



Historic Resource Study of Laborers at Weir Farm National Historical Park, 1882–1957



Rachel Boyle, PhD
Hope Shannon, PhD

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Presented to Weir Farm National Historical Park
Interior Region 1, North Atlantic—Appalachian

Prepared under a cooperative agreement between
The Organization of American Historians and The National Park Service

March 2023

Cover Image:

Mahonri M. Young, *Apple Picking at Branchville*, ink, 8 ¹⁵/₁₆ × 11 ¹¹/₁₆ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
MARCH 2023

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March 2023

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Acronyms

ABB	Anna Bartlett Baker
ABW	Anna Baker Weir
ADB	Anna Dwight Baker
BYU	Brigham Young University
CAW	Caroline Alden Weir
CW	Cora Weir
DW	Dorothy Weir
DWY	Dorothy Weir Young
EB	Ella Baker
EBW	Ella Baker Weir
JAW	Julian Alden Weir
JFW	John Ferguson Weir
MMY	Mahroni Mackintosh Young
WEFA	Weir Farm National Historical Park Archival Collections

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Rachel Boyle, PhD

Introduction

A wide range of workers shaped the built, social, and cultural environments of Weir Farm from 1882 to 1957, from tenant farmers and tradespeople to domestic servants and studio assistants. This study documents and analyzes the lives of workers hired by the Weir, Young, and Burlingham families to manage and improve the property and serve its proprietors. It aims to expand the documentary record of the site, link the estate to broader historical currents, and contribute to resource stewardship and interpretive strategies and goals at the national historical park.

In 1882, American Impressionist artist Julian Alden Weir acquired land for a weekend retreat in Branchville, a hamlet situated on the border between Ridgefield and Wilton, Connecticut. The following year, he married Anna Baker and together they had three daughters: Caroline, Dorothy, and Cora. Anna passed away in 1892, and Julian later married her sister, Ella, in 1893. When the family was not living in their main New York City residence or visiting the Baker family home in Windham, Connecticut, they retreated at the Branchville estate. From 1882 to 1919, Julian Weir made improvements to the site, found inspiration for his artwork, and spent time with family and friends at his farm.

This study begins by contextualizing the Weir estate as a New England farm, shaped by regional historical trajectories in the 19th century as well as the intersecting identities and personal idiosyncrasies of Julian Weir. His approach to property ownership set the conditions under which laborers like tradespeople and tenant farmers came to the farm and the kind of work they performed. Then, Chapter 2 focuses on the first long-term caretakers at the site: the Remy family. It details the daily and seasonal rhythms of agricultural labor on Weir Farm, the unpaid domestic work undertaken by Johanna Remy, and the cross-class relationships that developed between the Weir and Remy families. Chapter 3 goes on to discuss the domestic servants that Anna and Ella Weir hired to care for their children, cook, clean, serve, and launder clothing. It assesses the contours of their daily work in Branchville and New York City, the lives of known women, and connects to broader trends of Irish women working as domestic servants in the United States.

After Julian Weir died in 1919, Ella and Dorothy Weir managed the Branchville farm until Ella passed in 1930. Dorothy married sculptor Mahonri Mackintosh Young in 1931, and the two spent increasing amounts of time at the estate, even moving there full-time during World War II. Around the same time, Cora Weir Burlingham and her family also spent weekends and summer vacations on the adjoining Webb property acquired by Julian Weir in 1907. The two families spent much of the 1930s and 1940s at Branchville, employing people throughout the Great Depression and World War II. Mahonri Young

also completed two major projects of his career on the site: the *This Is the Place* monument and the statue of Brigham Young that represents Utah in the United States Capitol. Dorothy Weir Young passed away in 1947 and Mahonri Young a decade later.

The last two chapters follow the laborers who worked at the Weir family estate from 1929 to 1957. Chapter 4 examines how Dorothy Weir Young and, to a certain extent, Cora Weir Burlingham approached property management, noting how they both continued and departed from their father's legacy. The chapter also centers on another long-term caretaker family, the Besses, to revisit how agricultural practices changed or not on the site since the turn of the 20th century. The chapter makes use of rich oral histories shared by the Bass children who grew up on the Branchville farm, highlighting their mother's unpaid domestic labor while also describing the family's lifestyle and leisure activities. The final chapter discusses other workers who shaped Weir Farm during the Young and Burlingham years, from domestic workers and tradespeople to studio assistants and tenants after the Besses. The neighboring Knoche family in particular conducted a wide range of work on the site, from masonry and carpentry to laundry and agricultural labor. The Knoches exemplify how interconnected social and familial networks characterized life and labor in Branchville in the mid-20th century. The chapter also features other familiar faces on the property during that time, including longtime maid Mollie Gleason, devoted studio assistant Spero Anargyros, and the Gully family, who lived on the site as its final long-term tenants.

Previous reports from the National Park Service provide a strong foundation for this study. The 2009 Historic Resource Study, *An Artists' Retreat*, by Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, provides a rich and thorough overview of the life and work of Julian Weir as well as his immediate and extended family. Historic Structure Reports on the Weir residence and outbuildings, the caretaker's house, and the Webb/Burlingham complex establish key facts on how the property changed over time, which proved particularly useful in visualizing the spaces that workers navigated. The agricultural component of the Cultural Landscape Report written by Jack Larkin delves into the particulars of agricultural practices on the site, yielding valuable context for understanding the labor undertaken by the Remys, Besses, and other tenant farmers. Other reports that provided critical background included the 1996 Cultural Landscape Report and the National Register of Historic Places documentation.

Due to their scopes, many previous studies prioritized the perspective of the Weir family over the workers they hired. For example, many of the reports utilized correspondence written by Julian Weir to better understand him as an artist and the changes he made to the property. This study also analyzes Weir's letters, but primarily frames him and his descendants as employers. It further mines the letters for passing references to workers and builds out their personal stories. This report also aims to put people in the spaces so clearly defined by the Historic Structures Reports to better understand how workers moved around the property, how they interacted with the land and buildings, and how access to

utilities like water or heat impacted their daily life. Additionally, the study makes generous use of oral histories conducted in the late 20th and early 21st centuries by early National Park Service staff and volunteers, prioritizing workers' own voices where possible.

Altogether, this research combines a top-down approach that acknowledges the power of property owners with a bottom-up perspective that centers laborers as significant historical subjects. A top-down analysis places the Weir family in their historical context, understanding their participation in capitalism and settler colonialism alongside their personal and artistic motivations. The Weirs' perspective is well-documented thanks to archival collections at Weir Farm National Historical Park and Brigham Young University. People with more privilege and power tend to be overrepresented in the historical written record, so unearthing the stories of workers for a bottom-up perspective required creativity. Sometimes this study utilizes genealogical sources and oral histories to reconstruct laborers' personal timelines and connect the individual's life—including their migration patterns, ethnic and racial identities, and economic choices—to broader historical trends. In doing so, the study has revealed the names and lives of workers previously hidden in the historical record. Silences persist in other instances due to a lack of information. In those cases, the study makes use of existing secondary literature on agricultural, domestic, and trade labor to envision what life looked like for workers.

Combining top-down and bottom-up perspectives seriously considers both workers and employers as historical subjects and provides opportunities to interrogate cross-class relationships. By further rooting the analysis in the physical landscape of Weir Farm, the study explores how different people moved about the site in different ways, and how they would or would not interact with each other. Gender profoundly impacted interactions at Branchville, determining the differences between men's and women's work, where they performed their labor, and whether or not they received wages. Class and gender also informed the intimate domestic relationships between the Weirs and long-term servants like Mary Hanratty and Mollie Gleason, as well as the transactional wage interactions that contributed to high turnover among both domestic and agricultural workers. The inherently unequal power differential between employer and employee did not preclude the emergence of mutually beneficial, congenial, or even affectionate relationships. Other times, workers resented or resisted the interpersonal power dynamics at play.

In addition to exploring cross-class relationships at Weir Farm, this historical resource study reflects numerous accounts of family connection and pride. An attachment to family legacy profoundly informed Dorothy Weir Young's approach to managing the Branchville estate. Workers' families expressed pride in oral histories as they related their ancestors' hard manual labor. Even Irish maids maintained familial networks despite the disruption of migration and the isolation of live-in domestic service. The study reveals the

impacts of both transience and rootedness, from the workers who traveled great distances and moved through jobs quickly, to the families who stayed in Ridgefield for multiple generations, building businesses and shaping town life.

Studying the laborers of Weir Farm connects a hyperlocal narrative to regional, national, and global trends. The people who passed through the modest farm site in rural Connecticut share links to the Great Famine in Ireland, German unification, Italian immigration, early American colonization, and later Mormon settlement in the American West. The stories of labor at Weir Farm are manifestations of sweeping historical forces like settler colonialism and industrial capitalism, but are also about the quiet, daily, physical, rote work of wringing laundry, plowing a field, or laying stones.

CHAPTER ONE

Creating a New England Farm

The Weir Farm National Historical Park sits on Nod Hill Road, a rural Connecticut road that constitutes a border between the towns of Wilton and Ridgefield, Connecticut. Understanding the history of the area surrounding the farm contextualizes Julian Weir’s decision to purchase the property and transform it into a family and artistic retreat. In turn, Weir’s class, racial, and gender identities, along with his participation in the emerging American Impressionist community, defined his vision of the site, how he chose to change or maintain the site, the tradespeople and farmers he hired, and his expectations of them. His approach to ownership and management set the conditions under which laborers lived and worked at the Branchville farm. Weir’s New England farm was not an inevitable setting, but a specific product of broader social forces, Weir’s individual identity and vision, and the work of laborers he hired to realize his vision.

Weir Farm is located on Indigenous land. Long before the arrival of Europeans, Indigenous peoples lived on the land that is currently called Connecticut. Many nations in eastern North America were devastated by diseases brought by Europeans in the 15th and 16th centuries, and subsequent warfare between Indigenous nations and colonial settlers further depleted and displaced tribes.¹ By the mid-17th century, the Siwanog tribe lived near current-day Wilton, and the Ramapough lived on the land that would become Ridgefield.² In fact, English settlers from Norwalk and Milford purchased a tract directly

¹ Two notable examples of warfare include the Pequot War (1636–38) and King Philip’s War (1675–78). See “America’s Most Devastating Conflict: King Philip’s War,” Connecticut History | a CTHumanities Project, August 12, 2019, <https://connecticuthistory.org/americas-most-devastating-conflict-king-philips-war>; “Pequot War,” Connecticut History | a CTHumanities Project, November 20, 2012, <https://connecticuthistory.org/topics-page/pequot-war>. For other examples of warfare specifically involving the Ramapough, see “Ramapough Timeline,” Ramapough Lenape Nation, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://ramapoughlenapenation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Timeline2013.pdf>.

² George Lounsbury Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut* (Ridgefield, CN: Privately printed by the author, 1927); Hayden L. Griswold, *Map of Connecticut, circa 1625, Indian Trails, Villages, Sachemdoms* (Connecticut: National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Connecticut, 1930), Norman B. Leventhal Map Center Collection, Boston Public Library; “History Is Here: Episode 10, Wilton: Siwanog Tribe, English Parish, American Town,” *Wilton Historical Society*, June 3, 2020, <http://wiltonhistorical.org/2020/06/history-is-here-episode-10-wilton-siwanog-tribe-english-parish-american-town>; “Ramapough Timeline,” *Ramapough Lenape Nation*, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://ramapoughlenapenation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Timeline2013.pdf>; Ridgefield Archives Committee, *Ridgefield* (Portsmouth, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 7; Robert H. Russell, *Wilton, Connecticut: Three Centuries Of People, Places, and Progress* (Wilton, CN: Wilton Historical Society, 2004), 4; “Wilton: Siwanog Tribe, English Parish, American Town,” *Wilton Historical Society* (exhibition), <https://wiltonhistorical.org/current-exhibitions/wilton-siwanog-tribe-english-parish-american-town>.

from the Ramapough in 1708 to establish Ridgefield. These “Proprietors of Ridgefield” granted the land that would become Weir Farm to Matthew Arnold in 1745.³ After changing hands a few times, Anthony Beers purchased the property in 1789 and became its first long-term Euro-American resident. Beers, and later his son and daughter-in-law, would live there until 1880.⁴ The Beers’ ancestors fought in early colonial wars like the Pequot War, contributing to the forced displacement of Indigenous nations and making way for a Euro-American settler society on Indigenous land.⁵

Indigenous and settler history is acknowledged today in local place names like Catoonah Street in the center of Ridgefield, which references the Ramapough leader who sold the land to the Proprietors of Ridgefield.⁶ The colonization of Indigenous land by Euro-American settlers continues into the present day, as does the survival of the descendants of the Ramapough and the Siwanog. The Ramapough-Munsee Lenape Nation is currently headquartered in New Jersey, and descendants of the Siwanog tribe live today as part of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation in Kent, Connecticut.⁷ Weir Farm’s very existence as a Euro-American residence is rooted in a deeper history and continued reality of settler colonialism.⁸ Euro-American assumptions pervaded most decisions related to property ownership and labor on the site since the 18th century, usually without regard to the first stewards of the land who continued to survive in the region and beyond. Identifying property owners and workers as settlers acknowledges that they were operating within a colonial mindset and residing on Indigenous land.

³ Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat: J. Alden Weir’s Farm in Connecticut,” Weir Farm National Historic Site Historic Resource Study, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2009, 3; Ridgefield Archives Committee, *Ridgefield*, 7; Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut*.

⁴ Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 3.

⁵ Anthony Beers’ great-grandfather, also named Anthony Beers (ca. 1620–79) may have fought in unnamed “Indian Wars,” rising to the rank of sergeant. The elder Anthony Beers’ relative Richard Beers (possibly his father, uncle, or cousin depending on the source) fought and died in the Pequot War. Donald Lines Jacobus and Connecticut Daughters of the American Revolution, *History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield* (New Haven, CN: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1930), 55–56; Keith Marshall Jones III, *The Farms of Farmingville: A Two-Century Story of Twenty-Three Ridgefield, Connecticut Farmhouses and the People Who Gave Them Life* (Ridgefield, CT: Connecticut Colonel Pub Co, 2001), 64.

⁶ Also known as Sachem Katonah. “Ramapough Timeline”; Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut*.

⁷ “History Is Here: Episode 10, Wilton: Siwanog Tribe, English Parish, American Town,” *Wilton Historical Society*, June 3, 2020, <http://wiltonhistorical.org/2020/06/history-is-here-episode-10-wilton-siwanog-tribe-english-parish-american-town/>; “History,” Schaghticoke Tribal Nation, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://schaghticoke.com/history/>; “Ramapough Lenape Nation—Keepers of the Pass,” accessed April 30, 2021, <https://ramapoughlenapenation.org>.

⁸ Settler colonialism refers to colonizer attempts to replace Indigenous people and culture with settler society. For an introduction to the concept and how it can be applied in early American history, see Jeffrey Ostler and Nancy Shoemaker, “Settler Colonialism in Early American History: Introduction,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2019): 361–68, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.76.3.0361>.

The development of Weir's future retreat as a settler farm mirrored the evolution of the region in the 18th and 19th centuries. For example, the farmhouse that would become Weir's residence resembled other colonial homes of the period. It was likely built as a two-story building with an attic, cellar, and central chimney sometime between 1765 and 1781, before the Beers' occupancy.⁹ In the 1830s, Lewis Beers joined a local and national trend by altering the home in the Greek Revival style.¹⁰ During the same era, the Beers family oversaw the construction of the barn, caretaker's house, and picket fences.¹¹ The building on the site speaks to how New England agriculture grew beyond the subsistence farming of the 18th century, though it remained small-scale compared to the market-driven agriculture that developed further west in the mid-19th century.¹² Like many rural towns, Ridgefield and Wilton met local needs through service and craft industries. In the second half of the 19th century, both towns experienced population decline as people sought richer farmland out West or found jobs in industrializing cities. Factories attracted workers in nearby cities like Bridgeport or Danbury; one of the closest factories, the Gilbert and Bennett Manufacturing Company in Georgetown, Connecticut, opened its doors in the late 19th century and specialized in producing wire cloth and netting well into the 20th century.¹³ By and large, however, the transformative forces of industrialization bypassed Ridgefield and Wilton. What was left behind was, by all accounts, sleepy small towns and farming communities with a few longstanding Euro-American families and stores.¹⁴

Then, the opening of the Ridgefield branch of the Danbury and Norfolk Railroad in 1870 connected Branchville to New York City and brought urban dwellers seeking rural retreats, among them Julian Weir.¹⁵ As industrialization made cities like New York more populous and polluted, the idea of escaping to the countryside for fresh air in a more bucolic

⁹ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 23–24; Jones, *The Farms of Farmingville*, 151–54.

¹⁰ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 27; Jones, *The Farms of Farmingville*, 155–57. In Ridgefield's Farmingville district alone, Jones notes three farmhouses that were similarly remodeled in the Greek Revival style in the mid-19th century.

¹¹ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," xlix.

¹² Jones, *The Farms of Farmingville*, 118–32. For sweeping overviews on the market revolution and industrial agriculture, see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992); Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹³ Many workers discussed in this report worked at the wire mill during their lives. Jan Cunningham, *Georgetown Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1987; "History of Gilbert and Bennett in Georgetown, Connecticut," accessed April 30, 2021, <http://historyofredding.net/HGgilbertbennett.htm>; "Trade Catalogs from Gilbert & Bennett Mfg. Co.," National Museum of American History, accessed April 30, https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/SILNMAHTL_17253.

¹⁴ Hal S. Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Ridgefield Archives Committee, *Ridgefield*, 7–8; Russell, *Wilton, Connecticut*, 262.

¹⁵ Ronald Dale Karr, *The Rail Lines of Southern New England: A Handbook of Railroad History* (Pepperell, MA: Branch Line Press, 1994).

setting became particularly appealing to those with means to purchase property. The ensuing country house movement was fueled by nostalgia for an idealized version of pre-industrial, pre-Civil War life. Rural communities like Ridgefield and Wilton shifted from operating as primarily agricultural communities to hosting well-to-do families who built their summer homes there. Wealthy businessmen like George M. Olcott, B. Ogden Chisholm, George Griswold Haven, and Frederic E. Lewis developed grand estates in Ridgefield, and plenty of city dwellers established less extravagant country homes in Wilton, as well.¹⁶

Julian Weir's background positioned him to be among the first wave of city folks to buy land in the area. He was born into a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant settler family; his paternal grandfather migrated from Scotland to New Rochelle, New York, around 1790, and his father made a living as an artist and professor at West Point U.S. Military Academy.¹⁷ His mother, Susan Martha Bayard, descended from Europeans who settled in New York and New Jersey colonies well before the American Revolutionary War.¹⁸ Weir was not independently wealthy and pursued an art career subsidized by various women in his life. Anne Caroline Alden, for example, was a wealthy descendant of Pennsylvania industrialist Robert Coleman and the wife of Weir's godfather, a military captain who fought in the Rogue River Wars in Oregon and made a fortune drilling for oil in Pennsylvania. Alden paid for Weir's art education in Europe, and he honored her sponsorship by emphasizing his middle name in his professional signature, "J. Alden Weir."¹⁹ Weir later married into the Baker family; his wives' grandfather also served in the United States military and was a

¹⁶ The phenomenon of escaping cities to bucolic country estates did not begin with industrialization, but did accelerate with industrialization in the late 19th and early 20th century. George M. Olcott was the head of a drug and chemical importing company, B. Ogden Chisholm was secretary-treasurer of the Greenwich Savings Bank in New York City, George Griswold Haven made money in railroads, and Frederic E. Lewis was a banker and the grandson of Moses Taylor, one of the wealthiest men of the 19th century. Clive Aslet, *The American Country Home* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*; Ridgefield Archives Committee, *Ridgefield*, 8; Russell, *Wilton, Connecticut*, 310; Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 155.

¹⁷ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 9; Rossiter Johnson, ed. *Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans*, vol. I–X (Boston: The Biographical Society), 1904.

¹⁸ For example, Susan Martha Bayard's great-great-great grandfather, Petrus Bayard (1635–99), was the brother of the Nicholas Bayard, the 16th mayor of New York City. Another ancestor, her great-great-great grandfather, Richard "The Builder" Stockton (1654–1709), purchased land that would become the town of Princeton, New Jersey. For more, see "Public Member Trees," database, Ancestry.com, "Bowman Family Tree," profile for Susan Martha Bayard (b. August 6, 1817, New Jersey, USA, d. September 5, 1900, Garrison, Putnam County, New York, USA), <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/25522159/person/26098123919/facts> (accessed July 5, 2022).

¹⁹ George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.: From Its Establishment, In 1802, to 1890, With the Early History of the United States Military Academy* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1891), 488–91; Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 11; Joshua Growh, "Union Center: How a 520-acre Coleman Estate Was Converted into a "Worker's Paradise" for 20,000 Union Members," *LebTown*, June 28, 2021, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://lebtown.com/2021/06/28/union-center-how-a-520-acre-coleman-estate-was-converted-into-a-workers-paradise-for-20000-union-members>; Roberta Strickler, "Regal Millwood," *LancasterOnline*, August 20, 2004, accessed December 21, 2021, https://lancasteronline.com/news/regal-millwood/article_ca78318c-c589-56f8-900d-802a55d50176.html; Dorothy Weir Young, *Life and Letters*, xxi, 17.

successful businessman. Their great-grandfather was a prosperous merchant who had built a paper mill and provided American troops with clothing and other provisions during the War of 1812.²⁰ Like the Aldens, the Baker family's generational wealth directly resulted from the United States' wars of expansion into Indigenous land and subsequent military and economic activities. The Baker family home in Windham, Connecticut served as a retreat for Weir and his family, but access to the family's wealth also enabled him to own his own second home that he may not have been able to maintain based on his family background and income as an artist and teacher. Weir originally planned to build a summer retreat in the Adirondacks, but for unspecified reasons and possibly a good deal, he chose the Branchville spot instead.²¹ Certainly the convenient location a train ride from his life in New York City combined with the money from his wives' family and their distinctly settler legacy set the stage for him to buy property in the area.

Owning property reaffirmed Weir's identity as an upper-class white man in 19th-century America.²² Not only was individually possessing land rooted in Euro-American colonization of Indigenous land, but it also constituted the foundation of American citizenship, as only white male property owners could vote until the 1820s. Even later into the 19th century, nativist sentiments upheld the imagined supremacy of "native-born" Americans. In reality, established white Anglo-Saxon Protestant families like the Weirs or Bakers had access to more resources than groups like recent white ethnic immigrants who often worked low-wage jobs. White Americans of all classes also benefitted from and often upheld barriers to prevent Black Americans from securing employment, owning property, and exercising full citizenship. Meanwhile, women of all races enjoyed very limited property and voting rights. In this way, race, class, and gender intersected to ensure that the group with the most access to wealth and property in the United States were white men—which at the time meant "native-born" white Anglo-Saxon Protestant men like Julian Weir.²³

Compared to nearby Ridgefield estates and within the broader country house movement, Weir's Branchville home proved rather modest. The main residence was not, as Barr Ferre wrote of country houses in *American Estates and Gardens* in 1904, "a

²⁰ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 35; "Baker-Taintor Papers 1808–1869," Philip Heslip Manuscripts Division, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/f/findaid/findaid-idx?cc=clementsead;c=clementsead;idno=umich-wcl-M-1981bak;didno=umich-wcl-M-1981bak;view=text>.

²¹ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 56–59.

²² "Upper class" here is used as an antonym to working class and encompasses Weir with his middle-class background and access to the Baker family wealth.

²³ Irish, Italian, German, and other white ethnic groups became white later into the 20th century. See Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

sumptuous house, built at large expense, often palatial in its dimensions, furnished in the richest manner.”²⁴ However, Weir would hire premier country house architects for alterations to the home: Charles Platt and, later, the firm of McKim, Mead and White. Beyond the main residence, Clive Aslet argues that “an essential element of the American country house was the estate on which it stood” and elaborates with a description that neatly fits Weir’s Branchville property: “The American country house stands on its own land, beyond the suburbs and other planned developments, out of sight of other houses, possessing at least the appearance of an independent, possibly self-sufficient, landed life, even though the money that supported it never came from the land.”²⁵

In another nod to English gentility and in an effort to recreate an imagined agrarian past, many country house owners like Weir ran farming operations on their estates.²⁶ Weir frequently corresponded about farming matters with Percy Alden, his lifelong friend and son of his art school benefactor. Alden managed a farm on the large Coleman family estate he inherited in Pennsylvania and referred to himself and Weir as “us farmers.”²⁷ Neither Alden nor Weir tended the land themselves nor did they rely on crops as a significant source of income; rather, they recreationally managed agricultural activities as gentleman farmers. Alden once wrote to Weir wishing that his friend could see his field of millet, “both as an artist and farmer.”²⁸ For Weir, owning and managing the farm was part of a broader range of activities that included his main passion and income source: painting.

In fact, Weir’s farm and estate directly served his artistic pursuits. Like other American Impressionist painters, he sought inspiration from a rural landscape that offered an escape from the bewildering effects of industrialization that dominated life in cities like New York.²⁹ Their perception of rural life and environment did not often reflect the challenging historical realities of agriculture in New England that led to depopulation of towns like Wilton and Ridgefield; rather, they sought and created an imagined rural past with their brush strokes. The wistfulness of American impressionism mirrored the nostalgia of the country home movement, and those sentiments profoundly informed Weir’s management of the Branchville estate.

²⁴ Aslet, *The American Country Home*, v–vi.

²⁵ Aslet, *The American Country Home*, vi.

²⁶ Aslet, *The American Country Home*; Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940*.

²⁷ Percy Alden to Julian Alden Weir, June 6, 1903; Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 28; Joshua Growh, “Union Center,” *LebTown*, June 28, 2021; Roberta Strickler, “Regal Millwood,” *LancasterOnline*, August 20, 2004.

²⁸ Percy Alden to Julian Alden Weir, August 11, 1903.

²⁹ For more on J. Alden Weir’s position among American Impressionist painters, see Doreen Bolger Burke, *J. Alden Weir; An American Impressionist* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983); Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat”; “Hauling and Harrowing: Edward Volkert and the Connecticut Farm,” Florence Griswold Museum, <https://florencegriswoldmuseum.org/exhibitions/hauling-and-harrowing-edward-volkert-and-the-connecticut-farm>.

As gentleman farmer and proprietor of a country estate, Weir was expected to “improve” the land by hiring workers to change the buildings and landscape according to his vision. Nineteenth-century essayist Donald G. Mitchell ruefully observed, “Unfortunately, almost every city gentleman who comes into possession—whether by purchase or otherwise—of a plain country house, from which some honest well-to-do-farmer has just decamped, puzzles his brain first of all, to know how he shall make a ‘fine thing’ of it.”³⁰

The emphasis on elevating the value and aesthetic of property emanated from settler ideas of land ownership and was also shaped by the owner’s idiosyncratic taste. In Weir’s case, his occupation as an artist informed how he pictured improvement. By “improving” the farm, Weir could shape the land and buildings to fit his aesthetic vision in addition to meeting the practical needs of hosting his family and friends.

Building Improvements and Tradespeople

In order to improve the buildings on his site, Weir hired skilled trade workers like carpenters, masons, and painters from nearby towns.³¹ The pool of available laborers reflected both the continuation of craft and service industries from the area’s agricultural past and a growing demand from commuters and summer residents like Weir. Although Wilton and Ridgefield became home to Scandinavian, Irish, and Italian immigrants seeking work in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the towns did not experience a large influx of new arrivals like more industrial cities.³² Furthermore, trade labor proved less transient than industrial wage work or even hired agricultural help. Apprenticeship models and the strength of trade unions resulted in a relatively stable workforce of white and white ethnic tradespeople that continued across generations in towns like Wilton and Ridgefield.³³ In male-dominated trades like carpentry and masonry, men often brought their sons on as apprentices and,

³⁰ Quoted in Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940*, 1.

³¹ Although this chapter provides several examples of Weir hiring local workers, further confirmation exists in JA to EB, June 26, 1886, WEFA 192: “on the top of a lone hill we stopped at the house of a man who has occasionally worked for us, + found that he had married + bought the little place + was just as happy + contented as could be, his wife was quite pretty + and thrifty + neat as possible.”

³² In the late 19th century, Gilbert & Bennett Manufacturing actively recruited Scandinavian immigrants who settled in and near Wilton, Connecticut. See Russell, *Wilton, Connecticut*, 262. The Ridgefield Knights of Columbus, established in 1897, includes numerous members with Irish surnames. See Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut*, 346. In the early 20th century, Ridgefield became home to a flourishing Italian immigrant community. See Aldo P. Biagiotti, *Impact: The Historical Account of the Italian Immigrants of Ridgefield, Connecticut* (Ridgefield, CT: Romald, 1990); Ridgefield Archives Committee, *Ridgefield*, 60–61.

³³ As stated earlier, “white” in late-19th-century Connecticut usually meant white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, in contrast to white ethnics who were more recent immigrants and frequently practicing Catholics. Notably, white trade unions often discriminated against Black workers. See Philip Sheldon Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1973* (New York: Praeger, 1974).

beginning in the late 19th century, organized with fellow craftsmen in unions that they called “brotherhoods.” Although many trade unions formed to combat exploitation in the face of increasing industrialization, they still had a presence in towns like Ridgefield.³⁴

Weir frequently turned to local tradespeople to implement his renovations, but little historical documentation exists that specifically names the men he hired. Unlike domestic workers or tenant farmers, tradespeople did not reside in the homes where they conducted their work, and so were not connected to Weir through census records or city directories. Weir’s correspondence and inconsistent financial records did not include thorough notes on who he brought on to make improvements, either. In lieu of specific biographical information, this section will examine each type of laborer Weir required and what they accomplished on the site, before considering how different workers’ labor intersected during major construction projects.

For any significant undertaking that involved building additions, repairs, or new construction, Weir needed carpenters. He likely hired independent carpenters from local towns; in fact, when jotting down a list of potential carpenters during a project in the early 20th century, several lived in the village of Georgetown, just northeast of Wilton.³⁵ Local carpenters may have been members of early, growing trade unions like the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America that aimed to protect craftsmen from the proliferation of contractors and subcontractors in an era of industrialization and urbanization.³⁶ In the late 19th century, carpenters in Connecticut worked an average of 60 hours a week and earned around 2 dollars and 50 cents per day.³⁷ In comparison, a lower-skilled wage job in manufacturing paid closer to 2 dollars per day.³⁸ The difference in wages reflected the specialized skills required for craftwork like carpentry, as well as union efforts to protect wages.

Whether or not he hired union carpenters, Weir’s records suggest that he did not utilize contractors or subcontractors but preferred to manage construction projects himself or by proxy. For example, shortly after purchasing the farm, Weir wrote to his mother-in-law that he “shall try and send up a couple of carpenters to put everything in good

³⁴ Ronald Mendel, “Craft Labour and the Development of Trade Unionism among Building Tradesmen in Late Nineteenth Century New York,” *Construction History* 14 (January 1998): 3–19; Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut*, 348.

³⁵ WEFA 448; Box 1, Envelope 11.

³⁶ “History,” United Brotherhood of Carpenters, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.carpenters.org/about-ubc/21st-century-union/history>; Ronald Mendel, “Craft Labour and the Development of Trade Unionism among Building Tradesmen in Late Nineteenth Century New York,” *Construction History* 14 (January 1998): 3–19.

³⁷ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928* (Washington, DC: US Government, 1934), 162–65.

³⁸ United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Bicentennial ed. (Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975), 168.

order” at the residence and mentioned his desire to be on site to supervise.³⁹ The following year, while on honeymoon in Europe, Weir’s brother John Ferguson Weir oversaw improvements to the property on both the main building and the caretaker’s house (see Figure 1). John reported paying for building material, drawing sand, and paying “Powell’s bill” from South Norwalk for fixing the stove.⁴⁰ John’s activity confirms that he—and, by extension, Julian—managed their own contracts with local businesses and workers. In the same correspondence, John mentioned paying a worker named Benton 86 dollars, most likely for his carpentry work.⁴¹ Assuming that John paid Benton an average price in an effort to “reduce expenditure to a minimum,” Benton would have probably been accompanied by an apprentice or additional carpenter, or else the project would have lasted a month and a half.⁴²

After the initial improvements to his newly acquired property, Julian Weir continued to hire carpenters to carry out periodic construction projects in the following three decades. For example, carpenters likely constructed Weir’s artist studio under his supervision in 1885.⁴³ By 1888, as Weir’s family was growing, he hired carpenters to expand the first story of the main house westward, as well as adding new windows and doors. In correspondence he complained that “as usual the bills are twice what we expected and the bank broken” and ultimately received financial assistance from his wife’s mother.⁴⁴

The main home underwent two more major renovations in 1900 and 1911. Friend, artist, and architect Charles Platt designed the first set of alterations, which included expanding the house westward and adding a colonnaded veranda on the south façade. Weir then hired the firm of McKim, Mead and White in 1911 to add a bathroom and dressing room on the first floor of the house, as well as enlarging the dining room. Another friend, Stanford White, had died by 1911 when his former apprentice at the firm, Frederick J. Adams, designed the additions to the Weir estate. Both Platt and the architects at McKim,

³⁹ Marie L. Carden and Richard C. Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT [draft], US Department of the Interior, NPS, Northeast Region, Northeast Cultural Resources Center, Building Conservation Branch, 1998, 33; JAW to ADB, October 22, 1882, WEFA 191.

⁴⁰ JFW to JAW, August 2, 1883, WEFA 190.

⁴¹ JFW to JAW, August 2, 1883, WEFA 190.

⁴² Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2008; JFW to JAW, August 2, 1883, as transcribed in Wallace, “WEIRBLDG” (research notes, typescript, 6/24/1992), p. 2.

⁴³ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex.”

⁴⁴ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 34, 39.

Mead and White were notable contributors to the country house movement and tended to hold the same social status as their patrons. They collaborated as peers with Weir, who in turn hired carpenters and other tradespeople to carry out the designs.⁴⁵

Outside of major overhauls, Weir also needed to hire carpenters for small projects like repairs after a lightning strike, installing new windows and siding, enlarging the east wing, and making alterations to his studio.⁴⁶ Weir may have been discussing carpenters when he wrote to his wife, Ella, in 1914: “I am sorry to hear Snyders did not complete his job; I am afraid he is more of an experimenter than an expert. . .hoping that the men will get through the work in good shape.”⁴⁷ Weir’s comment speaks to the craftsmanship required of the tradespeople he hired to execute both minor and grand construction projects.

Apart from carpentry, Weir needed to hire masons for any foundation work or interior stonework like fireplaces and chimneys in the main home, caretaker’s home, or studio. During the initial 1883 improvements, Weir wrote that he “received a letter from home about three days ago, saying the masons had not yet terminated their work at Branchville.”⁴⁸ The bill totaled \$61.75.⁴⁹ At the time, masons in Connecticut worked anywhere from 48 to 59 hours per week and earned an average of \$3.35 per day—a significantly better wage than unskilled factory workers and even higher than carpenters due to their specialized skill set.⁵⁰ If Weir’s masons charged him an average rate, then he could have hired one mason for three weeks or three masons for one week.⁵¹ The two major alterations in 1900 and 1911 certainly required masons to lay new foundations, fireplaces, and chimneys. In 1911, Weir referenced masons that were referred to him by neighbor and craftsman Joseph Knoche, further confirming that Weir drew on a local network of tradespeople for his improvement projects.⁵²

Like carpenters, local masons may have participated in unions like the Bricklayers and Masons International Union, a group that encompassed another category of worker that Weir needed to hire: plasterers. Overlaying plaster on interior walls elicited wages

⁴⁵ Aslet, *The American Country Home*; Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex”; “Frederick J. Adams,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1945; Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat”; Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940*; Keith N. Morgan, *Charles A. Platt: The Artist as Architect* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985).

⁴⁶ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex.”

⁴⁷ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 67.

⁴⁸ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 33; JAW to JFW, July 1, 1883, WEFA 197.

⁴⁹ JFW to JAW, August 2, 1883, WEFA 190.

⁵⁰ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928* (Washington, DC: US government, 1934), 190.

⁵¹ Assuming a standard 19th-century six-day work week.

⁵² WEFA 448; Box 1, Envelope 11.

comparable to masons.⁵³ Then, painters would be brought in to cover both interior and exterior walls. For example, during the 1882 initial improvements Weir reportedly painted some of the interior walls himself, indirectly confirming that he hired workers to finish the rest. Painters applied black paint to interior woodwork, red on the exterior walls, green to the doors, and white finishing on the porch, window sashes, and surrounds.⁵⁴ Painters drew lower wages than more specialized craftsmen; in fact, they averaged two dollars per day in Connecticut, comparable to unskilled laborers in manufacturing.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, even painters could join their own union after 1887: the Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators of America.⁵⁶

Finally, Weir hired plumbers as early as the 1888 addition to install a limited plumbing system.⁵⁷ By the 1900 Platt alterations, plumbers were working on an indoor system that circulated water to the tubs and toilet in the basement, sinks in the kitchen and pantry, and a second-floor bathroom.⁵⁸ Plumbers also installed running water to a new bathroom on the first floor in 1911.⁵⁹ Weir desired water in his studio, as well, and hired plumbers to install a water tank there sometime between 1889 and 1901.⁶⁰ Plumbers had their own union like other craftsmen, but due to their highly specialized and in-demand skills, they earned higher wages averaging \$3.50 per day in Connecticut.⁶¹ Weir even complained about the cost of “the d—n plumbers bill that is out of all proportion” in a 1911 letter to his friend, Charles E.S. Wood.⁶²

Thanks to his inscription behind the toilet on the main floor, we know that local Ridgefield plumber Mike McGlynn worked on the 1911 alterations (see Figure 2).⁶³ The Weirs hired McGlynn again seven years later to fix their water tank after a previous plumber named Fuller “did not clean and dry out the tank as he said he would.” They needed to put

⁵³ United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, *History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928* (Washington, DC: US Government, 1934), 202–3. No data exists for this occupation in the state of Connecticut. However, average wages in other Atlantic and New England states range from \$2.17 to \$4.00 per day, averaging around \$3.40 per day.

⁵⁴ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 33–34.

⁵⁵ United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, *History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928* (Washington, DC: US Government, 1934), 197–99.

⁵⁶ “Our History,” *IUPAT*, accessed August 7, 2021, <https://www.iupat.org/about-us/our-history>.

⁵⁷ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 39.

⁵⁸ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 48–54, 82.

⁵⁹ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 57, 82.

⁶⁰ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 82.

⁶¹ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928* (Washington, DC: US Government, 1934), 207.

⁶² JAW to C.E.S. Wood, August 5, 1911, C.E.S. Wood Papers, Collection of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁶³ WEFA 448; Box 1, Envelope 11.

in a zinc bottom in the tank and Weir was glad that Ella “told McGlynn to do it.”⁶⁴ Mike McGlynn was a well-established community member in Ridgefield. He was a founding member of the Ridgefield Knights of Columbus, served as volunteer fire chief, and acted as town selectman from 1918 to 1925.⁶⁵ His son often accompanied him to work as his apprentice, including the 1911 project at Weir’s home.⁶⁶ McGlynn’s cousin, also named Mike and also a resident of Ridgefield, worked as a painter.⁶⁷ This glimpse into the life of just one worker that Weir hired confirms that tradespeople lived in local towns as members of established families and participated in local social and political organizations. Specific details about individual workers remain challenging to unearth because Weir did not refer to them using full names in correspondence, nor did he keep detailed financial records. McGlynn, however, literally left his mark on Weir’s home—a reminder that buildings are not just the result of owners or designers, but of the workers whose hands built them.

The most detailed notes that exist among Weir’s account books demonstrate how hired laborers worked together on the major McKim, Mead and White renovations in 1911.⁶⁸ The entries began on May 17th and continued through June 8th, showing that the bulk of construction took place in the spring before the Weir family arrived for the summer season. On May 17th, the “man & boy plumber” arrived, almost certainly Mike McGlynn and his apprentice son. They continued to show up most days through the duration of the project to complete their work. Then, carpenters began arriving on May 22nd and also made daily appearances, usually in a group of three. The masons were set to arrive on May 22nd as well, “but disappointed” Weir by not showing up. The following day, “mason & plasterer Mr. Beern & man did not turn up” but the mason recommended by Joseph Knoche did arrive and proved to be “an excellent man” who “started a stone pier to hold the chimney.” After that, at least one mason worked most days for the duration of the project, though it is unclear which one. Finally, by May 25th, the plasterers joined the crew as needed, only failing to appear one day in June.

The account book made clear that, once again, Weir supervised the project rather than a contractor. In addition to keeping track of workers’ attendance, he routinely listed supplies that he purchased—brick, lime, metal lath, and sand—and sent hired help to retrieve them. Under his watch, the plumbers, carpenters, and masons usually worked six

⁶⁴ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 67.

⁶⁵ Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut*, 346, 348, 541–42.

⁶⁶ WEFA 448; Box 1, Envelope 11.

⁶⁷ Painter Pete McGlynn owned a home in Ridgefield that was destroyed in a town fire, according to Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut*. Local historian Jack Sanders mentions cousins “Painter Mike” and “Plumber Mike” in “Who’s Who in Ridgefield, CT,” accessed April 30, 2021, <https://jackfsanders.tripod.com/M-R.htm>.

⁶⁸ WEFA 448; Box 1, Envelope 11. The notebook is dated by Dorothy Weir Young as 1900 but is more likely from 1911 because it lists Mr. Boughton, caretaker from about 1910 to 1916, and all of the calendar dates match the year 1911, not 1900 (except for Sunday, May 17th, which could be JAW’s error).

days per week, presumably for 10 hours each day as was standard among both skilled and unskilled workers at the turn of the century. However, the account book suggests that they did not work on Decoration Day—a holiday and precursor to Memorial Day—on Tuesday, May 30th, of that year.⁶⁹ The different craftsmen frequently worked concurrently, only coming into conflict in one documented case. When Weir arrived at Branchville on June 6th, he found that the “carpenter and mason could not agree and so [the] hearth was not laid.” The final entry was dated June 8th, though presumably some work still remained to be completed, as indicated by the June 10th inscription behind the toilet serviced by Mike McGlynn. A few weeks of work by a handful of skilled craftsmen profoundly shaped both the aesthetic and functionality of the Weir residence, leaving a lasting impact on the spaces where Weir lived and worked with his family and friends.

Outdoor Improvements and Tenant Farmers

The tradespeople discussed above primarily worked on inhabited buildings like the main residence, studio, and caretaker’s house. In 1907, Weir purchased the Webb farm adjacent to his property but did not appear to undertake any construction projects there. Beyond the buildings where Weir lived, worked, and entertained, he also valued the property for its landscape. He used the land for recreational activities like fishing, sought to maintain a working farm, and found inspiration for his paintings in his surroundings. To these ends, he hired people to build a dam, construct stone walls, and farm the land.

In 1896, Weir used \$2,500 in prize money from the Boston Art Club to pay for the construction of a dam that created a fishing pond on his property. Weir may have hired an engineer or someone similar to oversee the logistics of successfully damming the wetland area. Then, Weir could pay unskilled manual laborers to clear the area, dig the 3.7 acre pond, and use the excavated earth to create a 200-foot-long embankment along the north-east side of the pond. They also moved stones to construct a channel that could fill the pond with additional water as needed. Finally, laborers likely assisted in building various

⁶⁹ Decoration Day was acknowledged as an official holiday in all Northern states by the end of the 19th century.

attendant structures over the years like a boathouse, dock, and a summerhouse on an island in the pond.⁷⁰ Although the identities of the workers who built the pond remain obscured in the historical record, Weir immortalized the product of their labor in multiple paintings.⁷¹

Weir also depicted the property's distinctive stone walls in several of his paintings, even capturing the labor behind the landscape feature. For example, in *Mending the Stone Wall*, painted in the early 1890s, Weir shows a man with rolled-up sleeves and a straw hat laying stone in a wall formation (see Figure 3).⁷² Stone walls were a fairly common sight in New England, thanks to early settler farmers who unearthed numerous rocks while attempting to clear and till the soil.⁷³ Bill DeForest, who grew up in Branchville in the early 20th century, recalled that his great-great-grandfather “killed himself building the stone walls around here. . . this land all had to be ‘processed.’”⁷⁴ The perceived need to “process” land—often at great physical cost to the farmer—exemplifies how settler ideas of agriculture and land ownership profoundly shaped New England's physical landscape. Stone walls already existed on the land when Weir bought it. As part of the 1900 Platt alterations, however, Weir hired a stonecutter to construct a more sophisticated “laid” wall on the eastern side of Nod Hill Road. Stonemasons or stonecutters who worked on outdoor structures earned wages similar to those who completed interior stonework.⁷⁵ As discussed in Chapter 4, Joseph Knoche would later construct another iconic stone wall on the property in the 1930s for Weir's daughter Cora Weir Burlingham.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ According to the T. Thornberry-Ehrlich, *Weir Farm National Historic Site: Geologic Resources. Inventory Report, Natural Resource Report* (Fort Collins, Colorado: National Park Service, 2012), the pond was created from “damming a small seasonal stream, some springs, and a wetland area.” The Knoche family believes the pond was hand dug. Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. See also *J. Alden Weir Farm/Weir Farm Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1983; Peter M. Molloy, “Nineteenth-Century Hydropower: Design and Construction of Lawrence Dam, 1845–1848,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. 4 (1980): 315–43, accessed February 5, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1180701>; “Weir Pond,” *Weir Pond—Weir Farm National Historical Park (US National Park Service)*, accessed August 6, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/wefa/learn/historyculture/places-weirpond.htm>; National Park Service, *Weir Farm: Self-Guided Walking Tour* (brochure). Some sources claim that Weir purchased the 10 acres of land that contains the pond with his prize money; however, the bill of sale from the land is dated 1895, a year before he won the prize.

⁷¹ Examples include *Afternoon by the Pond*; *Pasture by the Pond*; *On the Shore*; *Rabbits by a Pond*; *The Pond at Branchville*; *The Ice Cutters, Branchville Pond*; *Workers at Branchville*; *Untitled (Weir Pond)*.

⁷² Weir captured a similar scene in *Man, Stone Wall and Dog*.

⁷³ National Park Service, *Weir Farm: The Stone Walls*, <http://npshistory.com/brochures/wefa/stone-walls.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Bill and Myrtle DeForest, interview with Doug DeNatale, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁷⁵ United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, *History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928* (Washington, DC: US Government, 1934), 212.

⁷⁶ It seems unlikely that Joseph Knoche constructed the 1900 walls; his descendants shared that he did not begin building stone walls until the Great Depression. Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

As part of his effort to cultivate an artistic and recreational retreat, Weir purposefully maintained a working farm. He did not rely on crops for his livelihood like earlier settler farmers in the area, but rather hired tenant farmers to keep the farm operational, provide some produce for family consumption, and perhaps sell any surplus for a minor profit. Weir was not unique in his approach; other seasonal residents from the city similarly hired agricultural workers to run small-scale farms on their country estates.⁷⁷ Whereas tradespeople were hired on a project basis, Weir sought long-term tenants to live full-time on the site and farm the land under his direction. Completing the image of a gentleman farmer running his country estate, Weir's wife took on the responsibility of benevolently giving gifts to tenants at Christmas. Ella Weir's diary records her giving clothes, candy, and other presents for resident employees and their families at both Windham and Branchville.⁷⁸ In a society increasingly dependent on wage labor, the employer-employee relationship on country estates instead mimicked the dynamic between landed gentry and tenant farmers.

Finding workers willing to fulfill that vision, however, proved challenging for landowners like Julian Weir.⁷⁹ Unlike the local and often-unionized craftsmen hired for construction projects, agricultural workers proved more transient and, as unskilled laborers, could easily find jobs with similar or better wages in manufacturing. Additionally, the backbreaking labor and lack of independence associated with tenant farming did not often compare favorably to the promise of homesteading further west. For the first eight years that he owned the Branchville property, Weir struggled to find long-term tenants to maintain his working farm.

When Weir first purchased the site, the Josephs lived in the main house as tenants. He considered them "bad" tenants and promptly evicted them before beginning repairs on the home.⁸⁰ Renovations to the caretaker's house started in earnest in the summer of 1883 and ensured that the tenant farmer would live separately in the caretaker's house year-round. John Ferguson Weir advised his brother that "it is certainly more roomy and convenient" for tenants in the caretaker's house compared to sharing space in the main house, "unless you allowed them to occupy the whole premises—your bedrooms and sitting

⁷⁷ Ridgefield Archives Committee, *Ridgefield*, 84, 87. See also Aslet, *The American Country Home* and Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940*.

⁷⁸ Ella Baker Weir Diary, WEFA 499. Despite plenty of literature on the phenomenon of gentleman farmers in the United States, few historians have considered the role that the gentleman farmer's wife played in shaping class dynamics on country estates.

⁷⁹ Richard D. Brown, "Farm Labor in Southern New England during the Agricultural-Industrial Transition," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 99 (1) 1989.

⁸⁰ JAW to ADB, October 11, 1882, WEFA 191; JAW to ADB, August 11, 1882, WEFA 191; JAW to ADB, October 22, 1882, WEFA 191.

rooms—which would not be advisable.”⁸¹ John’s letter conveys distaste at the idea of farmers occupying the same living space as the upper-class Weirs; the caretaker’s house provided a desired segregation between the proprietors and those who tended the land.

By the July of 1883, the Holsten family lived and worked on the site as tenant farmers.⁸² In a letter to his brother John that September, Julian Weir transcribed a letter he received from Holsten: “I gets oats on hear in Potatos best corn lookt good un de cous our well your brother en famile ol well. I my wife en children adelstright I am very glad to hear something of you an I hope you are poody soon back. Your very about olliet, Holsten.”⁸³

Holsten’s letter provides a report on the farm’s crops and confirms that he lived and worked on the farm with his wife and children. Weir remarked that the letter was “more valuable as manuscript than any letter I ever thought writing,” possibly making a joke at Holsten’s expense. As an immigrant, Holsten demonstrated limited English writing skills, and John and Julian both referred to him as “the Dutchman” to note his immigrant status and ethnic difference.⁸⁴

Holsten did not stay longer than two years. In March 1885, Weir wrote to his brother that he let go of his gardener—presumably not still Holsten—after he let 500 heads of celery freeze.⁸⁵ Additionally, the farmer’s wife sent Weir a 40-dollar bill for her work washing laundry, milking the cows, and making butter. Weir exclaimed that “for impudence this (takes the cake) to me a vulgar experience.”⁸⁶ Weir was insulted that the woman charged for her labor on top of her husband’s agricultural work, or perhaps he considered the price too high, or both. By labeling her behavior “impudent” and “vulgar,” he conveyed his expectation that a woman working for him should be more respectful and refined. By asserting the value of her labor, the woman tenant offended Weir’s class and gender sensibilities.

⁸¹ JFW writes further: “You could have made no better move than fitting up that house for him and his family. It is now very comfortable and I advise you to keep him there all the year round.” JFW to JAW, August 2, 1883, as transcribed in Wallace, “WEIRBLDG” (research notes, typescript, 6/24/1992) for Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage.”

⁸² Susan Weir to JAW, July 22, 1883. Susan also writes a letter to JAW on June 14, 1883 that references a Mr. Benedict who picked them up from the station and to whom they paid money for manure. They also mention a Mrs. Holland and friends at the house, and say that “the poor little children had the whooping cough which prevented their mother from doing all she would wish to.” Not clear if any of these people are caretakers or tenant farmers. Previous park reports refer to Holsten as William Holsten and believe he was responsible for the celery freezing incident, but neither his first name or his responsibility for the celery incident is confirmed by primary sources.

⁸³ JAW to JFW, September 6, 1883, WEFA 197.

⁸⁴ JFW to JAW, August 2, 1883 as transcribed in Wallace, “WEIRBLDG” (research notes, typescript, 6/24/1992) for Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage”; JAW to ABB, October 21, 1883, WEFA 198; Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II- A: Outbuildings.”

⁸⁵ Other reports speculate this was the Dutchman; seems unlikely because he’s not referred to as Holsten or the Dutchman in correspondence.

⁸⁶ JAW to JFW, March 22, 1885, WEFA 197.

In the same letter, Weir wrote that he hired “a good man this time, an old soldier from West Point who is glad to take the place for \$20 + his wife to make butter + help with the washing. An earning of fifteen dollars a month.” Weir clearly learned from his previous tenants to specify payment for the farmer’s wife. He continued, “However I suppose I will have to train the monkey + the pursuit had in getting rid of the extinguished William! So much for farming!”⁸⁷ Weir communicated contempt for workers who did not meet his expectations, as well as exasperation with what he considered the work of farming: managing tenants.

The high turnover in tenant farmers continued in the following years. In 1886 a tenant named Reisinger “occupied the house and took in boarders,” and in June of that year Weir brought on a 14-year-old boy to help with farm work.⁸⁸ By August, the Weirs had trouble with John—possibly Reisinger—and didn’t feel comfortable leaving Branchville under his care. He resisted eviction efforts, and Anna Weir wrote to her sister that “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 thing will be settled.”⁸⁹ Finally in 1888 Julian Weir expressed delight with a new tenant farmer and his wife, calling them “by far the best we ever had. . . they are Scotch and thrifty, tidy people.”⁹⁰ Even when praising those in his employ, Weir noted their ethnic difference.

Weir’s luck did not last long; by April of 1889, he reported to his brother that he needed to change gardeners again.⁹¹ In December 1889, Weir wrote to his mother-in-law:

The farm is still at Branchville, held down to terra firma by the rocks + boulders + the man well he is there too not half as black as he has been painted yet not exactly the kind I want. He has done all in his power since we came to do all he could, amiable respectful but lazy I do not think he will do much now that we are away but he did all he could while we were there so we are willing to forgive any little discrepancy that might occur while we are away however I will go up there once a month + have an eye on things.

Once again, Weir expressed frustration with his inability to depend on his hired help. When he wrote that the farmer was “not half as black as he has been painted,” he may have been suggesting that others exaggerated the worker’s dishonest or dishonorable traits. Or, he may have been referencing the farmer’s race, claiming that he was not as dark-skinned as suggested by others but still “not exactly the kind I want.” If so, Weir went on to deploy negative stereotypes of African American workers as “amiable, respectful, but lazy.”

⁸⁷ JAW to JFW, March 22, 1885, WEFA 197.

⁸⁸ JAW to JFW, May 24, 1886, as transcribed in Wallace, “WEIRTENA,” for Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage”; JAW to EB, June 26, 1886, WEFA 192.

⁸⁹ ABW to EB, August 6, 1886, WEFA 192.

⁹⁰ JAW to JFW, July 1888, WEFA 197.

⁹¹ JAW to JFW, April 18, 1889, WEFA 197.

Although the connotation in the letter is not entirely clear, Weir did hire Black workers on other occasions, and for him to comment negatively on a worker based on their race would fit broader evidence of his racial and ethnic prejudice.⁹² Regardless, Weir described a laborer that “did all he could while we were there,” but slacked on the work when unsupervised, prompting Weir to plan on returning to Branchville periodically to oversee his work.

By June 1891, Weir dismissed another gardener named John and claimed to have hired another man who was “doing well.” In a letter to his sister-in-law, Weir asserted that “I find it is important to make a change as they become slack in the work.”⁹³ By August he reported that “Nermeyer is settled here with his wife and is hard at work he seems to like this summer’s work pretty well.”⁹⁴ By September, however, Paul Remy replaced Nermeyer as Weir’s tenant farmer. Remy, along with his wife Johanna, two sons, and eventually a daughter, would become the first long-term tenant family employed by Weir. The next chapter will focus on the Remy family and examine the intricacies of agricultural labor on Weir’s farm.

Weir’s struggle to keep tenant farmers reveals both the challenges of finding agricultural help in late 19th century New England as well as Weir’s own management style that emphasized frequent supervision, impatience with unmet expectations, and recurring ethnic and racial prejudice. Weir’s identity as an upper-class white man not only set the conditions for him to purchase and improve the property, but also informed his interactions with the people he paid to work the land. Whether hiring tenants or tradespeople, Weir positioned himself as manager and supervisor, considering it to be the labor required of him as property owner and “farmer.” The tradespeople he needed for construction projects were usually local craftsmen who could negotiate standard wages for their temporary jobs. Agricultural workers, on the other hand, were expected to live and work on the premises long-term, and Weir found few men or families that were able or willing to fulfill those expectations. Nevertheless, all of the short-term workers who labored on Weir’s farm impacted the evolution of the property. Weir could not realize his vision of an artistic and family retreat and working settler farm without them.

⁹² Bill DeForest discusses a Black worker in Weir’s employ in Bill and Myrtle DeForest, interview with Doug DeNatale, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. In addition to examples of deploying ethnic stereotypes and emphasizing ethnic difference as documented in this chapter, Weir wrote to his daughter, Caro, from the Bahamas describing how he “never saw so many fine darkies they are so different from the make believe ones at the north. You get to be very fond of them as they are very modest and gentle.” JAW to CAW, February 1, 1888, WEFA 193.

⁹³ JAW to EB, June 8, 1891, WEFA 192.

⁹⁴ JAW to JFW, August 23, 1891, WEFA 197.

CHAPTER TWO

The Remy Family and Agricultural Labor at Weir Farm, 1890s–1920s

The high turnover of tenant farmers at the Branchville farm ended in 1891 when Julian Weir hired Paul Remy.¹ Along with his wife, Johanna, and three children, William, Carl, and Louise, Paul Remy would live and work at Weir’s farm for at least 13 years. The Remy family served as the longest-term tenant farmers and caretakers during Weir’s tenure. This chapter centers the lives of the Remy family, contextualizing their lives within broader immigration patterns to understand how they came to work for Weir. From there, the chapter will detail the agricultural and domestic labor undertaken by the Remys, while also considering the cross-class relationships between the Remy family and Julian Weir, his family, and visiting friends. Following the Remys after their time on Weir’s farm will reveal changing labor trends in New England and New York that would, in part, make it challenging for Weir to find a long-term replacement for the Remys. Finally, the chapter will conclude by tracking the succession of agricultural laborers at the Branchville farm through the first decades of the 20th century. Focusing on the lives of the Remys and the agricultural and domestic labor they undertook on the Branchville farm will highlight the humanity behind the labor that cultivated an aesthetically pleasing property in the eyes of Julian Weir.

The Remy Family before Weir Farm

In 1847, Paul Remy was born in Germany to Sebastian Remy and Maria Magdalena Von Baschung. He came into the world on the eve of a series of revolutions in 1848 and 1849 that advocated for a unified German identity, liberal ideals, and better living conditions for

¹ The 1996 Cultural Landscape Report suggests that Paul Remy arrived earlier in 1889; however, the 1890 Bridgeport City Directory lists Paul Remy as a gardener, and then in 1891 lists him as “removed to Branchville.” The year coincides with correspondence from JAW to EB, June 8, 1891, WEFA 192, and JAW to JFW, August 1891, WEFA 197. The correspondence cited by the Cultural Landscape Report references a Black worker, not Paul Remy. Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996, 35; JAW to ABB, December 12, 1889, WEFA 198.

the working class.² The revolutions were ultimately unsuccessful, and when Remy was around 17 years old, Otto Von Bismarck waged a series of wars to again attempt to unify Germany, this time under Prussian leadership.³ Remy likely fought in one of these wars, having served in the German Infantry for three years and reaching the rank of corporal.⁴ By 1871, a newly unified Germany was suffering the pains of transitioning from an agrarian to industrial society, resulting in mass emigration out of Germany. Population growth, improved travel methods, and lack of economic opportunities for farmers and workers resulted in 5.5 million Germans immigrating to the United States between 1816 and 1914. In fact, Germans constituted the largest group of immigrants to the United States between 1861 and 1890.⁵ Remy joined the exodus around the age of 30, immigrating to the United States in 1877 from the region of Alsace, which at the time was part of unified Germany but would later return to French rule in the aftermath of World War I.⁶ Dorothy Weir Young later noted that Remy trained as a priest before he “ran away” to the United States.⁷

Nine years after arriving in the United States, Paul Remy married Johanna Bauer in Manhattan, New York City, on July 1, 1886. He was 40 and she was 24.⁸ Bauer and her family were also part of mass German immigration to the United States in the late 19th century. Bauer was born in Hanover, Germany, in 1862 to William and Louise Bauer and immigrated with her family in 1872 at the age of 10. She lived on Chrystie Street in the

² Paul Remy and Johanna Bauer Marriage License, July 1, 1886, Manhattan, New York, New York, United States, New York City Municipal Archives, New York; FHL microfilm 1,671,683. Paul Remy’s birth date is confirmed by: 1920 United States Census, Fairfield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_177; Page: 24B; Enumeration District: 495; 1930 United States Census, Manhattan, New York, New York; Page: 9A; Enumeration District: 0495; FHL microfilm: 2341295; Connecticut Military Census of 1917. Hartford, Connecticut: Connecticut State Library.

³ Martin Kitchen, *A History of Modern Germany: 1800 to the Present* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 66–113.

⁴ Military Census of 1917, Hartford, Connecticut: Connecticut State Library.

⁵ Klaus J. Bade, “From Emigration to Immigration: The German Experience in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Central European History* (Brill Academic Publishers) 28 (4) 1995: 511–13.

⁶ Kitchen, *A History of Modern Germany: 1800 to the Present*, 198. Dorothy Weir Young refers to Remy as Alsatian in *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir* (Yale University Press, 1960), 173. All of Paul Remy’s federal records list his birthplace as Germany. In the 1920 Federal Census, Carl Remy reports his father’s birthplace as France, which reflects the area’s changing borders after World War I. 1920 United States Census, Manhattan Assembly District 11, New York, New York; Roll: T625_1204, Page: 1A, Enumeration District: 814. Although Alsace is a borderland area home to people of both French and German identities, Remy’s ethnicity and identity was likely German, not French. In census records he always listed his and his parents’ birthplace as Germany, he fought in the German army, and he married a German woman. Furthermore, John Weir characterized Remy’s speech patterns as German by substituting the “W” in “Weir” to a “V” in JFW to JAW, September 26, 1891, WEFA 190.

⁷ Dorothy Weir Young’s notes on the back of her father’s portrait of Paul Remy. Weir Farm National Historical Park Archives, Scrapbooks, Blue, 3A, 249B.

⁸ Paul Remy and Johanna Bauer Marriage License, July 1, 1886, Manhattan, New York, New York, United States, New York City Municipal Archives, New York; FHL microfilm 1,671,683; Confirmed by Index to New York City Marriages, 1866–1937, prepared by the Italian Genealogical Group and the German Genealogy Group, and used with permission of the New York City Department of Records/Municipal Archives. In general, some records list Johanna as “Johana” or “Johannah.”

Lower East Side with her father, mother, grandmother, and two younger brothers.⁹ They resided in the heart of the Lower East Side, a dense neighborhood home to many German immigrants in the 1870s and 1880s who often lived in overcrowded apartments known as tenements.¹⁰ As a saloonkeeper, Bauer’s father managed an important social gathering place for the growing German community in New York.¹¹

After their wedding, Paul and Johanna Remy lived in Westport, Connecticut, about 50 miles up the Atlantic coast from Manhattan. There, Johanna gave birth to the couple’s first son, William, on July 17, 1887.¹² At the time, Westport was enjoying the final years of a booming onion farming industry, which employed Irish and German immigrants like Paul Remy.¹³ Two years later the family lived in nearby Bridgeport, Connecticut, where they welcomed their second son, Carl, on November 18, 1889.¹⁴ Unlike Westport but similar to many other cities in New England, Bridgeport was being transformed by industrialization, with the explosion of new factories producing mass commodities like lamps, guns, brass, sewing machines, and corsets.¹⁵ Despite the availability of industrial jobs, Remy listed his occupation as “gardener” in the 1890 city directory.¹⁶

Historical records contain little information about Paul Remy’s labor before 1890. He may have gained agricultural experience as a young man in Germany, during his time as a bachelor in the United States, or as a possible worker in the onion industry in Westport. Regardless, by the time Julian Weir hired him in the summer of 1891 at the age of 44, Remy brought a strong set of agricultural skills to work the farm at Branchville. Weir had recently dismissed a gardener named John who had “become slack in the work.”

⁹ 1880 United States Census, New York City, New York, Roll: 878; Page: 161D, Enumeration District: 248.

¹⁰ 1880 United States Census, New York City, New York, Roll: 878; Page: 161D, Enumeration District: 248; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

¹¹ Kathleen Neils Conzen, “The Germans,” *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980), 417; Jackson, *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 97.

¹² William Remy, Connecticut, New Haven, Roll: 1562003; Draft Board 5, United States, Selective Service System, World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918, Washington, DC, National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, 4582 rolls.

¹³ Gregg Mangan, “The Many Layers to Onion Farming in Westport,” *ConnecticutHistory.org*, August 4, 2019, <https://connecticuthistory.org/the-many-layers-to-onion-farming-in-westport>; Diana Ross McCain, *Connecticut Coast: A Town-By-Town Illustrated History* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot, 2009), 41–49.

¹⁴ Carl L. Remy, Connecticut, Fairfield, Roll: 1570492, Draft Board 13, United States, Selective Service System, World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918, Washington, DC, National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, 4582 rolls.

¹⁵ McCain, *Connecticut Coast: A Town-by-Town Illustrated History*, 70–81. See also David A Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800–1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); New Haven Preservation Trust, *Carriages and Clocks, Corsets and Locks: The Rise and Fall of an Industrial City-New Haven* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2004); Peter Temin, *Engines of Enterprise: An Economic History of New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Francois Weil, “Capitalism and Industrialization in New England, 1815–1845,” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 4 (1998): 1334–54.

¹⁶ *Bridgeport, CT, 1890* (Bridgeport, CT: Price, Lee & Co., 1890).

Upon hiring Remy, Weir happily reported in letters to family members that “I have another man who is doing well” and “we have good hands on the farm and so we have peace.”¹⁷ Remy would end up living in the caretaker’s house at Branchville for at least 13 years with his wife and children. Paul became naturalized as an American citizen in 1892, and in 1899 he and Johanna welcomed their third and final child: a daughter, Louise.¹⁸ The rhythms and demands of farm life defined the Remys’ time working for Weir; they managed animals, fields, gardens, orchards, firewood, ice, and maintenance projects all while providing for their own growing family.

The Remys’ Agricultural Labor on Weir Farm

Previous studies on agricultural practices at Weir Farm rely heavily on correspondence by Julian Weir, his brother John Ferguson Weir, and other friends and family that reference the Branchville site.¹⁹ Additionally, a particularly useful manuscript by historian Jack Larkin creatively analyzes inventories of farm implements alongside 19th century sources on farm life such as reports from the Connecticut Board of Agriculture.²⁰ However, none of these primary sources are written or assessed from the perspective of the primary person engaged in agricultural labor on the Branchville farm under Weir: Paul Remy. Although Remy and Weir presumably corresponded frequently about farming, only one letter written by Remy survives from October 5, 1892.²¹ Remy sent the letter from Branchville to Weir in Chicago, where he was painting a mural at the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building for the 1893 World’s Fair. The letter provides an excellent snapshot into the life of Remy and his family, outlining their primary agricultural tasks. Centering Remy’s perspective and connecting his report to other known information about farming practices on Weir’s Farm and in New England will provide a greater understanding of the Remy family’s daily,

¹⁷ JAW to EB, June 8, 1891, WEFA 192; JAW to JFW, August 1891, WEFA 197.

¹⁸ Paul Remy Naturalization Record, National Archives at Boston, Waltham, Massachusetts, Naturalization Record Books, 12/1893–9/1906, NAI Number 2838938, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009, Record Group RG 21; Certificate and Record of Birth of Louise Remy, No. 24000, June 20, 1899, New York City Department of Records & Information Services, New York City, New York.

¹⁹ See Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996; Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat: J. Alden Weir’s Farm in Connecticut,” Weir Farm National Historic Site Historic Resource Study, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2009; Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2008.

²⁰ 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 the Weir Farm National Historic Site. Draft, 1996.

²¹ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

seasonal, and yearly work. Additionally, detailing Remy’s responsibilities around the farm offers a template for understanding the labor of subsequent tenant farmers, as well as a sense of the standard of work that Weir expected of the gardeners and farmers he hired.

The letter began by explaining that Remy did not write sooner because he was busy working and knew that Weir was receiving updates from his brother, John Ferguson Weir, who had recently stayed at the property with his family.²² Then, Remy started discussing farm business by first confirming the status of animals at Branchville: “The stock horses, cows, calves, pigs, oxen, chicken, dogs and cats are all well and I did not sell any yet.”²³ Managing livestock constituted a significant portion of Remy’s work, with each animal serving a unique function and requiring a distinct routine of care. For example, Remy first mentioned the stock horses, important animals required to drive both farming implements and carriages.²⁴ The horses lived in the stalls of the U-shaped barn across the road from the caretaker’s house, where Remy would provide clean bedding, feed them a bushel of oats per day, and let them out to exercise (see Figure 4).²⁵ Several photographs in Weir family albums show Remy’s sons Carl and Willie with the horses, suggesting that they also took care of the animals (see Figures 5 and 6). When necessary, Remy took the horses to the blacksmith.²⁶ In addition to using them to drive farm implements, Remy would harness horses to carriages for the Weir family and visiting friends to use for transportation.²⁷ The carriages may have been kept in a carriage house next to the caretaker’s house.²⁸ When the Weirs took the train from New York to the nearby Branchville station, Remy frequently met them there with horse and carriage to transport them home.²⁹

The barn also housed cattle: cows, calves, and oxen, according to Remy’s letter.³⁰ Remy used oxen primarily as beasts of burden to pull plows, carts, and other farm equipment. Jack Larkin notes that using oxen in the late 19th century was a “remarkably traditionalist,

²² Confirmed in correspondence from JFW to JAW, September 12, 1892, WEFA 190.

²³ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

²⁴ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 24, 41.

²⁵ “Paul says he never saw the horses in finer condition. Fact is Paul has been feeding them a bushel of oats a week at my charge to keep them so.” JFW to JAW, September 26, 1891, WEFA 190. Maureen K. Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II- A: Outbuildings,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT [draft]. Lowell, MA: US Department of the Interior, NPS, Northeast Cultural Resources Center, Building Conservation Branch, 1998.

²⁶ JFW to JAW, August/September 1892, WEFA 190.

²⁷ JFW to JAW, August 21, 1892, WEFA 190. See also Ella Baker Weir diary, ca. 1894, WEFA 2518; JAW to Dorothy and Cora Weir, October 11, 1898; JAW to Dorothy and Cora Weir, September 29, 1902.

²⁸ Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2008, 5.

²⁹ Ella Baker Weir Diary, ca. 1894, WEFA 2518; JAW to DW and CW, October 11, 1898, WEFA 195; JAW to DW and CW, September 29, 1902 WEFA.

³⁰ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

even romantic farm practice, continuing thirty years after the Federal Agricultural Census had ceased even recording oxen on farms.”³¹ While reliance on oxen aligned with Weir’s pastoral vision of the Branchville farm, it precluded Remy from utilizing modern machinery that would have made his work less physically arduous. As with the horses, Remy needed to keep the oxen, cows, and calves fed and well-bedded. According to Weir’s paintings, Remy also routinely let the cattle out to graze and later drove them home (see Figure 8).³²

Johanna Remy most likely managed the cows’ dairy production. Gendered division of labor on New England farms in the 19th century usually resulted in women milking cows, skimming the milk, churning the cream, working, and preserving the butter.³³ Churning in particular proved to be repetitive and laborious work.³⁴ Though the cows resided in the barn, Larkin suggests that dairying processes may have taken place in a lean-to or shed adjacent to the caretaker’s house.³⁵ The layout would have helped Johanna Remy more efficiently tend to her dairy work in close proximity to her already-sizable domestic labor. The resulting milk and butter would be consumed by both the Remy and Weir families, with the refuse fed to the pigs.

Meanwhile, calves could have been raised into new dairy cows or sold at market. Paul Remy mentioned in his 1892 letter that he had not sold any animals yet, adding that he would wait for Weir to return before selling.³⁶ Though some excess livestock and crops were sold at a profit, the Branchville farm did not primarily exist to maximize income. Rather, the Remys worked to keep the farm functional and well-tended to provide food for themselves, the Weirs, and their guests.

To that end, the Remys raised the pigs and chickens mentioned in Paul’s letter for food. The Remys kept the pigs in a pen behind the barn, feeding them dairy refuse in anticipation of their eventual slaughter.³⁷ Johanna likely fed both the pigs and poultry daily

³¹ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 22. He goes on to say, “Weir’s farming was far from the practice of the great majority of his ‘gentleman farmer’ contemporaries, who normally wanted only the most ‘progressive’ equipment and stock.”

³² See also *Cattle Grazing in Summer Field*.

³³ Linda J. Borish, ‘Another Domestic Beast of Burden’: New England Farm Women’s Work and Well-Being in the 19th Century” *Journal of American Culture* 18 (3) 1995: 96–97; Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 41. Contracts between JAW and tenant farmers in the 1910s confirm that dairying fell under the purview of tenant farmers. Julian Alden Weir Legal and Financial Records, 1887–1919, WEFA 190, Box 7, Folder 3. Additionally, the wife of one of JAW’s tenant farmers in 1885 charged him “\$40 for washing + milking + making butter”; he then hired a new farmer for \$20 whose wife would help with the butter and the washing. JAW to JFW, March 22, 1885, WEFA 197.

³⁴ Borish, “Another Domestic Beast of Burden,” 96–97.

³⁵ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 32. Before 1883, the caretaker’s house had a lean-to that was removed at some point during the Weir era. By the time the Bass family occupied the premises in the 1930s, a multipurpose shed sat directly adjacent to the home for dairying (see Figures 1 and 41). See Kasparian and Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage.”

³⁶ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

³⁷ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 33; Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II- A: Outbuildings,” 3.

(see Figure 9).³⁸ While laying hens produced eggs for consumption, other chickens could also be butchered for the dinner table. A chicken coop sat behind Weir’s studio, and Ella Weir reported around 1894 that “Paul has built a fine chicken yard and rabbit pen north of the studio, where the animals have abundant room and look as comfortable and happy as possible.”³⁹ Clearly by this time, rabbits had joined the catalog of animals at Branchville. Other years, turkeys and ducks also joined the retinue.⁴⁰ The remaining animals that Remy mentioned in his letter—dogs and cats—worked on the farm killing mice and rats and were also valued as pets.

Caring for the livestock of Weir Farm required a significant amount of feed, which included small grains like rye, oats, and buckwheat. Immediately after discussing the animals, Remy wrote that “the rye field is plowed thank God, that was the meanest job of plowing I ever shackled. I am going to sow the rye tomorrow or Friday.”⁴¹ To plow the fields before sowing, Remy hitched the oxen to a hand plow and broke up the dirt, often removing the stones that emerged from the rocky New England soil (see Figure 10).⁴² Remy plowed many fields this way during his time at Branchville, beginning in the fall of 1892 when he plowed a field overgrown with sumac accompanied by his two-year-old son William.⁴³ Each time, the endeavor demanded hard physical labor.

After plowing, harrowing took place with horses or oxen dragging implements with spikes or discs to further break up the soil. After Remy planted the seeds, another round of harrowing took place to cover the seeds with soil.⁴⁴ Winter rye was planted in the fall and then harvested around May or June the following year. Oats and buckwheat, on the other hand, followed a schedule of manuring and planting in the spring and harvesting in the early fall.⁴⁵ Harvesting small grains on Weir Farm likely involved cutting crops by hand with a cradle scythe (see Figure 11).⁴⁶ Using a handheld scythe represented a distinctly old-fashioned farming technique during a time when horse-drawn reapers were

³⁸ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 41. Weir also depicts a woman feeding chickens in *Connecticut Farm* (1886), though the painting predates the Remys’ time in Branchville.

³⁹ Ella Baker Weir diary, ca. 1894; Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II- A: Outbuildings,” 179.

⁴⁰ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 29, 36.

⁴¹ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

⁴² Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 22–23. See *Ploughing for Buckwheat* for a depiction of plowing with oxen, possibly featuring Paul Remy and one of his children.

⁴³ JFW to JAW, September 26, 1891, WEFA 190.

⁴⁴ For a more thorough description of harrowing, see Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 23.

⁴⁵ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 20, 28–29.

⁴⁶ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 28–29 hypothesizes the use of a cradle scythe; Weir’s painting, *Connecticut Grainfield*, depicts the use of a cradle scythe.

revolutionizing grain harvesting.⁴⁷ Similarly, without access to a threshing machine on Weir’s farm, Remy separated the seeds from the stalk by hitting a pile of grain with a wooden flail on the barn’s threshing floor and then running it through a winnowing machine.⁴⁸ The grain could then be used for livestock feed, with the husks and stalks becoming straw for bedding. From oxen-drawn implements to the use of scythes, flails, and winnowing machines, cultivating grain for feed on Weir’s farm demanded more physical labor from Remy than might have been required on more modern, progressive farms nearby.

In addition to planting rye in the early fall, Remy also grew and cut hay for livestock feed. In his 1892 letter, Remy wrote: “The grass in the other field has taken in places and in others it looks like only clover had taken, we cannot tell much about yet. The millet will be fit to cut in another week or so in places it is very nice over 2 feet high and in others only 6 inches. The clover also in the new field where the oats have been is in places very tall about 2 feet and I think when I mow the millet I will cut that clover also where it is high.”⁴⁹

Hay was one of the most important crops for New England farms in the late 19th century, and included the grass, millet, and clover that Remy mentioned.⁵⁰ Remy aimed to produce enough hay to feed livestock through the winter and avoid purchasing extra hay from others.⁵¹ Spring planting followed a similar pattern as small grains: manuring, plowing, harrowing, seeding, and harrowing. Grass and grains could be planted in the same field; the grains would start growing earlier as a cover crop and after harvest the grass would grow. This may be what Remy meant when he reported cutting clover “in the new field where the oats have been.” Whether utilizing cover crops or not, Remy likely cut hay at least twice in the late summer and early fall with a third cutting as late as October, as indicated by the 1892 letter. If haying followed the traditional farming methods that dominated the rest of Weir’s farm, then Remy cut the hay with a handheld scythe, raked up the dry hay with a horse-drawn implement, pitched it into a cart or wagon, and stored it in the hayloft in the barn or in a haystack.⁵²

⁴⁷ David A Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800–1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Larkin, 28; Charles Post, “The ‘Agricultural Revolution’ in the United States: The Development of Capitalism and the Adoption of the Reaper in the Antebellum U. S. North,” *Science & Society* 61, no. 2 (1997): 216–28.

⁴⁸ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 29.

⁴⁹ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

⁵⁰ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 24.

⁵¹ JFW stated that Paul “says he won’t have to buy hay next winter.” JFW to JAW, July 26, 1904, WEFA 190.

⁵² Larkin calls the horse rake the “one concession to modern farming.” Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 24–26. See also Figure 1.8 in Kasparian and Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” 31.

Remy went on in his 1892 letter to discuss his plans to harvest potatoes, which were likely in their own field and followed the familiar yearly rhythm of planting in the spring and harvesting in the fall.⁵³ Whereas Remy grew grains and grasses primarily for animal feed, potatoes could be consumed by either pigs or humans.⁵⁴ Remy then detailed garden crops by reporting a “nice lot of” onions that he brought in and how a recent frost “scorch[ed] the tops of the lima beans.”⁵⁵ He later mentioned that Johanna prepared 10 cans of tomatoes. Garden crops over the years also included peas, radishes, asparagus, lettuce, summer squash, cucumbers, sweet corn, and beets. After plowing and planting in the spring, the garden required constant manuring and weeding through the spring and summer, and often yielded a varied and robust set of crops that could feed the Remy family, the Weir family, and also possibly sell or trade.⁵⁶ Managing the garden crops was a family affair for the Remys; in addition to Paul’s documented harvesting and Johanna’s canning (and likely additional gardening), in later years the eldest son William would take the lead on the garden to great success.⁵⁷

The substantial garden likely sat in one fixed location close to the farmstead. Then, about 10 acres of oats, small grains, and potatoes were located nearby, followed by about 20 acres of hay fields. Larkin notes that “precise field uses would change significantly every year,” meaning that “no crop would find a permanent location” due to crop rotation practices.⁵⁸ Permanent pastures were located further away behind the hay fields before turning into woodland. Most of the land was already cleared for farming before Weir purchased the property, but Paul Remy and John Ferguson Weir did work on clearing a recently purchased “\$25 lot” in the fall of 1899.⁵⁹

Remy did not mention corn in his letter, although evidence suggests that it was an important crop grown at Branchville for livestock feed.⁶⁰ (Perhaps the corn harvest had been completed by October in 1892.) After planting the corn by hand in widely separated rows, Remy would have used a one-horse cultivator to remove weeds and hill up the growing stalks. The fields required intensive weeding through the summer until the ears were cut from the stalks in the fall and brought back to the barn in wagons. The corn then

⁵³ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190; Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 40.

⁵⁴ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 33.

⁵⁵ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

⁵⁶ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 43–44. When visiting Branchville in 1897, Albert Pinkham Ryder wrote that he enjoyed observing the Remys’ “busy planning of the garden which comes on apace.” Young, *Life and Letters*, 188.

⁵⁷ JFW to JAW, August 11, 1904, WEFA 190.

⁵⁸ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 43.

⁵⁹ JFW to JAW, September 11, 1899, WEFA 190; JFW to JAW, September 15, 1899, WEFA 190.

⁶⁰ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 26–28.

needed to dry out, either before or after the husks were removed by hand.⁶¹ In September 1899, the barn became too hot and risked spoiling the corn, so Paul, William, Carl, and John Ferguson Weir spent three hours removing all of the corn into the field.⁶² Shortly thereafter, a corn crib was built—possibly by Remy—to the north of the ice house to prevent a similar crisis.⁶³

Clearly, maintaining the livestock and crops constituted the core parts of Paul Remy’s job, with frequent contributions from Johanna and their sons. Aside from daily routines of dairying, feeding and otherwise caring for animals, the Remys followed a seasonal rhythm of manuring, plowing, planting, and weeding in the spring and early summer to harvesting, haying, and plowing again through the late summer and fall. The Remys also harvested apples from the Weir orchard in the fall, brought them to a local cider mill, and then stored barrels in the cellar to ferment.⁶⁴ Photographic evidence suggests that Paul Remy and his sons participated in honey harvests on the property, too (see Figure 12). Seasonal labor included chopping a steady supply of wood to keep inhabited buildings warm in the cooler months.⁶⁵ Remy mentioned in his letter that “I must get some wood as it is all gone.”⁶⁶ Similarly, in the winter he cut ice and stored it in the icehouse (see Figure 13).⁶⁷

Remy likely used time in the late fall and early spring to repair fences and work on other small construction projects.⁶⁸ Dorothy Weir Young later wrote that Remy helped Julian Weir build a portable studio called the “palace car” that could be pulled by oxen around the property.⁶⁹ Remy may have also been responsible for building the corn crib and for replacing the farm’s picket fence with a distinctive rustic fence.⁷⁰ Whereas Weir hired craftsmen to work on the main residence, caretaker’s house, and studio, construction related to the farm and its outbuildings seemed to fall under the farmer’s purview. On the final page of his 1892 letter, Remy wrote that “Phillippe has not show up yet nor did I hear from him, so I think when you come back we see that I can fix things myself before the

⁶¹ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 26–28.

⁶² JFW to JAW, September 11, 1899, WEFA 190.

⁶³ Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II- A: Outbuildings,” xxxiv, 163.

⁶⁴ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 49–50.

⁶⁵ Borish, “Another Domestic Beast of Burden,” 89; Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 50.

⁶⁶ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

⁶⁷ JFW to JAW, September 26, 1891, WEFA 190; Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II-A: Outbuildings,” 125–26.

⁶⁸ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 17.

⁶⁹ Dorothy Weir Young, *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir*, 173. However, JAW wrote to EB that he was using the mobile studio as early as November 1890, before Paul’s arrival. See JAW to EB, November 24, 1890, WEFA 192.

⁷⁰ Phillips dates the construction of the fence around 1890–1900, which largely took place during Remy’s tenure. “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II- A: Outbuildings,” 107.

winter sets in.”⁷¹ Remy clearly intended to wrap up outstanding tasks himself, despite the absence of another worker meant to assist him.⁷² No other correspondence during the Remy era ever mentioned additional farm hands hired specifically to help at Branchville, suggesting that the Remys completed most—if not all—of the agricultural labor on Weir’s Farm. Occasionally, Remy may have even traveled to Windham to assist with work there.⁷³

At the end of the letter, Remy noted that John Ferguson Weir paid his wages through October 5th. In a letter sent to Julian Weir four days later, John confirmed that he paid Remy for August and September and through October 6th, “so that for this month you will owe him \$25.”⁷⁴ The letters suggest that Julian Weir paid Remy a competitive monthly income of about 30 dollars, in addition to the use of the caretaker’s house and a portion of the dairy and produce. Just seven years earlier, Weir paid a former tenant 20 dollars per month for a similar arrangement, which reflected the average earnings of local farm laborers in the county.⁷⁵ Remy’s increased income assumed or erased Johanna’s significant agricultural labor while reflecting Paul’s strong agricultural skillset and his good relationship with Julian Weir. Remy reaffirmed this relationship in the conclusion of his letter by wishing Weir good luck with his work and sending best regards from Johanna, William, and Carl. Though seemingly positive, the 13-year relationship between the Remys and their employers contained nuanced dynamics that demand further consideration.

Cross-Class Relationships at Weir Farm

For a good portion of the year, the Remys did not see their employer while his family lived in New York City or visited the family home in Windham, Connecticut.⁷⁶ The Weir family most frequently visited in the summer and early fall and occasionally in the winter. Though Julian Weir embraced the role of gentleman farmer by nature of his ownership and management of Branchville, Paul Remy clearly conducted the daily labor and practical management of the property. All accounts point to Weir trusting Remy and appreciating his hard work ethic. In correspondence, Weir almost always referred to Remy by his first name

⁷¹ Paul Remy to JAW, October 5, 1892, WEFA 190.

⁷² “Phillipe” was likely a reference to Philip Vogelgasang, who worked for the Weirs in New York City. He is also referenced in: JAW to EBW, December 1, [no year listed], WEFA 192; JAW to EB August 5, 1892, WEFA 192; JAW to EB, August 28, 1893, WEFA 192.

⁷³ JAW to EBW, November 7, 1902, WEFA 192; Ella Baker Weir Diary, WEFA 499.

⁷⁴ JFW to JAW, October 9, 1892, WEFA 190.

⁷⁵ Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 37; JAW to JFW, March 22, 1885, WEFA 197. Contracts from the 1910s confirm that Weir’s tenant farmers usually received a portion of produce and dairy, in addition to the use of the caretaker’s house. See Julian Alden Weir Legal and Financial Records, 1887–1919, WEFA 190, Box 7, Folder 3.

⁷⁶ Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat: J. Alden Weir’s Farm in Connecticut,” Weir Farm National Historic Site Historic Resource Study, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2009, 66, 85; 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 the Weir Farm National Historic Site. Draft, 1996, 17.

rather than by the ethnic and racial signifiers that he so often used for previous employees.⁷⁷ He trusted Remy in business matters, relying on him to submit his taxes one year, and in 1895 Remy's signature appeared next to Weir's on a bill of sale for 10 acres of land.⁷⁸ Later that year, Weir expressed empathy when Remy fell ill with chest pain and a sore throat.⁷⁹ Weir's friends and family—many of whom spent time at Branchville as a private retreat—praised Remy in correspondence, saying: "I think you have an excellent man. He seemed so interested in his work and so intelligent" and "it must be a pleasure to you to be at Branchville again with the worthy Paul!"⁸⁰ Weir even painted a formal portrait of Paul Remy in which he depicts a dignified, aging man in his suit and tie, with gray hair, trimmed beard, and spectacles (see Figure 14). In contrast to the many times that Weir included Remy and other farm workers in his countryside landscapes, the portrait demonstrated how Weir perceived and represented Remy as a fully dimensional individual apart from his labor.

Julian Weir's identity as a painter far outweighed his perceived role as "farmer," and he valued his estate for its artistic inspiration as a pastoral landscape. One of Weir's students emphasized that Weir "gave much thought, time, and energy" to the image of the farm for the purpose of his paintings, adding that "the things made by the faithful Paul found a place in [Weir's] pictures: sapling fences, rustic arbors and bridges as well and hen runs, and informal gardens."⁸¹ Weir clearly valued Remy for how his stewardship of the farm fulfilled Weir's distinct vision. Members of the Remy family frequently appear in Weir's landscape paintings with their labor—often using arduous, outdated farming methods—completing Weir's nostalgic images of the Connecticut countryside (see Figures 8–11, 13, 15).⁸² Weir's insistence on creating an idyllic "traditional" farm in his paintings and in reality constituted a reaction against the industrialization and modern agriculture that was transforming New England, New York, and the entire United States in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. While his resistance to modern agricultural methods created the landscapes that appealed to Weir's artistic sensibilities, it most certainly resulted in more backbreaking labor for Paul Remy and his family.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 1 references to the Dutchman and the Scotch, among others.

⁷⁸ WEFA 1895. This land would include the site of Weir Pond.

⁷⁹ JAW to EBW, August 14, 1895, WEFA 192.

⁸⁰ Charles Weir to JAW, June 2, 1902; Percy Alden to JAW, August 21, 1902.

⁸¹ Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, "Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site," 58.

⁸² *Midday Rest in New England* clearly depicts Paul Remy and his son resting alongside oxen. Weir was not alone in this nostalgic depiction of the New England countryside; see discussion in Chapter 1 and "Hauling and Harrowing: Edward Volkert and the Connecticut Farm," Florence Griswold Museum, <https://florencegriswoldmuseum.org/exhibitions/hauling-and-harrowing-edward-volkert-and-the-connecticut-farm>.

There is no way to know exactly how Remy and his family viewed Weir’s romantic approach to agriculture. Perhaps traditional farming methods neatly fit the skillset and experience that the aging Remy brought to Branchville, or represented a better alternative than abandoning agricultural work altogether for an industrial job in Bridgeport. Paul and Johanna possibly valued a sense of stability and extra farm produce while raising their children. Or maybe Remy resented the lack of modernization and knew that he could not sustain the required level of labor forever. He may have been aware of agrarian activism in the late 19th century that embraced cooperation and modern farming practices, from the Grange movement with an active chapter in nearby Ridgefield to the sharecroppers and tenant farmers across the country joining the Knights of Labor or the Farmers’ Alliance.⁸³ Whatever the Remys thought of Weir, their opinions did not reach the pages of existing correspondence.

Letters from John Ferguson Weir, however, reveal a good deal about the nuances of cross-class interactions on Weir’s farm. John spent a significant time at Branchville, often writing Julian with updates and advice, particularly in 1892 as Julian mourned the death of his wife and again in 1901 while the Weirs traveled Europe. The Weir brothers shared similar backgrounds as artists from the same family, so their views on class were likely somewhat similar. A close reading of an excerpt from one of John’s letters in 1891 reveals how class and ethnic biases shaped his perception of Paul and Johanna Remy:

This afternoon we all walked down to the field where Paul is plowing to watch him. Paul’s grin as he shied over the rocks with the plow was worth seeing. He says, “Py George Misser Vere, these roots is tough.” . . . Paul works faithfully, you have a good man in him, and he is very clever. . . . I think Paul wants to have my stay here profitable for you: he says “Py George Misser Vere a man can do more working with another man.” . . . He never forgets his place, however, and I have found no fault whatever throughout the whole time we have been here: and also his wife. You are lucky in having them here.⁸⁴

In his report to Julian, John emphasized Remy’s ethnicity and difference by transcribing his German accent. The letter that Remy wrote himself the following year demonstrated a strong proficiency in the English language; nevertheless, John used the flourish to complete his picture of a jolly, ethnic worker who “works faithfully” with a “grin” and “never forgets his place.” John kept distance between his family and the Remys, observing Paul while he worked and applauding both Paul and Johanna for never crossing the line of familiarity. Remy commented on John’s observation of his labor, observing in return that Remy could get more done if John stopped looking and started helping. He delivered the feedback in

⁸³ Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); George Lounsbury Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut* (Ridgefield, CT: Privately printed by the author, 1927), 348.

⁸⁴ JFW to JAW, September 26, 1891, WEFA 190.

such a way, however, that John interpreted him as “clever” and not insubordinate. In later letters, John consistently praised Remy’s industriousness while often noting their proper distance, insisting that John and his family “do not interfere with Paul’s work.”⁸⁵ When John did infrequently assist Remy in agricultural labor—such as clearing the \$25 lot or throwing corn out of a hot barn—he expressed pride in his physical exercise as an aberration from his normal leisurely time at Branchville.⁸⁶

The class distance maintained by John Ferguson Weir mirrored the ways in which Julian Weir observed and painted Remy’s labor rather than consistently participate in grueling agricultural labor himself. When Julian was painting the mural for the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building at the Chicago World’s Fair, John even encouraged Julian to “shy over the rocks like Paul at his plow drawn by two mighty oxen, who upturn huge boulders in the furrows.”⁸⁷ From John and Julian’s perspective, Paul Remy represented a model worker and his labor served as the subject of observation, part of the countryside landscape, and a metaphor for Julian Weir’s own artistic labor.

While Paul Remy represented the most visible laborer in the fields, the other members of the Remy family also interacted with Weir’s family and guests but appear less frequently in the historical record.⁸⁸ While convalescing at the Weir estate in the spring of 1897, artist Albert Pinkham Ryder wrote to his friend Weir that “my little guide Carl Remy waits in the morning to see what I would do; and is altogether a sweet and aimable little lad and his brother also.”⁸⁹ As children, the Remy brothers also crossed the road to play with Weir’s daughters who were roughly their same age.⁹⁰ In 1898, Julian Weir wrote to eight-year-old Dorothy Weir that “Carl and Willie have each a tricycle and wanted you and Cora to see them.”⁹¹ After a visit to Branchville as a toddler, Dorothy enthusiastically “enumerated all the dogs and horses and then Paul, Mrs. ‘Amey,’ [Remy] ‘Carl and Willie.’”⁹² The Weir family photographs even include an image of Carl, Dorothy, and Cora on a porch together playing with animals. The girls wore white frilly dresses and styled hair while Carl sat barefoot in overalls and a straw hat (see Figure 16). While class did not prevent the

⁸⁵ JFW to JAW, August 21, 1892, WEFA 190; JFW to JAW, September 11, 1899, WEFA 190; JFW to JAW, October 8, 1903, WEFA 190; JFW to JAW, July 26, 1904, WEFA 190.

⁸⁶ JFW to JAW, September 11, 1899, WEFA 190; JFW to JAW, September 15, 1899, WEFA 190.

⁸⁷ JFW to JAW, September 21, 1892, WEFA 190. Weir’s mural depicted the “allegorical figures of Decorative Art, The Art of Painting, The Goldsmith’s Art, and the Art of Pottery,” according to Doreen Bolger Burke, *J. Alden Weir: An American Impressionist* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), 200.

⁸⁸ Previous reports suggested that *Alsation Boy* could have been a Remy son, but the dates (1880–89) do not line up.

⁸⁹ Young, *Life and Letters*, 188.

⁹⁰ Both Carl and Willie were younger than CAW and older than DW.

⁹¹ JAW to DW and CW, October 11, 1898, WEFA 195.

⁹² EB to JAW, October 10, 1892, WEFA 190.

Remy and Weir children from playing together, their lives as young adults would diverge drastically. William and Carl attended the nearby public school on Old Branchville Road until eighth or ninth grade, when they likely left to help with farm work full-time.⁹³ Meanwhile, the Weir girls attended the Brearley School for Girls in New York City and became educated ladies of leisure.⁹⁴

At least a decade younger than her brothers, Louise Remy did not enjoy seasonal playmates on the Branchville farm. The Weirs never mentioned Louise in correspondence, but the Weir girls did take at least three photographs of the youngest Remy outdoors, suggesting at least some familiarity between the daughters of the two families (see Figure 17).⁹⁵ Meanwhile, the few references to Johanna Remy in the Weirs' correspondence include Dorothy's toddler mispronunciation of "Mrs. 'Amey,'" and John Ferguson Weir's approval of Paul Remy's wife.⁹⁶ Albert Ryder similarly relayed that "Mr. and Mrs. Remy are as kind as possible."⁹⁷ The Weir family photographs include an image of Johanna holding Cora Weir's hand as a toddler, again implying some familiarity between Johanna and her landlord's daughters, at least in the outdoor liminal space between the households (see Figure 18).

Aside from an infrequent presence in photographs, brief mentions in correspondence, and possibly an appearance in *Feeding the Chickens* (Figure 9), Johanna Remy's agricultural and domestic labor remained largely invisible to the Weirs.⁹⁸ Class barriers included a gendered dimension that meant the lives of Julian or John Weir rarely intersected with Remy's, especially as much of her work took place in or near the caretaker's house. Meanwhile, the women in Weir's family relied on their own domestic servants and had little reason to interact with Remy in her home or their own. Despite silences in the Weir archive surrounding Johanna Remy, her domestic and agricultural labor proved critical to the Remys' successful tenancy and merits additional interrogation.

⁹³ Souvenir Student List for Branchville Schoolhouse, 1899–1900 school year, 1900, Private Collection; 1940 United States Census, Meriden, New Haven, Connecticut, Roll: m-t0627–00517, Page: 4A, Enumeration District: 5–104A; 1940 United States Census, New York, New York, Roll: m-t0627–02647, Page: 2A, Enumeration District: 31–982.

⁹⁴ Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, "An Artists' Retreat: J. Alden Weir's Farm in Connecticut," 144–45.

⁹⁵ No previous NPS reports mention Louise Remy; however, her birth certificate is very clear that Louise was born to Paul and Johanna Remy who lived in Branchville, Connecticut. Certificate and Record of Birth of Louise Remy, No. 24000, June 20, 1899, New York City Department of Records & Information Services, New York City, New York. Furthermore, Carl Remy's obituary states that he was survived by his brother, William, and sister, Louise. "Carl L. Remy" Obituary, *Bennington Banner*, May 3, 1972.

⁹⁶ No Weir Family correspondence or previous NPS reports identify Johanna Remy's first name.

⁹⁷ Young, *Life and Letters*, 188.

⁹⁸ Some sources suggest that Weir's painting of *An Alsatian Girl* depict Johanna Remy, but the image does not resemble Johanna Remy as captured in photographs.

Johanna Remy's Domestic and Agricultural Labor

Like many farm women in the late 19th century, Johanna Remy engaged in a wide range of overlapping agricultural and domestic tasks.⁹⁹ For the majority of her time at the Branchville farm, Remy raised, fed, and managed young children. Her two sons were two and four years old when they arrived at Branchville in 1891, and by the time they were over the age of 10, Remy began caring for a new infant: her daughter, Louise. The boys attended school and helped with more and more farm duties as they grew older. Julian Weir noted times when Paul Remy or one of their sons fell ill, which meant that Johanna would need to care for them while also taking on additional chores to keep the farm running.¹⁰⁰ Even with a healthy family, Johanna Remy likely participated in plenty of farm work, including feeding pigs and poultry daily, working in the garden, processing produce, and managing the constant tasks of dairying. She probably helped with harvesting and haying duties during particularly busy seasons, as well.¹⁰¹ The 19th-century concept of separate spheres—in which women managed the household and men worked outside the home—rarely reflected farm women's reality in which they took on the burden of the majority of domestic work plus a hefty share of agricultural labor.¹⁰²

Johanna Remy's domestic responsibilities also likely included managing and cleaning the caretaker's house and washing laundry for her household. For laundry day each week, she would need to retrieve 20 to 25 pails of water from the well and pour them into a laundry tub or barrel. From there, according to historian Linda Borish, farm women like Remy would spend hours "rubbing, pounding and wringing garments expending enormous amounts of time and labor."¹⁰³ Then, after line-drying the laundry, Remy undertook ironing which involved repeatedly heating up a heavy handheld iron on the stove.

⁹⁹ Given the traditional labor and equipment on Weir's farm, this report draws on histories of 19th century New England farm women, even though Johanna Remy worked on Weir Farm into the early 20th century. See Borish, "Another Domestic Beast of Burden," 38–87; Joan M. Jensen, *With These Hands: Women Working on the Land* (Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1993); Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹⁰⁰ JAW to JFW, "I fear Paul's boy has some sickness," undated, WEFA 197; JAW to EBW, August 14, 1895, WEFA 192.

¹⁰¹ Borish, "Another Domestic Beast of Burden."

¹⁰² For more on separate sphere ideology, see Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 9–39; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151–74. See also Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community* and *Putting the Barn Before the House: Women and Family Farming in Early Twentieth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

¹⁰³ Borish, "Another Domestic Beast of Burden," 92.

Finally, Remy would likely undertake any necessary sewing or mending.¹⁰⁴ If arrangements with previous tenant farmers are any indication, Remy may have also completed additional washing for the Weir family and their guests.¹⁰⁵

Cooking and feeding herself and her family also proved to be arduous work. Because the caretaker's house did not have its own cellar, Remy had to cross the road to access Weir's cellar anytime she needed to retrieve stored produce.¹⁰⁶ Cooking also required 6 to 10 pails of water, which again needed to be hauled from the closest well.¹⁰⁷ Finally, stoves needed to be well stocked with firewood or coal before the actual cooking could begin.¹⁰⁸ Keeping two working adults and three growing children fed required an unending repetition of this process.

Women's constant, physically exhausting labor on farms in 19th-century New England—often with a child on their hip—led some to complain that they felt like another “beast of burden.”¹⁰⁹ After all, women did not generally receive wages for their labor. As documented in Chapter 1, Julian Weir responded negatively when a previous tenant farmer's wife submitted him with charges for her work.¹¹⁰ Weir likely appreciated Paul Remy as a tenant farmer precisely because Johanna's unpaid labor was not brought to his attention. After all, according to John Ferguson Weir, the Remys knew their place. Julian Weir's ignorance of Johanna Remy's substantial labor would make it challenging for him to be satisfied with future tenant farmers. No one—or even two—tenant farmers would be able to uphold the same level of work of that the Remys accomplished as a family.

The Remys after Weir Farm

In 1904, John Ferguson Weir wrote to his brother praising William Remy's work on the garden and grounds, suggesting that “Willie would eventually fill Paul's place here, while Carl would grow into a similar office at Windham.”¹¹¹ After all, at age 17 William was

¹⁰⁴ Borish, “Another Domestic Beast of Burden,” 96.

¹⁰⁵ JAW to JFW, March 22, 1885, WEFA 197.

¹⁰⁶ The lack of cellar at the caretaker's house is documented in Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker's House and Caretaker's Garage,” 5, 56. The cellar at the main house was expanded in 1900 into a full basement. Marie L. Carden and Richard C. Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT [draft], US Department of the Interior, NPS, Northeast Region, Northeast Cultural Resources Center, Building Conservation Branch, 1998.

¹⁰⁷ The caretaker's house did not have running water or electricity until the 1930s. In Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker's House and Caretaker's Garage,” 5.

¹⁰⁸ Borish, “Another Domestic Beast of Burden,” 90; Larkin, “The Weir Farm,” 50.

¹⁰⁹ Borish, “Another Domestic Beast of Burden,” 83.

¹¹⁰ He was outraged by the woman's “impudence.” JAW to JFW, March 22, 1885, WEFA 197.

¹¹¹ JFW to JAW, August 11, 1904, WEFA 190.

almost grown while Paul Remy neared 60 years old. The Weirs seemed to hope the Remys could stay forever, but that would be the last mention of the family in existing correspondence. The Remys left Branchville sometime between the summer of 1904 and spring of 1907.¹¹² William and Carl Remy both ended up in New York City, where they likely found more economic opportunities than they could have expected as tenants for Weir. By 1910, William was working as a chauffeur for a private family, living in the same residence as his future wife, Mary O’Boyle, who worked as a servant.¹¹³ They married two years later and by 1920 lived in Meriden, Connecticut, where they raised their three children.¹¹⁴ Carl also worked as a chauffeur for many years in New York City, marrying Emily Rubsan in 1910. He later found work as a mechanic for the Packard Automobile Company on Long Island.¹¹⁵ In 1916, Louise Remy married Harry Naylor of Bridgeport and moved to New York City, where he worked in a factory and she raised two daughters.¹¹⁶ Harry died in 1925 and Louise worked factory jobs to support her family until marrying Joseph Herold in 1934.¹¹⁷

Meanwhile, Paul and Johanna Remy spent most of their remaining years after Branchville in the Fairfield and Westport areas, where Paul took on odd jobs including gardener, running an elevator at a factory, janitor, laborer, and carpenter.¹¹⁸ The lack of stable employment and Remy’s eventual transition from agricultural labor to more industrial work reflected the region’s continued urbanization and industrialization. Immigration

¹¹² By May 24, 1907, JAW wrote to C.E.S. Wood that he was having “much trouble getting a man for Branchville.” C.E.S. Wood Papers, Collection of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹¹³ 1910 United States Census, Islip, Suffolk, New York, Roll T624_1082, Page 3B, Enumeration District 1369. The census lists Remy as a servant with the occupation of chauffeur and Mary O’Boyle as a boarder with the occupation of waitress.

¹¹⁴ William Remy Marriage Record, Connecticut State Department of Health; Hartford, CT; Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–1968; 1920 United States Census, Meriden Ward 5, New Haven, Connecticut, Roll T625_190, Page 8B, Enumeration District 293; 1930 United States Census, Meriden, New Haven, Connecticut, Page 5A, Enumeration District 0169.

¹¹⁵ “Carl L. Remy” Obituary, *Bennington Banner*, May 3, 1972. The couple did not have any children. See also 1920 United State Census, Manhattan Assembly District 11, New York, New York, Roll T625_1204, Page 1A, Enumeration District 814.

¹¹⁶ Louise Remy Marriage Record, June 14, 1916, Connecticut State Department of Health; Hartford, CT; Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–1968; 1920 United States Census, Bridgeport Ward 3, Fairfield, Connecticut, Roll T625_174, Page 2A, Enumeration District 16; 1930 United States Census, Bristol, Hartford, Connecticut, Page 20B, Enumeration District 0097. Louise sometimes appears in records with the first name Dorothy.

¹¹⁷ Harry Naylor Death Record, June 12, 1925, Connecticut State Department of Health; Hartford, CT; Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Deaths, 1897–1969; 1930 United States Census, Bristol, Hartford, Connecticut, Page 20B, Enumeration District 0097; Dorothy L. Remy Marriage Certificate 41239, October 27, 1934, New York State Department of Health; Albany, NY, USA; New York State Marriage Index; 1940 United States Census, Bristol, Hartford, Connecticut, Roll m-t0627-00502, Page 66A, Enumeration District 2-28.

¹¹⁸ *Bridgeport, Connecticut, City Directory* (1914), 1219; *Bridgeport, Connecticut, City Directory* (1915), 1246; *Bridgeport, Connecticut, City Directory* (1917), 1556; *Bridgeport, Connecticut, City Directory* (1918), 1134; *Bridgeport, Connecticut, City Directory* (1919), 1150; 1920 United States Census, Fairfield, Fairfield, Connecticut, Roll T625_177, Page 24B, Enumeration District 495; *Bridgeport, Connecticut, City Directory* (1920), 1064; *Bridgeport, Connecticut, City Directory* (1921), 1117; Paul Remy, Connecticut Military Census of 1917, Hartford, Connecticut: Connecticut State Library.

from eastern and southern Europe and limited labor protections also meant that Remy faced stiff competition for work, especially as an aging man in an era before Social Security. The Remys may have received financial assistance from their sons; Carl listed his parents as dependents on his 1917 draft registration.¹¹⁹ At some point in the 1920s, Paul and Johanna moved to New York City, possibly to live closer to Carl.¹²⁰ Paul passed away in December of 1930 at the age of 83.¹²¹ Johanna moved in with her widowed daughter in Bristol, Connecticut, and passed away three years later on December 30, 1933.¹²² The couple are buried next to each other in Bristol's West Cemetery.¹²³

Paul Remy lived to see the impacts of industrialization first in Germany in the mid-19th century, and then again in New York and New England in the early 20th century. His time at Weir Farm may have been the most settled era in his life, working alongside Johanna, who found herself laboring as a farm wife after growing up in the tenements of New York City. While existing documentation cannot explain why the Remys left Branchville, Paul certainly could not continue plowing, haying, and harvesting by hand indefinitely, nor would the labor load become more manageable once his sons left the farm. John Ferguson Weir's vision of William and Carl Remy continuing to work for Julian Weir for a second generation did not match the realities of New England labor patterns in the early 20th century. In many ways, the Remys' tenure at Weir Farm existed as a moment out of time, looking more like the 1860s than the 1900s (for better or worse, depending on whether a person was plowing or painting). Meanwhile, outside of Weir Farm, industrialization transformed cities and the countryside before, during, and after the Remys' tenancy. Ultimately, time caught up with Weir Farm and the Remys sought other ways to make a living while Julian Weir tried to find new tenant farmers.

¹¹⁹ Carl L. Remy, Connecticut, Fairfield; Roll: 1570492; Draft Board 13, United States, Selective Service System. World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918, Washington, DC, National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, 4582 rolls.

¹²⁰ 1930 United States Census, Manhattan, New York, New York, Page 9A, Enumeration District 0495. Paul and Johanna lived a block away from Carl and Emily Remy's address as listed in the 1920 Census (Carl and Emily do not appear in the 1930 Census). 1920 United State Census, Manhattan Assembly District 11, New York, New York, Roll T625_1204, Page 1A, Enumeration District 814.

¹²¹ Paul Remy Death Record, December 24, 1930, Connecticut State Department of Health; Hartford, CT; Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Deaths, 1897–1969.

¹²² Johanna's address in 1932 Bristol City Directory is the same as Dorothy's address in 1930 Census. *Bristol, Connecticut, City Directory* (1932), 305; 1930 United States Census, Bristol, Hartford, Connecticut, Page 20B, Enumeration District 0097.

¹²³ Hale Collection of Cemetery Inscriptions and Newspaper Notices, 1629–1934, Hartford, Connecticut; Connecticut State Library, Vol 6, 184.

Weir Farm after the Remys: High Turnover and Transition

Julian Weir struggled to find satisfactory replacements for the Remys until his death in 1919. He faced many of the same obstacles that caused high turnover before the Remys. Richard Brown explains that “the rise of an industrial, commercial, and urban economy in southern New England. . . undermined the already fragile supply of farm labor.”¹²⁴ Weir also enjoyed the labor of Paul, Johanna, and their sons for the price of one, and would struggle to find tenant farmers able to meet the Remys standard of work. Plus, in 1907 he purchased the Webb property adjacent to his land, which significantly increased the amount of land and buildings for his workers to maintain.¹²⁵ Hiring and keeping farmers in his later years became a constant challenge, especially when the demands of his property required more than one tenant.

No documentation of Branchville’s farmers exists between 1904 and 1907. In May of 1907, Weir wrote that “I have had much trouble getting a man for Branchville.” There may have been a promising Cuban gardener in August of 1907, but by December the Tobin family appeared in Ella Weir’s diary as the likely tenants at Branchville.¹²⁶ Daniel and Mary Tobin were recent immigrants from Ireland who ultimately settled in Ridgefield; their son, Daniel Jr. would later be hired by Dorothy Weir Young for carpentry projects. Daniel Sr. worked on private estates as a teamster and farmer in the early 20th century until he acquired his own land to farm.¹²⁷ He did not stay with the Weirs for long; by the summer of 1908, Percy Alden asked if Weir had found a tenant for Branchville yet.¹²⁸

George and Harriet Gressler and their daughter, Mildred, may have lived and worked on the site sometime around 1910 before moving to Danbury.¹²⁹ Census records collected in April 1910, however, show that John E. Boughton lived on Weir’s Branchville

¹²⁴ Richard D. Brown, “Farm Labor in Southern New England during the Agricultural-Industrial Transition,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 99 (1) 1989: 114.

¹²⁵ Weir purchased 153 acres in 1882; the estate grew to include 238 acres by his death in 1919. Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat: J. Alden Weir’s Farm in Connecticut,” xi, 110.

¹²⁶ JAW to C.E.S. Wood, May 24, 1907, C.E.S. Wood Papers, Collection of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Percy Alden to JAW, August 13, 1907, WEFA 190; Ella Baker Weir Diary, WEFA 499. The 1907 entries also include gifts to Windham employees Mr. Rice and Mr. Beckwith and their families.

¹²⁷ 1910 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut, Roll: T624_127, Page: 5A, Enumeration District: 0104; 1920 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut, Roll: T625_178, Page: 16A; Enumeration District: 153; 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut, Page: 24B, Enumeration District: 0174; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

¹²⁸ Percy Alden to JAW, June 2, 1908 WEFA 190.

¹²⁹ Ella Baker Weir Diary, WEFA 499, lists Christmas gifts for the “Gressler” family alongside those for the Adams family who lived and worked in Windham in 1910. 1910 United States Census, Danbury, Fairfield, Connecticut, Roll: T624_129, Page: 4A, Enumeration District: 0060 lists a Gressler family that fits a similar description who were farming on their own account on rented land in Danbury.

property as a farm manager, accompanied by his wife, Elizabeth. He was 51 and she was 45. They were both born in the region and had two grown children no longer living with them.¹³⁰ The Boughtons managed the Branchville farm until at least 1916.¹³¹ Despite their relatively long tenure, Weir’s correspondence suggested some displeasure with them. After firing his farm manager at Windham, he complained to his friend that he couldn’t “get a good man” for either of his farms.¹³² In 1913 he referenced “two old nut crackers” at Branchville who “go through the motions but accomplish less than one live man could do,” adding derisively that “servants are all on the same scale.”¹³³ In 1915 the Boughtons moved into the Webb house, prompting Weir to remark, “I wonder if he has left the farm house in good condition for the State.”¹³⁴ Clearly, Weir did not trust that the Boughtons properly maintained the caretaker’s home.

In 1916, Weir reported to his daughter Dorothy that he received a letter from Boughton that was “not cheerful” and resisted Weir’s pick for a new farm hand at Branchville. Boughton insisted on “the great importance of having a man who could drive oxen,” an understandable request given the increasing rarity of skills necessary to manage the laborious, old-fashioned livestock and implements on Weir Farm. Weir argued that he could hire the man in question while continuing the search for someone who could drive oxen, ultimately reducing Boughton’s concerns down to an issue of racist suspicion, stating: “I fear Mr. B may think as [the potential hire] is an Italian, he is a dangerous one, but I do not think he will be more so than Mr. B.”¹³⁵ From failing to be “cheerful” and insisting on better living quarters to challenging Weir on the management of his farm, John Boughton did not demonstrate the qualities of a humble tenant farmer that Weir had so valued in Paul Remy.

The Boughtons may have left a couple months later, as Weir wrote that the lone “man” at Branchville “is not very satisfactory still he is a little better than no one.”¹³⁶ Later that summer of 1916, Weir referenced a Neil McGonigle at Branchville, but by the fall of

¹³⁰ 1910 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut, Roll T624_127, Page 15A, Enumeration District 0105.

¹³¹ For final reference to the Boughtons in correspondence, see JAW to DW, March 25, 1916, WEFA 195.

¹³² JAW to C.E.S. Wood, September 12, 1910, C.E.S. Wood Papers, Collection of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Previous reports suggest that Weir hired a Mr. Adams at Branchville; however, the 1910 United States Census confirms that Adams lived and worked at Windham when he expressed frustrations with the farm manager, Mr. Rice (JAW to EBW, April 17, 1910, WEFA 192). Adams still worked at Windham according to 1920 census records; his children are also depicted in JAW’s painting *The Adams Children*.

¹³³ JAW to C.E.S. Wood, May 12, 1913, C.E.S. Wood Papers, Collection of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. According to Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” a reference to “two old nutcrackers” may also be found in correspondence from JAW to EBW, May 9, 1913, WEFA 192.

¹³⁴ JAW to EBW, April 23, 1915, WEFA 192.

¹³⁵ JAW to DW, March 25, 1916, WEFA 195.

¹³⁶ JAW to DW, May 9, 1916 WEFA 195.

1916 he signed a contract with Willis O. Fuller “to do the gardening and take care of the farm.”¹³⁷ Fuller previously lived in Lebanon, Connecticut, not far from the Baker house in Windham. He occasionally encountered the Julian Weir in town, who repeatedly encouraged him to come work at Branchville. Weir reportedly “offered him all sorts of things” until, according to Fuller’s future son-in-law Bill DeForest, Fuller “finally broke down and came” to Branchville.¹³⁸ Weir paid him 50 dollars per month, with an extra 35 dollars compensation for his son’s labor. He could also use the caretaker’s house, firewood, one gallon of milk, and “potatoes while they last.”¹³⁹ At first, Fuller and his 13-year-old son, Charles, lived in the caretaker’s house alone. They were “batching it, a couple of bachelors keeping house there for themselves” according to Bill De Forest, which they “didn’t like. . . at all, it was pretty bad.”¹⁴⁰ When their furniture finally arrived via freight car, Fuller’s wife, Cora, and daughter, Lena, joined the household.¹⁴¹ Weir declared to his brother John that “at last I have a very good man at the place at Branchville and trust he may continue.”¹⁴²

The Fullers stayed for two years before Willis went to work for Mike Conrey in Georgetown, Connecticut. By the spring of 1918, Branchville was under the stewardship of Frederick Shuh, who earned 65 dollars per month, plus the use of the house, wood, milk, potatoes, and vegetables. Weir also agreed to give Shuh a pig and pay part of the butchering expense. That fall, Weir also hired Charles Warren for 40 dollars per month, in addition to the use of the farm home, milk, wood, and potatoes. While Shuh remained in charge, Weir assigned plowing, harrowing, milking, and stone cutting to Warren, along with cleaning the home, stables and providing coal for the kitchen. Presumably, Shuh lived in the Webb house while Warren lived in the caretaker’s house.¹⁴³ Weir’s Branchville contracts in the 1910s confirm that his tenant farmers received part of the dairy and crops that they pro-

¹³⁷ JAW to EBW, June 21, 1916, WEFA 192; JAW to EBW, July 23, 1916, WEFA 192; Julian Alden Weir Legal and Financial Records, 1887–1919, WEFA 190, Box 7, Folder 3.

¹³⁸ 1900 United States Census, Lebanon, New London, Connecticut; Page: 1; Enumeration District: 0451; FHL microfilm: 1240149; 1910 United States Census, East Bridgewater, Plymouth, Massachusetts; Roll: T624_610; Page: 19A; Enumeration District: 1211; FHL microfilm: 1374623; 1920 United States Census, Redding, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_178; Page: 1B; Enumeration District: 496; 1930 United States Census, Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 0225; FHL microfilm: 2339995; 1940 United States Census, Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00500; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 1-225; Bill and Myrtle DeForest, interview with Doug DeNatale, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; William H. Manning, *The Genealogical and Biographical History of the Manning Families of New England and Descendants* (Salem, MA: Salem Press), 1902.

¹³⁹ Julian Alden Weir Legal and Financial Records, 1887–1919, WEFA 190, Box 7, Folder 3.

¹⁴⁰ Bill DeForest, interview.

¹⁴¹ Bill DeForest, interview.

¹⁴² JAW to JFW, December 9, 1916, WEFA 197. An undated letter from JAW to JFW (WEFA 197) references employing “two good men for Branchville.” Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” suggests that the letter was written in spring 1917. If so, it could have been referring to Willis and Charlie Fuller.

¹⁴³ Julian Alden Weir Legal and Financial Records, 1887–1919, WEFA 190, Box 7, Folder 3.

duced, along with an occasional pig. They also show how Weir increased wages to remain competitive in New England and indicate that he needed to hire more than one worker to run the expanded Branchville property.¹⁴⁴

Although Weir raised his rates over the years, workers could still earn more in factories than on the farm. In December of 1918, Warren left for a position that could pay \$4.25 per day—more than double his earnings on Weir’s farm, not including food and housing.¹⁴⁵ The per diem rate of his new job suggests industrial work and compares to the average monthly earnings of manufacturing wage earners in the United States.¹⁴⁶ From the challenges of finding men to drive oxen to losing good agricultural workers to better-paying jobs, the traditional qualities of the Branchville farm that inspired Weir’s art also made it challenging to hire and keep help in the 1910s.

Meanwhile, Shuh remained at Branchville with his wife, Claribelle, and continued to serve as caretakers through the death of Julian Weir in December 1919.¹⁴⁷ Weir’s wife, Ella, and daughter, Dorothy, took over management of the farm, but little is known about the tenant farmers they hired in the 1920s.¹⁴⁸ One resident of the caretaker’s house may have been caught stealing and selling Weir family possessions.¹⁴⁹ The Branchville property would enter into a new era in the 1930s, as Dorothy Weir inherited full title to the farm, married Mahonri Young, and sold the Webb property to her sister, Cora.¹⁵⁰

During Julian Weir’s ownership of the Branchville property, the Remy family proved the ideal agricultural laborers to realize his vision of a traditional country farm. Their constant care of the farm’s animals, cultivation of fields using old-fashioned methods, and robust gardening ensured Remy’s continued employment for over a decade. Paul Remy left positive impressions on Julian Weir and his guests as he worked in the fields and managed the farm, while Johanna Remy accomplished significant agricultural and

¹⁴⁴ Average monthly earnings for Farm Laborers with Board in 1919 in New England: \$46.16. United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Bicentennial ed. (Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975), 163.

¹⁴⁵ JAW to C.E.S. Wood, December 2, 1918, C.E.S. Wood Papers, Collection of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California; United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Bicentennial ed. (Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975), 168.

¹⁴⁶ \$82/month in 1918 and \$97/month in 1919. United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Bicentennial ed. (Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975), 168.

¹⁴⁷ Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat: J. Alden Weir’s Farm in Connecticut,” 132. Probate records list Shuh and his wife, according to Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” 32.

¹⁴⁸ Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” 32.

¹⁴⁹ Norman F. Boas, *Nod Hill Wilton, Connecticut—Reminiscences* (self-published, 1996); Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat: J. Alden Weir’s Farm in Connecticut,” 159.

¹⁵⁰ Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” 32.

domestic labor without additional payment. The departure of the Remys back to eastern cities to find jobs as chauffeurs and laborers reflected the continued impact of industrialization and urbanization on labor patterns in southern New England and beyond, as Weir struggled to find agreeable long-term tenants that lived up to the Remys' standards.

CHAPTER THREE

Domestic Workers for the Weir Family, 1880s–1920s

A tremendous amount of domestic labor took place in the background of daily life in the Weir household. Every week, servants performed childcare, cooked meals, laundered clothes, and cleaned the home. Domestic laborers' lives remain largely obscured in the historical record, often only appearing in primary sources due to their employers' dissatisfaction or, in the case of Mary Hanratty, because of her uniquely long tenure. This chapter aims to make the hidden lives and labor of domestic laborers more visible by understanding how servants came to work for families like the Weirs, what their work entailed, and how they navigated their days in the Weir homes in New York and Branchville. The chapter will explore the details of individual servants when possible, acknowledging both their labor and their life beyond their occupation. After all, the servants who passed through the Weir household worked to secure their own livelihood while enabling the Weirs to pursue lives unburdened by hard domestic labor.

Many well-to-do women in 19th-century New England and New York hired domestic workers, and the Weir women were no exception. The Baker sisters likely grew up accustomed to servants in the home.¹ They came from an upper-class background; their grandmother was the daughter of a prosperous merchant and their grandfather, according to Dorothy Weir Young, “added to the family’s finances by wise investment” to the point where their son—Anna and Ella’s father—“was not obliged to earn his own living.”² When Anna and, later, Ella married Julian Weir, they continued to rely at least in part on the Baker family wealth. A 2009 Historic Resource Study for Weir Farm characterizes the family’s finances as “relying on sales of paintings, teaching fees, and intermittent gifts from Mrs. Baker” until she passed away in 1899. She then left her “substantial estate to Ella and

¹ The 1880 census shows one servant in the Baker household, even when all three daughters were grown. 1880 United States Federal Census; Year: 1880; Census Place: Windham, Windham, Connecticut, Roll: 110, Page: 337, Enumeration District: 126. The Bakers were traveling during the 1870 census and cannot be found in the 1860 census. Anna Bartlett Dwight Baker’s correspondence references servants, and Cora hired servants as mistress of her household.

² Quoted in Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat: J. Alden Weir’s Farm in Connecticut,” Weir Farm National Historic Site Historic Resource Study, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2009, 35.

Cora” who “carefully managed the estate’s assets, meeting frequently with their lawyers and advisers over the years.”³ Anna and Ella Weir contributed and managed a significant portion of the family finances, thereby providing the means to hire domestic help.

As ladies of the house, Anna and Ella Weir also made decisions about who to hire. The white, upper-class ideology of separate spheres in the 19th century asserted that the home was the domain of women who were responsible for keeping it clean, efficient, and morally pure. Despite its cultural influence, the concept of separate spheres held internal contradictions and rarely perfectly reflected reality. For example, domestic labor was incredibly arduous and not compatible with the idea that upper-class white women were physically and emotionally fragile. Nor did extensive housework allow time for women of means to pursue leisure activities and fulfill social obligations. To resolve these contradictions, white women in the early and mid-19th century often hired other, lower-class native-born women as domestic “help.”⁴ This approach implied that wealthy ladies benevolently provided an opportunity for less well-off girls to learn how to perform household labor before or while establishing their own homes.⁵

However, the pool of native-born women available or willing to work as servants dwindled over the course of the 19th century and into the early 20th century.⁶ Many middle- and upper-class women bemoaned the “servant problem,” or the challenge of finding good domestic help. In reality, many recent immigrants from Western European countries like Ireland, Germany, and Sweden sought work as servants in the late 19th century. The “servant problem” did not reflect a decrease in the pool of potential domestic workers, but pointed to changes in the relationship between employer and servant. A more transactional form of wage labor increasingly replaced the model of benevolent maternalism, especially in cities like New York where industrialization was transforming the labor market. White ethnic domestic workers could easily leave their employers to seek better pay or working conditions in other households. For example, in April 1890 Anna Weir wrote to her sister that she “had to get another girl in Mary’s place, as she wanted higher wages.”⁷ Workers could also find jobs in manufacturing, where the wages were comparable or slightly lower than domestic service, but also offered more freedom over personal time

³ Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 106–7.

⁴ “White” in this historical moment usually meant “native-born” white Anglo-Saxon Protestants like the Weirs.

⁵ Hasia R. Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Carol S. Lasser, 1987, “The Domestic Balance of Power: Relationships Between Mistress and Main in Nineteenth-Century New England,” *Labor History* 28 (1): 5–22; David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

⁶ Historians cite competition with factory jobs as a primary cause. See Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*; Lasser, “The Domestic Balance of Power”; Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*.

⁷ ABW to EB, April 28, 1890, WEFA 192.

than live-in work.⁸ Many middle- and upper-class women including the Weir women experienced high servant turnover as they struggled to maintain the power dynamic of earlier models.⁹

Both Anna and Ella Weir almost exclusively hired Irish women. Single immigrant women from Ireland comprised the largest group of foreign-born servants in the United States; in New York City alone they constituted 42 percent of all domestic workers.¹⁰ They became so associated with domestic labor that the “Bridget” stereotype emerged in upper-class discourse, characterizing Irish domestic servants as unruly and ignorant.¹¹ The caricature dovetailed with anxiety about the “servant problem,” revealing how many mistresses feared that white ethnic workers—especially Irish women—were too assertive and unreliable. Nevertheless, women like the Weirs continued to hire single Irish women as they dominated the pool of available domestic servants in New York City and beyond.

A number of factors contributed to single Irish women immigrating to the United States and turning to domestic labor en masse. In the wake of social changes wrought by the Great Famine, women found few opportunities for marriage or employment in Ireland. Irish gender norms increasingly emphasized women’s value in economic terms, and those who emigrated for jobs could send money back to their families. Once in the United States, they found high demand for domestic servants who could speak English. While many other working-class groups were reluctant to work and live in other peoples’ households as servants, the value of the paycheck outweighed the challenges of isolation for many Irish women. In fact, Irish domestic workers often married later in life or not at all in order to continue working longer.¹²

⁸ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 313: “When the equivalent cost of room and board are added to the annual earnings of domestic servants, their wages were at the same level or exceeded those of women in shops and in un- or semiskilled factory jobs.” See also Lara Vapnek, *Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865–1920* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 110–11.

⁹ Historians disagree about whether domestic service was an occupation where preindustrial norms persisted or another job impacted by industrialization. This study suggests a combination of both; certainly, the contract wage system and workers’ ability to keep looking for better jobs impacted the power dynamic between mistress and servant. On the other hand, the persistence of live-in service, and later DWY’s sense of obligation in hiring workers, shows how some traditional power dynamics between mistress and servant persevered.

¹⁰ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 66; Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*; xiv.

¹¹ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*; also see Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840–1930* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009).

¹² Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*; Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*; Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*. Diner also argues that segregation between genders and infrequent marriages in Irish society made marriage less of a priority for Irish women. Cultural norms rewarded making money and sending it back home.

Irish and other domestic servants connected with potential employers like the Weirs through classified ads, employment agencies and informal personal networks.¹³ Middle-class women usually hired one maid-of-all-work while New York’s wealthiest employed multiple servants with distinct roles ranging from chambermaids, laundresses, and waitresses to housekeepers, cooks, and scullery maids.¹⁴ The Weir family operated in the middle of the spectrum, hiring at least four servants in 1900 who traveled with them to Branchville: a cook, a waitress, a laundress, and a nurse. Information on the individual women hired by the Weirs remains challenging to find. Like many families, the Weirs experienced high turnover in their domestic staff and rarely mentioned the help by name in their writings. Plus, the women they hired often shared similar names with other fellow Irish immigrants, and many did not leave marriage or birth records because they stayed single. Broader knowledge about the job duties of different servants helps provide a clearer picture of domestic labor where evidence on individual workers is limited. The following section will examine the roles of the nurse, waitress, and cook as well as any known information about the women who provided those services for the Weirs in the late 19th century, before moving on to focus on what their work specifically looked like at the Weir residences in New York City and Branchville.

Domestic Servants, 1884–1900

Nurse

When Anna and Julian Weir welcomed their first daughter, Caroline (Caro), into the world on March 24, 1884, they likely hired a nurse to care for their child. Also called a nurse maid or nursery maid, the domestic servant tasked with childcare kept young ones clean, dressed, and fed.¹⁵ Anna likely breastfed for at least a short time.¹⁶ She may have also hired a wet-nurse to breastfeed the baby or supplemented with cow’s milk; both were common practices at the time.¹⁷ Regardless, the work of daily childcare primarily fell to the Weirs’ servants. For example, in June 1884, Anna wrote to her sister that a woman named Ann—likely Caro’s nurse—wanted Anna and Ella’s mother to know that “with her low chair she has a splendid

¹³ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*; Vapnek, *Breadwinners*, 114–16. For example, a newspaper clipping in one of Julian Alden Weir’s notebooks consists of a classified ad announcing a “Nurse and Seamstress” available for hire with city references. WEFA 445, Box 1, Envelope 8.

¹⁴ Deborah Fairman Browning, 1992, “Toilers Within the Home: Servants’ Quarters in Nineteenth-Century New England.” *Journal of American Culture* 15 (1): 93–98; see also Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*.

¹⁵ Appendix III in Lucy Maynard Salmon’s *Domestic Service*, Civic Club of Philadelphia, November 1895.

¹⁶ Artwork by Julian Alden Weir depicting Anna breastfeeding includes Julian Alden Weir, *Mother and Child, ADW at Branchville*, Pastel, 13 1/4 × 9 1/2 in, before 1892 (Private Collection); Julian Alden Weir, *Anna D. Weir*, Pencil on Paper, 5 1/2 × 3 in, n.d. (Private Collection).

¹⁷ Janet Golden, *A Social History of Wet Nursing in America*; Jacqueline H. Wolf, “Low Breastfeeding Rates and Public Health in the United States,” *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 12 (December 2003): 2000–2010.

lap, so there is no danger of the baby’s falling off.”¹⁸ Ann did not last long in the Weir household, as Anna complained of trouble finding a nurse in the fall of 1884 and again in the summer of 1885.¹⁹ By the time that the Weirs spent the following summer of 1886 in Branchville, they hired “an extra housemaid” in June, and by August, Anna wrote that “I like the two girls I have very much, indeed they do as nice as possible.”²⁰ At least one of the women hired by Anna Weir likely attended to the needs of two-year-old Caro.

As the Weir family grew, so too did the nurse’s responsibilities. Julian Jr. was born on January 30, 1888, and passed away 13 months later of diphtheria and pneumonia.²¹ Dorothy arrived on June 18, 1890, and Cora was born on January 29, 1892. Anna died in February 1892, shortly after delivering Cora. With Anna’s passing, her sister Ella Baker largely took over the task of managing domestic help, including nurses. While Julian Weir left for Chicago to paint murals in the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building for the 1893 Columbian Exposition, Baker and her mother watched over his children with the help of a nurse named Elizabeth. In September of 1892, Baker wrote to Weir reporting an incident in which Cora—still under a year old—accidentally threw herself against the bed and injured her tooth while under Elizabeth’s care. Baker criticized the nurse in her letter, claiming she was holding Cora too loosely, but ultimately admitted the situation was an accident. Baker conceded that Elizabeth generally “takes good care of the little girl,” and “Mamma and I both try and watch them like the apples of our eyes.”²² For Baker, watching the children also meant watching the hired domestic help like Elizabeth. The gender and class expectations informed by separate sphere ideology meant that the responsibility for children and supervising domestic servants remained women’s work. While working through his grief, Julian Weir was not burdened by the social expectation to directly oversee his children’s care.

Ella Baker’s responsibility toward her nieces’ care likely factored into her decision to marry Julian Weir in October 1893. The couple continued to rely on domestic servants to watch their children. Mary Kane, for example, was immortalized in an 1893 painting reading to a young Cora Weir (see Figure 19). By 1900, the federal census listed 20-year-old Hellena Dunn as the family’s live-in nurse. She had immigrated from Ireland as a girl eight years earlier. Often the youngest of the household staff, nurses like Dunn tended to earn

¹⁸ ABW to EB, June 1, 1884, WEFA 192.

¹⁹ Ernestine Fabbri to ABW, July 31, 1885, WEFA 191.

²⁰ ABW to EB, August 24, 1886, WEFA 192.

²¹ Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 68–69. See also Baby’s death, “Notices,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1889.

²² EB to JAW, September 23, 1892, WEFA 190; JAW to EB, September 21, 1892, WEFA 190.

around \$3.00 to \$3.50 per week in addition to room and board.²³ By the time the Weirs appeared in the census again in 1915, their daughters were fully grown and the family no longer employed a nurse.

In place of a nurse, families like the Weirs might employ a governess as a live-in companion and private tutor for their children as they aged beyond their infant and toddler years. Unlike servants, a governess tended to belong to the middle or upper class, occupying a unique role as both peer and employee. They also served as an economic status symbol for the employing family.²⁴ A woman named Gertrude served as Caro Weir's governess in the winter of 1889; she may have been the daughter of German socialist politician Karl Leibnitz.²⁵ Gertrude taught Caro German and accompanied the family to Branchville, where the two went on long walks.²⁶ By the end of December, Anna Weir complained to her mother that Gertrude was “perfectly useless in every way except that she teaches Caro. . . . I have stopped giving her things to do now and am quite discouraged talking to her.”²⁷ Anna's frustration suggests that she and Gertrude held different expectations of her duties as governess, with Gertrude strictly teaching German and Anna expecting her to take on more responsibility as an employee. The ambiguity surrounding expectations of governesses existed not just in the Weir household, but in Victorian society on both sides of the Atlantic as women with privilege but in need of money undertook educational and childcare labor.²⁸ By March of 1890, Anna let Gertrude go and began seeking another governess.²⁹ The historical record does not reveal if Anna Weir successfully secured additional governesses for her children.

Waitress

Whereas the nurse and governess had the specific duty of attending to children, the “extra housemaid” that the Weirs mentioned in the summer of 1885 fell into a broader category synonymous with waitress, servant, or even maid-of-all-work. All domestic servants worked at the beck and call of the mistress of the house, but the waitress's catch-all duties required her to be even more responsive to her employers' requests. Her duties included:

²³ Salmon, *Domestic Service*, Appendix III. Her wage survey on page 90 does not include nurses, but the Philadelphia wages in Appendix III suggest that nurses were paid comparably to waitresses. Data for New York City, specifically, is not available. In general, Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 313, argues that “when the equivalent cost of room and board are added to the annual earnings of domestic servants, their wages were at the same level or exceeded those of women in shops and in unskilled or semiskilled factory jobs.”

²⁴ Jeanne M. Peterson, “The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society,” *Victorian Studies* 14, no. 1 (1970): 7–26.

²⁵ JAW to CES Wood, January 17, 1915.

²⁶ JAW to ABB, December 1, 1889, WEFA 198; ADB to ABB, December 12, 1889, WEFA 198.

²⁷ ABW to ABB, December 30, 1889 WEFA 198.

²⁸ Peterson, “The Victorian Governess,” 7–26.

²⁹ ABW to ABB, March 3, 1890, WEFA 198.

serving and cleaning up after meals; dusting, sweeping, scrubbing, and generally cleaning all the rooms in the house; lighting fires in stoves and fireplaces; and answering the doorbell and running errands.³⁰ For example, when the Weirs entertained guests, the waitress served cocktails mixed by Julian. As an adult, Caro Weir Ely recalled how the waitress transferred cutglass cocktail glasses from a tray of crushed ice to another tray where she sprinkled them with sugar and “filled them from a shaker.”³¹

Notably, Caro Weir Ely did not name the waitress in her recollections. Perhaps the high turnover of domestic staff contributed to her remembering the waitress primarily by her occupation. It may also reveal the degree to which domestic staff operated in the background of the Weir sisters’ childhoods as nameless servants rather than individuals. Ely documented another memory of an unnamed “new young waitress” who emerged from the background when she “threw her basin and pitcher out of the window” of the servants’ quarters on the top floor of the Weirs’ New York residence, “arousing the neighborhood and bringing two policemen running.” The officers promptly escorted the “poor young woman” to the hospital.³² Ely did not elaborate on the causes of the “drama,” and presumably the woman did not return to the Weir household.

The Weirs likely hired a waitress or housemaid in the months before they needed a nurse, and they continued to keep one or two on staff well into the 20th century. Ella Weir mentioned “Amanda the waitress” in her diary dated around 1894, and the 1900 census listed Agnes Johnson as a waitress in the Weir household.³³ Unlike Dunn, the nurse who arrived in the United States as a young girl, Johnson immigrated from Ireland when she was around 18 years old. She followed the common trajectory of young single Irish women traveling to the United States and working as domestic servants. At 30 years old, she also reflected the broader trend of Irish servant women marrying later in life, if at all. Waitresses received comparable wages to nurses, around \$3.00 to \$3.50 per week, and many sent portions of their earnings back to their families in Ireland.³⁴

³⁰ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 122; Salmon, *Domestic Service*.

³¹ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969).

³² Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969).

³³ Ella Baker Weir Diary, WEFA 2518, Box 45, Folder 41; 1900 United States Federal Census; Year: 1900; Census Place: Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 4; Enumeration District: 0094.

³⁴ Salmon, *Domestic Service*, Appendix III and page 90; see also Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*; Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*; Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*.

Cook

The cook, meanwhile, usually commanded slightly higher wages than waitresses and nurses, given the specialized labor required to keep families like the Weirs fed to their satisfaction.³⁵ The constant work of making breakfast, lunch, and dinner from scratch required a robust skill set. Cooks needed to know how to make soup stock; how to roast, boil, and broil meats; how to dress and cook poultry; and how to cook eggs, fish, and vegetables. Unless families relied on local bakeries, cooks also served as in-home bakers, making bread, biscuits, muffins, and griddle cakes.³⁶ Plus, cooks kept supplies of tea, coffee, and desserts ready. Food production also required working and cleaning the stove, sinks, and utensils as well as maintaining the kitchen, cellar, and ice chest.³⁷ Mistresses and cooks often worked together to develop meal plans and grocery lists.³⁸ Cooking food was arduous, constant, and critical labor; if middle-class families could not afford multiple servants, they usually tried to at least keep a cook.³⁹

Given their value, finding and keeping a good cook concerned not just the Weir women, but Julian, too. In the summer of 1886, Weir interrupted his time at Branchville to travel to New York City and find a new cook. The previous hire had negotiated a competitive monthly wage of 17 dollars but was reportedly “a bad character and took to cider like a duck to water.”⁴⁰ Her apparent alcoholism both depleted the family’s reserves of cider and meant that she failed to meet their expectations of propriety.

The challenge to find and keep a good cook continued through the winter of 1887, when Anna Weir wrote to her mother and sister of her disappointment with her cook, who “cannot remember things.”⁴¹ By 1900, the federal census listed Mary Govern as the Weirs’ cook, a single 41-year-old Irish immigrant who had lived in the United States for 32 years.⁴² Although the census listed Govern’s name, correspondence among the Weirs never named the cooks that lived and worked in their homes. They only mentioned the cook when they

³⁵ Salmon, *Domestic Service*, Appendix III and page 90. They earned about 50 cents more per week than nurses and waitresses.

³⁶ Salmon, *Domestic Service*, Appendix III; see also Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*.

³⁷ Salmon, *Domestic Service*, Appendix III.

³⁸ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*; see also evidence in Chapter 5 of DWY planning meals with her cook, Mollie Gleason.

³⁹ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*.

⁴⁰ JAW to EB, July 14, 1886, WEFA 192. He refers to the cook as “the one which we were pay [*sic*] \$17,” perhaps suggesting that she had negotiated a higher than normal wage.

⁴¹ ABW to ABB, January 11, 1887, WEFA 198; ABW to EB, January 17, 1887, WEFA 192.

⁴² 1900 United States Federal Census; Year: 1900; Census Place: Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 4; Enumeration District: 0094.

were unhappy with her work, and even then they referred to her by her occupation rather than by name. Despite the importance of the cook's work, from the Weirs' perspective she still operated on the periphery of their lives unless causing a disruption.

Laundress

The 1900 census listed a fourth and final servant living with the Weirs: Alice Hughes, the laundress. Her responsibilities included washing, ironing, and mending clothes for the three girls, two adults, and fellow servants in the household. Laundry at the turn of the century remained physically strenuous work, and yielded wages similar to the cook's and more than a waitress or nurse.⁴³ Historian David Katzman describes how laundresses needed to coordinate “at least four separate washes—white, coarse white, flannels, and colored clothes” with “an appropriate number of tubs and amount of heated water.”⁴⁴ Ironing also required a great deal of manual labor, constantly lifting and replacing hot irons. Hiring a laundress dedicated to the time-consuming work of cleaning clothes allowed for a more expansive wardrobe than working-class families like the Remys across the road at Branchville, who fit laundry duties into an already full weekly routine.

Like the other three domestic servants working for the Weirs in 1900, laundress Alice Hughes immigrated from Ireland.⁴⁵ She was 32 years old and single when she stayed with the Weirs. Earlier census records suggest that she may have been previously employed as a servant by another New York City family at the age of 25.⁴⁶ Many of the Weir's servants likely came to them with previous experience, and given the high rate of turnover in the Weir and other upper-class New York households, they likely moved on to other employers, as well. Sometimes domestic servants followed their friends and families to other households. For example, Mary Theresa Hickey may have been one of the Weir's laundresses for a time, joining her sister Kathleen on the staff or vice versa.⁴⁷

⁴³ Salmon, *Domestic Service*; both the table and appendix shows comparable wages between the cook and laundress.

⁴⁴ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 124–25.

⁴⁵ 1900 United States Federal Census; Year: 1900; Census Place: Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 4; Enumeration District: 0094. The 1900 census lists fewer details about Hughes compared to the other Weir servants.

⁴⁶ 1892 New York State Census, New York State Education Department, Office of Cultural Education, New York State Library, Albany, NY.

⁴⁷ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. The Knoche family's personal collection included a formal portrait photograph of Mary Hanratty, suggesting that the two women may have been acquainted, perhaps even overlapping in their employment for the Weirs. Mary Hanratty. Knoche Family Photograph Collection, HP01370. For another example of connections among servants that extend beyond working for the same employer for a time, see Rosetta Prunty and Mary Collins in Chapter 5. The two servants worked together for the Burlinghams. Years later, Collins served as a witness for Prunty's naturalization.

Space and Work in New York City and Branchville

While working for the Weirs, domestic servants spent most of their days moving through the Weir residences in New York City and Branchville, as well as the Baker family home in Windham, Connecticut.⁴⁸ The Weirs spent most of the winters in their home at 11 E 12th Street in New York, while spending stretches of the summer and early fall in each Connecticut location. Over time, the family spent increasing amounts of time in Branchville.⁴⁹ Servants were generally based out of New York and hired there, but they accompanied the Weirs on their retreats to the countryside, as well. Comparing and contrasting what workers' labor looked like in the different domestic spaces in New York and Branchville will illuminate the contours of their daily lives and show how trips to Weir Farm impacted the staff's routines.

When the Weir family traveled between locations, the servants often arrived before the Weir women to prepare the home. For example, in January 1895 Julian reported from New York City to his wife Ella—still in Branchville—that he supervised the cleaning of the carpet, furnace, and curtains. He also ordered a new chandelier for the hall and ensured that disinfectants were put in the closet. Domestic workers played a key role in preparing the home; Julian remarked that “the three girls are at work and were here all day yesterday.”⁵⁰

Servants also arrived in advance of family stays at Branchville. In 1892, Julian Weir warned Ella Baker that the cook's room and other bedrooms were “simply alive” with some sort of pest that likely arrived in the servants' trunks. He suggested that the bugs spread while the domestics made the beds.⁵¹ In preparing the Branchville home, the workers tasked with cleaning were also identified as the source of unsanitary conditions. Employers often expected servants to maintain the same level of hygiene as them, without using the same facilities. After all, servants usually lived in segregated quarters, with less space than their employers and limited access to bathrooms and running water.⁵²

In New York City, the domestic staff lived on the top floor of the Weir's three-floor row house. The second floor had a family bathroom with a bathtub, toilet, and a wash basin—quite possibly with indoor plumbing—though servants may not have been allowed

⁴⁸ According to Caroline Weir Ely, “Grandmother's Attic,” in *Lest We Forget* (privately printed, 1965), the servants were included as part of the household that traveled to Windham. However, Mary Hanratty's letter to Caroline Weir on March 20, 1910 (WEFA 283, Addendum box 1, Folder 13) mentioned that the family went to Windham without her. Regardless, how the domestic servants navigated the shared family space in Windham falls outside the purview of this study. The New York City apartment and Branchville farm were both run by the Weirs, not their relatives, so all of the domestic servants would travel with them and not join an existing household with their own servants.

⁴⁹ Gardner and McKay, “An Artists' Retreat,” 66, 85.

⁵⁰ JAW to EBW, January 10, 1895, WEFA 192.

⁵¹ JAW to EB, August 4, 1892, WEFA 192.

⁵² Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 108–10; Browning, “Toilers Within the Home,” 93–98.

equal access to the room and its amenities.⁵³ At the very least, the women working for the Weirs kept basins and pitchers in their rooms. Caro Weir Ely remembered that, “the servants [*sic*] rooms were small and, I suppose, cold.”⁵⁴ The main source of heat in the house came from a coal-fired Baltimore heater, also known as a Latrobe Stove, in the basement.⁵⁵ Coal grates in fireplaces also kept rooms warm throughout the house, and possibly in the top floor as well. Given Ely’s comment, however, it is likely that the servants needed to keep warm with the heat that rose from the lower levels.

Similarly, in Branchville, domestic workers probably slept in the attic. The 1900 Platt alterations expanded the top level and added dormers, but the space remained sparsely appointed.⁵⁶ The chimney bypassed the attic, so the servants did not benefit from a fireplace to keep warm.⁵⁷ Some of the workers may have lived on the second floor before the 1900 expansions. Analysis of the building suggests that “the northwest bedroom was divided into two rooms at this time to accommodate nurses for the children and possibly a servant.”⁵⁸ The attic did not include a bathroom, but one with indoor plumbing was added to the second floor in 1900.⁵⁹ Expanding the plumbing system in 1900 involved adding a water tank to the attic—the servants’ quarters—to service the new bathroom, as well as the basement, kitchen, and pantry sinks.⁶⁰ As with the Weir home in New York, the servants may or may not have been allowed to use the family bathroom on the second floor. They may have been relegated to using basins and chamber pots, or perhaps an outhouse on the property.

Whether in New York City or Branchville, domestic workers did not spend much time in their living quarters. They worked 7 days a week and 10 to 12 hours a day, with most days starting before sunrise and continuing well into the evening. Workers may have had one evening off per week in addition to part of the day on Sunday. Many mistresses often frowned upon their servants hosting visitors in the home during on or off hours.⁶¹ In New York City, then, women could use their time off to leave the premises and visit friends or family and participate in other social activities. Many domestics took Thursday evenings

⁵³ Wealthy families had indoor plumbing as early as the 1840s, and by the early 20th century water closets were even required in tenement houses in New York City.

⁵⁴ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969).

⁵⁵ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969).

⁵⁶ The attic was “roughly furnished” around 1888, according to Marie L. Carden and Richard C. Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT [draft], 40.

⁵⁷ Janice Hodson, “Weir House Kitchen Historic Furnishings Report and Implementation Plan,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT, 5.

⁵⁸ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 40.

⁵⁹ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 51, 225.

⁶⁰ Hodson, “Weir House Kitchen Historic Furnishings Report and Implementation Plan,” 5, 51–55.

⁶¹ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 110–14.

off, which became a popular night for dances among the Irish in the city. It is harder to ascertain how servants spent their personal time at Branchville, given their isolation from their New York communities and the practical obstacles to traveling into town or engaging in social activities in Ridgefield or Wilton. In New York and perhaps even more so in Branchville, household staff had little space and time to themselves.

In addition to Thursday breaks, Irish women often attended Catholic mass on Sunday mornings, if possible.⁶² Julian Weir's grandson, Charles Burlingham Jr., conveyed the following image of Sundays in the Weir household:

My grandfather was of Scottish ancestry, and I'm sure back [then they were] some stern Presbyterian stock, and they'd have Sunday prayers, every one down on your knees in the living room, including the cook, poor lady—who was probably Irish and not Protestant at all—but they'd come in the living room, and he would read a short service, and they would say prayers together, and then everybody'd have to get dressed up in a bib and tucker, and they'd go off to church, there was to be no card-playing, and no novel-reading, and no nothing on Sunday... He didn't work himself on Sunday, it was a Sabbath.⁶³

Burlingham suggested that the Catholic servants were expected to participate in Protestant prayers, but were most likely exempt from the demand to rest. They may or may not have been able to participate in their own religious services while the Weirs attended church, but their labor throughout the rest of the day certainly enabled the Weirs to respect the Sabbath.

On a typical workday, domestic workers hired by the Weirs woke up before dawn in their small, cold quarters and used the back stairs to access the rest of the house. The New York home and—before alterations in 1900—the Branchville residence had separate staircases for the help, further hiding their movement and labor from the Weirs.⁶⁴ The nurse would go to the nursery, located on the second floor in both the New York and Branchville residences. Before 1900, the nurse may have slept in the room next door to the nursery in Branchville, perhaps due to limited space or maybe to be more responsive to the needs of the youngest Weir children.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, the cook would wake up and descend to the kitchen to have breakfast prepared by 7:30 a.m.⁶⁶ In New York, the kitchen was located in the basement and, according to Caro Weir Ely, contained a “large iron stove,” “two big ovens,” a hot water heater, “an enormous metal sink” with “a wooden drainboard beside it,” and an “oak table and

⁶² Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*, 126–42; Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 114–15; see also Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*.

⁶³ Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁶⁴ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 26, 40, 50; Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969).

⁶⁵ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 40.

⁶⁶ Dorothy Weir Young, *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir* (Yale University Press, 1960), 169.

chairs.”⁶⁷ In Branchville, the kitchen sat on the first floor and by 1900 housed a large, black cookstove with “eight big burners and a huge warming oven” that could run on either coal or firewood.⁶⁸ The cook likely started her day with the complex job of lighting the stove. First, she prepared the stove by closing the draughts, removing the top of the range and brushing off the ashes into the grate, and then replacing the covers and dumping the grate. Then, after the ashes settled, she would remove the covers again, add kindling to the bottom of the grate, open the draughts, light the kindling, and replace the covers. Once the wood started burning, she would periodically add additional firewood or coal until the fire steadily burned before closing the draughts again.⁶⁹

The fire in the stove needed to be tended all day, not dwindling too low or becoming too hot. Plus, the cook needed to strategically manage heat levels for different uses. For example, heating large amounts of water for bathing, cleaning, and washing demanded a hotter stove than cooking required.⁷⁰ Different recipes certainly required different heat levels, as well. If relying strictly on coal with no firewood, the stove would need to be kept hot overnight and immediately addressed in the morning. The appliance likely kept the kitchen warm in the winter, and uncomfortably hot in the summer months when the Weir family spent the most time at Branchville. The cook worked around the stove throughout her workday, retrieving food from the cellar and ice box, preparing meals, and keeping the kitchen and its utensils clean from use and from the ashy residue that coal and fire stoves produced.⁷¹ By 1900, the cook could use indoor running water for cooking and cleaning; before then, she may have used a hand pump or perhaps needed to retrieve water from the well.⁷²

After the cook prepared the food, the waitress delivered it to the Weir family. In New York City, the waitress transported the meals herself or used the building’s dumb-waiter to bring food to the studio for breakfast and to the dining room for other meals. Waitresses also attended to daily tea in the parlor and cocktails in the same space on special

⁶⁷ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (privately printed, 1969).

⁶⁸ Hodson, “Weir House Kitchen Historic Furnishings Report and Implementation Plan,” 6.

⁶⁹ Description of lighting stove summarizes quote from Carlotta Norton Smith, *The Homemaker: Her Science* (New York, 1905), in Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 128.

⁷⁰ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 124. Even a hot water heater like in the New York City kitchen only held small amounts of water.

⁷¹ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 124–28.

⁷² Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex”; Hodson, “Weir House Kitchen Historic Furnishings Report and Implementation Plan.”

occasions.⁷³ At Branchville, a butler’s pantry sat between the dining room and kitchen where the waitress could prepare and clean dishware. When the Weirs hosted larger parties, the caretaker’s wife may have assisted the waitress with her duties.⁷⁴

Aside from attending to the Weir family’s meals, servants were tasked with keeping the homes in New York and Branchville clean and warm. The waitress or general housemaid likely took the lead on these jobs. In New York City, the maid brought coals to individual rooms and kept the fires warm. Caro Weir Ely fondly recalled that “in cold weather there was always a coal fire burning in the grate” in the nursery.⁷⁵ Notably, she remembered the cozy warmth but not the labor of the domestic servant responsible for keeping the rooms heated. The Branchville residence likely relied more heavily on firewood, which was more readily available on the country property. Most rooms there had fireplaces or stoves that needed to be maintained on cold days and nights.⁷⁶ Maids balanced daily tasks like maintaining fireplaces, cleaning and lighting kerosene lamps, serving meals, and making beds with weekly housekeeping chores like sweeping, scrubbing, and dusting (see Figure 20).

Finally, while little information sheds light on what laundry looked like at the Weir’s New York residence, in Branchville the laundress would spend her day in the basement and outside.⁷⁷ Two laundry tubs were installed in the basement in 1900 and connected to the new plumbing system.⁷⁸ After handwashing and wringing loads of laundry there, workers would dry garments and linens on a clothesline outside. They would then return inside for the laborious task of ironing.

In his painting, *The Laundry, Branchville*, Julian Weir depicted a clothesline strung between trees and draped with mostly white fabric (see Figure 21). In this rare instance, the work of domestic servants visibly extended beyond the home and into the outdoor landscape that so often served as the subject of Weir’s paintings. Most of the servants’ work took place on the margins of his life, or in spaces that he did not frequently visit, such as the basement, kitchen, and nursery. The seeming distance between Weir and those who worked

⁷³ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (privately printed, 1969). The studio in the Weirs’ New York residence was not strictly reserved for painting, especially while the Weir children were growing up. Caro writes in *11 East 12th Street* that “there was a round eight-legged table...in the studio (used for breakfasts)” and Dorothy Weir Young later recalled that “by my childhood in the nineties the studio, although it still kept its name, had long since ceased to serve as such. Instead, it was used as a gathering place through the daylight hours, beginning when breakfast was served there at 7:30.” Dorothy Weir Young, *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960), 169.

⁷⁴ Hodson, “Weir House Kitchen Historic Furnishings Report and Implementation Plan,” 8. See Chapter 5 for examples of Betty Bass, the caretaker’s daughter, assisting Mollie Gleason with serving meals. However, this might also be the result of fewer live-in servants during the Young years.

⁷⁵ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969).

⁷⁶ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 82.

⁷⁷ Though they could have hired out laundry in New York City, the fact that they had a live-in Irish laundress in Branchville suggests that she lived with them in the city, too. Caro did not mention laundry in her reminiscences at all.

⁷⁸ Carden and Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” 50.

in his household reflected the passive—though not altogether absent—role that many men of his status played in domestic affairs compared to their wives.⁷⁹ Class and gender defined who inhabited and worked in which spaces on Weir Farm, often creating segregated worlds on the same property. Even in his impression of the laundry at Branchville, Weir did not include the women responsible for hanging the garments and linens.

Change and Continuity in the 1900s–1920s

The Weir family did not continue to maintain a four-person staff into the 20th century. As the Weir daughters grew into young ladies, they no longer required a nurse. Additionally, like many middle- and upper-class families in the early 20th century, the Weirs likely started sending laundry to commercial establishments outside of the home.⁸⁰ Their decreased staffing needs coincided with some financial stress starting in 1908 and again during World War I. They also rented out their home in Greenwich Village and moved to a cooperative apartment in the fashionable Upper East Side neighborhood.⁸¹ After Julian Weir passed away in 1919, Dorothy and Ella Weir continued to live together in apartments on the Upper East Side until Ella's death in 1930. During this time from at least the 1900s through the 1920s, the Weir family employed Mary Hanratty as a maid-of-all work and, when possible, brought on an additional servant as a cook.⁸² Among all of the domestic laborers that the Weirs hired, Mary Hanratty worked for them the longest and often appeared in their writing by name. For example, in 1907 Ella Weir wrote in her diary that “Dorothy and Cora, Mary and the cook started for Branchville at 12:03.”⁸³ The simple entry demonstrates how Hanratty became a visible member of the household due to her uniquely long tenure, whereas “the cook” remained defined by her labor.

Despite the lack of personal information about the cook in the Weir family papers, genealogical records reveal a glimpse into the lives of two of the cooks hired to serve Ella and Dorothy Weir in 1920 and 1930, respectively. For example, Mary Lavelle was born in Ballycastle, Ireland, in 1883 and immigrated to the United States around the age of 27. Ten

⁷⁹ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 215, notes that “in most accounts of domestic service written by servants, the male figures were generally distant, shadowy figures.” Certainly, the intimate dynamics of household labor sometimes meant that servants risked sexual harassment and assault in addition to the physical and emotional challenges of long hours, manual labor, and demanding employers.

⁸⁰ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 52. This would certainly prove to be the case for DWY; see Chapter 5.

⁸¹ Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 110, 130.

⁸² Census records from 1920 and 1930 list Hanratty and a second servant; In *Seven Days a Week*, Katzman notes that when families hired two servants, one was usually the maid of all work and the second was a cook. 1920 United States Census, Redding, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_178; Page: 1B; Enumeration District: 496; 1930 United States Census, Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 0225; FHL microfilm: 2339995.

⁸³ Ella Baker Weir Diary, WEFA 2518, Box 45, Folder 41.

years later, in 1920, she was working in the Weir household as a cook. Like many Irish women, she remained single and worked as a domestic worker for most of her adult life. By the time she sought naturalization in 1941 at the age of 57, she still worked as a servant for a family on Park Avenue in New York's Upper East Side.⁸⁴

Another cook, Julia Glover, left behind the clearest trail in the historical record compared to the rest of the Weirs' domestic workers. Glover was born in June 1894 in County Cork, Ireland, the first daughter and second of at least four children born to John and Mary Glover.⁸⁵ She attended school as a child and learned how to read and write.⁸⁶ Many Irish women who eventually became domestic workers in the United States were similarly literate.⁸⁷ When Glover sailed to America in 1921 at the age of 26, she listed her friend, Nelly Murphy, as her primary contact in the city.⁸⁸ Irish women who immigrated were frequently inspired or encouraged by correspondence with friends and family state-side who could help them settle upon arrival.⁸⁹ By 1929 she was working as a housemaid in the Upper East Side and, a year later, as a cook for Ella and Dorothy Weir.⁹⁰ Naturalization records then show Glover working for another Upper East Side family on Fifth Avenue in 1931, but entries in Dorothy Weir Young's checkbooks from the early 1930s suggest that Glover may have returned again to her staff in some capacity.⁹¹ Glover worked for at least three different Upper East Side families over the course of three years, reflecting both the

⁸⁴ Mary Elizabeth Lavelle Naturalization Records. National Archives at New York City, New York, New York.

⁸⁵ The youngest sibling was six months old in 1901 census; they could have had more children after that. Census of Ireland 1901/1911, The National Archives of Ireland, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search>, accessed May 31, 2013.

⁸⁶ Census of Ireland 1901/1911, The National Archives of Ireland, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search>, accessed May 31, 2013.

⁸⁷ Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*.

⁸⁸ Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820–1897. Microfilm Publication M237, 675 rolls. NAI: 6256867. Records of the US Customs Service, Record Group 36. National Archives at Washington, DC.

⁸⁹ Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*.

⁹⁰ National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, DC; NAI Title: *Index to Petitions for Naturalizations Filed in Federal, State, and Local Courts in New York City, 1792–1906*; NAI Number: 5700802; Record Group Title: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009; Record Group Number: RG 21; 1930 United States Census, Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 0225; FHL microfilm: 2339995.

⁹¹ The National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, DC; Petitions for Naturalization from the US District Court for the Southern District of New York, 1897–1944; Series: M1972; Roll: 767; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. Though Glover did not receive checks made to her, she did receive a Christmas gift in December 1933, suggesting she still worked for them and possibly received cash wages. A notation for \$150 wages in February 1932 lists "Mary and J," which could reference Mary Hanratty and Julia Glover. Glover is not mentioned again after that.

high turnover and high demand for domestic servants in one of New York’s wealthier neighborhoods. Plus, her return to the Weir household suggests that a servant’s departure did not preclude future employment with the family.⁹²

In 1931, Julia Glover became a United States citizen, with her two younger brothers serving as witnesses.⁹³ Like many Irish immigrants, multiple members of her family moved their lives overseas and stayed connected after their arrival. Notably, Glover did not list her older brother as a witness; he likely stayed behind in Ireland and inherited the family property. Glover and her younger brothers could support their family still in Ireland with wages from their working-class jobs in New York City.⁹⁴ Her path to citizenship as a single 37-year-old woman indicates a permanent embrace of the life she built in New York, one shaped by both her labor and her familial connections.

In contrast to the many servants that spent a short time with the Weirs, Mary Hanratty lived and worked in the Weir household for decades.⁹⁵ However, her life remains particularly challenging to trace through the historical record. Hanratty appeared as part of the Weir household in three censuses—1915, 1920, and 1930—and each time with different birth and immigration dates. (She was listed as 62 years old in both 1920 and 1930!) She was likely born between 1867 and 1872 and immigrated to the United States as a young woman between 1888 and 1893.⁹⁶ A Mary Hanratty with a comparable birth date arrived in Boston in 1888 with plans to work in the booming textile industry in Fall River, Massachusetts.⁹⁷ The Mary Hanratty that ended up with the Weirs may or may not have spent time spinning textiles, but she did ultimately make her way to New York City and found work as a domestic worker.

⁹² The way that Mary Hanratty disappears and reappears in the historical record as a servant for the Weirs also seems to confirm that domestic servants occasionally left and returned to the same household.

⁹³ The National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, DC; Petitions for Naturalization from the US District Court for the Southern District of New York, 1897–1944; Series: M1972; Roll: 767. The witness names are the same as the younger brothers listed in the 1901 Irish census. Census of Ireland 1901/1911, The National Archives of Ireland, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search>, accessed May 31, 2013.

⁹⁴ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*; Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*.

⁹⁵ Caro asserted that she worked for the family for nearly 40 years. Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (privately printed, 1969). Calculations based on the historic record suggests Hanratty worked for the Weirs for 28 years at least.

⁹⁶ The 1915 and 1930 censuses align the closest, listing Hanratty’s age as 44 and 62, respectively. The 1920 census lists—probably inaccurately—Hanratty as 62 years old, which unrealistically places her birthdate around the year 1858. The 1920 census also contradicts Caro’s narrative in *11 East 12th Street* that Hanratty joined the Weirs at 18 years old and worked for 40 or so years before retirement. If she retired in 1934, she may have started working for the Weirs around 1894. If she was 18 in 1894, she would have been born around 1876. Gardner and McKay in “An Artists’ Retreat,” referencing only the 1930 census, suggests that Hanratty arrived at the Weirs in the 1880s, which does not fit with available immigration data.

⁹⁷ The National Archives at Washington, DC; Washington, DC; Series Title: Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Boston, Massachusetts, 1820–1891, Record Group Title: Records of the US Customs Service, Record Group Number: 36, Series Number: M277, NARA Roll Number: 107.

In her reminiscences, Caro Weir Ely claimed that Hanratty started with the Weir family at the age of 18 and stayed for at least 40 years.⁹⁸ That would mean Hanratty worked for the Weirs beginning in the late 19th century, but the 1900 census does not list her as a member of the Weir household.⁹⁹ Further evidence suggests that she worked as a domestic laborer for another Manhattan family in 1900 before joining the Weirs.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, Weir family records do not mention Hanratty by name until 1907. Mary Theresa Hickey and Hanratty may have been acquainted, perhaps even overlapping in their employment for the Weirs sometime before Hickey married Joseph Knoche in 1905.¹⁰¹ Though her start date remains unclear, Hanratty likely had prior work experience before spending the majority of her working years with the Weir family.

Once Hanratty joined the Weirs, her work initially included and exceeded the traditional nurse duties of taking care of young children. Caro Weir Ely fondly remembered Mary Hanratty as “our nurse and general manager” who worked alongside a cook, waitress, and laundress.¹⁰² Ely elaborated that Hanratty would answer the door “in her starched white cap and apron,” a common uniform for domestic help.¹⁰³ As the Weir sisters grew older, Hanratty stayed on in a role that looked more like a maid-of-all-work, performing all household duties short of cooking and laundry. Hanratty likely saw many servants pass through the Weir home and was familiar with other long-term employees like Paul Remy. A Weir family photograph shows Hanratty participating in a honey harvest with Remy (see Figure 12).

In reminiscing about her childhood, Caro Weir Ely recalled that Hanratty “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.”¹⁰⁴ Hanratty devoted her working life to the people and pets in the Weir family, which included chaperoning the sisters on their social outings. Family photographs show Hanratty outdoors accompanying the Weir daughters and their friends as well as in domestic settings (see Figures 22–24).

⁹⁸ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969).

⁹⁹ EB also mentioned a nurse named Elizabeth in correspondence to JAW, September 23, 1892, WEFA 190.

¹⁰⁰ 1900 census lists Mary Henretty, born 1869 and arrived in 1888, working for the Bellard Family. 1900 United States Federal Census; Year: 1900; Census Place: Borough of Manhattan, New York, New York; Page: 4; Enumeration District: 0568; Microfilm: 1241106.

¹⁰¹ The Knoche family’s personal collection includes a formal portrait photograph of Mary Hanratty, suggesting that the two women may have been acquainted. See Mary Hanratty, Knoche Family Photograph Collection, HP01370.

¹⁰² Caroline Weir Ely, “Grandmother’s Attic,” in *Lest We Forget* (Privately printed, 1965).

¹⁰³ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969); Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*.

¹⁰⁴ Caroline Weir Ely, *11 East 12th Street* (Privately printed, 1969).

Hanratty displayed sincere affection for the girls in a rare surviving letter that she wrote to Caro Weir in 1910.¹⁰⁵ Caro was on a trip to Japan and had regularly sent postcards back to her former nurse and now “general manager.” Hanratty responded from New York, sharing that the Weirs were in Windham and “it has been very lonesome all week.” She updated Caro on Dorothy’s winter as a debutante, sharing details about boys and commenting on the social events that Dorothy and Cora attended. She also reported on a number of house fires in the neighborhood. She concluded: “Hoping you are very well and thanking you again for your very kind thoughts of sending me all the lovely cards. With a great deal of love and wishing you a very Happy Easter I remain very respectfully, Mary Hanratty.”

The letter evidenced a close relationship between the long-term caregiver and the girl she helped raise during her formative years. Domestic workers historically navigated the tensions between familial fondness and the economic realities that demarcated the boundaries of their relationships with their employers’ children. Hanratty played a significant emotional and practical role in the Weir family for many years, yet she always retained an inferior social position as a domestic employee. At the same time, she existed as a more fleshed-out individual in the Weirs’ eyes than the many short-term workers that passed through the household. In her later years, Hanratty even appears with her gray hair and white uniform in Dorothy Weir Young’s paintings, *Woman in Windsor Chair Sewing* and *Ladies at Dinner* (see Figures 25 and 26).

The close emotional relationship between Hanratty and the Weirs contributed to her staying in the household past the death of Julian Weir in 1919 and Ella Weir in 1930. Hanratty continued to receive wages of \$32.50 per month through the middle of 1936.¹⁰⁶ By the 1930s, domestic service looked much different than it had at the turn of the century when she started with the Weirs. The Irish maid became a less common feature in middle- and upper-class household due to a decrease in Irish immigration, the aging out of single Irish domestics like Hanratty, and a second generation of Irish women in the United States demonstrating little interest in domestic work.¹⁰⁷ Many Black women who moved north as part of the Great Migration responded to the demand for domestic labor but opted for live-out service or day work rather than living and working in their employers’ homes.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Mary Hanratty to CAW, March 20, 1910, WEFA 283, Addendum box 1, Folder 13.

¹⁰⁶ According to Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592, Hanratty received consistent wages of \$32.50 from March 1934 through July 1936. Toward the end of her time with the Weirs, some of Hanratty’s checks were addressed to Katie Noonan, and by the end of 1936 the checks to Noonan no longer referenced Hanratty. It remains unclear if Hanratty asked DWY to send her wages sent to a friend or family member—a common practice—or if Noonan replaced Hanratty.

¹⁰⁷ Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America*; Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*.

¹⁰⁸ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*.

Hanratty represented a holdover from a different era, and people who knew Dorothy Weir Young in the 1930s even noted the persistence of an Irish maid in the household as an extension from a previous time period.¹⁰⁹

Although Hanratty stayed with the Weir family for a long time, she was still ultimately an employee and left the household after she retired. Just as little concrete information exists about Hanratty's life before the Weirs, her life in retirement is also obscured in the historical record. At least three different single women named Mary Hanratty died in New York in the years following her departure. Hanratty may have passed away as early as December 1936 or she may have lived until 1945 or 1954. Existing records provide some useful information on the life of the Mary Hanratty who passed away in 1936. Even if they do not reference the beloved Weir family maid, the sources still offer a sense of what a single Irish woman's retirement looked like in New York City.

When she passed away in 1936, Mary Hanratty lived in an immigrant neighborhood in the southern part of the Bronx. She left behind an estate of around \$6,000, some of which went to her neighbors, John and Mary O'Connor, who also served as the executors of her estate.¹¹⁰ Hanratty also bequeathed money to her brother who also lived in the Bronx, several family members who settled in Australia, and some family who still resided in Ireland. She also donated money to the Chinese Mission Society of St. Columban, a Catholic missionary organization founded by Irish priests. The distribution of her estate reveals a transnational network of friends and family, from the local Irish American community in New York City, to family still living in her home country, to fellow emigrants who settled on the other side of the globe.

Although a majority of Mary Hanratty's career revolved around caring for the Weir children and adults, that relationship was not reciprocated in her retirement. At the end of her life, she remained an Irish, Catholic, working-class woman, and likely continued to engage with her communities after her time with the Weir family. Her identity exceeded her occupation, even as her domestic service greatly shaped the lives of the women she worked for and raised. Like the many other servants employed by the Weirs—whether known to the historical record or not—Hanratty's life mattered both because of and beyond her domestic labor.

¹⁰⁹ Mahonri Sharp Young, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions: "First they were inherited servants that Dorothy had from—that Mrs. Weir had had...they may well have gone back to Mr. Weir—of Irish maids and then they went back off."

¹¹⁰ Wills for Probate, *New York Times*, March 11, 1937.

CHAPTER FOUR

A New Era and the Bass Family, 1929–1944

Weir Farm entered a new era in 1931 when Julian Weir's daughter, Dorothy, married Mahonri Young and the two spent increasingly larger portions of their year at Branchville until moving there full-time during World War II.¹ During the same time period, Dorothy's sister Cora Weir Burlingham spent most weekends and several summer weeks on the Webb portion of the property with her husband and two children. Many turn-of-the-century agricultural and domestic labor practices persisted on the Weir family farm through the 1930s and 1940s, and class and gender boundaries continued to shape how people interacted and moved through space. However, Dorothy Weir Young's management of the main farm site as well as the changing labor market during the Great Depression and World War II also altered labor dynamics at Branchville. Most notably, the Youngs and Burlinghams frequently hired workers from a handful of interconnected local families. Whereas laborers in the previous era under Julian Weir tended to live more transient lives and work in segregated spaces, local families hired by Dorothy and Cora had members who farmed the land, some who did domestic work for the proprietors, and others who completed substantial construction projects on the estate. With some important exceptions, workers in the 1930s and 1940s tended to have family roots and social networks in nearby towns that existed before, during, and after their employment on the Weir family property.

Shifting immigration and labor patterns in the United States set the stage for hiring changes at Branchville. The waves of immigration from western Europe that brought German farmers and Irish maids to Weir Farm began to decrease near the end of the 19th century and were replaced by an influx of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. For example, an Italian immigrant community flourished in the town of Ridgefield, Connecticut, in the early 20th century.² Then, in the early 1920s, the United States passed nativist legislation that aggressively restricted immigration into the country, especially from

¹ Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, "An Artists' Retreat: J. Alden Weir's Farm in Connecticut," Weir Farm National Historic Site Historic Resource Study, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2009, 195.

² Aldo P. Biagiotti, *Impact: The Historical Account of the Italian Immigrants of Ridgefield, Connecticut*, (Ridgefield, CT: Romald, 1990); Ridgefield Archives Committee, *Ridgefield*, Illustrated edition (Portsmouth, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 2004).

Asia and Southern and Eastern Europe. Second- and third-generation white ethnics increasingly constituted the working class in places like New York and Connecticut, along with Black Americans who moved North as part of the Great Migration. The wage economy driven by industrial capitalism took a catastrophic turn during the Great Depression and resulted in high rates of unemployment. Fewer wealthy families had the income to hire a large domestic staff or manage multiple estates. With the exception of some domestic servants, most workers hired by the Youngs or Burlinghams were not recent immigrants, but already lived in Connecticut and would continue to live in the region after their time working for Julian Weir's daughters.

The Besses, for example, came from Windham, Connecticut, to live and work on the Weir family estate from 1929 to 1944 (see Figure 27). Dorothy Weir Young hired George Bass as the caretaker for the main farm, and his sons worked alongside him and also as caretakers for the Burlinghams. Meanwhile, his wife Bessie Bass raised their nine children and performed domestic labor and their only daughter occasionally worked as a waitress for the Youngs. This chapter will begin by considering how Young's management shaped working conditions for the Besses and other workers in the 1930s and 1940s. It will then examine the Besses' agricultural labor, evaluating how farming on the site had changed or not since the Paul Remy and Julian Weir years. Drawing on rich oral histories with members of the Bass family, the chapter will look at other forms of labor and sources of income for the family, from raising animals and taking on side jobs to working for the Burlinghams or waitressing for the Youngs.³ Like Johanna Remy, Bessie Bass performed crucial, unpaid domestic labor as she kept her large family fed and clothed. After highlighting Bessie Bass's labor, the chapter will go on to explore the Besses' relationship with their employers, as well as the family's living conditions and leisure activities. Finally, the chapter will conclude by assessing the changes brought by World War II that ultimately led the Bass family to depart Branchville for their own farm in Danbury, Connecticut.

Dorothy Weir Young as Property Manager

Just as Julian Weir's position as a white male settler property owner set the conditions under which workers on his farm labored, so too did Dorothy Weir Young's management shape the experience of laborers on the property in the 1930s and 1940s. Dorothy and her sisters, Caro and Cora, traded shares so that when their stepmother Ella passed away at the end of 1930, Dorothy inherited the entirety of the Branchville estate.⁴ She embraced the role of

³ Weir Farm Historic Site staff and volunteers interviewed Betty, Russell, Charles, Orin, and Kenneth Bass, as well as Mervin's wife, Mary Bruschi Bass Ciuccoli.

⁴ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 221. The fact that DW married later in life may have influenced her interest in managing the Branchville estate; her sisters had other estates to manage through their marriages.

caretaker of both her father’s legacy and his property. Observers noted that Dorothy, not her husband Mahonri Young, oversaw the finances for the property and managed workers.⁵ Mahonri was a sculptor, widower, and father of two grown children. Though not a practicing Mormon, he was a grandson of Brigham Young and received numerous commissions from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He made a living through his art, but did not bring a significant fortune to his marriage compared to his second wife.⁶ Even during the Great Depression, Dorothy Weir Young received reliable income from her investments, having inherited substantial wealth not only through the Baker-Weirs, but also from her aunt Cora Baker Davis Rutherford Laighton, who passed away in 1929.⁷ Young kept organized financial records documenting employee wages, property improvements and repairs, and other expenses associated with the Branchville estate.

Like her father, Dorothy Weir Young operated at the intersection of multiple identities. As a settler and descendent of settlers living on Indigenous land, she inherited land, wealth, and assumptions about the imperatives of property ownership. She also came of age during the Progressive Era as an upper-class white woman in New York City. She attended the prestigious Brearley School for Girls, visited Europe numerous times, and participated in various homefront efforts during WWI. Through the 1910s and 1920s she remained single with a rich social life and pursued training as an artist.⁸ She was well-read, regularly contributed to charities, and maintained social connections across the city’s upper-class society.⁹ As a young woman, Dorothy Weir joined a generation of women who, bolstered by generational wealth and racial privilege, pushed beyond separate sphere ideology to live dynamic independent lives in the public sphere.

Beginning in the 1920s and for the rest of her adult life, Dorothy Weir Young took a leading role in preserving and managing her father’s artwork and legacy. Although she exhibited her own art in the 1920s and 1930s, she also spent significant time assisting with publications and exhibitions related to her father’s work. She corresponded regularly with galleries to coordinate loans and sales of Weir paintings. She also organized and transcribed her father’s letters, a project that mushroomed into her writing a biography of her father, entitled *The Life & Letters of J. Alden Weir*. She continued to work on the project

⁵ Mahonri Sharp Young, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁶ DW met MMY through mutual artistic circles several times in the 1920s before marrying him in 1931. Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 155–61.

⁷ Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 159.

⁸ Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 141–52.

⁹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 141–52.

until her death in 1947.¹⁰ The task of preserving and chronicling family history was not uncommon among affluent white women in the United States, and Young's ownership and management of the Branchville estate clearly fell within her broader effort to commemorate her father's memory.¹¹ Aside from a few small construction projects and modern upgrades, Young did not radically renovate the property. She hired a caretaker to farm the land and husband a handful of animals, on a slightly smaller scale and with similar implements compared to the Remy operation at the turn-of-the-century. Like her father, she treated the site as a rural retreat and regularly hosted friends and family there. Unlike her father, however, Dorothy Weir Young did not fit the model of a gentleman farmer who dabbled in agriculture. She also did not seek to cultivate a romantic landscape to inspire her own art; rather, she stewarded the land as a valued part of her family inheritance.

Young's maternalist approach to managing employees further contrasted from her father. She seemed to embrace a perceived responsibility as an upper-class white woman to care and provide for hired workers beyond strictly wages.¹² Young routinely gave holiday bonuses, covered her employees' medical expenses, and followed her stepmother's example of purchasing gifts for workers.¹³ Whereas Willie and Carl Remy helped their father farm Weir's land with no evidence of extra pay, Dorothy Weir Young paid the Bass children for full-time, part-time, and temporary labor. During the financially challenging times of the Great Depression, Young frequently hired members of local families in such a way that not only responded to changing labor patterns, but may have also reflected a sense of obligation to help financially support her working-class neighbors. Such an approach would have aligned with her documented activities and sensibilities as a wealthy white woman who came of age in Progressive era New York City.

While providing more material support to her employees, Dorothy's maternalism also reinforced class boundaries. Charles Burlingham Jr. recalled that his aunt Dorothy and her sister Cora always called George Bass by his last name, "in sort of a noblesse

¹⁰ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 152, 187.

¹¹ See Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993). Ridgefield Archives Committee, *Ridgefield*, 81 highlights another Ridgefield woman with a story similar to Young: "Miss Mary L.B. Olcott was the mistress of Casagmo [an estate in Ridgefield] after the death of her father. . . . An ardent feminist, she was active in the woman's suffrage movement, and in her later years devoted herself to genealogy, gardening, and the breeding of prize poodles, game birds, and swans at Casagmo."

¹² Beginning in the late 19th century, middle- and upper-class women emphasized their feminine respectability and maternal morality as a guiding framework and justification for increased civic activities. This maternalism continued to inform women's volunteerism and activism into the Progressive Era through clubs like the New York Junior League, of which DW was a long-term member. Molly Ladd-Taylor defines maternalism in part as "a uniquely feminine value system based on care and nurturance," which characterizes DWY's approach to employee management at Weir Farm. See Molly Ladd-Taylor, "Toward Defining Maternalism in U.S. History," *Journal of Women's History* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 110–13.

¹³ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

oblige way.”¹⁴ In oral histories, members of the Bass family commonly referred to the Weir-Young residence on the property as, “the big house,” which loomed large in a physical sense in addition to housing their wealthy employer.¹⁵ While Dorothy Weir Young maintained her class status in opposition to those she paid, her records do not communicate the same level of perceived ethnic and racial superiority that appeared more commonly in Julian Weir’s correspondence. However, Young left behind less voluminous correspondence and also hired far fewer recent immigrants due to changing population patterns. Altogether, her class-based maternalism combined with her propensity to preserve the general form and function of the Branchville property defined the conditions under which the Bass family worked as caretakers from 1929 to 1944.

The Bass Family as Caretakers

The Basses that served as long-term caretakers for Dorothy Weir Young were a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant farming family with roots in eastern Connecticut and Rhode Island. George Bass was born on February 6, 1890, to English immigrants Edward Bass and Mary Ally Holt Bass, who farmed their own land in Windham, Connecticut.¹⁶ George grew up farming alongside his older sister, Mary, who ultimately inherited the property when their father passed away in 1910 after falling off a ladder.¹⁷ The following year, George Bass married Bessie Mabel Cooper of nearby Chaplin, Connecticut. She was born on July 4, 1892 in Newport, Rhode Island, to Bessie (Betsey) Matthewson Cooper and George Cooper, both of whom were born in New England. Her father painted houses and died

¹⁴ Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁵ “The big house” was also a term used on Southern United States plantations and on estates in Ireland owned by the Anglo-Irish class.

¹⁶ 1920 United States Census, Census Place: Windham, Windham, Connecticut; Roll: T625_198; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 351; 1930 United States Census, Census Place: Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 0225; Bessie Bass Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, November 4, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Charlie Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 1, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Darla Shaw, “Life on Weir Farm as Told by the Sons and Daughter of George and Bessie Bass,” March 2020. In collaboration with the Bass family, Dr. Darla Shaw put together an informal but thorough family history of the Basses in her capacity as volunteer for the Weir Farm National Historical Park. Although a valuable secondary source, the manuscript does not include direct citations of primary sources. While covering similar stories that Shaw describes, this chapter prioritizes and cites primary source evidence, including transcripts from oral histories conducted through Weir Farm National Park, genealogical records, and Dorothy Weir Young’s checkbooks. Where Shaw’s manuscript provides relevant information beyond existing primary sources, that will be noted in the footnote.

¹⁷ 1910 United States Census, Census Place: Windham, Windham, Connecticut; Roll: T624_144; Page: 13B; Enumeration District: 0590; Charlie Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 1, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Shaw, 2020.

shortly after she was born—also from falling off a ladder.¹⁸ Bessie Mabel Cooper moved to Chaplin, Connecticut, around 1903, when her mother married a Frank B. Hall, a day laborer who submitted an advertisement seeking a wife.¹⁹ Bessie married George Bass at a Methodist parsonage on March 22, 1911, and, according to the announcement in the *Hartford Courant*, the couple planned to “make their home at Windham, where Mr. Bass, conducts a large farm.”²⁰ Bass continued to work as a hired farmer for landowners like Alfred Abbe and Frank Barber in the Windham area through the 1910s and 1920s. By 1929, their household included six children: Mervin (16), George Albert (14), Edward (11), Bessie, who preferred to be called Betty (8), Russell (6), Orin (3), and Charles (3) (see Figures 28–31).²¹ Bessie’s widowed mother, Betsey Hall, also lived with the family.²²

Dorothy Weir likely connected with the Besses through networks in Windham, where the Baker family estate resided. Oral histories with members of the Bass family assert that Weir persuaded George Bass to come work for her.²³ Russell Bass remembered the family’s move to Branchville, “all crammed into a car or truck” with their belongings, “him sitting with a pig at his feet.”²⁴ By all accounts, George and Bessie Bass were hard workers. George’s children remember him working from dawn until dusk, often with them working beside him.²⁵ Charles Burlingham Jr., who spent his childhood weekends and summers across the street, remembered George Bass as a “a formidable, bandy-legged, old tough,

¹⁸ Charlie Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 1, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Shaw, 2020.

¹⁹ 1910 United States Census, Census Place: Chaplin, Windham, Connecticut; Roll: T624_143; Page: 4B; Enumeration District: 0571; Charlie Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 1, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Shaw, 2020.

²⁰ *Hartford Courant*, March 23, 1911, 19.

²¹ 1920 United States Census, Census Place: Windham, Windham, Connecticut; Roll: T625_198; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 351; 1930 United States Census, Census Place: Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 0225; Shaw, 2020. The Bass family includes three generation of women named Bessie, and two generation of men named George. To distinguish between them, this chapter will refer to the youngest Bessie as Betty (which she preferred), her mother (George Bass’s wife) as Bessie or Bessie Mabel, and the eldest Bessie as Betsey (in accordance with several census records). George and Bessie Bass’s son will be referred to as George Albert.

²² 1920 United States Census, Census Place: Windham, Windham, Connecticut; Roll: T625_198; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 351; 1930 United States Census, Census Place: Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 0225.

²³ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, October 23, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Bessie Bass Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, November 4, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

²⁴ Bass family members interview notes, interview by Maria Abonnel, May 31, 2006, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

²⁵ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 10, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, October 23, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Shaw, 2020.

elderly gent.”²⁶ Meanwhile, Bessie Bass cooked, cleaned, and managed a household that expanded to include two more children born at Branchville: Clifford and Kenneth (see Figure 32).

Through the 1930s, Dorothy Weir Young paid George Bass a competitive 85 dollars per month to run the farm; the average monthly agricultural worker in Connecticut earned 50 dollars in January 1940.²⁷ In his final three years at Branchville in the early 1940s, his pay increased to 95 dollars per month.²⁸ During that time, farm wages across the country increased due to worker shortages during World War II.²⁹ Orin Bass believed that his father “did not get half of what he was supposed to get,” because he would only use one week of his four weeks’ vacation each year and refused to take money for anything sold off the property. Orin recalled that the contract between George Bass and Dorothy Weir Young stated that George should have received half of any sales from farm, but he “was a proud Yankee” who “wouldn’t take something for nothing.” According to Orin, George “thought it was [Dorothy Weir Young’s] house, her property, her wood and he was just being paid to work there.”³⁰ From his son’s perspective, George Bass took pride in adhering to his perceived role as an at-will employee on Dorothy Weir Young’s land.

George Bass’s oldest son, Mervin, worked with his father as an assistant caretaker until 1941, earning anywhere from 60 to 75 dollars per month.³¹ Mervin married Mary Bruschi in 1934, and commuted from their residence in Ridgefield to the farm site every day. Mary recalled that he worked every other Sunday because someone needed to be on site to milk the cows.³² As part of his duties, Mervin traveled to town to pick up groceries

²⁶ Charles Burlingham, interview.

²⁷ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; United States Department of Labor, “Wartime Wages, Income, and Wage Regulation in Agriculture,” Bulletin No. 883, 1946; United States Department of Labor, “Handbook of Labor Statistics,” 1927–1990. The 1940 Census lists George Bass’s annual income as \$4680, more than four times what Dorothy paid him over the course of one year. The census also states he did not have other income sources. For comparison’s sake, on the same census page, a carpenter made \$1,700/year, and a dentist and a stock broker both made \$5,000/year. The record also lists Mervin and Eddie Bass’s income as astonishingly high (\$3,640 and \$3,420, respectively). George Albert’s \$532 annual income makes more sense, given that he had worked only 28 weeks in the previous year. 1940 United States Census, Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00500; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 1-225.

²⁸ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

²⁹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; United States Department of Labor, “Wartime Wages, Income, and Wage Regulation in Agriculture,” Bulletin No. 883, 1946 shows that average farm wage rates increased during the war; in Connecticut they increased to an average of \$106 in January 1946.

³⁰ Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

³¹ According to Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592, Mervin Bas earned \$65/month from January 1932 to May 1932. No entries with his name appear from June 1932 to May 1933; perhaps stopped working for Young for a time or perhaps she paid him in cash. Payments resume at \$60/month from June 1933 to July 1935 and \$65 from August 1935 to June 1937. From July 1937 to August 1939 he earned an extra \$10 each quarter, and then increased to \$75/month from September 1939 to November 1941. Mary Bass Ciuccoli remembers him getting paid \$65/month in her oral history.

³² Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview.

after the Youngs ordered them.³³ Dorothy Weir Young also hired Mary Bruschi Bass to perform housework and laundry and paid for the medical expenses associated with the birth of their two children.³⁴ Mary's domestic work will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5, but notably Dorothy Weir Young's financial arrangement with the Bass family expanded beyond George over time to include both Mervin and Mary Bass.

Under the stewardship of George and Mervin Bass, the Weir family property continued to function as a working farm. Like the Remys and other tenant farmers before them, the Bases cultivated fields, harvested crops, cared for animals, and assisted with gardening. Historian Jack Larkin remarks that "traditionalism and continuity" characterized farm operations during the Dorothy Weir Young years.³⁵ Reflecting her broader inclination to preserve her father's property and legacy, Young did not aggressively pursue modern farming practices on the site. Rather, the rhythm and labor of farm life continued to resemble the late 19th century. A few minor changes included consolidating the scale of crop farming, updating a few implements, and introducing a truck purchased by George Bass. The infamous oxen no longer resided on the property, and the Youngs slightly expanded the dairying operation. Although Mahonri Young drew many sketches of the Branchville landscape, neither he nor Dorothy managed the site for the purpose of artistic inspiration like their predecessor. The Bases were tasked with maintaining and continuing the existing estate as a self-sustaining farm and retreat.

The Bases farmed less acreage than their predecessors. Jack Larkin notes that "tillage fields and pasturelands were allowed to retreat into scrub woodlands," a common trend in a region with declining agricultural activity.³⁶ They likely did not grow small grains like rye or oats. They did, however, plant and harvest potatoes in the \$25 lot cleared by Paul Remy and John Ferguson Weir in 1899.³⁷ In the open lot they grew corn and hay for animal feed.³⁸ They also managed two vegetable gardens for Dorothy Weir Young in addition to their own (see Figure 33).³⁹ The introduction of a manure spreader made the process of

³³ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview.

³⁴ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview.

³⁵ 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 the Weir Farm National Historic Site. Draft, 1996, 57, based on MMY's drawings.

³⁶ Larkin, "The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940," 54–55.

³⁷ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, April 29, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

³⁸ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000 interview; Charlie Bass, interview, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

³⁹ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Orin Bass, interview.

fertilizing all of the fields more efficient.⁴⁰ Instead of using shovels to throw manure on the fields, the manure spreader could evenly distribute it onto the ground through a cylinder on the back of a customized wagon box.⁴¹ The Basses stockpiled the manure next to the barn before applying it to corn fields, hay fields, and the gardens (see Figure 34).⁴²

Apart from manuring, corn planting and harvesting looked much like it did during Remy years. In the spring, the Basses planted the corn in wide rows created by either a one-horse or hand cultivator to remove weeds and hill up dirt around the stalks. Cultivating the corn required periodic hoeing as depicted in a sketch by Mahonri Young's sketch, "Branchville August 1939" (see Figure 35).⁴³ In the fall, the Basses likely picked the corn by hand and stored it in the corn crib to dry out. Then, they removed the kernels using a corn sheller and fed them into a corn grinder to crush the kernels into feed.⁴⁴

After spreading manure, planting hay also followed the same process that it did at the turn of the century: plowing, harrowing, seeding, and more harrowing. Charles Bass remembered rotating the hay crops between red clover and buckwheat to help maintain the health of the soil.⁴⁵ The Basses may have persisted in using the same handheld cradle scythes wielded by Julian Weir's employees, or they may have utilized a horse-drawn mowing machine, or both. Horse-drawn mowing machines were already widespread in Connecticut by the late 19th century, and for the Basses to still not have access to one by the 1930s or 1940s would have been exceedingly rare.⁴⁶ Orin Bass mentioned a mowing machine in an oral history, and Mahonri Young depicted a mowing machine in one of his sketches as well as a painting entitled, "Rowen," referring to the second cutting of a hay

⁴⁰ Larkin, "The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940," 55–56. In 1943, Mahonri Young wrote to friend Jack Sears, "Again it is Spring. Bass the farmer and his son are out spreading manure on the gardens." Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 195.

⁴¹ Robert L. Ardrey, quoted in Larkin, "The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940," 55–56.

⁴² Larkin, "The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940," 43, 60; Orin Bass, interview specified that the manure pile was located on the far north side of the barn. MMY's sketch (Figure 34) is misleadingly entitled, "Bringing in the Hay."

⁴³ Larkin, "The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940," 60: "It is more likely that it depicts cultivation, with the worker hoeing around the corn plants for the fourth and final time in the cultivation sequence."

⁴⁴ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000 interview.

⁴⁵ Charlie Bass, interview.

⁴⁶ Larkin, "The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940," 26.

field (see Figures 36 and 37).⁴⁷ Yet other evidence suggests that the Basses continued to employ handheld scythes, as well. Russell Bass recalled using a scythe on the farm as a youth, and Mahonri Young sketched an image of workers—likely the Bass men—wielding scythes in an open field at Branchville (see Figure 38).⁴⁸

After cutting the hay, the Basses used a spring-steel horse rake similar to what the Remys used to collect dried hay and form windrows (see Figure 39).⁴⁹ Then, they loaded the hay into wagons and hauled it to the barn. They would bring the wagon in the south side of the building, unhitch the horses, and lead them out the north door while leaving the wagon full of hay behind (see Figure 40).⁵⁰ The Basses would then pitch the hay into the loft above the animals where it could be forked down to feed livestock as needed.⁵¹ Haying required intensive labor, and Dorothy Weir Young frequently hired on additional members of the Bass family in addition to George and Mervin during the harvest. Russell Bass remembered “helping bring in hay” as a boy and Young noted paying George Albert, Edward, and “Skippy” Bass for haying at various points over the course of the 1930s and 1940s.⁵²

Oxen, already old-fashioned during the Weir and Remy years, finally disappeared as beasts of burden from the site. In the early 1930s, George Bass purchased a truck for five dollars from Connery Brothers that he used for transportation and some farm operations.⁵³ However, the Basses primarily relied on horses to drive implements, wagons, and even an

⁴⁷ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000 interview. Their mention of a mower could refer to a push lawn mower, which may be what the Bass sons used when they mowed lawns for neighbors. Larkin is hesitant to confirm or deny the existence of a mower, partly because Mahonri Young did not always accurately title his sketches. For example, BYU 832070266 is titled “Mowing at Branchville” but clearly shows a horse rake in a field where the hay is already cut. For this reason, and due to the imprecision of Young’s sketches, Larkin is not fully convinced that “Mowing the Orchard” depicts a mower. Combined with the more detailed, *Rowen*, however, it seems very likely that the Basses used a mowing machine. Larkin, “The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940.”

⁴⁸ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview. Mahonri M. Young’s *Danbury Fair: Man with Scythe* may also have been inspired by the Basses.

⁴⁹ Larkin, “The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940,” 55; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview. Orin Bass mentions a “hay tedder” in the 1999 family interview, possibly referring to the hay rake or referencing an additional implement; there is no other evidence of an additional implement. Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

⁵⁰ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, second part of interview by Michelle Gutmann, April 29, 2000; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, October 23, 1999.

⁵¹ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, second part of 2000 interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

⁵² Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview. “Skippy” was likely a nickname for one of the Bass sons or perhaps a close relative.

⁵³ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview. The Bass family also owned a number of other cars for personal use. See Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2008, 34.

improvised snow plow.⁵⁴ They always kept at least a pair of horses for farm work; the Youngs owned two Belgians named Bill and Charlie when the Bass family left in 1944.⁵⁵ According to Charles Bass, an earlier Buckskin horse named Dan “dropped dead while pulling the load of wood,” and “the other horse was hitched to it and had to drag it back” out of the woods.⁵⁶ Dan’s death speaks to the tremendous amount of literal horsepower required for routine farm labor.

Along with horses, the barn on the Weir-Young property housed Jersey and Guernsey dairy cows.⁵⁷ Many of the cows were named Bessie or Mabel after Bessie Mabel Bass.⁵⁸ Orin Bass asserted that they never kept more than four cows at once, whereas Mahonri Young’s son from a previous marriage, Mahonri Sharp Young, remembered the Youngs owning “seven cows or something like that. . . a whole barn full.”⁵⁹ Yet another source suggested 12 dairy cows on site.⁶⁰ While she did not likely maintain a dozen cows consistently, Dorothy Weir Young did invest in an expanded dairy operation compared to her father. She updated the milking room with new stanchions and a cement floor in 1931.⁶¹ Members of the Bass Family milked the cows by hand into a bucket every morning at eight o’clock, and probably a second or third time later in the day, as well. Half of the milk was stored in large skimmer pans in the basement of the Young home. The Basses kept their share in the woodshed near their house in a tank where cream could rise to the top and milk could be dispensed through a spigot at the bottom (see Figures 1 and 41).⁶² Bessie Bass took on the laborious task of making butter by churning the cream, squeezing out the buttermilk, and then adding “the right amount of salt to make cakes out of it” according to Russell Bass.⁶³

⁵⁴ Charlie Bass, interview.

⁵⁵ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000 interview; Charlie Bass, interview. The Burlinghams also had Nina, a Shetland pony, that the Bass children sometimes rode, according to Charlie Bass.

⁵⁶ Charlie Bass, interview.

⁵⁷ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

⁵⁸ Orin Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

⁵⁹ Bass family members interview notes.

⁶⁰ Orin Bass, interview; Mahonri Sharp Young, interview.

⁶¹ Maureen K. Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II- A: Outbuildings,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT [draft]. Lowell, MA: US Department of the Interior, NPS, Northeast Cultural Resources Center, Building Conservation Branch, 1998, 43; Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

⁶² The multipurpose shed contained a woodshed, doghouse, and a cold bin. Bass family members interview notes; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview; Orin Bass, interview.

⁶³ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, second part of 2000 interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

The cows grazed in the pasture across the road from the barn; they reportedly loved to eat poison ivy below the stone wall there.⁶⁴ Orin Bass also recalled allowing cattle to graze in the hay fields after the second mowing.⁶⁵ One cow roaming in a mowed hay field accidentally slipped into a spring on the rocks and drowned; a young Charles Bass encountered the scene and remembered a snake coming out of the dead animal's mouth.⁶⁶ In the summer, the cows stayed out at night and came through the south side of the barn; in the winter, the Basses brought the cattle to the water trough and then through the south door of the barn for exercise. Charles remembered shoveling the snow out of the barnyard by hand during a blizzard in 1934 so that animals had room to walk around.⁶⁷

Both Dorothy Weir Young and George Bass were involved in buying and selling cows to maintain the small herd. In 1938, Young submitted a classified advertisement for three Guernseys ready for immediate sale due to being “overstocked.”⁶⁸ Orin Bass recalled a cattle dealer from Norwalk named Miller who “stuck” George Bass in his business dealings. George “said nothing” and “was very quiet waiting for the right opportunity.” He later sold a heifer to Miller, who afterward discovered that she only had three working faucets. According to Orin, “he didn’t come on the property for a year. He couldn’t take his own medicine.”⁶⁹ Once in a while, according to Charles Bass, a calf was slaughtered, but Orin remembered selling most calves to the peddler.⁷⁰

The Youngs financed a slightly expanded dairying operation due to a shared enthusiasm for cows’ romantic aesthetic and dairy products. Mahonri Sharp Young asserted that his father and stepmother “loved looking at [the cows] and having them in the landscape just as part of the decoration.”⁷¹ The Youngs kept their portion of cow’s milk in large skimming pans, where the cream would come to the top and curdle, making a kind of sour-milk cheese. According to Russell Bass, Mahonri would “come down for breakfast and scoop that lard stuff off and eat it for breakfast.”⁷² Dorothy may have had an interest in

⁶⁴ Bass family members interview notes.

⁶⁵ Orin Bass, interview.

⁶⁶ Charlie Bass, interview; Orin Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

⁶⁷ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Bass family members interview notes; Orin Bass, interview.

⁶⁸ Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

⁶⁹ Orin Bass, interview.

⁷⁰ Charlie Bass, interview; Orin Bass, interview.

⁷¹ Mahonri Sharp Young, interview.

⁷² Orin Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview; Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976.

cheese-making, as well.⁷³ The cook made butter and, in collaboration with George Bass, ice cream. Mary Bruschi Bass remembered them making ice cream twice a week, and Mahonri's grandson Charles Lay recalled enjoying ice cream as a child at the stone table during afternoon teatime.⁷⁴ Watching grazing cattle and savoring homemade dairy products contributed to the charm of staying in Branchville for the Young family and required significant labor by the Besses and the Youngs' cook.

The other major job for the Besses involved caring for the orchard on the property. They sprayed the apple trees with pesticide three times per year, “when the petals peaked and when the petals fell” or else there would be “too many bugs” according to Orin Bass.⁷⁵ When mixing the spray, George Bass followed recommendations published in booklets by the Connecticut State College Extension Service and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.⁷⁶ For example, handwritten notes in one of the booklets indicate that George mixed 40 gallons of spray for apple trees that consisted of water, dry lime sulfur, lead arsenate, and nicotine sulphate. The booklet also contained spray recipes for peach, pear, and cherry trees—all of which existed on the Weir family estate.⁷⁷ After mixing the spray, the Besses would load the barrel of liquid onto a horse-drawn wagon. Orin remembered sitting in the wagon and pumping the pump while his father sprayed the trees with a high-pressure hose.⁷⁸ In the fall, the Bass family—including the women—would pick the apples and store them in the root cellar under the Young studio (see Figure 42).⁷⁹ Apples were also sent to a cider mill on Route 7 to be pressed. Subsequent cider barrels resided in the basement of the big house.⁸⁰

⁷³ Larkin makes this assertion on page 55, but does not cite his evidence. Larkin, “The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940,” 55.

⁷⁴ Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview; Bass family members interview notes; Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview.

⁷⁵ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview.

⁷⁶ WEFA 15501—WEFA 15504.

⁷⁷ WEFA 15501; Bessie Bass Morabito, interview. Lead arsenate was the leading recommended pesticide for apple trees until the 1940s, when DDT was released as the more safe and effective option. Toxic byproducts of lead arsenate are still in the soil today, creating environmental concerns particularly when people develop homes and subdivisions where historic orchards were located. See Ernie Hood, “The Apple Bites Back: Claiming Old Orchards for Residential Development,” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 114, no. 8 (August 2006): A470–76. The Burlinghams also had grapes; the Besses may or may not have sprayed them, as well. Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview; Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996.

⁷⁸ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview.

⁷⁹ Charlie Bass, interview.

⁸⁰ Orin Bass, interview.

Additional Labor and Income

Cultivating and harvesting crops, managing livestock, dairying, and caring for orchards all fell under the caretaker responsibilities led by George and Mervin Bass, with the occasional assistance from other members of the Bass family. The Bass family also engaged in additional agricultural labor beyond caretaker duties to secure supplemental food or income. For example, George Bass cultivated his own vegetable garden, and the Bases raised various animals near the caretaker's house. They raised two pigs each year in pens behind the caretaker's garage, growing them over the summer and then slaughtering them in the winter (see Figure 1).⁸¹ After killing the pigs, Bass and one or more of his sons would cook the carcasses in a cauldron on blocks over a hot fire. After the hair began separating from the skin, they would use a scraper to remove the rest of the hair off the hides.⁸² Then, George Bass used a butchering knife to gut and divide the carcass.⁸³ The Bases split each pig with the Youngs.⁸⁴ In December 1943, Mahonri Young wrote to his friend Jack Sears that “we have just killed our pig. At this moment he is laying on the floor in my etching room cut-up and frozen stiff.” The next winter he wrote to Sears that Dorothy and their cook, Mollie Gleason, made a number of pork dishes that impressed friends, including head cheese, “patty de porc,” and pork cake, a fruit cake made with pork fat instead of butter.⁸⁵

In addition to pigs, the Bass family grew their own chickens. They collected eggs and butchered the birds for their own food and for sale.⁸⁶ Dorothy Weir Young regularly paid George—and, for a time, Edward—Bass for eggs at a rate ranging from 45 to 60 cents per dozen.⁸⁷ Charles Bass remembered him and his siblings selling chickens for pin, or spending, money. They each had at least one chicken under their care; at one point Charles grew as many as 35 chickens to sell for pin money.⁸⁸ In the early 1940s, Dorothy Weir Young converted her icehouse into a chicken coop; Russell Bass did not remember her keeping

⁸¹ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000 interview; Bass family members interview notes; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview. Oral histories place the pig pen “at the corner” of the current-day visitor’s parking lot, though there is some ambiguity as to which corner, and which side of the slope. Figure 1 locations represent best estimates based on a thorough review of oral history transcripts.

⁸² Bass family members interview notes; Orin Bass, interview.

⁸³ The Bass family donated the knife to Weir Farm Historic Site. See WEFA 15487.

⁸⁴ Bass family members interview notes; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

⁸⁵ MMY to JS, December 17, 1943, BYU 1058, Sears, 1; quoted in Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat”; MMY to JS, January 24, 1944, BYU 1058, Sears, 1; quoted in Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat” and referenced in Larkin, “The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940.”

⁸⁶ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000 interview; Bass family members interview notes.

⁸⁷ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

⁸⁸ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

chickens before then.⁸⁹ The Basses likely cared for the Youngs' chickens in addition to their own. Kenneth Bass recalled that his brother “Eddie used to carry 200 pounds of feed all the way up the driveway all the way to the chicken house over his shoulders.”⁹⁰ Mahonri Sharp Young remembered his father and Dorothy growing their own chickens, which “probably cost four times what the chickens cost at the A&P.”⁹¹ Whereas Mahonri Sharp Young believed that nostalgia inspired the Youngs to keep animals despite the financial loss, the Basses raised their own poultry out of necessity. Russell noted the benefit of living on a farm during the Great Depression; activities like butchering and selling chickens helped ensure that the large family had enough to eat.⁹²

In addition to chickens, the Bass family raised pheasants, guinea hens, turkeys, pigeons, and rabbits in pens east of Nod Hill Road, leaving behind stone foundations still visible today (see Figure 1).⁹³ To access the pens, the Basses built stairs down the steep slope behind the caretaker's garage and constructed a wooden bridge across the adjacent wetland area.⁹⁴ A nearby duck pond—likely utilizing the wetland area—boasted as many as 150 ducks at one time. The Bass boys also trapped muskrat, skunk, and mink and sold the furs at Bert's garage on Route 7 for pin money. They caught squirrels that Bessie Bass made into squirrel pie and squirrel soup.⁹⁵ Beyond the animals raised and trapped for food and money, farm cats worked the site and were allowed inside the caretaker's house, where a young Kenneth Bass once tried to cut a cat's whiskers off.⁹⁶

The panoply of animals cared for by the Basses on the Weir-Young farm included several beloved dogs. As part of her reimbursements to George Bass for incidentals each month, Dorothy Weir Young included entries for Hank, her black and white bird dog.

⁸⁹ Bass family members interview notes; Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482; Maureen K. Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II—A: Outbuildings,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT [draft]. Lowell, MA: US Department of the Interior, NPS, Northeast Cultural Resources Center, Building Conservation Branch, 1998.

⁹⁰ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

⁹¹ Mahonri Sharp Young, interview.

⁹² Bass family members interview notes.

⁹³ Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996, 284; Marie L. Carden and Richard C. Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT [draft]. US Department of the Interior, NPS, Northeast Region, Northeast Cultural Resources Center, Building Conservation Branch, 1998, xl.

⁹⁴ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview. The stairs and bridge are not extant. A causeway still exists nearby, though Bass family members remembered it functioning as a dam rather than a walkway.

⁹⁵ For more on squirrel dishes, see Rebecca Rupp, “Time to Savor the Squirrel (Again)?,” National Geographic, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/time-to-savor-the-squirrel->.

⁹⁶ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000 interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

Hank accompanied the Youngs hunting and lived in their Branchville home as a pet; the Basses likely interacted and cared for him periodically.⁹⁷ The Basses also kept their own farm dogs—usually Collies—that were typically not allowed inside but resided in the woodshed’s doghouse and kept guard over the caretaker’s house and its inhabitants (see Figure 41).⁹⁸ Orin Bass remembered one of their dogs attacking the ragman.⁹⁹ As a puppy, another dog named Rex bolted toward the chickens one night and came back with the seat of a man’s pants.¹⁰⁰ Rex’s protective tendencies also resulted in him putting his teeth on Dorothy Weir Young and leaving a black-and-blue mark; after that, Young insisted that Rex leave the property. The Bass sons later learned that the dog found another home.¹⁰¹

Beyond caring for animals, the Basses secured extra income by cutting ice from Weir Pond in the winter. Especially before reliance on electric refrigerators, the Youngs maintained an icehouse to keep perishables cool. The Basses also kept ice in their woodshed for cold storage.¹⁰² Retrieving ice remained as dangerous a task, as it was at the turn of the century. The frozen surface could get as thick as eight inches, but it did not always freeze evenly because of the springs that fed the pond.¹⁰³ The Basses would sometimes send out the horses onto the pond first to make sure the ice was safe enough to traverse.¹⁰⁴ Then, the older siblings would “put a hole in the ice, chop it in and then we’d use these ice saws to cut the ice into cakes of different sizes,” according to Charles Bass.¹⁰⁵ They would then tip the ice cakes and pull them up onto the surface and haul it into the wagon. They wore grips on their shoes to help prevent slipping on the ice and falling into the potentially deadly water.¹⁰⁶

Despite precautions, George Albert Bass once fell into the icy pond. Orin Bass recounted: “They were cutting the ice and we were all there standing around on the piece being cut. They cut three sides and just then the other side started down. Because there was

⁹⁷ Orin Bass, interview; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. For a drawing of Hank, see Mahonri M. Young, *Hank*, 1945, ink on paper, Private Collection.

⁹⁸ Dottie (Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview); Prince (Bessie Bass Morabito, interview); see also Charlie Bass, interview.

⁹⁹ Orin Bass, interview. This particular dog was a setter.

¹⁰⁰ Orin Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview. They refer to Rex as a police dog, perhaps identifying him as a German Shepherd.

¹⁰¹ Orin Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

¹⁰² Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Phillips, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. II- A: Outbuildings.”

¹⁰³ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹⁰⁴ Charlie Bass, interview.

¹⁰⁵ Charlie Bass, interview.

¹⁰⁶ Charlie Bass, interview; Orin Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

a spring under the water it bubbled up. We thought that the ice was thick enough but it wasn't, it was only about half an inch thick. When the ice broke George went into the water."¹⁰⁷

Charles Bass remembered the incident as well, recalling that by the time George Albert traveled the half mile back to the caretaker's house he was "nearly froze to death" and "could hardly walk because the clothes were frozen."¹⁰⁸ Another time, one of the Basses backed their truck onto the pond to load the cakes and the ice gave way underneath the weight. They needed to bring the horses down to pull the truck free.¹⁰⁹

After cutting the ice and putting it into the truck or horse-drawn wagon, the Basses transported the ice up from the pond to pack the icehouse.¹¹⁰ The younger Bass brothers packed the cakes between layers of snow or sawdust to prevent the blocks from freezing together, "like you pack cheese today with paper pieces in between each slice," according to Orin.¹¹¹ They also packed sawdust along the walls of the icehouse for insulation.¹¹² Charles remembered packing as a "tough job."¹¹³ Dorothy Weir Young generally paid George Bass for ice on top of his monthly wages; for example, in January 1938, she paid him 41 dollars for ice cutting.¹¹⁴ The supply typically lasted through July, when Young then bought commercial ice to keep the icehouse cool.¹¹⁵ In the summer of 1937, she paid an average of 30 dollars per month for commercial ice.¹¹⁶ Paying Bass an extra sum for cutting ice saved Young money while also serving as supplementary income for the Bass family.

The sawdust for packing ice came from cutting wood, another recurring job on the farm that could bring supplementary income.¹¹⁷ The Basses chopped wood from near the pond to meet their own cooking and heating needs; the stoves in the caretaker's house

¹⁰⁷ Orin Bass, interview.

¹⁰⁸ Charlie Bass, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Orin Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹¹⁰ Charlie Bass, interview; Orin Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹¹¹ Orin Bass, interview.

¹¹² Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹¹³ Charlie Bass, interview.

¹¹⁴ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

¹¹⁵ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, second part of 2000 interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Charlie Bass, interview.

¹¹⁶ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. In 1933, Young paid Merle Utz an average of \$10.38 for ice from August through November; in later years, she paid John F. Goetjen for ice during the summer months (July–September).

¹¹⁷ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Charlie Bass, interview.

burned wood during the day and coal at night.¹¹⁸ The Bass boys were responsible for replenishing the wood box near the stove with logs stored in the woodshed.¹¹⁹ They also cut wood for the Youngs and the Burlinghams.¹²⁰ Charles Bass remembered earning one dollar per cord of wood and cutting as many as three cords of wood per day.¹²¹ Dorothy Weir Young's checkbooks suggest that she paid the Basses 45 to 60 cents per hour for cutting wood.¹²² In his sketches, Mahonri Young captured the process of sawing wood at various stages, from chopping felled trees to cutting logs into firewood using a saw and sawhorse (see Figures 43 and 44).¹²³ The men featured in the images are all almost certainly members of the Bass family. By November 1943, the Basses may have used a gas-powered chainsaw for the chore.¹²⁴

Like many other tasks on the farm, chopping wood proved to be a dangerous job. In the winter, the Basses transported wood using a large bobsled drawn by horses. One time, the chain that held the wood in place broke, with Orin Bass still standing on top of the pile steering the horses. Orin was able to stop the horses as the logs started to roll off without getting seriously hurt.¹²⁵ In the early 1940s, however, George Bass suffered a permanent injury when he lost fingers on his right hand in a sawing accident.¹²⁶ According to one story, after he was released from the Danbury Hospital where they could not reattach his fingers, he immediately went to the barn to see if he could still effectively milk cows.¹²⁷ Charles Bass

¹¹⁸ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview.

¹¹⁹ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000 interview.

¹²⁰ Charles Burlingham, interview: "Mr. Bass and his cohorts would come down and cut the firewood and burn the brush and so forth."

¹²¹ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, second part of 2000 interview. The transcription reads, "We cut wood for three dollars a quart—four by four by eight. We got three dollars a quart. No! a dollar a quart. We would get three dollars for cutting three quarts." A quart is a term for one-quarter of a cord. However, a four-by-four-by-eight pile of wood constitutes a cord, not a quart. The transcription is inaccurate, as Charles is clearly discussing cords of wood.

¹²² Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

¹²³ Larkin, "The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940." See also Mahonri M. Young's sketches *Sawing Wood* (BYU 83207064) and *Farmyard* (BYU 832070637).

¹²⁴ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592, include an entry from November 1943 that lists \$2 paid to George Bass for "gas for cutting wood."

¹²⁵ Orin Bass, interview.

¹²⁶ Bass family members interview notes suggests Bass lost one finger; Charlie Bass, interview says "fingers"; Shaw, 2020, specifies four fingers as does Charles Burlingham, interview.

¹²⁷ Bass family members interview notes. Shaw, 2020, suggests that Bass did not consider going to the doctor; however, Dorothy Weir Young's checkbooks include a January 1942 entry for an X-ray for Bass. Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

recalled that his father subsequently “improvised a strap around his wrist so that he could still cut wood and milk the cows.”¹²⁸ George Bass’s livelihood depended on his ability to navigate hazards and meet the physical demands of agricultural labor.

Like the Basses, the Youngs used firewood during the day and coal at night. The Basses were responsible for bringing and lighting firewood in the main residence and Mahonri’s studio as part of their daily work.¹²⁹ George and Mervin even drove periodically to New York City in a 1937 station wagon to deliver wood to Dorothy and Mahonri’s Gramercy Park apartment.¹³⁰ Back at Branchville, Dorothy initially preferred to keep the fireplaces burning during the colder months even if she was out of the house. After a spark coming out of one of the chimneys started a fire on the roof in the spring of 1942, however, George reportedly refused to build indoor fires at the main residence unless Dorothy was present.¹³¹

In addition to haying, trapping furs, and cutting wood, the Bass boys took on a range of odd jobs through the 1930s and 1940s for supplemental income. They collected bottles and returned them to stores in Branchville for deposit money.¹³² During berrying seasons, Dorothy Weir Young offered 15 cents per basket of blueberries or blackberries collected on the property.¹³³ She hired Edward to wash windows, tend the garden, and complete other similar tasks on the grounds throughout the 1930s. Orin chauffeured Young in her 1937 Ford “Woody” station wagon and Russell polished copper around the fireplaces.¹³⁴ Charles cleaned Mahonri’s studio for a time.¹³⁵ Beyond the Weir family estate, George Albert, Russell, Charles, and Orin mowed lawns for neighbors like the Rhuls, Casteras, Mrs. Erlick, and J. J. Jones.¹³⁶ Russell worked for Joseph Pinchbeck, the florist in Ridgefield, and George Albert did plumbing work for Clayton Webb.¹³⁷

¹²⁸ Charlie Bass, interview.

¹²⁹ Orin Bass, interview.

¹³⁰ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹³¹ Orin Bass, interview; Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

¹³² Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

¹³³ Orin Bass, interview.

¹³⁴ Charlie Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview; Orin Bass, interview; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2008, 34.

¹³⁵ Charlie Bass, interview.

¹³⁶ Charlie Bass, interview (Rhul, Casteras, Erlick); Orin Bass, interview (Rhul); Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview (J. J. Jones).

¹³⁷ Charlie Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview; Orin Bass, interview. Russell worked in the rosehouse. Shaw, 2020 also mentions that Orin Bass worked for Pinchbeck, though that is not confirmed in Orin’s oral history.

Three of the Bass brothers in succession took on the caretaker position for the Burlingham property. George Albert filled the role first for a time in the 1930s.¹³⁸ By 1940, Edward served as caretaker and enjoyed a particularly friendly relationship with Cora Weir Burlingham based on their shared enthusiasm and gift for horticulture.¹³⁹ Edward went into the military after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and Charles stepped in as caretaker for the Buringhams before entering the service himself.¹⁴⁰

The Buringhams did not run a fully operational farm like the Youngs; they did not grow crops or raise dairy cows. Their barn primarily housed Charles Burlingham Sr.'s cars, as well as a pony for their two sons to ride.¹⁴¹ They may have raised chickens at one point and had a pen for dogs.¹⁴² The Bass men possibly helped care for the few animals owned by the Buringhams and certainly assisted with cutting firewood and burning brush.¹⁴³ They may have also mowed lawns, although Charles Burlingham Sr. also enjoyed taking on that activity.¹⁴⁴ Otherwise, Cora Weir Burlingham likely tasked her caretaker with helping to manage her impressive gardens. She may have cultivated vegetable gardens, as depicted in Mahonri Young's sketches, which required workers to plow, plant, manure, and weed (see Figure 45).¹⁴⁵ Charles Bass also recalled taking care of the compost

¹³⁸ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview. Based on existing sources, George Albert Bass may have worked for the Buringhams sometime in the 1930s until they arranged employment for him out west. He ended up hitchhiking and riding the rails back home to Connecticut, and by 1940 was living with his parents and working for Clayton Webb. Eddie Bass likely worked for the Buringhams after George left for the West. 1940 United States Census, Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00500; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 1-225; National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; *WWII Draft Registration Cards for Connecticut*, 10/16/1940–03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 23.

¹³⁹ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

¹⁴⁰ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview. Charlie's 1943 Draft Card lists his employer as the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Manufacturing Company; he may have worked for the Buringhams part-time. National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; *WWII Draft Registration Cards for Connecticut*, 10/16/1940–03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 23.

¹⁴¹ Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, "Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site," Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996; Charles Burlingham, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Charlie Bass, interview; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007.

¹⁴² Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, "Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site."

¹⁴³ Charles Burlingham, interview; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007.

¹⁴⁴ Charles Burlingham, interview.

¹⁴⁵ Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, "Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site" suggests that Cora did not do much vegetable gardening until her Victory Garden during WWII, yet both Larkin and the Cultural Landscape Report identify Cora's vegetable gardens in Mahonri Young's 1930s sketches. Larkin, "The Weir Farm: Working Agriculture and the Vision of Rural Life in New England 1860–1940."

heap.¹⁴⁶ Plus, Burlingham had a greenhouse and a “sunken” flower garden that required significant labor.¹⁴⁷ Although Burlingham frequently visited the property on the weekends and engaged in substantial garden work herself, the constant upkeep may have justified paying extra help.¹⁴⁸

George and Bessie’s only daughter, Betty, did not partake in the outdoor farm work or odd jobs like her brothers due to gendered expectations that she assist her mother with domestic duties. She did, however, earn supplementary income by waitressing and cleaning for both the Youngs and the Burlinghams.¹⁴⁹ For example, in August 1939, Dorothy Weir Young recorded paying Betty Bass \$19.20 for one week and 12 hours of work.¹⁵⁰ Bass recalled that “when their maids would go away, they would want me” to help. Although Bass did not cook, she recommended her cousin from Windham who would travel to Branchville and work in the kitchen while Betty served the food.¹⁵¹ Bass remembered that Mahonri Young’s guests usually embraced a more casual dining style, helping themselves to dishes placed on the table. When the Youngs entertained Dorothy’s more refined friends and relatives, however, Bass “had to serve them entirely differently,” usually delivering food individually.¹⁵² From waitressing and gardening to cutting ice and wood, the Besses augmented their family income through an assortment of part-time and temporary work.

Domestic Labor

Keeping the many members of the Bass family fed, clothed, and cared for as they labored in Branchville required a tremendous amount of unpaid domestic work by Bessie Bass. In the early 1930s, she underwent the physical labor of bearing children, delivering both Clifford and Kenneth in the caretaker’s house.¹⁵³ In addition to raising her own nine children, her household frequently included extended family. Her mother lived with them until 1932, and nephew Frank Bass often visited from Windham for extended periods of time. Frank

¹⁴⁶ Charlie Bass, interview.

¹⁴⁷ Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site.”

¹⁴⁸ Charles Burlingham discusses his mother’s enthusiasm for gardening; she later hired a full-time gardener to assist, so it stands to reason that is what she hired the Bass boys for, as well. See also Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹⁴⁹ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹⁵⁰ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592, include payments to Bessie (Betty) Bass once or twice a year throughout the 1930s as well an entry in May 1941 to Bessie Webb, using her new married last name.

¹⁵¹ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

¹⁵² Bessie Bass Morabito, interview. See also Figure 27.

¹⁵³ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Charlie Bass, interview. Clifford was born in 1931 and Kenneth in 1934.

even called George Bass, “Pop,” and some neighbors thought he was one of George and Bessie’s sons.¹⁵⁴ She nursed her children when they fell ill; both the measles and mumps made unwelcome appearances in the Bass home.¹⁵⁵ On a normal day she managed routine household chores, directing her children to help wash dishes, weed gardens, mop floors, and accomplish other tasks.¹⁵⁶ She particularly relied on her daughter, Betty, to assist with more domestic tasks than her sons.¹⁵⁷ If the children ever misbehaved, however, the role of disciplinarian went to her husband.¹⁵⁸

Laundry remained a constant and laborious household job. Some laundry appliances became common fixtures in American homes by the 1930s and reduced the amount of back-breaking labor required of hand laundry, but they did not fully eliminate the physical demands of the task. When the Besses moved to Branchville in 1929, the caretaker’s house did not have electricity. For a time they had a laundry set up in the all-purpose woodshed, likely consisting of two large wooden or galvanized tubs and a hand-cranked wringer. The wringer was an appliance with adjustable, rubber-covered rollers that pressed water out of clothes after washing.¹⁵⁹ Motorized wringers required less labor than hand-cranked wringers, which in turn still saved substantial energy compared to wringing clothes out by hand. Yet wringers carried their own risks. When Betty Bass was 10 or 11 years old around 1930 or 1931, she was wringing clothes in the woodshed on the Fourth of July, enviously watching her brothers shoot off fireworks. She became so distracted that her finger got caught in the wringer and her parents rushed her to the doctor’s office.¹⁶⁰

Aside from the hand wringers, laundry without electricity in the 1930s looked very similar to laundry at the turn of the century. Bessie and Betty Bass still needed to haul water for the tubs, using one for washing and one for rinsing. They would add soap—either store-bought or homemade—to the wash basin and stir with a paddle, possibly even scrubbing the clothes on a washboard.¹⁶¹ Then they put the clothes through the wringer, into the rinse tub, and through the wringer again. After that, clothes still needed to be line-dried and ironed. Without electricity, Bessie likely used stove-heated irons like her predecessors.

¹⁵⁴ Orin Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, interview; 7.

¹⁵⁵ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹⁵⁶ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

¹⁵⁷ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

¹⁵⁸ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

¹⁵⁹ Woman’s Institute of Domestic Arts and Sciences, *Laundering and Dry Cleaning: Home Laundering. Dry Cleaning* (Scranton, PA: The Woman’s Institute of Domestic Arts and Sciences, 1931), 10–11.

¹⁶⁰ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 2000, interview.

¹⁶¹ Woman’s Institute of Domestic Arts and Sciences, *Laundering and Dry Cleaning: Home Laundering. Dry Cleaning*, 22–23.

Dorothy Weir Young updated the caretaker's house with electricity in 1932. Sometime thereafter, the laundry set up was moved into the house, on the first-floor hallway in front of the bathroom and at the foot of the stairs.¹⁶² The Basses collected their dirty clothes at the bottom of the staircase, and sometimes the boys would leap from the top of the stairs into the pile of laundry.¹⁶³ With access to electricity, the Basses now used a washing machine instead of a hand-cranked wringer.¹⁶⁴ The machine may have simply consisted of a motorized wringer, or perhaps it also featured an agitator in a permanent tub with a drain in the bottom that could be connected to the home's plumbing system.¹⁶⁵ Clean clothes still dried on a clothesline, but electricity also meant that the Basses could use electric irons. Betty remembered ironing as her chore when she returned from school each day.¹⁶⁶ Even with the advances in laundry technology, cleaning clothes and linens for a family of 11 or more demanded a substantial amount of work from Bessie and her daughter, to the point where George often helped his wife by putting clothes on the line after he completed his farm work.¹⁶⁷

In addition to raising children and washing laundry, Bessie Bass kept her family fed. She used a wood-burning stove in the kitchen that always remained warm, even in the summer.¹⁶⁸ According to Orin Bass, she “banked the fire at night with coal and then burned wood all day to cook on.”¹⁶⁹ Logs of hardwood like oak, hickory, birch, and maple were stored behind the stove near the window of the kitchen.¹⁷⁰ Bessie did not need to haul water from the well for cooking, but pumped water by hand in the kitchen.¹⁷¹ She cooked meals using the animals raised or trapped on the farm as well as vegetables grown in the garden. Betty remembered that “if my mother had made a soup, we would eat that for both meals. If we didn't like it, we had to learn to eat it.”¹⁷² She also made pies from the

¹⁶² Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Room 104 on floor plan in Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker's House and Caretaker's Garage,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2008.

¹⁶³ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Charlie Bass, interview.

¹⁶⁴ Charlie Bass, interview; see also Bessie Bass Morabito, interview and Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹⁶⁵ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Bessie Bass Morabito mentioned that her mother had two tubs, even inside the house.

¹⁶⁶ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

¹⁶⁷ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹⁶⁸ During the winter, the stove was a main source of heat along with a potbelly stove in the living room.

¹⁶⁹ Orin Bass, interview.

¹⁷⁰ Orin Bass, interview; Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

¹⁷¹ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

¹⁷² Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

berries picked by her children, butter from the farm’s dairy cows, and even made home-made bread for a time.¹⁷³ Dorothy Weir Young sometimes paid to enjoy the butter and bread that Bessie Bass made.¹⁷⁴ Eventually, the Basses began buying bread from the Home Pride truck that periodically stopped by on its route.¹⁷⁵ To build a reserve for the winter months, Bessie canned fruit and vegetables including string beans, blueberries, pears, and peaches.¹⁷⁶ They eventually gained a refrigerator that helped with food preservation, as well.¹⁷⁷ Bessie’s hard work ensured that her large family had enough to eat through the years of the Great Depression and laid the foundation for the Bass family to successfully serve as long-term caretakers of Weir Farm.

Cross-Class Relationships

A complex set of cross-class and interpersonal dynamics shaped the relationships between members of the Bass family and the Youngs and Burlinghams. The younger Bass children who survived to share oral history testimony at the turn of the 21st century spoke kindly of Dorothy Weir Young and suggested that their father worked with her on positive terms. Russell said that Young “seemed all right” and Kenneth remembered that they “were always respectful” to Young “because we had to be.”¹⁷⁸ Most of the Bass children worked for Young incidentally as part of their family duties or on a temporary basis, as with Betty’s waitressing or the boys’ berry collecting and fireplace polishing. Orin Bass worked more directly for her as an assistant caretaker after his older brothers left Branchville during World War II. He communicated disappointment that his father did not earn more money for his labor and, as her chauffeur, expressed frustration that she was “always leaving late for the train.”¹⁷⁹ Mervin’s wife Mary, however, proved particularly effusive about Dorothy Weir Young’s generosity and kindness toward her young children.¹⁸⁰ Gender, employment role, and personal experiences clearly impacted the differing ways members of the Bass family responded to Dorothy Weir Young’s maternalist management style.

¹⁷³ Orin Bass, interview; Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

¹⁷⁴ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

¹⁷⁵ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Charlie Bass, interview.

¹⁷⁶ Charlie Bass, interview; Bessie Bass Morabito, interview. Charles: “We kept [the cans] in that little back room off the dining room in the little closet where it was cooler.”

¹⁷⁷ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

¹⁷⁸ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

¹⁷⁹ Orin Bass, interview.

¹⁸⁰ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview.

Beyond her role as property owner, Dorothy Weir Young also paid members of the Bass family to pose for her in her capacity as an artist. She painted Edward holding his two-year-old brother Clifford in the fall of 1933 for three dollars and fifty cents (see Figure 46).¹⁸¹ She also paid Mary Bruschi Bass about five dollars on two occasions in September 1935, likely for her to pose in “Seated Girl Reading Newspaper” (see Figure 47).¹⁸² Betty Bass remembered posing for Young, as well.¹⁸³ The paintings featuring the Basses fit Young’s broader tendency to paint portraits, domestic scenes, and still life. Edward, Clifford, Mary, and Betty all sat for Young in her residence at Branchville, suggesting a level of familiarity between the subjects and their painter. At the same time, Young likely did not spend any amount of significant time in her employees’ residence, especially if she sought a serene domestic background for her art. Even as she continued her practice of liberally embracing opportunities to pay the Basses small supplementary sums of money, the environment in which she painted the Basses reveals persistent class divisions between her and her employees.

Compared to Dorothy Weir Young, Mahonri Young elicited a wider range of reactions from the Bass family. Russell Bass believed Mahonri “to be all right as far as I was concerned.”¹⁸⁴ Betty Bass, however, did not remember Mahonri as a kind man. She recalled that he “would kind of belittle you in front of people. . . once in awhile, in my words, he would give you a little dig.”¹⁸⁵ He reportedly treated her father that way and also seemed irritable with women like herself and even Dorothy Weir Young.¹⁸⁶ Orin Bass acknowledged Mahonri’s impressive artistic skill but similarly shared that “he tried to lure the help” with sarcastic comments when he had guests around. For example, after George Bass lost his fingers in the wood-cutting accident on the property, Mahonri remarked, “See, you aren’t going to be such a great milker as you were before, are you?”¹⁸⁷ On another occasion, Mahonri made an unwelcome recommendation for obtaining dry wood for his studio. George Bass responded by cutting logs from a frozen poplar tree for Young’s studio, which resulted in “a stream of water running across the studio” when Young tried to burn the wood in his fireplace. Orin recalled: “That was how my father would get back at him. He would take everything but then when the time was right he would step right in. Mahonri never made a remark about dry wood gain. It worked.”

¹⁸¹ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

¹⁸² Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; The image fits Mary Bass Ciuccoli’s oral history memory that Dorothy “had me sitting in an upstairs bedroom in an old rocking chair holding a newspaper and reading it. I had on a blouse, a skirt, and a green sweater with designs on it.” Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview.

¹⁸³ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

¹⁸⁴ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview; Bass family members interview notes.

¹⁸⁵ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

¹⁸⁶ Bass family members interview notes.

¹⁸⁷ Orin Bass, interview; Bass family members interview notes.

Betty and Orin’s recollections suggest that George Bass had a more tense relationship with Mahonri than he did with Dorothy. While his personality, class status, and contingent employment precluded George from immediately responding to Mahonri’s slights, he asserted himself through calculated efforts. Charles Bass recalled that his father and Mahonri sometimes had conflicting opinions and were both stubborn. He remarked with a chuckle: “I’m not quite sure who ever won.”¹⁸⁸

Like Dorothy, Mahonri Young depicted the Bass family in his artwork. He sketched and painted numerous outdoor scenes at Branchville that featured men laboring. Given the time frame of the drawings and the jobs represented, most of the unnamed subjects were almost certainly members of the Bass family.¹⁸⁹ Like Julian Weir before him, Mahonri Young portrayed workers as part of a nostalgic agricultural landscape. He drew men wielding scythes, chopping wood, and pitching hay but never, for example, showcased the Basses’ truck. Young’s style differed from Weir’s in his fascination with the male form and physical movement. Considered a Social Realist artist, his broader work focused on sculpting working-class laborers, boxers, and Indigenous people.¹⁹⁰ He resisted abstract and surreal art forms and tended to work on subjects that emphasized nostalgic and idealized visions of masculinity.¹⁹¹

For example, in the 1910s Mahonri Young received commissions to contribute to dioramas of the Hopi, Navajo, and Apache at the American Museum of Natural History. He even traveled to the Southwest to study and sketch his subjects. Although Indigenous people survived in that region and across the United States throughout the 20th century and into the present day, creating exhibits for a natural history museum of different Indigenous “types” reinforced popular, harmful myths that Indigenous people were “noble

¹⁸⁸ Charlie Bass, interview.

¹⁸⁹ In one sketch, he does name Mr. Bass digging for parsnips. See Figure 33.

¹⁹⁰ Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat”; “Mahonri Young,” Smithsonian American Art Museum, accessed August 7, 2021, <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/mahonri-young-5524>; “Mahonri Young,” Weir Farm National Historical Park (US National Park Service), accessed August 7, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/wefa/learn/historyculture/mahonriyoung.htm>.

¹⁹¹ MMY considered surrealism and abstract expressionism a greater threat than Communism, according to Wayne Kendall Hinton, “A Biographical History of Mahonri M. Young, a Western American Artist,” ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1974.

savages” on the cusp of “vanishing” from the American landscape. His drawings and sculptures of Indigenous people nostalgically positioned them in opposition to seemingly inevitable American conquest and “civilization.”¹⁹²

Mahonri Young’s interest in culture that he saw disappearing in the face of modern, civilizing influences also related to his love of prize fighting. His son recalled that Young loved to sketch boxers in New York City and “knew all the old prizefighting lore.”¹⁹³ The “Manly Art,” as Young and many of his contemporaries called it, emerged in industrial cities as a way for working-class men to impose ritual and assert control over their bodies at a time of chaotic change and little personal autonomy in manufacturing settings. Historian Elliott Gorn argues that by the late 19th century, however, prizefighting increasingly became less of an oppositional working-class cultural expression and more of a source of vicarious entertainment for the bourgeoisie.¹⁹⁴ Young’s fascination with prizefighting echoed an early-20th-century yearning for idealized visions of masculinity that emphasized physicality, strength, and violence rather than the comfortable, bureaucratic, and “effeminate” influences of modern life for the middle and upper classes.¹⁹⁵ Young represented prizefighters as paragons of manliness in bronze sculptures like “Right to the Jaw,” “On the Button,” and “The Knockdown,” all of which depicted sportsmen in motion as they artfully deployed taut, well-defined muscles (see Figure 48).¹⁹⁶

Mahonri Young’s drawings and sculptures of laborers further demonstrate how he romanticized working-class men’s physicality. In his early career he sculpted many different “types” of laborers in action: “The Shoveler,” “The Pavers,” “Foundryman,” “The Hod Carrier,” “The Sower,” “The Steamfitter,” and “Wood Chopper.”¹⁹⁷ Whereas Young

¹⁹² Norma S. Davis, *A Song of Joys: The Biography of Mahonri Mackintosh Young, Sculptor, Painter, Etcher* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1999); Steven D. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, 2nd printing edition (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 1991); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917*, Women in Culture and Society Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Jeffrey Ostler and Nancy Shoemaker, “Settler Colonialism in Early American History: Introduction,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2019): 361–68, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.76.3.0361>; Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, illustrated edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987). The dioramas have since been destroyed.

¹⁹³ Charles Burlingham, interview.

¹⁹⁴ Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

¹⁹⁵ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*.

¹⁹⁶ Other sculptures and etchings of prize fighters include *On the Button*, *The Knockdown*, *Beat Him to the Punch*, *Two Boxers and a Referee*, *Main Street Gym*, *Loser Exits*, *Revising Boxer between Rounds*, *Study for in His Corner*, *Knocked-Out Boxer*. See also Davis, *A Song of Joys*.

¹⁹⁷ See also *Woodcutter with Hooked Axe*, *Man Digging*, *Tired Out*. While in Paris in the 1920s, he also sculpted at least two working-class women: a Lobsterwoman and a Breadwoman.

depicted both Black and white prizefighters in his art, he tended to represent the typical laborer as a white man. He even personified “Agriculture” and “Industry” as strapping white men with for the 1939 World’s Fair.

Mervin Bass stood as Mahonri Young’s model for the “Agriculture” sculpture, sharpening a scythe with bare, muscular arms and a lean body (see Figure 49).¹⁹⁸ Although the theme of the fair emphasized “the building of a better world of tomorrow with the tools of today,” Young decidedly showed Bass with a traditional tool of earlier days. His style of depicting men in motion also meant, ironically, that Mervin needed to stand in one position for long periods of time, a sharp contrast to his normal day working and moving around the farm. When asked what Mervin thought of posing, his wife Mary Bruschi Bass Ciuccoli later remarked that “It was tedious. He used to hate it!”¹⁹⁹ Young’s sculptures, sketches, and paintings of the Bass men using traditional agricultural methods fit with his broader practice of observing workers and idealizing physical labor. He did not adopt the role of gentleman farmer like Julian Weir did, but rather positioned himself as an artist documenting the honorable, physical labor of the white working-class man. According to his grandchildren, Young “loved the person who . . . had to work for what he got . . . that’s why he did the studies, in so many cases, of the working man.”²⁰⁰

The bodies of the Bass men were further immortalized in Mahonri Young’s magnum opus, the *This Is the Place* monument. Young acquired a commission sponsored by the Utah State Legislature to craft a landmark commemorating the declaration by his grandfather, Brigham Young, that the Mormons would settle in the Salt Lake Valley after their forced migration across the continent. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Wilford Woodruff stand at the peak of the structure above a depiction of Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow arriving in the valley and large bas-reliefs of the caravan of settlers that made the trek. The monument also depicts fur traders, Spanish explorers, the Reed-Donner party, a Catholic missionary, and Washakie, a Shoshone leader who joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.²⁰¹ *This Is the Place* celebrates colonization of Indigenous land by situating the Mormons as the culmination of a noble progression of Europeans and Euro-Americans to the West.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Charlie Bass, interview; Davis, *A Song of Joys*; Lois Street, “The Statue of Mervin Bass,” *The Ridgefield Press*, November 9, 2000. Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592 includes an entry for “M Posing” for \$2.80 in July 1938, around the time Mahonri was working on the sculpture.

¹⁹⁹ Lois Street, “The Statue of Mervin Bass,” *The Ridgefield Press*, November 9, 2000.

²⁰⁰ Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview.

²⁰¹ Davis, *A Song of Joys*; Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat.”

²⁰² Young was reportedly very proud of his “pioneer” heritage. See Davis, *A Song of Joys*, and Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996.

The monument displays many standing, sitting, and walking bodies with muted musculature and movement compared to Young’s images of laborers and prizefighters. Still, Mahonri Young paid some of the Bass men to pose for him, using their farmers’ bodies as a template for the idealized settlers. Although the Bass family oral histories do not entirely agree, it seems likely that some combination of George, Mervin, and George Albert worked as models.²⁰³ Charles Bass suggested that Young depicted their arms and legs in his rendering of a man wielding an axe, possibly referring to the Reed-Donner Party frieze.²⁰⁴ If so, they inspired the rare image on the monument of a shirtless man grasping an axe mid-swing and baring his muscular back, a nod to Mahonri’s history of depicting strong, working men in motion.

The Bases interacted with their maternalist employer, Dorothy Weir Young, on unequal but generally positive terms and more often bristled at Mahonri Young, who disrespected them in action and idealized them in his art. Young’s grandchildren through a previous marriage visited Branchville on occasion, playing with the youngest Bass sons and, on one spring day in 1942, accompanying George Bass “on the high seat of the [manure] spreader as proud as a peacock.”²⁰⁵ Meanwhile, the Bases spoke kindly of their neighbors and occasional employers, Cora and Charles Burlingham Sr., but did not interact with them often. Betty vaguely remembered Cora as a “sweet lady.”²⁰⁶ Charles Bass described Cora as quiet and enthusiastic about her flower garden, but “other than working for her just doing different odd things, I really didn’t know her that well.”²⁰⁷ Like Dorothy Weir Young, the Burlinghams extended well-intentioned maternalist generosity toward the Bases, from providing opportunities for supplemental income to passing along their boys’ outgrown shoes and clothes. Cora’s brother-in-law, Dr. Robert Burlingham, also treated Charles Bass’s abscessed ears at no charge.²⁰⁸

The limited ways that the Bass children interacted with the two Burlingham boys more starkly reveal the class distinctions between the caretaker family and the Weir sisters’ families. Charles and Orin Bass did not recall playing with the Burlingham boys, and Betty remarked that they “were not allowed to go out of the yard that much. . . naturally, people

²⁰³ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999, interview says Mervin and Eddie; Charlie Bass, interview says George and George Albert; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview and Shaw, 2020 both say Mervin, George, and George Albert; Darla Shaw, 2020; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592 includes an entry in July 1938 for Georgie (Albert) Bass with a note, “M posing 2.80.”

²⁰⁴ Charlie Bass, interview.

²⁰⁵ Ken and Russell, interview; Gardner and McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat,” 195.

²⁰⁶ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

²⁰⁷ Charlie Bass, interview.

²⁰⁸ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview.

with money don't want the caretaker's children running around."²⁰⁹ Orin remembered riding the Burlingham's pony, but only while the family was away in New York City.²¹⁰ Charles Burlingham Jr., on the other hand, recalled playing with Clifford Bass, who was his age and younger than Betty, Charles, or Orin Bass: "[Clifford] used to come over and we'd get in all sorts of trouble together. I remember he introduced us to dandelion wine one time in the woodshed behind his family's house. I think we must have been about eleven... I think the first obscenities we ever heard came from the mouth of Clifford Bass, and we were horrified. And we learned them, of course, but we were horrified."²¹¹

According to Charles Burlingham Jr., Clifford introduced him to a rougher lifestyle than he was familiar with as the son of a prominent New York City lawyer.

Aside from occasional interactions in Branchville, the Bass boys and the Burlingham boys experienced very different childhoods due to their class status. The Weir estate existed as a weekend and summer retreat for the Burlingham children when they weren't at boarding school or at home in New York City. Burlingham Jr. indicated that, as children, he and his brother had access to the entire property. He recalled, for example, sneaking into the barn to give the horses oats against the wishes of George Bass, who would "come rushing in" and "yell at us."²¹² The Besses, in contrast, lived on the site full time but their parents did not own the land, so they were not always allowed across the street from the caretaker's home unless they were working. They attended the local public elementary school in Wilton; some pursued secondary education but not everyone graduated from high school.²¹³ For example, Charles graduated from Ridgefield High School, but Orin left after the tenth grade at the age of 16 to assist his father at the farm full time.²¹⁴ Russell similarly attended Bedford Jr. High in Westport until the tenth grade, at which point his father provided the option to either go to school or find work, and Russell chose work.²¹⁵ Unlike the Burlinghams, the Besses' lives were oriented around labor.

²⁰⁹ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview. Charlie Bass interview and Orin Bass interview also say that they didn't play with the Burlingham boys.

²¹⁰ Orin Bass, interview.

²¹¹ Charles Burlingham, interview.

²¹² Charles Burlingham, interview.

²¹³ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Orin Bass, interview.

²¹⁴ Orin Bass, interview.

²¹⁵ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

Lifestyle and Leisure

Compared to the Burlinghams and the Youngs who usually kept at least two residences, the Bass family of 10 or more lived in the cramped quarters of the caretaker's house. The top floor was arranged into three bedrooms: the parents slept in their own room along with Betty when she was younger; a second room was occupied by Betsey Hall, then Mervin, then Betty; and the rest of the Bass brothers slept in the third room.²¹⁶ The building had one indoor bathroom equipped with a toilet, tub, and running water. Without a water heater, however, cold water needed to be manually warmed over a kerosene heater. The Basses also used an outhouse and, at night, a shared chamberpot that they euphemistically called the honeypot. During the winter, the kitchen stove along with a potbelly stove in the living room served as the main source of heat in the home. Indoor temperatures got so cold at night that the Basses sometimes woke up to a quarter-inch of frost on the inside of the windows; even the glass of drinking water that Bessie kept upstairs would freeze. Before the home was wired with electricity in 1932, the family relied on kerosene lamps for lighting. Charles remembered doing his homework by lamp light at the dining room table.²¹⁷

The introduction of electricity to the caretaker's house in 1932 altered the Basses' standard of living. They transitioned from an ice box to a refrigerator, from hand wringer to washing machine, from kerosene lamps to electric lights, and from a crystal battery radio to an electric radio.²¹⁸ Other changes to the caretaker's home included the addition of lightning rods in the 1940s. Prior to that, according to Charles Bass, "every time we had a storm the lightning would hit the telephone and just—bang!—blew it off the wall."²¹⁹

Although living in a rural area, the Basses frequently visited nearby towns to socialize. Orin remembered riding into Ridgefield to get ice cream at Ancona's grocery store, where the proprietor was a "jolly man" who "told us jokes."²²⁰ Mervin met his wife by socializing with other young people in front of Ancona's store.²²¹ Occasionally the Bass

²¹⁶ The top floor is currently two bedrooms; the larger was split into two. See Kasparian and Phillips, "Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker's House and Caretaker's Garage." See also Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview.

²¹⁷ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Kasparian and Phillips, "Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker's House and Caretaker's Garage."

²¹⁸ Charlie Bass, interview.

²¹⁹ Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview; Kasparian and Phillips, "Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker's House and Caretaker's Garage."

²²⁰ Orin Bass, interview; see also: Biagiotti, *Impact*.

²²¹ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview.

children might go to the movies in Norwalk or Danbury.²²² Russell and Kenneth discussed attending fairs and traveling to square dances.²²³ Socializing may have involved drinking alcohol for George Albert, who, according to Charles Burlingham Jr., got in trouble with the law on occasion for being drunk and disorderly.²²⁴ Betty remembered being particularly eager to leave the farm site and interact with more people, so she joined a church choir in Georgetown.²²⁵ Aside from Betty's singing, the Bass family did not actively regularly participate in a church community, a contrast to white ethnic working-class families in the area.²²⁶

Aside from trips to town, the Besses spent most of their childhood leisure time outside. They often went fishing and swimming in Weir Pond and enjoyed jumping and diving into the water.²²⁷ One time a local friend, Vincent DeForest, took a near-fatal deep dive into the pond.²²⁸ Other neighbor boys and playmates included the Webbs who lived down the road. Charles recalled playing with Dave Webb, George Albert worked with Clayton Webb, and Betty later married Francis Webb.²²⁹ Betty's father built her a dollhouse but, as the lone girl among eight brothers, she did not have many girl friends to play with growing up.²³⁰ She may have joined her brothers, however, in games of cards, croquet, or horseshoes.²³¹ The Besses also rolled down hills and played baseball.²³² In the winter, the children enjoyed sledding and ice skating (see Figure 50).²³³ The Besses frequently hosted relatives from Windham in Branchville, and always enthusiastically celebrated the Fourth of July with fireworks and a large dinner, in part because it also happened to be Bessie Bass's birthday.²³⁴ Although the Besses oriented their lives around labor, they also engaged in childhood play and found opportunities to socialize with friends and family.

²²² Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Charlie Bass, interview.

²²³ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

²²⁴ Charles Burlingham, interview: "Georgie Bass was, I remember, constantly in trouble. He was drunk and disorderly, he was in the pen up at Danbury for three months, you know, for assaulting a policeman, or being drunk or something." Kenneth and Russell also mention him getting a DUI.

²²⁵ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

²²⁶ Shaw, 2020. For example, the McGlynns and Knoches were active in the local Catholic church, as were many members of the Italian immigrant community in Ridgefield.

²²⁷ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Charlie Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

²²⁸ Charlie Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

²²⁹ Charlie Bass, interview; Norman F. Boas, *Nod Hill Wilton, Connecticut—Reminiscences* (self-published, 1996).

²³⁰ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview.

²³¹ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Charlie Bass, interview.

²³² Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

²³³ Bessie Bass Morabito, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview.

²³⁴ Charlie Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

From the Great Depression to World War II

The Basses' 15-year stay at Branchville encompassed the entirety of the Great Depression. Raising a family during a period with high rates of unemployment likely contributed to George and Bessie staying with Dorothy Weir Young over the long term. Charles remembered that “once in a while a tramp would come through,” and Russell recalled how “hobos and tramps” stayed in an area of Danbury called the Barbary Coast near the railroad and taverns.²³⁵ George Albert spent time himself as a transient laborer, “travelling, hitchhiking and jumping freights” across the country after leaving a job out west.²³⁶ This may have been after he reportedly tried joining the military but was denied because “he got picked up for drinking and driving” according to Russell. As a young man with less apparent enthusiasm for farm work than his brothers Mervin or Edward and some degree of trouble with drinking and the law, George Albert sought out other experiences during a period of limited employment. He later told his younger brothers stories about his travels, including clarifying the difference between a hobo and a tramp (one worked and one didn't), recounting the threat of getting picked up to work on a chain gang, and sharing how folks drank black coffee to ward off hunger.²³⁷

By the time George Albert Bass was 25 years old in 1940, he lived in Branchville again with his family and worked for Clayton Webb as a plumber.²³⁸ Life on the farm looked much like it had through the 1930s. His older brother, Mervin, now 28 years old and married, continued to work alongside his father as an assistant caretaker. Edward was 22 years old and exploring his love of horticulture as caretaker for the Burlinghams. Nineteen-year-old Betty helped her mother with domestic duties while her brothers Russell, Orin, and Charles—also in their teens—picked up odd jobs. Outside of chores and school, eight-year-old Clifford and five-year-old Kenneth likely spent most of their days playing.

After more than a decade of relative stability, life for the Bass family would change drastically over the course of the next five years. George Albert, who had been previously rejected by the military, was drafted in 1940 as part of the United States' first peacetime conscription.²³⁹ Betty left the household when she married her neighbor, Francis Webb, on

²³⁵ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview. This may be the area where George Albert got into trouble with the law. Charles Burlingham, interview mentioned George Albert Bass spent time in the Danbury jail for assaulting a police officer or being drunk and disorderly.

²³⁶ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview, mentions that the Burlinghams may have secured the job out west for George Albert Bass.

²³⁷ Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

²³⁸ George Albert Bass's draft card lists Clayton Webb as his employer and the 1940 census lists his occupation as laborer, not farmer. 1940 United States Census, Wilton, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00500; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 1-225; National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; *WWII Draft Registration Cards for Connecticut*, 10/16/1940-03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 23.

²³⁹ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

December 5, 1940.²⁴⁰ When the United States entered into World War II after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Edward joined the Navy. He was later killed in action at sea on November 13, 1942, during the Battle of Guadalcanal.²⁴¹ Russell and Charles followed their older brothers into the military.²⁴² Even Mervin left Branchville, as his role of assistant caretaker was deemed nonessential during wartime, and started working at a nearby defense plant.²⁴³ Orin wanted to join the military, as well, but by then too many brothers were enlisted and he needed to stay in Branchville and help his father on the farm.²⁴⁴

Edward Bass's death gratuity allowed George and Bessie to purchase 10 acres of their own land to farm on Barnum Road in Danbury, Connecticut. They left Dorothy Weir Young's employ in 1944 and lived another 40 years. George Bass passed on April 19, 1983, and his wife followed five years later on June 10, 1988. They both survived into their 90s, and their 72-year marriage produced 9 children and 24 grandchildren (see the Appendix). Mervin Bass preceded his parents in death, passing away in 1954 at the age of 42 from a cerebral hemorrhage.²⁴⁵ After the war he worked for the highway department and when he died he left behind his wife Mary and two children.²⁴⁶ George Albert Bass earned a purple heart in the war, married widow Ida Noonan in 1958, and worked at the Gilbert and Bennett wire manufacturing mill.²⁴⁷ Betty Bass had three children with Francis Webb and later married Peter Morabito and had two more children with him.²⁴⁸ Russell Bass married Edwina Brundage in 1957, raised one adopted son, and also worked at Gilbert and

²⁴⁰ "Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–2001," Connecticut State Library, <https://www.ctatatelibrarydata.org/marriage-records>; see also Charlie Bass, interview.

²⁴¹ Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview; National Archives and Records Administration, Register, World War II Dead Interred in American Military Cemeteries on Foreign Soil and World War II and Korea Missing or Lost or Buried at Sea. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration; State Summary of War Casualties from World War II for Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Personnel [Archival Research Catalog]; Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

²⁴² Charlie Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

²⁴³ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview; Charlie Bass, interview; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, 1999 interview; Orin Bass, interview; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview.

²⁴⁴ Orin Bass, interview.

²⁴⁵ Ancestry.com. US, Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012; Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview; Charlie Bass, interview; Connecticut Department of Health, Connecticut Death Index, 1949–2001, Hartford, CT, USA: Connecticut Department of Health.

²⁴⁶ Shaw, 2020; Westport, Connecticut, City Directory, 1948.

²⁴⁷ "Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–2001," Connecticut State Library, <https://www.ctatatelibrarydata.org/marriage-records>; Danbury City Directory, 1964; Shaw, 2020; Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936–2007.

²⁴⁸ Obituary of Bessie Morabito, *Danbury News Times*, November 15, 2012, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/newstimes/name/bessie-morabito-obituary?n=bessie-morabito&pid=161067827>; Shaw, 2020.

Bennett.²⁴⁹ Charles Bass worked as a meter man for the CL&P Electric Company and lived with his wife, Eunice, and five children in Southington, Connecticut.²⁵⁰ His twin brother, Orin Bass, married Katherine Forster in 1965, had two children, and worked as a carpenter. After serving in the Korean War, Clifford Bass married and had two children with Marjorie Gamans in Connecticut before moving to Florida, marrying Patricia Huff, and raising four more children.²⁵¹ Kenneth Bass married Dorothy Peck, had three children, and worked as a carpenter in Danbury.²⁵²

Betty, Russell, Orin, and Kenneth Bass all made their homes on the land purchased by their parents and their families continued to live there into the 21st century.²⁵³ The four siblings, along with Charles, revisited Weir Farm multiple times between 1999 and 2006 and shared oral histories with National Park Service staff and volunteers. They expressed pride in their family's legacy and work ethic, and their reminiscences reveal how the landscape of the Weir estate and their family's labor on it shaped their memories of growing up during the Great Depression.

Like the Remys before them, the Besses' labor as a family unit created an era of relative stability and continuity on the Weir family farm. The Besses made a living tending the land using many traditional tools and processes, with a few concessions to modern farming techniques. Bessie Bass managed a large household and a cramped living space while many of the Bass men worked full and part-time for the Youngs and Burlinghams. Their employers' maternalist management style resulted in many opportunities for supplemental income while also reinforcing geographic and social class boundaries on the property. With the Besses' departure, the Weir family farm would enter a final era of caretakers and agricultural laborers.

²⁴⁹ "Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–2001," Connecticut State Library, <https://www.ctatatelibrarydata.org/marriage-records>; Danbury City Directory, 1964; Shaw, 2020.

²⁵⁰ Southington, CT, 1951. Southington, CT: Price, Lee & Co., 1951; Shaw, 2020.

²⁵¹ Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File. Washington, DC: US Department of Veterans Affairs; "Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–2001," Connecticut State Library, <https://www.ctatatelibrarydata.org/marriage-records>; Danbury, Connecticut, City Directory, 1959; Social Security Administration; Washington DC, USA; Social Security Death Index, Master File.

²⁵² Danbury City Directory, 1962; Shaw, 2020.

²⁵³ Danbury, CT, 1964. Danbury, CT: The Price & Lee Company, 1964; Shaw, 2020.

CHAPTER FIVE

Domestic and Other Workers, 1929–1957

During their years at Branchville, Dorothy and Mahonri Young hired a wide range of workers in addition to the Bass family. With the exception of a few Irish maids and Mahonri's studio assistants, many local residents of Ridgefield labored for the Youngs as live-out domestic workers and tradespeople. Compared to the turn of the century, workers at Branchville were less likely to be recent immigrants or transient laborers and more likely to be connected with other folks hired at the farm in different capacities. Dorothy Weir Young and Cora Weir Burlingham's maternalist style of property ownership meant that they often returned to the same tradespeople for services, and frequently hired their relatives when possible. They also benefitted from reliable, high-quality work performed by experienced and familiar laborers. This chapter will begin by discussing both the live-in and live-out domestic workers hired by the Youngs and Burlinghams in the mid-20th century. It will then discuss the tradespeople who worked on the Weir family estate, especially the Knoche Family. In a departure from covering workers hired by the Weir sisters, the chapter will consider the labor of Spero Anargyros and other studio assistants hired by Mahonri Young to assist him on the *This Is the Place* monument in his Branchville studio. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief overview of the Gully family, who resided in the caretaker's house in the era after Dorothy Weir Young's death in 1947 until a few years after the passing of Mahonri Young in 1957.

Domestic Workers

As with agricultural labor, domestic labor on Weir Farm looked similar to what it did at the turn of the century, with a few concessions to changing technologies and labor patterns. In a notable continuation from their childhoods, both Dorothy Weir Young and Cora Weir Burlingham continued to hire Irish maids through the 1930s and, in Young's case, through the 1940s. The practice became less common into the 20th century as immigration from Ireland dramatically decreased, first-generation Irish maids aged out, and second-generation Irish women proved less likely to seek out live-in domestic work. Meanwhile, the Great Migration brought many Black women to northern cities like New York who offered

domestic services but tended to prefer live-out arrangements.¹ Mahonri Young’s children were largely raised by a Black housekeeper, Betsy Ann Hilton, in the years before and after his first wife’s death. By the time Young married Dorothy Weir, however, his children were grown, and Hilton had retired to be with her own family in New Jersey.² Dorothy Weir Young continued to keep at least one live-in domestic servant on staff who worked primarily as a cook, and then hired out for laundry and additional cleaning help.³ Mahonri Sharp Young recalled that, at first, Dorothy employed “inherited servants” initially hired by her stepmother, Ella. He conveyed that she then brought on a succession of couples in the New York apartment before moving to Branchville full-time and relying on one maid-of-all-work: Mollie Gleason.⁴

The first half of the 1930s exemplified the transitional period in which Dorothy Weir Young continued to employ long time Weir family domestic servants. For example, Young consistently paid Ada Larabee 20 dollars per month until her death in January 1934, likely for her services at the Weir family property in Windham, Connecticut.⁵ Meanwhile, Mary Hanratty, the beloved servant who raised Young and her sisters and worked for the Weir family since at least the early 1900s, continued to stay with the family through the death of Ella Weir. Dorothy Weir Young employed Hanratty through the mid-1930s, paying her monthly wages of \$32.50.⁶ Young may have also resumed or continued employing Julia Glover in the early 1930s, as well.⁷ Toward the end of her time with the Weirs, some of Hanratty’s checks were addressed to Katie Noonan, and by the end of 1936 the checks to Noonan no longer referenced Hanratty. It remains unclear if Hanratty asked Young to send her wages to a friend or family member—a common practice—or if Noonan replaced Hanratty. Nevertheless, it seems certain that Mary Hanratty was kept on staff by her initial employer’s daughter, who also hired additional maids to keep households running in both New York City and Branchville.

¹ Hasia R. Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

² Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 138, 148, 166.

³ Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁴ Mahonri Sharp Young, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT, Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁵ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; *Willimantic, Connecticut, City Directory*, 1930.

⁶ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. Mary Hanratty received consistent wages of \$32.50 from March 1934 through July 1936.

⁷ Though Julia Glover did not receive checks made out in her name, she did receive a Christmas gift in December 1933, suggesting she still worked for them and possibly received cash wages. A notation for \$150 wages in February 1932 lists “Mary and J,” which could reference Mary Hanratty and Julia Glover. Glover is not mentioned after that.

Myrtle Cogswell may have been one of the additional maids hired by Young. She received payments of 65 dollars in both January and February of 1932, an amount and frequency that suggests live-in work.⁸ Her next payment in April, however, indicated that she earned \$7.25 for one day plus six and a half hours of labor, revealing a likely transition to live-out work. She married Homer F. Steinbaugh on December 10, 1932 and continued to receive occasional wages from 1934 through 1941, probably for taking in the Youngs' laundry when they resided in New York City.⁹ Myrtle Cogswell Steinbaugh's transition to live-out domestic work reflected the broader trend away from in-home laundresses during the Great Depression. Greater access to technology like wringers and even electric washing machines decreased the time and labor required to launder garments, making it more cost effective for wealthier families to send their laundry out. For example, Young paid Steinbaugh around 30 dollars per month for live-out laundry services in the late 1930s—half of what she paid her for full-time labor in 1932.¹⁰ Meanwhile, working women like Steinbaugh still engaged in physically demanding labor and often laundered more than one family's clothes, but could also claim more autonomy than a live-in servant. They did not reside in the same quarters as their employer, were not at the beck and call of their mistress, and could more reasonably marry and live with their own families.¹¹

As Dorothy Weir Young transitioned away from familiar domestic servants, financial records on who she did hire remain spotty through the late 1930s until 1941. The only consistently named people in her ledger during that time were John and Adeline Pisano, who may have been one of the “couples” referenced by Mahonri Sharp Young that helped at the Youngs' New York City apartment.¹² Young likely continued to pay for at least a cook in addition to the couple, but she usually paid wages in cash. Oral histories recalling the

⁸ *Norwalk, Connecticut, City Directory*, 1931 lists her as a domestic servant in Norwalk, Connecticut, further suggesting that Cogswell was engaged in live-in work.

⁹ New York State Department of Health; Albany, NY, USA; *New York State Marriage Index*; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. At least one entry to Cogswell Steinbaugh is noted as payment for laundry; her payments are usually listed in winter and correspond to when Branchville laundresses did not receive payments. T 1940 United States Census, New York, Bronx, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02460; Page: 4B; Enumeration District: 3–24 lists her residence as New York City. The Youngs also occasionally used commercial laundries like Bourke's Criterion (1932–34) and Pearl White and Art Hand Laundry (1935 onward).

¹⁰ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

¹¹ David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981). Some live-out laundresses may have also had more control over their hours and wages, but were also subject to the whims of the market and the challenges of what we would call the gig economy today.

¹² Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young generally paid the Pisanos in the winters, suggesting that they were hired help in New York City. A family fitting their description appear in the 1920 and 1930 censuses in New York City. John Pisano's occupation is listed as a chauffeur, and they had a daughter, Mildred. It is possible that John and Adeline were live-out servants, perhaps a chauffeur and a maid. 1920 United States Census, Manhattan Assembly District 9, New York, New York; Roll: T625_1201; Page: 7A; Enumeration District: 682; 1930 United States Census, Head of the Harbor, Suffolk, New York; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 0104; FHL microfilm: 2341386.

Youngs' life in Branchville during this time occasionally refer to a Black woman who worked as a cook for the couple. Orin Bass remembered how she “washed the chickens out with soap and water because maggots were crawling out of the chickens.” The Youngs preferred their poultry to sit in the basement until “it moved” with larvae, claiming it made the meat “nice and tender.”¹³ The Youngs hiring a Black domestic servant would have reflected changing labor patterns in New York City, but unfortunately no further documentation exists to identify the cook. In addition to paying cash, Young seemingly struggled with high turnover during this time; she sometimes paid employment agencies in New York City to assist with finding help.

In 1941, the Haviland Employment agency connected Dorothy Weir Young with Mollie Gleason, who became the Youngs' sole live-in maid and cook until February 1949. Many people who visited and lived at Branchville remembered Gleason as a steadfast maid-of-all-work. Charles Burlingham Jr. described her as “a lovely, little Irish cook, who was a little bantam person, tiny person.”¹⁴ Mahonri Sharp Young recalled how she “was the cook, chief bottle washer, did all the work—chief slavey.”¹⁵ Mahonri Young's grandchildren also remembered how Gleason “did everything.”¹⁶ Orin Bass referred to her as “a little Irish girl, forty or fifty years old at the time.”¹⁷ Short in stature, Gleason was a constant presence at Branchville in the 1940s and managed a substantial workload.

Mollie Gleason's story began like many Irish maids. Born on March 19, 1889, in County Kerry, Ireland, she immigrated to the United States at the age of 18 on the SS *Adriatic*, arriving on November 1, 1907.¹⁸ She joined the later end of mass emigrations out of Ireland that brought women to the United States and into households like the Weirs to work as domestic servants. In 1910, Gleason worked as a cook for Irish Catholic priests at St. Saviour Church in Brooklyn.¹⁹ In 1920, she likely worked as a maid for the Petherbridge

¹³ Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Bass family members interview notes, interview by Maria Abonnel, May 31, 2006, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁴ Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁵ Mahonri Sharp Young, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁶ Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁷ Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁸ Mollie Gleason petition for naturalization, National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, DC; NAI Title: Index to Petitions for Naturalizations Filed in Federal, State, and Local Courts in New York City, 1792–1906; NAI Number: 5700802; Record Group Title: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009; Record Group Number: RG 21.

¹⁹ 1910 United States Census, Brooklyn Ward 22, Kings, New York; Roll: T624_971; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 0570; FHL microfilm: 1374984.

family in the same borough.²⁰ She continued to live in Brooklyn through 1930, when she was running a boarding house lodging five working Irish men in their 20s.²¹ There, she applied the same household skills she used as a maid: cooking, cleaning, and possibly laundry as well.²² When she applied for naturalization in 1933, she lived in a different location in Brooklyn and listed her occupation as housework.²³ By 1940, she had moved on from Brooklyn and worked as a maid for the Farrar family on Park Avenue on the Upper East Side, earning an annual income of \$360.²⁴ By the time she joined the Youngs at 52 years of age, Gleason had managed a wide range of households, from boarding houses and rectories to a five-person family living on Park Avenue.

Dorothy Weir Young hired Gleason in 1941 to work primarily as a live-in cook, and she accompanied the couple to Branchville on temporary trips and during their permanent residency in the country during World War II. The two women reportedly sat down to plan meals regularly, collaborating on the task of food management.²⁵ To execute the meals, Gleason spent significant energy managing a stove with firewood and coal, just like previous cooks and caretakers' wives. She may have cooked with firewood during the day and kept the stove warm through the night with coal, or she may have exclusively used coal for cooking.²⁶ Charles Burlingham Jr. remembered how Gleason kept coal in a small bucket and would “lift up the burner [on the stove] and throw some coal in there, put the lid back down and poke it around a bit.”²⁷ At the stove, Gleason cooked food delivered from the grocery store by the Bass family, along with the poultry, pork, eggs, and milk that they

²⁰ 1920 United States Census, Brooklyn Assembly District 12, Kings, New York; Roll: T625_1162; Page: 2B; Enumeration District: 679.

²¹ 1930 United States Census, Brooklyn, Kings, New York; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 0060; FHL microfilm: 2341247. One boarder was 30 years old.

²² See Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

²³ Mollie Gleason petition for naturalization, National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, DC; NAI Title: Index to Petitions for Naturalizations Filed in Federal, State, and Local Courts in New York City, 1792–1906; NAI Number: 5700802; Record Group Title: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009; Record Group Number: RG 21.

²⁴ 1940 United States Census, New York, New York, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02654; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 31-1310.

²⁵ Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

²⁶ Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

²⁷ Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

produced. She also made butter and, sometimes in coordination with George Bass, ice cream.²⁸ The Youngs' reduced domestic staff and expanded reliance on the Bases meant that Gleason likely interacted with the caretaker's family frequently.

Although primarily a cook, Gleason also functioned as a maid-of-all-work. She may have cleaned on occasions when Mary Bruschi Bass did not, and she certainly served tea, cocktails, and the meals that she cooked to the Youngs and their guests. She also cleaned the dishes. Betty Bass occasionally helped waitress and recalled how Mahonri Young's dinner guests preferred to help themselves to dishes on the table while Dorothy Weir Young preferred a more formal experience with guests served individually. Dorothy's attention to etiquette reflected her upper-class background and the social circles in which she participated. She depicted a meal scene at Branchville in her painting, *Ladies at Dinner*, including a domestic servant—Mary Hanratty—holding a dish from which a guest retrieved their portion (see Figure 26). Although the painting predated Gleason's time at Branchville, it still conveys the class dynamics of dinnertime as the servant keeps her eyes on the prepared food at a table of refined white women. Meanwhile, those not actively being served look and lean toward each other as if engaging in conversation. The image echoes the memories of Mahonri Young's grandchildren, who described dinner as a formal affair with Mahonri sporting a tie and Dorothy wearing a hostess gown.²⁹

In contrast to Hanratty's white outfit in *Ladies at Dinner*, Mollie Gleason usually wore a green uniform, except when she served dinner in a black dress and white apron.³⁰ Dorothy Weir Young supplied the uniforms. In May 1943, Young paid Lena DeForest 2 dollars and 50 cents to sew or mend Gleason's uniform. DeForest lived locally and briefly resided at the Weir estate in the 1910s when her father, Willis O. Fuller, worked as a caretaker for Julian Weir.³¹ Dorothy Weir Young also spent \$10.63 in 1943 to purchase uniforms at B. Altman & Co., a luxury department store in New York City. Wearing a uniform set Gleason apart from her employers and created a visual class distinction between people who occupied the same domestic space. In contrast, class boundaries for the caretaker's family were not enforced via uniform, but spatially by living in a different home and primarily working outside.

²⁸ Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

²⁹ Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

³⁰ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

³¹ For more on Fuller, see Chapter 2.

Gleason lived in the attic of the main residence at Branchville like the domestic servants before her.³² However, by the early 1940s the top floor boasted a bedroom, radiator heat, and a bathroom with modern plumbing. She also did not need to share the space with three other servants like her predecessors.³³ She may have worked anywhere from 60 to 80 hours per week, with days starting before breakfast and continuing until she finished cleaning up after dinner, which could take until eight or even ten o'clock in the evening.³⁴ Gleason took the traditional Thursdays and Sunday mornings off of work while Dorothy arranged for Bessie Bass and Mary Bruschi Bass to fill in as necessary. Orin Bass drove Gleason to the train to spend her Thursdays in New York City where she could visit her sister, Abbie Stack, who lived in Brooklyn with her husband and four children.³⁵ Orin also drove Gleason to church every Sunday.³⁶ Like many Irish maids, Mollie Gleason maintained her Catholic religious practices and as well as familial and social networks based out of New York City.

Gleason earned a monthly salary that started at 65 dollars for her first year and increased to 70 or 75 dollars through May of 1943. The following year she received a raise to 80 dollars and by January 1945 she made 95 dollars per month. From 1946 to 1949 her income plateaued at \$125 per month, which put her annual income in the top 15 percent of domestic service wage earners in the United States.³⁷ On occasion she arranged with Dorothy Weir Young to send a portion of her wages directly to the Internal Revenue Service, presumably as her income tax payment. Gleason also at times requested part of

³² Mahonri Sharp Young, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

³³ Marie L. Carden and Richard C. Crisson, "Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex," Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT.

³⁴ Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920–1945* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991), 77–81.

³⁵ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Mollie Gleason petition for naturalization; 1930 United States Census, Brooklyn, Kings, New York, Page: 7B, Enumeration District: 0699. Patrick Stack worked as a clerk in a jewelry store in 1930; in the 1920 census he was listed as owning a grocery store.

³⁶ Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. No details about which local Catholic church she attended; could have been in Ridgefield, Georgetown, or Wilton.

³⁷ United States Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Women's Bureau, "Handbook on Women Workers," 1948; United States Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Women's Bureau, "Handbook on Women Workers," 1950.

her income go directly to her sister and brother-in-law in New York, as well as other members of her network.³⁸ Gleason worked long, laborious hours and earned a robust wage that enabled her to support her relations.

Gleason stayed on with the Youngs past Dorothy's death in May 1947. The length of Gleason's employment speaks to a strong working relationship between her and Dorothy Weir Young. Dorothy paid Gleason well and, as with her other employees, covered certain medical expenses.³⁹ In turn, Gleason put substantial time and labor into serving the Young family while living under the same roof. Gleason continued to work for Mahonri Young for another two years after Dorothy passed away, and may have continued to serve Young's son, Mahonri Sharp Young, after that.⁴⁰ Like Mary Hanratty, Gleason spent an extended length of time working for the owners of the Branchville estate and stayed employed by the family after the death of her initial employer. Few records exist to indicate how Gleason spent her later years, but she did live until the age of 78 and was buried in Saint John Cemetery in Queens, New York, in 1967.⁴¹

Across Pelham Lane from the Young residence where Mollie Gleason lived and worked, the Burlingham family also employed domestic servants. Through the 1930s and 1940s, Dorothy Weir Young's sister, Cora Weir Burlingham, spent most weekends and several weeks of summer vacation in Branchville with her husband and two sons.⁴² They likely traveled with at least some of the three domestic servants that lived with them in their main residence in New York City.⁴³ For example, Jan and Clare White remembered "gorgeous lunches" served at Branchville by the cook working for the Burlinghams.⁴⁴ Cora Weir Burlingham's son Bill Carlin similarly recalled eating dinner after skeet shooting "every Saturday during the winter," likely prepared by maids.⁴⁵ In addition to a cook, the

³⁸ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. Other entries included: Marie Bernherd, Catherine Keniry, and Margaret Kenery. Her nieces' names were Mary and Catherine; they may have been the recipients. Gleason also shares a grave with Mary C. Keniry, who died in 1997. Find a Grave, (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/163091718/mary-c-keniry>, accessed January 7, 2022).

³⁹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. At least three entries reference paying Mollie Gleason's medical expenses.

⁴⁰ Mahonri Sharp Young, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Mahonri M. Young Financial Records, WEFA 00143.

⁴¹ Ancestry.com. US, Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2012, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/162054853/molly-gleason>. Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

⁴² Bill Carlin, interview with Bill Russell, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁴³ 1930 United States Census, Manhattan, New York, New York; Page: 1B; Enumeration District: 0533; FHL microfilm: 2341301; 1940 United States Census, New York, New York, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02655; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 31-1318.

⁴⁴ Jan and Clare White, interview with Cathy Granton, August 1994, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁴⁵ Bill Carlin, interview with Bill Russell, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions: "I think the maids prepared the dinner. But I may be wrong about that. Mother was a mean cook too."

Burlinghams probably hired nurses to assist with childcare. Cora's other son, Charles Burlingham Jr., recalled a story told about him as a baby at Dorothy Weir's wedding to Mahonri Young, when he was "put in the hands of some nursemaid, I suppose."⁴⁶ A third domestic may have served as a maid-of-all-work to help with cleaning and waitressing, especially if they followed the common trend of sending laundry out by then.

Like Dorothy Weir Young, Cora Weir Burlingham continued to hire Irish women as domestic servants. In contrast to the many single maids employed by the Weirs over the years, however, the 1930 United States census shows that the Burlinghams employed a 30-year-old married woman named Mary Collins. She immigrated from Ireland seven years earlier and likely worked as the Burlinghams' cook.⁴⁷ Collins' two coworkers, Elizabeth Burns and Rosetta Prunty, were in their 20s and remained single. Few concrete records exist on Burns, but Prunty was born in Longford, Ireland on September 20, 1903. She took the SS *Celtic* to America in August 1926 where she worked as a maid and remained single at least through 1940. When she petitioned for naturalization in 1932, Prunty listed Mary Collins as a witness, who was then working as a cook on Long Island.⁴⁸ Although their paths briefly crossed in the Burlingham home, their connection clearly extended beyond their employment there.

By 1940, no Irish women worked on the Burlinghams' domestic staff. Their three maids—Karen M. Olsen, Maria Hellmure, and Isebel Nicoll—were Norwegian, German, and British immigrants, respectively. All three were single, ranging in age from 29 to 39 years old. They earned \$600 per year, less than Gleason received as maid-of-all work for Dorothy Weir Young, but still more than the average domestic servant.⁴⁹ Cora Weir

⁴⁶ Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁴⁷ 1930 United States Census, Manhattan, New York, New York; Page: 1B; Enumeration District: 0533; FHL microfilm: 2341301; Rosetta Prunty Naturalization Petition, National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, DC; NAI Title: Index to Petitions for Naturalizations Filed in Federal, State, and Local Courts in New York City, 1792–1906; NAI Number: 5700802; Record Group Title: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009; Record Group Number: RG 21.

⁴⁸ Rosetta Prunty Naturalization Petition, National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, DC; NAI Title: Index to Petitions for Naturalizations Filed in Federal, State, and Local Courts in New York City, 1792–1906; NAI Number: 5700802; Record Group Title: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009; Record Group Number: RG 21; Rosetta Prunty Naturalization Declaration, The National Archives at Philadelphia; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; NAI Title: Declarations of Intention for Citizenship, 1/19/1842–10/29/1959; NAI Number: 4713410; Record Group Title: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009; Record Group Number: 21; 1930 United States Census, Manhattan, New York, New York; Page: 1B; Enumeration District: 0533; FHL microfilm: 2341301; 1940 United States Census, New York, New York, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02655; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 31-1318.

⁴⁹ 1940 United States Census, New York, New York, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02655; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 31-1318. The median wage for women domestic servants in 1946 was 373 according to United States Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Women's Bureau, "Handbook on Women Workers," 1948. The median wage for domestic servants in 1948 was \$425 according to United States Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Women's Bureau, "Handbook on Women Workers," 1950.

Burlingham's reliance on immigrant workers even as Irish maids became less available reflected changing labor trends. However, she did not appear to hire Black women despite their increasing presence in the domestic labor pool during the Great Migration.

Given their weekend trips to the country, the Burlinghams likely sent their laundry out in New York City and did not regularly require similar services in Branchville. The Youngs, in contrast, paid local women to launder their clothes during extended stays. From 1933 into 1935, Dorothy Weir Young hired Elizabeth Knoche, the daughter of her longtime neighbors Joseph and Mary Knoche. Unlike live-in servants who received standard monthly wages, Knoche charged a daily rate and Young paid her monthly. For example, in 1933 and 1934, Elizabeth Knoche earned anywhere from 25 to 48 dollars per month. She likely charged 9 or 10 dollars per day and washed the Youngs' laundry as frequently as once per week. Knoche may have taken in the laundry at her parents' home, or she may have traveled to the Young home and washed clothes and linens using the large tubs in the basement and an outdoor clothesline.⁵⁰ In 1935, around the time when payments to Elizabeth Knoche stopped, Dorothy Weir Young paid her sister, Theresa Knoche, 20 dollars for a washing machine.⁵¹ Young may have purchased the machine either for the caretaker's house or for her basement, and it could have ranged from a hand-cranked or motorized wringer to a more sophisticated set up with an agitator and drain. The prior year she also purchased an electric ironer for \$59.50. Instead of lifting heavy stove-heated irons, the launderer could now sit in front of a three-foot-wide appliance and feed clothing through an ironing roll.⁵² If Young's hired help did travel to the estate to wash clothes in the 1930s, they had access to a more modern set up than their live-in predecessors.

By 1936, Elizabeth Knoche left her parents' home to join the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and Dorothy Weir Young increasingly relied on Mary Bruschi Bass for both laundry and housecleaning. Mary Bruschi was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to Gino and Domenica Bruschi in December 1915.⁵³ Her family later moved to Ridgefield, joining a thriving Italian immigrant community. Her father worked as farm laborer on a local estate

⁵⁰ Carden and Crisson, "Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex," 82–83; Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Mahonri Young's sketch, *Washline and Barn* (included in Larkin, "The Weir Farm") shows a clothesline, though it's unclear where it is located.

⁵¹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

⁵² Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. The ironer still exists in Weir Farm's collection (WEFA 9684).

⁵³ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; 1920 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_178; Page: 11B; Enumeration District: 153; 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 21A; Enumeration District: 0174; FHL microfilm: 2339994; 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 13B; Enumeration District: 1-124; Connecticut Department of Health. Connecticut Death Index, 1949–2001. Hartford, CT, USA: Connecticut Department of Health.

before transitioning to construction and later opening his own restaurant on Route 7.⁵⁴ Mary met Mervin Bass while socializing at Ancona's food store in Branchville and later married him on November 5, 1934, in her parents' home. The couple lived on the third floor of the building next door to Gino's restaurant.⁵⁵ They welcomed a son, Robert, in December 1937 and a daughter, Joan, in 1944.

Dorothy Weir Young first hired Mary Bruschi in October 1934 before she married Mervin Bass, and then more consistently after Elizabeth Knoche's departure from September 1935 through 1942. As assistant caretaker, Mervin commuted to the Young's estate every morning. Mary accompanied him on Thursdays, the same day that Mollie Gleason usually took off to visit the city. Mary recalled that Mervin would "drop me off at the main house and I would stay there all day. Then he would pick me up at night and take me home."⁵⁶ While at the Youngs, Mary Bruschi Bass accomplished tasks that supplemented or fell outside of Gleason's job. For example, in December 1936 she spent 10 and a half hours doing laundry at a rate of 3 dollars per hour and was also reimbursed for soap. In September 1939, Young paid Bass \$24.30 for laundry and \$14.15 for cleaning.⁵⁷ In other months, Young noted paying Bass a rate of three dollars per day, possibly for cleaning or cooking in Gleason's absence.⁵⁸ On a typical day of cleaning, Bass dusted, swept, and scrubbed the upstairs bedrooms and bathrooms before working her way downstairs. She reportedly never cleaned the kitchen because that was Mollie Gleason's domain.⁵⁹

In later years, Mary Bruschi Bass Ciuccoli fondly described her relationship with Dorothy Weir Young: "When my grandfather lost \$40.00 and was terribly upset, Mrs. Young gave me her own money to give to him. She also lent us her car to go to the photographers after our wedding and paid for the birthing expenses of my two children. When medical bills came due she also helped us out. On holidays Mrs. Young always gave us money and boxes of delicious candy. She was a very kind lady."⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Aldo P. Biagiotti, *Impact: The Historical Account of the Italian Immigrants of Ridgefield, Connecticut*, (Ridgefield, CT: Romald, 1990), 237–38; 1920 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_178; Page: 11B; Enumeration District: 153; 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 21A; Enumeration District: 0174; FHL microfilm: 2339994; 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 13B; Enumeration District: 1-124.

⁵⁵ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁵⁶ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁵⁷ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. Similarly, in January 1940, Young paid Bass \$18.90 for laundry and \$3.50 for housework.

⁵⁸ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000 mentioned that she cooked and cleaned.

⁵⁹ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000.

⁶⁰ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000.

She also recalled how Young would rock her daughter, Joan, as a baby and “even asked me to bring Joan over when I no longer worked for her.”⁶¹ Young paid Bass to pose for her in September 1935, likely for the portrait, *Seated Girl Reading Newspaper* (see Figure 47).⁶² Young most clearly demonstrated her maternalist approach to employment in her interactions and transactions with Mervin and Mary Bass. By paying Mervin assistant caretaker wages, employing Mary as part-time help while they started their family, and offering financial assistance and gifts to the young couple, Dorothy’s obligation to and relationship with her employees extended well beyond the official wages that she paid her primary caretaker, George Bass.

When Mervin Bass left Weir Farm to work at a defense plant during World War II, Mary Bruschi Bass’s availability to help Young also decreased. Young only paid Mary once in 1943 and on a few final occasions in 1944. During this period, Mary’s mother Domenica Bruschi took over laundry services.⁶³ According to Dorothy’s checkbooks, Domenica may have first taken in the Youngs’ laundry a couple of times during the transition from Elizabeth Knoche to Mary Bruschi Bass. For example, Dorothy paid “Minnie” Bruschi \$24.35 in January 1936 for 22.5 hours of laundry, plus the costs of soap and electricity.⁶⁴ During World War II, however, she did laundry for the Youngs nearly every month from December 1942 to April 1944. While the earlier entries suggested that Bruschi took in the laundry and charged Dorothy for electricity, the later entries only include costs for labor and soap, leaving it unclear whether Bruschi washed clothing in her own home or at the Youngs. Either way, Dorothy Weir Young clearly relied on a handful of interconnected Ridgefield women for domestic labor.

When Domenica Bruschi stopped doing laundry for the Youngs in 1944, another local woman, Virginia D’Addario picked up the job and continued until January 1948. Like the Bruschi women, D’Addario was a member of the Italian American community in Ridgefield. She was born Virginia DiCamillo in Italy in 1900 and immigrated to the United States in 1920. She married Frank D’Addario in March 1921, and they lived on Branchville

⁶¹ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000.

⁶² Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

⁶³ United States, Selective Service System. World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls; The National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; World War II Draft Cards (Fourth Registration) for the State of Connecticut; Record Group Title: Records of the Selective Service System; Record Group Number: 147; Series Number: M1962; Gino Bruschi Naturalization, National Archives at Boston; Waltham, Massachusetts; ARC Title: Naturalization Record Books, 12/1893–9/1906; NAI Number: 2838938; Record Group Title: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009; Record Group Number: RG 21; 1920 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_178; Page: 11B; Enumeration District: 153; 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 21A; Enumeration District: 0174; FHL microfilm: 2339994; 1940 United States Census, Census Place: Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 13B; Enumeration District: 1–124; Ridgefield, Connecticut, City Directory, 1966; Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936–2007.

⁶⁴ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592, assuming Dorothy’s note, “lux,” referred to soap.

Road in Ridgefield.⁶⁵ Her husband worked as a laborer at the Gilbert and Bennett wire mill in Georgetown, Connecticut. She raised three children and, although she lists her occupation as housewife on the 1940 census, she clearly took on laundry for the Youngs as a side job later in the decade.⁶⁶ She earned anywhere from 10 to 25 dollars per month, less than Mary Bruschi Bass or Domenica Bruschi, both of whom tended to make 20 or 30 dollars per month.⁶⁷ Perhaps she charged a lower rate or took in less laundry than the Bruschi women, or perhaps her wages reflected that she did not take on additional house cleaning tasks.

From Elizabeth Knoche to Virginia D’Addario, Dorothy Weir Young hired known local women to do laundry and assist with housecleaning tasks that fell outside the substantial workload of her cook and maid-of-all-work, Mollie Gleason. Although Young’s employment of an Irish maid signaled a continuation of practices from her youth, the changing realities of domestic labor pools meant that she increasingly relied on live-out service, as well. Even the Burlinghams, who continued to depend on full-time servants, transitioned to hiring white immigrant domestics from countries other than Ireland. Whereas the majority of domestic servants that attended to Dorothy and Cora in their childhood were quick to move on for a better job in New York City, the women who increasingly attended to the Branchville estate in the 1930s and 1940s continued to live in the area and often held a connection to the next woman who did laundry or cleaned for the Youngs.

Knoches

At the center of a complex local network of Branchville domestic workers, carpenters, stonemasons and neighbors stood Joseph and Mary Knoche. A respected and prolific stonemason, Joseph Knoche owned 28 acres on Pelham Lane down the road from Julian Weir. He knew Weir as his neighbor and recommended several workers who assisted on Weir’s construction projects. His wife, Mary, was an Irish servant employed by Weir’s wife, and Knoche’s daughter, Elizabeth, took in laundry for Dorothy Weir Young. The Knoches were active members of the Ridgefield community and members of the local Catholic church frequented by many Irish and Italian families in town.⁶⁸ They lived for a time next door to the painter, Mike McGlynn, and they were familiar with the Bass family. Into the 1930s and 1940s, Joseph Knoche worked on projects for Dorothy Weir Young and

⁶⁵ “Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–2001,” Connecticut State Library, <https://www.ctatatelibrarydata.org/marriage-records>.

⁶⁶ 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 0173; FHL microfilm: 2339994; 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 14A; Enumeration District: 1-124; Ridgefield, Connecticut, City Directory, 1958; Biagiotti, *Impact*, 249–50; “Mrs. D’Addario, Native of Pescara,” *Ridgefield Press*, June 19, 1975.

⁶⁷ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

⁶⁸ It is possible, for example, that Mollie Gleason attended the same church as the Knoches.

built iconic stone walls for Cora Weir Burlingham. His sons, Terrance and Joseph Albert, completed a significant amount of carpentry work on the two properties, as well. The Knoche family story connects multiple aspects of labor on Weir Farm and demonstrates the growing interconnectedness among workers at the Branchville estate over the course of the 20th century.⁶⁹

Joseph John Knoche was born in July 1868 in Germany on the cusp of unification. He attended school there until the eighth grade.⁷⁰ As a teenager sometime between the years 1882 and 1885, he joined the same wave of emigration out of the industrializing country that brought Paul Remy to the United States.⁷¹ Knoche lived and worked in New York City for a time; possibly in a stone yard and possibly for his father’s ice and coal business.⁷² His descendants believe that he also spent a short time out west working for a mining operation before returning to New York.⁷³ He became a naturalized United States citizen as a 30-year-old in October 1898.⁷⁴ By 1900 he was living with his brother, John Knoche, in Ridgefield and working as a stone mason.⁷⁵ Knoche married Mary Margaret Hickey on April 23, 1905, in Manhattan and they made their home in Ridgefield, Connecticut (see Figure 51).

Mary Margaret Hickey was born in Ireland in 1879 and immigrated to the United States as an 18-year-old in 1897. She also joined a much larger emigration out of her country, and her records remain obscured among the many young single Irish women who left to find work.⁷⁶ She likely worked as a domestic servant in New York City at the turn of the

⁶⁹ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, January 14, 2022.

⁷⁰ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 62A; Enumeration District: 1-124.

⁷¹ 1910 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T624_127; Page: 11B; Enumeration District: 0105; FHL microfilm: 1374140; Macklin Reid, “Walls are stonecutter’s legacy,” *Ridgefield Press*, April 9, 1998; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. Some sources suggest he immigrated as young as 12 or 13, which does not align with genealogical sources.

⁷² Macklin Reid, “Walls Are Stonecutter’s Legacy,” *Ridgefield Press*, April 9, 1998; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. *New York, New York, City Directory*, 1886, 1888, and 1889 list a Joseph Knoche working at 436 E 75th St. in the ice business, as a peddler, and selling coal.

⁷³ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁷⁴ Joseph Knoche Naturalization Record, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, DC; Index to New England Naturalization Petitions, 1791–1906 (M1299); Microfilm Serial: M1299; Microfilm Roll: 20.

⁷⁵ 1900 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 4; Enumeration District: 0094; FHL microfilm: 1240134. Around that time, John Knoche’s sons Joseph and John, and his nephew, Charles, all attended the local Ridgefield public school with Carl and William Remy. Souvenir Student List for Branchville Schoolhouse, 1899–1900 school year, 1900, Private Collection.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 3 for more on Irish domestic workers at Weir Farm and beyond.

century, reportedly hired by the Weir family for a time along with her sister, Katherine.⁷⁷ That may be how she met Weir’s neighbor, Joseph Knoche.⁷⁸ After marrying Knoche and moving to Ridgefield, Mary was active in the local Catholic church, St. Mary’s, and raised four children: Elizabeth, Terrance, Teresa, and Joseph.⁷⁹ The family lived at 131 Barry Avenue, next door to Mike McGlynn, a painter and brother to the plumber who worked on Weir’s home in 1911. Mary Knoche passed away in 1927 at only 48 years of age.⁸⁰

At some point in the early 20th century—possibly as early as 1893—Joseph Knoche accumulated enough money through his stonemasonry work to purchase 28 acres on Pelham Lane in addition to the home on Barry Avenue. He and his family spent significant time on the property and was one of Julian Weir’s few neighbors in the early 20th century. Pelham Lane even used to be called Knoche Lane. Weir and Knoche regularly had friendly conversations, shared drinks on Weir’s porch, and the families were close enough that Weir family photograph albums include a picture of Cora Weir holding Elizabeth Knoche as a baby (see Figure 52).⁸¹ Julian Weir once called the fire department because he saw smoke on Knoche’s property and could not contact Joseph, who was actually out burning brush.⁸² Knoche recommended masons to Weir as he executed the 1911 Platt improvements to his property.⁸³ Knoche likely did not work for Weir himself; at that time he ran his own contracting business and did not switch to exclusively doing stonework until later in the 20th century.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁷⁸ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. It may have been unconventional at the time for a German immigrant to marry an Irish immigrant. Notably, however, they were both Catholic.

⁷⁹ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007; 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 17A; Enumeration District: 0174; FHL microfilm: 2339994.

⁸⁰ 1920 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_178; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 153; 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 17A; Enumeration District: 0174; FHL microfilm: 2339994; Find a Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

⁸¹ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, January 14, 2022.

⁸² Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁸³ WEFA 448; Box 1, Envelope 11. For more, see Chapter 1.

⁸⁴ Macklin Reid, “Walls Are Stonecutter’s Legacy,” *Ridgefield Press*, April 9, 1998; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

According to family and friends, Joseph Knoche embraced a strong work ethic. Charles Burlingham Jr. described Knoche as “a wonderful, powerful old German man with a great, white handlebar moustache.”⁸⁵ Charles Bass recalled that “he was a quiet person; when he went to work he just worked.”⁸⁶ His employees could not always keep up. Orin Bass remembered how, at around 70 years of age, Knoche fired a 60-year-old working for him because the laborer “was too slow.”⁸⁷ Another time, he learned that his employees tried to collect a full day’s pay for a half day’s work, and decided to stop hiring others and continue his business by himself.⁸⁸ Knoche never joined a union, but did collaborate with friends like Mr. Bloomer, who “had horses and equipment that was used to move stone for building projects” according to the Knoche family.⁸⁹ He never used paper plans or designs, but created an image in his mind based on what his customers wanted.⁹⁰

Knoche completed projects throughout the region, including chimneys, wells, and stone walls. Notable customers included Mark Twain in Redding, Connecticut, and the Doubledays in New York.⁹¹ He built an enduring stone foundation and fireplace at the foot of Nod Hill Road, but according to the Knoche family, “the man who wanted the house built did not have enough money to finish it, and had to abandon the project.”⁹² During another job, Knoche suspected a wealthy client might not pay and installed a piece of glass in the chimney he built. When the client found that their chimney didn’t work, he secured payment from them before dropping a rock down the chimney and clearing the flue.⁹³

⁸⁵ Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁸⁶ Charlie Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 1, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁸⁷ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, October 23, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁸⁸ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁸⁹ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; could be Thomas or Frank Bloomer according to Jack Sanders, “The Ridgefield Encyclopedia,” accessed August 10, 2021, <https://ridgefieldlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Ridgefield-Encyclopedia-Updated-4-14-2020.pdf>; Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, January 14, 2022.

⁹⁰ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007 WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁹¹ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, January 14, 2022; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions: Knoche built stone walls “in Ridgebury, on West Mountain across from Notre Dame, at the intersection of Barry Ave. and High Ridge, on the Wagner property.”

⁹² Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁹³ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

Cora Weir Burlingham hired Joseph Knoche for several stonework projects on her property. He famously crafted the rubble-filled walls along Nod Hill Road and Pelham Lane, dubbed “The Great Wall of Cora” (see Figures 53 and 54).⁹⁴ George Bass would bring stones from the fields and Knoche “would pick the ones he wanted,” according to Charles Bass.⁹⁵ Knoche showed up to work every morning just after seven o’clock and used a star drill, hammer, and chisels to split and shape the stones, leaving behind marks that are still visible to the keen observer (see Figure 55).⁹⁶ He then constructed the entire wall without cement, strategically placing stones into two laid walls filled with rubble in between to help with flexibility on shifting terrain. The outer wall facing the road consists of large, formal stones while smaller, more rounded rocks make up the wall facing inward toward the Burlingham property.⁹⁷

Mahonri Young, given his fascination with depicting working men in his art, sketched Knoche and his fellow workers building the wall (see Figure 56).⁹⁸ Charles Burlingham Jr. recalled: “Mahonri Young used to go out and sketch them, because he loved American laborers. He loved doing the rippling muscles and the stances and the postures of people building stone walls, and . . . he was out there with them half the time . . . he’d bring a little camp stool out and watch them, he’d draw them as they work.” Just as the Remys and

⁹⁴ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, January 14, 2022; National Park Service, *Weir Farm: The Stone Walls*, <http://npshistory.com/brochures/wefa/stone-walls.pdf>; Mahonri Young, *Joe Knoche Builds a Stone Wall*. National Park Service, *Weir Farm: The Stone Walls* suggests that Dorothy Weir Young named the wall “The Great Wall of Cora”; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007 claimed that Mahonri Young named it; and Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989 believed that either his father, Charles Burlingham, Sr. or Mahonri Young named the wall. The Maureen K. Philips in “Weir Farm Historic Structures Report, Vol. III: Burlingham Complex,” National Park Service, 1995 dates the stone wall construction in the 1930s, but Young’s sketch is dated 1942. Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996 says that Mahonri’s Knoche sketches are not dated.

⁹⁵ Charlie Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 1, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007 also suggests that the stones were most likely found on the property or maybe quarried from a quarry on Branchville Road.

⁹⁶ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

⁹⁷ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; National Park Service, *Weir Farm: The Stone Walls*, <http://npshistory.com/brochures/wefa/stone-walls.pdf>.

⁹⁸ Figure 3 clearly shows the Burlingham home in the background. For another sketch of the Knoches, see Mahonri M. Young, *Joe Knoche Builds a Stone Wall*, ca. 1943, Ink, 7 ¾ × 10 ½, WEFA AP00770. Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, claimed that Joe stopped hiring workers by the time he built the Great Wall of Cora, but Young’s sketches show multiple workers. Assuming the walls were not built during World War II, the other workers may be Knoche’s sons.

Basses appeared in Weir and Young’s artwork, the Knoches’ physical labor and craftsmanship inspired Mahonri Young. His sketches of the stonemasons fit within his broader work capturing the physicality of manual labor.

Cora Weir Burlingham took great pride in the walls built by Joseph Knoche. Charles Burlingham Jr. remembered how his mother considered it “criminal” for her children to “take a stone off of the top of one of her stonewalls and throw it somewhere.” For example, he once removed stones from the wall and threw them in an attempt to dislodge an oriole’s nest from a nearby elm tree. When his mother found out, “she made us go out in the fields and find as many of the stones as we could and put them back on the wall.”⁹⁹

In addition to the “Great Wall of Cora,” Joseph Knoche and his sons built other stone structures on the Burlingham property. For example, Knoche likely constructed the potting shed with stones he had cut and cast aside as part of a previous project.¹⁰⁰ He crafted other walls on the property, including the wall around the sunken garden. The Knoches also built a stone patio, a square stone structure connected to the wall between the barn and the woodshed, and possibly, though less likely, the stone garden terraces on the Burlingham property.¹⁰¹

Dorothy Weir Young also paid Joseph Knoche to do stonework on her property, as early as 1934 for unspecified stonework. She then hired him to build stone terraces for her gardens in 1935 and 1937, and then again in 1939 for “blasting stone in garden.”¹⁰² From July 1938 to January 1940, she made five significant payments to Knoche for a temple, though it is possible the project did not progress beyond transporting stone blocks down to the pond.¹⁰³ She also hired Joseph Knoche for a number of repairs from 1941 to 1944.

⁹⁹ Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁰⁰ The following sources attribute the potting shed to Knoche: Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996, 222; Maureen K. Philips, “Weir Farm Historic Structures Report, Vol. III: Burlingham Complex,” National Park Service, 1995. Mary Ann Sheehy shared the story about the cast-off stones in Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020.

¹⁰¹ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Maureen K. Philips, “Weir Farm Historic Structures Report, Vol. III: Burlingham Complex,” National Park Service, 1995; Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996, 222; Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. The Knoche family in their interview did not think that Knoche built the stone terraces; the two NPS reports suggest that he did.

¹⁰² Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 48; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

¹⁰³ Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 48; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; “Weir Pond,” Weir Farm National Historical Park (US National Park Service), accessed August 8, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/wefa/learn/historyculture/places-weirpond.htm>.

Although the carpentry work was likely executed by his son, Joseph Albert Knoche, the elder Knoche may have completed chimney repairs.¹⁰⁴ Joseph Knoche’s familiarity with the folks living at Weir Farm also extended to the Bass family. Mary Bruschi Bass remembered that Knoche, or “Nappy” as they called him, made a crib for George Bass’s children, and Mary used the crib for her babies, as well.¹⁰⁵

As Joseph Knoche aged, his oldest daughter Elizabeth—who did laundry for the Youngs—joined the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.¹⁰⁶ His younger daughter, Theresa Knoche, went to college, married Joseph Sheehy in New York City on March 2, 1946, and raised three children: Joseph, Mary, and Elizabeth.¹⁰⁷ Dorothy Weir Young depicted Theresa in her portrait, *Theresa and Tommy* (see Figure 57).¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, Joseph Knoche’s sons followed the family tradition of craftwork and became carpenters. From 1932 to February 1942, Dorothy Weir Young hired Terrance for at least one project nearly every year; in 1934 she paid him as many as seven times.¹⁰⁹ The jobs ranged from small odd jobs paying a couple of dollars to \$135 in May 1935 for carpentry work on the third floor bedroom in the main residence. Medium-sized projects included fixing doors, building shelves, and installing windows.¹¹⁰ Terrance’s younger brother by 10 years, Joseph Albert Knoche, started working on jobs for Dorothy Weir Young in the 1940s, such as fixing the ridge board of the house, putting a cement floor in the chicken house, or installing floors in the caretaker’s house after the Bass’s departure.¹¹¹

Terrance and Joseph Albert Knoche may have also worked on the significant alterations that Cora Weir Burlingham undertook in the 1930s after she acquired the Webb property. In addition to hiring Joseph Knoche to complete stonework, Burlingham

¹⁰⁴ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592.

¹⁰⁵ Mary Bass Ciuccoli, interview by Darla Shaw, November 13, 2000, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁰⁶ Macklin Reid, “Walls Are Stonecutter’s Legacy,” *Ridgefield Press*, April 9, 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; “Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–2001,” Connecticut State Library, <https://www.ctatatlbrarydata.org/marriage-records>.

¹⁰⁸ No entries in Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592 mention paying Theresa for posing; the painting likely predates the checkbooks.

¹⁰⁹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592. Every year except 1937.

¹¹⁰ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

¹¹¹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; given Joseph Knoche’s focus on stonework during that time, it seems likely that DWY was paying his son, Joseph Albert Knoche.

collaborated with designer Nelson Breed to enlarge the residence. The addition included a dining room and kitchen ells; she later added a greenhouse to the kitchen and a shed to the barn. The Knoche brothers most likely did carpentry work on any or all of these changes.¹¹²

At the start of World War II, both Terrance and Joseph Albert Knoche officially worked as carpenters for local contractors Driscoll and Sweeney.¹¹³ Terrance then served in the war and Joseph Albert worked as a state police dispatcher.¹¹⁴ In 1945, the two returned to carpentry and went into business together as Knoche Brothers Inc. Their father passed away in 1949. Terrance assumed the title of president while his wife, Helen, worked as the company secretary. They lived in the family home at 131 Barry Avenue with their son, Terrance Jr. The property also housed the office and a work shed.¹¹⁵ Joseph Albert Knoche served as vice president and lived with his wife, Margaret, and son, Joseph Knoche III, on the Knoche land on Pelham Lane near the Burlinghams and Youngs.¹¹⁶ Knoche Brothers Inc. thrived as a business and employed so many carpenters that, at one point, one worker's sole responsibility was to build stairs.¹¹⁷ They also hired Joseph Knoche III, who went to college for accounting and banking.¹¹⁸ Dorothy and, later, Mahonri Young continued to hire the Knoche Brothers for unspecified projects into the 1950s.¹¹⁹

Dorothy Weir Young hired one last Knoche in addition to Joseph, Elizabeth, Terrance, and Joseph Albert: Joseph's nephew, Edward Knoche. He worked in the building trades like his extended family, working at various times as a bricklayer, plasterer, and

¹¹² Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, October 23, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Maureen K. Philips, "Weir Farm Historic Structures Report, Vol. III: Burlingham Complex," National Park Service, 1995; Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, "Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site," Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996; Bill Carlin, interview with Bill Russell, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Charles Burlingham, interview by Doug DeNatale and Cathie Barner, March 17, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹¹³ Terrance Knoche and Joseph Knoche Draft cards, National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; WWII Draft Registration Cards for Connecticut, 10/16/1940–03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 220.

¹¹⁴ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020. They also mentioned that the Knoche brothers started their business before the war; that is not reflected in their draft cards.

¹¹⁵ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Ridgefield, Connecticut, City Directory, 1958, 1960, 1983.

¹¹⁶ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Ridgefield, Connecticut, City Directory, 1958, 1960, 1983.

¹¹⁷ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020.

¹¹⁸ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020.

¹¹⁹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Mahonri M. Young Financial Records, WEFA 00143.

mason.¹²⁰ Relatives recalled that he worked on bridges in New York City as an engineer during the Great Depression.¹²¹ In May 1942, he rebuilt a chimney for Young, and in the fall of 1944, he helped out on the farm after the Bass family departed. He lived nearby on Pelham Lane and could assist with farm work and cutting wood.¹²²

Through the 1930s and 1940s, the Youngs and Burlinghams hired a total of five different Knoches for jobs ranging from stone masonry and carpentry to laundry and agricultural labor. Joseph and Mary Knoche’s connections to the Weir family also extended back to the previous generation, and their grandchildren would later contribute oral histories and volunteer with the Weir Farm National Historical Park.¹²³ Joseph Knoche’s great-granddaughter, Johanna, even worked as a National Park Service employee on the site in the 21st century (see Figure 58).¹²⁴ The Knoche family’s persistent presence in Branchville speaks both to changing labor patterns in New England as well as their strong reputation and reliable craftsmanship. Whereas the workers and proprietors of the Weir estate at the turn-of-the-century were all newcomers to the area, by the 1930s and 1940s established relationships among families shaped economic relationships on the site.

Other Tradespeople Hired by the Youngs

Apart from the Knoches, Dorothy Weir Young hired other local tradespeople to make alterations to the Branchville property. Like her father, she embraced white settler assumptions regarding property ownership that required making “improvements” to the buildings and landscape. As established, she did not make radical changes to the property or shape the landscape to meet her artistic vision, but largely kept the site running as a modest farm and weekend retreat. Most of the projects focused on updating and repairing utility systems as well as painting and repairing the main residence and caretaker’s house. Previous

¹²⁰ 1930 United States Census, Stamford, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 31A; Enumeration District: 0208; FHL microfilm: 2339995; 1940 United States Census, Stamford, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 12B; Enumeration District: 1-153; Stamford, Connecticut, City Directory, 1940.

¹²¹ Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, January 14, 2022.

¹²² Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007 referenced Anne Knoche, Edward Knoche’s wife, who lived in a converted garage on the family property on Pelham Lane. Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, January 14, 2022, asserted that Edward owned his own property on Pelham Lane.

¹²³ Darla Shaw, “The Knoche Family, Builders of Stonewalls for Weir Farm,” <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-knoche-family-builders-of-stonewalls-for-weir-farm.htm>; The Knoche grandkids also lugged ice from the pond to the ice house for the Burlinghams, according to Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, March 20, 2020.

¹²⁴ Darla Shaw, “The Knoche Family, Builders of Stonewalls for Weir Farm,” <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-knoche-family-builders-of-stonewalls-for-weir-farm.htm>; Joseph and Mary Ann Sheehy, interview with Rachel Boyle, January 14, 2022. Johanna is the daughter of Joe Albert Knoche Jr. and Patricia Sheehan. See family trees in appendix.

historic structures reports detail most of the alterations made on the property over the years; this section will focus more specifically on projects for which information exists on the workers who implemented the changes. Young kept a ledger tracking projects, expenses, and notable events at the Branchville farm in addition to her meticulous checkbooks, and those records help shed light on the workers who shaped the landscape of the Weir estate.

For example, as early as 1927 Young paid Charles Weitzel \$1,469.82 to install plumbing for two bathrooms in the main residence and the bathroom in the caretaker's house.¹²⁵ Young hired Weitzel routinely until the end of her life, and after that Mahonri Young continued to pay him for plumbing projects. The son of German immigrants, Weitzel was born in 1895 and worked as a plumber in Ridgefield for most of his life. He raised three daughters and a son with his wife, Elizabeth.¹²⁶ Orin Bass recalled how Weitzel repeatedly advised Dorothy Weir Young against turning her heat down below 50 degrees, which she frequently did to save money. One winter all of the pipes froze solid, broke, “and there was water all down through the floor” in her Branchville home. According to Bass, “it cost her more money to replace the pipes than to keep the furnace up to a certain temperature.”¹²⁷ In addition to installing and repairing pipes as necessary, Weitzel also installed and performed maintenance for water heaters, radiators, and water pumps at Branchville. He also turned water on and off whenever the Youngs arrived or departed their country estate for the season.¹²⁸

Plumbing projects that involved new lines required not just a plumber, but a contractor to dig trenches for laying pipe. For example, before Weitzel could install plumbing in 1927, Dorothy Weir Young paid another party \$621.82 to dig and blast for pipes. Similarly, when Weitzel laid new lines to the caretaker's house in 1943, Young paid Joseph Bacchioci to dig the attendant ditches. Bacchioci was an Italian immigrant who lived in Ridgefield and ran his own construction company.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482. This interpretation of Dorothy's inscription in the Branchville Book differs from that in Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker's House and Caretaker's Garage,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2008, 65.

¹²⁶ 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 20A; Enumeration District: 0174; FHL microfilm: 2339994; 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 5B; Enumeration District: 1–126; The National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; World War II Draft Cards (Fourth Registration) for the State of Connecticut; Record Group Title: Records of the Selective Service System; Record Group Number: 147; Series Number: M1962; Ridgefield, Connecticut, City Directory, 1966.

¹²⁷ Orin Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 2, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

¹²⁸ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

¹²⁹ Biagiotti, *Impact*, 227.

Young hired another Italian Ridgefieldian, Vincent Bedini, for several projects that also involved digging and hauling. Bedini immigrated to the United States in 1907 and grew his business after buying a farm on North Salem Road in 1924. He began by plowing and mowing with horses for pay, and then bought a truck to start hauling sand and gravel, as well. By 1939, he worked as a general contractor and employed 40 workers.¹³⁰ Young hired Bedini for several projects in 1937 and 1938, including work on the artesian well and the pump house. An unspecified payment to Bedini in June 1938 suggested that he charged \$0.95 per hour. Notably, Bedini repaired and reinforced Weir Pond in December 1937 for about \$350.¹³¹

When Dorothy Weir Young installed a new fireplace in her dining room in the winter of 1937, she hired a handful of familiar local workers: Vincent Bedini, Terrance Knoche, and Mike McGlynn.¹³² The team represented a cross-section of Ridgefield's tradespeople: first- and second-generation Italian, German, and Irish workers. She purchased the fireplace from Builders Millwork Co. Inc. for 50 dollars and paid Bedini 20 dollars and 70 cents, possibly to transport it. Knoche built the mantel at the same time as he completed other carpentry projects at the house for a total of 30 dollars and McGlynn painted the fireplace for 8 dollars. Young hired McGlynn on other occasions, too. He plastered the dining room in November 1936, painted the inside of the main residence in April 1937, and painted the ceiling of the piazza in June 1941.¹³³ Young repeatedly hired the same local tradespeople from the Ridgefield area, many of whom likely knew each other as neighbors and from shared projects like installing Young's new fireplace.

The addition of a studio for Mahonri Young constituted a significant alteration to the landscape at Weir Farm in 1932. Young's son-in-law and landscape architect Oliver Lay designed the building; he was a graduate of the Columbia University School of Architecture and worked at the New York City Parks Department. He was also the son of landscape architect Charles Downing Lay (a longtime friend of Mahonri Young) and grandson of

¹³⁰ Biagiotti, *Impact*, 231.

¹³¹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 10, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. Dorothy Weir Young paid Vincent Bedini a total of \$372.71 in January 1938, noting "Dam at B'ville; fireplace 20.60" suggesting a \$352.11 cost for the dam.

¹³² Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946. Weir also mentions "Alden," but cannot identify him; she pays him \$329 in 1930.

¹³³ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

portrait artist Oliver Ingraham Lay. Like the architects who made alterations to the Weir residence earlier in the 20th century, Lay had a personal connection to the proprietors and occupied the same social status.¹³⁴

A local Wilton building company, the Meyer Brothers, executed Lay's plans for the studio at a cost of \$4,648.13.¹³⁵ Sons of first- and second-generation German immigrants, Fritz and Charles Meyer worked for local builder George Taylor before forming a partnership in 1914. Their mill stood on Wolfpit Road along the Norwalk River in Wilton for decades. In addition to millwork and residential construction, Meyer Brothers built numerous local buildings in town including the Wilton Library, the Center School, and the Barringer Building. The brothers were major local employers and hired up to 80 employees at one point. As civic leaders, they organized and joined Wilton's Volunteer Fire Department, created a swimming pond for local youth by damming the Norwalk River by their mill, donated a full basement while building Center School, and supervised the volunteer construction of the American Legion.¹³⁶ Hiring the Meyer brothers represented yet another example of the Youngs turning to local tradespeople for construction projects. When the water tank on top of Young's studio needed mending a year after construction, neighbor Bill De Forest remembered wielding a blow torch on a hot summer day to repair it.¹³⁷

A few other less familiar but still local names appear in Dorothy Weir Young's ledgers. For example, well before Terrance Knoche was old enough to do any woodwork, Dorothy Weir hired carpenter Charles Nash in 1927 to complete a project at Branchville property, possibly related to the installation of bathrooms.¹³⁸ Another carpenter, Daniel Tobin Jr., worked on the caretaker's house and the porch on the main residence in the early 1940s. His Irish immigrant parents had lived and worked on the property as caretakers for Julian Weir before he was born.¹³⁹ Instead of hiring McGlynn again in 1944, Dorothy Weir

¹³⁴ Gardner and McKay, "An Artists' Retreat," 175; Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, "Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site," 141, 146; WWII Draft Registration Cards for New York City, National Archives at St. Louis, Missouri, Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹³⁵ Marie L. Carden and Richard C. Crisson, "Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex," Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹³⁶ Russell, *Wilton, Connecticut*, 351–53.

¹³⁷ Bill and Myrtle DeForest, interview with Doug DeNatale, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹³⁸ Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

¹³⁹ 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut, Roll: m-t0627-00498, Page: 2B, Enumeration District 1-126; Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Ella Baker Weir Diary, WEFA 499.

Young hired local painter Harry D. Hull to paint and paper inside the farmhouse after the Bass family moved out.¹⁴⁰ Both Nash and Hull were born in Connecticut to parents also born in Connecticut, and so had even deeper generational roots in the region compared to the Tobins, Knoches, or McGlynns.

In addition to hiring help for plumbing, heating, and construction projects, Dorothy Weir Young frequently paid Harry N. Perregaux for wiring and electricity needs at the Branchville estate. She first paid him to bring electricity to the house, barn, and caretaker's house in January 1932 for a total of \$707.70. From then on, she hired him nearly yearly for smaller projects ranging in cost from \$1.50 to \$40.¹⁴¹ Perregaux grew up in Torrington, Connecticut, the son of two Swiss immigrants. By the 1930s he ran his own business out of Ridgefield and married Ruth Miller, an insurance broker.¹⁴²

Finally, a veterinarian and blacksmith also routinely appeared in Young's financial records. Valentine M. Knapp ran his business out of Danbury and regularly tested and treated Young's cows, horses, dogs, and cats.¹⁴³ The blacksmith, Harry Thomas, lived even closer on Catoonah Street in Ridgefield with his wife, Minolia, and three daughters.¹⁴⁴ Young hired Thomas two to three times per year in the 1930s, and more frequently in in the early 1940s. He shod horses and smithed iron implements as needed (see Figure 59).¹⁴⁵ Given how frequently their paths crossed, the Bass family was familiar with Thomas, and sometimes George Bass shod horses when Thomas was not available.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ McGlynn would have been 82 in 1944 (he lived until he was 97). Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482; 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 9A; Enumeration District: 1-124.

¹⁴¹ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

¹⁴² 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 3B; Enumeration District: 0174; FHL microfilm: 2339994; 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 63A; Enumeration District: 1-126; National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; WWII Draft Registration Cards for Connecticut, 10/16/1940–03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 323; Ridgefield, Connecticut, City Directory, 1966.

¹⁴³ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482.

¹⁴⁴ 1920 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_178; Page: 14A; Enumeration District: 153; 1930 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 0174; FHL microfilm: 2339994; 1940 United States Census, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 16A; Enumeration District: 1-126; Ridgefield, Connecticut, City Directory, 1958.

¹⁴⁵ Dorothy Weir Young checkbooks, WEFA 15592; Dorothy Weir Young, "Branchville Book," 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482; Charlie Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 1, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Russell and Kenneth Bass, interview by Michelle Gutmann, December 10, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁴⁶ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

Meanwhile, across Pelham Lane, Cora Weir Burlingham continued to hire help after the Basses departed for Danbury. For example, she hired a local man named Pete Green to cut wood and haul away brush from the property.¹⁴⁷ Another worker, Gianvincenzo (Vinny) Marsili, worked part-time as a gardener for Burlingham for 18 years. Marsili immigrated from Italy as a 29-year-old in 1930, married, and raised three children in Ridgefield. He worked full-time for the Gilbert and Bennett Manufacturing Company for 28 years; he would work the night shift there and then another 4 to 5 hours for the Burlinghams. He weeded, pruned, and planted trees, shrubs, and flowers in Burlingham’s expansive gardens. During the winter he painted garden tools and kept walking paths cut for the Burlinghams. He also completed repairs on the stone wall along Nod Hill Road.¹⁴⁸ Marsili would be one of the last hired workers at the Weir family estate, as few significant improvements took place on the property after the 1940s. Meanwhile, a very different category of skilled worker arrived at Branchville in the late 1940s: studio assistants for Mahonri Young as he sculpted the *This Is the Place* monument.¹⁴⁹

Studio Assistants for *This Is the Place*

From 1941 to 1947, Mahonri Young crafted the *This Is the Place* monument in his Branchville studio to commemorate Euro-American settlement of Utah. For the first three years of the project, Young mostly worked alone creating sketch models.¹⁵⁰ As discussed in Chapter 4, he paid several members of the Bass men to pose for him. He also immortalized his young grandson, Charles Lay, in his designs.¹⁵¹ However, in his advancing age Young required assistance with the physically demanding work of turning sketch models into larger-than-life casts. A young sculptor named Spero Anargyros persuaded his way into the position of assistant on the project and spent almost three years at Branchville aiding Young.

¹⁴⁷ Margaret (Peg) Knoche, Elizabeth Sheehy, Mary Carty, Joe Sheehy, Joseph Albert Knoche, interview by Jamie Peters and Dr. Darla Shaw, November 9, 2007, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁴⁸ Child Associates and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, “Cultural Landscape Report for Weir Farm National Historic Site,” Brookline, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1996, 222; Notes from Meeting with Vinny Marsili, September 28, 2001, WEFA. See also Bouton Funeral Home, “Obituary for Gianvincenzo Marsili,” accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.boutonfuneralhome.com/obituary/gianvincenzo-marsili>.

¹⁴⁹ Marie L. Carden and Richard C. Crisson, “Weir Farm, Historic Structures Report, Vol. I: The Site and Weir Complex,” Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT, 331 shows an untitled sketch by Mahonri Young of assistants working in his studio, dated around 1938, which preceded work on *This Is the Place*. There may have been other undocumented studio assistants at Branchville prior to Spero Anargyros, or the sketch is misdated.

¹⁵⁰ Norma S. Davis, *A Song of Joys: The Biography of Mahonri Mackintosh Young, Sculptor, Painter, Etcher* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 220–35.

¹⁵¹ Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Davis, *A Song of Joys*.

Spero Anargyros was born on January 23, 1915, in New York City to Drosos and Martha Anargyros. His father was a Greek immigrant who worked as a florist and raised two sons with Martha Carlson, a second-generation Swedish American.¹⁵² Anargyros grew up in the city and took an art course in high school that sparked an interest in ceramics and portraits. He earned a scholarship for the Art Students League of New York and met Mahonri Young there in the mid-1930s.¹⁵³ Although he never studied with Young, they became friendly while Anargyros worked at a sculpture house and did castings for students in Young’s class.¹⁵⁴ Anargyros continued to pursue a sculpting career, securing a federal commission through the Works Progress Administration to complete a bas relief sculpture in a New Jersey post office.¹⁵⁵ In 1940, he was employed by the Manhattan Wax and Candle Company and first approached Mahonri Young requesting to assist him with the *This Is the Place* monument.¹⁵⁶ However, Young had not yet signed a contract for the commission.¹⁵⁷

By the time Young began working on the monument in earnest, the United States entered World War II and Anargyros was stationed in northern Africa, leading an ambulance unit and continuing to practice his art when possible. In 1943, he even met the emperor of Ethiopia and crafted his portrait bust with clay.¹⁵⁸ In the fall of 1944, he returned to the United States and approached Young again about assisting with the monument, even following him to Salt Lake City to discuss the opportunity.¹⁵⁹ Anargyros secured the position, and moved into the caretaker’s house at Branchville with his wife, Florence, in

¹⁵² Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936–2007; 1930 United States Census, Manhattan, New York, New York; Page: 4B; Enumeration District: 0386; FHL microfilm: 2341288.

¹⁵³ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁵⁴ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁵⁵ Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Gabriel Donio, “The Man behind the Missing Mural at the Post Office,” *Hammonton Gazette*, April 30, 2021, <https://www.hammontongazette.com/post/the-man-behind-the-missing-mural-at-the-post-office-042821>.

¹⁵⁶ National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; WWII Draft Registration Cards for New York City, 10/16/1940–03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁵⁷ Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 220–235; Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions. In Spero’s account, Young was still raising funds.

¹⁵⁸ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Davis, *A Song of Joys*.

¹⁵⁹ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 240

October 1944.¹⁶⁰ He continued working at a defense plant in Tarrytown, New York, and commuted 35 miles every day back to Branchville at his own expense to work a second shift as Young’s assistant.¹⁶¹ He later recalled, “It was kind of rough, but to me it was one of the great experiences of my life, and a great education.”¹⁶²

Anargyros worked six days per week for Young, shifting to full-time once he was able to stop working for the defense plant. The pair rarely took days off. Every day they took a mid-afternoon break with some tea served by Mollie Gleason, enhanced with rum, honey, and cream skimmed from the pans of cow’s milk in the pantry. Living in the country was a new experience for Anargyros, a self-proclaimed city boy. He hunted for rabbits and squirrels, and learned how to make “a beautiful squirrel pie.”¹⁶³ He got along well with Dorothy Weir Young during his stay, describing her as “a wonderful woman.”¹⁶⁴

His work in the studio required a tremendous amount of physical labor. In *A Song of Joys*, Norma Davis describes Anargyros’ job: “His first task was to make enlargements from the small models Mahonri used to propose the project. These were the working clay models that would be used by Young to add fine details. When he finished with the working models, they had to be enlarged to their final size. At this point, Anargyros built armatures covered with lathing strips, applied a layer of burlap and plaster, and then applied shellac. Clay could then be built up on the armatures and the enlargement transferred from the working models to the clay using a pointing device.”¹⁶⁵ Anargyros completed the physical labor that Young could not easily accomplish in his advanced age. He also felt a sense of urgency to ensure the project finished on time, which would have been impossible for Young to do alone. Anargyros preferred to work without a shirt, explaining: “I was macho. I had to convince these guys it could be done. . . [sculpture artists] have to be an architect,

¹⁶⁰ Dorothy Weir Young, “Branchville Book,” 1927–1946, Weir Family Papers, Diaries, Ledgers and Notebooks, Box 7, WEFA 482; Bill and Myrtle DeForest, interview with Doug DeNatale, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT. WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁶¹ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996; Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 240–46.

¹⁶² Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, 4.

¹⁶³ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996. In the 1996 interview, Anargyros tells a comical story: “I’m a city boy and when I first took a trip in the country to go on vacation with my mother who was driving. I looked and I said, ‘Oh Ma, look, a male cow!’ [laughter] I’m sure she almost had an accident.”

¹⁶⁴ Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁶⁵ Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 241; Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, 12; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, 3, 9. George Lay similarly described how Spero “helped with the very large sculptural pieces in working up the various initially clay models, and then would blow them up to the plaster casts.” Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

engineer, shoemaker, bootblack, everything.”¹⁶⁶ Young’s grandson Charles Lay remembered Anargyros as “a very strong, sort of dynamic guy and he adored Mahonri and really enjoyed working with him.”¹⁶⁷

Indeed, Young and Anargyros seemed to enjoy a strong working relationship. In his recollections, Anargyros indicated a great deal of admiration for Young and insisted on addressing him as “Mr. Young” when he worked at Branchville.¹⁶⁸ In turn, he felt respected by Young. He recalled that, to Young, “you were another human. You weren’t a tool or a machine . . . which is what happens in a lot of studios.”¹⁶⁹ Young encouraged Anargyros to leave his initials on every piece of the monument and allowed him to craft the seagull that would sit on top of the monument behind statues of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Wilford Woodruff.¹⁷⁰ Young insisted on rigorous historical accuracy in every depiction on the monument, and Anargyros participated in that research.¹⁷¹ While working, the two men discussed Mormon history, and Anargyros delighted in listening to Young share what he called “incidental knowledge . . . of no great import but of tremendous interest to me.”¹⁷²

Young and Anargyros’ mutual respect resulted in the two men defending each other while fighting to secure payment for their labor. Young struggled with obtaining timely payments from the monument committee, and often paid Anargyros out of his own pocket. When the committee wanted Young to hire a less expensive assistant, Young asserted that Anargyros was not just a modeler, but an experienced sculptor and skilled mechanic. “Without him,” Young implored, “I cannot see any chance of getting the monument done.”¹⁷³ Meanwhile, Anargyros defended Young by interrupting a meeting among members of the committee in Massachusetts, insisting that they pay Young for Anargyros’s wages as agreed in the contract.¹⁷⁴ He “got tough” with the leadership because he believed

¹⁶⁶ Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁶⁷ Mahonri Sharp Young, George Lay, Charles Lay, Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview by Doug Seemans, August 7, 1989, Branchville, CT Weir Farm Heritage Trust, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT.

¹⁶⁸ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996.

¹⁶⁹ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976.

¹⁷⁰ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996. Regarding his initials, Anargyros asserted: “he TOLD me to. That’s something an assistant would never ask to do.”

¹⁷¹ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, 16; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, 9.

¹⁷² Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996.

¹⁷³ Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 246.

¹⁷⁴ Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996. Anargyros says Boston might be the Cambridge meeting referred to in Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 247.

“they were picking on” Young.¹⁷⁵ Ultimately, the committee agreed to paying Anargyros’s wages, though payments in Young’s checkbooks still suggest that the wages still came through his accounts.¹⁷⁶ He paid Anargyros around \$4,200 in wages in 1945, delivered in inconsistent sums that averaged \$350 per month.¹⁷⁷ Beginning in December, however, Anargyros consistently received \$500 per month through the completion of the project in the summer of 1947.¹⁷⁸

As part of the back-and-forth between Mahonri Young and the committee, an established Mormon sculptor Torleif Knaphus arrived in Branchville in 1945 to assist with the monument. Knaphus was a Norwegian immigrant who had completed a significant amount of work commissioned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, from temple artwork and busts of notable Utahns to the *Handcart Monument* in Temple Square.¹⁷⁹ Knaphus did not easily fit into Young and Anargyros’ dynamic. Anargyros derisively referred to him as “a joker from Salt Lake” who “was of no use to us whatsoever. He wouldn’t take directions. He wanted to model the stuff the way he wanted to model.” Knaphus was also homesick for his family and fell physically ill with pneumonia for three weeks. He promptly returned to Salt Lake City.¹⁸⁰ Young needed the committee to reimburse him for Knaphus’s 17 dollars per day wages, as well as for the housing the Youngs provided during his short stay.¹⁸¹

Mahonri Young’s checkbook also included a payment to Spero Anargyros’ wife, Florence “Nedra” Harrison Anargyros, for \$240 in November 1945.¹⁸² She occasionally assisted in the studio shellacking or working on the enlarging machine.¹⁸³ Working behind the scenes on a Mormon monument proved to be one of the more understated activities in her colorful life. Florence Harrison was born on December 3, 1915, in New York City to Florence and Leverett Roland Harrison, and lived in the city at least until she was eight years old. At some point her family moved to Tifton, Georgia, where she grew up and was named “Miss Tifton High School.” She then attended Emerson College in Boston, acted for

¹⁷⁵ Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996.

¹⁷⁶ Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996; Mahonri M. Young Financial Records, WEFA 00143.

¹⁷⁷ MMY’s income taxes list paying \$4,206; adding up the checks he wrote to Anargyros totals \$4,221.84.

¹⁷⁸ Mahonri M. Young Financial Records, WEFA 00143.

¹⁷⁹ Davis, *A Song of Joys*; “Torleif Soviren Knaphus,” Find a Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/138223134/torleif-soviren-knaphus>.

¹⁸⁰ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, Davis, *A Song of Joys*.

¹⁸¹ Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 248; Mahonri Young Income Tax Statement, 1945, WEFA.

¹⁸² Mahonri Young Income Tax Statement, 1945, WEFA; Mahonri M. Young Financial Records, WEFA 00143; *A Song of Joys*, 244.

¹⁸³ Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996. For photograph of Florence Anargyros shellacking, see Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 244.

a time in Florida, and then moved to New York and sought work as a model. She served as the inspiration for Dragon Lady in the *Terry and the Pirates* comic book and performed on horseback with the quadrille at the New York World’s Fair in 1939. Harrison married Spero Anargyros on October 21, 1940, and reportedly trained to become a pilot during World War II. She reunited with her husband when he returned from the war, and they moved to Branchville. After completing the monument, the couple moved to San Francisco, where she studied cytology. She divorced Anargyros in 1969, became a certified scuba diver, and briefly remarried in the 1970s. She supervised the cytology laboratory at UC San Francisco until her retirement in 1988, and passed away in 2004 at the age of 88.¹⁸⁴

To meet their deadline, Young and Anargyros needed help casting the larger sections of the monument. They worked with Spero’s former employer, Alec Ettl, who ran the Sculpture House in New York City. Anargyros described Sculpture House as staffed by “technologists” who were not sculptors but still did enlarging and casting.¹⁸⁵ Ettl founded the studio after immigrating from Hungary in 1883 and it remains in operation today. Anargyros shared an image with Norma Davis for *A Song of Joys* in which Mahonri and Spero stand in front of the “Trappers and Fur Traders group” alongside Alec Ettl and two of his workers: Hugo Ricardi and “Smitty” (see Figure 60). Young may have also temporarily brought on a former student and recent navy veteran, Lewis Iselin, to assist with casting.¹⁸⁶ Although a number of workers briefly interacted with the monument-in-progress, from Florence Anargyros and Torleif Knaphus to Ettl and his employees, Anargyros later asserted that he and Young did the bulk of the work in their two-and-a-half years together.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Davis, *A Song of Joys*; Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, 6; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996; “Nedra Harrison Anargyros,” accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Nedra-Harrison-Anargyros-model-for-cartoon-2689733.php>; San Francisco, California, City Directory, 1948; Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936–2007; 1920 United States Census, Manhattan Assembly District 12, New York, New York; Roll: T625_1207; Page: 4B; Enumeration District: 911; New York State Archives; Albany, New York; State Population Census Schedules, 1925; Election District: 37; Assembly District: 12; City: New York; County: New York; Page: 13; 1930 United States Census, Stamford, Fairfield, Connecticut; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 0203; FHL microfilm: 2339995; 1940 United States Census, Stamford, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00498; Page: 18B; Enumeration District: 1-140; Bonne Davis Cella, *Fixing the Moon: The Story of the First Presidential Pilot and Aviation Pioneer Lt. Col. Henry Tift Myers* (Macon, GA: Henchard Press, 2005); Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War Two* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1994). In the later part of her life, she went by, “Nedra.”

¹⁸⁵ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, 10; Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 246; WEFA HP01152; “About Sculpture House,” accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.sculpturehouse.com/t-about.aspx>.

¹⁸⁶ Davis, *A Song of Joys*, transcribes a letter in which Young is requesting to hire Iselin, but it does not seem that he ever did. Anargyros never mentioned him, he does not appear in Young’s checkbooks, and it seems that they used Sculpture house to cast the two large groups that Young and Anargyros needed help with: the *Spanish Explorers* (the “Escalante” group) and *Trappers and Fur Traders* (the “Ashley” group).

¹⁸⁷ Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996: “basically creating the sculpture was primarily between Mahonri and myself.”

While the sculptures were cast in bronze and transported to Salt Lake City, Anargyros assisted Young with another commission to craft a sculpture of Brigham Young to represent the state of Utah in the United States Capitol Building in Washington, DC. They completed the model before leaving for Salt Lake City to finish installation on *This Is the Place*. Anargyros oversaw most of the installation, and the two were present for the monument’s dedication on July 24, 1947.¹⁸⁸ Spero and Florence Anargyros soon moved to California. Spero spent time in Los Angeles doing portrait busts of the cast of *Morning Becomes Electra* before returning to San Francisco and building his own studio. In his ensuing career, Anargyros built sculptures for the Palace of Fine Arts and the California State Capitol as well as medallions for commemorations of several national parks and statehood anniversaries.¹⁸⁹ Like Young, Anargyros preferred realism to abstract art, once remarking, “There is enough beauty around us to copy. . . . Why try to improve on it by imagining things?”¹⁹⁰

Spero and Florence Anargyros divorced in 1969. Spero was married to Barbara Brooks for seven years in the 1970s and then wed Maria Ester Mendez Dequiroga in 1982. He passed away on September 10, 2004, in San Francisco following a brief illness at 89 years old. He effusively shared his experiences working on *This Is the Place* in interviews in 1973 and 1996. He unequivocally stated, “I’m proud that I worked on it as an assistant.”¹⁹¹

End of an Era and the Gully Family

1947 marked a year of significant transition at Branchville. Dorothy Weir Young passed away in May, and *This Is the Place* was dedicated in June. Around that same time, the last long-term tenant family moved into the caretaker’s house: the Gullys.¹⁹² Mahonri Young, in his advanced age, took on a limited role as property owner in the following 10 years and spent less and less time at the estate after his wife’s death. He increasingly relied on his son-in-law, Oliver Lay, and Oliver’s brother George, to help manage the property.¹⁹³ Young also paid his granddaughter, Darcy Lay Doyle, and her friend to go to the house “a lot” to

¹⁸⁸ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976; Davis, *A Song of Joys*, 250–56.

¹⁸⁹ “Spero Anargyros—Renowned S.F. Sculptor,” accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Spero-Anargyros-renowned-S-F-sculptor-2725343.php>; Spero Anargyros and Maria Ester Anargyros, interview by Norma Davis, June 30, 1996, 17–18; San Francisco, California, City Directory, 1948.

¹⁹⁰ “Spero Anargyros—Renowned S.F. Sculptor,” *SF Gate*, accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Spero-Anargyros-renowned-S-F-sculptor-2725343.php>.

¹⁹¹ Spero Anargyros, interview with M. Lewis Dittmore Jr., June 1976, 10.

¹⁹² Mahonri Young checkbooks, WEFA. William Gully starts getting consistently paid in 1947, which roughly corresponds to when the Anargyroses moved to San Francisco.

¹⁹³ Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, “An Artists’ Retreat: J. Alden Weir’s Farm in Connecticut,” Weir Farm National Historic Site Historic Resource Study, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2009, 200–201.

clean the place “because he did nothing.”¹⁹⁴ Although the Burlinghams continued to own and manage their property, dramatically fewer workers spent time on the land than when Julian Weir and Dorothy Weir Young managed it. Servants did not attend to the domestic space and few if any tradespeople were hired to implement changes to structures or the landscape. “Improvement” was no longer a priority for the proprietor of Weir Farm from 1947 to 1957, as evidenced by photographs from 1958 that show the barn in disrepair with detached doors and missing windows.¹⁹⁵

Based on Mahonri Young’s weekly payments of \$87.50 to William R. S. Gully from May 1947 to February 1948, the Gullys may have initially worked the grounds as caretakers. By 1952, however, the traditional arrangement of the caretaker’s family living in the farmhouse and tending the property may have shifted. A random note survived among Young’s financial records, entitled, “Gully Rent, 1952,” in which William’s wife, Mary, wrote: “Hope to have more next week, Bill only worked 5 days last week & week before.”

Numbers jotted on the note suggest that the total rent due was \$250.25. Apparently, the Gully family needed to find work elsewhere to afford rent and continue living in the caretaker’s house.¹⁹⁶ Although city directories continued to list William Gully as “gardener,” he likely ceased substantial agricultural activities or operated at a significantly limited scale compared to the Basses or Remys.¹⁹⁷ Despite the fact that the Gullys were not tasked with realizing a landlord’s vision of the property like their predecessors, their presence on the site continued to shape the landscape until they left after the death of Mahonri Young.¹⁹⁸

William Gully Jr. was born in Danbury, Connecticut on March 2, 1904, to William and Martha Bell Gully. His father worked a series of working-class jobs, including driving a delivery wagon, working in a fur shop, and farming as a hired hand. Gully attended school until the fifth grade and likely started working shortly thereafter; at 16 years old he was employed as a hatter in Danbury. By 1930, he lived with his widowed father and three

¹⁹⁴ Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

¹⁹⁵ WEFA AHP001322, AHP01323, AHP01332.

¹⁹⁶ Mahonri M. Young Financial Records, WEFA 00143. According to Lance Kasparian and Maureen K. Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2008, 49: “The local Wilton City Directory listed William Gully as ‘gardener’ from 1950–1961.”

¹⁹⁷ Kasparian and Phillips, “Historic Structures Report, Vol II-B: Caretaker’s House and Caretaker’s Garage,” 49.

¹⁹⁸ According to *Westport, Connecticut, City Directory*, 1959; *Danbury, Connecticut, City Directory*, 1960.

siblings in North Salem, New York, and worked in road construction.¹⁹⁹ There, he met Mary M. Coulter, and the two married on October 3, 1934, in New York City.²⁰⁰ They continued to live in New Salem until at least 1940, when Gully listed his occupation as a farm laborer in the federal census.²⁰¹ Two years later, the family had moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut, where Gully found a job at the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Manufacturing Company.²⁰² From there, Gully connected somehow with Mahonri Young and moved into the caretaker’s house at Branchville after the Anargyroses moved out.

While at Branchville, the Gullys raised three daughters and seven sons who likely attended Wilton public elementary school and Ridgefield High School.²⁰³ Mahonri Young’s granddaughter Darcy Lay Doyle remembered playing with the Gully kids when she visited. Grandson Charles Lay recalled visiting the barn where Mr. Gully would milk the cows and playfully “squirt . . . a little milk at you.”²⁰⁴ Jim Brown, a neighbor who grew up on Old Branchville Road, also played with the Gully children and remembered them caring for cows and chickens on the Weir property. Beyond that, however, he “had the idea they were subsistence farming, and quite a poor family.” He recalled a kitchen garden south of the caretaker’s house, and while they “may have sold some of what they produced . . . mostly they lived off it.” He did not believe that they owned their own farming equipment, but likely borrowed or shared any that they needed. Brown thought that several old, abandoned cars resided on the property during that time, possibly in the hay field to the north of the caretaker’s house.²⁰⁵ Doris Andrews’ daughter, who lived on the site after the Gullys,

¹⁹⁹ Social Security Administration. Social Security Death Index, Master File. Social Security Administration; 1910 United States Census, Danbury Ward 1, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T624_129; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 0062; FHL microfilm: 1374142; 1920 United States Census, Danbury Ward 1, Fairfield, Connecticut; Roll: T625_174; Page: 15A; Enumeration District: 97; 1930 United States Census, North Salem, Westchester, New York; Page: 3B; Enumeration District: 0291; FHL microfilm: 2341398; National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; WWII Draft Registration Cards for Connecticut, 10/16/1940–03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 172; 1940 United States Census, North Salem, Westchester, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02811; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 60-252.

²⁰⁰ “Connecticut Vital Records—Index of Marriages, 1897–2001,” Connecticut State Library, <https://www.ctatatelibrarydata.org/marriage-records>.

²⁰¹ 1940 United States Census, North Salem, Westchester, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02811; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 60-252.

²⁰² National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; WWII Draft Registration Cards for Connecticut, 10/16/1940–03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 172.

²⁰³ 1940 United States Census, North Salem, Westchester, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02811; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 60-252; “Obituary of Alice Ceperley,” Cornell Memorial Home,” accessed August 10, 2021, <https://cornellmemorial.com/tribute/details/8172/Alice-Ceperley/obituary.html>; Norman F. Boas, *Nod Hill Wilton, Connecticut—Reminiscences* (self-published, 1996); Jim Brown, interview with Sarah Olson and Gay Vietzke, Weir Farm, June 14, 1994, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions; “US, School Yearbooks, 1880–2012,” Ridgefield High School, 1958.

²⁰⁴ Darcy Doyle, Charles Mahonri Lay, and Mahonri Mackintosh Young II, interview with William Russell, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut, January 9, 2009, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

²⁰⁵ Jim Brown, interview with Sarah Olson and Gay Vietzke, Weir Farm, June 14, 1994, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

recalled that the former tenants “threw all their trash down the ravine.”²⁰⁶ The house itself was also “in very poor condition” according to Jim Brown, and Orin Bass had heard that “the kids had knocked holes through the walls.”²⁰⁷ The Andrews daughter similarly recalled that “the walls were just a horrible mess” after the Gullys departed around 1958 and moved to Danbury.²⁰⁸

The Gullys’ decade in the caretaker’s house represented an aberration in a broader history of laborers creating a place for leisure and artistic work according to the vision of the extended Weir family. Young did not hire the Gullys to improve or preserve the property, and they interacted with the landscape according to their needs and with significant economic limitations. In contrast, both Dorothy Weir Young and Cora Weir Burlingham sought to preserve and improve their father’s estate by employing local, interconnected workers to farm, do laundry, clean house, repair and construct structures, and update utilities. They also hired domestic servants like their mother and stepmother did before them. Even Spero Anargyros’ manual labor as a studio assistant at Branchville helped realize his employer’s artistic vision, not unlike the agricultural workers and tradespeople hired by Julian Weir to create an idealized rural retreat at the turn of the 20th century. Weir’s vision influenced the evolution of the Branchville property well into the 20th century with the help of his daughters, but it could only be fully manifested and adapted through the daily labor of farmers, carpenters, plumbers, stonemasons, maids, and laundresses.

²⁰⁶ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, October 23, 1999, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

²⁰⁷ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, October 23, 1999; Jim Brown, interview with Sarah Olson and Gay Vietzke, Weir Farm, June 14, 1994.

²⁰⁸ Charlie Bass, Kenneth Bass, Orin Bass, Russell Bass, Bob Fox, and Bessie Morabito, interview by Michelle Gutmann, October 23, 1999; *Danbury, Connecticut, City Directory*, 1960.

Conclusion

After Mahonri Young's death in 1957, his family sold the main residence of the Weir estate to Sperry and Doris Andrews, friends of Mahonri Young and fellow artists. While the Andrews made minor changes to the house to accommodate their family, they generally did not interfere with the outbuildings, landscape, or even furniture in an effort "to keep a lot of the spirit of the place."¹ Efforts to preserve the broader Weir estate accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s with the explosive growth of residential construction in the area. Advocacy by Cora Weir Burlingham, Doris Andrews, Bill Carlin, and others protected Weir Preserve, Weir Pond, and Weir Farm from encroaching development. The State of Connecticut acquired Weir Farm in 1986—the same month that Cora Weir Burlingham passed away.² Through further advocacy, the land became a National Historic Site in 1990, and a National Historical Park in 2021.³

Weir Farm still exists as a site of labor. National Park Service staff and volunteers continue to shape the landscape, alter buildings, and interpret the legacy of the site's former residents. In addition to creating a place of artistic inspiration in the spirit of Julian Weir, the National Park Service also continues Dorothy Weir Young and Cora Weir Burlingham's work of preserving their family's legacy and employing laborers to realize that vision. Preservation, like improvement, carries settler colonial assumptions about how to interact with land as well as judgments on which aspects of the past should be enshrined.⁴ Preserving a farm site in response to rapid social and economic change in the region also represents a late chapter in the continuing story of capitalism in the United States. From Julian Weir retreating to the countryside and painting bucolic scenes of an imagined pre-industrial past to Dorothy Weir Young's relationship to local workers during the Great Depression, industrial capitalism operated in the background of each generation of Weir ownership.

¹ Sperry and Doris Andrews, interview by Doug DeNatale, Weir Farm, Branchville, CT, March 16, 1989, WEFA Oral History Transcriptions.

² Deborah S. Gardner and Christine G. McKay, "An Artists' Retreat: J. Alden Weir's Farm in Connecticut," Weir Farm National Historic Site Historic Resource Study, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2009, 227–29.

³ James A. Himes, "H.R.5852—116th Congress (2019–2020): Weir Farm National Historical Park Redesignation Act," legislation, January 5, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5852/text>; Monica Potts, "Sperry Andrews, 87, Painter Who Preserved Weir Home, Is Dead," *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/16/arts/design/sperry-andrews-87-painter-who-preserved-weir-home-is-dead.html>.

⁴ For more on the legacy of the National Park Service and settler colonialism, see Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

The many laborers who passed through Weir Farm from 1882 to 1957 impacted the site and its inhabitants in different ways. As long-term caretaker families, the Remys and the Basses provided a period of stability for their employers and shaped the physical landscape as they worked to support and raise their families. Julian Weir and Dorothy Weir Young's vision of the property meant that Paul Remy and George Bass relied on traditional, even outdated, farming methods. They succeeded in large part due to the additional help provided by their multiple children as well as the domestic labor accomplished by their wives, Johanna and Bessie. Irish servants similarly executed a significant amount of domestic work that enabled the Weir, Young, and Burlingham families to experience Branchville as a retreat, pursue their art, enjoy farm products, and appreciate the romantic scenery. Although work dominated the lives of hired laborers at Weir farm, they also valued familial connections and leisure activities.

Excepting tradespeople who usually resided near Branchville, workers in the Julian Weir era tended to be transient laborers and recent immigrants who lived and labored in largely segregated spaces on the estate. Domestic servants kept to the main residence, with tenant farmers and their families working the grounds and living in the caretaker's house. During the 1930s and 1940s, however, Dorothy Weir Young often hired multiple workers from the same families. For examples, the Bass and Knoche families had members who did domestic labor for the Youngs, some who performed agricultural labor, and still others who worked on construction projects. Mollie Gleason's presence as an Irish maid represented a notable continuation from a previous era, and Spero Anargyros' artistic work on the site met the specific needs of Mahonri Young as he sculpted the *This Is the Place* monument.

The overall shift in the nature of work at Weir Farm reflected changes in immigration and labor patterns over the course of the 20th century, as well as the differing approaches to property ownership by Julian Weir and his daughters. Whereas her father adopted the role of gentleman farmer and sought artistic inspiration from the landscape, Dorothy Weir Young—and to an extent, her sister, Cora Weir Burlingham—embraced a maternalist management style as she stewarded her family's legacy. Employees responded in a myriad of ways to these workplace conditions. A number left after a short period of time, leaving their employers to complain about high turnover in correspondence with friends and family. Others like Mary Hanratty, Mary Bruschi Bass, or Spero Anargyros developed long term, friendly relationships with their employers. Some workers resisted interpersonal power dynamics, as when George Bass filled Mahonri Young's studio fireplace with frozen logs. Families like the Basses and the Knoches also took great pride in their labor, as expressed through oral histories with their descendants. While historical forces like industrial capitalism as well as the particular visions of the Weir family set the conditions under which workers sought to make a living, workers still exercised agency and, through their labor, left profound impacts on the people, buildings, and landscape of Weir Farm.

Figures

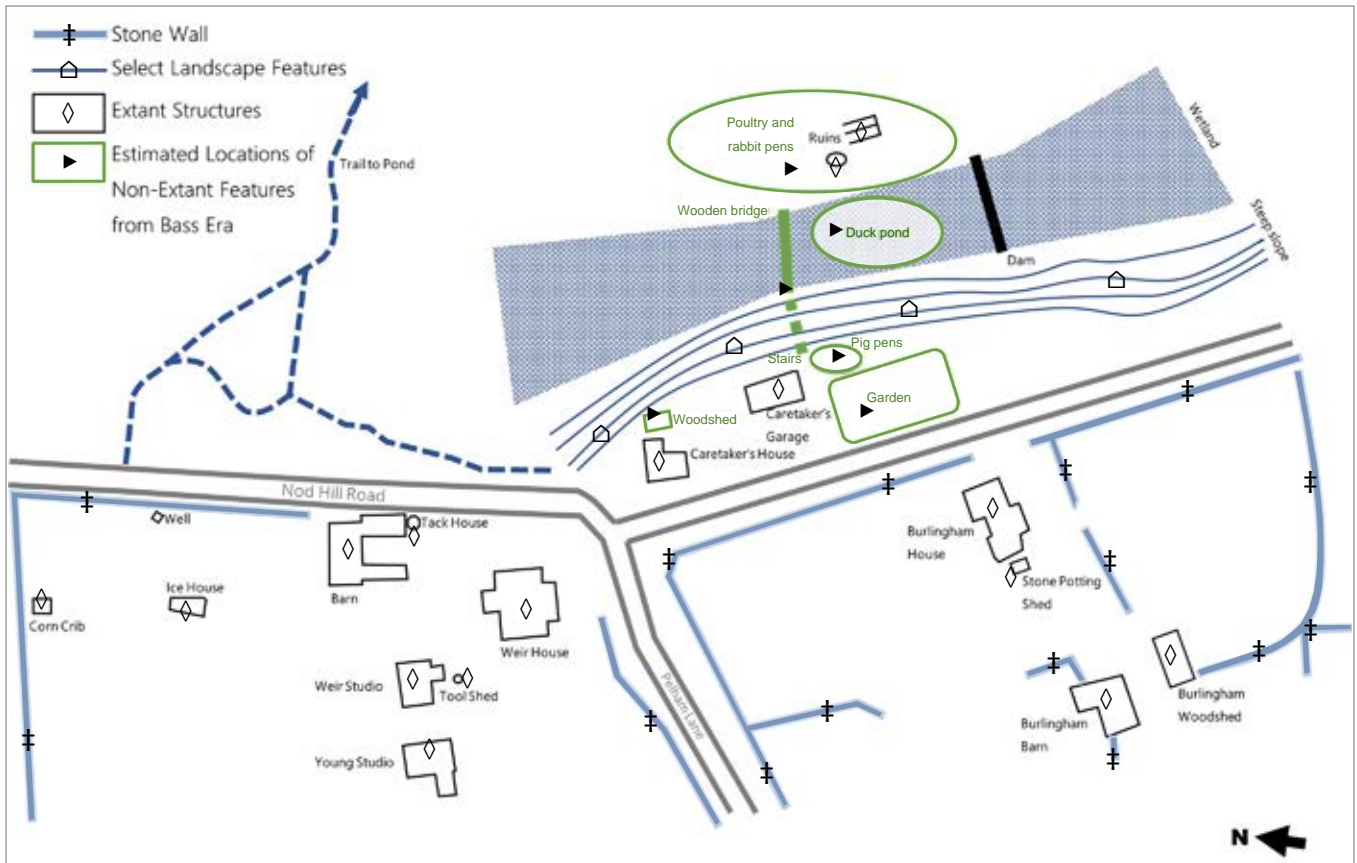


Figure 1. Sketch map of the Weir estate.

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Figure 2. Mike McGlynn's signature behind toilet, dated June 10, 1911.
Photograph by author, November 13, 2019.



Figure 3. Julian Alden Weir, *Mending the Stone Wall*,
pencil, watercolor and gouache on paper,
11 $\frac{7}{8}$ \times 11 $\frac{1}{4}$, late 1890s.
The William B. Carlin Trust.



Figure 4. Julian Alden Weir, *New England Barnyard*, 1904.

Oil on canvas, 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ \times 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.

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Figure 5. *Tommy and Carl,*
WEFA 9447.

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Figure 6. Cora Weir and Willie Remy,
WEFA 16389.



Figure 7. *Willie*,
WEFA 16389.

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Figure 8. Julian Alden Weir, *Driving the Cows Home* (original title: *Haunt of the Woodcock*).

Oil on canvas, 34 $\frac{1}{4}$ \times 24 $\frac{5}{16}$ in.

Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, Amherst, MA.

Bequest of Shirley Orr Stillson. Bridgeman Images.



Figure 9. Julian Alden Weir, *Feeding the Chickens at Branchville*,
pastel on paper mounted on canvas, early 1890s,
20 $\frac{1}{8}$ \times 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
The William B. Carlin Trust.



Figure 10. Julian Alden Weir, *Ploughing for Buckwheat*, 1898.
Oil on canvas, 47 × 32 ½ in.
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. Museum Purchase, 12.3.



Figure 11. Julian Alden Weir, *Connecticut Grainfield*, c. 1895.

Oil on canvas, 29 × 36 in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 12. *The Remys and Mary Hanratty Harvest Honey,*
WEFA 9451.



Figure 13. Julian Alden Weir, *The Ice Cutters*, 1895.

Oil on canvas, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ in \times 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Gift of Alfred H. and Nancy de C. Corbett in memory of Mrs. Gretchen H. Corbett.
Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon, 92.16.

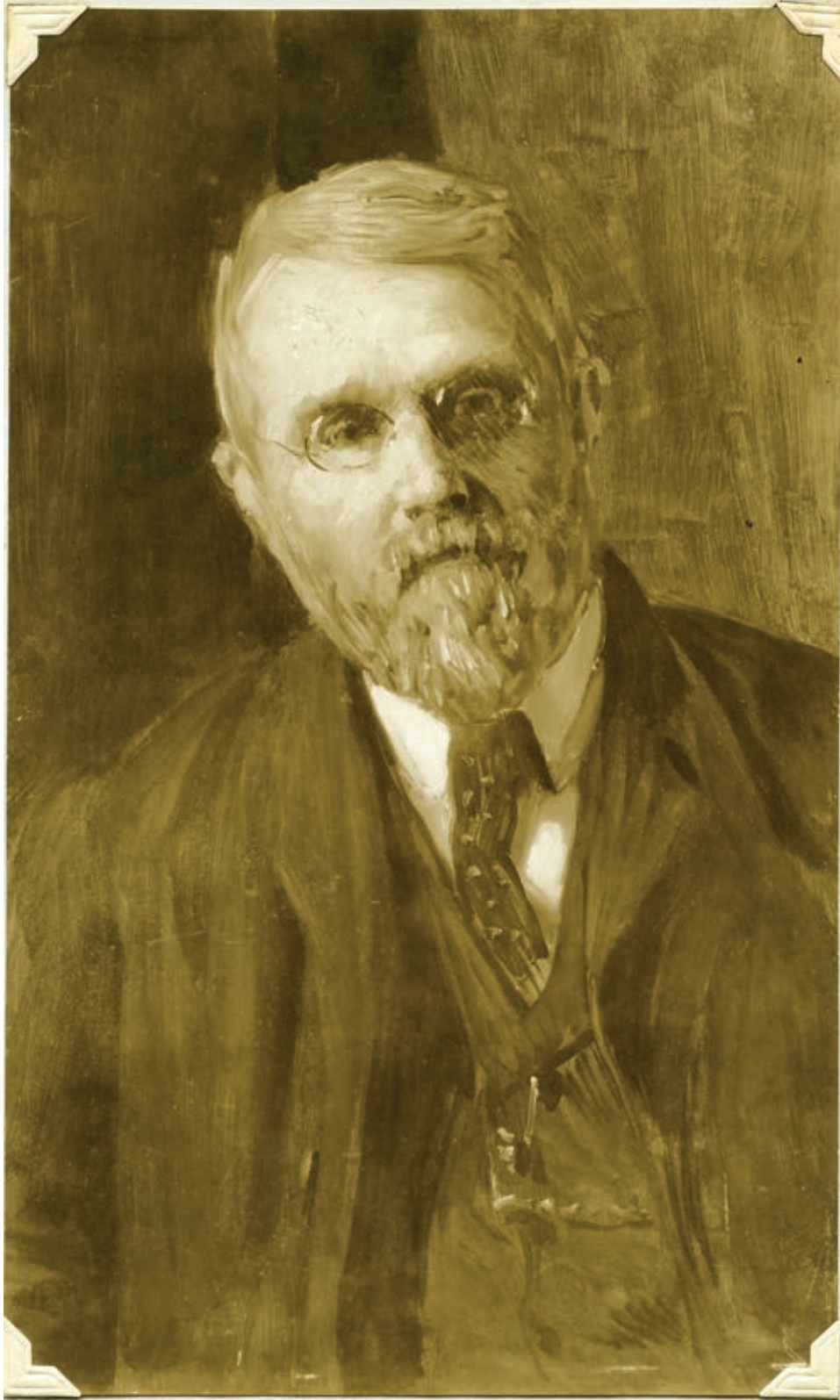


Figure 14. Archival photograph of Julian Alden Weir, *Portrait of Paul Remy*, oil on panel, nd. 27 × 16 in. WEFA 2892, Vol. 3A, pg. 249.



Figure 15. Julian Alden Weir, *Midday Rest in New England*, 1897.

Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{5}{8}$ \times 50 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia,

Gift of Isaac H. Clothier, Edward H. Coates, Dr. Francis W. Lewis, Robert C. Ogden, and Joseph G. Rosengarten, 1898.9.

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Figure 16. Dorothy, Cora, Carl, Tommy, Gip and Five Turtles,
WEFA 9447.



Figure 17. Louisa,
WEFA 3064.

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Figure 18. *Cora Weir and Mrs. Reemy,*
WEFA 3062.



Figure 19. Julian Alden Weir, *Cora and Mary Kane or Child and Nurse*, oil on canvas, 1893, 38 × 30 ½ in. Private Collection.

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Figure 20. *Unidentified Domestic Staff,*
WEFA 16388.



Figure 21. Julian Alden Weir, *The Laundry, Branchville*,
oil on canvas, ca. 1894, 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ \times 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
Weir Farm Art Alliance.

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Figure 22. Mary Hanratty in Park,
WEFA.

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Figure 23. Mary Hanratty in Nursery in Weir Residence, New York, WEFA.

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Figure 24. Mary Hanratty with Cora Weir and friend Minere Wardwell at the Pond in Branchville, WEFA AHP00281.



Figure 25. Dorothy Weir, *Woman in Windsor Chair Sewing*, c.1920, watercolor, 16 $\frac{7}{16}$ \times 12 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 26. Dorothy Weir Young, *Ladies at Dinner*,
c.1930, oil on canvas on board, 25 × 30 in.
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.

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Figure 27. *Mr. and Mrs. Bass on 30th Anniversary, 1940,*
Bass Family Photograph Collection, HP 01029.

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Figure 28. *Mervin Bass*, c. 1940, Bass Family Photograph Collection, HP 00999.



Figure 29. *Eddie and Georgie Bass*, ca. 1940s, Bass Family Photograph Collection, HP01010.

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Figure 30. *Bessie, Betty, Mary and Bobby Bass, 1940,*
Bass Family Photograph Collection, HP 00983.



Figure 31. *Russell, Charles, and Orin Bass, undated,*
Bass Family Photograph Collection, HP01035.

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Figure 32. *Mr. and Mrs. Bass, Clifford, Kenneth, 1934,*
Bass Family Photograph Collection, HP 00990.



Figure 33. Mahonri M. Young, *Bass Digging Parsnips*,
1942, graphite, 10 $\frac{3}{16}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{16}$ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.

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Figure 34. Mahonri M. Young, *Bringing in the Hay*,
ink, 10 $\frac{3}{16}$ \times 7 $\frac{11}{16}$ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 35. Mahonri M. Young, *Branchville August 1939*,
ink, 1939, 10 ¼ × 13 ¾ in.
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.

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Figure 36. Mahonri M. Young, *Mowing in the Orchard*,
ink, 10 $\frac{3}{16}$ \times 7 $\frac{1}{16}$ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.

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Figure 37. Mahonri M. Young, *Rowen*, 1937,
oil on canvas, 25 ¼ × 30 ⅙ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of the Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 38. Mahonri M. Young, *Scythe Cutters at Branchville*, 1931,
ink, 9 ³/₁₆ × 11 ³/₄ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.

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Figure 39. Mahonri M. Young, *Mowing at Branchville*,
ink, 9 $\frac{3}{16}$ \times 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 40. Mahonri M. Young, *Haywagon in Barn*,
graphite, 8 $\frac{1}{16}$ \times 10 $\frac{3}{16}$ in.
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 41. Dottie, the dog, on the porch of the caretaker's house.
Woodshed visible to the right.
Bass Family Photograph Collection, WEFA HP 01107.



Figure 42. Mahonri M. Young, *Apple Picking at Branchville*,
ink, 8 ¹⁵/₁₆ × 11 ¹¹/₁₆ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 43. Mahonri M. Young, *Cutting Tree at Branchville*,
20th century, ink and pastel, 19 × 13 ¾ in.
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 44. Mahonri M. Young, *Man Sawing with a Woodsaw*,
ink, 8 $\frac{3}{16}$ \times 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 45. Mahonri M. Young, *Branchville Garden*, 1934,
ink, 9 ⁵/₈ × 13 ¹/₂ in.

Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.

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Figure 46. Dorothy Weir Young, Untitled,
From Bass Family Photograph Collection.



Figure 47. Dorothy Weir Young, *Seated Girl Reading Newspaper*, c. 1930,
oil on canvas, 29 ¹⁵/₁₆ × 27 in.
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 48. Mahonri Young, *Right to the Jaw*, 1926,
bronze, 14 × 19 ⁵/₁₆ × 9 ¹/₂ in.
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 49. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library,
“Art—Sculpture—Agriculture (Mahonri Young),”
New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed August 8, 2021.
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5e66b3e8-a838-d471-e040-e00a180654d7>.

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Figure 50. *Kenneth and Ronnie Bass on sled, 1942,*
Bass Family Photograph Collection, HP 01028.



Figure 51. *Mary Hickey and Joseph Knoche's wedding portrait, 1905, Knoche Family Photograph Collection, HP01367.*



Figure 52. Cora Holding Elizabeth Knoche,
WEFA 3064.

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Figure 53. Great Wall of Cora,
NPS Photo / A. Thibault.

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Figure 54. Great Wall of Cora Detail,
NPS Photo / A. Thibault.

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Figure 55. Joseph Knoche's tools sitting on the stone patio he and his sons built for Cora Weir Burlingham, NPS Photo / J. Kuhn.



Figure 56. Mahonri M. Young, *Joe Knoche Builds a New Stone Wall II*, 1942, etching, 11 × 15 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 57. Dorothy Weir Young, *Theresa and Tommy*, c.1920,
oil on canvas, 27 $\frac{1}{8}$ \times 34 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.

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Figure 58. Johanna Knoche, great-granddaughter of Joe Knoche, recreates the etching “Joe Knoche Builds a Stone Wall” by Mahonri Mackintosh Young, 2010.
NPS Photo.



Figure 59. Mahonri M. Young, *Blacksmith Shoeing a Horse*,
graphite and colored pencil, 7 ¹¹/₁₆ × 10 ¹/₈ in.
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, purchase/gift of Mahonri M. Young Estate, 1959.



Figure 60. Hugo Ricardi, “Smitty,” Mahonri Young, Alex Ertle, and Spero Anargyros in front of full-size plaster casting of “Trappers and Fur Traders Group” for the “This Is the Place” Monument, WEFA HP1152, image courtesy Spero Anargyros.

Recommendations for Further Research

- Gender and sexuality in Dorothy Weir Young and Mahonri Young's art and relationships
- Historical relationships between urban retreaters and local residents in Wilton and Ridgefield
- History of Weir Farm preservation efforts
- How class and race shaped life and art at Weir Farm
- Indigenous history related to Weir Farm National Historical Park
- Life and labor of workers at the Baker residence in Windham, Connecticut
- Lives of Anna Baker Weir and Ella Baker Weir
- Lives of Caroline Weir Ely, Dorothy Weir Young, and Cora Weir Burlingham

APPENDIX

Family Trees

Remy Family Tree

Paul Remy (1847—December 24, 1930)

m. **Johanna Bauer** (1862—December 30, 1933), July 1, 1886

William (July 17, 1887—June 12, 1976)

m. **Mary O'Boyle** (1889—November 24, 1947), April 8, 1912

Carl (June 2, 1913—April 17, 1997)

Elizabeth (November 9, 1914—October 24, 2002)

Mary (May 2, 1919—December 13, 2010)

Carl (November 18, 1889—May 2, 1972)

m. **Emily Rubsan**, (March 30, 1892—January 14, 1972), April 1910

Louise (June 20, 1899—November 15, 1987)

m1. **Harry Naylor** (August 5, 1893—June 12, 1925), June 14, 1916

Bertha (1917—June 7, 1976)

Winifred (October 19, 1924—March 7, 2000)

m2. **Joseph Herold** (June 16, 1902—December 27, 1963), October 27, 1934

Bass Family Tree

George Robert Bass (February 6, 1890—April 19, 1892)

m. **Bessie Mabel Cooper Bass** (July 4, 1892—June 10, 1988), March 22, 1911

Mervin Robert Bass (June 26, 1912—September 10, 1954)

m. **Mary Eleanor Bruschi** (December 7, 1915—March 25, 2002), November 5, 1934

Robert

Joan

m2. **Amalkri Ciuccoli** (January 3, 1908—May 25, 1991), October 1, 1955

George Albert Bass (December 20, 1914—March 2, 2001)

m. **Ida Heim Noonan** (January 14, 1900—December 24, 1986), April 12, 1958

Edward Arthur Bass (September 26, 1917—November 13, 1942)

Appendix: Family Trees

Bessie (Betty) Mabel Bass (November 11, 1920—November 13, 2012)

m1. **Francis Webb** (March 12, 1912—unknown), December 5, 1940

Ronald
Richard
Carol

m2. **Peter Morabito** (February 7, 1932—), November 26, 1960

Diane
Janet

Russell Cooper Bass (December 9, 1922—December 28, 2009)

m. **Edwina Brundage** (August 7, 1924—October 15, 1994), June 22, 1957

Russell Jr.

Orin Bass (August 19, 1925—2017)

m. **Katherine Forster** (December 9, 1942—unknown), June 26, 1965

Bonnie
Brian

Charles Elwin Bass (August 19, 1925—November 28, 2021)

m. **Eunice Cashman** (15 April 15, 1928—February 17, 1996), June 19, 1948

Linda
Kirk
Duane
Sonja
Heidi

Clifford Earl Bass (August 22, 1931—June 23, 1986)

m1. **Marjorie Gamans** (October 5, 1934—December 8, 1975), August 16, 1952

Earl
William

m2. **Beatrice Conklin** (August 29, 1937—April 27, 1972), April 16, 1960

Clifford Jr.
Raymond
Mark
Thomas

m3. **Pat Huff** (January 26, 1940—January 26, 2019), May 26, 1972

Kenneth James Bass (November 1934—)

m. **Dorothy Peck** (November 22, 1939—), June 24, 1961

Susan
Carol
Linda

Knoche Family Tree

Joseph John Knoche (July 1868—May, 11 1949)
m. **Mary Margaret Hickey** (1879—October 5, 1927), April 23, 1905

Elizabeth (December 5, 1906—March 26, 1987)

Terrance (October 27, 1907—July 22, 1984)
m. **Helen Golden** (August 31, 1911—June 9, 2003), November 6, 1937
Terrance Jr. (April 27, 1940—February 9, 2013)
m1. **Patricia Foley** (August 18, 1943—April 6, 2006), February 4, 1961
m2. **Barbara Jean Lockwood** (January 3, 1943—), 26 May 1990

Theresa (April 6, 1911—December 23, 1996)

Joseph Sheehy (October 1, 1914—September 24, 1984), March 2, 1946

Joseph (March 1, 1947—)
m. **Mary Ann Gagon** (June 7, 1954—), July 25, 1981
Mary (January 4, 1950—)
m. **Joseph Carty** (March 30, 1948—), June 13, 1970
Elizabeth (July 13, 1951—)
m. **Kenneth Berg** (September 1949—), September 1, 1969

Joseph Albert (June 2, 1917—September 5, 1989)
m. **Margaret Quinn** (March 24, 1922—), April 22, 1944
Joe Albert Jr. (December 7, 1947– October 16, 2019)
m. **Patricia Sheehan** (December 31, 1954—), October 15, 1983

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- United States Federal Census Collection

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