

MAIN HOUSE



View of the House from Lake © Larry Lederman, 2010, all rights reserved

When Frederic Church purchased the property for Olana in 1860, he hired architect Richard Morris Hunt to design “Cosy Cottage.” The house was occupied in the early summer of 1861. In 1867 Church purchased an additional 18 acres at the top of the hill overlooking his property. Frederic and Isabel Church, impressed by the architecture they saw in cities like Beirut, Jerusalem and Damascus, envisioned a home at Olana that incorporated Middle Eastern elements and designs. They hired architect Calvert Vaux.

In the fall of 1872, the Church family moved into the second story of the new house while the first floor was finished. In 1888, Church began the studio wing, with guest rooms and a glassed-in observation room in the tower.

The Saving of Olana

When Frederic Church died in 1900, Olana was willed to his youngest son Louis Palmer Church. The following year Louis married Sarah Baker Good (known as “Sally”) and the two of them moved to Olana. After Louis's death in 1943, Sally stayed on at Olana until her death in 1964 at the age of 96.

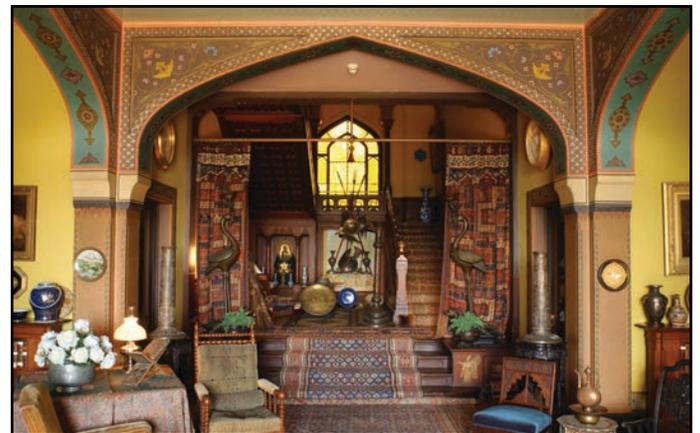
Throughout her life, Sally had insisted that Olana remain unchanged. Upon her death, her nephew Charles Lark, Jr. inherited the estate and undertook to have Sotheby's auction the estate. Professor David Huntington, learning of the upcoming auction, convinced Lark to allow time for funds to be raised to purchase the estate. Olana Preservation was formed to raise funds for the purchase of Olana. At the last moment, with help from the State of New York, the property was purchased in 1966 and the furnishings saved with the house, still looking much the same as when Church had lived there almost a century before.

Olana Preservation became the Friends of Olana and restructured in 2001 as The Olana Partnership.

The Main House Today

The contents of the house today, accumulated by Church over a 30-year period, include furniture, tapestries, rugs, bronzes, paintings, sculptures, and the myriad objects collected by Church to represent the major civilizations and religions of the world. The color scheme and stenciling that Church designed in 1870 remain, and from Church's property the visitor can still see the vistas recorded in Church's paintings.

The Olana Partnership and Olana State Historic Site continue to work together to raise funds for the ongoing preservation and restoration of objects, furnishings, stencils and paintings.



Court Hall at Olana © Andy Wainwright, 2004