



“Big Reveal” at Weir Farm National Historic Site Showcases Impressionism Painter’s Restored House and Studios

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by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

WILTON, C.T.—It’s never a simple matter to examine and evaluate any one artist’s influence on his or her peers, schools of thought, modes of expression, contemporary tastes, and context in art history. The task is even more daunting if the goal is to maintain a more or less permanent public record of both the artist’s life and some of the indicators of the artist’s impact through the years.

This kind of challenging mission is usually the domain of museums, whose art historians and curators, working with an institution’s permanent collection and works on loan, piece together over time an ongoing overview of a given artist’s place in the pantheon.

But what if, instead of a museum, curators and art historians were working with the National Park Service? What would that look like? What would it be like to immerse oneself in this kind of artistic examination and overview as part of a National Park experience?

Art lovers of all stripes—and particularly fans of 19th century Impressionist painter Julian Alden Weir—will have a chance to see for themselves starting this weekend at the grand opening of the completely restored Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio at the Weir Farm National Historic Site in Wilton, CT. The “big reveal,” as administrators are calling the event, is slated for Saturday (May 24), and Sunday (May 25), from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both days.



View of the Young Studio at the Weir Farm National Historic Site. Photo by Xiomaro.com. Courtesy of the Weir Farm National Historic Site.



Weir Studio: Paint box, palette and drawing cabinet at Weir Farm. Photo by Xiomarol.com. Courtesy Weir Farm National Historic Site.

Designated by Congress as a National Historic Site in 1990, Weir Farm and its studios was the first national park to honor an American painter, based primarily on its extraordinary history.

Weir Farm National Historic Site was home to three generations of American artists. Julian Alden Weir, considered a leading figure in American art and in the development of American Impressionism, acquired the farm in 1882. After Weir, the artistic legacy was continued first by his daughter, painter Dorothy Weir Young, and her husband, sculptor Mahonri Young, and then by New England painters Sperry and Doris Andrews.



Sperry Andrews Plein Air Painting Bag at the Young Studio. Photo by Xiomaro.com. Courtesy of Weir Farm National Historic Site

One of the biggest stars of 19th century American Impressionist painting, Julian Weir also had a stylish flair for interior design, according to the Farm website, that is evident in the Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio and will inspire visitors to rethink their own living rooms.

Over the past decade, the nationally celebrated buildings have been completely restored with original furniture, décor, and artwork, returned to the state in which they inspired generations of acclaimed and talented American artists. The unique décor includes many European elements from the Weirs' overseas travels, including Flemish tapestries, a Bavarian staghorn chandelier, a Delft tile framed fireplace, and medieval stained glass.



Weir House: View of the Dining Room with Bavarian Chandelier. Photo by Xiomaro.com. Courtesy Weir Farm National History Site.

The interior design and outdoor landscapes also reflect Weir's fascination with nature.

Not only can visitors walk in his footsteps as they explore 60-acres of national park landscape, they can stop at specially marked sites where artists have set up their easels to paint *en plein air*, including at the Weir Pond, historic gardens, orchards, fields, and forest.

Visitors who are inspired by the artistic legacy started in the Weir Studio and at the outdoor locations can also enjoy free-to-use watercolor supplies and take advantage of laid-back instruction from local professional artists as part of the park's popular Take Part in Art program.

The Grand Opening Weekend will also include opportunities to rediscover the other buildings on-site, special access to the Artist-in-Residence Studio, a new exhibit of paintings by Sperry Andrews, and a display of works by local, contemporary artists for sale in the visitor center.

While exploring, visitors will also have a chance to speak with those directly involved in the restoration, including the park's superintendent, curator, collections manager, and park rangers. All are invited to bring web-enabled devices and to share photos from the Grand Opening Weekend using the hashtag #WeirOpen.

In order to preserve the park grounds, there will be no on-site parking during the Grand Opening Weekend. All parking will be at nearby Branchville Elementary School, 40 Florida Road, Ridgefield, CT 06877. Free shuttle service will run continuously between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. each day.

Weir Farm is one of the stops on the Connecticut Art Trail (arttrail.org), and one of two visual arts sites in the National Park Service; the other is dedicated to the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens and is located in Cornish, NH. www.nps.gov/saga.

BASIC FACTS: Grand Opening Weekend at Weir Farm, featuring the restored Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio takes place on Saturday (May 24) and Sunday (May 25) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both days. The Weir Farm National Historic Site is located at 735 Nod Hill Road, Wilton, CT 06897. www.nps.gov/wefa

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