

Florence Griswold Museum Quick Facts

- ◆ Florence Griswold was born on Christmas day in 1850.
- ◆ After a financial misfortune the Griswolds turned their late Georgian style mansion into a school and eventually into a boardinghouse.
- ◆ In 1899 Henry Ward Ranger, an artist from New York, came to board for the summer. The following summer brought more artists.
- ◆ With the arrival of Child Hassam in 1903, the focus of the art colony shifted from Tonalism to Impressionism and became known as the most famous Impressionist colony in America – the American Giverny.
- ◆ Willard Metcalf, Matilda Browne, and William Chadwick helped transform the Griswold House into the home of the Lyme Art Colony. Members of the Colony, preferring to work from nature, spent the day in the presence of their subjects, often painting "en plein air" -- in the open air. Canvases were sun-soaked or moonlit depending on the weather.
- ◆ One of the few exceptions to the artists-only rule, Woodrow Wilson came to stay at the Griswold House in 1905 with his wife and daughters. They visited again in 1908, 1909, and 1910.
- ◆ In 1907 the Congregational Church at Old Lyme, made famous by Lyme artists, burned to the ground. Three years later, with the help of artists and the community, the church was rebuilt.
- ◆ Reserved largely for professional artists, a stay with Miss Florence was so esteemed that the house was irreverently nicknamed the "Holy House" by the many art students who arrived each summer and took lodgings in private homes nearby.
- ◆ The practice of painting on the walls and doors of the Griswold House, begun by Ranger, was carried out over a number of years by more than thirty of the colony's artists. There are 38 painted panels in the Dining Room alone.
- ◆ In 2001 The Hartford Steam Boiler and Inspection Company gave its entire holding of American art — 188 paintings and two sculptures— to the Museum. The collection showcases Connecticut's importance to American art history from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries.
- ◆ In 2002 the Museum opened the Robert and Nancy Kriebel Gallery. It overlooks the Lieutenant River and provides an additional 10,000 square feet of space for exhibitions, visitor services, and art storage.
- ◆ The gardens behind the house have always been an important part of the landscape. Miss Florence was an avid gardener who ordered flowers and vegetables from seed catalogues. Using historic photographs and paintings, these gardens have been replanted to reflect the gardening preferences of the time.