

NEWS *from*

Cedar Grove

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site

Studio with a past to play major role in Cedar Grove's future

Storehouse Studio to open Oct. 3 during ribbon-cutting celebration

The old rectangular building was not the most impressive-looking building on the grounds of Cedar Grove. It had been used for just about everything, including a storehouse in the 1800s, an antique shop in the 1900s, and a rustic apartment in recent years. But officials from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and the National Park Service knew it was a national treasure.

Built for Thomas Cole in 1839, the Storehouse Studio at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site is believed to have been the first purpose-built artist studio in the United States. It is also the place where Cole painted some of his most important works, including the renowned "Voyage of Life" series. It is where American landscape painting began.

Thanks to major grants from Save America's Treasures, the Catskill-Olana Scenic Mitigation Fund, and Benjamin Moore & Co., the storehouse studio is being fully restored to the way it looked in the 1840s. A ribbon-cutting celebration on October 3, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., will be attended by a number of public officials who had a hand in funding the project and seeing it through to completion. United States Congressman John E. Sweeney will be the honorary chair for the event.

"It is a miracle that this special place has survived, and it is another miracle that it has now been restored," said Elizabeth B. Jacks, Director of Cedar Grove. "What a thrill it is to see it the way it was when Thomas Cole last stepped out these doors. This is a very special occasion, and we plan to have a lot of fun in celebrating its grand reopening."

While Alexander Thompson (the uncle of Cole's wife) was drawing up plans to build a storehouse for the estate, Cole convinced him to dedicate part of it for a painting room. This was one of several locations at Cedar Grove where Cole turned sketches of scenic viewpoints into giant luminescent canvases that launched what would later be known as the Hudson River School of art.

The Storehouse Studio takes its name from its purposes. Part of the building was used as a storage area for any number of farm supplies and provisions used on the busy estate during

the 1830s, and the rest served as a rustic studio for Thomas Cole. It was a peaceful place, "removed from the noise and bustle of the house," as Cole once wrote in a later dated December 18, 1829.

Renovation of the Storehouse Studio was aided by the discovery that most of the underlying structures were still intact. Even though several alterations were made over the years—as parts of the building were used for storage, rooming, or perhaps a small horse stable—the area where Cole painted remained largely the same.

As workers uncovered and bolstered the stone foundation of this relic of the past, officials from Cedar Grove looked for ways to open it up for public tours. The building is considered the most significant resource in interpreting the art of Cole and understanding the beginnings of the Hudson River School. Thanks to surviving images and reliable documentation, officials from the National Park Service were certain it could be restored to the way it was when Cole stood in front of his easel.

Interior decorator Frank Racette has completed a refurnishing plan that will be used for setting up the inside of the storehouse studio. Racette consulted dozens of 19th century paintings of studio interiors, studio openings, and self-portraits that show the painting supplies of the period.

The opening of the Storehouse Studio represents a major addition to what visitors can experience at Cedar Grove. The main house, built in 1815, provides an opportunity to see where Cole was married, spent time with his family, and died in 1848. It also features changing special exhibitions. The restored studio tells the story of Cole's art as it conveys the historic appearance of the grounds during his time in Catskill and his connection to the landscape. The restoration of the Old Studio is made possible by grants from Save America's Treasures, the Catskill-Olana Scenic Mitigation Fund, and Benjamin Moore & Co.

About Cedar Grove

Cedar Grove is an affiliated site of the National Park Service, and is owned by the Greene County Historical Society. The main house has undergone a major restoration and contains furnished rooms and gallery exhibitions that carry on the spirit of Thomas Cole.

For more information about the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, go to www.thomascole.org, or send an email to info@thomascole.org. To obtain more information about events at Cedar Grove, call publicist Barry Henck at 518-943-7465.

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