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Thomas Cole Site Awarded \$200,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services

Catskill, NY – September 27, 2017 – We are pleased to announce that the Thomas Cole National Historic Site has been awarded a 2017 Museums for America grant award of \$200,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in the Learning Experiences category to support an interactive multimedia installation on the second floor of Thomas Cole’s historic home. This new installation, which will open in May 2019, follows the successful new permanent exhibition, *The Parlors*, that opened in May 2017 in the home’s first floor rooms with interactive multimedia experiences that bring to life the historic events that took place in the parlors of Thomas Cole’s 1815 home where America’s first major art movement was founded, the Hudson River School of landscape painting.

The new project, funded by the IMLS, will create new permanent interactive exhibits that will allow visitors of all ages to become part of a story that provides insights into America’s cultural history and sparks connections with our lives today. The project is establishing a new model for historic house museums to consider, using their powerful histories to engage and meet the needs of contemporary audiences.

The Parlors, which opened on May 2, 2017 on the first floor of Cole’s home, employs technology within the authentic historic spaces. *The Parlors* contributed to a 25% increase in attendance at the Thomas Cole Site this season, demonstrating a greater connection with broader audiences. The second-floor project will continue to bring more visitors and economic activity to our region while at the same time providing a vital community asset. The annual economic impact of the Thomas Cole Site is nearly \$2 million and supports 54 jobs in the local economy.

“This IMLS funding will enable us to continue to employ cutting-edge technology to engage the public with Thomas Cole’s art and ideas, illuminating a momentous chapter in American history,” said Elizabeth B. Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “We are enormously grateful to the IMLS and to Senator Charles Schumer, who has been an influential advocate for federal funding of the Cole Site.”

Senator Schumer has visited the Cole Site on two occasions to inspect progress on *The Parlors* and has recommended federal funding for the new exhibits on both the first and second floors of Cole’s home.

“The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is a birthplace of American art, and this funding will help make it come alive to new generations,” said Senator Chuck Schumer. “We’re already seeing the site’s economic impact on the community, and the potential for future growth is extraordinary.”

The design for the interactive exhibits is informed by extensive research conducted by the Thomas Cole Site including benchmarking trips to over 35 museums, historic sites and other attractions, and several stages of planning. The resulting exhibits on the second floor will be comprised of responsive



environments and story-driven experiences. New technology will be used to enhance learning and engagement, but the equipment will be hidden in creative ways so as to preserve the magic of being in a 19th-century space. Visitors will be able to enter the rooms and fully experience these impactful historic places instead of standing behind velvet ropes.

“As centers of learning and catalysts of community change, libraries and museums connect people with programs, services, collections, information, and new ideas in the arts, sciences, and humanities. They serve as vital spaces where people can connect with each other,” said IMLS Director Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew. “IMLS is proud to support their work through our grant making as they inform and inspire all in their communities.”

About the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

Thomas Cole National Historic Site preserves and interprets the 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, 1839 Old Studio, the newly reconstructed 1846 New Studio, and several other buildings. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. Following a restoration of the Main House, the Cole Site opened to the public in 2001. The site's activities include guided tours, exhibitions, 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 see the nearby views that Cole painted. Each year, the Cole Site organizes a loan exhibition of Hudson River School paintings, providing a first-hand experience with the art movement that Cole founded. 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.

Visit the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The hours for Thomas Cole's home, studios, special exhibitions, and grounds vary by month. For details visit: www.thomascole.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



About IMLS

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is celebrating its 20th Anniversary. IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation's [123,000 libraries](#) and [35,000 museums](#). Our mission has been to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. For the past 20 years, our grant making, policy development, and research has helped libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.ims.gov and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

