

GREENPORT

Second historic Olana viewshed tour slated

On Oct. 24, the Olana Partnership and the New York state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, will join with neighboring landowners to celebrate the beauty surrounding Olana's 250-acre landscape.

Like last year's very successful event, the 2009 self-guided tour focuses on the farms and privately-owned landscapes within the Olana Viewshed. Visitors will stand high above the Hudson River Valley in rarely-seen locations: they'll walk across meadows, beside ponds and streams, through orchards and gardens, often looking back at Frederic Church's Olana. They will experience first-hand the variety and magnificence of the region Church called "the center of the world."

Often referred to as the "crown jewel" of the Hudson Valley, Olana was the home of Church, one of America's most important artists, a student of Thomas Cole and a major figure in the Hudson River School of landscape painting.

Church, also a contemporary and colleague of Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux, designed Olana's Persian-style house amidst a 250-acre landscape and working farm.

When designing his landscape, in the 19th century Picturesque landscape style, Church intentionally integrated his setting within the surrounding landscape, revealing and framing exceptional views.

The grounds, now under restoration, constitute a masterpiece as important as any of his paintings. In creating this three-dimensional work of art, Church used the principles he used in his paintings — with a foreground of house and environs, middle



Contributed photo

Breathtaking sunsets like this one are part of Olana's viewshed. The state historic site is holding a viewshed tour on Oct. 24.

ground of woodland, parkland and farmland, and the panoramic background of the Catskills, Taconic Ranges and the Hudson River.

Today, many believe the Hudson River School to be the beginning of the American Conservation Movement, and the Olana Viewshed is a unique manifestation of those historic ideals.

While the celebration of views was integral to the philosophy of the Hudson River School painters, the idea of recognizing them as something to be protected is new.

Throughout the country, efforts

are underway to protect views, from California's Napa Valley, to areas surrounding Civil War sites, and in the environs of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello in Virginia.

In New York state, landscape historians, environmentalists, community members, art patrons, and land conservation organizations have all joined forces to protect the spectacular viewsheds throughout the Hudson Valley, of which Olana's is preeminent.

This year's tour includes ten unique private properties featured along the Hudson River and the foothills of the Catskill range, and

include an 1870s Calvert Vaux designed home, the former estate of the famous landscape painter Charles Herbert Moore, a biodynamic farm, and a restored 1743 barn perched above 436 protected acres.

Additionally, members can ascend to Olana's seldom-visited Bell Tower, with its unparalleled river and mountain views. Following the tour there will be a party at an 1850s farm with 180-degree views of the Catskill range.

The Viewshed Tour is a benefit to support the restoration of Olana's historic landscape.

The tour is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tickets are \$50, or \$40 for members. The party, from 4:30 to 6 p.m., is \$100 and \$75 for members. Bell tower tours, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., are \$50 and free for members.

Contact Melanie Hasbrook, 518-828-1872, ext. 103 or e-mail: mhasbrook@olana.org. for more information.

Two other organizations integral to the preservation of Olana's viewshed will be represented during the introductory part of the Viewshed Tour.

Scenic Hudson, a non-profit organization that has been a crusader for the Hudson Valley since 1963, will send representatives to discuss their work to protect and restore the Hudson River and its majestic landscape as an irreplaceable national treasure and as a vital resource for residents and visitors.

So far, Scenic Hudson has protected 1,248 acres in the Olana Viewshed, largely through conservation easements with private landowners and working farms. The group's campaign to Save the Land That Matters Most — a collaboration with fellow land trusts, governments, individuals and businesses — seeks to protect 65,000 acres of great scenic, ecological and agricultural significance throughout the Hudson Valley.

Also on hand will be representatives of the Columbia Land Conservancy, a local non-profit land trust which works with the community to conserve the farmland, forests, wildlife habitat and rural character of Columbia County, and which has also made great strides in protecting Olana's viewshed.