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THOMAS COLE SITE HOSTS SEPTEMBER 11 BOOK LAUNCH FOR *PICTURING AMERICA: THOMAS COLE AND THE BIRTH OF AMERICAN ART* BY RENOWNED CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR HUDSON TALBOTT

THE PICTURE BOOK INTRODUCES CHILDREN TO THOMAS COLE, FOUNDER OF AMERICA'S FIRST MAJOR ART MOVEMENT, AND CELEBRATES A LOVE OF PAINTING AND THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Catskill, NY – August 29, 2018 – The [Thomas Cole National Historic Site](#) will host the book launch for *Picturing America: Thomas Cole and the Birth of American Art* by renowned children's book author and illustrator Hudson Talbott. The 32-page picture book takes readers on a unique journey through the life of Thomas Cole, father of America's first major art movement, the Hudson River School of landscape painting. The launch will take place on Tuesday, September 11, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm, during which time the historic site will be open to the public and Hudson Talbott will sign books. One hundred percent of the book sales from the event will benefit the Thomas Cole Site's educational programming, thanks to the book's publisher, Nancy Paulsen Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

Picturing America tells the story of an immigrant from England who arrived in America 200 years ago and – through his passion for art, landscape, and the Hudson River Valley and the Catskills – came to define America's visual identity and set in motion an artistic legacy that continues to impact art and culture to this day. The book complements the international themes of the major Thomas Cole exhibition organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery, London this year. Through the life of Thomas Cole, the book also introduces readers to the role of the artist, highlights Cole's pioneering passion for the environment, and celebrates a love of painting that will inspire readers to draw and paint the landscape around them.

Picturing America will be published on September 4. In many ways, it is a companion book to Talbott's *River of Dreams: The Story of the Hudson River*, which was named the New York State Children's Book of the Year in 2009.

Hudson Talbott is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and a resident of the Hudson Valley. He has written and illustrated more than 25 books, including the Newbury Honor Book *Show Way* (by Jacqueline Woodson), ALA Notable Book *Leonardo's Horse* (by Jean Fritz) and *We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story*, which was adapted into an animated film by Steven Spielberg, starring the voices of John Goodman, Jay Leno, and Martin Short, among others.

The idea for *Picturing America* grew out of conversations between Elizabeth Jacks, mother of two and Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, and Hudson Talbott. Jacks was planning a family trip to another historic site and could not find any child-friendly material to introduce the site and its story. She realized that there was a need to provide this service to children and their families visiting the Thomas Cole Site as well. Hudson Talbott said that he would love to create the first children's book on Thomas Cole, and his editor at Penguin Random House, Nancy Paulsen, thought it was a great idea.

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of Thomas Cole. Located on 6 acres in Catskill, NY, in the Hudson Valley, the site includes Cole's 1815 Main House, his 1839 Old Studio, the recently reconstructed New Studio building, which Cole designed, and panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. The 1815 Main House includes the earliest-known interior decorative painting by an American artist.

“I’m thrilled to be able to introduce America’s children to Thomas Cole, who so profoundly influenced American art,” said Hudson Talbott. “I hope that *Picturing America* will help our nation’s youth picture what they love about America and express it for themselves.”

“Thomas Cole changed the way we see America, and Hudson Talbott tells the fascinating story of how that happened,” said Elizabeth Jacks. “My hope is that when children read this book they will be inspired to draw and paint the world that they see and, in the process, will discover, like Thomas Cole, their own love of art.”

To highlight further the role of the Hudson River Valley as an epicenter of American art, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and Olana State Historic Site in Hudson, NY have joined with the New York State Bridge Authority this year to launch a new initiative to promote the region. The initiative – recently designated by Governor Andrew Cuomo as the Hudson River Skywalk Region – weaves together the home and studios of Thomas Cole at the Thomas Cole Site and those of his legendary student Frederic Church at Olana with the landscape that inspired it all to create one seamless experience. With support from New York State, a continuous pedestrian walkway – known as the Hudson River Skywalk – will connect the historic sites across the Rip Van Winkle Bridge over the Hudson River by the end of 2018. Today, visitors can experience newly installed viewing platforms along the Rip Van Winkle Bridge that feature magnificent views of the Hudson River Valley and visit the two historic sites that are located just two miles from one another.

THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of painting, the nation’s first major art movement. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole’s 1839 Old Studio; the recently reconstructed New Studio building; and panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. The Cole Site’s activities include guided tours, special exhibitions of both 19th-century and contemporary art, printed publications, extensive online programs, activities for school groups, free community events, lectures, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enables visitors to visit the places that Cole painted. The goal of all programs at the Cole Site is to enable visitors to find meaning and inspiration in Thomas Cole’s life and work. The themes that Cole explored in his art and writings—such as landscape preservation and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are both historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

On VIEW throughout the Thomas Cole Site through November 18, 2018

+ *SPECTRUM*, an exhibition of contemporary artworks exploring Cole’s use of color, featuring the work of 11 contemporary artists.

On VIEW in Thomas Cole’s New Studio through November 4, 2018

+ *Picturesque and Sublime: Thomas Cole’s Trans-Atlantic Inheritance*. The exhibition is presented in partnership with the Yale Center for British Art and members of the Yale History of Art Department and features works of art by Thomas Cole, J. M. W. Turner, and John Constable.

Ongoing Exhibitions in the 1815 Main House

+ *The Parlors*, an immersive experience combining story-telling technology and meticulous restoration of Cole’s interior designs in his 1815 home, including the earliest-known interior decorative painting by an American artist. Integrated projections enable paintings to “come to life” and letters to “magically appear” on tables to tell a story.

+ *Mind Upon Nature: Thomas Cole’s Creative Process*, an exhibition in the Main House featuring Cole’s paintings, sketches, palettes, and other unique objects.

VISITOR INFORMATION: The hours for Thomas Cole’s home, studios and special exhibitions vary by season. For details see: www.thomascole.org/visit. Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @thomascolesite.