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 elements that are being developed will also be made available online.

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
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 Beatrice-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.

**Platinum Sponsors**

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.

**Gold Sponsors**


**Silver Sponsors**


Pic-Nic photography by Brian Branigan
What’s Happening

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.


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.


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

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

Director Betsy Jacks and daughter Ellie Dow
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 reelected Treasurer, and Linda Gentalen 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.

He has lectured and written on employment law issues and has taught at Baruch College and the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at 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.
Avihiile after midday we were only beneath the shaggy brows of South Peak. Of all points of its circumference as seen from below, this is the grandest and most picturesque. You look up high in air to a vast and shattered precipice. It is emphatically what the party denominated the "Shark's Jaw." Coming into a cool wood, through which stole a little brook, we proceeded to rest and refresh after a long, tiring, and sun-satiated ride; ever promising yet it seemed never to come to an end. The sweets of the morning hour were a charming breeze and an ever widening prospect. We found relief at last. The was gained, and we were rapidly down 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. 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 baggage for a comfortable encampment. This was indeed a Herculean labour. But the sun was setting towards the distant summits, and we had not a moment to lose. After due and careful preparation of our horses to mine the rest of the family, who, was engaged in the hayfield upon our arrival, resolved to be our guides. Our way over the field was without order; every one picking his path through 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 faultlessly 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. 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 was as a body, with the exception of the two half-brothers, who, occupied no considerable line of path, according to strength and inclination. None, however, fell so far behind as to be out of the cool spacious air of a mountain height. Warm weather is desirable for the out-door sleeper; when he has made 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.
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.


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.