

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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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

Thomas Cole House

AND/OR COMMON

Thomas Cole House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

218 Spring Street

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Catskill

__ VICINITY OF

29

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New York

29

Creene

39

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

__ DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

__ STRUCTURE

__ SITE

__ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

__ PUBLIC

PRIVATE

__ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

__ IN PROCESS

__ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

__ UNOCCUPIED

__ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

__ YES: UNRESTRICTED

__ NO

PRESENT USE

__ AGRICULTURE

__ COMMERCIAL

__ EDUCATIONAL

__ ENTERTAINMENT

__ GOVERNMENT

__ INDUSTRIAL

__ MILITARY

__ MUSEUM

__ PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__ RELIGIOUS

__ SCIENTIFIC

__ TRANSPORTATION

__ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr and Mrs. Howard Silberstein

STREET & NUMBER

218 Spring Street

CITY, TOWN

Catskill

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Greene County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Catskill

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

__ FEDERAL __ STATE __ COUNTY __ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thomas Cole House is a substantial two-story brick house, painted white, situated on a hill above the west bank of the Hudson River at Catskill, New York. Built by Mrs. Thomas Cole's uncle between 1812 and 1814, the house is ostensibly unchanged since the days of Cole's occupancy, the only major changes being an external chimney which has been added to the east end of the house, and the one story frame addition on the northwest end of the house, circa 1890, which houses the kitchen. Other salient external features are the porches. A one story porch runs the length of the south and west facades and a two-tiered porch covers the eastern half of the north (rear) facade. The house has a shingled gable roof, with an interior gable end chimney at the west end. There is also a raised basement, which can be entered through a door under the south porch.

The interior of the house is organized symmetrically about the central hall, and is rather simply ornamented, and not significantly altered. The rooms on the first floor have high ceilings and correspondingly high windows. The window of the artist's bedroom on the second floor face west to the Catskill Mountains. There are many furnishings associated with the artist in the house, and the living room is decorated with several of his finished and incomplete works, as well as his paints and brushes. The house continues to be used as a private residence by the Cole family.

Cole's studio, which he used up until 1846, stands to the southeast of the house. The second studio which the artist used for the two years before his death was to the south of the house and has been destroyed. The standing studio was originally used as a slaves' quarters in the western half and as a carriage house and Cole's studio in the eastern half. It is a one-and-a-half story white clapboard building with a gable roof which sweeps asymmetrically over the projecting southern facade. The western end of the building is presently occupied as an apartment, and the eastern end has been altered especially in the eastern facade. Used most recently as an antique shop, this end is no longer actively in use.

Directly west of this building is a small white frame privy.

The Cole property originally covered a far larger area than at present. What was originally farm and orchard land has been developed residentially. The property that the house and studio now occupy comprises the extent of the historically integral land. The enclosed area is maintained as lawn and garden, with many fine trees and shrubs.

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 1801 - 1848 *Occupancy 1836-48* BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Thomas Cole, pioneer interpreter of the romantic beauty of the American landscape, is one of America's notable landscape and allegorical painters of the first half of the nineteenth century, and the finest landscape painter of his time. The Hudson River School, which is receiving renewed attention today, sprang up largely because of Cole's work, and his landscapes remain outstanding examples of that school.

The Cole House, in Catskill, New York is an attractive brick building that has been little altered since its construction in 1812-14. To the east of the house is the two-story clapboard studio which Cole used until 1846. The property is presently privately owned by Cole's descendants.

Biography

Cole's artistic career began at an early age. Born in Bolton-le-More, Lancashire, England, on February 1, 1801, he became an apprentice as a youth to a designer of calico prints. He also engaged in wood engraving before moving with his family to the United States after the War of 1812. Cole's father migrated to Steubenville, Ohio, following a business failure in Philadelphia, and Cole joined his family there in 1819 upon returning from a voyage to the West Indies. An itinerant painter who visited Steubenville aroused Cole's interest in painting and by February, 1822, the would-be artist had set out to find sitters. The lack of commissions eventually discouraged Cole; who returned to Steubenville. When his family moved to Pittsburgh in the spring of 1823, he accompanied them and soon resumed his interest in art. The beauty of nature now intrigued him, and as he sketched landscapes and trees, he decided that he really wanted to be an artist. Thus he travelled to Philadelphia to study at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Dire poverty beset him in Philadelphia, and he lived on little more than bread and water. He was so poor that he had to use a table cloth to cover himself at night as he slept on a floor. His fortunes improved when he moved to New York in 1825, where three landscapes that he had done on a trip to the Catskill Mountains attracted attention. Colonel John Trumbull was one of those who recognized Cole's ability and generously backed the young artist, introducing him to other painters. Cole's sudden success brought him a new prosperity, and he never again suffered as he had during his bleak Philadelphia period.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

S. Sydney Bradford, "Thomas Cole House," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form 10-317, February, 1965.

Samuel Isham, The History of American Painting (New York, 1927), 218, 221-222, 225-226.
 Eugen Neuhaus, The History and Ideals of American Art (Stanford, 1931), 69-70.
 Clara E. Sears, Highlights Among the Hudson River Artists (Boston, 1947), 93-94.
 Frederick A. Sweet, The Hudson River School (New York, 1945), 55, 57, 60-63, 66-67.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.5 acres
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	5 9, 3 9, 3 0	4 6 7, 5 2, 5 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the Thomas Cole House National Historic Landmark are coterminous with the present lot boundaries.

Beginning at a point on the east curb of Spring Street approximately 85' north of the north wall of the Cole House, at the south curb of Gardiner Street, proceed east along the projection of said curb of Gardiner Street for approximately 400',
 LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Richard Greenwood, Historian Landmark Review Task Force
 ORGANIZATION DATE

Historic Sites Survey
 STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE

1100 L Street
 CITY OR TOWN STATE

Washington,
 D.C.

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Signature] DATE 9/28/83

ATTEST: DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET Biography

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Unlike many other painters of his era, Cole was not a flamboyant personality. He possessed a shy and sensitive nature, disliking large gatherings and boisterous occasions. In November, 1836, he married Maria Barton, which proved to be a happy union. She used to read to him as he painted, probably choosing works that appealed to his religious nature. His religious belief was very strong, and it helped to turn him pure landscape to allegory in painting.

Although Cole never entirely abandoned natural scenes, he, after 1830, turned increasingly to literary painting. Up until 1830, however, his love of nature fed his artistic prowess, and he became particularly enamored with the Catskill Mountains, settling permanently in Catskill in 1826. His close communion with the beauties of the region stimulated some of his best landscapes, which depicted the grandeur of the sky, field and forest. His two trips to Europe, in the early 1830's and again in the early 1840's led to an increasing concentration on allegorical scenes, but some pure landscapes continued to be produced. He painted "In the Catskills" in 1837, a picture based on his favorite walk along the mountain-bordered Catskill Creek, and in it nature is portrayed with realism, understanding and feeling. The need for money necessitated further landscape scenes in the 1840's and at that time he produced what is perhaps his masterpiece, "The Ox-Bow," a Massachusetts scene.

The timelessness of "The Ox-Bow" contrasts sharply with the dated character of Cole's allegories. Even before Cole travelled to Europe in 1829, he and others had recognized that his style might be endangered by what he saw abroad. William Cullen Bryant wrote a poem, "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe," warning the artist to preserve his own vision; and Cole himself wrote an admonitory line about Europe, "Lure me (not) from nature's purer live divine."¹ All to no avail! England and France left him largely unscarred, he thinking British and French painting "either too violent or too voluptuous,"² but Italy, like too much wine, overwhelmed him. The peninsula's ruins especially thrilled Cole, and in conjunction with his religious feeling, they diverted him from his former realism. He became fascinated with the transitoriness of life and upon his return to the United States in 1832 immediately set to work upon "The Course of Empire." This work consisted of five large pictures and depicted the rise and fall of an empire, with the story dominating the composition. The public applauded "The Course of Empire" when it was completed in 1836, and Cole earned almost \$1,000 from showing it. Additional allegories followed, the "Voyage of Life" in four large panels being noteworthy. The "Voyage" represented the four stages of man, and although some lamented Cole's story telling, the mass audience continued to welcome such works. A

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second trip to Europe in 1841 did nothing to lessen Cole's enthusiasm for the grand subject, especially after climbing Mt. Etna and contemplating the ruins in Sicily. Having already rejected suggestions that he abandon allegorical scenes, which advice he referred to as "the buzz of dirt flies," and having also rejected the idea of being "a mere leaf painter,"³ Cole, on his return to America, remained entranced by the cycle of life as well as with ruins. - When he died on February 11, 1848, he left another epic, "The Cross of the World," unfinished.

¹ Quoted in James T. Flexner, That Wilder Image (Boston, 1962), 45, 46.

² Frederick A. Sweet, The Hudson River School (New York, 1942), 60.

³ Quoted in Flexner, Wilder Image, 54.

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James Thomas Flexner, That Wilder Image. The Paintings of American's Nature
School from Thomas Cole to Winslow Homer (Boston, 1962), 5-9, 13, 19-20, 44-46,
49-50, 52, 54, 57.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Boundary ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

thence south to the rear property lines of the houses along the north curb of Hudson Avenue, thence west along said property lines to the east curb of Spring Street, thence north along said curb to the point of origin.

These boundaries include the structures of national significance, while excluding post-historic features.