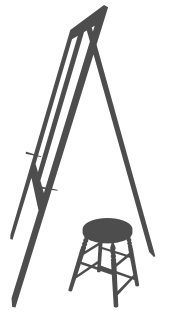


# THOMAS COLE

NATIONAL  
HISTORIC  
SITE



Fall 2013 Newsletter



Annette Blaugrund with the Bierstadt exhibition catalogue at the April 2013 opening



New staff offices. Photograph by Stephen Shadley

## RECORD ATTENDANCE FOR 2013

It has been a banner year at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, as record crowds flocked to the exhibition "Albert Bierstadt in New York & New England." Ticket sales at the historic site have more than doubled since 2012, and have surpassed the previous high when "Remember the Ladies," the exhibition of women artists of the Hudson River School, was on view in 2010. The 2013 exhibition was curated by Annette Blaugrund, former director of the National Academy Museum in New York City. Bierstadt is best known for his iconic images of the American West, but in the exhibition at the Thomas Cole site visitors saw paintings that depict the unspoiled wilderness, mountains, and meadows in the eastern United States - including work made from his home and studio along the banks of the Hudson River. A fully illustrated catalog with an essay by the curator is available from our online shop at [www.thomascole.org/shop](http://www.thomascole.org/shop).



*New partnership  
with local schools  
is launched.  
See page 2*

## THOMAS COLE STAFF GAIN NEW OFFICES

On September 9th, 2013, the administrative, curatorial and education staff of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site moved their offices out of the c. 1815 Main House and into 207 Spring Street, directly across from the historic site. The building was given to the organization in the late 1990s by Ms. Helen McCord and has been used as staff housing since that time. The staff and Board of Trustees made the decision in late 2012 to go ahead with the office move, implementing a key piece of the master site plan that had been developed with assistance from the landscape architect Robert M. Toole. The new offices were designed by trustee Stephen Shadley, an architect and interior designer who has been featured on *Architectural Digest's* AD 100 list for many years. The renovations were greatly assisted by Stephen Dunn, also a trustee of the Thomas Cole site as well as the former owner of Dunn Building Supply. The move will relieve the historic home of Thomas Cole from the daily wear and tear of office functions, open up the ground floor historic kitchen and several main floor rooms for public rather than private use, and provide ample room for the staff which has expanded from a single employee in 2003 to over ten people during the busy season in 2013. The board, staff and volunteers wish to extend their sincere thanks to Stephen Shadley and Stephen Dunn for donating their time and expertise.

## 2013 COLE FELLOWS

The Cole site has been blessed with another dynamic and talented group of Fellows in 2013. They have been quite busy working on educational events, collection care, welcoming visitors, leading tours, and producing the annual “Postcards from the Trail” exhibition. Behind the scenes they have been conducting in-depth research vital to our understanding of Thomas Cole, his time in Catskill, and his enduring relevance to our current moment. The Thomas Cole Fellows commit to a five-month stay at the historic site, from June to November, and receive an honorarium, free housing at the site, experience working in a museum environment, as well as a full schedule of training, professional development, networking and field trips. Interested candidates for 2014 should send a letter and resume to the Thomas Cole Historic Site, attention Kate Menconeri. Details can be found on our website at [www.thomascole.org/internships](http://www.thomascole.org/internships).



**Kelsey Hoffman** graduated with a degree in Art History from Bard College in May 2013. Prior to her work at the Cole site, she worked in the education department at Nashville’s Cheekwood Museum and Botanical Gardens, as an artist assistant at Mount Tremper Arts, and taught children at

the Imagination Station Arts. While at Bard, Hoffman helped curate an online exhibition for Vanderbilt Hyde Park Mansion and the 209 Project. During her time at TCNHS, Hoffman has conducted indepth research on the relationship between Thomas Cole and his most celebrated student, Frederic Church. Additionally she has worked with the Collection and Exhibition Manager to create an illustrated collection database and propose online exhibitions with items in our collection.



**Catherine Popovici** graduated with a degree in Art History from Smith College in May 2013. Prior to coming to the Cole site, Popovici worked at the Smith College Museum of Art and the Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery in NYC. Additionally she served as a student representative on the President’s Committee for Mission and

Priorities and co-curated an exhibition for Smith College’s Cunningham Center for Prints and Drawings. During her time at the Cole site, Popovici has been researching quotes by famous people from Cole’s time through the present day that relate to central themes in Cole’s art. The quotes shed light on a key period in the formation of America’s cultural identity and reveal Cole’s connections to cultural and political discourse today. Popovici also worked closely with the Education

Director to produce the celebration for Maria Cole’s 200th Birthday in August.

**Anne Rich** graduated with a degree in Art History from



the State University of New York at New Paltz in May 2013. Previous to work at the Cole site, Rich worked in the department of education at the Corning Museum of Glass, where she led gallery tours and helped curate an exhibition in the museum’s studio.

At SUNY New Paltz, Rich worked as a lecture liaison and representative for the Art History Association and served on the Student Government Board of Finance. At the Cole site, Rich is researching the changes to the view from the Main House, and tracing the evolution of the area from “wilderness” to one of busy industry filled with tanneries and a railroad. Her work will compare the actual views with Thomas Cole’s paintings of the same views to enable visitors to take note of the creative editing Cole imposed. Additionally Rich has been instrumental in realizing workshops for schoolchildren at the Cole Site. See feature below.

### SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP IS LAUNCHED

Early in 2013, the Thomas Cole staff began discussions with Catskill Superintendent of Schools, Kate Farrell, to find a way to integrate Thomas Cole into the elementary school curriculum in order to instill a greater sense of pride about the remarkable place that the schoolchildren call home. The result is a program that touches 2nd, 3rd and 4th graders with learning both in the classroom and at the historic site.



Anne Rich with Catskill 3rd-graders

# NEWS BRIEFS



Thomas Cole, *On the Mountaintop*, n.d., oil on board, 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in, Courtesy Questroyal Fine Art and Dr. Matthew Brown

## Another Thomas Cole Painting Arrives

A very special painting by Thomas Cole is now back in Thomas Cole's home, *On the Mountaintop*, on long-term loan from Questroyal Fine Art and Dr. Matthew Brown. It has been suggested that this may be a study for a painting entitled *The Translation of Elijah*, included in a list of proposed subjects by Cole in his notebooks in 1827. With its purple hues and dramatic subject matter, *On the Mountaintop* bears compelling visual similarities with Cole's painting *Prometheus Bound*, which is also currently on view in the West Parlor. Our visitors have greatly enjoyed seeing them side-by-side this season, and we would like to extend our thanks to Dr. Brown and Mr. Salerno for their thoughtfulness and generosity.



Albert Bierstadt, *Pine Trees in the Mountains*, n.d., oil on canvas mounted on board, 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.



Thomas Doughty, *Autumnal Lake Scene with Ducks*, n.d., oil on canvas, 19 x 33 in.

## A Generous Gift Grows the Collection

We are delighted to announce the acquisition of two beautiful Hudson River School paintings: one by Thomas Doughty and one by Albert Bierstadt, a gift of Solomon S. Grossman. The paintings are now in the historic site's permanent collection and are on view as part of the guided tour of Thomas Cole's home.

## Third Annual Community Day Draws Over 400 People

It was a perfect late summer day on Sunday September 8th and the visitors started pouring in even before the 1 pm start time for the annual free event. On sale in the Main House were over 150 new paintings in the second annual "Postcards From the Trail" exhibition, depicting scenic views from the Hudson River School Art Trail. The show was organized by staff member Kate Menconeri with the three Cole Fellows: Catherine, Kelsey and Anne (see page 2). In front of the visitor center, Alice Tunison was laying out a beautiful display of locally grown apples and cider doughnuts. Out on the lawn, a little girl was patting the head of a gentle goat while a boy was being interviewed live at the scene on WGXC Community Radio. The event was conceived and organized by Melissa Gavilanes, Director of Education, and made possible by many staff, volunteers and trustees.



Frank Cuthbert performs on the West Porch



Artists of all ages submitted paintings.



Alice Tunison poses with Thomas Cole

## New Hire: Samantha Singleton

We are delighted to announce a new member of our staff, Samantha Singleton, who was hired in August to lead tours at the historic site in response to our large increase in visitation. Samantha graduated from Smith College in 2011 majoring in art and history, and worked as a tour guide for two years at the Chelsea Art Museum in New York City where she also provided orientation and on-going supervision to new docents. Her experience also includes writing grant proposals and volunteering with the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization. She will be working part time at the Thomas Cole site until the visitor center closes for the season on November 3rd.



# THOMAS COLE THE ARCHITECT AND THE NEW STUDIO

By Francis Morrone

Thomas Cole had both an abiding interest in architecture, and ambitions as an architect. In fact, in Longworth's New-York City Directory of 1834-35, Cole listed himself as "architect, 520 Broome Street." As a friend of one of the nation's most successful architects, Ithiel Town (1784-1844), Cole had access to Town's architectural library, comprising some 2,000 volumes, probably one of the finest of its kind in the world at the time. It was from these volumes that Cole drew the imagery of his famous painting *The Architect's Dream* (1840), commissioned by Town. (Town, however, rejected the painting, feeling that Cole had neglected the landscape element.) Though he began in the Federal era, Town would come to be identified with the romantic associationism and parade of styles that characterize the American architecture of the 19th century. For instance, as early as 1814 Town designed a church, Trinity Church on the Green in New Haven, with Gothic forms. By the late 1820s, in such works as the Ralph Ingersoll house in New Haven, Town had marked himself as a leader of the Greek Revival that swallowed America whole. Unsurprisingly, we find the Greek temple and the Gothic church as the foreground buildings flanking the recumbent architect atop his column in *The Architect's Dream*. Perhaps more surprisingly, we find that Cole was not content merely to paint these architectural visions, but to put them in three dimensions as actual buildings.

Thus, in 1839 Cole designed a church, St. Luke's, in Catskill, in the Gothic style. Cole's church went up at the same time as his fellow Englishman Richard Upjohn's Christ Church in Brooklyn, New York. Upjohn was a principal figure in the movement to bring "correct" Gothic churches, particularly on the model of the English Medieval parish church, to American shores. The picturesque Gothic of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, with its nods to Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill and the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and the "Georgian Gothic" (Gothic details grafted onto a Georgian body), yielded to an ecclesiologically exacting Christian architecture. Cole's very simple church, however, is closer to Town's Trinity Church than to Upjohn's Christ Church (which has a fully articulated frontal tower), and unlike either had, in Cole's original design, no bell tower. The addition of a bell tower, effected by creating a stumpy and inelegant central tower, compromised the simplicity and gracefulness of Cole's original design, as we see in Cole's drawing

of the front elevation of the church. Cole's design lacks ornamental elaboration of the kind—pointy finials, stepped sloping set-offs, etc.—that we see in Upjohn's Christ Church and the whole host of Gothic churches to sweep across the country in the 1840s. But its light touch, and the piers (with slender vertical panels echoing the three double-lancet windows of the



Thomas Cole, *Front Elevation Drawing for St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Catskill, NY, c. 1839-40*. Detroit Institute of Arts.

facade) on either side of the central gable that rise jauntily over the roof as crenellated pinnacles, save the church from severity—though the bell tower addition made the whole thing a bit leaden. In his late 1830s "Letter to the Publick on the Subject of Architecture," Cole wrote of Gothic: "Its towers and pinnacles climb toward the clouds like airy fabricks. Ever hovering on the verge of the impossible, on it the mind does not dwell with satisfied delight, but takes wing and soars into an imaginary world." At St. Luke's, not so much. And it makes one wish Cole had had the opportunity to take wing and soar in a Gothic design. Unfortunately, St. Luke's was heavily modified in 1899 and demolished in 2002.

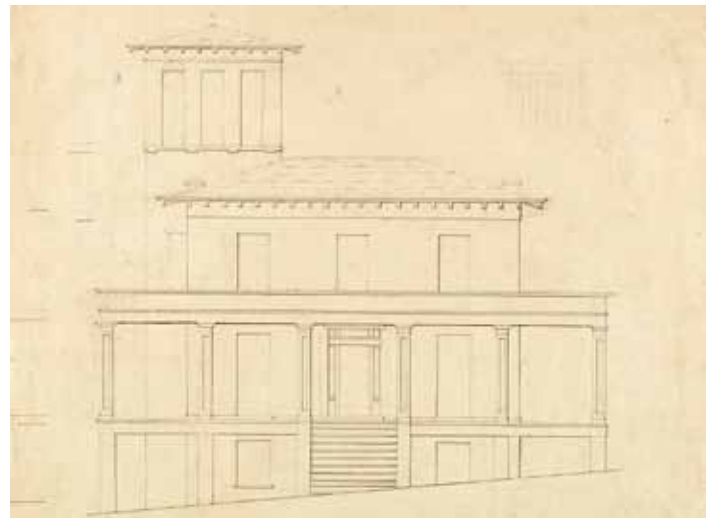
On the "Grecian" front, Cole, as is well known, entered the competition for the design of the Ohio State House in Columbus in 1838. "Do you know I am something of an architect?" he wrote to William Althorpe Adams on May 26, 1838, as he put out a feeler about the competition. He won third place after the Ohio architect Henry Walter and the New Yorker Martin Euclid Thompson. Third place was none too shabby in a field of fifty or sixty, especially when the top places went to two highly experienced architects. At that time, Cole's only architectural work consisted of his "consultancy," to use Earl A. Powell's word, to Luman Reed in the design of the gallery in his house at 13 Greenwich Street in 1836. The Reverend Louis Legrand Noble, the St. Luke's pastor who baptized Thomas and Maria Cole in 1844, wrote in his 1853 *Life*

and *Works of Thomas Cole*, “Profound in all the science necessary to an accomplished builder he was not....But in all that raises architecture from a mere science to an art he was a very fine architect.” Of the Ohio State House, Noble—and would that each of us had in his or her life a Louis Legrand Noble—said, “it cannot fail to be pronounced, by competent authority, one of the most perfect edifices for just proportion and harmony of parts, on the continent.” When Noble wrote, five years after Cole’s death, the State House was still under construction. After the competition of 1838, the capitol commissioners asked Ithiel Town and his partner Alexander Jackson Davis to attempt a synthesis of the top three designs. Their result proved too costly to erect, and the commissioners, remarkably, went ahead with Cole’s design, under Henry Walter’s supervision. The State House of today is largely, though far from totally, Cole’s, as architects including William Russell West and Isaiah Rogers modified it over the decades. “The country,” wrote Cole in his “Letter to the Publick,” “is bespattered with Grecian absurdities.” Missing from the final building is Cole’s dome (no one was too strict on what was “Grecian”), leaving a truncated drum. As we must go to his paintings to see the vision of Gothic he propounded in his “Letter to the Publick,” so must we return to *The Architect’s Dream* to see the State House he envisaged.

Davis worked in the usual variety of styles, creating what may be the most beautiful Gothic-style house in America, Lyndhurst, in Tarrytown, New York, in 1838, the year of the Ohio State House competition. Davis, who had co-designed with Town some of the nation’s finest Greek Revival buildings (including the state capitols of Indiana and North Carolina), would be best known for his houses in the “Italian villa” style, an adaptation of the sprawling 15th-century farmhouses in such places as Umbria, by way of houses like John Nash’s Cronkhill (1802) in Shropshire, England. The first Italianate house in America is often said to be the Philadelphia architect John Notman’s Riverside, built in 1838-39 for Bishop George Washington Doane in Burlington, New Jersey. (It was demolished in 1961.) Cole, who tried his hand at Gothic and Grecian, also tried his hand at the Italian villa. Alas, Cole’s design for an Italian villa-style house on the Cedar Grove property came to naught. That said, the design was in some ways the most remarkable in Cole’s architectural oeuvre. It was intended for a site on part of which Cole would later build his New Studio. Cole’s *Front Elevation Drawing for a House in the Italian Villa Style*, in the Detroit Institute of Arts, is dated by them as c. 1840-41. If

that is correct, the house comes just after Notman’s Riverside, and just before the 1842 publication of Andrew Jackson Downing’s *Cottage Residences*, which helped popularize the Italian villa style. Davis, whose own pattern book *Rural Residences* had appeared in 1838, and had a great influence on Downing, was Cole’s friend, and it is probable he also influenced Cole. In his “Letter to the Publick,” Cole wrote that “large piazzas, deep recesses, projecting roofs, and great breadth of Style is demanded by the American landscape & climate.” Cole’s proposed Italian villa indeed has a broad porch—broader than the body of the house—with a screen of well-spaced square piers rising to Tuscan capitals. In one drawing of a front elevation in the Detroit Institute of Arts, the body of the house, with a hipped roof and bracketed cornices, rises behind the porch. To the left rises, behind the body of the house, a bold square tower, culminating in a pyramidal roof, with three vertically accentuated rectangular openings to what appears to be a loggia. The Italian villa style is rambling and asymmetrical, and meant to be accommodating to additions of varied shapes, sizes, and heights as they are needed. A variant drawing of a front elevation places the tower on the right—in this style it hardly matters. It is nearly as wide as the house body. The porch in this version is much more elaborate, with columns instead of square piers, a balustraded railing, and a decorated entablature, which terminates in vases. Cole also, perhaps around the same time, drew a Palladian villa with a colonnade identical to the more elaborate of the Italian villa designs, but with the central three of the openings between columns made into arches with, above them, a triangular pediment.

The Italian villa was never built, probably for financial reasons. Cole had kept a studio in a storehouse on the



Thomas Cole, *Front Elevation of Proposed Villa at Catskill*, c. 1840-41. Detroit Institute of Arts.

property from 1839 to 1846. He had always wanted a purpose-built studio, and when it was evident the house was never going to be built, he designed and built his New Studio on part of the site. He moved into the New Studio around Christmas in 1846. The style has been called “Hudson River Bracketed,” an “Italianate” style popularized by Andrew Jackson Downing. However, there are no brackets. What we do have, by way of the only ornamental flourish in the design but one that, however simple, lends a distinct character to the structure, is a series of “Gingerbread Gothic” pendants forming valances hanging down from the fascia boards of the eaves surrounding the house. These are of a type illustrated on page 39 of Downing’s highly influential 1842 book *Cottage Residences*.

The New Studio (demolished in 1973) is simpler than anything in Downing’s *Cottage Residences*, as well it might be given that it is not a cottage but an outbuilding. But the Downing influence is unmistakable, and it provokes thoughts of Cole’s relationship to Downing. The two men never became friends, though it seems they ought to have. Downing called Cole “the greatest of our landscape painters.” After Cole’s death in 1848, Downing became William Cullen Bryant’s steadfast companion. The two were allied as the leading voices in the movement to create New York City’s Central Park, which Downing would have designed had he not died, in a tragic steamboat accident, in 1852, only four years after Cole. Ultimately, the park was designed by Downing’s protégé, an English architect named Calvert Vaux. And, as fate would have it, Vaux befriended Cole’s protégé Frederic Church and with Church designed Olana, just across the river from Cedar Grove. It is not hard to sense the spirit of Thomas Cole in Central Park, most obviously in some of the paint-



Thomas Cole's New Studio c. 1900

erly vistas so carefully framed by Vaux and his partner Frederick Law Olmsted.

The New Studio provides a vital link in the chain of relations that define the Hudson River culture of the mid-19th century, and fortunately the building is now slated for reconstruction. The Thomas Cole Historic Site commissioned a study of the surviving photographs and drawings, as well as detailed archaeology at the site, resulting in a set of architectural drawings and plans to construct an exact replica of Cole’s original design. Within just a few years, this important building will once again grace the historic site.

*Francis Morrone is an architectural historian and author of eleven books, most recently “Guide to New York City Urban Landscapes” (W.W. Norton). He was recently named by Travel + Leisure magazine as one of the 13 best tour guides in the world. He spoke at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in 2011.*

## ART TRAIL PLAQUES INSTALLED

The Hudson River School Art Trail – a series of driving and hiking routes to the vistas that were painted by Thomas Cole and his fellow artists of the Hudson River School – now features a set of metal plaques that are installed at each of ten different stops along the trail. The metal plaques feature a rendering of the particular view in a “rubbing medallion” made from line drawings that the Thomas Cole Historic Site commissioned from artist Patti Ferrara. Through a \$50,000 grant from the New York State Council of the Arts, the Thomas Cole Historic Site launched a promotion for the Art Trail and its rubbing medallions in partnership with Olana, Greene County Tourism, Columbia County Tourism, and the Hudson River Valley Greenway. Details about the promotion can be found at <http://offers.hudsonriverschool.org>.



Unveiling of the plaque at site #9 on the Art Trail. Left to right: Mark Castiglione, Congressman Chris Gibson, Elizabeth Jacks, Assemblywoman Didi Barrett, and Sara Griffen.

# THANK YOU TO OUR 2013 SUMMER PARTY SPONSORS!

The staff and trustees of the Thomas Cole site would like to thank the many contributors to our dreamy “Dream of Arcadia” summer party, hosted by Lisa Fox Martin and Dick May and designed by Greg Feller and Richard Bodin of Hudson Home. The event topped all previous records for both total revenues and total profit. The party brought in \$137,940, and the expenses were only 29% of the total, so our net profit was nearly \$100,000. The total event income increased 47% over last year, which had been the largest event we had ever had. The success of the event was greatly boosted by both a live and a silent auction that were the result of many generous people, listed below. A special thank-you to the event committee: Lisa Fox Martin (Event Chair), Asli Karahan Ay, Michele Saunders, Hudson Talbott, Greg Feller & Richard Bodin, and to the organizers of our first silent auction of paintings: Kate Menconeri and the 2013 Fellows. The staff worked very hard on this event all year, including Sheri DeJan, Melissa Gavilanes, and Alice Tunison. Save the date for the 2014 Summer Party: Saturday June 28!

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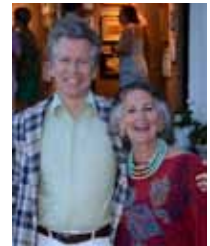
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Top to bottom: Johnnie Moore and Lisa Fox Martin, the dinner tent, Greg Feller and Richard Bodin, Melissa Gavilanes with Catherine Popovici and Anne Rich, Auctioneer C.K. Swett, Richard Kaplan and Edwina Sandys

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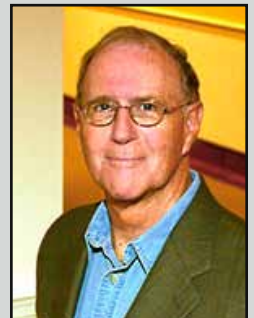
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## FREDERIC CHURCH TO RETURN TO CEDAR GROVE IN 2014

We are excited to announce that our 2014 exhibition will feature the early work of Frederic Church, focusing on his years as a pupil of Thomas Cole's, curated by John Wilmerding, the Sarofim Professor of American Art, Emeritus, at Princeton University. Wilmerding has also been a visiting curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and served as Senior Curator and Deputy Director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, where he was former chairman of the board of trustees. He is currently a trustee of the Guggenheim Museum, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas, and the Wyeth Foundation for American Art. President Obama appointed him to the Committee for the Preservation of the White House.

The exhibition at the Thomas Cole Historic Site will open in May 2014, and will explore the relationship between Thomas Cole and Frederic Church - a student-teacher arrangement that grew into a century-long friendship between the two families and, later, the two historic sites that bridge the east and west sides of the Hudson River. Church, who evolved into one of the most celebrated artists of the 19th century and later built Olana, was first introduced to the Hudson River Valley as an 18-year-old when he came to live at the Cole's property known as Cedar Grove in Catskill, New York, from 1844 to 1846. Church's paintings from this formative two-year period show the artist learning from Cole while developing his own emerging style and unparalleled mastery of landscape painting. The exhibition will be on view through November 2, 2014.



John Wilmerding



Frederic Church, *carte de visite (detail), undated*. Thomas Cole National Historic Site, gift of Frank Racette.