

## Letter #1

**Date:** November 30, 1902

**From:** Julian Alden Weir, owner of Weir Farm, American Impressionist Painter

**To:** C.E.S. Wood, American Satirist, Author, & Civil Liberties Advocate

**Background/summary:** Julian Alden Weir was friends with many prominent nineteenth-century Americans. In addition to painters like John Singer Sargent, Childe Hassam, and Albert Pinkham Ryder, Weir cultivated friendships with cultural figures like C.E.S. Wood throughout his long career. In this 1902 letter, Weir describes his attempts to “bag nature” through his art. Weir’s preference for quality & consistency over quantity, as is made evident in this letter, may have hurt Weir’s commercial career, but guaranteed his prominent place in American art history.

**Text:** “I am indebted for two letters to you when it ought to be the reverse. I am at present struggling with a portrait which is coming on finely... Oh, how I wished for you again this fall to enjoy birds. We have had partridges or quail for supper every night since Nov. 1st and still there hang seasoning eight partridges and one quail. Today is the last of the shooting for this year. I have a good dog and have had plenty of fun after the day’s work generally stopping at 3:30 pm, and taking the dog and gun till dark... I have not produced as much as you have been led to believe, but I think that the canvases I have a more consistent truth. I have not changed in any way not even in the subjects chosen but it is my hope and desire to get close to Nature, to know her character more intimately, but I will be old, old, old before I can do even the little I do without her assistance. I hope to accomplish much this winter. I am in good shape after all my walks and climbing stone walls, and how many beautiful things I have seen in these tramps... I wish I could use a fairy wand and make you a neighbor when we could be together in the fine hunts when I try to bag nature even more than game...”

## Letter #2

**Date:** January 3, 1892

**From:** Julian Alden Weir, owner of Weir Farm, American Impressionist Painter

**To:** Alden Twachtman, son of American Impressionist John Henry Twachtman

**Background/summary:** Julian Alden Weir was deeply involved in the lives of his fellow American Impressionists. He and frequent Weir Farm visitor John Henry Twachtman were especially good friends; so good, in fact, that Twachtman named his son Alden after his friend Julian Alden Weir. Here, Weir writes a young Alden on the concept of home. Weir saw one’s home as “the starting place” for genuine artistic expression. This philosophy underlies Weir’s creative attachment to his own home in Branchville, Connecticut.

**Text:** “Dear Alden: I received your poem on “the Brook” which I like very much. It brings to my mind very vividly the running water; but what charms me most is that you are looking at these beautiful things which God has given us to enjoy, with your own eyes, and beginning early to love this little stream that runs by your home.

There is another, a greater stream which this little one will teach you much about – the stream of life – home is the starting place and love the guide to your actions. Great men who loved their homes and were kind and generous to their playmates in youth, learned many truths which were of value to the all through their lives-

The flowers, rocks, and trees which one learns to know in their childhood seems more beautiful-

When I come out to your father’s [John Henry Twachtman], which I hope will be before long, we will take a walk by the brook and enjoy these beautiful things together.

Give my love to your mother and father, Elsie and Marjorie, and with a “happy New Year” believe me always your friend,

J. Alden Weir”

### **Letter #3**

**Date:** 1892

**From:** John Ferguson Weir, American Painter and half-brother of Julian Alden Weir

**To:** Julian Alden Weir, owner of Weir Farm, American Impressionist Painter

**Background/summary:** Although mainstream today, Impressionism shocked many Americans in the late nineteenth-century. Upon viewing an Impressionist exhibit in Paris, Julian Alden Weir himself remarked that he “never in [his] life saw such horrible things.” Weir would go on to embrace Impressionist techniques in order to more faithfully represent the allure of his farm in Branchville, Connecticut. Here, Julian Alden Weir’s brother John writes Julian just as he is beginning to experiment with Impressionism. John is shocked that Julian would throw away professional success so easily. Still, John’s letter shows a certain respect for Julian’s conviction and artistic integrity.

**Text:** “You have thrown up reputation, success, all that *professionally* most people strive for, for a conviction within your own breast, the immediate effect of which brings down upon you ridicule and harsh criticism. I myself cannot understand it, for I think and see differently. But seeing you have shown such insight in your art in the past, I cannot but credit you with that same intelligence in following your present conviction. But he that buildeth a city must count the cost; or one who stems the current of conventional ways must be content with a crust, eschewing soft raiment. One thing he has as a substitute- the joy of sincerity of belief, of living up to one’s convictions, of being identified with at least

the honest search for truth. I am not prophet to tell what is in store for you; but this I can say, these are the signs of the rising up out of the past, of a new heaven and a new earth for you.”