



Cedar Grove

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site

Vol. 7, No. 2

Winter 2007 Newsletter

Cedar Grove Awarded Prestigious Grant

The National Endowment for the Humanities has announced a grant award of \$320,900 for the Thomas Cole National Historic Site through the “Interpreting America’s Historic Places” program, which supports public humanities projects that exploit the evocative power of historic places to address themes and issues central to American history and culture. The award originally required a match of \$275,000, but in December we received word that the majority of the funding will be granted outright with no matching requirement, and only \$50,000 needs to be matched.

The grant will fund a new permanent exhibition at the Thomas Cole site – including an introductory film, educational panels, thematic displays of collection objects, interactive computer stations, printed booklets and brochures, guided tours of the site, and related public programs – that bring audiences new insights into America’s cultural history through Thomas Cole. The rich educational content that is developed for the computer stations will also be made available online.

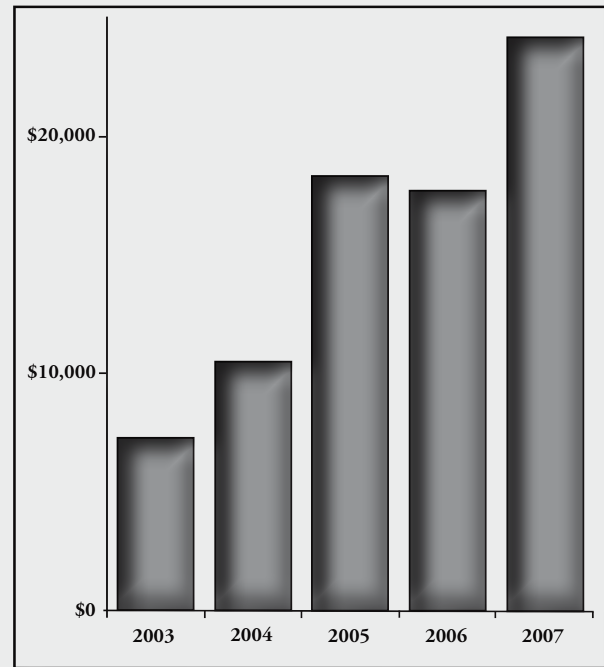
“This grant presents us with exactly the right opportunity at the right time for this organization,” said Elizabeth Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole site. “We are thrilled to be able to implement this key piece of our strategic plan, fulfilling our mission to be a center for education about the Hudson River School.”

The exhibition will specifically address Cole’s art-making process and the significant role his appreciation and interpretation of the American landscape had in shaping an emerging national and cultural identity. New exhibition elements made possible through this grant, such as a searchable database of high-resolution digital images of Cole’s paintings, will provide a means for visitors to become familiar with masterworks made by Cole at Cedar Grove. In addition, the film and educational

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At A Glance

Attendance to Cedar Grove Up 41% Over Last Year



Not in Cole’s Own Words

By Ray Beecher and Betsy Jacks

An original newspaper from 1849 with an interesting cover article was recently donated to the Thomas Cole site by Board of Advisor member Frank Racette. The article “Visit to South Peak by the late Thomas Cole,” ostensibly taken from Cole’s own diary, is reprinted on the following pages for your reading pleasure. As indicated in the introduction to the article, “We read with interest whatever we find from the pen of Cole, as we look upon his pictures, assured of truthfulness and sincerity. This little sketch has many of the traits of the amiable, genial, and pure nature of the man.” However, the text is not what it appears to be.

At the time, many of Cole’s writings including his “Thoughts and Occurrences” (not “Thoughts and Reminiscences” as indicated in the newspaper article) were in

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“Pic-Nic” 2007

The biggest event of the year at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site took place on Saturday July 21st at 5 pm, when hundreds of supportive party-goers enjoyed cocktails on the porch of the Federal-style Main House, followed by privately hosted dinners at spectacular nearby homes. A big thank you to all the supporters of this annual event, and to the volunteers who worked so hard to pull it all together.



Attendance at the event was up 18% over the previous year, which itself had broken all previous records, and income was up nearly 15%. In all, the event brought in over \$40,000 for the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, enabling the site to continue to grow and offer the community the opportunity to see painting exhibitions on the Hudson River School, speakers on American landscape painting, tours of the historic site, and free educational events throughout the year.



Flower arrangements with blue hydrangeas, pastel roses and white lilies were donated and arranged by Douglas Koch, the renowned florist whose accounts include Bloomingdales, the Helmsley Hotels, Elizabeth Arden, JP Morgan Chase and many others. Mr. Koch was named “New Yorker of the Week” by New York One News for co-founding Village Flower Power, which donates flowers to people with AIDS and teaches them flower arranging techniques.



The event is themed each year around Thomas Cole’s 1846 painting entitled “The Pic-Nic”, featuring Cole with his friends and family enjoying a beautiful summer day with wine, food and music. In the painting, Thomas Cole is seen playing an Italian guitar that was on view at Cedar Grove, on loan for the season from Alexander Gallery in New York City. The Chair of the event was Lisa Fox





Martin, assisted by the event committee of Pamela Belfor, Frank Cuthbert, Jackie Dunn, Ronnie McCue, and Amy Von Scholtz.

Pic-Nic Hosts

Jean and Richard Bassin, Pamela and Ted Belfor, Rosalind Daly and Glenda Ruby, Lisa Fox Martin and Dick May, Friends of Beattie-Powers, Carrie and Nick Haddad, Howard Hall Farm and Stewart House, Peter O'Hara and John Garofalo, Purcell and Jim Palmer, Janeen Sarlin, Michele Saunders, Betsy and Alfred Scott, and Ethel and Ken Williams.

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Lisa Fox Martin and Dick May, Pamela and Ted Belfor, Purcell and Jim Palmer, Ethel and Ken Williams, Hudson Talbott, Mario A. Pollan and Kevin Moran.

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Pic-Nic photography by Brian Branigan

What's Happening

A Summary of News & Events at Cedar Grove

2008 Sunday Salons

We are pleased to announce the new schedule of Sunday Salons, our popular monthly lecture series. Sunday Salons are gatherings at the home of Thomas Cole with guest speakers leading discussions on topics relating to the Hudson River School, America's first major art movement. Guests enjoy wine, cheese, and lively conversation once per month at Cedar Grove, the birthplace of American landscape painting. Sundays at 2 pm. Tickets are \$8 per person or \$5 for members. Admission is first-come-first-served.

January 13 – *The Jumping Off Place: The Autobiographical Nature of Cole's Biblical Landscapes* with Brett Dorfman.

Art lovers from the 1820s to the present have wondered: why did Thomas Cole spend time painting imaginary pictures of biblical scenes, when he was so good at painting real American scenery? Columbia University Master of Architecture candidate Brett Dorfman will reveal what a mistake Cole's patrons at the time, and historians today, make in disregarding Cole's biblical landscapes, painted from 1827-1833. They were not simply a detour from his career path; in fact, they are some of the most important works he ever completed, and the most autobiographical of all his paintings.

February 3 – *James Fenimore Cooper and Thomas Cole: Anger and Attachment in the Serial Landscape* with H. Daniel Peck.

Thomas Cole, founder of the Hudson River School, and James Fenimore Cooper, traditionally called "our first novelist," began their careers at the same moment in the 1820s. They knew one another, and cited each other's works in their own. Cole painted several scenes from *The Last of the Mohicans*, and Cooper specifically referred to Cole's *The Course of Empire* in one of his novels. But the relationship of their works can be understood at a deeper level as responses to the troubling changes of American culture in the Jacksonian era. H. Daniel Peck, John Guy Vassar Professor of English at Vassar College, considers these issues in relation to the serial landscapes of both figures.

March 2 – *The Hudson River School of Rocks* with Robert Titus.

The spirits of geology and landscape art became intertwined from the 1830s to the 1860s, a time when the great antiquity of the Earth came to be fully appreciated

and the geologic time scale was developed. Geologist Robert Titus, Professor of Geological and Environmental Sciences at Hartwick College, explores how landscape artists learned geology and portrayed it in imaginative artistic reconstructions. Bedrock became the very emblem of antiquity for these artists, filling a need served by classical ruins in European art. Professor Titus will examine how Thomas Cole employed this strategy in his series *The Course of Empire*, and in the process turned the tables on European art.

March 30 – *Thomas Cole and Christian Geology* with Rebecca B. Bedell, Assistant Professor of Art History, Wellesley College. .

Thomas Cole shared with many of his contemporaries a keen interest in the new science of geology. During his lifetime, many geologists, especially in the United States and Britain, placed their science in the service of revealed religion. They scoured the field for geological evidence for the historicity of the Bible, finding, for example, what they saw as substantial proof that a great Deluge had once swept over the earth. Cole's familiarity with this Christianized geology deeply influenced his work as a landscape painter, shaping his understanding of the land itself as well as his choice of subjects.

Newest Member of Cedar Grove Family



Director Betsy Jacks and daughter Ellie Dow

On December 1st, Director Betsy Jacks returned from maternity leave with daughter Elizabeth "Ellie" Bond Dow, born August 28th.

Prestigious Grant

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panels will illustrate the steps he took in his studio to develop the sketches he made on hikes in the surrounding Catskills. With telling subtractions and additions to the composition, he turned these sketches into paintings that influenced the way nature was perceived and initiated the art movement known as the Hudson River School.

The core project team includes Dr. Alan Wallach, considered to be the leading Cole scholar working today; Ms. Elizabeth Jacks, Director of the Thomas Cole Historic Site; Dr. Lee Vedder, Director of Collections and Exhibitions at the Allentown Art Museum; Dr. Karen Lucic from Vassar College; exhibition designer Charles Froom; filmmakers Eric Taylor and Jaime Bernanke; and Dr. James O'Connell, planner from the National Park Service. To ensure input from the community, a workshop was held in June 2005 providing insights from a variety of community members including representatives from neighboring institutions Olana and the Albany Institute of History and Art. The exhibition will open in phases over the next two years.

New Board Member and New Officers Elected

At the November 8th meeting of the Board of Governors, Lisa Fox Martin was reelected Chair, Hudson Talbott was elected Vice-Chair, Kenneth Williams was reelected Treasurer, and Linda Gentalen was elected Secretary. In addition, Randolph Wills was voted the newest member of the Board.

Mr. Wills is the acting Enforcement Director of the Office for Civil Rights of the U. S. Department of Education, whose mission is to provide equal access to education through the enforcement of civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability and age. Prior to that appointment, he was the Director of the New York Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education.

Before entering federal service, he worked for the New York City Commission on Human Rights, serving as Managing Attorney, Deputy Commissioner in charge of the Law Enforcement Bureau, and General Counsel.



Randolph Wills

He has lectured and written on employment law issues and has taught at Baruch College and the School of Industrial and Labor Relations of Cornell University. He graduated with honors from Bucknell University, studied Spanish literature in the doctoral program at Cornell University, and graduated from New York Law School.



Hikers on the Hudson River School Art Trail

Carol T. Savage Art Trail Guides' Program

The late Carol T. Savage will be honored with the establishment of a training program for guides who can take groups on the Hudson River School Art Trail. The Art Trail is a series of nearby sites where the views in the Hudson River School paintings can still be enjoyed. Dr. Kevin Avery, Assistant Director of the American collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has agreed to become a consultant in the formation and configuration of this exciting program.

Not in Cole's Own Words

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the possession of his pastor the Reverend Louis Legrand Noble, and, as noted by Cole scholar Alan Wallach, "Noble did considerable editing. Names are omitted—typical 19th c. literary discretion and forgivable—but, unforgivably, many sentences have been rewritten, and many omitted along with entire sections of Cole's original text. Noble was vain about his literary abilities, and the text is Noble's as much as it is Cole's."

The Literary World, A Journal of American and Foreign Literature, Science, and Art was the publication of Messers Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck of 157 Broadway, New York City. The periodical sold for three dollars per year - a princely sum in those days - and it was considered the leading literary journal of the day in New York. It was an important venue for authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, so it is significant that it published "Visit to South Peak." This *Literary World* version is likely the first appearance of this work in print, as Noble's biography of Cole did not appear until 1853.

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THE LITERARY WORLD.

A Journal of American and Foreign Literature, Science, and Art.

No. 102.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 13, 1849.

\$3 PER ANNUM.

EVERT A. & GEORGE L. DUYCKINCK, EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION 157 BROADWAY.

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VISIT TO SOUTH PEAK.

BY THE LATE THOMAS COLE.

OUR readers will remember a notice in a recent number (91) of the *Literary World*, of the Literary Remains of Thomas Cole, in the hands of his friend, Rev. L. L. Noble of Catskill, in which mention was made of "the most important and interesting work left by the Painter, a Journal of the last fourteen years of his life, a rare autobiographical diary, kept at intervals, embracing notes of secret thoughts, feelings, memoranda of events, criticisms, occasional descriptions of scenery, huntings for the picturesque, all included under the title, given by the author himself, 'Thoughts and Reminiscences.'" From this work we are now enabled to present a picturesque sketch of a summer party of pleasure on a visit to one of the most striking peaks of the Catskills, premising a word in favor of the writer's simplicity and plainness, not, however, unrelieved by exercises of fancy, the intention of "working up" a brilliant magazine paper being very far from his mind in his journal, and quite as undesirable for the matter in hand. We read with interest whatever we find from the pen of Cole, as we look upon his pictures, assured of truthfulness and sincerity. This little sketch has many traits of the amiable, genial, and pure nature of the man.

EXCURSION TO SOUTH PEAK.

August 14, 1846. Last evening I returned from an excursion to the south peak of the Catskills. It was accomplished in two days, with a party of twelve. Having made all necessary arrangements, we set off on the morning of the 12th, in two capacious wagons, and took our way down along the base of the mountains. As the day was fine our ride was delightful. Although the mountains rose with a good deal of sameness, high into the sky upon our right for several miles, yet there was a continual and pleasing variety. As we ascended the little eminences with which the road along the vale abounds, we overlooked the landscape, spreading far to the east, checkered with fields and woods, and illuminated with the sparkling Hudson: here and there, rising out of the groves like ancient castles and fortresses, were the grey old rocks, once heaved from the shelves of the mountain.

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Awhile after midday we were only beneath the shaggy brows of South Peak. Of all points of the whole Catskill range, as seen from below, this is decidedly the grandest and most picturesque. You look up high in air to a vast and shattered precipice. It is emphatically what one of the party denominated it, "The Short-off." Coming into a cool wood, through which stole a little brook, we resolved to take rest and refreshment. After a pleasant, merry hour over our coffee in the darkness of the grove, we set forward with new life and delight. Here we rounded the mountain, and took our way westward to a pass through which it was necessary for us to ascend. This we found a long, tedious, and sun-smitten road; ever promising, yet it seemed never to come to an end. The sweets of the tiresome hour were a charming breeze and an ever-widening prospect. But we found relief at last. The pass was gained, and we were rapidly descending on the road which now went winding down behind the mountain. After a short though rugged ride, we halted at a farmhouse, in the midst of wild summits, with South Peak directly between us and the Hudson. And now came "the tug." To the height of the peak must the whole party—the half of which was composed of the weaker sex—mount on foot, with all the necessary luggage for a comfortable encampment. This was indeed a Herculean labor. But the sun was settling towards the distant summits, and we had not a moment to lose. After due and careful commitment of our horses to mine host of the farmhouse, and an equitable division of bundles, bottles, and baskets among us, who were bound to carry the burdens, we set off, like a band of pilgrim pedlars, across the sloping field, and soon gained the forest. In the fear that we might not succeed in keeping the right path, the kind-hearted, barefooted housewife, who, with the rest of the family, was engaged in the hayfield upon our arrival, resolved to be our guide.

Our way over the field was without order; every one picking his path along the uneven, rocky pasture-lot as happened to suit him: but all gathered into regular procession as we passed under the archway of branches that overhung the right track, and followed faithfully our gentle, barefooted file-leader. For a time our path was the bed of a torrent. Rough as it was, it afforded many a convenient stepping-stone, and gave occasion to shout and merriment. At the end of the first half mile we sat down at a fine gush of water, and drank and bathed our heated faces. But we had no moments to spare in this too delicious rest. The sun, as he came through the boughs of birch and hemlock, warned us against the allurements of the spot; and so we resumed our heavier growing burdens, and recommenced the ascent. From this time forward our party began to manifest some straggling propensities,—occupying no inconsiderable line of path, according to strength and inclination. None, however, fell so far behind as to be out of the whoop which occasionally pealed from the van of the company; and all came up and gathered round the cold fountain which flows freely from a mass of mossy rocks about a half mile from the summit. Here our already too

heavy loads were increased by the filling of some empty vessels with the refreshing gift of the rock. This addition to our burdens was indispensable, for the reason, that we knew of no nearer spring from which to obtain our needful supply of water. Excitement, however, made us equal to every difficulty, and we completed the ascent with an agreeable enthusiasm. After a hasty glance at the grand scene before us, from the brink of a continuous precipice, called by the mountaineers "The Overlook," we selected our place of encampment, and commenced the building of a bough house. This, with vigorous application of the axe and lively industry on the part of the gentlemen, was accomplished in time to enable us all to gather on the beetling brow of the mountain, and enjoy the last splendors of day upon the landscape. I forgot to mention that our obliging guide wished us a pleasant night at the Overlook, and returned home.

The last shadows of the Catskills across the great expanse were already lost in the dusk of evening, when we returned to our bough tent, with its blazing fire. All had a look of fresh, wild beauty, mingled with a promise of comfort.

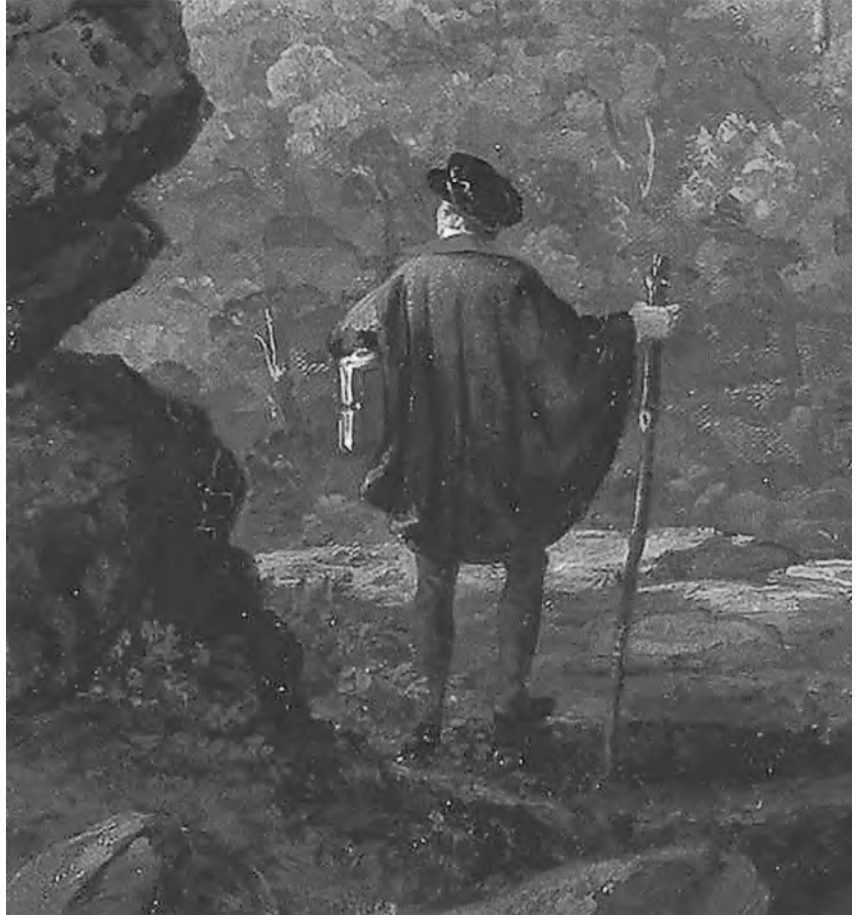
And now came the time for the ladies to act their important, though less laborious part in the preparation of supper. The cloth was spread upon the floor of fir-tree boughs, and we were all presently summoned around it to enjoy no simple, but rather a luxurious repast. Without the bracing quality of the high, pure atmosphere, and the appetite naturally incident to the fatigue of the day, one could hardly have failed to do ample honor to the delightful coffee and savory viands temptingly displayed before him. In fact, it turned out a substantial banquet. Had there been any question upon the point it would certainly have been, whether we had not, in the main, partaken too largely, rather than too sparingly, from any thinness of our board. Supper fairly ended, all seemed disposed, for a time, to settle back upon the evergreens in quiet enjoyment. We had had enough—enough of nature, enough of conversation and merriment, and certainly a full sufficiency of the good things for which the animal man has a keener relish than for poetry and beauty. This contemplative mood, however, soon faded away before the necessity of renewing our fire, and gathering wood for the night. In this operation all—the gentlemen most assuredly—became thoroughly waked up. While we took our turns in wielding the axe, the remaining were engaged in carrying in either what the chopper made ready, or any dry limb that came to hand. It was no light task to gather the required fuel for such a fire as we proposed to keep burning till morning. It will be remembered that in order to make our bush-house warm we were obliged to warm it in some measure out of doors—no small undertaking in the cool spacious air of a mountain height. Warm weather is desirable for the out-door sleeper; when he has to make it for himself he will, in many cases, find his blood stirring after the work is done. So, to a certainty, was ours when the axe ceased to ring in the surrounding woods, and we returned to the cheerful group of fair faces that smiled upon us from the green arch of the bough house,

Evening now closed around us. The red flame shot up its long tongue with a loud crackling, when the gummy foliage of the evergreen fir was sportively thrown upon the fire, and the smoke rolled up and away in luminous billows over the tree-tops, waving to and fro in the fresh night breeze, and shining in a pale green light. The heavens seemed, even in their starry blue, awfully dark—immeasurably deep: the trees more closely about us stood out in strong relief from the broad gloom of the great mountain forest; and the bough-house, all glowing with a flood of light except its dark recess, presented a scene of singular beauty. Within reclining forms were dimly seen: in front, figures in grotesque costumes of shawl and blanket, both sitting and standing, caught the vivid brightness on their faces and vestments. Every light was clear; every shadow mingled with the shadow of the surrounding woods, giving a unity of effect that ceases to exist by day. Every form, thus united with the great shadow of the wilderness, became with trees and grass a part of the mountain top.

And now came songs and pleasant jests, recitations, snatches of old plays, and bits of romance. Ever and anon a shrill whoop went like an arrow into the vast solitude. Last of all, when the general excitement had abated, and a solemn quiet had settled upon every heart and countenance (as we were a Christian band), came prayer and the *Gloria in Excelsis*. As the last strains died away, and we realized ourselves far above the common world, in the cold, pure region of the clouds, thoughts of earth, with its cares and turmoils, took their departure—thoughts of heaven, with its eternal order, stole upon the soul, and attuned it to quiet songs of joy and thankfulness.

Then came the hours of repose. One by one we sank down upon the fragrant fir, the ladies in the more retired part, the gentlemen on the outer edge of the bough tent, one in shawl or cloak, another in his blanket, and I in my brown monk's dress. After a fragmentary conversation in low tones, here and there, like scattering shots after a day of battle, all was silent. Though weary, I had no disposition to sleep; and so with closed eyes I either made pictures in the dark, or opened them and looked through the eaves of our leafy roof into the pure blue of the heavens, now beginning to pale in the rising moon. As she ascended she darted her silvery rays through the trembling leafage of the interposing wood, full upon my face. In the meantime the ear was busy drinking in both soothing and awakening sounds. The weary, deep sleepers breathed heavily; the breeze, at one time softly whispering over head, came at another rushing over the forest tops with a fitful melancholy roar—now afar off like the sea surf, and now making the branches swing about in the dim light of our declining fire. Solemn, awful midnight! A thousand fancies came thronging on my mind. Stillness, however, did not reign uninterruptedly through the night. There was music between the acts of our silent drama, Sleep. Two of the gentlemen rising to renew the fire, one of them, familiar with Indian life and manners, sang with characteristic gestures an Indian song. From low guttural tones the voice rose in mournful strains higher and higher, to the utmost loudness; then sinking to the same deep note from whence it first commenced, it presently swelled again in fitful modulations to the shrillest pitch, and concluded abruptly with a yell. After this wild and unique melody, the gentlemen resumed their places upon the evergreens, and all was still

again, except the breeze and the crackling of the brilliant fire. Not a cricket chirped. In the surrounding woods the winds sang their songs alone. When the grey dawn broke in mildly, a solitary robin on the mountain side below us was warbling his morning hymn. I shall never forget the quiet sorrow with which in the course of the forenoon we bade farewell to South Peak, and slowly took our way down the mountain, to our conveyances at the farmhouse.



Thomas Cole - *View of Two Lakes and Mountain House, Catskill Mountains, Morning 1844*. (Detail) Brooklyn Museum

View of Two Lakes and Mountain House

Painted near North Mountain two years prior to the hike that was described by Reverend Louis Legrand Noble in *The Literary World* article, this detail is of the artist's diminutive self-portrait. Cole wears a flowing cape with a red collar, perhaps the "monk's dress" listed in the probate inventory of the New Studio. He carries his bulging sketchbook and uses a roughly fashioned walking stick for support.

Volunteers

Thanks to the following group of people, Cedar Grove was open to a record-breaking number of people during the 2007 season. They successfully ran the Visitor Center and Old Studio Bookstore, gave many hours of tours to individuals and groups and helped host the summer benefit and generally kept everything going! A supper party at Lisa Fox Martin's house in August toasted their contribution, but we can never really thank you all enough.

Tony Anadio
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Linda Waldschmidt
Carol Wallace
Dennis Wepman
Ethel Williams

Volunteer Opportunities

Cedar Grove continues to develop the docent program along with help from Catherine Harris, a consultant experienced in docent training, and our own David Barnes, the quintessential volunteer docent. This coming year, this will be expanded to include field trips to Vassar College where a special tour will be given by the head of their docent program, and other trips to Utica, The New-York Historical Society, and Olana.

Watch for announcements in the local paper for recruitment gatherings at Cedar Grove over the winter months or call Linda Bartula, Operations Manager, 943-6452 ext. 4 if you are interested in volunteering.

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Cedar Grove is owned by the
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Cedar Grove

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site

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