

# **HISTORIC FURNISHINGS REPORT FOR OLANA STATE HISTORIC SITE**

**A History of the Interiors,  
Thoughts on Their Significance, and  
Recommendations for Their Restoration**

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Early in the drafting of the *Historic Furnishings Report*, a committee was formed to help formulate the content and format of the document. Committee members read drafts of each chapter as it was produced, made comments, and met to discuss all issues related to the document. Jim Ryan, site manager of Olana, served as head of this committee until his retirement in June 1999. At various times, committee members have included Anne Cassidy, Kristin Gibbons, Deborah Smith, Robin Campbell, John Lovell, all of Peebles Island; Dennis Wentworth of Taconic Region of OPRHP, along with Robin Eckerle and Heidi Hill,

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<sup>1</sup> As this document was going to press, the Friends of Olana changed its name to The Olana Partnership to more accurately reflect its expanding role in the stewardship of Olana. The name "Friends of Olana", however, has been retained in this document

successive heads of interpretation at the site. They are all to be thanked for their diligence and insights.

A group of professionals wrote early drafts of some chapters. Although they will find that only vestiges of their work remain in the final version, I hope they will know that I am grateful for their contributions. Joel Sweimler, curator at Olana from 1987 to 1990, wrote drafts of the following chapters: Preface; Porches, Piazzas and Outdoor Rooms; Vestibule; Corridor; and Dining Room / Picture Gallery. Marc Reabun, intern in 1988, wrote a draft of the East Parlor chapter. Tom Romanchuk, editorial assistant, wrote a draft of the Corridor chapter. Kathleen Gray, intern in 1992, wrote a draft of the Butler's Pantry chapter. It should be understood that any mistakes and infelicities remaining in those chapters are my responsibility alone.

As I drafted the *Historic Furnishings Report*, I was grateful for opportunities to speak about the document and the research that I had conducted in connection with it. These lectures and workshops helped stimulate and shape my thinking about the document. The first opportunities came in 1992, at a Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums workshop on furnishings plans and at an OPRHP colloquium focused on Olana. In 1995 I aired issues pertinent to Olana's furnishings at the National Trust for Historic Preservation's colloquium "Conservation in Context."

I would like to thank the interpreters who have worked at Olana during my years there. Their comments and questions invariably made me snap to attention. The interpreters were my main contact with the public, and their concerns helped keep the document grounded in pertinent information and real-world rhetoric.

At the final stages of the *Historic Furnishings Report*, two editors have stepped in and made the document infinitely more accurate and readable. Barbara Couser of OPRHP has painstakingly entered all my annotations and updates to the draft – dealing with a tangle of penciled lines and scotch-taped slips. She has also compiled illustrations and served as the desktop publisher of the document. Sabine Seiler, an independent professional editor, has copyedited the manuscript and produced the bibliography, making a seamless whole out of the disparate units she was handed.

The *Historic Furnishings Report* uses very little published scholarship; it is built upon a comprehensive examination of primary source material. While much of this material is found in the Olana Archive, many significant sources are held by other repositories and private individuals. Over the years an army of volunteers and interns has organized our own archival material, sought out material from other sources, organized this material and transcribed it, and lastly, written valuable reports based upon this wealth of primary data. Very little of this work has been published. The footnotes of the *Historic Furnishings Report* are littered with citations of this work, from research reports to transcripts of correspondence and concordances of archival material. The contributions of many individuals are mentioned in connection with the sources they produced, but many people did background organizational work that does not bear their name. I would like to single out a few whose projects made my research possible, namely, Jane Churchill, Kristin Gibbons, Laura Kline, and Abby Zoldowski.

I must reserve a special thank-you for those who carefully created and preserved records of Olana. When I first began writing the *Historic Furnishings Report*, I was totally immersed in archival sources. With no phone at my desk I was incommunicado; my family would ask me how I could function. I replied that most of the people I wanted to talk to were dead. Over the years I feel as though I have become friends with these people who left such a vivid picture of life at Olana. I want to thank especially Hortense Ferguson Childs, Susan Hale, Grace King, Ralph Good, Frank Bonnelle, the Osborns, the Warners, and the Palmers. Those of the twentieth century were important too (some of them are still alive!), especially members of the Lark family, David Huntington, Richard Wunder, Walt Miller, Jinny and Wendy Neefus, O. Rundle Gilbert, Helen Howe, Vera Frier Dietz, and the Wilsey family. Most of all, I must thank two generations of the Church family, for building and preserving Olana – a truly special place.

This document is dedicated to Jim Ryan, who, along with the Churches, still makes his presence felt at Olana. His vision for the *Historic Furnishings Report* shaped every word.





## Executive Summary

The *Historic Furnishings Report for Olana State Historic Site* is an administrative document that will guide the restoration of the furnishings of the first-floor public rooms of the main residence at Olana, the home of Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church and his family. The *Historic Furnishings Report* compiles extensive archival evidence for those furnishings, catalogs them, and interprets their meaning as an ensemble. This report complements other critical planning documents for the site: Robert Toole’s “Historic Landscape Report for Olana State Historic Site” (1996) charts the history of the landscape; his “Landscape Restoration Plan for Olana” (1999) makes recommendations for its restoration, and a historic structure report for the main residence, now in preparation, will document the architectural history of the building and make recommendations for its restoration. When the recommendations contained in these documents are implemented, Church’s greatest work of art – Olana – will be restored to the appearance the artist intended.

Most of the late-nineteenth century furnishings for the main residence at Olana survive, as does a rich archive; to be able to draw upon both furnishings and an archive to complete this report was an extraordinary opportunity. The interiors of Olana are recorded through an array of sources: diaries; correspondence of the family and visitors; nineteenth-century articles and books; a complete inventory from the 1960s, and a series of datable photographs. These sources provide unmistakable evidence of how the interiors looked and how they were used. This rich trove of documentation and artifacts was assembled and preserved by one of America’s most important painters and his descendants. Arguably, the furnishings of no other American artist’s home are so well preserved and so thoroughly documented; this fact alone makes the interiors important.

If Church’s paintings convey meanings beyond mere depiction of the scene portrayed, as modern scholars agree they do, we can likewise extract larger meanings from the interiors he composed. The *Historic Furnishings Report* accurately documents Church’s intentions for the furnishings of the main residence. It also serves as a road map for restoring the interiors of Church’s home with extraordinary historical precision. The interiors of the main residence,

along with its architecture and the surrounding landscape, are a unified artwork – perhaps the zenith of Church’s accomplishments in three dimensions, with an iconographic scheme all its own. The interiors of the main residence are part of a unique ensemble, remarkably intact and invested with meaning. This makes Olana an artist's home of international significance.

The *Historic Furnishings Report* is premised on one goal: to restore the interiors of Olana to their appearance during the years 1891-1900. Archival evidence supports the assertion that Frederic Church was the primary force shaping Olana and that his wife Isabel participated in the creation and refinement of the ensemble. Period references strongly suggest that during the 1890s the interiors at Olana changed little; Church considered them complete. The 1891-1900 restoration period chosen for the site represents the period of significance that governs the recommendations in the *Historic Furnishings Report*; it is also consonant with Olana’s interpretive policy. The *Historic Furnishings Report* is based on the continued use of the first-floor public rooms as the focus of the tour and on retention of the current tour path.

The structure of the *Historic Furnishings Report* consciously separates archival evidence from conclusions drawn from it. Part 1 of the *Historic Furnishings Report* consists of a series of short essays on topics of overarching significance that are not pertinent to any one room, such as the religious beliefs of Frederic and Isabel Church, their lives as collectors, the guests at Olana, and the domestic servants in the main residence. Each chapter in part 2 of the *Historic Furnishings Report* covers one room on the tour floor as well as the outdoor spaces of the main residence. The tripartite structure of each of these room chapters is reflected in the full title of the document: *Historic Furnishings Report for Olana State Historic Site: A History of the Interiors, Thoughts on their Significance, and Recommendations for their Restoration*. Each room receives a three-stage analysis. First, an exhaustive recitation of primary documentation relating to the interior furnishings is undertaken – this is the “raw data” of the document. Then this data is analyzed and conclusions are drawn. Finally, recommendations concerning what furnishings to use and how they are to be placed within each room are made; these recommendations are presented as an object-by-object catalog of the interiors. With this three-part formula, readers can easily trace how the recommendations contained in the *Historic Furnishings Report* were formed. Archival evidence suggested conclusions; the recommendations were based upon the evidence and conclusions.

In writing the *Historic Furnishings Report*, it became apparent that certain furnishings are especially significant. The East Parlor is an assemblage of family heirlooms and exotic, foreign furnishings set amid an array of Church's own paintings. The Dining Room / Picture Gallery celebrates the glories of old-world culture, highlighting Church's admiration for the painters Salvator Rosa, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, and Claude Lorrain. In the Studio, Church gathered representatives of all his collecting interests, including Persian art, pre-Columbian artifacts, old master paintings, photographs and other unframed art as well as his own art and that of his contemporaries. The Court Hall is filled with feminine imagery. Balance is achieved through symmetrical and pendant arrangements of furnishings, while visual intrigue is provided by reflective surfaces that flash points of light out of the semidarkness. In the Sitting Room every piece of art is personally evocative: Isabel Church's wedding portrait; the sketch for *Niagara Falls*, which made Church's fame; portraits of Church's mentors, Claude Lorrain, and Alexander von Humboldt; and most significant, *El Khasné Petra*, Church's own painting that serves as a metaphor for the house itself.

Once the most significant furnishings of the interiors were recognized, an iconography of the rooms began to emerge. The seating arrangements of the porches and piazzas of the main residence functioned as so many theatre seats from which to witness the panorama of landscape and sky. The East Parlor, planned as an eclectic showplace, became little used for formal calls, yet was always admired for its artistry. Even before excavation for the house began, the Dining Room / Picture Gallery was envisioned as a medieval space celebrating the age-old tradition of artful dining and conversation. The Studio became Church's last, great autobiographical statement. The Court Hall evolved as a mystical, generative space where the origins of human culture are contrasted with ever-changing nature. The Sitting Room became the family's treasure house of memories, one specially outfitted for an artist's family in a paradise designed by an artist.

Certain restoration priorities also became evident in the course of writing the *Historic Furnishings Report*. Those items that can be firmly documented to their locations by archival evidence dating from the restoration period are particularly important. Photographs from the restoration period exist for almost all the rooms; not coincidentally, these images depict furnishings that other contemporary sources indicate are especially significant. Among the most

important groups of such furnishings are: the old master paintings of the Dining Room / Picture Gallery; the furnishings of the stair hall, including the “trophy arrangement,” the niche with its Buddha, and the *nehan-zu*; and the artwork in the southwest corner of the Sitting Room, including the pendant portraits of Humboldt and Lorrain. Attention must be focused on restoration and reproduction of textile furnishings, since many of these large-scale items are missing, and their absence changes the nature of the interiors. Most draperies were a lavish concoction of Middle-Eastern and western textiles; while some drapes are extant, none can be hung due to their deteriorated condition. Likewise, large rugs for the Dining Room / Picture Gallery and the Studio survive, but only in fragments or in a badly deteriorated condition. Virtually no extant upholstery is appropriate. Many pieces of furniture retain twentieth-century show covers, and the nineteenth century upholsteries that remain have faded so significantly that they no longer convey their original color schemes. Currently, the reflective surfaces of many metallic objects are tarnished; the enlivening effect of their shine is now diminished. Although recommendations for architectural restorations are beyond the scope of the *Historic Furnishings Report*, attention must be given to further analysis of the painted surfaces of the interiors as proposals for upholstery and drapery treatments and the restoration of other furnishings move forward; the Churches surely planned color schemes for their furnishings in concert with architectural finishes such as stenciling and wall colors. The *Historic Furnishings Report* is a critical component in the site’s goal of an integrated restoration of the furnishings of the interiors, the architectural fabric of the main residence, and the landscape surrounding it. As we move toward that goal, we will revivify Church’s unified and sweeping vision for Olana.

## Preface

The *Historic Furnishings Report* for Olana State Historic Site is meant to serve as the definitive historical reference text on the furnishings of the public rooms on the first floor of the main residence at Olana State Historic Site, the home of Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church and his family. The Persian-style stone mansion was built between 1870 and 1872, and the studio wing was completed in 1891. It served as the family's primary home, and its furnishing engaged the painter and his wife Isabel during the entire period of their residence. The artist's son and daughter-in-law inherited the mansion and maintained it largely as they found it. The mansion and its contents, the highlight of the 125-acre estate, were acquired by New York State in 1966. The mansion is a remarkable survivor: nearly all of the original furnishings – an assemblage composed by one of America's most important painters – remain intact.

The *Historic Furnishings Report* was designed to be a highly technical administrative document that will guide the restoration of the interior furnishings of the main residence at Olana, but it also accomplishes other purposes. Following the model of other furnishings plans, this one compiles evidence concerning decor and provides a complete catalog of recommended objects for each room shown to the public. The *Historic Furnishings Report* also provides a wealth of data that can be incorporated into all aspects of site interpretation. The *Historic Furnishings Report* not only summarizes historical facts and lists objects, it discusses the career and the everyday lives of the painter and his family and how the rooms at Olana were used. It also begins an iconographic analysis of the interiors at Olana and their relationship to the physical, intellectual, and spiritual landscape in which they were developed. Thus the *Historic Furnishings Report* goes well beyond the typical furnishings report for the typical historic house, which usually summarizes scant primary documents for a figure whose home was not a visual manifestation of his profession. The extraordinarily rich archival resources of Olana and the well-developed scholarly literature on Church's aims as a painter led to this elaboration of the *Historic Furnishings Report*.

## The Restoration Period, 1891-1900

The *Historic Furnishings Report* focuses on one goal: to restore the interiors of Olana to their appearance in the years 1891-1900. This period was suggested by a reference in a letter written in 1891 by Isabel Church, wife of the painter, to her daughter, Downie. She is discussing the future of Olana and its new manager, her son Louis:

Just to occupy his time – (perhaps) he will be head of our place – with a salary – Your father thought he needed one of his sons, to take charge, and Louis, dear boy is the one. There is much to be looked into at Olana– and Father can not, nor cares to do it. But Louis is full of projects.<sup>2</sup>

In this letter Isabel articulated a thought suggested by all the other primary evidence: by 1891 Frederic Church considered Olana complete. Olana is richly documented for the years 1891 to 1900. With the rise of new photographic technologies that could be mastered by amateurs, the interiors at Olana are reasonably well recorded for this decade. These photographs can be augmented by a wealth of written material from the same years. All this evidence indicates that after 1891 Frederic and Isabel Church made no major improvements to the main residence; only a few items were added to the house, and no major revisions were made in the arrangement of furnishings. All evidence points to this decade as one of finality and stability. Yet, even though Olana is a remarkably well-documented site, we do not have a large amount of evidence for any one point in that decade. Instead, it is the entire decade of 1891-1900 that is illuminated by the evidence. As an elderly, invalid couple, Isabel and Frederic Church lived quietly at Olana until they died in 1899 and 1900 respectively. Thus, the restoration period for the purposes of the *Historic Furnishings Report* is 1891-1900. This accords with the Interpretive Statement for Olana State Historic Site, a document adopted in 1985 that guides the educational and interpretative efforts at Olana. This document specifies a restoration date of c. 1890, plus or minus 10 years, as the restoration date for the entire property.

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2 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Dec. 12, 1891, Estate of Sally Church Papers, Olana Archive (hereafter abbreviated as ESCP).

## The Structure of the Historic Furnishings Report

To truly understand the furnishings of Olana – its chairs and tables, its paintings and sculptures, its dinner plates and teapots – one must understand the lives of the people who used them. Part II of the *Historic Furnishings Report* catalog objects – from mundane plates to extraordinary paintings – thought to have been at Olana in its restoration period of the 1890s. Part I outlines the context for those objects, in order to illuminate the reasons why they were chosen. First, I discuss the invisible foundations upon which Olana was built: Frederic Church’s financial and artistic success, the marriage of Frederic and Isabel Church, and most important, their religious beliefs. Next, I describe the completed Olana as others described it, in published articles and through a few opinions expressed in private letters, thus providing a historiography of the home. The patterns of everyday life at Olana are revealed through sections covering the basic biographical details of the Churches’ four children, the routines of daily life, the Churches’ careers as collectors, the guests who visited Olana, the domestic servants, and the failing health of Frederic and Isabel Church. The artwork Church created in the 1870s and 1880s, as Olana was being built, offers insights into the themes and ideas Church found most meaningful at the end of his career. These same themes are to be found in the furnishings of Olana. An iconology of an earthly Eden can be traced not only in Church’s late paintings but also in his latest artwork, Olana. A final chapter discusses Louis and Sally Church as stewards of Olana.

Part I of the *Historic Furnishings Report* focuses on life in the main residence at Olana in the 1890s. Some topics of interest are necessarily mentioned only in passing or not discussed at all. For example, the Churches’ life in Cozy Cottage, the art Church created prior to 1870, and life at Olana in the twentieth century are only sketched. Likewise, objects not shown in Olana’s tour floor rooms are not discussed in the *Historic Furnishings Report* and are mentioned here only rarely; thus, bedroom furnishings and other significant objects are not analyzed in depth. The architectural development of the main residence and the history of the landscape at Olana are treated extensively in other documents: a forthcoming historic structure report and Robert Toole’s “Historic Landscape Report for Olana State Historic Site.”<sup>3</sup> When individual objects are discussed in Part I, full information on their provenance, attribution, and meaning for the Churches and all other relevant data are given in the pertinent chapter in which that object

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3 Toole, “Historic Landscape Report for Olana State Historic Site,” ORC.

appears. A textual reference or a footnote is supplied to guide the reader to the proper chapter. Part I of the *Historic Furnishings Report of Olana* is intended to provide the background needed to understand Olana during the chosen restoration period of the 1890s, when Church considered his work at Olana complete.

Each chapter in Part II covers one room on the tour floor. The tripartite structure of each tour-floor room chapter of the *Historic Furnishings Report* is reflected in its full title: *Historic Furnishings Report for Olana State Historic Site: A History of the Interiors, Thoughts on their Significance, and Recommendations for their Restoration*. Each room on the tour floor receives a three-stage analysis. First, an exhaustive recitation of primary documentation relating to the interior furnishings is undertaken – this is the “raw data” of the *Historic Furnishings Report*. Then, this data is analyzed and conclusions are drawn from it. Based both on the data of the primary documents and the opinions expressed in the conclusion, recommendations are then made. The recommendations for the interiors are organized as an object-by-object catalog of furnishings and a brief essay relating to more transient objects. Early in the drafting of the *Historic Furnishings Report*, the committee guiding the work realized that it would be critical to separate the documentation from the conclusions it suggested and that the recommendations for the restoration of the interiors ought to be drawn from a combination of both. With this three-part formula, readers can clearly trace the decisions made in the *Historic Furnishings Report*. Readers can easily understand the *Historic Furnishings Report* in its current incarnation, but, more important, they can see how it might be different. When new evidence comes to light or the administrative parameters of the institution change, necessary modifications to the *Historic Furnishings Report* will be easier to detect and make. Furthermore, as the recommendations made in the *Historic Furnishings Report* are implemented, they will be scrutinized and reconsidered – a healthy process. It is hoped that separating evidence from conclusions and recommendations will help future curators charged with implementing the *Historic Furnishings Report* to refine and improve upon the work done here as they strive to realize Church’s vision for Olana.



## Evidence

In each of the chapters on the tour floor rooms all primary source material is assembled under the heading “Evidence.” Sources dating from the nineteenth century include written documents, such as correspondence, bills, receipts, diary entries, and contemporary newspaper accounts as well as visual sources, such as architectural drawings, illustrations from period publications, and photographs. Twentieth century sources include estate inventories, oral histories from Church descendants and servants, and many, many photographs. Every available relevant nineteenth century source has been incorporated into the *Historic Furnishings Report*, and evidence relating to the restoration period of 1891-1900 is exhaustively discussed. Twentieth century sources are also treated extensively. Only a small amount of evidence from the twentieth century which was found to replicate information already included, has been omitted.<sup>4</sup> While many furnishings plans include information from secondary sources on room design, room use, and other general data, the *Historic Furnishings Report* contains little information drawn from secondary sources. Available primary sources are so rich that generalizations from secondary sources were rarely needed. All evidence is discussed in expository essays, each of which includes a set of topical categories, arranged more or less in chronological order.

Special methods of referencing some significant and often-cited sources have been devised. For example, we need explain only once the argument for the date, authorship, and history of a manuscript by a neighbor of the Churches’ or the many dates of the photographs taken by a local photography studio. These sources and many others are cited in almost every chapter. Rather than repeatedly explain the history and the rationale for the dating of such sources, or require the reader to search through footnotes for full references, footnotes refer the reader to an appendix entitled “Who’s Who at Olana.” Here, each source is explained and the

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4 Specifically, a multitude of photographs of the interiors were taken after Sally Church’s death in August 1964 and in June 1966, when Olana became the property of New York State. There are sometimes slight differences between views of the same room. As the *Historic Furnishings Report* was nearing completion, the papers of David Huntington were being processed and hundreds of photographs and slides of the interiors dating from this period were discovered. Huntington’s papers contain images taken by him and images taken by others, including the Neefus studio, Wayne Andrews, and others. The images in the Huntington papers were surveyed, and a few that provided new information were included. Most, however, were duplicates of images already in the plan or provided relatively little new information, so they were not included.

dating given. Virtually all known photographs of the interiors of Olana are included in the illustration section; thus, that appendix serves as a visual chronology of the interiors, while the photographers themselves are included in the “Who’s Who at Olana.” A detailed inventory of the entire house was taken in 1965 at the time of the death of Sally Church, who had inherited Olana. This inventory, known as the O. Rundle Gilbert inventory, often serves as the basis for furnishings recommendations; it is reprinted as Appendix 2. Thus, the “Who’s Who at Olana” and the appendixes serve as clear, easy-to-access tools for understanding complex archival sources.

It should be noted that there are many overlaps between *The Historic Furnishings Report for Olana State Historic Site* and the forthcoming historic structures report for the main residence at Olana. It is anticipated that the historic structures report will treat the architectural fabric of the mansion as exhaustively as the *Historic Furnishings Report* does its furnishings. Thus, the architectural evolution of the mansion is not discussed here in great detail. Likewise, only certain interior architectural features that figure prominently in the interior decorative scheme, such as fireplaces and stenciling, are discussed. Detailed information about original flooring, wall colors and textures, most original gas lighting fixtures, and other built-in fittings, such as tiling and cabinetry, can be found in the historic structures report. While I do include information about the curtains used at the windows, the historic structures report analyzes window hardware, including that for the original blinds. Thus, the evidence section contains only basic information on the architecture of the main residence.

## **Conclusions**

Following a complete analysis of evidence, each chapter includes a set of conclusions presented in essay form. The conclusions are my own opinions based upon the evidence and might include statements about room use, summarize important collections within rooms, and describe the aesthetic impact of a room and how it was achieved. These are relatively straightforward deductions and inferences drawn from the evidence, especially period quotations. The conclusions sections also attempt an iconographic analysis of the rooms at Olana. I have assumed that Church’s home, like his paintings, is more than a set of appealing images. Like his paintings, the decor of Olana, the view from its windows and porches, and the manner in which

life was lived, carry a deeper significance. Just as the compositional elements of Church's paintings were carefully considered, so were the furnishings of Olana. Each room is considered as an entity, and the introduction traces some overarching themes, such as the ideas Church conveyed in his late paintings and the religious beliefs of Frederic and Isabel Church. The *Historic Furnishings Report* analyzes the entire context of interiors at Olana: the way objects were arranged, the visual and symbolic relationships they communicated, and the ways humans interacted with objects. In so doing, I hope to unravel the iconography of the interiors.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations of furnishings to be included in Olana's interiors are based upon the preceding sections of evidence and conclusions. A ranking system determined how objects were chosen for inclusion in the recommendations sections. In all cases I attempted to determine which objects were present during the restoration period of 1891-1900. I relied first upon primary evidence from that period, especially photographs, but I also used written evidence such as letters and physical evidence such as picture hooks. Often, simple logic determined inclusion of objects. When a desk is visible in a photograph, the inclusion of a desk chair is implied, and when one of a pair of objects is visible, the mate is recommended for the pendant position within the room. When no evidence from the restoration period was available, I referred to a set of documents from the 1950s and 1960s, including the O. Rundle Gilbert inventory, and a set of diagrams and lists of artworks made by historians David Huntington and Richard Wunder. In some instances, security and conservation concerns override the evidence of primary documentation. We have had to move objects from their original placements and, in rare cases, delete them altogether. Over two generations of display many objects sustained severe damage, and some can never be displayed again. For others, we have devised display strategies that minimize further damage. For example, the Churches hung a tapestry in the Corridor from five wires suspended from a picture molding; in 1992 the textile was conserved, mounted on a frame, and the frame (not the textile itself) was hung from the same five points, thus preserving the appearance but not the hazardous stresses of the Churches' original scheme. Because the tour path cuts through the rooms and puts visitors in close proximity to furnishings, some objects have had to be moved from their original locations. Occasionally, some objects are

recommended because their interpretive value is so great. However, the evidence provided by primary documents is never set aside for interpretive reasons; rather, when there is no evidence from the restoration period, the themes of the room may suggest appropriate objects.

Each recommendation is given in a rigid format. First, basic cataloging data for the object is given, following a format similar to a museum label. The accession number for each object is provided, and it is assigned a *Historic Furnishings Report* number (the HFR#). Besides the object name (such as “table” or “vase”), I list maker and/or country of origin, date, and the materials of which the object is made. The room number and room name is listed, along with a sublocation within the room. A longer commentary section follows. This always begins with a rationale for the inclusion of the object in this room and in a particular location within the room. Usually, I cite specific documentary evidence, such as photographs where the object can be seen. If an object has been included for interpretive reasons or moved from its original location, this is explained. Finally, further cataloging information is given. I discuss what the object is, how we know this, and what the Churches or their contemporaries thought of the object. While secondary source scholarship for the objects at Olana has not been exhausted, virtually all primary documentation and relevant period sources known to date have been included.

The recommendations sections of each tour-floor room chapter follow an organizational pattern. Objects are grouped in the following categories: Architectural Treatments; Floor Coverings; Window Treatments; Furniture; Objects Mounted to Walls and Ceilings; Objects on Flat Surfaces; Accessories and Transient Objects. For convenience and clarity, a few rooms have special sections, such as the Studio’s section on painting tools and equipment. Each category is divided into “Extant Objects” (accessioned objects from the collections at Olana) and “Reproductions, Substitutions, and Acquisitions.” When evidence indicates that an object was once at Olana but is no longer in the collection or is in poor condition, I recommend a replacement, either a reproduction of a specific object, a substitution of an object from the collections that is a reasonable replacement, or the acquisition of a period antique or a modern facsimile and indicate the preferable option. Usually, however, further research will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether a reproduction, a substitution, or an acquisition is appropriate. A few recommendations have already been carried out – these instances are clearly documented. Within each category of furnishings, objects are listed in clockwise order, starting with a

prominent object on the north side of the room. Objects in the center of the room are grouped together. To facilitate finding individual objects and comprehending the *Historic Furnishings Report*, a floor plan with compass points is included. Each category of furnishings is preceded by a short text summarizing relevant issues, such as placement decisions, information on makers common to several objects, and conservation or restoration concerns for groups of objects.

In order to represent the activities of daily life, a special section of recommendations has been developed, entitled “Accessories and Transient Objects.” Each chapter on the tour-floor rooms contains an essay documenting the kinds of activities that went on in that room and the appropriate objects required to portray that activity. Usually, I cite events documented in primary sources, such as the custom of saying morning prayers in the Sitting Room or the use of the table in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery to view art. The introduction discusses activities that took place in many locations in the home or in a location that is not precisely pinpointed. For example, reading aloud probably occurred on the porches and in all the interior sitting areas, and knowing that tea was offered to callers, we might guess that it was served in the East Parlor. Rather than list all the accouterments required for morning prayers, for viewing art, for reading aloud, or for taking tea, the *Historic Furnishings Report* includes essays discussing which activities occurred in which rooms and what objects might best represent them. Each essay specifies both objects from the collections as well as suggestions for reproductions, substitutions, and acquisitions.

Since 1997 the curatorial and education staff at Olana have chosen a theme for the tour season and expressed this theme through the accessories and transient objects displayed in each room. For the 1998 tour season the theme was nature and natural history. The Sitting Room featured a display of an egg collection formed by the Church children; on the Library table was a selection of fossils and rocks, and on the table in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery there was a selection of objects representing Church’s travels in South America, including a case of mounted butterflies. It is anticipated that each year the selections of accessories and transient objects can be developed thematically and that each theme can center on events and collections documented for the restoration period.

The organization of the *Historic Furnishings Report* reflects the mechanics of moving visitors through the rooms on the first floor of the residence. The chapters proceed in the same

order as the public tour. The first spaces discussed are the outdoor rooms at Olana, including the front porch, where the tour begins; all porches, piazzas, and terraces at Olana are discussed collectively in this chapter. The next space discussed is the Vestibule (the first interior room), and then the East Parlor follows. The *Historic Furnishings Report* continues with the Court Hall, the Studio, the Corridor, the Library, the Cloak Hall, the Butler's Pantry, and finally, the Dining Room / Picture Gallery. A summary discussion of the Laundry Room, a basement space not yet on the tour but a room that will perhaps one day be interpreted to the public, is included. Rooms not on the tour, including the family and staff bedrooms, attics, and the service areas, are not included in the *Historic Furnishings Report*. These areas are, however, discussed in the introduction Part I of the *Historic Furnishings Report*.

### **Using and Implementing the *Historic Furnishings Report***

Although this may reflect the author's hubris rather than her foresight, few provisions have been made for radical alterations to the *Historic Furnishings Report*. This is because we do not anticipate the discovery of many more primary source documents that would necessitate major changes in the placement of objects. Significant portions of every room on the tour floor are documented during the restoration period, and every object in the interiors was recorded by the 1960s. During the 1990s, as the *Historic Furnishings Report* was being written, a few new photographs of the interior dating from the restoration period or soon thereafter surfaced.<sup>5</sup> These images did not challenge any previously known evidence regarding furnishings placement, but they did give more detailed views of portions of some rooms. While new evidence will undoubtedly come to light, it should not radically contradict the *Historic Furnishings Report* as it now stands. It is expected that new sources will provide further evidence regarding room use or help to refine portions of rooms only documented in the twentieth century. Such evidence and its implications will become welcome appendixes to this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

The *Historic Furnishings Report* is not meant to be an absolutely rigid prescription for Olana. While the placement of some furnishings is fixed by overwhelming primary documentation or by conservation considerations or by the pragmatic demands of the tour path,

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5 These were in gift from Charles Everard Childs, and included an 1891 photograph of the East Parlor, and a photograph of the Dining Room / Picture Gallery dating from about 1905.

many objects specified in the *Historic Furnishings Report* are meant to be moved often. Side chairs should be repositioned to reflect use at tables, the arrangement of utilitarian desk furnishings should be changed periodically, and even Church's painting tools can be altered to reflect use. In addition, the "Accessories and Transient Objects" essays suggest myriad ways to augment the fixed arrangements of furniture and objects in each room. Other objects whose appearance in an interior is ephemeral and not confined to any one type of room, such as shawls, luggage, sporting goods, and cleaning tools, should be shown from time to time.

Special arrangements should be made to manage natural light in the interiors at Olana. All windows are currently fitted with UV-protective film; this will need to be replaced periodically. Show curtains are recommended for most windows; in every instance these will be reproductions. These should be made to function, and they should be drawn closed during the hours the house is not open to the public. During the summer months, most windows on the south and east facades are fitted with awnings, whose design is based on photographic evidence from the restoration period. Two sources from the 1880s indicate that at Olana all show curtains were removed during the summer months, and at least some windows were fitted with blinds. Grace King, a guest at Olana in 1887, noted: "The windows, however, were uncurtained, as it was summer, and there was the most beautiful scenery in the world outside."<sup>6</sup> A diary kept by Isabel Church's mother, Emma Carnes, recorded: "Mr. Sedwick came out and took down storm windows, Ombra glazing &c and put up awnings and blinds. A big day's work."<sup>7</sup> Removing heavy draperies was a common practice in the nineteenth century; neither their draft-blocking capabilities nor their heavy appearance were desirable for the summer months. I recommend that all show curtains be removed for the summer months.

The evidence for blinds has not yet been systematically analyzed. The historic structures report will determine which windows were fitted with blinds in addition to show curtains. If blinds were present during the restoration period, I recommend that they be reproduced and used. If blinds were not present, I would recommend that we fit the windows with modern blackout blinds, to be used during the summer months (when the show curtains are gone) when the house is not open to the public. Whether or not blinds were present historically, I recommend that all

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6 Grace King, *Memories of a Southern Woman of Letters* (New York: MacMillan, 1932), 78.

7 Emma Carnes diary, June 5, 1882, ESCP.

south-facing windows on the tour floor be fitted additionally with scrimlike, semitransparent blinds. These should be used when the house is open to visitors. The use of these semitransparent blinds would prolong the life of historic textiles and other fragile materials, while still preserving the view through the windows. The design of these blinds should be so clearly modern that visitors will not mistake them for historic furnishings.

Just as natural light at Olana must be managed, so must artificial light. The Churches did introduce artificial light into Olana. Some of this came by way of furnishings: stationary and portable oil lamps. Some of this light came by way of architectural fittings: gas sconces and hanging fixtures. The use of specific lighting devices is recommended in various places in the *Historic Furnishings Report*; these recommendations are based on various lamps and fixtures known from documentary evidence. It is anticipated that the historic structures report will provide further evidence about the gas piping system at Olana, and the location of additional lighting fixtures will be revealed. Final decisions about how to light the interiors at Olana should not be made until all this evidence is gathered and evaluated in totality. Meanwhile, I would like to articulate some recommendations concerning lighting. I hope that we will be able to recreate the original lighting systems at Olana or some facsimile of them. While fire codes, conservation concerns, and practical considerations will probably prevent us from restoring gas and oil lights, we should aim for their distinctive look. Efforts should be made to find modern electrical lights that simulate gas and oil lighting and to incorporate them within historic lighting fixtures. It is understood that some visitors will require more light to see collection objects or simply to walk safely through the house. Therefore, the facsimile lighting systems should be augmented with modern lighting systems. We should adopt methods that allow us to demonstrate the difference between nineteenth century light levels and modern light levels. All modern systems, whether they are installed within the architectural fabric or are freestanding, should be so obviously of recent design and manufacture that no visitor mistakes them for historic objects. We can probably locate systems that accomplish the goals of safety, additional display lighting, and historic lighting by switching back and forth between different light levels.

Olana is an extraordinary site precisely because so many of its furnishings are extant and because so much evidence exists to indicate how these furnishings were arranged and used. Therefore, reproductions, substitutions, and acquisitions to the decorative scheme should be



introduced sparingly; the *Historic Furnishings Report* reflects a bias toward extant objects. The use of reproduced objects and the restoration of extant objects raises a series of philosophical and ethical issues. I have written elsewhere about the importance of recreating original context in historic house museums.<sup>8</sup> While other museums preserve and present objects, I believe that historic house museums, as a class, can best utilize all the tools of modern historical inquiry to recreate a vivid three-dimensional view of history. Behind the *Historic Furnishings Report* is the aim of recreating the original context of Olana – its appearance during its restoration period. The *Historic Furnishings Report* lists some 900 objects, each of which poses its own set of concerns. When carrying out these 900 recommendations, it will be tempting to become involved in the many “trees” posed by individual restoration problems. Instead, it is important to keep an eye on the entire “forest” of context and to strive to recreate the original ambiance of Olana.

In the effort to authentically recreate the Churches’ original decorative schemes for Olana, the curator will often have to choose between the restoration of an extant object and the substitution of another from the collection, a reproduction, or the acquisition of another nineteenth-century object. But the right choice – the most authentic choice – will not always be obvious. Let me cite a few examples. A portrait of Baron Alexander von Humboldt, a seminal figure for Church’s art, once hung in the Sitting Room; Louis Church gave it to a friend, and we have traced the painting to its current owner, who does not wish to lend it or donate it at this time. Should we instead hang another portrait from the collections as a substitution (for example, a drawing of Joseph Church, the artist’s father)? Or should we fabricate a reproduction of the Humboldt portrait and hang that? Which would be more authentic – a period portrait of the wrong man or a reproduction portrait of the right man? Because it hung for nearly one hundred years in the stair hall at Olana, an important Japanese temple scroll sustained significant damage. While this damage can be repaired (at great cost), if the scroll is rehung, it will again degrade. Should we instead fabricate a reproduction of this scroll? A photograph of the Dining Room / Picture Gallery shows a standing oil lamp. Should we buy a similar sort of nineteenth century lamp, or, using the photograph, should we fabricate a reproduction? Which would be

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8 Karen Zukowski, “The Importance of Context,” in Wendy Claire Jessup, ed., *Conservation in Context: Finding a Balance for the Historic House Museum*, (Washington, D.C.: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1995), 4-19.

more authentic? A grouping of small objects formed a still life on the print chest in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery. This still life is now within easy reach of the visitors on the tour path. Currently, the *Historic Furnishings Report* recommends that reproductions of all these collection objects be fabricated, thus putting a group of reproductions where they can be scrutinized by the visitor. Alternatively, this space could be furnished with less fragile collection objects, or the space could be left unfurnished. When deciding between conservation, substitution, reproduction, or acquisition, other factors besides budget and pragmatism must be considered.

Textiles pose special problems for authenticity at Olana. Generally, the *Historic Furnishings Report* recommends the continued use of rugs from the collection because they are so critical to conveying the original “Persian” flavor of the interiors. Many of these rugs have faded significantly and are in fragile condition. It may become necessary to reproduce them all, thus further compromising the authenticity of the ensemble. All draperies and virtually all upholstery, must be fabricated as well as wall-to-wall carpeting for two rooms. Some of the draperies and upholstery survive (in degraded form), and many of these textiles are also known from photographs. This evidence reveals that the textile treatments at Olana were unorthodox. Some of the original draperies and upholstery featured handwoven and embroidered Middle Eastern textiles appliquéd onto textiles of Western manufacture. To fabricate these textiles and draperies we can replicate the Churches’ process. We can procure antique Middle Eastern textiles, cut them, and sew them onto Western textiles. Or we can work with modern artisans to reproduce the handmade Middle Eastern textiles. We might work with American craftspeople, or we might find craftspeople in the Middle East who are able to replicate the nineteenth century textiles. Similarly, the Western fabrics can be rewoven and the trims can be fabricated, or we can search for modern facsimiles. Which among these courses is the most authentic? Which the most ethical? Obviously, much more research is required before any particular course can be recommended.

To implement the *Historic Furnishings Report* in the most authentic manner, one must consider the visual effects the Churches sought to achieve in the interiors. A preponderance of evidence indicates that the Churches did not seek to make their home fresh and fashionable; instead they hoped to evoke an impression of age and mystery. Although most of the furnishings at Olana date from the nineteenth century, many of them are made in the style of older objects.

And there are, in fact, many objects that were antiques at the time the Churches purchased them. The Churches articulated their desire for old objects and for interiors that conveyed an impression of age. Dramatic areas of light and shadow were achieved in the interiors. All this was intentional. These ideas are documented throughout the *Historic Furnishings Report*, especially in Part I and the chapters on the Court Hall and the Dining Room / Picture Gallery. As I maintain in Part I, the interiors at Olana can be described as the Churches' tangible exploration of ancient civilizations and the origins of human culture. Beyond the replacement of threadbare textiles, Louis and Sally Church, who inherited Olana, made no significant updates to the interiors; they too maintained the ambiance of Olana.<sup>9</sup> All this should be kept in mind when implementing the *Historic Furnishings Report*.

A consistent policy concerning the appearance of furnishings should govern the conservation of extant objects, the fabrication of reproductions, and the purchase of acquisitions. We should seek to recreate the same atmosphere the Churches originally created. As the implementation of each object within the *Historic Furnishings Report* is planned, its appearance in the nineteenth century should be investigated. Evidence indicates that the Churches did not polish the brasses to a high finish, that the old master paintings were not cleaned, and that some even received a layer of toned varnish. Often, the Churches exaggerated the age or exotic appearance of objects. Sometimes this was achieved by subtle methods, as when Japanese cranes were displayed against Middle Eastern kilims. Sometimes, however, the effort was dramatic, as when Frederic Church apparently deliberately overcleaned a portrait of a Mexican nun, thus emphasizing its age without marring its composition. Over a period of years, while the conservation of several of the old master paintings was in progress, we have formulated a protocol for their restoration to their appearance in the nineteenth century. Similar protocols should be developed for each of the other conservation disciplines. These protocols must be observed judiciously, on a case-by-case or class-by-class basis as individual objects and groups of objects undergo restoration and replacement. When reproductions are made, care should be taken that they do not look too fresh and new. Likewise, acquisitions of nineteenth century

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9 Of interest is a comment made by Helen Howe, a maid at Olana in the 1920s and 1930s. On her own initiative she once polished the brass handrail on the main staircase until it “shone like gold.” Upon seeing this, Sally Church instructed her: “Helen, we don’t polish that. That’s supposed to be worn looking.” See Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by James Ryan and Karen Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 8, Olana Research Collection (hereafter abbreviated as ORC).

objects should not have been restored to a higher finish than extant collection objects. When one component of an object must be restored or reproduced – perhaps a new castor must be fabricated or upholstery rewoven – care must be taken so that the new element appears “of a piece” with the old elements not requiring restoration. We do not necessarily seek to restore objects to their appearance at the time of their creation; rather, we want to recapture the appearance they had at the time the Churches owned them.

The implementation of the *Historic Furnishings Report* is a multiyear effort that can be phased in numerous ways. First, although emergency and remediation treatments of selected collections objects have been underway ever since Olana became a museum, efforts should be made to ensure that no other such treatments are necessary. Once we are assured that no further damage is being caused by passive neglect, we can move on to large-scale planning. Research should be conducted on groups of like objects. For example, we should do a survey of the Middle Eastern textiles used in all the upholsteries and draperies and determine whether any of them are still in production, what is available on the art and antiques market, and which craftspeople might be able to fabricate reproductions. The old masters should be tackled as a group or broken into subgroups by age and country of origin. Similarly, the conservation and/or reproduction of the oriental paper scrolls at Olana should be planned as a group. We may also choose to focus efforts on one room at a time, to achieve a “total” restoration in one manageable area, thereby triggering enthusiasm for further restoration work.

As the *Historic Furnishings Report* is implemented, new effort must be put into the interpretation of the interiors. Currently, nearly all the furnishings on view in the main residence were assembled by Frederic and Isabel Church; our current statement to the visitors that all furnishings are “original” requires no further elaboration. Soon that statement will no longer be true. Olana will, over the course of years, become a mixture of collections objects (some with restored components), reproductions of specific collections items or reproductions based upon other evidence, and antique furnishings acquired to replace missing furnishings. Further complicating matters, the *Historic Furnishings Report* recommends that visitors be allowed to interact with some reproductions. Visitors may sit in the set of reproduction wicker and ladder-back chairs recommended for the Piazza and walk on the reproduction rugs recommended for the Studio and the Corridor. Yet, they may not touch other objects, and they will still use tour

carpets in other areas of the house. All this is desirable; when the entire context of the interiors is recreated, a more authentic Olana will be the result. We must, however, be innovative and indefatigable in disclosing our work to the public – we must explain the choices made in the restoration of Olana. As the *Historic Furnishings Report* is implemented, this will become a more complicated task.

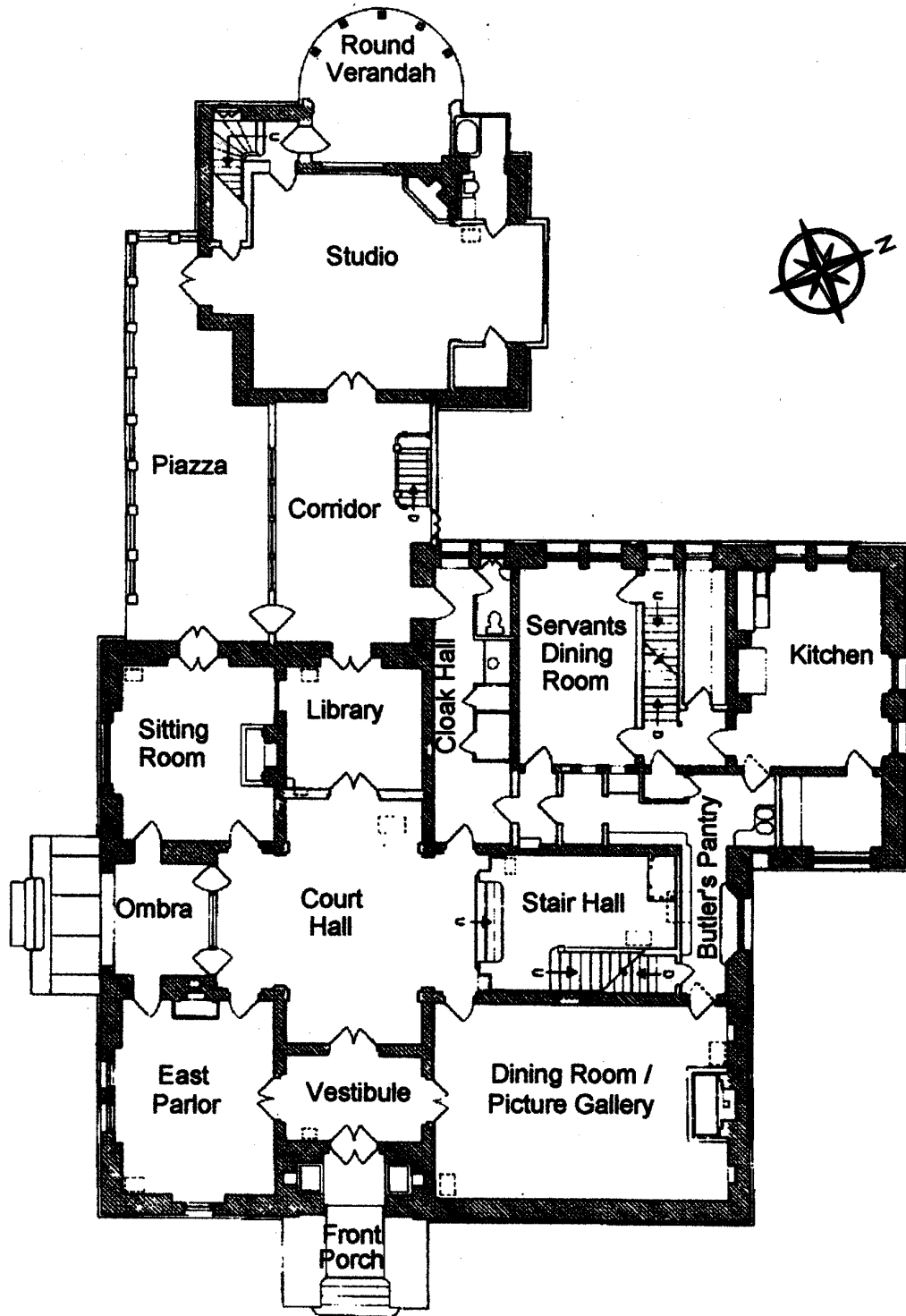
The *Historic Furnishings Report* will join other critical documents that chart the history of Olana and plan for its restoration. Robert Toole’s “Historic Landscape Report for Olana State Historic Site” (1996)<sup>10</sup> charts the history of the landscape, and his “Landscape Restoration Plan for Olana” (1999)<sup>11</sup> makes recommendations for the restoration of the landscape to its appearance in the 1890s. Similarly, a historic structure report for the main residence, now being drafted, will document the architectural history of the main residence and make recommendations for its restoration. Thus, these documents encompass sweeping portions of Olana’s historic fabric. While it can be read solely for the historical information it conveys, the goal of the *Historic Furnishings Report* is to provide a solid evidentiary basis to guide all aspects of the restoration of the furnishings of Olana. The value of the *Historic Furnishings Report* will be tested as it is implemented together with other planning documents.

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10 Robert Toole, “Historic Landscape Report for Olana State Historic Site”, unpublished report for Friends of Olana and NYS OPRHP, Dec. 1996, ORC.

11 Robert Toole, “Landscape Restoration Plan for Olana,” draft unpublished report for Friends of Olana and NYS OPRHP, Dec. 31, 1999, ORC.





**Plan of the Olana Tour Floor**





# **HISTORIC FURNISHINGS REPORT FOR OLANA STATE HISTORIC SITE**

**A History of the Interiors,  
Thoughts on their Significance, and  
Recommendations for their Restoration**

## **Part I: The Churches and Life at Olana**

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The Olana Partnership  
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OLANA STATE HISTORIC SITE, HUDSON, NEW YORK

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# CHAPTER 1

## Building a Fortune and a Career

Frederic Edwin Church was born into one of the most prominent families of Hartford, Connecticut. Joseph Church, Frederic's father, managed a mill in Lee, Massachusetts, that manufactured paper and other products.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Joseph Church also established himself as a jeweler in Hartford and in later life became an adjuster for the Aetna Life Insurance Company. He was also on the boards of Aetna, the Connecticut River Bank, and the Society for Savings. Charles Dudley Warner, the artist's biographer and a Hartford resident, noted that although Joseph Church had "accumulated a handsome fortune," he raised his family in the "comfortably plain circumstances of a prosperous New England family of that period."<sup>13</sup> Realizing that his son would not enter the business world as he had hoped, Joseph Church arranged for him to study with the leading landscape painter Thomas Cole. He instructed his son to treat his career in art as a business venture; he was expected to make his own fortune.<sup>14</sup> Years later, a reporter asked him if he was satisfied with his son's success. Joseph Church replied: "'Oh!' said he, his face glowing with gratified pride, 'he will do.'"<sup>15</sup>

Church did indeed achieve great professional success. By his early thirties, he was one of America's most famous painters; a photograph taken around 1860 shows him as a self-confident young man (figure 1). A friend recalled that when one of Church's paintings sold at an American Art Union Auction for \$1,250 in 1853 or so, it was the "talk of the town."<sup>16</sup> Church

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- 12 Unless otherwise cited, biographical information on Joseph Church comes from David C. Huntington, "Frederic Edwin Church, 1826-1900: Painter of the Adamic New World Myth" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1960), 13-14.
- 13 Charles Dudley Warner, "An Unfinished Biography of the Artist," in Franklin Kelly, Stephen Jay Gould, and James Anthony Ryan, *Frederic Edwin Church* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art and Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 174.
- 14 Warner, "An Unfinished Biography," 183, 195, 198.
- 15 "El-Khasné: The Rock-Cut Temple in Petra Arabia. A Noble Work of Art by the Great American Artist, F. A. [sic] Church," *Chicago Times*, March 7, 1875, copy in ESCP.
- 16 T. C. E., "Church, The Artist," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 15, 1900. Copy in series 4, box 4, folder 3, David Huntington Papers, Olana Archive (hereafter abbreviated as DHP). This painting was *New England Scenery* (1851), now in the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield, Mass. It sold in 1852 for \$1,300 (see Deborah Rindge, "Chronology," in Kelly, Gould, and Ryan, 161.)
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made an even bolder mark in the New York art world in 1857 when he treated his huge *Niagara* (1857, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington) as a “great picture,” exhibiting it alone in its own private exhibition and charging admission. The painting was sold to a dealer who issued prints afterward; the price was \$4,500 including copyright.<sup>17</sup> Just two years later, Church’s *The Heart of the Andes* (1859, Metropolitan Museum of Art) became the next “great picture” and sold for \$10,000, the highest price ever for the work of a living American artist.<sup>18</sup> In an 1860 article on the market for American painters and their productions, the artist was singled out: “Church obtains his own price, for he paints only one picture where one hundred are asked. The same thing may be said of no other artist in the country.”<sup>19</sup> Church and his agents gave other paintings “great picture” treatments, notably *The Icebergs* (1861, Dallas Museum of Art), of which afterward a successful chromolithograph was issued. With the triumvirate of *Niagara*, *The Heart of the Andes*, and *The Icebergs*, Church’s fortune and his international status as a landscape painter were assured. He was only 35 years old.

As Gerald Carr has proposed, Church’s success was based on extraordinary talent leavened with canny career development.<sup>20</sup> From the first, Church participated in America’s professional art organizations and contributed to their growth. Church became a member of the National Academy of Design in 1848 at age 22 and exhibited regularly at this prestigious organization; success here was the most important measure of professional standing in America. Over 25 of his pictures were sold through the American Art Union, an organization that offered its members a print of the artworks it owned as well as the chance to win the artwork through a lottery.<sup>21</sup> Church also took risks by putting much energy into ambitious pictures, rather than painting a greater number of smaller, more assuredly salable works. Not only did these “great pictures” sell at high prices, they also generated much publicity. Typically, Church and his agents arranged a media blitz around each picture that included advertisements in newspapers, handbills posted in shops, and pamphlets containing excerpts of favorable criticism. At the

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17 Gerald Carr, “Frederic Edwin Church as a Public Figure,” in Franklin Kelly and Gerald Carr, *The Early Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church, 1845-1854* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Amon Carter Museum, 1987), 13.

18 Ibid., 164.

19 “The Dollars and Cents of Art,” *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* 4 (1) (March 1860): 30.

20 See Carr, “Church as a Public Figure.”

21 Carr, “Church as a Public Figure,” 10.

exhibition itself, viewers were edified by a booklet explaining the picture. Usually a high-quality large-scale, black-and-white engraving or a chromolithograph of the work was available by subscription. Church's "great pictures" went on tour, thus creating a trail of publicity across America and Europe. Church used other strategies to make his work known. He invited reporters to come to his studio to "preview" his latest paintings, and accounts of his travels appeared in newspapers and journals, some of them probably authored by the artist himself.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Church's entrepreneurial business arrangements were directed at all markets, from the exhibition-goer who could afford only an entrance fee to the middle-class art lover who bought a print to the wealthiest patrons who purchased his "great pictures."

The surviving records do indeed provide ample testimony that before he built Olana, Church was financially secure. The artist owned stock in the Collins Company and the Michigan, Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad Company as early as the 1860s.<sup>23</sup> Although records are fragmentary, bank books indicate that in the 1870s Church kept accounts at a bank in Hudson and at a bank in New York City, allowing us to see that the family could often draw upon \$5,000-\$10,000 in cash.<sup>24</sup> Census data from 1870 indicates that the value of Church's land was \$25,000, and the value of his personal estate was \$50,000, indicating that even at this date Church had significant investments.<sup>25</sup>

Although Church had made money through his art and probably through his own investing, he also inherited much of his wealth from his family and accumulated more wealth by investing this inheritance. When Joseph died in 1877, his son inherited over \$200,000 in cash,

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22 Church "previewing" pictures in the 10th Street Studio Building is discussed in Karen Zukowski, "Creating Art and Artists: Late Nineteenth Century American Artists' Studios" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1999), 343. Press accounts of Church's travels include: "Camps and Tramps about Ktaadn," *Scribner's Monthly* 16 (May 1878): 33-47. For the articles authored by Church, see Carr, "Church as a Public Figure," 10.

23 Although few financial records pertaining to the stock holdings of Church prior to his death remain, there is a record of at least two stocks held in the 1860s as well as some bonds; see ESCP, series 14, subseries C, box 1, folder 2 and 6.

24 See Frederic Church's bankbooks from the Bank of Hudson, the Farmer's National Bank (Hudson), and the National Park Bank, New York City for the years 1873-1878, ESCP, series 14B. A separate bank account existed in Isabel Church's name from 1876-1898, ESCP, series 15D. It too usually held between \$2,000 and \$9,000 in cash; perhaps this was a household account.

25 See census data topical file, Olana Research Collection (hereafter abbreviated as ORC).

investments, and real estate.<sup>26</sup> When the last surviving member of his immediate family, his sister Elizabeth Church, died in 1886, she apparently left her entire estate, valued at \$403,757.73, to her brother.<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth's estate consisted largely of stocks and bonds in railroad, insurance, and banking concerns as well as real estate holdings in Hartford. Prominent among her holdings were stocks in the Aetna Insurance Company, the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company, and the Chicago, Illinois and New Orleans Railroad Company.<sup>28</sup> Leonard Church, Frederic's uncle and Joseph's business partner, had also invested in some of these same companies, and most of his widow's estate was also in railroad, insurance, and banking.<sup>29</sup> Church had probably become familiar with these industries when he was a young man. He had begun to invest in these industries himself in the 1860s, and his inheritance from his father was partially in the form of stocks and bonds in these industries. Church likely learned much more about the booming railroad business through his friendship with William Osborn, who was president of the Illinois Central Railroad Company and a related company, the Chicago, St. Louis and New Orleans Railroad.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly, at the time of his death Church held stock in Osborn's company.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, most of his investments were largely in the same sort of stocks and bonds that had been held by his father and uncle, even in some of the same companies. Much more remains to be learned about the various sources of Church's wealth and

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26 The settlement of Joseph Church's estate indicates Church's share of the inheritance broke down as follows: cash \$81,800, investments \$115,238, real estate \$9,000. See: "Mutual Distribution, estate of Joseph Church late of Hartford, deceased, filed Sept. 26, 1876" record book 94, page 469, document from an unknown source, presumably probate court of Hartford, Connecticut, copy in ORC.

27 See the file for Elizabeth M. Church in the Hartford probate district, deposited Dec. 27, 1944, with the Connecticut State Library, Hartford, copy in ORC. This file contains Elizabeth's will, an inventory of the estate, and other documents. Elizabeth's will left her entire estate to her mother and her mother's heirs. Because Eliza Church had died in 1883, it is likely that Elizabeth's estate passed uncontested to Frederic Church. See also a letter from Frederic J. Church to Charlie [Kittinger?], n.d. (probably June 1889), ESCP. Citing a conversation he had had with Miles Graves, his father's financial manager, Frederic Joseph Church claimed his father had inherited a total of \$850,000 from his family. Frederic Joseph reported that this sum, plus income from the sale of his paintings, made the artist worth "about a million and a half." Even given Frederic Joseph's tendency to hyperbole (as will be discussed), this estimate may well be accurate.

28 Elizabeth Church probate district file, copy in ORC.

29 Specifically, stocks of the Aetna Fire Insurance Company and Aetna Life Insurance Company, and the New York, New Haven and Hartford Rail Road Company represented a significant share of Leonard's estate. These same stocks were held by Lucy at her death; see the files for Leonard Church and Lucy Church in the Hartford probate district, copies deposited Dec. 27, 1944, in the Connecticut State Library, Hartford, copy in ORC.

30 "William H. Osborn Dead." *New York Daily Tribune*, March 4, 1894, 4.

31 Specifically, Church held stock in the Chicago, St. Louis, and New Orleans Railroad.

the investment strategies he pursued, but it is clear that painting was only one source of income. When he died in 1900, Church left an estate valued at \$784,408.04; the value of Olana at this date, which was counted as part of the total value of the estate, was \$9,331.13.<sup>32</sup>

Until the end of his life, Church remained successful as an artist, even though he painted less and faded from the limelight. Though American art collectors turned increasingly to European art in the decades after the Civil War, there was always a demand for Church's paintings. As late as 1890 Church commented that he was compelled to refuse commissions, noting that he produced only pictures he intended to pass on to his children.<sup>33</sup> The single most important force curtailing Church's paintings was the arthritis that after the mid-1870s began to afflict his hands and other limbs. As we shall see, this illness along with his increasing interest in developing Olana, limited his painting. It is also clear that his fortune removed any need to work. Nonetheless, public interest in his earlier output as well as in newer pictures remained high, and his paintings garnered respectable, even spectacular prices. Two of Church's late pictures, *Morning in the Tropics* of 1877 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) and *El Ayn* of 1882 (Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, Mass.) generated long, favorable press reviews.<sup>34</sup> In 1876 two of Church's earlier great pictures were again in the news when W. W. Corcoran paid \$12,500 for *Niagara*, and famed collector A. T. Stewart paid \$10,000 for *The Heart of the Andes*.<sup>35</sup> In 1888 the magazine *The Critic* called for a retrospective exhibition of Church's work, because so little of it was accessible to the public.<sup>36</sup> An obituary article summarized the market for Church's paintings. It noted that they "hardly ever appeared in the auction room; if they have done so on rare occasions, they have always brought high prices; probably exceeding those originally paid for them. The landscapes of many noted American

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32 The figures are included in the following document: "Final Judicial Settlement of the Account of . . . the Executors of the Last Will and Testament of Frederick [sic.] Edwin Church, deceased" prepared by Dexter, Osborn & Gillespie, New York City, June 1902, Lark Papers, series I (Louis and Sally), box 14, folder 3, Olana Archive. (References to the Lark Papers are hereafter abbreviated as LP.) It should be noted that another document related to the settlement of Church's estate contains different figures. In the "Appraisal under the Transfer Tax Act of the Property of Frederic E. Church, deceased" prepared by Claudius Rockefeller, Oct. 5, 1900, filed with the Columbia County Surrogate's Court, the value of Church's estate is given as \$648,634.98 and the value of Olana as \$8,793.13; see "Transfer Tax papers, 1900" by the Surrogate's Office, Columbia County Courthouse, Hudson, N.Y., copy in ORC.

33 Frederic Edwin Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Dec. 28, 1890, McKinney Library, Albany Institute of History and Art (hereafter McKL).

34 Carr, "Church as a Public Figure," 27, 28.

35 Rindge, "Chronology," 163, 164.

36 "The Fine Arts – Art Notes," *The Critic*, May 19, 1888, 248.

painters have not enjoyed equally good fortune, the auction room making a rude reappraisal of their values.”<sup>37</sup> Olana, rather than any canvas, can be seen as the last great work of art produced by a very successful painter who had entered semi-retirement.

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37 T. C. E., “Church, The Artist.”



## CHAPTER 2

### Building a Marriage

With their marriage in 1860, Frederic Church and Isabel Carnes began a union that lasted nearly forty years, until Isabel's death in 1899. Together, the couple developed the farm and the ornamental landscape at Olana, built the main residence, and raised four children. In the scant scholarship on Olana, Frederic Church is usually credited as its sole creator.<sup>38</sup> I will suggest that the story of the design and development of Olana is not so simple. The marriage of Frederic and Isabel Church was typical for its era. Frederic Church was the leader in the relationship, being the breadwinner and the family's representative to the world outside the home. Isabel's role was to nurture the family. Atypically, both were vitally interested in the design and furnishing of their home. While the relationship of Frederic and Isabel Church had profound effects on many aspects of their lives, here I would like to examine some basic biographical details and the implications these may have had on the design of Olana.

Isabel Mortimer Carnes was born into a cosmopolitan family. Her father, Francis came from a Scottish family that had immigrated to America in the late seventeenth century.<sup>39</sup> Francis was educated as a lawyer in Boston but by 1822 had become a merchant, forming a partnership with his brother Nathaniel and operating a very successful importing business.<sup>40</sup> The two

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38 See, for example, Roger Stein, "Artifact as Ideology: The Aesthetic Movement in Its American Cultural Context," in Doreen Bolger Burke et al., *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Rizzoli, 1986), 24-25; and John Davis, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth Century American Art and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 205-207.

39 Information on the Carnes family history is taken primarily from the Carnes family Bible, owned in 1988 by Margaret Valentine Weeks of Essex, Conn., photocopied excerpts of which are in ORC. Some of the handwritten notations in the Bible were entered by Francis Carnes, while others were probably written by Emma Osgood Carnes; a record of the vaccinations of her children is included. Also useful was Sally M. Bottiggi, "Five Generations, 1698-1860: The Family of Isabel Carnes Church," *The Crayon* 22, no. 191 (spring 1989): 1, 4-5.

40 Oddly, the Carnes family Bible omits mention of Nathaniel Carnes. Francis and "NG" Carnes, presumably Nathaniel Green Carnes, are listed as merchants and importers in Boston and New York City directories by 1822. It should be noted that Francis Carnes had a son, Francis John Carnes (1817-1846), who also became a merchant and lived in France. According to family lore, Francis was also a United States Naval attaché or held some other diplomatic post, but corroborating evidence to support this has not materialized. This was reported by Amelie van der Kieft Church to David Huntington and noted in Huntington, "Frederic Edwin Church," 136. Francis Carnes's diplomatic affiliation, if any, has not been cited by any other source.

brought French goods to America and also contracted with Chinese businessmen to imitate European goods for import to Europe, the United States, and South America. The firm imported and produced all sorts of goods, including drugs, fireworks, baskets, and matting as well as “fancy goods,” such as textiles, lacquerware, fans, and a type of decorative painting called “rice painting.”<sup>41</sup> For much of this period, Francis lived in France and traveled widely. Isabel’s mother, Emma Osgood, came from a farming family that had settled in Amesbury, Massachusetts, and Emma’s father was reportedly an Army or Navy officer.<sup>42</sup> Francis Carnes and Emma Osgood were married in New York City in 1829 and lived in Paris from about 1830 until about 1838. The Carnes’s kept illustrious company in Paris; they were presented at the court of Louis Phillipe, and they attended balls at the Tuileries. The couple was also friendly with the Marquis de Lafayette and visited at his country home outside of Paris.<sup>43</sup>

Isabel Mortimer Carnes was born in Paris in 1836 and was raised with two sisters and two brothers; three older stepsiblings from her father’s first marriage were also part of the family. The family left France when Isabel was about two years old, living first in New York City, then moving to Cincinnati, Ohio, probably in 1845.<sup>44</sup> By that date Emma Carnes and her two daughters had inherited \$200,000 through a maternal uncle, but other evidence indicates that the family did not remain wealthy.<sup>45</sup> By 1850 the family was living in Dayton, Ohio.<sup>46</sup> Francis Carnes probably retired from business when the family moved to Ohio.<sup>47</sup> By the 1880s,

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41 Walter Barrett, *The Old Merchants of New York City*, vol. 1 (New York: Worthington, 1885), 40-45.

42 See Sarah Osgood Tucker to Downie Church, May 16, 1900, ESCP.

43 Information on the Carnes’s life in France is drawn from the Carnes scrapbook (OL.1982.1037) and from a letter from Isabel Church to Downie Church, undated (c. 1890s), both in ESCP.

44 The Carnes family Bible notes that the family was in New York City by 1838 and in Cincinnati at least by 1845. Francis Carnes appears in the Cincinnati city directories for 1846 and 1849, and no occupation is listed for him, see a letter from Chris Bell-Puckett, reference assistant, Cincinnati Museum Center, to Karen Zukowski, Oct. 8, 1998, ORC.

45 Henry Wysham Lanier, *A Century of Banking in New York City, 1822-1922* (New York: Gilliss Press, 1922), 6. Lanier reprints an 1845 pamphlet published by the Sun office, entitled “Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of New York City.” Francis Carnes is listed. Note, however, that the Carnes family did not own their home when they lived in Cincinnati or in Dayton, as one would expect them to if they could afford it; see Mary Lou Lubinsky, researcher, Montgomery County Historical Society, Dayton, Ohio, to Karen Zukowski, Sept. 17, 1998; ORC. When Emma Carnes died in 1886, she left all her property in trust to her son, Henry Newton Carnes, then residing in Chicago, see a document filed with the Surrogate’s Court of New York County, March 3, 1886, proving the last will and testament of Elizabeth Emma Carnes, copy in ORC.

46 The Carnes family is listed at several addresses in downtown Dayton from 1850-1861 in the Dayton city directories. See letter from Mary Lou Lubinsky to Karen Zukowski, Sept. 17, 1998, ORC.

47 Bottiggi, “Five Generations,” 5.

when Emma Carnes was a widow living in New York City, she was not wealthy. After making her will, she noted in her diary: “It is, I find, impossible to leave things just right when there is so little to leave.”<sup>48</sup>

Little is known of Isabel’s childhood years in Cincinnati and Dayton. A daguerreotype, probably taken in Cincinnati (figure 2), shows her at about age 14. Two surviving sketchbooks by Isabel from the 1850s indicate that she took drawing lessons in Dayton, perhaps at the Cooper Seminary, which educated young women.<sup>49</sup> Most of the drawings are formulaic still life studies or landscapes, the sort of topics and techniques required by nineteenth century drawing courses. One page, however, shows Isabel’s sense of humor; she illustrated “life-size” a tiny fish she had caught in a local pond and a set of vignettes depicting a disappointed suitor (figure 3). Francis Carnes died in December 1860, just a few months after Isabel Carnes and Frederic Church were married.<sup>50</sup> Emma Carnes and Isabel’s younger siblings probably left Dayton for New York City in the early 1860s.

From the first, the couple’s courtship and their wedding ceremony had connections to the art world. In his autobiography, the painter Worthington Whittredge gives a vivid and entertaining account of how Frederic and Isabel met, as the artist watched the audience gathering around his own painting, *The Heart of the Andes*:

It happened that one day, as he stood behind the curtains looking out through the limpid shadow that surrounded him, he saw in the distance a ravishing vision, a star illumined with a light never before seen on land or sea! He dropped his opera glasses and sought the entrance door by a back way, and posted himself, determined that he would know more about his vision and arrest it if it attempted to escape. It was but a moment before he was confronted with it walking demurely by the side of a stately dame, who, on finding the door partially blocked by an inquisitive young man, politely asked to be allowed to pass. They did pass, but an introduction followed. The domicile of the fair one was soon invaded. The watchings from behind the screens soon gave way to

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48 Emma Carnes diary, Feb. 9, 1882, ESCP.

49 The sketchbooks are OL.1982.1136 and OL.1982.1178. OL.1982.1136 is dated 1854 and many of the drawings are labeled with numbers, indicating Isabel was following a specific lesson plan. The Cooper Seminary is documented in Williams’s *Dayton Directory, City Guide, and Business Mirror* (Dayton: James Rickey, 1860).

50 See John Beekman MacFall, Jr. “The Families of Frederic Edwin Church and Isabel Mortimer Carnes,” unpublished report, Dec. 3, 1990, copy in ORC.

closer watchings. The mother and daughter came every day and occupied front seats to look at the *Heart of the Andes*, and before the great picture was taken down and the outside world got into a settled state of mind, it was all over. Church was married.<sup>51</sup>

A slightly less romantic version of the meeting is told by the daughter-in-law of the artist, who said that Church first espied Isabel Carnes through opera glasses as she sat in the box of the de Forest family. Frederic then called on the de Forests, who were relatives of Isabel's.<sup>52</sup> This version of the story notes that Isabel had that very afternoon seen *The Heart of the Andes* and remarked that she wanted to meet the artist. Whichever version of the story is true, by January 1860 the engagement was public, and a Boston newspaper reported, "Church has been successfully occupied with another Heart than that of the Andes."<sup>53</sup>

Frederic and Isabel were wed in Dayton, Ohio, on June 14, 1860.<sup>54</sup> Virginia Osborn reported that Isabel "is just what you would imagine an artist's wife, with soft curling golden hair, and a sweet face where the color comes and goes every moment."<sup>55</sup> One of Isabel's relatives recalled that at the time of her engagement, "a new beauty developed, richer, deeper than that of the fresh young girl, and she grew more charming than before. Mr. Church, then in the Zenith of fame and success, was also handsome and irresistible, a man to stir any woman's enthusiasm and she appreciated him – he was radiantly happy in the feeling that he had at last found the realization of his dreams in her."<sup>56</sup> These recollections of the happy young couple seem confirmed by Isabel's wedding portrait (figure 4), which was painted by George Baker, a New York portraitist who was a friend of Frederic Church.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout their marriage, the couple nourished their ties to art and artists, especially the New York art world. Church maintained a studio at the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building, the center of the art world, until 1888. Here, he not only painted but also entertained and conducted

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51 John I. H. Baur, ed., "The Autobiography of Worthington Whittredge, 1820-1910," *The Brooklyn Museum Journal* 1 (1942): 29.

52 The incident is related in a typescript by Amelie van der Kieft Church, which quotes extensively from a diary Church kept on his trip to Petra, as well as other published and unpublished sources. The typescript may have been intended for publication, or as a lecture. See the Amelie van der Kieft Church typescript, Wunder Papers, box 3, folder 14, Olana Archive. (The Wunder papers are hereafter abbreviated as WP.)

53 *Boston Evening Transcript*, Jan. 10, 1860, 1.

54 See a handwritten certificate of marriage by Rev. Noble, ESCP, series 7D.

55 Virginia Osborn to Lucy Wheeler, Jan. 14, 1860. A copy from an unknown source is in ORC.

56 Sarah Osgood Tucker to Downie Church, May 16, 1900, ESCP. Tucker was a cousin of Emma Carnes.

57 The painting is OL.1981.3 and it is in the Sitting Room.

business.<sup>58</sup> Typically, the couple spent part of each winter in New York City, staying either at one of the city's better hotels or at the home of their close friends William and Virginia Osborn at 32 Park Avenue.<sup>59</sup> While in New York City the couple visited friends, attended the theater and concerts, went to art exhibitions, shopped, and otherwise maintained ties with the cultural life of the city.<sup>60</sup> Among the couple's closest friends were other artists and their wives, including Erastus Dow Palmer and his wife Mary, Jervis McEntee and his wife Gertrude, and Horace Robbins and his wife Mary. The Churches were also close to bachelor artists Martin John Heade and Samuel Rowse. They were friendly with many nonartist members of the art world, such as art writer Henry Tuckerman. Some of the city's leading business people were patrons and friends of the Churches. Besides the Osborns, these included Cyrus Field, promoter of the transatlantic telegraph cable, and John Taylor Johnston, a railroad executive. While many of these friends visited Olana often, the Churches also maintained ties with them through visits in New York City.

Throughout their marriage, however, the couple's primary residence was always in the country. Church purchased the 126 – acre parcel that was to form the nucleus of Olana in March 1860, and in August of that year he reported that he was “building a Farm House – hope to have it done by early October.”<sup>61</sup> This is undoubtedly a reference to *Cosy Cottage*, a simple, board-and-batten frame house still surviving at Olana. The house was probably designed by Richard Morris Hunt, then an up-and-coming architect and the first American to matriculate in

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58 For a discussion of Church and his use of his 10th Street studio, see: Zukowski, “Creating Art and Artists,” 341-345.

59 See Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Nov. 11, 1981, ESCP, written from the Bristol Hotel; Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Dec. 16, 1893, ESCP, written from the Osborns' home, and Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Apr. 27, 1896, ESCP, written from the Murray Hill Hotel. See Virginia Osborn to Fairfield Osborn, Oct. 20, 1886, The New-York Historical Society (hereafter abbreviated as NYHS), which mentions the Churches planning to spend two or three months in the Brevort House hotel that autumn. See Virginia Osborn to Will, Nov. 12 [1885?], Osborn and Dodge Papers, Princeton University Library, which discusses the Churches spending much of the winter at the Osborn's New York City house while the Osborns vacationed elsewhere.

60 For example, when staying at the Osborns in 1889, Isabel enjoyed the opera and concerts; see Virginia Osborn to Henry F. Osborn, March 11, 1889, NYHS.

61 Frederic Church to A. C. Goodman, Aug. 20, 1860, ESCP.

the architectural studios of the prestigious École des Beaux Arts in Paris.<sup>62</sup> The structure probably was completed in December 1860.<sup>63</sup> Soon after its completion, the family started called the home Cosy Cottage, using an old-fashioned spelling of the word.<sup>64</sup> Church himself apparently designed the additions made to it: a kitchen wing in the summer of 1861 and a one-and-a half-room addition to the west of the main structure in 1869.<sup>65</sup> One writer described the home and its setting: “His cottage, of the Gothic style, is nestled in a vale, where the stretch of interior landscape reminds one of Devonshire, England.”<sup>66</sup> In this simple farmhouse (figure 5), nestled against the brow of a hill, which received “the first and last glances of the sun,”<sup>67</sup> Frederic and Isabel began their country life.

The couple operated a farm and started their family. Church managed the work of hired farmers, some of whom lived in an eighteenth century frame house located several hundred yards southeast of Cosy Cottage.<sup>68</sup> Church did little manual labor himself but did design a barn and outbuildings, all the while maintaining a productive pace as a painter. Their first child, Herbert Edwin, was born on October 29, 1862, and the second, Emma Francis, was born on October 22, 1864. Several of Isabel’s letters dating from the 1890s nostalgically describe life in Cosy Cottage in the 1860s. Isabel recalls her life of housework, of entertaining guests, and of

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- 62 Attribution of the design to Hunt is based upon an extant bill from Hunt to Church, dated April 1, 1861, “for architectural services rendered up to date - \$125.” A drawing of the cottage (OL.1980.1608) is probably a rendering of the proposed structure that was made by Hunt’s office, both documents are in ESCP. See also: James Ryan and Rich Gromek, “Cosy Cottage Historic Structure Report,” report for NYS OPRHP, draft version dated April 1996, ORC.
- 63 An account book in Church’s hand contains notations about payments made to L. S. and William Smith and others for the construction of the cottage, ESCP, series 14, subseries B, box 2, folder 5, 18-19. One note indicates that with the payment of Dec. 3, 1860, the “contract was fulfilled.” See also the “Timeline for Cosy Cottage, Olana State Historic Site” in Ryan and Gromek, “Cosy Cottage Historic Structure Report,” ORC. Note also that Hunt’s bill is dated April 1, 1861.
- 64 Isabel Church uses the heading “Cosy Cottage” on a number of letters, all undated. See Isabel Church to Mrs. John Gillette (OL.1980.1971), ESCP, and Isabel Church to Mrs. [Mary Jane] Palmer, probably June 7, 1870, McKL. “Cosy Cottage” is mentioned in Henry Q. Mack’s diary, Oct. 30, 1872, Greene County Historical Society, Coxsackie, New York (hereafter abbreviated as GCHS), excerpt published in *Crayon* 13, nos. 1 and 2 (spring and summer 1981): 5.
- 65 See Ryan and Gromek, “Cosy Cottage Historic Structure Report,” “timeline,” and p. 18.
- 66 “Hudson Revisited,” *New York Observer*, Aug. 15, 1867, 1.
- 67 Henry Q. Mack diary, Oct. 31, 1872, GCHS.
- 68 This house has sometimes been called the Palatinate farmhouse, but this term is misleading. The term “Palatinate” refers to lands granted by royal authority, especially that of the German emperor. The eighteenth century farmhouse at Olana was probably built by Wysant Brezie, whose connection to the original large landholders of the area, if any, has not been established, so the adjective “Palatinate” is probably inaccurate.

cares for her children. She remembered: “Your father used to go to N.Y. very often but although it was rather lonely of evenings – still I knew my darlings were up-stairs in their little beds – and, in the morning and all day, I should be gladdened by their merry voices, and occupied for them.”<sup>69</sup>

This blissful life was shattered in March 1865 with the deaths of Herbert and Emma from diphtheria. Both Frederic and Isabel were devastated. They traveled to Jamaica for four months, hoping that a change of scenery would assuage their grief. Many tangible reminders of these children remain at Olana, including a photograph of a drawing of Herbert (figure 6) and, most significantly, two paintings, *Sunrise* and *Moonrise*. Church painted these in 1862 and 1865 respectively, to celebrate the births of the boy and the girl. After their deaths, the two paintings were hung in the Sitting Room to commemorate the lost children; they still remain in the room. The Churches’ rejoiced at the birth of Frederic Joseph Church on September 30, 1866, and three more children were born in the next five years. As we shall see, in many respects Olana is a home created to safeguard this “second family.”

Isabel, of course, was the mother of this family. There is abundant evidence to indicate that Church valued not only her maternal talents but also her aesthetic discernment. In a touching letter of 1888, as Isabel was experiencing difficulties with her eyes, Frederic wrote to a friend that the doctor had forbidden her to read, write, or otherwise strain her eyes. He noted that: “There are millions of capital eyes staring around the world which do not fix many pictures worth preserving – It seems rather hard that my little lady who can use her eyes to such good purpose should not be equally well orbed.”<sup>70</sup>

Family members and friends acknowledged Isabel’s influence in the creation of Olana. Marianne North, a botanical painter and explorer, credited Isabel with the arrangement of Olana’s interiors: “[Isabel] had contrived to make the whole collection of curiosities look like the natural parts of a comfortable living-house: exquisite Persian rugs, bronzes, carvings, porcelain, etc.”<sup>71</sup> Downie Church, the daughter of Frederic and Isabel, wrote a telling assessment of Isabel’s influence at Olana. In a letter to Charles Dudley Warner as he gathered

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69 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, September 18, 1891, ESCP.

70 Frederic Church to Charles De Wolf Brownell, Dec. 2, 1888, photocopy from an unknown source in ORC.

71 Marianne North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, ed. Mrs. John Addington Symonds, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: 1894), 2: 208-209.

materials for his biography of Frederic Church, Downie wrote: “Could my little Mother’s great part in Papa’s life, her influence on his building this house too be brought in? . . . I have not mentioned this to Papa – but he has often spoken of how her taste in the house is shown from top to bottom – and her advice was asked about it all.”<sup>72</sup> There is also less direct but perhaps more telling evidence that Church acknowledged Isabel’s role in the creation of Olana. One of Church’s drawings for stair balustrades includes the initials “ICC” and a cipher incorporating those letters, indicating that Church toyed with the idea of incorporating Isabel’s monogram into the design of the stair hall, the center and heart of the home.<sup>73</sup> As Church put it succinctly, “A good wife is the soul and life of the House.”<sup>74</sup>

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72 Downie Church Black to Charles Dudley Warner, Sept. 23, 1899, ESCP.

73 The drawing is OL.1982.775.

74 Frederic Church to Charles Dudley Warner, Aug. 22, 1886, ESCP.



## CHAPTER 3

### The Religious Beliefs of Frederic and Isabel Church

Both Frederic and Isabel held strong religious beliefs; these shaped their own lives and the lives of their children. The couple's spirituality was also made manifest at Olana in the design and furnishings of the home. It is not a coincidence that Church was painting *Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives* (1870, Nelson Atkinson Museum of Art, Kansas City) perhaps his most explicit statement of his own religious beliefs, as he was building his own Jerusalem – his home, Olana. Examining the couple's religious beliefs is to examine the underpinnings of Olana.

Frederic Church was a descendant of New Englanders famous for their influence in the intertwined religious and political affairs of colonial America. One of the most eminent among the original Pilgrims, William Bradford, who later became governor of the Plymouth colony, was an ancestor of Eliza Janes, Church's mother. Also among Church's ancestors was Richard Church, a member of the group that founded Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>75</sup> Thomas Hooker, a Puritan minister who had come to Connecticut with Richard Church, led a group of religious dissenters across Massachusetts to the upper Connecticut River Valley to begin a new settlement, where he was influential in helping to define the theological and political limits of Congregationalism. Other ancestors were influential ministers and civic leaders.<sup>76</sup> Church was well aware of his ancestry. An uncle, Frederic Janes, published a genealogy of the family, soliciting information from Church and his family. Church himself painted *Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness from Plymouth to Hartford in 1636* (1846, Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Conn.), which depicts the founders of Hartford journeying through an untamed but promising landscape (figure 7). Church was conscious that he was a descendant of New Englanders who had made faith a motive force in their professions and politics.

Church was raised as a Congregationalist, and his family attended Hartford's First Congregational Church.<sup>77</sup> The Congregationalism practiced in New England in the early

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75 Warner, "An Unfinished Biography," 174.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 197.

nineteenth century had evolved from English Puritanism, itself a branch of Protestantism. The Puritans drew much of their theology and many of their everyday religious practices from John Calvin, who (along with Martin Luther) had originated the essentials of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Protestantism in general, and Calvinism and Puritanism in particular, encouraged direct personal religious experience, sincere moral conduct, and simple worship services. Bible study and prayer, rather than reliance upon any institutional dogma, were the routes to redemption from the original sin all humans suffered. The Churches' minister in Hartford, Joel Hawes, was famous for his conservative, evangelical preaching; his theology remained close to its Calvinistic roots.<sup>78</sup> In this stern but intellectually and spiritually stimulating environment Church was raised.

Indeed, surviving letters from Joseph and Eliza Church to their son as he began his career as an artist are filled with admonitions couched in Calvinistic theology and biblical terminology. Both parents were wary that their son might not be able to remain pious while becoming an artist. Reading in a newspaper that their son was organizing a life drawing club in his studio, where, presumably, nude models would be employed, Mrs. Church feared that such a course might damage the morals and character of her son and his associates. She asked her son if he was aware that he was “indebted to [God] for the genius and talent you possess, and must appear at last before him to give an account how you employed them and how you influenced others?”<sup>79</sup> When Thomas Cole died in 1848, Eliza Church urged Frederic to follow the model the elder artist had set and to always ask himself: “am I treading in his footsteps so far as he followed Christ and duty? . . . There is no time to spare; you know not the time that you may be called,”<sup>80</sup> and Joseph Church wrote to his son that nothing could give his parents more joy than to know he “was making some preparation to meet your Saviour at the close of this life.”<sup>81</sup> Eliza Church sometimes tempered her admonitions with encouragement. “Frederic, the world may look very pleasant to you now, and so it is. God’s world is pleasant. There are a thousand

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78 See David Huntington’s comments on Hawes in “Church and Luminism: Light for America’s Elect,” in John Wilmerding, ed. *American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850-1875* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1980), 156. One biographical summary of Hawes describes a series of articles he published in 1830 on the history of Congregationalism in America and its Puritan roots, quoting a reviewer who noted that the author “cordially loves the principles, character and institutions of our Pilgrim Fathers.” See “Joel Hawes,” *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 11 (New York: White, 1909), 186.

79 Warner, “An Unfinished Biography,” 197.

80 Ibid.

81 Joseph Church to Frederic Church, Nov. 18, 1850, ESCP.

things that are worthy of our love and attention and which show the goodness and wisdom of our Heavenly Father. And when with the pencil you imitate the work of His hand let your heart praise the giver, but let not the pleasure of the world, the vanities, fill your mind and you lose the Pearl of great price.”<sup>82</sup> As David Huntington has noted, Church grew up in a tradition that “prepared him to look for parable and prophecy in nature.”<sup>83</sup>

Less is known about the religious affiliations of Isabel Carnes in her youth. At this writing it is not known what denomination of church the Carnes family attended, or indeed whether they attended church regularly.<sup>84</sup> In later life, it appears that Emma Carnes did not feel compelled to be a regular member of any one church; instead she attended the services of ministers she admired. One of these was the Reverend Henry Whitney Bellows, a well-known Unitarian minister in New York City who was a prolific author of essays on poetry and history as well as on theological matters.<sup>85</sup> He was also a leader in social welfare movements and was the driving force behind the United States Sanitary Commission, which raised money and distributed humanitarian supplies to Union soldiers and veterans. After Bellows died, Emma Carnes’s diary of the mid-1880s records her attendance at various churches and her reading of published sermons. She searched for a minister she liked and eventually found one, writing with evident satisfaction: “engaged a seat. It is time I *belonged* to my church.”<sup>86</sup> It is likely that Emma Carnes maintained a freethinking independence in religious matters all her life and that she passed along this attitude to her daughter.

Before his marriage, Frederic Church counted clergymen among his closest friends. When Church was studying with Thomas Cole in Catskill, New York, from 1844 to 1846, he

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82 Warner, “An Unfinished Biography,” 197.

83 Huntington, “Church and Luminism,” 159.

84 Apparently, the Carneses were not members of either Presbyterian congregation in Dayton, Ohio, in the 1850s, although one could attend services without formally joining a parish. See author’s notes on phone conversation with Susan Flacks, archivist, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Oct. 6, 1998, in Carnes family biographical file, ORC.

85 See Emma Carnes diary, Oct 21, 1883, ESCP. Describing a new minister, she notes “he will be a worthy successor to our grand Dr. Bellows, if that be possible.” The Reverend Henry Whitney Bellows had died on Jan. 30, 1882. For biographical information on Bellows see: *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Scribner’s, 1927), s.v.; Henry Warner Bowden, *Dictionary of American Religious Biography*, 2nd edition (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1993), 46-47; and *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, 3:261.

86 Emma Carnes diary, Oct 21, 1883, ESCP. See also entries for Feb. 11 and March 11, 1883. On July 21, 1882, she attended a “tent meeting.” This was presumably an evangelical service of some sort – it did not suit her, and she left early.

became friends with fellow student John Steinfort Kedney, who was to become an Episcopalian priest, a poet, and a writer, publishing two books on aesthetics.<sup>87</sup> Evidence indicates that Church and Kedney remained acquainted.<sup>88</sup> After moving to New York City in 1846, Church became friends with George Washington Bethune, a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, a Calvinistic Protestant sect, and traveled to Brooklyn Heights to attend his services.<sup>89</sup> Bethune was also a writer, producing commentary on poetry as well as his own poetry and essays on art and writing religious works.<sup>90</sup> He is probably best known for his annotated and expanded version of Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*, a seventeenth-century celebration of rural life. By 1861 Church had induced Bethune to buy land adjoining his own in Greenport.<sup>91</sup> Bethune valued the land for its views of the Catskills, but his plan to build a house on the steep slope never came to fruition; he died on April 27, 1862, in Florence, Italy.<sup>92</sup> Church acquired the property from Bethune's widow in 1864 and built a road through it that he named after the minister.<sup>93</sup>

Episcopal minister, Louis Legrand Noble, was a long-time friend of Frederic Church. The two met in Catskill, New York, where Noble became the pastor of St. Luke's Church in 1844, while Church was studying with Cole. A few years before that, Cole had served as architect of the parish's new church, and Noble baptized Cole and his wife in the building in 1844, a ceremony Church probably witnessed.<sup>94</sup> Noble was also a writer, producing a biography of Thomas Cole in 1853 as well as several volumes of poetry.<sup>95</sup> He wrote about Church and his

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87 For biographical information on Kedney (also spelled "Kidney") see Warner, "An Unfinished Biography," 189.

88 Kedney was also a friend of Louis Legrand Noble, who is discussed below. He was also a friend of a Bishop Whipple, who was probably the brother of the Rev. Whipple from whom Church bought some Persian goods, as discussed later in chapter 7.

89 Warner, "An Unfinished Biography," 197.

90 A bibliography of Bethune's writings can be found in the Bethune biographical file, ORC.

91 Toole "Historic Landscape Report", 39, ORC.

92 See George Washington Bethune to Frederic Church, Aug. 15, 1860, ESCP, and the pamphlet "A Tribute to the Memory of Rev. George W. Bethune . . ." by Alexander R. Thompson . . ." ESCP, series 7E, folder 15.

93 Toole, "Historic Landscape Report," 96, ORC describes construction of the road. As Toole notes, on an 1886 map of Olana, drawn by Frederic J. Church, the road is labeled "Bethune Road" indicating that the name was in use at that date.

94 Elwood Parry III, *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* (Newark, London, and Toronto: University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, 1988), 242-243.

95 James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: Appleton, 1888), vol. 4, s.v.

art, publishing a booklet to accompany the exhibition of *The Heart of the Andes* and a book, *After Icebergs with a Painter* (1861), describing the journey taken by the clergyman and the painter to Labrador and Newfoundland. For much of his career, Noble lived not far from Church. He served various parishes in the Hudson Valley and in the New York City area and in 1874 was appointed professor of literature and history at St. Stephen's College, in Annandale, NY (the predecessor to present-day Bard College), only a short distance from Church's home.<sup>96</sup> Noble was present at some of the important spiritual events in Church's life. Noble traveled with Church to Dayton, Ohio, and officiated at the wedding of the artist and Isabel Carnes. He conducted the funerals of Herbert and Emma Church in March 1865 in New York City.<sup>97</sup> Noble collected material to write a biography of Church but did not complete it before his death in 1882.<sup>98</sup>

In their married life, Frederic and Isabel Church formed strong ties to the Presbyterian Church. Among the many charities that the Churches supported was the Five Million Memorial Fund, which celebrated the reunion of various branches of the Presbyterian Church in America.<sup>99</sup> Church made two contributions of \$100 each in 1870 and 1871. These may have been solicited by John Gaul, a friend of the Churches who was an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Hudson. The Churches seem to have joined this congregation, for regular payments for pew rent are recorded beginning in 1861.<sup>100</sup> In 1875 the Reverend Charles C. Yeisley was appointed pastor of this church, and in 1879 he married Catherine Gaul, the daughter of John.<sup>101</sup> The Churches and the Yeisleys became close friends. In 1890, as the parish was celebrating its centennial, Church arranged to have decorator Frederick DuBois Stone stencil the chancel of the

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96 Ibid.

97 Gerald Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné of Works of Art at Olana State Historic Site*, 2 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1:282.

98 Warner, "An Unfinished Biography," 158-159. Warner makes it clear that he had Noble's notes on hand as he wrote his own biography of Church.

99 See two certificates documenting the donations in ESCP, series 6.

100 See Linda McLean, Patricia Miller, and JoAnn Jostlin, "Index of Bills and Account Listings in the Olana Archive," a report summarizing bills now in ESCP, 1981, ORC. Twenty receipts from the First Presbyterian Church survive, dating from 1861 to 1889; these appear to have been issued in return for quarterly payments of pew rent. Olana's extant checks were not examined.

101 For information on Yeisley and the First Presbyterian Church of Hudson see: Beverly Fenn, "A Hudson Friendship: Church and Yeisley," *The Crayon* 27 (spring 1996): 7-10; and "Presbyterian Church a Large Part of Hudson's Heritage," *The Register-Star* (Hudson, N.Y.), May 6, 1990, A-10.

church; he probably helped design the motifs used (figure 8).<sup>102</sup> Surviving letters between Church and Yeisley document the friendship. They mention the minister accompanying Church on a trip to Maine, discuss Church's enthusiasm for a paper by Yeisley entitled "The Uses of the Imagination in Historical Science," detail the health of the two families, and mention contributions the Churches made to various charities the Yeisleys supported and to the expenses of the church.<sup>103</sup> The couples remained life-long friends. The family's affiliations with the Yeisleys and their church were so strong that by the end of his life Church was known as a "staunch Presbyterian."<sup>104</sup>

The couple, however, maintained friendships with clergymen of many denominations and sometimes attended their services. Isabel and Frederic clearly sought out religious services when they traveled. While in Egypt in 1868, they attended an English service in Alexandria, Frederic having chosen to stay in the city for Sunday services rather than go sightseeing to the pyramids.<sup>105</sup> In Mexico in the 1880s and 1890s, Church "found many friends among Catholic priests and the prelates of that ancient organization, and in his travels they gave him much assistance."<sup>106</sup> Not only the Yeisleys were frequent visitors at Olana; clergymen of other faiths called too.<sup>107</sup> Clearly, the Churches' own religious beliefs did not preclude social affiliations with people of different faiths. The couple formed especially fond relationships with Protestant ministers of all denominations who had interests in art, literature, and travel.

In contrast to her husband's reticence concerning his religious beliefs, correspondence to and from Isabel Church is peppered with references to faith, prayer, and spirituality. Isabel wrote her daughter about the Bible classes she attended in New York City while staying at the Osborns and of a sermon she heard, "a great treat intellectually as well as a great help spiritually."<sup>108</sup> Isabel's friends gave her gifts of religious books.<sup>109</sup> In her letters to

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102 See Frederic Church to Rev. Yeisley, July 20, 1889, and April 29, 1890, both in ESCP.

103 Frederic Church to Rev. Yeisley, Dec. 28, 1891, and Dec. 30, 1878, both in ESCP.

104 "Mr. Church Dies," clipping from an undated, unidentified newspaper (probably the *Mexican Herald*, c. April 8, 1900), ESCP.

105 Frederic Church to William Osborn, Jan. 6, 1868, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP.

106 "Mr. Church Dies," [probably] *Mexico City Mexican Herald*, c. April 8, 1900, copy in ESCP.

107 For example, Emma Carnes recorded a visit from "Baptist clergyman and wife" in her diary on Aug. 7, 1884

108 Isabel Church to Downie Church, March 4, 1889, ESCP.

109 See Annie Freudenberg to Isabel Church, Jan. 19, 1887, ESCP, and an extant book, *Daily Strength for Daily Needs* (OL.1985.742), which is inscribed from "Mary."

Virginia Osborn, she sometimes shared religious writing that she found inspirational. For example, she wrote: “Some good words of Channings came to me in my reading today - “To do God’s will, as fast as it is made known to us, to inquire hourly - I had almost said each moment- what he requires of us & to leave ourselves, our friends, & every interest at His control, with a cheerful trust that the path which He marks out leads to perfection and to Himself - this is at once our duty and our happiness, and why will we not walk in the plain simple way?”<sup>110</sup> When her own daughter joined the Episcopal church and had her daughter christened in that faith, Isabel related the joy she felt at seeing the growing faith these ceremonies evidenced and the spiritual ties Downie was establishing with her husband.<sup>111</sup>

Isabel’s private reflections on religion and other topics can also be gleaned from a series of notebooks she kept, into which she copied quotes, extracts, and aphorisms.<sup>112</sup> While it is not known for certain why Isabel compiled these notebooks, it appears that they served as homemade anthologies of material that she found significant and that she took them along when she traveled. While Isabel chose material from very diverse sources – from English poets and philosophers to American essayists to Chinese poets – the Bible was her most frequently quoted source.<sup>113</sup> With very few exceptions, the texts Isabel chose to include in her notebooks were inspirational in character, urging the reader to greater strength of character through faith in prayer and God. The notebooks seem to show that Isabel struggled to attain a Christian resignation to the disappointments of her life, which besides the deaths of her first two children were to include an errant son and life as an invalid for herself and her husband.

The Church household was marked with signs of the couple’s faith. When the Church children were young, Isabel apparently included prayers as part of the nightly bedtime routine.<sup>114</sup> Morning prayers were said and hymns sung regularly, probably daily, a ceremony that often took

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110 Isabel Church to Virginia Osborn, July 12, n.y. (1890s?), NYHS .

111 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Feb. 23, 1894, ESCP.

112 See the three notebooks preserved in ESCP, series 8G, folder 5 (all three unaccessioned). One book that contains solely biblical quotations is labeled “Isabel’s Book of Quotations” in Frederic Church’s hand. Another book carries inscriptions of dates and place names that appear to relate to Isabel’s trip to Mexico in the winter of 1884-85; the third book carries the heading “Moralia [*sic*], March 1,” which relates it one of the Churches’ trips to Mexico – they may have visited Morelia several times.

113 A few of the quotes in these notebooks are in French, making it clear that Isabel read that language.

114 See a letter from Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Aug. 27, 1891, ESCP, in which she mentions supervising the bedtime prayers of young Virginia Osborn, daughter of Fairfield and Lucretia Osborn. Virginia Osborn was the Churches’ houseguest at the time.

place in the Sitting Room.<sup>115</sup> The household was well stocked with Bibles, prayer books, and hymnals. A letter from Grace King, a guest at Olana in 1887, makes it clear that all members and guests were expected to participate in this ceremony by taking turns reading from the Bible.<sup>116</sup> On occasion, the Churches held religious ceremonies in their home. On July 20, 1894, Frederic and Isabel's granddaughter, Isabel Church Black, was baptized in the Episcopal faith at Olana, and the family held a reception to celebrate the event.<sup>117</sup> To mark their wedding anniversary in 1897 the Churches arranged to have Reverend Yeisley perform a private service at Olana, complete with Holy Communion. Both Isabel and Frederic were comforted by the "beautiful and solemn service."<sup>118</sup> To some observers, however, the Churches' religious practices made them an unduly sober family. Jervis McEntee noted in his diary: "I think one trouble with Church and the Osborns, too perhaps, is that they are too heavily weighted with their Presbyterian strictures to have a very good time."<sup>119</sup> Clearly, the Churches were earnest people who lived by their religion.

The single episode that perhaps best illustrates the seriousness with which both Frederic and Isabel sought to live their faith was the pilgrimage the couple made to the Holy Land. Frederic Church's 18-month trip to Europe and the Middle East in 1867-1869 has been seen by many art historians as a journey undertaken to gather artistic inspiration. While the trip did result in many canvases depicting the Middle East, the artist went to the Holy Land for spiritual as well as aesthetic nourishment. The trip was no less important for Isabel Church, as a diary she kept during the trip makes clear. Frederic and Isabel Church went to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea because they wanted to see for themselves the sites of ancient civilizations,

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115 A letter from Susan Hale to her sister that describes the daily routine at Olana notes "Prayers are always after breakfast. Downie gets the Bibles and we all read round," quoted in Caroline P. Atkinson, ed., *Letters of Susan Hale* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1918), 142. See also a letter from Isabel Church to Frederic Church, May 9, 1878, ESCP, which mentions morning prayers. Emma Carnes mentioned hymn singing in her diary (ESCP) on Aug. 16, 1885.

116 See Grace King to May (King McDowell); June 7, 1887, collection of John Coxe, on loan to the Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. (References to the Hill Memorial Library at Louisiana State University are hereafter abbreviated as LSU-HML).

117 A copy of a certificate issued by the Diocese of Albany as well as a photocopy of a page apparently from a baptismal registry book are found in a file of genealogical documents compiled by Maria Livingston and donated to ORC. Members of the Osborn and Black families were witnesses. See also Isabel Church Black to Downie Church Black, Feb. 23, 1894, ESCP, which discusses Downie's conversion to Episcopalianism. A letter from Louis Church describes the ceremony and the reception, Louis Church to Sally Good, July 21, 1894, ESCP.

118 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, July 9, 1897, ESCP.

119 Jervis McEntee diary, May 19, 1885, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.



especially places discussed in the Bible. By visiting Damascus, Bethlehem, the small towns and ruins in the plains of Syria, and especially Jerusalem, the couple believed they were traversing the biblical landscape, even walking in the footsteps of Christ. Frederic and Isabel were not alone in their desire to visit the Holy Land as an expression of faith; by mid-century Americans and Europeans came in unprecedented numbers to experience the historical and biblical sites of the Middle East.<sup>120</sup>

For much of their time in the Holy Land, Frederic and Isabel stayed in Beirut, where they joined an informal colony of Americans and British who were doing pioneering missionary and archeological work. They became good friends of two American couples who were the founders and directors of the Syrian Protestant College: D. Stuart and Ellen Dodge and Daniel and Abby Bliss.<sup>121</sup> A frequent visitor to Beirut, D. Stuart Dodge was a New Yorker, a Presbyterian minister and head of the Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.<sup>122</sup> Daniel Bliss, who described himself as “born a Baptist, brought up a Methodist, ordained a Congregationalist and laboring among Presbyterians,” established a university where Christians were educated along with Druze, Muslims, and Jews.<sup>123</sup> The Bliss home was an important link between English-speaking visitors to Beirut and the Arab community.<sup>124</sup> Frederic and Isabel were especially interested in the operations of the British Palestine Exploration Fund, which was investigating and mapping biblical sites. Through Charles Warren, the head of the London-based Fund, Frederic was able to arrange to see the underground quarries in Jerusalem, from which the stone for Solomon’s Temple was thought to have been cut. Edward Floyd de Lancy, an American historian and lawyer and also the son of a prominent Episcopal bishop, met the artist and his wife in Beirut and later commissioned an “Oriental” picture, “as a memento of my

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120 In the mid-nineteenth century, the Holy Land (also known loosely as the Levant) comprised mainly Syria, which was a province governed by the Ottoman Empire based in Constantinople, Turkey. The eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, the site of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, and tribal Arabic civilizations, was dotted with ruins of edifices built by those civilizations over many centuries.

121 See Isabel Church’s diary, Jan. 4 - June 17, 1868, photostat from an unlocated original, NYHS. Both the Bliss family and the Dodge family are mentioned frequently. In addition, one of Church’s address books, ESCP, (OL.1994.18) lists a Rev. Daniel Bliss, D.D., at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut. This is probably an addition to the book made in the 1890s. The Syrian Protestant College became the American University of Beirut, which is still an important educational institution today.

122 See *Who Was Who in America* (Chicago: Marquis, 1943), vol. 1, s.v.

123 Biographical sketches of Daniel Bliss can be found in: Gerald H. Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Simon & Schuster MacMillan, 1998), s.v.; *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v.

124 Daniel Bliss, *The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss* (New York and Chicago: Revell, 1920).

visit to these ancient and sacred lands.”<sup>125</sup> William Thomson, a missionary and author of the well-read *The Land and the Book*, was also a friend. The couple’s time in the Middle East was spent seeing the sights in these “ancient and sacred lands,” for the most part in the company of these American and British expatriates. They also attended prayer services, visited the charitable and religious organizations that the foreigners were establishing, and enjoyed other social engagements. In the diary she kept during portions of her trip abroad, Isabel noted her thanks for becoming part of the “lovely Christian circle of friends” in Beirut.<sup>126</sup>

Both Frederic and Isabel have left vivid accounts of their experience of the Middle East, testimony to how the journey nourished their spiritual life. As their diaries make clear, the couple planned their itinerary around sacred and ancient sites. As they traveled, they noted the biblical associations of the cities and ruins they examined. When they made a camping excursion from Damascus to visit the famous cities of Bashan in the desert plains of Huran, Isabel noted that one halting place near the village of Neja could be identified with the biblical Abena Pharphar, while another village, El Musmich, was the “Phaenus, capital of Trachonyitis of which Philip was Tetrarch.”<sup>127</sup> Leaving Isabel and his family in Beirut, Church made a 10-day camel trip into the desert to the ancient city of Petra. Along with others, Church identified the Nabataean city with the biblical peoples of Edom, who had failed to provide Moses and the Israelites with refuge or provisions during their exile; these peoples, descendants of Esau, were thus accursed. On the way, the artist made a sketch of the oasis of Kadesh-barnea, identified as the site where Moses struck water from a rock.<sup>128</sup> At their campsite outside the city of Petra the group read relevant passages from the Bible, and Church noted, “We felt justified in supposing that the Israelites may have encamped just here.”<sup>129</sup> The group climbed a mountain on the outskirts of Petra to examine a structure known as the tomb of Aaron.<sup>130</sup> Upon his return to Jerusalem, Frederic and Isabel spent a night camping on the Mount of Olives, perhaps on the

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125 Quoted in Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 176.

126 Isabel Church, 1868 diary, Feb. 3, 1868, NYHS.

127 Isabel Church, 1868 diary, April 27, 1868, NYHS.

128 See Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 320-322 for a sketch of Kadesh-barnea and an explanation of the biblical associations of the place and Church’s awareness of them.

129 This is noted in a diary that Frederic Church kept on his trip to Petra in 1868, ESCP. See the entry for Feb. 23, 1868.

130 Frederic Church, Petra diary, Feb. 24, 1868, ESCP.

very spot where “once our Saviour wandered,” as Isabel noted.<sup>131</sup> She was deeply moved by the city, by nearby Bethany, by the hill where the Ascension of Christ was said to have taken place, and by many other sacred sites; she felt that “perhaps ‘Our Savior’ took those very paths - and looked upon those same lovely views.”<sup>132</sup> Perhaps the most poignant souvenir of the trip is an herbarium filled with flowers, grasses, and leaves, each carefully labeled; the couple’s presence at revered sites like Solomon’s Golden Gate, the plains of Sharon, and Mount Zion is palpable in the book, labeled “Wild Flowers of the H. Land.”<sup>133</sup>

With their trip to the Middle East, the couple put themselves at the forefront of the developing international field of sacred geography, defined by a twentieth-century scholar as “the rational study of the holy landscape with the aim of revealing the conformity of the physical and scriptural accounts.”<sup>134</sup> While in the Middle East, Fredric and Isabel befriended the ministers, archeologists, historians, and explorers who were establishing the study of sacred geography. These same people were employed by or were themselves the initiators of the philanthropies that established modern educational, economic, and governance systems in the Levant. Long after their return to America, the Churches maintained ties with these people. The Churches made a contribution to the young Syrian Protestant College, which was headed by the Blisses and the Dodges, and the Blisses’ children visited Olana in the 1880s.<sup>135</sup> The artist was on the first board of directors of the American Palestine Exploration Fund when it was formed in 1871.<sup>136</sup> As we shall see, Church himself contributed to the field of sacred geography with his paintings of biblical lands and sites of ancient civilizations. Some of Church’s long-standing patrons bought these new paintings, but Church also seems to have formed a new network of patrons among the ministers and scholars he had met in the Middle East. These patrons did not seek paintings that romanticized the exotic sites as other Orientalist painters and writers did; rather they looked to Church for a factual yet inspirational portrayal of ancient places. When William Walter Phelps, brother of Ellen Dodge, commissioned Church to paint Damascus, artist

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131 Isabel Church, 1868 diary, March 28, 1868 NYHS.

132 Ibid.

133 The herbarium is OL.1983.791.

134 Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 185.

135 The contribution is documented in Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 173. See Emma Carnes diary, June 23-25, 1883, ESCP, for references to W. Bliss; this is probably William Tyler Bliss, son of Daniel Bliss. A Bliss also accompanied the Churches on a camping trip in 1885.

136 Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 187.

and patron both conceived of the work as a pictorialization of a biblical site.<sup>137</sup> With their archeological reports, histories, sermons, and other texts, Church's new colleagues presented the world with an innovative form of empirical biblical study, one that could be the basis for reflection and renewal of faith in a modern, scientific age. Church did the same with his paintings of ancient sites.

Beyond the evidence of Church's own paintings of Middle Eastern sites and the souvenirs of the trip abroad, Olana contains abundant evidence of the couple's lifelong examination of spiritual and religious matters. The Churches collected hundreds of photographs of the Holy Land. Among the most lavish of these are the folio-sized photographs issued as part of the report of the Palestine Exploration Fund (figure 9). At Olana there are still dozens of volumes of travel narratives describing important religious sites in the Middle East and elsewhere, reports from those conducting archeology at ancient sites, and detailed maps of the Holy Land. These items offer compelling evidence that the couple kept abreast of the history of the ancient Middle East as it was being written in the late nineteenth century. A wide range of religious literature was also available at Olana, including catechisms, Bible study books, devotional and bereavement literature, sermons, and literary works with spiritual themes (such as poetry and biographies of religious people). These books indicate that the family was equipped to lead a prayerful, contemplative life. Not surprisingly, the library contained works authored by ministers and clergy whom the Churches knew. There are also many books that merge science and spirituality; these are philosophical texts reconciling new discoveries in the developing sciences of archeology, geology, and natural history with traditional Protestant religious thought.<sup>138</sup> Clearly, the Churches mused over the important theological issues of their day.

How can Frederic and Isabel Church's religious affiliations be summarized? The best synopsis of Frederic Church's religious beliefs was provided by his good friend Charles Dudley Warner. Before his death in 1901, the Hartford author wrote several chapters of a biography of Frederic Church. Warner speaks of Church's religious upbringing, his friendships with clergy, the churches he attended, and his character. While Warner notes that Church "followed the Trinitarian Congregational worship of his parents," strictly speaking he

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137 Ibid., 185.

138 See, for example: Cunningham Geike, *Hours with the Bible; or, The Scriptures in the Light of Modern Discovery and Knowledge* (New York: James Pott, 1888) and James McCosh and George Dickie, *Typical Forms and Special Ends in Creation* (New York: Robert Carter, 1881).

was not a Congregationalist after he left Hartford.<sup>139</sup> Nonetheless, as Warner states, Church was always careful to observe the “external manifestations of religious faith.”<sup>140</sup> One scholar notes that, true to his Calvinistic, Puritan roots, Frederic Church avoided sketching on Sundays.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, the records show that Frederic and Isabel both attended the First Presbyterian Church in Hudson regularly and that others considered them Presbyterians. Yet, as a young man Church attended services of the Dutch Reformed Church and was friends with ministers of many faiths. He and Isabel probably attended the services of other Protestant denominations when traveling. In their home, the family used prayer books, Bibles, and hymnals issued by a variety of Protestant denominations. The family read a wide range of religious literature. As Warner notes, “while ever adhering to the lines laid down in his inherited faith, he was essentially liberal in his belief.”<sup>142</sup> In other words, rather than adhering dogmatically to any one Protestant sect, Church sought to interpret the principles he had learned in his youth in a liberal, questing spirit.

A succinct comment from Warner on Frederic Church’s religious character provides insight beyond the question of the couple’s formal institutional affiliations. Warner called Church “a nineteenth century type of the old Puritan.”<sup>143</sup> By this, Warner meant that Church continued the dissenting tradition of his Puritan ancestors, living his life as an expression of his personal faith. Warner notes that for Church, “pleasure was ever balanced by duty, by his sense of responsibility.”<sup>144</sup> Yet, there was no “austerity to his Puritanism” because in the “practical application of his religion to the conduct of life Christianity was above all the gospel of love.”<sup>145</sup> While Jervis McEntee thought that the couple’s piety was not leavened by enough pleasure, Warner observed that Church had a “quick readiness for frolic”; certainly there was truth in the observations of both of these good friends.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, evidence indicates that at the core of both Frederic and Isabel’s personalities was a deep religious faith and that the couple was motivated by a desire to grow spiritually and to live their faith. Their religious lives were not bound up solely with formal, organized religious institutions; instead, they sought personal expressions of

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139 Warner, “An Unfinished Biography,” 197.

140 Ibid.

141 Huntington, “Church and Luminism,” 160.

142 Warner, “An Unfinished Biography,” 198.

143 Ibid, 197.

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid., 198.

146 Ibid., 197.

their faith. Church chose to worship at the services of the clergyman whose personality and intellect he found congenial. Isabel, too, sought spiritual sustenance from her friendships, as her letters to Virginia Osborn demonstrate. Together, the couple established a Christian home, where religious art was abundant, where prayers were said, where religious literature was read, where charity was performed. The motive force in the life of the couple was their faith in a Christian God, whose presence in the world was to be eagerly sought. As will become clear, it was at Olana that the couple's profound spiritual beliefs were made tangible.

## CHAPTER 4

### The New House: Public and Private Reactions

Even before it was built, the new residence Frederic and Isabel Church planned for themselves on their property near Hudson attracted attention in the press and remarks from friends. A steady stream of articles, books, and private letters written before and after the structure was completed discussed the home. Within these narratives we find assessments of the home that Frederic and Isabel had created. Many of the narratives also described the furnishings of the new home, sometimes in great detail. A survey of the most significant among these publications and letters presented here not only constitutes a bibliography for Olana but also a historiography of the home. Here I will concentrate on the writer's opinions and observations of groups of furnishings and the entire interior; discussion of individual objects and rooms in these narratives are to be found in the pertinent chapters of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

The first published mention of the new home the Churches planned appeared in a newspaper, the *New York Observer*, on August 15, 1867. In an article on the city of Hudson the correspondent discussed Church's cottage and studio. He stated that Church "proposed to build on the hill overlooking the river, and taking in the sun-set view on the river and the grand outline of the Catskills."<sup>147</sup> From the first, apparently, Church understood the advantages of the view from the home site. The next mention of the new home, written while it was under construction, was from a writer standing on the west bank of the Hudson. It similarly lauds the view and describes the mansion:

Directly opposite and across the river, upon the grandest of the hill-tops, a shiny platform shows the basements of the country house which Mr. Church is building at the summit of the extensive lands, and near the rustic lodge and studio he had many Summers rested, and where in secluded leisure several of his masterpieces have been finished.

#### A Roomy Mansion

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147 "Hudson Revisited," *New York Observer*, August 15, 1867.

The mustache of our guidebook became more and more animated, and fairly kindled in describing the liberal ground proportions of the mansion whose principal ‘upstairs’ the height itself has furnished. One could be lost in its cellar. The windows of the chief floor were of fifty different shapes. What a marvelous thirty-mile view extended as a back-view beyond it! Its front view westward is indescribably superb, uniting river and mountains.<sup>148</sup>

The source of this clipping has not been established, but by comparing it to the chronology of the construction of the main residence, the article can be dated to the summer of 1871.<sup>149</sup> The article not only describes the home at an early stage in its construction, it reveals Church’s enthusiasm for his new home – and his propensity to “narrate” its virtues to visitors.

It was not until 1876 that a full-scale description of the finished home appeared in print. This was probably written by Martha J. Lamb, a well-respected art writer and historian, and it was included in a series on the homes of eminent Americans published in the American edition of *The Art Journal*, a prestigious magazine.<sup>150</sup> In 1879 the series was reprinted as a book, *The Homes of America*.<sup>151</sup> Thus, Church’s Olana was discussed in company with George Washington’s Mount Vernon, William Cullen Bryant’s Cedarmere, and Mrs. Samuel Colt’s Armsmear.

Lamb’s account is too lengthy to quote in full, but its main points can be summarized. She praised the site, saying it “commands so many views of varied character and beauty, that here may be almost said to culminate the glories of the Hudson.” She describes the materials used in the construction of the building, mentioning the many types of brick used to “produce a pleasing variety of color, [and] also an effect like mosaic-work” as well as the green, red, black, and gilt slates in the roof, “in appropriate and elaborate patterns.” She especially noted the

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148 Fanchon, “The Kaatskills: Their Attractions Enthusiastically Set Forth. Prospects of the Present Season. Artists Among the Mountains,” undated [c. summer 1871], unattributed clipping marked “No., 141-vol. V,” copy at the Vedder Library, GCHS, copy in ORC.

149 See Karen Zukowski, “A Chronological Outline of the Significant Architectural Events at Olana, c. 1860-1900, and Lists of Significant Vendors and Workers,” Feb. 5, 1997, ORC.

150 “The Homes of America . . . Residence of Mr. Church, The Artist,” *The Art Journal* (N.Y. ed) 2 (Aug. 1876): 245-248. Although the article was anonymous, Lamb is listed as the editor of the book that compiled the “Homes of America” series, and at least one biographical sketch credits her with authoring the book (see Appleton’s *Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 3, s.v.). Note that Appleton published both this biographical dictionary and Lamb’s book.

151 Martha J. Lamb, ed., *The Homes of America* (New York: Appleton, 1879). The book was reprinted in the 1970s under the title *The Elegant Homes of America 100 Years Ago* by Sun Publishing (c. 1976).



“cornices, which are very bold, are richly painted in colors and gold, in designs being conformable to the style of the house.” She discussed the cruciform plan of the Court Hall and the even light in the Picture Gallery; these were the only mentions of interior spaces. Lamb concluded that the house, built into the rock, had attained “a strength and durability seldom achieved in our domestic architecture,” and the home was “certainly very unique, and will excite interest as well as approval, if for no other reason than because it is wholly an individual structure departing distinctly from the types that abound all around us.” Lamb included two illustrations, one of the south facade, the other of the view of the Hudson and Catskills from the home.

Lamb’s praise of the site for the house and its distinctive design was echoed by others. As the house was nearing completion, Jervis McEntee visited it. He wrote in his diary that Church “with his peculiar talent has produced a satisfactory result. The color of the house on the outside by the judicious use of colored bricks with the stone is very harmonious and agreeable. It looks like an artist’s work.”<sup>152</sup> In his 1879 book *Art and Artists in Connecticut*, Henry Willard French analyzed Church’s painting at length. His discussion of Olana, little more than a synopsis of Lamb’s article, did go beyond her analysis to make the point that Olana is “essentially one of [Church’s] works of art.”<sup>153</sup> Thus, within a few years after the residence was completed, astute critics recognized the uniqueness of Olana, invariably praising the views from its grounds and the inventive design of the residence.

In the late 1870s Olana received several more mentions in print. Briefer than Lamb’s discussion, these were also usually less accurate. A writer for *The New York Commercial Advertiser* mentions Church’s studio, and, judging from his description, he may not have gotten any closer to the house than that: “The summer residence of Church, the artist . . . is an Italian villa of curious fashion, situated on the brow of a high hill, with extended views in every direction. The outside of the house is painted a pale gray color, and has a frescoed border of leaves and vines.”<sup>154</sup> In reality the exterior of the residence was never painted, and on its

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152 McEntee diary, July 22, 1872, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

153 H[enry] W[illard] French, *Art and Artists in Connecticut* (Boston and New York: Lee and Shepard, 1879), 130.

154 E. E. D., “Catskill: Its Hotels – The Beautiful Scenery – The Dreamland of Rip Van Winkle – The Summer Home of Church, the Artist – The Place Where Cole Painted the ‘Voyage of Life,’” *New York Commercial Advertiser*, July 22, 1875, 1.

stenciled cornices were stylized conventional motifs, not plant motifs. On May 23, 1879, Olana was the destination of the junior and senior classes of Vassar students for their traditional end-of-year outing on the steamboat *Mary Powell*.<sup>155</sup> No less than four newspapers published accounts of this excursion.<sup>156</sup> The students were evidently allowed to roam freely in the house and on the grounds, and they climbed the bell tower and looked in on the bedrooms. The artworks in the house were given special mention, including paintings by Claude, Rembrandt, Rubens, Cole, Church's own painting *El Khasné Petra*, and Palmer's *Sleep*. One writer noted "the house inside is richly decorated with Japanese and Chinese curiosities and Persian and Turkish ornaments and costumes," and another concluded that the visitors "were in high artistic and aesthetic clover."<sup>157</sup> From these accounts we can see that by the late 1870s the decoration of the residence was largely completed, both on the exterior and in the interior. These accounts also reveal that by this time Olana had attained some degree of celebrity.<sup>158</sup>

The writer of the next account, one of the longest published on Olana, makes it clear that he was privileged to visit; by this date the Churches clearly avoided publicity. Francis N. Zabriskie, writing for the *Christian Intelligencer* in September 1884, did not meet Church (who was away), but the journalist toured the entire house.<sup>159</sup> His comments, however, were mainly upon the landscape. He noted that Church had traveled the world and chose this spot for his home. Zabriskie described both approach roads, contrasting the steep, wooded North Road with the more open, ascending South Road. He clearly entered the house by the Ombra and the Court Hall, which, "filled with objects of art and 'verta,' is the chief feature of the house." He described the west-facing terrace (at that date the studio wing had not yet moved the orientation of the Piazza southward) where "one would wish to be on a midsummer moonlight night." He also described the view from Mrs. Church's bedroom in detail, noting that its surround of amber glass gave the effect of a picture frame. He summarized the furnishings by noting that "the

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155 The visit may have been arranged through "G. F. Cole," apparently one of the Cole family of Catskill, who were friends of the Churches. See the *New York Daily Graphic* article cited below.

156 "Beauty on the Hudson," *New York Herald*, May 24, 1879, 5; "An Aesthetic Frolic: Vassar Girls Among Catskill Scenery, Pictures, and Bric-à-brac," *New York World*, May 24, 1879; "Vassar Girls on Pleasure Bent," *New York Times*, May 24, 1879, 7; "Pictures of the Day," *New York Daily Graphic*, May 29, 1879.

157 "Beauty on the Hudson" and "Pictures of the Day."

158 See also: "On the Hudson at Catskill," *New York Evening Post*, Aug 12, 1876, 2. This is a brief mention of the Church home as one of the attractions of the region.

159 F[rancis] N[ichols] Zabriskie, "'Old Colony' Papers: An Artist's Castle, and Our Ride Thereto." *Christian Intelligencer*, Sept. 10, 1884, 2.

whole house is a museum of fine arts, rich in bronzes, paintings, sculptures and antique and artistic specimens from all over the world.”

The fullest published account of Olana appeared in the *Boston Herald* in 1890 and was written by Frank Bonnelle, who was apparently a friend of the Ferguson family, who summered on neighboring Mount Merino.<sup>160</sup> The journalist was taken through the house by Church himself, and this article is a direct record, including quotations, of some of the artist’s thoughts about his home. It is a lengthy account, complete with line drawings illustrating the south facade, the Court Hall, the crane-atop-tortoise statues from the stair hall, and a bust-length illustration of Church. Bonnelle gives an account of the career of the artist, his three-year search for a suitable home site, and the beauty of the grounds. He discusses the architecture of the home, with its weathered reddish stone, its patterned brickwork, and its “Persian and Spanish tiles and frescoing.” Bonnelle comments on most of the public rooms of the first floor, noting that Church had “given his attention chiefly to making the first floor attractive.” The journalist was not received in the “parlor” off the vestibule, but in the Court Hall, which is the “main feature of the interior.” Here the attractions were the view from the Ombra, the “mellow light” of the amber window, and four “highly-ornamented” arches, as well as “pieces of rare statuary and bric-a-brac” and “rich furniture with downy cushions.” In the “picture gallery used as a dining room” he noted the old masters, especially “three by Murillo, a very fine Salvator Rosa, and a small Claude.” In the Sitting Room, described as “Mr. Church’s study” were Cole’s view of the “Roman Campagna” and Church’s own painting, *El Khasné Petra*. Bonnelle’s account includes information that can only have come from Church himself, such as mention of “a romantic and wonderful legend” concerning St. Rose of Lima, and the story that the temple in Petra had been painted from sketches that Church obtained “at the risk of his life, owing to the superstition of the Arabs regarding this remarkable piece of sculptured architecture.” Clearly, the visit was “narrated” by Church. Bonnelle reprised earlier sentiments, when he said, “here is the magnificent home of an artist, designed and built by an artist.”

When Church died in April 1900, obituary articles often mentioned Olana, and several lengthy tributes to the artist went into greater detail. A writer in the *Brooklyn Eagle* noted that

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160 Frank J. Bonnelle, “In Summer Time on Olana,” *Boston Herald*, Sept. 7, 1890, 17. The Ferguson’s home is also discussed and illustrated in the article. Frank Bonnelle was a guest at the wedding of Hortense Ferguson to Lowrie Childs.

Church had been almost forgotten by a generation because of his retirement due to his health. “He lived at Hudson, where nearly thirty years ago he built himself a noble mansion.”<sup>161</sup>

A. Cary Smith, a painter turned naval architect, also remembered Church, his travels, and his house with its views. “This house was of stone, in Persian style, and was filled with curios collected from all over the world.”<sup>162</sup> Mary Elizabeth Wilson Sherwood wrote a reminiscence of the painters of mid-century, praising Church’s life and art. She noted: “Before he retired to his lovely home on the Hudson, Mr. Church had lived three or four lives, gained an immortal fame, and had received the highest prices ever paid to an American artist for his pictures.”<sup>163</sup> Thus, many articles eulogizing Church discussed the man, his art, and his home. Olana was noted along with Church’s most well known paintings and thus among his artwork.

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161 T. C. E., “Church, The Artist.”

162 [A. Cary Smith], “Prominent Painters of the ‘Hudson River School’” clipping from an unidentified newspaper (labeled *Hudson Weekly Gazette*, May 6, 1909, 16), copy in ESCP.

163 M[ary] E[lizabeth] W[ilson] Sherwood, “Frederick E. Church: Studio Gatherings Thirty Years Ago – New York’s Former Bohemia,” probably April 21, 1900, clipping from an unidentified publication, marked page 260, copy in ESCP and ORC. The clipping is not from the *New York Times*, as was mistakenly assumed in prior publications.

## CHAPTER 5

### Raising Children at Olana

Olana was not only a work of art continuously in progress, it was a place to raise children. The main residence, the climax of Church's work on the estate, was begun when the two eldest boys were babies, and two more children were born during its construction. In this section, I will sketch the biographies of the Church children, concentrating on their lives in the 1890s. The lives of the children were the background, even the "underpainting" for the canvas of Olana, their home.

After the deaths of Herbert and Emma in 1865, the Churches raised a second set of children, who grew to adulthood at Olana. Although these children were raised on a farm, theirs were not the lives of typical farm children. Indeed, in October 1867, at the age of 13 months, Frederic Joseph (usually known as "Freddie," or "Fred") left with his family for an extended trip abroad, where his brother, Theodore Winthrop (known as "Winnie") was born on February 22, 1869.<sup>164</sup> The next son, Louis Palmer Church (also known as "Lou"), was born in Cosy Cottage on April 30, 1870. And the Churches had another girl with the birth of Isabel Charlotte Church on July 17, 1871; she was immediately nicknamed "Downie." The young family (figures 10, 11, 12, and 13) flourished at Olana. The children initially received basic education at home from governess' and tutors; Isabel probably contributed to their schooling as well. The wife of Winnie recalled that all the Church children were "required to learn to be farmers, mechanics and even the three boys were taught to sew and embroider."<sup>165</sup> A letter, probably dating from the 1880s, describes the presents Winnie, Louis, and Downie had made for their Grandmother Carnes: a pincushion cover, a mat to set down a teapot, and a teapot holder.<sup>166</sup> The children also probably learned basic drawing and painting, perhaps in part from their father. At Olana there are watercolor studies by Downie depicting wildflowers and other plants; some of these date from the 1880s and were done at Olana. Occasionally, the family's

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164 For birth and death dates of the Church family, as well as other genealogical data, see: MacFall Jr., "The Families of Frederic Edwin Church and Isabel Mortimer Carnes," ORC.

165 See the Amelie van der Kieft Church typescript, WP, box 3, folder 14.

166 The undated letter is in ESCP. The letter is also discussed in an interview of Maria Livingston by Jim Ryan and Robin Eckerle, Jan. 14, 1984, transcript, 46, ORC.

eccentricities clearly distinguished them from their neighbors. The Churches imported white donkeys from the Middle East, and for some years Isabel rode these animals, with brightly colored trappings, and a baby riding in the pannier, “to the open-mouthed admiration of the country folk.”<sup>167</sup>

While growing up, the Church children played with the children from local families of similar social standing to their own. A frequent playmate was Arthur Mack, a cousin of the Churches, who lived on a nearby farm. Hortense and Smith Ferguson, children of a respected Troy physician, played with the Churches when at their summer house on neighboring Mount Merino. Other frequent playmates were the Livingston children, the nieces of the Giffords of Hudson, presumably relatives of the painter Sanford Gifford.<sup>168</sup> The Osborn children, Henry Fairfield and William (known as Fair and Will), although some ten years older than the Church children, became good friends. The Church children formed lifelong bonds with these people, and their names appear often in the correspondence of the adult Church children.

As they reached their teens, all the Church children went away to boarding schools. All three boys attended St. Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire, which prepared students for college and careers. Each of the boys went off to school in the autumn when they were 12 or 13 years old, and they remained at St. Paul’s for varying lengths of time. Frederic Joseph was enrolled from 1878 to 1884, Theodore Winthrop from 1882-1887, and Louis Palmer from 1883 to 1887.<sup>169</sup> Downie attended Miss Porter’s School in Farmington, Connecticut, from spring 1886 through spring 1889.<sup>170</sup> There she took standard classes in literature, history, mathematics, German, and drawing as well as private lessons in piano. She took an unusually high number of science classes, including botany and physiology.<sup>171</sup> Schooling frequently continued in the summer, for the Churches often employed a tutor during these months. During their teens the children sometimes traveled with their parents during the school year, and spent vacations at Olana and in New York City.

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167 Fanchon, “The Kaatskills,” GCHS and ORC.

168 See, for example, Emma Carnes diary, May 25 and June 1, 1883, July 1883, and Aug. 4, 1883, ESCP.

169 A letter from Alan N. Hall, director of publications, St. Paul’s School, to Kristin Gibbons, NYS OPRHP, May 30, 1994, copy in ORC.

170 The dates of her enrollment are recorded under the account for Frederic Church in Sarah Porter’s account books for 1886-1889, Archives of Miss Porter’s School, Farmington, Conn., copy in ORC.

171 Ibid.

The two eldest Church boys attended Princeton. Fred entered in the autumn of 1884. Although he was apparently well liked by his classmates, and probably played football, he had trouble keeping up with his schoolwork and became ill frequently.<sup>172</sup> In the spring of 1886 he was suspended for cheating and returned to Olana to study privately with a tutor.<sup>173</sup> He was never able to catch up academically with his classmates and was expelled in June 1887, having only attained the status of sophomore.<sup>174</sup> Winnie, on the other hand, was a good student, entering Princeton in the fall of 1887, taking a full academic load, and earning good grades.<sup>175</sup> He graduated in June 1891.

Some insight into the personalities of Fred, Winnie, Lou, and Downie and the relationship they had with their parents can be gained from friends of the family who expressed their opinions privately in letters. Grace King, a novelist and friend of the Churches, visited Olana in 1891 and wrote, “Mr. C. is very strict with the boys, Mrs. C. very lenient – so there is a little friction constantly between the worthy pair – that breaks out in peevishness in her. . . . The boys try to interest themselves in the horses & dogs – & in natural history. Mr. C. won’t let them give an order, or touch anything on the place. I think if the whole family had some hard work to do in the world, they would all improve.”<sup>176</sup> Another look at the family dynamics comes from Susan Hale, who was a writer, lecturer, artist, and close family friend. As her roommate in Mexico, Susan Hale got to know Downie well. She described the 15-year-old girl and her parents: “Downie is the stupidest girl of her age I ever saw. I don’t feel enraged with her for this as it is due to the system of suppression from Papa and petting from Mama in which her life has been passed.”<sup>177</sup> She also stated: “Downie is really a dream of beauty. Certain turns of her head with her pillar of a white throat are wonderfully beautiful – but all is spoilt by the peevish expression of her mouth. This is caused by her already holding the Bit in it, and so no doubt she

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172 See J. B. Fine to Frederic Church, Oct. 7, 1885; William M. Sloane to Frederic Church, Oct. 8, 1885; H. B. Cornwall to Frederic Church, Oct. 23, 1885, all three in ESCP.

173 Frederic Joseph Church to Rev. Yeisley, April 4, 1886, ESCP, and Virginia Osborn to Henry Fairfield Osborn, c. spring of 1886, NYHS.

174 The records of Frederic Joseph Church’s grades are enclosed in a letter from Carl Esche, special collection assistant IV, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University Archives, May 23, 1994, to Kristin Gibbons, NYS OPRHP, ORC. Frederic Joseph is recorded as a nongraduate of the class of 1889.

175 Theodore Winthrop Church’s grades are enclosed in a letter from Carl Esche, May 23, 1994, to Kristin Gibbons, NYS OPRHP, ORC.

176 Grace King to “Partner,” July 17, 1891, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.

177 Susan Hale to “JB,” (Edward Everet Hale Jr.), March 27, 1886, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. (hereafter abbreviated as SSC).

will run her excellent father a merry jig before she is much older.”<sup>178</sup> Fred’s prodigality with money elicited comments from many, including Hale who noted: “You know Fred the oldest son is rather a ‘Black Sheep,’ not so very bad, but spends too much money and don’t earn any.”<sup>179</sup> Hale was fond of Louis, and after he spent a summer at her house in Rhode Island, she declared he was “a dear as ever was.”<sup>180</sup> Indeed, in the adulthood of the Church children one can see reflections of these opinions.

After his expulsion from Princeton, Fred had, in his own words, a “decidedly checkered career.”<sup>181</sup> At first he traveled, by the fall of 1887 ending up in Seattle. Here he worked in freight shipping and real estate businesses, with disastrous results. A partnership with one man failed, and employment with another concern ended when Fred was accused of either careless accounting or embezzlement. Although he avoided jail, Fred was deeply in debt and spent years working it off. He staked a claim on 160 acres on Lake Cushman, near Hoodspport, in Mason County, Washington. From a small cabin in this remote area he served as the surveyor of Mason County from 1890 to 1892. During this period he also worked as a guide for J. P. O’Neil, who conducted a government survey of the Olympic peninsula, the northwest corner of Washington State.<sup>182</sup> For the rest of the 1890s he lived in the cities of Eugene, Tacoma, and Seattle, working for various businesses or as a mapmaker, and he lived on his claim, trapping, sawing wood, and “prospecting and hunting with gun and camera in the Olympic mountains.”<sup>183</sup> This period was punctuated by a marriage, to Rella Ruff, on September 27, 1893, in Seattle, which ended tragically five months later when she died of a stomach disorder.<sup>184</sup> His writing and photographs were indeed published; they are entertaining stories of canoe trips with Indian guides and fishing

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178 Susan Hale to Jack (Edward Everet Hale Jr.), Oct. 13, 1889, SSC.

179 Susan Hale to Lucretia Hale, March 24, 1894, SSC.

180 Susan Hale to Mrs. William G. Weld, Oct. 17, 1890, quoted in Atkinson, *The Letters of Susan Hale*, 248.

181 *The Sexennial Record of the Class of 1889, Princeton College* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Press, 1895), s.v. Further biographical details are taken from a series of alumni publications of Princeton University and were provided by Frederic Joseph to the college. See: *The Decennial Record of the Class of 1889, Princeton University* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Press, 1899). *The Vigesimal Record of the Class of 1889, Princeton University* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1909), and *After Thirty Years: The 1919 Record of the Class of 1889, Princeton University* (New York: Bingham, 1919). See also a report by Nicole Holbert, “F. J. Church in Washington Territory,” summer 1994, ORC.

182 Robert L. Wood, *Men, Mules, and Mountains: Lieutenant O’Neil’s Olympic Expeditions* (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1976).

183 *Decennial Record of the Class of 1889*, 29.

184 A letter from Susan Hale to her sister describes the death and the family’s grief over it. See Susan Hale to Lucretia Hale, March 24, 1894, SSC.



expeditions in wilderness streams.<sup>185</sup> His life in the Northwest included a stint of managing and running teams of dog sleds in the Klondike during the gold rush of 1898.

During the 1890s Fred and his parents became more and more estranged. Deeply wounded by their son's expulsion from Princeton, Frederic and Isabel were even more affected by his involvement with Charles H. Kittinger, a shipping and real estate agent. It was Kittinger who employed and befriended Fred and who also accused him of embezzling or mismanaging money – over \$5,000 by Kittinger's account. A series of letters dating from November 1888 to April 1890 by Fred, Kittinger, and Miles Graves (the Churches' business advisor) show the son trying to justify his business schemes and asking his father for help, the employer making accusations, and the advisor trying to sort matters out.<sup>186</sup> Eventually, Frederic Church sent money to Seattle on his son's behalf. A few years later, however, Fred was in trouble again. From the summer of 1894 to the summer of 1895, Frederic Joseph wrote his father a series of letters asking for advice and money; his creditors were demanding money even while he was trying to raise cash to settle a claim on the land he had homesteaded.<sup>187</sup> A photograph from this period shows him in front of the milling and shipping concern in Seattle where he worked as a clerk (figure 14). All this put a strain on Frederic and Isabel. To his credit, Fred realized this, and in a touching letter of June 26, 1894, to his father he apologized for being “a care and a hindrance, when I should have been far otherwise.”<sup>188</sup> Frederic and Isabel did not trust their son in financial matters, and unlike the other three children's, Fred's share of the parents' estate was left in a supervised trust instead of paid outright. The parents never regained a close relationship with their son, and there is no record that Fred came East to visit his parents after the spring of 1889.

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185 See Frederic Joseph Church, “Shooting the Rapids of the Quinault,” *Recreation Magazine* 9, no. 3 (Sept. 1898): 186-190; “A Day with Quinault Trout,” *Recreation Magazine* 6, no. 6 (June 1897): 451-453; and “Olympic Explorers: First News from the Government Expedition,” *Portland Morning Oregonian*, July 19, 1890, copies of all three in Frederic Joseph Church biographical file, ORC.

186 The most important of these are: Frederic Joseph Church to Frederic Church, Nov. 30, 1888; Dec. 20, 1888; Oct. 12, 1889; Dec. 8, 1889; April 6, 1890. Charles Kittinger to Miles Graves, Nov. 29, 1889. Miles Graves to Frederic Church, Dec. 10, 1889; Dec. 20, 1889; Dec. 24, 1889; Jan. 31, 1890, all in ESCP.

187 Frederic Joseph Church to Frederic Church, May 19, May 23, June 23, and June 27, 1895, all in ESCP.

188 Frederic Joseph Church to Frederic Church, June 26, 1894, ESCP.

Sometime around 1899 Frederic Joseph moved to Hawaii, where he was to live for the next ten years or so.<sup>189</sup> On October 10, 1900, he married Elizabeth Elliot Styne, a Tacoma girl to whom he had been engaged since 1897. He worked first for several photography houses and by 1904 entered the hotel business, working for a time as the manager of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. By 1910 Fred was working as a manager of a ranch and had probably separated from his wife. By the following year he moved to Alabama and became involved in the real estate business. He was divorced in 1912, and was married again on March 27, 1914, to Minnie Isaacson. A child, Frederica Church, was born to the couple but not until a few months after her father's death on August 27, 1914.<sup>190</sup>

The career of Theodore Winthrop Church (figure 15) was decidedly less checkered. After graduating from college in 1891, "Dad" (as he had become known at Princeton), spent two years at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons but eventually decided not to practice medicine.<sup>191</sup> He "drifted into paleontological work" with Henry Fairfield Osborn, who by then was a professor of biology at Columbia University and a curator of paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History.<sup>192</sup> In 1894 he described himself as a "gentleman of leisure" who was looking for work.<sup>193</sup> In the next few years he took managerial positions with the Sachett Wall Board Company, the Arc Welding Company in Detroit, and the American Telegraph and Telephone Company in New York City. He married Amelie van der Kieft on October 30, 1899. By 1901 he went into partnership and formed the Church-Nevins Company, printers and manufactures of boxes and labels, located in New York. He and Amelie lived in South Orange, New Jersey, and they remained close to Louis, visiting Olana frequently. The couple had one child, who died as an infant.<sup>194</sup> Theodore Winthrop died of pneumonia on

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189 For biographical details of Frederic Joseph's later life see *The Decennial Records of the Class of 1889, The Vigesimal Record of the Class of 1889, and After Thirty Years*. See also a letter dated July 15, 1992, from Allen W. Hoof, Department of Records and Publications, State of Hawaii Archives Division, Honolulu, to Laura Kline, archivist, Olana, in Frederic Joseph Church biographical file, ORC.

190 Frederica was later adopted by her stepfather and took the name Frederica Church Horn.

191 For biographical details on Theodore Winthrop Church see *Forty-Year Record of the Class of 1891, Princeton University* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931). A letter from Isabel Church to Downie Church dated June 28, 1891, ESCP, mentions the fact that Theodore Winthrop had been "down to NY – getting matriculated as a medical student at Columbia."

192 *Triennial of the Class of Ninety-One of Princeton College* (New York: Scott, 1894), 13.

193 Ibid.

194 MacFall Jr., "The Families of Frederic Edwin Church and Isabel Mortimer Carnes," record for Theodore Winthrop Church, ORC.

March 27, 1914, and the Reverend George Yeisley of Hudson traveled to New Jersey to perform the funeral.<sup>195</sup> His widow became an interior designer and always maintained her ties with the Church family. She also admired her father-in-law and his art, corresponding with scholars in the 1940s and 1950s, and writing a synopsis of the diary Church kept on his trip to Petra, apparently intending to publish it.<sup>196</sup>

On February 7, 1891, Downie married Jeremiah Sullivan Black, Jr. in Washington, D.C.<sup>197</sup> He came from a distinguished family that had served the State of Pennsylvania in high positions as judges and elected officials. He was the son of Chauncey Forward Black, a noted lawyer, editor, and politician who served as lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania. Jere, as he was called, attended Princeton with the Church boys, and he undoubtedly met Downie through his friendships with them. The couple was engaged by December of 1890.<sup>198</sup> During the winter of 1890-91 Frederic, Isabel, and Downie all became ill, and the physician ordered separate climates for each of them.<sup>199</sup> This difficult situation was resolved by Downie's marriage and immediate move to Deming, New Mexico, where she recuperated completely. After less than a year, the couple joined friends of Jere's, Dan Casement and Charles Otis, who ran a cattle ranch in Unaweep Canyon in southwestern Colorado, near Grand Junction.<sup>200</sup> Jere helped on the ranch during the day and studied law at night. It was here that Downie's first child, Mary Dawson, was born on November 17, 1891.

Downie and Jere moved back East in the summer of 1892, to York, Pennsylvania, where Jere had grown up. They lived first in a cottage at Willow Bridges, Jere's father's property, which adjoined Brockie, his grandfather's property.<sup>201</sup> Jere continued his law career, and the

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195 "Pneumonia Causes Death of Theodore W. Church," *Newark Evening News*, March 28, 1914, copy in Theodore Winthrop Church biographical file, ORC.

196 See Amelie van der Kieft Church typescript, WP, box 3, folder.

197 Information on Jere Black and his family comes from the following sources: MacFall, Jr., "The Families of Frederic Edwin Church and Isabel Mortimer Church", ORC; "Mr. C. F. Black Dies Suddenly," clipping from an unidentified, undated York, Penn., newspaper, copy in the Hortense Ferguson Childs scrapbook, original in the possession of Charles E. Childs, copy in ORC; and "Two Noble Women Gone," clipping from an unidentified newspaper, Feb. 21, 1897, copy in ESCP, series 8.

198 See Frederic Edwin Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Dec. 28, 1890, McKL.

199 See Frederic Church to John Ferguson Weir, Oct. 25, 1891, Archives of American Art; Washington, D.C.; and Frederic E. Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Dec. 28, 1890, McKL.

200 Dan Dillon Casement, *The Abbreviated Autobiography of a Joyous Pagan* (Manhattan, Kansas: Casement, March 14, 1944), 19, copy in ESCP.

201 Casement, *Abbreviated Autobiography*, 27. See also Willow Bridges topical file, ORC.

family was wealthy enough to employ a staff of servants.<sup>202</sup> Three more children were born to the couple in York: Isabel Church Black on March 7, 1893; Louise Dawson Black on October 1, 1898; and Jeremiah Sullivan Black III on September 26, 1903.<sup>203</sup> A photograph taken in New York City in the early 1890s shows Downie with one of her children, perhaps Mary Dawson Black (figure 16). Downie and Jere spent two years, from 1901 to 1903, building their own house, Rural Felicity, on a hilltop in York; the home has many features in common with Olana, including amber glass windows with a cut-paper pattern.<sup>204</sup> The marriage ended in divorce around 1911 or 1912.<sup>205</sup> Downie moved to Virginia Beach, Virginia, where the family owned a summer home. She lived there with her children until at least 1914, eventually moving to Princeton, New Jersey, where she had many friends.<sup>206</sup> She married one of these friends, Edward Leavitt Howe, probably around 1920.<sup>207</sup> The two lived in Upland Meadows, a home in the countryside near Princeton, New Jersey. Howe was a banker, who worked for some years with the Princeton Bank and Trust Company.<sup>208</sup> Downie, like Winnie, remained close to her brother Louis, and she and her children visited Olana often. Downie died on September 4, 1935.

In contrast to the other children, Louis Church (figure 17) in his adult life was intimately tied up with Olana. After he left St. Paul’s School in 1887 there are indications he intended to make a career away from Olana. By December 1891, however, Louis and his parents had agreed upon a role that would resolve Louis’ future as well as the future of Olana. Isabel declared:

Just to occupy his time – (perhaps) he will be head, of our place – with a salary – Your father thought he needed one of his sons, to take charge, and Louis, dear boy is the one. There is much to be

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- 202 See the 1900 and 1910 censuses for Springgarden township, York, Penn., for the Jeremiah Black farm, vol. 229, ED176 and vol. 294, ED98, copies in Downie Church biographical file, ORC.
- 203 MacFall Jr., “The Families of Frederic Edwin Church and Isabel Mortimer Carnes,” ORC.
- 204 See Rural Felicity/Wyndam topical file, ORC.
- 205 In the 1984 interview (transcript, 59, ORC) Maria Livingston notes that Jere Black Jr. was eight when the couple divorced, making the date 1911 or 1912. Shortly after the divorce, Jere Black married his stenographer of 14 years, Mabel Evans; see “Jere Black and Mabel Evans Wed,” clipping from an unidentified, undated York, Penn., newspaper, copy in Hortense Ferguson Childs’s scrapbook, ORC.
- 206 An obituary for Theodore Winthrop Church (who died in 1914) notes that his sister was then living in Virginia Beach. See also notes of interview with Maria Livingston, Sept. 9, 1999, Downie Church biographical file, ORC.
- 207 See MacFall Jr., “The Families of Frederic Edwin Church and Isabel Mortimer Carnes.”
- 208 Letters from Howe on the Princeton Bank and Trust Company stationery dated May 22, 1924, are preserved in the files of the American Museum of Natural History. See correspondence between Henry Fairfield Osborn and Louis Church, Isabel (Downie) Church Black Howe and Edward Howe, ORC.
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looked into at Olana – and Father can not, nor cares to do it. But Louis is full of projects. And I love him far too dearly, to allow him to really sacrifice his life to us.<sup>209</sup>

Although his salary had been doubled within one year, Louis did not immediately settle down into this role, and he apparently contemplated various business ventures that would take him away from Olana.<sup>210</sup> Eventually, he did settle into a life of managing Olana and caring for his parents, who became increasingly frail. He spent most winters in the 1890s traveling with either his mother or father, as they journeyed in search of better health. While fulfilling this duty, he visited the mountains of Georgia and Tennessee, the shore of Virginia as well as Mexico, Algiers, and France. He developed his own interests as well. There are several mentions of Louis hoping to become a painter, and he may well have turned to painting throughout his life as an avocation.<sup>211</sup> He was apparently a photographer and may have produced an album of photographs depicting Olana.<sup>212</sup> Always an active hunter and fisher, he journeyed often to Camp Rhodora, the Church cabin in Maine, which stood on the shores of Lake Millinocket with a view of Mount Katahdin. He published an article about one hunting expedition in the magazine *Forest and Stream*.<sup>213</sup> In the course of the 1890s, Louis became more involved with the management of the farm and the everyday operations of the house. As will be discussed, Louis was to marry and make a life centered on Olana after his parents had died.

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209 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Dec. 12, 1891, ESCP.

210 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Dec. 8, 1892, ESCP. In one letter of 1894 Louis states: “I am working over in my mind all sorts of business ideas but none of them seem very encouraging except one on the Amazon River and I don’t care to go there now.” Louis Church to Sally Good, July 29, 1894, ESCP.

211 See Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Dec. 12, 1891, ESCP. In an interview Helen Howe, a former maid at Olana in the 1930s, states that she was familiar with a painting supposedly by Louis that hung in the house (it has not been possible to identify this painting), see Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by James Ryan and Karen Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, ORC. Note that one among a group of six stylistically similar oil sketches at Olana has an inscription on the reverse “L. P. Church’s.” The inscribed sketch is OL.1977.259, the other five are: OL.1977.260; OL.1977.255; OL.1977.256; OL.1977.259; OL.1977.258.

212 The photo album OL.1986.59 is tentatively attributed to Louis Church.

213 Pockwakemus, “A Month on Millinocket,” *Forest and Stream*, Jan. 26, 1901. The article is labeled “alias Louis P. Church,” in a scrapbook kept by Ralph Good, the brother of Sally Good Church. Ralph was probably along on the trip. The album is owned by George S. Good of Annville, Penn., copy in ORC.



## CHAPTER 6

### Daily Life at Olana

What was daily life like at Olana? The furnishings of Olana can be better understood when we examine the routines, habits, and pastimes of everyday life in the household. Frederic and Isabel Church and their four children were the primary members of the cast that inhabited Olana, along with their staff and their guests. All these people had duties and pleasures at Olana and lived an active life, indoors and out. Here I will examine the patterns of everyday life at Olana.

As joint managers of Olana, Frederic and Isabel performed many routine chores. As will be detailed, Isabel managed the daily duties of the household staff and paid their wages. Frederic supervised the operations of the farm, conferring often (probably daily) with the manager on crops, livestock, machinery, and other details. In the 1890s Louis did this work, and as Isabel noted, he also initiated new projects, such as a greenhouse located near the mingled flower garden below the east lawn. Frederic paid the household bills, probably a job that was also passed along to Louis. Both Isabel and Frederic kept up an extensive correspondence with their family and friends. Other members of the house had their chores and routines as well. During her extended stays at Olana, Mrs. Carnes did all sorts of helpful jobs for the household, such as fixing books, making a hammock for Downie's dolls, and running errands.<sup>214</sup>

Philanthropy was also an important part of the Churches' daily lives. When Isabel sent Downie an "oriental" table cover, she noted that its cost had gone to a good cause, the support of Christian orphans in Syria.<sup>215</sup> Frederic Church was active in the governance of the local one-room schoolhouses, serving on the board of the Red Hill School House association, and donating a bell to the Hook School on Mount Merino.<sup>216</sup> At Christmas time in 1894, Frederic Church noted in a letter to Downie that Isabel had "been overwhelmed with a multitude of cares and duties of late mainly connected with the Holiday Season including aid to some poor persons she

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214 Emma Carnes diary, Sept. 22 and 27, 1882, ESCP.

215 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Oct. 1, 1891, ESCP.

216 Olana retains meeting minutes from the Red Hill School Association for 1876 and 1882; see ESCP, series 7c. The donation of the bell to Hook School is cited in *Greenport: The Forgotten Town* (Hudson, N.Y.: Town of Greenport Historical Society, 1987), 49-50.

knew.”<sup>217</sup> Probably, Isabel had been making up baskets full of food and clothing, a common form of charity in the nineteenth century. It is likely that such activities went on all year long and that Isabel considered “aid to poor persons” an important task.

As important members of the community, the Churches participated in the custom of formal social calls. Before the era of the telephone, friends and acquaintances stayed in touch by making and receiving short visits at their homes – the formal call. Among the frequent callers at Olana were the Yeisleys, the Gauls, the Macks, the Gillettes, and the Livingstons.<sup>218</sup>

Mrs. Yeisley frequently brought friends with her, and on July 9, 1884, she called with “three buggies of people.”<sup>219</sup> The Churches too made calls, and in her diary Emma Carnes recorded visits to the Giffords in Hudson, to the Fergusons on Mount Merino, to the Livingstons at nearby Oak Hill, and to many other local friends. These calls were made by carriage and offered the opportunity for a ride in the countryside and an exchange of pleasantries and simple gifts, such as flowers and fruit from the farm.

At Olana sitting together in conversation was a prime occupation. Family and callers alike spent much time sitting on the porches and verandas of the house and looking out of the windows, admiring the view and talking. Susan Hale described the daily routine when guests were in the house: “Between three and four we come out richly dressed and assemble on whatever piazza, porch, or ombra commands the best advantages for seeing and coolness – and then talk, talk, talk till dinner at five-thirty.”<sup>220</sup> The spectacular landscape and skyscape always to be seen at Olana often inspired vivid descriptions in correspondence. Church wrote of it often: “We are having daily showers which clear up at evening with commendable regularity giving us gorgeous sunsets and twilights which are worth a pilgrimage to see.”<sup>221</sup> “We are both enjoying the gorgeous hues and soft atmospheric effect never more beautiful than this season. . . . I wish October would last three months but as it won’t I must make the most of it.”<sup>222</sup> “Since I commenced writing the clouds have begun to disperse, the mountains are asserting

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217 Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Dec. 25, 1894, ESCP.

218 Maria C. Lizzi, “The Guests of Frederic and Isabel Church, 1860-1900,” s.v., unpublished report for NYS OPRHP, April 1996, ORC.

219 Emma Carnes diary, July 9, 1884, ESCP.

220 Atkinson, *Letters of Susan Hale*, 142.

221 Frederic Church to Charles De Wolf Brownell, June 28, 1888, copy from an unknown source, ORC.

222 Frederic Church to Charles De Wolf Brownell, Oct. 12, 1893, copy from an unknown source, ORC.



themselves and a glorious golden light takes the place of the dismal slate tinted mist which has prevailed so long.”<sup>223</sup> Sometimes extraordinary events were witnessed. Emma Carnes noted that for a week in October of 1883 the family watched a comet cross the sky, and at another date a fire visible in the Catskills was a “superb sight.”<sup>224</sup> Everyone admired the sunsets unfold. Kate Bradbury and her friend Amelia Edwards were both entranced by one during a visit in 1889. “The sunset was marvelous. After it, while the sky was full of calm color, scarlet, orange, yellow, primrose, pale green, pale blue – up into deep blue – the sharp young moon came out, and the Hudson reflected it & the pale green and blue of the sky. . . . Miss Edwards came for me to my room, and found me doing just what she had been doing, sitting spell-bound at the window.”<sup>225</sup>

Another occupation was taking carriage rides and walks, both on the property and off. One guest described the estate’s carriage roads: “The Drive went round and round the hill – Mr. Church has taken advantage of every acreage of ground. . . . Every time we came to the Hudson it was a new revelation, a complete surprise.”<sup>226</sup> Isabel and Frederic both seem to have derived healthful benefits from carriage rides, so they took them as often as they could.<sup>227</sup> Others enjoyed vigorous walks. Susan Hale remarked “The place is so large I can walk miles without going off it. It is very pretty, great avenues of trees, a pond, nooks of shade, and always the wide view of the river and mountains. It is a little monotonous, in that just so much as you go down, you have to climb up again, being on the very top of everything.”<sup>228</sup> Nonetheless, she said that her “sweat-baths” enabled her to “recover my tone.”<sup>229</sup> Mrs. Carnes also took long walks on the estate.<sup>230</sup> Kate Bradbury describes taking a long walk on the Olana estate in December of 1889, listening to birds and gathering goldenrod, milkweed, juniper berries, and

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223 Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Dec. 12, 1894, ESCP.

224 Emma Carnes diary, ESCP. For the comet, see entries for October 3 and 4, 1883; for the fire, see Nov. 3, 1883.

225 Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, Dec. 25, 1889, typescript supplied by Brenda Moon, Edinburgh, Scotland, copy in ORC.

226 Grace King to May King McDowell, June 7, 1887, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.

227 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Oct. 1, 1891, and June 16, 1891, both in ESCP.

228 Atkinson, *Letters of Susan Hale*, 142.

229 Ibid.

230 Emma Carnes diary, Sept. 10, 1882, ESCP.

other things in seed.<sup>231</sup> Another guest, however, tells a different story about the Churches and their wildflowers. “Not a daisy is allowed to be pulled, not a cat’s tail – and as for goldenrod! The other day we drove miles to get some yellow daisies & sweet fern, when there were prairies of it all round about here – but that would have despoiled the place – taken a little from its beauty.”<sup>232</sup> The Churches’ enjoyment of their grounds is preserved in photographs, including one of Emma Carnes and her granddaughter Downie in a donkey cart (figure 18) and another, showing a young man, probably Louis Church, relaxing on a rustic tête-à-tête seat that was located on the Ridge Road (figure 19).

By the time the Church children became young adults, they lived active, outdoor lives, making good use of their own property and the surrounding countryside. On Fourth of July 1889, Winnie and Louis were among a large group that had an eventful day. They rowed across the Hudson to a picnic in Catskill, they took photographs, and in the evening, they took a walk, danced, and watched fireworks.<sup>233</sup> The lake at Olana was used by family, guests, and neighbors in rowboats and canoes.<sup>234</sup> Still surviving at Olana is much sporting equipment, such as fishing rods and nets, ice skates, and snowshoes. A lawn tennis court and golf links were also features of the property, probably installed in the 1890s.<sup>235</sup> At least in later life, Downie loved horseback riding; she probably also rode while she was growing up at Olana. During an 1896 visit to Olana, Downie received a gift of an especially spirited horse from her friend Dan Casement, at whose ranch she and Jere had lived in 1891-92.<sup>236</sup> This horse, Connemara, was brought back to Downie’s home in York and became a great favorite. It is likely that the horses on the Church estate were used for riding as well as carriages and that all the Church children rode.

The family also enjoyed playing with the many pets at Olana. “There are a great many animals attached to the house, donkeys and dogs and cats and turtles and a new owl just out of the egg, with great eyes that turn with his head.”<sup>237</sup> Probably the most remarkable pet at Olana

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- 231 Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, Dec. 25, 1889, from a typescript in the possession of Brenda Moon, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- 232 Grace King to “Partner” (her sister?), July 17, 1891, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.
- 233 Sally Good diary, Aug. 1886 through Nov. 1892, entry for July 4, 1889, ESCP.
- 234 Emma Carnes diary, Nov. 3, 1882, Oct. 3, 1882, and Aug. 11, 1883, ESCP.
- 235 Toole, “Historic Landscape Report,” 73.
- 236 Casement, *Abbreviated Autobiography*, 37.
- 237 Atkinson, *Letters of Susan Hale*, 141.

was Cyrus (figure 20), an imperious black Persian cat named after the legendary ruler of ancient Persia. He was originally a gift to Downie, but was so independent and ill-suited to indoor life that he eventually became wild, living entirely outdoors and capturing his own meals.<sup>238</sup> The Churches also had many dogs; some were the pets of the boys, others were guard dogs.<sup>239</sup> The Churches were also very fond of birds of all sorts, who usually lived in cages on the Ombra. From their first trip to Mexico in 1881 the Churches brought back three birds. A guest noted their “curiously metallic bell-like notes. It was difficult to believe birds could make such sounds.”<sup>240</sup> In the diary Mrs. Carnes kept between 1882 and 1886, she mentions these Mexican birds as well as parakeets, a canary, and at least two parrots. Some of the carriage horses were as well-loved as pets.<sup>241</sup> In fact, the Churches had so many pets they sometimes did not get along well. Susan Hale particularly worried that Cyrus might eat the owl: “It would be sad if one of our pets should lie down inside of the other.”<sup>242</sup>

Some of the Churches’ pets were the result of the active outdoor life the family led, especially the boys. The owl hatched from an egg was eventually set free, but it returned on occasion to be fed, flying in through the Ombra.<sup>243</sup> At one time Louis apparently had a pet fox, and at another time the boys kept two crows; presumably these were caught wild.<sup>244</sup> All four Church children, along with other local friends, were members of an egg-collecting club; they purchased some specimens and gathered others from the wild, keeping track of everything in a detailed logbook.<sup>245</sup> The eggs themselves, carefully labeled to correspond to entries in the logbook, are still at Olana. For his birthday in April 1883 Mrs. Carnes presented Louis Church with a set of garden tools; his pleasure with the gift indicates that by then he was an avid gardener.<sup>246</sup> Collecting and classifying plant life, a hobby known as botanizing, must have gone on at Olana. A guest noted that the estate had 76 varieties of goldenrod; this tally must have

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238 Isabel Church to Downie Church, May 16, 1887, ESCP.

239 Isabel Church to Downie Church, July 19, 1890, ESCP, mentions “Bocca” as well as “Lou’s little dog.” Guard or watch dogs at Olana are mentioned in Emma Carnes’s diary, July 22, 1883, and July 27, 1885, ESCP, as well as in E. E. D., “Catskill.”

240 North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, 1:209.

241 In particular, Chatto was a well-loved carriage horse and may have been used for riding.

242 Atkinson, *Letters of Susan Hale*, 143.

243 Emma Carnes diary, July 29, 20, 22, 24, and 25, 1884, for the fox; for the crows see May 16, 1882, ESCP.

244 Emma Carnes diary, July 22, 1883, ESCP.

245 The logbook is OL.1982.1820.

246 Emma Carnes diary, April 24, 1883, ESCP.

been the result of diligent analysis on the part of the Church family.<sup>247</sup> Indeed, the numerous books in Olana's library detailing the local flora and plant anatomy would have assisted in this task.

The Churches entertained themselves with games and other occupations, especially in the evening. When Isabel Church was host to the young grandchildren of the Osborns, she noted that one of them wanted "to play Casino all the time," apparently a board or card game.<sup>248</sup> Emma Carnes was very fond of all sorts of card games, and on her visits to Olana regularly recruited family members and others to play.<sup>249</sup> Susan Hale wrote that during one visit to Olana "'Fooley Ann' is one favorite occupation, a solitaire game they have just learned."<sup>250</sup> One evening Will Osborn recited something, presumably poetry, for the assembled group.<sup>251</sup>

Life at Olana was intimately connected with art, and much time was spent looking at art and talking about art. As noted in the discussion of articles on Olana, visitors to the home often found themselves on a guided tour of the artwork on the walls, narrated by Church himself. There are other recorded instances of guests and family members examining art. Two guests at Olana in December 1889 spent hours "looking over sketches, oil sketches of Mr. Church's from Syria, Petraea, Greece, Jamaica, New England, etc."<sup>252</sup> On a rainy afternoon, probably in the 1880s, Downie and her friend Hortense Ferguson were allowed to examine hundreds of Frederic Church's sketches, spread out on the table in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery; their detail and freshness made an indelible impression on Downie's young playmate.<sup>253</sup> To surprise his new daughter-in-law, Amelie, Frederic Church produced a photograph of Sainte Amelie,

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247 Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, Dec. 25, 1889, typescript supplied by Brenda Moon, Edinburgh, Scotland, copy in ORC.

248 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Aug. 27, 1891, ESCP.

249 Emma Carnes diary, ESCP. Entry for Sept. 19, 1883, records Miss Thompson (the children's tutor) teaching her a game of solitaire; see also the entries for Oct. 16, 1882, and Aug. 27, 1885, which record her playing whist.

250 Susan Hale to Carla Atkinson, Nov. 4, 1893, Special Collections, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R.I.

251 Emma Carnes diary, Aug. 19, 1883, ESCP.

252 Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, Dec. 24, 1889, typescript supplied by Brenda Moon, Edinburgh, Scotland, copy in ORC.

253 The incident is described in Hortense Ferguson Childs's "Reminiscences," (untitled) typescript with handwritten annotations, dating c. 1910-1930, WP, box 16, folder 17. This reminiscence was apparently delivered as a lecture, perhaps more than once. It is a survey of the Hudson River School painters, consisting not only of Childs's own memories but also of borrowings from the articles by Frank Bonnelle and Mary E. Sherwood.

perhaps a photograph of the city in Manitoba, Canada.<sup>254</sup> These anecdotes all describe another aspect of art viewing at Olana, people examining two-dimensional art normally stored away in drawers. At Olana were several thousand pieces of flat artworks. These included not only oil and pencil sketches by Church for his finished artwork, but hundreds of sketches he made for the architectural embellishments of the house. There were also drawings by other artists, including a large group of drawings by Fritz Melbye and other friends. Church also collected prints, especially those by American artists and works after the old masters. There were thousands of photographs of faraway places and people. There were maps, a scrapbook filled with memorabilia, and other archival documents. Much of this material was probably kept in the print chests in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery and the Studio as well as in the attic. Certainly, guests and family members would have been able to peruse this material, often in the company of Church, who would have provided a running commentary on the artwork.

Yet another pastime was reading. Family and guests alike read aloud and read silently. The Churches had a large library and they added to it continuously. As a houseguest in 1879, Virginia Osborn noted the pleasure of “coming home at night to wood fires, and tempting new books on the library table.”<sup>255</sup> Old books also attracted attention. When the author Samuel Clemens visited Olana in 1887, another guest mentioned his interest in one – she “came through the library after a while to hunt up the others and found Clemens reading some antique book.”<sup>256</sup> In short, as writer Grace King observed, “there are lots of books scattered all around.”<sup>257</sup> Reading aloud, a common activity in nineteenth century households, occurred often at Olana. Mrs. Carnes’s diary records instances of reading aloud, and a letter from a guest noted that “Clemens read Browning” – implying that the author had read the poetry of Robert Browning aloud to an assembled group.<sup>258</sup> Because both Frederic and Isabel Church were in poor health in later life, and they both required operations on their eyes and subsequent periods of recuperation, they often had books read aloud to them.<sup>259</sup> Susan Hale was sometimes recruited to do this

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254 Amelie van der Kieft typescript. WP, box 3, folder 14.

255 Virginia Osborn to Henry Fairfield Osborn, Oct. 25, 1879, NYHS.

256 Grace King to May King McDowell, June 7, 1887, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.

257 Grace King to “Partner” (her sister?), July 17, 1891, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.

258 Emma Carnes diary, Sept. 24, 1882, ESCP, and Grace King to “Nina,” June 10, 1887, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.

259 For mention of Frederic Church’s eye operation, see Emma Carnes diary, May 25, 1883, ESCP. Isabel’s eye operations are discussed in Chapter 10.

because everyone enjoyed her skill at this task. As the chapter on the Library details, the Church library was rich in all types of literature and poetry, in travel narratives and works on the natural history of specific places and in other scientific reports, in biographies and essays, and in religious literature. It was a library that could satisfy almost any reader.

The activity of dining was also important at Olana. The Churches, their houseguests, and local friends invited for a meal, all assembled in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery. The Churches seem to have served two main meals, breakfast and an early evening dinner. Smaller meals, such as light supper, were also served. All meals were served in the Dining Room; the terraces or other rooms were never used for meals, and only occasionally for tea. With houseguests, other dinner guests, the family, and select staff (such as the children's tutors) the table was a large one. Among the local dinner guests recorded are Archie Livingston, Theodore Cole, and Mrs. Gaul.<sup>260</sup> These people might be invited to meet other houseguests. There are many accounts of large, lively dinner parties, including one "hilarious Thanksgiving dinner in the high studded dining room and picture gallery, with the Old Masters seriously looking down upon our revelry."<sup>261</sup> Some dinners were formal affairs, where all wore evening dress and the different courses were each served on separate plates. Other meals were less formal, with all the food laid on the table at one time and passed around. All visitors concurred that an abundance of food was always found and that the produce of the farm was always included. As Church noted: "We are not ashamed to offer our friends ham and eggs – in fact we are rather proud we have it to offer."<sup>262</sup>

Music was often heard at Olana. There are two pianos in the house, one in the Dining Room and the other in the Studio. This alone is evidence that these rooms were used not just for dining and making art but also for the entertainment of family and friends. Isabel, Downie, and Emma Carnes all played the piano.<sup>263</sup> Still surviving at Olana are many volumes and individual sheets of piano music and choral music. The major European composers, such as Donizetti, Beethoven, and Rossini, are represented in this collection as well as pieces that might be termed

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260 For Livingston, see Lizzi, "The Guests of Frederic and Isabel Church," s.v., ORC, and for Cole and Gaul see Emma Carnes diary, June 17, 1883, and Aug. 11, 1884, ESCP.

261 Caroline Atkinson, "A Venture in Experience," chapter 4, 16, MSS in the possession of George Waterson, Wakefield, R.I.

262 Frederic Church to O. Rood, Special Collections, Columbia University, New York.

263 For Isabel and Downie Church playing the piano see Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Dec. 8, 1891, and May 31, 1888, ESCP. For Emma Carnes see her diary, July 15, 1884, ESCP.

popular or ethnic music, with titles such as “Woodman Spare that Tree” and “The Polish Maiden’s Song.” Hymns and other religious music are also well represented in the collection. Two pieces of music by George William Warren relate directly to Church and his art: the *Marche de Bravura: The Heart of the Andes*, an homage to Church’s painting, and *Cobweb Tarentella*, a short piano piece dedicated to Church, who illustrated the cover of the printed sheet music.<sup>264</sup> The Churches also read about music. Their library includes biographies of composers and musicians (including one on the Churches’ friend Louis Moreau Gottschalk) and many volumes on the history of music.<sup>265</sup>

The family shared an interest in music with their friends. Susan Warner (figure 33), wife of the author Charles Dudley Warner, was a gifted pianist. She was well known for her support of musical organizations in Hartford and her own Wednesday night musical open houses. She often played the piano when she came to Olana.<sup>266</sup> Susan Hale noted: “She plays superbly, and willingly, all the Dresel-Chopin things we used to know by heart.”<sup>267</sup> For Mrs. Warner, Church promised to collect samples of the music he had heard in Mexico, calling it “most charming and decidedly original.”<sup>268</sup> Sylvester Baxter, a noted scholar of Mexican culture, visited with an unnamed friend, who played Mexican dance music while at Olana.<sup>269</sup> The Palmers and the Churches also enjoyed music together. In March of 1878 Church invited Erastus Dow and Mary Palmer and their daughter and her husband, Isabel and William Fassette, to a “soirée musicale” at Olana.<sup>270</sup> Such homemade musical events were probably common. During a visit to Olana in 1883, Fair Osborn sang and his wife played the piano, and on another evening the Church family

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264 The *Marche de Bravura* is OL.1992.17, and neither of the two copies of the *Cobweb Tarentella* owned by Olana is accessioned, all are ESCP.

265 See, for example, *The Great German Composers* published by Appleton’s in 1876 (OL.1986.594); Gottschalk’s biography (OL.1985.823); and a history of piano forte music by John Filmore (OL.1984.434).

266 See Frederic Church to Charles Dudley Warner, May 25, 1885, and Aug. 15, 1887, ESCP. Emma Carnes diary, June 20, 1885, ESCP, notes that “Mrs. Warner played magnificently in the evening.” For a biographical statement on Susan Warner, see Louise Karr, “Mrs. Charles Dudley Warner,” *American Magazine*, May 26, 1897, 36, 38-39.

267 Atkinson, *Letters of Susan Hale*, 251.

268 Frederic Church to Charles Dudley Warner, March 2, 1885, ESCP; and Frederic Church to Henry Fairfield Osborn, May 27, 1885, NYHS. Church mentions that he has collected a selection of Mexican music arranged for the piano and asks “Lulu” (Fairfield’s wife) to play them at Olana.

269 Emma Carnes diary, June 3, 1885, ESCP.

270 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, March 14, 1878, McKL. The “Fassits” mentioned there were Mr. and Mrs. William Henry Fassette.

“sang hymns to Mr. Bliss[’s] lively & thundering accompaniment.”<sup>271</sup> By 1887 Isabel lamented that because she had neglected her practicing, she could no longer play the piano. She warns Downie – “never allow yourself to lose your music.”<sup>272</sup>

Holidays were celebrated at Olana. According to the 1890 article by Frank Binnacle, Church “always gathers his children here during the Christmas holidays.” While this was not strictly true by that date (the Churches often wintered away from Olana), in earlier years the family was home for Christmas. Virginia Osborn was a guest of the Churches at Christmas 1875 and describes the excitement of the four young Church children as the Sitting Room door was unlocked, revealing the presents Santa had left.<sup>273</sup> Presents, of course, were a part of Christmas for the Churches, as they were for most upper-class nineteenth century households. A letter from Mrs. Carnes, spending her Christmas in New York in 1882, inquires anxiously whether or not she has sent sufficient presents for the children.<sup>274</sup> A quiet Christmas was held at Olana in 1889, with houseguests Amelia Edwards and Kate Bradbury. The Churches presented the two with a “Mexican feather picture, framed” and later Church sent them several of his own oil studies, which he had reworked to improve.<sup>275</sup> Birthdays were celebrated with presents and perhaps a special outing, such as a picnic.<sup>276</sup> For the Fourth of July 1883, Mrs. Carnes bought fireworks for the Church boys.<sup>277</sup> When Theodore Winthrop Church brought his bride, Amelie van der Kieft to Olana for their honeymoon in 1899, the family and staff decorated the house with a white chrysanthemum and a candle on every windowsill in the house.<sup>278</sup> From these accounts, it is clear that the Church family marked national holidays and family milestones with moderate celebrations.

Although Olana was the permanent home of the Church family, all members usually spent some part of each year away from it. As discussed above, by the early 1880s each of the

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- 271 Emma Carnes, diary, Sept. 31, 1883, and Aug. 16, 1885, ESCP. The Bliss mentioned was probably William Tyler Bliss, son of Daniel Bliss, the American minister who headed the Protestant Syrian College.
- 272 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Jan. 29, 1887, ESCP.
- 273 Virginia Osborn to Mary Sturges, n.d. (probably Dec. 1875), NYHS.
- 274 Emma Carnes to Isabel Church, Dec. 24, 1882, ESCP.
- 275 Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, Dec. 25, 1889, typescript supplied by Brenda Moon, Edinburgh, Scotland; and Frederic Church to Amelia Edwards, Jan. 5, 1890, Sommerville College Library, Oxford, England.
- 276 Emma Carnes in her diary records a planned picnic to celebrate Downie’s birthday on July 17, 1883.
- 277 Emma Carnes diary, June 30, 1883, ESCP.
- 278 Amelie van der Kieft Church typescript, WP, box 3, folder 14.
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Church children spent much of the academic year away at boarding schools. Frederic Church maintained his studio in the Tenth Street Studio Building in New York City until December 1888. He used this space not only for painting but also for entertaining; it helped maintain his ties with the art world. Usually, Frederic and Isabel spent some weeks in New York City each year, often staying at the Osborn's home, at the homes of other friends, or at one of the city's better hotels.<sup>279</sup> The Churches also took short trips to visit friends, go sightseeing, and otherwise amuse themselves. For example, in June 1883 Frederic, Isabel, and Downie took a trip to Boston and Nahant to visit Thomas Gold Appleton and enjoy the seashore.<sup>280</sup> Camp Rhodora, probably acquired by Frederic Church in the late 1870s, was another favorite retreat. Although by the end of the 1880s Frederic and Isabel were probably not well enough to make the rugged trip to this wilderness area in Maine very often, the Church boys continued to enjoy and improve the camp. They probably spent portions of each summer there, along with friends, a custom Louis continued in the twentieth century.

In March 1881 Frederic and Isabel made their first trip to Mexico, a country that was to enchant the artist. He traveled there fourteen times, and Isabel accompanied him on five of these trips.<sup>281</sup> Frederic usually spent several months each winter in Mexico, generally departing the United States in December or January of each year, and returning by March or so. For most of the trips of the 1880s Isabel accompanied her husband, and in later years he was usually accompanied by either Louis or Winnie, at least for part of the trip. Church always preferred to travel with a congenial group, and over the years he cajoled a large cast of artists, writers, and other notables into going to Mexico with him or meeting him there. Among his Mexican traveling companions were Charles Dudley Warner, Sylvester Baxter, Worthington Whittredge, Jervis McEntee, and several younger artists, including George Lofton Noyes, Howard Russell Butler, and William Townley Benson. Isabel eventually found that she was less able than her husband to tolerate high altitudes and that she benefited from the humid climates that proved destructive to his health. Thus, while her husband went to Mexico she went to various

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279 While the Osborns were away, the Church family spent Jan. 18 - April 13, 1883, at their home, and in another instance, Isabel Church stayed with the Blodgets in New York City, see Emma Carnes diary, Jan.-April 1883 and April 1, 1882, ESCP.

280 Emma Carnes diary, June 29, 1883, ESCP.

281 The chronology of the Churches' trips to Mexico is taken from Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 419-423 and 466-469.

places, including Bermuda, Palm Beach, Florida, and, in the winter of 1893-94, to Algiers and Cannes. She also was usually accompanied by a family member and one or more of the Olana servants. The couple often reunited in the spring in the southern states or in New York City. They were usually in residence at Olana from late spring until late autumn.

## CHAPTER 7

### Frederic and Isabel as Collectors

Life at Olana was bound up in the collections of the house – in collecting fine and decorative art objects, in examining them, learning about them, and admiring them. Olana was described as “museum of fine arts, rich in bronzes, paintings, sculptures and antique and artistic specimens from all over the world.”<sup>282</sup> Frederic and Isabel both had wide-ranging interests in all the arts, and were friends with artists and with other collectors. The main body of the *Historic Furnishings Report* examines these objects one by one, cataloging them and explaining their significance to the Churches. In this section, I will discuss categories of objects the couple collected as well as how they formed their collections. As we shall see, they considered Olana a repository for their treasures.

Even as a young man, Frederic Church was collecting; these early objects foretold interests he cultivated later. He owned one old master painting as early as 1848; this was *Beauty in the Embrace of Death* (figure 21), an early eighteen-century painting now attributed to the Venetian painter Gregorio Lazzarini.<sup>283</sup> An 1856 letter from Edward Sheffield Bartholomew, a sculptor friend traveling in Europe, reveals that he was scouting photographs for Church to purchase.<sup>284</sup> Although he never became a photographer himself, Church was eventually to own thousands of photographs, and a significant number of these date from the 1850s and 1860s, when commercial photography was still quite young. Thus, Church was apparently a very early collector of photography. From the beginning of his career as an artist, Church exchanged gifts of artwork with other artists and other collectors. An 1856 letter to composer George William Warren thanks him for the gift of some “Chinese pictures. . . . [They] are very curious and have a barbarous beauty that I like.”<sup>285</sup> In 1853 Church arranged a swap with William Sidney Mount,

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282 Zabriskie, “‘Old Colony’ Papers.”

283 “Art Items,” *New York Evening Mirror*, April 6, 1848, 2. The painting is OL.1980.1950 and is discussed in ch. 24, “The Dining Room / Picture Gallery,” of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

284 Edward Sheffield Bartholomew to Frederic Church, March 11, 1856, Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Conn.

285 Frederic Church to George Warren, May 23, 1856, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Penn. Church may have been discussing a set of small Oriental paintings on silk, now housed in Olana’s archive.

trading an old master for a work by the American genre painter.<sup>286</sup> Throughout his life, Church was to retain an interest in artifacts from South America's pre-Columbian past. Still in the collections at Olana are textile fragments now attributed to the pre-Columbian era, probably obtained by Church on his trips to South America in 1853 and 1857. After their marriage, Isabel joined her husband as a collector. On the island of Jamaica in 1865 she made a large collection of ferns, gathering dozens of different species.

Frederic and Isabel were active collectors on the 1867-69 trip to Europe and the Middle East, bringing home a wide variety of objects. While they were still away, the family started sending crates filled with their purchases back to America; eventually their purchases filled at least 15 crates.<sup>287</sup> Writing from Rome in 1869, Frederic invited William Osborn to go to his studio and open boxes that had been shipped home from Constantinople, in order to retrieve their gifts: "I think it would amuse you and Mrs. Osborn to see the medley in the box – for there are rugs - armour - stuffs - curiosities, etc. etc., crowded in together and some of the other boxes have old clothes (Turkish) stones from a house in Damascus, Arab spears - beads from Jerusalem - stones from Petra and 10,000 other things."<sup>288</sup> Some of the collections formed on the trip probably decorated Church's studio, at least before the new home was built at Olana. A Boston newspaper described them. "Church, the artist, has brought home many trophies of travel, such as a Bedouin Arab's spear, a suit of Damascus armor, a huge bit of the Parthenon, Turkish embroidery, Palestine beads, etc. etc."<sup>289</sup>

The Churches began collecting Middle Eastern rugs on their trip to that region and continued to collect rugs for the rest of their lives. The artist's taste in rugs around 1869 is recorded: "Mr. Church says 'the quality I should like in all cases to be the best and the colour generally rather rich. . . . I want emphatically characteristic Persian rugs.'"<sup>290</sup>

When he was in the Middle East, Church apparently could not find high-quality rugs himself, and he went to some pains to learn from acquaintances in Damascus and Beirut where good rugs could be bought, at what prices, and whether rugs could be purchased directly from

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286 The exchange is mentioned in Mount's diary. See Alfred Frankenstein, *William Sidney Mount* (New York: Abrams, 1975), 268.

287 Frederic Church to Robert Weeks, June 7, 1869, ESCP.

288 Frederic Church to William Osborn, Feb. 4, 1869, transcript of a lost original, ESCP.

289 *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, Dec. 3, 1869.

290 William Wright to D. Stuart Dodge, January 26, 1869, ESCP.

caravans from Persia.<sup>291</sup> He ended up buying a few rugs in Beirut, because the marble floors of the family's hotel were so cold.<sup>292</sup> Isabel too was interested in rugs, and she bought three Smyrna rugs in the bazaar there and laughed with her husband about the price.<sup>293</sup>

Church greatly expanded his old master painting collection in Rome in the winter of 1868-69. Although he was not especially fond of the city, the family deemed it best to spend some months there so that Isabel could deliver a baby, Theodore Winthrop. Church made good use of his time, producing his own paintings, learning the technique of fresco, and collecting old master paintings. Church described his tactics: "We dine at two – after dinner I take my exercise and recreation – see sights and rummage among the shops of antiquities – I select about one in 5,000 – and generally pay about 1/10<sup>th</sup> the price asked."<sup>294</sup> He acquired ten or more paintings from an impoverished Monsignor in the papal offices, characterizing some of them as "pre-Raphaelite works and queer."<sup>295</sup> He was especially proud of a landscape purportedly by Claude Lorrain (figure 22), the renowned seventeenth century French painter of Arcadian scenes. "Two weeks ago I lighted on a sweet landscape – A Claude – for \$20. Some of the knowing ones here think it is really a Claude – Well it's as good as most of his and better too – It is charming."<sup>296</sup> This and other letters from Church allow us to discern his opinions about his old masters: he was proud that he had paid so little for the works; he realized that, in his day, many old master paintings were given inflated or misleading attributions; he mistrusted dealers, instead relying on his own eye; and he perhaps was immodest in ranking his own skills as a connoisseur.<sup>297</sup> By the end of the Roman sojourn, he had amassed some 60 paintings; while

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291 Ibid, and M. Meshalea to J. Aug[ust?] Johnson, Jan. 26, 1869, ESCP.

292 Frederic Church to William Osborn, Jan. 13, 1868, transcript of a lost original, ESCP.

293 Isabel Church, 1868 diary, May 30, NYHS.

294 Frederic Church to William Osborn, Nov. 4, 1868, transcript of a lost original, ESCP.

295 Frederic Church to William Osborn, Jan. 23, 1869, transcript of a lost original, ESCP.

296 Frederic Church to Martin J. Heade, Nov. 16, 1868, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. The painting is included in ch. 24, "The Dining Room / Picture Gallery," of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

297 For more on the old masters collection, see ch. 24, "The Dining Room / Picture Gallery," of this *Historic Furnishings Report* and Karen Zukowski, "Old World Art in the New: The Dining Room at Olana" (lecture to the Victorian Society in America, Hartford, Conn., Nov. 2, 1996), copy in ORC.

most were for his own collection, some were probably purchased for friends.<sup>298</sup>

To the end of their lives, the Churches continued to add to the old master collection. They bought five especially important paintings from the William J. Shaw auction in New York City in 1880, including *St. Rose of Lima*, which was then attributed to Bartolomé Murillo.<sup>299</sup> Another “Murillo” came from L. A. Lanthier, a New York City dealer in antique paintings, furniture, and objects d’art.<sup>300</sup> In 1886 Church inherited the furnishings of his family’s home in Hartford, including *Tobias and the Angel*, a seventeenth century work by the Dutch painter David Vinkboons.<sup>301</sup> It is likely that Church had had a hand in its purchase; his family was not otherwise known as collectors of old master paintings. In Mexico, too, Church tried his hand at collecting old masters. He made a rigorous trip in 1884 to the remote village of Tzintzuntzan in the province of Morelia, to see a large painting depicting the deposition of Christ, purportedly by Titian. He reportedly tried to purchase the painting, but the church that owned it would not sell it.<sup>302</sup> In a shop in Mexico City he did buy a life-sized portrait of a novitiate and spent some days cleaning it himself.<sup>303</sup> The picture is dated 1782 and is signed by Andreas Lopez, a well-known master of the genre of religious portraiture in colonial Mexico.

The old master collection at Olana now numbers some 55 canvases. There are other highlights of the collection beyond those cited above. A small tondo has recently been attributed to Perugino, the teacher of Raphael; it may have been the first painting by Perugino to have entered an American collection.<sup>304</sup> A large canvas depicting the scourging of Christ was once

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- 298 On an inventory written in Church’s handwriting 62 paintings are listed (OL.1985.608). This appears to be some sort of shipping list, dating from 1868-69. Another list of old masters is found in an 1868-69 address book (OL.1983.304), both in ESCP. The two lists, while similar, are not exact duplicates, making a precise accounting of Church’s Roman purchases difficult. Notations on these lists, such as “deF” indicate that some paintings may have been purchased for others, especially some member of the de Forest family, perhaps Henry Grant de Forest.
- 299 The Shaw sale is discussed more fully in ch. 24, “The Dining Room / Picture Gallery,” of this *Historic Furnishings Report* and in Zukowski, “Old World Art in the New.”
- 300 The painting, *The Annunciation to the Shepherds* (OL.1980.1888), was sold to Church as a Murillo. It is now attributed to Bartolomeo Passante, a painter active in Naples c. 1625 - c. 1650. It is discussed in ch. 24, “The Dining Room / Picture Gallery,” of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.
- 301 The painting is discussed in ch. 19, “The Studio.”
- 302 Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 440.
- 303 This is *Sor Pudenciana*, discussed in ch. 19, “The Studio.” (OL.1981.53). See also Edward Garczynski, “A Forgotten Artist: Mexico had a School of Portraiture,” *Mexico City Two Republics*, March 16, 1895, 8.
- 304 Joseph Antenucci Becherer, *Pietro Perugino: Master of the Italian Renaissance* (New York and Grand Rapids, Mich.: Rizzoli and The Grand Rapids Art Museum, 1997), 103-105. The painting is discussed in ch. 24, “The Dining Room / Picture Gallery.”
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attributed to Rembrandt; scholars now agree that it is not by that artist, but they have not yet been able to attribute it to another one.<sup>305</sup> Several paintings come from the Baroque era of Spain and Italy, including a macabre *Vanitas* and a more conventional fruit and vegetable still life.<sup>306</sup> Other highlights include a late Byzantine icon from central Italy and a life-sized portrait of a saint from fifteenth-century Florence, possibly by Giovanni di Francesco.<sup>307</sup> A great many of these paintings are hung in the Picture Gallery, which also served as the family's dining room, and others were found in the Studio. Several paintings were apparently hung in the bedrooms of the home, including the "Rembrandt," the *Vanitas*, and the Italian icon. The old masters were probably the single collection most remembered and most discussed by visitors to Olana.

Artworks by contemporaries of Church also formed an important part of the furnishings of Olana. It must be remembered that until 1886 the only large painting by Church on view at Olana was *El Khasné Petra*, a gift from the artist to his wife and painted in the first months of 1875. The Churches seemed to have been more interested in owning and displaying works by their friends. They owned no fewer than ten works by Erastus Dow Palmer, including *Sleep* (figure 23) and *Spring*, both full-scale marble sculptures.<sup>308</sup> They owned five charcoal portraits of family members by Samuel Rowse, who was probably commissioned to produce these.<sup>309</sup> Thomas Gold Appleton, best known as a writer and conversationalist, painted charming landscapes on smooth beach stones; a set of five were sent as a gift and framed in a shadow box.<sup>310</sup> Another gift came from Charles De Wolf Brownell, a Hartford artist, who sent a "portrait" of a royal palm tree, an expression of Church's and his mutual interest in tropical plants.<sup>311</sup>

Like many of their contemporaries, the Churches were especially interested in antiquarian objects from many cultures. The aged objects and their historical associations were carefully

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305 This is OL.1981.64. It is not included in this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

306 These are OL.1980.1935 (not in this *Historic Furnishings Report*) and OL.1980.1251 (discussed in ch. 24, "The Dining Room / Picture Gallery").

307 These are *Noli me Tangere*, OL.1980.1943 (not in this *Historic Furnishings Report*) and *St. Paul the Hermit*, OL.1980.25 (discussed in ch. 24, "The Dining Room / Picture Gallery").

308 *Sleep* is included in ch. 17, "The Court Hall" of this *Historic Furnishings Report*, and *Spring* is discussed in ch. 19, "The Studio."

309 Rowse's portrait of Isabel Church is discussed in ch. 17, "The Court Hall"; the other four portraits by Rowse are not in this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

310 Appleton's painted rocks (OL.1981.714) are discussed in ch. 17, "The Court Hall."

311 Brownell's *Royal Palm* (OL.1981.30) is not included in this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

noted by the couple. The Churches valued objects because they were old. In 1896 Isabel wrote to Louis, who was overseeing the cleaning of the house, to instruct the maids to “be extra careful of those two dark blue vases, in the Court – They are very old, and cracked already.”<sup>312</sup> The tall bronze cranes-atop-tortoises in the Court Hall were also thought to be “several hundred years old.”<sup>313</sup> Two paintings hanging in the Corridor were probably purchased because they were considered representative works of earlier American artists: a bucolic scene by Thomas Doughty, one of the first landscapists at work in this country, and a genre scene bought by the Churches as a work of Washington Allston, the Boston master of Romantic painting.<sup>314</sup> Commemorating her life in Paris in the 1830s, Emma Carnes compiled an album of memorabilia, including letters from the Marquis de Lafayette.<sup>315</sup> Not only did the Churches value this album, they added to it, including pieces of a tent George Washington used in his military campaigns and a piece of Martha Washington’s wedding dress. On his many trips to Mexico and through connections with collectors in New York City, Church acquired objects he believed had been made in the pre-Columbian era in South and Central America, especially Mexico.<sup>316</sup> Church sent Samuel Clemens one of these objects: “You will remember Mr. Carter of Mexico. . . . When I was last in Mexico he had just found an ancient pipe – antedating the Spanish invasion – in some debris where his men were excavating. He gave it to me as a curiosity – who can tell how many centuries have passed since its Toltec owner soothed his leisure hours with it.”<sup>317</sup> Clearly, Church was fascinated with romantic pre-Columbian history and its artifacts.

The Churches were also interested in handmade objects and admired the skill evidenced in their workmanship. Olana is filled with objects from preindustrial cultures, objects now

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312 Isabel Church to Louis Church, March 22, 1896, ESCP. These tall blue-and-white vases stand on the stair landing in the Court Hall and are described in ch. 17 of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

313 See Hortense Ferguson Childs, “Reminiscences,” 13, WP. Elsewhere in her paper, Childs makes it clear that Frederic Church himself related stories and anecdotes to her, so the assessment of the age of the cranes was probably made by Church himself. The cranes are now believed to date from the nineteenth century.

314 The painting is no longer attributed to Washington Allston. It is discussed in chapter 20, “The Corridor.”

315 The album is OL.1982.1037.

316 Church’s activities as a collector of pre-Columbian antiquities are summarized in: Bethany Astrachan, “The pre-Columbian Collection of Frederic Edwin Church,” research paper for Prof. Paul Goldstein, Columbia University, June 29, 1995, copy in ORC. At this writing, the collection has not been closely studied by experts in pre-Columbian art. It is believed that most of the objects in the collection were made in the nineteenth century, while some do date from before the Spanish colonization of the New World. Much of the pre-Columbian collection (but not all) is housed in a cabinet in the Studio and is discussed in ch. 19, “The Studio”; other pieces are in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery and discussed in ch. 24.

317 Frederic Church to Samuel Clemens, Dec. 16, 1887, Twain Papers, University of California at Berkeley.



termed folk art or ethnographic artifacts. In the Court Hall are ceramics from Mexico with charming painted designs (figure 24) and a Middle Eastern vase with a glaze imitating turquoise decorations.<sup>318</sup> Church collected examples of baskets and sombreros from Mexico and the southwestern United States, and his son Frederic Joseph apparently sent the family several fine baskets from different regions of the Northwest Territories. Textiles of all sorts were used as throws over seating furniture and tabletops; the collection is rich in *serapes*, *rebozos*, and heavily embroidered silk shawls from Mexico, and in *suzannis* and Rhest-work from western Persia. The Churches were active patrons of Lockwood de Forest, a distant relative of Isabel Church and a student of Frederic Church. De Forest began a workshop in India that produced woodcarvings and brass work as a spur to revive these dying arts of the *mistri* caste.<sup>319</sup> The Churches commissioned the Dining Room fireplace from de Forest’s workshop, purchased painted Kashmiri chairs he had designed (figure 25), and bought many other objects and architectural elements from de Forest.<sup>320</sup>

Even after returning from the Middle East, Church made special efforts to collect art from that region, especially objects from Persia. In 1878 he wrote: “I took Mrs. C. to New York on Tuesday with Miss Roosevelt. . . . I bought some Persian brass work - two rugs - a three-tined spear, Persian, an Arabian coffee pot, an Arabian Table, a piece of Persian Embroidery, a Persian Battle Axe, a silk Turban, a Moorish plate, et cetera.”<sup>321</sup> There is still a pair of Middle Eastern brass cone-shaped ornaments purchased from Samuel Green Wheeler Benjamin, an American writer on art, in the Court Hall.<sup>322</sup> The Churches were interested in the work of Ali Mohammed Isfahani, a ceramicist who worked in Tehran and Isfahan in the 1880s, reviving and

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318 Some examples of Mexican pottery are OL.1981.632, OL.1981.635, and OL.1983.965. The Middle Eastern vase is OL.1981.638. The vase and several examples of Mexican pottery are described in ch. 17, “The Court Hall”, of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

319 See Roberta Ann Mayer, “Lockwood de Forest and the American Aesthetic Movement: Understanding his Ideas in the Context of Olana” (master’s thesis, University of Delaware, 1995).

320 The Kashmiri chairs can be found in the chapters on the Court Hall (ch. 17) and the East Parlor (ch. 16) of this *Historic Furnishings Report*. Further architectural elements are described in the chapters on the Corridor (ch. 20), Studio (ch. 19), East Parlor (ch. 16), and Sitting Room (ch. 18). See Mayer, “Lockwood de Forest and the American Aesthetic Movement” for further information on de Forest objects at Olana.

321 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Nov. 14, 1878, McKL.

322 See Samuel G. W. Benjamin to Frederic Church, Dec. 24, 1885, and Jan. 13, 1886, both in ESCP; and Frederic Church to Samuel G. W. Benjamin, Dec. 21, 1886, Alfred William Anthony Collection, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York City. The Churches owned the following books by Benjamin: *The Story of the Nations: The Story of Persia* (OL.1984.361.9) and *Persia and the Persians* (OL.1985.450). The brass ornaments are discussed in ch. 17, “The Court Hall,” of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

interpreting classical Saffavid designs.<sup>323</sup> The Churches owned at least three fireplace surrounds (figure 26) as well as many pieces of hollowware made by him; some of this was purchased through a New York City dealer who had a trading depot in Tehran.<sup>324</sup> Through the Reverend W. L. Whipple, an agent of the American Bible Society who lived in Tabriz, the Churches were able to buy some select items directly from sources in Persia.<sup>325</sup> A series of letters records this purchase and shipment of items to Olana, an enterprise that took place over many months in 1887 and 1888 and was fraught with difficulties. In a letter to the Warners, Church mentions the expected shipment:

I hope you will both suppress undue mirth when I tell you that we have not yet received the Persian Goods. They have been in New York though for three weeks or more – of course in the hands of Customs officials. Ever since they left Tabbies [*sic*] on Camels we have followed their travels with a curious interest. At short intervals strange documents in various languages covered with queer stamps would arrive. So far as I could make out from them certain persons and firms, at the various stations where the goods rested, helped themselves to Baksheesh at my expense. This continued with great regularity until they reached New York – where the Baksheesh system will climax.

I hope that when all demands are paid that we will have saved enough from the wreck of our property to escape penury.

There is one ray of hope. I have just received information from the Customs officials that all the Porcelain is smashed owing to bad packing. Of course they can't collect Baksheesh on sherds.<sup>326</sup>

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323 See Jennifer M. Scarce, "Ali Mohammed Isfahani: Tilemaker of Tehran," *Oriental Art*, n.s., 22, no. 3 (autumn 1976): 278-288.

324 See a bill dated March 13, 1887, from S. Pruvost, ESCP. The letterhead lists Pruvost as an "importer of Persian and Oriental Goods." Two of the fireplace surrounds are in the Studio and in Mr. Church's bedroom. The third was installed in Louis and Sally's cottage in Florida; it was removed before the house was demolished in 1997, and its location is now unknown. See Daniel Chait, "Quick Action Documents Church History," *The Crayon* 27, no. 202 (spring 1996): 1, 16. Examples of Ali Mohammed Isfahani hollowware are discussed in the chapters on the Studio (ch. 19) and the Court Hall (ch. 17).

325 See Frederic Church to Samuel G. W. Benjamin, Dec. 21, 1886, Alfred William Anthony Collection, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York City, which mentions Whipple's affiliations. In the address book Church kept in the 1880s and 1890s (OL.1994.18) a "Rev. W L Whipple" appears in Persia. The March 8, 1888, letter from W. L. Whipple to Frederic Church (cited below) mentions mutual acquaintances in the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and the Union Theological Seminary of New York City.

326 Frederic Church to Charles Dudley Warner, Dec. 16, 1887, ESCP.

Nonetheless, some of Whipple's items did successfully arrive at Olana, including the large rug now in the Court Hall, a set of three portraits of high Persian nobles set in a mirror frame in the East Parlor, and an elaborately painted and inscribed table.<sup>327</sup> On her visit to Olana in November of 1888, Susan Hale found the decor much augmented by the shipments: "A good many changes in this palace since I was here last year, for all those Persian things are spread broadcast, every table, chair, window seat, mantelpiece, exquisite in form & decoration."<sup>328</sup>

The Churches also collected items because of the stories, memories, and meanings that were connected with them. When his sister Elizabeth died in 1886, Frederic, as the last surviving member of his family, inherited the furnishings of the family's home. Included among the heirlooms Church chose to incorporate into the interiors at Olana were pendant portraits of his father and himself and another of his sister Charlotte.<sup>329</sup> He also brought some of his own early paintings, including *Autumn in New England*, *The Afterglow*, and *Christian on the Border of the "Valley of the Shadow of Death," Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>330</sup> Because his parents had acted as patrons for these works, they would have held special meaning for Church. Church also collected the work of his teacher, Thomas Cole, and was especially pleased with his 1888 purchase of *View of the Protestant Burying Ground, Rome*.<sup>331</sup> Throughout her life, Isabel picked plants and flowers in special places she traveled, gathered these into herbaria, and carefully labeled her finds; at least three of these herbaria survive at Olana.<sup>332</sup> Two items once in the Sitting Room carried associations especially significant for understanding Church's art. Hung as pendants, portraits of Claude Lorrain and Alexander von Humboldt reveal Church's devotion to Old-World classical art and New-World modern science. All the artwork in the Sitting Room carries personal meaning, from Isabel's wedding portrait to the landscape by John Jameson, a

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327 See W. L. Whipple to Frederic Church, Nov. 8, 1887, ESCP, and W. L. Whipple to Frederic Church, March 8, 1888, private collection; copy in ORC. The table is not discussed in this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

328 Susan Hale to "Luc" (Lucretia P. Hale) Nov. 11, 1888, Special Collections, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R.I.

329 The portrait of Charlotte is discussed in ch. 16, "The East Parlor."

330 These paintings are described in the chapters on the East Parlor (ch. 16) and the Studio (ch. 19) of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

331 The painting is mentioned in ch. 18, "The Sitting Room."

332 One herbarium is a compilation of plant material gathered in the Holy Land (OL.1983.791); another contains material gathered around Rome (ESCP); and a third, an informal herbarium compiled between the pages of a magazine, appears to consist of material gathered in Europe, especially near the Obersee (ESCP).

friend tragically killed in the Civil War, to *Sunrise* and *Moonrise*, landscapes that commemorated the births of the Churches' first two children and served to keep their memories alive.

Some collections at Olana were formed specifically as resources that nourished the Churches' interests. The library, consisting of some 2,000 volumes on literature, travel, natural resources, history, and other topics, is the prime example. Many of these books were by acquaintances of the Churches and were also expressions of mutual interest in the subjects discussed. The Churches' extensive collection of travel and ethnic photography was produced by commercial photographers around the world; it documents the places and peoples that interested the Churches. This collection, consisting of some 2,500 images ranging from relatively common stereoscope cards to very rare prints taken by Persian photographers, is especially rich in images from the Middle East, Mexico, and Italy. The Churches also had an extensive collection of prints, which included the prints Church had had produced after his own paintings, prints after the old masters, and some unique items, including a print of the Church-owned painting, *St. Rose of Lima*.<sup>333</sup> These were resources that enabled the Churches to learn more about their collections and about every conceivable topic of interest.

Finally, Frederic Church was a philanthropist for America's developing museums. In 1877 he donated a "cabinet-sized portrait of President Madison," then attributed to Thomas Sully, to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington.<sup>334</sup> To the American Museum of Natural History, where Henry Fairfield Osborn was conducting important research, Church gave some insect specimens and ethnographic artifacts from Mexico.<sup>335</sup> Church was one of the founding members of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was a trustee from 1870 to 1887, and remained involved with the museum until his death.<sup>336</sup> This is not surprising, considering that he had

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333 See Karen Zukowski, "Prints and the Artistic Life at Olana," paper read at the symposium "Prints in America," City University of New York, New York, Dec. 4, 1992, copy in ORC.

334 William MacLeod to Frederic Church, March 19, 1877, ESCP.

335 The American Museum of Natural History, "Annual Report of the President, Act of Incorporation, Constitution, By-Laws and List of Members for the Year 1894" (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1896), 51; and The American Museum of Natural History, "Annual Report of the President, Act of Incorporation, Constitution, By-Laws and List of Members for the Year 1896" (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1897), 82.

336 Church's connections with the Metropolitan Museum of Art will be described in John Howat's forthcoming biography of Frederic Church. See also Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 305, and Katherine Emma Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839-1879* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 105.

many connections to its founders, including its first president, John Taylor Johnston, who was a patron. Another trustee was Johnston's son-in-law, Robert Weeks de Forest, a cousin of Isabel's and brother of Lockwood de Forest. Church donated several items to the young institution, including a painting then attributed to Rubens, and two Aztec bas-reliefs (figure 27) that are still on view.<sup>337</sup> He also loaned several old master paintings for special exhibitions.<sup>338</sup> Church also made efforts to have prints issued of at least two of his old master paintings; presumably these were as much educational projects as moneymaking ventures.<sup>339</sup>

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337 For the "Rubens," see a letter from Barbara File, archivist, Metropolitan Museum of Art, April 18, 1994, to Karen Zukowski, "Church as a Collector of Old Masters" file, ORC. For the bas-reliefs see Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance*, 105; and Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 466.

338 These are documented in Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1873). Church lent at least 11 old masters to this exhibition; 9 are still at Olana.

339 The two old masters that were engraved were *Beauty in the Embrace of Death* (OL.1980.1950), see "Art Items," and a nocturnal scene of classical ruins, now attributed to Desiderio Monsu (OL.1985.608). A plate still affixed to the frame of the nocturnal scene reads "published by M. Knoedler & Co. 170 Fifth Avenue New York." The painting was probably purchased in Rome in 1868-69, and Church probably arranged to have it engraved with Michael Knoedler of New York who had already issued prints after Church's own paintings. Efforts to find a copy of this print have proved unsuccessful. See the accession file for the painting for full documentation.



## CHAPTER 8

### Guests at Olana

In 1885 Frederic Church wrote: “our house has been crammed with visitors for some time . . . friends from different parts of the country have written that they are in New York or vicinity which means they expect to be invited for a visit – and so they have been – for we do want to see them.”<sup>340</sup> Olana was often full of visitors, not only those making a formal call or sitting down to a meal, but those spending several nights or longer. Although the Churches chose to build a home in the country, miles from any town, they were far from reclusive. Instead, the couple made efforts to bring the world to Olana. A significant portion of both Frederic and Isabel’s correspondence consists of invitations to visit Olana. Many accepted these invitations, and, as we have seen, the correspondence of these appreciative visitors provides some of the best documentation of activities that occurred at Olana and insight into the personalities and interests of the Church family. What follows is an account of the different types of houseguests at Olana, discussion of their activities while here, and a summary of the numbers of houseguests and how they were lodged.<sup>341</sup>

Accommodations were made for Church’s business associates, and others coming to the Churches for professional reasons. John McClure, an agent for Church who arranged the “great picture” exhibitions for Church’s *Niagara* and *The Heart of the Andes* and the man who supervised the sale of prints of these works, stayed in Cosy Cottage for several days in 1862; we can assume that others conducting business with Church stayed in the main residence once it was built. Miles Graves, a Hartford friend who looked after Church’s financial interest there, visited Olana several times, both by himself and together with his wife. His daughter arrived at Olana with the ten-year-old Downie and left one day later; she may have been serving as an escort. The patrons of Frederic Church, such as Charles Parsons and Joseph Austin, were also occasional visitors.

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340 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Aug. 2, 1885, McKL.

341 Much of the basic data about the guests at Olana is drawn from Lizzi, “The Guests of Frederic and Isabel Church,” ORC. Unless otherwise cited, references documenting the names and dates of visitors discussed in this section can be found in this report.

As might be expected, relatives of Frederic and Isabel often stayed at Olana. Perhaps the houseguest who could be found at Olana most often was Emma Carnes (figure 28). She spent weeks at a time there, and on several occasions became the head of the household while Frederic and Isabel traveled, helping to look after the children.<sup>342</sup> Lucy Weeks, Isabel's half sister, visited Olana several times.<sup>343</sup> Another sister of Isabel's, Helen, married Robert Weeks, and they and their children, Anita and Henry, were occasional houseguests.<sup>344</sup> Joseph and Eliza Church (figures 29 and 30), a quiet couple who did not travel often, nonetheless visited Olana; their daughters Charlotte and Elizabeth visited on their own more often.<sup>345</sup> As the Church children married and the family circle expanded, so did the roster of houseguests. Downie and her husband Jere Black stayed at Olana, and so did Jere's parents, who also returned there on their own.

Close friends of the Frederic and Isabel Church were frequently houseguests at Olana. Two couples, William and Virginia Osborn (figures 31 and 32) and Erastus Dow and Mary Palmer, seem to have been overnight guests of the Churches at least once a year, even though each of them had a home not far from Olana.<sup>346</sup> For at least two Christmases, one in the 1870s and the other in 1891, the Osborns were guests, telling evidence of the strong, sustained friendship between the Churches and the Osborns.<sup>347</sup> In the 1880s and 1890s, Charles Dudley Warner (figure 138) and his wife Susan (figure 33) usually visited once a year. Olana also was host to many painters, including Sanford and Mary Gifford, Jervis and Gertrude McEntee, and Horace and Mary Robbins. Gertrude McEntee's brother, Calvert Vaux, visited Olana in 1878 together with his wife Mary; the architect and the painter must have spent time admiring each other's handiwork in the completed residence. Susan Hale (figure 34)

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342 Emma Carnes's visits to Olana are well documented in her diaries for 1882-83 and 1884-85, all in ESCP. If these years are typical, Emma spent many weeks at Olana each year.

343 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, May 6, 189, ESCP; and Emma Carnes diary, June 9-13, 1884, ESCP.

344 A visit from Anita is recorded in 1885 and a call from Robert in 1883, see Lizzi, "The Guests of Frederic and Isabel Church," ORC. The Weeks family may have lived in Catskill; Helen Weeks's death is recorded there in 1879, see Carnes family biographical file, ORC. Further ties between the Church and Weeks families should be researched.

345 For example, both Elizabeth and Eliza Church were expected for a visit in May 1880, see Eliza Church to Frederic Church, May 8, 1880, ESCP, and both were expected again in the summer of 1881, see Eliza Church to Frederic Church, July 2, 1881, ESCP.

346 The Osborns' country home, Castle Rock, was in Garrison, New York, and the Palmers lived in Albany.



became a good friend of the Churches by the early 1880s and visited Olana at least once a year. She would stay for weeks at a time, continuing her own writing while at Olana. Her legendary good humor and quick wit always cheered the Churches.

Among the houseguests of the Churches were the children – and grandchildren – of Frederic and Isabel’s friends. Naturally, these younger people were friends with the Church children also, and came to see both generations of Churches. The Osborn children, Fair and Will, were always welcome at Olana. Fair and his wife Lucretia (known as Loulu) and their children stayed at Olana several times.<sup>348</sup> The children of Henry Grant de Forest, one of Church’s patrons and an active figure in the New York City art world, also became close friends of both generations of Churches. Lockwood de Forest first spent time at Olana in the 1870s as the pupil of Frederic Church, and he visited many times in the 1880s and 1890s with his wife Meta. His brother Robert and Robert’s wife Emily were photographers, and over a few days in September and October of 1884 they took a valuable series of pictures of Olana’s interiors (figures 135, 136, 137, 138 and 238). A well-known minister from Hartford, Joseph Twitchell, probably visited Olana only once, but his daughter Susan became friends with both generations of the Churches and visited at least five times. The Church children also invited their own friends to Olana. Downie’s friend Alice Westerveld, an acquaintance probably made at Miss Porter’s School, visited Olana with Downie in mid-November 1887.<sup>349</sup>

The Churches invited groups of friends to come to Olana together, composing house parties that lasted for several days. One of the most memorable of these house parties occurred in June 1887, when Samuel and Olivia Clemens, Charles Dudley and Susan Warner, Grace King and Joseph Twitchell journeyed from Hartford to Olana. The group took a drive through Hudson in open carriages, enjoyed a visit from William and Virginia Osborn, and in the evenings they entertained themselves with telling stories and reading aloud.<sup>350</sup> In June 1891, when Hortense Ferguson married Lowrie Childs, a classmate of the Church boys at Princeton, nine young men who came for the wedding stayed at Olana.<sup>351</sup> For Thanksgiving 1892 Olana hosted another

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347 Virginia Osborn to Mary Sturges, n.d. (probably Dec. 1875), NYHS. See Lizzi, “The Guests of Frederic and Isabel Church,” s.v., ORC, for the 1891 visit of the Osborns.

348 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Aug. 27, 1891, ESCP. This letter describes the visit of “Perry and Virginia.” These were Alexander Perry Osborn and his sister Virginia.

349 Isabel Church to Downie Church, Nov. 28, 1887, ESCP.

350 Grace King to “Nina,” June 10, 1887, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.

351 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, May 17, 1891, ESCP.

group of young men and women, all friends of Susan Hale and Louis Church.<sup>352</sup> The group spent time skating on the lake (figure 35), performing charades in the evenings, and playing pranks on each other. The boys and the girls “put strange things” into each other’s beds, and one of the boys, Frank Woodman, salted Frederic Church’s bed with beans by mistake. “His nervousness and terror when he found out what he had done and Mr. Church making caustic remarks at the breakfast table is something to be remembered.”<sup>353</sup> The finale came when the girls enlisted Louis to scare the boys by throwing a chicken into the darkened room while they all slept; the chicken and the boys caused the expected uproar. The “chicken in the nursery” story so amused Louis that he told it often in later years, and the tale became part of the lore of the house.<sup>354</sup>

In 1889 Louis Church expressed some exasperation concerning the stream of eminent houseguests at Olana when he noted: “There is another literary brick coming here . . . will they never stop?”<sup>355</sup> Indeed, Olana was host to many well-known writers and others prominent in their professions. Rafe Leycester, a British art critic, visited Olana in the fall of 1879. Amelia Edwards (figure 36), the British Egyptologist and travel writer, visited Olana in 1882 and 1889, taking time off from a lecture tour. The Churches owned many of her books, and Church himself greatly admired them. Sylvester Baxter, a writer on travel and art, visited Olana at least four times between 1884 and 1899. A traveling companion with Frederic Church in Mexico, he shared many interests with the Churches, including Japanese pottery, municipal parks, and the American Indian culture of the Southwest. Thomas Janvier, a novelist, journalist, historian, and travel writer, and his wife Catherine, a painter and a specialist in the Provençal culture of France, visited Olana at least twice.<sup>356</sup> They also traveled with Frederic Church in Mexico, and they probably provided important links to the New York City art world of the 1880s and 1890s. Lt. Gorridge, the man responsible for transporting a monumental obelisk, *Cleopatra’s Needle*, from Egypt to New York City’s Central Park, stayed at Olana for two days in May 1882.

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352 The story of this house party is recounted in Atkinson, “A Venture in Experience,” ch. 4, 15-17, MSS in the possession of George Waterson, Wakefield, R.I.

353 Ibid.

354 The story was recounted by George S. Good III, the nephew of Sally Church, see George Good III, interview by Karen Zukowski, Evelyn Trebilcock, and Ann Gibbons, April 7, 1999, n.p., ORC.

355 Louis Church to Sally Good, December 12, 1889, ESCP.

356 See Lizzi, “The Guests of Frederic and Isabel Church,” ORC, for documentation of a trip to Olana in January 1888, and a letter by Susan Hale to “Jack” (Edward Everet Hale Jr.), Oct. 11, 1885, SSC.

Marianne North, a British traveler and botanical painter, visited Olana in the autumn of 1871 and in June 1881. Grace King, a novelist from New Orleans who became famous for writing about the South, visited Olana at least twice, having become a friend of the Churches through her friendship with the Warners and Clemenses. When she visited Olana on her own, she spent part of each morning at her own writing, just as Susan Hale did.<sup>357</sup>

Frederic and Isabel's hospitality sometimes taxed the capacity of Olana, and fitting visitors into the house meant a round-robin of moving family and guests into available beds. In a letter, almost comical, Isabel describes the complex rearrangements that had to be made for an upcoming visit: "Downie and dear Winnie will be away, but therefore, we have two extra beds, so have ample room for Fair & Loulu – and Will, and Evert Wendell. No one else is to be here. If Loulu can bring the children, I shall be only to [sic] glad and have ample room for them also for Freddy can sleep with Louis and then I will have three spare rooms."<sup>358</sup> When a friend who had accompanied her to Olana became ill, Virginia Osborn had to stay on at Olana, sleeping on a cot because more guests were expected.<sup>359</sup> We know that guests usually stayed in the three south-facing rooms on the second floor, because they often mentioned the view from their bedrooms. Two of these rooms were Frederic and Isabel's bedrooms; at times the couple must have given up their own beds to guests.<sup>360</sup> In July of 1891 Isabel describes the use of two rooms in the attic, the former nursery and a small room next door.<sup>361</sup> She calls the smaller room Downie's room and notes that although Louis was sleeping in it now, it had recently been used

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357 "May" to Grace King, July 9, 1891, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML. Apparently King felt embarrassed to request a very early breakfast while at Olana, and May, King's sister, advises her: "If Mrs. Church is motherly it seems to me she would not mind you telling her outright that you work early in the morning and that you would like some fruit or milk to take when you first get up."

358 Isabel Church to Virginia Osborn, July 12, n.y. (1890s?), NYHS.

359 Emma Carnes diary, May 23, 1882, ESCP.

360 For example, Kate Bradbury and Amelia Edwards both watched a sunset from their separate rooms, which must have been on the south side of the house, see Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, Dec. 25, 1889, typescript supplied by Brenda Moon, Edinburgh, Scotland, copy in ORC. When Grace King visited Olana in 1887, she reported that the Warners were staying in Mrs. Church's bedroom and that she also had a south view, see Grace King to "May," June 7, 1887, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML. When Marianne North visited Olana in 1881, she slept in the Chinese bed, which reportedly had been Church's own bed, see North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, 1:209. It is unclear whether Church had moved out of his bedroom for North, or whether the Chinese bed had been moved into another room, possibly room 216. When Jervis McEntee stayed at Olana in July 1888, Isabel Church was away, and he noted that his room was in the "S W front of the house looking down the river," see McEntee diary, July 18, 1888, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

361 These are rooms 305 and 306.

by a houseguest. Isabel also notes that when Downie returns to Olana with her husband, the two of them can use both rooms as their suite.<sup>362</sup> Another room in the attic, constructed in 1885, might have been used by staff and perhaps sometimes by guests.<sup>363</sup> Similarly, when Church constructed the studio wing, he noted “it will make a very nice apartment for friends on occasion.”<sup>364</sup> Church’s plans did not come to pass because Louis Church co-opted the spacious downstairs bedroom of this wing as his own; but his move must have made more space available elsewhere for guests. “Musical beds” must have been a frequent game in the household.

It is difficult to generalize about the numbers of houseguests typically to be found at Olana. In August 1885 Frederic Church noted “We have a lively population – we have twelve in our family just now.”<sup>365</sup> The letter makes it clear that Church was counting certain staff (such as the tutor) in this tally, so that at that moment the family was apparently hosting five guests. Such a number was apparently not uncommon, especially in the summer and autumn months. As time went on and the health of the Churches deteriorated, probably fewer guests were invited to be at Olana simultaneously. While the number of houseguests at Olana varied, they were a constant presence in the household.

Although Frederic and Isabel both enjoyed having houseguests, the extra work they entailed sometimes put a strain on Isabel’s health. Frederic Church’s letters are sprinkled with references to guests and Isabel’s ability to cope with them.<sup>366</sup> Sometimes Isabel was not well enough to spend much time with her guests, which she regretted deeply.<sup>367</sup> Nonetheless, the Churches continued to invite guests, if in smaller numbers. Susan Hale, Grace King, and Susan Twitchell seem to have been favorites in the later part of the 1890s; these ladies read to the Churches and kept the conversation lively at mealtime. They and others were probably invited because their good humor, youthful energy, and practical kindness cheered the invalid couple.

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362 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, July 28, 1881, ESCP.

363 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Aug. 2, 1885, McKL. This is room 302.

364 Frederic Church to Charles Dudley Warner, July 23, 1888, ESCP.

365 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Aug. 2, 1885, McKL.

366 See, for example, *ibid.*

367 When Mr. and Mrs. Black (Jere’s parents) visited Olana in July 1891, Isabel met them only at meals. See Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, July 28, 1891, ESCP.

## CHAPTER 9

### Domestic Servants at Olana

“Our house full of things takes ‘a many’ people to keep it in order.” So wrote Isabel Church to her daughter in 1892.<sup>368</sup> Frederic and Isabel Church employed many servants over the course of their tenure in Olana. Their employees maintained the main residence and the outbuildings, took care of the carriage horses and livestock, farmed, and maintained the park grounds. Some of these employees lived at Olana and worked full-time, some employees were seasonal, and some were hired to perform specific tasks. Staffing levels and staff duties also changed over time, as the household and the estate evolved. These employment practices were typical of the era.<sup>369</sup> The story of domestic service at Olana is complex; here the focus will largely be on the servants employed by Frederic and Isabel to care for the main residence, its inhabitants, and the transportation needs of those people. These servants were separate from those who worked on Olana’s farm and those who kept the grounds in order; the latter will be discussed only briefly. As will become clear, Frederic and Isabel employed a staff of between 7 and 10 domestic servants at the height of a busy summer season; at other times their staff numbered considerably fewer people.

It was Isabel Church who managed the domestic staff. First, she had to hire her servants. Isabel sought recommendations from friends and family, and she also traveled to New York City to hire, probably using employment agencies.<sup>370</sup> As the manager of this staff, Isabel’s job was varied. She defined the duties of each member of the staff, probably trained them, and certainly supervised their day-to-day work. She organized the household’s routines and its special events, planned menus, supervised house cleaning, directed errand-running, and organized the activities of her family and guests. She supervised ongoing duties, such as the tutoring of the children and the making and repair of clothing and household linens. She determined any variations and

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368 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, June 6, 1892, ESCP.

369 For background on the history of domestic service in the United States see Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), especially ch. 9, “Mistress and Maid,” and Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America* (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

additions to the daily routines of servants, including special projects like spring-cleaning and the canning of fruits and vegetables. When the family was short on staff, it was undoubtedly Isabel who stepped in, by rearranging the workloads of remaining staff or perhaps by taking on some of the work herself.<sup>371</sup>

The relationship between the Churches and their servants was not always smooth. Like most wealthy Americans, they experienced what was known as “the servant problem” – the difficulty of finding, training, and retaining good domestic help.<sup>372</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the United States experienced labor shortages, especially in comparison to European countries whose industrial economies were slower to develop. Although the conditions in Europe fueled the immigration of labor to America, domestic service remained among the least desirable of professions in the new country. Servants, especially live-in domestics, worked long hours, had little privacy or free time, and usually found little opportunity to marry and establish households of their own. More important, many servants found the role demeaning.<sup>373</sup> In late-nineteenth century East Coast households, domestic servants were recruited mainly from poorer native households and from the growing ranks of immigrants. Women usually filled the job because both employers and employees considered housework women’s work. Employers and servants did not share the same long-term goals; while employers wanted to retain trained employees, servants hoped to leave the life of domestic service for employment in factories, shops, or offices. They also hoped to marry. The “servant problem,” a term coined by the employers, was thus intractable.

Indeed, there is much evidence that the Churches experienced their share of difficulties with employees. Complaints about servants make a recurring refrain in both Frederic’s and Isabel’s correspondence. With chagrin they discussed instances of servants quitting or being fired and instances when they judged the performance of servants inadequate. For example, Isabel wrote her father-in-law, “We are staying with the old English maids! Are not quite

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370 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, April 6, 1893, ESCP, and Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, July 15, 1872, McKL.

371 For example, in July 1872 the Churches had fired one maid and another was sick; it took four weeks to secure replacements. See Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, July 15, 1872, McKL, and Frederic Church to William Osborn, Sept. 23, 1872, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP.

372 See Dudden, *Serving Women*, 2.

373 Strasser, *Never Done*, 169-170, discusses servants’ assessments of the status of domestic service.

starved yet either! Although they have tried hard to accomplish our starvation!”<sup>374</sup> And Frederic wrote to William Osborn of the need for a new servant, because “The one we have is intolerable in her stupidity, and wears my wife’s life out.”<sup>375</sup> When discussing his servants, Frederic sometimes used the term “biddy,” a derogatory label for Irish maids, and he tended to note the imperfections of his foreign-born servants in distinctly racial terms.<sup>376</sup> In a letter to William Osborn dated June 13, 1867, Church notes, “We have a Scotch waitress whom we like exceedingly. She talks the broadest Scotch imaginable, which is preferable, rather, to Irish.”<sup>377</sup> Church was not alone in using racial slurs in private correspondence when expressing his frustration with his hired help; stereotyping was commonplace.

When rumors that the cook might leave reached Isabel in 1881, her comments to Frederic reveal much about the dynamics of worker and employee relations at Olana. She reports that she has received a letter from a friend, a Mrs. Lindley of Dobbs Ferry:

saying she is so sorry to take away my cook! But that my cook wrote to her nurse (Patrick’s wife) last autumn! – to try and get her a situation near her – And Mrs. Lindley said she thought if my cook was going to leave me – she might as well profit by it & secure a good cook for herself – Would you have believed such conduct of Jane? I have not spoken to her, for I am not well enough to go through a scene – I fear this will make a general exodus of our servants – for they have found the winter so long & dreary a one, and dread having a cross cook! – So we may be going to have trouble. Of course Jane would not be so base as to leave us without a cook. So you must not do anything about it yet.<sup>378</sup>

The letter reveals the fact that Isabel believed that Jane, the cook, was behaving improperly by attempting to secure better employment, that discussing the issue with Jane would be an upsetting episode, and that if Jane were to leave, the household would be in disarray. Clearly, in

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374 Isabel Church to Joseph Church, undated letter (probably 1862), ESCP.

375 Frederic Church to William Osborn, March 26, 1867, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP.

376 In a letter he uses the term “biddy,” see Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Nov. 6, 1874, MCKL. See Dudden, *Serving Women*, for a discussion of the term. Strasser, *Never Done*, 164-166, discusses derogatory terms for Irish servants, including the use of the name “Bridget” as a label for all female Irish servants.

377 Frederic Church to William Osborn, June 13, 1867, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP.

378 Isabel Church to Frederic Church, May 5, 1881, ESCP.

the discussions following the revelation in the letter, Jane would not be powerless; the Churches would have to negotiate, not dictate, the resolution of the conflict.

There is also, however, much evidence that the Churches were fair employers and that they treated their servants with kindness. In 1898 Frederic Church summarized the advantages of working at Olana, noting the healthful climate, the fact that the servants had several months of freedom each year while the couple traveled, and that the salary the Churches offered was “much more than country service usually demands.”<sup>379</sup> These were unusually generous terms of employment. Indeed, documentation suggests that daily life at Olana had its bright spots for the servants. Mrs. Carnes’s diary, kept for four years in the mid 1880s, shows that the servants usually went to church on Sunday; modern scholars have noted that by attending Sunday services domestic servants were able to maintain not only their faith but also their social ties.<sup>380</sup> When Mrs. Carnes took her grandchildren out for a picnic, the tutor accompanied them.<sup>381</sup> Relatives and friends of the servants were able to come to Olana, even for overnight visits.<sup>382</sup>

In times of crises, the Churches were caring employers. When servants got sick at Olana, they did not work.<sup>383</sup> A new servant whose mother became ill was allowed to go home and take care of her, and her job was kept open for several weeks.<sup>384</sup> When another one of the servants died, the Churches took care to inform the family in England and sent back the woman’s possessions.<sup>385</sup> In spite of Frederic Church’s slurs about his Irish employees, the two servants whom the Churches appointed to the positions of most responsibility and employed the longest were Irish immigrants, and at least one was probably only semiliterate.<sup>386</sup> One of those servants

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379 Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, March 24, 1898, ESCP.

380 See Emma Carnes diary, June 4, 1882, and July 12, 1883, ESCP, and Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Jan. 10, 1879, McKL. Dudden, *Serving Women*, 202-203, discusses the role of religion in servants’ lives.

381 Emma Carnes diary, June 8, 1882, ESCP.

382 Emma Carnes diary, ESCP. Entries dated Sept. 8, 1883, and Sept. 10, 1883, record the coming and going of the sister and young nephew of Hester Faulkner, a servant at Olana.

383 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, undated (possibly October 1894), ESCP.

384 Beasy Curran to Isabel Church, August 23, 1864, and Sept. 6, 1864, ESCP.

385 Elizabeth Allen to Frederic Church, May 13, 1870, ESCP.

386 Checks to Michael McKenna are endorsed with “his mark,” indicating his illiteracy. See Kim Leath, “Frederic Church’s Checkbook,” *The Crayon* 26, no. 201 (winter 1993): 8, which documents McKenna’s checks. As examples, see the checks dated Apr. 4, July 3, July 23, Dec. 4, Dec. 20, and Dec. 22, 1900. As further corroboration of McKenna’s illiteracy, census records give many different spellings of the names of Michael McKenna and his sister, which is not surprising if either were not fully literate. An 1885 letter from Michael McKenna to Church survives; perhaps this was dictated, see Michael McKenna to Frederic Church, October 27, [1885], ESCP.



was Jane, the cook who had threatened to leave; the situation was resolved, and she stayed another 20 years.

One reason the Churches were able to retain servants was that both work areas and housing for servants were well planned and generous. Isabel probably had much input into the design of these service areas. She must have realized that good working conditions would mean happier, more productive servants and less turnover. In its design, the main residence was divided into living, service, and storage zones, with separate spaces for family and staff. The service and storage zones were the domain of the servants. The work areas of Olana were spacious and designed for efficient work. The kitchen was on the north side of house, keeping it cooler. It overlooked an area where laundry was hung, deliveries were made, and stable work was performed. There were several separate pantries located in and near the kitchen, providing plentiful space for the storage of cookware, foodstuffs, and perhaps table linens. There were more storage areas in the basement and in the attic.<sup>387</sup> The copper sinks in the Butler's Pantry were used for washing fine china, keeping it away from the harder surface of the kitchen sink, where pots and pans were washed.<sup>388</sup> A room adjoining the kitchen probably served as a staff sitting area and perhaps as a dining room.<sup>389</sup> Because the staff and family bedrooms were separated, the Churches and their servants each had greater privacy.

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387 See Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 47-51, ORC, for a discussion of the use of the basement storage rooms in the twentieth century.

388 See Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 7-8, ORC, which discusses doing dishes in the copper sinks in the Butler's Pantry. Presumably the practices described in this interview were continuations of nineteenth century practices.

389 This is room 106. The Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, ORC, which describes life in the late 1920s through the early 1950s, records a huge icebox in this room and notes that the servants ate in the kitchen.

Although available data do not give a complete picture, the number of servants employed by the Churches presumably fluctuated over time.<sup>390</sup> Recalling the early years of her marriage in the 1860s, Isabel said that she then employed only one servant “and that invariably a poor one.”<sup>391</sup> On the 1867-69 trip to Europe and Middle East she employed two nurses for her growing family. By 1875, when the main residence was complete, the family had at least seven servants living on the premises; this level was probably maintained until the 1890s. By 1894 Isabel reported to her daughter that one servant had little to do; by the end of the year she noted “Mamie does not probably return, poor child she had tears in her pretty eyes when I told her, but we certainly do not require so many servants.”<sup>392</sup> As Frederic Church had noted, some servants may have been employed only seasonally, especially by the late 1880s when both Frederic and Isabel usually wintered in warmer climes.<sup>393</sup> With the exception of the coachman, the valet, and the tutor, all the domestic servants the Churches employed were women. Most were foreign born, many having emigrated from Ireland. Apparently, none were African-American.<sup>394</sup> What follows is a discussion of the jobs performed by servants who worked primarily at the main residence, naming those who did them if the information is available. Then, I will try to estimate the numbers of domestic servants at Olana. What emerges is a more complete picture of the staffing patterns in the main residence.

In 1893 Frederic Joseph Church wrote his brother Louis thanking him for the “bounteous box” he had sent, which included brandied peaches. He instructed Louis, “Tell dear old Jane that

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390 The following sources were examined to determine specific names and tallies of numbers of domestic servants at work at Olana: census data for the years 1860, 1870, and 1880, see federal censuses, housed in Columbia County Courthouse, Hudson, N.Y., excerpts in census data topical file, ORC. The federal census for 1890 was destroyed by fire. New York State conducted censuses on agricultural production; I examined data from the years 1865 and 1875, see New York State census data, housed in Columbia County Court House, Hudson, N.Y., excerpts in census data topical file, ORC. This was all the census data available at Olana; further research is being conducted to determine if this data is complete and if data from other years is available. I also examined records of payment to the servants at Olana for the years 1860-1900 as summarized in Kathleen A. Gray, “Olana’s Domestic Servants Research Paper,” written for the Cooperstown Graduate Program, Cooperstown, N.Y., 1992, Appendix B, copy in ORC. Census data and payment records could often be confirmed and sometimes amplified through references in the correspondence of Frederic and Isabel Church or others as well as through the diary of Emma Carnes.

391 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Sept. 18, 1891, ESCP.

392 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Nov. 7, 1894, ESCP.

393 Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, March 24, 1898, ESCP. A letter from Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Feb. 21, 1891, McKL, makes it clear that only a few servants were employed that winter. Church had chosen to stay at Olana for the season, but Isabel and the children were not there.

394 The best documents recording the nationality or race of the domestic servants are census records. At this writing, census data is not complete. See note 389 above for a record of available census data.

all I had to do was shut my eyes, and I was in Olana.”<sup>395</sup> This was a reference to Jane McKenna, who worked for Frederic and Isabel Church for at least 25 years.<sup>396</sup> She was in her late 20s when she came to Olana, perhaps directly from her native Ireland. She may have joined her brother Michael, who also worked for the family; it is unclear which of the two entered employment with the Churches first.<sup>397</sup> By the early 1880s she was the family’s cook, a position she was to retain until after the death of Frederic Church.<sup>398</sup> She was responsible for all food served to the family, their guests, and probably the servants as well. As the chapter on the Dining Room / Picture Gallery (ch. 24) describes, the Church family served lavish meals emphasizing the produce of their own land. Surviving recipes and mentions in letters indicate that Jane cooked mostly American fare, such as roasted meats, baked goods, fresh fruit, and vegetables. Occasionally, exotic dishes were added to the menu, including Mexican refried beans, curries, and mulligatawny soup. She also cooked special food when anyone was sick and presumably met any special dietary needs of guests and servants.<sup>399</sup> Except when she was unable to do so because of poor health, she was also responsible for the spring-cleaning of the kitchen and pantries.<sup>400</sup> She seems to have been considered the unofficial head of the household servants.

Just as Jane was unofficially head of the domestic staff, her brother, Michael McKenna (figure 37), appears to have been unofficial ambassador between the family and the grounds staff and other service people. Michael worked for the Churches for over 25 years as coachman, and his duties included delivering people and packages all over the property, to nearby towns, and sometimes further away as well. Michael may have started working for the Churches as a farm laborer, but by 1875 he is recorded as the family’s coachman.<sup>401</sup> By 1875 he was married; his wife Ellen kept house for her own growing family, presumably living in the apartment attached

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395 Frederic Joseph Church to Louis Church, April 13, 1893, ESCP.

396 A “Jane McCanna” first appears in the New York State census record for 1875 as a 30-year-old, unmarried, foreign-born servant – it is presumed this is Jane McKenna, who soon became the Church’s cook, see census data topical file, ORC. As noted above, Jane may have been illiterate; various spellings of her name appear on the census records.

397 Transcript of an article in the *Catskill Examiner* of Jan. 5, 1895, made by Raymond Beecher, director of the GCHS, copy in ORC.

398 A letter from Sally Good to Louis Church of Nov. 27, 1900, ESCP, indicates that Jane McKenna was still working for Louis at that time.

399 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Aug. 2, 1898, ESCP.

400 Isabel Church to Louis Church, July 23, 1896, ESCP.

to the coachman's house. Michael worked for the family until after the deaths of Frederic and Isabel Church.

Michael's primary responsibility was to be the chauffeur and errand-runner for the family and their guests and a caretaker for horses and vehicles. This was not insignificant for a family who delighted in carriage rides on their own property and who had many guests coming and going from train stations. Michael was responsible for delivering packages to and from the several nearby train and ferry stations and for picking up merchandise in stores in Hudson and elsewhere.<sup>402</sup> Michael was undoubtedly entrusted with delivering Church's completed paintings to railroad shipment offices for delivery to exhibitions and patrons. He also either performed or supervised the performance of some of the heavier domestic duties, such as putting up and taking down awnings and taking up rugs and having them beaten to remove dust.<sup>403</sup>

Anecdotal references to Michael make it clear he was a trusted servant and was well liked by family and friends. Michael is first mentioned in a letter Frederic Joseph Church wrote to Santa around 1873; the young boy asked Santa for "some bells for Michael to put on my sleigh."<sup>404</sup> In 1896 Downie, now married and with a household of her own, had decided to buy a horse and carriage. She asked her father and brother to consult with Michael concerning the best type to buy and exactly how to feed and maintain a horse.<sup>405</sup> Frederic Church told Downie that Michael recommended a "phaeton buggy," noting "I have never seen one but Michael's judgment is good."<sup>406</sup> Perhaps the most vivid account of Michael McKenna is contained in Susan Hale's recollection of a homemade theatrical performance she gave at Olana. One scene in the set of *tableau vivante* she performed in 1890 called for her to take on the role of a babe in arms. Michael carried Susan Hale down the great staircase in the Court Hall as she performed the role, to the great amusement of servants and family alike.<sup>407</sup>

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401 See the 1870 census, which records the 25-year-old Irish-born "Michael McCanny" as a farm worker; and see the 1875 census, which records "Michael McKenna" a 30-year-old Irish-born coachman, both census data topical file, ORC. See also the c. 1873 Christmas letter cited below.

402 See for example, Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Feb. 21, 1891, McKL. Emma Carnes's diary also contains many mentions of Michael running errands – see the entries for May 18, 1882, Sept. 17, 1883, and Sept. 20, 1883, ESCP.

403 Isabel Church to Louis Church, March 22, 1896, ESCP.

404 Frederic Joseph Church to Santa, c. Dec. 1873, ESCP.

405 Downie Church to Louis Church, April 4, 1896, ESCP.

406 Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Sept. 13, 1896, ESCP.

407 Atkinson, *Letters of Susan Hale*, 251.

For most of their married life, the Churches employed a female servant as a live-in waitress.<sup>408</sup> The job title implies that the primary duty of this woman was to serve meals; certainly she must have also set the table, and she probably took care of the family's china and silver. Two women who served meals at Olana in the twentieth century remember that their duties included washing tableware in the copper sink in the Butler's Pantry, a chore that could only be done after the meal was finished, so the noise would not distract guests; perhaps the same procedure was followed in the nineteenth century.<sup>409</sup> Several women are recorded as waitresses; among them were Mary Clogher<sup>410</sup> and "Bridget," probably Bridget Waters.<sup>411</sup> The formality of meals served by a waitress made an impression on guests. In 1884, during one of her first visits to Olana, Susan Hale commented that the "neat maid twangles a triangle to summon us" to breakfast.<sup>412</sup> But on a visit in the late 1880s, when she was alone at Olana with Frederic Church, Hale found the service at the table more oppressive. She noted that the invalid Church ate little, and the server, whom she named Herman, "hover[ed] over us like a vulture to pounce on the dishes."<sup>413</sup> This might be a reference to an unusual instance of a male domestic waiting at table.

The waitress also performed housekeeping duties, with help from the other domestic staff. She may have been responsible for bringing drinking water to the house; apparently all household drinking water was drawn from a well and dispensed from a large cooler that stood behind a screen in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery.<sup>414</sup> In 1896 "Annie the waitress" was responsible for the spring-cleaning of Parlor, Pantries, Vestibule, Dining Room and Cloak Hall; all of these were "her domain."<sup>415</sup> In that year, she was helped in her cleaning by three other

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- 408 Church mentions a "waitress" in a letter to William Osborn, March 26, 1867, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP. Isabel Church mentions a "waitress" in her letter to Louis Church, March 22, 1896, ESCP.
- 409 See Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 7-8, ORC.
- 410 See Emma Carnes diary, Sept. 11, 1883, ESCP, and Gray, "Olana's Domestic Servants," Appendix B, which records Mary Clogher in that year.
- 411 See Emma Carnes diary, May 13, 1882, ESCP, and Gray, "Olana's Domestic Servants," Appendix B, which records Bridget Waters in that year.
- 412 Atkinson, *Letters of Susan Hale*, 141.
- 413 Fragment of a letter from Susan Hale to an unknown correspondent, c. 1887-1889, SSC.
- 414 Twentieth century oral histories mention the source of Olana's drinking water and how it was dispensed – probably these practices were established in the nineteenth century. Apparently the Churches did not drink their tap water. See the discussion in Ch. 13 of improvements made in the early twentieth century to the mechanical systems of Olana.
- 415 Isabel Church to Louis Church, March 22, 1896, ESCP.

servants. Except for the cook, the waitress may have been considered the highest-ranking among the group of female servants who worked in the main residence.

At times, the Churches employed a “laundress,” who probably often did other chores as well as the laundry. The 1875 census records an Elizabeth Clentar, a 28-year-old woman from England, as a laundress; this might be the same person mentioned in Emma Carnes’s diary in 1883.<sup>416</sup> The laundress would have been responsible for washing the clothes of the family and of long-term guests and probably also those of her fellow servants and for laundering all the table linens. On one occasion she was pressed into cleaning bedrooms and hallways; Isabel reported that she “did it ‘protestingly’ but very well nevertheless.”<sup>417</sup> Indeed, the laundress may have routinely helped with the spring-cleaning; by 1896 this seems to have been the case.<sup>418</sup>

The household servants performed other duties besides waiting at table and cleaning. They apparently completed much of the household sewing. “Eliza” (probably Eliza McAree) made a comforter for Downie’s use, and another, “Sarah” (probably Sarah Clarkin), made curtains and pillowcases for the spare room.<sup>419</sup> Two servants accompanied Frederic and Isabel to New York City to help the couple; while there, the two were sent to Mrs. Carnes’ home with a basket of pears.<sup>420</sup> The domestic staff was apparently expected to be flexible, helping wherever they were most needed. For example, in the spring of 1893 Eliza had been nursing Isabel Church in New York City, but was dispatched back to Olana to supervise spring-cleaning with new staff.<sup>421</sup> To close the circle, the daughter of Michael McKenna, Elizabeth, was occasionally employed by the Churches.<sup>422</sup> At Olana, these “all-purpose” servants might have been called “maids of all work”; this term was used in other households of the time.

When the Church children were young, the Churches usually had at least one nurse on staff whose primary duty was to take care of them. Isabel also found it necessary to hire wet

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416 Emma Carnes diary, Sept. 12, 1883, ESCP. The entry mentions “Lizzie back, laundress.”

417 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, June 13, 1892, ESCP.

418 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, March 22, 1896, ESCP, discusses Nelly the laundress being sent to Olana to help with the cleaning.

419 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Oct. 29, 1891, ESCP. Gray, “Olana’s Domestic Servants,” Appendix B records a Eliza McAree employed in 1890, 1894, and 1895. “Sarah” is mentioned in Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Oct. 5, 1899, ESCP, and among the many Sarahs recorded in Gray, “Olana’s Domestic Servants,” Appendix B, is Sarah Clarkin, employed in 1893 and 1894.

420 Emma Carnes diary, Oct. 19, 1883, ESCP.

421 Isabel Church to Louis Church, April 6, 1893, ESCP.

nurses when Theodore Winthrop was an infant. The family brought one from Rome (where the baby was born) to Paris, sent her home, and hired another.<sup>423</sup> Another nurse, named Margaret, came from America to Europe and the Middle East with the Churches, but the family grew unhappy with her services. Frederic noted that she had “terribly degenerated since she has traveled first class and is now simply horrid,” and relished the opportunity to let her go once the family returned to New York.<sup>424</sup> To replace her, Frederic hoped to hire “a paragon of a nurse for Freddie,” bringing one to America from Great Britain.<sup>425</sup> This may have been Johanna Riper; she died while in the Churches’ employ, about May 1870.<sup>426</sup> Many other women are recorded as nurses, including a Mrs. Brownlee; Mary Walker, who was an American citizen; and Sarah Cannon, an Irish immigrant who was employed at least during the years from 1880 to 1883.<sup>427</sup> When the children were sick, these nurses took care of them, and they may have nursed others in the family as well. As early as 1870 Frederic noted that he had hired a Connecticut Yankee woman as a nurse, who was also “skilled in the sick room.”<sup>428</sup>

In 1886 the family still employed a nurse, although it is unclear if this person served as a companion to the Church children, now between 14 and 20 years old, or if she cared for the ailing Frederic and Isabel.<sup>429</sup> By the 1890s Olana’s maids were also acting as nurses for the couple, who required help both at home and when they traveled. As noted, Eliza had been in New York City with Isabel but was sent back to Olana to help with spring-cleaning; Isabel hired a trained nurse as her substitute.<sup>430</sup> On another occasion, Frederic thanks Downie for arranging for “Mary,” probably a maid from her own household, to go to Mexico to serve as his nurse, since his might have to leave.<sup>431</sup> From Bermuda, Isabel wrote that “Sarah is as good as gold, and

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422 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Jan. 18, 1886, McKL; and Gray, “Olana’s Domestic Servants,” Appendix B. Elizabeth McKenna appears as an 8-year-old on the 1880 census, see census data topical file.

423 Frederic Church to William Osborn, May 1, 1869, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP, and Isabel Church to Lucy Church, June 1, 1869, ESCP.

424 Frederic Church to William Osborn, May 1, 1869, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP.

425 Ibid.

426 Elizabeth Allen to Isabel Church, May 13, 1870, ESCP.

427 For Brownlee, see Frederic Church to William Osborn, June 15, 1870, ESCP; for Walker, see 1875 census, census data topical file, ORC; for Cannon, see 1880 census, census data topical file, ORC and Gray, “Olana’s Domestic Servants,” Appendix B.

428 Frederic Church to William Osborn, Nov. 7, 1870, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP.

429 Frederic Church to Charles Dudley Warner, June 11, 1886, ESCP.

430 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, April 6, 1893, ESCP.

431 Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Jan. 31, 1897, ESCP.

improves each day in her tender watchful care of me”]; this could have been either Sarah Clarkin or Sarah C. B. Cady, both of whom worked for the family in the 1890s.<sup>432</sup> When the Churches were more seriously ill, they apparently hired specially trained nurses. In 1896 a Miss Burton served as Isabel’s nurse.<sup>433</sup> And a Thomas Skully was recorded as receiving wages for serving as Frederic Church’s nurse in documents filed when the artists’ estate was settled.<sup>434</sup> Although it is difficult to be sure from surviving records, the couple seemed to prefer to use one of their regular domestic servants in the sickroom, only hiring a special nurse when they became very ill.

By the 1890s Frederic Church needed so much help with the daily chores of getting dressed and other matters that he regularly employed a valet. A letter written in May of 1891 refers to Frederic’s valet, a man from Persia named Samuel St. Abraham.<sup>435</sup> It is interesting to speculate that this man may have been a Christian who had immigrated to America through Church’s missionary connections. This intriguing figure did not remain at Olana for long, and by 1892 the role was filled by William McKenna, brother of Michael and Jane.<sup>436</sup> William had come to this position after being employed as a coachman for a family in Catskill, New York. His sudden death on January 1, 1895, resulted in a brief newspaper mention of his employment at Olana and indicated that he may have performed other duties on the property; the day he died he was helping with preparations to draw ice from the lake.<sup>437</sup> Indeed, in one letter Isabel Church had noted that the valet Samuel St. Abraham had been helping her water the roses; presumably this task usually fell to the gardening staff.

Other employees with more specialized duties were apparently hired for shorter periods of time. A Miss Tompkins was employed at least in the winter months of the 1880s as a governess for the children not yet at school, Downie and Winnie. She accompanied the Churches when they spent the winter months of 1883 in New York City.<sup>438</sup> At other times, the

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432 See Isabel Church to Louis Church, March 26, 1896, ESCP, and Gray, “Olana’s Domestic Servants,” Appendix B.

433 Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, Aug. 17, 1896, ESCP.

434 “Report of Appraiser,” filed Oct. 5, 1900, in transfer tax papers for 1900, Surrogate’s Office and County Clerk’s Office, Columbia County Courthouse, Hudson, N.Y.

435 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, May 1, 1891, ESCP.

436 Transcript of article in the *Catskill Examiner*, copy in ORC. See also Gray, “Olana’s Domestic Servants,” Appendix B.

437 Transcript of article in the *Catskill Examiner*, copy in ORC.

438 Emma Carnes in her diary, ESCP, for January through March of 1883 mentions Miss Tompkins often in company with the Churches and their children in New York City.



Churches employed men as tutors. On June 1, 1882, Mr. Goodrich arrived to tutor the children; they began their studies four days later.<sup>439</sup> The next summer Mr. Scudder was tutoring Downie by June 10, and he remained with the family until September 5.<sup>440</sup> A tutor was also employed in the summer of 1885.<sup>441</sup> Emma Carnes's diary, which notes the presence of all these people, makes it clear that tutors and governesses not only instructed but also acted as companions to the Church children, accompanying them to the theater and on calls, going on picnics, and other activities. Frederic Church employed a masseur named Peter Pinke for a brief period,<sup>442</sup> and when Isabel Church had outgrown her clothes, she had a dressmaker come to Olana.<sup>443</sup>

Currently, available records are not complete enough to reveal precisely how many servants the Churches employed to do housekeeping and general chores; instead a general impression must be drawn from "snapshots" of a few time periods for which adequate records do exist. In June 1875, the summer of 1883, and in March 1896 the Churches appear to have employed either five or six servants who performed general housework; this tally includes the waitress, laundress, nurse, and maids of all work (but not the cook, coachman, or tutor, whose roles were more distinct).<sup>444</sup> Clearly, because servants were hired and fired, because they traveled with the family, and because they themselves became sick or otherwise temporarily unable to work, the Churches required flexibility of all their servants. Few among the staff had rigid job duties; they were asked to fulfill many roles.

Other, usually less skilled workers were employed as day laborers. Typically, such workers were hired to help the regular staff with the onerous task of spring cleaning, performed just before the couple returned from their winter sojourns. In 1893 Isabel Church wrote to her son Louis, who was managing the household duties while his parents traveled, "ask Jane to get some woman (reliable woman) to scrub the sitting room floor. . . . Perhaps that Irish woman who lives on the side hill, as you go down south, towards the Livingstons, could do it."<sup>445</sup> In the

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439 Emma Carnes diary, June 1, 1882, and June 5, 1882, ESCP.

440 Emma Carnes diary, June 10, 1883, and Sept. 5, 1883, ESCP.

441 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, May 30, 1885, ESCP.

442 Leath, "Frederic Church's Checkbook," 8.

443 Frederic Church to Rev. Yeisley, Dec. 28, 1891, ESCP.

444 For 1875 see the New York State census, census data topical file, ORC; for 1883 see Emma Carnes's diary for the months of June through September, ESCP. Her diary can be correlated with Gray, "Olana's Domestic Servants," Appendix B, for 1883; for 1896 see Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, March 22, 1896, ESCP.

445 Isabel Church to Louis Church, July 23, 1896, ESCP.

same letter she said, “Get Michael, William, and Jimmy, to take up the Sitting Room carpet, shake it well – and put it down.” Clearly, at this date the Churches did not have enough full-time staff to accomplish the big job of cleaning the Sitting Room carpet and floor simultaneously.

Among those pressed into service as day laborers were undoubtedly Olana farm workers and their children and relatives. Because they are only identified by first name, it is likely that “William and Jimmy,” who helped shake the Sitting Room rug, were well-known to the Churches because they were farm workers (“Michael” was probably Michael McKenna). How many people were employed in farm and park operations at Olana has not been thoroughly studied, but a few facts are known. After 1872 at least two other houses on the property were occupied by tenant farmers and their families: Cosy Cottage and the eighteenth century farmhouse that was located south and east of Cosy Cottage.<sup>446</sup> There was also a small structure near the south entrance to the property, and some portions of the barns may have been reworked to serve as housing, apparently for farm workers and their families.<sup>447</sup> Some of the farm families living at Olana in the late nineteenth century are documented, including George and Anna Rushway, who had at least five children;<sup>448</sup> Hiram and Mary Dakin with three children;<sup>449</sup> and William and Catherine Donnelly with one daughter.<sup>450</sup> Census data and research on the landscape at Olana indicate that single men also lived and worked on the Church property.<sup>451</sup> There are instances when the farmers performed work usually done by the domestic staff. For example, one day when the coachman was sick, Mr. Donnelly went to the train station to pick up Frederic and Isabel.<sup>452</sup> We can be sure that the Churches regularly drew upon their resident population of farmers, their wives, and probably even their older children when the domestic staff needed extra help.

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446 See Toole, “Historic Landscape Report,” 33-34, ORC, for a discussion of the house dating from c. 1794.

447 Toole, “Historic Landscape Report,” ORC, details the various structures that existed on the property and outlines their functions. See p. 34 for the structure near the south entrance, and see p. 109 for mention of the coachman’s accommodations in the barn.

448 See 1865 and 1870 censuses, census data topical file, ORC.

449 See 1870 census, census data topical file, ORC.

450 Toole, “Historic Landscape Report,” 72-73, ORC.

451 See census for 1870, census data topical file, ORC, where four men, including “Michael McKanny,” are listed as farm workers. See also Toole, “Historic Landscape Report,” 74, 76, 119, and passim, ORC.

452 Emma Carnes diary, Sept. 9, 1883, ESCP.

## CHAPTER 10

### Illness and Frederic and Isabel Church

Recent research has revealed that Frederic Church almost certainly suffered from rheumatoid arthritis and that it ultimately was the cause of his death. In 1997 Dr. Philip Cohen, a professor of medicine specializing in rheumatology and immunology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, published a brief analysis of Church's disease after conducting research into primary sources at Olana.<sup>453</sup> Although there had been speculations that Church's illness, like the illnesses of other painters, might have been caused or exacerbated by the lead in his paint, Cohen found this unlikely.<sup>454</sup> Although the symptoms of polyarticular gout (also known as saturnine gout), which can be caused by exposure to lead, are similar to those of rheumatoid arthritis, the preponderance of evidence suggests that Church's illness was rheumatoid arthritis and was relatively unaffected by lead exposure. Church's afflictions were consistent with a severe form of rheumatoid arthritis, for which no effective treatment existed in the nineteenth century. Church's physician listed "chronic diffuse nephritis" as the cause of death, and in her diary Downie mentioned that her father had died of Bright's disease.<sup>455</sup> Nephritis and Bright's disease both refer to kidney malfunction and inflammation, now recognized as a complication in chronic cases of rheumatoid arthritis. Thus, Church probably died of kidney failure brought on by years of debilitating rheumatoid arthritis.

The ailment is first mentioned about 1869, when Church noted that his right wrist hurt while writing letters; by 1875 he was seeing doctors about the problem.<sup>456</sup> He and others called the problem rheumatism, while Emma Carnes called it lumbago, using a more old-fashioned term for rheumatic ailments.<sup>457</sup> As is typical in rheumatic arthritis, the course of Church's illness

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453 Philip Cohen, "The Arthritis of Frederic E. Church," *Journal of Rheumatology* 24, no. 7 (1997): 1453-1454. See also a letter from him to Dorren Martin, curatorial assistant at Olana, Sept. 12, 1995, ORC.

454 Lisbet Milling Pedersen and Henrik Permin, "Rheumatic Disease, Heavy-Metal Pigments, and the Great Masters," *The Lancet* 1, no. 8597 (June 4, 1988): 1267-1269.

455 See "Certificate and Record for Death" for Frederic Edwin Church, dated April 7, 1900, report issued by the City of New York, Department of Health, May 12, 1978, copy in ORC. For the reference to Bright's disease see diary of Downie Church Black, May 19, 1900, through Feb. 2, 1928, ESCP.

456 Carr, "Church as a Public Figure," 26.

457 See Frederic Church to Luigi di Cesnola, Sept. 5, 1893, Archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. See also Emma Carnes diary, Sept. 20 and 21, 1882, ESCP.

waxed and waned. He had weeks or months of relative good health, interspersed with periods of poorer health. In 1880 he was still able to walk over a mountain path at a hotel, albeit with difficulty.<sup>458</sup> By 1883 he had so much trouble moving his arms that he found it hard to dress himself.<sup>459</sup> By the spring of 1886, when the Churches were in Mexico, Frederic used a sedan chair for his daily outings.<sup>460</sup> The illness worsened over time, and one side effect was that Church often had indigestion. To counteract this, Church ate less and consequently became thin. He also required more sleep and a warm, dry climate. By the 1890s Church was an invalid.

Church tried all sorts of treatments to combat the course of the arthritis. He consulted with many doctors and tried many medicines.<sup>461</sup> He journeyed to the mountains of North Carolina in 1880 in hopes that the air and water would be of benefit. He installed a steam bath in his bedroom and, as noted, employed a masseur. In 1897 he took advantage of a period in New York City to try some form of electrical treatment.<sup>462</sup> In the end, he found that the warm, dry climate of Mexico provided the best respite, because it relieved the symptoms of rheumatism and revived his intellect.<sup>463</sup> In a photograph of Church taken in Orizaba, Mexico, in 1895, the signs of arthritis are visible in his stooped posture and his gnarled hands (figure 38).

As time went on, Church's arthritis invariably curtailed his ability to paint. In 1876, when several of Church's works were on display in centennial celebrations, the press reported that Church was incapacitated as an artist by his illness.<sup>464</sup> Perhaps as a deliberate attempt to counteract such reports, in his 1879 book, *Art and Artists of Connecticut*, Henry Willard French said that reports of Church's rheumatism were exaggerated; his entry on the painter discusses Church as a productive artist.<sup>465</sup> By 1881 Marianne North noted that Church "was sadly altered and crippled by rheumatism, and could not use his right hand anymore."<sup>466</sup> Church certainly

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458 Isabel Church to Virginia Osborn, Sept. 24, n.y. (probably 1880), NYHS.

459 Virginia Osborn to William Osborn Jr., April 8, 1883, Osborn and Dodge Papers, Princeton University Libraries, Princeton, N.J.

460 This is described in a letter by Susan Hale in Atkinson, *Letters of Susan Hale*, 163.

461 See Dr. G. Hennesy to Frederic Church, Jan. 27, 1888; Dr. F. N. Otis to Frederic Church, Dec. 19, 1885, both in ESCP. These letters discuss rheumatism and its accompanying symptoms and mention specific medicines for relief.

462 Frederic Church to Downie Church Black, April 22, 1896, ESCP.

463 See Church's comments to Luigi di Cesnola, cited in Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 466-467.

464 Carr, "Church as a Public Figure," 26.

465 French, *Art and Artists in Connecticut*, 131.

466 North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, 1:208.

made every effort to go on painting even as the rheumatism became more and more severe. From an authoritative source, Charles Dudley Warner, comes the information that Church learned to paint with his left hand once his right hand had become arthritic.<sup>467</sup> This adaptation was, however, not a solution because all of Church's limbs eventually became affected by the disease. By 1884 a reporter described the studio at Olana as deserted, noting that it had been "many years since [Church] was obliged to lay down his brush, perhaps forever. His health is so broken that life has become chiefly a struggle against disease, and a search for health."<sup>468</sup> As the years went on, there were fewer and fewer days when Church could summon enough manual dexterity to sketch or paint. As much surviving correspondence testifies, he was able to write until the end of his life, though his penmanship degenerated noticeably in the 1890s. The situation saddened all who witnessed it. "To see that cunning hand gnarled, cracked, swollen and shrunk out of all its beautiful shape with the Rheumatism which is eating him away, and slowly shutting him up in a living grave, is a pitiful and tragic sight. He is just a knotted skeleton, all askew and covered with skin . . . But the face is fine and the eyes see so clearly."<sup>469</sup> Indeed, as will become clear, Church's powers of perception never waned, and he turned to artistic endeavors he could accomplish: travel, entertaining, reading and study, and most of all, perfecting Olana.

Although it is clear that Isabel was also an invalid by the mid-1880s, far less is known of her medical condition. She seems to have always had a weak constitution and was prone to illnesses of various sorts.<sup>470</sup> She apparently believed that her pregnancies and the hard work entailed in raising young children had affected her health.<sup>471</sup> A few isolated ailments can also be mentioned. In the autumn of 1889 Isabel underwent operations on both eyes to restore failing sight.<sup>472</sup> The procedures weakened her greatly, and she was not allowed to read or write for some months afterwards, but her eyesight was improved. In Mexico in March 1885 she suffered

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467 Charles Dudley Warner, *Paintings by Frederic E. Church, N. A.*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1900).

468 Zabriskie, "'Old Colony' Papers."

469 Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, Dec. 25, 1889, typescript supplied by Brenda Moon, Edinburgh, Scotland, copy in ORC.

470 An 1891 letter from Isabel notes that already in the early years of her marriage, she was "very 'feeble' even then." See Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Sept. 18, 1891, ESCP.

471 See Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Oct. 16, 1891, and Oct. 25, 1891, both in ESCP.

472 Frederic Church to Rev. [Joseph] Twitchell, Dec. 8, 1889, Beineke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

a severely bruised arm.<sup>473</sup> She seems to have often suffered from fatigue, headaches, insomnia, and general malaise. By the early 1880s she very often felt too ill to leave her room, and even when she did, she often spent hours lying on a sofa.<sup>474</sup> Over time, her periods of bed rest grew more frequent and longer. We do not know the underlying physiological cause of these symptoms. In one letter she mentions that although she has energy, she is “yellow as saffron,” perhaps some indication of a liver ailment.<sup>475</sup> In another letter, she mentions “faint turns” that left her too weak to even speak.<sup>476</sup> Clearly, stress and worry, especially over the fate of her husband and her eldest son, exacerbated whatever illness she may have suffered; stress may have been the root cause of her illnesses.<sup>477</sup> Although there is no record of it, in the nineteenth century she may well have been diagnosed as a neurasthenic.

Like her husband, Isabel fought her illnesses with various treatments. In 1891 she noted: “I am much better – My head-aches were very troublesome, but I have been taking a very mild form of Electricity from a small battery Mr. Osborn has with him – and it’s quite wonderful; how my appetite has improved, and in a lesser way my head also.”<sup>478</sup> She too received massages: “I am rubbed every day – and though its [*sic*] a great bore and waste of time I believe it is doing me good.”<sup>479</sup> She apparently sometimes took belladonna to relieve pain but found that it caused depression.<sup>480</sup> Constant notes from friends and family remark that Isabel often attempted to do too much, and when she did, she needed several days of recuperation lying down.<sup>481</sup> Travel to humid climates, especially the seashore, was also helpful. A photograph, probably taken in Algiers in the winter of 1894, where she had gone for rest and recuperation, seems to show her at

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473 Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 421.

474 See the Emma Carnes diary, May and June 1882, ESCP. Mrs. Carnes is not surprised to find Isabel in bed for some days and having to cancel a planned trip.

475 Isabel Church to [Mary] Palmer, June or July 17, (1887), McKL.

476 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, April 6, 1893, ESCP.

477 See, for example, two letters from Frederic Joseph Church to his father expressing regret that news of his conduct had made his mother more ill: Frederic Joseph Church to Frederic Church, June 13, 1887, and Feb. 7, 1888, ESCP. A letter by Louis also notes an instance in which Isabel was made ill by emotional stress, see Louis Church to Sally Good (Church), Apr. 17, 1894, ESCP.

478 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, March 25, 1891, ESCP.

479 Isabel Church to Downie Church, March 2, 1887, ESCP.

480 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, July 28, 1892, ESCP.

481 See Louis Church to Downie Church Black, Jan. 15, 1894, ESCP. Louis notes: “Mother does 76 times as much as she should, and then pays the price.”

a moment of relative good health (figure 39). By the 1890s Isabel, like her husband, had become an invalid.

The many years of ill health also took their toll psychologically on both Frederic and Isabel Church. Both probably suffered from what would be diagnosed today as clinical depression. By 1880 Isabel realized that Frederic's health was affected by his moods, saying, "His mind seems to require change as much as his body, & meeting fresh people diverts him."<sup>482</sup> She constantly devised plans to keep her husband in good mental as well as physical health. In a letter about a planned visit to the Osborns, where Frederic would help lay out a road system, Isabel wrote: "We are anxious to divert F – as much as possible – He is cheerful when diverted, but apt to get very morbid and silent when left to his and my devices."<sup>483</sup> In the midst of clear, sunny January weather, Isabel wrote from Olana, saying "I think we should try and remain in our own home – Here father will go to his studio & paint, in New York he will only lie on the sofa & think of his various symptoms!"<sup>484</sup> Church was at his best when he faced the situation with black humor. After watching some squirrels feeding and gamboling, he wrote to a friend: "I sometimes feel a little curious when I see these agile little fellows and think how I am fettered by rheumatism – I oughtn't complain though for I think I have got as much out of my legs as any biped ever did nearly – Still I would like one day of the old strength and elasticity – I think I would make up long arrears in twenty four hours. I reckon I would cut such capers that the following day would find me in a strait waistcoat surrounded by reporters."<sup>485</sup>

The letters of Virginia Osborn provide special insight into Isabel Church's psychological health. The effort of caring for her husband and the rest of her family placed a great strain on Isabel. By the early 1880s Frederic Church depended upon Isabel to be nurse, valet, and companion; Virginia Osborn noted that Mr. Church "cannot go anywhere now without Mrs. Church."<sup>486</sup> Virginia Osborn confided to her son Fair that "Mrs. Church says she sometimes wakes in the night crying, from a depression of spirits which she cannot control, and which has no apparent cause, except the entire want of social intercourse."<sup>487</sup> In another letter,

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482 Isabel Church to Virginia Osborn, Aug. 17, n.y. (probably 1880), NYHS.

483 Isabel Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, July 30, 1883, McKL.

484 Isabel Church to Downie Church, Jan. 17, 1887, ESCP.

485 Frederic Church to Mrs. [Catherine?] Gaul, Jan. 8, 1888, ESCP.

486 Virginia Osborn to William Osborn Jr. Apr. 8, 1883, Princeton University Libraries, Princeton, N.J.

487 Virginia Osborn to Fairfield Osborn, Nov. 19, 1882, NYHS.

however, Virginia Osborn seems to disclose the root cause of this depression. Describing the upcoming trip the couple planned to Mexico, she noted “ I have never seen Mrs. Church so depressed with the prospect of the winter before her as now. I think she is physically exhausted with the care of Mr. Church, dressing, undressing, and rubbing him. Mr. Church has so many silent days, when he lies on the sofa and takes very little notice, but wants her to read to him for hours, and there is no one to speak a helpful or cheering word to her, and what she feels unspeakably, there are no religious services for her to attend.”<sup>488</sup> In short, Isabel confessed that she feared she might “fall into melancholia.”<sup>489</sup> Another observer summarized the situation in 1889 by saying: “Her health is all broken with waiting on him for years; both of them are invalids now.”<sup>490</sup>

Through all their years of ill health and worries over their children, Frederic and Isabel nonetheless remained close. As we have noted, both Frederic and Isabel actively struggled with their depression – Frederic with humor and Isabel with prayer. Both tried to divert each other from their problems, by travel, by inviting houseguests to Olana, and through other entertainments. As evidence of the bond between them we should note that the best of the few paintings Church completed in the 1890s were gifts to his wife. He painted a large picture of Mount Khatadin rising over Lake Millinocket, roughly the view from Camp Rhodora. The painting depicts a lone canoeist. In 1895 Church gave the painting to his wife, with an accompanying note:

I am happy in the belief that owing to your generous, unselfish and cheerful nature the Autumn of your life will be beautiful in its bright-ness and color. Your old guide is paddling in the shadows, but he knows that the glories of the Heavens and the earth are seen more appreciatively when the observer rests in the shade.<sup>491</sup>

Isabel clearly cherished these gifts of paintings, and when she received a small canvas, *The Church of the Tercer Orden* in 1896, she wrote a delighted note to Downie: “Did I write

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488 Virginia Osborn to Fairfield Osborn, Oct. 19, 1885, NYHS.

489 Ibid.

490 Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, Dec. 27, 1889, typescript provided by Brenda Moon, Edinburgh, Scotland, copy in ORC.

491 Frederic Church to Isabel Church, undated letter, ESCP. The painting was given by Louis Church to the family physician and has recently been acquired by the Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine.



you about the exquisite birthday present he made me in the shape of a picture painted in Cuernavaca last winter?"<sup>492</sup> The painting was hung in the Sitting Room, joining other paintings of special significance to the family. Like so many long-married couples, the Churches died within months of each other. Isabel died on May 13, 1899, and Frederic, though facing the future stoically, succumbed to his rheumatism on April 7, 1900.

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492 Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Nov. 11, 1896, ESCP.



## CHAPTER 11

### The Late Paintings of Church: the Search for Origins

Olana was created during the last 30 years of Frederic Church's life. Although Church was less active as a painter during these years, he did finish some significant canvases. Paintings contemporary with Olana can be expected to reveal ideas that were in Church's mind as he created and perfected his home. I will briefly discuss a few paintings from the first half of Church's career (the 1840s to the 1860s) summarizing the methodologies Church employed; these have been the subject of much scholarship. Then I will give more attention to Church's later paintings, the ones completed after his trip to Europe and the Middle East. In these paintings, Church applied methods he had developed earlier to a new set of subjects. As will be shown, there are clear parallels between the themes and aims of Church's later paintings and the themes and aims expressed in Olana.

Church's early fame rested upon canvases that were termed "compositions" by the artist and his contemporaries. Though filled with meticulous detail and convincing topographical scope, most of Church's major paintings were not, in fact, depictions of real places but imaginary scenes. *The Heart of the Andes*, perhaps Church's best known painting, is a combination of the snow-capped mountain peak of Chimborazo and the neighboring cordilleras, a waterfall observed in the Chillo valley, and the flora and fauna of Andean and sub-Andean regions. As Kevin Avery has shown, although Church had seen such sites during his 1853 and 1857 trips to South America, the place that Church depicted does not exist in the Andes.<sup>493</sup> Instead, the painting is a response to the call issued in the early nineteenth century by Baron Alexander von Humboldt for painters to illustrate his conception of natural history. Humboldt believed that the world was divided into linked terrestrial and celestial phenomena, following a scheme so complex yet so unified that it could only have been devised by God. In the equatorial Andes, Humboldt believed, all phenomena could be found in close proximity, though not all in one place. Church's canvas, a composition based upon the "heart" of the Andes, encompasses the whole of Humboldt's scheme and thus all of God's global vision.

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493 Kevin J. Avery, *Church's Great Picture: The Heart of the Andes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993).

Other seemingly realistic canvases are likewise compositions. For example, *The Afterglow* combines a spectacular many-rayed sunset Church had witnessed in Jamaica, elements of that island's geography, and an imaginary ruined parish church.<sup>494</sup> The painting is a meditation on decay and rebirth, painted in a period when Church was mourning the death of his sister Charlotte, the deaths of his first two children, and celebrating the birth of Frederic Joseph Church.

Church's major paintings thus carry systems of meaning that extend beyond the transcription of the landscape. In his canvases, elements of the landscape do not stand as simple symbols for other things; rather, the entire scene depicted connotes a larger meaning. In his thesis and later in the book, *The Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church*, David Huntington summarized the aims of Church's early paintings.<sup>495</sup> Huntington explained that Church envisioned himself and his countrymen as new Adams in the virginal terrain of North and South America. In this territory, so untouched by civilization, one could read God's plan for the natural world and the place of human beings within it. Huntington stated that Church created "the essential style and imagery, in a word, iconology, for the America of Manifest Destiny."<sup>496</sup> In other words, Church created paintings that carried an iconology for a nation looking westward, to a continent seemingly granted to it by Divine Providence. At the height of his career, Church was to devise a new set of meanings for a different part of the world, in fact, a new iconology for very old terrain.

Church looked eastward for his new iconology, to the Middle East and the Holy Land. The journey of 1867-69 was undertaken for spiritual and artistic reasons; Church wanted to get new source material for new compositions. At the beginning of the trip Church described his purposes to Osborn: "Just think of a series of studies in oil presenting the great features of Thebes, Etc., Sinai, Petra, Palmyra, Damascus, Baalbec, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Etc. Etc."<sup>497</sup> Within a few years, Church had painted full-scale versions of many of these places. The first to be completed was a view of Damascus, held in some legends to be the oldest city in the world. The painting was eventually purchased by William Walter Phelps, brother of Ellen Dodge of the

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494 Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 311-316.

495 Huntington, "Frederic Edwin Church, 1826-1900"; and David C. Huntington, *The Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church: Vision of an American Era* (New York: Braziller, 1966).

496 Huntington, *Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church*, x.

497 Frederic Church to William Osborn, Jan. 6, 1868, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP.

Syrian Protestant College; the historical and biblical associations of the scene would have been well known to this circle.<sup>498</sup> *Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives* followed soon thereafter, a detailed panoramic prospect that, when examined along with the special keyed map provided, gave the viewer a virtual tour of the city. A large painting of the Parthenon corresponds closely to photographs of the building that Church collected.<sup>499</sup> These paintings are among the most transcriptive of Church's career. Church wanted to paint landscapes whose meanings were synonymous with the historical events that had taken place within them; the fame and significance of these sites, for himself and for the world at large, required such a literal treatment. Having explored the origins of the natural world, Church was beginning an exploration of the origins of human civilization. Earlier, Church had examined the New World of North and South America for evidence of God's plan; now he turned to the ancient, history-laden lands of the Old World for evidence of God's work in human affairs.

By the early 1870s Church began painting compositions incorporating themes from the ancient world, and his brushwork became broader, incorporating less minute detail. Of course, Church's worsening arthritis may have contributed to this change, but other factors were also at work. By the end of his life, Church spoke explicitly of subsuming details into the whole. In describing Olana to a friend he said: "I am afraid if you had seen my house on a dull, cloudy day you would be inclined to criticize the predominance of details, the lack of repose, that most important expression of Architectural Art and indeed in all art."<sup>500</sup> This thought is exemplified in Church's later paintings. As the artist matured, his changing views of aesthetics had an impact upon his style. Both in his compositions and in his technique Church sacrificed detail to emphasize breadth and conception, and the change was made in order to focus on themes drawn from very old civilizations. While an examination of all of Church's late paintings is beyond the scope of this chapter, a few will be examined in detail. An analysis of three major paintings from the 1870s, executed at the time Olana was being built, decorated, and furnished, reveals that they incorporate some of the same iconography as Olana itself.

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498 Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 185.

499 See Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock, *The Influence of Photography on American Landscape Painting, 1839-1880* (New York and London: Garland, 1977), 115. She notes that the same shadows appear in the painting and on a D. Constantine stereograph in the Olana collection. Although Lindquist-Cock does not cite it, I also recall seeing a gridded photograph of the Parthenon in the collection.

500 Frederic Church to Mr. Olney, Nov. 30, 1896, from an unknown source, copy in ORC.

The first major composition treating Middle Eastern subject matter was *Syria by the Sea*, completed in 1873 (figure 40). The painting shows uninhabited ruins, lit by the sun. While the columns, entablatures, and structure in the right foreground can be identified as Roman, and the castle in the left middle ground seems to be a remnant of the forts built by the crusaders in the Middle East, no specific architectural elements are cited, nor is any specific place depicted; rather, generalized Syrian scenery is suggested.<sup>501</sup> The terrain is not hospitable to humans. There is only a tiny caravan visible toiling along the raised roadway, and Church has positioned the viewer amid foreboding fragments of rubble that block access. The scene would be utterly desolate except for the sun, which is the real protagonist of the painting. From the title Church gave the painting we know that he meant to depict the coastline of Syria, which looks west; thus we see a setting sun. Modern scholars have noted this sun: John Davis calls it “celebratory, reflective and mellow, tinged with copper-plated nostalgia,”<sup>502</sup> and Gerald Carr notes that its light is suggestive of paintings by Claude Lorrain and William M. Turner, of discolored varnish on old master paintings, and of archival parchment.<sup>503</sup> Indeed, the painting is highly atmospheric and suggestive, evoking the civilizations that lie in ruins. Church himself believed that Syrian subjects “must be distinguished by paucity of detail so far as landscape is concerned. The sentiment of them should be highly poetical and with a tone of sadness.”<sup>504</sup> *Syria by the Sea* fits his prescription. Here no specific culture is in ruins, instead the setting sun casts a golden glow over the remnants of eons, in homage to all the decayed civilizations of the Middle East. Church mourns the passing of these peoples, yet glories in the indestructible sun, which shone upon the ancient world, shines still, and will always shine. From the sun came the life force for the ancients, and its Divine rays will sustain civilization yet. The painting is ultimately bittersweet, an elegy to lost origins yet a celebration of the eternal grace of God.

Church’s last major work with a Middle Eastern theme was *The Aegean Sea* (figure 41), dating from 1878. This too is a composition, incorporating structures not only from the Aegean region, but those from further east. The left side of the canvas, in shadow, incorporates a rock-

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501 The ruins have been discussed in Gerald Carr’s entry on the painting in *American Paintings in the Detroit Institute of Arts*, vol. 2, *Works by Artists born between 1816 and 1847* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in Association with the Detroit Institute of Arts Founders Society, 1997), 52-56.

502 Davis, *Landscape of Belief*, 173.

503 Carr, *American Paintings in the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 2:54.

504 Frederic Church to William Osborn, Sept. 29, 1868, typescript copy of a lost original, ESCP.

cut temple facade akin to those from Petra, shattered column fragments from the temple of Bacchus at Baalbek,<sup>505</sup> and ancient, monolithic olive trees, very like those depicted in the oil sketch at Olana, *Olive Trees*.<sup>506</sup> The subjects depicted in the right-hand side of the canvas, which is painted more broadly, can be identified as a generically Greco-Roman ruin in the middle distance and an evocative representation of a Turkish metropolis, perhaps Constantinople, in the far distance.<sup>507</sup> At the painting's center is a group of three figures, a turbaned patriarch discoursing to two younger Arabs, armed and picturesquely costumed. The scene takes place beneath a double rainbow. Church has strategically positioned the figural group between a shadowy world in which the very ancient, pre-Christian cultures of the eastern Mediterranean are conflated and a brighter area in which the younger cultures of the Mediterranean, with Christian and even Islamic elements, are brought together. The patriarch, like an Old Testament figure, discourses to the younger men who absorb his words; one has even laid down his sword. Overhead, the double rainbow, a sign of God's covenant with humankind, connects the heavens with the younger architecture. With the living figures and architecture, Church offers an optimistic view that the old can impart their wisdom to the young, that ancient civilizations can teach modern civilizations, and that the task has God's blessing, betokened by the beneficent rainbow.

One of Church's last major paintings was also the first to portray an architectural subject in the New World. *The Monastery of Our Lady of the Snows* (figure 42), completed in 1879, depicts a fortress-like religious complex set atop a mountain cliff and overlooking a rushing river, brilliantly backlit by the sun; a lone figure climbs a rough track toward the structure. The edifice is named in a review that appeared when the painting was exhibited – it is a Catholic

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505 Petra and Baalbek are identified as sources for the painting by Natalie Spassky, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 2, *A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born Between 1816 and 1845* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with Princeton University Press, 1985), 279. She notes that the fragments from the Temple of Bacchus at Baalbek are based upon a photograph of the site still at Olana. Spassky also noted the light/dark bifurcation of the painting.

506 Carr notes that Olana's painting *Olive Trees* (OL.1980.1892ab) is the source for the massive tree in the *Aegean Sea*, see Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 344.

507 The sources for the right-hand half of the painting are discussed in Huntington, *Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church*, 19 and 80, and in Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 368.

monastery built in Ecuador by the conquistadors, an “eyrie of the Church.”<sup>508</sup> The review noted that the painting took as its subject “civilized and Spanish history,” not pre-Columbian culture and not pure nature, and that the painting “speaks to the memory and imagination of every educated man as well as to the eye of the artist and the worshipper of nature.” Like other compositions by Church, this painting seems to depict a real place that, in the perceptive viewer, evokes other thoughts. This mountain stronghold is a sun-blessed religious structure toward which a pilgrim toils; the painting promises that the glorious goal of forging faith in a new world can be attained. As Gerald Carr has noted, the painting is a visual analogue to Olana itself,<sup>509</sup> another “eyrie of the Church,” a stone structure set on a hill, overlooking mountains and a river and one with a sacred purpose: to guard the faith of its inhabitants. The connection between the painting and Church’s goals in building and living at Olana are unmistakable; Olana too could foster faith.

Although Church painted only a few more major canvases, and in these he returned to relatively depopulated scenes of South and North America, evidence that he did hope to develop themes from ancient civilization and the Old World does remain at Olana in the form of smaller paintings and sketches. Perhaps singular among Church’s works, *On the Mediterranean* (figure 43), an 1882 canvas, incorporates a painted quotation from an old master. Church’s composition was derived from the background to Claude Lorrain’s *Landscape with Moses and the Burning Bush*, which John Ruskin discussed in his *Modern Painters*, a book that Church owned.<sup>510</sup> Ruskin had used the work as an example of Claude’s disorganized compositions, and while Church did somewhat simplify Claude’s scene in his own painting, Church surely disagreed with Ruskin. Church admired Claude – the American believed that he owned a

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508     Untitled, anonymous notice in *New York World*, June 8, 1879, 4. Gerald Carr believes that the text of the review was suggested by Church himself to the reviewer, who was probably William Henry Hurlbut (or Hurlbut), an acquaintance of Church and the brother of the man who commissioned the painting. William Henry Hurlbut was the editor of the *New York World* and an active figure in the New York art world of the 1880s. He was apparently a patron of Walter Launt Palmer. His brother, Hinman Barrett Hurlbut, the owner of the painting, was a Cleveland industrialist and banker.

509     Gerald Carr, “What’s in a Name: The Genesis of Frederic Church’s Olana,” lecture in typescript, 1988, 12, ORC.

510     Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, cat. no. 602, 603, and 619.



painting by Claude as well as an engraving that depicted the Italian.<sup>511</sup> In the Sitting Room, Church hung Claude's portrait as a pendant to another hero, Humboldt. Clearly, Church's aims in *On the Mediterranean* were Claudian, as noted by an 1891 review of the painting: "The termination of a great civilization, serene in its decay, is typified by the artist with rare poetic skill. It is not only the Mediterranean which he presents to us, but the spirit of its past, [when] it was the central sea of the known world; that past which sleeps to-day in its historic ruins, a mere memory of poetry and legend, preserved to the busy world only by the art of the wizards of brush and pen."<sup>512</sup> Church believed that the consummation of Mediterranean culture, though in ruins, is yet blessed by God's light, and that it could still voice its lessons.

In Mexico Church found subjects that could convey his interest in great age and in the origins of religion. In his 1891 *Mexican Forest – A Composition* (figure 44), Church returns to the theme of monumental trees. Here one old, patriarchal tree stands amid a forest, surrounded by its progeny. The painting, which has probably always hung in the studio at Olana, testifies to Church's own view of his legacy as an artist. The tree with its offspring is like Church's own paintings amid the artwork of his studio, even his oeuvre in the world at large. In a series of oil and pencil studies of Mexican ecclesiastical buildings we find Church returning again and again to the theme of light and domes.<sup>513</sup> In these works, all dating from the last five years of Church's life, we see the artist focusing on architectural details and the effects of sunlight upon the structures. Church admired these buildings, the legacy of the Spanish colonists of Mexico, who brought Christianity to the aboriginal peoples of the New World. These studies can be seen as poignant meditations on the human striving for God's grace through the mediation of the church. In the best among these sketches, such as *Church of Guadalupe, Cuernavaca, Mexico, in Late Afternoon* (figure 45), dating from 1898, the setting sun almost dissolves the dome and the drum upon which it sits; the church is an intercessor between the viewer and the sun, which signifies God. Unfortunately, Church never developed these studies into large-scale finished

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511 The painting Church attributed to Claude Lorrain is discussed in ch. 24, "The Dining Room / Picture Gallery," of this *Historic Furnishings Report* and the engraved portrait of Lorrain in the chapter on the Sitting Room (ch. 18). The painting is no longer attributed to Claude Lorrain, and the man in the engraving does not resemble known depictions of Lorrain. Nonetheless, Church believed he owned a painting by Claude Lorrain and a portrait of the artist.

512 *Catalogue of the Thomas B. Clarke Collection of American Pictures* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1891), 29, quoted in Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 432.

513 See for example: OL.1980.1609.mm, OL.1980.1609.oo, OL.1980.1893a-.b, OL.1977.251, OL.1977.218, and OL.1977.226.

compositions. Had he been able to do so, surely he would have made statements about the continuity of faith in the New World and its continuing value as a wellspring of strength for modern humankind.

## CHAPTER 12

### The Furnishings of Olana: Creating a New Eden

Olana and Church's late paintings were created at the same time, over the course of the last decades of the artist's life. Olana – an ensemble composed of landscape, structures, and collections – is arguably the work of art to which Church gave his most sustained aesthetic effort. Like Church's late paintings, Olana has an iconology. The iconology of Olana, however, is conveyed not through paint and canvas, but through the architecture of the main residence, its furnishings, and the design of the landscape. Here, I will focus on the iconology of the furnishings, relating them to the iconology of the whole ensemble of Olana.

Of all the many cultures represented at Olana, Church and his contemporaries most often singled out the ancient Middle East, especially Persia, for special mention. Even before the house was built, Church described it as Persian. While at the hard work of designing and supervising construction, he noted:

A Feudal Castle which I am building – under the modest name of a dwelling house – absorbs all my time and attention. I am obliged to watch it closely – for 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 – then embody it on paper and explain it to a lot of mechanics whose ideal of architecture is wrapped up in felicitous recollections of a successful brick school house or meeting house or jail. Still – I enjoy this being afloat on a vast ocean paddling along in the dreamy belief that I shall reach the desired port in due time.<sup>514</sup>

As James Ryan has pointed out, one way Church attempted to remedy his lack of first-hand experience of Persia was by consulting the latest scholarship, in the form of at least two richly illustrated folio volumes that still remain at Olana.<sup>515</sup> Specific plates were used as the basis for

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514 Frederic Church to John Ferguson Weir, June 8, 1871, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

515 Jules Bourgoïn, *Les Arts arabes* (Paris: Morel, 1868-1873) and Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse* (Paris: Morel, 1867). Another later book of unbound plates survives at Olana; this set of plates was entitled *Ornaments de la Perse* and comprised vol. 1, Part I, in E. Collinot and de Baumont, *Encyclopedia des arts de l'orient* (Paris: Canson, 1883).

the design of the piazza columns, the water tower, and various motifs in the interior stenciling, including the design found on most of the doors on the first floor (figure 46).<sup>516</sup> Church also owned dozens of photographs depicting sites in the Middle East, although it is unclear how many of these were purchased before Olana was built. The library at Olana also contains many books detailing Persia's geography, natural history, and culture.

There is much evidence that the floor plan of the main residence, as well as some of its ornamentation, is based on Middle Eastern domestic architecture. In Damascus in 1868, Frederic and Isabel called on Lady Jane Digby, an English woman who had married an Arab sheik. While they found her quarters "too gaudy and rather shabby," Isabel admired her furnishings: "semi-oriental, semi-European – forming a very agreeable and pretty combination."<sup>517</sup> Isabel also wrote about the decoration of more typical upper-class Damascus houses, noting the courtyards paved in marble mosaics, the fruit trees perfuming the air, and rooms open to the courtyard furnished with divans upon raised daises. She was captivated by the walls and ceilings inlaid with ivory, mother-of-pearl, and bits of mirror, saying, "At night by candlelight the effect must be quite splendid."<sup>518</sup> And in a letter written from Beirut in 1868, Church noted his admiration for the local architecture: "The Dwellings are often quite grand. They have a large room called the court in the center often 30 x 50 feet or larger – and perhaps 30 feet high and smaller rooms on each side." He goes on to exclaim, "I have got new and excellent ideas about house building since I came abroad."<sup>519</sup> Indeed, the Churches probably spoke directly about the inspiration they had received in the Middle East. Many years after her visit in the winter of 1870-71, Marianne North recalled the house, then under construction. "Mr. C. had designed it himself after a pattern of a Damascus house, with a court in the middle paved with marble, having a splashing fountain in its centre. He had also had bricks and tiles made of different oriental patterns and ornamented the outside with them, but the floors were not yet laid down."<sup>520</sup> While North's recollections do not reflect the house as it was built (Olana's Court Hall was never paved in marble nor furnished with a fountain), she must have been recounting features the

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516 See James Anthony Ryan, "Frederic Church's Olana: Architecture and Landscape as Art" in Kelly, Gould, and Ryan, 137. Ryan discusses a plate from Bourgoïn, *Les Arts arabes*, which was the basis for the door stencils.

517 Isabel Church, 1868 diary, May 22, 1868, NYHS.

518 Ibid., April 24, 1868.

519 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, March 10, 1868, McKL.

520 North, *Recollections of a Happy Life*, 1:67-68.

Churches had considered. Clearly, the Churches digested their experience of the domestic architecture of Damascus, Beirut, and other cities, and their own home was based in part upon elements of homes that they had seen and admired.

However, Olana was not simply a set of quotations drawn from illustrated books on Persian architecture and memories of houses visited; the design of the main residence was a skillful melding of these elements with modern house design. Frederic and Isabel Church worked with Calvert Vaux, one of America's most accomplished architects in the field of country residence design. The architect had already published *Villas and Cottages* in 1857, which explained his conception of American rural domestic architecture and provided illustrations and plans of buildings he had designed. By 1869, when Church hired him, Vaux had designed dozens of large-scale country residences, many of them situated on the banks of the Hudson.<sup>521</sup> Vaux was able to give physical form to Church's "new and excellent ideas about house building," helping the couple adapt generic Middle Eastern and specific Persian design elements into the form of the new house. The nature of the collaboration between Vaux and his clients Frederic and Isabel is yet to be determined. Probably the couple described the types of rooms they desired and the functions they were to serve. Frederic and Isabel must have helped choose the site and plan the orientation of the main rooms and their views. They must have relied upon Vaux's expertise in technical matters of engineering, heating and plumbing, and they certainly drew upon his imagination and experience in country house design. The hundreds of extant architectural sketches by Frederic Church, however, testify to the artist's role in the design of myriad details and to his understanding of the overall conception of the house. Olana was planned carefully so that it not only proclaimed the owners' taste for Middle Eastern architecture but also met their practical needs for modern living. Church joked about his part in making the house conform to Persian architecture, noting that when asked if he was himself the architect, he replied "Yes, I can say, as the good woman did about her mock turtle soup, 'I made it up out of my own head.'"<sup>522</sup> That is, the architecture of the house bears the same relationship to Persian architecture as does mock turtle soup to turtle – there may not be any genuine parts to it, yet it resembles its model.

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521 Vaux's career is described in Francis Kowsky, *Country, Park, and City: The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

522 Bonnelle, "In Summer Time on Olana."

The most succinct summary of Olana’s Persian character was that given by Frank Bonnelle in 1890, when he described the home as “Persian, adapted to the Occident.”<sup>523</sup> He was reiterating an idea that had been expressed in print as early as 1876, when the house was only just completed. Martha Lamb’s 1876 article was probably the first to describe the new residence as “built in the Persian style, so far as the climate and the requirements of Western civilization permitted.”<sup>524</sup> In his 1879 book *Art and Artists of Connecticut*, Henry Willard French paraphrased Lamb, saying “The house, more properly castle, with its towers, reserved balconies, and pavilions, is thoroughly Persian, provincialized only where necessity demanded it.”<sup>525</sup> More fancifully, in 1879 the *New York Herald* declared that the house was “modeled after a Persian palace.”<sup>526</sup> Another newspaper, the *New York World*, enthusiastically but inaccurately described Olana in 1889: “The building is of Persian architecture and furnished throughout in the style of the country. The draperies and furniture were selected by Mr. Church during one of his tours in Persia. One feels as if transported to the Orient when surrounded by so much of Eastern magnificence.”<sup>527</sup> Another article also misattributed Olana’s Persian character to Church’s own experience: “He traveled not only extensively in Europe but penetrated into the heart of Asia and gathered novel art material in Persia, where also he learned to admire Persian architecture, which is exemplified in a modified form at his magnificent country home at “Olana” on the Hudson River, one of the most notable houses in the United States.”<sup>528</sup> At least one writer struggled to explain how the residence could be both Persian and Western. Francis Zabriskie writing in 1884 in the *Christian Intelligencer* noted that the “general style of the house is said to be Persian – how far so, I am too little of an architect to determine. It is certainly no rectangle of dead walls, such as I associate with the exterior of a Persian dwelling, but a bright open eyed house, presenting on the landscape sides an almost unbroken expanse of plate-glass window.”<sup>529</sup>

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523 Ibid.

524 [Lamb], “The Homes of America.”

525 French, *Art and Artists in Connecticut*, 130.

526 “Beauty on the Hudson.”

527 “The American Rhine: Interesting Facts About the Country Around Hudson,” *New York World*, July 21, 1889.

528 “Mr. Church Dies: Famous Artist Expires at New York. Was a True Friend of Mexico and Admirer of Its Art,” probably *Mexico City Mexican Herald*, c. April 8, 1900, copy in ESCP.

529 Zabriskie, “Old Colony Papers.”

While expressing different conceptions of “Persian” design, all writers agreed that the house was Persian in character.

The similarity of these writers’ opinions, even the similarity of their phrasing, cannot be coincidental. We can surmise that these writers had been told of Olana’s connections to Persia and that they were reiterating, interpreting and/or embellishing upon that idea. Most certainly it was Church himself who communicated the “Persian” character of Olana to these writers and explained how the house had been adapted to the Occident. The frank bewilderment of the *Christian Intelligencer* writer is especially revealing, because he notes that he had not met Church when he visited Olana; he had trouble explaining the style of the house because he had not had the benefit of Church’s narration. Church’s own description of Olana’s “Persianness” is recorded in a letter, and it accords with all these published descriptions: “I designed the house myself. It is Persian in style adapted to the climate and requirements of modern life – The interior decorations and fittings are all in harmony with the external architecture.”<sup>530</sup>

Church so admired Persian artifacts and architecture that he found traces of Persia in unrelated cultures and seems to have taught many others to see these correspondences. When he traveled in Mexico with Warner in the winter of 1885-86, the two admired the presidential palace on the hill of Chapultepec above Mexico City. With its fine views, the building must have born a resemblance to Olana, and Warner went on to describe the interiors, where they found what was undoubtedly Mexican or Spanish tile. Warner, however, noted “beautiful tiles distinctly Persian in color and effect,”<sup>531</sup> probably paraphrasing Church’s own opinion of the tile. Another acquaintance from Mexico, Edward Garczynski, also left evidence that in Church’s mind, Mexican and Persian architecture were connected. In an 1894 article in the English-language newspaper *The Mexican Herald*, Garczynski describes his astonishment at the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, in the Church of Santo Domingo in Puebla.<sup>532</sup> He was stunned by the Baroque interior with its elaborate polychrome plaster scrollwork, blue-and-white tiles, and carved benches ornamented with bosses made of copper/silver alloy. Though the tiles were of native manufacture, he insisted that they resembled Persian tile. Noting that Church was “a

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530 Frederic Church to Amelia Edwards, Sept. 2, 1877, Sommerville College Library, Oxford University, Oxford, England.

531 Charles Dudley Warner, “Mexican Notes, part I: From El Paso to the City of Mexico,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 27 (April 1887): 807.

532 Edward Garczynski. “Paradisiacal Puebla,” *Mexico City Two Republics*, Feb. 26, 1894, 1-2.

strong lover of Persian art,” he induced the painter to visit the chapel; once there, Garczynski reported that “the tiling gave him raptures.” Church was so moved by the chapel that he commissioned a Mexican artist to depict it; the gouache is still at Olana.<sup>533</sup> The tiled dome of the church of Nuestra Senora del Carmen, in Ceylea, designed by the eighteenth century architect Francisco Eduardo Tresguerras, deeply impressed Church. An article in *The Mexican Herald* noted that he “pronounces it thoroughly Persian in character. Mr. Church has made a very close study of Persian architecture and thinks it remarkable that an artist who had never been outside of Mexico should have reproduced some of its most delicate characteristics in this country.”<sup>534</sup>

In Church’s opinion of this dome we can find the clue to his admiration for Persian art; he believed Persian art to be a wellspring for elemental architectural form. In his book *Spanish Colonial Architecture in Mexico* (1901), Sylvester Baxter, a friend of Church and a visitor to Olana, described the dome at Ceylea as embodying “the exquisite lines of one of the finest of Persian types. Its decoration of glazed tiles, in alternating yellow and green, gives an effect of luminous greenish gold.” Baxter went on to report that his friend Church theorized that all domes were of Persian origin, the form perhaps deriving from dome-shaped adobe huts found in various parts of the Near East. Among Church’s studies of domes made during the last years of his life is one of the dome at Ceylea (figure 47) emphasizing its radiant glow. As he points out in his forthcoming biography of Frederic Church, John Howat has noted that his idea must derive from one of Church’s illustrated books of architecture.<sup>535</sup> Pascal Coste’s *Monuments modernes de la Perse* (1867), which Church used in the design of his home, includes a set of plates showing how Persian domes could have evolved from Turkoman yurts, the domed tents of the nomadic peoples of central Asia.<sup>536</sup> Church must have conjectured a line connecting these primeval domed structures to the domes of the Islamic Middle East, to the domes of Islamic and Catholic Spain, and to Mexico, which was a Spanish colony. In the tiled domes of Mexico, then, Church found direct links to Persia and to the earliest of human civilizations.

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533 It is by Jesus Martinez Carrion and is numbered OL.1980.1632.

534 Sylvester Baxter and Frederic Guernsey, “Interesting Queretaro,” *Mexican Herald*, Feb. 21, 1896, 7, copy in ESCP. Gerald Carr identified the authors and place of publication for this clipping, see Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 490, footnote 13.

535 John Howat kindly supplied me with a copy of his manuscript, which is as yet untitled. The reference to Coste is in chapter 21. See ORC for a copy of the manuscript.

536 See Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse*, plate LXXI.



Perhaps not surprisingly, there is evidence that Church hoped to built his own dome at Olana. A rendering for the residence by Calvert Vaux, dated 1870, includes a dome crowning a massive tower.<sup>537</sup> Even by the summer of 1873, after the Churches had moved into their new home, the plan may not have been given up. Among a set of illustrations of life in the Catskills published by a New York City newspaper, a tiny drawing of “Church’s Place” includes a distinct dome.<sup>538</sup> As discussed in the chapter on the Court Hall (ch. 17), architectural sketches by Church relating to that room and the spaces above it indicate that the artist toyed with including some sort of dome within the structure of the main residence. A dome also appears above the bay window of Church’s own bedroom in the rendering of the south facade that was published in the 1876 article on Olana in the *Art Journal* and then republished in 1879 when these articles were issued as a prestigious book, *The Homes of America*. The dome, slightly conical in form, sits above an arcaded drum and is crowned with a pierced crescent moon (a Turkish allusion); Church probably intended to have its patterned surface executed in tile. Although Church called this rendering “very imperfect,”<sup>539</sup> he had the studio wing added and allowed it to be published again in 1890, in Frank Bonnelle’s article on Olana for the *Boston Herald* (figure 48). Interestingly, the dome in the engraving, while it was not drawn by Church (in the Bonnelle article it is signed with the monogram of the illustrator), does resembles the one at Ceyla, which Church was to draw in 1896. Clearly, Church saw Persian architecture not as a simple sourcebook for motifs, but as a wellspring for the world’s architecture, influencing designers around the world. It is not surprising that he hoped to build a Middle Eastern dome at Olana.

Olana’s most significant link to Persia, however, lies in its name. The story of the naming of Olana has recently been recovered by Gerald Carr, after having been lost for much of the twentieth century.<sup>540</sup> Olana, the name the Churches used to describe their home and its grounds, was not used until the first months of 1880. Before that date the Churches usually called their home simply “the farm,” but they apparently sought a more meaningful name.

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537 This drawing is illustrated in Ryan, “Frederic Church’s Olana,” 133.

538 “Life at the Water-Places,” *New York City Daily Graphic*, Sept. 3, 1873, 1.

539 Frederic Church to Amelia Edwards, Sept. 2, 1877, Sommerville College Library, Oxford, England. The engraving also shows a terrace with a double staircase at the Ombra; this too was never executed.

540 The most complete explanation of the derivation of Olana is to be found in Carr, “What’s in a Name.” A condensed explanation appears in Gerald Carr, *Olana Landscapes: The World of Frederic E. Church*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 2, and is alluded to in Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 395. Unless otherwise noted, information concerning the derivation of the name Olana comes from Carr’s unpublished lecture.

Church experimented with a few other names, using “Arlimna” and “Ter Hum” as headings in letters addressed to Palmer. Finally, for Christmas of 1879 Isabel Church presented her husband with Strabo’s *Geographica*, an English-language edition of the work published originally in Greek around the time of Jesus. It is a classic work on the geography of the Roman Empire. Strabo mentions a city named Olane, implying that it is one among the “treasure-storehouses” or “fortresses” on the Araxes River, near the city of Artaxata, in the eastern Roman Empire. Another book in the Churches’ library gives more information about this ancient site. James Morier’s *A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople, Between the Years 1810 and 1816* (1818) identifies Strabo’s “Olane” (which Morier transliterated from the Greek as “Olana”) with a fortress then known as Alanjek, situated on a remarkable serpent-shaped mountain overlooking the Araxes River. Alanjek, or “Olana,” presided above a fertile valley and was located in the northernmost province of Persia. Significantly, Morier notes that Mount Ararat, the fabled landing place of Noah’s ark after the flood, was visible from “Olana.” It was from Mount Ararat, of course, that Noah and his family descended to remake and repopulate the world, based on the covenant God proclaimed with a rainbow.

It was shortly after the gift of Strabo’s *Geographica* that the couple started using the name “Olana,” and by 1890 Bonnelle reported that the name had been chosen by Isabel Church, because it was “an old Latin name for a place in Persia, to which the artist’s home bears some resemblance in situation.”<sup>541</sup> These facts are basically in accord with the relatively obscure references to “Olane” in Strabo (which had appeared in Latin editions) and “Olana” in Morier. The name first struck a chord with Isabel, who must have found the affinities between Morier’s “Olana” and their own home too appealing to resist. She was able to verify Morier’s account by reference back to the ancient source, Strabo. The name Olana, whose Middle Eastern origins are discernible to Western ears, has a pleasant alliterative cadence, and vaguely recalls the Alhambra, the Moorish palace in Spain. Whether or not the Churches knew it, the name also phonetically resonates with certain Persian and Arabic words, prefixes and phrases, including: *alana*, falcon’s nest; *ahana*, summit of a mountain; *a la*, higher or highest; *ala*, above, upon, over;<sup>542</sup> and, finally, Allah – God. The name is also related to *Alani*, a name used in the late

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541 Bonnelle, “In Summer Time on Olana.”

542 Carr, “What’s in a Name,” 9, records these meanings.

nineteenth century for the northernmost province of Persia. It was only natural that in the twentieth century, when the historical derivation that the Churches had forged had apparently been forgotten, the first site managers of Olana consulted Persian linguists, who reported that the word “Olana” could be translated “our place on high.” As we now know, “Olana” is more than a translation of a phrase.

The name “Olana” dovetailed with the only large-scale painting by Church that was on view in the house before 1886: *El Khasné Petra* (figure 49). This depicts another treasure house in ancient Arabia, one that also has bonds to mountains and water. In Church’s painting the structure is glimpsed through a chasm in a mountain through which a river flows; the temple gleams as if it is revelatory. Sometime around January 1875 the painting became a gift to Isabel Church, the mistress of the home that was then nearing completion. Church designed the mantle and stenciling for the family’s Sitting Room in sympathy with *El Khasné Petra*, and the couple hung the painting so that it overlooks a river valley. The painting became a metaphor for the Church’s home, which was itself a stone fortress overlooking a river valley, as it guarded its treasure of the couple’s possessions and their family. When Isabel Church derived the alliterative, allusive name “Olana” from ancient sources, she reinforced the visual metaphor for their home that had been created by the hanging of *El Khasné Petra* in the Sitting Room.

Naming their home Olana was yet another instance of the couple’s conscious efforts to connect their lives to ancient, especially biblical civilizations, and to the origins of Christianity. Many of these efforts have already been described: the 1868 trip to the Holy Land, the couple’s interest in biblical archeology, their support of the Palestinian Exploration Fund, their friendships with missionaries at work in the Middle East, and most important of all, their independent, questing form of Presbyterianism. Isabel developed her own Christianity through Bible study and prayer. Increasingly through the last decades of his life, Church painted ancient Middle Eastern sites as well as Mexican churches and ruins, where he found links to the primitive Catholic Church and even to Persia, the cradle of civilization. As Frederic Church was completing *The Monastery of Our Lady of the Snows*, a painting of a New-World religious fortress atop a mountain overlooking a river valley, Isabel was contemplating a name for their home, likewise a New-World structure set on a mountain overlooking a river. The couple wanted to explore the origins of human civilization and ancient religions and to connect these elemental life forces to the New World terrain of their own country and their own home. The

furnishings of the main residence at Olana are the most tangible evidence of the couple's investigations into the origins of humanity and its links with the Divine. With the furnishings of Olana, the couple created overlapping patterns demonstrating that the Divine can be seen in the artifacts of human civilization.

Foremost among these patterns are groups of artifacts revealing the great age of human civilization and celebrating its enduring cultural accomplishments. Old-world, European civilization is represented by paintings by old masters that form the decoration of the Dining Room / Picture Gallery. The ancient Greco-Roman world is represented by gouaches depicting the nine Muses and Apollo in the Court Hall, by Church's own painting of the Parthenon in the Sitting Room, and even by a piece of the Parthenon in the Studio. Palmer's bas-reliefs and his sculptures in the round, found throughout the house, draw upon the long tradition of the classicizing aesthetic. The ancient New World is represented too, with a collection of pre-Columbian artifacts; many of these are in the cabinet in the Studio. From the Orient came a pair of Japanese cranes-atop-tortoises – now in the Court Hall – that were said to be “several hundred years old.”<sup>543</sup> Of course, the ancient Middle East, where civilization originated, is well represented, by ceramic hollowware and tile work by Ali Mohammed Isfahani, by the winged Assyrian genies stenciled on the platform leading to the stair hall (figure 50), and everywhere by rugs drawn from every region of the Middle East. The Churches' view of human culture was global; they gathered artifacts from all corners of the world. They preferred objects that were either very old or represented the continuation and culmination of eminent artistic traditions. The enduring character of human accomplishment was celebrated, and by association a link was made with the Divine, from whence all inspiration flowed.

A second pattern is established by objects that displayed human ingenuity through the medium of long-lived craft traditions. In Mexico, the Churches collected examples of what we would today call folk art, including painted pottery, a carved gourd mounted as a chalice, and embroidered shawls.<sup>544</sup> Ornamenting the studio are two monumental jugs inset with mosaic work, one spelling out “Olana” (figure 51). *La Purísima*, an early nineteenth century statuette attributed to Mariano Arce that is firmly a part of neoclassical currents, nonetheless shows its

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543 Bonnelle, “In Summer Time on Olana.” The cranes are now believed to date from the nineteenth century.

544 Examples of the pottery are discussed in the chapter on the Court Hall (ch. 17) of this *Historic Furnishings Report*. The carved chalice is also in the Court Hall.

roots in colonial Mexican craft because it is carved, painted, and decorated with pearl and gold jewelry.<sup>545</sup> Middle Eastern brass shields, spears, trays, and hollowware of all sorts display the arts of chasing, piercing, and inlaying. All aspects of the decoration of Oriental ceramics can be found at Olana; the Churches were especially fond of two monumental Japanese vases in the stair hall, probably because they believed them to be antique representatives of traditional Japanese blue-and-white hand-painted porcelain. The Churches were great patrons of Lockwood de Forest, who consciously sought to revive the dying arts of wood carving and brass working among the *mistri* caste of India. Of course, the long-lived craft traditions also were evidence of the longevity of human civilization; the first and second patterns intersect. Human inventiveness and ability to maintain standards of craftsmanship are evidence of God's intervention on earth through the hands of humans.

A third pattern, which also intersects at various points with the other patterns, is established by objects with overt or subtle religious imagery, both Christian and non-Christian. Most of the paintings by the old masters, of course, have religious subjects; a full range of Roman Catholic theology and subject matter is portrayed in these canvases. *Kashkuls*, ornamental bowls used by members of Islamic mendicant sects to beg for alms, hang in several doorways. The Churches collected an authentic *kashkul* made of a carved gourd as well as ornamental ones of pierced brass work made for export. Two Buddhas were placed in especially prominent positions: a meditating Buddha of carved and gilded wood sits in the niche under the stairs; the other Buddha, shown at the moment of death as he enters Nirvana, appears nearby painted on a large hanging scroll (figure 52). "Staunch Presbyterians" that Frederic and Isabel were, they nonetheless openly admired and collected religious imagery of all sorts for the insight such objects provided into the universal human examination of the Divine.

A fourth pattern is established by artifacts with feminine imagery, invariably stressing the innocence, purity, and even holiness of women and girls. At least two portraits of Isabel Church, one in oils by George Baker (figure 4) and the other in charcoal by Samuel Rowse (figure 53), hung in the home; both portrayed her youthful, fresh beauty. We also know that *Star in the East*, which depicts the miraculous star announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds, was intended

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545 The statuette is discussed in the chapter on the Court Hall (ch. 17) of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

by Church to be an allegorical representation of Isabel Church and her sacred role as mother.<sup>546</sup> A piece of religious statuary by Palmer, known with the alternate titles of *Supplication* or *Faith*, was originally a wedding present from the sculptor to Isabel; it surely was intended as a tribute to Isabel's virtue within the enterprise of marriage.<sup>547</sup> A portrait of Downie at age five or so and another work by Rowse, a fanciful depiction of a little girl in a big hat, hung as pendants in the Court Hall. *Sor Pudenciana*, a life-sized portrait of a nun who lived in seventeenth century Mexico City is a highlight of the Studio, and the first saint from the Americas is portrayed in *St. Rose of Lima*, which hung in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery. The Madonna herself is represented in five canvases among the Dining Room / Picture Gallery's old masters, by the statuette *La Purísima*, and by the *enconchada* in the Court Hall. It is significant that much of this feminine imagery is to be found either in the family's Sitting Room or in the Court Hall, the physical center of the house. It is as if this feminine imagery is to be identified with the female members of the household, the germinating life force for the family. The feminine imagery thus is connected to the origins and renewal of the human race that stems from Eve and her descendants. This theme is paralleled in Church's painting *Monastery of our Lady of the Snows*, which is exactly contemporary with the naming of Olana. The structure depicted in this painting is a monastery dedicated to a Madonna of the New World, and it is a feminine figure that walks along the path. As we have noted, the painting is a visual analogue for Olana itself; it is another clue to the connections Church made between the feminine and faith.

Last but not least, another of the intersecting patterns encompasses objects with iridescent, reflective, and metallic surfaces, especially ones that gleam out of dark spaces within the interior. To spend time in the interiors of Olana is to be continually drawn to patches of luster, deliberately placed to capture attention. Rhythmic patterns of light are established by the brass work in the fireplace garniture on the mantle in the Sitting Room, in the figurines in the fireplace niche of the Dining Room / Picture Gallery, and among the still life arrangements in the Court Hall. The arrangement of Middle Eastern weaponry and armor hung in the back of the stair hall bristles with points and discs of light. Church expended special effort on collecting Mexican pottery with an iridescent glaze; indeed, ceramic objects throughout the interiors of

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546 See Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 265-70. The painting was not among the furnishings of the first floor; it may have hung in Isabel's bedroom.

547 The statue is discussed in the chapter on the Studio (ch. 19) of this *Historic Furnishings Report*.

Olana cast spots of reflected light.<sup>548</sup> Two framed butterflies with iridescent wings hang on the pilasters that frame the entrance to the stair hall (figure 54). Church's own paintings were hung so that they glowed within the house. After watching a real sunset at Olana, Grace King turned and her attention was "caught by a mass of color – It was a lamp in a window burning just in front of one of Church's pictures – a sunset he had painted from nature on the Island of Jamaica."<sup>549</sup> The most spectacular example of the manipulation of golden glowing light within a dark space is the large amber window in the back of the stair hall. More subtle and mysterious, the two gilt Buddhas in the stair hall both glow, as though the states of meditation and enlightenment generate their own spiritual light. In fact, many of these objects are explicitly religious, or, like butterflies, are associated with the soul and transcendence. These objects, shining out of the gloom, are the material parallel to Church's painted sunsets and irradiated cloud formations. As many scholars have maintained, for Church, to paint light was to paint evidence of the Divine presence on earth.<sup>550</sup> The glowing artifacts at Olana carry the same connotations.

The furnishings of Olana, then, reveal overlapping patterns demonstrating evidence of the presence of the Divine in the artifacts of man. To the Churches, the antiquity of human civilization and its enduring cultural accomplishments are evidence that Divine inspiration is transmitted to humans. The ingenuity displayed in craft was evidence to the Churches of how God works through human hands. Religious imagery, overt and subtle, gives ample evidence of the human need to explore and express its conception of God. Feminine imagery brings to mind the generative force of women, a force that all theologies maintain stems from God. And light shining out of darkness is evidence for the power of spiritual revelation and transcendence. These patterns overlap and intersect; individual artifacts and groups of objects fit into more than one pattern. For example, Church admired Arce's statuette of the Madonna (figure 55) for its "curious combination of various Arts – Sculpture, painting decorative etc – It combines high Art with low."<sup>551</sup> In other words, Church admired the statuette for its simultaneous use of the conventions of Western figural statuary and its inventive use of craft techniques. These

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548 See Frederic Church to Charles Dudley Warner, Jan, 23, 1887, and March 27, 1892, both in ESCP.

549 Grace King to May King (McDowell), June 7, 1887, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.

550 The most complete treatment of this topic can be found in Huntington, "Church and Luminism."

551 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, Oct. 4, 1894, McKL.

connections between the artifact and the Divine are real, tangible material presences within the interiors of Olana.

It is impossible to experience the furnishings of the main residence in isolation; while inside Olana one can always see the landscape outside (figure 56). The view from Olana points to another connection the couple made with the Divine. The view encompasses the carefully planned and cultivated grounds of the estate itself, the agricultural fields and the commercial traffic of the Hudson, the length of the river and the breadth of the Catskill Mountains, and especially, the constantly changing skies. Very little of this panorama had been shaped by humans. Only the foreground of this picture had been altered by Church when he designed his own landscape garden that was set down amid his own fruitful agricultural lands. The larger landscape visible from Olana – the mountains and river valley – had originated and been shaped over eons by geological forces; this history became obvious from the vantage point of the home. This great spectacle had been created by God and was undeniable proof of the workings of the Divine in the natural world. Frederic and Isabel Church and Calvert Vaux capitalized upon the site, creating a home where they could always see river, mountain, and sky. They made the most of the view by bringing it to the doorstep, even by bringing it indoors. Porches were set around the house, capitalizing upon every line of sight; windows were bordered with ornamented golden glass, “framing” the view. The Divine of the natural world is thus constantly linked to evidence of the Divine in the man-made world.

At Olana, Frederic and Isabel Church created a new Eden by bringing together evidence of the Divine as the creator of human civilization and the natural world. The furnishings of Olana are material, empirical evidences of human interaction with the Divine. The home was full of artifacts that could be examined, even touched. Their provenances in the ancient world were narrated by Frederic and Isabel to their children and guests. The experience of the landscape was also very real. Family and guests rode through it in carriages, tracked meteorological phenomena from the terraces, and ate homegrown produce. The couple created an empirical world where the origins of human civilization and of the natural world were inescapably tangible. Olana was a place where the human intersected with the Divine. Like their contemporaries, the Churches believed that only once before had humans been able to live with God – in the Garden of Eden, where all life originated. Olana was designed as a new Eden,



a place to nurture life – the physical, intellectual, and spiritual life of the couple and their children.

There is tantalizing evidence that Frederic and Isabel did, in fact, think of their home as a new-world Eden. A few visitors to Olana explicitly called it “Eden” or “Paradise.” Upon arriving at Olana, Grace King wrote to her sister, “Well here I am! At last – looking at a perfect Eden of picturesque beauty.”<sup>552</sup> After a visit, Samuel Clemens wrote a brief thank-you note to Frederic Church: “It was an ideal holiday, in a Garden of Eden without the Garden of Eden’s unprotection from the weather.”<sup>553</sup> An elderly relative of the Churches’, recalling a visit she had made to Olana, remembered, “There was everything to make it an Earthly Paradise.”<sup>554</sup> Not long after he purchased the property on the Hudson, Church wrote to Palmer: “About an hour south of Albany is the Center of the World – I own it.”<sup>555</sup> In the literature and myth of many religions, including the writings of early Christian philosophers, the notion recurs that Paradise, or Eden, lay at the center of the earth. Church, half in jest and half solemnly, had expressed that view of Paradise by claiming his own land as the center of the world.

Perhaps the most telling clue to the couple’s assessment of Olana as an earthly Paradise may be in an 1887 letter to the artist. Church had asked the writer, an agent who imported Persian artworks to America, to have a couplet of poetry transposed into Arabic writing.<sup>556</sup> The couplet was: “If on earth there be one paradise / It is here, it is here, it is here.”<sup>557</sup> A parallel quote can be found in one of Isabel’s notebooks: “If on the earth there be a bower of bliss / That place is this, is this, is this, is this!”<sup>558</sup> Clearly, the sentiment was significant for both Frederic and Isabel. It is not hard to theorize that both liked the quote because it described their home. The same letter from the agent in Persia also mentions a second quotation that he had had transcribed into Arabic for the Churches. This was from the Bible, from the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, chapter 3, verse 4: “For every house is builded by some man, but he that built all

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552 Grace King to Nan, July 4, 1891, collection of John Coxe, on loan to LSU-HML.

553 Samuel Clemens to Frederic Church, June 11, 1887, Twain Papers, University of California at Berkeley.

554 Sarah Osgood Tucker to Downie Church Black, May 16, 1900, ESCP.

555 Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, July 7, 1869, McKL.

556 W. L. Whipple to Frederic Church, March 4, 1888, private collection, copy in ORC.

557 The writer points out that the scholars he had consulted had not identified the source of the couplet, but noted that perhaps it was by the 14th-century Persian poet Hafiz; Church also owned an illuminated manuscript version of Hafiz’s poetry.

558 See the notebook in ESCP, series 8G, folder 5. The notebook is inscribed “Morelia March 1.” Frederic Church was in Morelia in 1884, 1885, and 1886, and apparently Isabel was with him each time.

things is God.” More direct evidence that the Churches wanted to testify to God’s intervention in the creation of Olana can hardly be imagined. It is tempting to suppose that Church had asked to have these phrases put into Arabic so that they could be inscribed somewhere in the house, just as he had earlier had the Sitting Room mantle inscribed.<sup>559</sup> The inscriptions would thus have become mottos for Olana. With these sentiments Frederic and Isabel left compelling evidence that they regarded their home as a new-world Eden, whose origins lay in the Divine.

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559 On the east facade of Olana is an inset panel, about 2’ high and 4’ long, that was apparently intended to house an inscribed plaque of some sort. Two objects produced by Frederic Church during the design of the house indicate that the artist then thought of putting a date in this panel (an architectural model of the house has the date “1871” painted in the spot occupied by the panel [OL.1980.34] and a drawing dating from c. 1870 has an illegible date [OL.1980.40]). Photographs of the east facade, however, show clearly that the panel was never filled in by either generation of the Churches. It was filled in the early 1980s by site manager Jim Ryan, as a preservation measure. David Huntington, Jim Ryan, and others apparently believed that the panel had been removed by Sally Good Church, but there is no evidence to support this assertion.

## CHAPTER 13

### Louis and Sally as Stewards of Olana

Louis Palmer Church married Sarah Baker Good, known as Sally, in January 1901 in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. The couple had been friends since the 1880s, and they had been engaged since July 1894.<sup>560</sup> They apparently did not feel free to marry before the deaths of Frederic and Isabel Church, probably because Louis felt an obligation to care for his invalid parents.<sup>561</sup> Sally's father, George Good Sr., was a Civil War veteran and had had a long and successful career as a railroad contractor and owner of several different companies that manufactured industrial-grade ceramic piping and sewer lines.<sup>562</sup> Sally was one of six children and grew up in affluence in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania.

Before the marriage, there were many ties between the Church and Good families. Sally was a close friend of Hortense Ferguson, who had known the Church family ever since her own family began summering in a house on neighboring Mount Merino. Sally Good and Hortense Ferguson both attended St. Agnes School in Albany, and Sally probably met the

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560 A series of letters from Louis Church to Sally Good in July 1894 make the fact of the engagement clear. See Louis Church to Sally Good, July 21, July 26, and July 29, 1894, all in ESCP.

561 At least one source notes that Frederic and Isabel might not have approved of Sally and her family; see Anne Haskell, "Once Upon a time at Olana," *Art and Antiques* (Feb. 1989): 66. Haskell quotes her grandmother, Isabel Church Burroughs, who was the daughter of Downie Church Black. A letter from Downie Church Black to Sally Good, however, paints a different picture. Downie states how happy she is about the engagement: "It is just perfect the whole thing, my little Mother and you were so devoted and I couldn't have chosen any one in the whole world that I would rather see filling her dear place at Olana – and this you know is the biggest compliment I could pay you," in Downie Church Black to Sally Good, Oct. 4, 1900, ESCP. Furthermore, Frederic Church had some inkling of the engagement; see Miles Graves to Louis Church, Nov. 1, 1900, ESCP. Isabel Church too knew of Louis's affections for Sally; see Isabel Church to Downie Church Black, Jan. 30, 1892, ESCP, and Louis Church to Sally Good, Jan. 30, 1892, ESCP. For evidence for Louis and Sally's long "secret" engagement, see a letter from Virginia Osborn to Louis Church, which mentions Isabel Church's fear that her invalidism would prevent him from making a life for himself; Virginia Osborn to Louis Church, Oct. 19, 1900, ESCP.

562 "George S. Good Claimed by the Grim Reaper," undated and unidentified clipping, Hortense Ferguson Childs's scrapbook, copy in Good family biographical file, ORC.

Churches while visiting the Fergusons.<sup>563</sup> Sally's older brother Harry attended St. Paul's school in Concord Massachusetts, where the Church boys went to school,<sup>564</sup> and Sally's cousin, Reverend George Yeisley, was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Hudson, and a good friend of the Churches. Throughout the late 1880s and the 1890s, the Church family and the Ferguson family were good friends, exchanging visits daily when both were in Hudson, and Sally was very often a member of the Ferguson household. The couple thus had many opportunities to meet. When the engagement was announced in November 1900, many friends wrote congratulatory notes intimating that the "secret" engagement had not been a secret to them!<sup>565</sup>

Louis and Sally were married by Sally's cousin, the Reverend George Yeisley, who travelled to Lock Haven to perform the ceremony.<sup>566</sup> Several of Sally's siblings became good friends of the couple, and the lives of the Good family became increasingly intertwined with Olana. Ralph Good (known as Johnie) and his wife Marion visited Olana often and went camping with Louis and Sally at the Church cabin on Lake Millinocket. Sally always remained close to her sister Blanche, who married a lawyer, Charles Tressler Lark. Blanche and Charles Lark and their children also visited Olana often, and Charles Lark Jr. (known as Tim) was eventually to inherit Olana.

After several months honeymooning in Europe, Louis and Sally Church (figures 57 and 58) settled into life at Olana. The rhythms and patterns established by Frederic and Isabel were, for the most part, maintained by the new couple. Louis was now owner of the property he had managed for many years, and evidence indicates that while he made some improvements to

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563 George Good III, in a phone conversation with Karen Zukowski, July 8, 1999, believed that Louis and Sally had met at a party held in connection with Sally's school, Good family biographical file, ORC.

564 George S. Good III, in a conversation with Karen Zukowski, May 23, 1999, Good family biographical file, ORC.

565 See ESCP, series 3, for letters to Sally Good between October and December 1900, when the engagement and the forthcoming wedding were announced almost simultaneously.

566 See "Church-Good: Many Guests Witness the Solemnization of Brilliant Nuptials," clipping from an undated and unnamed newspaper, (c. Jan. 1901, Lock Haven, Penn.), copy in Good family biographical file, ORC. See also George C. Yeisley to Sally Church, Dec. 20, 1900, ESCP.

the estate, he made no radical alterations. Almost immediately, he overhauled the plumbing and installed a new range in the kitchen.<sup>567</sup> Nonetheless, the water systems at Olana always remained somewhat archaic; drinking and cooking water was hand-pumped and carried from a well at the north end of the mingled garden, while bathing and washing water was provided from a cistern that was apparently filled both with rainwater and with water pumped from the lake.<sup>568</sup> Bills indicate that the house now had a telephone – and it may have been installed prior to Frederic Church’s death.<sup>569</sup> Sometime between 1909 and 1917 electricity was introduced to the house, by way of a generator installed under the half-round porch of the studio wing.<sup>570</sup> Probably the most obvious change made to the estate was the addition of an elaborate flower garden on the east lawn, completed sometime around 1915.<sup>571</sup> Apparently designed by Louis himself, the garden was modeled loosely after a photograph in Olana’s collection showing the garden of a summer palace in Tehran, Persia.<sup>572</sup> Louis Church initiated and oversaw all these improvements and took an active hand in their maintenance. Visitors to Olana remember that it was Louis who fired up the electrical generator each morning and who conferred with the farm

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- 567 See Louis Church to Sally Good (Church), April 17, 1900, Nov. 17, 1900, Nov. 26, 1900, and Dec. 1, 1900, all in ESCP.
- 568 At least two interviews mention drinking water being hand-carried to the cooler in the Dining Room, see Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 10-11, ORC; George Good III, interview by Karen Zukowski, Evelyn Trebilcock, and Ann Gibbons, April 7, 1999, ORC. See also Louis Church to Sally Good, Nov. 17, 1900, ESCP, which explains the cistern and pump at the lake. See also an appraisal of the Church property by Lloyd Boice, Aug. 5, 1944, Columbia County Surrogate’s Court, file no. 2230, Columbia County Courthouse, Hudson, N. Y., copy in ORC, which notes that at that date, drinking water was hand-carried from an artesian well into the house.
- 569 See a check dated Jan. 7, 1901, ESCP. The check appears to be for a routine charge for the service (not an installation charge), indicating that the phone was installed earlier.
- 570 Fred H. Jennings, a grounds worker at Olana, recalled that electricity was installed in the house during his tenure there, between 1909 and 1912, see Fred H. Jennings, interview, Aug. 28, 1980, ORC. Vera Frier Dietz recalled that she was 13 when she met her future husband, who was wiring Olana; see Vera Frier Dietz, interview by James Ryan and Robin Eckerle, June 17, 1985, transcript, 1, ORC. The date when wiring was installed is still uncertain because we do not know her birth year; three separate oral interviews with her cite it as 1902, 1903, and 1904.
- 571 Toole, “Historic Landscape Report,” 118-119.
- 572 The photograph is OL.1981.494.90.

and grounds workers before breakfast to ensure the smooth operations of the estate.<sup>573</sup> They also remember that each morning Sally Church found a flower on her breakfast plate, a gift from her husband.<sup>574</sup>

Daily patterns of life on the estate were little altered. The farm still provided its own unsalted butter, apples, peaches, eggs, and other products.<sup>575</sup> Canning still went on, and the Churches still proudly sent their homegrown produce to friends.<sup>576</sup> Louis and Sally purchased an automobile in 1903; with a large picnic hamper strapped to its fender, the couple used it for excursions on and off the property.<sup>577</sup> At Olana, automobiles gradually replaced horses and carriages. While the couple let some servants go, they hired new ones, always maintaining significant staffing in the house.<sup>578</sup> Louis and Sally continued to entertain many guests at Olana. Frequent visitors included some who had come during the nineteenth century, such as Susan Hale, Caroline Atkinson, and Lockwood and Meta de Forest.<sup>579</sup>

Very few changes were made to the furnishings of Olana. As a remembrance, Louis gave Virginia Osborn a sketch by his father that had been made in connection with the large painting

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573 See George Good III, interview by James Ryan, Robin Eckerle, and Gerald Carr, June 7, 1984, ORC.

574 See Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 6, ORC.

575 George Good III, interview by Ryan, Eckerle, and Carr, June 7, 1984, ORC.

576 See Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 48-50, ORC, for information on canning. George Good III, in the interview by Ryan, Eckerle, and Carr, June 7, 1984, ORC, notes that lima beans were taken to the Livingstons by Ruben Wilsey.

577 See Susan Hale to Carla Atkinson, Nov. 16, 1903, special collections, University of Rhode Island, Providence, R.I. The car appears in many photographs, among them OL.1986.378.34.a-e. The picnic hamper with all its accessories is still at Olana.

578 Shortly before his marriage, Louis Church fired Jane McKenna, Olana's long-time cook, and Sarah Clarkin, a maid who had worked for the Churches for some time. See Sally Good to Louis Church, Nov. 17, Nov. 22, and Nov. 27, 1900, ESCP. Vera Frier Dietz recalls that in 1907 or 1908 Michael McKenna was fired and her father was installed as head of the estate, see Vera Frier Dietz, interview by Ryan and Eckerle, June 3, 1985, transcript, 4 ORC. Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, ORC, gives a clear picture of staffing levels at Olana in the late 1920s and 1930s.

579 Two guest books survive, covering the years 1901-1918 and 1918-1943; they document these and other names; see LP.

*Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives*.<sup>580</sup> Over the years, he occasionally made similar presents to close friends of his father’s artworks and other works from the house. Louis may have sold a few of the old master paintings and contemplated selling more, but did not do so.<sup>581</sup> The couple’s most significant dispersal of Frederic Church’s works was to a new museum, founded to augment the mission of the Cooper Union, which trained artists and mechanics. The Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City was attempting form a study collection of drawings by American artists, and in 1917 the couple donated over 2,000 pencil and oil sketches.<sup>582</sup> Louis and Sally retained all framed works by Church that were in the house as well as most sketches depicting Olana or its view and all material relating to the architectural development of the site. Louis and Sally did add a few paintings to Olana; all were apparently gifts painted by friends, including a large marine by John P. Benson that hung in the Sitting Room and a landscape by James Wordwell, an artist from Woodstock, New York.<sup>583</sup> A radio was installed in the Dining Room / Picture Gallery, and a television was installed in the Sitting Room.<sup>584</sup> Over the years, much worn upholstery was replaced, a few pieces of furniture were added, and some rooms, notably the Court Hall, were rearranged. But mainly, as the former servants who worked at Olana remember, “you didn’t dare move anything,” because the couple wanted to keep the house as they had found it.<sup>585</sup> The subsequent chapters of the *Historic Furnishings Report* detail the

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580 Virginia Osborn to Louis P. Church, Oct. 31, 1900, ESCP.

581 Of the many old masters mentioned in two letters from the Ehrich Galleries in New York City in 1919, only two “flower pictures” cannot be identified with pictures still at Olana; apparently these were sold. See Walter Ehrich to Louis Church, Nov. 29 and Dec. 6, 1919, ESCP.

582 See Gail S. Davidson, “Eliot Clark and the American Drawings Collection at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 34, no. 4 (1994): 2-8.

583 The Benson is OL.1980.1954. The Wordwell is OL.1980.1928. It is inscribed to “Dad” (the nickname of Theodore Winthrop Church) and thus may originally have been owned by him. It was probably given to Louis and Sally after Theodore Winthrop’s death in 1914.

584 For the radio, see George Good III, interview by Zukowski, Trebilcock, and Gibbons, April 7, 1999, ORC; for the television see Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, ORC.

585 Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 57-58, ORC.

specific changes made; cumulatively, this evidence proves that few changes were made to the interior arrangements of the house.

Louis and Sally also spent much time away from Olana. They built a cottage in Port Sewell, Florida, in a development associated with the Sunrise Inn, a resort hotel.<sup>586</sup> The couple spent most winters there. Louis Church enjoyed deep-sea fishing and boating, and together the couple created a garden. The two also spent much time at Camp Rhodora, inviting many friends to the remote cabin, which could only be reached by canoe.

Louis Church died on November 8, 1943, in his bedroom at Olana, of a gunshot wound.<sup>587</sup> For several years, Sally attempted to maintain the estate and farm, with the help of Ruben and Ellen Wilsey, who had worked for the Churches for many years.<sup>588</sup> By 1946 the farm was leased to tenants, and the Wilses continued as caretakers and gardeners, living in the main house with Sally Church.<sup>589</sup> Around 1947 Lloyd Boice, a real estate agent from nearby Germantown, was hired as overseer of the property.<sup>590</sup> Boice was a link between the Wilses and Charles Lark Jr., Sally Church's nephew, who increasingly took on the management of Sally Church's financial affairs, and by extension, all expenditures for Olana. The cottage in Florida and the camp in Maine were sold. As the years went on, Sally developed various health problems, including cataracts and blindness in one eye. She also became senile, and for some years before she was legally declared mentally incompetent in 1960, she was unable to manage

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586 The cottage, near the present-day town of Stuart, was recently demolished. See Chait, "Quick Action Documents Church History."

587 Lloyd Boice believed that Louis had committed suicide; see Lloyd Boice, interview by Peter Stevenson, Jan. 1969, transcript, 3. There was no police investigation into the incident.

588 See Lloyd Boice, interview by Peter Stevenson, c. January, 1969, transcript, 3, ORC, and Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 1-2, ORC.

589 See an agreement regarding the farm between Sally Church and Otto Keoppe, March 30, 1946, LP. Later, the June family apparently farmed the land; see Lloyd Boice, interview by Peter and Aileen Stevenson, June 24, 1969, transcript, 20-21, ORC. The move of the Wilses to the main house is recorded in Helen Howe, Dot Wilsey, and Dorthea Wentworth, interview by Ryan and Zukowski, Aug. 13, 1991, transcript, 36, ORC.

590 Boice's hiring, see Boice to Lark, Dec. 30, 1949, LP; and Lloyd Boice, interview by Peter Stevenson, c. January, 1969, transcript, 2-5, ORC.



her own affairs.<sup>591</sup> For the last decade of her life she lived at Olana with trained nurses and spent most of her time in the Sitting Room, Dining Room / Picture Gallery, and her bedroom, as well as taking drives in her car on her own property, with Ruben Wilsey acting as chauffeur.

Sally Church died peacefully in her sleep on August 17, 1964.

During her whole tenure at Olana, Sally worked to preserve the estate, and there are many indications she may once have even sought to make Olana a museum. From the start, Sally Church evidently revered her deceased in-laws and respected the home they had created.<sup>592</sup> Hortense Ferguson Childs, in a speech she gave sometime in the early decades of the century, noted that Olana had been left to Louis, who “keeps the place in the most perfect condition, regarding it as a trust and a memorial to his father.”<sup>593</sup> In a 1948 article for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, noted writer James Thrall Soby described Frederic Church’s art, and the visit he had recently made to Olana. He said: “It is to be hoped that ‘Olana’ will one day be preserved as a public park, with the likely consent of Church’s devoted and gracious family. Nowhere else that I know of is there so grand and complete a monument to later American romanticism in the fine arts.”<sup>594</sup> Amelie van der Kieft Church, widowed by 1914, also admired her father-in-law, and apparently prepared a lecture on Church, quoting from the diary the artist kept on his trip to Petra, and adding her own reminiscences. In this she notes “I join with the Church descendants in wishing that ‘Olana’ may be preserved as a public park.”<sup>595</sup> As late as 1955, Sally wanted to replicate the original scheme for the stenciling on the exterior cornices, even though Lloyd Boice

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591 Dorren Martin, curatorial assistant, recorded the date of March 23, 1960, as the date when Sally Church was declared “mentally incapable.” See her “Notes on Researching Sources” in “A Chronological Outline of Architectural Alterations to the Main Church Family residence at Olana State Historic Site, April 7, 1900, Through June 30, 1966,” unpublished report, Feb. 18, 1997, ORC.

592 See George Good III, interview by Ryan, Eckerle, and Carr, June 7, 1984, ORC. Mr. Good reported that his mother, Marion Bigler Good, always used the word “preservation” when discussing Sally’s efforts to keep Olana as it had been created by her in-laws.

593 Hortense Ferguson Childs, “Reminiscences,” 14, WP.

594 James Thrall Soby, “The Fine Arts: Iron Lungs for Genius,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, Jan. 24, 1948.

595 Amelie van der Kieft Church typescript, WP, box 3, folder 14.

and Charles Lark felt it would be too expensive.<sup>596</sup> Even in her old age, Sally Church hoped for the preservation of Olana.

In December 1953, David Huntington, then a student in art history at Yale University, first visited Olana while doing research for his Ph.D. on Frederic Church. He recognized the significance of Olana immediately. By then, it was feared that his examination of the papers and artworks at Olana would disturb Sally Church, so it was Charles Lark Jr. who granted permission for his research to go on in the attic without Sally's knowledge.<sup>597</sup> After Sally Church's death, the Lark family continued to grant Huntington and his colleagues access to the house, and soon the Larks signed a lease with the newly formed Olana Preservation. This grassroots organization, headed by David Huntington and composed of scholars, local politicians, and people from the community, was committed to raising money to buy the property in order to preserve it as a museum. After a two-year campaign that involved public tours of the house, fund-raising events, wide-ranging solicitation efforts, and much local, national, and even international publicity, Olana Preservation had raised two-thirds of the asking price.<sup>598</sup> As the deadline imposed by the estate drew near, county assemblymen introduced a bill to the New York State Legislature to appropriate the remaining funds, and *Life Magazine* ran a cover story on Olana, entitled "A Century-Old Refuge of Art and Splendor: Must this Mansion Be Destroyed?" The bill passed, and Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who had become interested in Olana, signed the bill into law on the steps of Olana on June 27, 1966. Thus, Olana's preservation was ensured.

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596 See Lloyd Boice to Charles Lark, Sept. 13, 1955, LP.

597 See David Huntington, interview by Charles B. Hosmer Jr., March, 1988, transcript, 7-8; and Charles Lark to David Huntington, Feb. 24, 1954, LP.

598 For the history of Olana Preservation, see "Friends of Olana Marks 25 Years of Partnership," *The Crayon* 27, no. 202 (spring 1996): 1, 15.