

THOMAS COLE

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

I never saw so many different [trees] together in my life.

Maria Bartow Cole's account of the Schroon Lake trip taken by the Coles and Durands in June 1837, in a letter addressed to her sisters Emily, Harriet, and Frances Bartow.

Maria Bartow Cole (1813–1884) was a niece of John A. Thomson, the head of household at Cedar Grove from c.1821–1846. In 1836, Maria married the artist, Thomas Cole.

The foot of Scroon Lake, June the 24, 1837

My Dear Sisters,

As we have arrived at our journeys end or at head quarters, I will commence writing my promised letter although I have been absent only three days.— I was very sorry not to see Mary Anne [illegible], for you must have been so disappointed to return home without her. I thought of you all the afternoon.— Our passage to Albany was not very pleasant for it rained most of the time, it fortunately stoped a little before landing.— We found Mr. & Mrs. Durand impatiently awaiting our arrival.— As the Cars for Saratoga were not to leave until the next morning -- we contented ourselves with the hope of fairer weather for traviling.— In the evening we attended one of Catlins Lectures which was directly oposite the Mansion House. It was extremely interesting: Catlin is an Artist, that has been among the diferent Indian Tribes, between the Misippy and the Rocky Mountains for seven years — for the purpose of getting information respecting their manners and customs, &c. &c.— He showed a great many portraits of different Tribes, with an account of each, & their different dr[e]sses. Some of them were realy splendid, but I must leave the rest to tell you when I return. I was both amased and delighted.—

Thursday morning promised fairer weather as we had hoped.— We met Mr. Woodruff in the street, promised to call on our return. At ten OClock took our seats in the Cars for Schenectady, where we changed Cars for Saratoga arrived there at half past two.— It appeared delightful to me there while we staid, the grounds are laid out handsomely & the Houses & every thing around appeared so perfectly neat.— We had only time to walk to the Spring & take a glass of Congress water before dinner.— It would not take long however to see everything that is remarcable there, Art has done a great deal for the place.— There was very little company there.— We left there soon after dinner in an open

Barouche for Lake George.— The roads were not very fine, a good deal rut up by the late rains & the distance 27 miles. So we did not reach Caldwell until 9 O'Clock, & pretty well tired as you may suppose, after traveling 60 miles in eleven hours.

I saw very little of Schenectady as we were there only long enough to change Cars.— The route from Albany there is very uninteresting, indeed, I was thankful that there was a Rail Road to pass over it on. & from S. to Saratoga was but little better. I saw some beautiful flowers growing on the bank and in the swamps we passed by, I longed to possess some of them but of course could not. From Saratoga to Lake G. it was much more interesting.— Glens Falls is a much more remarkable place than I expected to see. There is at present an immense body of water there, which dashes over the rocks in the grandest manner I ever saw.— It was twilight when we passed Bloody point & Col. Williams Rock: I don't know when I have had such a fit of romance since me.— I felt all the Horrors of the Scene as if it might actually have then been passing.— I will Scarcely say that I have seen Lake G. for I have by no means had a favorable view of it. We left at 1 O'Clock in the morning after we arrived there, & the Atmosphere was such as to see nothing there to advantage.— The road to Scroon was full of interest, the Country I cannot describe, it is filled with little mountains, with now & then a fine peak of a lofty distant one. The land is a good deal cleared in parts [illegible word crossed out] ~~the houses that are built~~ but very little cultivation. But Scroon is delightful notwithstanding the hazy atmosphere.— So far it has certainly been most unfortunate for us.— Our quarters are as comfortable as we could wish for in any place, and altogether more commodious than I anticipated. Our Land Lord has been a School Master most of his life I believe, & a real Ichabod Crane he is too.— Our Land Lady a real industrious woman — the head manager I imagine.— a good deal such a woman as Mr.[sic] Thorp only altogether neater.—It is three days since I commenced writing this, however I will go on with my description.— The house fronts the West.— The prospect is limited on all sides, being apparently surrounded by very high hills almost mountains.— The woods remind me a good deal of Broome, though there is a much greater variety of trees.— I never saw so many different ones together in my life — The Lake lies about half a mile back from the house.— From a little hill very near the house we can have a very fine view of it.— I have been on it twice, the first time I went up it three miles.— but the Atmosphere has been so hazy ever since we came we have scarcely been able to see the distance at all.— from all that we can learn, the high mountain that T. sketched when here before must be the one of 5000 that is now spoken of-- it is 8 or 10 miles from here.— & difficult of access. It should clear up soon which we are all earnestly hoping [illegible due to tear] do.— most likely T. & Mr. D. will explore it.— As soon as the weather will permit — we are going to sail through the Lake which is 9 miles in extent.— Our gentlemen are improving their time as well as they can. They have sketched some very pretty near views, but have been almost devoured by musketoes, gnats & sand flies.—You would think Mr. D. had the measles.— Mr. D. has not been very well but is getting much

better.— We have rambled a good deal but not to any great distance.— We find plenty of Strawberry. by the way our fair is real country. I cannot begin to describe the variety we are treated too.— I think I never ate fresh fish before, the Lake Trout is so much finer than any thing I ever saw of the fish kind.— I cannot tell when we shall leave here, we shall probably not be home until the 5 or 6th.— It is doubtful whether Mr. & Mrs. D. will stop at C.— they think now that they had better not.— We attended no church on Sunday as the nearest is 7 miles.— It is as wild and quiet here as you can imagine. We have had an invitation taking tea out tomorrow afternoon much to the annoyance of our Gentlemen but we shall accept it. I must leave the rest to tell you when I return. I shall then have much more to tell I hope than I have now. Give my love to all which will include yourselves of course. I believe to be your affectionate Sister Maria

Maria Bartow Cole to Emily C. Bartow, June 24, 1837, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Thomas Cole Papers 1821-1863, SC10635, Cole Family Letters, Box 4 Folder 1 [missing].