

Landscape Tour 1.0

“I believe that the teacher’s business is simply to determine, on the basis of larger experience and riper wisdom, how the discipline of life shall come to the student.” - from philosopher, psychologist, and educator John Dewey’s Pedagogical Creed 1897

It is in this late 19th century tone that we develop this tour

As a boy, Church instinctively liked to draw and to gaze at clouds and let his imagination take flight. He gravitated toward the natural sciences and was enamored with calligraphy and with the color red writes historian Gerald Carr. Church’s school exercise books and text books are completely filled with drawings and writings in the margins.

Huntington writes “The continued support of both his mother and father can hardly be exaggerated. Frederic’s mother offered encouragement, religious education, and faith in his natural abilities. Frederic’s father offered stanch disappointment and skepticism in his son’s career choice, but enabled him to study here on the Hudson with Cole and then was completely supportive after the paintings started to sell. Carr writes that Joseph Church provided critical fiscal support to the Cosy Cottage and farm during the Civil War when art patronage reduced, and 2/3rd of the funds for building Olana came from his mother and father while they were still alive.

Church comes from Hartford to Catskill after being accepted to study painting with Thomas Cole. In 1844 Church writes to Cole:

“I have seen your letter addressed to Mr. Wadsworth in reply to the one written by him with reference to me and I may say I have seldom felt more sincere joy than I experienced when I learned of your favorable answer. I had frequently heard as you intimated in your letter that you seldom or never received pupils, consequently I scarcely dared to hope that you would be willing to receive me, but your condescension and Mr. Wadsworth [sic] kindness in offering to use his influence in my favor even if I had no other object in contemplation, ought to be of sufficient weight to persuade me to exert myself in your art to the extent of my ability...”

Before he departed Catskill (after two years of work with Cole) Church had familiarized himself with and had developed lifelong sentimental attachments to the region and to the art and family of Thomas Cole. From here he launched into all descriptions. Says Gerald Carr “Church has a visual appetite for the magnificent view.”

“I have frequently heard of the beautiful and romantic scenery about Catskill, once I passed near there, but so long ago that I remember nothing but the abrupt bluffs and lofty heights which characterize [sic] one of its grandest features; it would give me the greatest pleasure to accompany you

in your rambles about the place, observing nature in all her various appearances.” Frederic Edwin Church to Thomas Cole. Hartford, May 20, 1844. Collection NYS Public Library

In the late 1840s scientist and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt published his multi-volume works known as *Cosmos*. As the reigning scientific mind of the early 19th century, Humboldt is a unique combination of naturalist and adventurer. On a 6,000-mile journey through what is now Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico and Cuba, risking his life in treacherous terrain, he conducted the first extensive scientific explorations of the Andes and the Amazon, literally redrawing the map of this part of the world and dramatically expanding our knowledge of the natural world in general. He laid the groundwork for the fields of climatology and oceanography, and profoundly influenced followers such as Darwin and Agassiz. Humboldt was one of Frederic Church’s heroes and he owned and read *Cosmos* and used it to drive his approach to botanical detail in his paintings, his need to travel to unusual and less explored places, and to link the natural “order of things” to a higher (godlike) power. –from the article *Church, Humboldt, and Darwin: The Tension & Harmony of Art and Science* by Stephen Jay Gould

“The recollection of the blue mountains is as fresh and vivid to me as the day I last saw them.”
Frederic Edwin Church to Thomas Cole, Hartford, October 17, 1846. Collection Detroit Institute of Arts

“I think that perhaps my pleasantest thoughts now-a-days are when they are about our home on the Hudson and all the surroundings . . . ” FEC to William Henry Osborn, November 9, 1868, from Rome

While living at Cosy Cottage after marriage to Isabel Carnes Church

“The country is very lovely now in its fresh verdure – I am sure you would enjoy (and I hope you will) some of the fine sunsets as seen from the summit of my rough farm.” [This pre-dates purchase of hill top property – summit is closer to where free-standing studio was situated.] Frederic Edwin Church to John F. Kensett [Fellow Hudson River School painter]– July 13, 1863. Collection of Olana State Historic Site, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

“The country is very lovely now and the grand scenes which encircle my farm are getting their summer drapery-I should be happy to have the opportunity some time to show you the beautiful views I look daily upon.” Frederic Edwin Church to Gifford Pinchot- May 12, 1866. Collection of Olana State Historic Site, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

“The country is beautiful and I am enjoying it the uttermost.” Frederic Edwin Church to Martin J. Heade [Fellow artist]– June 12, 1866. Collection of Archives of American Art.

“Almost an hour this side of Albany is the Center of the World – I own it – I am all alone in the little dining room enjoying a nice wood fire – and thinking how thankful I ought to be to have travelled and returned with my family all well-“ Frederic Edwin Church to Erastus Dow Palmer – July 7, 1869. Written from Cosy Cottage upon return from traveling abroad. Owned by The Albany Institute of History and Art Library, Albany, NY [Note: While this is a well-known quote – what is not generally focused upon is that this was written from Cosy Cottage.]

“She [Isabel] now sits under the apple trees in luxurious contemplation of the beautiful scenes which encircle our little cottage.” Frederic Edwin Church to William Henry Osborn – May 16, 1870. Collection unknown. Transcript in Collection of Olana State Historic Site, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

“How many hundred forest trees have been set out in its parks lately, and above all, how the artist’s beautiful wife has been seen riding across these red-veined hilltops upon a milk-white donkey...”

Frederic Edwin Church to William Henry Osborn – July 22, 1871. Collection of the Princeton University Library.

“The grass was fresh and green about the house [Cosy Cottage]. The strawberries had commenced throwing out new leaves. Vines and plants were well started[,] peas have been up some little time – about five hundred trees have been planted and about as many more will be this spring...” Frederic Edwin Church to his father, Joseph Church – April 15, 1864. Collection of Olana State Historic Site, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

“I am busy landscape architecturing” source?? (sentences around this sentence?) (Mark)

“We are having splendid Meteoric displays – Magnificent sunsets and Auroras – red, green, yellow, and blue – and such – in profusion I have actually been drawn away from my usual steady deviation to the new house to sketch some of the fine things hung in the sky.” Frederic Edwin Church to Martin Johnson Heade, October 24, 1870

“We hope you can both come – We want you to see how beautiful we are – I mean the scenery of course. Plenty of rain has glorified the country . . . ” Frederic Edwin Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, June 18, 1870, Collection Albany Institute of History and Art

From main house at Olana or at other points on property such as studio

“It [the main house] stands at an elevation of 600 feet above the Hudson River and commands wonderful views of sky, Mountains, rolling and savannah country, villages, forest and clearings. The noble River expands to a width of over two miles forming lake like a sheet of water which is always dotted with steamers and other craft.” Frederic E. Church to Egyptologist, Amelia Edwards, September 2, 1877. Collection Sommerville College Library, Oxford, England.

“The house will be a curiosity in architecture . . . and the picture from each window will be really marvelous.” Frederic E. Church to William Henry Osborn, July 22, 1871. Collection Olana State Historic Site

“The weather superb. The river a clear mirror of ice and is lively with flying ice boats.” Frederic Edwin Church to William Henry Osborn, February 22, 1871

“...when the autumn fires light up the landscape you will see Nature’s palette set with her most precious and vivid colors...” Frederic E. Church to Jervis McEntee, September 23, 1874. Collection Archives of American Art.

“Nature has been very lavish here in the gifts of her beauty – I am sure you would enjoy the noble scenes which our windows command – “ Frederic E. Church to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, October 29, 1880 Collection Harvard University Library

“It is a particularly lovely Autumn here rich coloring, no frost as yet and mainly still soft weather toned to suit an Artists eye...” Frederic E. Church to John Ferguson Weir, October 25, 1891. Collection Archives of American Art.

“I have made about 1 ¾ miles of road this season, opening entirely new and beautiful views. I can make more and better landscapes in this way than by tampering with canvas and paint in the studio.” F. E. Church to Palmer, October 18, 1884, Albany Institute of History and Art Library

“We are both enjoying the gorgeous hues and soft atmospheric effects never more beautiful than this season...” Frederic E. Church to Charles W. de Wolf Brownell, October 12, 1893. Transcript in collection of Olana Research Collection, Olana State Historic Site.

“...and [I] make a study from my studio window of a sunset or twilight nearly every day...” Frederic E. Church to Martin Johnson Heade, February, 8, 1871. Collection Archives of American Art.

“You notice that I write in an absent minded sort of way, crossing out and inserting words; well it is owing to the magnificent effects this morning – beautiful clouds, an opalescent atmosphere, and lovely tints in the landscape distract me every minute ...” Frederic E, Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, April 19, 1891. Collection of Albany Institute of History and Art Library.

Additional Quotes