



Nature walks at Olana developed by  
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OFFICE OF PARKS • RECREATION • HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
NEW YORK STATE

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When the Churches lived at Olana, they used the land as an agricultural and livestock farm. After a long day, it was a relief to spend time in the deep forest nearby. You will learn how the farm is used today and experience the way this environment changes into dense forest as you walk toward the House. **The transition from farm to forest provides many plants and wildlife with suitable habitat.** This walk will take you through the farm, into the forest and up to the House on shale roads.

The Farm to Forest walk is about ¾ of a mile long. Look for the road markers with the farmhouse and tree symbol (you may notice numbered circles on trees – these are from an old 1970s trail).

**Watch out for ticks during and after your walk!** For more information on ticks and Lyme Disease, pick up informative brochures at the Visitor Center or the Wagon House Education Center.

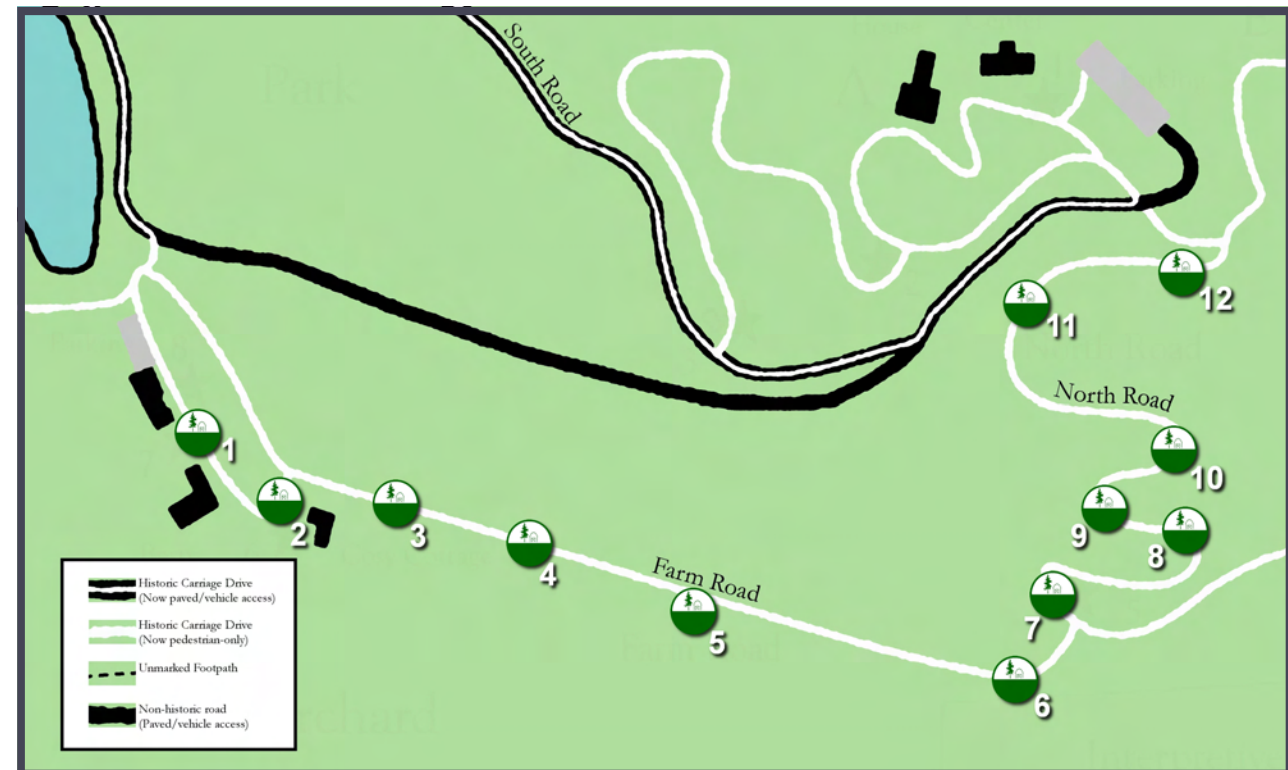
### 1. Gone but Not Forgotten

Frederic Church used the barns you see ahead of you for hay storage and livestock housing. **Today there are no cows, horses or chickens, but the barns are still used by wildlife.** You may notice the nests of Eastern phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*) and Barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) under the eaves. Along the walls there are pipe-shaped mud nests made by mud dauber wasps.



An Eastern Phoebe nest

**Olana's nature walks will be marked soon, but for now you'll need to pay extra-close attention so you don't miss your stop!**

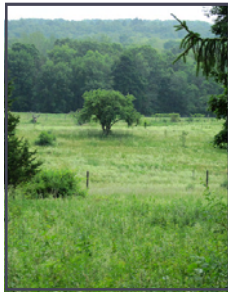


## 2. Under Attack

Observe the trees in front of you. Do you see anything unusual? **These are Japanese black pines (*Pinus thunbergii*), brought here by Church, and they are being attacked by beetles.** The oozing sap is evidence of the attack, as the tree attempts to “pitch out” the offending beetle. Sometimes the tree will win the battle and a beetle will be trapped in the sap, but in other cases the beetle will avoid being repelled and continue to damage the tree.



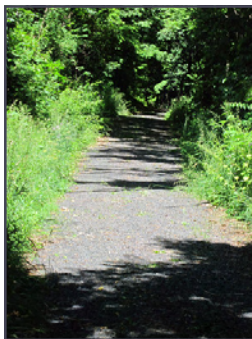
## 3. Old Orchard, New Life



From this spot you can see over the orchard — now under restoration — in which Church planted apple, peach, pear, plum and cherry trees. **Many species of birds enjoy the open fields dotted with trees.** Listen for the calls of Field sparrows (*Spizella pusilla*), Song sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*) and Baltimore orioles (*Icterus galbula*). If you're lucky, you may even see a Wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*)!

## 4. The Edge of the Forest

You are about to enter the forest. **The transition from farm to woodland was purposefully created by Church's picturesque landscape design.** As you move along, take some time to sense the changes around you. The farmland is light and warm; the forest is dark and cool. The types of plants will be different in the two areas, and you may even notice different smells.



## 5. Roots Exposed

This stop allows you to see the part of a tree that is usually hidden: the roots. **Because the tree is growing on a slope next to a road, the soil around its roots has been washed away by water erosion.** In the long run, erosion can be problematic for the tree as its roots find less support, but in the short term small animals like chipmunks tunnel between the roots. Look for more exposed roots as you continue.



## 6. Thick Skinned Tree



Take a look at the bark on this tree! **This Chestnut oak's (*Quercus prinus*) thick, fissured bark is only a part of its amazing resilience.** Chestnut oaks grow in rocky, poor soils many other trees would not tolerate. Because Chestnut oaks tend to be slow growers, this particular tree is quite old and has lived through all kinds of extreme weather. As if giving thanks to the generous environment, the oak provides acorns, which are eaten by deer and small rodents.

To your left you will see the winding North Road. Continue up this road to complete the walk. Approaching the House this route was one of the ways how Frederic Church intended his visitors to see the landscape.

## 7. Going When the Going's Good

If you look carefully up the hill, you should see a long gully extending down to a bowl-shaped depression next to the road. **This drainage could be classified as a seasonal stream, which only runs during periods of high water concentration in the soil.** The stream may only contain water after snow-melt in the spring or heavy rain.



The pool prevents some of the water from flowing over the road.

## 8. Secondary Success

What do you notice about the trees before you? **As a general rule, if you can't see very far into the forest, you are standing among second growth trees.** This area was once clear as a result of insect attacks and storms in the 20th century. These saplings quickly began to grow together in the available sunlight. Their small trunk diameters and close proximity to one another indicate this is a young successional stand of trees. Look around for any older trees that were here long before these saplings.



## 9. A Rare New York Resident



The tall bushes beside the road are Shrubby St. John's-wort (*Hypericum prolificum*). **Shrubby St. John's-wort is a state-threatened plant that grows commonly at Olana.** Found in just 5 sites throughout New York, Olana is the only NYS park in which the plant occurs. In mid-summer, Shrubby St. John's-wort produces showy yellow flowers.

As you continue along North Road, keep an eye out for more. How many can you count?

## 10. A Little Bit of Farm in the Forest

On the hill before you is a large colony of Hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*). Lean over and smell the air around the ferns, or brush your hand against one. **Hay-scented ferns are**



**named after the fragrance they release, which is similar to hay that has been recently mowed.** This trait — along with the slightly sticky feel of the fronds — can distinguish this species from the similar New York fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*).

## 11. An Unwelcome Visitor

At first you may look at this oak and think it has many low-growing branches. But careful, don't get too close! **Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) readily climbs trees and can grow quite large, like this one.** The dark vine has many “hairs”, or aerial roots, which help it grip the tree's bark as it ascends. Although unpleasant to humans, poison ivy does not harm the tree and produces nutritious berries favored by birds.



## 12. One of Church's Favorites



Notice the dark foliage above you contrasting with the lighter greens of leafy trees. **These Eastern hemlocks (*Tsuga canadensis*) were extensively planted around Olana by**

**Church as artistic elements to the landscape.** Normally, hemlocks are rare on this side of the Hudson River, but Church spent much of his earlier years painting in the Catskill Mountains and loved these trees so much he grew them on his property.

You have now finished the Farm to Forest walk. Continue to the paved road and on to the House or the parking lot. We hope you enjoyed the walk and will come back to visit the beautiful landscape at Olana.