

THOMAS COLE
&
FREDERIC CHURCH

A LEGACY OF
ART & FRIENDSHIP

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The Thomas Cole National Historic Site showcases the life and work of Thomas Cole (1801–1848), whose American landscape painting defines an enduring visual identity for the nation. Its work aims to spark a love for art and nature through the work of Thomas Cole.

Transcriptions by Maya Junkins, Amanda Malmstrom, Margaret DiStefano, and Michaela Ellison-Davidson
Edited by Margaret DiStefano, Maya Junkins, and Heather Palmer

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THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Catskill, New York

Editor's Note

This volume contains a curated selection of correspondence to, from, and about Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, telling the story of how Church came to be Cole's student, his study in Catskill from 1844 to 1846, and the legacy that Cole's teachings had on his career and American art. Additional correspondence exists in archives and other publications.

The authors of these letters often wrote in an informal style, using abbreviations, omitting punctuation marks, and crossing out words. They inserted hyphens, occasionally written as “=” or “—,” for words that are continued on the following line, which are included here. Original line breaks are not preserved in this text.

Complete high resolution digital images of select original letters are available from the website of the New York State Library at www.nysl.nysed.gov. A lightly edited version of the text is available for sale at thomascole.org or in our gift shop.

The following historic documents may contain outdated and offensive terminology. Please read with care.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The relationship between Thomas Cole (1801–1848) and Frederic Church (1826–1900) is a foundational one in the history in American art, the Hudson River School, and Cedar Grove, the property known today as the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

In 1844, an eighteen-year-old Frederic Church arrived at Cedar Grove to study under the renowned landscape painter Thomas Cole. Records show that Church's father paid three hundred dollars a year for his son's tuition. From 1844 to 1846, Church refined his draftsmanship skills and created some of his first landscape paintings. Provided with drawing assignments, the young artist explored the grounds of Cedar Grove, sketching trees, plants, figures, and farm animals directly from observation. One of Church's earliest painted landscapes he made under Cole, *The Catskill Mountains from the Village of Catskill, New York* (c. 1844–46), was most likely a view close to the property. Alongside his mentor, Church toured the mountain peaks of the Catskills and locales along the Hudson River. In the area, Church visited and sketched sites such as the Catskill Mountain House, North-South Lake, the Van Vechten House, Kaaterskill Falls, Catskill Creek, and Red Hill, the place where he eventually designed the landscape and architecture of his Hudson River home, Olana. Cole and Church also traveled beyond the Catskills to various locations across New York and New England in search of inspiration.

After his study with Thomas Cole ended in 1846, Frederic Church continued to nurture relationships with many members of the Cole family. He visited Cedar Grove once in 1847 and again in October 1848, after Cole's death. During this visit, he sketched *View from Cedar Grove* (1848), the most comprehensive view of the property as it stood during Cole's time. That same year, he painted *To the Memory of Cole* as a tribute to his mentor. In the following decades, Church recurrently wrote letters to the family, particularly to Maria Bartow Cole (1813–1884) and Emily Cole (1843–1913), Thomas and Maria Cole's daughter, who was also a professional artist. However, the most significant family connection Frederic Church formed was with Theodore "Theddy" Alexander Cole (1838–1928), Thomas and Maria Cole's eldest son. Theodore Cole, who had accompanied Church on his sketching excursions around the Catskills as a child, eventually came to work for Church, tending to his farm at the property known today as the Olana State Historic Site. Their extensive correspondence shows that they developed a valuable lifelong friendship. Alongside directly supporting Theodore, Church gave financial advice to the Cole family and gifted them money on multiple occasions after Thomas Cole's death.

The letters selected for this publication concern the story of how Frederic Church came to be Thomas Cole's student, his study in Catskill from 1844 to 1846, and the lasting relationships he continued to foster from his time at Cedar Grove until his death in 1900. They allow us to view Frederic Church through the lens of the family that welcomed him into their home. They watched as he grew from a talented and ambitious eighteen-year-old young man to an established and world-renowned landscape painter. Throughout his career, Frederic Church embraced the teachings of Thomas Cole and cultivated his personal bonds with the Cole family. His correspondence reflects the lasting impact of these relationships as he rose to fame while bearing Thomas Cole's artistic legacy.

— Maya Junkins, 2026 Cole Fellow

[Daniel Wadsworth to Thomas Cole]

[Addressed to:]

Thomas Cole Esquire–

Artist

Cattskill–

State of New York

Hartford May 8th, 1844

My dear Mr. Cole

Joseph Church Esq a gentleman of respectability of this town has a son between seventeen and eighteen years of age, who has evinced considerable talent for landscape painting & who has a strong desire to pursue the art. His father is both able and willing to forward his views in this respect

The young gentleman has received a good education and has considerable mechanical genius His personal appearance and manners are prepossessing Will it be convenient and agreeable to you to receive him into your own family as a pupil or if not to have him board near you and give him the advantage of your instruction His father will acquiesce in any terms you may require. I do not urge this matter on you but I think the young gentleman both worthy and amiable Will you be kind enough to answer this letter at your convenience stating what would be your own terms for instruction and what would be the expense of board with you or elsewhere and at what time if you can receive him you would like to have him come I write with the knowledge and at the request of Mr. Church as well as expressing my own wishes on the subject. Young Mr. Church has practised considerably in oil and with some success by himself without instruction—

[In unidentified handwriting:]

You Mount Etna is in a safe ~~place~~ Place & in perfect preservation & much admired by the very few have been to see it– You See I have been obliged to use ~~of~~ another had to write for me I would attempt to – say adieu with my own I have not written 20 lines since my last letter to you. & these few are a great effort – Without any acute disease my strengthth [~~illegible~~] of body & faculties of mind lessen every day gradually– Perhaps the summer may raise life a little but it is only Perhaps

: With kind respect to your Father in Law & Mrs. Cole & love to the Children– With much affection –

your faithful Friend

Daniel Wadsworth

[Frederic E. Church to Thomas Cole]

[Addressed to:]
Thomas Cole Esq.
Catskill
New York.

Hartford May 20th, 1844.

Sir,

I have seen your letter addressed to Mr. Wadsworth in reply to the one written by him with reference to me and I may say, I have seldom felt more sincere joy than I experienced when I learned your favorable answer. I had frequently heard, as you intimated in your letter, that you seldom or never acquired pupils, consequently I scarcely dared to hope that you would be willing to recei[ve] me, but your condescension and Mr. Wadsworth['s] kindness in offering to use his influence in my favor, even if I had no other object in contemplation, ought to be sufficient weight, to persuade me to exert myself in your art, to the extent of my ability; and if unremitting attention and activity can ac—complish anything, it shall not be my fault if I am not a worthy pupil of so distinguished an artist.

My highest ambition lies in excelling in the art. I pursue it not as a source of gain or merely as an amusement, I trust I have higher aims than these.

In case you had not been willing to receive me, I had intended to pass the summer and fall in Massachusetts, consequently I had prepared my colors and painting utensils, so that I could now im—mediately set out for Catskill, if there were not other necessary matters to be attended to, which will delay me several days, perhaps I may venture to say that I will be with you as soon as the 1st of June.

My father thinks it best to accept your latter terms giving me an opportunity to leave if anything should happen which cannot now be foreseen.

My parents (as well as myself), would cer-tainly prefer that I should board in your family, when it can be done with perfect convenience to yourself.

I have frequently heard of the beautiful and romantic scenery about Catskill; once I passed near there, but so long ago that I remember nothing but the abrupt bluffs and lofty heights which characterise one ^{of} its grandest features; it would give me the greatest pleasure to accompany you in your rambles about the place, observing nature in all her various appearances. I have never before this spring at-tempted to paint from nature, but of all employ--ments, (as far as I have had experience,) I think that the most delightful.

I am fully sensible of the unusual advantage I enjoy in being allowed to look to you sir as an in-structor, yet I plainly see that my own diligent attention is necessary, in order to render your valuable instructions useful.

Yours very respectfully
Frederic E. Church.

[Theodore A. Cole to Thomas Cole]

Pa pa

[In unidentified handwriting:] August 26th 1844 **[Presumably Theodore Cole's handwriting:]** Catskill

Dear Papa

I want you to come home and se me.

I am very glad that you have got my box of paints to paint with. When is Mister Church coming home.

[Thomas Cole to Maria Bartow Cole]

[Addressed to:]

Mrs Tho^s Cole
Catskill
New York

To Mrs. Cole

New York, March 3^d, 1845.

My dear Maria

[Crossed out with an X over the following text: I have no doubt you have been expecting a letter from me before this time & I have been thinking of writing; but have not had the opportunity before this.] I arrived here safely with the pictures. I have not quite finished the Catskill yet; but have commenced sketching on Canvas for the Sea View. I have fitted up the painting room, so, that it is quite comfortable— have got the little stove up, + the stair way covered. I only want you here to see it. There was a very pleasant Club meeting of VerPlancks' on Thursday. Mr Sturges is pleased with the VerBryck picture. I spent an evening with George Allen + am to drive there to-morrow. They are very kind + make enquires about you. **[Crossed out with an X over following text: Sarah + the rest are pretty well. Sarah is not gone to Baltimore yet, but may in a few days. I called on Spencers they are well. I suppose Uncle Sandy has heard from him before this. I perceive by the papers that they are about sending apples to China wrapped in paper— per-haps it will be a good market soon. I think I shall be able to sell the pictures. There has been very fair weather since I have been down, it is rather blustering to day: I want to see you + the children very much— I am afraid Theddy will be disappointed about Aunt Anns' Schools as she cannot get any Scholars until towards May, How do they little folks get along I after think of them + want to come up + see them.]** I forgot to take tell the children they must be very good, when I am away. I hope Theddy draws + Mary. Ask Mr Church if he will, now + then give, Theddy a little lesson. Tell Mr Church that I expect to see something quite fine, on my return. I am not quite certain whether I can come up before next week: in all probability not, I wish to finish my pictures + sell them; **[Crossed out with an X over the following text: but you must hold yourself ~~to~~ in readinesss to come down with me when I come. Mr Noble is not yet come so in all probabily he will come next week. Tell Mr N that I somewhat expected him. I did feel in the humor to write to him the other day; but something interferred.]** Give my love to all the girls, + kiss the children all round for me. All ~~[praise]~~ in love to you. I remain

Yours affectionately,

Thomas Cole

Write to me soon.

[Thomas Cole to Maria Bartow Cole]

[Addressed to:]
M^{rs}. Thomas Cole
Catskill
N. York.

New York Nov ^27 1845

My dear Maria,

I write in the greatest haste as I have many things on my hands to day. Among the rest I am summoned as a Juror on the rascally Polly Bodines case; but I shall get clear. I was glad to recieve your letter + would have written sooner if I could. All the matter shall be attended to. I am going to D^f Mason's this Mg who is still talking about painting. I dined a day or two since at M^f Minturns' — I suspect to get something of Mr Lenox. I am sitting to Bogle for m[y] likeness. Ann is getting better slowly. I have not sold the circular picture yet. few have seen it yet. Mr Bryant has returned + there will be a club meeting to morrow Ev^s at M^r Dewey's. It will be towards the last of next week before I can get home. I hope you are all getting along well. Kiss all the Children for me. I am getting very anxious to be at home Write to me immediately + let me know how you are getting on. My love to all. Respect to M^f M^cConkey + M Church.

I must conclude ~~with~~ the strong desire to be with you soon.

I remain

yours affectionately

Tho^s Cole

It is rainy to day.

[Theodore A. Cole to Thomas Cole]

January 6, 1846

[Presumably Theodore Cole's handwriting, block letters, written in pencil:]

Catskill

Dear Papa,

Tone wich my mother heard [Illegible, three words added in unidentified handwriting] was the ice going a way. We went down to the river just when you went away and after we had been there half an hour the boat was above Hudson. My mother and Aunt Harriet and Mr. Church and my sege, went to the streaky yesterday, and [Addition in the same unidentified handwriting:] Aunt Harriet was the l^eader and she made a mistake, the streaky was full of water, there was ice in it, it was aboyt as thick as your finger nail, it was not mudy I had a very hard lesson today. Sister and me were rolling barrels and one of the barrels busted and all our boys came running out and then their waggon was all brokin and I had to cary the staves in that old ho^use behind the wing, Aunt Franky was sick and the doctor gave her four pills she is better now; Mr. Church put a box [written in ink:] for a blue bird [illegible, two words].

From your little boy Theddore [Addition in the same unidentified handwriting:] Cole

[Addition in the same unidentified handwriting, in pencil:] + Birds

[On the right side of the page: Two pencil drawings of a house with trees, a path, and a figure]

[Theodore A. Cole to Frederic E. Church]

[Presumably Maria Bartow Cole's handwriting:]

Catskill Feb. 26 1846

Dear Mr. Church,

I received your letter yesterday and was very happy to hear from you. Mr. Palmatre was going to shoot Tiger when his Father in law was here and ^{my} My father asked the man if he wanted Tiger but he ~~said~~ ^{said} that ^{[above the a in "that":] a} he did not want him. ~~illegible~~ So my father offer^d some money along with Tiger; then the man took Tiger and put him ~~int~~ in the waggon and took him to Greene Ville. ~~illegible—two characters~~ Tiger ~~was~~ ^{co} was condemned to the churn-mill for life to make up for the sheep that he killed. Mr. M^c Conkey, ~~aunt harri~~ Aunt Harriet, Miss Maria [&] Cath^arine Cooke went to ~~greene~~ Green Ville yesterday. On Sunday it snowed all day and the greater part of the ~~next Mon~~ Monday pretty hard so it is very good sleighing and the snow is about a foot deep: I wrote a valentine to Cousin Emma.

I went to a concert and one of the Ladies sang very well and there ~~was~~ ^{were} two ~~grum~~ grum gentlemen^s. My father was at work at the Cross in the World. He got the two figures^{ures} too small at first and then he ~~rube~~ ^{drubbed} them out and painted them larger and ~~know~~ ^{now} they he ~~don~~ does not like them. He ~~be gan~~ ^{began} Prometheus on On Christmas. I got in my stocking a Portfolio Ink stand two Books + some candy. Sister Mary got in her stocking a cradle a book little candy man and rabbit. Emmy got a candy man and child and new doll she bit oof ~~the~~ the child's head and mans^h hat. ~~we~~ ^{We} have got the ice house filled with very fine and clear ice, Martin and another man was lifting a very long piece of ice and the other man let go of his ~~illegible~~ ^{illegible} and the piece of ice fell ont Martins ~~illegible~~ foot and made ~~hi~~ him pretty lame. My Mother Aunt harriet sister Mary and Emmy Martin and my self to Mr. Jacksons to get a dog but we ~~illegible~~ ^{Could} not get the dog we wanted. There has been a freshet here the Creek broke open and the ice cover^d the Long dock so that people ~~he~~ who live there had to creep along to get there, it broke apart of the Slaughter house and a barns. My Father thanks you for sending me sutch a good letter, I do not go to school this winter but I expect to ~~get~~ ^o go to school in the ~~spring~~ spring. We are all well except Emmy she has ~~the~~ ^a cold, what are you painting on this Winter? I am ~~draw~~ drawing eyes this winter and faces. In the next letter ^{you} will you ^{please} ^{to} draw me a little picture to cobby.

Yours, sincerely

Theodore A. Co[le]

P.S. I ~~miss~~ miss you very mutch this winter because I have no one to ^{slide} [^] play with. This is a poor drawing of a house.

[Ink drawing of a house, mountains, and two figures]

[Frederic E. Church to Thomas Cole]

[Addressed to:]
Mr. Thomas Cole.
Catskill
N. Y.

Hartford Oct. 17th 1846

Dear Sir,

more than three months has elapsed since I left Catskill, and yet in spite of blue ink stands and sundry promises very little has been effected in the way of correspondence between my friends in Catskill and myself.

I can only excuse your humble servant by saying that the last letter which i wrote to you, although more particularly devoted to business than friendly correspondence, yet influenced me in supposing that it might be considered a sufficient beginning to induce some member of your family to reply by giving me a full and glowing account of the “manners and customs” of my friends in Catskill. Again, the past summer has glided away so rapidly that it appears to me nearer four weeks than four months since I left C—. The recollection of the blue mountains is as fresh and vivid to me as the day I last saw them: neither does it require any very powerful effort of memory to see you all engaged in your respective employments. Viz— Yourself and Mr. M^c. Conkey— painting. Mrs Cole with her needle, Miss Emily superintending household matters generally, Miss Harriet with her lamp scissors and poker Miss Charlotte with her brooms and ~~g~~ green baise cap— and the children amusing themselves in a variety of ways, as their versatile fancies direct.

I am now engaged on a small portrait which has occupied my attention for a few days, previously I had painted a small picture (22 by 30) of the Deluge ” in which I paid particular attention to effect: it was a source of pleasure to me to find that all my friends liked it, and as far as they were capable of judging, considered it my best per-formance. I have ~~p~~ made a careful drawing of the “Charter Oak” from a new point of view, intending to paint it on a pretty large Canvas during the coming winter.

Some of the gentlemen connected with the Wadsworth ~~A~~ gallery are trying to purchase my “Hooker” picture, this picture I have improved by glazing &c. since my return.

It is my intention to spend the winter in New York City— I should like very much to know whether it is your intention to reside ^{^there} or in Catskill during the cold season. It appears to ~~fillegible — one character~~ me that ^{^before I left} Mr. M^c. Conkey expressed his intention of staying with you, at least during the autumn (if so I should be delighted to receive a letter from him).

A few days ago our City was the scene of the most horrid tragedy that ever happened here within my remembrance— A person by the name of Holcomb born at the north but brought up and properly instilled with southern principles in the South having had a tedious law suit with one Olcott of this City invited the latter to his room in the United States Hotel relative to the settlement of the affair; so far from settling it however they probably came to high words when Holcomb shot Olcott through the head with a pistol and then himself also through the head H— died immediately but O— breathed a few **[page ripped]** a pen was found in the grasp of the latter **[page ripped]**

I should like to hear if Miss Emily has any of those delicious New Spitzenburg apples for sale and if so her price per barrel.

I presume your hear often from Miss Frances, the last time I saw the doctor he said she was gaining steadily. Please remember me to all the members of your family and to all my friends in the village.

I presume that you have as many letters to answer as usual, if so, let the task ~~fall on~~ of replying to this fall on Miss Charlotte Thomson & Co. since they agreed to answer my letters.

Very respectfully
F. E. Church—

[Frederic E. Church to Theodore A. Cole]

[Addressed to:]

Master Theodore A Cole
NY Catskill

[Illegible markings]

Y

New York Feb^y 20th, 1847

Friend Theddy

I received your very welcome letter a long time ago, and wished to answer it before this, but owing to a very bad habit which I have, of neglecting to answer letters in time, always putting them off until the next day, (which never comes,) I have not commenced it until now. I was ~~much~~ pleased with your letter which conveyed much information in few words, what displeased me in it was the account of Tigers backsliding I was very sorry to hear that he had not acted as becomes an intelligent and conscientious dog. I am much afraid that his mistress overlooked his faults too much, so that he is what may be called a spoiled dog, I should ^{^think} that the destruction of his house and property ^{^by the flames} had soured his disposition perhaps, and led him to associate with evil companions, like— Short Tail Bull Dog, Long Tail Snarler, Brown Back, Sheep Stealer, ~~and others~~, &c. infamous for their wicked deeds; you must expostulate with Tiger and set before ^{^him} noble examples of the canine race, such as the Dogs of St. Bernard and others at the same time, showing what awful ends some dogs have come to; perhaps he may reform.

I suppose that you are at school and are getting to be very learned in your various studies: perhaps you teacher would ~~sh~~ say that you letters were somewhat disconnected or broken, as if I should write thus— Dear Theddy how do you do, its ~~st~~ snowing. I am well, f a friend of mine got his fingers snapped off in a steel trap— its washing day. I want to see you. &c &c.

Now I should like to have you write me another letter soon and see how great improvement you can make in that respect; your spelling &c were very good indeed. Whilst making the above hint to you I noticed that I was writing to you in a wretched scrawly hand which you must excuse as I have several letters to write after this and my time is limited.

I wonder if you are ^{^as} anxious to grind paint as ever, and if you stick to your drawing; suppose if you write to me again, you introduce an original drawing ^{^into your letter} and let me see how much improvement you have made.

I noticed the other day while looking over my sketches a very rude pencil drawing of Emmy presiding at the little tea table which ~~im~~ instantly brought to my mind "old times" where you and Mary used to have little tea parties, at which time when you two were arranging things and going through with all the formalities, little Emmy amused herself in appropriating the good things to herself. I should very much like to see you all three together again. But I must close ~~soon~~ as I have as, I said before, other letters to write so remember ~~to~~ me if you please to you Father and mother Miss Emily, Miss Harriet, Miss Charlotte, Mr. Mc-Conkey, Mary and Emmily and such other of my friends as you may see.

Your friend,

Frederic E. Church

P.S. I am afraid that I have not written this letter properly for a little boy, but you Father or Mother will explain it I dare say

F.C.

[Frederic E. Church to Theodore A. Cole]

[Addressed to:]
Theodore Cole
Catskill

Lee: July 25th 1847

Dear Theddy

I am sorry not to have answered your letter before this, ~~and~~ I have thought of it again and again, but I dislike to write letters even to those whom I take great interest in, I hope you will never be in the habit of not answering letters in time. I suppose that you are stuffing your mind with all sorts of knowledge whether you are at school or not, maybe you prefer cherries and raspberries boys generally do.

I was walking in the yard to day, when I spied a lame, tame crow jerking along like a corklegged tailor whom I know. I got some crumbs of bread, at the sight of which my unfortunate little friend hopped up to me and fed out of my hand without fear; he had such a funny face which he now and then turned up with such a comical grave look that I laughed right out, when he took offence, gave a kind of gruff caw and flew away, don't you ~~wh~~ wish you had seen him. I saw a dog in Boston which looked so much like ~~€~~ Tiger that I stopped to see, but this dog had not these ugly eyes that Tiger has: How does the dog which you have now get along I shall be afraid to go into the yard, when I come to Catskill if he barks as fiercely as you say he does, but I shall be obliged to look over the gate and call for you to let me in, and then I shall have to walk very fast into the house for fear the dog should bite my legs, how you would laugh to see me hurry into the house, looking back to see if he was after me.

I wonder if you draw every day now, you should, you must be careful and not let Mary beat you. I suppose you will say – "Pooh! She can't beat me! but you had better be careful. I suppose that Emmy has got to be a woman by this time, and presides at your little tea table with great dignity, eating all the good things, while You and Mary are arranging the cups and saucers. Mary must be older than you by this time, and tells you not to go into the wet grass and to keep ~~out of the g~~ off from the flower beds, and at bed time says– Theddy, its time to go to bed– and you march off without saying a word. However, we will talk things over when I see you. Please answer this letter soon.

–Your friend–

Frederic E. Church

[Thomas Cole to Frederick W. Mineé]

Catskill Dec^r 16th 1847

Fred^k W Mineé Esq

Dear Sir

Yours of the 7th last was received some days ago + would have been answered earlier had M^r Smith to whom you referred me had been well enough to reply to mine before this. It has not been an ob-ject with me to give instruction the pursuit of my Art occupying my time & thoughts, but ^{[at the] requests} on the commendation of friends I have taken several young ~~illegible, three words~~ ^{painters} to study under me— These ~~I have always heard~~ as having been with me for a year or two each are now gone away ~~& I am without~~ As I have always treated my students as friends as well as pupils & should be unwilling to instruct any one whom I cannot meet on such terms ~~I t a~~ I took the liberty you offered me + ^{[your being on outer Niagra] scribbles} ~~enqu~~ ^{made en-}quiries of Mr Smith— His commendation + that of some of your fellow students is very satisfactory— The terms on which I take my other students was \$300 p^r Annum for this I will furnish you with a ~~sw~~ painting room give you the necessary instruction + amit you into my studio at suitable hours. In the summer season you will at times accompany me in my sketching excursions— &c. I am not quite certain whether the arrangements of my family will permit me to take ~~you~~ as an inmate at present; but ~~Board such suitable~~ ^{the expense of suitable} board can be obtained in the village for \$ about \$3 including the washing—

You speak of endeavoring to be here early as Spring if the arrangement is made between us— It is possible that I may be absent for a few weeks in May. best this may be a matter of arrangement between us. ~~Pf~~

I took the ~~liberty~~ the liberty of asking M Smith as to your religious sentiments ^{but he did not answer}— this is a matter on which I hesitate to speak, but you will excuse the desire that I have that one with whom I ~~have~~ may have itimate intercourse should not be strongly at variance with myself who am of the Protestant Episcopal Church—

If ~~if is you~~ you conclude to become my student you will please write to me as your easiest convenience ———

I am

Yours truly

Thomas Cole

[Frederic E. Church to Theodore A. Cole]

Pittsford Sep 11th 1848

Master Theodore Cole }

Dear Theodore

You perhaps recollect that I promised when I was in Catskill last, to write you a letter and although it is a long time since then, I will keep my promise by writing now. Perhaps you will be pleased to get a letter which came all the way from Pittsford, for Pittsford is a great ways from Catskill, and perhaps [^]will wonder what I can be doing in the middle of Vermont, so far from home. I will tell you. There are a great many high Mountains here much taller than High Peak and the scenery is very beau-tiful. I brought my sketch box and Port-folio and employ myself in taking sketches all about. But there is one thing here which will please you mightily, that is the fishing. I sometimes go to the Mountain streams, and fish for trout, which you know are the best of all fishes, and catch a great many at a time, enough to make a nice break-fast for a dozen people perhaps. Don't you wish that you was here? I hope that you sketch and ~~draw~~ draw a great deal for you recol-lect that your father when he was living advised you to draw every day and as you will never see your kind father while you live you ought to remember and make the most of all the good advice that he has given you. And if you perserve in your studies etc. you very likely will make as great a man as your father was but not without study and labor. I send you a very small sketch which I was obliged to make in a hurry as I am going home soon and have to finish some outdoor sketches before I go. I hope that your Mother Aunts & sisters are all well. I intend to visit you all in two or three weeks and before I come I hope that you will get a nice sketch for me to see how much improvement you have made.

I have no time to write more excepting that I shall have a great deal to tell ~~you~~ when I see you.

Please remember me to all,

Your friend
Frederic E. Church

[Frederic E. Church to Theodore A. Cole]

[Addressed to:]

Mr. F.E. Church
No 15 Tenth St
New York C.

Catskill Dec 23/63

Dear Mr Church

We arrived home quite safely Yesterday afternoon from finding it very cold up here & good sleighing. Which will make or pay for Christmas.

I enclose you a number of bills (which were presented to Thomas in Hudson) which ^{bills} if you approve and re Enclose to me I will have paid.

I have yet remaining on hand about one Hundred Dollars of Your Money above that Kirby owes me for 2 pigs \$48, making in all above \$158 cash on hand. The Taxes & the man will require about this am't between now & the 15th of Jany. so if You decide that these bills paid ~~you~~ now will You please send me about this am't.

I have not Shown your present to me yet to the family, I am going to astonish all hands on Christmas, morning. They will think they have got into the wrong sleigh when they see so splendid a robe. All join in Kindest regards to Mrs C & Your self & wishing You all a very Merry Christmas

I remain Most truly Yours
Theo. A. Cole.

[Frederic E. Church to Theodore A. Cole]

Kingston July 28/65

My dear Mr. Cole

I received your letter in which you refer to Mr Barhytes desire to secure more of that muck— I have no objection provided he hauls out an equal number of loads for me according to the restrictions previously arranged— It is important though— that he should not carry off for his own use the top layer of muck—the black part—and leave me the lower He should make an equal division.

I am glad to hear that affairs on the farm are so satisfactory and I hope that the farmer will prove the right man—

I trust that your farm will produce abundantly this year and heavy crops of all kinds reward your care and skill.

Now for Jamaica — We have removed to this place or residence called Galloway Hill about 5 3500 feet above the sea and we have a cool delightful climate— The scenery is superb— grand. The eye ranges from the Caribbean Sea to Blue Mountain peak which is about 8180 feet in height— A great drought still prevails at this end of the Island which is somewhat mitigated by light showers— yet we have threatening clouds and thunder every day— for some days we hear thunder all day long—

These are all Coffee Estates Coffee is the most beautiful crop which can be raised— when in blossom the fields look like snow and the most delicious fragrance fills the air—

This Coffee brings the highest price in England. The greater part of Jamaica has had abundant rains and the contrast between the gorgeous verdure of the one part and the parched aridity of the other is striking— The line between, in some places is very marked—

I have stood on dry parched ground and overlooked valleys intensely green and luxuriant.

We shall remain on the Island a month longer at least and may conclude to remain two months— I have accomplished a great amount of work— but there is so much to do that I am at a loss to decide day by day— what to paint—

Mrs. Church is fascinated with the occupation of fern collecting and has already an enormous collection. We have them of all sizes from ½ inch to 8 feet in length.

Your sister would hugely enjoy this fern hunting among these picturesque mountains— We hope some day to show to you all a great variety of Jamaica ferns

When I return to the states I shall hasten up the river to see you all and great good it will do me too— Notwithstanding this mag-nificent scenery. I cannot think of the farm and surrounding friends without great longing — Mrs Church desires to join me in kind remembrance to your mother aunts and sisters as well as to your self—

And when you should happen to see Mr and Mrs Hays please remember me them and I hope they have had strawberries enough—

Yours sincerely

Frederic E. Church

[Frederic E. Church to William Henry Osborn]

Rome, Nov. 9th, 1868.

My dear Mr, Osborn:

We are almost as comfortable around our table – illum-ined by a carcel lamp and warmed by an oak fire – as if we were lighted by petroleum and basked by hickory coals in our own cottage – But – the Tiber is not the Hudson – We are all as usual – our small chap had his first sitting, to Healy portrait painter – to-day. Healy has taken a studio here for the winter. Healy is a fine artist – and one half length portrait of an old man which he has in his studio is really magnificent – He is painting a large picture of our war history. The figures are Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, & Porter engaged in an important conference. The likenesses will be very strong – Healy wanted me to help him in some atmosphere effects and offered to paint a head in exchange, as it will not demand two hours time. I readily assented – especially as the arrangement will give us a likeness of our dear little one.

Henry DeForest, wife and two children are in Paris and will be here in a few days. John T. Johnson and part of his family will also be here soon. I hear many Americans on their way hither.

I have commenced my Damascus picture and think I shall go at it with spirit – the subject is an unusual one. I can-not say as yet whether it will paint easily or the reverse.

I have not written to Mr. Borthwick but am waiting until I commence his picture, which (the canvas being ready) will be very soon.

A long time ago you informed me that you had directed Mr. Borthwick to pay the £500 for the picture I painted in Syria – into the hands of Morton & Co. to my credit – a few weeks since it occurred to me that perhaps I ought to write to Morton about it – and did so – but as I wished to make the letter an answer to one he wrote last summer I made the mistake of writing to him in person about the credit. But a few days ago I received from his house a letter of credit for £250 in-stead of £300 and to-day I received a letter from him dated New York, enclosing another letter of credit to the same amount £250. I am a little puzzled at the amount credited to me – and also the duplicate credits – of the letter – however – I think it pretty plain that a mistake has been made by my writing to Morton himself – probably my letter to him was open-ed in London and the business part attended to there by his people and by himself in New York.

I hope that Mr. Borthwick did not understand that I was to paint him a picture (3 feet long) for \$250 – £400 is my regular price – a deduction of £150 would be a little more than I could afford – although I would gladly diminish my uni-form price by twenty-five per cent – to him and also make an especial effort to give him what will please him exactly.

It occurs to me now – it did not before – that perhaps you had also wanted a Syrian picture – if that is so – tell me so plainly and I shall be delighted to paint you another – ruins Arabs – goats and all. The one you have I will give to some one else – I have several applications for that sized picture – I shall only beg for the delay of a few months until I can get here and in my own studio – although I might undertake it here – if I progress well with the work in hand – I intend that you shall have something to represent Syria anyhow – I am more and more delighted that you have got that fine Cole – I believed him to be the best landscape painter that ever lived – If he did not have the marvellous knowledge of light and shade which distinguishes Turner's works he excelled him in color (that I will maintain before all the warmest admirers of Turner) and in profound poetic feeling he was far beyond Turner and equal to Claude and vastly superior to Claude in knowledge.

Strange that the works of so great a man should be com-paratively overlooked. It will be my ambition hereafter to secure a fine Cole for my collection – I should also be much gratified by becoming the possessor of a Holy Family by Murillo – but as Stevens overlooked me in his will, I shall not at pres-ent commence any negotiations for the purchase of a Murillo.

The election of Grant is very inspiring. Heaven help our country and bring us safely out of the confusion which at present prevails and make clear the turbid waters by setting the dirty politicians in the profoundest depths of oblivion. Halloo – that’s a burst –

I think that perhaps my pleasantest thought now-a-days are when they are about our home on the Hudson and all the surroundings – I don’t weep now – because time flies swiftly – I have excellent news from home, my parents and sister are well and everything goes smoothly there and at the farm. Mr. Cole writes that he sent some fruit down to you – I hope that the quantity was large – and the quality excellent. I have learned something about grape culture – as I have noticed with some particularity the manner of treating vines in various countries. Not generally – the flavor of fruits in Europ’s are much inferior to ours. Have you got a good gardener? I am curious to see your farm now. I shall see a great change – Two years improvements and growth tell. Ah – if you only had your farm up opposite to the Catskills.

Got the Memoirs of Dr. Bethune by Rev. Mr. Van Nest – They are very interesting. Robertson’s sermons are wonder-fully fine – Have you read that one on the “Glory of the Vir-gin Mother?” I have read but a few of them as yet.

Splendid news from Spain – that infamous queen has met with her just deserts – she is coming here – perhaps the only refuge she has on earth. A thorough revelation and the Murillos all safe – I think that I shall attempt a flying visit to Madrid before I sail for Rome in order to see the pictures – perhaps by the time this reaches you I shall be on my way to Athens – I wish that you could join me – on that trip.

I had something to say about your building a new house on your farm in my last – of course it is expensive building new – but sometimes the desire to build attacks a man like a fever – and at it he makes – I should almost as much in-terested in your house as in my own and as I have scraped together some good ideas, as I think – I want you to have the benefit of them – You have a high opinion of the architect you have heretofore employed – and I have the boldness to say that I think him not a great man in his department – I don’t think him good at contriving nor good at effect – both pretty important considerations in architecture – I would not say this (perhaps I am mistaken) were it not that I want you to be pro- -vided with the best. A clever young architect who has been trained in a good school will be the best man to give shape to the emanations from our three heads and we will place first Mrs. Osborn’s head. A young architect is more painstaking and more tractable than and old and popular one.

This is a perfect pot **[possible text missing]** of a letter – which I have not re-read – for I am sure I should then commit it to the flames.

My wife has gone to bed but I can, all the **[same]**, send our love with mine to you all– Letters from you and from Mrs. Osborn always cheer us up in our expatriation.

Yours sincerely,
Frederic E. Church

[Frederic E. Church to William Henry Osborn]

Rome, Feby: 24th, 1869.

My dear Mr. Osborn:

I was sad when I wrote to you last – because I was much concerned about my mother's health – and although later letters do not show that she has improved very much – yet I am much more cheerful lately because of a great joy.

At 5 A. M., Feby. 22nd – Washington's birthday – an important stranger made his appearance in Rome – a boy, a fine healthy child. Isabel is doing remarkably well – we have an excellent nurse – and we could desire nothing better in the way of arrangements. We have given up the parlor – which is a really grand room – with plenty of sun and air – to mother and child – so that everything is as well and convenient as can be. You and Mrs. Osborn will – I know – rejoice to hear the news.

I hope before many weeks to be able to introduce George Romulus Washington Remus Church to you in person.

I have been busy to-day packing my old masters. There are 59 in all and cost \$1355 for the lot. I shall send them off in a few days.

The smaller landscape is nearly done. I undertook to paint on it two days lately – when I was not feeling well and injured it considerably so that it will require two days to repair the mischief.

The Damascus I have not dared to touch lately as it is advanced enough now to require the best of my brains – I think ten days would finish it. I have written to McLean, London, to know if he can put it on exhibition for a short time in London before it goes to America – It pleases here, much.

As soon as Isabel is pretty well I propose to start for Athens – I must give up my Spanish tour – we are all very eager to get home – and will not be delayed any more than is necessary.

On the 1st of March Mr. Kneidler owes another \$5000 on the Niagara but I am not disposed to ask him for it now although it might be convenient for me to have \$1000 in gold placed to my credit in London by the middle of April. And it occurs to me that perhaps from the sale of the prints, &c., he might find it convenient to pay that amount on account. I think I have enough to carry me home even now as I do not intend to launch out more in unnecessary purchases, &c. Still – in closing up after a prolonged residence in any place there are many unexpected items of expense – which amount to considerable in the aggregate.

Will you do me the favor when you see Kneidler to probe him a little as to his ability to pay the sum I mentioned – and if he does – will you please add it to my credit at Horton's? I ask this favor of you because you know much about Knoedler's affairs. If Mr. Borthwick should take the little picture I am painting – it will give me \$1350 which is all I require but I judge from his letter to you that he has got his mind on something which is very foreign to my style – so I don't feel any certainty as to his liking the picture I have painted.

Spring is fairly opened here and fresh green leaves are pushing out everywhere – and the Campagna is blooming with flowers. You had not informed me – previous to your last letter – that you had loaned Mr. Cole money on some small pictures – I am exceedingly glad on his account – I was aware of the speculation he had intended to (or had) interested himself in – although I did not know (but suspected) that it was a bad one. When he told me at first that he intended to (or had) invested in an oil well – I hinted that I thought the time for a successful speculation in that direction had past – but he was much interested in it – and fancied it was a

sure thing – I am very sorry – It was a great misfortune and the more so – because he had several un-favorable years for fruit.

I believe that Mr. John Taylor Johnson, who is now here – expressed the wish that he had the “Cross and the World” in place of “Voyage of Life.” Possibly some one would be glad to buy the “Voyage of Life” because it has long been famous. When I return – I shall make an effort to sell the “Cross and the World” for the Coles if possible. It would straighten out all their troubles in money matters.

Thomas Cole was a remarkable genius – far superior in the highest qualities to Turner – and if not quite equal to Claude in those respects – yet was so much his master in others that I feel that I should prefer to own one of Coles best landscapes – in preference to any other landscapes the world can furnish.

It is midnight – so must close, first sending my best love to you and to yours, and adding that of my wife who is now I trust sound asleep.

Yours sincerely,
Frederic E. Church.

Care of Maquay, Pakenham & Hooker,
Rome.
After March 20th Care of
Hottigner & Co.,
50 Rue de Provence,
Paris.

[Maria Bartow Cole and Harry to Emily Cole]

[In unidentified handwriting, possibly from a different letter:]

[Text missing] will send the money next time – I think I have not answered all you outlined, have not you better by me— Eugenia has Braid enough can you borrow if you should want many before me [illegible] love to Cousin C.—

[In pencil:] I will write very soon about Mother.

[Maria Bartow Cole's handwriting, in ink:]

Thursday evening

My darling Emmie

Mary received your letter on tuesday, & I need not say that we are delighted at the prospect of seeing you so soon— come by all means if you can— Mrs. Clark, we have engaged for Easter week— & if we can do any thing before that time, to the Skirts let us know what you would like—

It is so kind of Cousin C. to want you to stay longer in the City— Let us know whether you prepare to come on Wednesday or thursday & I will try to keep you informed of the River which is sound enough now— but whether it will remain so a fortnight longer is a question— I think we have had much the same weather here that you have had in the City one bright day— the next snowing. The poor Prevosts they arrived in a great Snow Storm— Staid one day & had not been gone an hour, when it began to snow again, & they had a most uncomfortable journey home.

I supposed you have received Harry's long letter—, in which I believe he endeavoured to give you all the home news— he keeps well— & I do not apprehend virulence, still I shall feel more comfortable when a few more days are past [^]if he still keeps well.— I could not think of you turning nurse— for my first feeling was that of thank-fulness that you were away—

a letter [^]or a line from Thomas yesterday gave us hopes of seeing him tomorrow evening,— Mr. Weeks thought of leaving home & had written to know if T could take his Friday evening lecture— we have just heard that Mrs. W. is very sick and Mr. Ws plans frustrated. Mary & your Aunt H. have just come in from the Society.— & say we are to exhaust Thomas— We don't know what is the matter with Mrs. W. but I suppose it is ~~illegible, two words~~ similar to one she had before you left home.— The Poor Jacksons: Word has come, that their Barn was burnt this afternoon— — Your Aunt H. Eugenia Harry & Charlotte went to Leeds this morning— & bought the lb. of thread— this afternoon we had a call from Mrs. Folger & her daughter She expressed herself desirous of renewing old acquaintance — — —

Harry (who is writing on the same little card table) says “give my love and put it in now” Mary is getting on nicely with her worsted work and it is very pretty— You must not feel discouraged if others do draw better than you do, now, I am sure you will succeed— after a while— Mary told Mr Church that you said you had not drawn any thing right, he said he was glad to hear it,— by that, I suppose he meant that he was glad you could see your defects.—

I am glad to hear that you find the Grey Cloak useful— Cornelia has taken the Weeks Children in— We do feel so sorry for Mr. W he looks so worn. they are looking for a nurse— — I shall have to say good night now dear— will try to write soon again—

Your loving Mother

[Presumably Harry's handwriting:]

Your Mama says I may write the postscript dear Emmy. You expect there to come and make us a little visit at Easter tide? Just the time that poor Hal wont be home. It seems to me, sister dear that your "six weeks" are the longest six weeks I ever knew. Judging from your letter I should say you don't expect to come home till June, but I am so glad you have such a good chance for improvement tho it is hard to have you away so long. I dreamed last night that you were doing so splendidly at the school. You must not be discouraged. Do you have headaches now? Good night, your loving

Harry

[Frederic Church to Maria Bartow Cole]

Hudson Nov 25th 1876

My dear Mrs. Cole

Not many days before my father was taken ill he expressed his intention of sending you a present as a souvenir of the pleasant friendship formed so many years ago.

But illness overtook him and he was taken from us —

My Mother, my sister and myself desire to carry out his wish in this matter which is so entirely in accord with our feelings. My father mentioned the sum of one hundred dollars at the amount he proposed to use for the purpose —

My mother and sister consulted with me as to the shape in which we could use the amount mentioned so as most exactly to conform to our fathers wishes — and finally we decided to send you the money that you may decide for yourself and use it in any way agreeable to yourself —

We trust that you will accept the sum I enclose as a gift from My father, who always took a great interest in the welfare of yourself and of your family —

Very sincerely yours

Frederic E. Church

[Frederic E. Church to Theodore A. Cole]

Hudson Feby 20th 1882

My dear Mr. Cole

I have just received your letter—.

In a statement of your affairs sent to me by Mr. Taylor- I find the following items—

-due Mr. Jno Breasted } \$612 =
secured by a picture & \$100 =
int. — — — — \$712 =

I suppose that the claim you refer to in your letter is the same as the above —

If not, and there is any lean upon the picture not included in Mr. Taylors list. I shall be glad to know it—

I take it for granted however that Mr. Taylor has a complete statement of the ~~your~~ indebtedness of the family— and there is nothing more to come up hereafter to embarrass the friend who are endeavoring to put your affairs on a better footing—

Of course the claim in favor of Mr. Breasted as noted in Mr. Taylors list will be attended to.

I am sorry that I could not get a larger sum for the sale of ~~illegible~~ My picture— I couldnt have sold the “Adirondack scenery” at any price— I always regretted that you had the picture cleaned it came out so dark and brown – Oliver is a skilful and conscientious man – but I cannot help the belief that he removed a delicate scumbling which gave air and distance to the middle ground of the picture –

I have not found anyone who seemed interested in the other picture— The Old Tower— I will see if I can get any sort of an offer for it—

Has your mother any small sketches— which are good examples of your fathers work?

Yours truly

F. E. Church

[Frederic E. Church to Theodore A. Cole]

[Addressed to:]
Mr. Cole
Santiago se Queretaro

Queretaro March 19th, 1896

Dear Mr. Cole,

Your letter was a long time in reaching me because 1st I spent most of my time in other cities than Mexico and 2^d because it was sent to the general P.O. and was advertised –

With regard to the “Prometheus” I think it would be best to refer a possible purchaser to me – I would not like to ^{write to} strangers advising them to buy it.

I always admired greatly the sky of that picture deeming it the finest morning effect I ever saw painted – you had it varnished some years ago and I thought it was crudely done. For the clarity of the sky was greatly impaired – but I presume if the varnish was removed the original brilliancy would be restored.

The subject of the picture is a very difficult one to handle – when all the representation of a human figure it is almost impossible to feel that it is much more than six feet high and the contrast belittles the surroundings. The addition of the eagle, also of [word unknown] proportions. Comparatively increased the difficulty.

Candidly I would prefer to see the landscape without the figure – but then that is only my private opinion – others may think differently. I hope you will be able to sell it to advantage for it is certainly an important example of American Landscape Art –

You have had wonderfully changeable weather in the north and conditions which one residing in Mexico finds is hard to realize – but by this time you may be enjoying the breath of spring.

I trust that you are all well – and that Miss Harriet’s lameness has diminished. I wish to send her another slight letter of my regard for her and enclose my check for \$100.00 to that end

–

With best wishes for her, your sister, and your family –

Yours sincerely,
F. E. Church

P.S. So the Mails of this country are not quite as reliable as there in the States. I gave my address asking you to advise me if the Check is received.

I expect to remain nearly a month longer in Mexico –

I have excellent from Mrs. Church who has been remarkably well in Bermuda.

F. E. Church
c/d Frederic R. Guernsey
“Financiero”
Coliseo Viejo – 17
- Ciudad Mexico.

[Frederic E. Church to Emily Cole]

Hudson Nov 5th 1898-

Dear Miss Cole

Please find enclosed my check for \$25⁰⁰ in payment for Loro's board until our return next spring—

I trust that he will behave in a becoming manner. I will get Michael to take the lounge over to your house shortly— Mrs. Church and I remain about the same and we both feel the necessity of moving southward at an early day— I expect to go to New York next Monday or Tuesday to remain until the middle of the month when propose to start for Mexico—

Mrs. Church will remain here a few days longer than I do and stay in N. York but a day or two before [^]she goes South— Give my very best regards to Miss. Harriet and remember me to all the family— I suppose Theodore will get home in due season—

Sincerely yours,

Frederic E. Church

[Frederic E. Church to Emily Cole]

Cuernavaca Feb. 16th 1899

My dear Miss. Cole

I have heard so much about the bad weather in the states and the prevalence of Grip— that I feel anxious about all my friends. Many of them have the Grip but fortunately none of the cases which come to my knowledge have proved fatal—

I trust that you are all well and that Miss. Harriet notwithstanding her great age has resisted the bad climate conditions.

In Hudson Influenza has been very prevalent and several well know citizens succumbed to it with fatal results — Although I understand that the disease although so universally distributed is usually of a mild type —

I enclose my check for \$100⁰⁰ as a little gift for my esteemed old friend Miss. Harriet and I hope to hear accounts of her health —

Mrs. Church at Palm Beach Florida is unusually well and enjoys her life there. A number of her old friends are at the ~~Hotel~~ “Palm Beach Inn” with her so she has no lack of enjoyable society ~~illegible~~ — My Son Louis is there also —

In most respects I am decidedly better than when I came here — Cuernavaca is a lovely place and has the best Climate I know of in the North American Continent – I am constantly reminded of Loro there are so many sounds here which he imitates — I have wondered how he bore the sharp changes of weather this season — I know he has the best of care and of course have no anxiety about him on that score —

I will be very glad to hear from you and learn how you and your brother with his family and dear Miss. Harriet are

With my best regards for all —

very sincerely yours

Frederic E. Church

My address { Cuernavaca
Mexico —