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JUNE 4-5 **NATIONAL TRAILS DAY CELEBRATION IN THE CATSKILL HIGH PEAKS!**

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site & the Mountain Top Historical Society team up for a weekend of special events:

Hudson River School Art Trail Locates the Painting Sites of the Artists

Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide Explores America's Oldest Recreational Mountain Trails

Saturday, June 4, 2 pm

The Mountain Top Historical Society, Haines Falls

- ❖ Lecture—"Lost Trails of the Escarpment"
- ❖ Francis X. Driscoll Photography Exhibit
- ❖ Guided Hikes—3:30 pm
- ❖ "Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide" Book
Premiere & Booksigning

Sunday, June 5, 10:30 am

Thomas Cole's Cedar Grove, Catskill

- ❖ Official Launch of the Hudson River School Art Trail
- ❖ Premiere of the Trail Map brochure
- ❖ Free Coffee and viewing of Thomas Locker paintings
- ❖ Benjamin B. G. Stone Drawings Exhibition
- ❖ Booksigning with Raymond Beecher & Robert Gildersleeve



Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Catskill Mountain House*,
1855. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

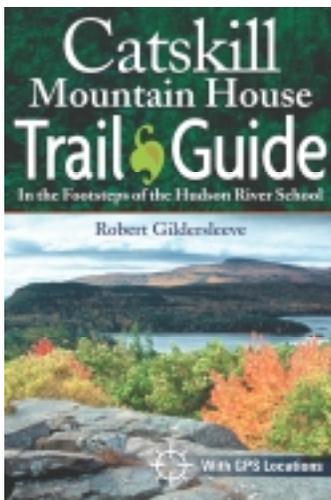
The year is 1823. America is struggling to form its own identity. Washington Irving and Fennimore Cooper are writing some of our earliest fiction. The works of Thomas Cole are about to burst on the scene to create The Hudson River School, America's first original school of art. Americans look to Europe and see a long, rich, and romantic history. Here in their own land they see a wilderness. It is Cole, Cooper and a host of others who will create a romance of that wilderness. It is a small area around the newly built Catskill Mountain House—perched precipitously on a mountain ledge along the eastern escarpment of the Catskills, 2,000 feet above the nearby Hudson River—that is the heart of that romantic wilderness.

The trails that developed around the Catskill Mountain House were the first recreational mountain trails in the United States. Many of these trails are essentially unchanged today and they are the focus of this year's weekend-long celebration of National Trails Day, on Saturday and Sunday, June 4 and 5. The Thomas Cole Historic Site and the Mountain Top Historical Society have teamed up to present the weekend's events, which include guided hikes, art exhibits, guest speakers, a new guidebook to the historic trails, and the inauguration of the Hudson River School Art Trail.

Footpaths through America's First Wilderness

Saturday's events will be held at the Mountain Top Historical Society's campus on Route 23A in Haines Falls and will feature the debut of the new book, *Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide: In the Footsteps of the Hudson River School*, by Robert A. Gildersleeve, a state-of-the-art hiking guide to the trails that inspired generations of America's foremost artists and writers. The book features newly drawn maps, GPS locations, and precise modern trail descriptions, together with period illustrations, and original maps and descriptions from two classic 19th-century guidebooks (one of which has been out of print for over 100 years). Using modern technology and close readings of the original guides, Mr. Gildersleeve rediscovered some of the lost and forgotten sites of the golden age of the Catskill Mountains.

Author Gildersleeve will be on hand to autograph copies of his book from 1:00 to 3:00 pm (books will be available for sale), and will give a slide lecture at 2:00 pm. Accompanying the lecture/booksigning will be a special exhibit featuring the Catskill Mountain photography of Francis X. Driscoll. Immediately following the booksigning, at 3:00 pm, will be guided "classic Mountain House" hikes with the author and volunteers from the Catskill Mountain Club. Admission to the lecture and exhibit is free. The hike may require the purchase of a day-use fee at North-South Lake Campground. For more information call (518) 734-6357.



About the Book: *Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide: In the Footsteps of the Hudson River School*

by Robert A. Gildersleeve, foreword by geologist Robert Titus
(paperback, 6 x 9, 240 pages, maps, illustrations, GPS points, isbn 1883789451, \$16.95, available from Black Dome Press, 1-800-513-9013, www.blackdomepress.com)

As the Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide illustrates, it is hard to overstate the importance of the scenes and sites surrounding the Kaaterskill Clove/North-South Lake area to America's cultural scene of the nineteenth century. Not only did the scenery of the Mountain House trails inspire writers and poets like James Fenimore Cooper and William Cullen Bryant, and all of the major Hudson River School painters including Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, Frederic Church, and Sanford Gifford, but the trails around North and South mountains, as Mr. Gildersleeve points out, also inspired America's pioneer landscape designers—Andrew Jackson Downing, Calvert Vaux, and Frederic Law Olmsted—the architects of many of America's city parks including Central Park in New York City.

Francis R. Kowsky, SUNY Distinguished Professor of Art History, Buffalo State College, and author of *Country, Park and City: The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux* wrote: "We owe Bob Gildersleeve a debt of gratitude for sharing with us his extensive knowledge of the Catskill Mountain House and for showing us how much we can still enjoy of the scenery that aroused the admiration of America's Romantic writers, poets, painters, and landscape architects." Robert Titus, Professor of Geology, Hartwick College, and author of *The Catskills: A Geological Guide* and *The Catskills in the Ice Age* adds his endorsement: "All the old trails of North and South mountains are still there, although many have suffered from age and are sometimes hard to follow. To hike any of these, and then to go off of them and enter the forest primeval itself, is indeed to journey into Middle Earth. ... The area is in fact haunted, haunted by the people who came here and were affected by what they saw and what they experienced. ... It is good that we have just the right guidebook, to once again wander the old trails and see the forests through nineteenth-century eyes, exactly as they should be seen."

About the Author

Robert A. Gildersleeve moved to the Catskill Mountains in 1972 when he started teaching at Hunter-Tannersville Central School. Soon after moving to the Catskills, Mr. Gildersleeve became involved with the Mountain Top Historical Society, serving first as treasurer, then as vice president. He has worked on the historical society's publications, including the book *Kaaterskill: From the Catskill Mountain House to the Hudson River School*, for which he wrote the introduction, and he has been a leader of the society's hiking program

since the mid-1970s. Now retired from teaching, Mr. Gildersleeve and his wife Maria live in Maplecrest, New York, near a system of hiking trails that interconnect with the historic trails that are the subject of his book.

Official Launch of the Hudson River School Art Trail

Sunday's events begin at 10:30 am at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, 218 Spring Street, Catskill (518 943-7465), with free coffee and a viewing of Thomas Locker's paintings of the views from the Trail. Presentations begin at 11 am with an introduction by Cedar Grove director Elizabeth Jacks and a talk by artist Thomas Locker and officials from the National Park Service (11:00-12:30 pm), followed by a picnic lunch on the grounds of Cedar Grove (12:30-1:30 pm, box lunches available for sale by advance reservation: 518-943-7465). Authors Raymond Beecher and Robert A. Gildersleeve will be on hand to meet the public and autograph copies of their books. In the Main House will be an exhibition of drawings by 19th century artist Benjamin B.G. Stone which recreate the experience of hiking through Kaaterskill Clove. Maps for the Hudson River School Art Trail will be distributed, and Barry Hopkins will be waiting at the South Lake Pavilion at North-South Lake Campground to deliver an introduction to the Trail at 2pm



The Hudson River School Art Trail is presented in partnership with Olana, the home and workplace of artist Frederic Church, and with the National Park Service Rivers & Trails program, with additional support from the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department. The Trail project is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation, with special thanks to Congressman John Sweeney.



The Hudson River School Art Trail is in phase one of its development, which includes the creation of a brochure and web site with maps, driving and walking directions, and printed representations of the painted views to use as a comparison with today's actual views. For phase one, seven sites have been chosen for inclusion, and it is expected that other stops will be added in the future. The Art Trail will include wayside interpretive signs including reproductions of paintings depicting each site as well as background information on the painting, the artist, and how the scene has been preserved. These wayside interpretive signs will serve as "captions on the landscape," enhancing the visitor's understanding about the Hudson River landscape and the art that it inspired.