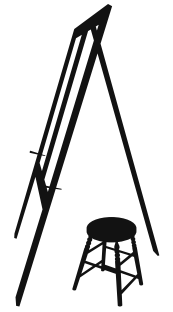


# THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



Winter 2011 Newsletter



Robert S. Duncanson, *Landscape*, 1851. oil on canvas, 12x22 in. Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, TN

## ANNOUNCING THE 2011 EXHIBITION

### The First African-American Landscape Painter to Gain International Renown

On May 1, 2011, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site opens *Robert S. Duncanson: The Spiritual Striving of the Freeman's Son*, the first exhibition featuring the work of the nineteenth-century African-American landscape painter Robert S. Duncanson in many years, and the first exhibition of his work to appear on the east coast, even in his lifetime. The exhibition will bring the work of this Ohio artist to the home of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School and major influence on Duncanson.

Duncanson was the first American landscape painter of African descent to gain international renown and occupies a critical position in the history of art. His success is remarkable as a "free person of color" descended from generations of mulatto tradesmen, to graduate from skilled trades and participate in the Anglo-American art community. The Cincinnati Gazette declared that he "enjoyed the enviable reputation of being the best landscape painter in the West." His paintings earned him international attention with especially high esteem bestowed on him by the art press in Canada and England.

Cont. on pg. 3

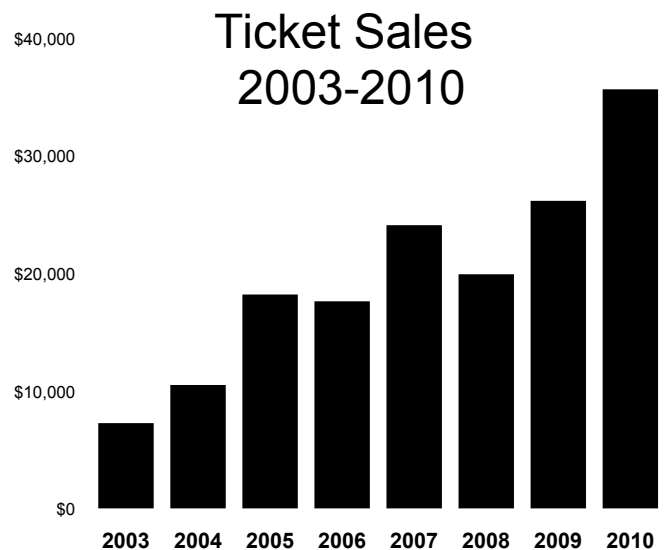
## MAJOR NEW GRANT AWARDED

The Thomas Cole Historic Site has been selected to receive a "Museums for America" award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a federal agency with a mission to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas.

The grant is for \$103,000 over two years, and will enable the Thomas Cole staff and a team of consultants to develop an interpretive plan for the historic site. Included in the project scope is reading through original Cole papers to find out specific stories and details about what happened at the site during Cole's residence there, completing the research begun last year about the original furnishings and finishes in the Main House and Old Studio, and designing a visitor experience that is informed by the resulting new information. The project began in August 2010 and continues through July 2012.



## ADMISSION JUMPS 36% IN 2010



Due in large part to the success of the exhibition *Remember the Ladies: Women of the Hudson River School*, the number of people coming to see the Thomas Cole Historic Site jumped dramatically in 2010.

# REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR



Elizabeth Jacks  
Executive Director

This past year, as soon as one major construction project drew to a close (our landscape restoration), another enormous one started up. As anyone driving by could tell you, the Main House has been undergoing all-over repairs, thanks to the ARRA funds (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) that



Construction work on the Main House

we received through the National Park Service. The project enables critical repairs to be made all over the building's exterior, with rotting wood, peeling paint, sagging porch, leaky windows, etc., all getting fixed.

The same project also brings back the wonderful original architecture that graced our street frontage in Thomas Cole's time: a long stone wall topped by a picket fence, punctuated by graceful openings with brick piers and gates. What a difference this will make to our "curb appeal"! The landscape architect Robert M. Toole researched and specified the design and materials, and archaeology was done to locate the exact positioning of the different elements. Now it is finally time to see it all put into place.

Our press coverage has increased markedly in the last year. Here is a list of some of the publications that have featured our exhibition, "Remember the Ladies": Antiques & Fine Art, American Art Review, Vogue online, Roll Magazine, Hudson Valley Magazine, Harper's Bazaar-Spain, Chronogram, front page coverage in Hudson-Catskill Newspapers and the cover feature of the "Scene" insert, and high-traffic blogs



C. 1905 photo of original brick entrance piers

including "The Smart Set," Traditional Fine Arts, The Feminist Art Project, New York History, and ArtFix-Daily. In June, New York City's PBS station, Channel 13 WNET, featured the exhibition on the "Sunday Arts" television program with Philippe de Montebello, and WNYC's Leonard Lopate interviewed and aired our curators in October.

Our new online learning portal that we call "Explore ThomasCole" has won the most sought-after award in websites: a Webby! The website was selected as an Official Honoree for the Art category. With nearly 10,000 entries received from all 50 states and over 60 countries, this is an accomplishment about which we are most proud and delighted. The learning portal includes nearly 150 Thomas Cole paintings to explore in depth with loads of information that was written by leading Cole scholars. Explore for yourself at [www.explorethomascole.org](http://www.explorethomascole.org).

On June 19th, when the Catskill Farmers' Market moved to Main Street, we decided to support the effort by taking a booth. We were rewarded with a front-and-center position on the central open area of the market. Our interns and fellows were busy selling our shop merchandise, gathering market research through questionnaires, conducting art projects and handing out free Thomas Cole activity booklets for any and all kids that came by.



The July 4th "Independence" party broke all our previous records, bringing in \$86,000, compared to \$66,000 last year, as over 350 supporters gathered at the home of board chairman Lisa Fox Martin and Dick May. It was especially joyous to celebrate this Independence Day with so many supporters because the Thomas Cole house

Terence Barrell and Edith Marcik



Thomas Cole booth at Farmers' Market

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Terence Barrell and Edith Marcik


has just found “independence” of its own. On July 4th we thanked and bid farewell to our former parent organization, the Greene County Historical Society, as the Thomas Cole National Historic Site became an independent non-profit organization that owns and operates the home of Thomas Cole.



**Event Chairs Lisa Fox Martin and Michèle Saunders**

I’d like to take a moment to thank the incredibly talented and generous people who contributed to make July 4th an event to remember! First, a toast to our hosts, Lisa Fox Martin and Dick May, along with the Host Committee, Michèle Saunders and Geoff Howell. The fun, clever, charming design for the event and invitations,

as well as the fanciful circus “tent and wagon,” were created and donated by Geoff Howell Studio, Inc. The “Independence Cocktail” was courtesy of Domaney Liquors of Great Barrington, MA. Guests swayed to the tunes of the Good Time Jazz Band, and 400 pots of flowers were lent to us at no charge by Story Farms. Dinner and hors d’oeuvres were created by Apogee Catering,

and the fantastic fireworks were by Ain’t Misbehavin’. Many thanks to all of the volunteers, interns, fellows and staff who worked all weekend to pull the event together. 



**Event Designer Geoff Howell**




**Casey Biggs and Brigit Binns**

## EXHIBITION - Cont. from pg. 1

Canadians acknowledged Duncanson’s seminal role as “one of the earliest of our professional cultivators of the fine arts.” And the critics of the London Art Journal praised him as possessing “the skill of a master,” whose paintings “may compete with any of the modern British school.”

Duncanson adopted the style and metaphors of east coast landscape painting that depicted the “natural paradise” of the New World as a romantic symbol for the European settlers’ perceived covenant with God. But in so doing he also appropriated the art of landscape painting--both in subject and content--for African-American culture. The grandson of a freedman, Duncanson’s artistic ambitions and the content of his paintings epitomize W.E.B. Du Bois’ statement that “the spiritual striving of the freedman’s son is the travail of souls.”

The exhibition is curated by Joseph D. Ketner, the Henry and Lois Foster Chair in Contemporary Art and the Distinguished Curator-in-Residence at Emerson College in Boston. He is the author of the definitive book about the artist, *The Emergence of the African-American Artist: Robert S. Duncanson 1821-1872*. The catalogue for this exhibition will contain an essay by Mr. Ketner including new information on the artist and color illustrations of many new paintings discovered over the past fifteen years. 



**Robert S. Duncanson, *Minnehaha Falls*, 1862. oil on canvas, 20x16 in. Howard University Art Gallery, Washington, DC**

# INAUGURAL YEAR OF THOMAS COLE FELLOWS PROGRAM

*Every time I interact with someone involved with the Thomas Cole House is an opportunity to learn something new.* -Jordan Casper

Building on the success of the undergraduate internship program at the Thomas Cole Historic Site, which has grown and flourished for the last seven years, in 2010 the site launched a program for recent college graduates and graduate students: the Thomas Cole Fellows. These young scholars commit to a 5-month stay at the Thomas Cole site, June 1 to November 1, and in exchange receive free housing at the historic site, the resume-building experience of working in a museum environment, as well as a full schedule of training, professional development, networking and field trips. The program included four Fellows this year, who along with two other interns brought the total team to six.

The primary task for the Fellows and Interns is to interpret the site to visitors through delivery of guided tours. In addition, each scholar completes research projects that are overseen by Thomas Cole staff, descriptions of which are below. In addition, the scholars completed “benchmarking” projects that will assist the institution in future program planning, including an evaluation of: 1) the viability of a kitchen garden; 2) the state of youth and family programs at historic sites across the East Coast; 3) the state of other historic house and museum fellowship programs along the East Coast; and 4) archival and collections access policies throughout the Mid-Atlantic. The staff, board and volunteers of the Thomas Cole site offer our profound thanks to these wonderful individuals who will be sorely missed!



## **Sonia Booth**

Sonia has organized and developed the “Farming Activity Booklet” which is given free to families at the weekly Catskill Farmers’ Market. She wrote a summary of Youth Outreach Programming at nine other sites which she researched

through phone interviews with the historic sites. She also completed a new program for families called the History Detective Pack that will guide children 8-12 years old and their caregivers on the grounds of the site with hands-on activities. The “Pack” is given out for free to any child that comes to the Thomas Cole visitor center during regular hours of operation.



## **Anna Cressotti**

Anna has researched how other museums and community gardens operate kitchen gardens, and has outlined the feasibility of establishing a kitchen garden at the Thomas Cole site and the steps that would need to be considered before imple-

mentation. Currently, Anna is doing an archaeological dig south of the privy, and has uncovered the foundation of what appears to be a small outbuilding. She has uncovered numerous artifacts that correspond to the documentation of a cold frame structure located south of the privy. She has also arranged soil resistivity testing with Dr. Susan Winchell-Sweeney, an archaeologist from the New York State Museum.



## **Jordan Casper**

Jordan has created the new “Accessibility Binder” for the Thomas Cole site, which enables visitors of all capabilities to see and experience the home of Thomas Cole. The binder includes photographs and descriptions of the rooms of the

Main House that are not handicap-accessible. It will be made available both in the visitor center and on the front porch of the Main House.



## **K. John Lor**

John’s major project was to create a reference book for each of the three period furnished rooms in the Main House. The books contain photographs and descriptions of the rooms’ objects, and they will be placed in the rooms so that docents

can look up detailed information while they are giving tours. In addition, John assisted with the inventory of architectural objects at the site, and conducted community outreach at the Catskill Farmers’ Market on Saturdays.



**Perri Osattin**

Perri has been working on object analysis and research for future display on the Thomas Cole website, fellowships benchmarking, grant solicitation and publicity materials, collections management materials (loan agreements, etc.), developing the cell phone tour for the grounds, and developing a more extensive pre-visit school package for teachers before their visit to the house. She helped coordinate loans to an exhibition at the Catskill Mountain Foundation Gallery, and traveled to the New York State Museum and Library in Albany for research to transcribe and compile a repository of digital photographs of correspondence between Thomas Cole and his contemporaries.

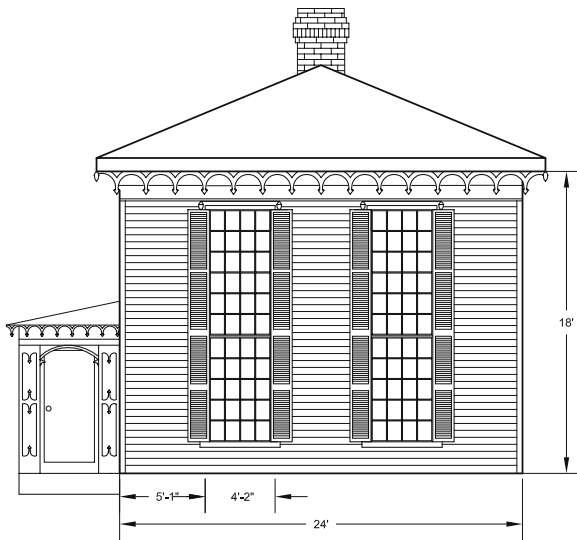


**Sarah Zabek**

Over the course of her internship, Sarah conducted interpretive program research and created benchmarking aids, including research on the dynamic art market of the Hudson River School and on museum archive policies. Sarah was also highly involved in the planning and facilitation of special events, such as the Catskill Farmers' Market and the 4th of July Celebration picnic.

We are now accepting applications for the 2011 class of Thomas Cole Fellows. Please send a cover letter, resume, and writing sample to Thomas Cole Historic Site, PO Box 426, Catskill, NY 12414. For more information, contact Melissa Gavilanes at 518-943-7465, ext. 5 or [info@thomascole.org](mailto:info@thomascole.org).

**NEW STUDIO DRAWINGS UNVEILED**



On a beautiful Saturday in September 2010, the Trustees of the Thomas Cole Historic Site unveiled the architectural drawings for Thomas Cole's 1846 "New Studio," a building that Cole designed and used as his workspace for the last two years of his life. The drawings were completed by architect Marilyn Kaplan, Principal of Preservation Architecture, and are the result of careful study of all known documentation of the building that stood a few hundred yards from the Main House but was demolished in 1974. Reconstructing the building will bring back one of the few known architectural creations of Thomas Cole, and will provide year-round space for exhibitions, programs and events at the historic site.

This past fall, to inspire others to give to this important project, Mr. Rick Sharp stepped forward with the funds for us to purchase Thomas Cole's guitar,



Emily Cole c. 1900 in the New Studio

which appears in the only known photograph of the New Studio's interior, shown above, lying across the bench. We are thrilled to see this beautiful object return as a harbinger of other things once lost and now coming back to Thomas Cole's home. To augment this gift, Mr. Alex Acevedo donated \$10,000 of the guitar's purchase price. Our heartfelt thanks go out to these generous individuals and all who supported the September New Studio Celebration event, with particular thanks to Warner Shook who chaired the event and hosted one of the dinners with Frank



Warner Shook with television star Doris Roberts at the September event

Swim. Many thanks to the other dinner hosts Lisa Fox Martin and Dick May, Purcell and Jim Palmer, Johnnie Moore and Ashton Hawkins, and George and Shelly Pulver. The "New Studio Cocktail" was provided by Domaney Liquors of Great Barrington, MA, and the magnificent flower arrangements were donated by Jeanne Cameron.

# THANK YOU TO OUR 2010 SUPPORTERS

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**WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS**




**Robin E. Redford**



**Warner Shook**



**Anne J. Miller**

We are pleased to welcome three new members of our Board of Trustees: Robin E. Redford, Anne J. Miller and Warner Shook. Ms. Redford is a Director in the Public Finance Group, Housing Finance, at Raymond James & Associates, New York. She resides in Athens, New York with her husband and two-year-old son. Ms. Miller is a hand surgeon with Englewood Orthopedic Associates in Englewood, New Jersey, and is a graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Medical School. She resides with her husband in both Catskill and in New York City. Mr. Shook is an award winning Broadway and national stage director who lives with his partner Frank Swim in Catskill and Seattle. 

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## SPRING 2011 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### March 6, 2 pm Sunday Salon Lecture

David Bjelajac  
*Thomas Cole, Freemasonry and the American Hercules*  
Thomas Cole became a Freemason during the summer of 1822, and soon composed paintings that drew upon Masonry's mysterious emblems. David Bjelajac, Professor of Art and Human Sciences at George Washington University, reinterprets Cole's *The Titan's Goblet* (1833), which honored New York Governor De Witt Clinton, a leading Freemason. This small, enigmatic painting draws upon Masonic ritual and Herculean myth and looks forward to Cole's famed *Course of Empire* and *Voyage of Life* series. \$8/\$6 members



Thomas Cole, *The Titan's Goblet*, 1833. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

### April 3, 2pm Sunday Salon Lecture

Gay Myers & Lance Mayer  
*In the Studio with Thomas Cole*  
Lance Mayer and Gay Myers, independent paintings conservators based at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, give a sneak preview of their unprecedented research on Thomas Cole's painting techniques from their upcoming book *American Painters' Techniques: The Colonial Period to 1860*. Their research sheds new light on many aspects of Cole's methods, from the influence of the "tone" of the Old Masters to his disputes with artists' suppliers, as well as Cole's choice of pigments and other art materials. \$8/\$6 members

### May 1, Opening Day

Free viewing of new exhibition, *Robert S. Duncanson: The Spiritual Striving of the Freeman's Son*. Curator talk by Joseph D. Ketner. Details to be announced. 