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## **Thomas Cole National Historic Site Announces 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Cole’s First Trip to Catskill, NY, Which Changed the Course of American Art**

**Catskill, NY – April 2, 2025** – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of Cole’s first trip to Catskill, NY, in 1825, which changed the course of American art. The paintings that Thomas Cole (1801-1848) made of the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountains launched not only his career, but the major art movement of the United States known as the Hudson River School of American landscape painting.

Reflecting on that trip, 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.”

Thomas Cole’s trip inspired him to paint three significant works that elevated American landscape to iconic stature: *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 now in the permanent collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art); *View of Fort Putnam* (in the permanent collection of The Philadelphia Museum of Art). Upon returning to New York City, Cole convinced a bookseller to hang the three paintings in his shop window, and overnight success ensued. Cole’s American landscape paintings and impassioned writings advocated for the preservation of the natural landscape and gave rise to the country’s identity of “America the beautiful.”

To commemorate the anniversary, the Thomas Cole Site has created a range of materials that are available online at [thomascole.org/cole200](http://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.”

Additional 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary programming will be announced in the coming months.

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination, including the artist’s home and studios in Catskill, where Thomas Cole made his transformational works of art. 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.

“We are delighted to celebrate this year’s 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thomas Cole’s first trip to Catskill, NY and the Hudson River Valley,” said Maura O’Shea, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “His trip transformed American art and the perception of America broadly, resonating through to the present moment. 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.”

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**MAURICE D. HINCHEY**  
**Hudson River Valley**  
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**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). 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 Old 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 hours of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site vary by season. For details see: [www.thomascole.org/visit](http://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).