenced others but was not recognized or appreciated as special by less discriminating or skilled viewers. Another comment by Emil Carlsen also suggests such a divide. While sculptor Mahonri Young was modeling his portrait bust of Carlsen sometime in the 1920s, Carlsen spoke of Kenyon Cox, John Twachtman, Weir, and other artists. Mahonri later recalled Carlsen's statement "that Twachtman was the more perfect artist but Weir was the greater man. Weir he said has never died; he is still alive. Cox is dead."<sup>357</sup> Until Weir's work could be placed in a readily understood context, as would occur in the 1970s and 1980s with a fresh view of regional and American impressionism, his reputation would suffer and the monetary value of his paintings would decline.

### **ARTISTIC DEBUT, COURTSHIP, AND MARRIAGE**

During her work on the Century show in 1921, Dorothy met her future husband, Mahonri Mackintosh Young, for the first time. Young recalled that sometime in 1921, Duncan Phillips invited a group of friends to a dinner to plan the Phillips Memorial Gallery: "It was at this dinner that I first saw Dorothy Weir . . . I immediately recognized her as Alden

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<sup>356</sup> All quotes, Sherman, *Weir, op. cit.*, Prefatory Note, 1, 12. Weir had privately expressed his disappointments to his friends as noted in earlier chapters.

<sup>357</sup> BYU 4, MM Young, 1/25, "Julian Alden Weir" by Mahonri Young. Cox had died in 1919. Carlsen had a studio in the same building as Young.

Weir's daughter. Her nervous laugh as she came into the room I can still hear. Whether she spoke to the other guests before I spoke to her I don't remember. I do remember that I wasn't introduced; but introduced myself." The Phillips group also discussed two books to be sponsored by the new gallery: the first volume to be dedicated to J. Alden Weir and the second to French painter and satirist Honoré Daumier. According to Mahonri Young's biographer, Norma S. Davis, the group met often, "and while they made few decisions about the gallery, they did a great deal of work on the two books."<sup>358</sup>

Dorothy and Mahonri encountered one another several times after their first meeting, first at a Degas exhibit at the Grolier Club and then at a fund-raiser at the New Society where John Sloan was making an etching. "At other times I met her," recalled Mahonri, "but of those other times I have no clear memory except the time she invited me to dinner. That was at Park Avenue . . . During this time I knew I liked her very much. I arrived for dinner much too early." Mahonri soon told his children that Dorothy was the only woman he knew that he would think of marrying: "But what was the use? I was the father of two young children to provide for and no income. And she was a wealthy lady living on Park Avenue with a step-mother to whom she was devoted."<sup>359</sup>

Young returned to Paris with his children in 1925, a stay that would last three years. In the fall of that year, Dorothy visited the city with her mother and Brearley classmate Tina Fisher. The three of them went to the Louvre and although Dorothy knew the city, she had never been to Le Dome on the Boulevard Montparnasse. Le Dome was the most famous of the Paris cafes where many American writers, including Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and one of the central figures of the Harlem Renaissance, Claude McKay, spent their leisure hours in the 1920s. Mahonri promised to take her, but never did before she returned home and many years later had to admit, "She never forgave me for that."<sup>360</sup>

Meanwhile, Dorothy had begun to show her work in galleries and exhibits, working out of a studio at 151 East 53rd Street. In 1922, she exhibited an oil painting, *Calendulae* at the Ferargil Galleries in a show of works by seventeen American women painters and sculptors. She was singled out for mention in a review that was generally favorable to the show, the writer noting that she was "straining a little away from the poetry of her father's roses as the younger generation does strain away from what was beautiful in the old." In 1925, she had two linoleum prints, *Flowers* and *Young Dahlias* at a National Arts Club print show. During the winter of 1926, that she had an exhibit of her paintings at the Cosmopolitan Club. In 1928, the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors (of which she would remain a member until her death) awarded her the Joan of Arc bronze medal for *Portrait of a Young Girl*.<sup>361</sup> It was displayed at the Association's 39th annual

<sup>358</sup> "It was at this dinner," BYU 4, MM Young, 7/24, Mahonri M. Young, "Dorothy Weir." "and while they," Davis, *Song of Songs*, 155.

<sup>359</sup> Both quotes, Mahonri Young, "Dorothy Weir," op.cit., BYU 4, MM Young, 7/24.

<sup>360</sup> Mahonri Young, "Dorothy Weir," op.cit. On Paris cafes, see Michel Fabre and John A. Williams, *Street Guide to African-Americans in Paris* (Paris: Privately printed, 1996), 138-39.

<sup>361</sup> Brotherson, *Dorothy Young*, provides a detailed description of Dorothy's exhibits and there is

exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. The art critic who reviewed for the *New York Times* appreciated the “nonsensational show” during an era when “modern art” was in full bloom and thus was enchanted by Dorothy’s work

in its silver and black and red, in its peaceful, sober lighting, its stillness and distinction, carries us back to the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, to Terburg especially. And soon as one has said it the analogy loses its force. The monumental character of Miss Weir’s picture is what differentiates it from its companions and makes it a personal expression of fastidious dislike for the frippery of incident.<sup>362</sup>

The Print Club of Philadelphia showed her linoleum print, *Drying Corn*, in 1929, and in September 1930 she received the Crowninshield Award of \$100 for *Petunias*, the best oil painting at the Stockbridge Art Association’s annual exhibit of paintings and sculpture. Among the 225 pieces in an “exhibition of exceptional merit,” the reviewer found Dorothy’s work to have a “wonderful luminous quality.”<sup>363</sup>

Even with her blossoming art career, all her responsibilities for the Weir estate, and frequent trips to Branchville where she and her mother would stay for extended visits in the warmer months, Dorothy still found time to be socially active in New York City. She was often noticed as a guest at Junior League events, and was in the cast of the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta *Patience*, performed by the socially-prominent Blue Hill Troupe to raise money for the French Hospital in Manhattan.<sup>364</sup>

After Mahonri Young returned to New York from Paris in January 1928 he saw Dorothy a few times before he went to Hollywood. It was a time of great ferment in the movie business. “Talking pictures” and color film had only recently been introduced and there were just a handful of technicolor cameras among the various studios. Mahonri had an unusual commission in Hollywood. He worked from June to early October 1929, creating plaster and bronze portrait busts and medallions of famous composers for the Hall of Music at the Twentieth Century Fox Film Company. He wrote to Dorothy from time to time and while he later remembered that “after we were married, she never forgave me for not writing at times while I was there. I should have,” she was clearly pleased to hear from him however infrequently. She wrote to him on September 19, asking about his figures: “It was awfully nice to hear from you - how wonderful you are to get so much accomplished. You must feel

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additional information in Brearley Archives, "Studio," *Brearley Bulletin*, February 1923. "straining a little away," in "Art: Exhibitions of Portraits," *New York Times*, May 7, 1922, 86. Exhibit at Cosmopolitan Club noted in *Brearley Bulletin*, May 1926. Association membership, Brotherson, 22-23.

<sup>362</sup> Elisabeth L. Cary, “A Question Ages Old,” *New York Times*, April 15, 1928, 126. This painting had also been exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and in Wilton, Connecticut in 1927.

<sup>363</sup> “exhibition of exceptional merit,” “Tea Opens Art Show in Berkshire Hills,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1930, 25.

<sup>364</sup> See, for example, “Junior League Reception for Countess de la Gabbe,” *New York Times*, October 30, 1928, 24, and “Operetta for Charity,” November 20, 1928, 37.

cheered. What are they? are they to be in a movie - or are they to decorate a movie palace? I hope the former, as I'd like to see them.”<sup>365</sup>

Dorothy and Mahonri seemed to know each other well enough by then that she could update on him on her recent activities, telling him that she was sorry he had missed an outdoor ball at the Ely's, and that a local resident of Branchville had been found by the State Police to be “selling things of ours in the antique shops in Ridgefield . . . it was an awful mess.” She told him that she and her mother were moving back to New York from Branchville around October 15th before it got cold because Ella had another “bad attack about a month ago though she’s getting over it very well now, but she must be careful.” She concluded with an invitation for his return: “I certainly hope you will come up to B’ville. I think you should make some autumn watercolors there!”<sup>366</sup>

During Mahonri’s stay in California, Dorothy had also been busy, along with her sisters, handling matters concerning Aunt Cora’s estate. As noted above, Cora had left them the bulk of her fortune including real estate and trust funds. She had been an important part of her nieces’ lives. With her death in July 1929 and substantial bequest, her legacy continued. Dorothy’s inheritance eased her financial situation, even when the stock market crash of October 1929 took its toll on her new assets.

With Mahonri back in New York in October 1929, he began to see more of Dorothy and asked to marry her. For some months, she felt unable to accept his proposal due to the responsibilities of caring for Ella. But with Ella’s health failing, she finally agreed on Christmas Eve 1930 to marry him. Ella died on December 27th, 1930 at her apartment at 1192 Park Avenue at the age of 78. Two days later, funeral services were held at St. Paul’s Church in Windham, where she and Julian attended services when they were staying at the old Baker house and where he had served as a vestryman. Ella was buried beside Anna and Julian in the Windham cemetery.<sup>367</sup>

Even as she was mourning her step-mother, Dorothy could not but be buoyant with the news of the major change to her own life at age 40. She announced her engagement in a letter to Sara Bard Field and Charles Wood:

I am going to be married to Mahonri Young - the sculptor. He is - I think - a very wonderful person! He paints and sketches as well as sculpts, and we love exactly the same things - music - books - the country - and Branchville - I think we are going to be very happy together...Mahonri comes from the West - in fact he is a grandson of Brigham Young! So I, who have never been west of Pittsburg will undoubtedly be learning more of my own country before so very long.<sup>368</sup>

<sup>365</sup> “after we were married,” *The Reminiscences of Mahonri Mackintosh Young*, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1958, 99-102, hereafter, Young, *Reminiscences*. See Davis, *Song of Songs*, on the Hollywood episode, 186-188. On Hollywood and the new technology, “Projection Jottings,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1929, X4, and “Notes of the Western Studios,” July 21, 1929, 97. “It was awfully nice,” DW to MMY, September 19, 1929, BYU4, MM Young, 3/5.

<sup>366</sup> All quotes, DW to MMY, September 19, 1929, BYU 4, MM Young, 3/5.

<sup>367</sup> “Deaths,” *New York Times*, December 28, 1930, N6, and “Mrs. J. Alden Weir,” December 29, 1930, 21.

<sup>368</sup> DW to CESW and Sara Bard Field (SBF), January 14, 1931, Huntington, Wood, 287/46.

The marriage took place in the apartment of Dorothy's sister Caro and her husband George Page Ely at 1120 Fifth Avenue (formerly Aunt Cora's apartment), on February 17, 1931. The Rev. Dr. Aldrich of the Church of the Ascension performed the ceremony and Dorothy's uncle Charles G. Weir gave her in marriage.<sup>369</sup> Mahonri's close friend, painter Gifford Beal, was best man. Young later wrote a humorous account of the events surrounding their nuptials:

When Dorothy and I were married, the only one of my old pals I asked to the wedding was Johnny. The reason being that at that time neither Hal Burrows nor Herman would refrain from getting drunk. At a wonderful dinner given to Dorothy and me by the Edgar Stillmans, Johnny was placed on the left side of Kate Stillman, our hostess, and I on the right. During the dinner Kate turned to Johnny and said, 'Mr. Held, are you married?' 'Oh, yes,' said Johnny, 'I'm already paying two alimonies,' which was a mere statement of fact, but at that precise moment he was unmarried. What a dinner that was. Like a C. D. [Charles Dana] Gibson drawing of a banquet of the 90s and cooked like it . . . Most of Dorothy's friends were there - Tina Fisher, Minere and Freddy Cunningham, George and Kay Montgomery.<sup>370</sup>

The names of Dorothy's friends that Young recalled in his memoir, written so many years after the wedding, were the very ones who had been together with Dorothy since her school days at Brearley and who valued each other's friendship so highly.

Although Mahonri married Dorothy a dozen years after her father's death, he had encountered Julian on several occasions. Young was familiar with Weir's work long before he met him. During his first stay in New York, while a student at the Art Students League, he had gone to an exhibition of The Ten. In 1901, on his way to Paris, he had stopped at the Buffalo Exposition and seen Weir's *Donkey Ride* on display. Young first saw Weir in person in 1908 at the Durand-Ruel Galleries, then located in temporary space at 36th Street and Madison Avenue, at a Renoir exhibition. Weir was with Childe Hassam and Mahonri vividly recalled their presence: "I can see their grey overcoats; their slow movements as they looked at the pictures. They were not looking at them with any great interest or enthusiasm. In fact, I felt, at the time, that they didn't approve; and yet they were the outstanding American impressionist painters." Years later, Mahonri recalled his surprise at their reaction because on display were "most of Renoir's greatest and loveliest masterpieces." He also recalled Weir's appearance, "leaning on a cane and that was the first intimation I had that he was lame. He walked with a very decided limp. He was, also, much older in appearance, than I had expected [from] portraits I had seen of him . . . his face was seamed and drawn, and impressed me as one who had had bad health or had, otherwise suffered." Young was seeing

<sup>369</sup> "Dorothy Weir to Marry Mahonri Young," *New York Times*, January 25, 1931, N6; "Other Weddings. Young-Weir," February 18, 1931, 12. The engagement was announced by Caro and her husband. Young had announced the engagement of his daughter Aggie a few days earlier: Mahonri M. Young, printed wedding ceremony announcement, BYU 4, MM Young, 3/7.

<sup>370</sup> BYU 4, MM Young, 6/7. Johnny was John Held Jr., famed illustrator and cartoonist and Utah friend. See Chapter 8 for additional information on Held.

the effects of the 56-year-old Weir's heart disease on his whole demeanor. Given the relatively small configuration of the New York art world, the two men must have crossed paths several times over the next few years. In 1911, for example, both had work on display in the winter exhibition of the National Academy of Design and Mahonri's sculpture there of *A Laborer* won the Helen Foster Barnet sculpture prize.<sup>371</sup> They also both had work on display at the Armory Show in 1913.

It was at Young's first one-man show in 1912 at the Berlin Photographic Gallery, located at Madison Avenue and 43rd Street, that he actually met Weir. Weir went to see the show and spoke briefly with Young. Acknowledging Mahonri's fluid sketches of birds and animals, Julian mentioned that he had drawn animals too in the past. In December 1916, Young remembered, Weir took pains to look at his entry in the National Academy show, a sculpture entitled *Alcmene*. Mahonri also saw Julian at the Century Association, which Mahonri joined in 1917. Although Mahonri could not remember the specifics of each encounter, he did recall that Weir "was always kindness itself. He was always quite willing to talk; but he was no monologist."<sup>372</sup> Obviously, Mahonri, 25 years Weir's junior, valued the considerate attention of one of America's then most famous artists, however brief his comments.

Mahonri's last meeting with Weir was in 1919, at the sculptor's retrospective show at the Mrs. C. C. Rumsey Gallery. Weir came to the show and wanted to purchase an item but then realized he didn't have the funds. "I have always felt," Mahonri recalled, "that it was the knowledge of the serious state of his health that prevented him from going through with the matter. But whatever the cause the disappointment I felt very keenly. Had he bought the thing he had picked out I should have felt that I had received equal approval with my friends Maurice Stern and Paul Manship."<sup>373</sup> Weir's reputation was such that a gesture like that would have conferred a validation of sorts on the artist.

Although Weir was friendly to younger artists like Young, he didn't introduce them to his daughters. "But it was no use," affirmed Mahonri. "I married the most beautiful . . . the most talented of them, Dorothy, in 1931."<sup>374</sup> As Dorothy and Mahonri had met a decade earlier during the preparation for the Century exhibit to honor Weir, ultimately, it was the painter who brought them together.

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<sup>371</sup> Seeing Weir's work, "Draft Autobiography," 8, 10 in BYU 4, MM Young, 6/38. All other quotes, Young manuscript, "Julian Alden Weir," BYU 4, MM Young, 1/25. This appears to be a draft text which is similar but not identical to Young's text, "Julian Alden Weir: An Appreciation," published as the introduction to a Weir centennial exhibition catalog of the American Academy of Arts & Letters in 1952. See Chapter 10 for more information on that exhibition. Sculpture prize, "Academy of Design Exhibit," *New York Times*, December 9, 1911, 12.

<sup>372</sup> All information and quote, Young, "Julian Alden Weir," *op.cit.*, BYU 4, MM Young, 1/25.

<sup>373</sup> All information and quote, *Ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> All information and quote, *Ibid.*



## CHAPTER EIGHT

# MAHONRI MACKINTOSH YOUNG: THE MAKING OF AN ARTIST'S CAREER, 1877-1931

I cannot remember when I did not want to be a sculptor.

I always was a reader....I used to say that I always hung everything I knew on about three pegs: one of them was art, one of them was history, and one of them was Western life.<sup>375</sup>

### AN ARTIST'S EDUCATION IN UTAH, NEW YORK, AND PARIS

Mahonri Mackintosh Young was born in Salt Lake City on August 9, 1877. He was, as he later noted “practically a third generation Westerner” as his grandfather was Brigham Young (1801-1877), the famed religious leader who had led the Mormons to Utah in 1847. Mahonri later claimed that the relationship was an asset in commercial work: it helped him obtain commissions from the Mormon Church (some that he later he worked on at Branchville), and believed that it made him stand out in his Eastern social and artistic circles.<sup>376</sup>

Mahonri Young was a well read, self-educated man with a prodigious memory who dropped out of high school to earn his living and support his family. While studying art and working in Salt Lake City, he made several friends who would be his companions through life. He became closest to Jack Sears (1875-1969), later a comic artist and cartoonist, a graphic designer and animator, a teacher at the University of Utah (1919-46), and author and journalist with Salt Lake City newspapers. Another good friend was Lee Greene Richards (1878-1950), best known for portraiture and later in life for his mural painting, who grew up on the same block in Salt Lake City as Mahonri, and studied in Paris at the same time. Before Sears, Richards, and Mahonri left Salt Lake, they had found their basic training

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<sup>375</sup> “I cannot,” from “Notes at the Beginning,” Mahonri M. Young, in *Mahonri Mackintosh Young, Retrospective Exhibition* (Andover, MA: Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, 1940), 47, hereafter, Young, *Retrospective*. “I always,” Young, *Reminiscences*, 22. The biography by Norma Davis should always be consulted for additional information on any topic pertaining to Mahonri Young. It is the definitive study of Young and is also profusely illustrated. We have relied on it to guide us through Young’s life and career but we have also used previously uncited primary sources from interviews and letters for a fresh perspective on Young’s thoughts and relationships with friends.

<sup>376</sup> Young, *Reminiscences*, 1, 4. The official name of the Mormon Church is “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,” but it is often referred to as the LDS Church, and its members are referred to as “Mormons.” We follow this standard usage in this manuscript.

and inspiration in the classes of James T. Harwood at the University of Utah. Harwood (1860-1940) was the first Utah-born artist to study in Paris at the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian. Through him, his students were introduced to the rigors of European-style training in basic drawing and drafting and inspired to seek additional art education in New York and abroad.<sup>377</sup>

Mahonri had drawn since childhood, under the tutelage of his father who also introduced him to sculpture through wood carving. Eventually Mahonri was hired by the *Salt Lake Tribune* to do portraits and sketches, learned photo-engraving as part of his job, while studying with Harwood. He saved enough money to take the train to New York in 1899 where he would stay for almost a year, alighting first with his "Aunt Net." She was a bohemian in love with the city's cultural activities and kept tabs on all Utahans there, some settled and some passing through. A few years before Mahonri's arrival, Jack Sears had traveled to New York and taken classes at the Art Students League.<sup>378</sup>

Mahonri also enrolled at the League, which he characterized as "the place that people went if they didn't go to the academy schools." He later remembered all the details of his exciting and arduous year at the elegant League building on West 57th Street, located between Broadway and Seventh Avenue. Like other full-time students, he took classes morning and afternoon, with long hours in the studios, and went to extra lectures and programs. After an arduous climb up several flights of stairs, he took an 8 a.m. class with George B. Bridgman who came to make criticisms twice a day, which Mahonri eventually found unhelpful because they didn't relate to what he termed the "drawing problem," "I had been very fortunate in getting admitted into the life class without going through the long purgatory of the antique." His afternoon class was with Kenyon Cox whom he respected enormously. Cox, the husband of Dorothy's teacher Louise Cox, was by then famous as a portrait painter and a muralist and was an honored member of many of the city's major art organizations. Mahonri took an illustration class with Robert Blum, a friend of Weir's, as a sure means to prepare for earning a living, but did not take a class in sculpture (because of the added expense) although he knew he "could model from the first thing I tried." Blum was versatile in many mediums, but was especially known for his work in pastels, etchings and murals, all influenced by a two-year stay in Japan to study Japanese art.<sup>379</sup>

Mahonri took another illustration class with Walter Appleton Clarke, a successful and popular artist whose work appeared in *Scribner's* and the other illustrated periodicals that had inspired Mahonri when he first studied their pages in Utah. He attended lectures on anatomy by Bryson Burroughs (1869-1934), a painter of classical subjects, which he found

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<sup>377</sup> Young, *Reminiscences*, 13-17.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 22-24.

<sup>379</sup> "the place that," Young, *Reminiscences*, 28. Bridgman (1865-1943) was a Canadian, trained in Paris, who taught portrait, figure, and life drawing classes. See Steiner, *Art Students League* and H. Barbara Weinberg, *American Pupils of Jean-Léon Gérôme*. "I had been," in "Draft Autobiography," BYU 4, MM Young, 6/38. "could model," Young, *Reminiscences*, 31. On Robert Blum, see Hosley, *Japan Idea*, *passim*.

valuable, and talks on composition as practiced by such French painters as Gérôme and Puvis de Chavanne. Most of the basic classes were still segregated by gender (except for portrait, costume, illustration, and sketch) but the sociable Mahonri made many friends among the male students with whom he talked in the School's lunchroom and enjoyed the conviviality of afterhours parties. However, Mahonri's limited finances did not enable him to pursue an active coed social life. While he was a student at the League, Mahonri recalled seeing John Twachtman, "It has always seemed to me another of nature's little ironies to think that poetical, pictorial genius John Twachtman should have had to earn his living teaching the [antique] cast class."<sup>380</sup> Weir, too, with his unique sensibility, had also endured the rigors of teaching at the League.

Mahonri made the most of his time in the city, visiting art galleries and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, then still primarily confined to its original red brick Victorian building designed by Calvert Vaux, going to art lectures, and discussing ideas and techniques with his new friends. At the Durand-Ruel Gallery, he saw his first impressionist paintings, and found that "Some Monets made a great impression on me . . . one of the poplar series was the way I wanted to paint." Later he saw some of Manet's religious paintings there. When he could not sleep at night, he read all of Shakespeare and the back issues of such magazines as *Harper's*, *Century*, and *Scribner's*. When he became ill, his Aunt Net and her husband took care of him. On Sunday evenings he had dinner with the family of his Uncle Willard Young, a retired Army engineer, who lived on the west side of Manhattan.<sup>381</sup> So Mahonri's stay in New York was cushioned by the presence of family, enlivened by his new friends, and intellectually and creatively stimulating.

Out of funds, he returned to Salt Lake City to resume newspaper work, determined to save enough to go to Paris, still the center for aspiring American artists, as it had been in Julian's day. Mahonri reported that when he returned to Salt Lake City, one of his friends said to him, "Hon, before you went away you were shy and diffident; now you are very different. What happened?" He answered with the self confidence that informed every particle of his adult being, "Nothing happened; but, I found out that though I didn't know much other people knew no more."<sup>382</sup> With what he earned, and some family assistance, he was able to go to Paris in 1901 and stay four years, finally returning to the United States in the fall of 1905.

Mahonri devised his own educational program in Paris. Although he knew he wanted to be a sculptor, he pursued training in everything he considered useful: drawing, etching, anatomy, and painting. Of these various disciplines, he concluded, "I've studied lots of things lots harder than I've ever studied modeling or sculpture, because I've always felt that they were so inter-related, and I also found that they were so different. I also found out early in life that I'd better get a grounding in all of it." The first two years he spent in formal

<sup>380</sup> Scribner's in "Draft Autobiography," 10, BYU 4, MM Young, 6/38. All information from "Draft Autobiography," including "It has always," 9.

<sup>381</sup> All quotes and information from Young, "Draft Autobiography," op.cit., 6/38, 14-16.

<sup>382</sup> Quotes, Ibid.

study at the Académie Julian, the second on his own, “the ones that determined more than all the rest put together . . . I had the great museums to look at. I was working in my own studio. I was trying to put into practice what I’d learned in that time.” In his studio in the art quarter of Montparnasse, he drew models, and then sketched workmen in the nearby streets, “I wanted to work from life, not from living models. I wanted my things to come directly from life, and life is always moving, not posed.” He went from place to place to satisfy his interests, studying casts of Greek statuary in the Louvre and etchings in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and building up a visual memory bank of extraordinary depth: “I knew the Rembrandts and most of the Dutchmen. I certainly knew the Durers, Albert [Albrecht] Durer the great German engraver...I tried to learn all I could.” He traveled farther afield as part of his studies, making two memorable trips to Italy which he characterized as “the mother of art.” It was a revelation for him: “The whole thing made a tremendous impression on me. It confirmed in me a lot of things, it clarified a lot of things.”<sup>383</sup>

Like many of the American students in Paris, Mahonri began to exhibit his work as a way to measure his progress and to gain some attention. His versatility was already apparent in the variety of his submissions: water colors, pastels, etchings, and sculpture. (He had learned to do water colors when a broken thumb in late 1903 prohibited him from working with clay for five months.) His work had been noticed by critics, commended by his friend Alfred Maurer, an established American painter who lived in Paris for over a decade and experimented in tonalism and other new styles, and one of his water colors was purchased by William Merritt Chase. The Musée Carnavalet also bought two water colors, but as Mahonri noted, “I had a reputation as a water colorist. But that was not what I wanted.” He wanted to be a sculptor but recognized that acquiring the necessary skills, the “language” of painting, early in his career would be useful over time, “If I could do that, I’d enjoy doing [it] naturally and freely.”<sup>384</sup>

In addition to enjoying the company of friends from Utah, such as Lee Greene Richards who was also studying in Paris, Mahonri’s open manner gained him many new friends, including Jacob Epstein, the English sculptor, and Leo Stein, art connoisseur and brother of author Gertrude Stein, who opened his eyes to the great draughtsmanship of Degas, the skill of Piero de la Francesco, and the lighter, brighter Italian palette. He returned to America from Paris believing that he had completed his essential studies. He had produced works that were “definitely in the art class. They were not just studies . . . I knew I had much still to learn but I felt I had laid down a fairly solid foundation.”<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> All quotes from Young, *Reminiscences*: “I’ve studied,” 31-32, “the ones that determined,” 44, “I wanted to work,” 110-11, 124, “I knew the Rembrandts,” 112, 114, and “The whole thing,” 44.

<sup>384</sup> Submissions in Young, *Reminiscence*, 50; broken thumb, Young, *Retrospective*, 55. Chase, Young, *Reminiscences*, 113; “I had a reputation,” Young, *Retrospective*, 55. “If I could do that,” Young, *Reminiscences*, 71.

<sup>385</sup> Leo Stein, Young, *Reminiscences*, 63ff. “definitely in the art class,” Young, Ibid., 71 and “I knew I had,” Young, *Retrospective*, 56.

## STARTING A FAMILY AND A CAREER

Young went back to Salt Lake City to begin his career. On his initiative, he secured from the Mormon Church his first significant public commissions for sculptures of the martyred Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon church, and his brother Hyrum Smith. He married Cecelia Sharp (1872-1917) on February 19, 1907. She was a trained musician who had studied in Paris and was the daughter of a prominent businessman and former Mayor of Salt Lake City. In April 1908 their daughter Cecelia Agnes, known as Aggie, was born, and in 1910 the family moved east to advance Mahonri's career. Their son Mahonri Sharp Young, always called Bill, was born in New York in July 1911. It would be a good year. Mahonri won the sculpture prize at the winter exhibition of the National Academy of Design. J. Alden Weir had a portrait in this show too.<sup>386</sup> During the next few years, their paths would cross a number of times at New York art centers.

Mahonri was elected an Associate of the National Academy in 1912 and began to show his work in New York galleries. That year he received an important commission from the LDS Church for the *Seagull Monument*, an idea that he had originally proposed (and put into preliminary design) several years earlier, but whose funding and approval had been delayed. In later years he reflected that client delay was typical of such large projects, delays that threw off schedules for all involved. The monument celebrated the sea gulls who ate an invasion of crickets in 1848 that threatened the crops of the Mormon pioneers during their first year of settlement at Salt Lake City. Also in the 1910s Mahonri began to make a name for himself in New York as someone who would speak publicly about art matters. He was the spokesperson for a group of artists defending the design of the Maine Memorial Monument at Columbus Circle, refuting the criticisms of "greenhorns" who disparaged its design and placement at the southwestern corner of Central Park. It was a bit late in the day for such protests and the monument was dedicated on Memorial Day 1913, commemorating the destruction of the battleship *Maine* in the harbor of Havana, Cuba in February 1898, an incident which precipitated the United States into the Spanish-American War.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Family information from Weir Farm OH I, Interview about Mahonri M. Young with Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Macintosh Young II at Weir Farm, August 7, 1982, hereafter Weir Farm OH I, MM Young. See also Davis, *Song of Songs*, 103-104ff. "Academy of Design Exhibit," *New York Times*, December 9, 1911, 12.

<sup>387</sup> New York galleries: there was praise for Young's portraits and "sympathetic representations of laborers at work or resting," in "News and Notes of the Art World. Bronzes and Drawings by Mahonri Young," *New York Times*, April 21, 1912, SM15. Also, he exhibited *The Heavy Sledge* at the 1912 Academy show, "From the Academic to the Modern Is the Range Shown in Exhibition of Sculpture at the Academy," December 22, 1912, SM15. Client delay, Young, *Reminiscences*, 92-93. See also Davis, *Song of Songs*, 124, 134-135. The Seagull Monument was dedicated on October 1, 1913 in time for elderly Mormons who had been alive in 1848 to attend. Maine Memorial, see "Monument Fight Due to Torn Burlap," *New York Times*, May 18, 1913, C6, and Michele Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), Chapter 9, "Maine Memorial and Pulitzer Fountain: Site, Patronage, and Process," 185ff.

In order to make ends meet, Mahonri took on many kinds of projects, including the research and design of habitat groups for the American Museum of Natural History. One evening, while at dinner at the Salmagundi Club, Howard McCormick, an Indiana-born painter with whom Mahonri had shared a studio in Paris a decade earlier, introduced him to the museum's Curator of Ethnology (and intermittent head of the Anthropology Department), Dr. Pliney Earle Goddard, an expert on American Indian languages and culture of the Southwest. They came to an agreement and Mahonri traveled, for the first time, to New Mexico and Arizona to do the research for the Indian habitat groups he had been asked to prepare. He treated his trip with McCormick as an adventure: "Had a grand time. I landed at Gallup, went up into the country, saw the Navajos for the first time, went up into the Hopi country where we stayed. I lived right there in the villages . . . for months, and traveled through the country, made water-colors and drawings." He saw a Snake Dance on the Hopi mesas, and was the object of attention for his pioneering use of an automobile in that region. The roads were so primitive that in some areas he had to travel by horse-drawn wagon.<sup>388</sup>

When Mahonri returned to New York he modeled the figures and worked with painters, including McCormick, and museum personnel to create the habitat groups. His use of perspective and other innovative techniques earned the praise of Dr. Goddard, whose approval of "a museum group that is not only true but beautiful" Mahonri long remembered. Goddard was also impressed by Mahonri's rendition of an Indian pony, which the artist had drawn on this trip. His knowledge of the correct way to depict an animal was based on childhood memories, as he explained, when "Salt Lake was the crossroads of the West" and tied up at the hitching posts were all kinds of horses, including the ponies. "The first drawing I made was from life, of the horse."<sup>389</sup>

A few years later, the Museum sent Mahonri back to the west so he could create an Apache group and this time he traveled with John Held Jr. Held was another Salt Lake native and friend who had come to New York to make his fortune, and achieved that and fame as an illustrator in the 1920s.<sup>390</sup> Young described his 1915 adventure:

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<sup>388</sup> Howard McCormick (1877-1943) would become known for his mural paintings; late in life he started to do wood engraving. See "McCormick Dies; Mural Painter, 66," *New York Times*, October 14, 1943, 22. On McCormick and Mahonri in Paris, see Davis, *Song of Songs*, 58ff. The Salmagundi Club, then located at 14 West 12th Street, brought together in its membership artists and patrons. At the time when Mahonri met him, Pliney Earle Goddard (1869-1928) also taught at Columbia University and was the editor of the leading journal in the field, *American Anthropologist*. During the same time period, Goddard was involved in arranging the first excavations at what became the Aztec Ruins National Monument. See *Aztec Ruins, New Mexico: An Administrative History*, Chapter 5, *passim*, at [www.nps.gov/azru/adhi/adhi5.htm](http://www.nps.gov/azru/adhi/adhi5.htm). "Had a grand time" and travel conditions, Young, *Reminiscences*, 80, 81, 90. Davis, *Song of Songs*, also has wonderful materials on this trip west, quoting Mahonri's letters, 118-124.

<sup>389</sup> "a museum group," and "first drawing," Young, *Reminiscences*, 85, 89.

<sup>390</sup> John Held (1889-1958) came to New York in 1912 and earned his living in commercial art while developing as a cartoonist. He became famous with his drawings of flappers in the 1920s and his work

We had a marvelous trip. We went . . . through Holbrook down into the White Mountains, and went on a deer hunt with two Apaches, and camped out . . . one night way up on the tops of the mountains, by a little stream, with great ponderosa pines around. We'd cook bacon and beans and dough-guns . . . think pancakes is what they are . . . And we'd have a cup of coffee. Fifty years later he recalled his thoughts that night, "This is the life, to hunt all day, and then at night, over the fire, tell good tales, tall tales."<sup>391</sup>

Young took the research for this income producing project as seriously as he would for any major sculpture commission, and yet typically found a way to make it a wonderful experience for himself and a friend.

In 1914, Young moved his family to Leonia, New Jersey, a community where other commercial and fine artists had settled, and he commuted to the city to do his work in a studio in the Miller Building at Broadway and 66th Street. This routine was sadly interrupted in 1917, when his wife Cecelia died of breast cancer at age 45. The family's beloved African-American housekeeper, Betsy "Betty" Ann Hilton, then helped him raise his children. Hilton, born a slave in North Carolina in the early days of the Civil War, had been completely trusted by Cecelia, and they had become "the very best of friends." She took charge of the children after Cecelia's death, and from Mahonri's point of view "they couldn't have been in better hands." With Betty in charge, Mahonri could stay in the city overnight during the week to work on his art in his studio.<sup>392</sup>

From Betty, Mahonri learned much about African-American culture. He admired her apt sayings, astute observations, and sense of equality with all of the family and friends who visited. Perhaps it was her influence that inspired him to do the statue *The Angry Saxon* (also known as *The Buffalo* or *The Colored Doughboy*) of 1918 depicting an African-American soldier of World War I, an unusual topic for a sculptor of Young's generation, given the pervasive racism and social injustice of American society during that era. Even with Betty's help, though, Mahonri was keenly aware of his obligation towards his children. Returning from Salt Lake City after the funeral of Cecelia, he found Aggie had not been treated kindly by an aunt. "I have never yet been able to understand the reason for this; but, I did realize what would happen to the Young children if anything happened to me. I realized then that nothing must happen to me."<sup>393</sup> He gave them time and attention, using the well-honed

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appeared in the most popular magazines, including *Life*, *Vanity Fair*, *Colliers*, and *The New Yorker*, the latter started by another friend from Salt Lake City, Harold Ross. See Shelly Armitage, *John Held, Jr: Illustrator of the Jazz Age* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), and Lee Lorenz, *The Art of the New Yorker, 1925-1995* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

<sup>391</sup> Young, *Reminiscences*, 86, 107. Mahonri went out west again in 1917 to prepare for a large Navajo group but that work wasn't completed until 1923. *Ibid*, 108.

<sup>392</sup> On Leonia artists, see Davis, *Song of Songs*, 37. Cecelia's death, Young, *Reminiscences*, 94. On Betty Hilton and "they couldn't," Young, "Draft Autobiography," BYU 4, MM Young, 6/37.

<sup>393</sup> *Angry Saxon*, Davis, *Song of Songs*, 150ff, suggests also the influence of Augustus Saint-Gaudens' *Robert Gould Shaw Memorial* in Boston. "I have never," in "Draft Autobiography," BYU 4, MM Young, 6/4.

cooking skills he had learned living on his own, to sustain family rituals and stretch the unpredictable income of an artist. Betty remained with the family until Mahonri took his teenage children to Paris with him in 1925.

### PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

From the 1910s to the mid 1920s, Mahonri was displaying and selling his work through several galleries which had also displayed Weir's work. The Macbeth Gallery started handling Mahonri's work in the teens, offering him advice on what might readily sell and admonishing him to stay on schedule when he did not meet deadlines. Mahonri kept Macbeth informed about his plans, writing a long and detailed description of his 1915 trip to the southwest to draw the Navajo, Hopi and Apache. A year earlier, for the Christmas holidays, the gallery had suggested to Mahonri that smaller works and some new ones would be good for sales. It informed him that Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney planned to sell donated objects from her MacDougal Alley studio. Mrs. Whitney was Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, herself a sculptor of note, who made her studio, and later an adjacent building, available for the regular showing of contemporary art. Contributing to her sale could only benefit Mahonri in the long run by making his work known to her as she was becoming an important patron of the arts (she would later found the Whitney Museum of American Art to hold her collections.) Macbeth informed Mahonri that Mrs. Whitney would price the works modestly for the holidays: the artist would get a portion of the sales proceeds and the remaining funds would be given for the war effort, to people with "urgent need, regardless of nationality." Mahonri also helped the war effort in an exhibition organized by Knoedler & Co. His sculpture *Veterans* was on view beside the art of Rockwell Kent, George Luks, John Sloan, George Bellows, and Florine Stettheimer—all well regarded members of the new generation of painters who had followed Weir, Hassam and Twachtman--and others who agreed to take payment in Liberty Bonds.<sup>394</sup>

During the war years, Mahonri's facility in different media was gaining recognition. His etchings at the exhibition of the New York Society of Etchers, of which he was president, gained favorable attention in one 1916 notice: "Young's goatherds and elegant horses with long, forward reaching necks have more substance in the crisp, succinct medium employed than anything he has done in sculpture." A solo show of etchings at the Grolier Club a few years later was also well received. Mahonri was exhibiting at the National Academy almost

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<sup>394</sup> Mahonri participated in yet another show as part of American support of its future allies in World War I, when he contributed a piece of sculpture in response to the theme, "Carry On," which was displayed at the Gorham Gallery. See "November Exhibitions in Great Variety," *New York Times*, November 17, 1918, 46. Macbeth advice to MMY, April 20, 1914, AAA- Macbeth, Reel 2666/n.f.; travel plans, MMY to Macbeth, October 15, 1915, Ibid.; re Whitney, Macbeth to MMY, November 14, 1914, Ibid. *Veterans*, AAA-Knoedler, Reel4559/363-64 and AAA-Milch, Reel 4859/591-92, 600. On Mrs. Whitney, see *Notable American Women*, s.v., Vol.3, 601-603.

every year, and his proficiency in sculpture earned him the respect of his peers. He was elected a vice president of the National Sculpture Society in 1920.<sup>395</sup>

Mahonri's work was on display in many galleries in the early 1920s, whether it was water colors, drawings, etchings, or sculpture. There was much that was western themed, drawing on the sketches he had made during his trips to Arizona and New Mexico for the Natural History Museum. Examples of his work could be found at the Babcock Galleries, alongside that of George Luks and Maurice Prendergast, or as part of the New Society of Artists exhibition at the Wildenstein Galleries at 647 Fifth Avenue. His etchings were at the Brown Robertson Galleries, and his sculpture at the National Sculpture Society's major exhibit of 800 items at the Hispanic Museum.<sup>396</sup>

Mahonri participated in a number of exhibits organized by the Milch Galleries and the Montross Gallery, too, placing etchings, drypoint and sculpture, in these influential establishments. At the Montross, his work was displayed alongside that of John Sloan, Arthur B. Davies, and Charles A. Platt. A reviewer wrote that Young "has the merit of seeming completely at ease with his etcher's tool and in such an etching as *The Watering Trough* shows a classic taste in composition." He continued to sell water colors, his main outlet for those being the gallery owned by Frank K. M. Rehn, a specialist in American painting. Mahonri's show at that gallery in 1922 received good press; the title of one newspaper review captured the spirit of his multi-faceted talent: "A Sculptor's Adventures in Painting - Mahonri Young, Always Versatile, Has Worked in this Medium in the Southwest, and an Interesting Exhibition Results." He was extremely pleased when Frank W. Weitenkampf, the influential Curator of Prints at the New York Public Library, reviewed his work in the *American Magazine of Art*. Mahonri wrote to him in May 1922, "I value your kind, considerate and appreciative advice on my etching very highly indeed . . . Please accept my sincere thanks." Weitenkampf was a discerning collector for the Library, and bought

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<sup>395</sup> "Young's goatherds," in "Exhibition of New York Society of Etchers," *New York Times*, October 29, 1916, SM14; "Mahonri Young, Sculptor and Etcher, President of New York Society of Etchers, at Work in his New York Studio," December 31, 1916, RP3. Grolier, "Art Notes," June 13, 1920, 64, "extremely competent and agreeable . . . fortunate in most of his subject matter His Western plates are unhackneyed in theme and picturesque." In 1918, he was one of a group of 11 men and women, including John Sloan, as a member of the Manhattan Painter-Gravers Club, whose work was on display at the Mussman Gallery, "November Exhibitions in Great Variety," November 17, 1918, 46. National Sculpture Society, *New York Times*, May 12, 1920, 10.

<sup>396</sup> Babcock, "Notes on Current Art," *New York Times*, November 30, 1919, XX10; Wildenstein, "The World of Art: New Society of Artists," November 14, 1920, BR11, "Mahonri Young's Navajo women and Navajo goats, unconventional descriptions of the life of the region . . . and an interesting portrait bust." Brown Robertson, "Art: Portraits, Landscapes, and Prints," February 19, 1922, 77, included Young's *Indian Sheepherder*. Hispanic Museum, "Sculpture at the Hispanic Museum," April 15, 1923, SM13. The Hispanic Museum was sponsored by the Hispanic Society of America and its beautiful quarters at the Audubon Terrace in upper Manhattan provided a handsome setting for the exhibition of sculpture.

examples of Mahonri's work. Beyond that, the men had a friendship that extended back a number of years and would last into the future.<sup>397</sup>

Mahonri was also teaching during this time. By late 1923, he was an instructor at The New School of Design - The School of American Art, which offered its students courses in "practical and applied art." Early the following year, he volunteered for an exercise in public education sponsored by the New Society of Artists at the Anderson Galleries. In order to demonstrate how artists went about their work, three sessions were offered. George Luks worked on an oil painting, Albert Sterner did drawings, and Mahonri modeled a portrait bust of fellow artist Joseph Pennell, all carried out before audiences of several hundred people. During the remainder of the year, before he left to return to Paris, Mahonri had work on display at a number of galleries, including the well known Kraushaar and Milch galleries, and the obscure, the Henry Ward Beecher Memorial Gallery of the Plymouth Institute in Brooklyn, where the reviewer found his drawings of Paris best "where he makes a typical flower cart bloom convincingly and with the smart look worn by common things in Paris."<sup>398</sup>

From 1925 to 1928, Mahonri lived in Paris. In the fall of 1926, his daughter Aggie returned to New York to enter Barnard College. Upon her departure, he wrote to Jack Sears, his old friend from Salt Lake City, that it was "hard to think my little girl is a grown up lady and in college." His son Bill stayed with him as a high school student until he returned to the States to attend boarding school in Pennsylvania. Mahonri missed his western friends and the west, wanting to "see the old mountains again, and go up into their canons . . . and do a thousand water colors." While living abroad, Mahonri was able to support himself by selling his paintings, water colors, and bronzes in Paris and New York. His work was on display in both cities and he kept his name before the American public with well-placed publicity and by entering competitions. In 1926, a photo of him at work in his Paris studio appeared twice in the *New York Times*. In 1927 he was one of a dozen finalists, including such prominent sculptors as Jo Davidson and Stirling Calder, whose models were displayed at the Reinhardt

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<sup>397</sup> AAA Montross Gallery exhibition catalog collection, Reel 4859/709-714, "Exhibition of New York Society of Etchers, Oct 31-Nov 11, 1916," hereafter AAA-Montross. Catalogue with introduction by Carl Zigrosser. c.1920s exhibition, "American Sculpture for the Town and Country House, the Garden and the Grounds" with Stirling Calder, Malvina Hoffman, Anna Vaughn Hyatt, F. MacMonnies, et al. and Mahonri Young, "Listening Faun," AAA-Milch, Reel 4859/0591-92, n.d. Etchers at Montross, "The World of Art: Miniatures and Prints," *New York Times*, November 7, 1920, 54. "A Sculptor's . . ." by David Logan, AAA Rehn, Reel D290/ F159), hereafter AAA-Rehn. Rehn was the son of Frank K. M. Rehn (1848-1914), known for his marine paintings. The gallery was at 6 West 50th Street. "I value your kind," MMY to Weitenkampf, May 10, 1922, AAA Frank Weitenkampf letters, Reel N3/1327, hereafter AAA- Weitenkampf.

<sup>398</sup> Instructor, "practical and applied art," Display ad, *New York Times*, November 11, 1923, XXII. Anderson, "Demonstrations of Art," January 2, 1924, 5. Kraushaar Art Galleries, 630 Fifth Avenue, display ad, *New York Times*, December 21, 1924, X12. Milch Galleries, 108 West 57th Street, display ad, January 18, 1925, XII. "where he makes," in "The World of Art: Prints and Prizes," *New York Times*, July 6, 1924, SM13.

Galleries in a competition for monument to women pioneers of the West to be erected in Oklahoma.<sup>399</sup>

During his time abroad, Mahonri made his name with bronzes of prize fighters, celebrities of the Jazz Age who willingly posed for him, and drew his inspiration from the fights he attended in Paris courtesy of American reporters. Indeed, Mahonri was one of the few artists of the day whose work was discussed on both the arts and sports pages. He received a contract, while in Paris, from the New York State Athletic Commission, to design the “[Gene] Tunney - [William] Muldoon Boxing Trophy,” for display in the lobby of Madison Square Garden. Meant to be a “symbol of high ideals in boxing,” its panels would be inscribed with the names of the world’s heavyweight champions. The silver statuette was presented at the Garden at a ceremony in April 1929.<sup>400</sup>

When Mahonri returned to New York in 1928, he brought home enough new work for several shows. During the next few years, he would maintain a presence in group shows and have several solo shows. He was liked and respected by the curators and art critics of the day who appreciated his skills, his verve, and the variety in his work. Lloyd Goodrich, starting his career as an influential curator and art historian, wrote about Mahonri’s show at the Weyhe Gallery in the spring of 1929:

While it includes little of his sculpture, gives a very complete picture of the man and his work. Consisting mostly of drawings and water-colors going back over a period of twenty-five years, it demonstrates his great versatility, his interest in many aspects of the world, and at the same time retains the essential unity of a strongly marked personality.... The unifying thread that runs through all these extraordinarily varied subjects is the artist’s interest in form and his search for the qualities of line that will give the greatest sensation of form.<sup>401</sup>

Mahonri moved his family to Manhattan. In spite of the success he was having in bringing his art to the marketplace, he continued to teach and to take commercial jobs to earn enough money to support his children. He traveled to Hollywood for a few months to create sculptures for a movie studio and taught at the Art Students League. Mahonri worked non-stop according to his son Bill:

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<sup>399</sup> “hard to think,” MMY to Jack Sears, hereafter JS, September, 27, 1926, BYU 1058, Papers and collected materials of John Septimus (Jack) Sears,1, hereafter BYU 1058, Sears. “see the old mountains,” Young, *Reminiscences*, 94-95. 1926 photo, “Grandson of Brigham Young, Mahonri Young, at the door of his studio in Paris,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1926, RPA4, and “A Grandson of Brigham Young, Mahonri Young. American Artist at Work in his Paris Studio on a Series of Paintings for the American Museum of Natural History,” December 26, 1926, RPA2. Pioneer women, “Pioneer Women in Bronze,” February 22, 1927, 21, and “Public to Decide Art,” February 27, 1927, 31.

<sup>400</sup> James P. Dawson, “Tunney-Muldoon Boxing Trophy Unveiled Before Notables,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1929, 33.

<sup>401</sup> “Further Comment on the Art Exhibitions of the Week. Seen in the Galleries. Drawings by Mahonri Young,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1929, 133.

I rarely saw him when he wasn't working. Now that included making drawings in a sketch-book, which was his idea of relaxation...usually he worked on several pieces at the same time . . . He was a man who lived with no disconnection between life and art. His life and his art were a seamless web. One just flowed right into the other. He talked about art, he thought about art, and made art. Art in a very real sense was his life.<sup>402</sup>

As Mahonri himself later noted, "All I am concerned about is doing my work as well as I can and letting it take its chances." He believed in researching his work, and getting every detail right. He used books, and he went into the field like an anthropologist as he had done with the Indian tribes. He was equally attentive to anatomical details, having studied medical textbooks "so he knew every bone and every muscle in the human body," recalled his grandson, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, who noted that this knowledge was reflected in all his human sculptures, and especially visible in his prize fighters and workmen, who were depicted with little clothing, "He knew that all those bones and all those muscles were in absolutely the correct anatomical position for that posture for that figure." Yet a hard working Mahonri also enjoyed relaxing with his friends. He was a member of the Century Club, and lunched there frequently. He had an eclectic group of friends in the arts, including Gifford and Reynolds Beal, and considered as a "friendly rival" the modernist sculptor Paul Manship.<sup>403</sup>

Thus, by the time Mahonri married Dorothy in 1931, he was well established in the art world. While many American sculptors were exploring, or even adopting, modernism and more abstract and symbolic forms, Mahonri remained "a member of the realist school" while appreciating, as his son recalled, the art of other cultures.<sup>404</sup> He was able to preserve his own artistic identity while relishing the debates and conversation with artists who followed different muses. In his second marriage, he would find an enthusiastic supporter of his distinctive voice.

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<sup>402</sup> Bill Young, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 2-3.

<sup>403</sup> "All I am concerned," MMY to JS, January 24, 1944, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. "so he knew," Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, hereafter MMYII, Weir Farm OH, MM Young, 11. "he knew that," Ibid., 11. Manship, Ibid., 9.

<sup>404</sup> Bill Young, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 9-10.

## CHAPTER NINE

# DOROTHY AND MAHONRI YOUNG: LIFE TOGETHER, 1931-1947, AND MAHONRI ALONE, 1947-1957

### SETTLING INTO MARRIED LIFE AT BRANCHVILLE

After Dorothy and Mahonri's wedding, they sailed to Europe for a honeymoon. For three months, they both sketched and painted. When they returned, Branchville became central to their lives. For Dorothy it became a second home where she and Mahonri would live full-time for weeks or months, and during World War II, for years. Dorothy had made it possible to be there year round, having installed a furnace in the house in 1930.<sup>405</sup> For Mahonri, the farm and its surrounding landscape was a source of inspiration and the workplace for the most important projects of his career. When Dorothy and Mahonri stayed in Manhattan, they lived first at 1192 Park Avenue, where Dorothy had lived with her stepmother, Ella Baker Weir, and then bought an apartment at 24 Gramercy Park, a cooperative where several friends lived, located across the park from The Players and the National Arts Clubs.

The same year Dorothy and Mahonri were married, Young's daughter Aggie (Agnes) married Oliver Lay. Oliver's father, Charles Downing Lay, a prominent landscape architect, and his family had been friends of Mahonri for many years; Charles was also a fellow-member of the Century Club. Mahonri asked his new son-in-law, a recent graduate of the Columbia School of Architecture, to design a studio for him at Branchville. Dorothy was able to pay for the studio, as she had the new furnace, thanks to the bequest from Aunt Cora. It was one of Oliver's first projects and he worked with Mahonri to design a space that would permit him to work on large pieces, "large enough," wrote Dorothy to Charles and Sara, "to sculpt an Equestrian statue if he wants to." And large enough, Mahonri wrote happily to Jack Sears, "to do anything I want to do in paint or clay. If I ever have a big thing to do again I will do it here even if I have to stay all winter." How prescient his words would be. A steel I-beam with rollers and a chain was installed to move large plasters and casts around. On the balcony, Mahonri could sketch and write, or read one of the many hundreds of books he had

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<sup>405</sup> Dorothy put in a furnace in 1930 at a cost of \$2,998 and changed the water pipes from iron to brass at the same time for an additional cost of \$1,777. See Diary of maintenance work at Weir Farm, WEFA 482, 7. Generally, Dorothy and Mahonri stayed at Branchville from May to December in the 1930s and 1940s, and spent the winter there in 1942 and 1943 (and part of 1944). In 1936, 1944, and 1946, they spent several months in Utah followed by time in Branchville.

collected and placed on shelves at that level.<sup>406</sup>

Just as in the time of Julian, Anna, and later Ella, artist friends and other guests would come to the farm on weekends when Mahonri and Dorothy were there. Of these visitors, grandson Charles Lay recalled, “it became a very stimulating place to be . . . there would be at least one expedition per day, either to the pond or to some other location in the surrounding area for either sketching or doing a water color.” Mahonri loved to talk, sometimes dominating the conversation, sharing his opinions and knowledge, “he was a cornucopia of information on just about any subject that you wanted to discuss with him.” He enjoyed having a few guests at a time, being, as his son recalled, “a conversationalist” rather than a public speaker.<sup>407</sup> Dorothy’s sister Cora, who had married the distinguished New York admiralty lawyer Charles Burlingham in 1929 (after the death of her first husband, Bill Carlin, in 1928), often came over for cocktails or dinner when they came up to their weekend house next door (the former Webb property) in the 1930s and 1940s. The sense of Branchville as a convivial social center lasted from Mahonri’s marriage to Dorothy until about 1944, his grandson reported. After that, wartime gas rationing inhibited much leisure travel by friends and family. (Figure 17)

Charles Lay recalled Dorothy, his step-grandmother, as a gracious and talented person, who adored Mahonri, and who “made sure that the house ran smoothly . . . and everything was in order . . . And so Sunday dinner was always a magnificent exercise with finger bowls . . . a freshly killed chicken from the farm . . . And there was a lot of good conversation . . . around the table.” Mahonri loved good food, “he approached the food with the same passion that he approached the art and that meant that he knew all the chefs in New York City . . . he had definite standards in how the meal should be presented and whether or

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<sup>406</sup> Lay family: Mahonri met Charles D. Lay c.1912-13 when Lay became part of a group of young artists that included John Held Jr., who would gather in the evenings and practice figure drawing with a model. Mahonri was something of an informal instructor. See Davis, *Song of Songs*, 116. The engagement announcement for Agnes and Oliver, *New York Times*, January 25, 1931, N6. Cora’s bequest: In January 1931, for example, Dorothy and her sister Cora sold two apartment houses (inherited from Aunt Cora) in upper Manhattan (12-16 Arden Street) for over \$100,000. Presumably they split the proceeds. See “Manhattan Transfers,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1931, 40. Although Aunt Cora had a large estate, eventually the Depression took its toll. In 1935, Dorothy obtained a mortgage/lease on a New York apartment building at 235 West 71st Street. The next year the bank foreclosed on her \$200,000 debt; see “Latest Recorded Leases,” *New York Times*, August 15, 1935, 36, and “Foreclosure Sales,” February 15, 1936, 29. “large enough to sculpt,” DWY to CESW and SBF, November 28 [1931], Huntington, Wood, 287/45. The reference in the text is to Charles and Sara, rather than Charles Wood and Sara Bard Field or Charles and Sara Wood because they were not yet married although they had been living together since at least 1918; they married in 1938. WEFA 482, 7: Dorothy paid \$4,239 for the construction, \$789 for bookcases, \$707 for wiring, and \$408 to Oliver. “to do anything,” MMY to JS, August 8, 1932, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. Balcony, Charles Lay, hereafter CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 18, 19. Mahonri continued to maintain a studio in New York City. From c.1921-37, it was at 59th Street and he often shared space after that, Bill Young, *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>407</sup> “it became a very stimulating place,” CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 5-6. “he was a cornucopia,” CL, *Ibid.*, 8. “conversationalist,” Bill Young, *Ibid.*, 11.



**Figure 17.** Dorothy Weir at Branchville.  
Photograph, late 1920s - early 1930s. (WEFA AHP00631)

not the seasoning was correct . . . He thoroughly enjoyed his eating, always. And he could also cook very well." In everything he did, the strength and forcefulness of Mahonri's character was evident. As his son remarked, "he was a man given to strong and clear and clearly defined statements . . . And while not Jonsonian – he was lacking in pomposity . . . he held strong opinions and expressed them freely."<sup>408</sup>

Mahonri's family became entwined with Dorothy's life. She not only hosted them at Branchville but helped them in other ways when needed. In 1937, for example, she took care of Mahonri's daughter, Aggie, and her baby when they were ill, first in New York and then at Branchville. Her friend Minere Cunningham wrote to her about the burden of caring for the unwell Aggie and her baby, extending her sympathy, "I can't bear to think of your *valuable* time being spent on worrying when you should be getting along with your book & painting." She hinted at some family friction as she continued, "I bet you've kept dark from Cora, just to save yourself her scolding - And you are only doing what you *have* to, I suppose." After the death of Mahonri's mother in 1944, Dorothy invited his brother Winnie (Winfield Scott Young), who had always lived with his mother, to come and live with Mahonri and herself. Winnie didn't want to leave Utah so Mahonri shared the costs with his sister of overseeing his care in Salt Lake City. Mahonri's close friend, Jack Sears, was a helpful intermediary in this situation and Dorothy was grateful for this assistance, as Jack and his wife Florence had also become dear friends to her after her marriage to Mahonri. "We thank you from our hearts for all that you are doing for Winnie - it takes a load off Mahonri's mind that you are there and are so thoughtful and kind." And of course Dorothy shared the worries and concerns, the happiness and achievements, of Mahonri's family, writing to Jack Sears in 1946: "Bill [Mahonri Sharp Young] gets out of the army in June -which is our big news. It will be grand to see him again." Florence and Jack periodically sent fresh Utah celery to Dorothy and Mahonri, which they both enjoyed during the winter. Dorothy was especially grateful for a box of Florence's fudge which contained "such a large share of your sugar," a true mark of friendship during a period of wartime rationing.<sup>409</sup>

While Mahonri worked in his studio, Dorothy had her own projects and responsibilities. The smooth running of the household was a credit to her management of the employees who helped her with the house and grounds, skills she had perfected in the years of caring for the property while her Ella was alive, and which had in fact been her responsibility since the death of her father. Mahonri was glad to have her do so. The only exception was his studio: "That was the one place that was his and his alone here." Dorothy

<sup>408</sup> "made sure the house" and following, CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 12. "He was a young man," Bill Young, *Ibid.*, 22. "Jonsonian" is a reference to Samuel Jonson, the famous 18<sup>th</sup>-century man of letters famous for his blunt opinions and the important English dictionary he compiled. His life and opinions were chronicled by James Boswell.

<sup>409</sup> ill baby, DWY to CESW, June 16, 1937, Huntington, Wood, 287/44. "I can't bear," and "I bet," MC to DWY, May 9, 1937, BYU 4, MM Young, 3/5. Winnie's needs, MMY to JS, BYU 1058, Sears, 1, January 4 and 6, 1944. "We thank you," DWY to the Sears, May [1944?] BYU 1058, Sears, 1. "Bill gets out," and "such a large," DWY to JS, [late winter 1945?], BYU 1058, Sears, 1.

took pleasure in cultivating a flower garden, carrying on the traditions started by Anna and Ella. She wrote to Charles and Sara with whom she had exchanged plants, about her roses, “Mine in my garden here are just at their perfect height, each one of them is so bright & clear that they give the effect of just springing from the earth. None, alas, of my western seeds have come up, I did so hope for a lot of new varieties in my garden.” From those roses, she made a “rose confiture,” which she found “so exotic that I feel it should be served to Queen Tatania, or someone of that ilk.”<sup>410</sup>

Dorothy had a cook, Molly, and others who helped with the household. But Dorothy, too, was engaged with household work, especially during the war. The pigs raised were butchered and cured at the farm and the various cuts sent to the butcher to be smoked. Dorothy and the cook, wrote Mahonri to Jack Sears, “made some most excellent head cheese and patty de porc which have made a tremendous reputation among our friends . . . They also made pork cakes (fruit cakes using pork fat instead of butter). These, too, have been a great success.”<sup>411</sup>

Household help was important because it allowed Dorothy to continue painting, at least during the early to mid 1930s. She won another Crowninshield Memorial prize in September 1933 at the Stockbridge Art Association for *Morning Chocolate*, a depiction of a woman sitting in bed with a breakfast tray. She then displayed the same picture in tandem with Mahonri’s bronze *Mother and Child* in an exhibit at the Argent Galleries, whose theme was husband and wife teams of artists; the women were members of the Women Painters and Sculptors Association. Another couple whose work was on display was architect Harvey Wiley Corbett, with a painting of the Pennsylvania Power and Light Building (one of his designs), and sculptor Gail Sherman Corbett’s figure, *Boy with Flute*.<sup>412</sup>

In the midst of all their responsibilities, Dorothy and Mahonri also had their quiet time together at Branchville. With Sara and Charles, Dorothy exchanged reading materials, especially poetry, fiction and books on the arts, which included those authored by the Woods. They had sent her Charles’s newly-published book, *Earthly Discourse*, which she and Mahonri were both reading, separately, “But we keep continually interrupting the other to read some particularly good bit.” In the evenings they often listened to the radio show *Amos and Andy* and they were both disappointed when the program went off the air, as Mahonri reported to Jack Sears, “We feel it almost is a Tragedy. What a career! What one might almost [call] genius those two fellows have shown in their 16 years in the radio.” Mahonri also enjoyed listening to the ventriloquist Edgar Bergen in his character as “Charley

<sup>410</sup> Mahonri was glad, Bill Young, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 14. “That was the one,” Bill Young, Ibid., 13. “Mine in my garden,” and “rose confiture,” DWY to CESW and SBF, June 16 and 24, 1937, Huntington, Wood, 287/44.

<sup>411</sup> “made some most,” MMY to JS, January 24, 1944, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. The year before, Mahonri had provided an even more vivid description to Sears, “We have just killed our pig. At this moment he is laying on the floor in my etching (?) room cut-up and frozen stiff.” December 17, 1943, Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Stockbridge Art Association, “Berkshire Honor to Jane Maclane,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1933, 8; Argent Galleries show, “Current in New York Galleries,” November 12, 1933, X12.

McCarthy" as well as comedians Gracie Allen and George Burns, "but where they appear once a week *Amos and Andy* appeared every night and How!"<sup>413</sup>

From almost his first acquaintance with Branchville, Mahonri enjoyed taking walks along the roads in a countryside that was so different from that of his native state. "The air is filled with the scent of honeysuckle and other flowers and shrubs," he wrote in a diary entry of Sunday, June 21, 1932 [1937]. He watched three crows "flying over the woods and alighting in some dead trees; they were talking to each other . . . Several warblers of two different species were singing beautifully - The air was as fresh and invigorating as in the mountains at home."<sup>414</sup> Indeed, Dorothy and Mahonri were aware of each other's delight in the countryside. Ten years later, Mahonri remained enchanted with the area. On a beautiful October day, "one of those days of days - the sky light blue with only occasional white clouds, a slight delicious breeze - neither too warm nor too cold," Dorothy suggested an excursion. Mahonri continued in his letter to Jack Sears that day,

As Dorothy was going to spend some precious gas going to her book club auction, she suggested I go along and make a sketch or two on Millstone Road - two subjects I always wanted to sketch. She would go on to the auction - I could stop and make the sketches and she would pick me up, about 5 o'clock, on her way home. And so it was.<sup>415</sup>

#### RESEARCHING AND WRITING J. ALDEN WEIR'S BIOGRAPHY

When they weren't sharing the loveliness of the countryside or entertaining friends, such as Dorothy's Brearley group or Mahonri's artist friends, including Gifford Beal, Harry Wickey, and Paul Manship, Mahonri was in his studio and Dorothy was hard at work on a project to document the life of her father that she had begun before her marriage. Her notes and files were marshaled on the card table in the living room. From the time of Julian's death, she had worked continuously to amass material about his life and career. She began with scrapbooks she had kept since she was a child. Then, very soon after his death, she systematically began to collect information for a complete list of her father's work. She wrote to dealers and owners all over the country trying to collect a photograph of every Weir oil painting and all information about it (description, size, where exhibited, etc). As early as 1920 she had written to Charles Wood about her motivation in seeking such complete information, "I want this first of all for my own pleasure, but I also think that it will be a very

<sup>413</sup> DWY to CESW, June 24, 1937, Huntington, Wood, 287/44. *Earthly Discourse* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1937) was a collection of essays. The longest one was "The Supreme Court and the Constitution," a discussion of the proposal -- known as "court-packing" -- made by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in early 1937 to enlarge the Court and as well as the history of the Court's review of legislation. See Hamburger, *Charles Wood*, 338-40. "We feel it almost" and following, MMY to JS, April 12, 1943, BYU 1058, Sears, 1.

<sup>414</sup> "The air is filled," and following, Mahonri Mackintosh Young Diary, BYU 4, MM Young, 6/9.

<sup>415</sup> MMY to JS, October 19, 1942, BYU 1058, Sears, 1.

useful thing to have in years to come, as a reference. We have had several fake pictures shown to us." Later, she spoke to him of another rationale for her work: "Some day no doubt a biography will be written, and I want to have all the records and data collected that I can." In pursuit of these goals, Dorothy organized family correspondence and transcribed hundreds of letters with the prospect of publishing some of them. Of Julian's letters to his mother and father during his years at the Beaux Arts, she told Wood they "make such an interesting record of his life and experiences as a young artist."<sup>416</sup> In fact, the collection is one of very few significant records of American painters in Paris at that time.

Wood was an important informant about Julian and advisor to her on the project in the mid-1920s. He had found that the earlier Century memorial volume did not truly capture the Weir he knew. When Ella Weir Baker sent him a copy, he wrote back an extended reply that acknowledged the gift, corrected a mistake in his contribution to the volume, and explained why he thought something more was needed to define Weir's achievements and honor his spirit. He thanked her for "two beautiful etchings with Julian's unmistakable poetic touch. It was all so unexpected that tears sprang to my eyes. The sudden flood of memories - Surely it is a tribute to Julian's strong yet winsome nature that though I really saw him so little I counted him my dearest friend and everyday still feel the unfillable vacancy in the world - By this I can guess your loneliness." He then explained what he felt were the inadequacies of his essay. He would have "paid tribute to Julian as a Poet artist" if he had not gotten instructions to write about "anecdotes of the man as a friend." He hoped the memorial volume would not be the last tribute for the other authors, even the artists, it seemed to him,

miss the real soul of his work - the immortal *poetic* quality of the man and his creations and a proper tribute to Julian should begin with his return from Paris and show his personal influence on American Art. These painter friends of his are too busy with technique and the mere externals. I hope some competent person who loved him will take this up - Surely it will be done some day if not in our day.<sup>417</sup>

Dorothy asked Wood to send her his recollections about Weir, for "I feel that there was no friend that he had known whom he loved more than he did you, or who understood both him and his work better than you did, and I am sure that you could tell me so much that I do not know." She also interviewed Wood over a number of years and maintained a continuing correspondence with him and his companion (and later wife) Sara Bard Field. In sending him a copy of her notes on one of their conversations, she asked him for corrections and added new questions, "Do you know when he first began to be interested in impressionism and a lighter palette? . . . Do you know when and how his friendship with Ryder began?" She asked if he had kept any letters from 1883 to the mid 1890s, essentially

<sup>416</sup> "I want this," DW to CESW, Huntington, Wood, 287/39, 1920. "Some day," October 18, 1926, Ibid., 287/40. "make such an interesting," Oct 18, 1926, Ibid., 287/F40.

<sup>417</sup> All quotes in paragraph and block quote, CESW to EBW, June 14, 1921, Huntington, Wood, 240/3.

the period of Julian and Anna's marriage, for which she had the fewest records. Wood was happy to cooperate as he had intended to write his own sketch of Weir but never got to it. He had earlier written to Dorothy's sister, Caroline Weir Ely, "It tells much of your dear father's character - that I miss him out of my life contacts as much as or more than I did at first - I wish adequate justice could be done to him in a feeling biography."<sup>418</sup>

Sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s, Dorothy decided to write a life and letters herself, rather than merely collect materials for someone else to fashion into a biography. Soon after her marriage, she was determined, as she wrote to Wood, to tell her father's story and portray his artist friends, Ryder, Twachtman, Robinson, Warner, and numerous others. She believed "too little has been written" about these American artists, in contrast to the "thousands of fine books there are in France about the French artists." She knew she had a large project, but she was determined to carry out her plan. She declared to Sara and Charles: "I may have bitten off more than I can chew--but I intend to enjoy it anyway."<sup>419</sup> In 1937, she summarized her goals in a letter to Charles,

In my book on Papa I want very much to give a real picture of his time as well as his own life, & I want to include vignettes, so to speak of his artist friends, & their relation to him & to the art of their day....I am getting more & more interested in the book as I go on with it, & also I think it should be a valuable contribution to that period of American art, which was a little Golden Age of its own & which is to date completely unwritten, except for a book on Chase . . . I have no illusions about myself as a writer, but I feel that my contribution can be in making things just as accurate as possible . . . you know that all his colleagues were devoted to him all his life.<sup>420</sup>

As Dorothy wrote her biography, she requested that Wood review her text on Albert Pinkham Ryder and Olin Warner, asking him if she had really captured their personalities. She felt on surer ground with Ryder (who died in 1917 when Dorothy was 27) "both because

<sup>418</sup> "I feel that," DW to CESW, October 18, 1926, Huntington, Wood, 287/40. "Do you know," June 9, 1930, Ibid., 287/41. "It tells much," CESW to Ely, July 8, 1925, I, 230/7.

<sup>419</sup> Decision to write life and letters: In 1927, Frederic Fairchild Sherman (1874-1940), a publisher and art critic, had privately printed *J. Alden Weir*. It consisted of an essay, plates, a listing of Weir's medals, honors, and exhibitions, a bibliography, and a list of over 500 oil and water color paintings "compiled by Dorothy Weir" with their title, date, size, and owner [the actual list was 515 oil paintings and 79 water colors; this contrasts with the 400 oils and 67 water colors listed in the Century volume of 1921]. The work was arranged by subject matter and date. Sherman had previously published, in 1925, Catherine Beach Ely's book, *The Modern Tendency in American Painting*. It is interesting to speculate what finally motivated Dorothy to write the life and letters, e.g., Dorothy may have decided to move forward with her project because she was not happy with Sherman's assessment of her father's talents as noted earlier, or she finally decided that she was the person best suited to prepare a definitive study. See AAA-Milch, Reel 4433/1221-22, n.d., the gallery writes to Dorothy relaying a request from Sherman and asking for information about the dimensions and owners of Weir's paintings for the revised list that he was preparing. "too little has been written," and following, DWY to CESW and SBF, November 28 [1931], Huntington, Wood, 287/45.

<sup>420</sup> DWY to CESW, May 10, 1937, Huntington, Wood, 287/44.

he was a very unusual individual & also because I remember him myself." She hoped, she concluded, that she hadn't "sentimentalized Ryder, or laid too much stress on his peculiarities." She especially needed help with Olin Warner, even though she had consulted with his widow, because she hadn't really known him; he had died in 1896 when Dorothy was only six years old. As she went on with her research, she relied on Wood's letters to her father, especially those with information on pictures, and his anecdotes about such well-known figures as Mark Twain.<sup>421</sup>

In February 1947, Dorothy reported to Sara that she had been working steadily on the book, "I can see the end and that gives me fresh impetus to get it done." By the time she died she had much of a draft manuscript completed and enough material in good order with notes so that an editor could put it into final form for publication. Her original goal was realized when Yale University Press published *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir* by Dorothy Weir Young in 1960, with an insightful introduction by the editor Lawrence W. Chisolm.<sup>422</sup>

### MANAGING THE WEIR ESTATE AND ARTISTIC LEGACY

Dorothy continued to work on her father's estate matters during the 1930s. She responded to requests for loans of her father's paintings and for additional information about him and his circle of friends. When the Macbeth and Milch galleries helped organize *Twachtman & His Intimates*, an exhibition for the Greenwich Museum in Connecticut, they sought to borrow a major painting such as *The Donkey Ride* and watercolors or etchings from the family's holdings. Dorothy arranged for the loan of *The Black Hat* which she insured for \$5,000. Macbeth also worked with curator/art historian Lloyd Goodrich in the preparation for a Winslow Homer catalogue. Dorothy was asked about the location of Homer watercolors owned, or previously owned, by Weir, and whether Homer was a member of the Tile Club. Mahonri was also asked to contribute what he knew about the Club.<sup>423</sup>

There was no consistent pattern in the market for Weir paintings in the 1930s. By late

<sup>421</sup> "both because he was," and following, DWY to CESW, May 10, 1937, Huntington, Wood, 287/44. After Warner's death, Ella and Julian often visited Mrs. Warner in her home at Point Pleasant, New Jersey; see Ella Weir Diaries, WEFA, and on Warner, DWY to SBFW, July 20, 1945, Huntington, Wood, 287/49. Twain, see DWY to SBFW, February 12, 1947, Huntington, Wood, 287/53.

<sup>422</sup> "I can see the end," DWY to SBFW, February 12, 1947, Huntington, Wood, 287/53. Yale publication, Bill Young, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 14-15. For additional information on the biography and Chisolm, see Chapter 10.

<sup>423</sup> "Twachtman," DWY to Macbeth, January 20 and February 13, 1937, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2660/n.f.; Homer, Macbeth to DWY and MMY, August 24, October 15 and 19, and November 30, [1937], Ibid. Lloyd Goodrich may have been preparing the catalogue for the Whitney Museum of Art, *Winslow Homer Centenary Exhibition* (1936). Peters, *Twachtman*, in her list of exhibitions, has nothing for the Greenwich Museum at this time. There is, however, a Brooklyn Museum exhibition, *Leaders of American Impressionism: Mary Cassatt, Childe Hassam, John H. Twachtman, J. Alden Weir* (October 17-November 28, 1937), with an essay by John I. H. Bauer.

1930, art sales were greatly reduced generally due to the depressed economy. Macbeth delicately suggested to Dorothy that the gallery return four paintings that had not sold, that they had held them "as long as we are entitled to them," the inference being that they might sell elsewhere. Several months later, a clearer picture emerged as to the gallery's straits. "We are in rather a bad way as to the number of pictures we have here so I think if you don't mind we return these to you now." Yet in 1937, Macbeth was asking Dorothy where it might locate lithographs by her father to sell to a collector. She told him that there were three but that she didn't know where to find them for sale. The next year, however, Sara Wood found out, when she inquired about selling some items from Charles Wood's collection, that Hassam and Weir paintings were not selling well in San Francisco. The dealer wrote to her: "This naturally means that the prices have to be low in order to sell them at all. I am advised that the selling prices on the larger sized Hassams should be from 900.00 to 1500.00. It seems there is so little demand for Weir that I could not get a price quoted."<sup>424</sup>

When financial pressures made selling imperative eight years later, after Charles Wood's death, Sara Wood found that prices for Weirs were very low and that they went for "a song." As she wrote to Major H. H. Parke of the Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York,

I was frankly bitterly disappointed in the results of the picture sale. Had I known Weir had so low a market value I would not have sold those important pictures of his. *The Hunter's Moon* was one of the prize pictures at the Panama Pacific Exposition. My husband paid over \$3000 for it.<sup>425</sup>

She shared this unhappy information with Dorothy who wrote back that she was "heart-sick" over the news which she knew from her own inquiry about the prices, "When they told me I realized on how many different points I felt hurt." First, for the loss to Sara. Then, she continued, "I keep feeling how badly Papa and Col. Wood would have felt over such a sale - and then I added my own feelings to the matter - so that the sum total would wake me up at night as I am sure it did you." Dorothy called off a planned exhibition at the Sterner Gallery as it "didn't seem a good time for it." She felt that prices would rise in the future, "I have perfect faith that time will justify them."<sup>426</sup>

In spite of these disappointments, the vagaries of the market sometimes surprised even the experts. Early in 1945, Macbeth wrote to Dorothy asking if she might consider

<sup>424</sup> "as long as we," Macbeth to DWY, November 20, 1929, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2666/n.f. "We are in rather," March 6, 1930, Ibid; see also November 12, 1930. Lithographs, November 30 and December 7, 1937, Ibid. "This naturally means," KE Slaughter to Mrs. CES Wood, January 6, 1938, Huntington, Wood, 196/58.

<sup>425</sup> SBFW to H.H. Parke, March 20, 1946 [1945], Huntington, Wood, 265/16.

<sup>426</sup> "when they told me" and following, DWY to SBFW, April 14, 1943 [1945], Huntington, Wood, 287/47. Sterner Gallery: Marie Sterner (1880-1953) founded her gallery in 1923 after she had divorced painter Albert Sterner (1863-1946). She featured American artists, particularly those who came of age in the first few decades of the 20th century. See descriptive information on Marie Sterner and Marie Sterner Gallery papers, 1913-51, Albert and Marie Sterner letters received, 1899-1945, Albert Sterner letters, 1894-1916 and items in other collections from search of siris-archives.si.edu.

swapping a picture the gallery had bought from Weir in 1925 for \$5,000, *Peacock Feathers*, for another work in the family's holdings. He hoped to obtain something of equal value, "I am, however, commercially minded in this thought for I should want to have one with sales possibility." Dorothy replied that there were no figure studies of comparable importance but that there might be a landscape. In the midst of their discussion, Macbeth made the sale, "I sold *Peacock Feathers!!!*" he wrote. While appreciating her willingness to trade, he then had "the very unexpected opportunity to sell it, I just couldn't resist. What is still funnier, however, is that a day or two later, I could have sold it to another person! If you know of a queerer business than dealing in art, tell me about it!" Judging by the dealer's exuberance, he did not lose money by having it in his inventory for so long. If he sold it for the 1925 value in 1945 dollars, that would have meant a sale of approximately the same amount, give or take a few dollars. At least the price had held up through twenty years of depression and war.<sup>427</sup> This was probably the last major sale that Dorothy oversaw.

Whatever the market situation in the 1940s regarding Weir's work, it continued to be selected, though less and less frequently, for thematic exhibitions in museums and featured for collectors' sales in galleries. In reviews, Weir was a name that was expected to be recognized as a respected member of a past generation of artists. While galleries and museums did not shut down during the war, there were fewer shows and less activity generally, circumstances which may have contributed to the lack of visibility of Weir's work and a decline in his reputation as one of the major figures in American art, relegated to something like the second tier in his generation. By that time, Eakins, Homer, Sargent, and Hassam seemed to hold the esteem of the public and the art world. What to label Weir was also a continuing problem for viewers. He was not as clearly an Impressionist as others, so the lack of a precise artistic identify may have played a role in the ambivalence towards his work. He seemed to fare best when his works had a solo display, rather than when they were in a large group exhibition and the "stars" gained all the attention. In addition, during the 1940s, Dorothy's travels and her episodes of ill-health may very well have been a factor in this because she may not have had the time or energy to respond to all requests for loans of her father's work.

Weir's work appeared in exhibits more in the early 1940s than in the middle of the decade. In 1940, several of his oil paintings, *Old Sentinel* and *Yellow and Pink* were displayed for sale at the Douthitt Galleries (9 East 57th Street) as part of the John F. Braun Collection. In 1941, his work appeared in a watercolor show at the Milch Galleries; in a printmaking show of the work of 101 artists over three centuries at the Grand Central Galleries (a collection that had actually been purchased by Thomas J. Watson, President of IBM when it was exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington); in the grand opening of the National Academy of Design's new building at 1083 Fifth Avenue, its first permanent home in over 40 years; and at the Museum of the City of New York, in an exhibition of Christmas cards that

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<sup>427</sup> Macbeth to DWY, January 21 and February 27, 1945 and DWY to Macbeth, February 6, 1945, AAA-Macbeth, Reel 2666/n.f.

included those prizewinners that had been published by Louis Prang.<sup>428</sup>

In 1942, his work was chosen for a major exhibition at the Whitney Museum, “A History of American Water Color Painting,” which was promoted as the first such large scale survey and featured artists “most characteristic” of each time period and, as Juliana Force, the Museum’s director wrote in the catalogue, “whose use of this medium has had a profound influence on many developments in our era.” There were several Weirs on display and his paintings were among those with “prophetic notes” although one reviewer lauded the work of his friends and contemporaries, John La Farge, Thomas Eakins, Childe Hassam and John Singer Sargent, and acclaimed the work of Winslow Homer, “And to this day it remains for any artist to outstrip him in results.” In the spring, Weir’s work was featured twice by the Macbeth Gallery, first in a small show of oils, and then in the Gallery’s 50th anniversary exhibit of work by American artists, “leaders, or whose work was deemed full of promise during the early days of the gallery’s career.”<sup>429</sup>

In the fall of 1942, the Babcock Gallery featured 20 Weir paintings, borrowed from dealers, collectors, and the Weir family. The show garnered a mixed comment, which began with an observation that his work (and that of Homer D. Martin, in another show), “looks oddly ancient nowadays, with all our new trends and tribulations and triumphs.” Was Weir an Impressionist the reviewer asked, “Upon this trait he placed less emphasis than did, for instance, Childe Hassam. In fact, his brushwork, with its long dragging stroke and its preference for what might be called a kind of patted impasto, does not really seem impressionist at all. But atmospheric mistiness is prevalent, often very sensitively caught, in landscape or on the petals of a flower, and the two green nocturnes are, though not slavishly, reminiscent of Whistler.’ A delicate and most ingratiating color harmony invests Weir’s still-life *Buttercups*.<sup>430</sup>

In 1943, it was not surprising to find a Weir as part of the Art Students’ League 50th anniversary show celebrating its occupancy of the 57th Street building, the 227 items created by “illustrious names associated with previous epochs.” The following year, Weir’s work

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<sup>428</sup> Douthitt Galleries, Edward Alden Jewell (hereafter EA Jewell), “Braun Collection Put on Exhibition,” *New York Times*, December 18, 1940, 22. All remaining citations from the *Times*. Milch, “Other Groups,” January 19, 1841, X9. Grand Central, “Printmaking Show Will Open Today,” February 19, 1941, 19. National Academy, “Art of Past Era to be Exhibited,” October 5, 1941, 50. Museum of the City of New York, “The Same Old Wish,” December 3, 1941, C24.

<sup>429</sup> Whitney, “most characteristic,” “Water-Color Show Will Open Today,” *New York Times*, January 23, 1942, 15; “whose use of this medium,” EA Jewell, “Water-Colors Put on Exhibition Here,” January 27, 1942; and “prophetic notes” and following, EA Jewell, “Whitney Traces Our Development,” February 1, 1942, X9. Macbeth, EA Jewell, “Current Local Exhibits,” February 22, 1942, X9; “leaders, or whose work,” in Macbeth, “Half a Century,” April 19, 1942, X5.

<sup>430</sup> Babcock, “Openings of the Weeks,” *New York Times*, October 11, 1942, X5; “looks oddly ancient” and following, EA Jewell, “‘Inner Vision’ and Out of Bounds . . . Last-Century Americans,” October 18, 1942, X9. Dorothy and Mahonri were acknowledged in the Babcock exhibition brochure, presumably for loaning several paintings: Frick, Davidson, Weir, *Exhibition of Paintings by J. Alden Weir*, October 12-31, 1942, Babcock Galleries, 8 East 57th Street, New York.

appeared in a spring show “Summer Pleasures” of “older Americans” at the Milch Gallery. And in November 1944, a Weir was loaned for “New York Portraits of Children,” a benefit show for the School Art League, just the kind of activity for which Weir would have happily volunteered.<sup>431</sup>

### TRAVELS AND MAHONRI’S MAJOR PROJECTS

Supervision of the estate and loans of Weir paintings was an ongoing but also intermittent activity for Dorothy. She may have been doing some painting but with many undated canvases, it is unclear whether they were completed in the 1920s or 1930s. Her more or less constant activity was her book about her father and whenever she traveled with Mahonri, she brought her research materials with her and worked on the project in their hotel rooms. Dorothy enjoyed several lengthy trips to the west with Mahonri. She went by train to the West Coast for the first time in March 1936 for an extended visit which took them through Tucson, Arizona. There they attended the dedication of one of Mahonri’s historical plaques, a low relief of *Padre Eusebio Francisco Kino, S.J.*, a missionary, cartographer, explorer of California and Arizona, writer, and rancher of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, who laid for foundation for the mission church of San Xavier del Bac in Tucson. After the ceremonies, they continued on to California. Among the friends they visited were Sara and Charles at their beautiful home and gardens, named “The Cats,” at Los Gatos, south of San Jose in the Santa Clara Valley. They also spent a few days in San Francisco where they went to Chinatown and Mahonri spent time “sketching down at Fisherman’s Wharf.” A climb through the Sierras was followed by a trip to Salt Lake City. There, Dorothy told Sara and Charles, Mahonri was “swamped by all his relations and old friends . . . also he is cheered by the prospect of three sculpture jobs that seem to be appearing on the horizon.”<sup>432</sup>

Mahonri and Dorothy’s attention was also focused in the late 1930s on the possibility of obtaining what would be Mahonri’s largest public commission, *This is the Place Monument*. The proposed monument was sponsored by the Utah State Legislature to commemorate the

<sup>431</sup> Art Students League, EA Jewell, “Art Group to Open Exhibition Monday,” *New York Times*, February 6, 1943, 14. Milch, EA Jewell, “Old World to Modern American,” May 7, 1944, X7. School Art League, EA Jewell, “Art. A New Melange,” November 12, 1944, X8.

<sup>432</sup> On the trip to Tucson and plaque, see Davis, *Song of Songs*, 197, 216-217, and Frank C. Lockwood, “Padre Eusebio Kino, Pioneer of the Pacific Coast,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1936, BR6, a review of a new biography by Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Rim of Christendom: A Biography of Eusebio Francisco Kino, Pacific Coast Pioneer* (New York: Macmillan, 1936). Wood home: the area was named Los Gatos (the cats) by the Spanish for the many wildcats that roamed the hills and the Wood simply used the term in English. On their estate, see Hamburger, *Charles Wood*, 298-97, 302-03, and on Sara and Charles’s local bohemian intellectual circles and political activism, see Glenna Matthews, *Silicon Valley, Women, and the California Dream* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003). “sketching down” and following, DWY to CESW and SBF, May 5 [1936], Huntington, Wood, 287/43. The entire trip to Arizona, California, and Utah is described in detail in Davis, *Song of Songs*, 215ff.

centennial of the 1847 arrival of the Mormons at the valley of the Great Salt Lake where they would build a permanent settlement, far from the mobs that had hounded them out of previous homes in Illinois and Missouri. Getting the commission took several years, and working on it was a motif of their lives in Branchville for almost decade, until its completion in 1947. Mahonri lobbied long and hard to obtain the commission, calling upon his friends in Utah for their assistance. Although the monument was nominally state sponsored (nominally, since the state government was dominated by Mormons), the selection was overseen by an “independent commission” comprised, again, of prominent Mormons. Among Mahonri’s arguments for his selection, aside from his obvious talent and national reputation, were his family ties to Brigham Young. It is ironic that the *Seagull Monument*, which started his career as a public sculptor, and the *This is the Place Monument*, which was effectively the end of his career, were commissions related to Mormon history, for he was not a religious person. As his son noted, “He had no interest in religion at all.” Mahonri was interested in the history of the Mormon settlement in the west for its drama. He was also interested in the other groups who had passed through the region and made a compelling argument to the commission for including references to their experience on the monument. However, while *This is the Place* depicted various several groups and individuals who had traveled across the Salt Lake Basin, including Indians, Protestant explorers, Catholic missionaries, California-bound migrants (among them the ill-fated Donner party), and the Mormon emigrants, and while Mahonri referred to it as “the largest Catholic monument in the United States,” it was still best known as a celebration of the Mormon experience.<sup>433</sup>

Mahonri used all his political skills and influence to obtain the award. He had met with Heber J. Grant, the president of the LDS Church, when he came to New York and augmented his letters to Grant with sketches. He wanted Grant to understand that the decision about such a large monument should not be based on just a written submission for “an artist is loath to lay out, before a large committee . . . his ideas.” He also worked to convince Grant that the story of the pre-Mormon pioneers should be included, a provision that was apparently the subject of debate among members of the monument. Mahonri traveled to Washington to speak with Utah Senators Elbert D. Thomas and William H. King, who supported his designs, and also with Edward Bruce, Director of the Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture (a New Deal program), who thought there might be a way to get financial aid via the Works Progress Administration art programs since the monument would be on government land. Federal legislation had been required to allow construction on the grounds of Fort Douglas so that it was placed at the actual location

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<sup>433</sup> “He had no interest,” Bill Young, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 17. “The largest Catholic monument,” Ibid., 17. For a complete and detailed account of the monument’s development, design, and dedication, and illustrations, see Davis, *Song of Songs*, 220-259. McKay site visit, *This is the Place Monument*.

where the lead Mormon party had stopped in 1847 and Brigham Young declared, “This is the place,” pointing to the distant spot where he envisioned the Mormon settlement.<sup>434</sup>

The Monument Commission’s decision to hold a competition disappointed Mahonri, who wrote that this decision “momentarily took the wind out of my sails.” He didn’t believe that competitions produced the best results. Nonetheless, he undertook to develop his ideas from sketches to a model which showed a three level plan. A long low base, ornamented with a frieze and high relief panels depicting various historical figures and groups and supporting several free standing groups, and a central pedestal topped by Brigham Young and two associates. Mahonri was successful and was unofficially awarded the commission in 1939, although it was not until 1941 that the Utah Legislature gave its final approval. As a result, continuous monitoring of the political situation was necessary. He complained to Jack Sears in March 1939, for example, that legislative inaction had left him “quite up in the air.” He didn’t feel he could perfect his model until the lawmakers did their part to fund the work.<sup>435</sup> Two years passed before he was officially acknowledged as the designer, and received a contract and payment to begin the work.

Jack Sears kept his ears to the ground throughout this period and kept Mahonri apprised of the process. As a journalist Sears was in an excellent position to do this, for he had long used his profession to place stories in the Salt Lake papers about Mahonri’s successes, honors, and work around the country, stories which enhanced his reputation locally as an artist of national stature. In a letter of March 1939, Mahonri gave Sears “a note for immediate use - The University of Nebraska Art Gallery has just purchased my *Shoveler*. This pleases me very much as that is the very first of my bronzes [1902-03, Paris]. I am always pleased when one of my early things are sold as it proves that they haven’t become old fashioned yet.”<sup>436</sup>

Even while Mahonri was working on models for *This is the Place*, he created other large pieces at Branchville. Among them were two sculptures he designed for the 1939 New York World’s Fair, *Industry* and *Agriculture*. When he received the commission, he wrote to

<sup>434</sup> “an artist is loath” MMY to JS, n.d.[c.1937], BYU 1058, Sears, 1. On trip to Washington, MMY to JS, February 22, 1937, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. Elbert Thomas (1883-1953) was a professor of political science at the University of Utah for a decade before he served as senator from March 1933 to January 1951. William King (1863-1949) practiced law and was a judge in Utah when it was still a territory, and served in the Senate from March 1917 to January 1941. See “Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress” at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>. Edward Bruce (1880-1943) had been a successful attorney and businessman before he studied painting and changed careers. A friend of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the president appointed him in December 1933 head of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), the first New Deal relief agency to help artists and he remained director of all the federally-supported arts programs under the aegis of the Treasury Department, and then the Federal Works Agency, from 1934 to his death in 1943. See Martin R. Kalfatovic, *The New Deal Fine Arts Projects: A Bibliography, 1933-1992* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994) and Bruce I. Bustard, *A New Deal for the Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

<sup>435</sup> “momentarily took the wind,” and sketches to model, MMY to JS, April 25, 1938, BYU 1058, Sears, 1; “quite up in the air,” and fund the work, MMY to JS, March 30, 1939, *Ibid*.

<sup>436</sup> MMY to JS, March 30, 1939, BYU 1058, Sears, 1.

Jack Sears, "These are subjects I have long waited to do, and, at last, I will see some of my working men as big as they should be." From four foot models, they were to be enlarged to 14 feet and put on pedestals. "They ought to be rather impressive," he told Sears.<sup>437</sup> Placed at the entrance to the Fair across from the Long Island Railroad station, the plaster figures were seen by thousands each day.

On Utah Day at the Fair on July 24, 1939, Dorothy accompanied Mahonri for lunch with New York City mayor Grover Whalen, the governor of Utah, and other well known citizens of that state. For Mahonri it was a chance to discuss *This is the Place* and to find out that the governor had finally appointed a committee, chaired by Heber Grant, president of the LDS Church. "Everything seemed to be going smoothly" Mahonri reported to Jack Sears, his anticipation of success based on remarks made to Dorothy during these conversations at the fair, that "there would be funds available for me very soon." But matters were not resolved quickly. Therefore, Mahonri found subtle ways to remind people of his achievements to suggest they remember his needs. When he had a major show in 1940 at the Addison Gallery of American Art at the Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, he sent a catalog to President Grant. He told Sears that Grant "wrote to tell me how pleased he was and how surprised he was at the variety and amount of things I had done as he had always thought of me as a sculptor."<sup>438</sup>

As was the case with his other historical commissions, and for any realistic piece he prepared, Mahonri did a great of research for *This is the Place*. He reported to Jack Sears about a debate he had with a descendent of Orson Pratt, one of the leaders of the Mormon wagon trains, about whether Pratt was the first Mormon to set foot in the valley with the future site of Salt Lake City, or whether he was accompanied at that moment by Erastus Snow. "[M]y impression of it, and I've read all the accounts I can get my hands on, is that they came together . . . but that he [Snow] came out of the canon [canyon] and looked over the Valley and took off his hat and shouted Hosanna I have his own word for it in more than one place. Such," he concluded "is history." The final version of the monument depicted the two men together at that moment of joy. Young's grandson, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, commented on Mahonri's "obsessive" concerns with historical accuracy: "For all of his sculptures, the guns were right, the equipment was right, the insignia, everything was right because he had done the research in the historical sources and he knew every detail was historically correct."<sup>439</sup>

<sup>437</sup> "These are subjects," MMY to JS, n.d., [c.1937/38], BYU 1058, Sears, 1; "They ought," MMY to JS, November 6, 1938, Ibid. On the sculpture program at the Fair, see "Fair Will Exhibit Heroic Statuary," *New York Times*, December 11, 1938, 63. Thirty-six sculptors were selected and their work for the fair grounds was overseen by Lee Lawrie. Among them were leading artists of the day, including James Earle Fraser, Paul Manship, and William Zorach.

<sup>438</sup> "Everything seemed to be," and following, MMY to JS, July 26, 1939, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. "wrote to tell me," MMY to JS, November 7, 1940, Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> "My Impression" and following, MMY to JS, February 10, 1943, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. Dorothy accompanied Mahonri to Salt Lake City, where they stayed in the Hotel Utah, while he sought

Jack Sears also helped Mahonri with research for *This is the Place*. He sent Mahonri photos of Wilford Woodruff, who was one of the flanking figures to Brigham Young at the top of the monument and in whose wagon the unwell Young had traveled. Mahonri also relied on Sears to keep him informed on the progress of the building of the large granite base. For all this and more, Mahonri was grateful. “I can’t put in words how much I value your friendship. In this life there is nothing so valuable as such friendship.”<sup>440</sup>

From the time he was awarded the project, it dominated his work life at Branchville and filled his studio there with models of all sizes and states of preparation. Indeed, he could never have taken on a project of this dimension and complexity without the Branchville studio. After several weeks in the hospital following surgery in September 1938, he had been eager to return to Branchville to finish work on the first model of the whole monument. Once that was complete, he would travel to Salt Lake to show it and discuss it with the Monument Commission. As he confided to Jack Sears in early November, “I am well on the road to complete recovery . . . I am told to take it easy for some time. My spirits are improving and I hope when I get out home you and my other friends will find me pretty much my old self.”<sup>441</sup>

Mahonri needed all the strength he could muster at his age for there was a great deal of hard work involved. He told Sears, “I never have worked harder than the last months and, I suppose, I have accomplished a lot but I do not feel I have accomplished what I should - or could.” He was 63 years old with various aches and pains, and tired at the end of each day. By October 1942, Mahonri was reporting to Sears that the model was in good shape and that everyone who saw it admired it. “All the sculpture is in place and the composition of the different groups is about as it should be. It remains only to finish it.” He was especially moved by the comments of his friend Paul Manship who visited with his family for a weekend. “He was very pleased with it. He had seen it before and had gone over it very carefully with me. At that time he said that he thought the Group on top was as fine a group as existed anywhere.” By early 1943 Mahonri had the model done and was preparing it to be photographed so that it could be reviewed in Utah. He expected final approval for the enlargement and casting the reliefs and figures in bronze. One of the committee members came east about that time and was able to view the model.<sup>442</sup>

Charles Lay recalled Mahonri’s work on *This is the Place* at Branchville: “It was a very dynamic environment in the studio at that point in time . . . he was in a very productive,

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information that would be useful for the monument, CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 10. “For all his sculptures,” Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, hereafter MMY II, *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>440</sup> MMY to JS, April 30, 1943 and July 23, 1947, BYU 1058, Sears, 1.

<sup>441</sup> MMY to JS, November 6, 1938, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. Surgery and recovery, DWY to JS, September 1938, *Ibid.*

<sup>442</sup> “I have never,” MMY to JS, c.1940, BYU 1058, 1. Mahonri confided similar sentiments in his diary on his birthday, Diary August 9, 1940, BYU 4, MM Young, 3/9. “All the sculpture,” and following, MMY to JS, October 19, 1942, BYU 1058, 1. Model done, MMY to JS, January 6, 1943, *Ibid.* Committee visit, MMY to JS, February 10, 1943, *Ibid.*

creative phase in his life . . . I would go away for awhile and I would come back and there'd be this terrific profusion of things that had happened since I had gone last." Mahonri was greatly assisted by Spero Anargyros and his wife. Spero had studied sculpture at the Art Students League and other programs in New York and exhibited his work at the National Academy of Design, but after the war started, he was employed in a factory in Tarrytown. Mahonri hired him, which Spero accepted as a second job in 1943, but later he worked for him full-time as the schedule became more pressing to complete the work. Charles Lay recalled that Spero "would do the hard physical work that was involved in putting together the larger casts and moving them around."<sup>443</sup>

Dorothy wrote to the Sears about progress on the project: "Mahonri is hard at work on his monument - it's going ahead splendidly - He has a young assistant now - to do the necessary armature etc. work that is a waste of his time and everything is going well."<sup>444</sup> But at a time of general labor shortages, everyone could be mobilized to help out. Dorothy described one such instance of her own participation in a letter to Florence and Jack Sears:

The monument is progressing marvelously - it really is wonderful. I wish you could both see it as it grows from day to day. Yesterday, Spero Anargyros - Mahonri's helper - & I served up yards and yards of canton flannel and oil cloth to cover the new reliefs they're putting up - the nine men coming in on the sides of the pylon. The Hallelujah group is up in its full size - & there is really after these only the two big reliefs & the single statues to be done - Doesn't that sound good?<sup>445</sup>

Almost a year later, she was jubilant: "Mahonri is in his last lap with the monument and it's going on grandly."<sup>446</sup>

Also in the mid-1940s, Mahonri was interested in securing a commission for a statue of his grandfather, Brigham Young, for the United States Capitol Rotunda. Each state had the right to place an important figure from its history in that location. Mahonri planned to visit with the Utah senators, Orrice Murdock, and "my old friend Sen. Thomas," in Washington in order to further his chances. He relied on Jack Sears to keep him informed about the local politics for the project, "I suppose 'Bandanelli' Fairbanks will be on the job." Mahonri was referring to Avard Fairbanks, another Mormon sculptor who had been his

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<sup>443</sup> "It was a very dynamic," CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 4. (The transcript misidentifies the speaker as George Lay, Charles' uncle, but it is clear from the content that it is Charles.) On Spero Anargyros, see Davis, *Song of Songs*, 246ff. Mahonri later hired several other men to work with him, Davis, 248ff. Davis did an oral history interview with Anargyros which is on file in Weir Farm OH I. "would do the hard work," CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 18.

<sup>444</sup> "Mahonri is hard at work," DWY to SBFW, Huntington, Wood, July 20, 1945, 287/49. After finishing the monument, Anargyros moved to the Bay Area in California where he had a successful career as a realist sculptor and teacher, won many awards for his projects in the U.S. and abroad, and was named as a Fellow of the National Sculpture Society. See Davis, *Song of Songs*, 259, [www.geocities.com/S\\_anargyros/BIO.html](http://www.geocities.com/S_anargyros/BIO.html), Anargyros oral history interview, op.cit. note 39.

<sup>445</sup> DWY to CESW and SBFW, December 4, 1945, BYU, Sears 1058, 1.

<sup>446</sup> DWY to SBFW, November 27, 1946, Huntington, Wood, 287/51.

chief competitor for the Place Monument. Ultimately, Mahonri secured the commission for the Brigham Young statue. He completed, with the help of Spero Anargyros, a full sized model at the Branchville studio by the spring of 1947. He contemplated going to Italy to carve it as it would be cheaper and he could get the same kind of marble - Carrara - that Michelangelo used but Dorothy's final illness and death intervened. In the end, he did not travel to Rome until 1948 when he stayed for months into 1949, first to oversee the selection of the marble, and then to do the finishing carving on the rough figure which had been produced by Italian craftsman.<sup>447</sup>

### LIFE AT BRANCHVILLE, THE WAR, AND DOROTHY'S DEATH

While Mahonri had happily settled into his routines at Branchville after his marriage to Dorothy, it was also clear that after that event, Branchville became even more the center of her life than it had been in her young adulthood. This came about in part because she and Mahonri could both work on their projects there, Mahonri in his studio and Dorothy at her desk, at her easel, and in her garden, and in part because they both shared a love of the countryside. Branchville became the place that Dorothy and Mahonri always wanted to get back to, whether it was the short trip from New York City or from their travels across country or abroad. This desire to return to the farm was similar to that experienced by J. Alden Weir, and was especially true after every major illness suffered by Dorothy and Mahonri, for the peace and beauty of the farm offered them a soothing recuperative environment. This was the case for Mahonri after his surgery in 1938, and for Dorothy after surgery and radiation treatment for cancer in 1940. While she was recovering well, Mahonri told Sears, "I'm sure, when she gets up to Branchville, she will be herself very soon." Mahonri was also relieved to return there after a heart attack in 1941. Stricken while in Utah, he had to recuperate before traveling back to the east. Once in Branchville, he tried to rest while aware of all that he had to do on *This is the Place*. As his strength returned, he decided to resign as an officer of from several arts organizations so he could put his energy into the large projects with looming deadlines.<sup>448</sup>

The New York apartment at 24 Gramercy Park remained an important base for when Dorothy and Mahonri needed medical care, or when they had social events in the city, or for Mahonri's art related activities before his health forced him to slow down. Like his father-in-law, he had taken on a range of responsibilities when well, including art jury work,

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<sup>447</sup> "my old friend" and "I suppose," MMY to JS, April 12, 1943, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. On Fairbanks, see Davis, *Song of Songs, passim*. Orrice Abram Murdock Jr. (1893-1979) was an attorney who served in the House of Representatives (1933-41) and then the Senate (1941-47), having wrested the nomination from his predecessor, William King. See *Biographical Dictionary of the U. S. Congress 1794-Present* at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>. Brigham Young statue work, MMY to JS, April 28, 1947, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. See also Davis, *Song of Songs*, 259ff and *passim*.

<sup>448</sup> "I'm sure," MMY to JS, July 4, 1940, BYU 1058, Sears, 1; heart attack and recuperation, MMY to JS, December 15, 1941, *Ibid*.

negotiations with galleries, presiding at a meeting as a Vice President of the Institute of Arts and Letters, and teaching at the Art Students League which he did for many years. In 1941, he reported to Sears, "There, I've had a triumph. At one time my class was the largest in the League and the largest sculpture class in the history of the League. That gives me pleasure and a malicious satisfaction." For a man whose whole life was dedicated to his vision of realism, the evolution of modernist sculpture had been a challenge and at times a critique of his career. That students still valued his approach and his skills, when to some he seemed "old-fashioned," must have been very satisfying. But it was a short-lived victory. The following fall his class was cancelled because the registration was insufficient to pay for his services; as in so many other schools, the mobilization for war had dramatically reduced enrollments. Mahonri wrote to Jack Sears, "I shall miss the trip into town once a week and I shall miss the pocket money. But," he admitted, "there are compensations. I can stay up here [in Branchville] and just work until I'm tired; I can play hermit, a little, as I've always wanted to; and I can do several other things I want to do; and maybe even get my studio straightened out. It's been a wreck since the move." He was probably referring to his and Dorothy's decision to move up to Branchville full time during the war and to rent out their Manhattan apartment.<sup>449</sup>

As with so many American families, their lives had been changed by the war. Even before the United States had entered combat, the drama of battle and terror in Europe was apparent. Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and France had fallen to the Germans and the Battle of Britain had begun when Mahonri confided his concerns to his diary in the summer of 1940:

What a year! The war and the breaking up of all our world. My feeling about it must be very much the same as those people who realized its import, people in war torn Europe at the time of the conquests of Genghis Kahn. An apparently irresistible force is sweeping on from the East. England is now battling for her life. If she falls our turn is next.<sup>450</sup>

Friends who escaped France before its capitulation to Vichy and the Germans visited Branchville. Later in the fall, Mahonri and Dorothy were pleased that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was re-elected for a third term during those ominous times. Connecticut and Utah had both voted for him, Mahonri told Jack Sears, "I think most everybody's pleased except the Nazis, the Fascists and big business. Well, so be it, I feel much more secure now I know that preparations for any eventualities will be prepared for." Little did anyone envision quite how soon the United States would finally be drawn into the war. As Mahonri wrote to Jack

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<sup>449</sup> "There, I've had," MMY to JS, March 18, 1941, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. "I shall miss the trip," MMY to JS, October 26, 1942, Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> MMY diary, August 9, 1940, BYU 4, MM Young, 3/9.

Sears in December 1941, a week after the devastating Japanese attack on American Navy ships in Pearl Harbor, “It’s kinda hard to be merry this Christmas.”<sup>451</sup>

Dorothy and Mahonri lived full-time at Branchville in 1943 and 1944, after moving there late in 1942. This enabled them to live off the land with their victory gardens and animals during the wartime food shortages and rationing. It also gave Mahonri uninterrupted time to work on his monument and allowed Dorothy to research and write her father’s biography. After Christmas 1942, Mahonri reported a wonderful time when Agnes and her family came to visit and returned at New Year’s when “we had a goose and our in-laws the Burlinghams. That day was also a success.” Snug inside the house, in the company of their dog Hank and two bob tailed cats, Mahonri and Dorothy enjoyed the winter weather, “Outside it is all white and, most of the time, the wind is howling when it isn’t whistling or moaning.”<sup>452</sup>

The wartime-imposed country regime allowed them to enjoy the seasons unfolding one after another in new ways. Mahonri told Jack Sears “Again it is Spring. Bass the farmer and his son are out spreading manure on the gardens. Aggie’s son, Charles Mahonri Lay, age 4, is riding on the high seat of the spreader as proud as a peacock.” The first blizzard of the season in the winter of 1945 “banked snow against every window in the house” and drifts were such, wrote Dorothy to Florence and Jack Sears, that she “had been planning to go in to town today, but it is impossible to get down the hill - so I’ve had to put it off till next week.” She also reported that she and Mahonri had spent Thanksgiving nearby in Old Lyme at the home of her older sister, Caro Weir Ely, the first family reunion “we have had since the war began and we all loved it. I think, too, it did both Mahonri and me good to get away for a few days.”<sup>453</sup>

The war had made itself felt in many ways. On occasion, Mahonri went into New York City for meetings related to *This is the Place* or to see Utah friends. In January 1943, he wrote to Jack Sears about one such expedition, “A miserable night - black and rainy. New York is pretty gloomy at night with the dim out. It’s also very dangerous in crossing the streets.” There were ongoing concerns about friends and family who were in military service. Mahonri’s son Bill enlisted in the army and his daughter Aggie became an Air Warden. Dorothy made her home available for the work of the Wilton branch of the Red Cross and with her friends she made surgical dressings and clothes, reviving skills she had not used since World War I.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> “I think,” MMY to JS, November 7, 1940, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. “It’s kinda hard,” MMY to JS, December 15, 1941, Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> “we had a goose” and following, MMY to JS, January 6, 1943, BYU 1058, Sears, 1.

<sup>453</sup> “Again it is spring,” MMY to JS, April 13, 1943, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. “banked snow” and following, DWY to JS and Florence Sears, December 4, 1945, Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> “A miserable night,” MMY to JS, January 6, 1943, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. “Dim-out” referred to the blackout which required most public lights to be turned off and the use of light-blocking shades or curtains on windows, to protect the city from possible bombing attacks. On Bill and Aggie, MMY to JS,

In addition to blackouts, the rationing of food and fuel, and the ongoing worries about family and friends in the military, basic materials for Mahonri's work were not available. When Florence Sears asked for a set of cat bookends that he had designed, he explained that "We can't have anything cast in bronze for the duration [of the war]. I have some bronze and I know a caster who would cast them but Uncle Sam won't even allow us to cast our own bronze." Some limited activity persisted in the art world, although organizing exhibitions was difficult for galleries and museums both for display in this country and to send abroad. Mahonri contributed an etching to a show destined for Italy; little risk was involved for if the shipment was lost at sea, a victim of the German U-boats, another print could be pulled from the same plate. But, in the end, Mahonri reported to his old friend Frank Weitenkampf, Curator of Prints at the New York Public Library, it wasn't all hardship, but rather inconvenience that could be endured: "My old address in Gramercy Park no longer exists [the apartment was rented]. For the last two years we have stayed all winter and summer up here in the country. We like it very much and do not mind the weather but we could use a lot more gas." He had cut back on his professional activities and noted that it was difficult to go to New York and return in one day although it was doable, "but you can only attend to business and don't see your friends." It was unsettling when old friends like Howard McCormick, his Paris roommate from student days, companion through Indian country, and collaborator at the American Museum of Natural History, died in the fall of 1943 at age 66, the same age as Mahonri. He missed all the more his lunches with Weitenkampf and other friends at the Century.<sup>455</sup>

In the midst of this came news of the death of Charles Wood on January 22, 1944. Both Dorothy and Mahonri mourned his loss. As Dorothy wrote to Sara Wood, "I cannot bear to think that that wonderful life of ninety one years has ended, but what a triumphant life it was. In so many different ways Col. Wood stood for all the things that are really important in life, and Mahonri, as well as I, feel that we were privileged to know him." Dorothy had known Wood her entire life, and had looked to him as a source of information, intellectual stimulation, shared memories of her father, and emotional sustenance. She recalled, "I always felt a deep affection for him - I don't think I was ever more pleased than when, that last time I went down to see you...he introduced me to someone as "another daughter" of his, it touched me more than I can say."<sup>456</sup>

The friendship continued between Dorothy and Sara, and the extended families.

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December 15, 1941, Ibid. Dorothy's war activities, see Frick, Davidson, Weir records, 5/10, "Obituary" and "Dorothy Young Wife of Sculptor," n.d., unidentified Connecticut newspaper clipping.

<sup>455</sup> "We can't have," MMY to JS and FS, December 17, 1943, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. Etchings show, "American Etchings off to Italy Today. 300 Prints to be Shown at Biennial Art Exhibition in U. S. Pavilion, Venice," *New York Times*, April 20, 1940, 19. "My old address" and following, MMY to FW, Jan 8, 1944, AAA-Weitenkampf, Reel N3/1332. Cut back on activities, for example, Mahonri relinquished his place on the jury of award for an etching show, Edwin Alden Jewell, "American Etchers to hold Exhibition," *New York Times*, January 12, 1943, 21. Death of McCormick, "Howard McCormick Dies, Mural Painter, 66," *New York Times*, October 14, 1943, 22.

<sup>456</sup> "I cannot bear," and following, DWY to SBFW, January 1944, Huntington, Wood, 287/48.

“Isn’t it nice,” wrote Dorothy in 1946, “to have the Wood-Weir friendship carried to the third generation.”<sup>457</sup> Sara entertained Julian’s grandson Bill Carlin (son of his daughter Cora) when he was stationed in the army in California in 1947. Carlin later recalled that weekend and its significance in his life:

It was in the spring of 1947 that I met Sara Bard Field. I was in the army at that time, stationed at Two Rock Ranch Station that lies some 40 miles north of San Francisco. Thanks to the good offices of my aunt, Dorothy Weir Young who knew her, I was invited to spend a weekend at her hacienda in Los Gatos, California. It was to be a memorable weekend for me, one that would actually change the course of my life. I arrived too late in the afternoon on a Friday and was immediately introduced to her daughter, Catherine, and her son in law, Jim Caldwell who was a professor of English at the University of California in Berkeley.<sup>458</sup>

Within a few days after the gathering at Los Gatos, Caldwell introduced Carlin to the modernist composer Roger Sessions, the head of the Composition Department at Berkeley. After meeting with Sessions, Carlin went to hear a performance of his opera:

I found the music almost incomprehensible. I did not understand how a person who knew so much music by heart could come up with these strange, new compelling sounds. I determined I was going to abandon Harvard and return to Berkeley in the hope of studying with Roger Sessions. Sure enough, thanks to Jim and Sara Caldwell’s intervention I entered the University of California that fall and the rest is history. None of it would have happened had not Weir and Colonel Wood become friends so it seemed that all things had come “full circle.”<sup>459</sup>

In the spring of 1947, both Mahonri and Dorothy felt under the weather. Mahonri attributed it to a flu that was going around. When Dorothy didn’t recover as quickly as did other family members, Mahonri wrote to Sears in late April that he was “rather worried about her.” Several weeks later he reported very bad news. Dorothy had undergone exploratory surgery “of the abdominal region with most disastrous results. The conditions couldn’t have been much worse. We can only hope she will not suffer too much.” Dorothy, like his first wife Cecelia, had terminal cancer. Dorothy remained at the Harkness Pavilion of the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York and Mahonri balanced visiting with her with frequent trips to Branchville to work on *This is the Place*, its deadline for completion nearing. He was on the train when she died on May 28, her sister Cora by her side. Mahonri told Sears, “She left no message but just ceased to exist.” After private funeral services in St.

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<sup>457</sup> DWY to SBFW, [1946], Huntington, Wood, 287/52.

<sup>458</sup> William B. Carlin speaking with Christine McKay, August 12, 2003, and email communication, October 2003.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

Paul's Church in Windham, Dorothy was buried, on May 30, in the Windham cemetery, not far from the graves of her parents and Baker family ancestors.<sup>460</sup>

That Dorothy had not suffered endlessly "we can be grateful and thankful," wrote Mahonri to Jack Sears. He continued in an affectionate mode, "Certainly no one could have been more loved and no one could have been more missed. It has been a real consolation to me, to hear from friends of hers that she was very happy with me. To have been a source of happiness to a lovely woman like Dorothy is a help and a comfort in her loss. But I shall miss her for a long, long time."<sup>461</sup>

Shortly after her death, Mahonri wrote the notes for a memorial exhibition of her watercolors at one of her favorite places, The Cosmopolitan Club in New York. "Dorothy was an artist all her life," he began and then detailed her family artistic inheritance: grandfather, father, uncles, and sisters. After summarizing her art studies as a child and young adult, he described in more detail her artistic activities during their marriage. He believed that it was the first major trip to the Southwest in 1936 that had reinvigorated Dorothy's interest in watercolor painting. In Tucson, they visited the mission church of St. Xavier del Bac, and "Dorothy fell in love with the interior." She then took several days to complete what Mahonri called "her first successful watercolor." Later, in Utah, she worked on studies of native plants and flowers and landscape. When she returned to Branchville, she used the flowers from her garden for still-life pictures. Over time, she gained confidence in her technique, as Mahonri noted, "no technical problems seemed to thwart her; she calmly surmounted them." He closed with a loving tribute to her and her art:

When I look at these pictures done in watercolor I am filled with joy at their beauty and their competence . . . All is done. They are complete. But, with this joy in their beauty there comes a sense of sadness. With this beauty, this mastery, comes a feeling of what might have been. What could she have not done? Everything seems possible.<sup>462</sup>

Mahonri didn't refer to the body of oil paintings, including many portraits and still life subjects that Dorothy left at Branchville at the time of her death. Some of the portraits were those of her friends, like Minere and her two children (*Mrs. F. Cunningham, Baby [Hetty Cunningham]*), or the beloved Weir housekeeper, Mary Hanratty (*Seated Woman Darning*), but most were untitled and undated. Judging by the style, a good number must

<sup>460</sup> "rather worried about her and following," MMY to JS, April 28 and May 20, 1947, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. Hospital, Frick, Davidson, Weir records, 5/10, "Obituary" and "Dorothy Young Wife of Sculptor," n.d., unidentified Connecticut newspaper clipping. "She left no message," MMY to JS, July 23, 1947, BYU 1058, Sears, 1. Obituary and death notice, "Mrs. Mahonri Young," *New York Times*, May 29, 1947, 21 and May 30, 1947, 21. Authors' visit to Windham cemetery, January 2002. "She left no message," Mahonri believed that his first wife had delivered a message from the realm beyond life in her dying moments.

<sup>461</sup> "we can be grateful," and following, MMY to JS, July 23, 1947, BYU 1058, Sears, 1.

<sup>462</sup> All quotes in paragraph and block quote from, "Introductory Note" by Mahonri Mackintosh Young, Cosmo Club, *Dorothy Weir Young*, BYU 4, MM Young, 1/24.

have been painted in the 1920s or early 1930s.<sup>463</sup> But her wider circle of family and friends were acquainted with her complete body of work and made note of her skills in their own public tributes. Her sister Cora's father-in-law, Charles C. Burlingham Sr., wrote to the *New York Herald Tribune* describing her "as a painter of exceptional talent and a woman of infallible taste" who did not exhibit her work often but whose "pictures were highly appreciated by critics and connoisseurs." He closed his letter with comments about her that could only have been written by someone who knew her well, writing "of her beauty and distinction, her grace and graciousness, her generous and noble nature, . . . it was these gifts and qualities which endeared her to her friends."<sup>464</sup>

A Bearley classmate saw the Burlingham letter and added her own comments about Dorothy that filled out the portrait of a woman embodying many wonderful qualities that touched all who knew her, and influenced every aspect of her life, whether it was art, research, family matters, or daily life:

that an exceptionally fine and sensitive understanding (matching the delicate perception of her painting) was balanced by an ability to enjoy many aspects of life (from a delight in good cooking to a passionate interest in world politics); and that her painting had strength and a sure touch as well as delicacy. Although the word 'noble' was appropriate to her nature as to few others - what one felt on meeting her was a relaxing warmth and responsiveness, a response so quick with interest and generous with sympathy that her friends were of every age and walk of life. Her 'bounty' was as boundless as the sea.<sup>465</sup>

As Dorothy had ensured that her father received well-merited tributes after his death with commemorative exhibitions and a biography, so her family and friends made sure that she was honored too. Her early death, a decade before that of Mahonri, would alter the course of Branchville history.

### MAHONRI'S YEARS ALONE

Dorothy's death coincided with the completion of the *This is the Place Monument*, which was for Mahonri, noted Charles Lay, "the culmination of his whole life work."<sup>466</sup> He went to Utah in July 1947 for the dedication, regretful that Dorothy did not live to share his

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<sup>463</sup> For a list of Dorothy's paintings, see "List of Pictures by Dorothy Weir Young Held by Brigham Young University," Frick, Davidson, "Inventory," 5/9. The list of about 80 items actually includes those owned by BYU as well as family and friends.

<sup>464</sup> "As a painter of" and following, Charles C. Burlingham to the Editor, June 9, 1947, *New York Herald Tribune*, a copy is located in Frick, Davidson, Weir, 5/10. The long-lived Burlingham (1858-1959) was an esteemed lawyer and savvy adviser to many New York Democrats, from the 1920s to the 1940s, including New York mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

<sup>465</sup> Bearley comment, Frick, Davidson, Weir, 5/10.

<sup>466</sup> "the culmination," CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 15.

happiness at that event, or share the credit for her unqualified support of his efforts for nearly a decade.

Branchville would not be the same without Dorothy. At age 70, Mahonri was winding down his career. He went to Rome in 1947 and 1948 to oversee the work on the Brigham Young statue destined for the Capitol in Washington DC. When he returned, he settled into what his grandson described as the “triangular” pattern of the last decade of his life: in New York a few days a week at his small apartment on Gramercy Park with meals taken at the Century Club; a few days at Branchville working or putting in his studio and enjoying the visits of young artists who lived nearby, among them Sperry Andrews and his wife Doris; and then weekend trips to Stratford, Connecticut, visiting the longtime home of his daughter’s family and in-laws.<sup>467</sup>

Mahonri's active art career was slowing down too. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, he served on some juries. Although his work was selected for only a few group shows, he was referred to as a “master” or a “veteran” of American art.<sup>468</sup> In June 1950, his statue of Brigham Young was finally dedicated in the Capitol on the anniversary of the Mormon leader’s birthday. It was unveiled by Mahonri, Brigham Young’s youngest grandson, and by 87-year-old Mrs. Mabel Young Sanborn, Young’s last surviving child. The statue had been ready for months but delayed by a political dispute about its placement: whether it should be in the great circle of Statuary Hall, as the Utah officials preferred, or by the window, as Mahonri preferred, where it would have better light. Mahonri had taken care with the selection of the stone, and was reported at the time to have said “The block of marble is as near perfect as a piece of stone can be - it rings like a bronze bell when struck with a hammer.” In 1952, Mahonri prepared the introduction for the Weir centennial exhibition at the American Academy of Arts and Letters and was elected, along with William Zorach, another sculptor, an honorary member of the Art Students League for distinguished service in the Fine Arts.<sup>469</sup>

Mahonri tried to keep the Branchville property up after Dorothy’s death by hiring

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<sup>467</sup> Pattern of Mahonri’s life: see CL, Ibid., 16. After Dorothy died, Mahonri sold the front section of the apartment and lived in a smaller section in the rear, Bill Young and MMY II, Ibid. 20. Davis, *Song of Songs*, 271, says Mahonri lived in the separate small servants’ apartment which he kept when he sold the large unit.

<sup>468</sup> “master or veteran,” see Sam Hunter, “Among New Shows . . . A Prize Ring Panorama,” *New York Times*, November 23, 1947, 88. Other reviews that discussed Mahonri’s art at this time: “Topics of the Times - Touching the Manly Art,” December 31, 1947, 14; “Painting Displays Strike Lyric Notes,” September 24, 1949, 11; Samuel Putnam, “Variety of Christmas Group Shows Include Display by 10 American Veterans,” December 22, 1951, 13.

<sup>469</sup> On Brigham Young statue, see “Mormons’ Leader Gets Niche Today - Congress Committee Will End Dispute Over the Placing of Brigham Young Statue,” *New York Times*, March 13, 1950, 25; “A Tribute to Mormon Leader,” June 2, 1950, 31; and “Last Surviving Child of Brigham Young, 87,” September 22, 1950, 31. Centennial exhibit, “Art Show Marks Weir Anniversary,” *New York Times*, February 1, 1952, 19. Honorary member of League; “Art Students League Elects Six,” December 11, 1952, 42.

help and with the assistance of his son-in-law Oliver Lay, but as he aged it was more difficult for him to do much work himself around the grounds. Oliver's brother George also helped out around the property and later assisted Oliver in readying the art works for shipping to Utah after Mahonri's death.<sup>470</sup>

That Oliver and George were so willing to help out during Mahonri's old age reflects the strength of their family's attachment to Branchville. From the time of his marriage to Dorothy, Mahonri's family had started visiting Branchville and enjoyed long stays there. Son Bill spent as much time as he could at the farm between 1932 and 1957, "and it was very much home to me during those years." He remembered the construction of his father's studio as did his brother-in-law, Oliver Lay, "We called it the Taj Mahal." Charles Lay remembered Dorothy as a warm person who welcomed his family. During the decade after Dorothy's death, from 1947 to 1957, Bill Young and his family would visit for three months every summer. Young taught at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, in the 1940s, which made it easy to visit Mahonri and Dorothy. But even after he became a museum director at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in Utica, NY (1951-1953), and at the Columbus [Ohio] Gallery of Fine Arts (1953-1976), he and his family traveled to Branchville frequently.<sup>471</sup>

Charles Lay recalled Branchville as a place with a "magical quality . . . And the way you experience it is to spend some time walking around the grounds and walking down to the pond. And that's when it starts to work." It was especially wonderful for children, who had no restrictions as to where they could go, observed Lay, "Branchville was a child's paradise because you could go down to the barn and play in the hay, and . . . check out the horses, feed the cows, go down to the pond, go fishing for pickerel or sun fish, . . . and no one really cared where you were." There were many places for children to enjoy such as the area they characterized as the "Secret Garden." There were trails through the woods, where fox hunters could be heard at night. The Weir studio had a playhouse, two small rooms on the upper deck of the south side. By the pond, there was a boathouse and a boat for fishing, and rocks for sunning or swimming. "Not always," remembered Charles, "but most of the time when we had a good Spring . . . and you could go from the little dock in the boathouse to the boat with your fishing rod and everybody could go out and . . . put their line in." Amidst these childhood pleasures, Mahonri was always working but "didn't seem to be working, because this was his life" observed Charles. Mahonri always had time for showing a child how to work with tools or to make something, said Mahonri Mackintosh II. Lay noted how

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<sup>470</sup> CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 13; George Lay, *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>471</sup> "and it was very much," Bill Young, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 1; "Taj Mahal," Bill Young, *Ibid.*, 2; CL, *Ibid.*, 15. Bill Young (1911-1996) authored a number of books on American art. See "Mahonri Young, 84, An Art Historian," *New York Times*, July 7, 1996, 22.

his grandfather was always “working with the real things in life. He was an eternal realist.” Mahonri was aging, but “fond and supportive” to all his grandchildren.<sup>472</sup>

Mahonri’s health declined during the last few years of his life and he was in and out of the hospital. Finally, on November 2, 1957, he died in Norwalk Hospital at age 80. His body went by train to Utah for burial in the Salt Lake Cemetery next to the grave of his first wife Cecelia.<sup>473</sup> His written will and his family would determine the next chapter in the life of the farm at Branchville.

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<sup>472</sup> “magical quality,” CL, Weir Farm OH I, MM Young, 16. “Branchville was,” CL, Ibid., 19. “Not always,” CL, Ibid., 23-24. “didn’t seem to be,” CL, Ibid., 4. Work with tools, MMY II, Ibid., 6. “working with real things,” and following, CL, Ibid., 4.

<sup>473</sup> On Mahonri’s last years, 1950-57, see Davis, *Song of Songs*, 271-80. Also, “Mahonri Young, Sculptor, Dead,” *New York Times*, November 3, 1957, 88.

## PART THREE

### **THE LEGACY OF J. ALDEN WEIR AND WEIR FARM**



## CHAPTER TEN

### ASSESSING J. ALDEN WEIR'S REPUTATION, 1947-2003

#### FROM OBSCURITY TO A BIOGRAPHY, 1947-1960

In the ten years between Dorothy's death and his own, Mahonri Young's principal contribution to preserving Weir's artistic legacy was his introduction to the 1952 catalogue for the centennial exhibition at the American Academy of Arts and Letters.<sup>474</sup> With Young busy completing his own art projects and contending with medical problems, the stewardship of Weir's reputation passed to his surviving daughters, Caro and Cora, and their families, and the interpretation of his place in American art to dealers, scholars, curators, and critics.

Following a two year interval (1945-46) when Weir's work did not seem to be exhibited, it reappeared in some group shows between 1947 and 1951, and attracted more positive comment as American Impressionism was emerging in a more favorable light following the war. After a decade of passing reference, his portraits were the first to receive strong, favorable mention even in group shows. Hence at the French & Company Galleries, in July 1947, the show included "a large, dark and vital portrait by J. Alden Weir." At the centennial exhibition for Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917) at the Whitney Museum, Weir's portrait of Ryder was included. The Metropolitan Museum of Art chose in 1948 to celebrate the golden jubilee of the consolidation of Greater New York--which occurred in 1898 when the City of Brooklyn joined with New York (Manhattan and the Bronx), Queens, and Staten Island to become one great city--in a Costume Institute exhibition of "seventeen magnificent portraits." Virginia Pope wrote in her review, "These are not only distinguished paintings by such artists as John Singer Sargent . . . J. Alden Weir and James McNeill Whistler, but they are striking records of the styles of the day."<sup>475</sup>

The reassessment and revival of Weir's work did not evolve steadily over time, but appeared and disappeared, remaining constant from about the mid-1970s on, as dealers and scholars began to revisit and promote interest in American Impressionists. Weir's visibility followed these patterns, and his work began to attract more than the offhand reference. The exhibition of "American Paintings from 1880 to the Present" at the Milch Gallery in June 1949 elicited this appreciation and assessment from Stuart Preston, one of the *New York*

<sup>474</sup> American Academy of Arts and Letters, *J. Alden Weir, 1852-1919, Centennial Exhibition, February 1-March 30, 1952* (New York, 1952). See below for discussion.

<sup>475</sup> "a large dark," French & Co., "New Group Events," Howard Devree, *New York Times*, July 6, 1947, 52; Ryder show, "53 Ryder Paintings Shown at Whitney," October 18, 1947, 13; Metropolitan show "There are not only," in "New Designs Seen in Old Portraits," June 18, 1948, 13.

*Times'* leading art critics: "Hassam, J. Alden Weir and Willard Metcalf were among the leaders of American Impressionism that one day deserves a comprehensive exhibition to itself; and, though the paintings by them shown here are not first rate, they demonstrate how intelligently these men followed their great French contemporaries."<sup>476</sup> A year later, Howard Devree, another *Times* critic, used a different show at the Milch, with paintings by Twachtman, Prendergast, Renoir, Glackens and others, to suggest that the art of the past be revisited carefully as it had something to say to contemporary painters:

Of the earlier American paintings there is more diversity than some of our more ardent contemporaries are usually prone to believe, and occasionally one notes on second glance a style or approach on the part of the artist which is already indicative of later developments . . . the range is from the bright broken color of Hassam's impressionist Venetian canvas to the sensitive green tonalities of J. Alden Weir's New England panorama.<sup>477</sup>

The opportunity to look at Weir's art anew came two years later when the American Academy of Arts and Letters sponsored an exhibition commemorating the centennial of Weir's birth. It opened on February 1, 1952, selected and arranged by a committee comprised of Barry Faulkner, Gifford Beal, Leon Kroll, and Mahonri Young. On display were 113 items, the majority of which were oil paintings and the remainder water colors, pastels, drawings, dry-points, etchings, engravings, and a lithograph. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue with a flattering essay by Mahonri who described Weir as a "devotee of quietism." He continued, "In his art there was no unseemly bluster; there no tempests and few storms. He had nothing in common with the 'strong arm school.' His aim was to be, not to seem . . . the whole was greater than the parts . . . the art force we know as J. Alden Weir was greater than any of his masterpieces." In his first column about the exhibition in the *Times*, Stuart Preston noted that no major collection had been shown since the artist's death in 1919 (he was apparently unaware of the Century and Metropolitan exhibitions in the early 1920s). Therefore, it was "high time" for a re-assessment of Weir's work which, Preston believed, reflected the changes in American art during the artist's lifetime although he was a "conservative realist." Preston also mentioned in a positive vein Weir's role in introducing French art, particularly that of Manet and Bastien-Lepage, to this country, and his role as a founder of the Society of American Artists and as a leader of such organizations as the National Academy of Design.<sup>478</sup>

However, in his longer review of the show, Preston's opinion about Weir's work and his place in the context of his times, was decidedly mixed, "Weir was a conservative artist and his range of expression was not wide. Still, from his early, rather academic figure pieces to

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<sup>476</sup> "Around and About," *New York Times*, June 5, 1949, X6.

<sup>477</sup> "Expanding Horizons. Four Newly Opened Exhibitions Enlarge Our Outlook on Art of Today," *New York Times*, June 11, 1950, 106.

<sup>478</sup> "devotee of quietism" and following, in Young, "Appreciation," *Weir Centennial*, 3, 5. Preston, "Art Show Marks Weir Anniversary," *New York Times*, February 1, 1952, 19.

the shimmer of his late blond landscapes, with which he half-heartedly linked himself to Impressionism, there is a genuine development to be traced.” Preston alternately praised and disparaged Weir’s achievements, citing, for instance, the “personal quality, a measure of individual grace and harmony” that distinguish his work “from the mediocrity of most late nineteenth century realism.” He noted that there are no real failures among the paintings and that some even have “beauty of a poetic order.” Weir’s technical ability could not make up for a deficiency of “powerful means of realizing the visual world. His response to that was comparatively faint.” He faulted his “balmy landscapes, whose color is wan” and wondered why he painted so many as “they do not seem at all to have fired his imagination.” Rather, Preston found “that spark” in his portrait work: “The distinction and sensitivity of *Against the Window*, of *Idle Hours*, of the portraits of John Gilbert and of Wyatt Eaton, make one wish that he had multiplied the number of these tender and humane images.”<sup>479</sup>

During the remaining years of the 1950s, Weir’s work appeared in a few exhibitions in New York, usually in the company of his Impressionist peers, and these displays were received favorably. The Milch Gallery mounted a show in 1955 entitled “Childe Hassam and American Impressionism,” which included paintings by Ernest Lawson, Gari Melchers, Willard Metcalf, Theodore Robinson and “J. Alden Weir, one of the most sensitive of them,” as Howard Devree noted in his review.<sup>480</sup> The critic was interested in their work as models for contemporary artists, not stylistically, but in showing how artistic influences could be appropriated without holding back change. Devree wrote that the Milch show

reveals how American artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reacted to French Impressionism. Their reaction was far less violent than the reaction of American artists to later phases of modernism in the wake of the famous Armory show. And yet, although quite as influenced in their time, they retained -- as we can now see with the passage of time -- quite distinct individualities instead of being overwhelmed as they might well have been.<sup>481</sup>

A year later, Stuart Preston also had kind remarks about the “first generation of American impressionists” in a show at the James Graham & Sons gallery: “J. Alden Weir, Twachtman, Lawson and Theodore Robinson (Monet’s pupil) may have been derivative artists but their practice of the new style was intelligent and, at his best, Childe Hassam need fear nothing from a comparison with the French.”<sup>482</sup>

<sup>479</sup> “Weir was a conservative,” and following, Stuart Preston, “Centennial Exhibition. J. Alden Weir’s Paintings,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1952, X9. This column was accompanied by an illustration of *The Red Bridge*. Next to it was Picasso’s *Night Fishing at Antibes*, and both were accompanied by the caption, “Extremes in the Week’s Exhibitions.” The Picasso was on view at the Museum of Modern Art which had just purchased it.

<sup>480</sup> Howard Devree, “Recurring Tides. American Impressionists and Artists Of Today Linked by Problems,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1955, 159.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>482</sup> Graham Gallery, Stuart Preston, “New York Variety: Local Summer Shows,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1956, 74.

Weir's work appeared in three shows in 1959 and 1960, including an exhibit at the American Academy of Arts & Letters of artists influenced by the Impressionist movement, a show of pastels at the Davis Gallery, and a survey of 19th and 20th century art at the Maynard Walker Gallery. Stuart Preston urged his readers to go to the Davis Gallery where they would find "small gestures by men such as Everett Shinn, J. Alden Weir, Arthur B. Davies, and Eilshemius, whose work we are accustomed to seeing on a larger and more important scale . . . the Weir pastel is a beauty." At the Walker Gallery, critic Dore Ashton found "sensitively painted still lifes by J. Alden Weir."<sup>483</sup>

The publication of Dorothy Weir Young's *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir* in 1960 should have been a watershed year for an appreciation of her father's work. Lawrence W. Chisolm, a young professor of history at Yale, had edited Dorothy's manuscript, authored an introduction, and thanked Dorothy's surviving sisters, Mrs. Charles Burlingham (Cora) and Mrs. George Page Ely (Caro) for their assistance.<sup>484</sup> In Chisolm's long, insightful introduction, he did a remarkable job of summarizing Weir's career and then explaining the decline in his reputation in the larger context of changes in American art and taste, most notably in the ascendance of modern art and the changing historiography of American culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of the themes in his introduction are those that other authors, both before and after the *Life & Letters* appeared, grappled with as they tried to place Weir in a sympathetic context. Chisolm's concerns, too, about the 'misinterpretation' of Weir as strictly an Impressionist foreshadowed critiques in the 1970s and 1980s. A few selected sentences from the introduction reveal how he understood these issues:

This biography invites us to enter a personal dialogue with a portion of the American past as yet scantily understood . . . A life of quiet harmony represented not a retreat but an ideal.( xv) Today, forty years after Weir's death, his work is little known outside professional circles, his diminished reputation due in part to his modesty in life and in paint and to the shifting standards of critics and historians. (xxii) Weir's paintings have moved from the gallery walls to storerooms, Where international modernism hasn't dominated, only the most insistently American work has won acclaim.(xxvi) To call Weir an impressionist is to indicate an important visual vocabulary he often used, but it is also to mislead somewhat as to the special quality of his style, a style grounded in his own life rather than in the Paris art world of the eighteen sixties and seventies.(xxvi) . . . his work was never widely popular. It neither accommodated the prevailing taste nor won notoriety by flaunting. . . . Weir urged no aesthetic

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<sup>483</sup> American Academy, Howard Devree, "Art: Impressionist Mood," *New York Times*, January 17, 1959, 17; "small gestures," in Stuart Preston, "Art: Take Your Choice. Shows Offer American Pictures of 1900," December 12, 1959, 19; and "sensitively painted," in Dore Ashton, "Art: 18th-Century Switch," May 11, 1960, 35.

<sup>484</sup> Lawrence W. Chisolm (1929-1998) received his BA from Princeton University and a PhD in 1957 from Yale. His specialty was American history but he was also an expert in Chinese language and culture. In 1968 he was recruited from Yale to the State University of New York, Buffalo, to head the American Studies department; it became one of the leading programs in the country under his direction. See University at Buffalo *Reporter*, "Obituary," [www.buffalo.edu/vol29/vol29n31/obit.html](http://www.buffalo.edu/vol29/vol29n31/obit.html).

dogmas, wrote very little about his own work, and avoided both the stasis of academicism and the orthodoxy of revolution. In short, Weir had no taste for self promotion either in his own time or with an eye on posterity. Integrity was its own justification.(xxx) It is often difficult not to judge Weir's round of life complacent, but this is to deny a part of our past and ourselves under the pressure of contemporary attitudes. Weir's love of a commonplace, natural world, a private life, and a modest art cannot be dismissed as nostalgia in an age of forced social consequences and agonized sensibilities.(xxxii)<sup>485</sup>

The main text of the book that followed the introduction was an engaging mixture of narrative, analysis, and extensive quotation from the correspondence of Weir, his family, and his friends that reflected Dorothy Weir's long years of research and commitment to honor her father.

The book received a very favorable review in the *Sunday Book Review* of the *New York Times* written in an inviting manner by popular art historian James Thomas Flexner, himself an adept chronicler of the history of American painting. The review was accompanied by four illustrations of Weir's paintings from the book. Flexner had visited with Dorothy and Mahonri and called on his memories of the farm in his introductory comments, "Among the most delightful places this reviewer has known in America was a Connecticut farmhouse on whose walls paintings bloomed as naturally as flowers in the surrounding fields." The charm and character he remembered had been re-captured for him by the book. Flexner found the book a cultural history of Weir and his times, and a story of his life and artistic evolution, and valued it for those reasons: "Not so much from the sale of his pictures as from two prosperous marriages and from acting as a purchasing agent abroad for American collectors, Weir achieved a financial position that enabled him to help his fellow painters. That he was so widely gregarious and appreciative expands his biography into an informal history of the era." Flexner particularly enjoyed Weir's letters from his student days and the wealth of material on Weir's friends. His concluding remarks were an invitation to the reader to seek out and read the volume: "this book reflects the genteel tradition in American art at its most engaging. Weir was celebrated for his paintings of 'quietly beautiful gentlewomen.' Mrs. Young tells his story with a gentlewoman's modesty, unobtrusive culture, and grace."<sup>486</sup>

## CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM, 1960-1983

The *Life & Letters* did not inspire a renaissance of interest in Weir, and without a serious change in attitudes towards the American Impressionists (the group with which he was usually associated, correctly or not), another decade passed before the positive outweighed the negative judgments, and his work was displayed with regularity. Only a brief

<sup>485</sup> "Introduction," Young, *Life & Letters*: the small roman numerals in the quote are the page numbers.

<sup>486</sup> All quotes, James Thomas Flexner, "In the Genteel Tradition of Another Day," *New York Times*, January 1, 1961, BR7. Flexner later became a friend of Bill Young.

notice was given to a show at the Larcada Gallery in 1966. More than three dozen Weir oils and drawings, “with some rare loans from family,” were on view, wrote John Canaday about the work “of this sturdy American impressionist.” In another review the following year, Canaday suggested that there were cycles in the evaluation of late 19th-century American art, linked to the rise and fall of individual artists’ reputations. The IBM Gallery displayed 33 paintings (of a group of 150) that the collector William T. Evans had given to the nation between 1907 and 1915. Except for a “really extraordinary Ryder, *Moonlight*,” he found the show bland, including an “awful” picture by Elihu Vedder. There were some artists that were “dead and buried” but have “begun to look good again,” including Dewing, Chase, and Twachtman. Noting that revivals of interest in various movements or artists could be triggered by any number of reasons, including “almost literal changes in our vision,” he suggested that such a process might be at work for late 19th century American art. How else could he have come to the following statement: “And the namby-pamby lady [*The White Parasol*] by Robert Reid, compared with *A Gentlewoman* (what a title) by J. Alden Weir, which looks good, will inspire wonder as to why, a few years ago, the Weir would have looked equally feeble.”<sup>487</sup>

Certainly Canaday was not a man to mince words. And in other discussions of the American Impressionists he continued in this forthright vein. He basically liked a new show at the Hirschl & Adler Galleries called “The American Impressionists” and enjoyed his introduction to some painters whose work he was not familiar with, such as Dennis Bunker, a somewhat younger Weir contemporary “whose death at the age of 29 [1890] must have cut short a vigorous talent.”<sup>488</sup> However, he then ranked as second class the work of Weir and his contemporaries compared with that of their French peers:

The American impressionists suffer badly from the automatic imposition of the French standard, and of course none of them meets it. Nor can they offer a really impressive standard of their own to substitute for it. Even at their most adventurous . . . the Americans failed to recognize that French impressionism carried with it new approaches to pictorial composition along with the division of color and the preoccupation with informal subject matter, which were understood on this side of the Atlantic. Painters like John Henry Twachtman, J. Alden Weir, Willard Metcalf, the brilliant William Merritt Chase and even the Francophiliac Childe Hassam could not tear themselves away from the carefully balanced, frame-controlled compositional schemes inculcated by the academies. Their efforts to combine the freed brush with harmoniously accidental-looking compositions . . . never quite jelled. The American impressionists are hence a

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<sup>487</sup> Larcada Gallery, “with some rare loans,” John Canaday, “Art: here’s a Birthday Cake, Pablo: Happy 85th . . . other Current Shows,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1966, 24. IBM Gallery, “really extraordinary Ryder,” and following, John Canaday, “Art in Ferment, Sort Of,” January 15, 1967, D29.

<sup>488</sup> John Canaday, “Art: The American Impressionist, Big and Little,” *New York Times*, November 16, 1968, 30. Dennis Bunker (1861-1890) was a friend of Charles Platt who married Bunker’s widow. See Morgan, *Charles Platt, passim*.

much more provincial school than those painters at work up until about 1875, whose genuine Americanism they replaced with a half-digested Europeanism.<sup>489</sup>

In 1972, there were two small exhibitions that featured Weir. The motivation for the show at the Montclair Art Museum was to feature *A Glimpse of the Sound*, a picture donated in 1902 by William T. Evans. The second show was apparently organized by Bill Young, then Director of the Columbus [Ohio] Gallery of Fine Arts, for three venues: the Columbus Gallery, the Phillips Collection in Washington DC, and the Brigham Young University Art Gallery in Provo, Utah. Bill Young wrote a breezy introductory essay, "The Most Fortunate Man I Know," that captured the outgoing social personality of Weir but had little to say about his art. It is not clear what inspired this exhibition, which was entitled "Paintings by Julian Alden Weir." Neither the exhibition in Montclair nor the one organized by Young seemed to have influenced then current evaluations of Weir.<sup>490</sup>

A new point of view toward American art gradually emerged in the 1970s, a willingness to appreciate the various schools and movements in American art for their achievements in a given cultural context. Hilton Kramer personified this when he wrote about the 150th anniversary show of the National Academy of Design in 1975. He found of interest the vast array of the Academy's "most accomplished members," and included Weir among those "luminous names in the history of the American realist tradition." The new trend was also discernible in the commercial galleries which were loath, at any time, to promote art they believed unsalable. The Coe Kerr Gallery featured six painters, Cassatt, Hassam, Robinson, Sargent, Twachtman, and Weir, in its 1976 show, "American Impressionism, Works of Its Masters."<sup>491</sup> But the real breakthrough came in 1979 and 1980 with several shows focused on the history of art activities in Connecticut.

In 1979, the Lyman Allen Museum in New London, Connecticut presented an exhibition on the art colony at Old Lyme, about which interest had been building for some time. Vivien Raynor reported on the show in the *New York Times*, and noted that Old Lyme was "at its best during its Impressionist years" when Hassam, Weir, and others were active

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<sup>489</sup> John Canaday, "Art: The American Impressionist, Big and Little," *New York Times*, November 16, 1968, 30.

<sup>490</sup> Montclair, *Julian Alden Weir Exhibition of Paintings June 4-June 25, 1972*, Arranged by Drew University, Madison, New Jersey with the Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ. There were 24 oils, six water colors, and one pastel on display. The brochure essay was written by Fearn C. Thurlow. Found in Frick, Davidson, Weir. There were two possible motivations for the organization of the Columbus-Phillips-BYU exhibit, one, to commemorate the 120th anniversary of Weir's birth, and two, for BYU to partially redeem its promise to build a museum and display the collection it had purchased in 1959 from Bill Young. Thirteen years had elapsed and it had not built the museum. The university may have mounted the show to demonstrate its good faith to the Young family, and to demonstrate to the Weir family that it was a legitimate steward of the collection. See Chapter 11 for information on the transfer of the collection to BYU.

<sup>491</sup> "Most accomplished painters," in Hilton Kramer, "National Academy of Design Celebrates Its 150th Anniversary," *New York Times*, October 10, 1975, 39-40; Coe Kerr Gallery, "American Impressionism, Works of Its Masters," February 29, 1976, 52.

and influential.<sup>492</sup> This show was an aperitif for the three exhibitions that would open a year later, defining the movement centered in Connecticut, but connecting to the wider world of American art, and thus providing a more comprehensive framework for understanding Weir's art, as well as that of his contemporaries and friends.

The three exhibits were planned in tandem to showcase "Connecticut and American Impressionism" and opened in the spring of 1980. The William Benton Museum of Art in Storrs hosted *Connecticut and American Impressionism*, the Hurlbutt Gallery of the Greenwich Library displayed *The Cos Cob Clapboard Show*, and the Lyme Historical Society in Old Lyme mounted *The Art Colony at Old Lyme*. Susan Tritschler, Director of the Greenwich Historical Society, regarded this group set of shows as "the first evidence of general interest in American Impressionist paintings."<sup>493</sup>

Vivien Raynor reviewed all three exhibits, relating one to another, and while not wildly enthusiastic about the art per se, and like many of the critics who preceded her too prone to comparing French and American work, to the detriment of the latter, was exceedingly complimentary about the catalogues produced. With the Benton show, she praised the accompanying catalogue and lauded the essay, "Reflections on Impressionism, Its Genesis and American Phase," by Harold Spencer, the guest curator, for its delineation of the differences between French and American Impressionism:

As Professor Spencer makes clear in his excellent catalogue essay, it's no use comparing the Americans, many of whom were teachers, with their European counterparts. 'The Painting of American places,' he wrote, 'was born in a romantic era and developed an iconography that could not be easily shed.' - and likewise a state of mind. It's hard to imagine a Frenchman saying, as Weir did to Twachtman of the river he was painting, that it would teach him about the 'greater stream . . . of life.'<sup>494</sup>

Spencer's cautionary note was one that echoed earlier comments by Phillips and others, and one that should have warned future writers of the perils of interpretation. In the actual catalogue essay, he wrote:

'Impressionism,' as a stylistic term, is something of an abstraction. It serves best as a term of convenience of the most general nature, and this is as true of the French as it is of the American phase. American Impressionism was not 'unlocalized,' for there is no mistaking its sense of place. . . . The painting of American places was born in a romantic era and developed an iconography that could not be easily shed. A fair measure of it was fashioned in New England, and the fact that so much of American Impressionism came out of this region is a

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<sup>492</sup> Vivien Raynor, "Old Lyme as Provence," *New York Times*, May 27, 1979, CN14.

<sup>493</sup> Tritschler quoted in Alberta Eiseman, "A Cos Cob House is a Landmark of American Impressionism," *New York Times*, November 10, 1991, CN27.

<sup>494</sup> Vivien Raynor, "Impressionism: 'A Genteel Interlude,'" *New York Times*, March 30, 1980, CN16. The Spencer quotation in the Raynor article has been corrected to conform to the actual catalogue text.

conjunction of some consequence . . . The Americans were Impressionists selectively.<sup>495</sup>

As Raynor reported on the shows at Greenwich and Old Lyme, she noted that attendance had been high for “a spread of art that is . . . so cheerful.” She urged viewers to see all three shows because each had something to contribute. She also highlighted a number of paintings and painters in both reviews, and contrasted the somewhat different atmospheres and work in the Cos Cob and Old Lyme colonies. She mentioned Weir in her factual narrative and referred to only one painting by him: “Weir, whose work a reporter actually described in 1896 as ‘Impressionism minus the violence,’ is quite well represented by *The Fishing Party*. It has an airless quality, though, that is caused, possibly, by his having piled green upon green rather than attempting complementary contrasts.” Perhaps the critic was somewhat jaded about the American interpretation of Impressionism, but the catalogues and the impressions made by the exhibitions would be influential over the course of the next decade.<sup>496</sup>

In 1983, Weir was featured in two exhibitions in New York. At the 42nd Street Philip Morris Branch of the Whitney Museum an exhibition which was pleasantly received looked at three American families in art: the portraits of the colonial era Duyckincks, the portraits and still lifes of the federal era Peales, and the work of Robert Weir and his sons John and Julian.<sup>497</sup>

More importantly, Julian was the subject of a major retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was curated by Doreen Bolger Burke and accompanied by the publication of her thorough study of Weir and his work.<sup>498</sup> The exhibition was reviewed by *Times*’ critic John Russell who characterized Weir as “someone who labored hard and long but did not often rise above mediocrity.” Like many other critics before him, Russell considered the

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<sup>495</sup> Harold Spencer, “Reflections on Impressionism, Its Genesis and American Phase,” in *Connecticut and American Impressionism* (Storrs, CT: William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, 1980), 49, 51. Found in Frick, Davidson, Weir, 5/2.

<sup>496</sup> “a spread of art” and following, Vivien Raynor, “A Full Portrait of American Impressionism,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1980, CN1. That she was not an enthusiast about the movement is evident in another piece, “It remains to say that the art for which Connecticut itself was an inspiration (though by no means the only one) was American Impressionism, a popular but not altogether successful graft from France,” in a review of the New Britain Museum of American Art exhibit, “Three Centuries of American Art,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1981, CN1, 24. The authors also wonder if Raynor just didn’t like Weir’s art at all. In a review of watercolors by Sperry Andrews, she wrote that he lived in Weir’s former house and “paints the Connecticut countryside but with considerably more panache than Weir.” See “Printmakers in New Britain,” *New York Times*, October 30, 1983, CN22.

<sup>497</sup> Grace Glueck, “In the Arts: Critics’ Choices,” *New York Times*, October 9, 1983, G20. Vivien Raynor reviewed this show when it traveled to the Whitney branch in Stamford, CT., and was enlarged with the work of a fourth family, the Wyeths. She preferred the work of John Weir to Julian but then added, “Collectively, the Weirs cause the show to sag a bit, but they at least report on the sinister atmosphere of the Belle Epoque, during which Modernism was born.” A Display of Four Illustrious Families,” *New York Times*, January 1, 1984, CN14.

<sup>498</sup> Burke had received support for her research on Weir from Cora Burlingham.

work of the French Impressionists as the ideal, and that of the Americans as second rate: “If anything could put this particular visitor out of humor with painting, it would be the experience of looking at canvas after canvas by J. Alden Weir and seeing what a hash he made, time after time, of motifs that had already been treated to perfection [by Manet and other Impressionists].” Yet, Russell found some things to admire, alluding to “the delicacy with which Weir charted the progress of the Industrial Revolution in the Connecticut countryside,” and also finding Weir’s portrait of Wyatt Eaton “a very touching evocation of young American manhood.”<sup>499</sup>

Other reviews of the exhibition were more discerning. The *Wall Street Journal* was critical of Burke’s interpretation, rather than the art itself. The reviewer suggested that it was an injustice to Weir’s talent and achievement to present his work as “always progressing toward Impressionism,” especially as half the pictures displayed did not fall under that rubric, “Indeed, many of Weir’s best (and earlier) works show a creamy realism and a smooth brush.” The writer also found “works on view that give a great deal of pleasure, in particular his masterful still lifes and the moody, summery landscapes.”<sup>500</sup>

The exhibition inspired a nuanced discussion of Weir, his art, and his life in an essay by Gordon Fairburn in *Art World*, “Weir’s Ethics Puritan Line,” which drew on the Met exhibition and Burke’s catalogue, both of which he admired, as well as the *Life & Letters*. Fairburn situated Weir in a wider intellectual discussion about the Puritan heritage of morality that influenced American culture long past the formal religious evocation. From Weir’s father, Fairburn argued, the artist received a world view that equated the good (moral) character with good draughtsmanship. Yet Weir eventually broke away from both his traditional Parisian training and his father’s influence to experiment with new techniques, a lighter palette, and new subject matter, all of which occurred in 1889, the same year that Robert Weir died (and Weir started painting with Twachtman): “Weir’s palette began to lighten quite abruptly from the traditional academic shadows to a dramatic higher Impressionist key . . . with the passing of his father, the puritan assumes his own mature style.” Fairburn also viewed 1891 as another key moment when Weir wrote to his brother that “he had newly ‘recognized a truth which he never before felt.’”<sup>501</sup> Fairburn understood that Weir’s work had to be considered part of a larger cultural tradition, and as a painter, his

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<sup>499</sup> “someone who labored hard” and following, John Russell, “Art: At the Met, Sculptures by Erastus Dow Palmer,” *New York Times*, October 14, 1983, C23. Russell referred to “Manet and other Impressionists” elsewhere in the article.

<sup>500</sup> “always progressing towards” and following, *Wall Street Journal* article, with a notation “week of 11/7 to 11/10?,” was found in Frick, Davidson, Weir, 5/3.

<sup>501</sup> “Weir’s palette began” and following, Gordon Fairburn, “Weir’s Ethics Puritan Line,” *Art World*, November, 1983. Copy in Frick, Davidson, Weir, 5/3. In the same file, there was a brief article by John Russell Taylor published in *The Arts*, “The all-American Impressionist” which was also extremely positive about Weir’s work and its individuality, “and the paintings which mark him most clearly as an American Impressionist, if not the American Impressionist would never be mistaken for French painting. His colors are predominantly pale, applied with the lightest and most feathery of touches, so that one often gets the feeling of a tapestry rather than a painting.”

art fit patterns shared by his American contemporaries. Compromise between older artistic tradition and newly emerging trends had affected generations before Weir. His was no exception:

Weir's most admired and beloved peer in the ateliers, Jules Bastien-Lepage, showed until his premature death all the promise of forging a compromise between the masters of the École des Beaux Arts and the new color theorists of Impressionism. No doubt about it, Weir was an able committeeman, a unifying, compromising force in the New York art world. This instinct for compromise is reflected in the ambivalence of American Impressionism.<sup>502</sup>

The *Times'* review by John Russell was upsetting to the Weir family. Charles Burlingham Jr. objected to Russell's "gratuitous abuse" in a letter to the newspaper that protested the "pre-disposed opinions of a mind which had slammed shut some time ago." A few years later, the dealer Peter Davidson discussed with another family member the impact of Russell's scathing review in the city's chief newspaper, "Everyone knows that a retrospective can kill an artist and the Weir exhibition at the Met was the best example of this that I know of."<sup>503</sup> However, a few weeks after Davidson's assertion, a Weir painting, *Nassau*, sold for a record price at auction, \$400,000.

### A NEW HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK EMERGES, 1983-2003

In 1985, discussing an exhibit on Impressionism at the Newark Museum, David Shirey reported that the French Impressionists were reviled when their work first appeared--even Weir dismissed their work while a student in Paris--and yet a century later, their work was popular and commanded high prices. With the scarcity of available French Impressionist works, he noted, the market and collectors began to look elsewhere in the early 1980s, and turned to such Americans as Hassam, Twachtman, Cassatt, Prendergast, Chase, and others. Shirey cited a Weir painting in the show, which also illustrated the article: "Another whose flickering paints make his pictures shimmer with life is J. Alden Weir, whose oil entitled *Fording the Stream* coalesced the vital forces of his subject matter into remarkable pictorial unity."<sup>504</sup>

Even critic Vivien Raynor found more positive things to say about the American Impressionists in a series of exhibitions she wrote about in the 1990s which continued to explore the work of Impressionists in Connecticut. In the course of discussing several

<sup>502</sup> Gordon Fairburn, "Weir's Ethics Puritan Line," *Art World*, November, 1983. Copy in Frick, Davidson, Weir, 5/3.

<sup>503</sup> Burlingham's letter wasn't published. Charles Burlingham Jr., "To the Editor," *New York Times*, October 19, 1983, filed in Frick, Davidson, Weir, 5/3. "Everyone knows," Peter H. Davidson to William B. Carlin, May 4, 1987, Frick, Davidson, Weir, 5/3. On the *Nassau* painting, see Chapter 6.

<sup>504</sup> David L. Shirey, "Impressionists in Newark [Museum]," *New York Times*, July 21, 1985, NJ20. There seems to be a dearth of shows that feature Weir in any substantive way from mid 1985 to the beginning of 1990; this was also true between c.1947 and 1951.

stylistic movements, including Impressionism, that were presented in a show at the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme, she paused to praise the “pre-Impressionist still lifes” by Emile Carlsen and Weir, “Weir’s is a chiaroscuro study of roses and lilac in a pewter vase and is perhaps the finest painting in the show.” In a review of a 1990 Twachtman exhibit at the Wadsworth Athenaeum, she commented that “he had more painting power than most of his Impressionist contemporaries and he died before expending all of it.”<sup>505</sup>

In 1991, to celebrate the designation of Weir Farm as a National Historic Site, a new unit of the National Park Service, two museums, The William Benton Museum of Art in Storrs and the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, hosted a solo exhibition of Weir’s art. As Paul F. Rovetti wrote in the accompanying catalogue, *J. Alden Weir: A Place of His Own*, “Amazingly, no collection of the works of J. Alden Weir has until now been on public view in the state where he created nearly all of them a century ago.” The three essays in the catalogue comprised a concise introduction to Weir’s life, his art, his relation to the Connecticut landscape, his evolution as an artist, and his circle of friends. From that time on, no serious discussion of Weir could proceed without reference to these essays. They were as significant in defining him for a new audience as the *Century* volume had been for summarizing his achievements in his own era. There was definitely a growing interest in Weir and many of his contemporaries. The year before the Benton/Bruce exhibits, the Spanierman Gallery in New York City had mounted *Ten American Painters* and published with it a substantial catalogue with biographical essays by leading scholars on each member of The Ten, including Weir.<sup>506</sup>

Additional exhibitions during the decade of the 1990s looked at other aspects of Impressionist work in Connecticut, and the popular interest led a group of institutions to put together a “Connecticut Impressionist Art Trail” guide.<sup>507</sup> In all of these articles, Weir is often referred to for his presence at a location, or involvement with the style, but only rarely

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<sup>505</sup> “pre-Impressionist still-lifes,” and following, Vivien Raynor, “‘Native Inspiration,’ A Departure for the Griswold,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1990, CN26. “he had more painting power,” in Vivien Raynor, “Twachtman’s Paintings of His Greenwich Years,” April 15, 1990, CN16. The latter show at the Wadsworth had originated at the National Gallery of Art. Another Connecticut show at this time was “On Home Ground: Elmer Livingston MacRae of the Holley House” at the Bush-Holley House and the Bruce Museum, both in Greenwich. These were written up in “Cos Cob Clapboard’ Artists Honored at House They Loved,” by Alberta Eiseman, *New York Times*, September 23, 1990, CN21.

<sup>506</sup> “Amazingly, no collection,” Paul F. Rovetti, “Foreword” in Evans, *A Connecticut Place. Ten American Painters* (New York: Spanierman Gallery, 1990), May 8 to June 9, 1990.

<sup>507</sup> Exhibits in the 1990s: see Alberta Eiseman, “A Cos Cob House is a Landmark of American Impressionism,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1991, CN27, on the occasion of the Bush-Holley House being designated a National Historic Landmark; William Zimmer, “A Glimpse of Turn-of-the-Century Wilton,” October 18, 1992, CN18, an exhibit at the Lambert Corners Gallery of the Thaler Cohen collection which included Weir’s *Connecticut Hillside*, with “an all-over pasty green tonality.” Vivien Raynor, “An Impressionist Can Still Make a Splash in Old Lyme,” September 11, 1994, CN18, an exhibit of William Chadwick’s work at the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme. On the Impressionist art trail, see Bess Liebenson, “A Painter’s Eye for the State’s Landscape,” September 10, 1995, CN23.

is his work singled out for its unique character. An exception to this was the review of a 1997 exhibit at the Griswold Museum about images of suburban life. The reviewer was intrigued by Weir's technique, finding that it

does a couple of interesting turns on the show's theme in *The Laundry, Branchville*, painted around 1894. Rather than present women in white as do Twachtman and Benson, he provides more mysterious evidence of their presence. He also adopts an unusual vertical format. The painting is two thirds lawn; the red house on what becomes the horizon line is the sought-after place of repose, a goal to be achieved.<sup>508</sup>

Finally, Weir was at center stage in 2000 for the second time in Connecticut with the exhibition *A Connecticut Place: Weir Farm, An American Painter's Rural Retreat*, which was shown at the Parrish Art Museum in Southampton, New York, the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, and at Weir Farm National Historic Site in Wilton, Connecticut. Although the focus was on Weir and his country home, his landscape paintings, and related topics, both the exhibition and the catalogue managed to provide an overview of his life and career, and all of his work. Every essay in the catalogue was of great interest and full of important insights, but the brief statement by Nicolai Cikovsky Jr., "J. Alden Weir & Impressionism," helped the reader understand the problematic depiction of Weir in many of the reviews of his work (as exhibited) from the 1960s though the 1980s. Cikovsky argued that the worst thing that happened to Weir was "when, after his death, he began to be called an American Impressionist."<sup>509</sup> He suggested that when Weir, and his contemporaries like Twachtman and Robinson, were assigned this identity, critics had to find a way to account for the differences between their work and that of the French painters. The contorted explanations that followed never took into account, he suggested, the fact that perhaps the American painters were not interested in limiting themselves to such a framework. That by assessing Weir within such a specific context, his strengths in other areas such as portraiture and still life, were diminished. Rather, Cikovsky urged that Weir's engagement with Impressionism be viewed as part of a continuum of exploration that characterized his artistic life, and as a tool that served his emotional and artistic needs, a point of view that both Duncan Phillips in 1921, and Lawrence Chisolm in 1960, also shared:

But it was not Impressionism as a stylistic language that interested Weir so much as what it allowed [him] for the first time to paint. It enabled him to accommodate in his art a subject--landscape, and that particular part of it that was dearest to him above all others, his farm at Branchville--that he could not

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<sup>508</sup> William Zimmer, "Home, Sometimes in Odd Poses," *New York Times*, September 7, 1997, CN18, a review of the Griswold show on *Visions of Home: American Impressionist Images of Suburban Leisure and Country Comfort*.

<sup>509</sup> "when, after his death," and following, Nicolai Cikovsky Jr., "J. Alden Weir & Impressionism," in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 17.

accommodate without it. Impressionism and landscape go hand in hand in Weir's art.<sup>510</sup>

Cikovsky found that Weir, and his reputation, paid a price for his wide ranging interests and experimentation, when his work could not be neatly labeled, and concluded, as noted in the introduction to this study, "but he had no choice and could not be otherwise."

Following this show, Weir was also featured in Susan G. Larkin's exhibition and excellent catalogue of 2001, *The Cos Cob Colony: Impressionists on the Connecticut Shore*. However, something of the old pattern, of promoting Weir's contemporaries rather than Weir, continued when an exhibition was mounted farther afield. In 2003, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington DC presented "The Impressionist Tradition in America" in which two of Weir's paintings were on display, *Autumn* (1906) and *Obweebetuck* (1908). While his work was treated with respect in the exhibit, there was no catalogue and Weir's name was not used in the press releases; readers can only assume that the choice of names -- Sargent, Robinson, Twachtman, Hassam, Cassatt, Prendergast, and a few others -- were selected for name recognition.<sup>511</sup>

## THE ART MARKET

Since the appearance Doreen Burke's book in 1983 and the establishment of Weir Farm, scholars have revisited Weir's career as a whole, identifying more varied and complex styles in his work beyond Impressionism. Nevertheless, galleries, museums, and dealers of the 1990s and early 2000s have for the most part continued to include him with the core group of American Impressionists for purposes of interpretation and marketing.<sup>512</sup> While scholars' expanded interest in an artist or a group of artists can result in a popular exhibition such as the Connecticut Impressionist show at the National Academy in 2001, which created

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<sup>510</sup> Cikovsky Jr. in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 17.

<sup>511</sup> The Cos Cob Colony exhibition was shown at the National Academy of Design in New York, and subsequently in Houston and Denver. The catalogue was published by Yale University Press. The Corcoran exhibition was on view July 19, 2003 - April 2004. The press release was obtained from [www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/upcoming](http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/upcoming). The release is important because the information is used by the press; hence, if a name does not show up in a release, it is unlikely to appear in a news article or announcement such as the one printed in the *New York Times*, July 14, 2003, E2, "Washington: Impressionists at the Corcoran." The wall text was reviewed on a site visit by McKay. Another example of the issue of name recognition is a course announcement for "America's Impressionist Art Colonies," offered at the School of Continuing and Professional Studies at New York University: "Artists such as Childe Hassam, John Twachtman and Willard Metcalf produced some of their best works at summer enclaves such as Old Lyme, Cos Cob, and Gloucester, among others." *New York University Bulletin*, Fall 2002, 174.

<sup>512</sup> This discussion is based in part on background information provided by dealers and auction house specialists in American painting, and published information regarding auction prices such as Hislop, *Art Sales Index*, op.cit.

a “buzz” about its artists and attracted the attention of collectors, the market does not necessarily reflect that process immediately in terms of prices.

Weir’s top price at auction, for example, was reached during the art market boom of the late 1980s with the sale of *Nassau* for \$440,000 in 1987. At about the same time, a work by Twachtman, *Sunset*, brought his top price of \$550,000. However, those prices were dwarfed in 1988 and 1989 when two Hassam works sold for \$2.9 million and \$2.1 million. A decade later, one of Hassam’s flag paintings set a record for an American Impressionist artist with a price of \$7.2 million. In that same period, Twachtman’s paintings were selling in the \$400,000 range, and Weir’s were about \$200,000, with some below \$100,000. By way of contrast, record auction prices for other contemporaries of Weir were \$4.1 million for Frank Benson, \$3.9 million for William Merrit Chase, and \$1.3 million for Theodore Robinson.<sup>513</sup>

Auction house professionals and dealers have speculated on the reasons why Weir’s work has brought lower prices. In general, the two points mentioned most frequently were: the beautiful, bright colors of Hassam in comparison to all his peers, and the scarcity of Weir paintings on the market because so many of them either remain with members of his family or are owned by the Brigham Young University Art Museum. Furthermore, dealers noted that with so many paintings unavailable, and few coming on the market, there was no incentive for dealers to promote Weir. Yet, more than one art dealer noted that if a “big Weir” were to come on the market, it would bring a substantial price at auction. However, dealers also noted that customers looking for the work of a particular artist, who are unable to find something, will move on. In addition, auction prices do not necessarily represent an accurate indication of the market value of Weir’s paintings. For example, a Weir painting at Brigham Young University was appraised in 2003 for \$1 million (for insurance purposes, not sale). Apparently, a few Weirs have sold privately in the \$500,000 to \$1 million range in the past few years. At the Spanierman Gallery in New York, in September 2003, two paintings by Weir were for sale, *Anna* (1891) for \$85,000, and *The Two Sisters* (1890s) for \$2.5 million.<sup>514</sup>

But prices, of course, are not the only determination of reputation and historical significance. Weir is somewhat understudied compared to Chase, Cassatt, Hassam, and others of his generation. But the interest of gallery directors, museum curators, and scholars in Weir is gathering strength especially as it relates to a more complex understanding of American Impressionism. For such opinion makers there is also the additional and special resource of the archives at Weir Farm National Historic Site. The preservation of the site as part of the National Park Service becomes an important element in shaping the future assessment of his life and career, and that of the other artists who lived and worked at the farm.

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<sup>513</sup> The \$440,000 represents the price (\$400,000) plus the auction house commission (\$40,000). In October 1980, dealer Peter H. Davidson had appraised two paintings at fair market value: *The Donkey Ride*, at \$300,000, and *Portrait of Mrs. Weir* (a.k.a. *Portrait of a Lady with a Greyhound*) at \$250,000. See letter of October 14, 1980, Frick, Davidson, Weir, 4/1. Other sales prices from Hislop, op.cit.

<sup>514</sup> The Brigham Young Art Museum owns 105 paintings, about 20 percent of Weir’s total production. This data on the collection and the 2003 appraisal, McKay conversation with Senior Registrar Susan G. Thompson, September 2003. Spanierman prices obtained in McKay conversation with gallery.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE PRESERVATION CAMPAIGN, 1957-2003

It isn't going to be like a Sturbridge Village . . . It's going to be a serious and wonderful piece of property that has a certain ambience to it that's irreplaceable, that will be appreciated by future generations.

Sperry Andrews, 1989<sup>515</sup>

Weir Farm is unusual in that it has been the home of working artists for more than 120 years. There are several factors that account for this remarkable continuity: first, the relatively uncomplicated passage of property from generation to generation, the Weirs to the Youngs to the Andrews, each as a generation; second, the involvement of each generation in the arts; and third, their shared and sustained cultural concerns about preserving rural or undeveloped landscape. Although varied in their intellectual origins -- contrast Weir's desire for a second home in the country where he could make a protected landscape the subject of his art with the conservationist ethos and open space movement (anti-suburban sprawl) of the last quarter of the twentieth century -- the arguments for preservation resulted in a permanent arrangement to maintain the property and honor its heritage in the history of American art.

#### SUMMARY OF OWNERSHIP BY WEIR AND YOUNG FAMILIES

Following J. Alden Weir's death in 1919, the use of the farm by his widow Ella and daughter Dorothy until Ella's death in 1930, and then by Dorothy and her husband, sculptor Mahonri M. Young, after their marriage in 1931, has been described in Parts I and II. When Weir died intestate, his 238-acre farm in Branchville was inherited by Ella and his three daughters. In 1922, Caro and Cora traded their interest in Branchville to their sister Dorothy in exchange for her share in the Baker family property in Windham. Thus, when Ella died, Dorothy inherited the entire Beers and Webb portions of the farm. At about the time of her marriage in 1931, Dorothy gave the Webb portion to her sister Cora Burlingham for use as a weekend retreat.<sup>516</sup> Dorothy and Mahonri resided at Weir Farm until their deaths in 1947 and 1957, maintaining the farm, working on their respective artistic and writing projects, and entertaining family and friends from within and without the art world.

In its feasibility evaluation of Weir Farm for National Historic Site status, the National Park Service (NPS) wrote in 1990 that Weir Farm "remains as it does today, not by

<sup>515</sup> Sperry Andrews, hereafter SA, Interview with Sperry and Doris Andrews, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, March 16, 1989, Weir Farm OH I, 14, hereafter, Andrews Interview.

<sup>516</sup> HSR, III, 5; WEFA 422, Burlingham/Weir, Legal 1/5.

accident, but because of the concerted efforts of a local group of neighbors who would not accept the loss of this important historic site to suburban development.”<sup>517</sup> The story of the preservation of the farm after Dorothy’s and Mahonri’s deaths begins with Cora. During Dorothy’s lifetime, Cora and her family spent weekends year round, as well as the entire months of May and June, at the farm. Her son, Charles Burlingham Jr. recalled that the minute Cora reached Branchville on the Friday 3:45 p.m. train from Grand Central Station, she would call “2-8-9-ring 2” on the party line to tell Dorothy she had arrived and would soon be over to visit.

Cora and Dorothy, less than two years apart in age, were not only sisters but the closest of friends. Educated together at the Brearley School, as discussed above, they shared a circle of friends from those days who remained close throughout their lives. Cora studied interior design and was an avid gardener and horticulturist.<sup>518</sup> She and Dorothy completed Red Cross training in Washington D.C. during World War I, and Cora went to France as a volunteer nurse. In December 1918, at the age of 26, Cora married William E. “Billy” Carlin, 25 years her senior, who was working as an ambulance driver for the American Field Service in Brest. Carlin had been friends with Cora’s aunt, Cora Baker Davis, in Nassau as early as 1902, and the younger Cora may have known him from that time. According to Cora’s sons, she did not often share details about her first marriage.

Billy Carlin’s father, General William Passmore Carlin, who died in 1903, had been a career Army officer serving throughout the frontier and rising to the rank of brevet Major General during the Civil War. His son was born in 1867 in Buffalo, New York, his mother’s home. Billy was educated at West Point and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. As a young man, he explored and hunted in the northwest United States and British Columbia and served as a naturalist and photographer on the Leyden expedition in Idaho and British Columbia in 1889. Carlin researched and published articles on the capabilities of firearms and later became acquainted with camera and film-manufacturing pioneer George Eastman and modernist photographer Alfred Stieglitz. He exhibited photographs with Stieglitz in New York, Chicago, and London between 1898 and 1903, and his work was published in magazines and portfolios, including Stieglitz’s influential journal *Camera Notes*. Carlin was also an original member of the Photo-Secession movement founded by Stieglitz in 1902 to champion artistic photography. Many of Carlin’s photographs were taken during his travels in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, when he was accompanied by his mother or his first wife, Theo.<sup>519</sup> J. Alden Weir, who also may have met Billy Carlin years earlier, thought the

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<sup>517</sup> WF Feasibility.

<sup>518</sup> For additional details on Cora, see HSR, III, 5. Authors’ conversations with her sons, Charles Burlingham Jr., August 8, 2002, and William B. Carlin, June 25, 2003. For biographical information on William E. Carlin, see his obituary in *The New York Times*, March 20, 1928, 22. (Some details are incorrect in the obituary).

<sup>519</sup> See George Eastman House Catalogue, [www.geh.org](http://www.geh.org) and Christian A. Peterson, *Alfred Stieglitz’s Camera Notes* (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Art, 1993). No original photographic prints

age difference between Cora and Billy was too great, but shortly before his death, he and Carlin went fly fishing, Weir's great passion, and Weir was won over. Cora and Carlin had a son, William B. Carlin, born in November 1927, and the following March, Carlin died of cancer at the age of 60.

Through her Bearley friend Katherine "Kay" Crane Montgomery and Kay's husband George, Cora met Harvard-educated attorney Charles Burlingham and they were married at the Weir family's Church of the Ascension in New York on April 2, 1929.<sup>520</sup> Burlingham was the son of Charles Culp Burlingham (1858-1959), a distinguished attorney who had served as president of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York and been an advisor to several generations of public officials. Cora and Charles Burlingham's son, Charles Jr., was born in 1930.

Volume III of the *Historic Structures Reports* describes Cora's activities on the Webb property:

They kept dogs, cattle, and workhorses, and raised chickens. During World War II the field to the north of the house was converted to a "victory garden" and Cora again volunteered for the Red Cross. Photographs and reminiscences record much friendly and familial contact between the Burlinghams and the Youngs on Weir Farm, with frequent visits from sister Caro and her family. Mahonri Young teased Cora about the 'chateau' she was building as the additions to the house went up, and about the "great walls of Cora" she was having the Knoche boys build around "the old Webb place." . . . Bill and Charlie had the run of both the Burlingham and Weir Farms, each had their own ponies, went skeet-shooting on the property, and helped Cora and Charles Sr. with the gardening.<sup>521</sup>

Dorothy and Mahonri resided at Weir Farm until their deaths, maintaining the farm, working on their respective artistic and writing projects, and entertaining family and friends from inside and outside the art world. Several years after Dorothy's premature death from cancer in 1947, Sperry Andrews introduced himself to Mahonri Young and became a frequent guest at the farm.

### THE ANDREWS FAMILY IN RESIDENCE

Charles Sperry Andrews III (Sperry) was the son of a banker from Bronxville, New York. Before the war, he had studied art at the National Academy of Design School. He began to exhibit his paintings and his work was favorably reviewed by art critics. He won a prize in 1939, and the next year his monotype, *Carnival*, was purchased by the Collectors of American Art. After the United States entered World War II, Andrews spent four years with

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by Carlin appear to have survived. There are references to Carlin in the Alfred Stieglitz papers in the Beinecke Rare Book Library, MSS.85, Yale University, 9/217-218.

<sup>520</sup> See "Burlingham-Carlin," *New York Times*, April 3, 1929, 34, and "Carlin-Burlingham," March 26, 1929, 39.

<sup>521</sup> HSR, III, 5. "great walls of Cora" were traditional-style stone walls.

the First Army Division, including overseas duty in Iceland, France, Belgium, and Germany. Upon his discharge, he returned to New York to study at the Art Students League, although he also took some classes at the National Academy. In 1945, he married a fellow League student, former debutante Adrienne Vanderbilt, but this marriage was short-lived.<sup>522</sup>

Doris Bass, born in Kentucky in 1921, graduated from the Erskine School in Boston. She then returned to Louisville, learned Morse Code, and served in the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers during World War II as a telegraph operator. When the war was over, she moved to New York City to attend the Art Students League. There, in 1946, she met Sperry Andrews.<sup>523</sup>

Doris and Sperry married on June 7, 1947, and soon moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut where they painted: Doris specialized in watercolors and pen and ink while Sperry worked in a variety of mediums. When they began to have children, Doris discontinued her art career in order to support Sperry's career and to take care of their family. In the early 1950s, Sperry continued to exhibit his work in New York galleries to positive comment, especially in 1952, an important year in many ways for his professional life and for their personal lives. Andrews had a one-man show at the Ferargil Gallery in the spring of 1952, which included a number of landscape paintings of the Connecticut countryside. It was well-received by Stuart Preston of the *Times* who wrote, "His method is light and airy and disciplined by cubist tradition . . . [with] some admirable results. In all cases color is handsomely harmonized." One of Andrews' paintings was purchased as part of a group acquired by the Childe Hassam Fund of the American Academy of Arts and Letters to be given to museums in the United States and Canada. At the St. Lawrence Valley Art Exhibition in Canton, New York, his first prize painting of *Fair Grounds* was purchased for donation to the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> On Sperry Andrews' background, "C. S. Andrews, 72, Retired Banker," *New York Times*, February 14, 1957, 27 and "Miss Vanderbilt Becomes A Bride," *New York Times*, July 12, 1945, 14. On his nascent art career, "The Academy's 113th [Exhibition], Edward Alden Jewell, *New York Times*, March 20, 1938, 157; "Tiffany Annual," by Howard Devree, *New York Times*, November 27, 1939, 21; "Collectors' Group Holds Art Show," Edward Alden Jewell, *New York Times*, December 13, 1940, 30. (The collectors bought art and distributed the work to their members.)

<sup>523</sup> "Doris Andrews, 82, Advocate for Weir Farm," *New York Times*, June 22, 2003, and "Doris Andrews, 82, Artist, Preservationist," [www.acorn-online.com/obits/andrews.htm](http://www.acorn-online.com/obits/andrews.htm). Authors' interview of Doris Andrews, September 13, 2002.

<sup>524</sup> Date of the Andrews' marriage: email communication to the authors from WEFA Museum Technician Delores Tirri, June 29, 2004, reporting on information obtained from the Andrews' daughter Barrett Andrews: "The date was June 7, 1947. I found two telegrams, and a newspaper article captioned, "Doris Bass to Wed New Yorker." Additional biographical information was obtained from WEFA, Andrews Interview, the authors' conversation with Doris Andrews on September 13, 2002, and from an exhibition pamphlet, *Selected Works by Sperry Andrews*, Weir Farm, September 19-October 24, 1993. "His method," Stuart Preston, "Art World Activities," *New York Times*, May 3, 1952, X8. As it happened, the Ferargil Gallery had also been a dealer for the work of J. Alden Weir and Mahonri Young. Another show exhibiting Sperry's work was reviewed in "\$1,200 Art Award to John Folinsbee," Howard Devree, *New York Times*, March 9, 1950, 27. This was a review of the 125th

In February of 1952 the Andrews visited the exhibition in honor of J. Alden Weir's centennial at the galleries of the American Academy of Arts and Letters at 155th Street and Broadway in upper Manhattan. Weir had been a member of the Academy and its Art Committee. Mahonri Young had written "a sympathetic account of his life and work" in the exhibition catalogue.<sup>525</sup> Doris Andrews recalled reading that Young mentioned Branchville in the foreword and when she and Sperry realized they lived only a few miles away, they decided to call on him. Sperry remembered this first visit:

. . . in company with a neighbor friend, an artist, his name is John Hubbard. We knocked on Mr. Young's door. His reply: 'Come in. What is the problem boys? Do you wish to go fishing in the pond?' I said, 'No, Mr. Young, we'd like to talk to you.' And that was the beginning of a friendship . . . which continued close to five-and-a-half years before Mr. Young died. I remember we used to knock on the door of his big studio . . . And I would say, 'Are you busy, Mr. Young?' 'I'm always busy, but come in anyway.'<sup>526</sup>

During the next five years, Sperry visited Mahonri to talk and also to paint on the grounds, "down in the old orchard here, beyond the studio to the north." Sperry admired Mahonri's work, recalling that he was "thrilled and inspired by his art, by his drawing particularly" and enjoyed looking at Mahonri's sketchbooks with him. Sperry came to paint on his own and once brought his class in landscape painting, as well as other artist friends. He was appreciative of Mahonri's advice while it was clear that Mahonri enjoyed Sperry's company since the older man did not have many close artist friends nearby. Sperry recalled, "He'd be sitting on the porch out here sometimes. And I wouldn't get back to Branchville for

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anniversary exhibition at the National Academy of Design where Andrews *Ballet Dancer*, won a \$125 Hallgarten prize in the category of "American citizens under 35." Also in the spring of 1950, he had a small one-man show of paintings and scratch-board drawings at the Ferargil, "an artist who reconciles a conventional outlook toward figures and landscape with a rigid semi-cubist style," Stuart Preston, "Art Shows Varied in Local Galleries," *New York Times*, May 27, 1950, 28. "Hassam Fund Buys U. S. Artists' Works," *New York Times*, May 5, 1925, 75. When J. Alden Weir's great friend Childe Hassam died in 1935, he generously left his unsold work to the American Academy of Arts & Letters as an endowment, with items to be sold from time to time and the funds received used for purchasing current work for donation to museums. St. Lawrence Valley, "Exhibit Opens on Campus," *New York Times*, July 7, 1952, 21.

<sup>525</sup> "sympathetic account" from "Art Show Marks Weir Anniversary. 113 Oil Paintings and Selection of His Drawings and Etchings Placed on Display Here," *New York Times*, February 1, 1952, 19. See Young, "Appreciation," in *Weir Centennial*. Sperry may have visited the exhibition with a friend, art critic F. Newlin Price, without Doris.

<sup>526</sup> SA, Weir Farm OH I, Andrews Interview, 1. This visit was in 1952 but it is cited as 1955, incorrectly we believe, in the pamphlet, "Selected Works by Sperry Andrews," Weir Farm Heritage Trust, 1993. The year 1952 is also cited in the CLR, 237. During the oral history interview, Sperry was consulting notebooks or diaries to refresh his memory. He had written down many conversations with Mahonri, so the authors are inclined to accept the accuracy of his recollections. Since the notebooks may contain valuable information about Mahonri, the farm, and Mahonri's memories of Dorothy, an inquiry should be made as to the survival of these documents.

a period of maybe a week or something. And he'd be sitting there, and he'd say, 'What's the matter? Have you grown tired of Branchville?' and he'd smile."<sup>527</sup> (Figure 18) Sperry and Doris took Mahonri on several trips, including one to the Danbury Fair, which was, with Mahonri's commentary, "an education about livestock." As Mahonri aged, Doris recalled that Mahonri wanted to visit "people he hadn't seen for years," and had Sperry take him to see his friend, the critic Van Wyck Brooks. For Sperry, "those last days, with drives were very special."<sup>528</sup>



**Figure 18.** Sperry Andrews and Mahonri Young at Branchville.  
Photograph, early 1950s. (WEFA 6830 AHP01209)

<sup>527</sup> SA, Weir Farm OH I, Andrews Interview: "down in the old orchard," 4; "thrilled and inspired," 3; landscape class, 4 and friends, 11; "He used to be," 4.

<sup>528</sup> SA, Ibid.: Danbury Fair, 12; Van Wyck Brooks, 12; "those last days," 12. "People he hadn't seen," Doris Andrews, hereafter DA, conversation with authors, op.cit.

Sperry and Doris had become acquainted with Mahonri's son Bill, and his family, when they visited during the summer. Several months after Mahonri died in November 1957, the Andrews wrote to Bill Young offering him approximately \$50,000 for a portion of the property. The Andrews were interested in the house and the outbuildings (especially the studios) "and enough land to protect the core of the farm." Young agreed to the sale of 12.34 acres and gave the Andrews a second mortgage until they could sell some of the land on the Wilton-Ridgefield Road in order to afford to hold the rest of their property.<sup>529</sup> According to Doris, Young wanted time to decide what to do with the 300 paintings and other art work still remaining on the property and the Andrews were willing to be caretakers until he could make his decision.

Thus, the Andrews, who were by then the parents of three children, moved to the farm. In order to accommodate their family needs, they renovated the kitchen and made other repairs and minor alterations. They bought some of the furnishings in the house from Bill Young, which allowed them, reported Doris, "to keep a lot of the spirit of the place . . . We've kept a lot of the feeling of the house because they let us have all the furniture." During the following decades, they would maintain most of the house in its original configuration. The Andrews left the studios as they found them, and Sperry's art would rest atop a few remaining J. Alden Weir and Mahonri Young works. They repaired the barns but did little else because Sperry had no interest in changing the landscape. The overall result was, as Doreen Bolger Burke observed, "like going into a time warp." Doris continued, "it's overgrown and changed. But it still has that aura of the past."<sup>530</sup>

## THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT

The NPS Feasibility Study noted that "the site was in danger of being developed to satisfy a seemingly insatiable demand for single family houses in this pleasant area close to

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<sup>529</sup> Sale to the Andrews, Weir Farm OH I, Andrews Interview, 6. Sperry said that Bill Young hadn't put the house on the real estate market before the Andrews made their offer or "we couldn't have even thought of touching it if it had been." Ibid., 7. Mahonri died in November 1957. Thus, the Andrews made the offer sometime after that. Doris, in her conversation with the authors, recalled the purchase price to be about \$50,000. To verify this, the authors went to the Ridgefield Town Clerk to look up the warranty deed from Mahonri Sharp Young and Agnes Young Lay to Charles Sperry Andrews and Doris B. Andrews, dated October 14, 1958, vol. 82, p. 555. Although it reads, as is common in deeds, "for consideration of \$1.00 and other good and valuable considerations," the U.S. Revenue Stamps attached are in the amount of \$51.70. According to the town clerk, the purchase price may be calculated by a formula in which, in 1958, each \$1.10 of the stamps represents \$1,000 of purchase price. In this case, that would come to \$47,000, which is very close to Doris's recollection. Town of Ridgefield Warranty Deed, October 14, 1958, vol. 82, p. 555 and conversation with Town Clerk, August 9, 2004.

<sup>530</sup> "to keep a lot," SA, Weir Farm OH I, Andrews Interview, 7. "like going into," DA reporting Burke's remark in Ibid., 15. See also "Local Farm Once Inspired Impressionist," *The Stamford Advocate*, July 9, 2002, acquired from [www.stamfordadvocate.com](http://www.stamfordadvocate.com)

growing employment centers in Stamford and along the Connecticut Route 7 corridor.” The residential development on outlying areas of the property continued into the 1960s and began to generate press coverage, bringing the situation to the attention of a group of local preservationists.

The story of the preservation of the farm begins with Cora Weir Burlingham. She was aided, in particular, by Doris Andrews, and Cora’s son, Bill Carlin. Bill Carlin was working at that time on the staff of the Nature Conservancy and in 1969, Cora donated 37 acres of her property to its Connecticut chapter. This land would become part of the Weir Preserve owned by the Nature Conservancy. Cora’s efforts in preserving Weir Farm should not be understated, especially her primary role in organizing Citizens to Preserve Weir Farm in 1970.<sup>531</sup>

By 1976, the Committee to Save Weir Pond was formed to secure land to provide a 200-foot border around the pond. Petition drives and rallies were held and in 1978, the Ridgefield Preservation Trust received a grant from the Connecticut Historical Commission to conduct a survey of architectural and historic resources including Weir Farm. The Ridgefield Preservation Trust’s study concluded that the site was unique, “a still extant, original painter’s environment - the only completely intact site of an American Impressionist painter.” Letters of support came to the Trust from directors and curators of major art institutions urging the site’s inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. John Wilmerding, Deputy Director of the National Gallery of Art, wrote that “few such sites [are] still extant as the homes and studios of most of our important 19th century artists have long since been lost or destroyed.”<sup>532</sup>

In 1984, the farm was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1986, the state of Connecticut appropriated \$2.7 million to acquire the property. In late 1988, the state’s Department of Environmental Protection had acquired the majority of land held by the TPL, approximately 44.78 acres. Of this core area, Sperry Andrews noted at the time, “It has an ambiance that is unmistakable. You feel that the first time you come here.” Eventually there would be 18 land transactions for a total acquisition cost of \$4.25 million. Bill Carlin recalled that the first closing occurred on the afternoon of December 12, 1986. His mother, Cora, died that night at the age of 94. “She was not going to let go until she knew that the property was saved,” he observed.<sup>533</sup> A newly created Weir Farm Heritage Trust was

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<sup>531</sup> “We had no choice,” Peggy McCarthy, “Painter’s Home Vies to Be a National Park,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1989, CN15. “the site was,” *WF Feasibility*, 1. For additional information on preservation efforts, see “Preface,” in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*; HRS and CLI; interviews with Charles Burlingham, William B. Carlin, and Doris B. Andrews in Weir Farm OH I and III, and articles from *The New York Times* as cited. Local preservationists, “Residents here back national park idea for the Branchville farm,” New Canaan newspaper article, August 24, 1989 in Frick, Davidson, Weir, 7/10. Nature Conservancy, CLI, 19-23. Additional information on Cora Burlingham’s role in the preservation of Weir Farm can be found in the CLI, *passim*.

<sup>532</sup> Weir Pond was the pond J. Alden Weir had built in 1897 with his Boston Art Club prize money. “a still extant,” and “few such sites,” quoted in Evans, *A Connecticut Place*, 10.

<sup>533</sup> It has an ambiance,” in “State Buys Farm in Ridgefield,” *New York Times*, November 20, 1988,

designated to serve as interim manager of the property. The Weir Farm Heritage Trust, an outgrowth of the Citizens to Preserve Weir Farm, comprised of family, preservation and art experts, and local citizens, was officially established as a non-profit organization in 1989 to develop a long-term protection strategy and program for the use of the site. (It changed its name to Weir Farm Trust in 1997 and to the Weir Farm Art Center in 2006.\*)

Also in 1989, after congressional hearings highlighted the need for additional parks and open space in Connecticut, the NPS, in cooperation with the Trust for Public Land, conducted a study to evaluate the feasibility of including the property as a unit of the National Park System. As the study was completed, the NPS planning representative, Sarah Peskin, told the press, "it was pretty apparent, even from that initial visit, that this was a site that was very significant and quite unique."<sup>534</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From the time of J. Alden Weir's death until the preservation movement for the site began, the buildings and the land were actively used and preserved by its succession of owners. On October 31, 1990, Weir Farm became the first national park in Connecticut.<sup>535</sup> It was the second national park in the country honoring an artist: the first was the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, New Hampshire, the home of Weir's friend, the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Weir Farm National Historic Site, however, is the only federal site honoring a painter. There are other artists' homes which can be visited such as Olana, the home of Frederick E. Church, in Hudson, New York, which is a New York State Historic Site. Thomas Cole's home in Catskill, New York is a National Historic Landmark, an affiliated area of the NPS, and is operated by the Greene County Historical Society. Nevertheless, Weir Farm National Historic Site remains unique for the combination of original historic structures, the impact of the cultural landscape, its continuing family involvement, the role of partner organizations, and its preservation and protection as a National Park Service site.

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CN14. "She was not going," McKay conversation with William B. Carlin, June 25, 2003. This story was also reported in the *Ridgefield Press* article of April 8, 1988, *op.cit.*, quoting Catherine Barner, "She died the day we bought the property. It was like her business was done." Cora Burlingham was the last of Weir's children to die. Her oldest sister, Caroline Weir Ely, had died in Old Lyme at age 89 in late 1973. "Mrs. George Page Ely," *New York Times*, January 6, 1974, 58. For a complete chronology of land transactions, see CLI, 19-23.

\* Weir Farm Art Center is a private, nonprofit organization. The Weir Farm Art Center presents educational programs that fulfill its mission to sustain and promote the legacy of J. Alden Weir, including exhibitions, lectures, children's art classes and the Artist in Residence program. In 2005, ownership of the 110-acre Weir Preserve, adjacent to the park and founded by Cora Weir Burlingham, was transferred to the Weir Farm Art Center by the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

<sup>534</sup> Peskin quoted in Peggy McCarthy, "Painter's Home Vies to be a National Park," *New York Times*, December 31, 1989, CN15.

<sup>535</sup> Constance L. Hays, "Farm Will be Connecticut's First National Park," *New York Times*, November 10, 1991, 41.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **TOPICS**

Early history of farm, Beers and Webb families, abolitionist activities

Daily lives of women (e.g., Weir's sisters)

Dorothy Weir Young as an artist

Lesser known art colonies (e.g., Weir and Hassam in the Catskills)

William E. Carlin and relationship to Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession

Erwin Davis, art collector

Role of religion in Weir's life

Further study of various Weir friendships, (e.g., Candace Thurber Wheeler, J. Appleton Brown)

11 E. 14 Street studio in New York

John F. Weir's role in maintenance of Weir Farm

### **COLLECTIONS TO BE CONSULTED**

Art Students League records at the Archives of American Art, for a more thorough review on Weir's teaching.

Olin Warner correspondence at the Archives of American Art.

Charles Erskine Scott Wood Collection and Addenda, Huntington Library, for a comprehensive review.

Charles E. S. Wood papers, 1884-1920, at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA. It would be worthwhile to explore if there are Weir materials in this collection.

Cooper Union records at Cooper Union, on Weir's teaching.

John Ferguson Weir papers at Yale University Archives, for a selective review.

Irene Weir materials at Yale in the Humanities and Fine Arts Collection.

(Irene Weir (1862-1944) was the daughter of Julian's older brother Walter and his wife Anne Field Andrews Weir. Irene studied in Paris and received a B.F.A. from the Yale School of Fine Arts where her uncle, John Ferguson Weir, was the director. Irene went on to a career in arts education, organizing and directing many programs and schools for "practical application" of the fine arts. There is a biography of Irene in *Notable American Women*. The collection should be surveyed for additional material on Robert Weir and Julian.)

National Academy of Design records at the NAD, on Weir's exhibition record and service as an officer.

Theodore Robinson diaries at the Frick Art Reference Library, on Weir's friendship.

## REPOSITORIES CONSULTED

### CONNECTICUT

#### RIDGEFIELD AND WILTON

##### ***Weir Farm National Historic Site, Weir Farm NHS Archives (WEFA)***

Nearly all collections relevant to this study were surveyed. The most significant are:

The Weir Family papers, 1746-1962 (bulk dates 1873-1919), WEFA 190-199, 410, and 2612. This collection consists of twelve groups of papers, primarily correspondence, financial records, and printed material, of J. Alden Weir and his family members. Additional papers are organized as ephemera, which include artwork, diaries, ledgers, clippings and other articles, scrapbooks, and photographs. These latter papers are each given individual WEFA catalogue numbers and are noted in the footnotes throughout the study.

The Dorothy Weir Young research papers, 1813-1947 (bulk dates 1919-1947), WEFA 409. This collection consists of materials gathered by Dorothy Weir Young in the course of her research and writing of *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir*, as well as her work as the cataloguer of her father's work and family historian. The transcripts of her father's letters and the drafts of her book contain overlapping material with that in the Dorothy Weir Young papers at Brigham Young University. Among the most useful and interesting materials are J. Alden Weir's business records pertaining to his work as a dealer and a collector, sales of his work, and his estate; the Taintor and Baker family papers (dating from the early 19th century); and transcripts of Weir's letters to and from his family during his years in Paris. The collection includes correspondence and photographs pertaining to Dorothy's efforts to catalogue her father's body of work, substantial printed material (exhibition catalogues, clippings and articles), and typescripts of successive drafts of the *Life & Letters*.

The Burlingham/Weir Archives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, WEFA 422 [Doreen Bolger Burke papers]. This is a collection of research materials compiled 1975-89 by Doreen Bolger Burke for her dissertation and her 1983 exhibit on Weir at the Metropolitan Museum and her accompanying book, *J. Alden Weir: American Impressionist*. The materials, comprising 71 archival boxes, range from biographical materials on Weir and his friends to correspondence, financial records, exhibit catalogues, clippings, interviews, inventories of Weir's artwork, and Burke's notes.

##### ***Weir Farm National Historic Site, Weir Farm Trust Records***

The records of the Weir Farm Trust (formerly the Weir Farm Heritage Trust, and, as of 2006, the Weir Farm Art Center) are stored in the administrative offices of the Weir Farm Art

Center, located at Weir Farm National Historic Site. These records do not belong to the National Park Service.

#### NEW HAVEN

*Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University.*

Alfred Stieglitz papers, MSS.85.

#### NEW YORK

##### NEW YORK CITY

*Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York City Branch*

A search of the AAA database yielded many collections with Weir materials. The most useful for this study were the J. Alden Weir and Weir Family papers, the Art Students League, the Frank Weitenkampf papers, and the Ferargil, Macbeth, Milch, and Montross art galleries. Further research in the papers of the Arts Students League and the Olin Warner papers would probably be of value.

- Albert E. McVitty papers, 1902-1971
- Albert and Marie Sterner letters received, 1899-1945
- American Academy of Arts & Letters records, 1864-1942
- Art Students League records
- Ferargil Galleries exhibition catalogues, 1918-1942
- Ferargil Galleries records, 1900-63
- Frank K[nox] M [orton] Rehn Galleries records
- Frank Weitenkampf letters
- J. Alden Weir papers, 1869-1966
- James Carroll Beckwith papers, 1852-1917
- John White Alexander papers, 1870-1942
- Knoedler & Co. records
- Macbeth Gallery records
- Macbeth Gallery exhibition catalogues
- Milch Gallery records, 1911-1980
- Montross Gallery Exhibition catalog collection
- Olin Warner, 1844-96, and Warner family papers, 1918-1962
- Otto Bacher papers, 1873-1962
- Players Club letters, 1848-1941
- Ten American Painters, 1898
- Weir Family papers, 1823-1930

**Brearley School Archives**

Alumni files, publications, and student yearbooks

**Frick Art Reference Library Archives & Special Collections**

Peter H. Davidson & Co. Weir Records, 1957-1991; Weir Family; Weir Farm; and Weir Foundation. Additional research in these records would be of value as would a review of Theodore Robinson's diary.

**National Archives and Records Administration, New York Branch**

Census records

**New York City Municipal Archives**

Birth, marriage and death certificates

**New York Public Library**

Poultney Bigelow papers

**New York University Archives, Bobst Library**

University Building Ledger, 1854-1871 [mislabeled as it includes material of a later date].

**KEENE VALLEY**

*Keene Valley Public Library*

**TANNERSVILLE**

*Onteora Club Archives, Onteora Park.*

**UTAH**

**PROVO**

**Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library, Tom Perry Special Collections**

Weir Family Papers, MSS 511

Reviewed in its entirety. There is overlap between this collection, the Weir Family papers on microfilm at the Archives of American Art, and the WEFA collections. Nonetheless, there is valuable information about members of the extended Weir family, particularly J. Alden Weir's parents, Robert W. and Susan Bayard Weir, including 26 volumes of "European Journals" which are, in fact, 21 volumes of Susan Weir's diaries (1875-1892) and five volumes of Louisa Weir Seymour's (Julian's half sister) European journals, 1877-1880; and, Anna Baker Weir, and her sisters Cora Baker Davis Rutherford Laughton, and Ella Baker Weir. In

addition, there is correspondence between Weir and J. Appleton Brown, 1898-1901; Childe Hassam; Albert Pinkham Ryder; John Singer Sargent; and John T. Twachtman. Many of these letters are the originals of those transcribed by Dorothy, copies of which are housed at WEFA. The collection is also rich in exhibition catalogues and contains 150 photographs (currently housed as MSS P78) J. Alden Weir's family and friends, some of which are still not identified.

**Dorothy Weir Young collection, MSS 1291.**

Reviewed in its entirety. The collection is primarily composed of typescript drafts of her *Life & Letters* organized in chronological sections with cut and pasted pages. There is overlap with typescripts housed at WEFA as well as cut and paste typescripts of Weir's letters to his family.

**Mahonri Mackintosh Young collection, 1870-1957, MSS 4.**

Reviewed in its entirety. The Young papers comprise 77 archival boxes which include correspondence with his children, Mahonri Sharp "Bill" Young and Cecelia Agnes Young Lay, while they were at school; Mary Lightfoot Tarleton, his former student and lover during the years between the death of his wife and his relationship with Dorothy; vast subject files; diaries; business records; exhibition catalogues; clippings; scrapbooks; and Sketchbooks. There 14 boxes of artists' biographical files and notes and partial drafts of projected autobiography. Photos from the collection are now housed in MSS P82.

**Papers and collected materials of John Septimus (Jack) Sears, MSS 1058.**

Reviewed in its entirety. The four boxes of Sears papers contain substantial incoming and outgoing correspondence between Young and his lifelong friend Jack Sears, as well as biographical material on Young, printed materials, Sears' own sketches and caricatures, and Young's reaction to Dorothy's final illness and death.

**Brigham Young University, Museum of Art**

The museum has an art collection of over 16,000 objects, nearly two thirds of which (approximately 10,000 items) comprised the material acquired by purchase in August 1959 from Mahonri "Bill" Sharp Young after he had inherited these materials (and the farm) from his father. The Young collection was originally housed in the Franklin S. Harris Fine Arts Center, opened in 1965, and then moved to the Museum of Art that opened in October 1993.

The Young collection includes artwork of J. Alden Weir, his family and friends, and his collected pieces. The collection was reviewed in its entirety for Julian's and Dorothy's work, and selectively for Mahonri. There are 1306 pieces, including multiples, of Weir's art and works by Daumier, Durer, Homer, Rembrandt, Twachtman, and others.

There are approximately 400 works by Dorothy Weir Young, including oils (portraits, still

lifes, florals) and works on paper (watercolors, prints, and sketches). The NPS might want to consider asking the Museum to donate a representative selection of duplicate prints by Julian and Dorothy for display in the future visitor center. The same request might be made from the 7063 works by Mahonri Young, which also include multiples.

## CALIFORNIA

### SAN MARINO

#### *Henry E. Huntington Library, Manuscript Department*

##### **Charles E[rskine] S[cott] Wood Collection**

Reviewed selectively. This is the principal collection comprised of approximately 50,000 items, including correspondence, literary manuscripts, and personal papers of Wood and his longtime companion (and later second wife), Sara Bard Field. In this collection there are letters from Weir to Wood, Wood to Weir, and Erskine Wood (CES Wood's son) to Weir, covering the period 1898 to 1919; and letters written by Ella Baker Weir, Dorothy Weir Young, Childe Hassam, Albert Pinkham Ryder, and others that mention Weir. These materials were invaluable in casting light on the Weir-Wood friendship, the art market (through Wood's work as a collector and dealer for Weir's art), and Weir's views on a great range of topics (politics, fishing, family life, literature, etc). They also document the friendship between Dorothy and CES Wood and Sara Bard Field that continued after Julian's death. Although Dorothy created transcripts of a number of the letters, and excerpted them in the *Life & Letters*, WEFA should consider ordering a microfilm of all Wood-Weir correspondence and letters by their friends, family, and colleagues that refer to Weir.

WD Box 215, folders 53-56, Weir to Wood, 1913-1919

WD Box 240, folders 4-47, Wood to Weir, 1898-1908

WD Box 241, folders 1-51, Wood to Weir, 1910-1919

WD Box 255, folders 26, 30-31, Erskine Wood to Weir, 1899-1915

WD Box 287, folders 39-53, Dorothy Young to Charles and Sara Woods

##### **Charles E[rskine] Scott Wood Collection Addenda**

Reviewed selectively. There are about 1900 items in this collection. The letters from Weir to Wood date from 1897 to 1913. Again, these contained comparably rich materials to those in the main collection.

WD Addenda, Box 22, folders 1-56, Weir to Wood, 1897-1913

WD Addenda, Box 23, folders 1-42, Weir to Wood, 1914-1919



## APPENDIX

### WEIR FAMILY GENEALOGY

This genealogy has been prepared based on information from the WEFA *Finding Aid to Weir Family Papers*, 43-44, records of the archivists at the Weir Farm National Historic Site, and research for this study. It also includes Mahonri Young genealogical information.

#### ANCESTORS OF JULIAN ALDEN WEIR (JAW)

Robert Weir m. Mary Catherine Brinckley (paternal grandparents of JAW)

Robert Walter Weir (June 18, 1803- May 1, 1889) (father of JAW)

m1. Louisa Ferguson (1807-1845)

Walter Weir (b.1831) m. Anna Field Andrews

Irene (1862-1944)

Louisa Weir (1832-1919) m. Gen. Truman Seymour (1824-1891)

Emma Weir (1834-c.1910s) m. Gen. Thomas Lincoln Casey (1831-1896)

Robert W. Weir Jr. (1836-1905) m. Anna Chadwick

Gulian Verplanck Weir (1837-1886)

m1. Anna Williams (1842-1864)

m2. Ellen Merrick (Brawner)

Henry Cary Weir (1839-1927) m. Josephine W. Henderson

John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926) m. Mary H. French (1846-1927)

Louise Weir m. Joseph D. Sargent

Edith Dean Weir m. James DeWolfe Perry

Mary Weir (1843-1848)

Alice Weir (1845-1845)

m2. Susan Martha Bayard Weir (1817-1900) (mother of JAW)

Bayard Weir (1847-1848)

William Bayard Weir (1849-1879)

Charles Gouverneur Weir (1851-1935)

Julian Alden Weir (August 30, 1852-December 8, 1919)

m1. Anna Dwight Baker (1862-1892)

Caroline Alden Weir (1884-1974) m. George Page Ely (1879-1967)

Julian Alden Weir Jr. (1888-1889)

Dorothy Weir (1890-1947) m. Mahonri M. Young (1877- 1957)  
Cora Weir (1892-1986)  
    m1. William E. Carlin (1867-1928)  
    m2. Charles Burlingham (1884-1979)  
    m2. Ella Baker (1852-1930)  
Anna Rhea Weir (1853-1932)  
Carrie Mansfield Weir (1855-1937)  
Helen Rutgers Weir (Nell) (1857-c.1930s) m.Thomas Sturgis (1846-1914)

#### **IN-LAWS OF JULIAN ALDEN WEIR\***

Rufus Lathrop Baker (1790-1868) m. Eliza Taintor (c.1801-1869)  
    Rufus Lathrop Baker Jr.  
    \*Charles Taintor Baker (1821-1881) m. Anna Bartlett Dwight (1826-1899)  
        Ella Baker (September 7, 1852-December 27, 1930)  
            m. Julian Alden Weir, October 28, 1893  
        Cora Baker (April 18, 1858 – July 10, 1929)  
            m1. Henry S. F. Davis, April 11, 1882  
            m2. John A. Rutherford, May 6, 1905  
            m3. Paul D. Laighton, October 12, 1921  
        Anna Dwight Baker (May 18, 1862-February 8, 1892)  
            m. Julian Alden Weir, April 24, 1883

#### **IMMEDIATE FAMILY OF JULIAN ALDEN WEIR**

Julian Alden Weir (August 30,1852- December 8, 1919)

    m1. Anna Dwight Baker (May 18, 1862- February 8, 1892), April 24, 1883  
        Caroline (Caro) Alden Weir (March 24, 1884-January 4, 1974)  
            m. George Page Ely (1879-1967), June 7, 1916  
                Anna (Ann) Weir Ely (1918-1998) m. Gregory Smith (1913-1998)  
                    Lydia Ely Smith (b.1942- )  
                    Alexander "Zander" Smith (1945-1996)  
                    Caroline "Caro" Smith (b.1955- )  
                Caroline Page Smith (Lin) (1921-1993)  
    Julian Alden Weir (January 30, 1888-March 8, 1889)  
    Dorothy Weir (June 18, 1890-May 28, 1947)  
        m. Mahonri Mackintosh Young (1877-1957), February 17, 1931  
    Cora Weir (January 29, 1892 – December 12, 1986)  
        m1.William Edward Carlin (July 26, 1867-March 19, 1928), December 1918  
            William Bayard Carlin (b.1927- )  
            m1. Anne Mallon

Lisa Weir Carlin (b.1959- )  
William Bayard Carlin Jr. (b.1962- )  
m2. Elizabeth Ann  
m2. Charles Burlingham (June 8, 1884-June 18, 1979),  
April 2, 1929  
Charles Burlingham Jr. (b.1930- )  
m1. Priscilla Alden Dunphy (b.1932)  
Robin Adair Burlingham (b.1960- )  
Nicholas Weir Burlingham (b.1962- )  
m2. Olive Adair Miller (b.1934)

m2. Ella Baker (September 7, 1852-December 27, 1930), October 28, 1893.

#### **IMMEDIATE FAMILY OF MAHONRI MACKINTOSH YOUNG**

Mahonri Mackintosh Young (August 9, 1877-November 2, 1957)

m1. Cecelia Sharp (1872-1917), February 19, 1907  
Cecelia Agnes Young (Aggie) (1908-1979)  
m. Oliver Ingraham Lay (1906-1970), 1931  
Dorothy (Darcy) Laura Lay (b.1935- )  
Charles Mahonri Lay (b.1938- )  
Daniel Mackintosh Lay (1944-1954)  
Mahonri (Bill) Sharp Young (1911-1996)  
m1. Betty Chamberlain, 1932  
m2. Rhoda Satterthwaite, 1940  
Mahonri Mackintosh II (1947- )

m2. Dorothy Weir (June 18, 1890-May 28, 1947), February 17, 1931



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*Doris and Sperry Andrews*, March 16, 1989, Book I.

*Charles Burlingham Jr.*, March 17, 1989, Book I.

*Mahonri Sharp (Bill) Young, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, Charles Lay, and George Lay*, August 7, 1989, Book I.

*William (Bill) DeForest*, August 7, 1989, Book II.

## AUTHORS' INTERVIEWS, CONVERSATIONS, AND SITE VISITS

Doris Andrews.

Conversation with Doris Andrews, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT.  
September 13, 2002.

Charles Burlingham Jr.

Conversation with Charles Burlingham Jr., Black Rock, CT. August 8, 2002. Burlingham is the son of Cora Weir Carlin Burlingham, J. Alden Weir's youngest daughter, and her second husband, Charles Burlingham.

William B. Carlin.

Telephone conversations with William B. Carlin, June 25, 2003; and personal visit, August 3, 2003. Email communication, October 2003. Carlin is the son of Cora Weir Carlin Burlingham and her first husband, William E. Carlin.

John W. Claghorn.

Telephone conversation with John W. Claghorn, Pocono Lake Preserve, Pennsylvania, August 13, 2003; and site visit to Henryville, PA.

Nicholas Cunningham.

Conversation with Dr. Nicholas Cunningham, October 15, 2002. Cunningham is the son of Mary Blair Wardwell Cunningham, lifelong friend of Dorothy Weir Young.

Norma S. Davis.

Conversation with Norma S. Davis, Salt Lake City, Utah, March 7, 2002.

Constance Evans.

Conversations with Constance Evans, Executive Director, Weir Farm Trust, Wilton, CT., 2001-2003.

Julia Gatta. See Barbara and John McGrath below.

Patricia Hills.

Conversation with Professor Patricia Hills of Boston University, November, 2002.

Barbara and John McGrath, and Julia Gatta.

The authors are grateful to the current owners of the Windham house, Windham, CT, Barbara and John McGrath, for information about the property and a tour of the cemetery in Windham where members of the family, including Julian, Ella, and Anna, are buried. Barbara McGrath is the stepdaughter of Charles Burlingham Jr.; also, for their introduction to Rector Julia Gatta of St. Paul's Church in Windham and her tour of that building. February 2002.

Robin Pell.

Conversation and site visit with historian Robin Pell of Keene Valley, NY, August 2001.

Susan G. Thompson.

Conversations with Senior Registrar Susan G. Thompson, Brigham Young University Museum of Art, Provo, Utah, March 7, 2002 and September, 2003.

Mahonri Mackintosh Young II.

McKay telephone conversation with Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, August 25, 2004.

#### **ADDITIONAL SITE VISITS**

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Olana State Historic Site (Frederick Church home), Hudson, NY.

Onteora Park, Tannersville, NY, August 2002 and 2003.

Salmagundi Club, New York, NY, October 21, 2002, With John Morehouse, member.

Thomas Cole National Historic Site, "Cedar Grove," Catskill, NY, August 2003.

#### **MUSEUMS VISITED WITH AMERICAN ART COLLECTIONS AND/OR RELEVANT EXHIBITIONS DURING THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH**

Corcoran Gallery, Washington DC

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, Provo, Utah

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY  
Florence Griswold Museum, Old Lyme, CT  
Layman Allen Museum, New London, CT  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY  
National Gallery of Art, Washington DC  
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