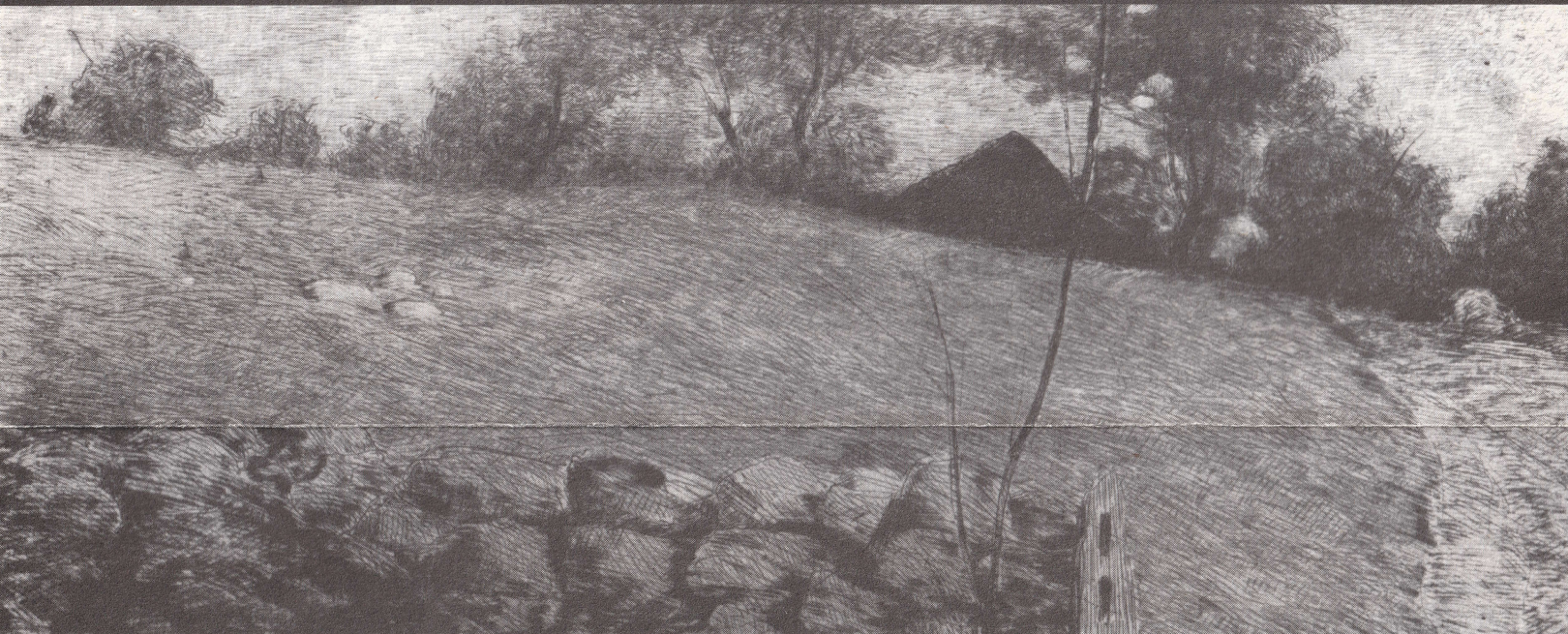


# Weir Farm

National Historic Site  
Connecticut

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



J.A. Weir, *The Barn Lot*, courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Brigham Young University

## Home is the Starting Place

*For more than 100 years Weir Farm has been an inspirational focal point to many generations of artists. At few other places is an American landscape so intimately tied to the paintings, drawings, etchings and other works of art produced there.*

*The American Impressionist painter Julian Alden Weir (1852–1919) purchased this Branchville, Connecticut farm in 1882. The property included 153 acres, which Weir eventually expanded to 238 acres. The “quiet plain little house among the rocks” held special appeal for the painter. For nearly four decades, Weir*

*In 1931 the sculptor Mahonri Young (1877–1957) married J. Alden Weir’s daughter Dorothy and came to live at the farm. A grandson of Brigham Young, Mahonri Young was already recognized for his small studies in bronze of the common working man. The studio he built at Branchville, however, was custom designed to accommodate his monumental public work. A person of great creative versatility, Young worked in many artistic mediums and in time set up an etching room off the sculpture studio. Dorothy Weir Young was also an accomplished artist in both oils and watercolor. She trained at her father’s side and took over his*

made this his primary summer studio and home to his family. He built a painting studio, twice enlarged the house, and continuously worked the landscape, adding and massaging features to suit his highly discerning eye. The farm became, in a sense, a big sprawling palette, its buildings, stone walls, woods and gardens all elements in the painter's evolving composition. It also inspired and suggested subject matter for much of Weir's work and offered countless excursions, both recreational and creative, to his wide circle of friends that included many leading figures in American art. The painters Albert Pinkham Ryder, John Twachtman and Childe Hassam were perhaps closest to Weir and were regular visitors to Branchville. Known for a generosity of spirit, as well as the legacy of his professional life as an artist, Weir recognized early the importance of a creative center, a focal point, for both life and art. "Home is the starting place," he wrote his future wife in anticipation of their marriage and move to Branchville, which would remain home and workplace to Weir for the rest of his life.

Branchville studio following his death. Since Mahonri Young's death in 1957 the cultivation of both art and life at Weir Farm has been carried on by the artists Sperry and Doris Andrews. The Andrews recognized this as a place of extraordinary significance to American art and were instrumental in preserving the landscape and its artistic legacy for the visiting public and future generations of artists.

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## J. Alden Weir, An American Master

In 1877, at the age of 25, Julian Weir returned to America from five years of training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He was one of many American art students during the years following the Civil War who sought formal academic training in Paris. The long hours spent in the studios there with other students studying abroad formed the beginning of a communal habit of working and many close friendships that would last throughout his life. While in Paris Julian had the chance to witness firsthand the earliest exhibitions of French Impressionist work. Although he would later become a champion of the style in America, he regarded it with disdain in his youth, criticizing Impressionist works for their total rejection of drawing and form.

*continued*



## An American Master

*continued*



J.A. Weir, *Idle Hours*, courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art

In choosing a career in art Julian was following the lead of both his father and brother. Robert W. Weir, his father, was associated with the Hudson River painters and had a long and distinguished career as a professor of drawing at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Julian's older brother, John Ferguson Weir, directed the art department at Yale University for 44 years.

Back in America, Julian began his professional life as an art instructor in New York City and pursued his own work in portraiture and still life. His paintings of flowers are among the masterpieces of still life produced in this country. With his marriage in 1882 to Anna Dwight Baker, their move to Branchville, and the birth of their first child, he turned increasingly to domestic scenes. Around 1890 he began to paint out of doors in an Impressionist style, using pure, prismatic colors, unmixed on the canvas to create effects of intense coloration and flickering light. His conversion to the style that he had shunned as a youth was most certainly influenced by his close friendship with John Twachtman. Together Weir and Twachtman embraced the Branchville landscape in their

work, even devising a portable studio for the winter months. In 1897 they were instrumental, with another friend Childe Hassam, in forming the Ten American Painters.

The Branchville-inspired landscapes of Weir, Hassam, Twachtman and others associated with The Ten are among the finest products of the American Impressionist movement. Weir was exceptional among the group for also producing a series of industrial landscapes depicting the textile mills around Willimantic Connecticut, his wife's family home and his "other" Connecticut studio.

Throughout his career, Weir balanced his own work with teaching and other activities that lent support to young artists. From 1897 to 1901 he held open air classes at Branchville. Other years he taught in the summer at Cos Cob, Connecticut where some of his friends had established a thriving art colony. Late in life he was elected to the board of trustees of the Metropolitan Museum and as president of the National Academy of Design. Artist, educator, patron, collector and all-around advocate of the artistic life, his mastery was of immense proportions.

## Visiting Weir Farm National Historic Site

Weir Farm was established as a National Historic Site in 1990 and planning is now under way to provide a full range of opportunities for visitors.

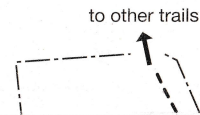
The Visitor Center, located in the Burlingham House, features an introduction to the site and changing art exhibitions. Scheduled tours are available of J. Alden Weir's studio. Special exhibitions, lectures, art workshops and a visiting artist program are offered by the Weir Farm Heritage Trust, a nonprofit partner with the National Park Service.

Weir Farm NHS is located in southwestern Connecticut in the towns of Ridgefield and Wilton. From Route 7, take Route 102 west to Old Branchville Road, to 735 Nod Hill Road.

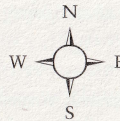
For hours and further information, contact:

Weir Farm National Historic Site  
735 Nod Hill Road  
Wilton, CT 06897  
(203) 834-1896.

For information about special programs and membership, contact the Weir Farm Heritage Trust at (203) 761-9945.



to Routes **7** and **102**



to other trails

RIDGEFIELD  
WILTON

Nod Hill Road

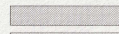
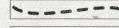

Weir Farm Lane

Pond

Pelham Lane

Nod Hill Road

to Weir Preserve

-  Open to the public on guided tours only
-  Foot paths
-  Stone walls

**Buildings**

- 1** Ice House/Chicken Coop
- 2** Weir Barn
- 3** Weir House
- 4** Weir Studio
- 5** Young Studio
- 6** Burlingham House Visitor Center
- 7** Burlingham Barn

