



# The Land of Nod

This fall, PBS will air the new Ken Burns documentary series *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*. The 12-hour, six-part documentary series, directed by Burns and co-produced with his longtime colleague, Dayton Duncan, is the story of an idea as uniquely American as the Declaration of Independence and just as radical - that the most special places in the nation should be preserved, not for royalty or the rich, but for everyone.

Though the series spotlights the 58 places that Congress has designated as National Parks, the series is really about each of the 391 units (58 national parks, plus 333 national monuments, historic sites, and other units) of the National Park System. Weir Farm National Historic Site figures prominently in the list of National Historic Sites and though not mentioned in the film, the power of art to motivate people to preserve and protect land for generations to come is a theme throughout the series.

Writer Wallace Stegner called the national parks “the best idea we ever had,” and no activity of the federal government engenders such universal support and public loyalty; yet the story of how these special places became preserved as parks, the role of individual citizens in creating them, and the powerful stories of people’s emotional connection to them remains relatively unknown. Over six years in the making, *The National Parks* features some of the most extensive, breathtaking images of the National Park System ever captured on film. Tune in this fall and do some armchair traveling to those 58 parks – but don’t forget, your little slice of Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon are as close as Weir Farm National Historic Site.

See you soon,

Linda Cook, Superintendent

## Events:

**A Brush with Nature**  
**Sunday, May 31, 2009**

Join us for a free day-long *plein air* art event

**Connecticut Open House Day**  
**Saturday, June 13, 2009**

Come take a hard hat tour of the Weir House and see the restoration in progress

**Connecticut Historic Gardens Day**  
**Sunday, June 21, 2009**

Explore the historic gardens while volunteers offer short informal talks

**National Public Lands Day**  
**Saturday, September 26, 2009**

Help repair a historic stone wall during a stone wall workshop

**Jazz in the Garden**  
**Sunday, September 27, 2009**

Enjoy an outdoor jazz concert among the terraced gardens

## A Brush with Nature

On Sunday, May 31, Weir Farm National Historic Site welcomes art lovers and artists, of all ages and experience levels, to enjoy the fun of creating art in nature. A Brush with Nature, a free day-long *plein air* art event, will celebrate the creation of art in a landscape that has inspired artists for over 125 years. Local professional artists Sally Frank, Wendy Hollender, Bobbi Eike Mullen, Jen Shelley, and Janine Wesselmann will be set up in the landscape sharing their passion for *plein air* painting and sketching. Watercolor and sketching supplies will be provided by the National Park Service for anyone who needs them. The professional artists will be available to help those just starting out. At the end of the day, an on-site exhibition will feature artwork created throughout the day.

All parking will be at the Branchville School at 40 Florida Road in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Shuttles will run continuously to and from the farm from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. There is no fee to participate. Simply park at the Branchville School, ride the shuttle to Weir Farm National Historic Site, and experience the fun of creating art *en plein air*! In the case of severe weather, a rain date has been scheduled for Sunday, June 7.



A father and daughter participating in the Take Part in Art program on a sunny Sunday afternoon.



# Selected Works: Mahonri Young Currently on Exhibit

From May through October, *Selected Works: Mahonri Young* will be on exhibit in the visitor center gallery. Mahonri Young, husband of Dorothy Weir and son-in-law of J. Alden Weir, was a resident at the Branchville farm from 1931 to 1957. Though he was best known as a sculptor, Mahonri Young was also an exceptional draftsman, painter, and etcher adept at working with a variety of media and subjects. Young's artistic eye was tuned in to the many manifestations of life – he found intrigue and beauty in them all. Most of these works, all selected from private collections, have never been exhibited publicly. The variety of images showcase Young's tremendous versatility and technical skill. Whether capturing a fleeting moment before sunset as a man rests with his horse, a quiet landscape covered in snow, or the excitement of the boxing ring, Young's artwork succeeds in presenting specific moments in time with sincerity and extraordinary artistry. The exhibit was made possible with assistance from the Weir Farm Art Center and the Young Family.

*“I write you – as from a different country, so great is a change here after the quiet, peaceful and pastoral Branchville – that will always represent for me the peace loving intimate America. I can't tell you how I enjoyed those good days with you all – the fields, the woods, the fishing, silent hours, the peaceful times at night looking up into the stars...”*

Wilfred Von Glehn  
Writing to J. Alden Weir  
after enjoying a visit to  
Weir's Branchville farm



Mahonri Young  
Branchville, May 1929  
Watercolor on paper  
Private Collection

Watercolor of the Branchville Farm by Mahonri Young painted for his wife, Dorothy Weir Young in 1929.

## New Junior Ranger Activities

**Weir Farm  
National  
Historic Site**



**Weir Farm  
National  
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**Weir Farm  
National  
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On Saturday, April 25, Weir Farm National Historic Site celebrated Junior Ranger Day with the launch of two new Junior Ranger activities: Art Ranger Letterboxing and the Art Ranger Pond Pack.

The Art Ranger Letterboxing activity directs children to use guided clues to navigate the landscape and locate stamps in hidden locations. The Art Ranger Pond Pack, a backpack containing art and nature-oriented activities to complete on a hike around Weir Pond, is great for those looking for a nature walk. By completing any of these activities, children can earn their very own Junior Ranger badge!



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## Visitor Center Hours of Operation

**May through October**

The Visitor Center is open  
Wednesday through Sunday  
from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## Tour Schedule

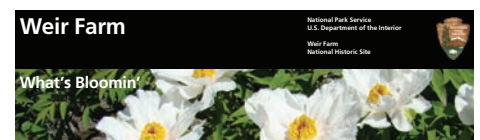
**May through October**

**Tour of Weir Farm NHS:**  
Wednesday through Sunday  
at 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday  
at 1:00 p.m.

**Stone Wall Program:**  
Thursday and Saturday at 1:00 p.m.

The grounds are open daily from dawn to dusk. Admission and tours are offered to the public free of charge.

## What's Bloomin' Brochure Now Available!



To find out what's blooming in the gardens and around the landscape of Weir Farm National Historic Site, pick up the new *What's Bloomin'* brochure! You can find the brochure on the porch of the visitor center, in the visitor center, and on our website at [www.nps.gov/wefa](http://www.nps.gov/wefa). It will be updated regularly to reflect which plants are in bloom and will tell you about favorable growing conditions and the bloom length for each plant.

### The Land of Nod:

The name given to the Branchville property by J. Alden Weir and his artist friends. Both Weir and Childe Hassam used the phrase to title works that were inspired by the local landscape.