

View of Hudson River and Catskill Mountains from Olana, Photography by Teófilo Sprugel

Olana State Historic Site

Olana was home, studio and estate of the Hudson River School artist, Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), one of the most important artists in American history. Here he developed a three-dimensional work of art; a totally integrated environment embracing architecture, art and landscape, unmatched by any other 19th-century American property.

In 1860, Church purchased a farm in Columbia County near the site where he and his teacher Thomas Cole had sketched and painted a little more than a decade before. This 126-acre farm was distinguished by its views of the Hudson Valley as well as the Taconic Hills to the East.

Church concentrated on transforming his property into an ornamental farm. Like his contemporaries, Church reorganized landscape gardening as a fine art, creating and composing real views as he did so imaginatively on canvas. The first element he added to this landscape was a small country cottage, believed designed by architect Richard Morris Hunt. In addition, Church laid out gardens, orchards, dredged a marsh to create a 10-acre lake, and built a studio. Frederic and his wife, Isabel, called their house *Cosy Cottage*, the land around it *The Farm*. In this setting, Frederic and Isabel began a family and started acquiring the property that they would one day name Olana.

In 1867, Church acquired the most important parcel of his landscape, the top of the hill. There in 1870, surrounded by spectacular views of the valley and mountains, he

placed the crowning element of his composition, a large new house inspired by his recent trips to Europe and the Middle East. Cabert Vaux was the consulting architect. The landscape setting Church created reflects the aesthetic of the romantic landscape tradition as espoused most notably by A. J. Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted. The Churches' house was designed as a total work of art within a designed landscape garden.




Throughout his life, Church continued to develop the grounds, laying out miles of roads and planting thousands of trees, as he created this "living landscape." Using native material and working in the Picturesque style, Church composed landscape scenes contrasting broad pastoral vistas with woodland intimacy, sun-dappled carriage roads with dark enveloping forests and the blue distant mountains with the bright waters of the lake and river. The shifts in light, atmosphere and seasons caused frequent changes in these scenes. The artist wrote, "I can make more and better landscapes in this way than by tampering with canvas and paint in the studio."

With the completion of the studio wing in 1890, Church essentially called his creation complete; a harmonious union of buildings, landscape and scenery. Today, Olana is known as one of the nation's important Picturesque landscapes as well as an artistic treasure. ■



Olana landscape

Frederic Church's Landscape

-  **DIRECTIONS:** Located on Rt. 9G, 5 miles south of Hudson. Take NYS-87 to exit 21, Catskill. Take Rt. 23 over Rip Van Winkle Bridge. Bear right on 9G south. Olana is 1 mile on left. Or, visit our website at www.olana.org and www.nysparks.com
-  **HOURS:** Grounds open 8:00 AM to sunset. Call (518) 828-0135, or visit www.olana.org and www.nysparks.com for admission, program and tour information.
-  **New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation** works closely with its partner The Olana Partnership, to preserve and restore the landscape of the historic site. For more information on how you can help please contact the site 518-828-0135 or The Partnership at 518-828-1872

COVER: *View of Olana, photograph by Richard Greenleaf*


Olana State Historic Site
5720 Route 9G
Hudson, NY 12534
(518) 828-0135

www.olana.org

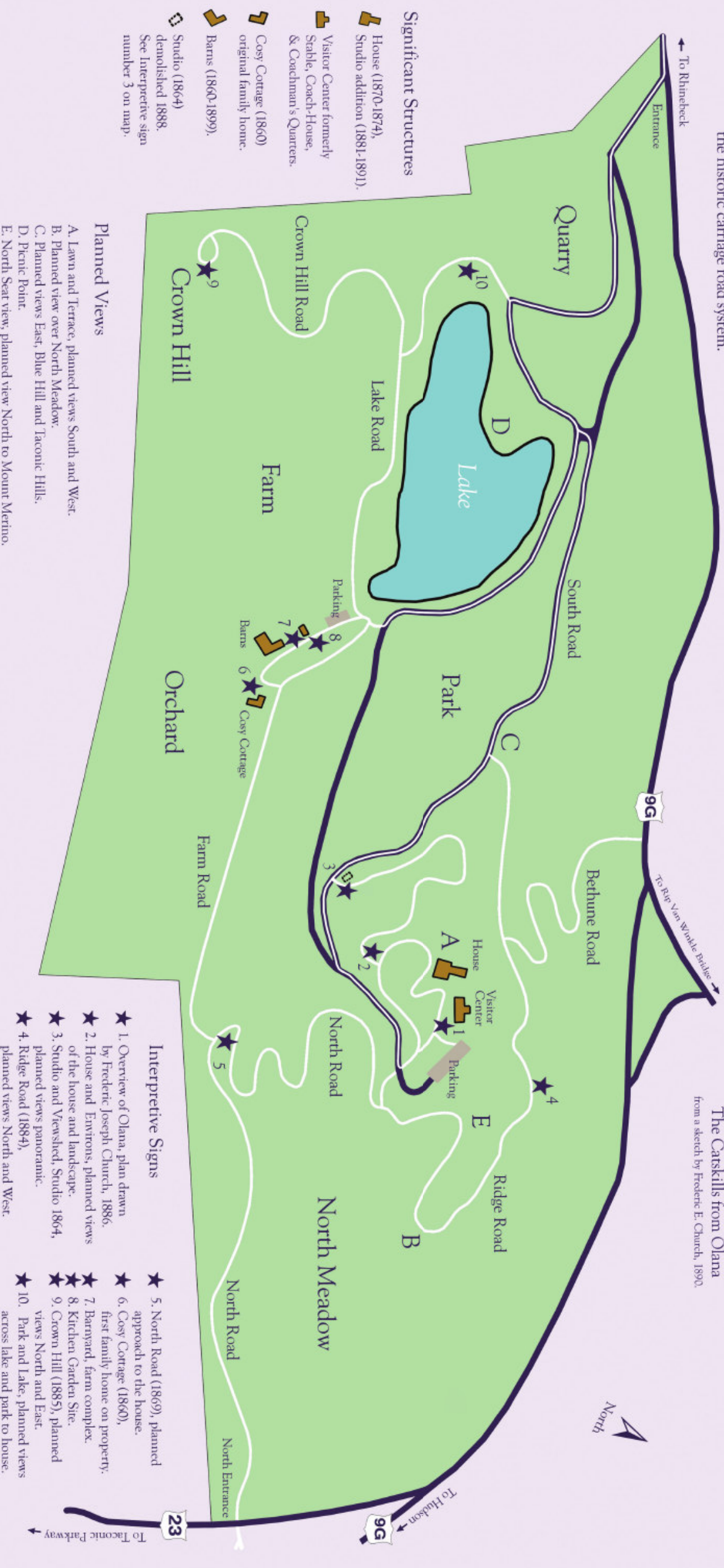
www.nysparks.com

Guide to Olana

This map is a stylized overview of Olana's landscape. The features shown on the map, in print or icon, represent the major elements of the 1891 landscape. The white line represents the historic carriage road system.



The Catskills from Olana
from a sketch by Frederic E. Church, 1890.



Significant Structures

-  House (1870-1874), Studio addition (1881-1891).
-  Visitor Center formerly Stable, Coach-House, & Coachman's Quarters.
-  Cosy Cottage (1860) original family home.
-  Barns (1860-1899).
-  Studio (1864) demolished 1888. See Interpretive sign number 3 on map.

Planned Views

- A. Lawn and Terrace, planned views South and West.
- B. Planned view over North Meadow.
- C. Planned views East, Blue Hill and Taconic Hills.
- D. Picnic Point.
- E. North Seat view, planned view North to Mount Merino.

Interpretive Signs

- ★ 1. Overview of Olana, plan drawn by Frederic Joseph Church, 1886.
- ★ 2. House and Environs, planned views of the house and landscape.
- ★ 3. Studio and Viewshed, Studio 1864, planned views panoramic.
- ★ 4. Ridge Road (1884), planned views North and West.
- ★ 5. North Road (1869), planned approach to the house.
- ★ 6. Cosy Cottage (1860), first family home on property.
- ★ 7. Barnyard, farm complex.
- ★ 8. Kitchen Garden Site.
- ★ 9. Crown Hill (1885), planned views North and East.
- ★ 10. Park and Lake, planned views across lake and park to house.