THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Fall 2020 Newsletter

A YEAR OF INNOVATION



The Pollinator Pavilion at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

Photo © Peter Aaron/OTTO

COLE'S GALLERY

REVEALED

See page 3

Hunters in a Landscape in the Main House

OPENING NEW CONTEMPORARY ART

The Pollinator Pavilion, a new site-specific public artwork by the internationally renowned artists Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood, opened at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site on August 7. The artists created this interactive artwork to provide sustenance to pollinators and a place for visitors to encounter these enchanting creatures. Curator, Kate Menconeri, and curatorial program coordinator, Amanda Malmstrom, worked with the artists over many months to re-

alize this elaborate artwork, which will be on view at the Cole Site through October 2021.

The project was conceived as part of the major traveling exhibition *Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church, and Our Contemporary*

Moment, which will open in the Hudson Valley in 2021. The major traveling exhibition was created by the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, The Olana Partnership at Olana State Historic Site, and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas. The exhibition tour is organized by Crystal Bridges. Support for the exhibition and its national tour is provided by Art Bridges and additional major support is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

MAJOR COLE PAINTING GIFTED

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site was gifted a major Thomas Cole painting by Susan Warner, Chairman of the Board of the Warner Foundation. The foundation was founded by Dr. Warner's late husband, the legendary American art collector Jack Warner. The painting, entitled *Hunters in a Landscape*, is a gift from Dr. Warner's personal collection and is one of Cole's earliest paintings, dated approximately 1824–25. This is the same time period when Cole

was discovered by the New York art world, launching his career and the style of painting now known as the Hudson River School. The painting is featured in a new installation and reinterpretation of the collection-based

exhibition *Thomas Cole's Creative Process*, supported by the Henry Luce Foundation.

In celebration of the gift, we invited Graham C. Boettcher, the R. Hugh Daniel Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art, to deliver our Annual Raymond Beecher Lecture and shed new light on the painting. Dr. Boettcher's talk illuminated the work and its importance to our growing collection.

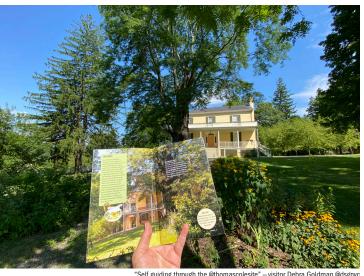
Jack and Susan Warner have played a pivotal role in col-

continued on page 7 continued on page 7

EXPRESSING OUR APPRECIATION

In March of this year, it became clear that the organization would experience significant losses in revenue from admissions, shop sales and events in 2020. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the organizations and individuals who supported us this year and made everything we achieved possible. Thank you to those who went above and beyond to provide crisis funding. Major support provided by the Bay & Paul Foundations, Willow Springs Charitable Trust, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Enoch Foundation, the U.S. Small Business Administration, New York State

Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, Art Bridges Bridge Ahead Initiative, the Brown Foundation, the Gilder Foundation, Humanities New York CARES Grant with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the federal CARES Act, Terra Foundation for American Art, and the Kindred Spirits Society of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. Thank you to all of our important supporters that allowed us to persevere this year.



NEW WAYS TO VISIT THE SITE

Our grounds remained open throughout the pandemic. We began offering a new way for audiences to visit in person at the start of summer with Outdoor Explore Kits and launched outdoor guided tours this fall. Outdoor tour guests can join a Museum Educator for a 45-minute introduction to Thomas Cole, his home and studios, and the view of the Catskill Mountains that so inspired him. The Outdoor Explore Kits are available to pick up at the Visitor Center on certain days of the week. The Kits come in "basic" and "family" versions and are filled with an itinerary and activities to support an hour-long visit to the site. Learn more about our outdoor programming at thomascole.org/events.

PARTNERING ON NEW EXPERIENCE AT CATSKILL CREEK

This spring, we debuted new interpretive signage along a walking trail at Catskill Creek in partnership with Scenic Hudson, the Greene Land Trust, Greene County Historical Society and the Mohican Nation Stockbridge-Munsee Band

with support from the Hudson River Valley Greenway. The one-mile interpretive loop at Mawignack Preserve is located a short distance from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. The loop takes visitors through the natural landscape that Thomas Cole painted more often than any other subject.

Our staff supplied the content for a panel featuring Cole's Essay on American Scenery, which he delivered to an audience in Catskill in 1842. He mourned the destruction of this very place and called the community to action: "Where once was beauty, there is now barrenness.... Nature has spread for us a rich and delightful banquet—shall we turn from it?"

Another panel, written by the Mohican Nation Stockbridge-Munsee Band, describes an earlier history of the same landscape: "The lands here were home for thousands of years

> to the Mohican people and their ancestors.... In April 1649, when Pewasck and her son, Supahoof, signed a deed with Brant Van Schlichtenhorst for a large piece of property, they received coarse woolen cloth, a beaver jacket, and a knife. To Pewasck, this 'sale' likely was seen more as a gift exchange between nations, rather than a Western view of payment.



She would have expected her people could return to the property. Mohican people continued to be pressured out of their Hudson Valley homelands throughout the 17th and mid-18th centuries." Today, this magnificent stretch of land along Catskill Creek is preserved as a public park.







Restoration detail photographed by Manager of Visitor Engagement, Heather Paroubek

REVEALING COLE'S HOME ART GALLERY

Last year we discovered Thomas Cole's art gallery hiding in plain sight. New forensic paint analysis supported by the National Park Service revealed that Cole painted another decorative border in a room that guests encounter directly ahead of them when entering the artist's home. Historic interiors expert Iean Dunbar conducted additional research and confirmed that "Thomas Cole's decoration of his home suddenly emerges as an artistic whole... with a gallery at its heart." With major support from the Henry Luce Foundation as well as the Gerry Charitable Trust, the conservator Margaret Saliske continued her work in the historic house this year and completely uncovered Cole's decorative hand-painting from beneath layers of modern paint. She is now restoring sections of the work to its original vibrancy through a conservation process called inpainting. Cole painted a Greek key design using a red and black Pompeian color scheme around the entirety of the room above red walls. The design and colors were associated with the display of art during his time and bear a strong resemblance to J. M. W. Turner's red-walled art gallery, which Cole visited in London. The restoration will create a unique visitor experience, allowing guests to immerse themselves in Cole's sweeping landscape paintings in the environment he designed for their display.

The restoration of Cole's art gallery is part of Phase III of a comprehensive restoration and reinterpretation of the historic Main House that is informed by over a decade of research. Phase III is made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Park Service, the Gerry Charitable Trust, the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, and the Hudson River Valley

Greenway. In addition to restoring Cole's gallery, Phase III will transform the second floor of the artist's home to reveal the design of his private family rooms and employ interactive story-telling to explore the last decade of the artist's life, a time when the nation was experiencing rapid cultural and political changes not unlike today. The wall coverings, furnishings, and finishes will be restored in the Sitting Room and Cole's Bedroom, and collection items will be restored and reinstalled with new interpretation. Turn to page 12 for a preview of the Sitting Room transformation.

The project also includes conservation, framing, and creative display cases for collection artworks and objects that will be on view throughout the house. The collection-based exhibition Thomas Cole's Creative Process, which now features a major new painting gift from Susan Warner, has also been completely reinstalled with new interpretation. We plan to open Phase III in 2021.



Newly conserved botanical watercolors by Emily Cole from the collection of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

DEVELOPING RESOURCES FOR K-12 STUDENTS NOW

This year we reimagined our annual educational programming for K-12 students. Each year we offer programs, both at the historic site and in classrooms, designed to meet teacher needs by using American art to teach the American history curriculum and ensure that art has a place in the classroom.

At the historic site, we are offering Outdoor Explore Kits for free to children within the Greene and Columbia County public school systems. In the digital space, we are offering live virtual programs with a Thomas Cole Site educator. Teachers can email education@thomascole.org to schedule group kit pick-up and/or a virtual session.

We also created free lesson plans and activities for remote learning that are available at thomascole.org/teacherresources. Resources include lesson plans for grades 3-5 and 6-12 and activities for grades K-5. Even more online educational content can be found at thomascole.org/events.



anda Malmstrom, Education & Curatorial Program Coordinator, leading live virtual programming

EXPANDING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESS

The Thomas Cole Site launched a Diversity, Equity and Access Initiative in October 2019, guiding the staff to develop a list of commitments, take thoughtful actions, and engage in frequent discussions with stakeholders both inside and outside of the organization.

An important part of this work is a major project we are calling Full House, which will bring to light the underrepresented voices in this nation's history by illuminating the perspectives of the large and diverse household, including female family members and workers who lived here during Thomas Cole's residency from 1836 until his death in 1848.

In 2019, our Executive Director, Betsy Jacks, attended a conference with the leading art historian Liz Prettejohn, who is conducting cutting-edge research in the field of historic house museums and artist studios. Dr. Prettejohn asserts that house museums have the opportunity to "break down the patriarchy" by deconstructing the myth that the artist acted alone; instead, it took a whole household to make that art happen. Timely topics related to the property's historic household members include racial justice, women's rights, immigration, economic disparity, and more. The first step



Old Studio with Thomas Cole's son Theodore and three unidentified farm workers, c. 1910, Thomas Cole Site Archives

in this project is meticulous research that we plan to incorporate into new interpretation. Additional work and conversation under the Diversity, Equity and Access Initiative includes featuring more prominently the work of BIPOC artists, implementing diverse board recruiting and hiring practices, identifying more Black-owned businesses to work with across operations, and continuing our own education as individuals and as an organization. We are committed to antiracist work.

PERSEVERING THROUGH A PANDEMIC: THE COLE FELLOWSHIP



Anne, Hampton, Marissa, and Alex

The Class of 2020 Cole Fellows persevered through the pandemic and worked with the staff to adapt and innovate in the early days of this new environment. Over the course of the year-long fellowship from June 2019 through May 2020, they joined project committees, conducted extensive research to advance initiatives at the site, traveled for professional development sessions at regional museums, and worked with the public as museum educators.

In May 2020, the graduating class presented their research projects to a virtual audience of over 100 people on Zoom. Hampton Smith presented Last Indian—Dead Hemlock: Thomas Cole and the Imagined Indian, Marissa Hamm presented Changing Hands, Changing Lands: The History of the Cedar Grove Property, 1848–1961, Alex McCarty presented Ten Thousand Fires: Thomas Cole's Environmental Anxiety, and Anne Comer presented Experiencing the History of America Through Art: On-Site & On-Line Adventures. All of their research contributes to future programming at the historic site. Hampton was accepted into the History, Theory and Criticism of Art PhD program at MIT Architecture, Marissa is an Ohio History Service Corps Member

in Americorps, Alex was accepted into the master's program in Art History at the City College of New York Graduate Studies, and Anne is working at the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society in Maryland. Our Class of 2019 Fellow alums are also doing exciting things in the field. Peter Fedoryk is in his second year of graduate studies with the Winterthur Program, where he is a Lois F. McNeil Fellow; Maeve Mc-Cool is a working artist and Grants Manager at CREATE: Council for Resources to Enrich the Arts, Technology & Education; Amanda Malmstrom was hired as our Education & Curatorial Program Coordinator, made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; and Katie Pratt is currently earning her MA at Columbia University and is also working as an intern with the National Gallery in Washington, DC.

We selected four new Cole Fellows for the Class of 2021 from many exceptional applicants. The new Cole Fellows are: Isabelle Bohling, Mount Holyoke graduate with a BA in Art History and Psychology; Adaeze Dikko, Tufts graduate with a BA in Political Science and Africana Studies and minor in Museum, Memory, and Heritage studies; Brooke Krancer, University of Pennsylvania graduate with a BA in History and minor in Art History; and Oriana Tang, Yale graduate with a BA in English. The new class visited the site this fall for a distanced in-person orientation, to be followed by an interim remote period. We plan to transition into the full in-person program with communal living in the spring of 2021.



The new class of Cole Fellows visits the Site Photo by Adam Deen

PUBLISHING COLE'S WORDS FOR THE FIRST TIME

Thomas Cole wrote essays, letters, poems, journals, and lectures on the same themes that his widely known paintings address, but much of his writing remains inaccessible to the public. To address this need, the Thomas Cole Site launched a project several years ago to transcribe and publish more of Cole's own words. Our second book in the series, Lecture on *Art*, was released in March—175 years after it was written. As museums were transitioning to the virtual space around the world, Lecture on Art proved particularly timely. Cole asserts

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the need for public art museums and declares, "Without art man would scarce be human."

Lecture on Art follows the first publication in the series, Essay on American Scenery, which includes Cole's most explicit environmental advocacy. Both publications are printed on paper made from sustainably harvested forest products using renewable energy. They are available in our online shop at store.thomascole.org. The next publication in the series, Thoughts and Occurrences, will be published this winter.



Thomas Cole's original writing and our transcribed publication

CONTINUING COLE'S ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY

This year Thomas Cole's role as a proto-environmentalist was featured in National Geographic's Special Issue for the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, and here at the historic site we completed Phase 1 of our site-wide Greening Initiative to carry on Cole's environmental legacy. We are taking action to become an environmentally sustainable organization in keeping with Cole's proto-environmentalist values. ("Proto" means that he was working prior to the invention of the term "environmentalist.")

A major accomplishment of Phase 1 was the installation of a new public electric vehicle charging station, the first in our community of Catskill, New York. The charging station was made possible by a gift from local residents and environmentalists Sara and Tom de Swardt. Ms. de Swardt serves as Treasurer on the Thomas Cole Site Board of Trustees.

Additional completed actions in Phase 1 include steps to reduce air toxins and general chemical use, reduce nonrecyclable waste, reduce waste of natural resources, and encourage biodiversity. A detailed list of actions can be found on our website at thomascole.org/greening.



Our public electric vehicle charger at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Catskill, New York

Ruby-throated hummingbirds and other critical pollinators that perpetuate our ecosystem flit in and out of the openair Pollinator Pavilion. Inside, a Victorian loveseat encourages guests to sit down for a quiet moment, one at a time. Time Out New York recommends "making a weekend getaway" to experience a "respite from our troubled moment" at The Pollinator Pavilion, and artnet News chose the artwork as an "Editors' Pick," noting, "It's an open air space, which is a plus in the age of social distancing." Local Catskill resident Mabel Bermejo observed that many of her friends and neighbors in the community of Catskill are so happy the pavilion is here. Mabel shared, "It is like a gift in this time and a place of sanctuary and beauty. I love coming to see the sun set from this beautiful spot." Her neighbor Suzanne Bernstein said, "I feel lucky and blessed to live close by The Pollinator Pavilion—I was just taken by it! I have gotten a tremendous amount of restoration from the piece."

The artwork is accompanied by a free audio introduction from the artists, available at thomascole.org/pollinatorpavilion. Dion says, "We chose a very strange architectural mélange for the design of the gazebo, and that has a lot to do with thinking about the fantastical aspects that we see in Thomas Cole's paintings, especially in relationship to architecture." Sherwood observes, "It's no wonder that the Hudson Valley has been a draw for artists since the time of Thomas Cole. The majesty and sublime nature that surrounds the area at his time and in ours still today is full of wonder. Mark and I really wanted to capture the sense of wonder and the magical aspects of being in nature."

Dion had a major survey exhibition at Storm King in 2019, which included the collaboration with Sherwood Conservatory for Confectionery Curiosities (2008/2019). Dion's work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Tate Britain (London), and MASS MoCA (North Adams), among others. Sherwood has exhibited throughout the Americas and Europe, including solo exhibitions at Galerie Nagel Draxler (Cologne), Denny Dimin Gallery (New York) and Kepler Art Conseil (Paris). The Pollinator Pavilion was inspired by the series of paintings known as The Gems of Brazil (1863-64) by the 19th-century artist Martin Johnson Heade (1819–1904), a protégé of Frederic Church, who was in turn a protégé of Cole. The Gems of Brazil will be on view as part of Cross Pollination, which will open simultaneously at the Thomas Cole Site and Olana in spring 2021. The Pollinator Pavilion will remain on view in 2021 as a part of that exhibition, which was delayed by a year due to the pandemic.

lecting Hudson River School landscape paintings. Jack began collecting in the 1950s and continued purchasing an extraordinary number of masterpieces until his death at age ninety-nine. Among their many honors and achievements is the naming of the Jack and Susan Warner Gallery of Hudson River School paintings in the American Wing of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where Cole's famous *Oxbow* painting hangs today. In addition to her role as the Warner Foundation Chairman, Dr. Warner is a trustee at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and serves on the Education Committee. The Warner Foundation has also loaned the Cole Site two additional major works by Thomas Cole: *Catskill Mountain House*, 1845–47, and *Autumn Landscape (View of Chocorua Peak)*, 1827–28.

Other major gifts to the collection in reverse chronological order include: Sarah Cole oil painting Voyage of Life: Old Age, after Thomas Cole, 2018 gift of E. W. Doucet and Mary Hallock; original drop-leaf table from Thomas Cole's residency, 2018 gift of Stuart P. and Sue Feld; Thomas Cole oil painting Tower by Moonlight, 2014 gift of David and Laura Grey; Thomas Cole watercolor Ruined Castle on a Rock, Thomas Cole oil sketch Reflection, and Thomas Cole oil painting Catskill Mountain Landscape, all 2014 gifts of Richard Sharp; original painted door thought to have been used in Cole's Old Studio, 2012 Gift of Alexander Gallery; Thomas Cole oil sketch Catskill Landscape, 2011 gift of the Seattle Art Museum; Thomas Cole original guitar and case, 2010 gift of Richard Sharp; Thomas Cole original paint brushes, 2008 gift of St. Julian Fishburne and Arthur Anderson; Thomas Cole oil sketch Study of a Man's Head, 2007 gift of Irwin and Susan Richman; and Thomas Doughty oil painting and Albert Bierstadt oil painting, facilitated by Cynthia S. H. Bowers.

CURATE YOUR LEGACY

Many supporters have left a gift to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in their wills or estate plans to preserve this historic place for future generations, and you can too. Our legacy depends on yours. If you have already included the historic site in your plans, or would like to find out how, please let us know. We cannot wait to thank you. You can reach Jennifer at jgreim@thomascole.org to start the conversation.

NEW ELEVATOR EXPANDS ACCESS

For years we have been working to make Thomas Cole's Main House structure more accessible. Thanks to your support and an excellent project team, construction is under way and nearly complete on an elevator. New York State approved our elevator lift design, which has very little impact on the historic structure and will bring guests to the first floor. The lift provides access to the digital story-telling experiences in the East and West Parlors, the artist's gallery that is in the process of being restored, and magnificent views of the Catskill Mountains. Thank you to everyone who made this important project possible.



Facilities Manager, Matt Alexander, doing construction for the elevator lift installation

\$20,000 and up

John Ben Snow Foundation & Memorial Trust

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Architectural drawing by Peter Sweeney Architects LLC

GOING PAPERLESS

As part of our Greening Initiative, we are transitioning many of our mailings from paper to digital. Visit thomascole.org and scroll to the bottom banner or email info@thomascole.org to join the digital mailing list.

THE 2020 SCHOLARS' DINNER

The annual Scholars' Dinner supports and celebrates American art scholarship. This year we featured Morrison H. Heckscher, Curator Emeritus of the American Wing at The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Graham C. Boettcher, R. Hugh Daniel Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art; and Shannon Vittoria, Senior Research Associate in the American Wing at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, along-side our Class of 2020 Cole Fellows.

Originally, the event was to take place at the Century Association in New York on April 6, 2020. Due to the pandemic we could not celebrate together in person, but together from our own homes we shared the written remarks from the featured scholars and caught up on the latest projects of all the American art scholars who had planned to attend.

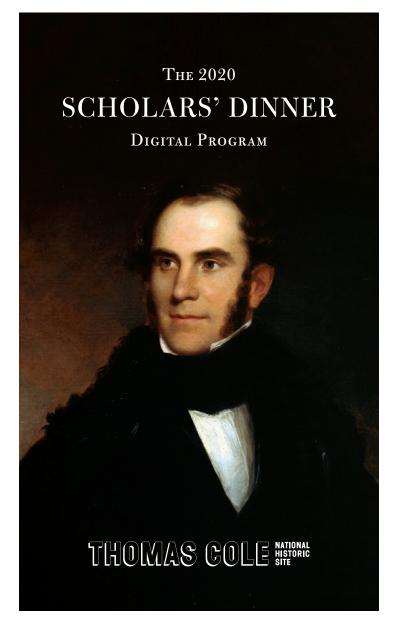
You can find written remarks in the digital event program at thomascole.org/scholarsdinner. Dr. Heckscher, reflecting on his career in American art, closes by saying, "Lots has changed since then, but the need to mentor the next generation of art museum professionals has never been greater. Carry on!" And carry on we will. The tremendous support of our Benefit Committee was an invaluable lifeline for our organization this year. Thank you for your commitment to and support of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.





r. Boettcher

Dr. Vittoria



AMERICAN ART TABLE

Lisa Fox Martin Nina Matis & Alan Gosule Anne J. Miller & Stuart J. M. Breslow Warner Foundation, Susan Warner

AMERICAN ART TICKET

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THE RESILIENT SUMMER PARTY PIC-NIC

Together we continued the resilient, creative and passionate community tradition that embodies our annual Summer Party, hosted by our Chairman, Lisa Fox Martin, for eleven years running! This year, we served more guests at a virtual event than we ever have at the in-person event. We shared a lovely custom picnic—designed by Geoff Howell and delivered to each home while listening to the ebullient Tim Barringer from Yale, who delighted us with insights on Cole's A Pic-Nic Party painting. Thank you for coming together with us in spirit. Your support helps make everything we achieve possible. Thank you!

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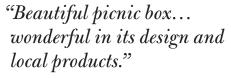


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William Coleman







-World-renowned artist



Pic-Nic Package Design by Geoff Howell Studio; Filming and editing by Jesse Brown from Hudsy; Virtual Fireworks by Brian Kenny. We are proud to have supported local businesses for this event, including Beth's Farm Kitchen in Stuyvesant, Hudson Wine Merchants in Hudson, Mansion + Reed in Coxsackie, Potters Table in Round Top, Talbott & Arding in Hudson, and Upstate Ink in Catskill. Special thanks to the Stewart House.



"The most inventive and creative online program I've seen during this moment of remote museum-going"

— Curatorial Fellow Harvard Art Museums











"As Mr. Cole eschewed all but the true and the natural, he would have felt this was just the right way to keep a sense of community in this unusual period."

—Celebration Pic-Nic sponsor



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THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Thomas Cole Historic House 218 Spring Street Catskill, NY 12414 518.943.7465 · thomascole.org NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION U.S. POSTAGE PAID NEWBURGH, NY 12550 PERMIT NO. 8604



New decor details in the Sitting Room of the Main House

ENTER THE ARTIST'S PRIVATE SPACE

In 2021, the Thomas Cole Site will unveil a new experience in the artist's private spaces, continuing our award-winning interpretation model of marrying interactive story-telling with historic restoration. The project restores the upstairs Sitting Room that the artist designed for his family and explores American history through Thomas Cole's eyes. The experience features Cole's own words, reminiscent of contemporary headlines: "Every newspaper brings accounts of the laws violated... It appears to me that the moral principle of the nation is much lower than formerly" (*Thoughts and Occurrences*, August 21, 1835). The project is made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Park Service, the Gerry Charitable Trust, and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

