

1 Overview

Olana Landscape Timeline

Frederic Edwin Church (FEC) born in Hartford, CT

1826

1840

1841
Hudson Valley nurseryman A. J. Downing publishes his *Treatise on... Landscape Gardening*. Its popularity shapes America's domestic landscape, translating the English picturesque style for the new nation.



Fig. 43. Landscape Gardening, in the Picturesque School.
Downing's illustration of gardening in the picturesque mode.

1853
FEC follows von Humboldt's footsteps, visiting Colombia, and in an 1857 trip, Ecuador



FEC, Mount Chimbarazo, Ecuador, 1857



FEC, Heart of the Andes, 1859

1850

1844-46
FEC becomes the first student of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River Valley School of Landscape Painting (1801-1848).



FEC, To the Memory of Cole, 1848

1860-61
FEC marries Isabel Carnes, moves to his new hillside land, and begins to develop a "gentleman's farm." Constructs Cosy Cottage, with assistance from friend and architect Richard Morris Hunt. This would be his home for the next ten years.



FEC, Cosy Cottage, c. 1870-72

1859
Charles Darwin publishes *Origin of the Species*. FEC questions his ideal of the union of science, religion, nature, and art and turns to the Holy Land for answers.

1860
FEC purchases 126-acre Simmons farm, near site of his early exploration in Hudson Valley, for \$10,000. This farm would become part of Olana.

Feb 1860
First reference to "getting out muck," from a wetlands area of the farm. FEC excavates for 20 years, eventually creating Olana's lake.

Summer 1861
FEC begins to create the landscape of his farm, planting "an abundance" of trees. "Quite a number of trees were set out."

1860

May 1863

Church family settles into farm existence. FEC to father:
"The farm looks better than ever before... The peach [...] pear and plum trees are a sight...The apple trees are just beginning to come out... We have a coop of 15 chickens by the house and he [son Herbert] feeds them out of his hand - He is fascinated by the horses - I have a pair of pigeons."



FEC, Apple Blossoms at Olana, 1870

c. 1865

FEC has 24-foot square studio constructed 150 feet above Cosy Cottage.



Oct 1862
Churches' first child,
Herbert Edwin, born.

Spring 1864
FEC tallies his tree planting at "several thousand," including fruit trees, native deciduous trees (sugar maple, white birch), and native evergreens (pines, spruce, hemlocks). Records show purchase of three hundred maple trees in August.



Arthur Parton, Looking Southwest over Church's Farm from the Sieghenbergh, 1864

Oct 1864
Daughter Emma
Frances born.

1865
FEC and Isabel lose their two young children to diphtheria a week apart in New York City.



FEC, Farm Walk, Jamaica, July 1865

1867
FEC engages architect Hunt to help develop plans and elevations for a new house at the farm.



Richard Morris Hunt, Residence for F. E. Church, 1867 or 1869

Sept 1866
Third child, Frederic Joseph, born to the Churches.



left: Felix Bonfils (attributed), FEC and His Son, Frederic Joseph, in Beirut, 1868

Feb - Sept 1867
Churches in residence at farm preparing for trip to Europe and Near East. FEC builds new barn, remodels old barn, and re-roofs ice house. Farm consists of ten buildings added by FEC: Cosy Cottage, cottage outbuilding, studio, new barn, second barn and/or stable, coachman's house, ice house, and several smaller sheds and specialty buildings.



Unidentified photographer, Cosy Cottage, c. 1890

1869
FEC begins to be bothered by rheumatism which begins to disable him and restricts his painting for the rest of his life.

July 1869
Churches return to farm after almost two years away. FEC writes: "Here I am on my own farm.... About an hour this side of Albany is the Center of the world—I own it."



FEC, Church's Farm, Hudson, New York, 1870-1880



Calvert Vaux, Study of a House for F. E. Church, 1870

1869-1870
FEC hires Calvert Vaux "kindred spirit in matters of Picturesque design," to work with him in preparing drawings for his new house. Vaux's involvement continues for two years.

Nov 1867 - June 1869

FEC embarks on pilgrimage with wife, year-old son, and mother-in-law to Old World, primarily the Holy Land. Europe (Paris and London), the Near East (Beirut, Syria, Palestine, Athens, Corinth, and Petra, Jordan), the Bavarian Alps, Rome.

1870

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Spring 1870
The Farm is essentially complete and agricultural operations running smoothly. FEC turns his attention to the design and construction of the house and ornamental landscape.

July 1871
FEC writes: "I am building a house and am principally my own Architect. I give directions all day and draw plans and working drawings all night."



FEC, Southwest Façade, Olana, c. 1870

1873 onward
FEC develops site as "landscape composition that combined agricultural acreage, parkland, woods and water into a single unified entity," providing a setting for "sophisticated residential life in the country."

1876
House is essentially complete.



FEC, Olana in the Clouds, 1872

1879
Lake is complete.



Granville Hills, House and Park from across the Lake, Olana, c. 1890-1903

1880
FEC builds new kitchen garden.



1794 Farmhouse with 1869 west addition by Church, 1906. Fruit trees in background, cottage garden in foreground.

1880
"Olana" is adopted as property name—ancient Persian for "elevated stronghold overlooking fertile river valley."

1880

1882
Isabel's mother records daily routine of relaxed recreation, carriage rides, visiting farmer, touring kitchen garden, boating on the lake.



Robert and Emily de Forest, Isabel Charlotte (Downie) Church and her Grandmother, Emma Carnes, 1884

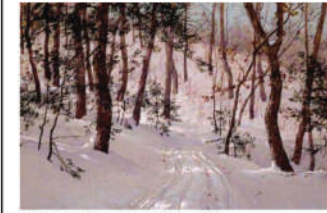
Winter 1883
Churches, and later FEC alone, travel to Mexico seeking a climate more comfortable for his rheumatism.

After 1886
Creation of "Mingled Garden," primarily a perennial border, on south side of retaining wall edging final approach driveway.



John A. Eberle, Gardener Standing in Garden, 1906

Oct 1884
FEC writes to sculptor Erastus Dow: "Five men [are] building a road...." Both Ridge and Lake Roads built in 1884. Ridge Road corridor, formerly crop land, transformed to managed parkland, enhancing site views.



Walter Launt Palmer, Road to Olana, 1888

Sept 1886
Frederic Joseph Church, Church's son, draws plan of nearly complete Olana landscape.



Frederic Joseph Church, Plan of Olana, 1886

1888-91
Studio wing added to Olana house. This was the "last major creative effort of Church's life," and was accomplished with a rheumatic wrist.



Aerial from SE showing studio wing

June 1888-9
FEC lays out a new, more ornamental and more scenic approach to house, a modification of South Road; last major road by FEC.



John A. Eberle, South Road, Olana, 1906

Nov 1889
Arrival of 2,087 "young evergreens." Photos show FEC planted slope south of lawn terraces with trees and shrubs which don't block views to or from house when young.



Olana panorama with view of house framed by trees, 1895

FEC, Olana from the Southwest, c. 1872

Oct 1891
Son Louis Church accepts
parents' offer of job as
property superintendent.

Late 1894
Louis oversees
installation of
new pump, and
pump house with
piping system to
bring water from
lake to house, and
adjacent sawmill.

1892
Louis builds greenhouse
(15 x 30 ft.) east of house.

1899
Large cow barn built on east
side of older barn, signaling
development of dairy herd,
perhaps because of improved
rail service in the valley.

May 1899
Isabel Church dies in New York City. FEC travels to Mexico
a few months later.



Walter Launt Palmer, Church on a Balcony in Orizaba, Mexico, 1895

March 1900
FEC returns from Mexico in poor health
and dies on April 7, never well enough
to return to Olana. Metropolitan Museum
mounts first retrospective of his work.

C. 1914-1915
Louis and Sally Church build elaborate flower garden on
East Lawn.



Gatty Brothers (Clermont, NY), Aerial Photograph of Olana from Southeast, c. 1931

1933-34
Construction of Rip Van Winkle
Bridge increases traffic around
Olana, and becomes large
intrusion in Olana's viewshed.

Nov 1943
Sudden death of Louis
Church at age 72.

Mar 1945
Seymour and Stanley June, last
salaried farmers at Olana, leave.

Aug 1964
Sally Church dies leaving Olana in jeopardy.
Charles T. Lark, Jr., inherits and immediately
plans auction of entire property. Church's
revived reputation inspires movement to
preserve the house and grounds.

June 1965
Olana listed as National
Historic Landmark.

June 1966
State of New York purchases
Olana under Governor Nelson
Rockefeller. Landscape
preservation not considered
in preservation or purchase.

June 1967
Olana opens for
public visits.

Dec 1953
Student David Huntington visits Olana and discovers
"a nearly complete repository of artifacts from Frederic
Church's lifetime." Visit is catalyst for preservation of Olana.



Kurt Dolner, Court Hall at Olana, 1997