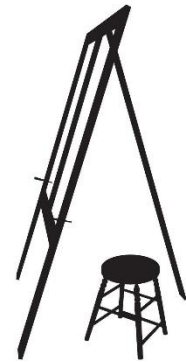


THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



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October 2025 Marks the 200th Anniversary of the First Presentation of Thomas Cole's Paintings of the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountains.

That Presentation Changed the Course of American Art.

Catskill, NY – September 9, 2025 – The month of October 2025 marks the 200th Anniversary of the first presentation of paintings of the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountains by Thomas Cole (1801-1848) – a presentation that changed the course of American art. The display of three paintings took place from October 26 to November 4, 1825, in New York City – in the windows of Colman's bookstore on Broadway near Fulton Street in Manhattan.

The exhibition launched Thomas Cole's career and gave birth to what is now known as the Hudson River School of landscape painting. Cole's work in turn gave America a visual identity, reflected in the concept "America the beautiful" and still celebrated today.

The paintings were: *Lake with Dead Trees* (now in the permanent collection of the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College); *Kaaterskill Falls* (whose location is unknown, but a second version Cole painted in 1826 is in the permanent collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art); and *View of Fort Putnam* (in the permanent collection of The Philadelphia Museum of Art). They became an immediate success when purchased by renowned painters John Trumbull and William Dunlap and engraver Asher Durand. Inventor Samuel F. B. Morse became a major champion of Cole as well.



Figure 1: Thomas Cole, *Lake with Dead Trees* (Catskill), 1825, oil on canvas, 27 x 33 3/3 in., Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio, Bequest of Charles F. and Abigail L. Olney, 1904.1183

Reflecting on Cole's first trip to Catskill, NY, in the summer of 1825, which yielded the sketches that led to the three paintings, Tim Barringer, Yale University's Paul Mellon Professor of the History of Art, says, "Thomas Cole's first visit to Catskill is an event whose significance resonates through the history of American art to the present day." Betsy Kornhauser, Curator Emerita at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, states, "When Cole took his first trip up the Hudson River in 1825 and took sketches of the Catskill region, his early wilderness scenes launched a new paradigm for American art." Franklin Kelly, Senior Curator and Christiane Ellis Valone Curator of American Paintings at the National Gallery of Art, says, "If landscape painting in America can be said to have a 'big bang' moment, that was surely it."



Figure 2: Thomas Cole, Kaaterskill Falls, 1826, oil on canvas, 25 1/4 x 35 1/4 in., Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, Bequest of Daniel Wadsworth, 1848.15

To commemorate the 200th anniversary of Cole's trip and the resulting exhibition, the Thomas Cole Site has created a range of materials that are available online at thomascole.org/cole200. They include the following:

- A timeline of historic events in 1825 that started with Cole's first trip to Catskill – sourced from the research of Shannon Vittoria: "Chronology," Thomas Cole's Journey, 2018, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Two sites on the Hudson River School Art Trail (Kaaterskill Falls and North-South Lake), bringing visitors to the places in nature that inspired Cole's iconic anniversary paintings
- A 36-hour itinerary for individuals who would like to explore further the places that Cole visited on his trip – with lodging, dining and shopping tips
- A new, free, classroom lesson plan for students in grades 6-12 titled "Thomas Cole & Trees."
- A Sunday Salon [lecture on November 30, 2025](#), by Greene County Historian Jon Palmer titled "In the Shadow of the Mountains: Catskill at the Dawn of the Hudson River School."

"Thomas Cole's work was celebrated by artists of his day and continues to resonate deeply with artists working today," said Kate Menconeri, Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, Contemporary Art, and Fellowship at the Thomas Cole National

Historic Site. “Cole’s vision and advocacy for balance within the natural world, as expressed through pen and paintbrush, inspired generations and continues to be poignant and vital in this moment.”

“Thomas Cole’s first trip to Catskill, NY, and the resulting public presentation of his first Catskill paintings transformed American art and the perception of America broadly,” said Maura O’Shea, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “Thomas Cole’s home, art studios, and gardens, amidst the stunning landscapes he painted, enable visitors to engage with his art and insights and explore their relevance today.”



Figure 3: Thomas Cole, *View of Fort Putnam*, 1825, oil on canvas, 27 1/4 x 34 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniversary Acquisition, Gift of Charlene Sussel, 2018

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination, including the artist’s home and studios in Catskill. The permanent collection includes original Thomas Cole paintings as well as paintings by other Hudson River School artists he inspired. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System.

COLE 200 is funded in part by the Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.



MAURICE D. HINCHEY
Hudson River Valley
National Heritage Area

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). Cole founded the influential art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School of American landscape painting. Located on six acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House where the artist lived; Cole’s 1839 Storehouse Studio; the reconstructed 1846 New Studio building, which now features a museum gallery of rotating exhibitions; a new visitors center called the Cole Center, designed by AD100 Stephen Shadley; and gardens and grounds with panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System, operating as an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization. Activities include 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 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 Thomas Cole National Historic Site is open year-round and hours 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 Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter at [@thomascolesite](https://www.instagram.com/thomascolesite).