

THOMAS COLE

NATIONAL
HISTORIC
SITE



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

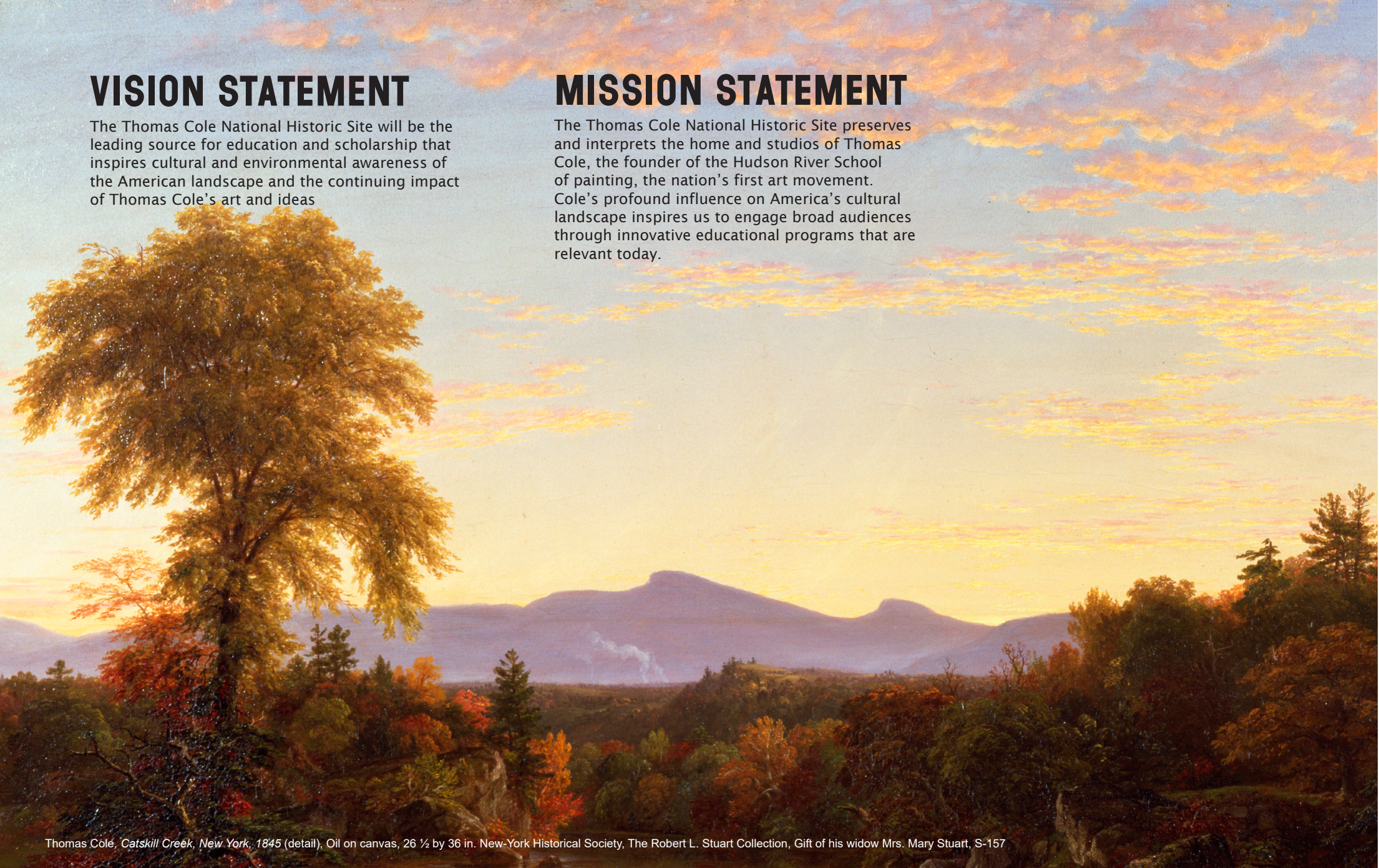


VISION STATEMENT

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site will be the leading source for education and scholarship that inspires cultural and environmental awareness of the American landscape and the continuing impact of Thomas Cole’s art and ideas

MISSION STATEMENT

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site preserves and interprets the home and studios of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of painting, the nation’s first art movement. Cole’s profound influence on America’s cultural landscape inspires us to engage broad audiences through innovative educational programs that are relevant today.



Thomas Colé, *Catskill Creek, New York, 1845* (detail), Oil on canvas, 26 ½ by 36 in. New-York Historical Society, The Robert L. Stuart Collection, Gift of his widow Mrs. Mary Stuart, S-157

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Betsy Jacks with Nina and Adrian Jones at the Scholars’ Dinner Beth Schneck Photography

Dear Friends,

This year *The New Yorker* declared “There’s a Cole revival underway” in Peter Schjeldahl’s review of our exhibition. Together, this community at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site has revitalized Cole’s revolutionary creativity and we’re making an impact on broad audiences.

We opened a new exhibition of groundbreaking research by Vassar Professor H. Daniel Peck on Cole’s beautiful paintings of Catskill Creek and hosted canoe trips on that very same body of water that runs through our local Village. We debuted monumental new artwork by the contemporary artist Shi Guorui in a new exhibition entitled, *Ab/Sense-Pre/Sense*, that was inspired by Cole and was celebrated in *The New York Times*.

We partnered with many, many fantastic partners to open the Hudson River Skywalk, a new scenic walkway connecting the homes and studios of Thomas Cole and his student Frederic Church over the Hudson River via The Rip Van Winkle Bridge.

We hosted the first annual Scholars’ Dinner at The Century Association in New York City to underwrite our Cole Fellowship program, launching the next generations of museum leaders. At the annual Summer Party here in Catskill, this community brought us over the finish line of a five-year \$1.2MM campaign to establish a Program Endowment to support educational programming here in perpetuity.

Thank you for being an important part of this community and helping to make everything this organization achieves possible.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth B. Jacks
Executive Director



1839 Old Studio Interior

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Hudson Talbott & Sylvia Yount

Photo by Adam T. Deen



Children on Opening Day

Photo by Adam T. Deen

THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is a National Historic Landmark presenting the original home and studios of the artist and early environmentalist Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Cole founded the first major art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School of landscape painting. The nationally recognized museum is an affiliate of the National Park Service and operates as a forward-thinking nonprofit organization embracing change and continually pursuing authenticity and resonance. Thomas Cole's profound influence on America's cultural landscape inspires us to engage broad audiences through innovative educational programs that are relevant today. Our programming and operations are continually evolving under our initiatives for Greening and Diversity, Equity and Access.



H. Daniel Peck



Lisa Fox-Martin, H. Daniel Peck & Jon Palmer Photo by Adam T. Deen



Young visitor on Opening Day

Photo by Adam T. Deen



H. Daniel Peck, Kate Menconeri, Lisa Fox Martin & Betsy Jacks

Photo by Adam T. Deen



Thomas Cole, *Autumn Landscape (View of Mount Chocorua)*, 1827-28, The Jack Warner Foundation, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.



Emily Cole, *Untitled (Goldenrod and Morning Glories)*, 1877 Reproduction display of watercolor and pencil on paper.



2019 Cole Fellow Amanda Malmstrom installing *The Art of Emily Cole*

ART HISTORY

This year, *The New Yorker* declared “There’s a Cole revival underway” and hailed our nineteenth century exhibition in the New Studio as “sublime.” The exhibition, *Thomas Cole’s Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek*, marked the first time that Cole’s paintings of Catskill Creek, created from 1827 through 1845, were considered as an integral series. The exhibition was based on new scholarship researched by H. Daniel Peck, the exhibition’s

curator and the John Guy Vassar, Jr., Professor Emeritus of English at Vassar College. The exhibition was accompanied by a book of the same title, published by Three Hills, an imprint of Cornell University Press. Professor Peck observed how “the paintings contain mysteries - enigmatic figures, evocative human structures, and symbolic landforms - that tell stories of their own.” Professor Peck presented the annual Curator’s Talk and gave us a behind-the-

scenes look into the exhibition. We hosted the talk downtown in the Village of Catskill at the Lumberyard Center for Film and Performing Arts.

In the Main House, we presented a new collection-based exhibition entitled *The Art of Emily Cole* that opened during Women’s History Month in March. Emily Cole (1843-1913) was a professional artist and the daughter of Thomas Cole. Our new exhibition, *The Art of Emily Cole*, was the first

solo exhibition of her artwork on paper and porcelain, revealing her exquisitely painted botanicals. A nineteenth-century newspaper review of an exhibition of Emily’s porcelain calls her work “unrivaled” for its “delicacy, purity of color, and transparency” The exhibition was curated by Amanda Malmstrom, 2019 Cole Fellow, in conversation with Kate Menconeri, Cole Site Curator and Director of Exhibition

and Collections, with research conducted by Rowanne Dean, 2018 Cole Fellow. Amanda also developed a special guided tour that was offered throughout the 2019 season, sharing the stories of five women who lived at the Thomas Cole Site in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

We hosted our 16th annual Sunday Salon series, bringing new scholarship and ideas to Catskill, New York. The conversation leaders were

Sylvia Yount, Lawrence A. Fleischman Curator in Charge of the American Wing, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Alan C. Braddock, Ralph H. Wark Associate Professor of Art History & American Studies, College of William & Mary, Co-curator of *Nature’s Nation: American Art and Environment* at Princeton University; and Jeanne Haffner, Associate Curator of *Hudson Rising* exhibition at the New York Historical Society.



Shi Guorui & Kiki Smith at the opening

Photo by Niva Dorell



Installation view

© Peter Aaron/OTTO

CONTEMPORARY ART

Our fourth annual exhibition in the series *OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole* featured new work by the internationally acclaimed artist Shi Guorui. Originally based in Beijing, China, Shi Guorui now has a home and studio in Catskill, NY. The exhibition, *SHI GUORUI: Ab/Sense-Pre/Sense*, debuted a series of large-scale landscape photographs

inspired by Thomas Cole and installed throughout the historic Main House where Cole lived and worked. *The New York Times* observed that the photographs are “like staring into the soul of the Catskills.” Shi Guorui visited the places in nature that Cole painted and captured those magnificent landscapes today using the ancient camera obscura process.

Transforming box trucks and twenty-five-foot tents into cameras, Shi Guorui created giant photographic prints of iconic views, including Kaaterskill Falls. For the exhibition, Shi Guorui converted a second-floor room in the historic house into a walk-in camera obscura. Cole used that same room as a studio before moving his painting operation to the “Old Studio” in 1839.



Lisa Fox Martin, Kate Menconeri, Shi Guorui & Betsy Jacks

Photo by Niva Dorell



HUDSON RIVER SKYWALK AND COMMUNITY

The Hudson River Skywalk opened this year, creating a new scenic walkway at the place where the Hudson River School of landscape painting began. The six-mile out and back scenic walkway connects two National Historic Landmarks, the homes and studios of the American artists, Thomas Cole and his student Frederic Church, over the Hudson River via the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. The walkway offers sweeping views of the Hudson Valley and the

Catskill Mountains. The project also reconnects Cole's historic home and property to the Hudson River waterfront for the first time in over a century. The Skywalk is a partnership with Olana, the NY State Bridge Authority, and many other partners, and the grand opening ceremony on June 1 was a celebration of our joining together two towns and a village, and two great historic sites. The festivities began with a "parade of paintings"

originating from each historic site led by none other than Thomas Cole and Frederic Church. The groups met over the Bridge and celebrated a ribbon cutting hosted by the New York State Bridge Authority state dignitaries with a musical performance by students from Catskill High School. To further expand our outdoor programming and connect with diverse audiences beyond traditional museum spaces,

we hosted a series of canoe trips on Catskill Creek that launched from a local public park, Mawignack Preserve. The program was developed in conjunction with the special exhibition of Cole's paintings of Catskill Creek. We partnered with Jeff Vincent, a Catskill Native, licensed guide, and founder of Catskill Mountain Wild. Participants paddled down the Creek, read Cole's writing about this very place, and stopped to sketch along the trip.



Class of 2020 Cole Fellows Alex McCarty, Marissa Hamm, Anne Comer, & Hampton Des Smith

Photo by Kate Menconeri



Third graders visit the Thomas Cole Site



Students at Montgomery C. Smith Intermediate School

EDUCATION

The Thomas Cole Site presents annual free school programming that responds to expressed teacher needs for engaging material to teach the curriculum. Our programming uses American art to teach American history, such as Industrialization and Empire. We served 545 students this year with educational programming led by Thomas Cole Museum Educators both at the historic

site in Catskill, New York, and in regional classrooms. We served groups ranging from Catskill Elementary Public School students to Winterthur American Material Culture graduate students. Additionally, our teacher resources website page at theomascole.org/teacherresources offers free lesson plans and creative activities for teachers to use in their own classrooms.

This year, we graduated the tenth annual class of Cole Fellows. Congratulations to Peter Fedoryk, Katherine Pratt-Thompson, Amanda Malmstrom, and Maeve McCool! The Cole Fellowship program addresses an urgent need to steward talented young people into the field of American art by giving them significant responsibilities and by showing them their work can be both

rewarding and rewarded. The program welcomes recent college graduates to live and work at the historic site for a full year and complete a significant research project that is put to action to advance museum initiatives. The Fellows are encouraged to explore topics that are of particular interest to them. The 2019-2020 Class of Cole Fellows are Anne Comer,

Hampton Des Smith, Marissa Hamm, and Alex McCarty. Anne is researching digital education games. Her project will build on the Thomas Cole Site's education initiative using American art to teach American history in school classrooms. Hampton is researching the portrayal of Native Americans in Thomas Cole's paintings. His project will expand the conversation about American

art at the Thomas Cole Site. Marissa is researching life at Cedar Grove in the first 125 years after Cole's death in 1848. Her project will inform future on-site interpretation of Thomas Cole's legacy. Alex is researching Thomas Cole's legacy as a proto-environmentalist. His project will inform the reinterpretation of the second floor of the Main House.



Thomas Cole National Historic Site Board of Trustees

Photo by Adam T. Deen



Dinner guests at the Scholars' Dinner

Beth Schneck Photography



Fireworks at the Summer Party

Photo by Adam T. Deen

DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

In 2019 we successfully completed a five-year \$1.2MM campaign to establish a new Program Endowment to support educational programming at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in perpetuity. The campaign was supported by a \$300,000 Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and many generous foundations and individuals. In fact, it was under the tent

at our annual Summer Party, hosted by Board Chairman Lisa Fox Martin at her home on the banks of the Hudson River in Catskill, NY, that the community came together to get us over the finish line. The event raised a record-breaking \$225,000! Thank you to all of the Summer Party sponsors. We are in awe of the amazing community behind this historic place.

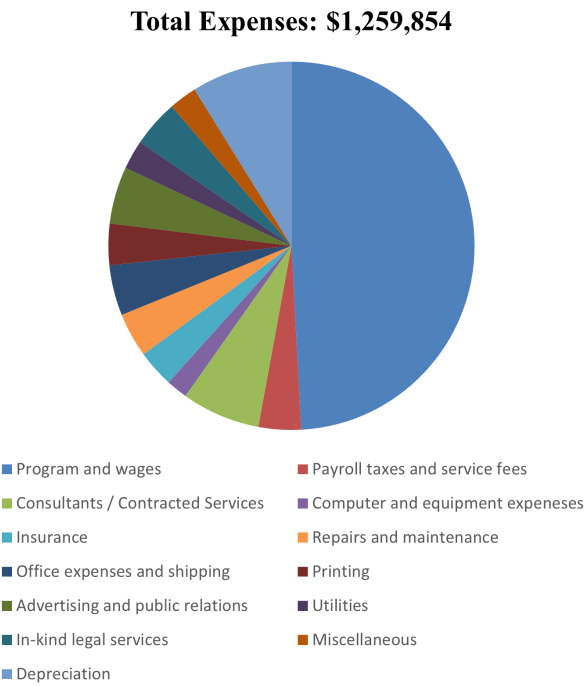
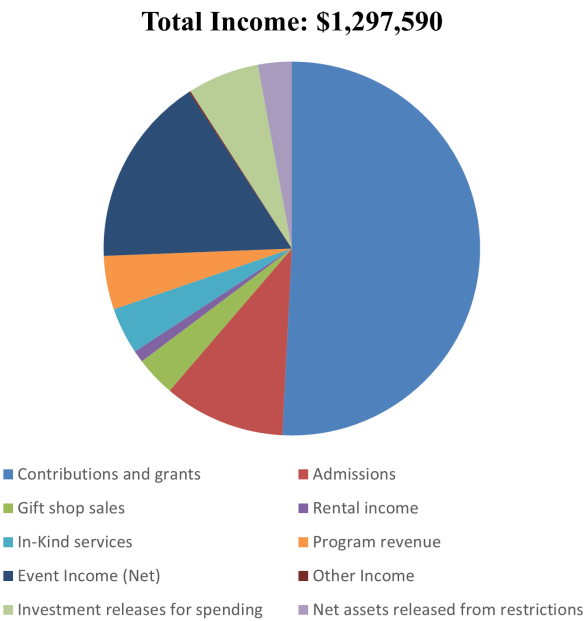
This year we launched a new event in New York City bringing together leading American art scholars of today and emerging American art scholars of tomorrow. The first annual Scholars' Dinner was held at The Century Association and all proceeds from the event underwrote our annual Cole Fellowship Program. The event featured three scholars in particular who delivered

inspiring remarks: John Wilmerding, Christopher B. Sarofim Professor of American Art Emeritus, Princeton University, shared his personal stories as a pioneer in the field of American art; Mark Mitchell, Holcombe T. Green Curator of American Paintings & Sculpture, Yale University Art Gallery, revealed his life-changing encounter with the original art object; and Lauren

Palmor, Assistant Curator of American Art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, brought her perspective on the American Story as a first generation American. In addition, our 2019 Cole Fellows presented their research and showed us that the future of American art is bright. Thank you to everyone who joined us and supported the special evening.

We came together for the annual Holiday Gathering and it was a lovely way to wrap up the year by getting together with friends in Thomas Cole's New Studio and around the dinner table. The proceeds from this year's event underwrote our growing school programs, providing students with free arts programming both inside their classrooms and at the historic site.

2019 SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDS



Total income does not include unrealized market gains/losses. Excess of income over expenses reflects the establishment of a Program Endowment.



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Christa Percopo
Joanna Porreca
Bruce Porter
Regina Quinn
Barbara Rankin
Deborah D. Richards
Jackaline H. Ring
Barbara Rivette
Michael Russin
Janeen A. Sarlin
David R. Seamon
Elizabeth Shafer
Melanie & William Siegel
Susan Simovich
David Sokosh
Katarina Spitzer
Andra Sramek
Kay Stamer
Alan Stricoff
Phyllis Thorpe-Hillis
Robert & Christine Toole
Thomas Torkilson
Joan Trunt
Harry O. Vincent
George Ward
Timothy Watkins & Carol
S. May
Geraldine & Oskar Weidel
Richard & E. L. Wengenroth
Lois Whealey
Cynthia Willis
Alison Young
Joyce Zucker



Guests at the Winter Party Photo by Adam T. Deen



David & Laura Grey Beth Schneck Photography



Lisa Fox Martin & Marianne Lockwood Photo by Elizabeth Ibarra



Dinner guests at the Summer Party Photo by Adam T. Deen

“Year by year the groves that
adorned the banks of Catskill
wasted away ... I speak of
these in particular because
they have contributed to your
enjoyment as well as mine.”

—THOMAS COLE