



HAWTHORNE  
Fine Art

**JULIAN ALDEN WEIR (1852-1919)**

*Family Scene, Isle of Man, c. 1889*

Watercolor on paper

12 ½ x 17 7/8 inches

Estate of the artist

The impressionist painter Julian Alden Weir was a well-respected and highly accomplished artist of his time. Weir came from an artistic milieu, as both his father, Robert W. Weir (1803-1889), and his brother, John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), were artists in their own right. Born in West Point, New York, Weir's first lessons in drawing and painting came from his father. From the age of fourteen, Weir would occasionally visit his older brother at his studio in the Tenth Street Studio Building in New York City. While the elder Weir sibling toured Europe from 1868-69, J. Alden took up residence in that same studio, alternating between New York City and West Point. Upon his brother's return, Weir took up classes at the National Academy of Design. He studied primarily with Lemuel Wilmarth (1825-1918), and attended lectures by noted artists James Renwick Brevoort (1832-1918), William Rimmer (1816-1879), Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins (1807-1894), and William Page (1811-1885).

Under the sponsorship of Mrs. Bradford Alden, Weir departed for Europe in 1873. He studied with Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) in Paris at the École des Beaux-Arts, painting Paris as well as in the countryside at Pont Aven and Cernay-la-Ville. During his four-year tenure in Europe Weir also traveled to Belgium, Holland, England and Spain. He exhibited for the first time at the Paris Salon in 1875.

Following his return to New York in 1877, Weir's career flourished. He accepted a teaching position at the Cooper Union, and began to teach art classes at the Art Students' League (which he would continue to do for the following two decades). He exhibited at the Society of American Artists in 1878, before being elected vice president in 1880, and full president two years later—a position he held until 1897. Weir would also be elected an associate member of the National Academy of Design in 1885, a national academician in 1885, and president in 1915.

In 1882, shortly before marrying Anna Dwight Baker, Weir acquired a farm property in Branchville, Connecticut, which is now a National Historic Site. Like many of his contemporaries, Weir thereafter



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divided his time between the artistic center of the city and the respite of the countryside. Weir also traveled to Europe when he could.

It was around the mid-1880s that the content and composition of Weir's paintings began to change as he shifted his focus toward smaller canvases and informal compositions. In 1889, Weir and his wife spent three weeks on the Isle of Man during a summer trip to Europe. Due to the similarity of the interior to



J. Alden Weir, *Fisherman's Hut, Isle of Man*, etching, 11.5 x 15.5 cm. Private Collection.

other works Weir completed from that trip—most of which are etchings—we know *Family Scene* to have been painted there. Like many of Weir's compositions around this time, *Family Scene* echoes the French Impressionists' loose style of domestic genre scenes. Weir often used his wife and children for these compositions. Weir's increased interest in watercolors during the 1880s is underscored by his election to membership of the American Watercolor Society in 1884.

During his lifetime, Weir was the subject of two one-man exhibitions: the first, at Doll & Richards in Boston (1884), and the second, at Blakeslee Galleries in New York. Weir also exhibited multiple times at the American Watercolor Society (1880), the Paris Salon (silver medal in 1882), the New York Etching Club, the Society of Painters in Pastel, the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York (1901), the Universal Exhibition in St. Louis (gold medal, 1904), and had twenty-five works appear in the monumental 1913 Armory Show in New York. Weir was the president of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors (elected in 1911), and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (elected 1915). Weir was one of the founding members and contributors to the exhibition, *Ten American Painters* in 1898, and was the recipient of honorary degrees from Princeton (1916) and Yale Universities (1917). Today, his work can be found at such institutions as the Smithsonian and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.