

Thomas Cole Historic Site Awarded \$320,900 From the National Endowment for the Humanities

Catskill, NY – The National Endowment for the Humanities has announced a grant award of \$320,900 for the Thomas Cole National Historic Site through the "Interpreting America's Historic Places" program, which supports public humanities projects that exploit the evocative power of historic places to address themes and issues central to American history and culture.

The grant will fund a new permanent exhibition at the Thomas Cole site, delivered throughout the site through a variety of elements – an introductory film, educational panels, thematic displays of collection objects, interactive computer stations, printed booklets and brochures, guided tours of the site, and related public programs – that bring audiences new insights into America's cultural history through the nineteenth-century artist Thomas Cole, who is considered the founder of the Hudson River School of art.

"This grant presents us with exactly the right opportunity at the right time for this organization," said Elizabeth Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. "We are thrilled to be able to implement this key piece of our strategic plan, fulfilling our mission to be a center for education about the Hudson River School."

The exhibition will specifically address Cole's art-making process and the significant role his appreciation and interpretation of the American landscape had in shaping an emerging national and cultural identity. New exhibition elements made possible through this grant will not only provide a means for visitors to the site to become familiar with masterworks made by Cole at Cedar Grove (the historic name of the property), but will also illustrate the steps he took in his studio to develop the sketches he made on hikes in the surrounding Catskills. With telling subtractions and additions to the composition, he turned these sketches into paintings that influenced the way nature was perceived and initiated the art movement known as the Hudson River School. The Thomas Cole site's collection of Cole's artwork, tools, reference books, household furnishings and personal items will be presented and interpreted in new ways, heightening visitors' awareness of Cole's methods. The exhibition will advance the public's knowledge of the origins of an art movement that dominated American visual arts for the 50 years between 1825 and 1875 -- a movement that formulated several of the underlying themes that still define America.

Planning for the exhibition is well underway due to a Planning Grant from the NEH awarded to the Thomas Cole site last year, an NEH Consultation Grant in 2005, and several grants from the New York State Council on the Arts. The core project team includes Dr. Alan Wallach, considered to be the leading Cole scholar working today; Ms. Elizabeth Jacks, Director of the Thomas Cole Historic Site; Dr. Lee Vedder, Director of Collections and Exhibitions at the Allentown Art Museum; Dr. Karen Lucic from Vassar College; exhibition designer Charles Froom; filmmakers Eric Taylor and Jaime Bernanke; and Dr. James O'Connell, planner from the



Cedar Grove

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site

National Park Service. To ensure input from the community, a workshop was held in June 2005 providing insights from a variety of community members including representatives from neighboring institutions Olana and the Albany Institute of History and Art. The exhibition will open in phases over the next two years.

Cedar Grove is located at 218 Spring Street in Catskill, New York, near the western entrance to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, with easy access from the New York State Thruway, Exit 21. For more information about the site, call (518) 943-7465 or visit www.thomascole.org.

About Thomas Cole

Long regarded as the founder of America's first art movement, known as the Hudson River School, Thomas Cole (1801-1848) is a central figure in the development of American culture. When Cole made his first trip up the Hudson River in 1825, American cultural leaders were searching for something distinctly American to establish the nation's own culture as separate from that of Europe. Thomas Cole found it in the Catskill Mountain wilderness, which came to symbolize the unspoiled character of the new nation. Lionized during his lifetime and celebrated by a generation of artists who followed in his footsteps, Cole is now widely regarded as the father of American landscape painting.

About Cedar Grove

Cedar Grove is the site where the artist Thomas Cole lived, worked, was married, and where he died at the age of 47. Today the site consists of the Federal style brick home (c. 1815) in which Thomas Cole resided with his family, as well as the artist's original studio building, on 5 landscaped acres with a magnificent view of the Catskill Mountains. In recent years the Main House has undergone a major restoration and contains both furnished period rooms and galleries featuring special exhibitions. The studio, restored in 2004, contains Cole's original easels and art-making tools, and offers a greater understanding of the artist and his working environment. Lectures and other public programs are offered throughout the year. The current schedule is available at www.thomascole.org. The site is an affiliate of the National Park Service and it is owned by the Greene County Historical Society.