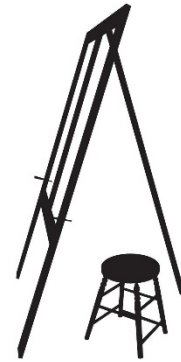


THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



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The Thomas Cole National Historic Site Announces Expanded Greening Initiative on World Environment Day with the Completion of Phase 2

The Campus-Wide Initiative Honors the Legacy of the American Artist and Early Environmentalist Thomas Cole (1801-1848) at His Home in Catskill, New York

Catskill, NY – June 5, 2024 – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today its expanded Greening Initiative with the completion of Phase 2 on World Environment Day. The campus-wide initiative takes action to honor the legacy of the American artist and early environmentalist Thomas Cole (1801-1848) at his home in Catskill, New York. The national landmark campus includes the artist's historic home and two studio buildings, including an art museum with changing exhibitions, as well as a modern staff office building, housing for research fellows and a forthcoming new building for visitor orientation called the Cole Center. The gardens and grounds of the property look out on the Catskill Mountain views that Cole immortalized in his American landscape paintings, launching the art movement known today as the Hudson River School.

The site's Director of Visitor Engagement, Heather Palmer, oversaw the completion of Phase 2 this year and first launched the Greening Initiative in 2017. The initiative has implemented over twenty significant operational changes across all aspects of museum operations from maintenance to gardening to exhibition logistics. The actions are organized into five results-driven categories:

- 1) Reduce Air Toxins and Chemical Use
- 2) Reduce Single-Use Plastics
- 3) Reduce Waste Materials
- 4) Reduce Waste of Natural Resources
- 5) Encourage Biodiversity.

Major accomplishments of Phase 2 include:

- Sourcing renewable electricity from a regional community solar garden
- Eliminating the use of pesticides and becoming a certified member of the Pollinator Pathway Northeast

- Establishing a composting practice
- Converting office products such as soap and cleaning agents to environmentally friendly substances with minimal or no plastic packaging.
- Creating an office policy guide for employees.

This work builds on Phase 1 achievements including installing a public electric vehicle charger, which was made possible by Sara and Tom de Swardt. See the full list of achievements at thomascole.org/greening.

Thomas Cole is recognized as an early voice in the environmentalist movement of the United States. His paintings of the Hudson River Valley that surround the Thomas Cole National Historic Site today became international symbols of American beauty and inspired the young country to preserve its natural landscapes. The Metropolitan Museum of Art writes of Cole's major painting in their collection, "The Oxbow," 1836, that "Faced with the rapid destruction of nature, symbolized by the areas of clear-cut forest on the distant mountain, the artist presents a manifesto to the American public urging the preservation of the sublime aspects of the American landscape."

Cole himself wrote forcefully about the need to protect these places, including in his major work, "Essay on American Scenery," which was published in American Monthly Magazine in 1836 and delivered as a public talk at the Catskill Lyceum in 1842. Cole puts to his audience a timely question: "In this age, when a meager utilitarianism seems ready to absorb every feeling and sentiment, may we at times turn to the pure enjoyment of rural nature...Nature has spread for us a rich and delightful banquet. Shall we turn from it?"

"This organization is made up of special people who get inspired and get things done," says Betsy Jacks, Executive Director. "A great example is Heather Palmer, our Director of Visitor Engagement, who took the initiative to create our Greening Initiative shortly after she arrived here, to align our operations with Thomas Cole's environmental message. Her care and follow-through in the completion of Phase 2 Greening have made an extraordinary difference here and offer a model for other institutions."

From Director of Visitor Engagement Heather Palmer, "Back in 2017 we had been talking for a long time about how we might become a more environmentally friendly site, both to do less harm to the earth, and better align our practice with our interpretation of Thomas Cole as a proto environmentalist. I remember my excitement when I first discovered the existence of reusable Keurig coffee pods. We ordered a set of them right away, one for each of us at the time, and I recall the refreshing feeling of knowing we were doing something just a little bit better for the earth. I smiled and thought, "Thomas would approve." I like to think it gave us all a bit of energy to think about what else we could replace for the better. With different eyes we examined some of our other practices, like single-use plastic soaps bottles in restrooms, the kind of paper we use for printing, our lawn mowing routine, what kind of plants we put in the gardens, and more. Soon after that we set to work on a greening to-do list. We came up with more ideas – oftentimes just in passing between meetings – and the list grew in length. With pages

devoted to steps we could potentially take, and in ways that touched all areas of our operation and mission, it was soon time to look at this thing together as a team, gather even more ideas, and set to work with real intention. Soon we began to take significant steps, and since then everyone here has been involved in amazing projects that will help to make our physical footprint here just a little bit smaller.”

Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of the artist and early environmentalist Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Cole founded the influential art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School of American landscape painting. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole’s 1839 Old Studio; the reconstructed 1846 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. Activities include special exhibitions of both 19th-century and contemporary art, print publications, lectures, extensive online programs, school programs, the Cole Fellowship, free community events, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enable people to visit the places in nature that Cole painted—and the Hudson River Skywalk, a new scenic walkway connecting the Thomas Cole Site with Frederic Church’s Olana over the Hudson River. The goal of all programs at the Thomas Cole Site is to enable visitors to find meaning and inspiration in Thomas Cole’s life and work. The themes that Cole explored in his art and writings—such as landscape preservation and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are both historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

Visitor Information

The hours of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site vary by season. For details see: thomascole.org/visit. The grounds are open every day for free from dawn to dusk. Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at [@thomascolesite](https://www.instagram.com/thomascolesite).