Dear OLLI friends,

There's an excellent week ahead for Hudson River School fans, especially if you are drawn to the art of Frederic Edwin Church and his home Olana, the subjects of our next class.

Programming on Olana’s YouTube channel continues to expand, with weekly Subject Specialist Talks being added. Video recordings of recent Olana lectures may be found at olana.org/virtual-learning. These live webinars with Q&A are available by email invitation to members, with recordings uploaded for all to enjoy. Lectures previously presented to live audiences are also available on the website. The “Up Close and Personal” series highlights the postponed feature exhibition “Cross Pollination” which treats the relationship between Church and fellow artist Martin Johnson Heade.

Subject Specialist presentations include the saving of Olana, Church’s relationship with patrons, and the next in the series, about which I’m very excited. A blockbuster exhibition will be described, in perfect timing to coordinate with our progress through the Hudson River School artists. It'll be like having a perfectly timed, private sneak preview tour through a definitive, world class exhibition, presented by a leading scholar/curator of the blending of American history and art.

On Wednesday, April 29th at 5:30 pm, Eleanor Jones Harvey, Senior Curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, will be presenting a webinar on “Alexander von Humboldt and Frederic Church: An Insider’s Perspective.” This webinar will include an exhibition tour and a live Q&A. It is open to staff, volunteers and members of The Olana Partnership. Registration in advance is required. Olana members may check their email and register to attend or contact misaacs@olana.org. Details are not otherwise available.

An existing, 35 minute video is on both YouTube and the Smithsonian site and covers much of what this webinar should be expected to show: https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/humboldt. “Alexander von Humboldt and the United States: Art, Nature, and Culture,” Curator’s Video Tour. YouTube also has a companion preview video, much shorter at 1:25.

Due to covid-19 restrictions, the Smithsonian is closed and Dr. Harvey’s much anticipated exhibition was unable to open. I’d made plans to attend the opening symposium in Washington, for this topic of great personal interest. During my tour managing career, I’d spent considerable time in the Andean countries, and following Church, I’d also followed the route of Humboldt. I continue traveling to Galapagos, Machu Picchu, Peru and mainland Ecuador.

You’ll likely find Humboldt’s life and accomplishments to be fascinating, and in our next class I’ll discuss Humboldt’s importance to the development of science and his influence on Church.

In preparation for Tuesday’s class, on a different topic than Humboldt, I encourage you to view the currently available YouTube video: “First Wednesday: Frederic Church’s Landscapes by Eleanor Jones Harvey.” I attended this lecture last May at the Middlebury library, as part of an overflowing crowd. It seems that some of the screen graphics did not record entirely well, but the topic was wonderfully presented in Dr. Harvey’s informative, often humorous style. The audio is great, although visuals are incomplete.

I hope you’ll find the time to view some of these most interesting materials. See you Tuesday.

Cordially,
Ralph Pearson
Instructor