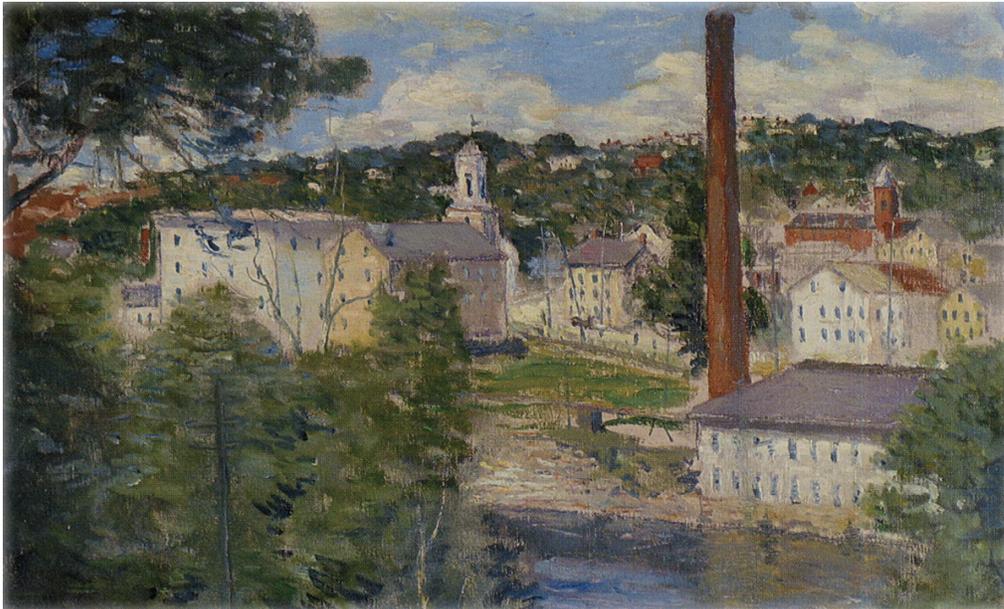




The Sketchbook

Weir Family Exhibit Debuts in Utah, Coming to Connecticut in June



Julian Alden Weir's *Willimantic, Connecticut* (1903, oil on canvas, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona) is one of the more than seventy pieces of artwork on display in *The Weir Family* exhibit.

On November 18, 2011, the Brigham Young University Museum of Art held the grand opening of the highly-anticipated exhibit, *The Weir Family, 1820-1920: Expanding the Traditions of American Art*. The exhibit showcases the artwork of Julian Alden Weir, his father, Robert Walter Weir, and his half-brother, John Ferguson Weir. Curators pulled a total of 74 paintings from Brigham Young University's extensive collection and major art institutions nation-wide. The exhibition "explores how the transatlantic encounters of the Weir family of artists helped shape American art for nearly a century."

All three Weir artists were American-born, but received much of their artistic training at the academies of Europe. Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889) was an early American artist to study abroad in Italy, and upon his return he began a 40-year tenure as the

Professor of Drawing at West Point. His son, John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926) followed in his father's footsteps, and began his visits to Europe to study the old masters in 1869. He eventually became the first dean of the Yale School of Fine Arts. The youngest Weir son, Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919), studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the late 1870s, and upon his return gained renown in major American art circles, most often recognized for his role in the development of American Impressionism. All three Weir men consistently travelled to Europe for the remainder of their lives, and their repeated Atlantic crossings fostered a two-way cross cultural exchange, as evidenced in their artwork. "[The Weirs] imported European methods and modes of instruction to America," writes curator Marian Wardle, and "in return, they exported their art, exhibiting and winning awards in European

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From the Superintendent

The restoration of the Weir property is approaching completion! In April we will be installing new roofs on the Weir House, Weir Studio, Young Studio, and the back of the Burlingham House. The roofs will be the same type of shingles that Weir had, western red cedar. Also, the same team of preservation experts that were here last year from the Historic Preservation Training Center in Maryland will be back on the job. In May, the exterior of the Weir House will begin its transformation with a team of local craftsman. An accessible walkway (similar to the one just completed in front of the Visitor Center) will lead to the porch, or "piazza" as Weir called it. The exterior siding and windows will be restored and painted. We plan to follow with the completion of the interior in the winter and spring of next year. Planning and mobilization of such an immense project takes months of coordination, and we have kept the needs of our neighbors and commuters in mind. So watch for the traffic cones. Thank you to all the local businesses and contractors who assist our crews. These types of businesses, in partnership with the National Park Service, continue to be economic engines that produce and support local jobs across the country. In March, the National Park Service reported \$12 billion in direct spending by the 281 million visitors to parks in 2010. Most of the spending and jobs figures relate to lodging, food, retail, gas, local transportation, and groceries -- we are lucky to have that same mix of local businesses around Weir Farm National Historic Site. See you soon,

Spida A. Cook

Upcoming Programs:

History Meets Natural History Stone Wall Walk

Sunday, April 22, 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Join Dr. Mitch Wagener for a hike that explores the cultural and natural history of stone walls -- defining features of both the New England landscape and Weir Farm NHS.

Framing the Artscape*

Sunday, April 29, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Join Park Ranger Caitlin Sjaarda as she explores the artistic landscape of Weir Farm NHS. View, step into, and become a part of iconic American masterpieces through giant picture frames placed throughout the landscape.

Nature of Love Walk*

Saturday, May 5, 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Join volunteer Bonnie Tremante as she discusses the love letters exchanged between J. Alden Weir and his young fiancée, Anna Dwight Baker. Learn about the connections between love, art, and the landscape.

In the Footsteps of Weir Gallery Talk*

Sunday, May 6, 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Hear from photographer and 2012 Visiting Artist Xiomaro as he discusses his techniques for capturing the empty spaces of with the Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio for the *Weir Was Here* exhibit.

The Weir Family Companion Exhibit

Visitor Center Hours Beginning June 7

View a companion exhibit on display at Weir Farm NHS to correspond with the arrival of *The Weir Family* exhibit in Connecticut. Pieces by Robert Walter Weir, John Ferguson Weir, and Julian Alden Weir will be on display!

*Registration is required. To register or for more information, please call (203) 834-1896 x12.

Weir Family of Artists...



Robert Walter Weir (Self-Portrait, 1860), John Ferguson Weir (by Robert W. Weir, 1864), J. Alden Weir (Self-Portrait, 1886)

expositions...and their pupils [became] an important American art export.”

Brigham Young University (BYU) holds the largest collection of Weir artwork in the world. In 1959, the heirs of Mahonri Young (J. Alden Weir's son-in-law) worked with BYU to arrange a combination gift and sale of nearly 12,500 pieces of artwork -- including

more than 1,000 works by J. Alden Weir. The exhibit will be on display in Utah until May 18, at which point it will travel to Connecticut for display at the New Britain Museum of American Art from June 30 - September 30, 2012. Weir Farm National Historic Site (NHS) will showcase a companion exhibit at the Burlingham House Visitor Center.

Reaching Youth in Partnership with Woodcock Nature Center

Since 2010, Weir Farm NHS has partnered with nearby Woodcock Nature Center to provide over 550 summer camp participants with the experience of *en plein air* painting. This summer, thanks to a generous Impact Grant from the National Park Foundation, that partnership will expand. Funding from the grant will be used during the summer of 2012 to support the Student Natural Ambassadors Program (SNAP), which brings underserved minority youth from the Norwalk, Connecticut community to Woodcock Nature Center to participate in their Summer Adventure Camp and the Weir Farm NHS *Take Part in Art* program. This partnership program provides campers with a transformative experience --

connecting with nature through art. Each week throughout the summer, Weir Farm NHS park rangers will bring watercolor painting supplies to Woodcock Nature Center to facilitate a session of *Take Part in Art*. During the following school year, SNAP participants will share their summer camp experience with fellow students, teachers, and the community, creating a ripple effect of learning and outreach. Weir Farm NHS and Woodcock Nature Center staff will assist these students with their presentations, thereby bringing this exciting program right into the community. For more information about Woodcock Nature Center, call (203) 762-7280 or visit them on the web at www.woodcocknaturecenter.org.



A Woodcock Nature Center camper participates in *Take Part in Art* (Summer 2011)

Xiomáro: 2012 Visiting Artist

New York photographer and former Artist-in-Residence Xiomáro has been named Weir Farm NHS's 2012 Visiting Artist. In addition to displaying his work in the Burlingham House Visitor Center, he has already conducted multiple gallery talks for the public, and will continue to be an advocate for Weir Farm NHS.

While Xiomáro studied art history, painting, and drawing in college, he would spend much of his early career in the music and entertainment industry. He always possessed a passion for photography, and soon found that he "was drawn to the solitary peace of wandering the landscape and photographing it." Whereas the music industry requires vast levels of collaboration, photography could be a more personal endeavor, with "no one to hold [you] back."

Xiomáro first arrived at Weir Farm NHS in March 2011, at the start of his month-long stay as an Artist-in-Residence. He spent his time photographing the landscape in



Stained glass window in Weir House, © Xiomáro, 2011

New Self-Guiding Walking Tour Brochure Now Available



A new self-guiding walking tour brochure is now available! The brochure highlights the buildings, stone walls, artists, and landscape of Weir Farm NHS. An artist-

drawn map will lead you around all the historic structures and down to Weir Pond. Pick up your copy at the Burlingham House Visitor Center today!

transition from late winter to early spring, and compiled his photographs into an exhibit for the Burlingham House Visitor Center, *Weir Farm - 'The Great Good Place.'* Impressed with his work, Weir Farm NHS commissioned Xiomáro to return to the park and photograph the interiors of the Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio during the summer of 2011. All three structures are in the midst of a multi-phase restoration, which has necessitated the removal of all interior furnishings. This offered Xiomáro the chance to focus on the details of these spaces -- features that might otherwise go unnoticed in a fully-furnished setting. As the first artistic collection of photographs of these historic structures ever created, a selection of the images will be on display at Weir Farm NHS through the end of May. The exhibit, titled *Weir Was Here - Secret Rooms, Doors, and Windows* offers visitors a glimpse into the Weir House and studios while they remain closed to the public. Xiomáro has recently embarked on a similar mission at Sagamore Hill National Historic Site in Oyster Bay, New York, where he has been commissioned to create an artistic collection of photographs of President Theodore Roosevelt's home.

Xiomáro's photographs have been instrumental in bringing a bit of Weir Farm NHS to not only the surrounding community, but the nation at large. A version of his *Weir Was Here* exhibit is



Xiomáro conducting a recent gallery talk for visitors to his *Weir Was Here* exhibit.

currently on display in the newly-renamed "Weir Room" in Senator Joseph Lieberman's Washington, DC office; similar versions will soon be dedicated in the offices of Senator Richard Blumenthal and Congressman Jim Himes. Later this year, you can see two of Xiomáro's photographs alongside a handful of other Artists-in-Residence from national parks across the country in the online multimedia exhibition, *Through Your Eyes*, comprised of works inspired by national park settings. "It's a privilege for me to have free access to one of the most significant landscapes in American art," said Xiomáro reflecting on his experiences at Weir Farm NHS, "hopefully, like J. Alden Weir, my work will stand the test of time."

Conservation Corner

One of the many pieces of furniture Julian and Anna purchased on their European honeymoon was an intricately carved two-piece sideboard. It was used in their New York home for many years until it eventually made its way to Branchville. The base (shown here) underwent a multi-step process at Harpers Ferry Center conservation labs to prepare it for exhibit in the Weir House dining room. After a thorough vacuuming and cleaning, the base

was stabilized by fixing loose joints, adding small wooden blocks to the bottom, and reattaching the door. After the base was stable, the surface was waxed and areas of damage toned to bring it back to life. The top only needed a cleaning and a coat of wax. Upon completion of the restoration of the Weir House, the sideboard will once again hold a prominent place in the elegant dining room.



The base of the Dutch sideboard after conservation.

130 Years & Counting...

2012 marks the 130th anniversary of J. Alden Weir's acquisition of the Branchville farm. In the spring of 1882, a local business man and art dealer, Erwin Davis, offered Weir the 153-acre property in exchange for \$10.⁰⁰ and a painting from Weir's private art collection. When J. Alden Weir first inspected the property in June 1882, he was so inspired by the landscape that he created this quick watercolor sketch (below), "Spring Landscape, Branchville," beginning an artistic tradition that has been unbroken ever since.



Rebuilding New Gates for the Historic *Secret Garden*

After nearly two decades of service, the fence and gates around the "Secret Garden" were in desperate need of attention. During the summer of 2011, rotten fence posts and rails were replaced with fresh cedar logs. The two entrance gates remained, however, and were rebuilt during the winter months. The designs for the gates were modeled from historic photographs and drawings of the garden, and will approximate the

originals as closely as possible. In order to supply the materials needed to rebuild the gates and entrances, the park maintenance staff made a trip to Oxford High School, where biology teacher Joe Lanier and a group of students assisted in harvesting cedar trees. The fresh-cut lumber was sent to the park maintenance shop, where construction of the new gates began. Ben Shaw, a volunteer for the National Park Service, cut and fitted many of the joints required to complete the project. Staff members now only need to wait for a spring thaw, at which point they can fully install the gates in the Secret Garden. Once the gates are in place, and the Honeysuckle and Clematis have been given time to grow up the sides, the Secret Garden will once again appear as it did nearly one hundred years ago, and will continue to lend a bit of extra interest to an already beautiful landscape.



Part of the new cedar gates, built by staff and volunteers.



Gates in the Secret Garden, c. 1915.

A Park for Every Classroom Engages Teachers & Students

In 2011, Weir Farm NHS was selected as one of eight national parks in the Northeast Region to participate in a new pilot program called *A Park for Every Classroom*. The program builds partnerships between teachers, parks, and community organizations to provide teachers with resources and to incorporate the park into their curriculum. Through *A Park for Every Classroom*, teachers are empowered to use the park as a classroom and create meaningful place-based learning experiences for their students.

Weir Farm NHS hosted its first *A Park for Every Classroom* workshop for teachers March 31 - April 1, 2012, with six educators from five different schools participating in this immersive professional development opportunity. This group of teachers will help the park reach hundreds of local students annually, helping to advance the educational mission of the National Park Service, and provide opportunities for children to learn about national parks and



Third graders from Ridgefield Academy hike down to Weir Pond during a *Park for Every Classroom* visit.

what they reveal about nature, the nation's history, and issues central to our civic life. This past September, Ridgefield Academy became the first school to partner with Weir Farm NHS through *A Park for Every Classroom*. Ridgefield Academy third-grade teacher Pam Clasby noted the "meaningful connection to the park" felt by many of her students. "[They] have a great understanding of the significance of

national parks," she continued, "and we feel fortunate to have one close by." Weir Farm NHS will build upon this success and continue using *A Park for Every Classroom* model to enhance student learning, professional development for teachers, and the park's education programs. For more information, contact Park Ranger Kristin Lessard at (203) 834-1896 x11.

Visit, Like, Friend, and Follow!



www.facebook.com/WeirFarmNHS



www.twitter.com/WeirFarmNPS

Weir Farm NHS has gone social! The park has fully entered the world of social media, maintaining an official Facebook page and Twitter account. Park staff post daily updates on both sites, highlighting upcoming programs, relevant news articles, art exhibits, photographs, and information about Weir Farm NHS. One of the most popular features of the Weir Farm NHS social media presence

has been "Museum Mondays." Every Monday, Museum Technician Jessica Kuhnen offers our virtual visitors a glimpse into the park's museum collections by showcasing a special object, piece of artwork, or document. Julian Alden Weir himself has even decided to enter the virtual realm. You may have noticed his activity on the Weir Farm NHS Facebook page, where he comments on posts and interacts with visitors. With a little help from park staff, J. Alden Weir maintains an active Facebook presence -- and you can add him as a friend!

If you have a smart phone, scan the QR Codes ("Quick Response" Codes) shown above, which link directly to the Weir Farm NHS Facebook and Twitter accounts. You may notice these QR Codes appearing in more and more locations throughout the park, in an effort to engage the 21st-century visitor. With nearly 300 Facebook fans and more than 600 Twitter followers, the Weir Farm NHS social media presence is thriving. Feel free to join the conversation...

Visitor Center Hours and Tour Schedule

April through December

Visitor Center Hours
Thurs. through Sun. from 10-4

30-Minute Introductory Tour
Fri. and Sun. at 11, 1, and 3
Thurs. and Sat. at 11 and 3

1-Hour Stone Wall Tour
Thurs. and Sat. at 1

January through March

Visitor Center Hours
Sat. and Sun. from 10-4

30-Minute Introductory Tour
Sat. at 11 and 3
Sun. at 11, 1, and 3

1-Hour Stone Wall Tour
Sat. at 1

*3:00 tours on Saturdays include a visit to the Artist-in-Residence Studio.

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



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Weir Farm National Historic Site
735 Nod Hill Road
Wilton, CT 06897

Take Part in Art and add
your masterpiece to our
growing collection of
visitor artwork!



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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

Things To Do:

Weir Was Here - Secret Rooms, Doors, and Windows On Exhibit

Visitor Center Hours

Check out photographer Xiomaro's images of the Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio. With all three structures empty and closed to the public during a multi-phase restoration, Xiomaro's images offer a sneak peak of what lies inside these buildings!

Take Part in Art

Visitor Center Hours

Discover your inner artist while sketching or painting *en plein air* as artists have done at Weir Farm NHS for more than 130 years! Art supplies are provided free of charge by the National Park Service.

Junior Ranger

Visitor Center Hours

Earn a Junior Ranger badge and patch while exploring Connecticut's only national park by completing one of two Junior Ranger booklets, available at the Visitor Center desk!

Group Visits

Visitor Center Hours

Organized groups are encouraged to visit the farm year-round! School groups and scout groups should ask for information on the Art Alive! curriculum-based program and Scout Ranger program. Please call in advance to arrange a group visit: (203) 834-1896 x11



Artist-in-Residence Receptions

Once a month, meet the current Artist-in-Residence at a public reception at the Wilton Library. Presented by the Weir Farm Art Center. Call (203) 761-9945 for specific dates and times, or visit www.wiltonlibrary.org. You can also visit the studio workspace of the current Artist-in-Residence on Saturdays following the 3:00 p.m. tour.

Become a Volunteer-in-Park (VIP)!

From working in the gardens, to hiking the Pond Trail, to staffing the Visitor Center desk, Weir Farm NHS relies on an incredible team of volunteers! Have you ever considered volunteering for your local national park? Visit us online at to view current volunteer opportunities at www.nps.gov/wefa/supportyourpark