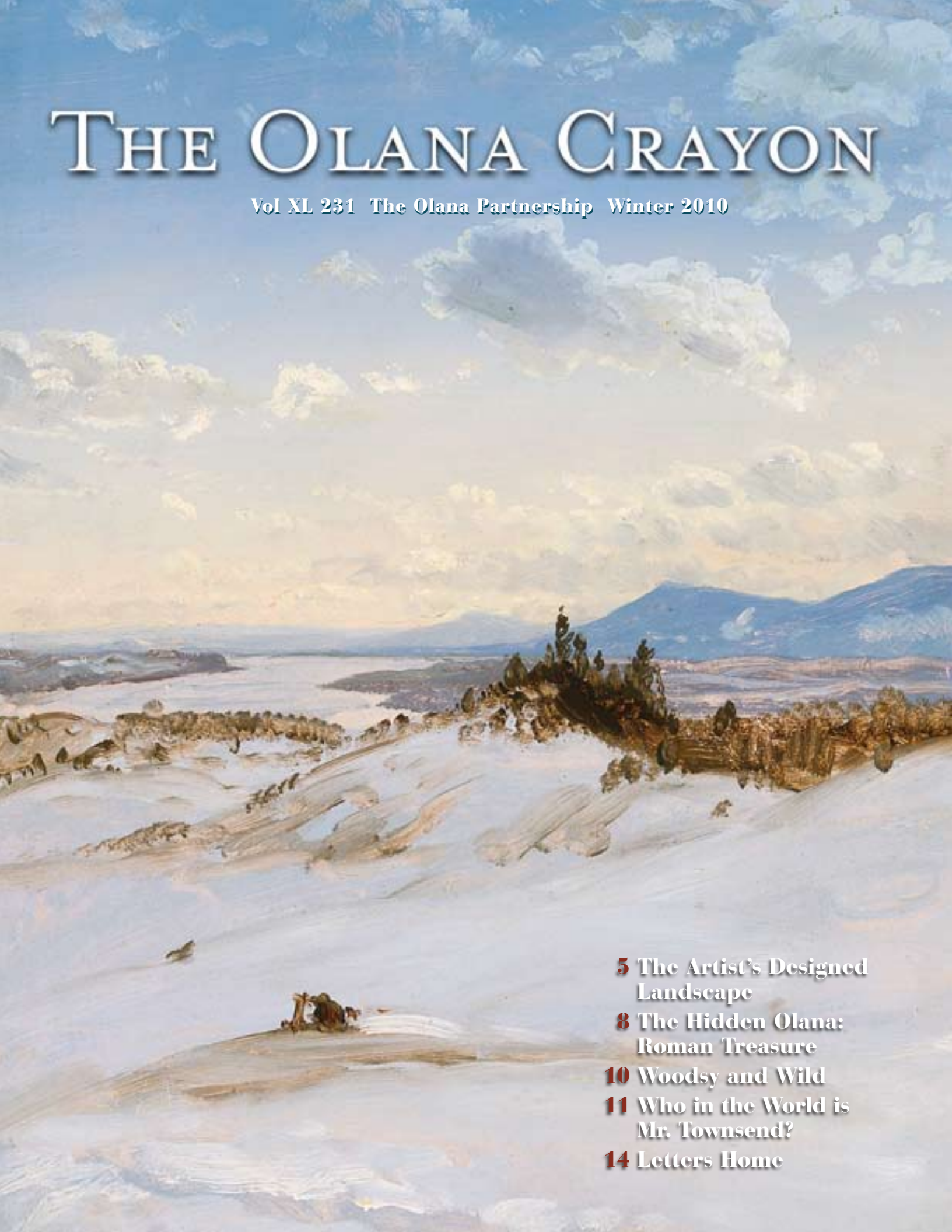


THE OLANA CRAYON

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SHADE TREES AT OLANA

By Nelson Sterner, Director of Administration & Public Affairs

When Frederic Church purchased the many parcels of land that would one day become Olana, he had a vision of what the landscape would become. Because most of the land had been under cultivation, Church had an essentially blank canvas on which he could plant thousands of trees and shrubs that define the landscape as we know it today.

This spring we had the good fortune to receive a grant for tree planting from the Burpee Seed Company, a great first step in the restoration of the historic landscape at Olana. This was an exciting time—being able to plant new trees in the same locations as Church had done 150 years ago. Although the landscape at Olana is in need of restoration, many of the trees that Church planted are still extant.

The tree that is most abundant at Olana today—many clearly planted when Church was in residence—is the sugar maple, *Acer saccharum*. It is best known as the source of maple syrup, but it is also an excellent disease-resistant shade tree. At maturity the sugar maple can be sixty to seventy feet tall, and in the fall it is a beacon of orange, yellow, and red.

The stately oaks, another group of trees clearly extant at Olana today, comprise many different species. Although it is not easy to find, we were able to plant one of

my favorites, the chestnut oak, *Quercus prinus*. Aptly named because of foliage somewhat similar to the American chestnut, it is easier to identify in the landscape by its massively ridged, dark gray-brown bark. The chestnut oak is fairly common at Olana if you take a walk along the Ridge Road. The burr oak, *Quercus macrocarpa*, can grow to one hundred feet with massive trunks up to ten feet in diameter. A slow grower, the burr oak has been known to live for three hundred years. Another oak we planted was the swamp white oak, *Quercus bicolor*, an excellent landscape tree. It is pyramidal in habit and has lustrous dark green leaves with a white pubescence underneath. The swamp white oak is an under-used tree. As the name implies, it loves moist soils and will grow to fifty feet at maturity. The red oak, *Quercus rubra*, is the most common of the oaks at Olana. Named for its bright red fall color, the red oak is among the easiest of the oaks to transplant and is a suburban large-area tree, maturing at sixty to seventy-five feet.

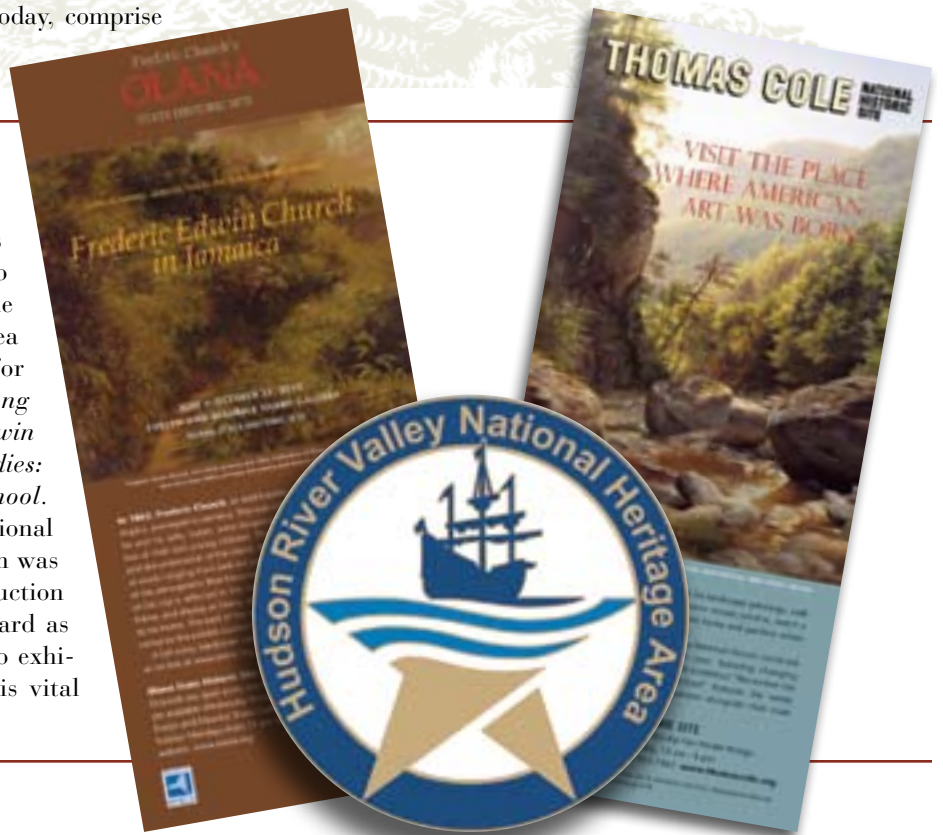
To see the newly planted trees, take a walk along the approach drive and look to your right, as Church's guests would have done on a visit to the main house at Olana. ■



Gardener Mary Hughes plants one of the new trees at Olana.

THANK YOU TO HRVNHA

The Olana Partnership and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site wish to acknowledge the generous support of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area for our combined marketing campaign for the 2010 exhibitions *Fern Hunting among These Picturesque Mountains: Frederic Edwin Church in Jamaica* and *Remember the Ladies: Women Artists of the Hudson River School*. Funding from the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Development Grant Program was used to underwrite a portion of the production and distribution of a double-sided rack card as well as other media promotion for our two exhibitions. We are extremely grateful for this vital support. ■



CHAIRMAN'S AND PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Burn Oberwager and Sara Griffen

The summer and fall of 2010 have been marked by refreshing progress at Olana. Between the restoration and opening of two bedrooms on the second floor of the main house, to the widely admired show of Frederic Church's Jamaican sketches in our gallery on the second floor, to the lively photographs by contemporary photographer Larry Lederman in our newly opened Coachman's House, we have been able to offer our visitors entirely new experiences this year.

New experiences are also unfolding in the landscape. Thanks to a grant from the Burpee Foundation, we have planted numerous trees along the final approach drive toward the main house, providing our visitors with a greater sense of Church's intention—to hide the house as much as possible before coming upon it after the final turn of the drive. More changes in the landscape are in the works. Owing to the \$250,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Fund earlier this year, we are working our way through the planning process to determine which of the many landscape projects identified in our Comprehensive Plan makes the most sense to pursue. It is likely to be a combination of planting projects and the opening of some of the views Church intended but have since been obscured by second-growth woods.

In September, we were most gratified to be chosen as the site to launch a new program of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area—a monthlong celebration of historic landscapes



in the Hudson Valley. Timed in conjunction with the publication of two new books relating to the Hudson Valley's landscapes and gardens, Robert M. Toole's *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson, a History*, and Steve Gross and Susan Daley's *Gardens of the Hudson Valley*, this celebration was aimed to shed new light on these treasures in our midst. From the landscape of Springside in Poughkeepsie to those of Locust Grove, Montgomery Place, and Clermont, to name just a few, these properties deserve much greater recognition and financial support than they have received thus far. The fact that Olana was chosen by Bob Toole as the culminating chapter in his book, representing "the aesthetic crescendo of American landscape gardening," led the organizers of this celebration to choose Olana as the launching site. We were delighted to welcome Joan Davidson, chairperson of the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial, J. Winthrop Aldrich, deputy commissioner for Historic Preservation for New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, and Mark Castiglione, acting director of the Hudson Valley Greenway, to speak to more than 150 guests who attended this event on September 19.

It is through the long standing commitment of our board of trustees and staff, as well as support from our members and donors, that we are able to continue the progress begun years ago when we were formed as the Friends of Olana. Next year we celebrate our fortieth anniversary—stay tuned for more exciting developments. ☐

SPECIAL NOTE OF TRIBUTE TO OUR RETIRING CHAIR

I write with great admiration for the inspiration provided by Burn Oberwager, chair of The Olana Partnership for the past three years. Under Burn's leadership, remarkable progress has been made. From the opening of the new gallery on the second floor of the main house and the restoration of much of the second floor, to the reconstruction of the Wagon House as an educational center, the burying of utility wires underground, to endowing the president's position and the unprecedented successes of our recent galas in New York City, Burn has been a steady force in encouraging us to dream adventurously. Not one simply to persuade others to demonstrate their support, Burn has led by example, providing generously at every turn, most notably in adding significantly to our endowment. That, in the end, is the truest measure of commitment to an organization—a willingness to provide for Olana's future. Burn and his wife, Susan, have done this with grace and style. On behalf of all of us at Olana, we extend a heartfelt thanks for Burn's leadership and inspiration.

Sara J. Griffen

The Washburn S. & Susan M. Oberwager President

The Frederic E. Church Society

The Frederic E. Church Society recognizes those who have included Olana in their estate planning. If you would like more information, please call the Development Office at (518) 828-1872, ext. 101.





VIEW FROM THE CASTLE

By Linda E. McLean, Historic Site Manager

Illustration from the *Boston Herald*, September 7, 1890



What to write? Then, going through old files, I found an interesting form called Park Summary 2002; I thought you might enjoy some of the highlights of that summary, to see how far we have travelled since that time.

We had some 300+ acres in 2002. Our maintenance staff was tucked in random corners of historic buildings, our landscape was not even mentioned as a public offering; we had fishing, picnicking and special events. The main house had a hot air heating system and a forest of fans in summer. Tours made a limited circuit of the main floor. The grounds were riddled with overhead wires, poles and a particularly lovely “ski lift” corridor cutting through the west side of Church’s hill. Yes, the interior glowed with beauty of Church’s paintings, but the stencils peeled, the textiles were faded, and the exterior boasted two colors—brown and yellow. Our Comprehensive Plan was signed in that year. For us, this document was a turning point; it set a new bar, and redirected our thoughts and energies. We began an advance toward heretofore un-thought of possibilities.

Since 2002 we have accomplished a preponderance of the plan’s recommendations. Cosy Cottage is restored and serves as headquarters for The Olana Partnership (TOP), an adaptive reuse success. The Carriage House/Coachman’s complex has been restored, and we have rebuilt one of the “lost buildings” as a wildly successful education center. While we will never complete the plan’s never-ending assignment “to preserve and restore the main house,” we have restored the whole building envelope and are now dealing with final roof repairs. The exterior is no longer a study in brown and yellow but an architectural canvas bursting with color, gold leaf and tiles that make it the glorious Persian style man-

sion Church boasted of and his visitors gushed about in letters to friends and family. Work continues on the barn complex, to date we have completed the Pumphouse, Wagon House, Stable and Tool Shed. Our site maintenance facility has been consolidated and moved to a more adequate space, across Route 9G from the historic property.

Using the Landscape Restoration Plan as our guide, wonderful, long hidden views have been restored. We have re-established most of the carriage drive system. The drive system is used daily by walkers, joggers, runners clubs and two school systems – how wonderful is that? The maze of poles and wires traversing the property has been underground. We continue to work on expanding the understanding of the artist-designed landscape; its importance culturally and academically, not only to the Hudson Valley, but to the world of landscape gardens. We are truly re-establishing the historic landscape design and farmland patterns on the land.

Work on the viewshed is equally impressive; with the help of partners and consultants we have prepared a viewshed plan that gives clarity to our mission and our priorities within it. We have worked with the community to mitigate viewshed threats, most notably St. Lawrence Cement, and continue to do so for the protection of the site and the community’s green space. Our total buffer acreage around the site has increased three-fold from about 300 acres to over 900 acres through easements, purchase or transfer from other state agencies.

We have curators for our collections, including the landscape, an archivist and a collections care technician. We have installed both a state of the art heating and ventilation and fire detection and suppression systems. Not only have we significantly implemented the furnishing plan for the main floor

and studio; we have opened the second floor, reinstalled a long missing staircase, re-established four of the six living spaces on that level and have installed a jewel-box gallery that enchants all who experience it. Computer stations provide a personal tour of the gallery and second floor area for those who are unable to access the second floor by traditional means.

Surveys, letters and patron comments show we continue to provide one of the highest quality programs in the valley. Over the years attendance has steadily increased for both house and landscape. Working with and through TOP the site has surged forward in our plan to develop national, state, regional and local awareness of the site. This will be an ongoing responsibility, but one where we see continued improvement. We avidly collaborate with heritage tourism and have shown our impact on the economic fabric of our area is now over seven million dollars in related spending and jobs.

We have accomplished so much that we need to begin the Comprehensive Plan process again; we need to redefine goals and reset the bar, as we did in 2002. We would not be at this happy juncture had we not come together as a team, not only on site but through our communities, local, state and national. Together we have made amazing things happen. I know our president Sara Griffen would join me in saying this venture was a project of partners; one that brought the site to levels of achievement we could only dream of in 2002. As I write, I reflect with pride and a feeling of accomplishment on my participation in our success, the time we shared and the fact we did this together. To all of you, volunteers, staff, members, board, and partners, THANK YOU; and now, if we are going to continue our progress, back to work! ☒

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THE OLANA CRAYON

The Olana Crayon is published twice a year by The Olana Partnership, a not-for-profit organization chartered by the Board of Regents of the State of New York. The mission of The Olana Partnership is to inspire the public by preserving and interpreting Olana, Frederic Church's artistic masterpiece.

Our title acknowledges the nineteenth-century journal *The Crayon*. This weekly journal, aimed at a popular circulation and "devoted to the graphic arts," was instrumental in drawing attention to the art and artists of the Hudson River School.

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Designed by Toelke Associates
Chatham, New York

Cover Image: Frederic Edwin Church,
*The Hudson Valley in Winter from
Olana*, (detail) c. 1871-72, oil on paper
mounted on canvas, 20 1/4 x 13 in.,
OL.1981.14



Events at Olana Bring New Attention to the Artist's Designed Landscape

By Valerie A. Balint, Associate Curator

This past autumn, Olana was the host of two wonderful events that highlighted the importance of this site's extraordinary artist-designed landscape. It had been selected by the Hudson Valley National Heritage Area to be the launch site and signature property for its monthlong celebration of historic landscape gardens of the Hudson Valley (September 19–October 24, 2010). During its celebration of the region's landscape gardens, the Heritage Area hoped to draw attention to the importance of the Hudson Valley during the nineteenth century, in the context of a national version of Romanticism. Today, many of the largely unaltered grounds of numerous riverfront properties are preserved as historic sites open to the public. Some of the premier historic attractions are, in fact, landscape compositions, where architecture is but a part of the entire historic presence. Olana is a wonderful example and provided the perfect setting for the launch.

More than one hundred and fifty guests came to celebrate amid Frederic Church's glorious landscape at Olana on Sunday, September 19. Revelers also celebrated the publication of Robert M. Toole's *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson, A History: The Romantic Age, the Great Estates & the Birth of American Landscape Architecture*.

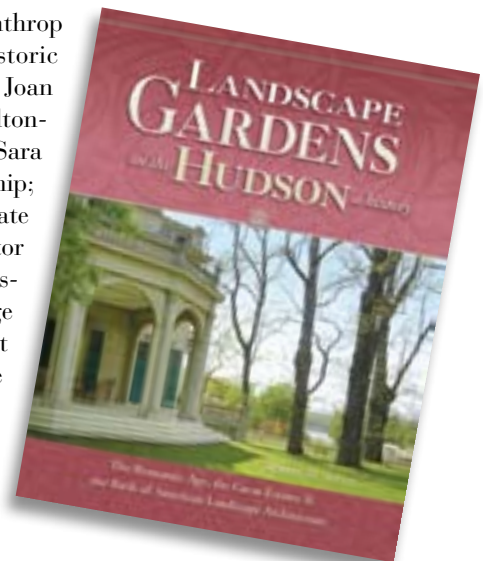
Landscape architect Robert M. Toole, who prepared the landscape plan for Olana, is the author of the new full-color book, which chronicles the development of the art of picturesque landscape gardening in the Hudson River Valley in the nineteenth century. It features a foreword by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, president of the Foundation for Landscape Studies and founding president of the Central Park Conservancy, who has written that "Robert Toole's important contribution in this book is to perform what amounts to a feat of garden archaeology, bringing to light the many-layered landscapes of these historic Hudson River places." The book was published by Black Dome Press (blackdomepress.com), which also published *Frederic Church's Olana: Architecture and Landscape as Art* by James Ryan. *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson* received support from Furthermore, a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, to underwrite the cost of the color illustrations. The Olana Partnership submitted the successful grant request on Bob Toole's behalf.

By attending the book's launch at Olana, attendees could purchase the book, which was decades in the making, hot off the press, speak with the author, and get an insider's introduction to the magnificent landscape that Church devoted forty years to perfecting.

The day also included remarks by many involved with Olana and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP), including J. Winthrop Aldrich, deputy commissioner for Historic Preservation for New York State OPRHP; Joan Davidson, chairperson of the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission; Sara J. Griffen, president of The Olana Partnership; Linda McLean, site manager for Olana State Historic Site; Mark Castiglione, acting director of the Hudson Valley Greenway; and administrators of the Hudson Valley National Heritage Area. All acknowledged the growing interest by both tourists and scholars in the unique attributes of our area landscapes.

On Saturday, October 16, guests at Olana again participated in an event that championed Frederic Church's landscape

Continued on next page.






Joan Davidson, Mark Castiglione, Robert Toole, Sara Griffen, Wint Aldrich, and Linda McLean at Olana for the book launch of *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson*.

vision. More than eighty visitors attended a lecture in the Wagon House Education Center by the distinguished scholar Dr. David Schuyler, entitled “Artists and the Hudson River: Landscapes of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and Jervis McEntee.” Dr. Schuyler, a professor of Humanities and American Studies at Franklin and Marshall College, is a longtime advocate of the site, having served on the Olana National Advisory Committee for many years. He is also author of *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing 1815–1852*, which was available for purchase at the event.

Attendees were granted the special treat of viewing several paintings by the less familiar artist Jervis McEntee, put on view just for the day through the generous efforts of the incoming Partnership Board Chair, Rick Sharp. After the lecture guests were offered a personal tour by Dr. Schuyler of the nearby scenic lake drive, one of the many picturesque features Church designed to enhance his grounds. The entire event was co-sponsored by Olana and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

Both the book launch and the lecture were wonderful testaments to the National Heritage Area’s efforts to bring attention to important landscapes such as Olana. Church certainly recognized the relationship between his paintings and the composition he created by planting trees, constructing a lake, and opening views to the Hudson. He boasted to a close friend, “I can make more and better landscapes in this way than by tampering with canvas and paint in the studio.” To walk through the Olana property is equivalent to exploring a great Church painting. We invite everyone to come and

discover this important aspect of the artist’s creation!

Both Bob Toole and David Schuyler’s books are available for sale in the Olana Museum Shop or online at www.olana.org. 



Dr. Schuyler lectured to a packed house at Olana.

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Now Batting . . . Frederic Edwin Church?

By Daniel A. McHale, Historic Interpreter at Olana



Take a seat on the bench, Derek Jeter! You're out of here, A-Rod! There's another star shining in New York. This Yankee, however, isn't making road trips to Boston or playing doubleheaders in Detroit; instead, his travel itinerary has included stops in Ecuador, Labrador, and the Holy Land. While we can only imagine how Frederic Church would have fared against a Nolan Ryan fastball, the landscape artist did indeed hit a home run with 1857's *Niagara*, and drew record crowds through the gates in 1859 to see his acclaimed *Heart of the Andes*. And now, thanks to the longtime baseball card manufacturer Topps, the nineteenth-century painting superstar has his very own rookie card! This 2009 set, called Topps American Heritage, is stacked 150 cards deep with figures drawn from the annals of U.S. history, including Norman Rockwell and Walt Whitman, and Olana guests like the indomitable Mark Twain. Church's card—featuring a fresh-faced Frederic recently out of his apprenticeship in the “minor leagues” under Thomas Cole—comes in three varieties: basic issue, chrome (serial numbered to 1,776), and chrome refractor (numbered to only 76). Whereas purchasing an original oil-on-canvas Church masterpiece might be out of your ballpark, one of these little ink-on-cardboard treasures can be had for the price of some peanuts and Crackerjacks. And just like our special family-themed tours here at Olana, these cards are guaranteed to entertain (and educate) kids of all ages! ☒

At left: It's certainly no El Khasné Petra, but this Frederic Church Chrome Refractor is the one-and-only specimen in professionally graded gem mint condition.

A NOTE TO MR. SEEGER

By Ida Brier, Librarian/Archivist

Mary McGuigan and former trustee John McGuigan graciously gave Olana a scan of a February 1892 letter from Frederic Church to a Mr. Seeger. In the letter Church hastily and happily accepts Mr. Seeger's invitation to travel together on the train to Mexico.

Mr. Seeger is Charles L. Seeger, who, like Church, was a frequent winter visitor to Mexico. Other references to Seeger in the Olana collection place him in the company of a Mr. Guernsey, proprietor of *The Mexican Financier*, and Sylvester Baxter, a Boston-area newspaper writer and urban planner. The artist Howard Russell Butler traveled to Mexico with the Churches in 1884 and mentions seeing Seeger there.

In April 1885 Susan Hale wrote to her sister Lucretia from Mexico City (where she was staying with the Churches) of a visit by “Young Segur, who played Mexican airs to us on the piano. They are very charming. . . .” Later that year Mrs. Church's mother, Mrs. Carnes, wrote in her diary that “Mr Baxter & Segur came [to Olana], the latter played for us some Mexican dances delightfully.”

It is wonderful to have this additional information about Mr. Seeger and his connection to Church. The McGuigans will donate the original letter, along with their collection of artists' letters, to the Archives of American Art, giving all scholars access to this interesting information. ☒

The Hidden Olana

Olana Friend Finds Roman Treasure: A Collector's Second Donation to the Archives

By Valerie A. Balint, Associate Curator

Imagine my amazement when Jack Baker contacted me this spring to say that among his treasure trove of collectibles he had stumbled across a new letter of interest for us—and this one in Church's own hand!

I first met Jack, an avid stamp collector and Civil War enthusiast, when he found among his collections two letters written to Frederic Church in 1862 related to the exhibition of Church's painting of *Oosisoak*, the Arctic explorer Isaac Hayes's sled dog. Jack and his wife, Jean, visited Olana for the first time in summer 2009 and generously donated these letters to the site. I wrote an article about the gift of these letters in the fall/winter 2009 issue of *The Crayon*.

The Bakers' most recent find is a very personal and emotive letter writ-

ten by Church to his mother from Rome dated February 17, 1869, after traveling earlier that year throughout the Middle East. The letter had been sent in an envelope addressed to the artist's father, Joseph Church, which had remained with the letter. Jack had done an initial transcription but quickly sent along a photocopy of the letter for our archivist, Ida Brier, to decipher more completely.

What emerged was a letter in which Church conveys his observations about the development of his young son Frederic Joseph, providing glimpses into Church's emotions both as a parent and as a son.

Church writes delightfully descriptive passages of Frederic Joseph's daily antics for the enjoyment of Eliza and Joseph Church, who certainly must have been proud grandparents, saying, "He has



Envelope addressed from Church to his father from Rome containing a letter written to his mother, Eliza Janes Church, February 17, 1869. Church's mother Eliza Church, c.1860-66, Forshew Photographic Studios in Hudson, New York, OL.1982.1546

which is a great relief to me—
The weather here is very beautiful
and the spring flowers are very abundant,
I can hardly persuade myself that
you are all still in the midst of winter.
However, spring will soon begin to assert
its power and give you a milder air—
is sound asleep and very likely
Peacocks. Isabel is I
asleep and so, as it is late,
I bid you all good night with
our affectionate love
Frederic



At right: Isabel Church and young son, Frederic Joseph on a donkey in Beirut, 1868, attributed to photographer Felix Bonfils, OL.1984.447. The family had been traveling in the Middle East the spring before settling in Rome for the winter starting November 1868.



before Isabel gave birth to another son on February 22. The couple named him after Church's friend Theodore Winthrop, a promising writer who was killed in the early days of the Civil War a few years before. Of his son's arrival, Church wrote to his friend and patron William Henry Osborn about this joyful event saying, "At 5 AM . . . Washington's birthday—an important stranger made his appearance in Rome—a boy, a fine healthy child . . . You and Mrs. Osborn will—I know—rejoice to hear the news."

In June, Jack and Jean Baker made a second pilgrimage to Olana to visit and generously donate this new letter to the collection. They brought with them their daughter Susan Galanek for her first visit to Olana. We are all extremely grateful for the family's continued generosity to Olana and for the rich context that this donation and the previous one have provided to the archives. Jack promises to continue to be on the lookout for more gems as he peruses his collections, and we tease him that we are counting on him for another fabulous find in the future! You never know. ☒



Jean and Jack Baker with their daughter Susan Galanek when they came to Olana to donate the letter this summer.

pretty much demolished his soldiers by frequent marchings—and now is intensely interested in a box of wooden houses which he arranges very cleverly on his little table singing to himself nearly all the time." These snippets of life narratives are combined with more reflective musings about the young boy's character: "When he promises not to do anything, he keeps his promises exactly excepting occasionally from forgetfulness, but then immediately after he usually remembers and puts on such an expression of disgust and regret that it 'becomes' very touching." He goes on to say, "I think you will be very proud of him—for he has a great many delightful traits of character—which are developing finely."

In the letter Church also becomes introspective and expresses fatherly concerns that the boy was not initially particularly demonstrative, but had developed since he last wrote his own mother "a very loving and affectionate disposition." He further comments, "We have all noticed this change with wonderment." Church touchingly credits much of this shift to Isabel's capability as a mother, but then in a rather poignant statement to Eliza Church admits, "Still—good mothers do not always have good children. Otherwise I should have been the best of sons to you." The entire tenor of the letter provides a lovely per-

sonal glimpse into the heart of a man whose letters are often more "newsy" and regularly have the character of reportage, rather than deeply personal observations.

It is not surprising that Church's thoughts turned to parenting during this time. The family was wintering in Rome, in part because of Isabel's advanced pregnancy. The expectant father is still primarily concerned about her comfort and the antics of the toddler. He charmingly closes the letter with "Freddie is sound asleep and very likely dreams of Peacocks. Isabel is I trust also asleep and so—as it is late—I will wish you all good night with my best love."

The letter is written only days



Coliseum, Rome, c. 1860-1870, Photographic Studio of Vincenzo Carlo Domenico Baldassarre Simelli, OL.1981.613.23. One of many sites Church family would have visited while staying in Rome. This image is one in a portfolio of works by Simelli, depicting Roman architecture, which Church purchased for his extensive collection of travel photographs.

WOODSY AND WILD: *Exploring the Natural World at Olana*

By Carri Manchester, Director of Education

In 1884 Olana guest Susan Hale wrote to her sister Lucretia, “It is lovely here, real woody and wild . . . Mrs. Church met me at Hudson, and we drove up here, several miles—through thick woods, like the ascent to the Alhambra . . . There are no noises whatever, but old squirrels yapping, and hermit-thrushes and robins, in unalarmed profusion . . . The place is so large I can walk for miles without going off of it. It is very pretty, great avenues of trees, a pond, nooks of shade and always the wide view of the river and mountains” (*Letters of Susan Hale*, 140–141).

Exploration of the natural world was a popular pastime in the nineteenth century, and a new series of nature walks at Olana encourages our visitors to do the same. Three self-guided walks, Meadow Walk, Farm to Forest Walk, and Lake Walk, lead visitors on an exploratory journey through the Olana landscape, learning more about Olana’s natural world and its connection to Frederic Church’s vision.

Meadow Walk helps visitors to understand the meadowland environments created in the nineteenth century by Church’s design of the landscape and views, and today by our own work to restore them. Farm to Forest Walk takes visitors through two distinct environments at Olana, encouraging visitors to look for



the remains of the former working farm and the impact of that farm on the landscape today. As the walk progresses into the forest, visitors are encouraged to acknowledge the sensory impact as the environment changes and to understand Church’s role in eliciting

that visceral response. Lake Walk asks visitors to look a little more deeply into the elements that make this environment unique, even giving them a chance to step off the carriage drive to explore lakeside footpaths. All three walks introduce visitors to some threatening aspects of the Olana landscape as well, including the beetles attacking Olana’s Japanese black pines at the farm site, the invasive species phragmites on Ridge Road and at the farm site, and Eurasian water milfoil choking the lake.

Olana’s nature walks were developed by summer 2010 interns Danielle and Jessica Zeller, 2006 alumnae of Cairo-Durham High School and 2008 alumnae of Columbia-Greene Community College. Both are now enrolled in the Natural History and Interpretation program at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse. ■



*At top: Chinese mystery snail shells—*Cipangopaludina chinensis*; left: *Coreopsis lanceolata*; above: Danielle and Jessica Zeller.*

Who in the World Is Mr. Townsend?

By Nina Heath, Curatorial Intern

Alexander and Loie Acevedo of the Alexander Gallery in New York City graciously gave the Olana Research Collection a scanned letter from Frederic Church to a Mr. Townsend. While working as the summer curatorial intern at Olana, I was given a research project: to identify Mr. Townsend and find out his connection to Frederic Church. There was no first name mentioned anywhere in the letter; there was no envelope to give a hint of where he may have lived, and there were no other letters that we knew of that mentioned him. I started searching for information on the Internet and found a candidate: Martin Townsend (1810–1903) who lived in Troy—maybe he was my man.

I discovered that Mr. Townsend was a politician who, only two years after the end of the Civil War, spoke out about suffrage rights for the newly freed slaves. Mr. Townsend's views were publicly recorded on the subject of suffrage, and he was questioned by a group of people about his stance on the rights of African Americans to vote. He did not shrink from his belief that they should have "the natural right to participate in the administration of the government in which [they live]." Townsend's stance tells us a great deal not only about his character, but perhaps also by extension, about Church and the ideas he was exposed to.



Martin Ingham Townsend, October 10, 1896, Photographic Studio of Sarony & Co., NYC, OL.1986.251.

When I returned to searching for a direct connection between Townsend and Church, the major challenge was that the evidence was circumstantial. Luckily, there were a few clues in the letter that helped my search. The letter from Church to Townsend discusses several people who are clearly of their mutual acquaintance. There is mention of a Mrs. Nason and an indirect reference to Church's neighbor, close family friend, and sometimes physician, Dr. Ferguson. I now knew that Mr. Townsend had to have more direct connections to the Church family. If I could definitely link the people in their respective social circles I could firmly identify "Mr. Townsend" as Martin Townsend. Mrs. Nason was added to my search of possible connections, and everything went smoothly from then on. In the Olana research collection there was a group photograph identifying Mrs. H. B.

Nason with Mrs. E. D. Ferguson (the doctor's wife), Sally Church (Louis's wife), and Mr. H. T. Nason. Additional research led to H. T. Nason's will records, which mentioned Martin Townsend as his grandfather. Nason, whose full name was in fact Henry Townsend Nason, stated in his will that he shall leave everything to his grandfather if he predeceased him. In addition, Nason named Dr. Ferguson in the will as the recipient of \$10,000. Apparently, Dr. Ferguson had been the Townsend-Nason family

Continued on page 13

The Olana Auction returned on May 18, 2010, at the Alexander Gallery in New York City, raising over \$60,000 for The Olana Partnership. The evening, co-hosted by the Alexander Gallery and Thomas Colville Fine Art, was a private preview dinner and silent/live auction to celebrate the opening of their joint exhibition *New Old New York: In & Out of Town*. The nineteen lots available in the silent and live auctions included generous donations of nineteenth-century to contemporary art provided by Alexander Gallery, Thomas Colville Fine Art, Peter Jung Fine Art, Babcock Galleries, Debra Force Fine Art, Hammer Galleries, Mark LaSalle Fine Art, Questroyal Fine Art, Stair Galleries and private collectors. The Partnership would like to thank Alex and Loie Acevedo and Tom Colville for hosting the event. We are also grateful to trustees Rick Sharp, Oz Lunde and David Redden for their donations to the success of the event.



Art, Babcock Galleries, Debra Force Fine Art, Hammer Galleries, Mark LaSalle Fine Art, Questroyal Fine Art, Stair Galleries and private collectors. The Partnership would like to thank Alex and Loie Acevedo and Tom Colville for hosting the event. We are also grateful to trustees Rick Sharp, Oz Lunde and David Redden for their donations to the success of the event.

Left: David Redden, Auctioneer. Photo credit: Eric Weiss Photography. Below: Sara Griffen, Alex and Loie Acevedo, Rick Sharp, Tom Colville, Evelyn Trebilcock, Valerie Balint, and Nelson Sterner at the Olana benefit auction when the Acevedos gave Olana the scanned letter from Frederic Church to Mr. Townsend. Photo credit: Melanie Hasbrook.



Keeping up with Owen Jones:

Possible Inspirations for the Decorations which Ornament Olana

By Evelyn Trebilcock, Curator

My recent talk at the Driehaus Museum in Chicago—a “must see” on your next trip to the Midwest—allowed me the opportunity to pursue some research on Church’s invention and inspirations at Olana. Church described his process of creating Olana as:

“a Feudal Castle which I am building—under the modest name of a dwelling house—[it] absorbs all my time and attention . . . Having undertaken to get my architecture from Persia where I have never been—nor any of my friends either—I am obliged to imagine Persian architecture.”

Church had a little help “imagining Persian architecture.” We have a good understanding that Church borrowed liberally from Pascal Coste’s *Monuments Modern de la Perse*, 1867, and Jules Bourgoïn’s *Les Arts Arabes*, 1868. James Ryan, in his book *Frederic Church’s Olana*, traces how Church studied the plates in these books, drawing and watercoloring the patterns he used to decorate the interior and exterior of the house.

Most likely, Church also referenced *The Grammar of Ornament* published in

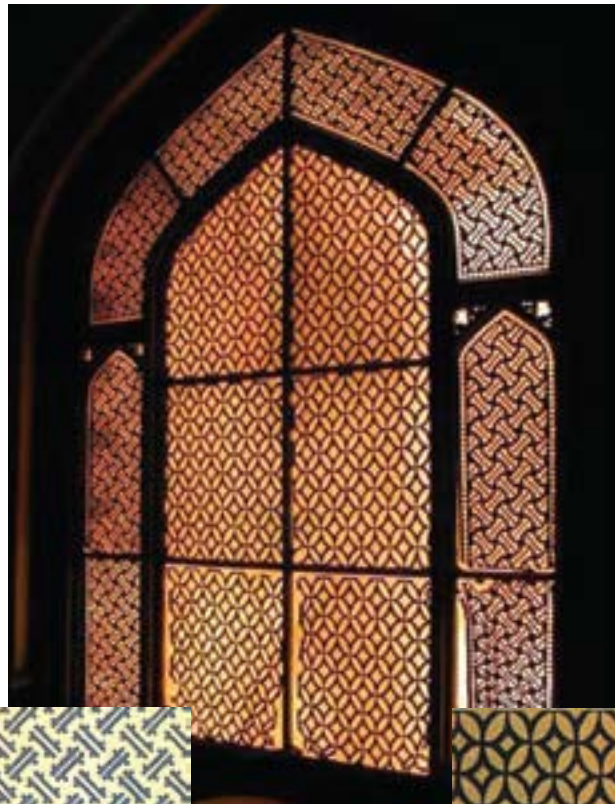
1856 by Owen Jones (1809–1874), the English architect and art decorator. Jones served as superintendent of works for London’s Great Exhibition of 1851 (known as the Crystal Palace Exhibition) and helped develop the

South Kensington Museum, now known as the Victoria and Albert Museum. *The Grammar of Ornament* includes more than one hundred color plates organized by the country or civilization of origin. The publication supplied furniture, carpet, and other decorative arts with a wide variety of splendid patterns.

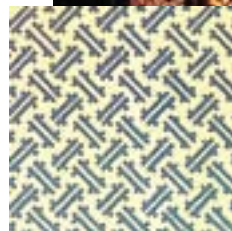
At Olana the most sensational adaptation of a Jones pattern is the amber window in the Court Hall. There Church uses both the color scheme and design from *India No 4–21* for the center of the window. For the border he selects *Chinese No 1–8* as the design and then changes the color to match the center of the window. While *The Grammar of Ornament* supplied the patterns, Church may have copied the German paper-cutting art, formulating the unique installation by sandwiching a black cut paper following Jones’s ornament between pieces of clear and amber glass to gain his desired effect. Few visitors realize how the window was constructed, but all enjoy the result: “a stained glass window that lets in a flood of mellow light.”

For my talk I was searching through Jones’s book and found what I believe is the inspiration for

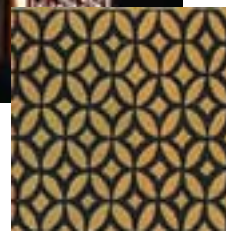
the exterior Dining Room cornice. The cornices are unique to Olana, and, in turn, each cornice is unique. The writer Martha Lamb describes them as “cornices, which are very bold, are richly painted in colors and gold, in designs being conformable to the style of the house.” *Persian No 3–25* appears to have given the basic form and some of the color to



Amber window at Olana.



Chinese No 1–8.



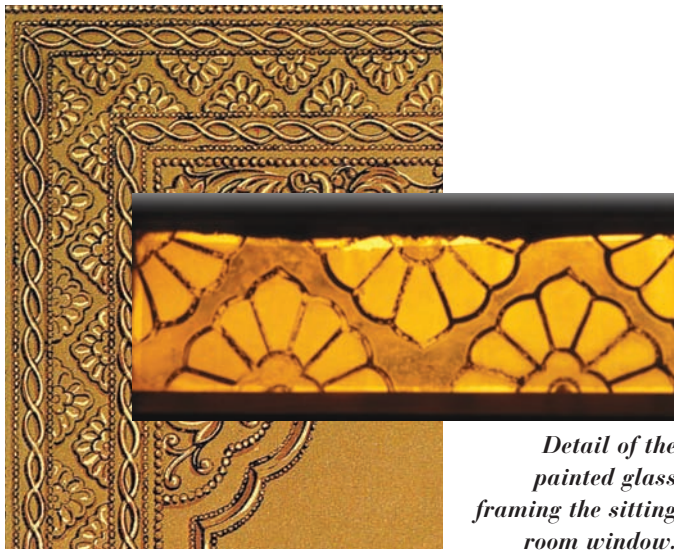
India No 4–21



Dining Room cornice re-stenciled in 2003.



Persian No 3–25.



Detail of the painted glass framing the sitting room window.

Hindoo No.3-4.

the Dining Room cornice. Church has eliminated some of the smaller, fussy lines, retained the basic shape, and simplified the flowers.

Did Church also borrow from Jones the pattern on the glass framing the small windows above the library and sitting room doors and the arch of the sitting room window? *Hindoo* No 3-4 depicts the motif, allowing Church to supply the color: amber glass painted in green and red, now faded.

Regardless of the “muse,” Church brought his own artistic genius to each of these ornaments. ☒

Townsend continued from page 11

doctor for quite some time; and here is where the connection to the Church family would most likely arise.

In his letter to Martin Townsend, Frederic Church was fulfilling a promise to give details about how to travel to Mexico. Church’s advice is to take the “tourist train” from St. Louis. Frederic Church spent the last sixteen winters of his life in Mexico. In an age when traveling to Jamaica or Mexico is fairly routine, it is easy to forget the risks and challenges that nineteenth-century travelers faced. Church’s example led many of his friends and acquaintances to travel there, among them Martin Townsend. In my research I found that Townsend did go to Mexico and actually wrote a lecture, “Prehistoric Structures of Central America. Who Erected Them?” With more digging I compared some of the places we know Church visited with the places Townsend referenced in his lecture. Surprisingly, some of them matched! Both Church and Townsend visited Chiapas, Puebla, Cholula, and Mexico City. Interestingly, Townsend’s self-published lecture predates Church’s letter giving travel advice, so Townsend had probably already been to Mexico. Why did Townsend need advice? Maybe Church was considered an expert on travel to Mexico.

What is noteworthy is that Church’s travels influenced his friends and acquaintances extending beyond the circle of artists and art lovers. Church’s knowledge of exotic places inspired those who journeyed for artistic and academic reasons alike. ☒

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Letters Home—

Horace Wolcott Robbins's Letters to His Parents

By Ida Brier, Librarian/Archivist

Much of what we know about the day-to-day activities of Frederic and Isabel Church while they were living in Jamaica in 1865 is thanks to Robert Rintoul and his mother, Mary Rintoul, the descendants of the Churches' traveling companion, Horace Wolcott Robbins. As a young artist, Robbins wrote letters to his mother and father which supplied wonderful details of adventures and descriptions of scenery that informed Olana's recent exhibition, *Fern Hunting among These Picturesque Mountains: Frederic Edwin Church in Jamaica*. The Jamaica letters entered the Olana Research Collection years ago, but recently Mr. Rintoul generously allowed Olana to borrow and transcribe the entire cache of Robbins letters.

Approximately two hundred letters sent by Robbins to his parents span the period 1862–83, with particular concentration in the period 1862–67. These letters provide additional glimpses into the life not only of the writer, but also of his friend Frederic Church, and other artists and patrons of the arts during and after the Civil War.

In the early letters, Robbins was learning to be a soldier at Harper's Ferry. He did not see any real action, but explored the countryside and drew diagrams for his family of the encampment. He was a keen observer, commenting on the news of the day. He mentioned the plot to set fire to the hotels of New York during the Civil War and wrote of the workings of the draft board and purchasing substitutes. He attended both the Brooklyn and Manhattan Sanitary Fairs, which were held to

Horace Wolcott Robbins, Sketch of Trees and Mountains, ink on paper, OL.1983.925. This drawing is one of two by the artist in the Olana collection. It hangs in the Sitting Room behind Isabel Church's desk.



Robbins at his easel, photographer and date unknown. Photo courtesy of Robert Rintoul, descendant of the artist.

raise funds for the Civil War wounded and their families. The picture exhibitions at these events were a good place not only to see and comment on the work of other artists, but to meet his fiancée.

When in Europe, he reported in his letters (which were often illustrated) about the crowds that strolled the avenues in Paris, the fancy food and dress at social occasions, and the politics of the painting-hanging committees at the various large exhibitions. In all, about forty of the approximately two hundred letters mention Church, giving us new and important insight into Church as a mentor as well as a few details of his sketching trips, family life, and exhibitions.

Robbins was a close friend and observer of many of the Churches' personal joys and trials. He writes of meeting Frederic at Cosy Cottage, where they attended the christening of young Herbert

Edwin Church before the two men set off on a sketching trip to Vermont in September 1863. A later letter mentions the birth of Emma. In 1865 Robbins tells his own parents of Church's grief at the death of both Herbert and Emma.

Robbins's studio was in the 10th Street Studio Building. He wrote excitedly in 1864 that he was going to be able to move within the Studio Building to the studio next to Church. While Robbins was in Europe, Church's friend

the sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer used this studio for a few months to model a bust in the space because Church's studio was "so full of things" that it could not accommodate him.

Occasionally, Church and Robbins met for lunch or dinner, and Church sponsored Robbins for membership in the Century Club, a popular artist's club. The letters note that Church dropped by Robbins's studio, commenting on his work, and particularly advising that he not hurry his painting just to meet deadlines for exhibitions. When Robbins



accepted a pupil from his hometown of Baltimore, Hugh Bolton Jones, Church advised him *not* to have Mr. Jones work in Robbins's own studio, but rather to find another space in the building for the pupil and visit him.

Horace was not without whimsy. In 1870 he purchased foot-long live baby alligators for the aquarium in his studio. He tells his father that "eating but very little—are no trouble to take care of— . . . They have to remain without any companions . . . in the way of fish—as they would be tempted to eat them."

Olana's collection contains two prints by Robbins, one of which, a landscape, hangs in the Sitting Room. A circa 1895 photograph of Robbins, Worthington Whittredge, and James Hart is inscribed to Frederic Church, "with sincere regards of his old friend Horace W. Robbins." Some of the Robbins children became friends of the Church children. "M A Robbins" appears on the 1885 roster of members of the "D.O.S. Society," a group of young naturalists made up of the Church children and their neighbors. Their collection of bird eggs, both local and exotic, is still part of the Olana collection. In 1901 Downie Church Black was matron of honor at Mary Robbins's wedding. And there are gift cards from the Robbins family in the collection related to the 1901 marriage of Louis Church and Sally Good.

We are delighted to have the transcripts of these wonderful letters. Thank you, Robert Rintoul! ☒



Hudson River School Artists Worthington Whittredge, Horace Wolcott Robbins and James Hart, *September 2, 1895, unidentified photographer, OL.1982.1381. This photograph was given to Church by Robbins.*

Frederic Church, Dynamite, and Niagara

By Mark Prezorski, Trustee

Was Frederic Church serious when he suggested that Niagara Falls might be physically altered to "improve the artistic effect"? Calvert Vaux mentions this in a letter to the *New York Tribune* entitled "A National Park at Niagara" (October 5, 1878). When Church was park commissioner at New York's Central Park, he had shown Vaux an original sketch of Niagara and proposed changing the flow of water to "add sparkle and life" to the larger scene, so that Niagara's essential beauty might be secured for the public. Vaux uses Church's impulse to illustrate "the art of the landscape gardener." The letter provides a glimpse into Church's approach as an artist and landscape designer.

Calvert Vaux also writes about the extensive "blasting in rock" and excavation required to create Central Park—for "the preservation and emphasis of every natural characteristic of the site." He describes these efforts as "apparently iconoclastic." He continues, "having studied carefully the works and the method of working of the Creator, the designer of a landscape can bring into successful play the great forces of Nature, and subordinating his own personality, can secure for his work an undying vitality which can only follow from such a direct reliance on the resources of the Infinite." Frederick Law Olmsted, a close associate of Church's, also brought a similar spiritual view to his landscape work. With Olmsted, Church lobbied for the creation of the Niagara Reservation, one of America's first state parks. It was in this spirit and culture that Frederic Church also created Olana.

The Olana Partnership believes that Olana itself is one of America's great works of art. Church's entire 250-acre design, which includes the main house and farm, woodland and carriage drives, has yet to be fully restored. Like Central Park, aspects of it were man-made, and parts were designed to appear untouched, a stylized version of Nature itself. Working around "borrowed views" (the Olana viewshed), Church carved out meadows, planted thousands of trees, shaped a lake—all, as Vaux writes, "to help forward the great result on which Nature is lavishing its powers of creation." These were lofty times for American landscape design. Working on a grand scale, artists like Olmsted, Vaux, and Church brought strong spiritual ideas to their work. ☒

Frederic Edwin Church, Horseshoe Falls and Table Rock, c. December 1856-January 1857, oil on canvas, 17 5/8 × 11 5/8 in., OL.1981.9





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PARADISE FOUND

By Keith Nyhof, Membership Director


Paradise Found: Olana's 2010 Summer Party attracted more than three hundred guests to the East Lawn for an evening of Caribbean-inspired merriment. The theme was chosen in conjunction with Olana's exhibition, *Fern Hunting among These Picturesque Mountains: Frederic Edwin Church in Jamaica*, which ran from April through October.

Paradise Found was the eighth rendition of the annual summer party, an eagerly anticipated event where guests are encouraged to have fun with the theme and immerse themselves in the same setting used by the Churches for many of their own social gatherings. Each year, the summer party is made possible through the collective efforts of our sponsors, volunteer planning committee, donors, and the public-private partnership at Olana.

Olana is grateful for the generous support of its sponsors: Stair Galleries, Couples Resorts, WDST Radio, Stuart Breslow and Anne Miller, Bridge Creek Catering, Joel and Joyce Buchman, Mimi and David Forer, Fountain Press, Jack and Mary Ellen Higbee, Betsy and Al Scott, Richard Sharp, Empire Merchants North, Esotec LTD, Fairview Wine &

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The Olana Partnership is especially grateful for the time and talents of Matt Decker, Burnell Shively, and the planning committee for their dedicated work.

The Partnership would also like to extend thanks and appreciation to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation for their ongoing support in the form of time, equipment, and talent. 

***Guests peruse the
 silent auction tables
 at Olana's 8th Annual
 Summer Party.***

