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Showing postings 1 - 5 of 5 in the thread: Area artists of the past.

Posting: Area artists of the past Poster: William Brainard Date: 15 September 2005 11:19 AM	Posting 1
<p>Walter Van Arsdale of Coventry was an illustrator for Colliers magazine; Ruth Welles did lots of reflective scenes of Coventry, Bolton, West Hartford and Noank and the shore towns and scenes in Palm Beach Fla. where she tied up her power cruiser "Carminita", 1947-51. Mrs. Welles had an art studio at her farm in South Coventry. Though she died more than 50 years ago, many will recall that she started and ran the Welles Real Estate and Insurance Agency from 1932 till her death in 1955. She was also music supervisor for the towns of Coventry and Columbia and taught at Windham High School in the late 1920s. Aside from bottling her own milk and cream, Mrs. Welles played the Hammond organ at the local Congregational Church in South Coventry and still had time to help out with the old Coventry Players. A buzz occured in Coventry when one of Mrs. Welles' guests at her home, Melody Farm, was the famous television personality of the time, Dagmar. Ruth Welles began her career on the stage and starred in the road company of "Bringing Up Father", 1913-1917. One of her best friends on the road was the character actress of stage and screen, Miss Charlotte Greenwood.</p>	
Posting: Re: Area artists of the past Poster: Henry George Date: 18 September 2005 7:00 AM	Posting 2
<p>Bill, as anyone ever written anything about the actors/artists colony at Coventry? I've seen lots of references to it, but nothing really in depth. Also, in talking of artists, American impressionist Julian Weir lived at Windham and painted many local scenes.</p>	
Posting: Re: Area artists of the past Poster: TRB Date: 18 September 2005 9:58 AM	Posting 3
<p>Henry, this colony goes back to the nineteenth century. A famous impressionist artist, like Weir, called Benoni Irwin, drowned in Coventry Lake in 1896. Irwin was a close friend of John Muir, who helped develop Yosemite as a national park.</p> <p>November 16, 2002 Benoni Irwin</p> <p>Long before Lake Wangumbaug, or Coventry Lake, was known for Lakeside Park and as the terminus of the Willimantic-Coventry trolley line, its pristine beauty attracted writers, actors and artists from across the United States, who transformed this scenic spot into a private escape, and summertime resort in the years after the Civil War. One such summer visitor was renowned America portrait painter and sculptor Benoni Irwin (1840-1896).</p> <p>Benoni Irwin was born in Newmarket, Ontario, and removed to upstate New York as a child. He was a pupil of the National Academy of Design in New York, and trained in Paris with the famous French portraitist Emile Auguste Carolus-Durand (1838-1917), also known as Charles Durand.</p> <p>Irwin's work was widely sought after by America's Gilded Age elite, and he had studios in San Francisco, New York, and Baltimore. Amongst other works, New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art holds an Irwin portrait of Edward Messer, the head of Washington's Corcoran Art Gallery, and one of writer Charles H. Farnham. Irwin participated in art exhibitions across America and Europe, and he exhibited in the Universal Exposition at Paris in 1889, and the Chicago World Fair in 1893.</p> <p>Irwin married into a Coventry family, the Deans, and was introduced to the delights of Coventry Lake, and the beauty of northeast Connecticut. Irwin and his wife lived at Yonkers, New York, but they built a home near to Coventry Lake, and spent more than 20 summers in the town.</p> <p>On the evening of August 26 1896 Benoni Irwin loaded his camera onto a round bottom boat, and sailed out onto Lake Wangumbaug to take photographs of the lake at sunset. Irwin stood in the boat as he took pictures with the bulky camera and tripod, and was seen by many people on the shore. But as he was adjusting the focus Irwin suddenly lost his balanced, and fell into the lake.</p> <p>Those on the lakeshore heard a splash, and then noted that the boat was empty. Ernest Woodworth jumped into a boat and rowed to Irwin's empty boat, but could see no sign of the unfortunate artist. Woodworth's friend Arthur Curtis dived into the lake and quickly recovered Irwin's body.</p> <p>The artist's uncle through marriage, Dr. Dean, and medical examiner Dr. Higgins were called to the scene, but Irwin could not be revived. The local community was greatly shocked by the tragic loss of its prominent summer resident.</p> <p>Irwin was only twenty yards from the shore in an area where the water was only eight feet deep, and it was a surprise to many that he had drowned. Some thought he may have collapsed from sunstroke or a heart attack, but the postmortem revealed that Irwin had drowned after being knocked unconscious by hitting his head on the edge of the boat as he fell.</p> <p>The 56 year-old artist was buried in Coventry cemetery, and family and friends came from across the United States to attend his funeral. His fellow artist, Julian Alden Weir, although not a native of the region, also chose to be buried at nearby Windham. Such</p>	

artists, other than enjoying the natural beauty of the landscape, believed that the light in northeastern Connecticut was 'just right'.

Posting:	Re: Area artists of the past	Posting 4
Poster:	William Brainard	
Date:	19 September 2005 11:30 AM	

I didn't know this; thanks for sharing!

Posting:	Re: Area artists of the past	Posting 5
Poster:	William Brainard	
Date:	19 September 2005 11:37 AM	

There were a number of articles in the old Hartford "Times" from what I understand. Walter Van Arsdale was associated with the West Hartford Art League School. He and Mrs. Welles had life study classes in South Coventry in the early 1950s. The school was in Mrs. Welles studio at her home "Melody Farm" on South Street. Ruth Welles was a student of Mr. Van Arsdale. Her works were shown in Coventry throughout the '50s and early 1960s. The Booth-Dimock Library had one of her paintings of South Coventry village and the Bidwell Hotel but a new board of trustees removed the painting and it reverted to the family. Mrs. Welles died in 1955; the family gave the painting to the library in her memory. It was on view 19 years till the library intended to destroy it about 1974. Actress Jane Wyman works in oils similar to Mrs. Welles style; I saw Miss Wyman's retrospective in a Carmel art gallery in the mid 1970s.