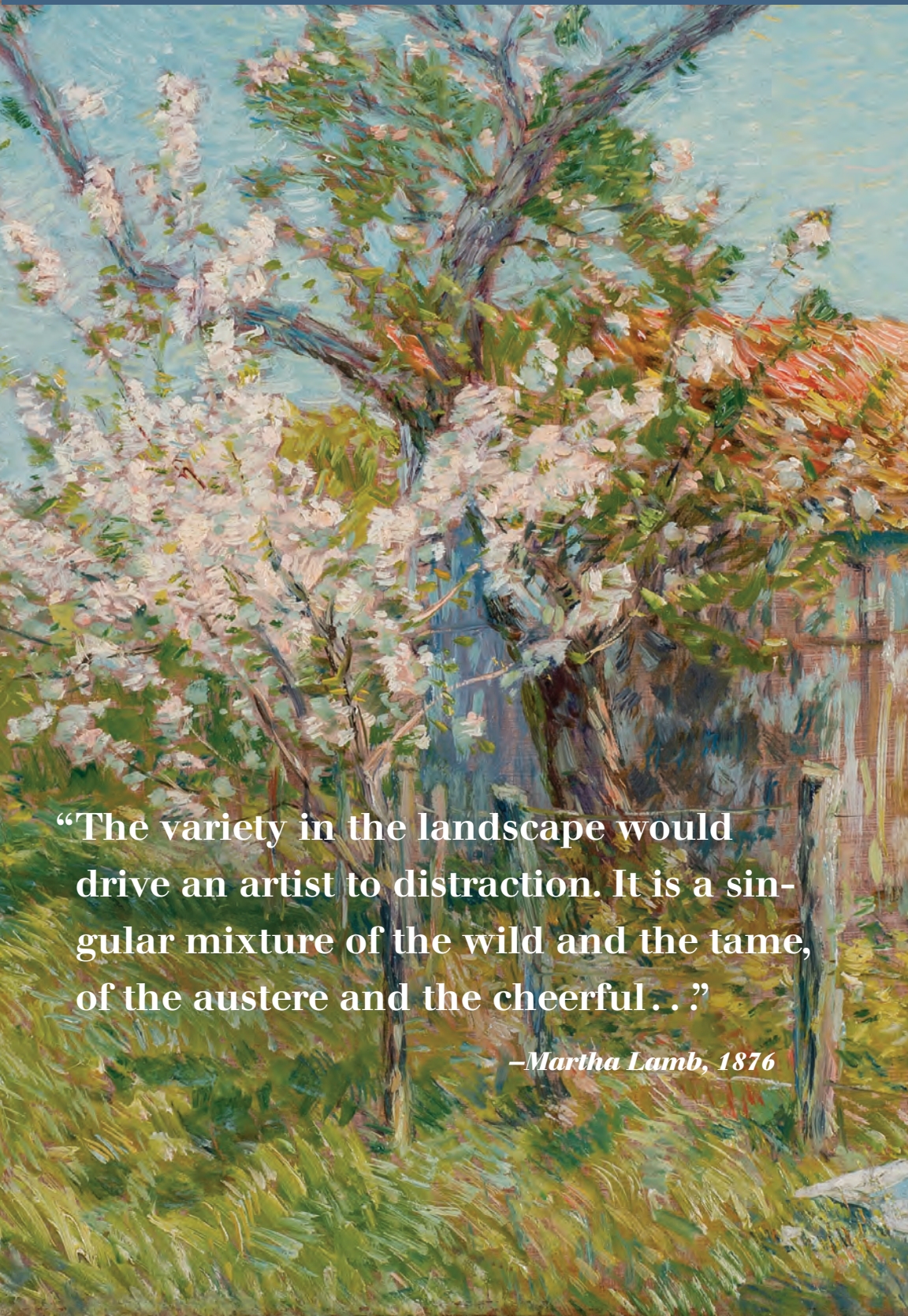




FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM
VISITOR GUIDE

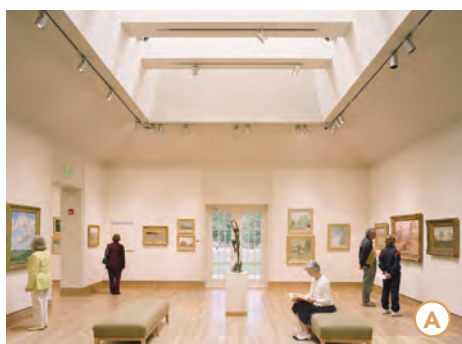


“The variety in the landscape would drive an artist to distraction. It is a singular mixture of the wild and the tame, of the austere and the cheerful..”

—*Martha Lamb, 1876*

As you use this guide to explore the Florence Griswold Museum, you will walk the grounds enjoyed by Miss Florence Griswold (1850–1937) and the painters of the Lyme Art Colony who took up residence in her house beginning in 1899. Experience first-hand the environment of one of the largest Impressionist art colonies in America, including the Robert F. Schumann Artists’ Trail. This new addition to the Museum, opened in 2019, offers an opportunity to take in the natural, artistic, and historic highlights of our site via a half-mile, ADA-accessible pathway that links the fragments of the original Griswold estate for the first time since 1936. Inside this guide, you will find a detailed map with points of interest around the Museum and along the trail.

- (A) Robert & Nancy Kriebel Gallery:** Designed by Centerbrook Architects and opened in 2002, this award-winning gallery houses the admissions desk, changing exhibitions, the Museum’s art and archival collections, a brief orientation film, The Shop, and visitor amenities. A research archive is also available by appointment. The Robert F. Schumann Artists’ Trail starts at the Kriebel Gallery’s side entrance.
- (B) Marshfield House:** To generate money for the elderly Miss Florence’s care, her estate was sold in 1936 to Judge Robert McCurdy Marsh of New York. He built the house as a weekend and summer retreat in 1937, taking advantage of picturesque views of the Lieutenant River. Privately owned until 1997, Marshfield is typically closed to the public but hosts Museum programs, private rental events, and Café Flo (open May–October).
- (C) Café Flo:** Enjoy outdoor dining overlooking the Lieutenant River (open May–October).
- (D) John & Dyanne Rafal Landscape Center:** An exhibition of photographs, tools, and videos inside describes Miss Florence’s gardens and the history of the local landscape (open April–October).



- (E) John & Kelly Bill Hartman Education Center:** The hub of hands-on creative programs for visitors and school groups. Open to the public on Sundays for art projects, including the opportunity to paint your own canvas indoors or out (open Sundays, April–December).
- (F) Florence Griswold House:** Home of the Lyme Art Colony. A remarkable series of paintings on the doors and dining room walls is unique in American art. The house is designed to be self-guided, and there are knowledgeable docents inside to provide more information about the period rooms and upstairs galleries.
- (G) William Chadwick Studio:** Similar to the studios that once dotted the property, William Chadwick’s studio provides a glimpse into the working methods of the Lyme artists. Moved from Chadwick’s home in Old Lyme to this site and opened in 1993, the shingled building combines a painting room lit by a large north window, a storage loft, and a framing workshop (open April–October).



The Robert F. Schumann Artists' Trail



RIVER WALK

1. Farm Fields

The Griswold family moved to this property in 1841 and cultivated the land near the Lieutenant River with crops such as corn, oats, potatoes, beans, and hay. During the art colony years, journalists commented on the fresh produce served at Miss Florence's meals, harvested from the riverside fields. During breaks from painting in his studio (see Woodland Walk), artist William S. Robinson enjoyed cutting hay in these fields with a scythe.

2. Lieutenant River Overlook

This 3.7-mile-long river joins the Connecticut River estuary near Long Island Sound. The Lieutenant River is tidal and brackish, with marshes along its banks. Its wharves once supported shipbuilding and trade of local produce with the West Indies. The river also powered a gristmill, a fulling mill for processing cloth, and a nail factory in which Florence Griswold's father invested. Lyme artists depicted the waterway's picturesque curves on their canvases. For fun, they paddled Florence Griswold's rowboats called *Scarlet Fever*, *Smallpox*, and *Prickly Heat*, launching from a dock whose remains are visible to the north. Today, fish such as shad, white perch, and striped bass frequent the river, as do migrating eels and birds. Great egrets, great blue herons, and mute swans are commonly seen in this area, with bald eagles arriving each winter.

3. Rainwater Garden with Native Plants

The banks of the Griswold land along the Lieutenant River have hosted a range of plants over the years, from native mountain laurel, to white birches, to vegetables cultivated for Florence Griswold's boardinghouse table. Those disturbances and changes in the soil's chemistry allowed invasive plants to take hold. Indigenous plantings have now been added and inroads made against non-native plant species. The varieties chosen can tolerate both wet and dry conditions and include rushes, irises, sedge, butterfly weed and other plants that support healthy bird and

insect populations. This rainwater garden offers major ecological benefits: it collects and cleans water after a rain to remove toxins before it re-enters the Lieutenant River and recharges the groundwater, contributing to the river's health.

4. Osprey Nests

This location provides the ideal view of osprey nests on the riverbank and in the marsh just across the Lieutenant River (resting on elevated platforms). The birds spend spring and summer in Old Lyme, dining on fish from the river before migrating to South America each September. Ospreys were threatened in the 20th century by the pesticide DDT, as field-guide author Roger Tory Peterson observed from his home upriver from the Museum. Like his friend Rachel Carson, writer of the landmark environmental conservation book *Silent Spring*, Peterson helped bring awareness to the issue, saving the birds.

5. Bow Bridge

Artists set up easels near where you now stand as a vantage point for painting the Bow Bridge, which once crossed the Lieutenant River near the present-day bridge visible to the southwest. The quaint, wooden arched structure was one of the Lyme artists' favorite subjects. Lyme Art Colony founder Henry Ward Ranger chose the bridge as the subject for his painting on one of the doors in Florence Griswold's house. The original bridge was built around 1830 and later raised to allow for the passage of boats filled with salt hay from the marshes. It was replaced with an iron structure in 1914 when car traffic from a new highway bridge over the Connecticut River proved too much of a strain, and again in 1928 with a steel bridge. The footings of the Bow Bridge are still visible on the far bank. The spot where you are standing is on property the Museum acquired in 2016 to reestablish the boundaries of Florence Griswold's original estate. As our landscape restoration along the Lieutenant River progresses, this vista will eventually include a meadow with native flowers and grasses.



HEDGEROW WALK

6. Childe Hassam's Studio Site

Florence Griswold encouraged her artist boarders to use her farm sheds as studios, at least seven of which dotted the estate. A 1998 archaeological dig and evidence from paintings and historic photographs show that Impressionist Childe Hassam's studio was here at the northwest corner of the orchard. During spring visits, he stepped outside it to paint the flowering apple trees (see his depiction of the studio on the front of this guide). Although the original studio is gone, its shape has been outlined in granite carved with Hassam's crest. As you walk around it, imagine a rustic room with the smell of turpentine and wet paint, mixed with the scent of fresh grass and apple blossoms. Uneven plank walls and a metal roof would have transmitted the sun's warmth and the sound of raindrops, as well as the voices of fellow painters stopping by. Hassam kept a pipe in a drawer of the room's small table and lounged on a sofa he snuck out of another artist's studio, only to have it disappear when the prank was returned. When reserving a guestroom, Hassam requested this studio from Miss Florence, but when he was away other artists moved in to enjoy its advantageous location and river views.

7. Orchard

The Griswold family cultivated fruit trees after they bought the property in 1841. By 1880, one acre of the estate was devoted to an orchard consisting of 40 trees. Historically, varieties included plum, peach, cherry, and apple, and the orchard now hosts heirloom apple trees as well as crabapple, pear, cherry, and plum cultivars. Lyme Art Colony painters set up easels in the orchard, which was a site for outdoor leisure as well as agriculture. Miss Florence sought to manage the orchard well, allowing its use in spraying and pruning demonstrations by the New London County Farm Bureau.

8. Hedgerow

Dating to medieval England, hedgerows were planted around fields to serve as natural fences, windbreaks, and erosion

control. In New England, they have often grown up around the remnants of old stone walls. Located at the edges of a property, hedgerows are a rich ecosystem that attracts birds, insects, and mammals, so restoring those areas of our site improves its environmental health. Trees, bushes, and plants of different heights are densely clustered to offer shelter, nest sites, and food to animals, birds, and insects, many of them vital pollinators. Along this old lane, some invasive plant species have been removed and native shrubs and plants added to attract wildlife, insects, and songbirds. Nesting boxes and bat houses have been placed to make them feel at home. During the years of the Lyme Art Colony, the lawn between this path and the Florence Griswold House featured lush vegetation, including what a 1904 newspaper described as "delightful walks among old fashioned flowers and shrubs" such as bowers of lilacs.

9. Florence Griswold House and Lawn

Considered one of the finest examples of Late-Georgian architecture in America, the Florence Griswold House was built in 1817 for the Noyes family by the architect Samuel Belcher. Upon marriage, Florence Griswold's father bought the home in 1841. The building's historic character and picturesque grounds captured the imagination of artists when it served as the boardinghouse for the art colony beginning in 1899. Don't miss seeing the remarkable paintings the artists left on the walls and doors on the house's first floor. During breaks from their work, the artists sprawled on the front porch and lawn, talking and playing games of baseball or horseshoes that continued on the grass to the south side of the house. *Please enter the house from the back porch.*



WOODLAND WALK

10. Woods and Understory

Located at the edge of what was once a field, this area of Florence Griswold's original property was historically more overgrown, with tangled vegetation and native plants like laurel that enjoy the shade of the understory, where they are shielded by a canopy of taller trees. Today, evergreen firs, rhododendron, and holly, as well as witch hazel and winterberry have replaced some of the invasive plants that had made their way into this area. Ferns and woodland flowers cover the ground, restoring the grove as a habitat for owls, ducks, and other birds along the nearby stream.

11. Bridge to Lyme Art Association and Mile Brook

Steps here lead to a path and bridge that connect to the Lyme Art Association (LAA). Florence Griswold sold a portion of her property to the LAA in 1917 so the artists could construct a permanent gallery to exhibit their work. Designed by architect Charles Platt, it opened in 1921 with Miss Florence as manager. Mile Brook begins to the northeast at the Boggy Hole Swamp. It passes behind the LAA, where it once broadened into an ice pond for the Griswold family (now largely filled in). What remains of the brook resurfaces beyond the interstate highway, where it flows into the Lieutenant River.

12. Pump House

The concrete structure set into the ground once sheltered a mechanical pump that moved water from the Mile Brook up to Florence Griswold's house. *Thank you for not walking on the pump house.*

13. Former Robinson Studio Site

In the 1930s, Lyme Art Colony painter William S. Robinson leased a studio from Florence Griswold that once stood near the end of this trail. The ramshackle building existed until the 1980s. From this spot, Robinson contemplated the beauty of the wooded stream, which once formed a pond behind the LAA known as Florence Pool. To extend the view, the Museum plans to continue restoring this landscape. To visit a similar studio used by Impressionist painter William Chadwick, follow the trail toward signs for the Chadwick Studio (seasonal) as you return to the Kriebler Gallery.



GARDEN WALK

14. Benjamin Eggleston Portable Studio and Art Cart

Artists came to Old Lyme to paint outdoors, and several used portable studios to help them do so in cold or wet weather. This cart was recreated from a photograph of artist Benjamin Eggleston's portable studio, which he could pull to his desired painting spot. Inside, there are kits with hands-on art and nature activities for all ages (open April-November).

15. Miss Florence's Gardens

Like her mother before her, Miss Florence was an avid gardener. She ordered flowers and vegetable seeds from catalogues late each winter and nurtured old-fashioned

perennials. Behind her house there were four distinct gardens: one for herbs and produce such as strawberries, lettuce, peas, corn, and potatoes; one for roses; and two for flowers, which she also sold to make ends meet. Using historic photographs, films, and paintings, these gardens have been re-planted and the white rose trellis re-built to reflect how they appeared to the artists of the colony, who made the gardens a major subject of their paintings. Pick up a garden guide at the front desk or Landscape Center to help identify many of the plant species.

16. John & Dyanne Rafal Landscape Center

Built in 1851, this barn is original to the property and was restored in 2009. It once housed the Griswold family's pigs and dairy cows. Today, an exhibition of photographs, tools, and videos inside describes the local landscape's history and uses up through the Lyme Art Colony period. In the hayloft, you will see the canoe brought to Old Lyme by future president Woodrow Wilson and his family for paddles on the Lieutenant River during their summer visits to the art colony (open April-October).

Continue on to the Florence Griswold House or visit the special exhibition in the Kriebler Gallery.



(Left) Florence Griswold in her garden, ca. 1910. (Above) John R. Baynes, Jr., The Hot Air Club, ca. 1906. Lyme Historical Society Archives, Florence Griswold Museum

Who Was Miss Florence?

By the late 1890s, the Museum's namesake Florence Griswold (1850–1937) was nearly fifty years old. The youngest child of a once-prosperous sea captain, she outlived her parents and all but one of her three siblings, and faced the future as an unmarried woman with few economic prospects. She inherited the family home along with the costs of its upkeep. To survive, she chose to take in boarders, a common and socially acceptable occupation for women at the time. Fortunately, during the summer of 1899, one of her visitors was Henry Ward Ranger, an American artist looking to establish an art colony in New England. He returned with a group of artists the following year and over the next two decades the Florence Griswold House in Old Lyme was the center of a thriving artist colony.

Thank you for visiting us today!

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FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM

Celebrating Art, History, and Nature

96 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, CT 06371

Front cover image:

Childe Hassam, *Apple Trees in Bloom, Old Lyme* (detail), 1904. Oil on wood, 25 x 30 in. Gift of the Vincent Dowling Family Foundation in Honor of Director Emeritus Jeffrey Andersen