

THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Thomas Cole National Historic Site Receives \$50,000 from National Trust for Historic Preservation to Help Tell the Full American Story

\$2.5 Million Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities Through the American Rescue Plan

Catskill, NY – April 7, 2022 – At a news conference today, the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s *Telling the Full History Preservation Fund* announced its award of \$50,000 to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. The grant is one of 80 given to select organizations nationwide with projects that help preserve, interpret, and activate historic places to tell the stories of underrepresented groups in our nation.

The grant to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site will support research, planning, and implementation of new interpretive installations that bring forward the histories of two women who made possible the first major art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School founded by Thomas Cole (1801-1848), which has profoundly influenced the country’s cultural landscape.

This grant-funded project is part of the Thomas Cole Site’s ongoing initiative to expand the focus of its interpretation beyond the white male artist, Thomas Cole. In this phase the organization will focus on Maria Bartow Cole, who married him, and an unnamed free Black woman, who lived and labored on the property during his residency there. Women owned and operated the property that now bears the artist’s name, critiqued his art, and advised him on the business of exhibiting and selling his art. Thomas Cole relied on these women in many ways and wrote to Maria, “But how can I paint without you with me to praise or to criticize?”

“With this important support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site will create new installations in the historic home that shine a light on the important histories of two 19th-century women that lived here and have fascinating stories to tell,” said Elizabeth Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole site.

Research conducted by Adaeze Dikko as part of our Cole Fellowship program, reveals that a free Black woman, whose name is still unknown, was a part of the household and was very likely born an enslaved person, based on New York State laws. Additionally,

newly transcribed letters written by Maria Bartow Cole reveal that she was deeply involved in art and business decisions.

The grant was made possible through a one-time \$2.5 million grant program funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) under the *American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021*.

“The *Telling the Full History Preservation Fund* represents the largest number of grants given through a single program at the National Trust,” said Katherine Malone-France, Chief Preservation Officer. “These 80 projects are driven by many dedicated volunteers, staff, and experts, all seeking to expand how we compose the American narrative. We are grateful for the work that they do on the ground and in their communities to reveal, remember, celebrate and illuminate these stories through these extraordinary places,” she continued.

“The National Endowment for the Humanities commends the National Trust for Historic Preservation for its work in administering American Rescue Plan funds to assist historic sites, museums, and preservation organizations around the country in recovering from the financial impact of the pandemic,” said NEH Chair Shelly C. Lowe (Navajo). “These awards will reach deeply into communities large and small, lift up often overlooked voices, and tell important, untold stories of our country’s rich and diverse history.”

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THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The National Trust, a 501(c)(3) organization, is a privately funded nonprofit chartered by Congress in 1949 to protect the nation’s historic places. Today, the organization is deeply committed to utilizing preservation as a tool to advance justice and equity for all Americans. We are guided by four strategic priorities: Saving America’s Historic Sites, Telling the Full American Story, Building Stronger Communities, and Investing in Preservation’s Future. The National Trust for Historic Preservation was recognized by the National Endowment for the Humanities with the National Humanities Medal in 2001.

The Telling the Full History Preservation Fund

The *Telling the Full History Preservation Fund* restores and supports the core activities of humanities-based organizations as they recover from the pandemic and utilize historic places as catalysts for a more just and equitable society. Due to their power as primary sources, historic places advance our quest for a more perfect union by combining individual experience inside the American story with relevant, innovative humanities scholarship. It emphasizes telling the full, true story of historic places to gain components critical to the historic record, to help complete the humanities infrastructure of the nation, and to reimagine history in ways that reflect a comprehensive view of American identity. To learn more about the **Telling the Full History Preservation Fund**, go to savingplaces.org/neh-telling-full-history

The National Endowment for the Humanities

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is an independent federal agency created in 1965. It is one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States. Because democracy demands wisdom, NEH serves and strengthens our republic by promoting excellence in the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans. The Endowment accomplishes this mission by awarding grants for top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent, external reviewers. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this press release do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of the artist and early environmentalist Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Thomas Cole founded the first major art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School of landscape painting. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole's 1839 Old Studio; the reconstructed 1846 New Studio building; and panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. The Thomas Cole Site's activities include guided and self-guided tours, special exhibitions of both 19th-century and contemporary art, print publications, lectures, extensive online programs, school programs, the Cole Fellowship, free community events, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enable people to visit the places in nature that Cole painted—and the Hudson River Skywalk, a new scenic walkway connecting the Thomas Cole Site with Frederic Church's Olana over the Hudson River. The goal of all programs at the Thomas Cole Site is to enable visitors to find meaning and inspiration in Thomas Cole's life and work. The themes that Cole explored in his art and writings—such as landscape preservation and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are both historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

Visitor Information

The hours of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site vary by season. For details see: www.thomascole.org/visit. The grounds are open every day for free from dawn to dusk. Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at [@thomascolesite](https://www.instagram.com/thomascolesite).



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