

## **Farm Tour – Olana State Historic Site**

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### **1. Cosy Cottage – 1<sup>st</sup> stop**

- FEC purchased farm in 1860 and immediately began planning construction of new house.
- Architect was Richard Morris Hunt. Construction lasted through 1860 (Churches stayed at Cedar Grove during work), and family moved in by May or June 1861.
- Churches pursued rural life, which surprised some friends (“...[c]an it be possible that you have abandoned the exquisite field of ideality in which you have reaped so many laurels, for the sure matter-of-fact one of the husbandman?” –letter, Ramon Paez to FEC, 1862) – Church saw farm as a refuge.
- First child, Herbert Edwin Church born 1862, and second, Emma Frances, born 1864. Both died in spring 1865 of diphtheria in NYC. Churches spent summer 1865 in Jamaica after that event.
- Frederic Joseph Church born 1866.
- Recent restorations of exterior including rebuilding of wing; inside is currently used for offices

### **2. Barnyard – 2<sup>nd</sup> stop**

- Had been a farm prior to FEC’s purchase, earliest visible on property was Wynsant Brezie’s farm house c. 1794 (now ruin & hidden by trees beyond barnyard, but was still standing in FEC’s time).
- Theodore Cole, who first knew FEC while he studied with his father Thomas Cole and remained friends of the Church family for decades after, assisted FEC from the beginning, collaborating with FEC on plans for development of farm, keeping accounts, etc., and worked as farm manager for FEC for 26 years. (“It is a pleasure for me and no task to be of any service for you. I always feel almost as if I was doing something for my own Brother when I am doing anything for you.” –letter, Theodore Cole to FEC)
- FEC hired a salaried farm manager to run farm staff and accounts (i.e. Cole), and full- and part-time staff of farmers and farm hands
- General-use farm operation: crops included apples, peaches, berries, hay, rye, corn, etc.; livestock incl. horses, cows, chickens, geese, donkeys, etc. –show pics on sign board.
- FEC was committed to farming but also set aside acreage for park space, and in his later years even removed some land from farm use to continue developing the aesthetic element of the property. FEC began having trees planted and lake dug on property almost immediately, saying in 1864 that he already had “several thousand” trees planted on the property.
- Farming was abandoned by late 1940s and many of the original farm buildings and many of the original farm buildings removed
- Surviving buildings include 1899 dairy barn & older attached barn, farm stable and pump house.
- Upcoming plans include restoration of extant barns and buildings and reconstruction of the wagon house, which was among the removed buildings. The buildings will then be able to be used for educational programs, lectures, display space, etc. Restorations such as this are made possible through fundraising by the Olana Partnership and grants.

### **3. Kitchen garden sign – optional 3<sup>rd</sup> stop**

-Garden site behind where one stands to view sign- pic on sign

-In 1880, FEC described building a “two acre garden below and east of the lake” with irrigation from the lake (letter to Erastus Dow Palmer); by 1885 described the garden as “a success” with “Mexican corn 16 feet high” (letter to Erastus Dow Palmer).

-FEC was generous with the garden and often offered plants and flowers to friends

-Kitchen garden provided vegetables for kitchen in house and for workers, also cut flowers for the house.

### **4. Lake – 4<sup>th</sup> stop (near small dock)**

-FEC first refers to excavation on lake site in 1860 (sent Theodore Cole to the site to “see about getting out muck”), continued over the course of about the next 20 yrs.

-FEC had west bank of lake shaped to “echo” shape of the river in view from hilltop – visible from south side of house

-“Muck” removed from lake site during excavations was spread on fields on farm for fertilizer.

### **Conclusion**

-The farm was integral to the Churches’ early history at Olana as their primary site of residence until 1872. Following a trip to the Near East and Europe in 1867, the Churches began planning a larger home on the hilltop, construction of which began in 1870. The family moved into the new house in 1872. However, the farm remained crucial to the site’s identity long after the family moved into the main house. FEC commonly referred to the property as “the Farm” until the end of his life. Upcoming plans for the farm complex include restorations of the barns and reconstruction of the wagon house. These projects, utilizing funds raised by the Olana Partnership and New York State, will further return the exterior appearance of the farm complex to its appearance during Church’s lifetime, while also opening new possibilities for a wide range of programs to be offered throughout the year.