

19th Century Painters: Hudson River School



Hudson River Valley
National Heritage Area, New York
hudsonrivervalley.com



View of Tappan Zee from Lovat Hill, Jasper F. Cropsey, 1887, Newington-Cropsey Foundation, Hastings-on-Hudson

From the 1820s through the end of the century, the natural wonders of the Hudson River Valley kindled one of the most significant achievements in the nation's cultural history—the development of a style of painting that expressed the American character.

In 1825 the dramatic scenery of the Hudson River Valley inspired a young artist, Thomas Cole, to create the first paintings of the American landscape in the new, Romantic style. What began as a casual group of painters eager to capture the beauty of upstate New York grew to become a school of artists who traveled the country and even the world producing some of the masterpieces of American art.

Paintings shown in this brochure can be seen in the Hudson River Valley at the indicated heritage sites. Please see the map side of this brochure for information about collections of Hudson River paintings.

A New Artistic Philosophy

The mid-1820s was a remarkable time in the Hudson River Valley. The Catskill Mountain House, the country's first mountain resort, opened in 1824. That year admiring crowds gathered along the Hudson River to catch a glimpse of the Marquis de Lafayette, the great French patriot and American Revolutionary War hero who was taking a five-day celebratory steamboat tour from New York City to Albany.

After eight years of construction, the Erie Canal opened in 1825 and instantly became America's most important internal trade route. The area's newly flourishing economy created a climate



Lake in the Catskills, Thomas Cole, n.d., Cedar Grove, The Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Catskill



Portrait of Thomas Cole, Thomas S. Cummings, c. 1826-28, Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany



Inside Thomas Cole's "Old Studio," Cedar Grove, The Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Catskill John Thorn

for tourism. Summer retreats appeared up and down the Hudson River. The valley attracted entrepreneurs, tourists, and travelers eager to share in the wealth, beauty, and excitement.

It was in this atmosphere of technological advances, financial success, and a growing appreciation of natural wonders that Thomas Cole traveled to the Catskills in search of scenic views. One of Cole's works caught the eye of Colonel John Trumbull, president of the

American Academy of the Fine Arts, who bought the painting and spread the news about the new young painter on the New York art scene.

Fellow artists Asher B. Durand and William Dunlap also bought Cole's work, and within a few years Cole became known as the leader of an accomplished circle of landscape painters. Over the next 80 years, the Hudson River School grew to include about 100 painters, and Durand, as president of the National Academy of Design, became a major influence in the art world. The group was never a formal institution offering academic instruction, but rather a loosely defined association of painters who



View on Catskill Creek, Thomas Cole, c. 1833, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany

followed a similar artistic philosophy. The artists worked from nature, focused on American scenery, and expressed optimism, vitality, and their own personal theology through color, light, and perspective. By turning their attention to the natural scenery around them, these painters forged a new artistic tradition.

Cole, Church, and Cropsey

The Hudson River Valley became a gathering place for the landscape painters, and tourists soon began exploring the scenic areas celebrated in their favorite paintings. By 1826 Cole had already produced three paintings of Kaaterskill Falls. The dramatic gorge known as the Clove appeared in another Cole painting (*The Clove, Catskills, 1827*), as well as one by Stanford R. Gifford (*Kaaterskill Clove, 1862*) and another by Durand (*Kaaterskill Clove, 1866*).



The Voyage of Life: Old Age, Thomas Cole, 1840, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York, gift of Roy R. Neuberger Jim Frank

In 1836, Thomas Cole married Maria Bartow and settled at Cedar Grove, a hillside farm in Catskill. From the porch of his home, Cole could gaze upon the Catskill Mountains. Although much of his work remained regional, Cole also experimented with



Portrait of Frederic E. Church, Charles Loring Elliott, 1866, Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Hudson

allegorical and religious themes in such works as *The Course of Empire* (1832-36), a series of five paintings, and *The Voyage of Life* (1842). For two years, Cole shared his home and studio with his student, Frederic E. Church.



Twilight Among the Mountains, Frederic E. Church, 1845, Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Hudson



Catskill Mountains from the Home of the Artist, Frederic E. Church, 1871, Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Hudson

Frederic Church went on to paint pictures that rivaled Cole's in breadth and grandeur. Unlike so many of his peers who struggled to market their work, Church managed to make a livelihood by charging admission to view some of his masterpieces. *The Heart of the Andes* (1859), mounted in a tremendous wood



Sunset on the Palisades, Hastings, Jasper F. Cropsey, 1890, Newington-Cropsey Foundation, Hastings-on-Hudson

The success of the Hudson River School was hardly a local phenomenon. Cole and many of his peers traveled to Europe for instruction and used European themes for major paintings. Jasper R. Cropsey, who became known as "America's painter of autumn," spent many years in Europe and was introduced to Queen Victoria. In 1885 Cropsey purchased Ever Rest, a board-and-batten house in Hastings-on-Hudson, built a studio addition, and lived and worked there until his death in 1900. By that time, the Hudson River School included paintings set in ancient Rome, the sub-Arctic, the Ecuadorian highlands, and the Holy Land, as well as symbolism ranging from personal remembrance to the purpose of existence.



Ever Rest, home of Jasper F. Cropsey, Hastings-on-Hudson



Through the Woods, Asher B. Durand, 1849, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

Jasper F. Cropsey, self-portrait, n.d., Newington-Cropsey Foundation, Hastings-on-Hudson



frame measuring about 13 feet high by 14 feet wide, was the 19th century equivalent of a major motion picture, complete with lighting and a "stage set" of palm leaves.

In 1860 Church bought a farm in the Hudson Valley. Over time he designed a Persian style house and created a 250-acre landscape. Olana is Church's artistic masterpiece. Situated high on a hill across the river from Cedar Grove, Olana provided Church a panoramic view of the Catskill escarpment and the Hudson River.

Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, home of Frederic E. Church, Hudson Andy Wainwright



A Picnic on the Hudson, Thomas P. Rossiter, 1863, Butterfield Memorial Library, Cold Spring

The Hudson River School marked a decisive break with tradition in terms of the artists' subject matter and world view. Suddenly the American landscape was on center stage and with it a modern understanding of God's presence in nature and man's place in the natural world.

Today, visitors can view hundreds of Hudson River School paintings in museum galleries along the Hudson, explore many of the sites that inspired their creation, and tour the homes and studios of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and Jasper Cropsey.

Other Hudson River School Painters

Here are a few other Hudson River School artists who painted in the valley.

- Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902)
- John William Casilear (1811-1893)
- Thomas Chambers (c.1808-c.1866)
- Samuel Colman (1832-1920)
- Thomas Doughty (1793-1856)
- Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904)
- George Inness (1825-1894)
- Homer Dodge Martin (1836-1897)
- Jervis McEntee (1828-1891)
- Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872)
- William T. Richards (1833-1905)
- Thomas P. Rossiter (1818-1871)
- Francis Augustus Silva (1835-1886)
- Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889)

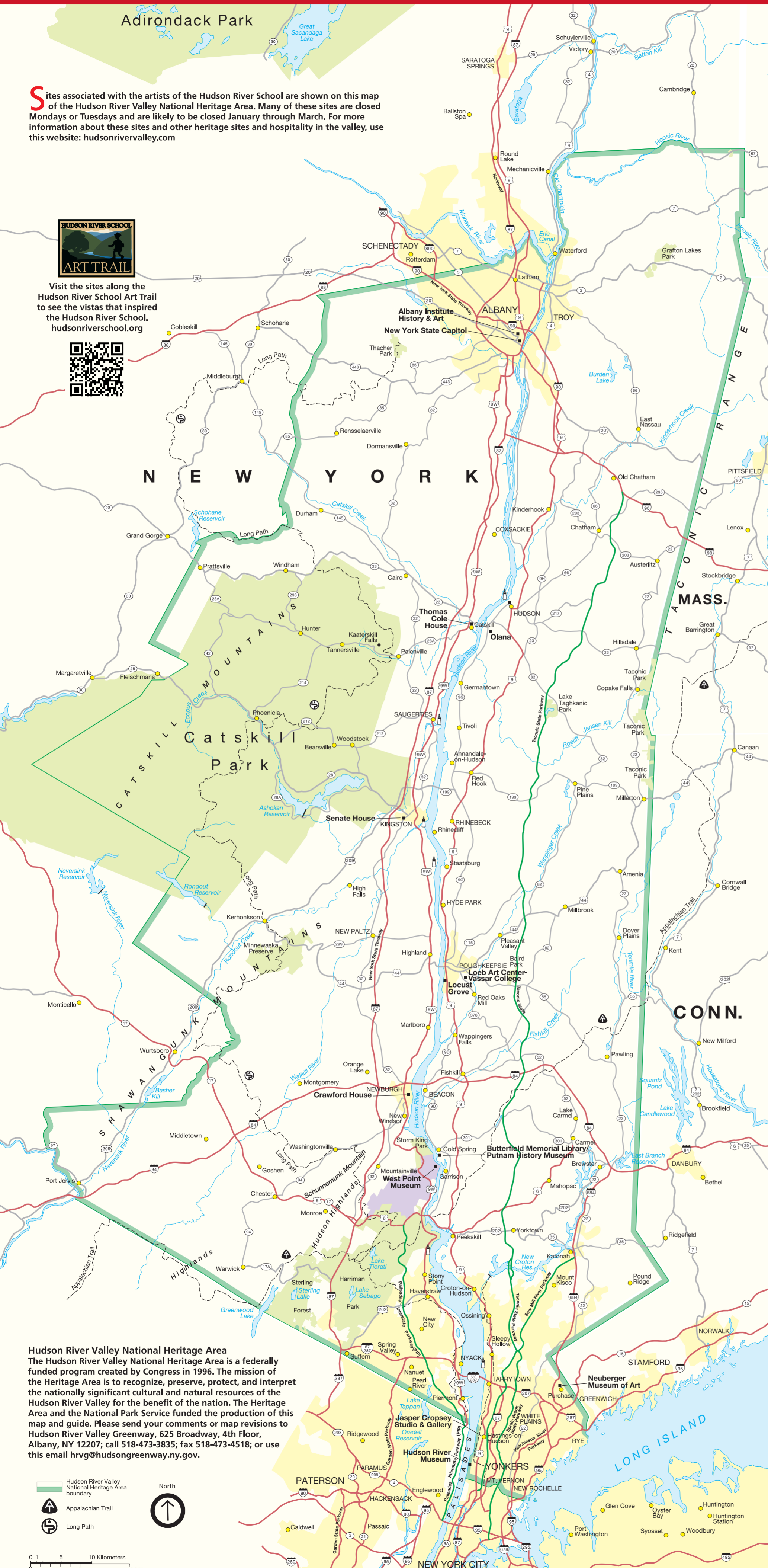


Hudson River Looking South From West Point, Robert W. Weir, n.d., Putnam County Historical Society, Cold Spring

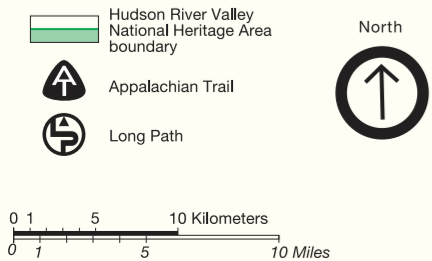
Sites associated with the artists of the Hudson River School are shown on this map of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Many of these sites are closed Mondays or Tuesdays and are likely to be closed January through March. For more information about these sites and other heritage sites and hospitality in the valley, use this website: hudsonrivervalley.com



Visit the sites along the Hudson River School Art Trail to see the vistas that inspired the Hudson River School. hudsonriverschool.org



Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area
The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area is a federally funded program created by Congress in 1996. The mission of the Heritage Area is to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the nation. The Heritage Area and the National Park Service funded the production of this map and guide. Please send your comments or map revisions to Hudson River Valley Greenway, 625 Broadway, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12207; call 518-473-3835; fax 518-473-4518; or use this email [hrvg@greenway.ny.gov](mailto:hrv@greenway.ny.gov).



Upper Hudson

Albany Institute of History & Art, 125 Washington Ave., Albany, 518-463-4478—One of the nation's oldest museums, the institute includes more than 60 paintings and oil sketches by members of the Hudson River School and has over 100 sketches, sketchbooks, letters, photographs, and other materials in the collection. www.albanyinstitute.org



Frederic E. Church's studio at Olana, Hudson
Andy Wainwright

Although intended to appear natural, the landscape was extensively designed by Church in the picturesque style he used in his landscapes on canvas. The house is richly furnished and decorated to appear as it was during Church's lifetime. The collection includes numerous paintings and sketches by Church and works by fellow Hudson River School artists Thomas Cole, Martin Johnson Heade, Jervis McEntee, and Sanford Gifford. (National Historic Landmark) www.olana.org

Thomas Cole National Historic Site, 218 Spring St., Catskill, 518-943-7465—This landmark celebrates the achievements of Thomas Cole, founder of the Hudson River School of art and one of America's most accomplished landscape painters. The property, known as Cedar Grove, includes the Federal-style main house where Cole was married in 1836 and the 1839 studio where he created many of his best known works. The main house includes changing exhibits highlighting the work of Hudson River School artists. www.thomascole.org

Olana State Historic Site, 5720 Route 9G, Hudson, 518-828-0135—Frederic E. Church and the architect Calvert Vaux collaborated on the design for a Persian-style castle on a hill overlooking the Hudson River.

Mid-Hudson

Senate House, 296 Fair St., Kingston, 845-338-2786—Built in 1676, the Senate House is arguably America's oldest public building and the site of the first New York State Senate meeting in 1777. The adjacent museum houses the largest collection of works by John Vanderlyn (1775-1852), one of America's first internationally respected artists. Vanderlyn painted portraits, classical scenes, and landscapes at a time when American artists were struggling for recognition. His *Landing of Columbus* hangs in the U.S. Capitol. Although under-appreciated in his lifetime, Vanderlyn is now considered an important forefather of American painting. www.senatehousekingston.org



Italian Landscape, Samuel F. B. Morse, c. 1830,
Locust Grove, Poughkeepsie

was the founder and first president of the National Academy of Design. During the late 1830s, Morse focused his attention on developing an electric telegraph and the Morse code. Paintings by Morse are on view in a modern museum gallery. In the mansion, the collection includes Hudson River School paintings by Morse, George Inness, Sanford R. Gifford, and Henry Farrer. (National Historic Landmark) www.lgny.org



Hudson at Kingston, John Vanderlyn, 1796,
Senate House State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, Kingston

Locust Grove Estate, 2683 South Road (U.S. 9), Poughkeepsie, 845-454-4500—Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872) studied painting at London's Royal Academy and became a respected New York artist in the 1820s. He

Lower Hudson

West Point Museum, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, 845-938-3590 or 2203—The museum's Hudson River School collection includes more than 200 paintings and numerous original prints and drawings. A selected number of paintings are on exhibit, and the collection is open to scholars by appointment. The museum features the work of Hudson River School artist Robert Weir, the academy's drawing instructor for 42 years, and many of his contemporaries. From Fort Putnam and Trophy Point, painters enjoyed a spectacular view of the river. It was near Fort Putnam that John F. Kensett painted *Hudson River Scene* in 1857. www.usma.edu/museum/

Hudson River Museum, 511 Warburton Ave., Yonkers, 914-963-4550—The museum consists of Glenview, an Eastlake-style house constructed in 1876, and a modern museum wing. Thirteen Hudson River School paintings are a permanent part of the collection. The museum also includes a planetarium and the Hudson Riverama, a 31-foot-long topographical map of the river with aquariums and hands-on displays. www.hrm.org



Washington's Headquarters, Victor DeGrailly, c. 1855,
West Point Museum Collection, USMA, West Point

Locations of Other Paintings
The Julia L. Butterfield Memorial Library, 10 Morris Ave., Cold Spring, 845-265-3040, displays two paintings by local resident Thomas Rossiter, *A Picnic on the Hudson* (1863) and *View of the Hudson River From the Artist's Home in Cold Spring* (n.d.). www.butterfieldlibrary.org

The Putnam History Museum, 63 Chestnut St., Cold Spring, 845-265-4010, features *The Gun Foundry* by John Ferguson Weir. www.putnamhistorymuseum.org

Across the river, the **Captain David Crawford House**, 189 Montgomery St., Newburgh, 845-561-2585, exhibits Raphael Hoyle's, *Washington's Headquarters at Newburgh*. www.newburghhistoricalsociety.com/Main/CrawfordHouse

Ever Rest, the Cropsey Home and Studio, 49 Washington Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, 914-478-1372, and the **Newington-Cropsey Foundation**, 25 Cropsey Lane, Hastings-on-Hudson, 914-478-7990, tours by appointment only—Hudson River School painter Jasper Cropsey gained international fame for his painting *Autumn on the Hudson River*. In 1885 Cropsey purchased Ever Rest, a carpenter Gothic house overlooking the Hudson River, and immediately built an artist's studio addition. Cropsey spent the last 15 years of his life at Ever Rest. The house, which includes artwork adorning the walls, has been maintained in its original condition. The Newington-Cropsey Foundation is the steward of the world's most comprehensive collection of Jasper Cropsey's work. The Cropsey Gallery, built in 1994, offers temporary exhibits and art shows throughout the year. www.newingtoncropsey.com

The Neuberger Museum of Art has two paintings by Thomas Cole and one by Albert Bierstadt on exhibit in its stairway gallery. Purchase College, 735 Anderson Hill Rd., Purchase, 914-251-6100, Tuesday-Sunday, 12-5 pm. www.neuberger.org

Comprehensive Hudson River School painting collections can be seen in three museums in New York City: **Metropolitan Museum of Art**, 1000 Fifth Ave. at 82nd St, 800-662-3397, www.metmuseum.org; **New-York Historical Society**, 170 Central Park West, 212-873-3400, closed Mondays, www.nyhistory.org; **Brooklyn Museum**, 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, 718-638-5000, closed Mondays and Tuesdays. www.brooklynmuseum.org

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