

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
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DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC  
FREDERIC E. CHURCH HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON  
Olana

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
Church Hill, east end of Rip Van Winkle Bridge

CITY, TOWN  
Greenport (Hudson) NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
29

STATE  
New York VICINITY OF  
CODE  
36 COUNTY  
Columbia CODE  
21

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
New York State

STREET & NUMBER  
Division of Parks, Conservation Department

CITY, TOWN  
Albany STATE  
New York

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Columbia County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Hudson STATE  
New York

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE  
1969 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Library of Congress Annex/Division of Prints and Photographs  
CITY, TOWN  
Washington STATE  
D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Frederic Church House, Olana, is perched on a hilltop 500' above the east bank of the Hudson River, just south of Hudson, New York. Built in two stages, from 1870-72 and 1888-89, Olana, which means "Our place on high" in Arabic, was designed primarily by Church himself, with the practical aid of Calvert Vaux. Despite its many Eastern details and exotic appearance, the house is basically a two story Italian villa dominated by a square, three story tower with a steep Second Empire roof, on the southeast corner. Built of a local reddish-brown slate in rubble masonry, the house's exterior is richly embroidered with colored tiles, polychrome brickwork, and limestone Moorish arches, to produce a tapestry effect. The roof is similarly ornate as it utilizes red, green and black slate tiles in geometric patterns. A great variety of assymmetrically placed windows and doors, some protruding in rectangular bays and others recessed under pointed Moorish arches, or treated as Gothic lancets, contribute to the composition of an exceptionally fine example of the eclecticism and exoticism which was characteristic of the Victorian era. The wealth of Oriental detail, which reflects Church's fascination with the Near East, is generally labelled "Persian," and indicates a general tendency to utilize various elements for a picturesque effect without regard for an historically correct usage.

The smaller, western addition of 1888-89, contributes to the basic assymetry of the house, with its three corner towers and one slender minaret. This addition, which housed Church's studio on its western extreme, has a circular porch on the western end, which is patterned after the deck of a steam boat.

The interior of the house, which is perfectly preserved on the first floor, reflects the great attention to detail which the artist lavished on his home. The positioning of windows, the many fireplaces, each of which is unique, the extensive carvings and ornamentation, all carved by Lockwood DeForest, the cousin of Mrs. Church, and the wall hangings and rugs, all are the products of Church's fertile and imaginative energies. The walls are also hung with countless souvenirs and artifacts of his many journeys all over the world. Hardly the least of all the furnishings are the several Church originals and other works of art, all of which still occupy the positions that the artist gave them in his house. At the present, the first floor alone, which contains a parlor, central hall, library, dining room, and pantry, studio and studies, is open to the public. The upper floors which contained bedrooms and the like, are now used as storage and office space by the administrators of the site. There are thirty-seven rooms total, in the house. Remaining outbuildings of the house include a small frame garage as well as a carriage house-stable complex with an attached apartment. A portion of this is now used for restrooms. This is located to the west of the house.

There is a formal garden to the east of the house, and just below the house to the south is a small man-made lake which Church had constructed to balance the panoramic view of the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains.

Approximately halfway up the entrance road to Olana is the "Cozy Cottage" where Church lived while Olana was under construction. A small two story L-shaped frame cottage, it is presently being extensively redone so as to be habitable. There are a collection of barns and outbuildings along side the cottage as well, which are

(continued)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1872, completion of Olana BUILDER/ARCHITECT Calvert Vaux and Frederic Church

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"Olana," Frederic Church's castle-like residence atop Church's Hill on the east bank of the Hudson River, near Hudson, New York, evinces that painter's love of the dramatic and grand. Overlooking 60 miles of the Hudson River Valley, the towered stone mansion, with its Oriental flavor symbolizes the spirit and vitality of one of America's ablest nineteenth century artists, a leader among American artists in a period that has been described as the most prosperous time in the history of American art (1840-1876).

Olana is presently maintained as a house museum by the State of New York.

## BIOGRAPHY

Church was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on May 4, 1826, and gave early signs of his artistic talent. A son of rich parents, he disdained college when he reached college age, deciding instead to pursue art, and became a pupil of Thomas Cole, one of the founders of the Hudson River School, in 1844. Cole had not previously accepted pupils, but took Church because of the youth's seriousness, and the master treated him like a son until his (Cole's) death in 1848. Shortly after Cole's demise, Church gained fame through some of his paintings of the Catskill Mountains, especially because of the able manner in which he treated the sky. Despite the success of his Catskill scenes, Church by the early 1850's was seeking more spectacular, compelling landscapes.

Church's desire to paint more fascinating scenes reflected his virile character. He possessed a tremendous vitality, sometimes laboring at his easel for over ten hours a day. Moreover, his zest for living frequently displayed itself in the practical jokes that he loved to work on friends. Isable Mortimer sufficiently diverted him from his intense life for him to marry her in 1859, however, and they were to have three sons and a daughter.

Some years before marrying, Church had begun the travels that were to make him the best travelled painter of his era. Having read and been fascinated with Baron Alexander von Humboldt's Kosmos, especially as the book pertained to Latin America, Church seized the opportunity in 1853 to accompany Cyrus W. Field on an expedition to South America. While in Quito, Ecuador, Church lived in the house Humboldt had occupied fifty years earlier. Astounded by the magnificent forests, mountains, and volcanoes in Ecuador, and also in Columbia, Church drew countless sketches on this and a subsequent trip to the same region in 1857. Those sketches became the basis for his notable South American landscapes, one of which, "The Heart of the Andes," aroused such interest when exhibited in 1859 that the painting

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- S. Sydney Bradford, "Frederic Church House, Olana," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form 10-317, 2/17/65.  
 James Thomas Flexner, That Wilder Image, The Painting of America's Nature School from Thomas Cole to Winslow Homer (Boston, 1962).  
 Samuel Isham and Royal Cortisser, The History of American Painting, (New York, 1927).  
 Frederick A Sweet, The Hudson River School, (New York, 1945).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 250.15

UTM REFERENCES

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

12/12/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, NW

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Wendy Smith*

DATE

4/14/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

OLANA

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

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used for storage and workspace at the present.

The 250+ acres of the Olana Historic Sites are presently open to the public as picnic and park lands. The entire estate is virtually unchanged since the days of Church's occupation.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET      OLANA      ITEM NUMBER      8      PAGE      2

earned over \$600 daily. In the same year that he exhibited "The Heart of the Andes," Church journeyed to Labrador to observe its scenery, thereby becoming the first artist to do so. He became entranced by icebergs while there, and made trips in small boats to study the slowly-moving snow islands, later painting them. Like a restless conquistador, Church was again on the move in 1865, when he visited Jamaica, and again in 1868, when he travelled to Europe and the Near East. During all these years, Church also painted, and America and Europe applauded his work, as well as paying high prices for his landscapes.

Although Church has studied under Cole, Church's paintings show a strong personal style. Unlike his teacher, Church avoided imbuing landscapes with a moral, or a historical point-of-view, choosing to portray nature with a literal faithfulness, and

In the name of scientific accuracy, he sought to reproduce scenery with an exactitude from which all<sup>1</sup> sense of paint, of a picture, had been refined away.

At the same time, he possessed a tremendous dramatic sense, which is especially evident in his handling of light in the sunsets, storms, hazes, mists, and volcanic explosions in his landscapes, of which "Cotapazi" and "Chimborazo" are fine examples. Even if many today scorn these paintings, no one can deny the man's understanding of perspective, or his rare ability to depict space through changes in color.

Tragedy ended Church's career in 1877, when his painting powers were still growing. The artist had always sought to protect his health, even though a zealous worker, but in 1877 inflammatory rheumatism crippled his right arm. Hardly had he begun to train his left arm before it also was crippled, and for the last twenty years of his life Church could not paint. When his wife died in 1899, Church lingered for only a short while, dying on April 7, 1900.

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<sup>1</sup>James Thomas Flexner, That Wilder Image, The Painting of America's Nature School from Thoams Cole to Winslow Homer. (Boston, 1963), p. 159.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Frederic E. Church House

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Acres 250.15

UTM

- A. 18.596940/4674900
- B. 18.597100/4674140
- C. 18.597070/4674070
- D. 18.596790/4673400
- E. 18.596100/4673220
- F. 18.596180/4674090
- G. 18.596680/4674900

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Historic Landmark boundary for Olana coincides with the boundary of Parcel A shown by the red line on the accompanying "Olana Historic Site" map from the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation, with the exception of the part of Parcel A north of state route 23. This boundary includes the house and outbuildings but excludes several small parcels to the north and east (B, C, E).

Beginning at a point approximately 50 feet south of state route 23 and approximately 600 feet east of the intersection of said route with state route 9-G, proceed generally south along a wire fence approximately 2,400 feet to a point; proceed east southeast approximately 800 feet along a stone wall to a point; proceed generally southwest approximately 600 feet along a stone wall to a point; thence east southeast approximately 900 feet to a point; thence approximately 300 feet nearly south along a stone wall to a point; thence west northwest approximately 750 feet to a point; thence southwest approximately 150 feet to a point; thence generally south approximately 800 feet to a point; thence west northwest approximately 1,000 feet to a point; thence south southwest approximately 1,000 feet to a point; thence generally northwest approximately 1,400 feet along a stone wall to a point; thence south southwest approximately 400 feet along a stone wall to a point; thence northwest approximately 600 feet to a point; thence generally north northeast approximately 5,000 feet to a point; thence east approximately 500 feet to a point; thence east northeast approximately 200 feet to a point; thence southeast approximately 200 feet to the point of origin.