

CT Trust Resource ID: 2864

## HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY – BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

State Historic Preservation Office, DECD, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

\*Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

Inventory form modified for the Creative Places - Arts & Letters Project

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common): Baker-Weir HouseOther Name(s) (Historic): Baker-Weir HouseStreet Address or Location: 29 Windham Center Road, WindhamTown/City: Windham

Village:

County: WindhamDesignation(s): SRHD, NRHDOwner(s): Mcgrath, Barbara StoreyPublic/Private: PrivateLatitude: 41.6981 Longitude: -72.1573

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: single dwelling; Secondary outbuildingHistoric Use: Domestic: single dwelling; Agriculture/subsistence: Agricultural outbuildingAccessibility to public: No Exterior visible from public road? YesInterior accessible? If yes, explain: NAStyle of building: Italianate Victorian Date of Construction: 1720, 19th c.**Material(s)** (Indicate use or location when appropriate)**Structural Systems(s):****Roof(Type):** (Material):**Number of Stories:** 2 1/2 **Approximate Dimensions:** 40' x 72', additions**Structural Condition:** Excellent**Exterior Condition:** Excellent**Locational Integrity:** On original site **Moved, When:** NA**Alterations?:** Yes If yes, explain: 19th-century remodeling of c. 1720 house**Related outbuildings or landscape features:** Barn**Surrounding Environment:****Interrelationship of building and surroundings:**

The Weir-Baker Farm is located to the west of Windham Center Road (CT Route 203) and south of Windham Green. The main house is set back from the road behind a deep lawn with scattered shade trees. The property is accessed by a drive from the north. West of the main house is a complex of barns and cleared land. The current size of the property is 2.51 acres, but it must have previously been much larger. The Baker-Weir farm is a contributing resource in the Windham Center Historic District No. 79002655.

**Other notable features of building or site:**

The house consists of two intersecting blocks. A c. 1855 tall 2 1/2-story section oriented east-west has a shallow-pitched gable roof with deep overhangs and ornamental brackets below deep cornices. The east end is a gable façade facing the lawn and road. A full pediment at the attic has a pair of arched attic windows. Windows are six-over-six double hung, and a bay window projects from the first floor. To the north of this is a lower, and older, eighteenth-century block with its gable roof oriented north-south and an ell projecting west. The east façade windows are smaller two-over-two sash, four windows in two pairs, with a full-height angled bay at the north corner. A one-story hip-roofed porch runs across the east façade from the inside corner of the south block. This has arched trellis posts supporting the roof. A two-story wing extends west from this section of the building. Siding is stucco and clapboard and roofing is asphalt shingles.

Architect: Unknown Builder/Maker: Unknown**Historical or Architectural importance:**

The Baker family house incorporates several structures of different periods, and was 'modernized' during the 1850s in an Italianate style. Colonel Rufus Baker (1790-1868) and his wife Eliza Taintor Baker (1794-1868), who inherited the property from her father, settled in Windham Center when Baker retired after a career as an army officer. They were responsible for renovations from 1855 to 1858 (Dawson 2016, Chapter 4). Following the deaths of the Bakers, the house was passed to their son Charles Taintor Baker (1821-1881) who with his wife Anna Bartlett Dwight Baker (1826-1899) began occupying the property seasonally between travel in Europe, time in New York City, and other resort areas of New England. The property was later inherited by Ella Baker Weir. The artist J. Alden Weir (1852-1919), had married Anna Baker (1863-1892) and, after her early death, married her sister Ella Baker (1852-1931). His three children grew up in the care of Ella, and spent extensive time with her at the Windham farm. Weir's property at Branchville in western Connecticut is now a National Historic Site, with the Baker-Weir Farm less well-known as influential in the life and work of Weir and his family. A niece, artist Irene Weir (1862-1944), was also associated with the site as a periodic resident and was Director of the Norwich Art School from 1890-1893.

Dorothy Weir (1890-1947) was the middle daughter of Julian Alden Weir and Anna Baker Weir. After her mother's death, the three children were

cared for at this family farm by their aunt Ella Baker, who then married J. Alden Weir. Dorothy studied art and became a painter and print-maker. Works in the archives at Brigham Young University show the scenery of Windham and illustrate how important the place was for her. After her father's death, she wrote the biography 'The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir,' published posthumously, and worked to preserve the farm at Branchville that has become the Weir Historic Site. Dorothy cared for her stepmother Ella, and only after Ella's death, married Mahonri Young (1877-1957) in 1931. The couple were often at Branchville where Mahonri Young had a studio, but also spent extensive time at Windham. In her lifetime, she won prizes for her Japanese inspired woodblocks as well as for some of her oil paintings. Most of her work can be now be found at the Museum of Art at Brigham Young University.

**Sources:**

Phone interview by C. Hitchcock with Anne Dawson, 2/12/2015.

Town of Windham Assessor's Records. <http://windham.univers-clt.com/index.php?reset=true> .

Dawson, Anne E., curator. 3/05/2016. 'A Good Summer's Work: J. Alden Weir, Connecticut Impressionist.' New London: Lyman Allyn Museum.  
Dawson, Anne E., ed. 2016. Rare Light: J. Alden Weir in Windham Connecticut 1882-1919. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press. Chapter 4: essay by Rachel Carley.

Keiner, Harry. 1979. Windham Center National Register Historic District Nomination No. 79002655. National Park Service.

Wardle, Marian, ed. 2011. The Weir Family, 1820-1920: Expanding the Traditions of American Art. Provo: Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Hanover: University Press of New England.

Young, Dorothy Weir. 1960. The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Young, Dorothy Weir. Weir Farm National Historic Site web site. Accessed at: <https://www.nps.gov/wefa/learn/historyculture/dorothyweiryoung.htm> .  
Weir Collection, Brigham Young University. Accessed at: <http://files.lib.byu.edu/ead/XML/MSS1291.xml> .

**Photographer:** Anne Dawson (weirinwindham.org) Date: 2016

**View:** East view

**Form completed by:** Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: July 22, 2016

**Organization:** Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

**Address:** 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

**Threats:** None known

**Subsequent field evaluations:**



Baker Weir House east view (www.weirinwindham.org)

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**FOR OFFICE USE:**

Town # \_\_\_\_\_ Site# \_\_\_\_\_ UTM \_\_\_\_\_

District ☐ S ☐ NR If NR, specify: ☐ Actual ☐ Potential