

# CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

For the

Thomas Cole National Historic Site:

*Cedar Grove*

Catskill, New York

Prepared for:

Greene County Historical Society  
and  
The National Park Service

Thomas Cole National Historic Site

**Elizabeth B. Jacks**

Director

**Robert H. Stackman**

Chairman, Board of Governors

Prepared by:

Heritage Partners

and

**Robert M. Toole**

Landscape Architect

Special appreciation to **Raymond Beecher**, the preservation angel who saved this National Historic Site, and whose research on aspects of the Cedar Grove story, as cited in the footnotes of this report, has enriched this study.

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## Introduction

Over the last few years, the rescue of Cedar Grove from slow deterioration can be cited as the most important preservation story in the Hudson River Valley. This is true because America's fleeting Romantic period is increasingly recognized as a landmark in the history of American art. In turn, the Romantic period was a "golden age" in the Hudson River Valley. Basic to this evaluation were the paintings of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church and the other members of the Hudson River School. But there was also the literary contributions of Washington Irving and the Knickerbocker writers, the poetry of William Cullen Bryant, and the architecture and landscape design of Alexander Jackson Davis, Calvert Vaux and Andrew Jackson Downing. Together, this era created a milieu of romanticism that has come to represent America's earliest, notable artistic expression.

In these achievements, "Nature" and the landscape were central themes, and for Thomas Cole they were a focus. It is therefore especially fitting and appropriate that this *Cultural Landscape Report* would be prepared for Thomas Cole's home, Cedar Grove. Indeed the story of Thomas Cole's life in the Village of Catskill, residing with the Thomson/Bartow family, could not be truly understood without knowing the role of the landscape at this National Historic Site.

The role of the landscape at Cedar Grove is told in the *Cultural Landscape Report* in five narrative sections. The sections build on the findings of the earlier investigations, as follows:

### Section A – Site History Thru Thomas Cole's Lifetime

This is a chronologically arranged, factual description of Cedar Grove's landscape evolution, from its initial development until Thomas Cole's death in 1848, as understood from the available evidence. This section provides the basis for the technical "Design Description" in Section B, and also presents aspects of the Cedar Grove landscape, such as the Thomson's land acquisition, and details of agricultural pursuits, that are not discussed in subsequent sections, but are important to understanding and interpreting Cedar Grove as Thomas Cole knew it.

### Section B – Design Description

This is a technical narrative that describes the physical form, layout and intended design effects of Cedar Grove's landscape during the last years of Thomas Cole's residency. The text is based on the scholarship and analysis presented in the site history

(Section A, above), and most importantly by the illustrative evidence, paintings, maps and photographs, and investigations of the existing site. This narrative is fundamental to evaluating the landscape's restoration potential, because it articulates the objective of such a restoration, namely the authentic historic situation.

#### Section C – Site History After Thomas Cole's Lifetime

This is a chronologically arranged, factual description of Cedar Grove's landscape evolution from the time of Thomas Cole's death to the present, based on available evidence. This section reveals the ways that the Cedar Grove landscape did not change dramatically throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century but endured notable alterations after 1900.

#### Section D – Existing Conditions

This is a description of the present site conditions, notably comparing the current situation to the historic period before Thomas Cole's death in 1848. This technical narrative uses the same organization as the "Design Description" in Section B, wherein the historic situation was articulated and made explicit. It is the comparison between the historic and the present that identifies the landscape's integrity.

#### Section E – Report Recommendations

As a result of this study, recommendations are offered as to the next step in the process of documenting and planning for Cedar Grove's landscape future. Follow-up research, archaeology, interpretation and restoration projects are discussed in this section.

Throughout, the report is illustrated with numerous historical images, plans and maps, as well as present-day photographs and drawings prepared for this report. The historical images are sometimes of poor quality, but they are crucial documentation and the best available copies are reproduced here. Study of the originals would be required for detailed analysis.

The Thomsons, Coles and Bartows used a variety of names to identify various Cedar Grove landscape components. For the purposes of this report, names used to designate Cedar Grove landscape features have been selected based on their original known use. Where a name or designation was unclear, or unknown, an appropriate and consistent name, without capitalization, has been selected. All of the principle landscape elements have been capitalized and a comprehensive glossary of terms for these names appears below.

## Statement of Significance

The evaluation of a "historic landscape" is based on criteria and nomination guidelines developed by the United States Department of the Interior.\* As such, the Cedar Grove landscape is a "designed historic landscape" in a sub-type identified as "estate or plantation grounds," which includes the exterior of the house and other buildings, as well as landscape features and effects.

The national guidelines consider a designed, historic landscape to be nationally "significant" if the landscape "be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past," in this case Thomas Cole. Cole's importance is attested to in the 1966 designation of Cedar Grove as a National Historic Landmark. The designation read in part:

Thomas Cole, pioneer interpreter of the romantic beauty of the American landscape, is one of America's notable landscape and allegorical painters of the first half of the nineteenth century, and the finest landscape painter of his time.\*\*

Today, Thomas Cole's life at Cedar Grove, over a period of twenty years, is recognized as having enabled him to pursue his art in favorable circumstances. The Thomson/Bartow family, and their farm "establishment" at Cedar Grove, was for Cole a home and a base of operations. It provided the stability that helped nurture his creative genius. Many of Cole's masterpieces were painted at the property in one of several studios he set up there, culminating in the freestanding, Italianate-style structure – the New Studio – that he designed and built in 1846, only two years before his death.

Cedar Grove is now reduced to a few acres from what had been an expansive farm. Still, the preserved acreage, close to the main House, and around the Store-House/Studio, and at the site of the New Studio, retains the authentic setting, fabric and associations that would encourage an effective landscape restoration. While missing elements and changes in the maintenance practices result in a landscape that does not now always convey its Cole-period character, much of the landscape remains uncompromised, resulting in good potential for landscape preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of a historic, residential landscape with national significance.

\* U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin #18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes," 1987.

\*\* National Park Service, "Thomas Cole: Suitability/Feasibility Study," September 1991:

## Glossary of Terms

In discussing historic Cedar Grove, the following terms are used consistently in this *Cultural Landscape Report*.

**Cedar Grove** – Name given to the Thomson estate before 1830 and used sporadically thereafter, notably by Thomas Cole. The property included about 110 acres, in two areas; the main property on the east and west sides of Spring Street, east to the Hudson River (75 acres), and the separate but close-by “Vault Lot” (35 acres).

### Structures:

**House** (a.k.a. main House, 1815 House) – extant. Sometimes referred to in Cole’s period as the “mansion,” this was a substantial Federal-style dwelling, built by brothers Thomas T. and John A. Thomson.

**Privy** – extant. This is an elaborate example with a Federal-style façade facing west, probably built at the same time as the House. It was a landscape feature.

**Cottage/Studio** (a.k.a. farmhouse) – not extant. The original house was built after 1797 on the Thomson property, or possibly earlier, before Thomson ownership. There were later additions and alterations. Periodically used as a duplex in Cole’s period. The Cottage/Studio, or a portion of it, was rented by Thomas Cole as his studio and residence, pre-1830 (?), and 1833-39. It is possible that Cole and his wife, Maria Barlow, lived there for a time after their marriage in 1836. Here Cole did considerable work in this period, including *The Course of Empire* series. He abandoned use of it after 1839 when the Store-House/Studio was built (see Figure 53).

**Barn(s)** – not extant. Housing for animals and related storage was provided in a barn structure located west of Spring Street and north of the main House, near today’s gas station. The Barn was probably built in association with the original construction of the Cottage/Studio. The Barn seems to have been two connected structures, built separately either by the Thomsons (after 1797), or prior to their ownership. The Barn was demolished in the 1930s.

**Coal House** – not extant. This was a large shed located south of the Cottage/Studio and north of the main House. It was demolished in the 1960s (see Figure 53).

**Chicken House** – not extant. Located east of the Cottage/Studio where it housed a sizable flock of chickens (documented in the mid to late-19<sup>th</sup> century). It was demolished at an unknown date (see Figure 53).

**Store-House/Studio** – extant. Built in 1839 by John A. Thomson with financial help from Thomas Cole. This structure housed Cole’s 2<sup>nd</sup> studio space at Cedar Grove in the period 1839-1846.\* Here, Cole painted many of his works of this period, including *The*

*Voyage of Life* series. The building also served as a stable, carriage house and general purpose utility structure (see: John A. Scott, NPS, "The Artist Studios of Thomas Cole," 7/9/2002).

\*The main House may also have been used by Cole for painting, but the Cottage/Studio, Store-House/Studio and the New Studio seem to have been Cole's primary painting rooms over the course of his residency at Cedar Grove.

**New Studio** (a.k.a. 1846 Studio) – not extant. Designed by Thomas Cole and built on the lot he had purchased as a planned house site in 1839. The New Studio was demolished in about 1975.

**Fruit House** – not extant. This structure is possibly a later building, documented only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a utility structure, apparently used in the fruit business, and was demolished at an unknown date.

### **Landscape Features:**

**Flower Garden** – The formal plant beds aligned on the axis with the center line of the main House. The garden arrangement was probably developed shortly after the House was constructed. A Flower Garden was referred to in Thomas Cole's period. First illustrated in Charles H. Moore's painting (c. 1862). Abandoned and grassed over after 1960; restored beginning in 2002.

**Honeylocust tree** – A massive specimen that is nearly 200 years old, this is possibly one of 7 honeylocusts ("three-thorned acacia"), trees purchased by John A. Thomson in 1817. It seems to have been positioned beside the center line of the garden path that was aligned on the axis of the House. As the tree grew, its massive trunk necessitated the path be steadily narrowed.

**Kitchen Garden** – sited south of the Store-House/Studio, there may also have been a larger vegetable garden located southeast of the Store-House/Studio (see: Figure 5).

**Grove** (a.k.a. woodlot) – Extensive area of mixed woodland trees and understory forming a woodlot of several acres east of the House, Store-House/Studio, and New Studio. Many old oaks remain, remnants of the original Grove. There was a clump of mature cedar trees at the northwest corner of this Grove, close to the Cottage/Studio, that may have inspired the estate name "Cedar Grove."

**Gravel Pit** – Mentioned by Cole as being "at the edge of the Grove" and probably located southeast of the House as indicated on a later plan (see: Figure 5).

**Spring Street** (a.k.a. Rt. 385, Catskill-Greene Turnpike) – The road alignment as it past through Cedar Grove may have undergone some realignment and regrading after Thomas Cole's lifetime.

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## Section A - Site History Thru Thomas Cole's Lifetime

### Phase 1 - Colonial Period (1684-1787)

In 1684, a Dutchman, Gysbert uyt den Bogaert, purchased from the native Americans about 460 acres on the Hudson River at the mouth of Catskill Creek (Figures 2 and 3). This parcel was bounded on the east by the Hudson River, from Stuck Creek on the north to Femmen Hook at Catskill Creek on the south. On the south and west, the property traced Catskill Creek to a small tributary called Hans Vosenkill Creek. A straight survey line formed the northern boundary, connecting Hans Vosenkill Creek back over the hill to the Hudson at Stuck Creek. On the north was the Corlaerskill Patent. Bogaert built a house on Catskill Creek (which provided a deep and safe harbor off the Hudson River) and lived there for twenty years. In 1688, he conveyed the land to his son-in-law, Helmer Janse, but after Janse's death without issue the property reverted back to the public domain.<sup>1</sup>

In 1738, more than a half century after its initial development, a land speculator named John Lindsey (also spelled Lindesay or Lindsay, etc.), obtained a patent to the Bogaert/Janse property and soon thereafter sold it to George Clark, Cadwalder Goldin, Vincent Matthews, Garret Van Bergen and Mathew Van Bergen.<sup>2</sup> The five new owners subdivided the western portion -- along the Catskill Creek waterfront -- into ten lots (each about 6 to 10 acres). This was referred to as the 1st division of the Lindsey Patent (Figure 2). The remainder of the Lindsey Patent (about 80% of the total) was not initially subdivided and was apparently held in common for several decades, although the details of this ownership period are not fully understood from the available documentation or secondary accounts.

In 1773, on the eve of the Revolutionary War, the eastern portion of the Lindsey Patent was subdivided into twenty lots. This was referred to as the 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent (Figure 2). The lots were delineated as strips running parallel with the north survey line, resulting in long narrow parcels. The lots were numbered 1 to 20

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<sup>1</sup> J. B. Beers & Co., History of Greene County, New York, 1884, pp. 86-87 under discussion of "Old Catskill." This county history is apparently the only source of information on early Catskill, but it does not provide sources for the information conveyed.

<sup>2</sup> Information on the owners and their acquisitions in the 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent is from an unidentified, undated article that included a map of the disbursement (Figure 2) [Vedder Research Library (hereafter cited as VL), folder entitled "Thomas Cole Maps." Note: some of the documentation that was housed at the Vedder Research Library at the start of this study has subsequently been moved to Cedar Grove. The original Vedder folders have been retained and these numbers/names have been used herein].



beginning from the north survey line. The northern lots were larger (about 20 to 26 acres), compared with the southern lots (about 8 to 10 acres).

Of the original owners in 1738, only George Clark and the Van Bergens were represented in the 2nd division. Thirty-two years after the 1st division, there were now ten owners. Their names are listed below in descending order of the total acreage each received. The lot numbers for each are also listed. Note that some of the owners are grouped, indicating that there were likely secondary agreements at play within the overall disbursement.

James Barker - #4, #8, #13, #16 = 78 acres.

George Clark - #2, #6, #15 and #20 = 63 acres.

Henry Oothoudt and Johannis Schuneman - #10 and #17 = 37 acres.

Egbert Bogardus - #9 and #12 = 37 acres.

Teunis Van Vechten and Samuel Van Vechten - #5 and #14 = 33 acres.

Jane Dies - #1 and #19 = 30 acres.

Martin Van Bergen - #3 and #11 = 29 acres.

David Abeel - #7 and #18 = 28 acres.

From the tabulation of acreage, the disbursement does not seem to have been equitable, suggesting a complex transaction that is not understood in all its details. While particulars concerning the occupancy and use of the land in 1773 are unclear, it was in this 2nd division area that Cedar Grove would emerge, notably on Lots #2 and #6, owned by George Clark, Lot #3, owned initially by Martin Van Bergen, as well as Lots #4 and #5 (see Figure 70).

Land development in the 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent seems to have been very modest in the Colonial period. The turmoil of the Revolutionary War further retarded land improvements and, by the end of the conflict in 1783, the eastern lots were described as a "primeval forest [that] had hardly felt the ax."<sup>3</sup> While the woodland trees "were not large, excepting a few white oaks and aged pines," there does not appear to have been much farm development. The "Hill," as it came to be called, was said to be "reached [from the Village of Catskill] by wood-roads which had been cut through the forest." Today's Greene Street and Thompson Street, both originating from the Catskill Creek waterfront, are mentioned as early routes up the hill.<sup>4</sup> It was not long thereafter

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<sup>3</sup> Beers (1884), p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Despite the spelling, Thompson Street was named for the future owners of Cedar Grove, which was reached from the center of the village by way of this uphill road.

that a road led from these uphill roads towards the north. After 1803, this was the Catskill to Athens Turnpike (also called the Albany-Greene Turnpike, and later in the mid-19th century, Spring Street, today's Rt. 385).<sup>5</sup> The turnpike road bisected the northern lots of the 2nd division (Figure 4).

Despite the 1773 subdivision and its ten separate owners, only five houses were said to exist in the entire Lindsey Patent -- much of today's village of Catskill -- in the immediate post-Revolutionary War period.<sup>6</sup> In the late 1780s, only 8 houses were recorded. After that the community's growth increased, with "about a hundred" houses standing in the mid-1790s.<sup>7</sup> By 1800, Catskill was designated the Greene County seat and its development was described as "very rapid,"<sup>8</sup> with 180 houses and a population of about 2,000. Still, most of this activity was restricted to the Catskill Creek frontage, until 1803, when the "level at the top of the Hill" (i.e., the core of the 2nd division of the Lindsey patent), began to be subdivided for residential use.<sup>9</sup>

## **Phase 2 - Initial Development Under Dr. Thomas Thomson (1787-1805)**

In 1787, Dr. Thomas Thomson (1750-1805), sometimes mistakenly spelled Thompson, and his family (wife Sarah and children as listed below), took up residency in Catskill, arriving as part of the post-Revolutionary War population boom. Initially Dr. Thomson rented Lot #5 in the 1st division of the Lindsey Patent, which had a house on it, and Lots #3 and #11 in the 2nd division.<sup>10</sup> Dr. Thomson seems to have moved from an earlier residence east of the Hudson River where he operated a mercantile business, d.b.a. "Thomson and Co."<sup>11</sup> His wife's family was from Connecticut.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> Duke De la Rochefoucault Llancourt, travel narrative (1795-97) as quoted in Beers (1884), p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Beers, p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Rental Agreement: William Davis to Dr. Thomas Thomson, 1/6/1787 [VL, box 21, folder entitled "Thomas Thomson"]. Rental was for 3 years. For background on Dr. Thomson, see: Raymond Beecher, "The Thomsons of Catskill Landing: An In-Depth Study" (2 vols), Greene County Historical Journal (hereafter cited as GCHS Journal), Coxsackie, NY: Greene County Historical Society, Inc., Vol. 23, Issues 2 and 3, Summer, Fall, 1999. In this article, Dr. Thomson was said to have died in 1805, at age 55. If so, he was born in 1750.

<sup>11</sup> Handbill, issued at District of the Manor of Livingston (Columbia Co.), 3/1/1786 [VL, folder 1].

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Raymond Beecher speculates that Thomson may have originated in New England. He believes the Thomson home in the Clermont area was at Haitia, where Ann Bogardus married A. Prevost.

After moving to Catskill, Dr. Thomson apparently practiced medicine until his death in 1805. From the evidence he was also involved in land speculation and other businesses during his Catskill residency.<sup>13</sup> On Lot #5, he moved into a previously built stone house, described as an "Old Stone Castle" in 1815 when it was demolished due to its poor condition.<sup>14</sup> Later, Lot #5 was referred to in the Thomson family papers as the "House Lot." An otherwise unidentified house is documented as in existence there on the early survey of the Lindsey Patent (Figure 2). Dr. Thomson purchased a portion of Lot #5 with the stone house in 1792, indicating a commitment to his new home.<sup>15</sup>

At an unknown date Dr. Thomson apparently purchased Lot #11 in the 2nd division.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Dr. Thomson rented additional parcels of land in the Lindsey Patent owned by George Clark, who, as noted, had received the largest share of the 2nd division and was one of the original owners in 1738.<sup>17</sup> An 1805 inventory of Dr. Thomson's estate indicates that some of the leased land was part of Lot #6, west of Main Street (1st division of the Lindsey Patent), and Lots #2 and #6 (in the 2nd division).<sup>18</sup> Lot #2 was, of course, adjacent to Lot #3, leased originally in 1787. Here were about 44 contiguous acres. As will be shown, the 2nd division leases of Lots #2, #3 and #6 would, over time, evolved into the Thomson's Cedar Grove property.

An important step in this process was in 1797 when, after a ten-year lease, Dr. Thomson purchased Lot #3 -- 23.7 acres -- in the 2nd division.<sup>19</sup> Seventy years later,

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<sup>13</sup> Raymond Beecher, "Greene County's Horse Ferries," *GCHS Journal*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, Summer 1984. Extensive records of Dr. Thomson's business dealings are in the New York State Library.

<sup>14</sup> Deed: Ezra Hawley to Thomas T. Thomson (4/11/1815) [VL, folder 3]. Both the Beers history of Catskill and an unidentified article regarding the area's early patent (which included a map of the area - Figure 1), attest to a house on Lot #5. Beers says "it is not known who was its owners, or when it was built" (p. 88), but this seems to have been the house earlier owned by the Van Bergen family, who in turn may have occupied Gysbert uyt den Bagaert's 17th-century dwelling. Except for Lot #5, the few known early houses are identified as belonging to others. If so, Dr. Thomson moved into a 100 year-old house that by 1815 might have rightly been described as an "Old Stone Castle."

<sup>15</sup> Deed: William Davis to Dr. Thomas Thomson (8/17/1792) [VL, folder 1]. See also footnote #10.

<sup>16</sup> No deeds of this transactions have been uncovered, but when Dr. Thomson died the executors sold a portion of Lot #11, 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent (about 8 acres) to cover estate debts (see agreement dated 5/17/1806). There is also evidence he owed the adjacent Lot #12 for a period of time [VL, folder 2].

<sup>17</sup> Duke De la Rochefoucault Llancourt reported in 1799 (quoted in Beers, p. 124) that George Clark was considered the "lawful proprietor" by the majority of the village residents, indicating his importance to local real estate in this period. After Clark's death his estate seems to have remained a prominent landowner even after the Civil War.

<sup>18</sup> Inventory: Estate of [Dr.] Thomas Thomson, 1/1/1807 [VL, folder 2]. The leases were initiated in 1790 and were to cover Dr. Thomson's lifetime and the lifetime of his sons James H. and John A. Thomson. An account book confirms payment on these rents. See: "Receipt Book," Dr. Thomas Thomson and John A. Thomson [VL, FCV, box 21].

<sup>19</sup> Deed: William Davis to Dr. Thomas Thomson (no month or day, 1797) [VL, folder 1].

still in its original 23.7 acre configuration, Lot #3 was depicted on a map as including a farmhouse (later called the "Cottage"), and several outbuildings grouped fronting the east side of the turnpike.<sup>20</sup> There was a large barn(s) on the west side of the road, also on Lot #3. These farm buildings were possibly constructed by Dr. Thomson, either during his rental of Lot #3 (1787-97) or after his 1797 purchase.<sup>21</sup> It is also possible that these buildings and farm infrastructure may have existed prior to Dr. Thomson's involvement, as part of an earlier development.<sup>22</sup> A 1805 inventory of Dr. Thomson's possessions indicates he owned farm animals and farm equipment, so it is reasonable to conclude that he operated a modest farm, what was sometimes referred to as a "home farm" in this period.<sup>23</sup> His leased land and land ownership amounted to approximately 85 acres at Catskill suggesting such activity, but Dr. Thomson and his heirs also entered into agreements that periodically sublet portions of these holdings to tenants.<sup>24</sup> In these circumstances, Dr. Thomson may have had no other intent than land speculating.

Whatever these particulars, we focus on Dr. Thomson's ownership of Lot #3 in the 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent, and follow the evolution of this core of what would become Cedar Grove.

A census from 1790 lists Dr. Thomson as a resident of the Village of Catskill, living along Catskill Creek in the "Old Stone Castle," holding four slaves and controlling about 85 farm acres close to the village.<sup>25</sup> Dr. Thomson's wife pre-deceased him. Seven Thomson children survived their father's death in 1805, and these children inherited his holdings as seven equal portions. The children are listed here as follows:

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<sup>20</sup> 1867 Map of Catskill, see Figure 4.

<sup>21</sup> This is the assertion of a 1934 newspaper article entitled "Old Cole Barn, Long Catskill Landmark, Is Torn Down," unidentified newspaper, 6/21/1934 [VL, copy]. The reporter, offering no documentation, states that the barn west of the turnpike was built in "about 1800," i.e., after Dr. Thomson had purchased Lot #3 and thirteen years after he had first rented it. The article concluded that "the barn was built for the late Alexander [i.e., John Alexander] Thomson," being Dr. Thomson's son, age 24 in 1800 (see below).

<sup>22</sup> The grouped outbuildings appear on Lot #3 on the 1867 map of Catskill. The history of Lot #3 suggests these buildings may have been constructed by earlier owners. After acquiring Lot #3 in 1773, Martin Van Bergen, an Albany merchant, sold it in 1778 to Adam Bloodgood, said to be a resident of the Catskill area (deed dated 3/20/1778) [VL, folder 1]. After eight years, Bloodgood sold the property to William Davis (agreement dated 8/21/1786) [VL, folder 1] who leased it for eleven years before selling it to Dr. Thomson in 1797.

<sup>23</sup> Inventory: Dr. Thomas Thomson, Dec'd., 9/21/1805 [VL, folder 2]. The inventory of 2 "old cows," 3 horses and 1 pig does not suggest a substantial agrarian enterprise but more of a "home farm." Home farms provided modest acreage for the essential needs and gentlemen farming for someone employed as a merchant, professional, or retired. Land and buildings were available for horses and the cultivation of produce and orchards, but the agrarian activity was not intended to be a primary source of income.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Samuel Haight to John A. and Catharine T. Thomson (5/7/1808) [VL, folder 2].

<sup>25</sup> U. S. Census, 1790.

1. James Harvey (1773-before 1821) - later residence unknown. Married w/ at least four children (Julia A., Charlotte, Helen and Harriet).
2. Maria (1774-1830) - married in 1792 to Stephen Bartow (c. 1764-1819). Lived in Canada with eight children (see list below). After her husband's death, Maria moved to Town of Broome, Schoharie Co.
3. John Alexander [often cited hereafter as John A.] (1776-1846) - nick-named "Uncle Sandy," a bachelor. He would own Cedar Grove outright after 1827 (Figure 7).
4. Thomas T. (1778-1821) - bachelor, moved to South America in 1803, returned in 1815 when he was the impetus for the development of Cedar Grove.
5. Catharine T. (1780-1827) - spinster, lived with brother John A. at Cedar Grove.
6. Harriet (1782- ?) - married Mark Spencer of New York City, no children.
7. Frances (1784-1817) - marital status and residency unknown, was buried at Cedar Grove.

### **Phase 3 - Expansion Under Dr. Thomson's Children (1805-1825)**

The seven children of Dr. Thomson were to share equally in their inheritance, but the varied circumstances of the beneficiaries seems to have prompted different settlements for each sibling. Also, there seems to have been a strong desire within the family to consolidate the estate, despite its fragmentation into seven equal parts.

So, for example, by 1806, Maria Thomson Bartow was married and living in Canada. She and her husband rented their "one equal and undivided, seventh part" of her father's estate to Maria's brother John Alexander (John A.) for 50 years and otherwise agreed that the property was best left undivided and in John A.'s occupancy.<sup>26</sup> John A., a bachelor, lived in Catskill with his unmarried sister Catharine T. Thomson. Together, brother and sister retained occupancy of Dr. Thomson's house and holdings after their father's death.

John A. is documented as practicing surveying when he was in his twenties, but he was a merchant at Catskill Landing by 1805, selling such wares as stoves and crockery, and operated other of his father's businesses.<sup>27</sup> Catharine T.'s life is closely

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<sup>26</sup> Lease agreement, Stephen Bartow and Maria Bartow to John A. Thomson (8/10/1805 and 5/27/1806) [VL, folder 2].

<sup>27</sup> Raymond Beecher, "John A. Thomson, Catskill Merchant," *GCHS Journal*, Vol. 7, Issue 2, Summer, 1983. One such business inherited from Dr. Thomson was operation of a ferry service between Catskill landing and the Oak Hill landing in Columbia County.

linked to her brother, although she seems to have conducted some transactions on her own, related to her seventh share of the inheritance.<sup>28</sup> James Harvey Thomson's situation was unusual. Married, he was in debt at the time of his father's death. John A. paid the debt and thus acquired James's interest in the estate.<sup>29</sup> The other son, Thomas T. Thomson was a merchant, but he had moved to South America in 1803. Although he seems to have retained ownership of certain Catskill property inherited from his father, these holdings might have been administered and/or occupied by his brother, John A.<sup>30</sup> Another of Dr. Thomson's daughters, Harriet, married Mark Spencer of Catskill at an undetermined date and she too seems to have made arrangements concerning her portion of the real estate with John A. and Catharine T.<sup>31</sup> The circumstances of another daughter, Frances (nick-named Fanny), are less clear, although she signed many of the financial transactions that survive from the period after her father's death, indicating she lived locally and was compensated in some fashion. Importantly in all this, the Thomson real estate remained intact. While the details are complex and somewhat unclear, the family, represented by John A. and Catharine T., managed to retain their father's land holdings on Lot #3, and its infrastructure, after his death.

In 1815, the Thomson family's situation at Catskill changed dramatically when Thomas T. Thomson, aged 37, returned from South America to take up local residence. Thomas T.'s return was notable because he had accumulated considerable wealth during his South American stay.<sup>32</sup> On return, he seems to have conspired with his brother, John A., and his sisters living in Catskill to further consolidate and expand the family's holdings around Lot #3 and the rented Lot #2, in the 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent. The purpose seems to have been to develop a more substantial residential property centered around a new house.

Even before his return to Catskill, Thomas T. had begun to make land purchases that showed his intent. In 1813, he acquired his siblings' ownership in Lot #3.<sup>33</sup> Then, shortly after his return, Thomas T. purchased portions of Lot #4, located adjacent to Lot #3 on the south. Originally assigned to James Barker in the 1773, 2nd division, Lot #4 had been resold and partially subdivided by 1815. The western-most portion, closest to

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<sup>28</sup> Agreement: James Collier and Catharine Thomson, 5/1/1812 [VL, folder 7].

<sup>29</sup> Mortgage (5/20/1809) [VL, folder 3].

<sup>30</sup> Deeds: (4/25/1809 and 4/27/1812) [VL, folder 6].

<sup>31</sup> There are sales agreements and other documentation indicating Harriet's accommodation with her brother and sisters, although the particulars of her settlement are unclear [VL, folder 2].

<sup>32</sup> Raymond Beecher, "Thomas T. Thomson - Pinckney's Enigma," GCHS Journal, Vol. 4, Issue 3, (Fall, 1980).

<sup>33</sup> Agreement: Stephen and Maria Bartow, Thomas T. Thomson and John A. Thomson, Catharine T. Thomson, Fanny Thomson and Harriet Thomson (5/12/1813) [VL, folder 3].

the village, had been sold earlier in small lots. In 1815, the remaining acreage of Lot #4 was in five parcels, each with a separate owner. Three of these parcels were located on the east side of the turnpike road (Spring Street). The northern-most of these was on the site of the future Cedar Grove house. These were small lots of less than one acre each, indicating they were intended as modest house lots, and indeed there was a pre-existing small dwelling on the southern-most lot (the Thomsons later removed it). It is possible that all these small lots had been cleared prior to the Thomson purchase. It is notable that the eastern boundary of these three lots corresponded to the western edge of a woodlot, where clearing had not been undertaken. This woodlot would be retained by the Thomsons and become a prominent landscape feature of the house grounds, called the "Grove" even to the present day.

In five transactions, completed between April 1815 and June 1817, Thomas T. Thomson purchased all the remaining Lot #4 parcels, adding about 26 acres to the earlier holdings on the adjacent Lot #3.<sup>34</sup> The Thomsons now owned about 50 contiguous acres, while leasing another 45 acres on Lots #2 and #6.

In the midst of these land acquisitions, Thomas T.'s plans are documented in a letter written on May 17, 1815 to his sister, Maria Bartow in Canada. He wrote in part:

I arrived here in Feb. last after an absence of nearly 12 years in good health and flourishing circumstances having realized my full expectations as far as regards the accumulation of wealth . . . I arrived in time to meet our Brother [John A.] and sisters [Catharine, Fanny and Harriet] in the Old Stone Castle which is since level'd with the dust, as it was in a very shattered state and no longer tenable. Alexander [John A.] has rented another for the summer and commenced building a very comfortable House on the Hill for the Family which I trust will be ready by next Dec.<sup>35</sup>

From this correspondence and subsequent activities it is clear that Thomas T. Thomson planned to improve the family circumstances at Catskill by developing a residential farm estate, both for his own use and for his unmarried brother, sister(s), and other family members (one niece, Sally Bartow, was already residing with the Thomsons in 1815).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Deed descriptions: 7.2 acres acquired west of the turnpike from Henry Van Gordon (4/19/1815); then, east of the turnpike, .6 of an acre acquired from Jacob M. Hallenbeck, 5/3/1815; .55 of an acre acquired from Anthony Dumond (5/3/1815); 16.7 acres acquired from John Livingston (4/29/1816); and finally, .65 of an acre from Henry VanGordon (6/11/1817) [VL, folders 3 and 6]. There was mention of a "small House of Trivial Value" on the last site purchased.

<sup>35</sup> Letter: Thomas T. Thomson to Maria Thomson Bartow, 5/17/1815 [Albany Institute of History and Art, Thomas Cole Papers (hereafter cited as AIHA, TCP), box 1, folder 11].

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

The purchase of Lot #4 provided the building site for the Federal-style house mentioned in Thomas T.'s letter to Maria written about two weeks after the house site was acquired. In August 1815, Sally Bartow wrote to her father in Canada and noted that the house was under construction but "will not be completed until Spring [1816]."<sup>37</sup> In a letter dated October 22, 1816, Thomas T. said he had "completed my buildings at Catskill," confirming the construction begun about sixteen months earlier.<sup>38</sup>

Though undocumented, Lot #5 of the 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent seems to have been purchased by the Thomsons at some point after 1816. In that year it was identified on a survey map of adjacent Lot #4 as belonging to "Van Orden," but Lot #5 was part of the later Thomson holdings and some evidence of its purchase is extant.<sup>39</sup> With Lot #5, the Thomsons' contiguous land holdings totaled about 75 acres, and with Lots #2 and #6 leased, 120 acres were under the family's control (see Figure 70).

Consolidation of the ownership of Lot #3 continued in 1817 when Maria Bartow sold her interest in that property to Thomas T. Thomson.<sup>40</sup> A year later, in 1818, in a notable move, Thomas T. purchased about 35 acres north of the Lindsey Patent in the Corlaerskill Patent, on the west side of the turnpike (see Figure 70).<sup>41</sup> This parcel was not contiguous to the rest of Cedar Grove -- Lots #1 of the Lindsey Patent intervened -- but it was very close and provided considerable additional acreage to the growing Thomson estate. The 35 acre parcel seems to have been open land, but there was also a steep slope towards the west dropping down to the Hans Vosenkill Creek, a drop that opened up panoramic views to the west. Thomas T. Thomson had a burial vault constructed at the edge of this steep slope, oriented west towards the Catskill Mountains and approached by a straight avenue lined with trees (Figure 63). Thereafter, this parcel

<sup>37</sup> Letter: Sally Bartow to Stephen Bartow, 8/25/1815, [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 11].

<sup>38</sup> As quoted in Raymond Beecher, "Cedar Grove - The Thomas Cole Residence," The Crayon [newsletter, Friends of Olana], Vol. XII, No. 1 (Spring 1980). Further indication of the house construction includes a memorandum of expenses for a "brick house," with entries from June 21, 1815 [VL, FCV, box 32, folder entitled "Cole, Thomas, estate"].

<sup>39</sup> A survey map survives showing Lot #5, and there is a wrapper labelled "Deeds and titles of Lots No. 5, 11 and 3 in Femmen Hook Patent [Lindsey Patent]." No actual record of the land's sale has been found [VL, folder 3].

<sup>40</sup> Deed: Stephen and Maria Bartow to Thomas T. Thomson (8/10/1817) [VL, folder 3].

<sup>41</sup> A mortgage agreement dated 12/24/1868 recounts this purchase [VL, folder 10]. There were said to be two separate parcels totally "forty acres." The first was conveyed on 10/8/1817 for "about thirty-six acres" and the second of "about six acres" on 3/9/1818. A map entitled: "Map of lands in the Corlaerskill Patent Sold by William Schuneman to Thomas T. Thompson (sic), surveyed May 1818 by C. Dubois," (parts of Lots #32, #12 and #10 of the Corlaerskill Patent) shows this purchase, but indicates the total was about 33-1/2 acres [VL, Map Folder]. This map shows a separate parcel at the southeast corner, labeled "Robert Moor / 3 acres," indicating it was in separate ownership. The western boundary of this lot was later altered to accommodate Allen Street, but this does not alter the discrepancy which is not understood from available documentation.



was referred to as the "Vault Lot."<sup>42</sup> In 1821, Thomas T. was buried there. In 1848 it would be the burial place of Thomas Cole.

In total, the Thomsons' ownership "on the Hill" had grown from the 23.5 acres of Lot #3 to about 110 acres, with about 45 additional acres leased. The full 155 acres would have been adequate as a modest family farm in this era.

A village census in 1817 identified John A. Thomson as heading a household of eight occupants (together with two free blacks and two slaves), all living at the new house on Lot #4. Given current understandings, the identity of all these individuals is unclear, and the total may have included persons living at the adjacent farmhouse (cottage) on Lot #3. Certainly the siblings, John A., Thomas T., Catharine T., Harriet and possibly Frances (who died in 1817) were present, but also nephews and nieces, possibly including Sally Bartow and children of James H. Thomson (who died before 1821).

There is evidence that the Thomsons developed their new holdings for agriculture, even as the new house was being completed. In autumn 1817, John A. Thomson ordered a wide variety of fruit trees, enough to have planted a sizable orchard of about 70 trees.<sup>43</sup> Most notable in this tree order was the inclusion of "12 three thorned acacia (sic)." Today, the "acacia," is called honeylocust (*Gleditsia tricanthus*), with its distinctive 3-branched thorns. A large specimen of this tree grew (and continues to grow) close to the front stoop of the house. If this tree is one of the 12 purchased in 1817, it was about 50 years old when illustrated in 1862, and nearly 200 years old today (Figure 14).

In 1819, Maria Thomson Bartow, John A. and Thomas T. older sister, was widowed. She quickly moved from Canada with her children to a farm owned by Thomas T. Thomson in the Town of Broome in Schoharie County, about 27 miles west of Catskill. This farm was sometimes called "Stout Farm" or "Mountain Farm" and its history is somewhat intertwined with that of Cedar Grove. The seven children of Maria Bartow were as follows:

1. Sally (Sarah) A. (1794-1825) - married John B. Spencer before 1821.\*
2. Edwin (c.1795-1812-14) – killed by Indians in the War of 1812.\*
3. Thomas Alfred (called Alfred) (1799-1832)\*
4. Emily C. (1804 -1881) - spinster, lived at Cedar Grove.
5. Harriet (1808-1904) - spinster, lived at Cedar Grove.

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<sup>42</sup> A watercolor sketch of the vault survives, showing it set into the slope. See: GCHS Journal, Vol. 23, Issue 3, Fall, 1999 Figure 63).

<sup>43</sup> Letter: John A. Thomson to Elyiah Janes, 9/29/1817 [VL, box 21].

6. Maria (1813-1884) - m. Thomas Cole in 1836. Their children are listed below.

7. Frances E. (1815-1894) - spinster, lived at Cedar Grove.

\* Played no significant role at Cedar Grove.

In the period 1817-21, details regarding the whereabouts and status of these children are as follows. Sally Bartow had been in Catskill from before 1815 and was married before 1821. Harret Bartow was said to have arrived in Catskill "with her mother, brother Alfred and four sisters [Sally, Emily, Maria and Frances] about 1820, and after living a few years at Broome."<sup>44</sup> There are some questions about the details. For example, Maria Bartow's stay in "Broome" (a.k.a. Schoharie or the "Stout Farm"), after 1819, is thought to have been longer than one year, but the point remains that the sizable Bartow family was now in the care of the Thomsons at Catskill. Eventually four sisters, Emily, Harriet, Maria and Frances, came to live with their "Uncle Sandy" -- as the family called John A. Thomson -- and aunt, Catharine T. Thomson, at Cedar Grove.

These circumstances began in about 1821 when Thomas T. Thomson died. His will stipulated that his sister, Maria Bartow, could occupy the Broome farm on a life tenancy. Thomas T. bequeathed \$1,000 gifts to all his nephews and nieces, including four children of his brother, James H. Thomson. But the house and real estate in Catskill was left to his brother, John A. and sisters, Catharine T. and Harriet.<sup>45</sup> At this date, Harriet Thomson was married to Mark Spencer who lived in New York City, so that the known residents of the farm were two -- John A. and Catharine T. Thomson.<sup>46</sup>

The Catskill property was a residence and it was farmed, so that it was possibly an income property supportive of the household.<sup>47</sup> As such, it continued as a version of the "home farm" as it had been for Dr. Thomson. The creation of Cedar Grove was strongly influenced by Thomas T.'s ambitions, and John A. Thomson's activities closely reflected his brother's. The inventory of John A.'s possessions, twenty-five years after Thomas T.'s death, show similar farm activities. There were a pair of oxen (suggesting ploughing), seven cows, one horse, a dozen beef cattle and a dozen hogs. Barley, oats and corn were cultivated, as well as hay.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Obituary: Harrett Bartow (1904) [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 10]

<sup>45</sup> Will: Thomas T. Thomson (1/19/1821) [VL, box 21].

<sup>46</sup> Bill of Sale: Harriet Thomson to John A. and Catharine T. Thomson (11/27/1821), and Agreement: Harriet and Mark Spencer to John A. Thomson and Catharine T. Thomson (4/2/1823) [VL, folder 4].

<sup>47</sup> An inventory of Thomas T. Thomson's possessions shows that his farm-related animals and equipment were considerable, although some of this accounting could possibly refer to the farm at Broome (Schoharie).

<sup>48</sup> Inventory: "Thomas T. Thomson, deceased" (8/23/1821) [VL, folder 3].

In all this period, John A. Thomson rented lands to others, notably Lots #2 and #6 which were on long-term lease from George Clark, and which apparently proved profitable for the Thomsons, who habitually rented those lots for grazing. So, for example, in 1828-30, Lot #6 (8 acres) was rented to Charles N. Botsford for use as a "pasture lot."<sup>49</sup> At unknown dates, John A. also rented the Vault Lot to local farmers for pasturing cows.<sup>50</sup> Even after John A. Thomson's death his estate received rent from a Mr. Salsberry for use of the "Clark Lot,"<sup>51</sup> which would be either Lots #2 or #6, owned by George Clark, adjacent to Cedar Grove.

In 1822, a James Blodget entered into an annual agreement with John A. Thomson to occupy the Cottage on Lot #3.<sup>52</sup> This correspondence is of special interest because it shows that the Cottage was rented, perhaps habitually but at least for short periods of time in the years just prior to the arrival of Thomas Cole at Catskill.

Despite the complexities, and without a full understanding of what constituted the Cedar Grove property, or its use, the land ownership had been consolidated, a process that concluded in 1827 when Catharine T. Thomson died, leaving the last separate interest to her brother John A. Thomson, Uncle Sandy.<sup>53</sup>

It was in about this period that Maria Bartow visited her family in Catskill, and wrote home to her children in a letter headed "Cedar Grove."<sup>54</sup> The letter is not dated but Maria died in 1830, and as such it is the earliest known use of the name "Cedar Grove." Another undated letter from Harriet Bartow to her sister, Maria, in a period when Maria was at least temporarily at the Schohaire farm, before 1830, is also headed "Cedar Grove," suggesting the name was in common use at that time.<sup>55</sup> It must be remembered that Cedar Grove was the name of the property -- the landscape -- not just the house as it is often thought of today.

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<sup>49</sup> Agreement: John A. Thomson to Charles N. Botsford [VL, folder 6].

<sup>50</sup> Agreement: John A. Thomson and David Gun (no date) [VL, folder 6].

<sup>51</sup> Rental agreement, John A. Thomson to Mr. Salsberry [VL, folder 8].

<sup>52</sup> Agreement: James Brodget and John A. Thomson (5/1/1822) [VL, folder 6].

<sup>53</sup> Last will and testament of Catharine Thomson, 9/1/1821. Other than her clothing, Catharine left everything to her brother John A. Thomson.

<sup>54</sup> Letter: Maria Bartow to her children, 5/15/? [VL, loose folder entitled: "Cedar Grove"].

<sup>55</sup> Letter: Harriet Bartow to "Rich" (Maria Bartow ?), 3/17/? [VL, box 21]. The letter seems to suggest that Harriet, age 22, was a school teacher in Catskill at the time.

## Phase 4 – Thomas Cole Period (1825-1848)

Though devoid of the stern sublimity of the wild, [our homes'] quieter spirit steals tenderly into our bosoms mingled with a thousand domestic affections and heart-touching associations . . . And it is here that taste, which is the perception of the beautiful, and the knowledge of the principles on which nature works, can be applied, and our dwelling-places made fitting for refined and intellectual beings.

- Thomas Cole, *Essay on American Scenery*, 1835.

### Cedar Grove in the late 1820s

In 1827, after his sister, Catharine T. Thomson, died, John A. Thomson was 51 years old. He headed a Cedar Grove household of numerous nieces. At any given time, these residents included the daughters of John A. Thomson's deceased brother, James Harvey, including Julia A., Charlotte and Helen Thomson. After John A. Thomson's sister, Maria Bartow, died in 1830 and was buried at the Schoharie farm, her children became full-time residents. The oldest was Alfred Bartow (about 31 years old in 1830), followed by Emily C. Bartow (then 26 years old), Harriet Bartow (22 years old) and Maria (17 years old). Frances was the youngest (15 years old in 1830). The women in this group, all to be spinsters except Maria, were affectionately referred to within the family as "the girls," a term of endearment used even after they had reached middle age.

Seemingly unconcerned for finances and the livelihood of this expansive household, John A. Thomson retired from merchandising in 1831 and thereafter devoted his time primarily to Cedar Grove.<sup>56</sup> In the next ten years, John A. seems to have operated his property as a gentlemen's farm that the family, at least occasionally, called "Cedar Grove."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Mortgage: John A. Thomson to Benjamin Hartun, 2/15/1831 [VL, folder 6].

<sup>57</sup> The name "Cedar Grove" does not come up frequently in the extant documentation, although it is repeated over the years, notably by Thomas Cole, but not by John A. Thomson. After its initial use before 1830 it is used by Cole in a poem, dated 1834 (see main text), and then in another poem on the occasion of his wife's birthday on August 3, 1840 [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 4]. Maria Cole headed a letter to her husband "Cedar Grove" on April 20, 1838 [New York State Library, Thomas Cole Papers (hereafter cited as NYSL, TCP), box 4, folder 1]. Then, in a diary entry dated March 17, 1842, Maria Cole mentioned going "out of the Grove," referring to Cedar Grove [AIHA, TCP, Maria Cole's diary]. Finally, Maria's sister, Harriet Barlow, writing to her sister Frances while the latter was convalescing under a doctor's care

## Cole's First Visits – 1825-1830

Thomas Cole, an icon of America's Romantic period, arrived at the Thomson home when it had reached its culmination as a Federal period property. It is not certain exactly when Thomas Cole first came to know John A. Thomson or his nieces. In a tribute published after Cole's death, it was said that "some fifteen years ago he [Cole] came to this place [Catskill]." That would place his first visit to Catskill at 1833, which is clearly incorrect. The confusion is apparent in this same article, with the reporter going on to say that "during his [Cole's] residence he twice visited Europe," which would accurately push the date of Cole's earliest visit to before 1829.<sup>58</sup> It is this earlier date that now seems likely.

In fact, Thomas Cole first came to the village of Catskill, however briefly, in the late summer or early autumn of 1825. This was Cole's landmark tour "in search of the picturesque," as he often referred to such outings. As he stepped off the steamboat from New York City, Cole first encountered his future home and the Hudson Valley setting to which he is now so closely associated. He was 24 years old and it is not known where he stayed in Catskill, or even if he only passed through the village on his way to the mountains. He was back in New York City soon enough, spending the winter of 1825-26 there, establishing his fame.<sup>59</sup>

It is known that Cole returned to Catskill in 1826. He toured in the mountains and he wrote a long poem, "The Wild." One scholar, quoting a letter Cole sent to Daniel Wadsworth in July 1826, states that he stayed at a "Mr. Bellamy's in the village of Catskill," this after a May 1826 visit to the Lake George region.<sup>60</sup> The evidence for a Cole visit to Catskill in 1827 is less clear. Cole's biographer, Louis L. Noble, without offering evidence, says Cole came "early in the summer, . . . where he took lodging and

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in Hartford, Connecticut, used the heading "Cedar Grove" in several letters written during 1847 [NYSL, TCP, box 4, folder 1]. No other reference to the name Cedar Grove has been found prior to Thomas Cole's death in February 1848.

<sup>58</sup> Catskill Messenger, 2/26/1848 [NYSL, TCP, box 5, folder 5].

<sup>59</sup> For an excellent description of Cole's early career in New York, see: Ellwood C. Parry III, "Thomas Cole's Early Career: 1818-1829," in Views and Visions: American Landscape Before 1830 (Washington, DC: The Corcoran Gallery of Art), 1986, pp. 161-187.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 172. Professor Parry (correspondence with the author, 8/31/2003) credits Mabel Parker Smith (former Greene County Historian) as identifying "Mr. Bellamy" as Joel Bellamy, who is recorded with a household of 18 people in an 1820 census, providing evidence that he was running a boarding house. The Daniel Wadsworth letter has not been studied by the author. See: J Bard McNulty, ed., The Correspondence of Thomas Cole and Daniel Wadsworth (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society), 1983; and Ellsworth C. Parry, The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press), 1988.

fitted up a painting room" (he doesn't say where).<sup>61</sup> More recent scholarship detailed Cole's summer activities in 1827, an itinerary that would seem to have left little time for an extended stay in Catskill.<sup>62</sup>

In all of this, there is no hard documentation that Cole had come into early contact with the Thomson/Bartow family at Cedar Grove, but indirect evidence hints that such an initiation had occurred by 1829, before he left for his first trip to Europe. For example, there is a notation in John A. Thomson's account book, signed by Thomas Cole in 1837, that asserts that Cole was a witness to an agreement involving Alfred Bartow, his future wife's brother, who was living at Cedar Grove when the agreement was originally made in May 1827. This indicates that Cole knew the family at that time.<sup>63</sup> Then there is a magazine article, published five years before Maria Cole died, which had this to say about Cole's first encounter with Cedar Grove: "The house and family had long shown him [Cole] its hospitality. The lady of his happy choice [i.e., Maria Bartow] he had known first as a child during his earlier visits to the mountains."<sup>64</sup> This suggests Cole may have known John A. Thomson and his home from as early as Cole's first visit to Catskill in 1825 when Maria Bartow was 12 years old, or perhaps if he visited at Cedar Grove in the summer of 1827 or 1828, when Maria was 14-15, and her brother Alfred was 28-29.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, consider this bit of evidence. In November 1834, Cole wrote that "in company with the girls[,] H & MB[,] I took a walk through a favorite dell . . . we conversed on times past . . . when my sister (Sarah Cole) was with us."<sup>66</sup> Here "H" is Harriet Bartow and "MB" is Maria. Cole's reminiscence of "times past," possibly reflect back to visits made before his trip to Europe in 1829, rather than to 1833, only one year earlier. Whatever the specifics, there is the probability that Thomas Cole was an influence in the Thomson family circle much earlier than the dates reported in recent

<sup>61</sup> Louis L. Noble, The Life and Works of Thomas Cole (1853), reprint: Black Dome Press, 1997, p. 46.

<sup>62</sup> Ellwood C. Parry, "Thomas Cole's Early Career," pp. 173-178. In a correspondence with the author (8/31/03), Professor Parry admits Cole might have been in Catskill before the June opening of the National Academy show in New York City, but he asserts that his itinerary in July and August, after which he is known to have been back in New York City, left little time for an extended stay in Catskill.

<sup>63</sup> AIHA, TCP, box 3 (John A. Thomson's account book).

<sup>64</sup> Harper's New Monthly Magazine, c. 1879 [VL, large flat box labeled "LOB 118, Cole, Thomas, et al."]. The source and reliability of the Harper's piece can not be verified.

<sup>65</sup> A Cole visit in 1828 is also possible, but apparently unrecorded. Noble doesn't say, probably because he couldn't find documentation, but Cole was close-by, in Boston during the summer and in New Hampshire in the autumn. It is also possible that Cole visited Catskill in the Spring of 1829 when he passed by to and from a visit to Niagara Falls before his trip to Europe in June 1829.

<sup>66</sup> TC journal entry, 11/5/1834 [NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 6]. Louis Noble reports this as a romantic encounter, focusing on Maria alone, leaving out the fact that Harriet Bartow also accompanied Cole to the "favorite dell."

scholarship.<sup>67</sup> If Cole knew the family before he departed for Europe in June 1829, there is the intriguing possibility that Cole suggested the name "Cedar Grove."

### **Cole's Early Years at Cedar Grove – 1830-1836**

Thomas Cole returned from Europe in the autumn of 1832 and after the winter in New York City, he promptly went to Catskill in the spring 1833, renting "the Cottage," or a portion of it, from John A. Thomson.<sup>68</sup> Cole remained in Catskill until November, and then spent the winter of 1833-34 in New York City. By spring 1834, he wrote a friend, that "it is my custom to spend the summer at Catskill," inviting him to visit his "workshop" there.<sup>69</sup>

In November 1834, after two summers of presumed use of the Cedar Grove Cottage/Studio, Cole did not yet admit to any attraction to Maria Bartow. A few days after he commented on the excursion with the Bartow "girls," Cole left for New York City, saying he would miss the countryside. He did not directly refer to Maria Bartow. Cole spent the winter of 1834-35 in the city, and his correspondence and journal entries reviewed from this period do not mention Maria or Cedar Grove.

However, in spring 1835, he again settled in Catskill, calling it his "favorite haunt" and vowing to stay there through the following winter to concentrate on his art and reduce the expense of wintering over in New York City.<sup>70</sup> In the summer of 1835, an unnamed visitor to Cedar Grove was described later by Louis Noble as "ascend[ing] to [Cole's] painting room," apparently from a downstairs living space.<sup>71</sup> This and other evidence suggests that Cole was in this period working and living in the Cottage/Studio,

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<sup>67</sup> In recent literature, Cole's earliest contact with Cedar Grove is discussed vaguely. Sandra S. Philips, in her essay in Charmed Places (1988), says Cole "settled in Catskill" in 1836, citing his marriage. Earl A. Powell, in Thomas Cole (1990), reports Louis Noble's earlier comment that Cole spent the "summer in Catskill" in 1827, but he says nothing of the earliest Cedar Grove contact. The editors of Thomas Cole: Landscape Into History (1994), say Cole was in Catskill in 1833, and that in 1834 he "rents a small building at Cedar Grove." Of interest, Louis Noble, while asserting Cole's 1827 visit, only mentions "Mr. Thompson's" (which Noble, not Cole, misspelled) in 1835 (Noble, p. 144).

<sup>68</sup> Despite undocumented family legion, the accumulated documentation, and common sense, suggests that Cole utilized the Cottage from his earliest residency at Cedar Grove. First, the Cottage was available for rental, and given Cole's bachelor status, and the then crowded household of young, single women, his residency outside the main House would be expected. As noted in the text, there are several specific references that confirm such an arrangement.

<sup>69</sup> Letter: Thomas Cole (hereafter cited as TC) to William A. Adams, 4/23/1834 [NYSL, TCP, box 4, folder 2].

<sup>70</sup> TC journal entry: 4/17/1835 [NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 2].

<sup>71</sup> As recounted by Noble, p. 156.

not the main House. It is noteworthy that Cole was then painting the large *Course of Empire* series, using large five-foot by three-foot canvases that would, with his other works, have required a large studio space.

As he had planned, Cole stayed in Catskill over the winter of 1835-36, and in February 1836 he spoke of taking a painting "downstairs,"<sup>72</sup> as with the summer 1835 quotation, suggesting Cole was living in accommodations of at least two floors at the Cottage/Studio. This is confirmed by a notation that Cole rented the "farmhouse" (i.e., the Cottage/Studio), where on the second floor a ample "painting room" would have been available. The Cottage/Studio had primitive heating, and there were several account entries for coal and charcoal in Colé's name.<sup>73</sup>

The commitment to stay over winter indicated Cole's heightened interest in Catskill, as well as his concern for the expense and distraction experienced in New York City during the winter of 1834-35. Again, Maria Cole's romantic role got little direct attention from Cole, at least in the documentation that survives and has been studied. Yet others may have suspected a romantic link as early as the summer of 1835, when the visitor described above, reminisced that Maria had arranged flowers in Cole's private rooms (in the Cottage/Studio), and speculated that this would be Cole's future wife well over a year before the actual marriage.<sup>74</sup>

But there are hints that Cole was not always satisfied with his Catskill circle of friends, including the Bartow "girls." In August 1835, he commented in his journal that in this group's company he attended a party, condescendingly describing "giggling girls and idealess men."<sup>75</sup> These misgivings do not seem to have been fully allayed during Cole's stay in Catskill during the winter of 1835-36, although his attachment to Maria Bartow surely advanced.

Cole's ambivalence towards married life was clear. In this period he was providing financial help to his elderly parents and other family members in New York City, and he also worried about the finances of the Thomson household. His professional life was on the rise, but his financial situation was not stable. All this affected his focus. At one point he wrote of his frustrations at being interrupted as he worked:

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<sup>72</sup> Letter: TC to Luman Reed, 2/18/1836, as quoted in Noble, p. 158.

<sup>73</sup> AIHA, TCP, John A. Thomson Account Book, page 117, October 10, 1836: Received from Thomas Cole "rent on farm house - \$75." Cole used the term "painting room," but "studio" also appears in the documentation.

<sup>74</sup> Noble's recollection, p. 156.

<sup>75</sup> TC journal entry: 8/16/1835 [NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 2]. Cole suggested that "the ladies," who probably included his future wife, "strive more to please by true refinement and accomplishments than by chattering nonsense everlastingly. But the men are worse than they."



I am most happy when I can escape most from the world. The longer I live in it, the more its common cares and troubles seem to claim me. Nothing makes me so melancholy as that which prevents me from the pursuit of my art.<sup>76</sup>

The dissatisfaction could have been that of an anxious bachelor, and it continued after his winter at Cedar Grove and into 1836. In fact, only a few months before his marriage, his sister Sarah counseled Cole to put his concerns aside, to marry Maria (who Sarah knew and liked): "I think she would make you very comfortable. I do not see that you need to be much troubled with her family affairs," Sarah wrote.<sup>77</sup>

In October 1836, *The Course of Empire* series was exhibited publicly in New York City. Ticket sales were brisk. The income may have prompted Cole to finally abandon his misgivings. On November 22, 1836, he married Maria Bartow in a private ceremony at Cedar Grove. The decision was apparently quickly made and possibly for that reason none of Cole's New York City friends attended the wedding.

#### **Cole's Married Life at Cedar Grove- 1837-1848**

From the evidence, both direct and inferred, it can be concluded that Thomas Cole's role at Cedar Grove was somewhat detached. This is not surprising as Cole was a tenant in an established family household. Cole was also preoccupied. He had little time, or inclination, to devote to a domestic role. He was away from the property for substantial periods throughout his residency. Early on, he spent a few winters in New York City, a practice that continued to some extent after his marriage.<sup>78</sup> Cole also expressed little interest in the property's operations.

Cole was involved in the Thomson/Bartow family's finances, and these matters had an impact on the Cedar Grove landscape, although not in a major way. First, Cole rented apartment/studio space. He also paid board when in residence at Cedar Grove, indicating that meals, heat and incidental expenses were included. Within a month of his marriage he was paying board for Maria Cole. So, between December 1836 and March 1841, 4-1/3 years, Cole paid about \$1,500 (at \$7 per week). After 1841, the weekly

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<sup>76</sup> TC journal entry: 9/6/1835 [NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 2].

<sup>77</sup> Letter: Sarah Cole to TC, 7/3/1836 [NYSL, TCP, box 4, folder 1].

<sup>78</sup> [AIHA, TCP, Thomas Cole's Account Book]. The Coles were in New York City from mid-November 1838 to mid-March 1839.

board went to \$7.50 per week. Thomas and/or Maria Cole's absence from Cedar Grove, especially after his marriage, is well documented by the occasional references to such in his account book.<sup>79</sup> Thomas Cole kept a record of his expenditures, which he charged against his board payments.<sup>80</sup> He contributed cash and paid some bills as they arose, all towards his overall rent and board agreements with Uncle Sandy. It is unclear where the newlyweds lived in their early years at Cedar Grove. It is certainly possible that Maria, at least initially, moved into the Cottage/Studio. Eventually, possibly soon after their marriage, the couple lived at the main House.<sup>81</sup>

In August 1836, several months before his marriage (with the *Course of Empire* series completed), Cole seems to have had some disposable cash and he contemplated investments in real estate. He apparently focused on local opportunities to the mild rebuke of his brother-in-law.<sup>82</sup> After his marriage, Cole was inexorably tied to Catskill, and it may be concluded that he utilized the established Cedar Grove household, its infrastructure and landscape, its animals and equipment, as if they were his own. Cedar Grove provided Cole with an established country seat, something the modest artist alone could not have realized. It was perhaps this situation that led his sister Sarah to suggest that marrying Maria Bartow might make him "comfortable."

While Cole had a strong sense of wanderlust, he understood the value of a loving home life.<sup>83</sup> That the Cedar Grove property was a substantial farm estate, fronting on the Hudson River, with magnificent views towards the Catskill Mountains, was so much the better. Cole made his feelings known in a poem, written at Catskill in November 1834, in the same month that he visited the "favorite dell" with the Bartow "girls," and dreaded leaving for the winter in New York City:

O Cedar Grove! whene'er I think to part  
From thine all peaceful shades my aching heart  
Is like to his who leaves some blessed shore

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., December 12, 1836: "Maria's Board - \$96." Page 26 has a summary of the board payments.

<sup>80</sup> Miscellaneous accounting [VL, folder 8].

<sup>81</sup> Solid evidence regarding Cole's use of the house is slim. There is considerable oral tradition that he used rooms in the main house, but these comments are from persons reciting family legend, not documented fact.

<sup>82</sup> Letter: George Ackerley to TC, 8/24/1836 [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 1]. As to Cole's speculative interest, Ackerley remarked: "who would have thought a quiet painter, accustomed to the contemplation of nature, would have so suddenly become so sanguine [for the potential of land speculation]."

<sup>83</sup> In a letter written in 1843, Cole mused "A man must not be a vagabond . . . He who lives by himself alone, will find himself, at last, alone and melancholy." - TC to G. W. Greene, not dated (winter 1843), as quoted in Noble, p. 253.

A weeping exile ne'er to see it more.<sup>84</sup>

Cole's use of the name "Cedar Grove" is notable as the first documented use of the name after its pre-1830 use by Maria Bartow's mother and sister. Further research on Cole's earliest links to the Thomson/Bartows, and closer dating of the family's earliest use of the name, may one day shed light on the initial coining of the estate's name. The poem certainly confirms Cole's approval, and attest to the great affection he had for the Thomson estate and its household.

Cole wrote another poem, undated, entitled "To Cedar Grove - Catskill, The Residence of J. A. Thomson."<sup>85</sup> It was probably written before his marriage and it could have predated 1830. In this, Cole confirms that an actual grove of cedars suggested the name "Cedar Grove." He noted that these trees (Eastern Red Cedar – *Juniperus virginiana*), which seem to have formed a grove close to the house (Figure 11), remained evergreen while deciduous foliage dropped in the autumn. Cole compared this arboreal phenomenon to his "evergreen," never-fading affection for Cedar Grove and its residents. Whether Cole was the first to make this romantic connection, and to suggest that the Thomson farm deserved the distinction of a named property, remains to be determined.

Throughout his residency at Cedar Grove, Cole took great pleasure in his "home" as he often referred to it. He repeatedly wrote in rhapsody over the effects of nature seen around him. On May 19, 1838, he described the springtime appearance of fruit tree blossoms (profuse at Cedar Grove) amid fields of fast-growing grasses and yellow dandelions, concluding: "Alas, the painter falls far short [of imitating nature's effects]."<sup>86</sup> For several years, at about this mid-May date, Cole reiterated in his journal his intense feelings for the first summer-like days at Catskill, struggling to put the weather into words. These descriptive passages were almost always generalized and, given Cole's voluminous writings, only occasional comments can be related specifically to Cedar Grove.

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<sup>84</sup> "O Cedar Grove," by Thomas Cole, 11/1834 [NYSL, TCP, box 5, folder 2]. For this and other Cole poetry, see: Marshall B. Tymn, ed., *Thomas Cole's Poetry* (York, PA: Liberty Cap Books), 1972.

<sup>85</sup> "To Cedar Grove – Catskill," by Thomas Cole, not dated [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 12].

<sup>86</sup> TC journal entry, 5/19/1838 [NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 2].

In the late 1830s, John A. Thomson was faced with increasing financial difficulties due to adverse court settlements on his brother, Thomas T. Thomson's estate, and other problems.<sup>87</sup> As a result, John A. Thomson was forced to mortgage portions of Cedar Grove beginning in 1838. Initially, this was the core of the property, Lots #3 and #4 of the 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent. The mortgaged property was estimated at 50 acres, confirming that the original Thomson acreage remained intact. The \$5,000 mortgage noted the "mansion house and outbuildings thereon."<sup>88</sup>

Also in this period, John A. Thomson borrowed small amounts of cash from several family members, including Thomas Cole. As was the case just before his marriage in 1836, Cole seems to have occasionally been in a good situation to accommodate these financial requests.

For example, in March 1839, Cole signed an agreement (he called it a "noble commission") that would have paid him \$5,000 to paint the *Voyage of Life* series.<sup>89</sup> In July 1839, no doubt confident with this commission, and feeling cramped for space, Cole entered into an agreement with John A. Thomson to help pay for the construction of what was called a "store-house" (a barn), a portion of which Cole would use as a studio.<sup>90</sup> Near the end of 1839, Cole announced to fellow artist Asher B. Durand: "Do you know that I have got into a new painting room. Mr. Thomson has lately erected a sort of Store-house & has let me have part of it for a temporary painting room[.]"<sup>91</sup> This "store-house" served as Cole's major studio at Cedar Grove for the next seven years. Cole commented that his previous studio space (in the Cottage/Studio) was "rather too small for painting such pictures as Mr. Ward's [*Voyage of Life* series]."<sup>92</sup> The six-foot+ by

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<sup>87</sup> For background on this history, see: Raymond Beecher, "Cedar Grove - The Thomas Cole Residence," *The Crayon*, Spring 1980, and Raymond Beecher, "Greene County's Horse Ferries," *GCHS Journal*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, Summer, 1984, p. 18. Apparently John A. Thomson was also adversely affected by the nationwide Panic of 1837 and its ensuing depression.

<sup>88</sup> Mortgage: (10/11/1838) [VL, folder 6]. No mention was made here of Lot #5, continuing the mystery of its status in this period.

<sup>89</sup> TC journal entry: 3/21/1839 [NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 1]. The *Voyage of Life* series utilized four large canvases.

<sup>90</sup> TC account notation, 1840 [AIHA, TCP, box 2, folder 6 Thomas Cole Account Book]. "This year having given up my old painting room for which I paid \$2 per week, and taken the one in the new building which I have for having (sic) paid in part for its building." This building was also called the store-house in John A. Thomson's inventory, dated 1846.

<sup>91</sup> Letter: TC to Asher B. Durand, 12/18/1839 [NYSL, box 1, folder 4].

<sup>92</sup> TC journal entry: 11/2/1839 [NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 2].

four-foot+ canvases were even larger than those of the *Course of Empire* series. Cole called the store-house a "temporary painting room," because he also planned to build a separate house. He said in his journal: "I hope to have a good one (i.e., studio) in the house I intend to build next summer."<sup>93</sup>

The location of Cole's planned house was apparently to be on land south of the main House that Cole purchased from John A. Thomson in 1839.<sup>94</sup> Thomson's motivation for the sale was apparently financial as he needed cash "to settle a long pending legal dispute" involving the estate of his brother, Thomas T. Thomson.<sup>95</sup> Cole's motivation seem to have been more complex, as discussed below, but in any event, this was one of very few early subdivisions of the Cedar Grove property. The sale was for two adjacent but separately described lots, each about 1-1/4 acres in size, totally about 2-1/2 acres, located south of the main house. In defining the boundaries of Cole's purchase, John A. Thomson must have been convinced that the 200 feet between the south side of the main House and the northern boundary of Cole's purchase was adequate as a landscape buffer. In turn, the Cole lots were bounded on the south by a planned street, called "Cole Street" in the deed. In 1839, Cole Street was a paper street, but its inclusion as an idea shows that subdivision of Cedar Grove may have been under consideration prior to John A. Thomson's death. Cole Street -- running east-west from Spring Street -- would have bisected the portion of Cedar Grove to the south, opening up the area for further sales. There was no view to the Hudson River from this position, with the land oriented west towards the Catskill Mountains.

As noted above, Cole expressed his "hope" to build a house, this despite a clause in the agreement that allowed John A. Thomson a "right of repurchase" over the property. Cole may have been motivated by the birth of Cole's second child, Mary, in September 1839. In fact, the brick and timber were ordered in the autumn. When the order was canceled, one supplier suggested a penalty was due him for work performed, indicating

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Deed, John A. Thomson to TC, 7/26/1839 [VL, folder 6]; also: [AIHA, TCP, box 3 John A. Thomson Account Book]. The cost was \$2,350 which was paid by canceling 6 previous loans, totaling \$1,100, plus \$1,000 in cash and \$250 to be paid over 5 years. The total seems excessive for the 2-1/2 acres included in the sale.

<sup>95</sup> Raymond Beecher, "Cedar Grove -- The Thomas Cole Residence," *The Crayon*, Vol. XII, No., Spring, 1980, p. 7.

how quick was Cole's change of heart.<sup>96</sup> No doubt crucial in these circumstances was the death, in November 1839, of Cole's patron on the *Voyage of Life* series, Samuel Ward. Ward's heirs made it clear they felt no desire or responsibility to continue Cole's lucrative commission and this may have prompted cancellation of the plans for house construction.

While the house was never built, Cole's interest in the idea continued for several years, and indeed his interest in architecture predated his marriage. At least one of Cole's house designs survives.<sup>97</sup> While Cole professed interest in house building, he also recited the idea that "fools build houses while wise men live in them," indicating some detachment from the responsibilities of home ownership, an attitude befitting his wanderlust personality.<sup>98</sup> In any event, there is no evidence that Cole was under pressure from the Cedar Grove family to construct a separate house. In fact, in light of John A. Thomson's increasing debt, and the uncertainty of the *Voyage of Life* commission, and the needs of Cole's extended family, there was every reason for him to economize. As it turned out, instead of building a house, Cole sailed for Europe in August 1841, returning a year later. His contribution to the construction of the store-house, and his within-the-family land purchase were convenient ways for Cole to contribute to the relief of the family's ill fortune, while he dreamed whatever dreams he felt comfortable with on the topic of house building, and retire to Europe with his art.

All through this decade-long period, from Cole's earliest residency at Cedar Grove, when Maria was "a child," until 1839 and beyond, John A. Thomson seems to have acted as a gentleman farmer, being very much involved in Cedar Grove's agricultural management and the administration of its associated leases. He called the property "My Farm," and in a typical year hired several farm laborers, whose numbers increased in the summer months and into the autumn harvest.<sup>99</sup> He is documented as

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<sup>96</sup> Letter: D. B. Hervey to TC, 2/19/1840 [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 1 and 16].

<sup>97</sup> Cole prepared a house design in this period. See: "Design for a Villa," pen, ink and graphite on paper (Detroit Museum of Art), see: Sandra S. Phillips, et al., *Charmed Places* (Red Hook and Poughkeepsie: The Edith C. Blum Institute, Bard College and The Vassar College Art Gallery), 1988, Figure 3, p. 18. The editor dated the work at 1840-41.

<sup>98</sup> Letter: TC to William A. Adams, 4/8/1841, as quoted in Noble, p. 219. In this letter Cole said he "had not built it yet," and suggested a visit in the summer of 1841 to "the site of the new house, and say how magnificent it is to be."

<sup>99</sup> Account entries: pages 44, 45, 67, 119, etc. [AIHA, TCP, box 3 John A. Thomson Account Book].

being especially interested in fruit and grape cultivation. One early nursery order survives, made in 1817 just after the house construction, that included 15 varieties of apples: Seek No Further, Flushing, Spitzenbergh, Tallmans, Sweeting, Kentish, Codline, Ox Noble, Siberian Crab, Jacobin, Rhode Island Greening and Golden Pippin. This list also included 4 varieties of plums, 5 of peaches, 5 of pears and 3 different cherries. In total, the 1817 order, possibly an initial site planting after the house construction was completed, included 80 trees.<sup>100</sup> Still, our understanding of John A. Thomson's agricultural activities is limited. Some records of fruit sales survive and we know he maintained a large kitchen garden and pasturelands. He may have raised grain (Figure 8) and as there is no record of hay being purchased, he probably mowed several acres for silage. Still, there is little direct documentary evidence of these activities. The few references are intriguing. In 1833, John A. Thomson ran a newspaper notice warning against trespassing and "plundering my orchards and garden."<sup>101</sup>

It is clear that for the family, farming Cedar Grove was not the household's only source of income, although the wherewithal of the varied occupants at Cedar Grove are not fully understood. Several of the Bartow sisters may have worked as teachers, activities mentioned in several letters, but their employment records, if they ever existed, are unknown. In the end, John A. Thomson appears to have been cash poor, in debt and with a farm that did not provide ample income. He eventually turned to mortgaging the property and borrowing against the land. He maintained an ongoing financial arrangement with Thomas Cole, and records remain detailing these accounts.<sup>102</sup>

Despite the household's financial difficulties and uncertainties, the early 1840s might be seen as Cedar Grove's "golden age," with John A. Thomson still active and his nieces handling much of the domestic chores. Thomas Cole was free to pursue his art in what by his accounts were idyllic circumstances, although at times he seemed to have

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<sup>100</sup> Letter: John A. Thomson to Elyiah Janes, 9/29/1817. Old ledger entitled "Copies of letters sent" [VL].

<sup>101</sup> Unidentified newspaper notice, dated 1833 [VL, Cedar Grove file].

<sup>102</sup> John A. Thomson, on account with Thomas Cole (8/1841 to 1845) [VL, folder 8]. This document lists unpaid interest on a bond over a period of about 3-1/2 years. At the same time, John A. rented portions of the property. These records are numerous but documentation of all such transactions may not survive (see VL, folder 6 for many of these agreements). A full understanding of Cedar Grove is also complicated by a lack of documentation as to the role of the Schoharie farm, which may or may not have remained in the family possession through the period of Cole's residence. How the Schoharie farm was managed, and when the family divested itself of the Schoharie farm, are topics beyond the scope of the research undertaken to date.

shied away from the domestic rigors and responsibilities, and he did not care too much for the long and harsh winters in Catskill, nor its provincial ways.<sup>103</sup>

In August 1842, when Cole returned from Europe, he remained preoccupied with his artistic career. He traveled often, to New York City (where he spent the winter of 1844), and Boston (often in the 1840s), and elsewhere. In correspondence with Maria, who typically remained at Cedar Grove with the children, there are a few hints of his interest in life at the Thomson farm. At one point, Cole expressed concern that "Uncle Sandy" would find another "Farmer," after the current farmer, a "Mr. Witbeck," decided to leave John A. Thomson's employ.<sup>104</sup> This is the only reference to a hired farmer serving on the property, although one of John A.'s account books shows he hired much seasonal help in the 1830s, a situation that is thought to have been typical throughout his ownership.

All the while, Cole was on the sidelines. In several instances he transported some plants up-river to the household, but that seems to have been the extent of his direct involvement.<sup>105</sup> Even his interest in the property seems to have been minimal, with only a few references cropping up in the extensive surviving correspondence and journal notations. He occasionally mentioned the grove of trees east of the Thomson house,<sup>106</sup> and he referred several times to the flower garden that occupied the grounds south of the house. From Europe in 1842, he hoped "Harriet [Bartow] has good luck with her flower-bed," suggesting that his sister-in-law, then age 34, had primary responsibility for the flower garden in that period.<sup>107</sup>

Cole made numerous trips in pursuit of his art. Maria Cole wrote to her "deary" of the activities at Cedar Grove. So, for example, in 1841, Maria reported that "Uncle Sandy was busy setting out grape vines and current bushes,"<sup>108</sup> while in autumn 1843, she was "working in the yard about the whole day, having the Dalias taken up, etc. If it were not wishing time away, I could wish it spring that I might attend to the flowers." A few days later she wrote: "Uncle Sandy has sent off the apples, etc., this morning to the City

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<sup>103</sup> Letter: TC to G.W. Greene, not dated (winter 1843), as quoted in Noble, p. 253. Cole commented on the local society: "There is little of real art in our atmosphere, and to me but few congenial minds. I languish, sometimes, for the intercourse I enjoyed last winter [when in Rome where Greene was American consul] and feel that there is little to hold me here but my family and my own dear Catskills."

<sup>104</sup> Letter: TC to Maria Cole (hereafter cited MC), 2/12/1844 [NYSL, TCP, box 4, folder 1].

<sup>105</sup> Letter: TC to MC, 3/15/1844 [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 4].

<sup>106</sup> In correspondence, Cole mentioned "an oak in our grove" [TC to William A. Adams, 7/22/1838, as quoted in Noble, p. 198], and "the oaks and chestnuts of our grove" [TC journal entry: 5/30/1841, NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 2].

<sup>107</sup> Letter: TC to MC, 3/26/1842, as quoted in Noble, p. 241.

<sup>108</sup> MC to TC, 1841 [NYSL, TCP, box 4, folder 1].



[New York City].”<sup>109</sup> Maria Cole also kept a occasional diary, but there was little focus on the operations of Uncle Sandy’s farm or the Cedar Grove landscape. While the numbers are surprising small, several of Cole’s pictures include glimpses of the Cedar Grove landscape (Figure 9).

For two years (1844-45) Cole worked with Frederic Church (1826-1900) as his student. Church’s father paid Cole \$300 a year for his tutelage and while Church did not reside at Cedar Grove (rented elsewhere in the village), he became a close friend of the family’s, and remained so throughout his lifetime.<sup>110</sup>

John A. Thomson died on June 27, 1846. He left his entire estate to his four Bartow nieces, “to be equally divided between them.” The Thomson nieces (children of James H. Thomson) received cash gifts but not ownership of Cedar Grove. There was no separate mention of the Schoharie farm in this will, and records of its ownership have not been traced. Thomas Cole and Ezra Hawley were named co-executors of John A. Thomson’s estate.<sup>111</sup>

After Uncle Sandy’s death, Thomas Cole felt the burden of caring for the Cedar Grove estate, saying “it has brought upon me new duties and cares and will probably influence my whole life.” This comment both confirmed John A. Thomson’s active role and Cole’s previous detachment. Cole lamented that Thomson had not been

spared to see a little longer the luxuriant growth of the vines and fruit which he had planted and pruned with so much skill and pleasure. He had a passion for Horticulture, and was skilled above most men and it was amusing to hear him [?] on a peach or apple, a pear or a strawberry. The gardens and orchards for weeks past have shown evidences that their master’s hand is no longer there. Useless shoots disfigure the [orchard] trees and weeds riot over the beds and the grape-vines with their redundant foliage and curling tendrils are trailing over the ground.<sup>112</sup>

Cole promptly put up for sale hundreds of grape vines that were part of the Cedar Grove vineyard, which Cole or the remaining family could not maintain.<sup>113</sup> As co-executor of

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<sup>109</sup> Letters: MC to TC, 10/30/1843 and 11/3/1843 [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 4].

<sup>110</sup> Charles Dudley Warner, “An Unfinished Biography of the Artist,” as published in Franklin Kelly, et al., *Frederic Edwin Church*, Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1989, p. 183. Church’s accounts are in Thomas Cole’s Account Book [AIHA, TCP, box 3].

<sup>111</sup> Last Will and Testament, John A. Thomson, 7/12/1841 [VL, folder 8].

<sup>112</sup> TC journal entry: 7/1/1846 [NYSL, TCP, box 6, folder 2].

<sup>113</sup> Advertisement: *Catskill Messenger*, 3/6/1847 [VL].

the Thomson estate, Cole also took on the troubled family finances. An aunt in England wrote expressing sympathies and referring to the "embarrassed" Thomson fortune.<sup>114</sup>

Later that year, Cole built a New Studio on the land he had purchased from John A. Thomson in 1839. The timing may relate to release of whatever "right of repurchase" John A. Thomson held over Cole's use of the property, from this point on called the "Studio Lot."<sup>115</sup> Dismantled in the 1970s, the New Studio's location is shown on a survey dated 1962 (Figure 69).<sup>116</sup>

Thomas Cole was now the man of the Cedar Grove household, but then he too died only two years after Uncle Sandy, in 1848. A newspaper tribute noted "his lonely tomb, which lies on a sequestered hillock on his domain upon the banks of the Hudson,"<sup>117</sup> a reference to the burial vault developed on the Vault Lot by Thomas T. Thomson before 1821. Perhaps sensing that this would be his burial spot, Thomas Cole had earlier put his thoughts on the Thomson vault to poetry:

To be sepulchred here - to rest upon  
The spot of earth that living I have lov'd  
Where yon far mountains steep; would constant look  
Upon the grave of one who lov'd to gaze on them.<sup>118</sup>

An inventory of Thomas Cole's estate included \$2,840 on the mortgage he held on the Studio Lot. Paintings in his possession were valued at about \$7,000 and his personal effects were valued at a modest \$150. There were numerous articles held by Mrs. Cole that were not appraised, including some of her husband's paintings.<sup>119</sup>

Eight months after Cole's death, in October 1848, Frederic Church visited and made a detailed drawing showing the Spring Street frontage, from the house (north) to the New Studio, south (Figure 10). Carefully drawn, the sketch provides important information concerning the appearance of the house grounds at the end of Thomas Cole's lifetime.<sup>120</sup> Five years after Church's drawing, Jasper Cropsey also sketched this scene

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<sup>114</sup> Letter: MC to TC, 11/14/1846 [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 1.].

<sup>115</sup> As discussed in Noble, p. 279.

<sup>116</sup> Survey plan, entitled "Preliminary Map of Part of Vincent Est[ate]" (scale 1"=50'), by George F. Eckon, revised by J. C. Bagley, 12/14/1962 [VL, loose folder entitled "Conservation of Site, Pre-TCF (Thomas Cole Foundation)"].

<sup>117</sup> New York Tribune, 2/21/1848 [VL, FCV, box 32, folder labeled "Cole, Thomas"].

<sup>118</sup> "The Burial Ground at Catskill," by Thomas Cole [NYSL, TCP, box 5, folder 2]. After Cole's death, Frederic Church painted "In memory of Cole," illustrating a scene that is close to that looking west towards the Catskills from the Vault Lot. Church would certainly have known of the site from his presence in the area in the period 1844-45 and thereafter.

<sup>119</sup> Inventory: Thomas Cole Estate, 3/3/1848 [VL, loose folder entitled "Cole, Thomas (1801-48)"].

<sup>120</sup> Pencil sketch by Frederic E. Church, dated Oct. 1848 (Figure 10).

(Figure 11), confirming many of Church's observations and revealing some additional information.<sup>121</sup>

Thomas and Maria Cole had five children, as follows:

1. Theodore Alexander (1838-1928) - m. in 1874 Eugenia Casey (1839-1934). He resided at Cedar Grove and his children are listed in the next section (Figure 64)
2. Mary B. (1839-1894) - a spinster, she lived at Cedar Grove.
3. Emily (1843-1913) - also a spinster who lived at Cedar Grove.
4. Elizabeth (1847-1847) - died after two days.
5. Thomas II (1848-1919) - m. Ann F. Springsteed (1847-1919). He became an Episcopal priest and lived nearby in Saugerties; no children.

At the time of Thomas Cole's death, Theodore was only 10 years old, Mary and Emily were young children, and Thomas II was as yet unborn. In the years ahead, Theodore's role would replace his grand uncle, John A. Thomson. But the financial limitations of casual gentlemen farming would eventually necessitate the property's subdivision as the Village of Catskill expanded "up the Hill."

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<sup>121</sup> Pencil sketch by J. F. Cropsey, dated 1853 (Figure 11).

## **Section B – Design Description, 1848**

“[Cedar Grove] did not give off an atmosphere of luxurie (sic) and wealth”

- Jasper Cropsey to his wife

### **Overview:**

The appearance and use of the Cedar Grove landscape as it was at the end of Thomas Cole’s lifetime is described below. The articulation is based on the documented Site History (Section A, above), and a variety of visual evidence, as noted herein. This evidence allows the period landscape to be imagined and delineated as it was known to Thomas Cole (Figures 68 and 70).

Below, today’s Thomas Cole National Historic Site (about 5 acres), and its immediate surroundings, are described first, including the main House grounds and a recently purchased contiguous property – the former Scott Residence (about 4 acres). Discussed separately is a newly acquired lot, formerly the McCord Residence, west of Spring Street (about 1 acre). These areas are illustrated on a period plan, Figure 68, that delineates the known situation in 1848. After this description, the broader landscape that constituted historic Cedar Grove in 1848 (110 acres) is discussed, again as understood from the available documentation. The full Cedar Grove property, as known to Thomas Cole, is delineated on Figure 70.

### **Area 1 - Today’s Historic Site - East of Spring Street (4 acres) – Figure 68**

#### **1.1 – Immediate House Grounds**

In 1815, the main House was constructed facing south, about 100 feet south of what was a pre-existing farmstead located on Lot #3 of the Patent (see Section A – Site History, for detailed background). The earlier farmstead included an older house, referred to in the historic documentation as “The Cottage,” that was rented in Thomas Cole’s period, possibly as a duplex. Documentation indicates that Thomas Cole rented the Cottage, or a portion of it, as his first “workshop” at Cedar Grove, in the years 1833-39. For this reason, the building is referred to here as the Cottage/Studio.

In addition to the Cottage/Studio, the farmstead complex included a separate “Coal House” to the south of the Cottage/Studio, and a large “Chicken House” to the east. There was a Barn, being two attached structures of different dates, on the west side

of Spring Street. The Cottage/Studio site possibly included other outbuildings (a privy, sheds, etc.), together with related driveways, a separate kitchen garden (location unknown but probably east of the Cottage/Studio), and other development appropriate to its function as the modest farm residence on the Thomson property prior to construction of the main House in 1815 (Figure 53). Thereafter, the Cottage was put to varied uses, rented by Cole and others. The Barn(s), Chicken House and other outbuildings, amounting to pre-existing infrastructure in 1815, continued to serve the needs of the Cedar Grove household.

The Cottage/Studio site was separated from the House grounds by a hedge row, the earlier demarcation between Lots #3 and #4. There were openings in the hedge row. A pedestrian path no doubt linked the Cottage/Studio directly to the new House, and there was a wider wagon road located about 100 feet east of the House (see below).

As noted above, the main House and its immediate grounds were probably sited to be adjunct to the existing infrastructure and facilities established at the Cottage/Studio complex. Only the Privy is thought to have been built when the House was constructed in 1815, and in some ways the House culminated the Thomson's eighteen-year-long use and development on Lot #3.

The new House was constructed on Lot #4, which had been subdivided before 1815. The House and its immediate grounds were built on what had been three subdivided building lots along the Spring Street frontage of Lot #4, immediately south of the Cottage/Studio site. The three lots purchased by the Thomsons for the new House totaled only about 1.8 acres.

The western boundary of these lots was Spring Street. The northern line was the Cottage/Studio site, which had been in Thomson ownership since 1797. On the south side was adjacent Lot #5, possibly not owned by the Thomson family when the House was being built, but subsequently acquired. In 1839, a portion of this southern area was acquired by Thomas Cole (see below).

East from the main House lots was the western edge of a woodlot. This woodlot covered at least 3 acres on Lot #4 alone, and it is thought to have extended over onto Lot #5 as well. After purchasing Lots #4 and #5, the Thomsons retained the woodlot, thereafter habitually referred to as "the Grove." The Grove was a feature of the historic landscape as it formed a substantial buffer on the eastern side of the House grounds, tending to separate it from the Hudson River frontage and enforce the western orientation. The topography was also decisive in the off-river siting of the House. The first floor of the House (elevation approximately 185 feet above the river) was well below the intervening ridge line (approximate elevation 210 feet). With the woodlot as a

backdrop, the 1815 House and its grounds were clearly oriented with the adjacent public road (Spring Street) and the western orientation towards the Catskill Mountains, while retaining the favored south prospect of the House itself.

The small lots on the road, acquired by the Thomsons for their new House site, may have been extensively cleared before they were purchased. The southern-most lot included a small building (house?) which was probably demolished at an early date, but its existence suggests that this lot might have included some improvements, which were possibly retained. In any event, much of the 1.8-acre tract on Spring Street was to be the immediate residential grounds of the new House.

As part of that development, considerable landscape work was undertaken to set the House elegantly on the public road, and to develop the immediate grounds as an ornamental landscape that included the elegant Privy and a substantial Flower Garden. There is evidence that fruit trees may have been planted close to the House, or possibly several existed prior to house construction and were retained. One large apple tree is seen in photographs from the 1890s (Figures 27 and 28), standing just south of the driveway, close to the east side stairs leading up to the Piazza.

The House was constructed close to the road, with a primary driveway entrance for carriages southwest of the house, only about 80 feet from the front door. This primary driveway entrance was marked by two high brick piers, fitted with urn-like finials and a picket-fence style gate, altogether an imposing entry (Figure 21). Once inside the gate, the driveway angled up to the south side of the House, skirting the wide Piazza stairway and then continuing on to the east, where it linked with the lane going north to the Cottage/Studio site, and continued to the so-called Store-House/Studio. From that area, the drive went east into the grove of trees, and beyond, into fields towards the Hudson River. This driveway arrangement was Cedar Grove's central corridor for the circulation of carriages and wagons.

Together, the grounds were defined by the orientation of the House itself, with work yards to the north and gardens to the south, traversed by the carriage drive. The Store-House/Studio had a workaday setting, and as Jaspar Cropsey attested (quote above), the landscape did not present an air of "luxury and wealth."

Illustrative documentation for the appearance of the House grounds at the time of Thomas Cole's death is quite extensive for the Spring Street frontage, but more limited elsewhere. Imagining the conditions known to Cole, reasoned conjecture is aided by the few pieces of hard documentation that survive, and from evidence that came after Cole (e.g., paintings, photographs and written descriptions), in a period when the landscape is

not thought to have been altered. There are also numerous physical clues (e.g., large trees and archaeological findings) that reveal the earlier conditions. Details follow.

## 1.2 – Spring Street Frontage

Cedar Grove public face onto the public road is well documented in the sketches by Frederic Church (1848) and Jaspar Cropsey (1853) (Figures 10 and 11). As befitted a Federal period residence, the treatment of this public road edge was substantial, and it aspired to elegance.

In 1848, Spring Street was a modest dirt road only about 10 feet wide. The roadway may have curved slightly and came closest to the House about where the primary entrance was located, but the road's early alignment, much altered today, is uncertain given the current evidence. Archaeological investigations might help to clarify the situation.

What is clear is that a picket fence extended north and south from the main entry, presumably following the property line along the east side of the public right-of-way. A wide grassy verge existed between the public road and the fence line. The fence, about four feet high, was erected on top of a stone wall. The wall coping provided the fence with a uniform base because the wall filled in the uneven ground along the property line (see Figure 10). While details of the fence construction are unknown, it was probably built of timber, painted white. While there is no direct documentation, the brick piers were possibly painted yellow to match the painted brick of the House. Together, the fence and wall, and the substantial brick piers at the entrance gate, created a formal and elegant treatment that is quite typical of Federal period, domestic landscape development. The elaborate Spring Street frontage extended the Federal period design theme out into the landscape and was Cedar Grove presentation to the viewing public.

In addition to the primary entrance set off by the brick piers, there were other gateways along the Spring Street frontage. To the north, a separate pedestrian gate provided access directly to the basement of the House. This was a service access marked by small piers, probably of timber construction, not brick, and with a gate matching the picket fence. A similar pedestrian gateway was set just south of the main entrance. This would have served residents or visitors coming on foot directly to the front door of the House. There was no doubt a gravel path between this gateway and the stairway leading up to the front door of the House.

There was an extensive shrubbery, with small trees, in the space (approximately 60 feet wide) between the Spring Street fence and the House. Unlike many Federal period dwellings, the formal, symmetrical House facade was apparently not intended to be a feature from the public road. Here, the south facade was perpendicular to the road and plantings between the road and the House would have been intended to hide the structure. The composition of this roadside shrubbery at the time of Cole's death, is not known, although lilacs were mentioned as a dominant element in later descriptions and appear on the oldest photographs of the area (Figure 59). The shrubbery would have provided some privacy and screening for the basement areas of the House that opened towards Spring Street, and also for the raised Piazza, where the family would gather to sit in appropriate weather. While not documented in its specifics, and possibly subject to considerable change over time, the distant views west from the Piazza were no doubt maintained in an ongoing way, by managing the foreground vegetation in this area given over to shrubbery.

South of the House and the main carriage drive entrance, the formal picket fence/wall along Spring Street continued for about 100 feet. In this section, the stone wall that formed the base for the fence was in places several feet high, providing a substantial demarcation along the road. The picket fence and support wall ended at a secondary service-oriented gateway. This was probably maintained for separate access to the New Studio (1846) and lot purchased by Thomas Cole in 1839. This secondary gateway may also have been positioned to mark the end of the corner of the Cole lot or the old boundary line between Lots #4 and #5, both of which were in this approximate area.

Compared with the substantial wall and fence line adjacent to the House grounds, the wall along Spring Street south of this point was a far simpler construction. There was no picket fence and the masonry was less exacting in its construction and alignment. This area fronted the roadside adjacent to the site of Thomas Cole's New Studio Lot.

Trees that existed along the Spring Street frontage can be identified with some accuracy from the Church and Cropsey drawings. First of note was the honeylocust tree thought to have been planted in front of the House shortly after house construction. It was a sizable specimen by the end of Cole's lifetime and loomed large in both Church's and Cropsey's views. Closer to Spring Street, there were several small trees growing between the roadway and the picket fence, and within the grounds. Further south several trees were illustrated in the lawn area maintained inside the picket fence. South of the secondary gate, a thicket of trees was retained that may have identified the southern limits of the immediate House grounds, and separated to some extent the main House



from Cole's New Studio. Also, there was a slight rise between the New Studio and the main House, tending to further separate the two areas. The New Studio was set on sloping ground oriented to the western prospects (Catskill Mountains). Trees and shrubs were kept low in the space between the New Studio and Spring Street to facilitate open views.

In summary, along Spring Street, the remarkable similarity between the scene shown by Frederic Church and Jaspar Cropsey, sketching only five years apart, provides a near-photographic record where many individual trees can be identified on both drawings.

### 1.3 – Areas North of the House.

The conclusive evidence available for the Spring Street frontage is not carried onward to landscape conditions further to the east, and some areas of the House grounds are not well documented from the available information, even if the basic layout of the landscape is understood.

The area north of the House, in the 100 foot wide space between the House and the Cottage/Studio site, is not shown on any image prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1870's a substantial wing was added to the House on this north side, further altering the pre-1848 appearance of this area. Most likely this was always a service-related zone, utilized for wood storage, laundry or other "yard" activities. Whether these yards were fenced, as would be typical, is unknown. Initially, there may have been a small kitchen garden located here at a spot close to the basement kitchen of the House.

An early drawing (Cropsey, Figure 11) clearly shows large eastern red cedar trees (*Juniperus virginiana*) growing in the area northeast of the House. In Cropsey's view, the telltale tips of these trees are apparent, and their presence here is confirmed in a later oil sketch (Moore, 1862, Figure 12), where tall cedar trees are shown behind and northwest of the Store-House/Studio, in the same general area as the Cropsey sketch. This grove, being close to the old Cottage/Studio site and the 1815 main House, may have prompted the estate's pre-1830 name, Cedar Grove.

#### 1.4 – Flower Garden

South of the main House, centered symmetrically on axis with the front door, was the Flower Garden. If not original to the House construction, this Flower Garden was probably in place by 1848. It is first definitively documented in a painting (Figure 14), dated to about 1862. There are also several earlier written references to it.

The Flower Garden extended as a border (about 8-10 feet wide) on each side of the central, gravel-surfaced path (about 9 feet wide). Initially, this path was aligned on the center line of the House. Over time, the path was narrowed and shifted to the east as the honeylocust tree grew.

Maria Cole and her sisters were closely associated with the Flower Garden and it is probable that the general design approach, as it was in 1848, remained consistent through Maria Cole's lifetime. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, this conclusion was argued in several later accounts of the Flower Garden. These writers distinguished between the Flower Garden's "old fashioned" plants, and "new things," referring no doubt to the garden as known during Maria Cole's lifetime, to the early 1880s, and its maintenance thereafter, with newer things added only in the post-Maria Cole era. Within this context, a full understanding of the flower types cultivated in the Flower Garden during Cole's lifetime can not be known with certainty. Still, a list of what constituted "old fashioned" flowers, quoted in the historic accounts, does provide valuable information, and some of this is confirmed in the earliest images of the Flower Garden.

One of the best descriptions of the Flower Garden was in a 1922 newspaper article. The Flower Garden was said to contain spring bulbs, appropriate because it was a year-round residence. Of the "old fashioned" flowers identified as in the Flower Garden when Maria Cole tended it (and so flowers that may have been familiar to Thomas Cole), "poppies, roses, lemon lilies, fraxinella, larkspur, hollyhocks, valerian and china asters" are mentioned in the 1922 piece. In addition, Maria Cole discussed such plants as "dalhia" and "carnations" in letters and diary entries, further expanding the list of plants likely to have been used in Thomas Cole's lifetime. Of course these references do not specify individual species or hybrid, nor provide the all important flower color for types of flowers that were available in several colors, but it does provide a generalized guide.

### 1.5 – South of the Flower Garden to Cole's New Studio

At the southern end of the flanking plant beds, the path through the Flower Garden turned abruptly east (left). This area of the site dropped into a shallow ravine, which drained the House grounds to the west. The ravine seems to have been kept as a thicket of shrubs and trees. It appears that a small foot bridge was installed to cross the drainage swale, and the path then ascending towards the south, crossing a wider farm lane that came into the site at the secondary gate on Spring Street. South of this lane a path curved up to the entrance porch at the northwest corner of the New Studio.

The western surroundings of the New Studio are shown on the Church and Cropsey drawings. Cropsey also did a closer view of the building from the north (Figure 29). From this visual evidence it seems possible that the New Studio was built in a former orchard. Some of these trees may have been felled when the New Studio was constructed. Standing fruit trees, some quite old, can be identified scattered north and northwest of the New Studio in later photographs (Figure 32).

The mature woodlot, the Grove, that occupied the eastern side of the immediate house grounds also extended to the east of the New Studio. To the west and northwest, any large intervening trees that would have screened the views towards the Catskill Mountains were removed. Smaller trees, and possibly shrubs, were retained in this foreground, and close to the New Studio. In general, it seems the area was roughly kept, with grass remaining long and considerable growth of vegetation on all sides, a character well reflected in Cropsey's picturesque view (Figure 29).

### 1.6 – Environs of Privy and Store-House/Studio

The Privy, probably built at the same time as the House, has a Federal period façade on the west side only, facing the House and complementing the Federal style ensemble that included the House, substantial brick entrance piers and gate, and elaborate fence line along Spring Street. The Privy was probably built at the same time as these other, i.e., at the time of the original House construction, although documentation for this has not been found. The Privy is shown in Church's 1848 sketch (Figure 10). A late 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph shows that the Privy was embowered in vegetation on its north, east and south sides, so that only the decorative west façade was displayed.

The Store-House/Studio was constructed in 1839. The building was carefully sited between two large oak trees, each being left only a few feet from the north and south façades. The driveway that passed the front of the House continued along the north side of the Store-House/Studio and then turned southeast to continue through the Grove (woodlot) towards the Hudson River. The lane that led north to the Cottage/Studio site splayed into two separate routes going in opposite directions as it came to the north façade of the Store House/Studio (Figure 68 shows this). A late 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph (Figure 49) shows a large pine tree on the east side of this lane, and a smaller tree located in the triangular lawn area where the lane splayed to the east and west. Today, large stumps in these positions are believed to identify these trees, but archaeology might further confirm the lane's exact alignment.

Stable doors were located on the east side of the Store-House/Studio. On the south, the building opened onto the site in a way that suggested a barnyard environment there. Wood was stored against the south façade and a yard space was maintained outside interior areas given over to domestic utility.

Close-by, south and southwest of the Store-House/Studio, was a large Kitchen Garden, probably developed shortly after the adjacent building was completed, but certainly from the time of a painting showing the scene in about 1862. The Kitchen Garden may have covered an area of about ¼ acre (approximately 150 feet x 70 feet), occupying the grounds to the west nearly to the Flower Garden south of the House.

On the west side of the Store-House/Studio, a narrow gap between it and the older Privy allowed wagons to move around all four sides of the Store-House/Studio.

### 1.7 – Woodlot

East of the House grounds, Cottage/Studio, Store-House/Studio and the New Studio, was a woodlot, referred to as the "Grove." An area of about 4 acres is thought to have been so designated. The Grove may have provided firewood and was probably managed to some extent, with unwanted saplings thinned and fallen limbs cleaned up. As such, the woodlot had an ornamental role, but as was typical in this era, it is not believed that this area was extensively maintained. The ground surface remained rough and unmown (Figures 55 and 56).

Near the southeastern corner of the Woodlot was a quarry, possibly of gravelly materials. The quarry was mentioned in Cole's period, and was identified on a later sketch map of the property (Figure 5).

At the northwest corner, near the Cottage/Studio, was a somewhat isolated grove of eastern red cedars, a cluster that may have inspired the property's name, Cedar Grove.

## **Area 2 - Today's Historic Site - West of Spring Street (1 acre)**

### **2.1 – McCord Property**

This property, part of historic Cedar Grove, is not part of the currently designated National Historic Site. The parcel is a modern residential lot and is located on the west side of Spring Street, about opposite the main House. It is thought that this area was a portion of orchard during Thomas Cole's lifetime. The area is shown in the foreground of later photographs showing the western prospect from the House and Barn (Figures 58, 59, 60 and 61).

## **Area 3 - Cedar Grove Lands outside Today's Historic Site**

### **3.1 – Area east of Spring Street**

In 1848, the House grounds preserved at today's National Historic Site were bounded on all sides by peripheral areas of Cedar Grove that are now in separate ownership, with landscapes that are vastly altered in appearance and use from the historic situation.

To the north was the Cottage/Studio complex, with outbuildings and surrounding grounds, together with the Barn(s) west of Spring Street. This area was closely related to the house development and was discussed earlier for that reason. The Cottage/Studio site was probably dominated by a workaday, utilitarian landscape, but the detailed conditions in Cole's period are unclear. Cedar Grove's historic north property line was located about 100 feet north of the Cottage/Studio complex. This north line was marked by a roadway, maintained as a right-of-way that connected Spring Street east to the small settlement and ice house at Hamburg on the banks of the Hudson River north of Cedar Grove.

South of the main House, and south of Cole's New Studio, was additional open ground, possibly an orchard in Cole's lifetime, that was then allowed to grow up into a

more heavily treed area shown on the 1889 aerial view (Figure 22) as fronting the north side of High Street (Cedar Grove's south property line). South of High Street was Lot #6, leased by the Thomsons and then habitually rented out as a pasture/meadow. It is shown as open round on the 1889 aerial view (Figure 22).

To the east of the House site, from the Cottage/Studio complex on the north to Cole's New Studio on the south, was the woodlot (Grove) discussed above. A portion of this woodlot is preserved within today's historic site boundaries. Further east, between the woodlot and the Hudson River, were several open fields (about 25 acres). Wooded ground occupied the steep topography closer to the river (about 9 acres). The configuration of the fields in the river frontage, and their agricultural use over time, is not well documented. One helpful image, an un-attributed oil painting, shows this area in considerable detail (Figure 8), during a period thought to coincide with Cole's residency. The summertime view looks northeast, down the ravine of the Stuck Creek, a known topographic feature that can be located on a modern survey map. The field to the southeast of the creek appears to be cultivated, with a monochromatic coloring possibly indicating grain. Only one tree is shown in the otherwise open expanse. The painting seems to depict a wooded hedgerow on the west, and this may correspond to a line of vegetation that existed along the old property line between individual Lots #3 and #4 that formed Cedar Grove. This hedge row vegetation is shown on the later 1889 aerial sketch of the scene (Figure 22).

### 3.2 – Areas West of Spring Street

The original Cedar Grove Lots #3, #4 and #5, extended across Spring Street to the west. The exact configuration, appearance and use of this land area in 1848 is not fully documented. The portion along the road was later planted with fruit trees (about 3-1/2 acres), as shown on the 1889 aerial view (Figure 22), and on historic photographs showing the panoramic scenery from the House. A portion of this orchard, the former McCord Residence (about 1 acre) was discussed above under the landscape on today's historic site.

Open land (about 10 acres), which may have been used as pastures/meadow, or periodically cultivated, were to the west of the Spring Street orchards. The topography became abruptly steep as it dropped to the Han Vosenkill further west. This area was apparently left as woods (about 5 acres). Areas of the Cedar Grove property along the south boundary, later delineated by High Street, were the first areas to be subdivided and

developed as house sites (see Figure 22), but these intrusions had not occurred as early as 1848.

### 3.3 – Vault Lot

Separated from the primary Cedar Grove acreage (about 75 acres) was the Vault Lot (about 35 acres), located to the north. The Vault Lot was named for the Thomson family burial vault, located along the south boundary of this property at a point where the grades drop more steeply to the west, and where the vault was excavated into the hillside that directed views from it towards the Catskill Mountains. The vault was accessible from a straight driveway, later shown lined with trees, that ran along the south boundary of the Vault Lot, coming out onto Spring Street about 1000 feet north of the main House. In total, the vault development itself did not occupy extensive ground (about 1 acre), nor intrude into the rest of the parcel.

The remainder of the Vault Lot is thought to have been primarily open ground (about 24 acres), fronting onto Spring Street, extending west to the top of steeper topography that dropped to the Han Vosenkill. Wooded areas may have occupied the steep ground (possibly 10 acres).

### 3.4 – Others (Leased Lands Contiguous to Cedar Grove)

It is known that Lots #2 and #6 (about 45 acres) adjacent to the primary Cedar Grove property respectively on the north and south, were leased by the Thomsons before and throughout Thomas Cole's residence, and thereafter. These lots appear to have been cleared land, and it is believed that these lots, or portions of them, were habitually rented to third parties, primarily for use as pasturage/meadow.

## **Summary: Historic Character Defining Features and Effects**

### **Introduction**

In order to better understand landscape conditions at Cedar Grove in the Thomas Cole period, the following narrative highlights site elements that distinguished this property from all others, and so defined Cedar Grove as a separate, historic place. These factors are called the landscape's "character defining features and effects." As discussed in Section D, below, some of the historic landscape characteristics described here are well preserved at today's historic site, while others are missing, or have been altered by changes that have occurred since 1848. The historic characteristics can be compared with the existing conditions. With this analysis, the potential for period landscape restoration can be assessed and appropriate treatments can be planned. Preserving and restoring the special landscape characteristics outlined below would provide an authentic historic landscape that is as close to the conditions in Thomas Cole's lifetime as possible.

#### **1. Farmscape**

Cedar Grove was not just a house and its immediate grounds. For Cole, the Thomson property was an expansive 19<sup>th</sup> century farm, laid out in an especially scenic setting. Living on the property was to be part of a generally self-sufficient agricultural household, where animals were kept and utilized, a variety of crops were cultivated, and sold, and hired help came and went within the seasonal routine of agricultural operations. The landscape at historic Cedar Grove was fundamentally a "farmscape," whose physical arrangements were largely determined by its owner, John A. Thomson.

One overriding physical characteristic of this farmscape that was distinctive above all others, was Cedar Grove's unique siting. The eastern half of the property sloped east, to the banks of the Hudson River. Cedar Grove was an authentic riverside estate, yet the western half, which included the House and its immediate grounds, sloped dramatically west, towards the Catskill Mountains. That Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School, came to live on a riverside estate that nevertheless focused towards a grand panorama of the Catskill Mountains, from which the artist drew so much of his inspiration, is possibly coincidental, but it is no less fitting.



## 2. House Siting

Within the larger Cedar Grove farmscape, the House and its immediate grounds were a somewhat separate landscape area. The House grounds had clearly defined edges and a function and appearance unlike other areas of the property. The House was the focus, establishing much of its surrounding landscape layout. The House was oriented towards the south, with the compass, rather than oriented to the public road as was often typical for Federal period houses. A broad stairway gave access to a long shady porch, called the Piazza, that extended across the entire south and west façades at the first floor level. The front door of the House was at the top of the stairway, at the center line, in keeping with the Federal style. Service related activities at the main House were relegated to the exposed basement on the west, and to areas north of the house, while ornamental grounds were modest, kept primarily to the south of the House.

## 3. Views west from the raised porch (Piazza)

In 1815, the Piazza was a somewhat unusual treatment possibly influenced by Thomas T. Thomson's experience in the tropics, and certainly inspired by the mountain views to the west. The raised porch overlooked an extensive landscape scene. Intended as a viewing platform and, as needed, an outdoor place of shade and shelter, the Piazza was positioned to feature the western panorama of the Catskill Mountains and intervening countryside. Cole's link to the Catskills is no better evoked than from this western view from the House. While not strictly a landscape element, the Piazza was a critical interface between house and landscape, not only allowing direct links to the Catskill scenery but also close observation of the public road (Spring Street), to the arrival footpaths and driveway, and to the Flower Garden.

## 4. Spring Street Frontage

The elaborate and elegant wall and fence along the property's frontage on Spring Street was intended as an extension of the Federal period house architecture. The stone wall and picket fence (probably painted white, although this is not known with certainty) harmonized with the formal architectural ensemble of the House and Privy. The fence line was interrupted by a hierarchy of entry gates, setting off the house as the core of a substantial "estate" property, worthy of a named designation, such as "Cedar Grove." The landscape architectural importance of the street frontage was a paramount landscape feature.

## 5. Flower Garden South of House

Aligned on the the center line of the south façade of the House, the Flower Garden was a landscape feature whose design closely reflected Federal period taste. In Cole's period, flowers were possibly grown in several areas of Cedar Grove, as at the Cottage/Studio, or, for cutting flowers, in the Kitchen Garden close to the Store-House/Studio, but the Flower Garden south of the House appears to have been the principal decorative feature of the immediate house grounds. It was composed of flanking plant beds, called "borders" today, separated by a wide (9-10 feet) gravel-surfaced path. The plant beds seem to have been about 10 feet wide. The plants utilized in the cultivated beds during Cole's lifetime are not fully known, but the beds seem to have been a mix of perennials, bulbs, and even possibly a few shrubs, with annuals added each year in a scheme that no doubt changed to some extent year to year.

A honeylocust tree was planted at the northern end of the garden, probably at the time of the house construction. There may originally have been other honeylocusts, possibly planted as avenue trees along the driveway as would have been typical of Federal period design. But in any event only one honeylocust was present by about 1862 when the first image of this area to survive was recorded (Figure 14). The tree was a conspicuous feature at the Flower Garden even in Cole's lifetime.

## 6. Connecting Drives and Paths

The system of carriage/wagon routes, called driveways, drives or lanes, together with narrower pedestrian-only paths, created a network of access corridors in the environs of the House, Store-House/Studio and the New Studio. It was from this access network that the landscape was largely experienced, and so these routes are important character-defining features of the historic landscape. The entrance driveway, as it extended past the House and the Store-House/Studio was the spine of the landscape close to the House. This primary driveway was linked by a lane that connected north to the Cottage/Studio site. South of the House, wagons and carriages could enter the property along the north side of the lot purchased by Thomas Cole in 1839, and this access linked back into the primary driveway at the Store-House/Studio, which was a service node of sorts and to which house-drawn vehicles could have access on all four sides. Pedestrian-only paths were maintained in the Flower Garden, and this path continued to the south to the New Studio. There were also footpaths linking the House to two gates in the Spring Street fence, and a path of unknown alignment that linked the House to The Cottage/Studio.

## 7. Workaday Setting of Store-House/Studio Area

From the documentation it seems certain that the landscape around the Store-House/Studio exhibited the decidedly utilitarian appearance expected of a service-related building. This was especially true of the south and east sides. The driveway ran close to both the west and north facades, which were without access doors. By contrast, there were stable doors on the east, and on the south was a large open area incorporated under the building roof, and several doorways and storage spaces. A sizable Kitchen Garden was supported from the south side of the Store-House/Studio. As a result, the earliest images of this area, a painting from 1862, shows a wheelbarrow and other garden-related paraphernalia and storage against the south side of the Store-House/Studio. In the 1862 painting, chickens free range in the unkempt yard space. The landscape is also distinguished by the building's siting between two large oak trees, preserved from the woodlot landscape thought to have been present before the Store-House/Studio was built in 1839.

## 8. The Woodlot ("Grove")

The proximity and character of the so-called "Grove" was important to the Cedar Grove landscape along the east side of the House grounds. These mature woods apparently featured sizable specimens of oak, chestnut and pine trees, even in Cole's period. Being primarily located on the west-facing slope, at a higher elevation than the House, the woodlot tended to reinforce a separation from the Hudson River frontage, and as a backdrop that enhanced the western orientation of the house grounds.

Near the northwest corner of the woodlot, there was apparently a near monolithic concentration of eastern red cedars, shown on Jaspar Cropsey's drawing (Figure 11), and on an oil sketch by Charles H. Moore (Figure 12). This may have been the "cedar grove" that inspired the property's name.

## 9. Orchard Setting of the New Studio

The New Studio, built in 1846, was apparently developed as a somewhat separate setting, buffered from the House by the intervening landform and vegetation, and clearly oriented toward the west, southwest, where open ground was maintained. Close to the building, the landscape seems to have been unadorned, without foundation plantings or even vines, although these were present later (Figure 30). There were some older fruit trees suggesting the location had been an orchard. The ground vegetation was kept rough.

## **Section C – Site History After Thomas Cole’s Lifetime (1848-2003)**

### **Phase 1 – Bartow/Cole Family to Theodore Cole’s death (1848-1928)**

On Thomas Cole’s death, Maria Cole inherited her husband’s interest in Cedar Grove. Ezra Hawley became the sole executor of John A. Thomson’s estate. The household was reduced to the four Bartow sisters, then in their 30s and 40s, and Maria Cole’s four young children. In the years ahead Hawley is mentioned in numerous accounts that trace the family’s finances at Cedar Grove, continuing what had become established arrangements. These records are voluminous and un-catalogued, and a full study of them would be beyond the scope of the landscape research. Some of the accounting is illegible and most of the rest is difficult to evaluate in its specifics without a better understanding of the context in which these records were made.<sup>122</sup>

Despite many unanswered questions, it seems clear that Maria Cole and her sisters did not undertake extensive landscape alterations to the grounds close to the House. There had been no abrupt change of ownership or operations, and every indication that the family was an established entity in continuity with the past.

Still, there must have been some alterations to Cedar Grove’s management. In 1846, when John A. Thomson died, there was no one within the family who could have taken on the role of active gentleman farmer, a role for which John A. Thomson left no heirs. While Thomas Cole provided only a two-year transition period before his own death, it is an intriguing question if he developed plans for his future at Cedar Grove. There is no clear hint of it in the documentation.

Theodore Cole, the Coles’ oldest child (Figure 64), was only 10 years old when his father died, and it was not until about 1856, when he was 18 years old, that Theodore became active in handling both the agricultural and family business. In these circumstances, Maria Cole and the other Bartow sisters presumably provided for the property’s management, with the unspecified but implied help of Ezra Hawley.

In the early 1850s, in letters Maria Cole wrote to her son, Theodore, while he was away at school, there are glimpses of the Cedar Grove landscape in the period immediately after Thomas Cole’s death, when little seems to have changed in its appearance or use from what Thomas Cole would have known. Around the house, there

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<sup>122</sup> For example, an 1850 tabulation lists “products from the farm” but it isn’t clear if this is the Schoharie farm or Cedar Grove, nor if the items (such as “18 bu. wheat \$27”) are being billed or are income.

was a handyman/gardener, "William," who worked at the "Garden and at the gravel walk," probably a reference to the Flower Garden south of the House. Close-by, there were ducks, chickens and pigs to manage. At the end of May 1852, "the tulips and lilacs" received special mention and "200 carnations were transplanted in the garden."<sup>123</sup> In all the evidence, the Cedar Grove landscape seems to have remained without extensive changes. The owners and their sensibilities remained consistent at least through Maria Cole's lifetime, and even thereafter until late in Theodore Cole's lifetime after 1900, 60+ years after his father died.

In the post-Cole years, the family continued the long-term leases on Lots #2 and #6 adjacent to their Cedar Grove holdings, presumably seeing a return on the rental of these tracts of generally open land. An indenture dated January 23, 1856 obliged Maria Cole to pay George Clark \$75 a year for a period of 6 years for use of about 40 acres of land on Lots #2 and #6.<sup>124</sup> It is also possible that at some date, the river-front of Lot #7 was leased to Cedar Grove.<sup>125</sup> The arrangements whereby these contiguous areas to Cedar Grove were rented out to others, at a profit, no doubt motivated the family's continued leasing of the peripheral lots, but the financial return from these leased acres, either by its rental or direct use by the Thomson/Cole family, is not readily understood.

The weight of evidence suggests that much of the active farming on the property, possibly from John A. Thomson's death in 1846, was handled either by a salaried farmer, working with hired, seasonal help, or by a tenant farmer, who would have paid a rent. Whatever the specifics, there was no one in the immediate family who had the wherewithal to be actively involved in farm work until Theodore matured nearly a decade after his father's death. Details of Cedar Grove's landscape management in the interim period are, for the moment, unclear. Perhaps Maria or one of her sisters was active in the property's farm management, filling the role of their Uncle Sandy, but if this was the case there is little hint of it in the documentation reviewed to date.<sup>126</sup>

In 1858, when he was 20, Theodore Cole directed the reburial of the Thomson family members, including his father, Thomas Cole, who were earlier interned at the

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<sup>123</sup> Maria Cole to Theodore Cole, 5/24/1852 [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 6].

<sup>124</sup> Indenture, Maria Cole to George Clark, 1/23/1856 [VL, folder 10]. This document confirms that the arrangements were a continuation of earlier agreements between the parties, and indeed Dr. Thomas Thomson had leased Lots #2 and #6 from George Clark from late in the 18th century.

<sup>125</sup> The last family owner, Edith Cole Silberstein, drew a map of Cedar Grove lands in about the 1960s that showed the river frontage of Lot #7 as part of the property. No substantiating evidence of this has come to light.

<sup>126</sup> Maria and her sisters continued to rent out portions of the property as opportunities arose, including Thomas Cole's studio. See letter: Mabel P. Smith to Charles A. Sarnoff discussing this. The artists who rented the studio included Edward C. Post and B. B. G. Stone, who rented in 1856.

privately owned Vault Lot.<sup>127</sup> The remains were moved to a newly developed section of the village's non-sectarian cemetery just south of Cedar Grove off Spring Street (see Figure 22).<sup>128</sup> It seems the reburials were related to the availability of the new cemetery, but the move had the effect of ending the family's direct link to the outer-lying Vault Lot, and so opened the way for its sale. As in the past, the Vault Lot in the immediate post-Cole period, was at least occasionally, and perhaps habitually, rented out as pasture/meadowlands.

In Spring 1860, Frederic Church returned to Cedar Grove. A painting of the house and its flower garden, done a few years later (Figure 14), records the scene he would have witnessed in front of the house. Newly married, Church had purchased a 120-acre farm on the east side of the Hudson River that would evolve into Olana (now a New York State Historic Site). On his early visits, until a cottage could be built for his use at Olana, Church and his wife stayed with the family at Cedar Grove, reinforcing their friendship.

Notably, Church hired Theodore Cole, then 22 years old, to help manage his ambitious development goals for Olana. During the ensuing ten years, Theodore was actively involved making numerous visits to "Mr. Church's Farm" and keeping accounts for Church of Olana's expenses and farm income. He interviewed and hired a salary farmer for Church, purchased supplies and animals, and reported on farm activity.<sup>129</sup>

In a like way, Theodore Cole seems to have willingly pursued farming at Cedar Grove, and despite a lack of hard evidence, he apparently did become actively involved managing agricultural operations there, and so reactivated the family's direct agricultural use of Cedar Grove that had been in abeyance since John A. Thomson's death in 1846. Theodore Cole's active involvement is confirmed in a notation in his 1863 diary, where he states he was "ploughing the meadow," and, three weeks later, "planting corn" at Cedar Grove.<sup>130</sup> Frederic Church wrote to Theodore in 1865, commenting: "I trust that your own farm will produce abundantly this year and heavy crops of all kind reward your care and skill."<sup>131</sup>

But whether the Cedar Grove landscape ever turned an agricultural profit, or paid a substantial portion of the household's yearly expenses is an open question. In 1867, a

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<sup>127</sup> Maria Cole had purchase the cemetery lot in 1857 [VL, deed, location unknown].

<sup>128</sup> Theodore Cole, journal entry, 5/11/1858 [VL].

<sup>129</sup> For this background see: *Olana Historic Landscape Report* (1996), pp. 36-49; also Raymond Beecher "Went Over the River to Churches Place," unpublished manuscript (4 pages), no date, c. 1981 [Olana].

<sup>130</sup> Theodore Cole Diary (1863), 5/2/1863 and 5/29/1863 [VL, FCV, box 21].

<sup>131</sup> Letter: Frederic Church to Theodore Cole, 7/28/1865 [copy, VL, FCV, box 32, folder: Cole, Thomas correspondence research].

friend, replying to Theodore's request for financial advice, cautioned: "It does not seem probable the you can get a surplus from your farm above what you require to live to any considerable amount."<sup>132</sup> Family tradition suggest Theodore's farming was amateurish and not financially rewarding. Writing much later, a grandchild (who was 8 years old when Theodore died and whose memories must have been from older family members) wrote: "Theodore was not an efficient farmer and was more imaginative than practical. He believed an orchard more interesting when pears, apples and peaches were planted alternately in rows instead of each kind having a separate orchard."<sup>133</sup> Given Frederic Church's contemporary assessment of Theodore's "care and skill" this may be overstated. In any event, Theodore persisted with agriculture, being habitually listed as a "farmer" in the New York State Census.<sup>134</sup>

At about the time of Frederic Church's 1860s move to Olana, author Benson J. Lossing visited Cedar Grove in conjunction with his masterwork, "The Hudson, from the Wilderness to the Sea" (Arts Journal, 1860-61). Lossing noted the "fine old family mansion, delightfully situated to command a full view of the Katzberg range [i.e., Catskill Mountains] and the intervening country." Lossing made a special note of Cole's New Studio, saying: "It is regarded by his devoted widow as a place too sacred for the common gaze. The stranger never enters it."

In 1867, Cedar Grove was identified on a village map (Figure 4), and many of its buildings were shown.<sup>135</sup> The 1867 map shows that at this date, High Street had not yet been built along the south boundary of Cedar Grove. Plans for this construction are documented two years later on a map that shows the extension of High Street from New Street, all the way to the river, following the south line of Cedar Grove (Figure 66).<sup>136</sup>

In 1868, the four Bartow sisters mortgaged the Vault Lot,<sup>137</sup> and later that year a 4-acre corner of the same lot was sold separately after it fell outside the extension of Allen Street on its western side.<sup>138</sup> By 1871, the family was advertising the sale of lots on High Street, Spring Street and Allen Street -- all streets on the built-up periphery of the Cedar Grove property, towards the village. Also for sale were "35 acres of land,

<sup>132</sup> Letter: J. A. Taylor to Theodore Cole, 5/22/1867 [VL, FCV, box 21].

<sup>133</sup> Edith Cole Silberstein, "Our Lovable Eccentrics," unpublished manuscript, n.d. (c. 1990s) [copy, VL].

<sup>134</sup> New York State Census, June 1875, [AIHA, TCP, Box 1, F-17. See: Raymond Beecher, "The 1875 Census, Bartows, Coles and Even a Cawthorne," *GCHS Journal*, Vol. 23, Issue 3, Fall, 1999.

<sup>135</sup> Map of Catskill, 1867, by Beers [copy, VL].

<sup>136</sup> Plan entitled: "Map of the Extension of High Street in the Village of Catskill, N.Y. from New Street to the River," by Geo. R. Olney, April 26, 1869.

<sup>137</sup> Indenture: Emily C. Bartow, Maria Cole, Harriet Bartow, Frances Bartow to Andrew Breasted, 1/24/1868 [VL, folder 10].

<sup>138</sup> Indenture: Maria Cole, et al., to Andrew Breasted, 10/22/1868 [VL, folder 10].

improved, under fine cultivation," being the Vault Lot itself.<sup>139</sup> The family's circumstances were serious enough that they rented the main house for three months in the summer of 1875, moving to the nearby cottage in return for \$900.<sup>140</sup>

In 1871, a bond was taken out with the Catskill Savings Bank for \$17,000. This may have been a consolidation of earlier, smaller mortgages. The bond was accompanied by an agreement that seems to have set aside what came to be called the "Homestead Lot," being about 14 acres immediately surrounding the house.<sup>141</sup> The boundaries of this zone were Spring Street on the west, the northern line of Cedar Grove, Thomas Cole's New Studio Lot on the south, and a point 900 feet from the Hudson River on the east. In 1879, a bond was taken designating this same parcel.<sup>142</sup> In addition to the gardens and grounds surrounding the house and the adjoining cottage complex, this area included the grove of mature trees that extended to the ridge line east of the house.

Theodore Cole married Eugenia Casey in 1874. The New York State census, taken in June 1875, provides a portrait of a Cedar Grove household with eleven individuals. Included were Maria Cole and the Bartow sisters, Emily, Harriet and Frances. Also included were the newlyweds, Theodore Cole (who was listed as a "Farmer") and Eugenia, together with Thomas and Maria Cole's unmarried daughters, Mary and Emily who were in their 30s. The household also included an 18-year-old student, Harry Cawthorne, probably a boarder, a 13-year-old domestic servant, Charles Dubois, and a farm laborer, Armstead Robins, age 29 (these last three may have lived outside the main house). The household was added to within a year, and eventually Theodore and Eugenia had three children, as follows:

1. Florence H. (1876-1961) - married Stanley Vincent (? -1914). Returned to Cedar Grove after being widowed in 1914. Thereafter (her father died in 1928), she influenced landscape changes in the house grounds. Mrs. Vincent occupied and helped preserve the Cedar Grove property under difficult circumstances in the 1930s.

2. Mary Emily (1880-1967) - married in 1904 Charles L. Van Loan.

3. Thomas III (1883-1956) - married in 1914 Helen Carteret (? -?), and later Annette ? (1888-1962). One daughter, Edith (1919- ) was in her 40s when her aunt Mrs. Florence Vincent died. Thomas Cole's granddaughter, she inherited the property and was the last family member to reside at Cedar Grove (see below).

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<sup>139</sup> Advertisement in The Catskill Recorder, 8/22/1873 (original from 1871) [VL, loose folder, no title].

<sup>140</sup> Letter: Theodore Cole to Dr. J. H. Hinton, 4/21/1875 [VL, loose folder, no title].

<sup>141</sup> Indenture: Maria Cole, Emily C. Bartow, Harriet Bartow and Frances Bartow, and the Catskill Savings Bank, 11/17/1871 [VL, folder 10].

<sup>142</sup> Bond: Maria Cole and sisters with Rufus King, 4/18/1879 [VL, folder 10].



In the decades following Thomas Cole's death, Cedar Grove was a destination for many illustrious visitors, so that one reporter, in 1871 (nearly a quarter century after Cole's death), called it "a sort of shrine."<sup>143</sup> In about 1879, an article appeared in the popular magazine, Harpers, which attested to the site's special interest. It is one of the earliest full description of the property. At this date, Maria Cole and her sisters were elderly ladies and Cedar Grove was reaching the end of its golden age. The piece said in part:

The house stands in a garden full of old-fashioned blossoms and fragrances; its walls of yellow stone show in summer-time against a gorgeous garden of hollyhocks; the gateway is overhung with verdure; and below the sweet old-fashioned garden beds are the pine woods, which reach down, skirted by farmlands, to the river. Near the entrance to the upper woods . . . [was built the Store-House/Studio].<sup>144</sup>

The "gateway . . . overhung with verdure" is confirmed in an old photograph (Figure 21), and several others reported on the bountiful, overgrown greenery of the house grounds, one describing "a wilderness of garden sweets."<sup>145</sup>

Despite the idyllic setting, by the mid-1880s financial circumstances for the Cole/Bartow family were getting serious. In the autumn of 1876, Frederic Church wrote, attaching a check for \$100, which Church claimed was at the bequest of his father, who had died earlier that year.<sup>146</sup> In 1882, in another bid to aid the family, Church purchased one of Thomas Cole's paintings. He wrote to Theodore Cole asking that the "money [be] used to pay personal debts or mortgage on [the] Homestead (12 acres included) [to] relieve your family from their embarrassments . . . [considering] the urgent nature of your family affairs."<sup>147</sup> The letter was a serious expression of concern, and even this generosity was challenged when one of Cedar Grove's claimant, John Breasted, asked to be paid \$738 from the painting's sale in partial relief of his unpaid accounts. A

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<sup>143</sup> "The Kaatskills, Their Attractions Enthusiastically Set Forth," unidentified newspaper/magazine article, c. 1871 [VL].

<sup>144</sup> Harpers, c. 1879.

<sup>145</sup> "The Kaatskills, Their Attractions Enthusiastically Set Forth," unidentified newspaper/magazine article, c. 1871 [VL].

<sup>146</sup> Letter: Frederic E. Church to Maria Cole, 11/25/1876 [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 5]. Church contributed similar cash gifts to the residents of Cedar Grove, sometimes as birthday presents.

<sup>147</sup> Letter: Frederic Church to Theodore Cole, 2/16/1882 [VL, FCV, box 32, folder: Cole, Maria]

comprehensive tabulation showed that the family's debt totaled over \$21,000 in this period.<sup>148</sup>

So serious was the situation that an annuity fund was set up for the benefit of Maria Cole, with several subscribers donating \$100 annually to her upkeep.<sup>149</sup> In 1882, two of these friends stipulated that the monies were to "purchase and take a deed of conveyance of about 12 acres including buildings [to be] preserved as a homestead and residence of said Maria Cole."<sup>150</sup> These actions suggest a quasi-public campaign was underway to help secure the House and a remnant domain, the "Homestead Lot" of 12 acres. No survey plan of this area has been uncovered but the parcel corresponded closely with the earlier 14-acre exclusion on the 1871 bond.

Maria Cole died in 1884.

After his mother's death, Theodore Cole (age 46), his wife and their young children, and Maria's elderly sisters, Harriet (80) and Frances (69), together with Maria's daughters, Mary B. Cole (45) and Emily Cole (41), remained a large multigenerational family at Cedar Grove. The oldest photographs, dating to the 1880s and early 1890s show some of the family members (Figures 16, 17, 19 and 27).<sup>151</sup>

Theodore Cole's ongoing farm activities at Cedar Grove are detailed in an account he submitted the year his mother died.<sup>152</sup> The informal list covers income and expenses for the previous year, 1883. Cedar Grove's profits came overwhelmingly from fruit production, about \$4,180 from a total income of about \$5,470. The balance was rental on the Cottage/Studio and other land rent. Only the sale of beef cattle (about \$400) can be added to the farm production in that period. For expenses, Theodore listed labor, some "for picking berries," indicating bush fruit as well as fruit trees were cultivated. Other expenses included fruit baskets, manure and fertilizer, animals, rental of land (possibly a reference to portions of Lots #2 and #6), and interest on debt. The expense total of about \$5,630 represented a small loss during the year. Theodore Cole does not seem to have listed his family's expenses in his tabulation of expenses, indicating that the farm business was not providing a net income.

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<sup>148</sup> "Summary of Debts," not dated, c. 1880s [VL, folder 10].

<sup>149</sup> "Monies raised for the annuity Fund" [VL, folder 10].

<sup>150</sup> Agreement: Mrs Turner B. Tayler and Turner Hopkins [to Maria Cole], 3/?/1882 [VL, folder 10].

<sup>151</sup> There are several photographs from this period that show the grounds close to the house forty years after Thomas Cole's death.

<sup>152</sup> Letter: Theodore Cole to J. R. Taylor, 4/1884 [VL, folder 17]. Taylor, in reply (letter dated 4/22/1884) referred to Cole's activities as "your business."

Theodore Cole's pursuits did not change the bottom line. Cedar Grove's financial difficulties continued. Inevitably, very quickly after Maria Cole's death, the family initiated a process that led to the extensive subdivision of the property. The early results of these efforts were modest, but Cedar Grove's proximity to the village, and the landscape's inability to return an income for a family without other means of support, seem to have been important factors in the family pursuit of land sales in the decades to come.

An early sign of the demise of the property was a map, originally drawn in 1884, that proposed a new street layout on Cedar Grove's orchard grounds west of Spring Street. This area was bounded on the south by High Street, which, after it was laid out in 1869, came up the hill from the village center toward the east along the southern line of Cedar Grove.<sup>153</sup> In January 1884, a handbill was circulated offering "valuable village lots" on what was Cedar Grove property west of Spring Street.<sup>154</sup> By this date, it seems a few small building lots had already been sold and developed along High Street, but the 1884 subdivision scheme provided more than 60 new house sites along what are today Hudson Avenue, Bartow Street and Sunset Street, west of the main House. A revised version of this plan was prepared in 1887 (Figure 62).<sup>155</sup>

At the same time, radical land-use changes were occurring along Cedar Grove's Hudson River frontage. A map, dated 1884, presented an ambitious scheme to develop a reservoir at Cedar Grove. The plan was sponsored by the "Catskill Water Works" and the drawing identifies Theodore Cole as the Secretary of the water work's board.<sup>156</sup> The plan shows the reservoir as located on George Clark's Lot #2, but overlapping by about 20 feet onto the northern boundary of Cedar Grove. Further, a pipe line is shown, crossing diagonally to the southeast across Cedar Grove until it intersected High Street where it turned down steep topography to a "Pumping Station" built out on fill from the Hudson River shoreline. The development was completed within a short period.

Two years later, a new street named Colewood Avenue was laid out to the east of the Cedar Grove house, linking High Street to the George Clark, Lot #2 and beyond, to the north. The circumstances of this development are not clearly understood from the

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<sup>153</sup> High Street had been extended from the west after spring, 1869. See map entitled: "Extension Of High Street In The Village of Catskill NY From Catskill New Street To The River," by George R. Olney, dated 4/26/1869 (Figure 66) [VL]. Also, map entitled "Village lots as laid out for T. A. Cole" (scale 1"=50'), by W. S. Parker, 1884 [VL, flat files].

<sup>154</sup> Handbill, 1/29/1884 [VL, FCV, box 21].

<sup>155</sup> Map entitled "Lands of Theodore A. Cole and Others in Catskill, N.Y." (scale 1"=100'), by Henry D. Shores, Surveyor, 3/15/1887 [VL, flat files].

<sup>156</sup> Map entitled: "Supplemental Map Showing Lands To Be Used For Reservoir, Pipe-Lines, And Dock For The Catskill Water Works," scale 1"=400', dated 9/29/1884 [VL].

available documentation, but the project was probably related to the reservoir construction.<sup>157</sup> One use for Colewood Avenue was as a more convenient connection from the Village of Catskill to an old road leading to the hamlet of Hamburg, on the Hudson River north of Catskill. The older route was by way of the right-of-way that ran along the north line of the Cedar Grove property, a route interrupted by the reservoir development. High Street and Colewood Avenue improved this link.

The Cole/Bartow family's reactions to these changes, notably the intrusion of a public road built across Cedar Grove's river frontage, and a buried pipe line installed from the river to the adjacent reservoir, are not recorded, but clearly the impact was considerable. Theodore Cole's role on the water work's board has not been investigated, but the family was clearly in transition to the next generation. In 1889, Harriet Bartow (then 81 years old) and her sister Frances Bartow (74 years old) sold their rights in the property to Theodore Cole, his sisters, Mary B. Cole and Emily Cole, and brother, Thomas Cole II, for \$1.<sup>158</sup>

That same year, an aerial (bird's eye) perspective was published to illustrate the Village of Catskill (Cover and Figure 22).<sup>159</sup> This illustration included Cedar Grove, the first such overall record of the landscape. It appears to be a remarkably accurate depiction providing important information on the property's condition in this period -- some forty years after Thomas Cole's death, but prior to the major alterations that would follow.

On the drawing, High Street is shown crossing to the east and disappearing down toward the Hudson River where it accessed the reservoir pump station on the shoreline. Four or five houses are shown on High Street, west of Spring Street. These were the first separate dwellings built on the core Thomson estate lands. East of Spring Street, Colewood Avenue is not shown, having been constructed shortly after the aerial view was drawn. The Cedar Grove House and Thomas Cole's New Studio are carefully drawn on the aerial view, together with the older Cottage/Studio complex and outbuildings north of the main House. The Barn is shown on the west side of Spring Street. There is an alignment of fruit trees extends along the west side of Spring Street, south of the Barn. The level of detail shown on the aerial is impressive and includes a row of evergreen

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<sup>157</sup> Plan entitled "Map of Colewood Avenue" (scale 1"=50'), by Walter M. Meserole, C.E., 8/26/1886 [VL, flat file]. Agreement: Theodore Cole, Emily Cole, Thomas Cole (II) and the Village of Catskill, 10/21/1896 [VL, folder 17]. The agreement mentioned "road from High Street to the buildings at the pumping station."

<sup>158</sup> Agreement: Harriet and Frances Bartow to Theodore Cole, Mary B. Cole, Emily Cole and Thomas Cole (II), 1889 [VL, folder 17].

<sup>159</sup> Aerial perspective by L. R. Burleigh, Troy, New York, 1889 [copy, VL].

spruce trees along the east side of Spring Street, remnants of which remain to the present time.

The 1889 aerial shows the wooded Grove east of the immediate house grounds. This heavily treed area is shown with a narrow, hedge row-like extension towards the east, through a low pocket that ended in open ground closer to the Hudson River (Figure 8). Several decades later a newspaper piece described as "a grove of oaks, hickories and pines."<sup>160</sup>

The public right-of-way in place along the northern boundary of Cedar Grove is also shown on the 1889 aerial view. This roadway came from Spring Street and went east over the top of the river-front ridge. As shown on the aerial view, the older roadway was apparently kept after reservoir construction, despite it coming very close to the reservoir basin, a situation that might have encouraged use of the alternate route provided by Colewood Avenue.

Finally, the 1889 aerial view shows the open land (about 40 acres) that constituted the Cedar Grove property located north of the primary acreage, the so-called Thomson Vault Lot. While the burials there had by this date been relocated, the drawing clearly indicates the straight laneway, lined with trees, that led from Spring Street to the then abandoned vault site. The remainder of the Vault Lot is shown as an open field, confirming its general use as a pasture. By this date, the most notable change at the Vault Lot was that it had been bisected by construction of the "West Shore & Buffalo Railroad," which opened in 1883.<sup>161</sup> The intrusion of the railroad can be discerned on the extreme west (left) side of the aerial view (Figure 22). It is unclear if the railroad corridor was taken as an easement or represented a full scale subdivision whereby the lands to the west became a separate, isolated parcel.

In the late 19th century, Theodore Cole developed a private picnicking facility called "Cole's Grove," along the wooded Hudson River shoreline of Cedar Grove. A business card survives.<sup>162</sup> The card states that "boats land at waterworks dock at grove," confirming the presence of the pumping station that was part of the earlier reservoir development. The comment also suggests access to Cole's Grove was principally from the water, suggesting that High Street did not provide easy access into the area. Cole's Grove was said to be "unsurpassed for excursions, picnics, etc." and would be "let by the

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<sup>160</sup> "The Garden at Cedar Grove," unidentified newspaper article, 11/27/1922 [VL].

<sup>161</sup> (Catskill) Recorder, 8/11/1882 [VL, file labeled "New York, West Shore & Buffalo Railroad"]. This was the main line following the western side of the Hudson River. The railroad company was founded in 1880. The first train was reported to have passed through Catskill on July 9, 1883.

<sup>162</sup> Business card, not dated [VL, photo folders].

day to respectable parties only." Local newspapers reported a variety of events held there from 1894.<sup>163</sup>

A map, dated 1900, confirms that Colewood Avenue was by then a reality, but there was no further indication of land sales along the north side of High Street by that date.<sup>164</sup> In addition, the planned subdivision streets on Cedar Grove west of Spring Street had not yet been built. The sale of lots in this area, since the initial subdivision map of 1884, seems to have been negligible. In fact, a dated photograph taken thirteen years after this map continues to show orchard trees where the subdivision had been planned some thirty years earlier.<sup>165</sup>

Cedar Grove lost its river frontage when Cole's Grove was sold in 1901.<sup>166</sup> The parcel took in the land between Colewood Avenue and the river, and constituted about 30 acres. The sales agreement included provision for continued Cole family access to "a private boat house and private dock," as well as the stipulation that a "large pavilion" would be removed from the site.<sup>167</sup> A subsequent agreement added "board seats and tables in said Grove," and "certain boats," to the list of items to be removed prior to finalizing the sale.<sup>168</sup>

Eight years later, in 1909, a small lot (less than 1/2 acre) was sold at the northeast corner of High Street and Spring Street. This was the first such sale east of Spring Street, along what had been Cedar Grove property. The lot was situated just south of the 2-1/2 acre New Studio Lot purchased by Thomas Cole in 1839.<sup>169</sup> Between these lots, a 30 foot-wide right-of-way was retained for the placement of Cole Street, which had been described as a paper street in the 1839 deed but had never been built.

All these arrangements were summarized on a comprehensive map of the Cedar Grove property prepared in 1914.<sup>170</sup> This map shows the still undeveloped, 30-year old subdivision west of Spring Street. East of Spring Street, Colewood Avenue now formed the east boundary of Cedar Grove. South of the main House, Thomas Cole's 1839 lot

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<sup>163</sup> Raymond Beecher, "Cole's Grove - A Favorite Spot on the Hudson," GCHS Journal, Vol. 4, Issue 3, Fall, 1980.

<sup>164</sup> Map entitled "Map of Catskill showing street lines and heights" (scale 1/5000), no author [VL, flat file].

<sup>165</sup> Photograph dated Oct. 1913 [VL, photo folders].

<sup>166</sup> Agreement: Theodore A. Cole, Emily Cole and Thomas Cole II and Slocum Howland, 3/1/1901 [VL, folder 10].

<sup>167</sup> An old photograph shows this pavilion and the steep riverside setting of "Cole's Grove."

<sup>168</sup> Agreement: Theodore Cole and Slocum Howland 3/26/1901 [VL, folder 10].

<sup>169</sup> Bond: Minerva A. Shipherd to Theodore Cole, Emily Cole and Thomas Cole (II), 8/14/1909 [VL, FCV, box 32, folder entitled "Cedar Grove during Thomson-Cole Residence"].

<sup>170</sup> Map entitled: Theo[dore] and Thomas Cole and Estate of Emily Cole, Catskill" (scale 1"=100'), by C. H. Van Orden, C.E., 1914 [VL, flat file].

was clearly depicted with the 30 foot-wide right-of-way along the un-built Cole Street still shown. The 1/2 acre parcel sold in 1909 at the northeast corner of Spring and High Streets was also delineated. To the east, seven larger building sites (each about 2-1/2 acres in size) were aligned along the north side of High Street. The "Homestead Lot" east of Spring Street and surrounding the main House, Cottage/Studio, Store-House/Studio and New Studio, amounted to 16 acres, extending north to Cedar Grove's north line (as modified by the reservoir) east to Colewood Avenue.

While subdivision plans moved ahead, a tax schedule for 1919 shows that fruit production remained by far the most important money maker at Cedar Grove, fetching \$9,178 that year. All other farm produce amounted to just \$464.<sup>171</sup>

In 1922, near the end of Theodore Cole's lifetime, an informative newspaper article discussed the property, paying special attention to its flower garden. It said in part:

Across the driveway, opposite the [House] doorway stands a massive wide-spreading thorn acacia tree which has weathered the storms of a hundred and fifty years and from there stretches the old garden with its beds of flowers separated by grassy walks. In these beds, as the seasons succeed one another, blossom crocuses, hyacinths, daffodils, poppies, roses, lemon lilies, fraxinela, larkspur, hollyhocks, valerian, china asters and many other old fashioned flowers, and to these have been added without interruption to the general harmony such novelties as pyrathrum, fringed petunias and the tall and beautiful autumn anemone.<sup>172</sup>

The "thorn acacia tree" was the old honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*). The basis for its dating to 1772 (150 years before 1922), is unclear. Other assertions in this article are also suspect, with the author claiming Cole painted several of his masterpieces in a building (the Store-House/Studio) that was not constructed until after the specified paintings were completed. The Flower Garden, which was first illustrated in about 1862 (Figure 14), and was referred to in the Harper's piece of 1878, is thought to have pre-dated Thomas Cole's residency. It was called an "old garden" in the 1922 newspaper article, and was said to have been laid out by John A. Thomson.

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<sup>171</sup> Tax schedule, 1919 [VL, FCV, box 21].

<sup>172</sup> "The garden at Cedar Grove," 1922. This article may have been adapted from a handwritten manuscript [AIHA, TCP, box 1, folder 18]. In the article, Florence Cole Vincent, then 46 years old, is mentioned as providing the information on the flower garden.

## Phase 2 - Modern History as Residence (1928-1978)

Theodore Cole, who had taken over management of the Cedar Grove landscape, died in 1928. That same year, a survey plan was prepared showing an extensive subdivision of the lands east of Spring Street and north of High Street.<sup>173</sup> This plan included the layout of several new streets, including today's Hudson Avenue and Woodland Avenue. Hudson Avenue came from Spring Street, cutting through Thomas Cole's New Studio Lot. Its development had the effect of terminating any consideration of realizing the Cole Street alignment. This change, seventy years after Thomas Cole's purchased the site, represents a reintegration of the New Studio Lot into the larger Cedar Grove holdings. No legal documentation of this transaction has been found.

The newly planned streets east of Spring Street served dozens of small house lots, each no more than 5,000 sq. ft. (about 1/10 acre) in size. It is unclear if this development was initiated by Theodore Cole, but in any event, a notation on the plan indicates that it was not filed as a subdivision plat until 1930, at which time Theodore Cole's children, Florence H. C. Vincent, Mary E. C. Van Loan and Thomas Cole III had inherited Cedar Grove.

Florence H. C. Vincent (Figure 65), Theodore Cole's oldest daughter, was 52 years old when her father died. She had been widowed since 1914, and was living on the Cedar Grove property. She would remain in residence for nearly 40 years, until her death in 1961.

Mrs. Vincent seems to have been influential in a significant makeover of the house grounds, possibly beginning with her widowhood and return to Cedar Grove in 1914, late in her father's lifetime. While she kept the Flower Garden south of the House, Mrs. Vincent developed a more formal feeling in the immediate grounds. She tidied up the landscape, extending and improving the lawns and added several sculptural features. She formed a rectilinear landscape "room," bordered by hydrangeas and other period plantings, in a lawn area northeast of the House. The photographs from this period (Figures 33, 34, 35 and 36) show evidence of the Colonial Revival gardening. These alterations had an important impact on the landscape's appearance, even in areas away from the House (Figure 31). The former workaday landscape, as in the area south of the Store-House/Studio, was also polished, with ornamental development (e.g., a bed of flowers), replacing utilitarian purposes (e.g., firewood storage) (Figures 47 and 48).

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<sup>173</sup> Map of Cole Estate (scale: 1"=50'), by R. W. Jones, 6/1928 [VL, flat file].



Mrs. Vincent also actively pursued the property's subdivision, even while her siblings apparently applied pressure to sell Cedar Grove outright, wishing to liquidate their inheritances.<sup>174</sup> But Mrs. Vincent remained an active resident, continuing the fruit business and operated an antique dealership from the Store-House/Studio. Mrs. Vincent also turned over considerable documentation on Thomas Cole to the Albany Institute of History and Art, the Detroit Museum of Art and the New York State Library, all important present day repositories of Cole related material.

Cedar Grove's future was decisively changed in 1933 when the Rip Van Winkle Bridge was constructed. Initially the bridge development was to have crossed the property on a route that would have necessitated removal of the House and all the outbuildings. In negotiating a sale price, New York State assessed the property's worth at between \$10,000 and \$15,000. The Coles claimed a value of \$100,000. As the dispute continued, there arose calls for preserving Cole's legacy (although at the time Hudson River School painters and their art were out of fashion). Fortunately, in order to avoid controversy and hasten construction, the bridge designers backed off, proposing that the bridge approach road skirt the north side of the main House but leave it intact. Faced with further opposition to this revised plan, the bridge engineers shifted the alignment far enough to the north to avoid the residential grounds altogether, and allowing the Cottage/Studio to be saved. The Coles sold the required portions of Cedar Grove to New York State in September 1933.

Despite the design modifications, the approach roads and bridge were a major intrusion, amounting to a wide diagonal slash through the historic Cedar Grove property (Figure 71). The alignment obliterated more than half of Cedar Grove's historic acreage east of Spring Street and left an isolated, 5-1/2 acre, triangular shaped parcel at the northeast corner.<sup>175</sup> The bridge construction required extensive excavation of the river-front ridge line that had been the highest elevation of the historic Cedar Grove property. In one area, the road cut was more than 20 feet deep. As such, thousands of cubic yards of earth fill and rock were dumped to the west forming the raised strip of land that has since evolved as an unattractive commercial development along Rt. 23 west of Spring Street. The extensive filling also led to the demolition of the Cedar Grove Barn which had been sited at a lower elevation west of Spring Street.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Raymond Beecher, personal correspondence with the author, 5/2002. Dr. Beecher has direct understanding of the later history of the property from his long correspondence with Edith C. Silberstein.

<sup>175</sup> See: Raymond Beecher, "Rip's Hudson River Bridge," *GCHS Journal*, Vol. 9, Issue 3, Fall, 1985. The bridge records are in the New York State archives. See also newspaper article, 8/14/1934 [VL, box 21]. The route was altered "to preserve as much as possible the estate of Thomas Cole."

<sup>176</sup> "Old Cole Barn . . . Is Torn Down," 6/21/1934 [copy, VL].

An aerial photograph showing the bridge dedication in 1935 provides considerable information about the landscape (Figure 26). This photograph shows that the subdivision of Cedar Grove west of Spring Street remained modest. An extensive orchard that filled much of the Cedar Grove acreage in this area. Several houses are seen facing onto Spring Street, these having been built in the previous forty years. To the east, High Street and Colewood Avenue are visible and there are houses along the north side of High Street, but the newly filed subdivision along Hudson Avenue and Woodland Avenue has no reality on the ground. The aerial photograph does show a dark utility building east of Thomas Cole's 1846 Studio. This was a fruit storage building mentioned as in use by Mrs. Vincent in her fruit business.<sup>177</sup>

In 1949, the family split their ownership of the property. Thomas Cole III and his sister Mary Emily, who were interested in selling out, acquired the Cottage/Studio complex and adjoining property, while Mrs. Vincent retained the main House and Thomas Cole's 1846 New Studio. During the 1950s, a subdivision plat was prepared for a portion of Thomas Cole III and Mary Emily Cole's property, being the triangular piece isolated by the bridge in the northeast corner of Cedar Grove. About 20 small lots were formed.<sup>178</sup> It was later sold and developed as a commercial property. The Cottage/Studio property was then sold separately and in the 1960s Temple Israel was constructed on that site after the Cottage/Studio was demolished. In 1954, a map shows a proposal to develop several small lots along a new street, later called Pine Road, that extended to the north from Hudson Avenue.<sup>179</sup> Development on Pine Road would have encroached into the core of the old Grove of trees east of the House, but it was never built.

When Florence H. C. Vincent died in 1961, the main House, Store-House/Studio and New Studio, and intervening grounds (now reduced to a few acres), were inherited by her niece, Edith Cole Hill (daughter of Thomas Cole III and Helen Carteret Cole). Edith had married Milt D. Hill (? -1965) in 1944. This was the last family owner at Cedar Grove. The Hills stayed at the property for several summers. In September 1964, a well publicized auction was held on the lawn as Edith tried to close out the site.<sup>180</sup> After her husband died in 1965, Edith She married Howard E. Silberstein (? -1984) and Cedar Grove continued as an occasional home. Edith played a role in the site's dedication as a

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<sup>177</sup> Aerial photograph, Rip Van Winkle Bridge dedication, 7/2/1935 [New York State Archive].

<sup>178</sup> Map entitled "Portion of Cole estate north of bridge approach" (scale 1"=50'), by W. R. Crocker, Surveyor, 7/3/1950 [VL, flat file].

<sup>179</sup> Map entitled "Survey in Village of Catskill, N.Y." (scale 1"=50'), by Boyd F. Allen, Surveyor, 12/1954 [VL, flat file].

<sup>180</sup> The auction was documented in several newspaper articles [VL, large flat box labeled "LOB 118."].

National Historic Landmark in 1966, but in this same period, the Flower Garden opposite the front door of the house, after a continuous history that likely spanned 150 years, was abandoned, with the beds graded over and seeded to lawn.

It was in this period that Dr. Raymond Beecher, Greene County historian, became interested in the property, developing a friendship with Mrs. Hill that led to the acquisition of documentation and considerable published research (as cited in the footnotes of this report).<sup>181</sup> Edith married Howard E. Silberstein in 1966 and the couple lived year round on the property for a few years before routine winter trips south, until the late 1970s. In 1972, Edith C. Silberstein sold the New Studio and about 1/3 acre surrounding it to a couple named Cumiskey, who planned to renovate the building as a residence. When this proved impractical, the Cumiskeys had the New Studio demolished, and then, in 1977, resold the property to Edith C. Silberstein.<sup>182</sup>

### **Phase 3 - Stewardship (1979-2003)**

In 1979, dispirited at her failed attempts to have New York State acquire the property, Mrs. Silberstein sold the House, Store-House/Studio and site of the recently demolished New Studio, and the remaining acreage to the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, who had agreed to provide a short-term holding action on the property until it could be sold to an appropriate buyer. The property was listed for sale, with restrictive deed covenants, in October 1981.<sup>183</sup> Late in 1982, the Catskill Center sold the property to four art enthusiasts who formed the not-for-profit, Thomas Cole Foundation, with the intent of operating a house museum.

But restoration was sporadic and visitation slight. The needed investments were not forthcoming. In the late 1980s, the National Park Service, recognizing the site's national significance, became interested in possibly acquiring what remained of Cedar Grove, but after preparation of an elaborate study of the potential, the idea was dropped for lack of funding in 1994.<sup>184</sup> Thereafter, the site languished until a grant from the Beecher Trust allowed the site to be purchased by the Greene County Historical Society in 1998. In 1999, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site was established by the United States Congress. After extensive restoration, the House opened for its first public visits

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<sup>181</sup> The Florence C. Vincent Collection, acquired by gift to the Greene County Historical Society, 1967.

<sup>182</sup> Miscellaneous records [VL, unidentified folder on land transactions].

<sup>183</sup> Preservation News, Washington DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, October 1981.

<sup>184</sup> National Park Service, Thomas Cole, Suitability/Feasibility Study, 9/1991.

in Spring 2001. In this same period, a neighboring residence on the west side of Spring Street was given as a gift by the McCord family. Recently, another neighboring residence, the Scott Residence, and the adjoining Pine Road, which had never been developed, were acquired and added to the historic site acreage.

In Spring 2002, archaeological investigations, the first undertaken on the historic site, confirmed the layout of the old Flower Garden, with its wide, gravel center line path and flanking flower borders as shown on the 1862 painting. The Flower Garden was then restored, beginning in May 2002.

## Section D – Existing Conditions

### Overview:

Existing landscape conditions at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site have been recorded on a plan, entitled “Existing Conditions, 2003 – Thomas Cole’s Cedar Grove,” scale: 1”=20’, draft dated 11/13/2003 (reduced, Figure 69). This plan shows the approximately 5 acres owned by the Greene County Historical Society inclusive of the 3.3 acre National Historic Site. The Existing Conditions Plan is based on a survey entitled “Map and Survey of Lands of The Greene County Historical Society,” scale: 1” = 40’, dated 6/3/1999, by Harvey Associates, and topographic information from a New York State Bridge Authority survey, scale: 1”=50’, contour interval 2 ft., dated 12/14/1989.

The survey information has been amended and enhanced after extensive field investigations to show additional information, such as the location and size of trees and other plant materials, stumps, lawn areas, pavements, and other important landscape elements and details. The plan was originally prepared in 1999 and has been fully updated after field work was conducted in the spring and summer of 2003. The Existing Conditions Plan is supplemented by photographs taken on May 7, 2003 (Figures 75-93).

Topographic information shown on the 1989 survey provides the most detailed and accurate depiction of the land form available at this time.

Existing conditions for the wider landscape that was historic Cedar Grove are taken from sources noted on Figure 71.

In the narrative to follow, existing conditions are described using the same outline as in Section B – Design Description. So, today’s historic site (5 acres) is described first, followed by a discussion of the present appearance and use of the wider landscape that was historic Cedar Grove in Thomas Cole’s lifetime (about 110 acres). At the conclusion of the detailed description is a summary of the site’s “extant fabric” and “integrity,” focusing on the present status of the landscape’s “character defining features and effects,” as discussed in Section B, above. The analysis of extant fabric and integrity uses the same outline as the earlier description of conditions in 1848, so that it forms the basis for an evaluation of the restoration potential of the site’s important landscape artifacts.

## **Area 1 – Today's Historic Site – East of Spring Street (4 acres)**

### **1.1 – Immediate House Grounds**

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site represents a remnant of historic Cedar Grove, being the site area close to the main House, east of Spring Street. Since its acquisition by the Greene County Historical Society in 1998, the 1815 main House, including the Piazza and exterior stairways, have been carefully restored. Much of the immediate surroundings of the House were disturbed by the restoration work and now exhibit a character that is not always reflective of the historic conditions.

On the south, the Piazza is again adorned with wisteria vines fixed to wire climbers in an arrangement reflective of the historic situation. A post-mounted, electric light is sited west of the main south stairway and this is not a historic fitting. On the south and west, the basement opened from two doorways onto a stone surface below the Piazza. This surface has been restored. The north kitchen wing of the House is a post-Cole addition. On the ground floor a new handicap-accessible restroom has been built, reached by a new stonedust-surfaced path that extends around the back (north side) of the House and connects with the stairway leading onto the Piazza from the east.

Unfortunately, segments of this path are too steep for handicap access. Also, the extent and grading of the stonedust at the restroom door is subject to washout and is difficult to maintain. Consideration has been given to allowing access to this restroom directly from the south, over, or along the edge of the stone surface, linking to the driveway south of the House.

The entrance driveway skirts the main stairway south of the house. The driveway seems to follow its historic alignment, but the roadway is overgrown with grasses and its surface is broken asphalt, remnants of later repaving. There is a cobble stone gutter along the driveway opposite the south side of the house, again an alteration that post-dates Cole's period (see Figures 16 and 20).

While the large, old honeylocust tree remains, the typical placement of trees immediately around the house has changed. At the southeast corner of the Piazza, the large specimen apple tree is now gone, replaced now by open lawn. Close by, on the north side of the driveway, there is now a medium-sized honeylocust tree, thought to have self-seeded here about a decade ago (Figure 83). West of the house, a few old lilacs

remain that are believed to have been in place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although whether these shrubs were in place in Cole's lifetime is less certain.

In April 2001, a large spruce tree that fully screened the western views from the House and Piazza was removed. The stump revealed a ring count of 137 to 145 years, indicating that this tree, and a similar one that remains close-by to the south, germinated between 1856-64, and were possibly planted as small trees (5-6 years old) between 1860-68. As such, the tree that was removed, one of several planted along the east side of Spring Street, post-dated Cole's residency, although not by many years.

Once the large spruce was removed, several new, smaller trees have been planted in the area west of the House. These were intended to screen Spring Street from the Piazza, although as shade trees these will, in time, grow tall enough to intrude into the distant views unless routine pruning is done.

## 1.2 – Spring Street Frontage.

The public roadway, today's Spring Street, has been altered in the 150 years since Cole's period, but the exact changes are uncertain pending further investigations. Comparing the accurate sketches done by Frederic Church and Jaspar Cropsey (1848 and 1853 respectively, Figures 10 and 11), it seems likely that the alignment of today's Spring Street has been shifted to the west and regraded to a lower elevation in the segment fronting on Cedar Grove (Figures 81 and 82). The change required an intrusion on the west side of the road, necessitating the removal of a stone wall that formerly edged the west side of the road. In turn, today's Spring Street alignment was moved away from the elaborate stone wall and picket fence line shown on the Church and Cropsey sketches. In fact, it seems possible that a portion of the older public roadway may have been retained to provide the driveway extension up to the House from the repositioned public roadway further west. This driveway extension remains, although it is now abandoned and it is barely discernable with a turf surface.

While changes on Spring Street are obvious, this history is not fully understood. It could be that the road was historically close to its present location, although at a higher elevation. As such, today's driveway leading up to the House might have been a private drive at the time of Cole's death. At any event, at an unknown date after Cole's period, the elaborate wall and picket fence line that traced the east side of Spring Street as it passed Cedar Grove was dismantled. Today, no remnant of this demarcation remains (Figure 75). Even the location of the historic wall/fence line, and its entrance gates, are

not now apparent, with only a few stones found here and there being possible wall components. Archaeology might be helpfully employed to establish the location of this important landscape feature.

At the southwest corner of the Cedar Grove property, at the corner of Hudson Avenue and Spring Street, is a 20<sup>th</sup> century residence west of the site of Cole's New Studio. This private residence altered the historic situation as it took up the foreground of the western prospect from the site of the New Studio. As a result, western views are now fully screened.

Trees along the Spring Street side of the property somewhat reflect the known historic appearance, as known from the Church and Cropsey sketches. For example, just inside the site of the former entry piers and gate, at the stairway that led up to the Piazza, the large honeylocust tree still dominates. Close-by, there are three large spruce trees that remain from the roadside plantings installed along Spring Street after Cole's death. While these spruce trees have a size and evergreen form that does not appear to have been present in the historic period, their mass does help to insulate the property from intrusive off-site development, notably houses on the west side of Spring Street. Today, the deciduous trees that dominate the Spring Street front are mostly medium-sized maples, but there are also numerous volunteers, including small elms, box elders, mulberry and ash. Except for some areas of scrub vegetation, the surface along Spring Street is mown grass.

### 1.3 – Area North of the House

Today, the ground north of the House, to the north property line, is kept simply in grass (Figure 76). The historic pedestrian access north to the former Cottage/Studio complex is gone, and given the loss of the Cottage/Studio as part of the historic site resource, this is appropriate. Except for the seldom used access path to the restroom, visitors are not focused on this area. Outward, toward Spring Street and the parking lot at Temple Israel to the north, there are several mature trees, mostly maples and a few old spruce. Otherwise, a thin row of forsythia shrubs separates the historic site grounds from parked cars at Temple Israel. To the east, the remnants of garden development dating to the 1920s are apparent. These include a shallow marble basin, an urn and some hydrangea shrubs, peonies and roses remaining from the garden interests of Mrs. Florence H. C. Vincent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Figures 84, 85 and 86).



#### 1.4 – Flower Garden

Abandoned in the 1960s after some 150 years of continuous cultivation, the Flower Garden south of the House was restored beginning in 2002. About 460 sq. ft. were planted with old varieties of annuals in the first year. Bulbs were added in the autumn of 2002, and a mixed perennial and annual arrangement was installed in expanded beds of 680 sq. ft. in Spring 2003 (Figures 79 and 80). The guiding principle of the replanting is to emphasize the flower types identified as likely components of the garden in Thomas Cole's lifetime, while avoiding current favorites and modern cultivars unlikely to have been present in the 1840s. In this way, plantings in the Flower Garden, and their floral effects, will be as accurate a representation as is possible given the limits of the documentation.

Archaeological investigations of the Flower Garden were undertaken in Spring 2002. A trench was made perpendicular to the center line path and special study was given to identify the layers of gravel known to have formed the path over time. The dig confirmed the photographic analysis that the path had been narrowed over its history, from about 9 feet wide when illustrated in 1862, to only a few feet wide in the 1950s. This change came largely from the need to move away from the growing honeylocust tree planted close to the edge of the original path, but with a trunk that is today 7 foot + across at its base. The restored garden beds are set 9 feet apart, as was the original, but the tree is given a wide clear zone. At least temporarily, grass remains the path surface rather than the historic gravel. A sample of the older gravel material was saved from the 2002 archaeological work, to serve as a guide if the gravel surface is restored in the future. A rustic-style seat has recently been placed at the base of the honeylocust, replicating the seat seen in this spot in photographs from the 1890s (Figure 80).

#### 1.5 – South of the Flower Garden to Cole's New Studio

The landscape south of the Flower Garden has lost most of its historic use and appearance. The center line path through the Flower Garden, once a continued ribbon of gravel that passed over a small bridge, crossed a farm road and then approached the New Studio, can not now be followed or even identified. Archaeology might help to locate the route and particulars of this important path.

Today, the ground south of the Flower Garden, including the site of the New Studio, is unkempt, with only limited areas regularly mowed and the area around the New Studio having reverted to woodland conditions where vines and poison ivy are prevalent. A dense row of recently planted spruce trees effectively separates the site of the New Studio from the grounds of the House to the north. The New Studio site is seldom visited, and the grounds surrounding the corner house site at Hudson Avenue and Springs Street are not maintained. There are downed trees and limbs and rampant weed vegetation which hides to some extent off-site development, especially in the foliage season.

#### 1.6 – Environs of Privy and Store-House/Studio

Two large oak trees that determined the placement of the Store-House/Studio in 1839 are now gone (Figures 78 and 88). The roadway that provided access from the front of the House, passing the Privy and following along the north side of the Store-House/Studio, to the doors on the east, remains. Today's entrance path from the parking area at Temple Israel is located just to the west of where the historic lane come into this area from the Cottage/Studio site, so that it approximates a historic route.

South of the Store-House/Studio there are only remnants of the Kitchen Garden that was maintained here in Cole's lifetime. The utilitarian storage and work yards on the south side of the building is now abandoned and maintained as lawn, with remnants of ornamental plantings that were cultivated here in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Figures 77, 78, 87 and 90). The Store-House/Studio awaits imminent and complete restoration. It is anticipated that this work will include landscape elements, including replanting the two flanking oak trees and some replication of the workaday character south of the structure. South from this area, a dense tree planting is aligned along the current property line, to some extent screening the neighboring houses on Hudson Avenue.

The Privy, west of the Store-House/Studio, has been extensively restored. This building is not as embowered in tree and shrub foliage as appears to have been the case in Cole's lifetime.

A map dated 1867 shows several structures south of the Privy, although nothing more elaborate than a cold frame is apparent in the photographic record. Archaeological investigations might help clarify the components of this area which seems to have also been planted with shrubs and low trees in photographs from about the 1890s.

## 1.7 – Woodlot

Much of the historic Grove east of the house grounds remains, extending from the Temple Israel parking lot, along the entrance path, around the Store-House/Studio and ending only at the residential lots that align along Hudson Avenue (including the Scott property, a residence recently acquired by the Greene County Historical Society). Off site, to the east and south, some of the older, large trees that remain from the Grove can be seen on neighboring residential properties. The largest and oldest trees remaining in the Grove are the oaks, several being red oaks and at least one large specimen, a white oak. There are also ash and some large white pines, whose age may extend back to Cole's period. Numerous smaller saplings and medium-aged trees are also present.

A modern metal garage structure is located at the extreme eastern edge of the historic site, close to neighboring residences that are not fully screened from view. This building is used for utilitarian purposes. While technically an intrusion in the historic landscape, the garage does not severely impact the visitor's experience due to its peripheral location, diminutive size, and the extent of surrounding vegetation.

## **Area 2 – Today's Historic Site – West of Spring Street (1 acre)**

### 2.1 – McCord Property

This is a modern residence, whose grounds include a short driveway to the garage doors, clipped foundation plantings and the site of a former swimming pool. Today's landscape bears no relationship to the orchard that is thought to have occupied this site in Cole's lifetime.

## **Area 3 – Cedar Grove Lands Outside Today's Historic Site**

### 3.1 Area East of Spring Street

Once bucolic farmland overlooking the Hudson River, this area is today developed as several dozen residential homes along Hudson Avenue, High Street, Woodland Avenue and Colewood Street, as well as extensive highway development,

associated with the Rip Van Winkle bridge approach (Rt. 23), including a toll booth, offices and bridge maintenance facilities. The bridge development (1930s) required extensive excavation that dramatically altered the land forms at the center of historic Cedar Grove (Figure 93). North of the Rt. 23 bridge approach, an abandoned commercial property and a large residence are accessed from Colewood Avenue, which was laid out across the Cedar Grove frontage in about 1886. Wooded areas remain along the Hudson River. In summary, virtually nothing remains of the open farmland that characterized the Hudson River frontage in Thomas Cole's lifetime.

### 3.2 – Area West of Spring Street

In Cole's period this was open farmland, with orchards developed close to Spring Street and wooded ground on the west where the land dropped into the valley of the Han Vosenkill. The woodland on the steep topography remains, but extensive residential development now occupies the higher, less steep areas closer to Spring Street. Today, dozens of house sites front onto High Street, Hudson Avenue, Sunset Street, Gardner Street, Bartow Street and Spring Street. The site of the Cedar Grove Barn, until the early 1930s standing close to Spring Street opposite the Cottage/Studio complex (today Temple Israel), is today a gas station at the intersection of Spring Street and Rt. 23.

### 3.3 – Vault Lot

The integrity of this 35-acre lot has been altered beyond recognition in the 150 years + since Cole's death. The first notable change was the railroad which crossed the lot on a north-south line and bisected the Vault Lot into two parcels in the early 1880s. In the 1930s, Rt. 23 made a diagonal east-west cut through the Vault Lot. Fill excavated from the ridge west of the Rip Van Winkle bridge toll booth was spread over road edges west of the intersection with Spring Street. A clutter of commercial development has sprung up along the new roadway, so that the site of Thomas Cole's original internment is no longer apparent. The roadside hodgepodge of commercial establishments includes a motel, gas stations, fast food outlets, a large junk car yard, and a variety of small businesses with associated billboards, utility lines and poles. Altogether this post-1930's development seriously detracts from the area's amenity and the integrity of the Vault Lot.

The attractive western prospects that inspired Thomas Cole and the Thomsons to locate their family burial vault here have been seriously compromised, ignored and often screened. The Vault Lot area fronting Spring Street remains relatively open, despite numerous house sites on several subdivision roads. The steep hillside to the west remains wooded.

### **Summary: Extant Historic Fabric and Integrity**

#### **Introduction**

In order to better understand the current landscape conditions at Cedar Grove, vis-à-vis the historic situation in Thomas Cole's lifetime, the following narrative describes the state of preservation of the "Character Defining Features and Effects" identified in Section B as distinguishing the site's historic landscape. As will be apparent, some of the pre-1848 elements are largely unchanged, while others have disappeared completely. The preservation of "Extant Fabric" in the landscape determines the site's "Integrity." The level of integrity can influence the significance of a landscape artifact, and it suggests appropriate treatments for separate landscape features that could help to achieve an authentic landscape, as close as possible to its character as Thomas Cole would have known it before his death in 1848.

#### **1. Farmscape**

Any sense of historic Cedar Grove as a working farm has been lost due to extensive subdivision and development of the farm acres, a process that began in about the mid-1880s. Today, only about 3.3 acres are designated as today's National Historic Site, a fraction of the approximately 75 acres once contiguous to the House grounds (or 110 acres if the Vault Lot is included). These adjacent acres include the Cedar Grove's Cottage/Studio complex, orchards, fields and woodlots that are today in many separate ownerships, and vastly altered. None of these acres are today farmed, an activity that has nearly disappeared in the environs of Cedar Grove. Instead, much of the area around Cedar Grove is now residential land-use, with dozens of house sites on several streets, primarily in the south and eastern portions of the historic property. There are also numerous commercial sites on what was the site of Cedar Grove's Barn and portions of its farmland. Even more dominant is the historic site lands now given over to road/bridge construction, Rt. 23 and Colewood Avenue. The Cottage/Studio site -- Thomas Cole's earliest rental at Cedar Grove -- is now Temple Israel and its adjacent parking lot. Where

not actively developed, formerly open fields are today second-growth woods. With all these changes, today's landscape does not allow an easy perception of the historic situation wherein Cedar Grove was recognized as a distinct, agricultural-based estate property.

## 2. House Siting

The orientation of the House, south facing and perpendicular to Spring Street, remains, and the Cedar Grove landscape close to the House successfully retains the basis of its historic character. Importantly, this area can be experienced apart from incongruous surroundings. This is due to the historic situation whereby the grounds of the House had a notably distinct landscape character, quite different from the adjacent woodlots, orchards and open meadow/pastures that otherwise characterized the Cedar Grove farm. Even today, being in the house grounds has a distinct feel, somewhat separate from the modern surroundings. The conditions on the edges of today's house grounds are relatively well defined, and this helps to segregate the house grounds from the adjacent land-use. These factors suggest the high level of landscape integrity at the core of today's National Historic Site.

The House, with its landscape elements, the Piazza and its broad stairways on the south and east, and the basement kitchen opening onto a covered stone surface, has been recently restored and remain as originally conceived and never altered. The 1870s kitchen wing on the north has compromised the historic situation in this area. In any event, there is an absence of documentation for the pre-1848 landscape layout in this area north of the House, which was a service-related area. As such, there is little need or desire for visitors to be drawn there.

## 3. View west from the Piazza

In April 2001, western views to the Catskill Mountains, as seen from the Piazza, were substantially restored with the felling of a large spruce tree located less than 50 feet west of the Piazza. Close-by, several deciduous trees were also removed at this time. Because the spruce tree was the sizable hindrance, these tree removals immediately opened views to the Catskills from the Piazza. Some smaller trees and shrubbery were kept in order to optimize screening of Spring Street and the residential properties west of Spring Street. Today, the eye is effectively carried over the middle ground to the distant Catskills. While the historic panorama has been restored, it is not as open as it was in Thomas Cole's lifetime. There are several trees on the McCord property that screen the

southern edges of the view. There is also a large spruce remains south of the one that was removed. In turn, trees on the west side of Spring Street, south of the McCord property, screen distant views. In summary, while not panoramic, the present views from the Piazza does recreate an important aspect of the historic situation.

#### 4. Spring Street Frontage

While the land here is preserved, nothing remains of the elaborate wall/fence line that fronted Spring Street in Cole's lifetime. The absence of this design feature detracts from the landscape's authentic appearance, especially as seen from the public roadway. Today, the appearance of the Spring Street frontage is vastly altered, relying only on a broad lawn, studded with numerous native trees, slopes up from Spring Street. A disused driveway hints at the intended approach but today's historic site has rerouted access to the driveway and parking lot at Temple Israel. As such, the House site has lost its distinctive, architectonic definition as experienced from the public road. The fence/wall alignment and the positioning of its various gateways are uncertain and would require archaeological investigation to precisely locate.

#### 5. Flower Garden south of House

In Spring 2002, after archaeological investigations that revealed important aspects of the garden's layout, the flanking flower beds were cut from the turf, improved with manure and compost and planted with period flowers. The plant bed area was expanded a bit in 2003. As presently constituted, the garden center line path (about 9 feet wide) is grass surfaced. A gravel path is believed to have been in place during Cole's lifetime. The continued presence of the old honeylocust tree is an important example of extant landscape fabric. This tree is possibly approaching a two hundred-year birthday. Beside the honeylocust, a new rustic-styled bench, similar to one shown there in photographs from the 1890s, has been recently added. In summary, the Flower Garden retains a great deal of historic integrity.

#### 6. Connecting Drives and Paths

The main approach driveway is preserved, from the presumed location of the brick gate piers, passing the access stairway at the House, and continuing towards the east. It is marred by its broken-asphalt surface and overgrown edges. In some sections the old roadway is nearly grassed over. North and east of the Store-House/Studio, the

drive continues, more authentically as a dirt surface. The site's other carriage/wagon drives are today obscured. The laneway that linked the Cottage/Studio to the House grounds could be identified after archaeological investigations, as can the farm/secondary drive that came into the property south of the house. Finally, the pedestrian route that extended from the Flower Garden south to the site of the New Studio is no longer traceable. In summary, the integrity of the historic driveway and path system has been compromised but not obliterated.

#### 7. Workaday Setting of Store-House/Studio Area

The planned restoration of the Store-House/Studio will provide the opportunity to renew the Store-House/Studio's historic, associative landscape. Provisions are to be made to replant the oak trees that originally framed the structure on the south and north. The exterior restoration will include installation of the carriage house doors on the east and the open storage/work spaces on the south that are documented as present in Cole's lifetime. All these landscape areas are abandoned and their maintenance negligible. While the area's integrity is preserved, landscape restoration will be needed to convey the essentially utilitarian, workaday use of the Store-House/Studio as it was in the historic period.

#### 8. Woodlot ("Grove")

While the present woodlot is no more than a remnant (3/4 acre) of the more expansive Grove (about 4 acres) known in Cole's lifetime, the woodland area that remains part of the present National Historic Site includes numerous mature specimen trees – truly extant historic fabric – and a sampling of smaller trees and understory that have grown up since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. As such, the Grove remains reflective of its historic condition. The area can be further managed to optimize healthy forest conditions, and to better screen peripheral residential development east and south of the historic site. Any development of this area (an alternate parking lot has been mentioned) would seriously detract from the integrity of this important character-defining landscape feature.

#### 9. Orchard Setting of the New Studio

While the property is preserved, little historic landscape fabric can be found at the site of Thomas Cole's New Studio (1846). Still, there are plans to reconstruct this important building and documentation that will guide such a treatment also provides a good deal of information to inform an authentic restoration of the associative landscape.



Unfortunately, the site that remains is only a remnant of what had been the grounds of the New Studio. Views that were oriented towards the west are today obscured by residential development, and modern Hudson Avenue, which was constructed only 35 feet from the New Studio building, intrudes into what was open ground in Cole's lifetime. The proximity of Hudson Avenue is a factor that will require mitigation, such as screen plantings, that had no precedence in Cole's lifetime, so that the integrity of this site can not be fully restored.

In summary, the House environs, including the important landscape role of the Piazza and the immediate residential grounds (including the Privy and the Flower Garden), retain much of their historic landscape character. Also, the Store-House/Studio building, to be restored with its associative, workaday landscape, can closely reflect the historic situation. The wooded Grove also provides a high degree of integrity vis-à-vis the area's historic situation. Less successful at retaining historic character is the landscape associated with Cole's New Studio, and the Spring Street frontage with the elimination of its defining wall and picket fence line. Yet these deficiencies are related more to missing elements – the New Studio and the wall/fence structure – that reconstruction of these elements, if deemed feasible and appropriate, would advance noticeably the historic landscape integrity of today's National Historic Site.

## Report Recommendations

### Research:

This report is based primarily on the collections of the Vedder Research Library, and the Thomas Cole papers at the New York State Library and the Albany Institute of History and Art. It seems clear that the bulk of documentation that survives related to Cedar Grove and Thomas Cole's residency at the property is encapsulated in the collections of these three repositories. However, there appears to be numerous possibilities where important documentation survives in secondary repositories. It is noted that Thomas Cole maintained correspondence with several important personages. In some instances the papers of these parties have provided important information related to Cole's life. While the information may not be decisive as related to Cedar Grove, such questions as Thomas Cole's earliest link to the Thomson/Bartow household, and the derivation of the name Cedar Grove, are worth pursuing in other repositories. Still, these are likely to be secondary and incidental sources, given the objectives of this *Cultural Landscape Report*. Over time, the varied sources of possible additional information should be reviewed and the findings used to correct, expand and/or enhance the findings of the *Cultural Landscape Report*.

### Archaeology:

Given the type and importance of several missing landscape features at Cedar Grove, it is believed that archaeology can play a key role in better understanding Cedar Grove's historic landscape, and so better guiding its preservation and authentic restoration. A list of archaeological needs, related to the historic landscape artifact, is as follows:

1. New Studio location, including connecting paths.
2. Spring Street wall/entry piers/fence lines locations.
3. Drive and path alignments and extent of gravel surfaces.

This for such landscape components as the historic laneway from the Cottage/Studio, the secondary entrance from Spring Street (south of the main entry gate), and several short pedestrian paths.

4. Unknown structures south of the Privy.

#### Interpretive/Restoration Themes:

The Cultural Landscape Report provides the opportunity to identify historical issues that are considered important to an understanding Cedar Grove and Thomas Cole's life there. The following are noted:

1. Cedar Grove was a farm. The present context in a residential area is misleading and could to be countered with interpretive presentations related to historic Cedar Grove, at it was for Thomas Cole and his extended family. The information conveyed would include the property's lost components, e.g., the farm acreage and the Hudson River frontage, the Cottage/Studio and Barn complex, Vault Lot, etc. The post-Cole changes to the landscape are also an interesting interpretive issue.
2. As documented, Cedar Grove was a workaday landscape maintained in order to heighten a picturesque effect – as Jasper Cropsey said: “without an atmosphere of luxury or wealth.” This character can be maintained in an authentic restoration of the historic landscape in Cole's period. By replicating the landscape as Cole knew it, the visitor will better appreciate its historic character.
3. Thomas Cole's role at Cedar Grove needs detailed descriptions. These roles would include his use of the various buildings on the property, and his 1839 purchase of the New Studio Lot. For Thomas Cole, Cedar Grove was a refuge, his retreat and base of operations, and his family home. While Cole was somewhat disconnected from the property's day-to-day operations, and his mind was often elsewhere, he was closely allied with the Thomson/Bartow family. From his earliest connection, he contributed financially, with rent and board payments and his cash loans, land purchases and partial financing of construction projects. These involvements, which Cole seems to have gratefully entered into, materially benefited Cedar Grove's financial well being during a period when there was considerable need for such assistance. This story, as it relates to the landscape, is an interesting and important one.
4. The role of the post-Thomas Cole period can be touched on to show the continuity and preservation that typified the 60-90 year period after Cole's death, during the residency of Maria Cole and her sisters, and of Theodore Cole, Thomas Cole's oldest son who came to manage the property after his father's death.

### Restoration Potential:

In general, the findings of the *Cultural Landscape Report* would seem to encourage, and not detract, from the landscape's potential for authentic restoration. Documentation in Cole's lifetime is limited, but much is known, and the landscape's presumed continuity throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century allows images from fifty years after Cole's death to be evaluated for elements and effects likely to have remained unchanged during the residence of Cole's widow (to 1885) and son (to at least 1910). After 1914, with Cedar Grove's acreage being increasingly subdivided, the grounds of the House were modified and notably tidied up (a condition well illustrated in some of the photographic images from this period). The remnants of this more ornamental landscape, as compared to the utilitarian/workaday, and picturesque landscape documented in Cole's era, remain today. With the earliest landscape conditions documented in this *Cultural Landscape Report*, numerous steps can be taken that would lead to a landscape reflective of its condition in Thomas Cole's lifetime, as follows:

- a. The Spring Street frontage treatment is well documented and very important to the site's distinctive Federal period design. The House environs, including the Piazza, Privy, panoramic views, Flower Garden and basement level stone terrace, are well understood.
- b. The Store-House/Studio and its surrounding landscape, including the woodlot (Grove) to the east, laneway to the north (approximate entrance path from the modern parking lot), the Kitchen Garden on the south, etc., were established during Cole's lifetime and are well understood from the available documentation, including later photographs that are thought to show the area close to the conditions in Cole's lifetime.
- c. The New Studio and its landscape setting are relatively well understood. There are plans to accurately reconstruct the New Studio and its grounds, presumably including the gravel path that led to it from the House, and the picturesque orchard setting that so distinguished the surroundings. Limited space available north of modern Hudson Avenue, and adjacent neighboring residence on the west, will compromise a restoration. Suitable screening may be needed to close off these sides of the site, altering the intended open orientation to the west. The east side, a wooded area in Cole's time, can be more easily returned to the historic condition.

- d. Boundary screening and buffers need to be reinforced, especially towards the north (Temple Israel parking, commercial development), east (residences), and south (residences).
- e. Treatment of current residential sites (former McCord and Scott residences) while not technically part of the current National Historic Site designation, were part of historic Cedar Grove. Today, modest modifications to the landscapes of these residences will allow them to be more sympathetic to the historic situation without requiring the removal of either house. Specific comments on each follow:
  - McCord Residence – Part of a former orchard, the critical role today is as a foreground element (together with overhead utility wires and Spring Street), in the important western panoramic views from the House. This is especially notable from the Piazza, which is a view experienced by nearly all who visit the property today. The McCord site should not detract from the overview. Trees on the property that are infringing on the south can be removed. The house façade can be altered to reduce its visual impact. White siding can be darkened and presently sheared foundation plantings allowed to naturalize and left to form a more effective screen to the house structure.
  - Scott Residence – Part of the former Grove, the critical role today is to have this area adequately screened for visitors in the area of the Store-House/Studio and the New Studio. Several opportunities exist that would help mitigate the visual intrusion. For example, there is presently a wide mown lawn north of the Scott house. This lawn area could be narrowed to a swath closer to the House, and the intervening ground could be planted. This would both restore a portion of Cedar Grove's woodlot, and provide a wider visual buffer between the modern house and portions of the historic landscape.

## Bibliographic Notes

The *Cultural Landscape Report* incorporates the results of a previous "Landscape Research Report," dated 6/18/2002, which reported on the collections related to Cedar Grove in the care of the Vedder Research Library, Coxsackie, NY

The collections housed at the Vedder Research Library covered a wide variety of material. There were extensive deed and financial records, many maps and plans, photographs and original art works. The collection is perhaps weakest in correspondence. Recent history is well recorded due to the commitment of the GCHS to this property, so that there is a fulsome scrapbook of newspaper clippings dating from the past 70 years.

The Vedder collections are not as yet catalogued and portions of it have recently been moved to the Cedar Grove property. The Vedder collections can be roughly described as in the following areas:

- Numerous individual folders kept in a single file cabinet drawer. Most of the folders are numbered and chronologically arranged; some are without numbers and are arranged by subject matter.
- A large flat box holding many recent newspaper clippings from the era of Mabel P. Smith (up to the 1960s).
- The Florence C. Vincent Collection (3 boxes donated to the GCHS by Edith C. Hill).
- Flat files (metal cabinet), with maps and plans organized under "Catskill."
- Several photographic files and loose images scattered elsewhere in the general collection of the Vedder Library.

The *Cultural Landscape Report* expands the findings of the earlier research report by incorporating relevant materials in the Thomas Cole Papers in the holdings of the New York State Library and the Albany Institute of History and Art. The State Library houses their Thomas Cole collection in six boxes which include letters to and from Thomas Cole, family letters, journal entries, lecture notes, poetry and other miscellaneous Cole writings. There are also newspaper clippings, bills, receipts and other accountings. Finally, the collection includes sketches. While smaller than the State Library's collection, Albany Institute has a similar mix. There are in this case three boxes. Letters to and from Cole are included, as are family letters. Unique is the presence of one of Cole's account books, as well as an account book of John A. Thomson. Maria Cole's diary is in this collection.

In summary, documentation at the Vedder Research Library, New York State Library and the Albany Institute of History and Art allows us to understand Cedar Grove's landscape background, as well as Thomas Cole's life at Catskill from 1825 until his death in 1848. The property's acquisition by the Thomson family and its general development history in the Federal period is best documented from the Vedder collection. Cedar Grove was a sizable farm property. Over 100 acres were owned by the Thomson family and additional contiguous acres were rented on long-term leases. There is some uncertainty as to the use of the land, which in any event changed over time. There is only fragmentary evidence of the Thomson family's own farm operations. The exact production and financial return of Thomson family farming at Cedar Grove, during Thomas Cole's residency, remains an open question.

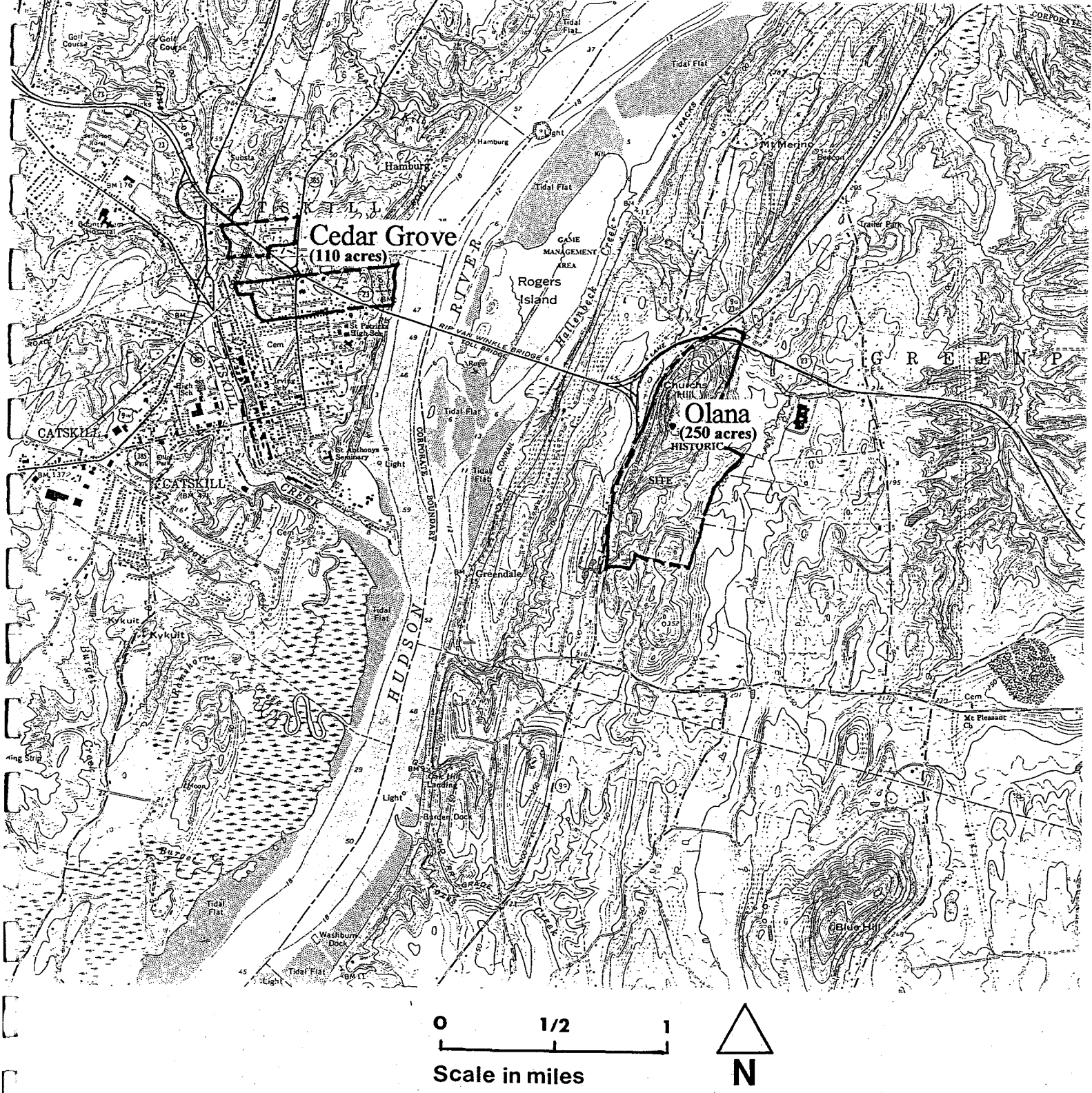
In addition to the original documentation, earlier research was utilized where possible. These sources are footnoted throughout the text of this report. Of note in this regard is the work of Dr. Raymond Beecher, dean of the Vedder Library who has been researching aspects of the Cedar Grove story for thirty years. Much of these investigations have been published and are cited in the footnotes of this report.

Also of note is the contribution of Ellwood C Parry III, noted Cole scholar, who has researched and published the results of his investigations on Thomas Cole's early career. Dr. Parry read the draft of the Cole-related period history presented in this *Cultural Landscape Report*, and offered several suggestions, while answering specific questions related to Cole's earliest connections with Catskill. His help was appreciated.

Finally, mention must be made of Louis L. Noble, to date Thomas Cole's only true biographer (*The Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, 1853, reprint, 1964). For anyone investigating Cole's life at Cedar Grove, Noble can be a mixed blessing. As he knew Thomas Cole personally and knew Cedar Grove during Cole's lifetime, he must be given deference. Noble, who had direct access to all of Cole's papers, compiled a wealth of information into an accessible volume, but he was not focused on the Cedar Grove landscape, nor the inner workings of Cedar Grove, and so he did not include all the available evidence on the topic of concern here. Also, Noble clearly misquoted or doctored some events. When his misquotations are revealed, it is unsettling, so much have we now depended on Noble for our interpretation of Cole. Unfortunately, many modern writings are misinformed by Noble's omissions and mistakes.

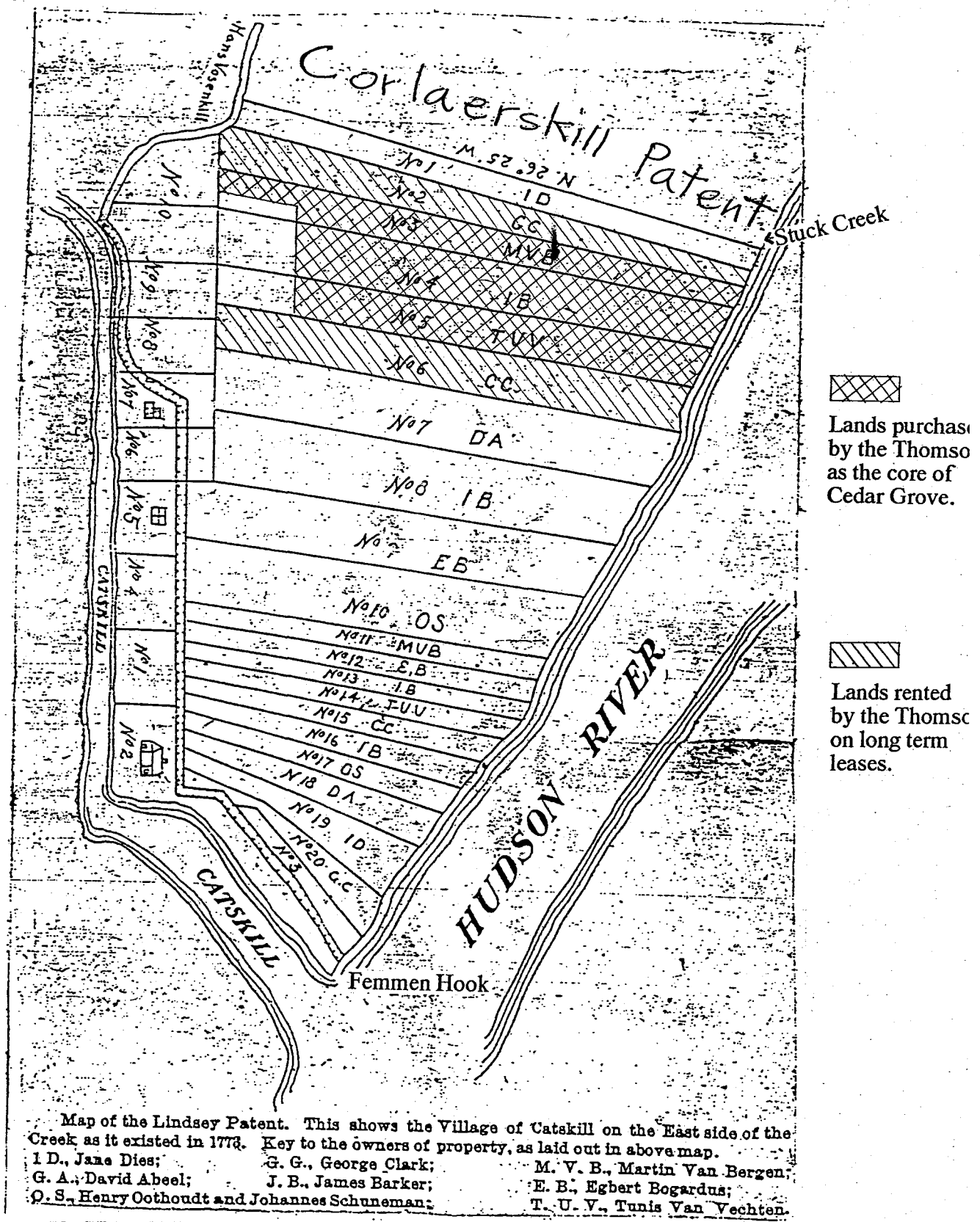
# Illustrations





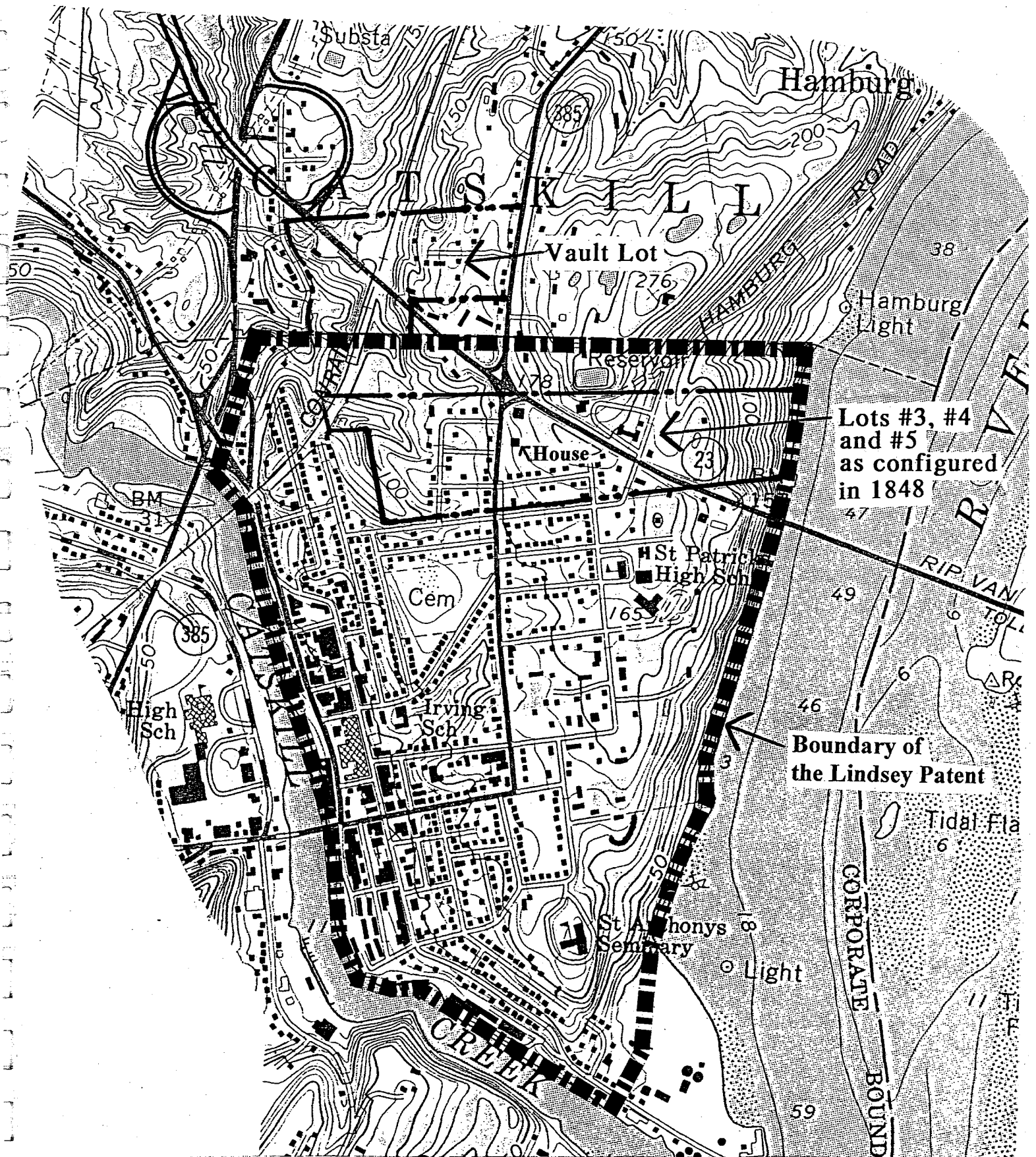
**Figure 1: Location Plan**

Cedar Grove is located on the west side of the Hudson River. The property is on the outskirts of the Village of Catskill, an old river port that developed rapidly after the Revolutionary War. Cedar Grove (1815) is nearly opposite the later Olana (1860), located on the east side of the Hudson. Developed by Thomas Cole's student, Frederic E. Church, Olana is linked to its precursor by the modern Rip Van Winkle Bridge.



**Figure 2: Map showing divisions of the Lindsey Patent**

This drawing was made from an original in 1925. Here it is annotated to show Cedar Grove. The Map delineates the original lot lines used to divide the 460-acre Lindsey Patent. The lots on the west (left), along Catskill Creek (nos. 1-10), were formed first, the so-called 1st division of the Lindsey Patent (1738). The house indicated on Lot #5 was lived in by the Thomson family before they moved to Cedar Grove on Lot #3, #4, and #5 of the later, so-called, 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent (1773). These 2nd division lots extended east-west from the 1st division lands to the Hudson River. [North is up the page]



**Figure 3: Map showing the Lindsey Patent overlaid on a modern map of Catskill\***

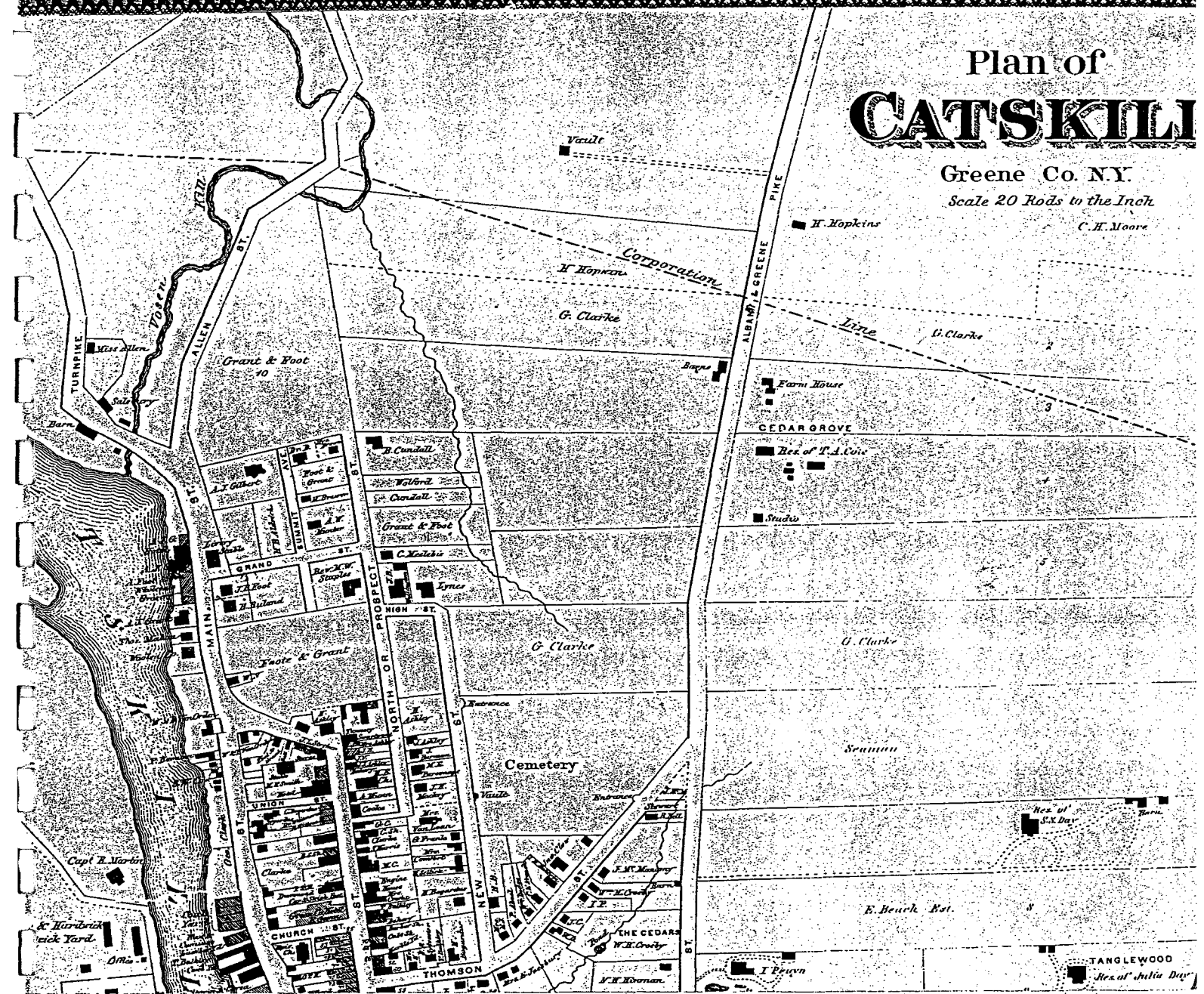
The Cedar Grove House (labeled) is shown on the east side of Rt. 385, which was the early turnpike road leading north from Catskill. The "Vault Lot" was also part of Cedar Grove. Note how the Rip Van Winkle Bridge approach road cut diagonally through both the Vault Lot and the core of the Cedar Grove property.

[North is up the page] \* USGS map, 1963, revised 1980

# Plan of CATSKILL

Greene Co. N.Y.  
Scale 20 Rods to the Inch

C. H. Moore

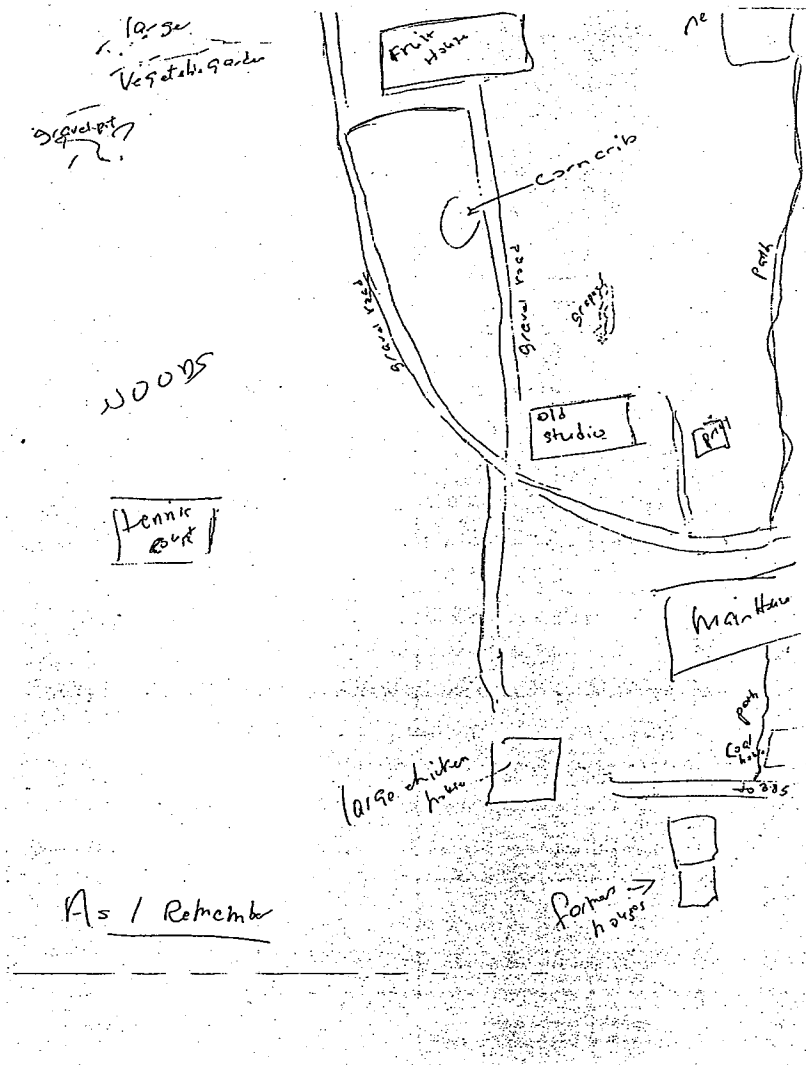


**Figure 4: Map showing “Cedar Grove” (1867)**

On this map, the label, “CEDAR GROVE” is on Lot #3 of the 2nd division of the Lindsey Patent (see Figure 2). The lot numbers are shown on the right side of the map. To the north of the House is the “Farm House” (a.k.a. The Cottage/Studio) and “Barns,” thought to have been erected on Lot #3 before 1814 as part of the initial development by the Thomson family, or possibly by an earlier owner. To the south is the 1815 House, labeled “Res. of T. [Theodore] A. Cole” (Thomas Cole’s son who was 29 years old in 1867). The extant Store-House/Studio is shown as a black rectangle east of the house. Between are three smaller structures, one of which is the extant Privy.

Thomas Cole’s 1846 “New Studio” is identified. Cedar Grove also included Lot #5, south of the “Studio,” and a non-contiguous lot, labeled here “Vault,” being the Thomson family tomb, situated just to the north along the turnpike, labeled here the “Albany & Greene Pike” (a.k.a. Spring Street). The Thomsons and later the Coles also rented land on Lots #2 and #6, identified here by the owner, “G. Clark.”

Note “High Street,” in the west corner of Lots #5 and #6. This street would be extended east between Cedar Grove and Lot #6 in 1869. [North is up the page].



**Figure 5: Sketch Map "As I Remember" (c. 1970s), showing Cedar Grove**

This plan was drawn by Edith Hill (1919- ) to illustrate her recollections (in the period 1940s when about 25 years old), of the layout of the Cedar Grove landscape. Notice the "path" designated between the back (north side) of the House and the older "farm house" (a.k.a. the Cottage/Studio). The path from the "Main House" through the Flower Garden (which isn't shown), to the New Studio, is indicated on the far right. Also note the path system extending to such now lost features as the "fruit house," "large vegetable garden," "gravel pit," and "tennis court." [north is down the page].





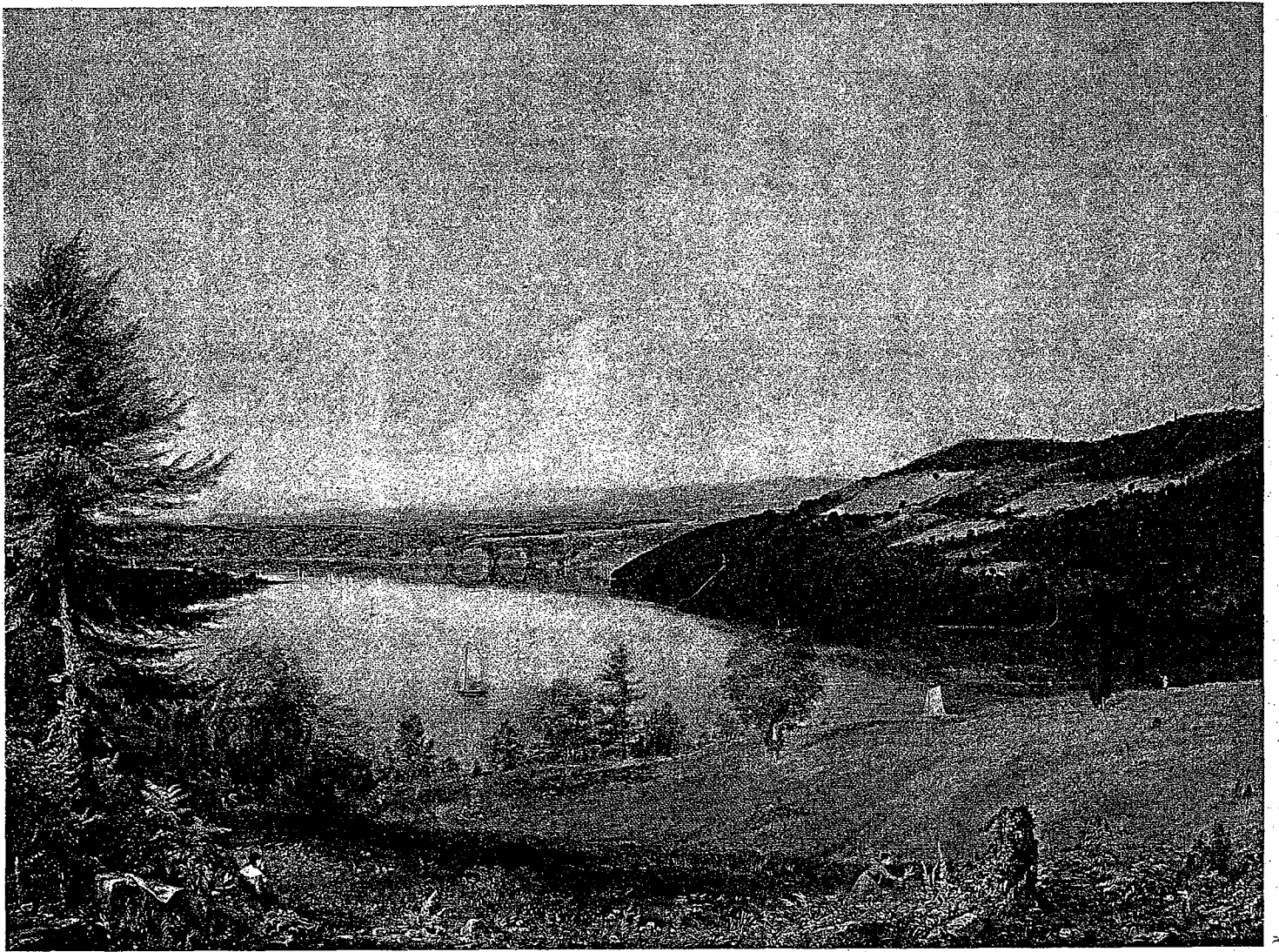
**Figure 6: Portrait of Thomas Cole, by Frederic E. Church, c. 1845.**

This pencil sketch was drawn during Church's tutelage at Cedar Grove. It shows Cole in his mid-forties, about three years before his death.



**Figure 7: Portrait of John Alexander Thomson,  
by Frederic E. Church, c. 1845**

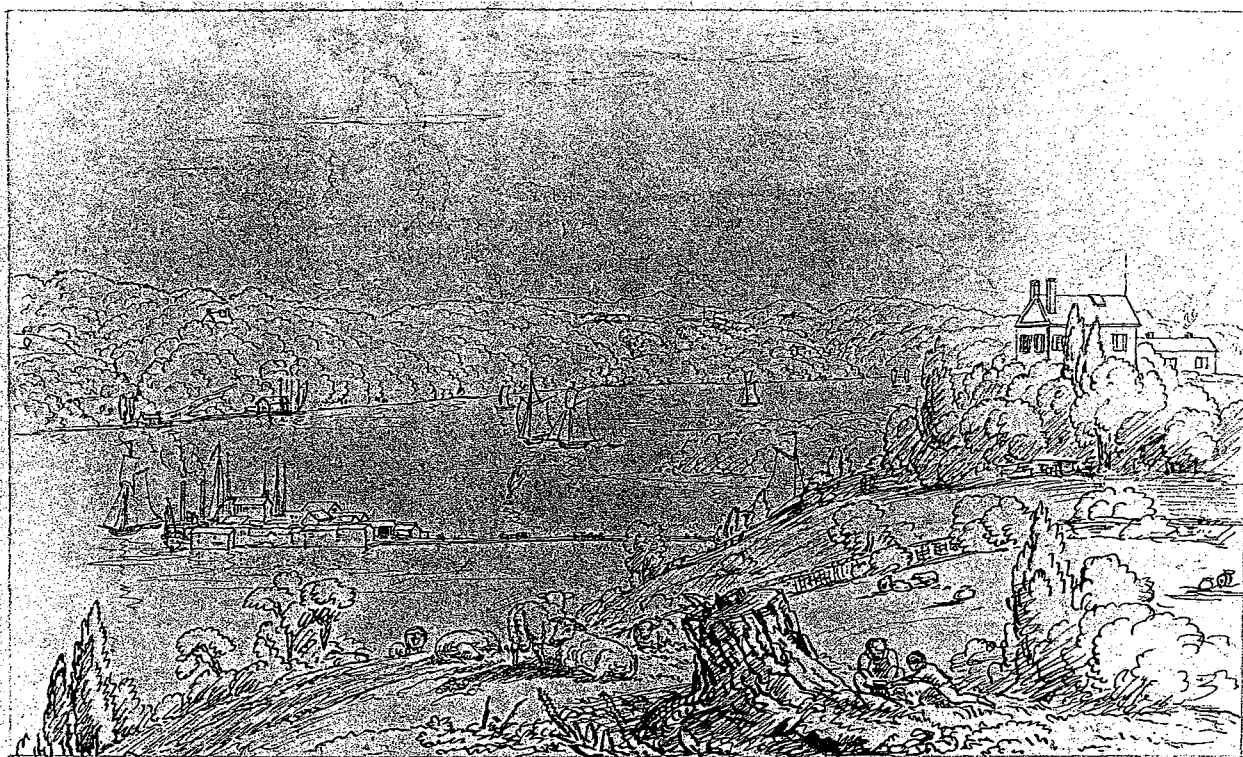
Drawn only about a year before his death, the owner and master of Cedar Grove during Cole's lifetime was a retired merchant and gentleman farmer.



**Figure 8: Painting, unknown artist (not dated), showing northeast view from Cedar Grove**

Entitled "Point Merino, Near Hudson," this painting shows in considerable detail the prospect northeast from a viewpoint within the Cedar Grove property. This is a rare finished oil showing Cedar Grove. The ravine indicated crossing down from the center to the left in the view was Snuck Creek, which formed the northeast corner of the Lindsey Patent from which Cedar Grove was formed. The foreground, right, where the girl picks flowers, is approximately the location of today's Rip Van Winkle Bridge toll booth. Note the cultivated field toward the river, possible wheat or another grain.

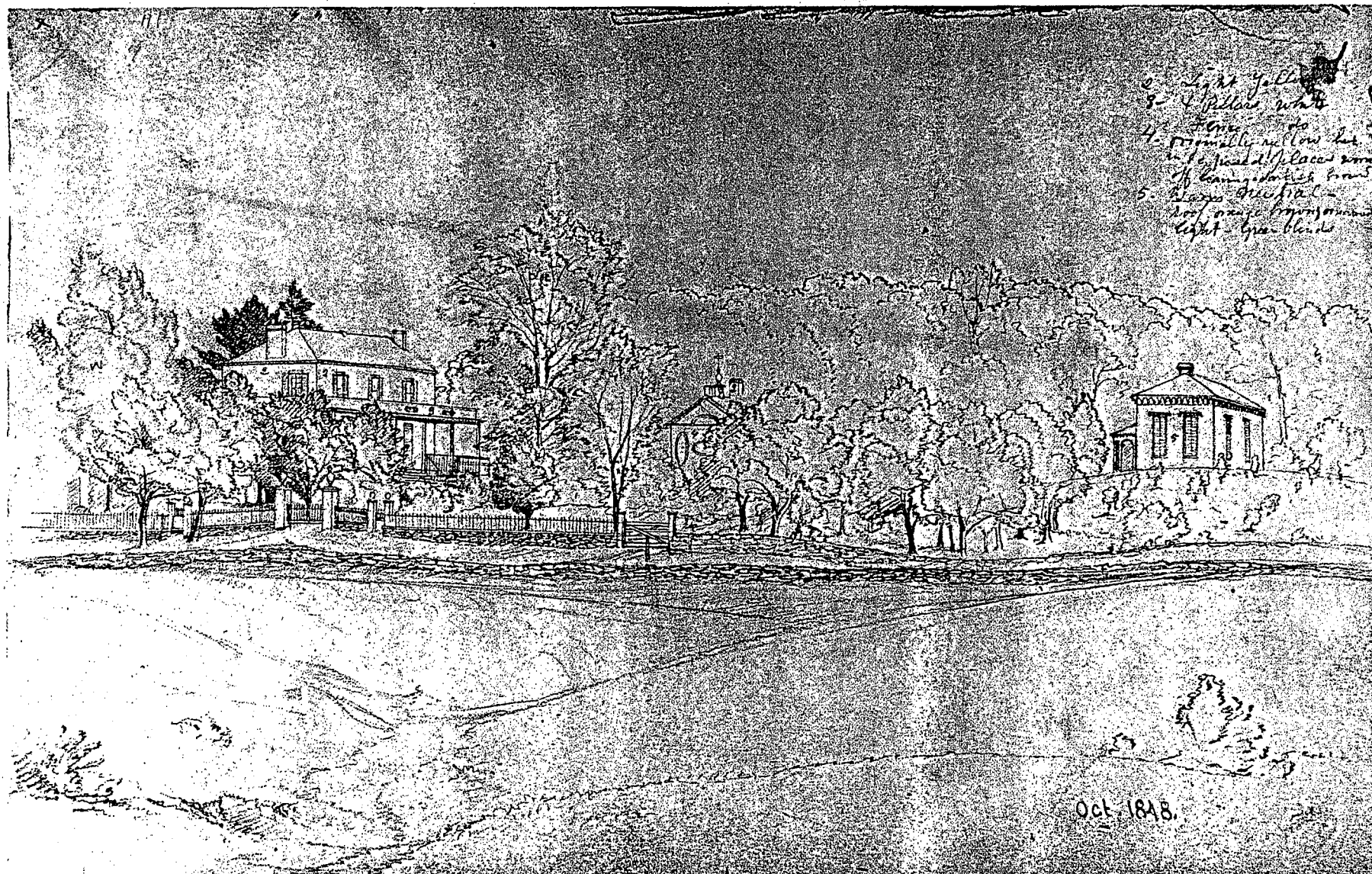
The painting is in the collection of the Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY. Once attributed to Thomas Cole, the Parrish now lists the painting as "artist unknown."



**Figure 9: Sketch, by T. Cole (1847), showing view southeast from Cedar Grove**

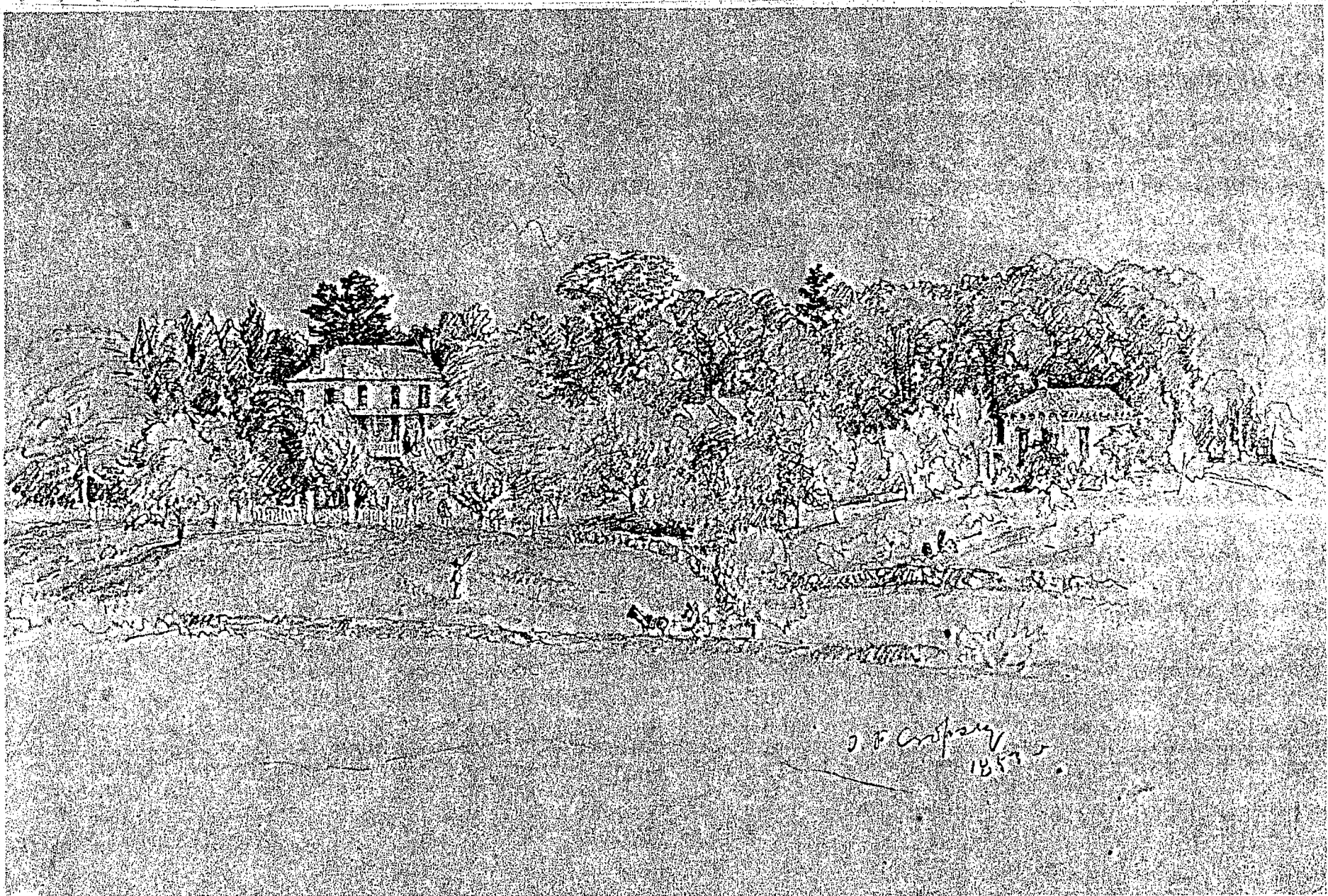
The view seems to include a portion of the Cedar Grove property and certainly indicates the parallel lot lines formed by walls, fences and hedge rows that extended over the riverfront ridge and down to the shoreline of the Lindsey Patent. Cole did this sketch as one of a series on the Hudson Valley.





**Figure 10 - Drawing showing Cedar Grove from the west,  
by Frederic E. Church (1848)**

This sketch was prepared by Frederic Church about eight months after Thomas Cole died. It shows the Spring Street frontage with the House (left) and Cole's New Studio (right). Note that in front of the New Studio, the foreground trees have been removed to enhance the western views. The Privy is also visible, topped by an elaborate weathervane. The sketch is thought to be highly accurate showing individual trees, fencing, walls and gates as these site features existed in Cole's lifetime. Note the public roadway between flanking stone walls, and also the four gateways into Cedar Grove, two wide enough for carriages/wagons, and two for pedestrian only. The sketch seems to suggest that these gates came out directly onto Spring Street



**Figure 11: Sketch, by Jaspar Cropsey (1853), showing Cedar Grove from the southwest**

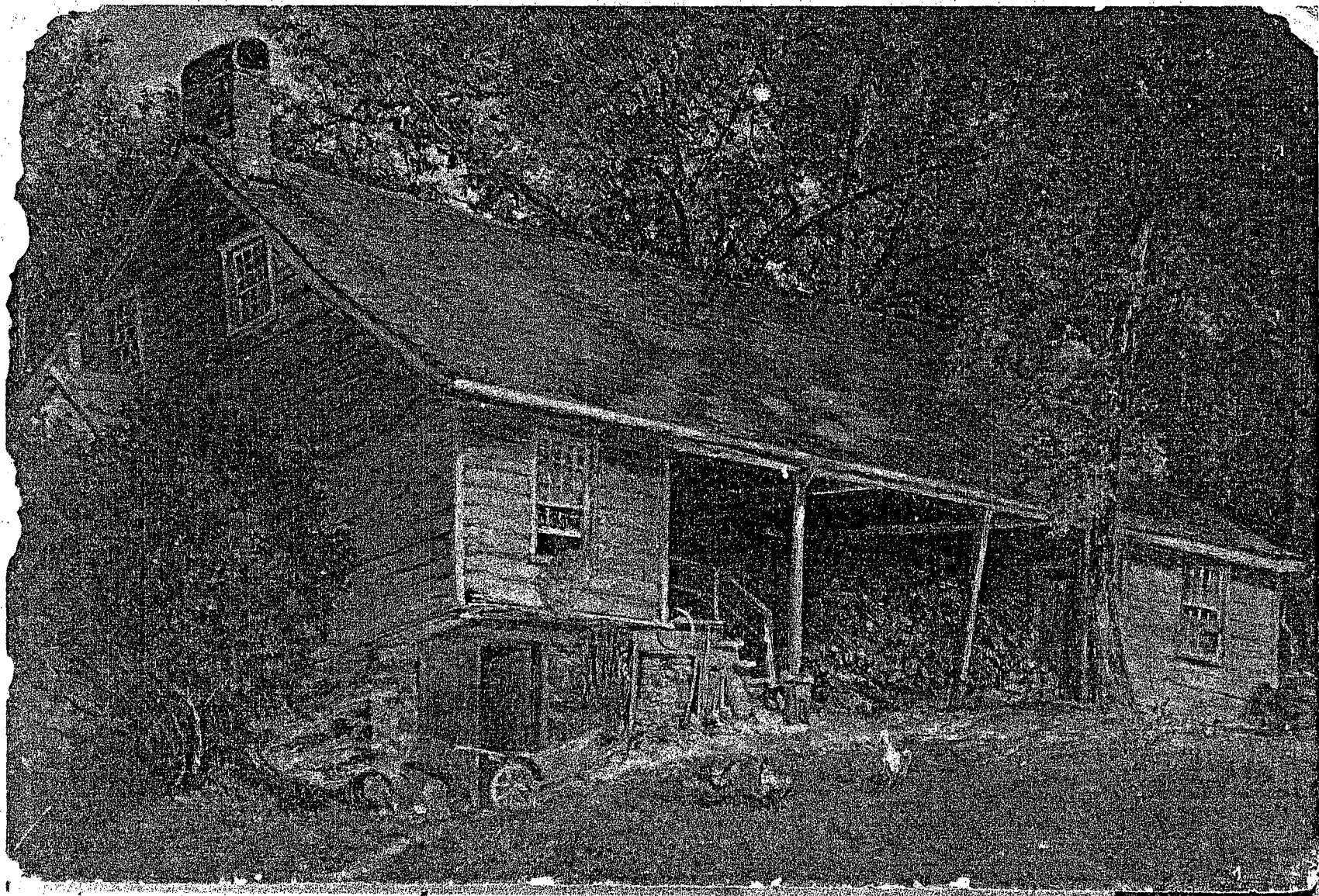
This view, nearly identical to the earlier Church sketch, confirms much of the earlier depiction, down to individual trees. Unlike Church's sketch, this suggests that Spring Street may have followed a lower elevation (on line with the foreground wall and the horse and wagon shown in the sketch) with an angled driveway (that remains today), sweeping up to the House. In the backdrop, note the pointy, dark tips of cedar trees seen just to the left of the House





**Figure 12: Oil sketch, by Charles H. Moore (c. 1862), showing Store-House/  
Studio from southwest**

This important document shows the scene looking north from the south side of the Store-House/Studio building, which was constructed in 1839. The view includes a clearly depicted grove of mature cedar trees in the background, left, which apparently stood to the west of a connecting road that linked the foreground area to the Cottage/Studio to the north. The cedar grove can also be identified in Jasper Cropsey's sketch of 1853 (Figure 11).



**Figure 13: Oil sketch, by Charles H. Moore (c. 1862), showing Shore-House/  
Studio from south**

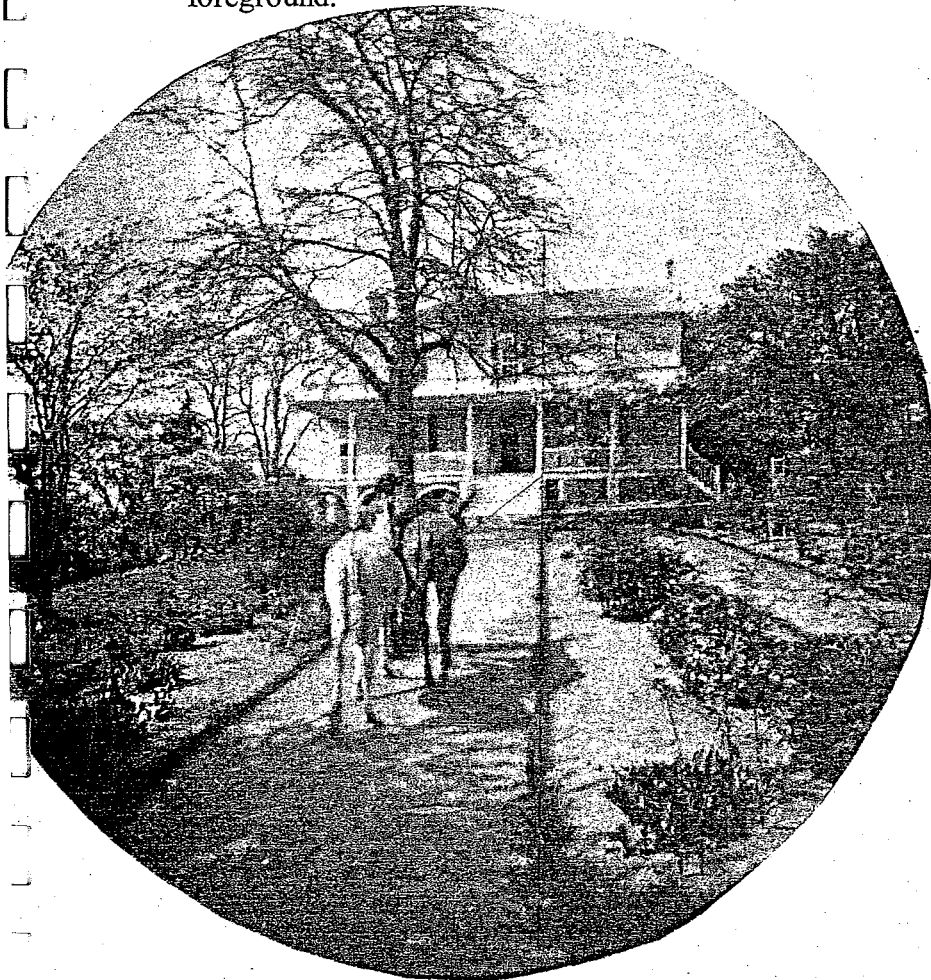
This is a companion view to the previous oil sketch (Figure 12). It shows the south side of the building in its telltale utilitarian, workaday setting, with firewood storage and chickens feeding in the foreground. Note the oak tree growing close to the south façade of the building.





**Figure 14: Painting, by Charles H. Moore (c.1862), showing House and Flower Garden from the south**

The painting is the earliest pictorial record of the Cedar Grove flower garden as it was laid out south of the house. Thomas Cole's daughters, Mary (then age 23) and Emily (19 in 1862) may be depicted on the steps. Note the wide gravel walk centered on the house, and the massing of the flower borders, which included shrubs as well as taller herbaceous plants like hollyhocks, seen in the right foreground.

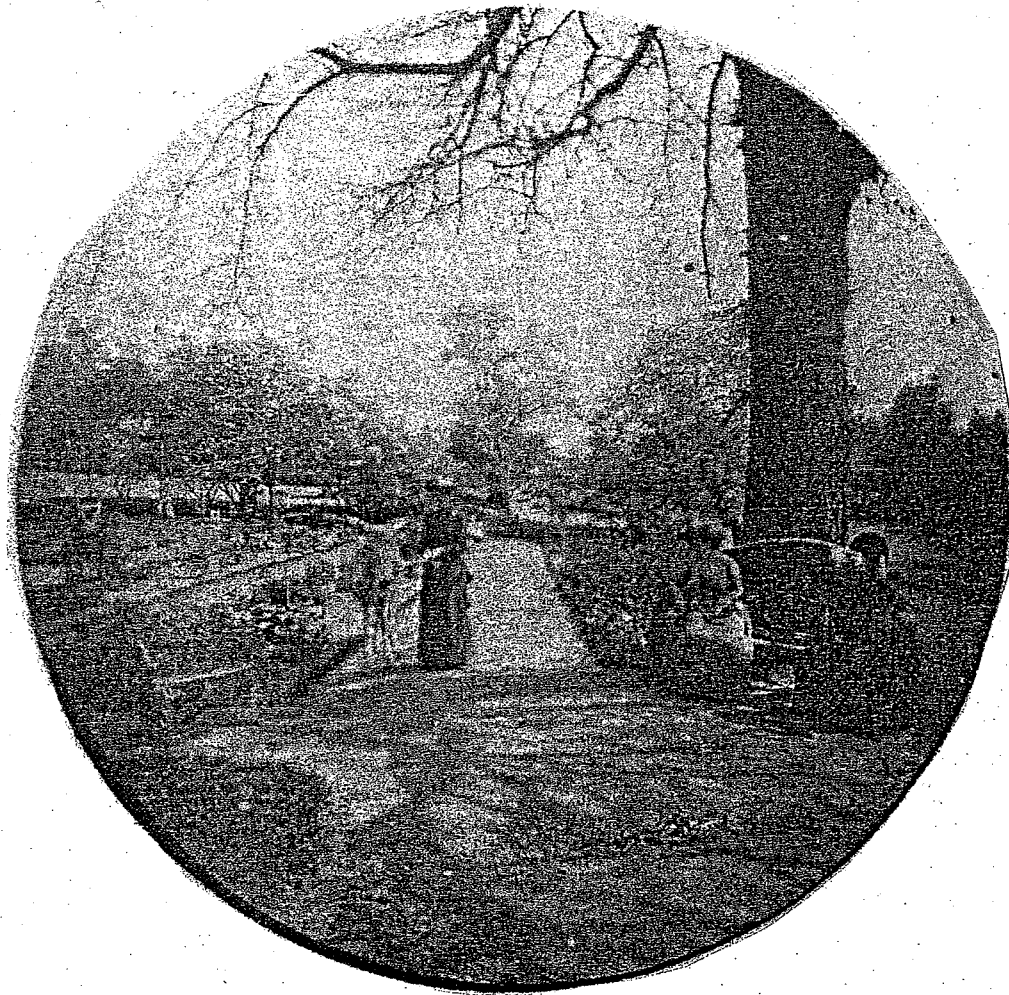


**Figure 15: Photograph of House from the south, c. 1891**

The donkey's (Max Welton and Kikie) are standing on the garden path. The right side of the path (east) is shown extending to the eastern side of the center stairway leading to the House Piazza and front door. Initially, the left (west) path line may have been aligned on the west side of the stairs, but as the honeylocust tree (shown here at about age 74 years) grew the path line was shifted to the east and the path narrowed.

The photograph was taken in spring (perhaps mid-May) and shows the early season growth of several perennials (including peonies).

Note also the small tree to the left of the donkeys; the second garden path to the right of the center path, and the large apple tree to the right (east) of the house. Some/larger trees are shown along Spring Street north of the house, while a spruce tree is seen just to the left (west) of the Piazza.



**Figure 16: Photograph of the Flower Garden, from the north, c. 1890**

The view complements Figure #15 from the opposite orientation. Nearly 80 years after the house (and possibly the Flower Garden), was constructed, the center line path is shown offset from the widening honeylocust tree. Note in the background that the path seems to end. It actually turned sharply left (to the east) where it led to Cole's New Studio

In the foreground, note the drainage swale along the driveway edge. No cobble stones are visible. The gravel path branches to the left where it gives access to an adjacent, narrower path seen to the left of the donkey. Note the grove of trees in the background. This thicket line separated the immediate house grounds from the lot purchased by Thomas Cole in 1839, where he built his New Studio in 1846.





**Figure 17: Photograph of the Flower Garden from the north, c. 1882**

This is a close-up of the previous image, taken in a similar time period. The young girls on the garden path may be Theodore Cole's children, Florence (6 years old in 1882) and Mary Emily (2 years old in 1882). Note the small tree to the right and behind the large honeylocust tree. Also, note the several large trees behind and to the left of the center path. Cole's New Studio is seen to the left, behind some lower vegetation.



**Figure 18 – Photograph of House and Flower Garden from the south, c. late 1890s**

The summertime scene shows the House Piazza overlooking the garden. One leg of the rustic seat is visible as are lower vines and shrubs to the left (west) of the main stairway leading to the Piazza. Note the lower branches of a small tree left of the center path.





**Figure 20: Photograph of Flower Garden, from the north, 1933**

Three decades after the scene in Figure 19, the center line garden path has been reduced to about three feet, as the 120 year old honeylocust tree spreads its trunk. In the foreground, a cobble stone gutter has been added and the earlier rustic seat has been replaced. The parallel garden paths remains but, by this date, it was grass surfaced. A rose arbor has been added to the east. On the extreme left is a lawn ornament resembling a bird bath with a sculptural figure

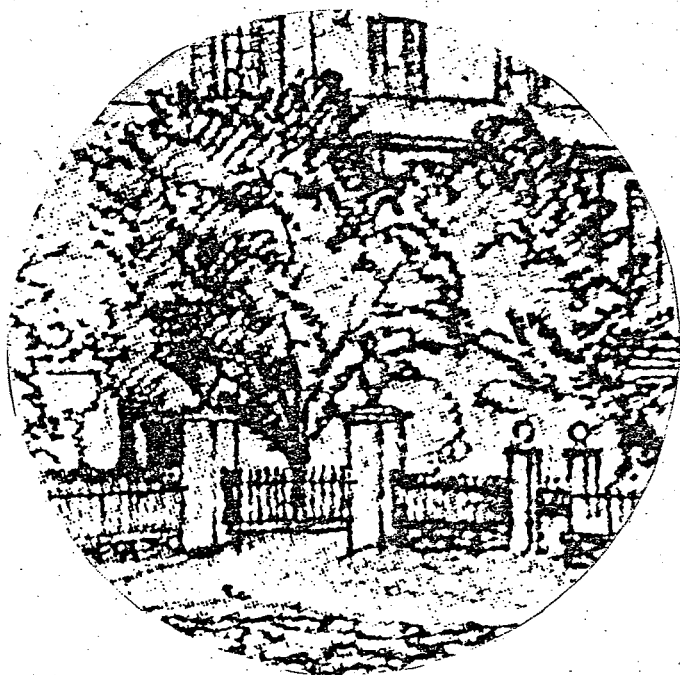


**Figure 19 – Photograph of Flower Garden, from the north, c. late 1890s**

This image appears to be a match to #18. Comparing this to image #16, the center line path has been further narrowed. The rustic seat remains



**Figure 21: Photograph showing gate piers at Entrance to Cedar Grove, c. 1880s (?)**



The original brick gate piers formed a substantial carriage entry (about 11 feet wide) leading into Cedar Grove from the turnpike road (today's Spring Street). By measuring the brick coursing, the piers appear to have been about 8 feet tall, plus cap and finial, and 2-1/2 feet wide. As such, the man standing beside the northern pier is about 6 feet tall, probably the lanky Theodore Cole (1838-1928) – see Figure 40, possibly standing beside his wife, Eugenia (1839-1934), sometime after their marriage in 1874.

Circled at the left is a detail from Frederic Church's drawing of 1848 (see Figure 10) that illustrates these piers, suggesting that originally there were sizable urns mounted on the top of each pier. If so, the urns were removed before the above photograph was taken. Note that the picket fence and gate has also been removed in the photograph. Note also on Church's drawing, the pedestrian gateway to the right of the carriage gate. It is fitted with ball finials on tops of the pedestrian-scaled piers, which were probably of timber construction.