



*The Land of the
Gentleman Artist
A Trip Up the Hudson River*



October 6th - 8th, 1998

Jessica Deutsch

The Land of the Gentleman Artist: A Trip up the Hudson River October 6th - 9th, 1998

Travel by steamboat up the *Hudson River* as we journey into a breathtaking landscape of majestic mountains, offset by castles and grand mansions whose manicured lawns roll down to meet the river. This is the world that Thomas Cole captured on canvas in 1825 when he presented nature in its raw beauty, full of the unexpected, the mysterious and the dramatic. Soon, he was emulated by others and a movement began that came to be known as *The Hudson River School* of painting.

Limited to sixteen participants, our trip offers a taste of the grandeur and elegance of the *Gilded Age* with luxurious accommodation at the *Belvedere Mansion*, a former estate opulently restored. This Neo-classical mansion overlooks the *Hudson River* and we will see a splendid landscape turned red-gold with fall leaves. *The Hudson River School of Painting* is introduced in a lecture by Professor William Gerdtts, Professor of Art History, Graduate School of the City University of New York and author. He will explain the 19th-century philosophy of sublime beauty and how this was captured by the painters of the school. Our visits to historic homes include the work of the designer A. J. Downing who took ideas of the sublime and the picturesque and applied them to architecture and landscape design. We

will also learn of the early settlers who came to the area and were granted tracts of land by the British crown and who in turn came to build great estates such as *Montgomery Place* that survive into the present. We also explore the later mansions built by railroad and financial magnates, exotic artists' studios and discover why this is an area that continues to attract artists, craftsmen, designers and collectors.

For the artists of the 19th-century the lure of the area was the dazzling juxtaposition of man-made and God-made, of beauty both tamed and wild, of the sense of primeval forests in close proximity to towns, villages and industrial sites. With ample time to enjoy the mansion and its surroundings we will see how a short walk or ride of only a few miles takes one to the wildest mountain scenery. In these surroundings are set houses seemingly untouched by time. While we learn the secrets of the past, we also have the privilege of dining with present residents including the owners of the beautiful houses *Midwood and Tailings*.

We shall come to see why the Hudson is an area that inspires passion in the heart of its inhabitants and explorers, and why a trip into its heartland at a time when it is at its most glorious, still provides spiritual renewal.

Schedule

Tuesday, October 6th

The full grandeur of the *Hudson River* can only be appreciated by a boat trip

upstream. Just as the artists of the early 19th-century escaped their city studios for the wilderness of the *Hudson River Bed*, so we capture the spirit of the past with a boat ride from *West Haverstraw* to *West Point*. We travel on the *Commander*, a wooden boat that has been plying the waters since 1917. Luncheon at the water's edge in the charming town of *Cold Spring*.

The Italian villa style house was one that appealed most to the artists of the 19th-century. Samuel F. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, built one in 1851 when he transformed *Locust Grove*, his symmetrical house near Poughkeepsie, into a picturesque Italian villa. A stop at *Locust Grove* allows us to study the ideal in architecture of the period.

Next we visit *Mills Mansion* where Edith Wharton set her "House of Mirth". Late afternoon, check into the *Belvedere Mansion*.

Early dinner and after dinner lecture with Professor William Gerdtts on "*The Hudson River School- Uniquely American*".

Wednesday, October 7th

Time to relax at the *Belvedere Mansion* before we depart for a visit to *Clermont*, oldest of the Hudson River estates. We then proceed to a contemporary artist's studio at the top of a restored 19th-century house in the town of *Hudson*. *Frank Faulkner*, a New York abstract painter entertains us for lunch. *Hudson* is famed for its antique stores, and we allow free time after luncheon to shop. We then stop at a private house and collection.

After a rest at the hotel we visit *Wilderstein*- a Gothic fantasy where one finds oneself lost in time. The furnishings designed for the house when it was built are by J. B. Tiffany, a cousin of Louis Comfort Tiffany. The house was lived in by Miss Margaret Lynch Suckley. Her romantic liaison with Franklin Roosevelt was discovered from their love letters later found in the house.

Our day ends with a private dinner at the *Honorable Joan K. Davidson's* magnificent house, *Midwood*. The former commissioner of New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Mrs. Davidson has lovingly restored this 1888 wooden clapboard vernacular version of a grand old house.

Thursday, October 8th

A morning of studio artist visits begins with the grandest and most exotic of houses by *The Hudson River School*, that of *Frederic Church* at *Olana* with its spectacular site overlooking the Hudson. Church had journeyed to the Near East in 1868 and was captivated by its art and architecture. His house is unique in its incorporation of Islamic features and an interior filled with objects from many periods and places.

In stark contrast is the atelier of French ceramicist *Martine Vermuelen* who lives in a small 19th-century farmhouse on the edge of the woods. From here we travel to the studio of silversmith *Robert Butler* who works with hollowed silver. Our morning ends at *Gilmore Glassworks*, a working glass foundry. Here we will see a demonstration of glass blowing which will be followed by a