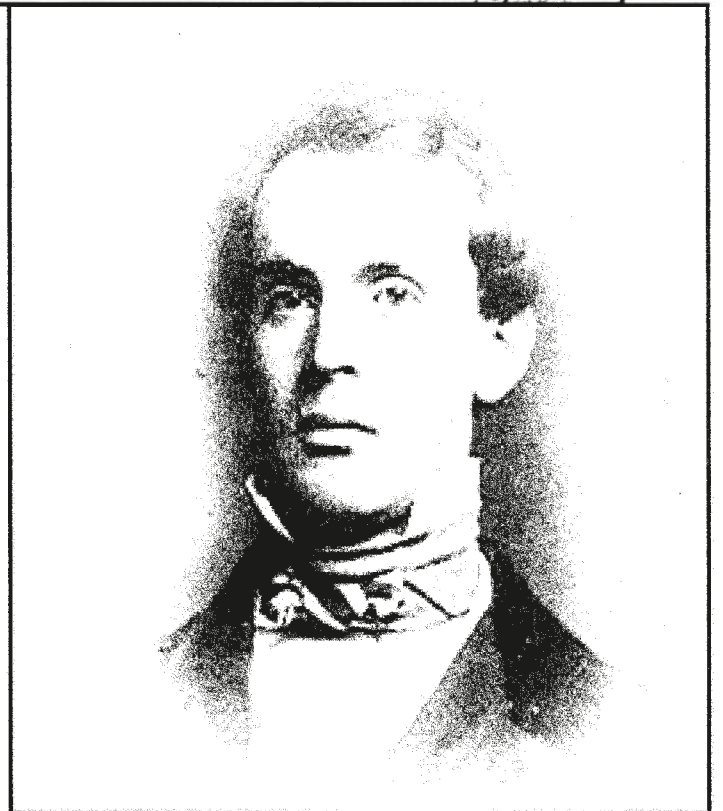
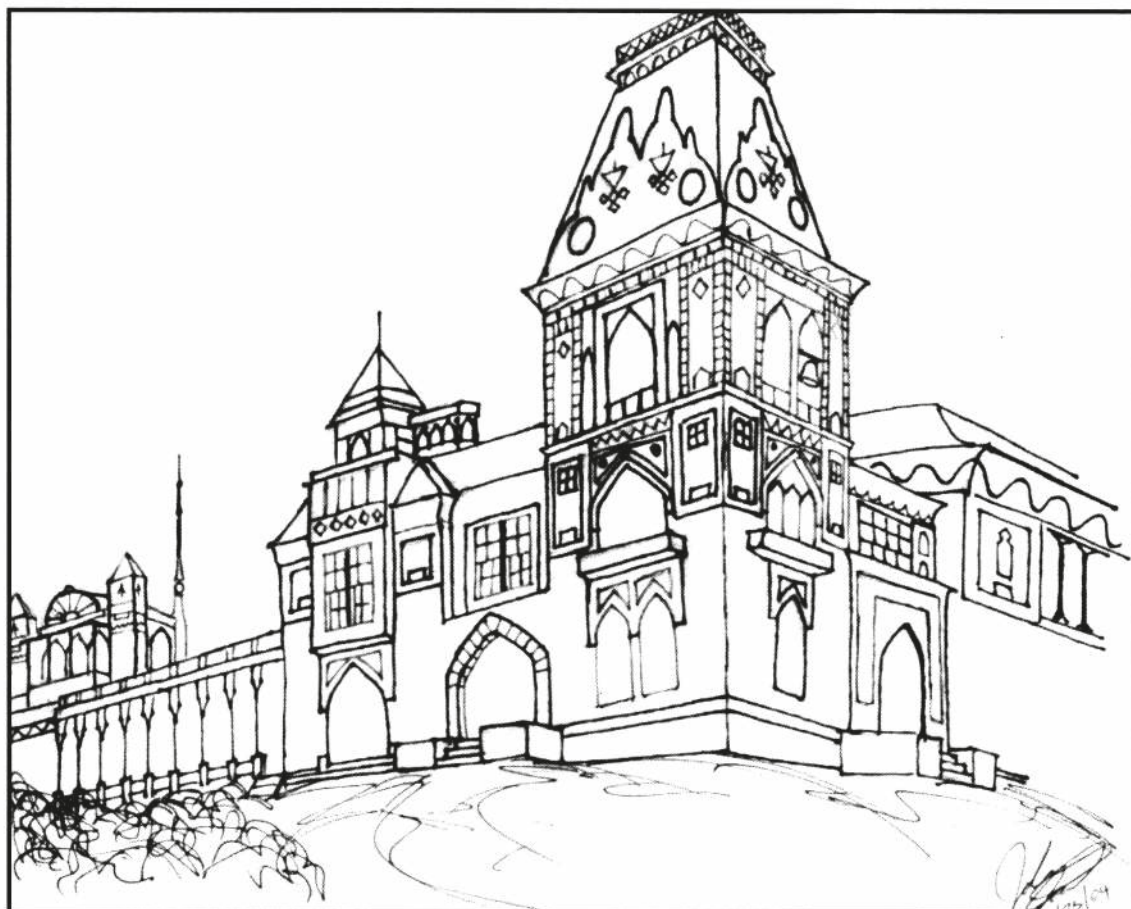
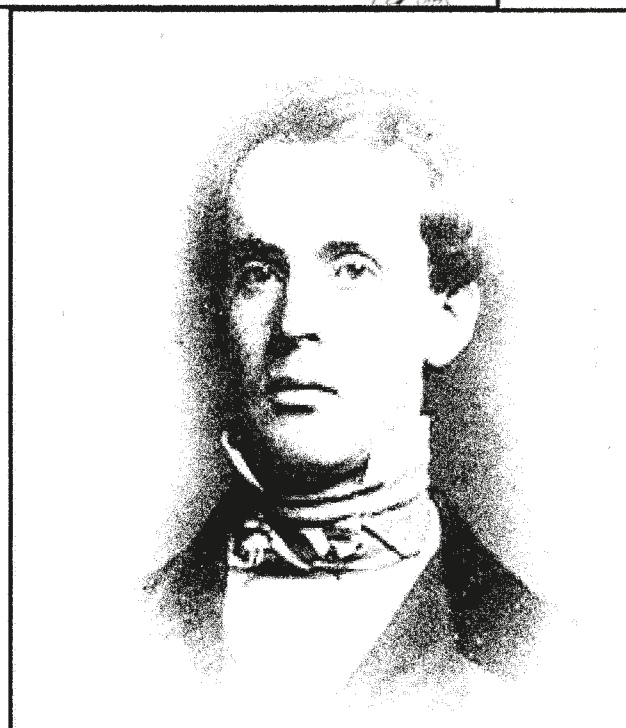


THE STORY
OF
AN ARTIST
AND
HIS HOME.





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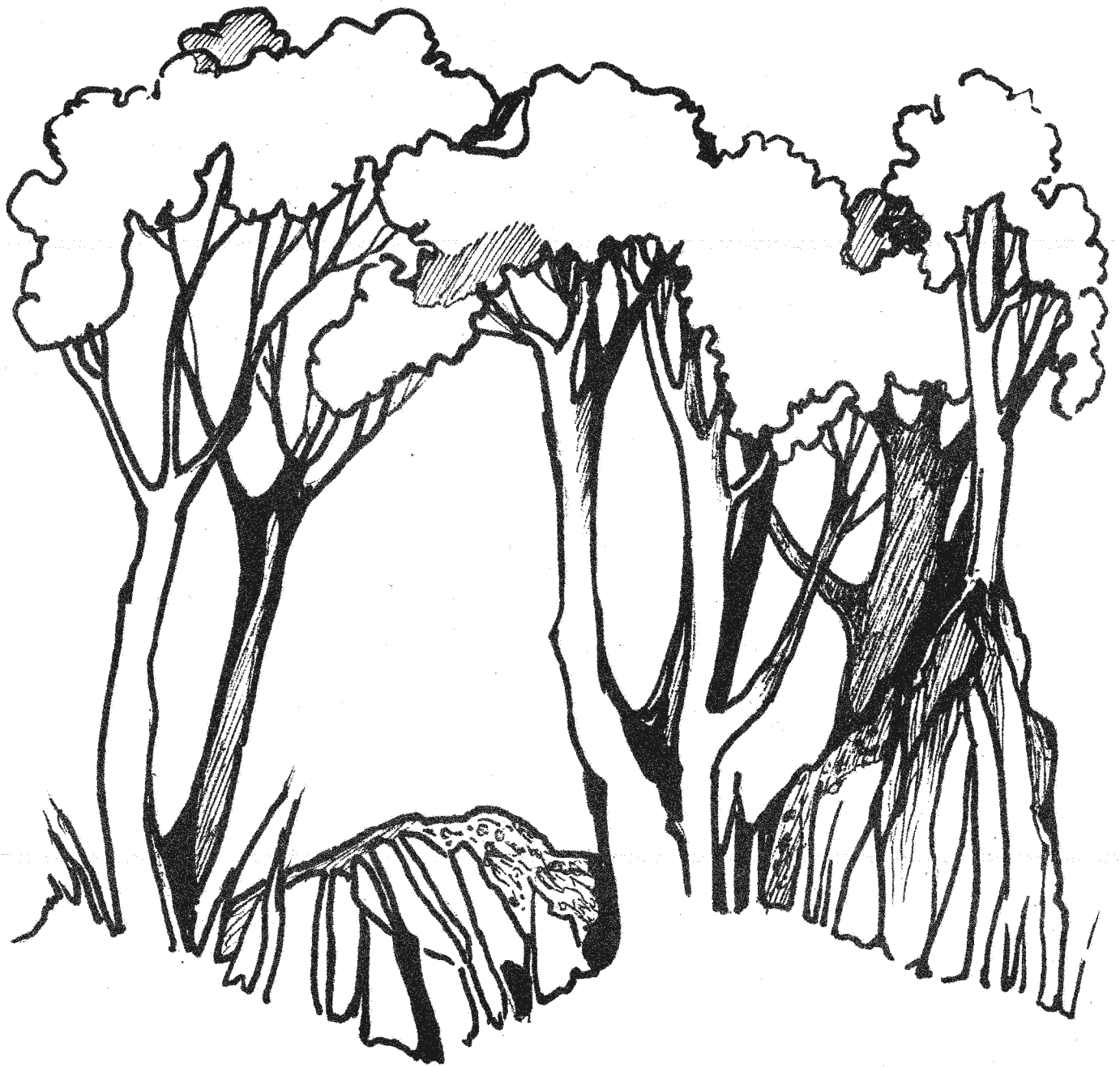


Frederic Edwin Church was born May 4, 1826 in Hartford, Connecticut. When Frederic was a little boy he loved to draw. He studied math, reading, writing, history and science. But he knew, most of all, he wanted to be an artist when he grew up.



By the time he was a young man, his father wanted him to be a businessman like he was. But, Frederic was determined to be an artist, so his father arranged for him to study art with Thomas Cole. Thomas Cole was a very famous artist who lived in Catskill, NY. Frederic lived and studied in Catskill for almost two years.

The first thing Frederic learned was to observe nature carefully so he could represent accurate details in his art. Frederic learned to make pencil or ink sketches of lakes, flowers, farm buildings, stumps of trees, cows, horses, a cliff or mountain, a sunset or sunrise. He would make notes on his sketches to remind him of colors, light and what the scene looked like. He'd use these sketches to give him ideas later when he painted his large oil paintings. Thomas Cole said Frederic had "the finest eye for drawing in the world."



In 1846 after two years of studying with Mr. Cole, Frederic went to New York City. In the winter, Frederic would paint in his studio in New York City. During the summer, he would travel and sketch outdoors.

He explored western New York, Virginia, Kentucky, Vermont, Maine and other parts of America and Canada. Frederic was learning to understand how the sky, land and water work in harmony in the world and how to show this harmony in his paintings. As he traveled, he sketched and learned. He would then take his drawings back to the studio and incorporate them into his paintings.



A Church type study of Niagara Falls

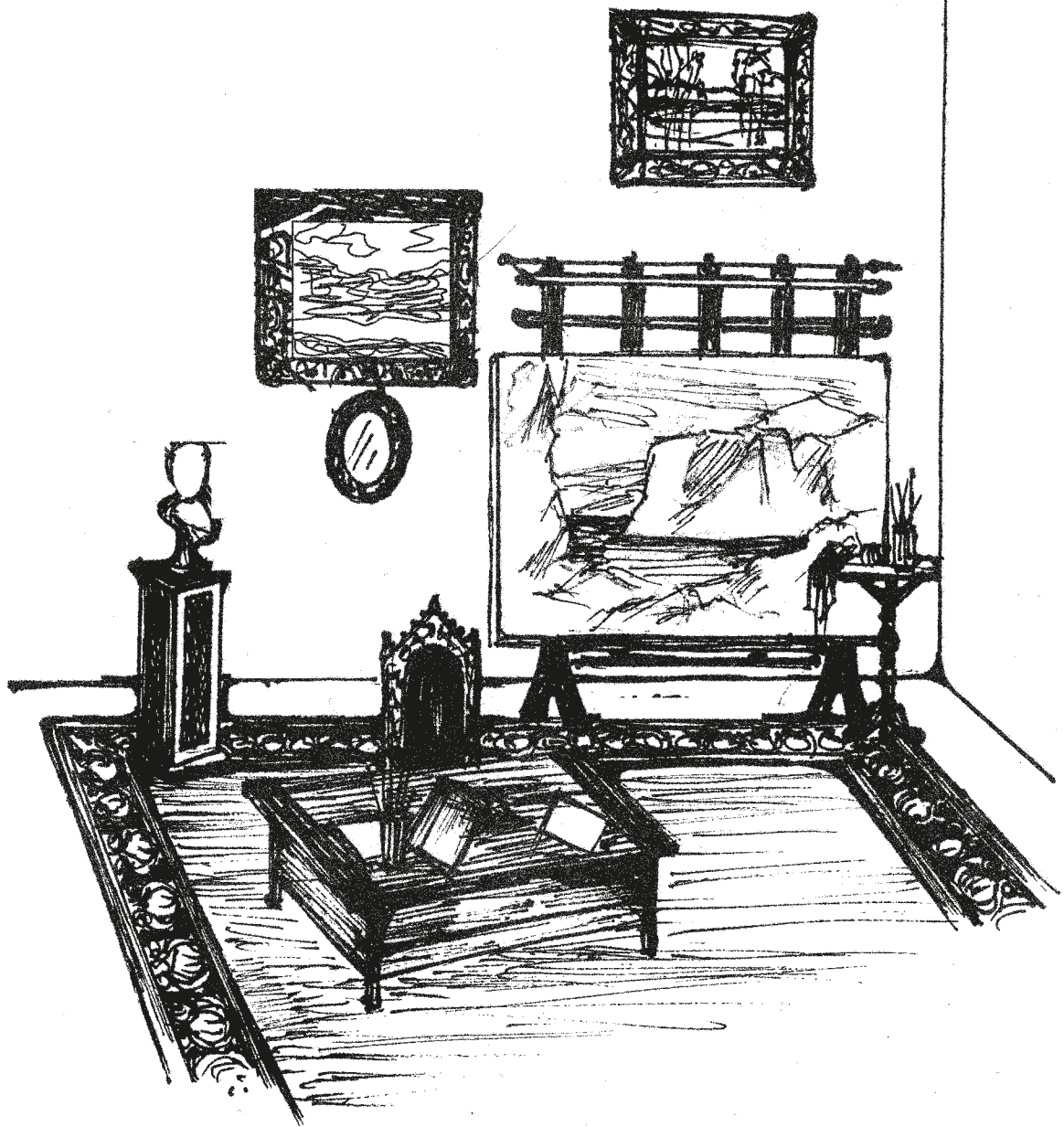
Artists who share the same ideas about how painting should be done are sometimes said to belong to a “school of art.” That does not mean they study together. It means they share a style of painting even if the subject matter is different. Frederic Church and Thomas Cole were part of what was called “The Hudson River School.” The goal of the Hudson River School was to paint a natural scene so that the people looking at the picture would feel that they were actually there.

Frederic wanted people to enjoy the beauty of his paintings and also look for “lessons” of nature in the picture. In 1857, Frederic’s first major painting, *Niagara*, was exhibited in New York City. People loved it. It seemed so real that people thought they could almost hear the roar of the waterfalls as they stood looking at the wonderful colors Church used in the painting.



A Church type study of South America

During his life Frederic studied many books about meteorology (weather), botany (plants), geology (rocks), optics (light), history and travel. In 1853, Frederic went to Colombia and Ecuador in South America. He explored and sketched the beauty of nature in the wilds of the South American jungle and at the same time wrote in his journal about what he saw and thought. He painted a picture of a volcano called *Cotopaxi*. After his second trip in 1879, he painted a picture called *The Heart of the Andes*. The mountains were the heroes of these pictures. He wanted people to feel like they could wander, climb and leap through the pictures. For many people, Church's paintings were their first look at the jungles of South America. His paintings were as amazing to them as the pictures we saw of men on the moon in the 20th century.

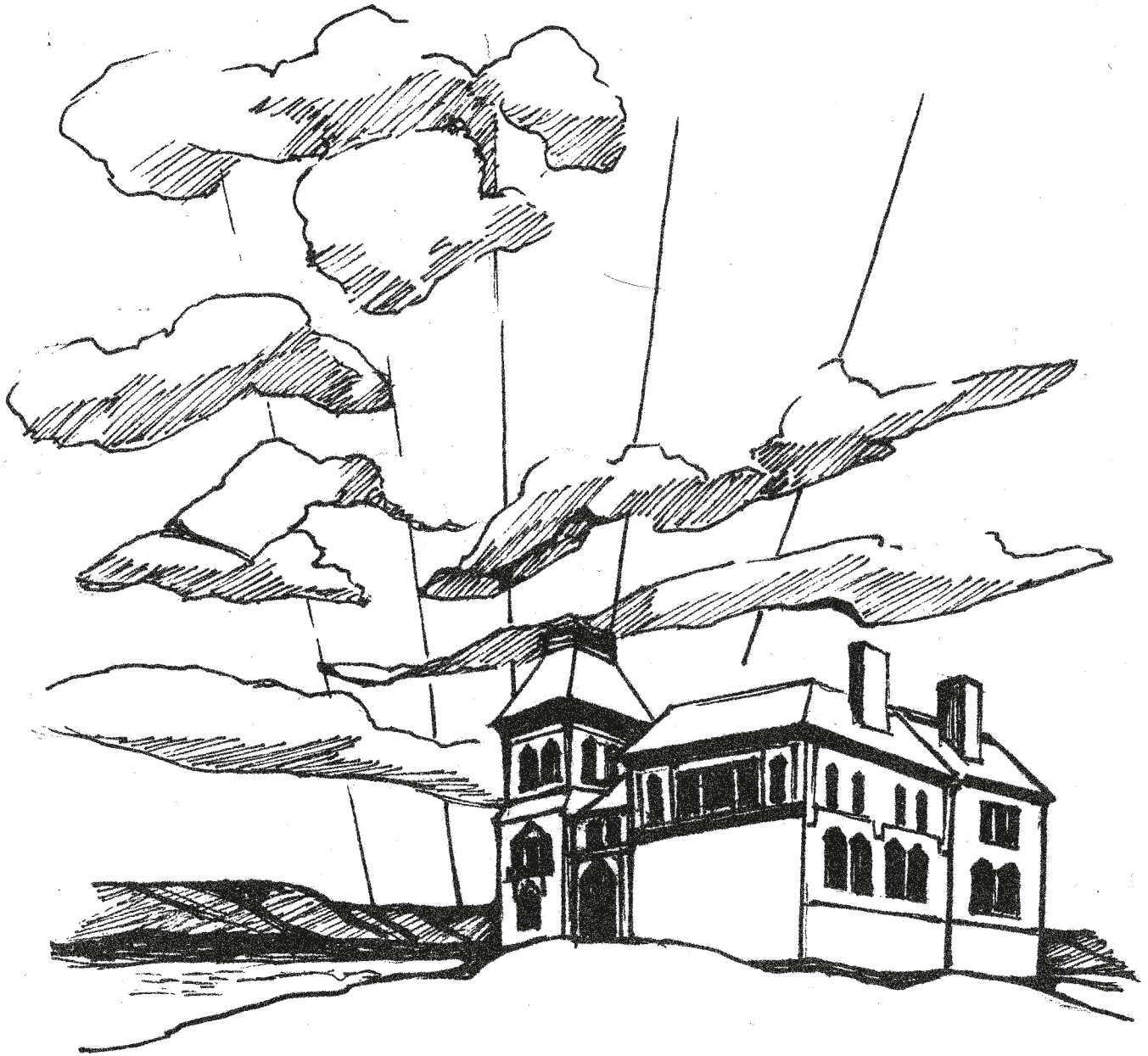


Frederic became very good at using light to emphasize his ideas in his paintings. In his painting *Twilight*, he was able to paint clouds as floating masses of water vapor alive with light and color. In his picture *Iceburgs*, the shimmer of the mist allows the viewer to almost feel its damp coldness. In the 1850's, chemical pigments for artists to use in their paints became more readily available. Before this invention artists had to mix their own colors of paint. These new paints produced bright, intense colors. Frederic especially liked to use them when he painted skies where he felt "color is everything."



In 1867, Frederic Edwin Church, and his family, made a trip to Europe and the Middle East. Frederic was constantly sketching and painting through the whole trip, saving ideas that would later be used in his great paintings.

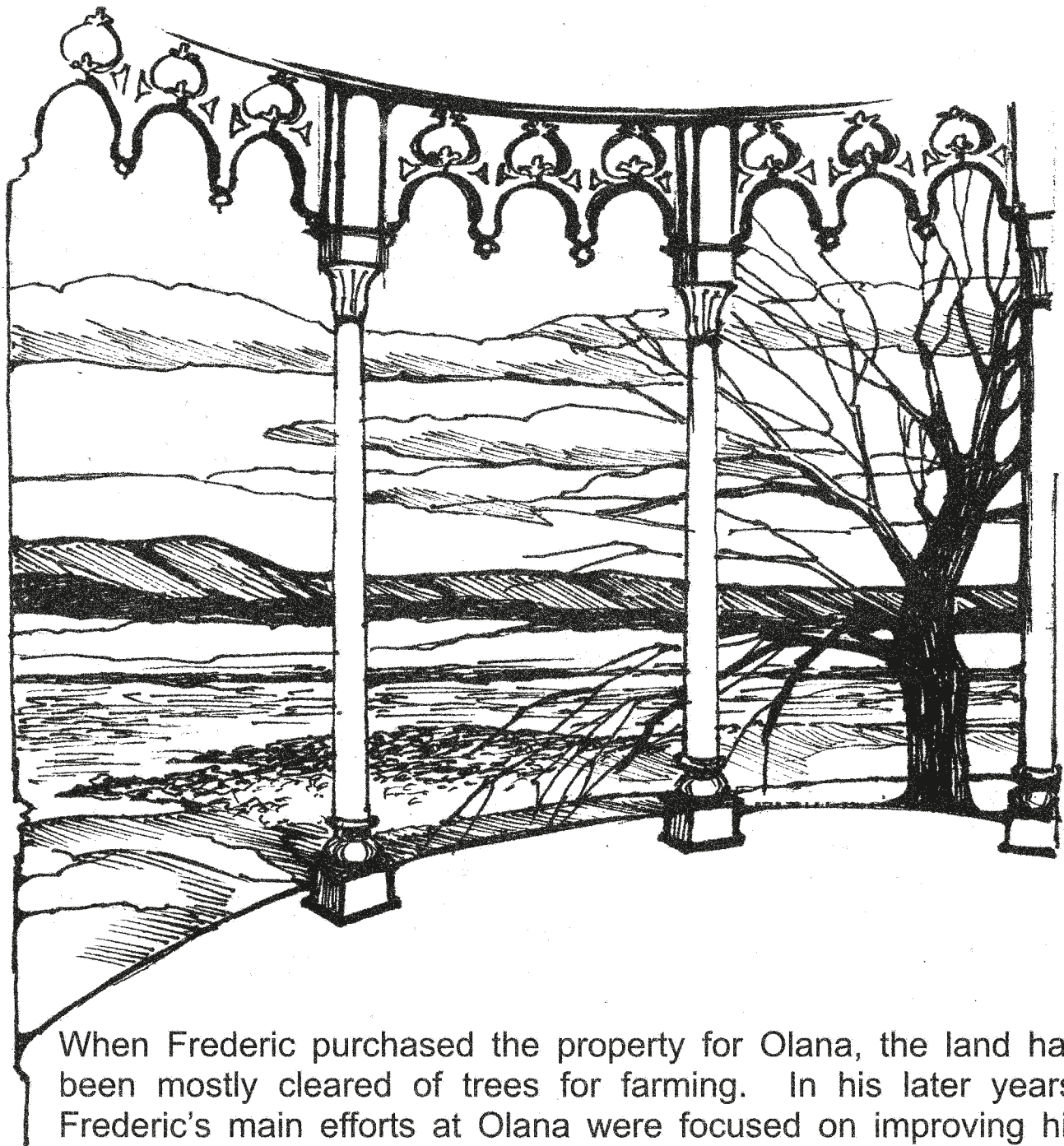
Church's son, Frederic Joseph (Freddie) was 13 months old when he went with his parents on this trip. How lucky he was to get to ride on a camel with his father! Freddie's little brother, Theodore Winthrop (Winnie) was born in Rome, Italy. At the same time, Church was learning to paint on plaster a technique called fresco. Church wrote to a friend that "he would be able to paint a scenes in the plaster of his barn walls when he got back to Olana". Church had a very good sense of humor.



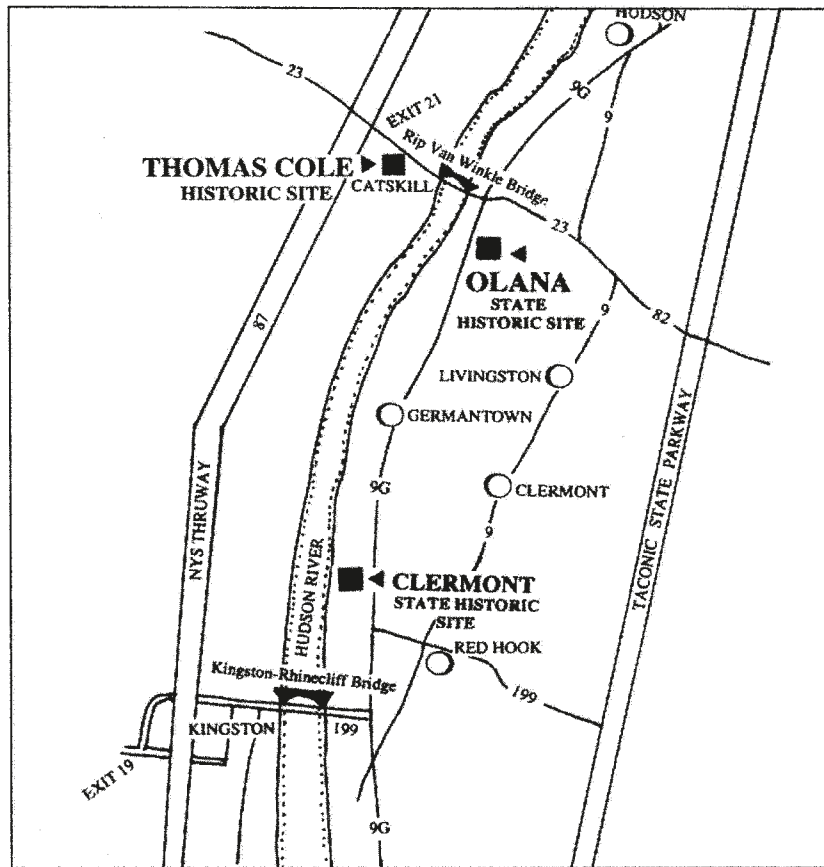
After Church and his wife returned from the Middle East, they decided it was time for a bigger grander house on their farm near Hudson, NY. They loved the colors and designs of the Middle East and wanted to use them to decorate the new house. They worked very hard with a famous architect, Calvert Vaux, to build a home over looking the Hudson River. The house and the surrounding grounds they named Olana.



Soon there were two more children, Louis Palmer (Lou) and Isabel Charlotte (Downie). Olana was a wonderful place to grow up. The children had a tutor at home and studied reading, writing, math and science. They were also taught to sew and embroider, even the boys. The children learned basic drawing and painting, perhaps, in part, from their father. They collected and studied butterflies, bird eggs and plants. Mrs. Church imported white donkeys from the Middle East for herself and the children to ride along the carriage drives at Olana. When the children got older, they went to boarding school and college.



When Frederic purchased the property for Olana, the land had been mostly cleared of trees for farming. In his later years, Frederic's main efforts at Olana were focused on improving his home and creating a natural environment of five parts: the house and its surrounding grounds, the south park, the farmstead, the woodland buffers and the roads. The south park was carefully planned and planted with trees and a lake was built. The farm produced fruits, vegetables and flowers for the house and also crops that the Church's could sell to support the farm. The woods were a buffer between the Church's home and the outside world. The roads were laid out so the visitor would see a variety of 3 dimensional "visual landscape paintings" as they came or left the house. Olana was said to be Frederic Edwin Church's last and greatest artistic effort.



Directions: Exit 21 (from the north or south) off NYS Thruway, I-87; take Route 23 EAST to Rip Van Winkle Bridge, exit the bridge to Rt 9-G South. Olana's entrance is 1 mile south of the bridge on the left. Or NYS Rt 9 W (north or south) follow signs to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, exit the bridge to Rt 9-G South. Olana's entrance is 1 mile south of the bridge on the left.

Rt 9 to Rhinebeck then Rt 9-G north from Rhinebeck. It is less than a 30 minute ride from this point. You will pass the exit for the Kingston/Rhinecliff Bridge, Red Hook and Tivoli and at the traffic light in Germantown. It is about a 5 mile drive. Olana's entrance is marked and will be on your right. If you reach the Rip Van Winkle Bridge you have gone too far, turn around and retrace your path.

Olana State Historic Site &
The Olana Partnership
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www.nysparks.com



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