

Letter #1

Date: October 5, 1892

From: Paul Remy, Caretaker

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

Transcribed from a letter in the Weir Farm National Historic Site collection

Background/Summary: Paul Remy was Weir Farm's longest term caretaker, living and working at the farm for almost 15 years. Remy occupied the Caretaker's House with his wife and young sons Carl and Willie. During Remy's tenure, Weir was away from the farm more than usual, following the death of Weir's wife Anna in 1892. Weir's letters with Remy are professional, though Weir's tone is often friendly when speaking about the Remys and their time at the farm. Remy's letter shows typical chores associated with his position, and helps explain how "gentleman farmers," like Weir, had the time to paint at a working farm.

Text: "The stock horses, cows, calves, pigs, oxen, chickens, dogs, and cats are all well and I did not sell any yet. Have to wait till you come back and then we see what we can do. 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. 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. I must get some wood as it is all gone and get the potatoes in now as the family is gone. I took the onions in the other day have a nice lot of them. My wife has put up 10 cans of tomatoes for you as they would have rotted anyhow. We have rain today but it is getting colder, we had frost Sunday morning enough to scorch the tops of the lima beans."

Letter #2

Date: Unknown

From: Joseph Pearson, former art student of Julian Alden Weir's

To: Dorothy Weir Young, Julian Alden Weir's daughter

Background/summary: Joseph Pearson writes Dorothy Weir Young, reminiscing about her father, Julian Alden Weir. He notes Weir's love for his farm. Pearson's remarks on Paul (Paul Remy) and the farm's rustic features shed light on Weir's artistic fascination with the New England landscape.

Text: "Few artists of character I have known have escaped the diverting effect of the purchase and development of run down property. Your father was no exception. He had much property. It was lovely.

It charmed him. He gave much thought, time and energy to its improvement. How he enjoyed clearing vistas, trimming trees well up from the ground revealing beautiful notes and things unseen before. The making of level places for tennis, working with his men who used great red oxen to haul the boulders to one side; the building of the pond with prize money, some of which was generously shared with employees; piling brush here and there and making a bon-fire now and then when the boy in him suggested it.... The things made by the faithful Paul [the farmer] found a place in his pictures: sapling fences, rustic arbors and bridges as well as hen runs, and informal gardens.”

Letter #3

Date: September 8, 1899

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

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

Transcribed from a letter in the Weir Farm National Historic Site collection

Background/summary: John Ferguson Weir stayed at his brother’s farm in Branchville, Connecticut frequently. In this letter, John thanks his brother Julian for allowing him to stay, and describes his blissful days at the farm. Notice John’s offhand remarks about painting in between his comments on farm life. The farm’s relaxing atmosphere took the pressure off of many artists, which paradoxically drove them to create more freely - seen especially in John’s line “I think one can work in a better spirit after working at the real things in the fields – seems easier.”

Text: “Here I am sitting under the trees, between the porch and the gate, having just returned with May from a paddle on the lake. Edith is sitting on the porch with a book. The dog barks, the ducks quack, the chickens cluck – all is serene and Sunday-like – a Sabbath of rest. But it has not been altogether, for Paul discovered last night that the corn was heating in the barn, and this morning it was so hot that I told him there was nothing to do but for us all to turn to and throw it out in the field back of the barn. It took nearly three hours of good hard work, with the boys and Paul and myself. He will stack it out when it is thoroughly dry.

Yesterday was the first day I have touched a brush. I had got well started on a canvas when the man arrived with a load of lumber. Paul says it is about 1/3 the quantity ordered – and he was not the bill. It is stored in the loft over the oxen-stall.

The work out in “the \$25 lot” goes on well. I have been at it myself. They have worked well I can assure you. The lot now looks like this.

That gives you only one end of the lot, it would run that way down to the bottom of this page. Paul would like to have it photographed for you. I have spent my days laboring in the field, moving or weeding and it has done wonders for me. I feel finely, and my back-bone has stiffened up again. Edith

too has improved, though she has not gained as much as I have. But the place is balm and strength to us all – It seems to me never was there a better rest and refreshment – and so May says. Nothing could be better than the comfort of it all. I think everything in Paul's work has gone on satisfactorily to yourself. He has not written because he thought I had told you all there was to tell. We see that his regular work is not interrupted.

This tells you all there is to say about the farm.

The Sturgis came up and spent a night with us. They were perfectly charmed with the place. Our days are just simply enjoyable. It seems to me, and to all of us, that we never enjoyed anything so much. We had a specimen of what the lightning can do in this region. The other night the sky was simply ablaze for hours but it wasn't around us. The skies have been wondrous, the moisture in the air them very rich and full, and fine in cloud-forms. I don't know when I have studied the skies as I have here. I think it would be a good plan to make notes of skies alone – they are so fleeting that they must be done quickly with nothing else to bother about. It seems that Constable made a practice of this.

Thus far I have worked on the place in the morning, coming in at one for a bath, and the luxury of that refreshment after the morning's work is simply delightful. Then a pipe, and the paper, and in the afternoon some other kind of work. But the couple of hours yesterday with the paints was good, too. I think one can work in a better spirit after working at the real things in the fields – seems easier.

I am glad you have your things at last. Paul took them some the day we arrived – a week ago last Wednesday!

Tell Ella that we have thought of her a thousand times with thoughtful hearts; her ears must burn. It is all so lovely. It is simply the perfection of a vacation- this letter is to both of you.

And now as I am writing the sun is glancing across the lawn, gleaming on the tree trunks and soon it will be down.

I feel now as if I could look the world in the face again. If you and I could have a painting spell together it would make the vacation complete. You must bring away something to cover up your bad luck with fishing. Tell Ella I remember her kind thoughts of me in planning what I should do had I gave to Windham. The fact is I was barely up to a fishing bout then, thought I should be now- I am all hardened again. Now the last ray has died away and I must to in and light a pipe. It is all beautiful, peaceful and happy, with love to Ella from us all, and kisses for the children, and kindest remembrances to Mrs. Baker.

Affectionately,

John"