

HISTORIC RESOURCES

BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Please send completed form to: Stacey Vairo, National Register and State Register Coordinator,
State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development,
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford CT 06103

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

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) Burr Sisters Studio Record No. 39383
 Building Name (Historic) Burr Sisters Studio / Burr Family Orchard
 Street Address or Location 485 Elm Street
 Town/City Monroe Village _____ County Fairfield
 Owner(s) Fraser, Diane and James, 485 Elm Street, Monroe CT 06468 Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: secondary structure; Domestic: single dwelling
 Historic Use: Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling
 Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No
 Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain _____
 Style of building New England barn, Vernacular style Date of Construction 1885

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input type="checkbox"/> Brick | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>vertical wood flush board siding</u> | | |

Structural System

- Wood Frame Post & Beam Balloon Load bearing masonry Structural iron or steel
 Other _____

Roof (Type)

- Gable Flat Mansard Monitor Sawtooth
 Gambrel Shed Hip Round Other _____

(Material)

- Wood Shingle Roll Asphalt Tin Slate Asphalt Shingle
 Built up Tile Other _____

Number of Stories: 2 1/2 Approximate Dimensions 20 x 24 feet

Structural Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Exterior Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? _____

Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain: Interior partition, small shed addition

FOR OFFICE USE: Town # _____ Site # _____ UTM _____

District: S NR If NR, Specify: Actual Potential

PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT'D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- Barn Shed Garage Carriage House Shop Garden
- Other landscape features or buildings: House, garden, stone walls

Surrounding Environment:

- Open land Woodland Residential Commercial Industrial Rural
- High building density Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

See continuation sheet.

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*)

See continuation sheet.

Architect _____ Builder James Burr

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:

Cunningham, Janice, *Connecticut's Agricultural Heritage: an Architectural and Historical Overview*, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation & State Historic Preservation Office, 2012.

See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock Date 10/13/2011

View Multiple Views Negative on File CTHP

Name Charlotte Hitchcock Date 10/28/2011

Organization The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude:
41.327939, -73.222343

Threats to the building or site:

- None known Highways Vandalism Developers Renewal Private
- Deterioration Zoning Other _____ Explanation _____

• **Interrelationship of building and surroundings:**

The property is located at the southwest corner of Elm Street and Lovers Lane/Longview Road. The property is situated in a predominantly residential area with individual lots separated by woodland buffers. In the late 19th century an area of about 55 acres on the west side of Elm Street comprised the Burr Family Farm, an orchard and berry farm. The farm extended west across the hilltop overlooking the Poquonnock River East Branch and south toward Bugg Hill Road. Elm Street runs north-south approximately ¾ mile west of the Monroe Town Green, which can be reached from the site by Lovers Lane or Church Street. The Burr Farm was subdivided in the 1960s with residential streets and smaller lots; a few orchard trees remain at the corner of Longview and Highmeadow Roads. The original farmstead site retains the early 19th-century farmhouse and the barn studio on one acre of land.

The barn studio is located almost at the center of the property with its ridge line running north-south parallel to Elm Street but perpendicular to Longview Road. The farmhouse is located northeast of the barn with its ridge-line running north-south and its east eave-side front facing Elm Street. The house is a 5-bay 2 ½-story colonial-style building with its eave-side facing the street. The second-floor windows are twelve-over-eight double-hung sash. At the ground floor a full-width porch has been partially enclosed, with one-over-one double-hung windows. The entry door is under the porch, in the end wall of the enclosed area. The north gable-end has two twelve-over-eight double-hung windows at the second floor level and two two-over-two double-hung windows at the ground level. Additions extend south and west from the main block. Siding is wood clapboard, painted tan with white trim. Roofing is asphalt shingles.

A stone wall lines the edge of the front yard. The property is entered by a driveway from Longview Road to the north of the barn. Gardens are north and west. The foundation of an earlier shed remains to the west of the barn. A few old orchard trees remain to the south of the barn.

• **Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*):**

Architectural description:

Inventory of structures (C – contributing, NC – non-contributing):

House	early 19 th c.	C
Barn studio	1885	C

Exterior:

This is a 2 1/2 -story workshop type barn of approximately 20 x 24 feet with a recent shed-roof addition on its south gable-end. The ridge line of the barn runs north-south parallel to Elm Street. The north gable-end of the barn facing Longview Road has two pairs of hinged wagon doors at the grade level, with wrought iron strap hinges. The gable attic has a pair of over-sized three-over-three double-hung windows with tall narrow panes. The east eave-side of the barn has a pass-through door off-center towards the south with lintel trim and wrought iron strap hinges. A six-pane stable window can be seen towards the right (north) of the pass-through door. The second floor level of the east eave-side of the barn has two two-over-two double-hung windows to the left (south) of center. The south gable-end of the barn has the 1-story shed-roofed addition towards the west and a two-over-two double-hung window centered at the second floor level. The west eave-side of the barn has a single-pane window at the center of the ground floor and a two-over-two double-hung window at the second floor level, off-center towards the right (south).

The gable roof has overhangs at the eaves and rakes, with sloped wood soffits. A brick chimney projects through the ridge-line near the south end wall. The barn has asphalt shingle roofing and red painted vertical wood siding with white trim.

Interior:

The structure is constructed primarily of post and beam framing. At the ground floor ceiling level, a central lateral girder runs east-west slightly north of the center, supported by wood posts in the side walls and a steel lally column at the center. This and other heavy timber members exhibit the saw marks of a band saw. Mortise and tenon joints are pegged with wood pegs. At the perimeter, heavy timber sills and plates form the frame while 2" x 8" sawn joists support the upper floor. A stair rises in the southeast corner to provide access to the upper level. Framing details are visible in the ground floor walls and stair, while the upper floor level has finished interior plaster walls.

At the upper floor level, the stair is enclosed by tongue and groove wood paneling with a door at the top of the steps. A built-in cupboard is set into the enclosure wall over the stair. A partition and raised floor platform (not original) separates the lower south area, used as a workshop, from the elevated north space, used as a music studio. In the north area, the two over-sized windows provide north studio light. These and the other double-hung windows in the upper floor level are trimmed with square wood casings and aprons. At the ceiling near the south wall, an opening leads into the bottom of the chimney (supported by wood framing); this may be the location of a wood stove in the original configuration. Flooring in the workshop area is 6"-wide tongue and groove softwood boards.

• Historical or Architectural importance:

Applicable Connecticut Register Criteria:

1. Associated with a significant person/people.
2. Embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

Historical background:

Monroe in the late 19th century was a farming community but well-connected to New York and to Connecticut's cities by virtue of rail and road connections. Substantial numbers of local students went off to colleges throughout New England, and Monroe became a popular summer destination, enhancing its communication with the larger world. Farm products were increasingly marketed to the city population centers.

The Burrs were a prominent family in Monroe. James Burr purchased the farm on Elm Street from his father in 1860, and with his wife Caroline, raised his children there while growing hay, apples, raspberries, grapes, vegetables, and strawberries. He was best known for his strawberry crop which was marketed in a number of nearby cities. Fannie, born in 1858, and Jennie, born 14 years later in 1872, were the survivors; two boys died in infancy and another sister in her late 20s.

Fannie's interest in art began early and her sister Elnora's diary records drawing lessons from 1877 onward. Her teachers suggested that she study at the Yale School of Fine Arts. The school was then newly founded and headed by John Ferguson Weir, a prominent landscape painter. In its early years prior to its ability to grant a bachelors degree, most of the students were women. Unlike some other art schools at the time, at Yale the women were full citizens, involved in all activities including life drawing. Fannie graduated in 1881, spent three years at home, and then studied in New York City at the Art Students League with some of the most prominent American Impressionist painters.

While Fannie was in New York, her father built the small 2-story barn with large north windows and a wood stove, for her use as a studio (Fuscass, p. 7). Fannie painted in the studio for the next 30 years.

Her studies were discontinued for the next two years. Documentary evidence shows that she was unhappy about this and felt she was not living up to her potential. The reasons for her episodic education are unclear, whether financial or other family dynamics were involved; she did have disagreements with her father, James. Although women were finding educational opportunities in the art world of the 1880s, they still found it difficult to develop careers and nearly impossible to combine professionalism with marriage. Fannie worked briefly out of a studio in Birmingham (Derby), taught at the Yale School of Fine Arts, then opened a studio in Bridgeport. In 1890 her sister Elnora died (of complications of diabetes) and Fannie returned home.

Meanwhile, Jennie was growing up, with Fannie a strong almost maternal influence. Jennie also began to draw and paint, and was able to attend Mount Holyoke College for two years in 1891-3. During that time Fannie worked on the family farm, taught a few students, and attempted to paint in what time she could find. Jennie went on to study at Yale as well. Both sisters ultimately returned to the family homestead to help their parents and after James Burr's death in 1901, to take over the farming business and care for their mother. Fannie ran the farm successfully and prospered financially, while continuing to paint portraits on commission. Jennie, with a more reclusive personality, became withdrawn as the years passed, particularly after Fannie's death in 1931. The two sisters experienced the frustration of lacking time and opportunity to pursue full time careers as artists while fulfilling the expectations of supporting their parents and working the farm.

When Jennie died in 1961, 700 works of art had accumulated in the studio building, to be stored by relatives for 25 years until they were finally catalogued and exhibited at the New Britain Museum of American Art in 1990.

Architectural significance:

The building represents a well-preserved example of the workshop type of building, with ample light through residential style windows, a finished interior at the upper floor level, and provision for heat by a stove. The sawn heavy timber post and beam frame represents a high quality sturdy construction method at a time when lighter balloon framing was becoming prevalent. The soffits are finished with wood, giving a modest level of detail to the exterior. The level of interior finish exhibited in the stair surround and window finish trim, made this a pleasant work space, and the large windows provided ample light for painting. The north studio windows, with their 3-pane sash, exhibit a subtle touch of Victorian styling, in contrast with the simple two-over-two sash of the remaining windows, characteristic of Italianate style which was waning in popularity at the time.

The building has exceptional integrity in the intact condition of its structure and exterior and interior finishes. Although the original farm acreage has been reduced, the setting in relation to the historic farmhouse and garden retains integrity, with a planted buffer screening views of the newer construction to the west. The use of this workshop building type for an artists' studio is unique, as is its association with historical events. The Burr family was locally important, and James Burr made a significant contribution to the change of agriculture from subsistence to a market economy with the development of strawberries and other fruits as commercial crops. In addition to their roles as early professional women artists, Fannie and Jennie Burr took over the management of the farm and ran it successfully through the 1920s and 1930s.

• Sources (*continuation*):

Photographs and field notes by Lee Hossler 03/28/2011, Charlotte Hitchcock.

Monroe Assessor's Records <http://monroe.univers-ct.com/>, <http://www.monroect.org/> Parcel ID: 062 018 00.

Aerial views from:

<http://maps.google.com/> accessed 10/28/2011. <http://www.bing.com/maps/> accessed 10/04/2011.

UTM coordinates: <http://itouchmap.com/latlong.html>

Coffey, Edward Nichols, A Glimpse of Old Monroe, Monroe Sesquicentennial Commission, 1974.

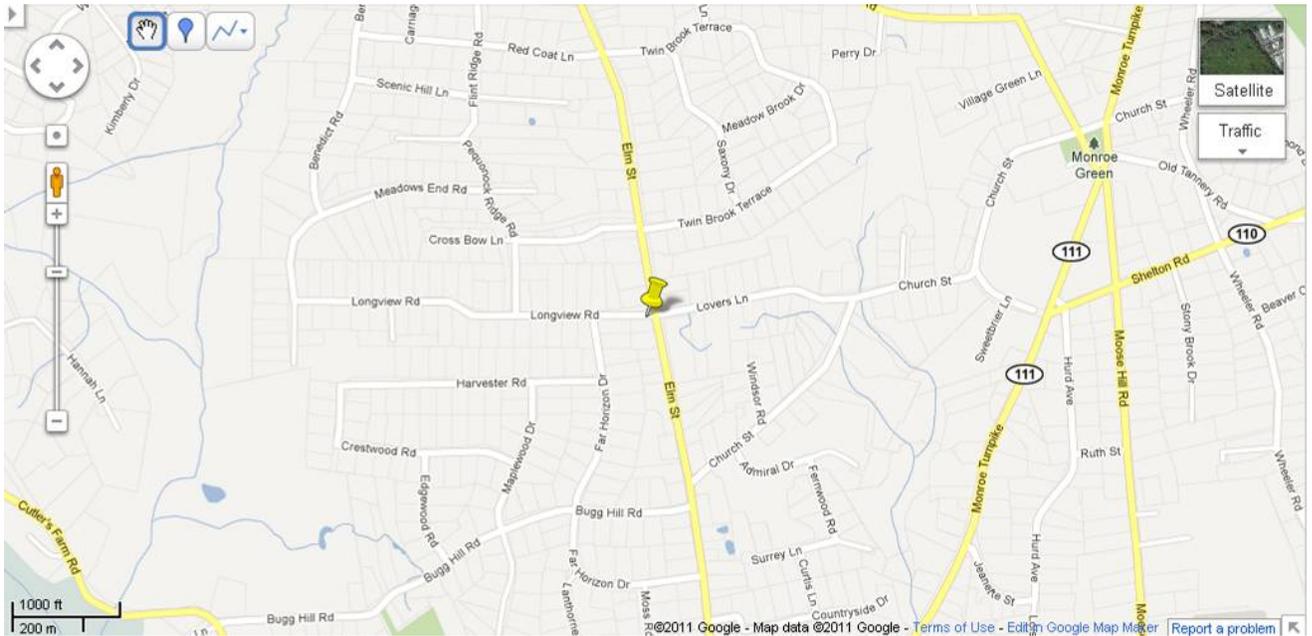
Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, Historic Barns of Connecticut Resource Inventory, 2010, <http://www.connecticutbarns.org/39383>

Donohue, Mary, McCain, Diana Ross, Historic & Architectural Resource Survey of Monroe CT, Connecticut Historical Commission, 2002.

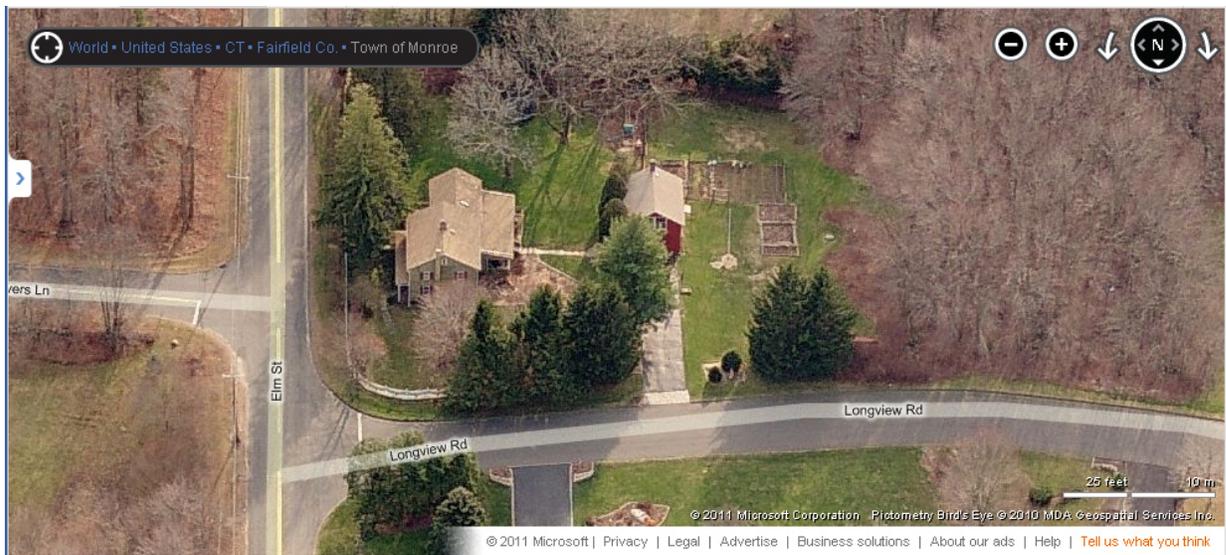
Fusscas, Helen K., Fannie C. Burr & Jennie M. Burr Artists: a Catalog for an Exhibition at the New Britain Museum of American Art, Connecticut Gallery Inc., 1990.

Sexton, James, PhD; Survey Narrative of the Connecticut Barn, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, Hamden, CT, 2005, <http://www.connecticutbarns.org/history>

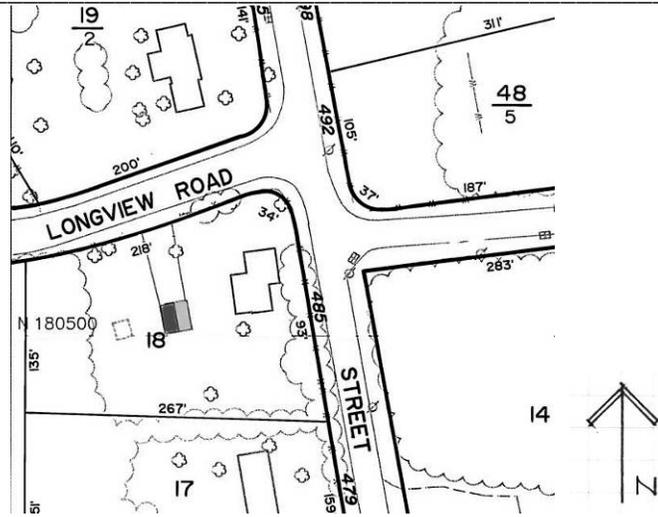
Visser, Thomas D., Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings, University Press of New England, 1997.



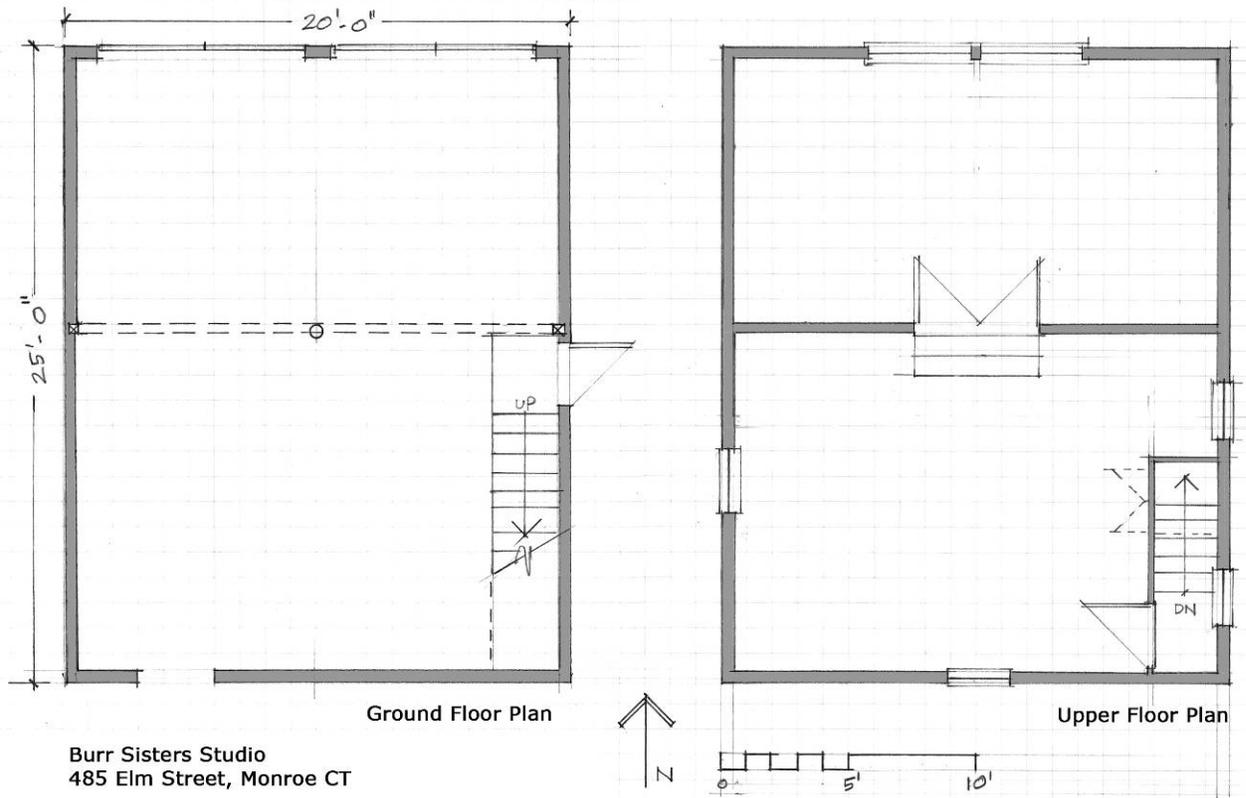
1. Location map of 485 Elm Street, Monroe CT – from <http://maps.google.com/> accessed 10/28/2011.



2. North view – aerial “bird’s-eye” map of 485 Elm Street, Monroe CT – from <http://www.bing.com/maps> accessed 10/28/2011.



3. Parcel map of 485 Elm Street, Monroe CT – from <http://www.monroect.org/>.



4. Sketch plans of Burr Sisters Studio.



5. Northeast view of studio, camera facing southwest.



6. Southwest view of studio, camera facing northeast, rear of farmhouse behind at right.



7. Southeast view of studio, camera facing northwest; farmhouse at right.



8. Detail of studio windows, camera facing south.



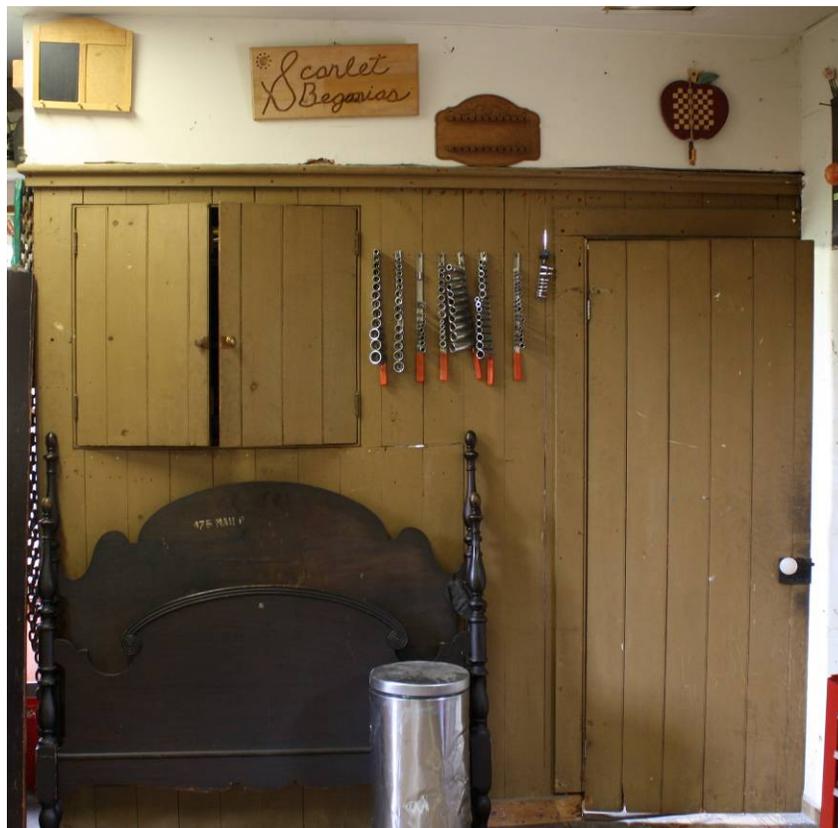
9. Detail of east eave-side, camera facing west.



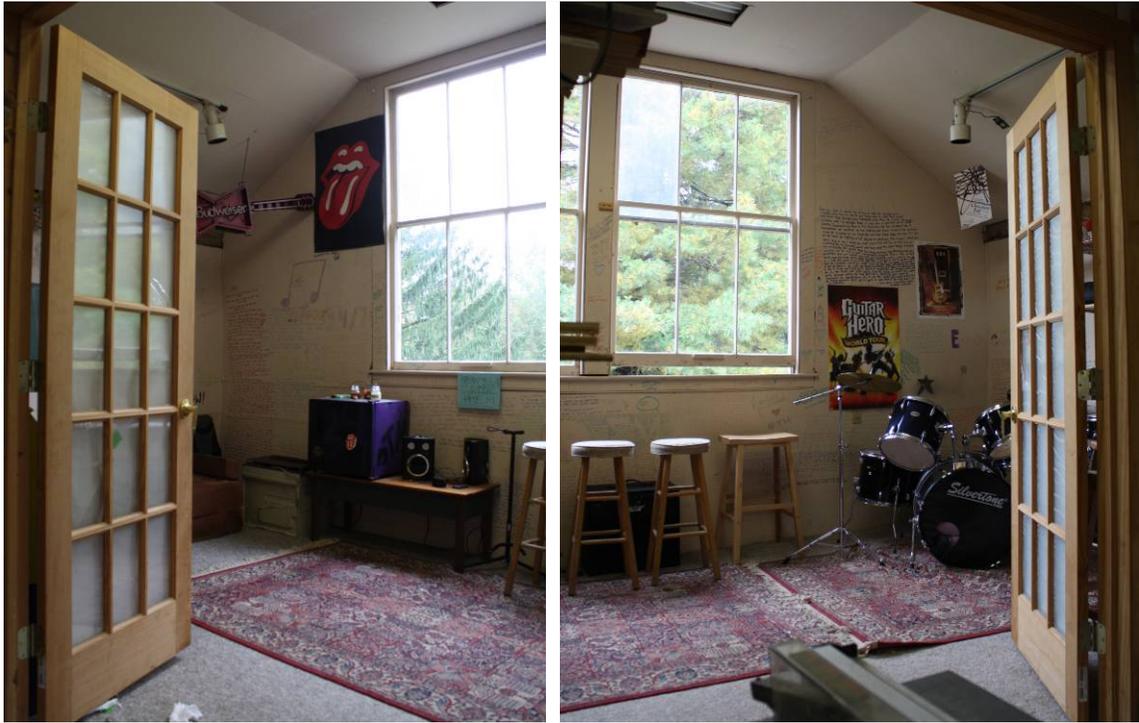
10. Interior of upper level at southeast corner, camera facing southeast.



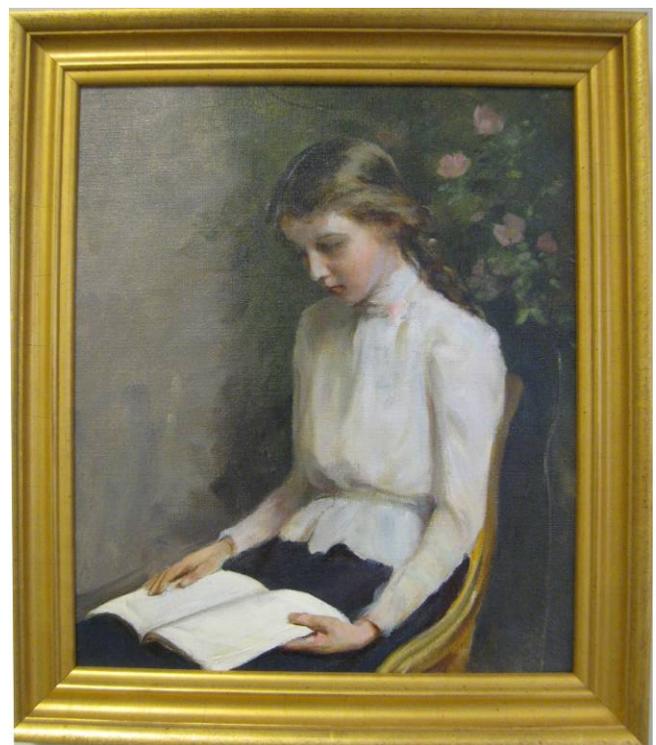
11. Interior of ground level at center of east wall, camera facing east.



12. Interior paneling detail at upper floor level, camera facing east. Door at right (southeast corner) gives access to stair down.



13. Interior of upper level studio, view to north studio windows; camera facing north.



15. Self-portrait by Fannie Burr (left); portrait of Jennie Burr painted by Fannie Burr (right), Monroe Historical Society collection.



16. Landscape at Burr Farm, painted by Jennie Burr, Monroe Historical Society collection.