Thomas Cole Papers, 1821-1863; bulk, 1821-1848

SC10635
Series I. Correspondence, 1820-1855
Box 1, Folder 3: Letters by Thomas Cole, 1837-1838

To	Year	Month/Date
Asher Brown Durand	1837	June 9
Joshua Bates	1837	June 12
Asher Brown Durand	1837	June 14
William P. Van Rensselaer	1837	July 9
Asher Brown Durand	1837	July 29
William P. Van Rensselaer	1837	October 15
Asher Brown Durand	1837 1837 1838 1838 1838 1838	November 2 December 11 January 4 January 31 February 12 March 20
W. Martin	1838	April 28
William A. Adams	1838 1838	May 3 May 26
Asher Brown Durand	1838	May 28
Unknown	1838	June 18
William A. Adams	1838	June 18
Asher Brown Durand	1838 1838	August 7 September 4
William A. Adams	1838	September 10
Asher Brown Durand	1838	September 13
William A. Adams	1838 1838	September 25 October 31
Asher Brown Durand	1838	November 12

Unknown	1838	n.d.
William A. Adams	1838	November 27

My dear Durand,

In consequence of the heavy rains & other matters & things we have postponed our excursion to the High Peak & we propose now if agreeable to you to start for Schroon sooner than I proposed when with you - we could not have a more beautiful season than the present - Write to me & say when you can start - and say whether we shall meet you in the Steam Boat or you will land & spend a day with us before proceeding - If the former, we must understand that if through accident we do not meet on the boat the party in advance must wait a day in Albany for the others. and let it be known at what Hotel they may be found

The Mansion House for instance or any you may name — Perhaps next Wednesday or Thursday you will be ready — but write me a day or two previous to your starting — You said you wished me to give you a list of Colours I scarcely know what can be got in bladders but I think the following — White — Roman Ochre — Terra Siena Raw & Burnt — Burnt Umber — Crome yellow — Naples Yellow — Antwerp Blue — Madder Lake — Vandyke brown — Light Red — Indian Red — A little Oil — & some ~~Copal~~ Copal varnish in a Vial as a drier — Vermillion & even Crome Yellow we may carry unprepared and a little Ultramarine — Camp Stool I think you ought to have — Camp Umbrella if you can get one I will join you in it if you like — It will be well to get two sets of colours one for you & one for me of course the bladders must be small the white in greatest quantity — Roan or ~~the~~ Dechaux must charge ~~them~~ to me —

In the hope that nothing will interfere with our anticipated excursion Mrs C & myself tender our regards to Mrs Durand & yourself & remain Yours truly —

Thomas Cole —

Catskill
Nov 9th 1837 —

Mrs C desires I should say she would be happy to have Mrs D & yourself here for a day or so previous to our Scrooning —

A B Durand Esq
82 Duane St
N York.

To W Bates
London
June 12 1837

My dear Durand,

I received yours of the 13th inst. and we were not sorry that you had postponed our excursion for a few days; but sincerely hope that nothing will interfere with our promised pleasure — Be sure you let us know when you intend to be here — As to the quantity of Colour I think the 25ct bladders will be too large for me I am afraid — If Rowe will put me up 12½ct ones they will be sufficient as I intend to take a few dry Colours — Pasteboards I have — Ochre I never use — I should like a bladder of Mummy or Bone Brown — one or the other — With respect to the Estimate of the expense of altering Bridewell I thought it was decided ~~that~~ it to be unnecessary to get one at present — but if one is ne-

quired Henry will make one in a day or so if you will let him know — he is at Mother's 51 Canal St —

I am like yourself rather unsettled & shall be so — We hope to hear from you soon — Present our best regards to Mrs D & believe me

Yours ever

Thomas Cole

Catskill 14th June 1837 —

10 Cts

A. B. Durand Esq.
82 Duane St
N York.

The annexed, probably a copy of a letter, to Mr Van Rensselaer is in reply to one from him (making inquiries as to his progress in the pictures which, in the preceding december, he had given him a commission to paint.

% Wm P. Van Rensselaer Esq.

Wm P Van Rensselaer

Dear Sir,

An absence of several weeks from Catskill prevented an earlier answer to your letter of the 26 ult. Your pictures are on the easel, but far from being finished. But I hope you will excuse the delay, as it has arisen, in part, from previous engagements, (I believe I intimated in my letter I had such), & partly from the strong desire I have to give you the best of my productions. Your commission was given in a manner to gratify & gratify, that I determined that no pains & study should be wanting in order to accomplish something worthy. I have, therefore, in determining the plan of the pictures, & in making such studies from nature, to be available in them, spent more time than is usual. My earnest desire is to produce something that will be a source of lasting pleasure to both of us. Sunrise & Sunset will be the seasons of the pictures: but I shall endeavour to link them in one subject through means of story, sentiment & location. It will perhaps be as well not to men-

-tion more explicitly the subject, until the work is about completed - The size of the pictures you left in a measure ~~my~~ to me; & I hope the canvasses I have chosen will not be found too large, as I think the subject requires the size - which is about 5 ft long - I shall now proceed with the pictures, I hope, without interruption; but I must ask your indulgence in time. I am afraid the pictures cannot be finished before the Autumn -

~~Gratified that you should~~ As the pictures advance, I may probably trouble you with a line, & I shall be happy to hear from you, whenever convenient.

Yours respectfully

Thomas Cole -

July 9 1837

My dear Durand,

I write to you somewhat in a hurry — not the hurry of necessity, but the hurry of inclination ~~and~~ Not having heard from you since our Schooning & being a little perturbed in spirit I am stimulated to write —

I have just received a letter from Mr Haggerty in which he apologizes for not having answered my letter before in which I had proposed the sum of £4 4s 0d by 2.6 for the picture — and in conclusion he says an order on him enclosed under sealed cover for $100 will be honoured — prodigious — As he may not have expressed how much he is going to honour you for your labours I thought I would let you know what you might expect — He speaks also of employing Mr Inman to paint one of the four pictures he wishes with Mr Inman he so honoured do you suppose?

I do not know what you intend to charge for your Rip Van Winkle. but should imagine you would not lift a pencil abit for do make a sum — ~~by the way~~ better dig potatoes by Savage Sam.

How is Mrs Durand — I hope much improved in health by the journey. Mrs C is pretty well & desires to be remembered — Are you painting Schroons — yet I am not. I have been painting on two compositions one of which is about spoiled and for the present I am exposed — write to me when you can & let me know every thing —

Yours very truly
Thomas Cole

Catskill
July 2nd 1837

It is possible (barely) that Mr H intends the $100 ~~in a~~ to be in advance as a favour — I am afraid he is not so considerate —

When are you coming? —

A. B. Durand Esq
82 Duane St
N York

By favour of Mr Pickering

15th of Oct. 1837. probably.

Wm. P. Van Rensselaer.

Dear Sir,

You have almost reason for considering me negligent & perhaps dilatory in not having executed your picture before this time — I have been neither; but the subject I undertook to paint for you, at first apparently simple, has grown ~~on~~ my hands ~~& that~~ one picture is yet only completed & the other ~~partly~~ ~~Castle Cam-~~ ~~-pbell~~ is on the easel although my time has been assiduously devoted to them — * The story, if, I may so call it, which will give Title & I hope life & interest to the Morning & Evening Landscapes — ~~it~~ is neither ~~taken~~ taken from written History nor Poetry; but is a Fiction of my own, of ~~such~~ ~~such~~ incidents that must have occurred frequently can be called Fiction — It is supposed to have date in the 13th or 14th Century — * Having advanced so far I thought it might be agreeable to you to learn something of the work which I am about to ~~give~~ offer you & I have thus ~~given~~ taken the liberty to give you a hasty sketch of what I ~~have been~~ am doing at the same time I must say that a written sketch can give but a very inadequate idea of my labours.

In the first picture, ~~the scene~~ morning ~~light~~ ~~illumines a castle~~ ~~rising from the lake~~ illumines a lofty ~~ancient~~ Castle which stands in eminence embosomed in woods. The distance is composed ~~of~~ mountains whose tops are yet crowned with clouds & the lower ones sloping to the sea.

In the first picture: ~~morning light illumines a mountainous Coun-~~ ~~-try~~ Morning — Grand castle departing light — A lofty Castle embosomed in ~~the~~ woods and ~~the~~ Morning — Contiguous to the sea forms the principal feature ~~of the sea~~ the distance beyond is composed of cloud-capt mountains & declivous lands that slope down towards the sea — ~~near the sea~~ ~~in this side~~ In the foreground is a Sculptured Madonna by which

passes a road that winds beneath the Ancient trees ~~and~~ & crosses ~~a gothick~~ a Stream by a Gothick Bridge ~~and~~ conducts to the ~~Castle~~ gate of the Castle. From the Gate has issued a ~~a~~ troop of Knights & Soldiers who are seen in the glittering armour dashing across the Bridge & underneath the lofty tree - the foremost party has reached the Madonna in the foreground & the principle figure who may be considered the Lord of the Castle ~~turns~~ reins in his charger & turns a look of pride & expectation at the Castle of his Fathers & his gallant retinue. He wave his sword as though saluting some fair lady whose eyes from ~~some~~ lofty battlement or narrow window watches ~~the~~ her Lords departure to the war. The scene is supposed to be in early Summer.

The second picture. The Pictures ~~represents~~ Copy in Autumn - The spectator has turned his back upon the Castle. The sun is low its yellow beams gild the pinnacles of an abbey which rises from the shadowy wood - the sculptured Madonna stands a short distance from the foreground to identify the scene. & near it moving towards the Castle is a mournful procession - the Lord of the Castle is ~~now~~ borne on a litter a dead or dying man his charger is led behind - a Single Knight & one or two attendants, all that was seen to have survived of that gaudy company ~~that~~ who lately passed beneath that Madonna -

~~Perhaps~~ ~~they may appear a disjointed effusion but you~~ ~~The one other~~ You will perhaps be inclined to think this is a melancholy subject; but I hope it will not in consequence ~~be less pleasing~~ be incapable of affording pleasure. I will not trouble you with more than this hasty sketch of my labours - in the pictures I have endeavoured ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~story~~ to tell the story in the most rich & picturesque manner of which I was capable & indeed should there be any story understood ~~& truth~~ there will be sufficient truth ~~found in the sentiment~~ & beauty found in the pictures to interest & give pleasure -

Permit me that in undertaking a ~~sub~~ picture ~~such as~~ which required so much thought & labour I have not ~~unmerited~~ your intentions & that when you see the pictures you will be gratified ~~if they~~ ~~if by your~~ ~~could I hope that~~ I will that I might indulge the hope that if you could think it convenient ~~when passing~~ to come ashore & spend a few hours with me & see what I have been doing - I am easily found by enquiring at the Hotel - ~~Perhaps~~ Permit me to say that it would be well to order the Frames almost immediately so that when the pictures are ~~so~~ finished they will be in readiness -

It would not be surprising if you should consider me negligent or dilatory in regard to your pictures; but I hope that the pictures themselves will plead my excuse for ~~such a~~ the long delay -

To Ogden Haggerty Esq

Catskill Nov 2 1837

Dear Durand,

If the weather had been fine I should have expected you here before now — The last day or two has been fine & I was almost certain of you — I do not know what weather we are going to have, if it proves good I hope you will come up & look at Nature in her undress — Before you come, as come I hope you will, I shall be obliged to you if you will do me a couple of favours one is to order two Frames from Connelly for the pictures I am painting — & this I wish done immediately if you can as the they ~~will~~ can scarcely be finished by the time I bring the pictures to N York — The size of ~~the~~ each pictures is 5 feet 3 inches by 3 feet 3 inches exactly — I do not wish the Frames to cover the picture much more than a quarter of an inch on each side — The style of Frame I wish to be massy covered with small ornament — no curves or scollops — resembling the Frames in the Course of Empire though not necessarily the same pattern — the best gold, not the pale — it would perhaps

be well for him to see Mr Allen's Frames — They are for Mr Van Rensellaer — I shall want them in a fortnight or three weeks at the utmost, & he must not disappoint me in that particular, because Mr Allen is to meet me in N York at that time to see the pictures — I should not have troubled you with this matter had I known how to address the Frame Maker — If he cannot execute this commission in time he must let me know as soon as possible — Now for the other trouble — Mr Thomson wishes to get a drawing Book for a young friend of his can you make it convenient some time when you are passing through Broadway to purchase one — One that will cost two or three dollars or less if a pretty good one — Eyes Ears Noses & Figures are most wanted with a sprinkling of pumps & pump handles & Landscapes is desirable — When you come bring it with you — or I will send for it if you do not come — Now I think I ought to be ashamed of myself for filling a letter with errants for you to do & I am — but I cant help myself so I hope you will bear with me

this time — I am still at the pictures — when will they be done? My labour increases with my practice —

"Sysiphus thy stone stands still
Tyon rests upon his wheel"

but my labour ceases not — How are you doing? painting Landscapes or faces — See me soon or write to me.

Tell Mrs Durand the Mrs C. was much pleased with her sweet & very acceptable present. You know what a tooth we have for Molasses Candy — She sends her love & I send good wishes & remain

Yours truly

Thomas Cole

Stanleys corner of Canal & Broadway is I believe a good Shop for Drawing Books —

PAID

A B Durand Esq
82 Duane St
N York

Catskill Monday 11 [Dec] 1837

My dear Durand,

You will perceive by the date that I am in the vicinity of the Mountains again & you may guess that I should not write so soon if I had not some favour to ask – I was so negligent as to come up without consulting some print or picture for appropriate Costume for the Indian picture – and now request you to aid me if possible. and the thing must be done soon or never for it is probable the Boats will soon cease to run – perhaps you can forward to me a print or two or I believe there is a publication called Illustrations of Byron – You could purchase that for me – Most probably I could obtain a hint or two from that – I want but little – perhaps you may know of something better – the Catskill Boat the Frank will most probably leave here this Evening & N York to-morrow Evening at 5 PM if you could give the Book into the hands of some person on board I might get it safe the Frank

comes to a little below Albany Basin –
I am afraid you will have but a short time to do this business for me – The Portraits is just arrived and pleases exceedingly Mrs C does not know how ever she shall get out of your debt – I am up here but as yet do not feel in painting mood –
We have quite a fall of snow here I suppose it is rain with you – Write to me now & then & let me know how you get along –
Mrs C gives me in good wishes for Mrs Durand & yourself –

I remain

Yours very truly

Thomas Cole –

If the Boats continue to run if you cannot send by the Frank perhaps there may be other opportunity

I wish Mr Casilear could spare the Burnish for a few days for my Sister – Henry will call & enquire –

I find the Frank does not leave until to-morrow & perhaps may not return this season – I should think it possible that some person could be found on board one of the Albany Boats who would deliver a parcel to Capt Jacobs at the Catskill Landing – If not it cant be helped ~~but have~~ I would not have you take too much trouble –

Paid 12½

A B Durand Esqr

82 Duane St

N York

Catskill Jan 14 1838

My dear Durand —

Your letters are always welcome visitors & the last was not the least so, although I have been tardy in returning your Christmas call, but you will excuse me when you learn what mighty events have taken place in the brief space of time since you wrote — In the first place I have been rather idle through Christmas (To what disadvantage I compare with you) ~~working at~~ making a new fashioned Musical Instrument which if it ever will play & I ever shall play, you shall hear when you come to Catskill — In the second place, mark, I say second place because I do not wish you to think that I think, or ever should think or have thought that the matter is to be compared in importance to the Construction of a Musical Instrument, In the second place then, on New Years day Maria thought she would make me a New Years gift, (such as only one Married Man in 365 has a bare chance of getting) in the shape of a little Boy — I am glad to say that she ~~appears to be~~ is as well as can be expected — Now these weighty matters taken into consideration will certainly incline you

to excuse me for not having written sooner.
Your dream of Doll Babies &c may admit of a fuller interpretation than merely that I have been in your thoughts — So Rip has toiled up the Mountain with the Liquor; I should like to see the old Morpheus and though I may not be blessed with a taste of the Somnifick Cordial I hope to enjoy the sight of the Flagon & perhaps I may exclaim like the old Woman (I believe in one of Esops Fables) who putting her nose to the Bung Hole of an empty Wine Cask exclaim "O if thou art so delightful now, what must thou have been when full"! But your Flagon shall not be enjoyed by Rose but by eyes — and what have I been doing? Toiling up Mountains like yourself — even Schroon Mountains solitary & companionlys — I took the notion & got into a Mountain Fever & nothing would do but I must allay it by painting the Sable Pyramid from the Sketch made in the Clearing before we dash'd on to the Griely Pond — I consider it our grandest view — I have taken the liberty of elevating myself a little as though on a tree top to get a glimpse of the nearest pond by which we pass'd — How I have succeeded you shall judge — Painting this picture has recalled our Schroon Days & already in my mind they begin to take the hue of Romance — that was a Glorious day the day of the Lake Hunt — Grisly pond-day. The thoughts of that day stir in me now like the musick running waters in an umbrageous valley — Have you not found? I have) that I never succeed in painting scenes, however beautiful, immediately on returning from them I must wait for Time to draw a veil over the common details, the unessential parts which shall leave the great features, whether the beautiful or the sublime, dominant in the mind — Haggerty's picture I am about to commence I think I shall paint one of the Catskill Lakes — Will you be angry if I paint in a small picture the View of Mount Moriah from the Meadow at the head of Schroon, you have painted it. If I thought you would consider it in the least infringing on your right or that I shall cause the least unpleasant feeling in your mind I would relinquish it — The fact is I have been looking over & over my sketches for a subject for one of my commissions & I find none that will suit the purpose so well as this — Write to me & tell me candidly — I have instructed Henry to pay to Mr Cummings $10 — If you see Mr C as well as the other Councillors say I desire to be remembered — Mrs C would desire to join me in tendering my best regards to Mrs Durand & yourself — Write soon & believe me Yours truly Thomas Cole

1838

1/2 Ft

A B Durand Esq

92 Duane St

N York.

Mr Bryant
John Martin

Catskill Jan 7 31 1838

My dear Durand,

Though you owe me a Letter & a long one I write again, but am not certain whether you will consider this as adding to the debt you owe, because I write ~~because~~ to ask a favour & I put in the humour — You know Mr Fair chose Medora as the subject for his picture & I accepted it without considering it in detail, but lately I have had the subject in my mind, & have sketched for it, but am not so well satisfied as I expected to be — In the first place it is rather an Historical subject than one for a Landscape — As such there is a fine opportunity for expression but the Landscape must be subordinate — As a Landscape (and particularly a Landscape in which there ought to be great height & depth) the Figures must be very small and merely ~~be~~ sufficient to give a name to the Picture — As a mere Landscape it is ca-

-pable of much grandeur - but of no luxuriant richness & beauty - The rocks the Ocean & the Tower are the Materials & with a Sunset, I wish nothing better, but poor Medora will look but small among them - The Corsairs Island says Galt "is the Island off Cape Colonna. It is a rude rocky Mass" - Now I hesitate in painting this Landscape because I am afraid Mr Fair will be disappointed at finding Medora & Conrad not much larger than a couple of Gulls among the rocks - For my own part I should like to paint it vastly if the Figures may be so subordinate to the Landscape - indeed I have a desire; but I am inclined to think that there are Subjects ~~that~~ more capable & more likely to give general pleasure - I will mention one that I have long thought of painting & you will do me the favour to speak of it to Mr Fair as well as to give him my ~~thoughts~~ opinion on the Subject of Medora - The subject I would suggest is ~~from~~ in Coleridges exquisite poem called "an Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie" - You must have read it but

as you may not have the poem at hand I will transcribe a stanza or two –

Oh! ever in my waking dreams
I dwell upon that happy hour
When midway on the mount I sate
Beside the rushing tower –

The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene
Had blended with the lights of eve;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Gulnare! –

She leant against the armed man,
The statue of the armed knight;
She stood & listed to my Harp
Amid the ling'ring light –

I play'd a sad & doleful air
I sang an old & moving story –
An old rude song that fitted well
That ruin wild & hoary –

You will readily perceive how fraught with the pictorial is this passage from one of the most tender & exquisite poems in the language – I don't know but I prize it higher than the Corsair – even – Will you suggest this subject to Mr F when you see him & let me hear soon as convenient – I hope he will choose it, though I shall be satisfied with the other – This I will paint if I se

Now do write soon and

me know what you are about – I have finished a little view on the Arno for a Gentleman in Boston I am afraid the Arno will create a deluge in Boston, this is the third Arno for Boston – Mr Haggerty's picture is on the easel – It is one of the Lakes in the Catskills I hope it will be a pleasing picture of the wild tranquil kind – If you see him with you say his picture is in progress – I believe you will have to enlarge the Exhibition Rooms for me as I shall have such a crowd as I never had before – I intend to paint a scene or a couple of scenes in Arcadia (of course in the Golden Age) & know not what else I might do if the shut was large enough – Mrs C joins me in best wishes for yourself & Mrs Durand & I remain yours truly Thomas Cole

I suppose you are all working like good fellows for Exhibition – I hope we shall make the people stare

Do not let me be forgotten by Moses Ingham & Cummings – I hope they are all well & doing well. Tell Ingham I was sorry that I could not call on him when in town

1838
46
14
60

A. B. Durand Esqr
92 Duane St
N. York

13 Steamer

CITY POST
FEB 1

Catskill Sept 12 1838

My dear Durand

I have received your very welcome letter of the 7th inst and take you at your word & write sooner – I am very much indebted to you for Mt Moriah as I always considered you as holding a share in that stock: But you must not say that my picture will depreciate yours in your own eyes, for that I should be very sorry even was it warranted by the pictures themselves, which is not likely to be the case – I am sorry Mr Fairle is tenacious ~~about~~ of large figures in Landscapes – In the Corsair either the figure must be small or the Landscape subordinate for fine effect – I scarcely know how to answer Mr Fairle about the treatment of the figures in the subject from Coleridge. The poem itself describes what I wish to do better than I can – as to their size if it is a Landscape they must be subordinate, I do not mean diminutive, but large enough for general expression & effect. Between you & I Mr Fairle would be wise to leave

both the subject & treatment to me, he would then be sure of as good a picture as I can paint, but if I am to be fettered by a certain size of figure or manner of treating them, even by a hint. I am as a man with a ~~chain~~ leg chained to his leg, I move both slowly & lame — This I may say of the figures in the last subject mentioned, they would most probably be about in the same proportion to the Landscape as those in the last two pictures you saw of mine, & perhaps somewhat larger — The size of the Canvas I have spread is about what you have mentioned — I hope Mr Fails will have faith & confidence in me & I will endeavour to give him the best I can do — I wish to hear from him soon as I am almost ready to begin — Mr Haggerty's picture is an Autumnal Scene & I think one of the most pleasing I have painted — I intend to write to him about Frame &c. It is rather singular that ~~you~~ we have both chosen a Catskillian subject for Mr Haggerty — Lo Rip is about finished — I long to see him — The Dance on the Battery, too, is going on merrily — You seem to dash along — Will you say to Mr Allen that the small Composition of American Scenery is in the possession of Mr Cooke who resides with Dr Kissam Broadway I think near Franklin St on the east side of Bdy — And when you tell him this give my respects. I am rejoiced that you are getting something up in the way of a periodical. I think it may be successful — I hope I may be considered as one of the party — Let me know more about it — I am afraid we Country Folks are likely to be forgotten — I amuse myself at times by anticipating a ramble in search of the picturesque next Summer — I suppose you will be ready either for Long Lake or Virginia & Tennessee — I hope these anticipations will hasten — I see & you will see that I have got to scrawling as it is late bed time & I have been working long to day. I think I will close this & send in the hope that the next will be more worthy of your perusal — Mrs C who is well desires to tender her best wishes & regards to Mr Durand & let me join her — I find that there is little need of inventing musical instrument when there are so many of Adams' patent — I find I have a pretty load toted on of that sort — Hoping you have a merry time Dancing on the Battery & a

Remain Yours very truly
Thomas Cole —

So our old friend Dunlap is about to leave us — We shall regret his loss both as a man & as a worthy member of our Academy —

1838

12½

A B Durand Esq

82 Duane St

N York

Boullenois

Catskill March 20 1838

My dear Durand,

I believe I shall have to head my letters with one of Paul Pry's speeches "just popped in - hope I don't intrude" for I am afraid they sometimes come to you unexpectedly - that they come unexpectedly you would excuse, but they generally just pop in to ask a favour or to tell you something you would rather not hear & something of that kind pops in just now - ~~a person~~ a Mr Gaylord wrote me a few days ago to enquire whether I could take him as a ~~student~~ pupil - He stated ~~you~~ that among other artists he had spoken to you on the subject - The letter is ~~modest~~ unpresuming & the writer appears to have a proper enthusiasm for the profession & concludes by saying he awaits with "great solicitude" my answer - Now if he had not incidentally mentioned your name his "solicitude" would have been rather a long one, as he made the little mistake of not sending his address - I should be sorry that Mr Gaylord should imagine ~~that I am~~ Mr not willing to take the trouble of writing to him & so trouble you supposing it probable that you would see him in

the course of a few days — You can then do me the favour to say that I shall be in the City in a few weeks when I will converse with him on the subject. Of course I am always willing to give all the information I can to every young artist who appears to possess a true love for the Art, but I could not possibly devote any particular portion of my time to instructing, without pecuniary compensation — nor perhaps even with that inducement — Indeed I do not feel competent to give a course of instruction in Landscape painting because I paint from feeling more than by rule — Your letter was received among the welcome things. And it gave me great pleasure to learn that you were getting on so well with your picture — I cannot speak too well of my affairs after all my bragging & you may tell the Council they had better not enlarge the Exhibition room on my account this season — I took a trip to Arcadia in a Dream — At the first start the atmosphere was clear & the travelling delightful; but just as I got into the midst of that famous Land there came on a Classic Fog — & I got lost & bewildered — I scraped my shins in scrambling up a high Mountain — rubbed my nose against a Marble Temple — got half suffocated by the smoke from an altar where the priests were burning offal by way of sacrifice — queer taste the Gods had that's certain — Knocked my head against the arch of a Stone Bridge — was tossed & tumbled in a Cataract — just escaped — fell flat on my back among high grass — and was near getting hung on some tall trees — but the worst of all is the inhabitants of that are Country — I found them very troublesome very — they have almost murdered me — Alas! I am in their hands yet — but I hope to dispose of them one by one if I have fair play & have them hung as a striking Example in the Exhibition of the National Academy by many men of our acquaintance. Stop! says you — You began in a Dream & have come down to a dull reality — True: but it happens that Pleasant things are dreams, unpleasant ones realities — For instance this letter — There is nothing dream or reality though, that is pleasant — that is the river is open & Spring is come — but you know all that — I am like the little Dog at Schroon, you perhaps remember it — that was so glad to see us it picked up a straw — So I offer you a straw & a great deal of nonsense with it. You must attribute both to a cracking bad pen — so bad it can't write common sense — If you can spare time & have a pen & ink with you let me know when I ought to be down at the Hanging you know. I like to be just in time — this is perfectly convenient not otherwise. I don't mean the Hanging — We are all well — Maria joins me in best regards for Mr Durand & yourself

I remain Yours truly

Thomas Cole

What a slovenly letter!!!

1638

Hon. Samuel Cook
82 Duane St
New York

See page 1

I am very much indebted to you for the trouble you have taken with Mr Fair & am pleased with the result — I am afraid though I shall not be able to finish the pictures for Exhibition —

No 6.

Mr Wm M. Martin Esq. Philad.a

My dear Sir,

The subject you mentioned when I had the plea-
-sure of seeing you, has not been absent from my mind, for
it possesses an interest far greater than could arise from mere
pecuniary considerations — I am gratified in being consulted
on the subject of a painting picture of such magnitude & importance;
And if I should be selected to execute it I assure you that
no exertion of mine ~~shall be~~ will be wanting to make it worthy of
liberality of those who give the commission & honourable
to myself & the Institution for which it is intended painting —
I feel too that you have an opportunity of setting a great
Example to ~~the~~ our Public Institutions — In bringing before the
Public the painting Art on a more Magnificent Scale than
has hitherto been attempted on this side the Atlantic. ~~[illegible]~~ In
doing so you will open a noble field to the American Artist & ~~may~~ a
offer a effectual means of improving & refining the Public Taste —
You know that our pictures are principally ~~possessed by~~
~~private~~ Cabinet pictures possessed by private individuals
and consequently seen & enjoyed by few — & with the exception
that they are at times exposed to the public in Crowded
& garish exhibitions — Now I feel confident that should
a noble example like yours proposed on be set ~~in many~~
~~public institutions in the U. States would follow it~~ it would
become fashionable & almost necessary to have pictures
for similar situations & the Public Institutions of the
U. States would be to ~~the Churches of Italy have been~~
~~to the Painting Art~~ to the painting Art what the Chur-
-ches of Italy have been in her most glorious days —
On this subject I could expatiate; but such considera-

have ~~entered~~ most probably entered your own mind & an perhaps as unnecessary & uncalled for — Your first thought was that the picture ought to be painted in Fresco — this as I intimated to you is liable to several objections — In the first place our artists are unpractised in Fresco, & indeed the Italian Artists of the present day execute it in a very imperfect manner — In the second place it has not the force of Oil ~~painting~~ & it should be remembered that it originated before the discovery of Oil painting & was practised after that discovery more through fashion than necessity or superiority — Among the pictures I saw in the Vatican were several paintings on the wall in Oil. ~~These~~ ~~only~~ they retain much more force of Colour & Chiaro Scuro than ~~this~~ pictures painted at Fresco — Another objection, and to which Oil is equally liable & indeed all paintings on the walls, is that the cannot be removed in case of fire — this is a serious one in our fiery region — In my opinion strong Canvas prepared in the most substantial & durable manner is preferable to anything else — Canvas is made here of almost any size & of extraordinary strength, such as the Old Masters never had, a picture painted on this in a proper manner would be as durable as any thing that has yet been devised for the painter, & can be removed in case of fire — The ~~proper~~ appropriate subject for the picture is a matter that requires much consideration & I will defer speaking on that head until I have had more ample time for thought & have profited by the suggestions of others — I will only say that it should comprise ~~all that~~ the Grand & Beautiful in Natural Scenery with the Magnificence of Architecture & the interesting in Animated Nature — It should be striking in its general effect & finished in its detail — You have asked me what I can paint the proposed picture for; to ~~me~~ setting a price on my works is the most difficult part of my Art & I should deem my profession happiest one if I could afford to give my pictures away ~~for nothing~~ I do not think I can offer to paint the picture for less than $5000 — this may appear at first a startling price; but I feel confident on consideration you will not esteem it extravagant — I cannot calculate on less than a Year's constant labour on the picture & it is highly probable that to execute it to my satisfaction it will require ~~it will take~~ six or eight months more — And I assure you if such was the case the remuneration would fall a good deal short of my present or diminish income & of course I should be under the necessity for a time of repeating at the Commission — I will mention the fact that may lead to take away any fear ~~the unwillingness on the part of the Public~~ ~~to give great~~ to give me the Commission on account of the ~~great expense~~. It is that the receipts from the Exhibition here for 6 weeks only of my small pictures of the Course of Empire amounted to about $2000 — Now I should be greatly surprised if in the first year of Exhibition ~~if a picture on such a grand scale & in such a noble situation did not more than clear all the expense of purchase~~ — The sum I propose is certainly barely sufficient to compensate me for the time & labour I should bestow should I be fortunate — but the opportunity is one I have long desired & I am willing to run some pecuniary risk — The expense of Materials ~~—~~ Canvas, Colours &c I should consider an extra charge they would perhaps amount to $200 — If I should paint the picture in the Country I should have to erect a

building purposely, to be lighted precisely as the gallery of your museum - this would cost several hundred dollars, but I leave the matter for future consideration feeling sure that if you honour me with the commission you will wish me to feel at ease in pecuniary matters - Perhaps you might desire that the picture should be painted to the place for which it is intended - then may be obstacles in the way of this the part of the gallery which would have to be partitioned off & it might be inconvenient for me to reside for so great a length of time in Philadelphia - I have lately had thoughts of spending a year or two in Italy but am not quite determined on the subject perhaps you would have no objection to the picture being painted there. But my letter is already longer than I intended & I fear I ought to apologize for having troubled you with much that may be considered irrelevant - I with the desire that you will favour me with an answer as soon as is most convenient to yourself. I with the wish to express the obligation I am under for the good opinion you have expressed towards me

I am Yours very respectfully

Thomas Cole

Catskill

April 28th 1838

My dear Sir

If I had time I should commence a letter to you with a pretty lengthy expression of my disappointment in not seeing you in N York as you had led me to expect; but I write in great haste & at the request of a Friend who is making a collection of mineral & fossil remains & to whom I had mentioned that your district abounded in impressions of plants &c — If you can conveniently & agreeably forward a few of the most remarkable specimens you can find, you will add another favour to those already conferred on me — I remember when walking with you on the Bank of the Muskingum to have picked up several vegetable fossils of a fine cone-like appearance. these struck me as being remarkable & I remember well that you showed me several drawings from impressions of plants that were beautiful — ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ specimens of these fossils

or any others that you may consider remarkable my friend would be very glad to obtain - he would either exchange Fossils of this region for them or depay any expense that may attend their purchase & transportation - He suggests that large specimens should be packed in a Box by themselves & the small by themselves also - They may be directed to C. C. Engham Esq 78 White St. N York - Now my dear Sir if I am imposing on you a task that is in the least inconvenient do not hesitate in refusing to perform it as I know that what I ask can not be done without trouble - Of course all expenses will be paid by my friend - or myself - Our Exhibition is just opened & perhaps it is finer than any we have had - I wish you could see it - I feel inclined to fill the sheet but time will not permit - I am down here for a few days only & am full of business I must tell you that I got married since I saw you & even more than that, my wife gave me a New Year Gift on New Years day in the shape of a Son - As you Bachelor Friends In the hope of hearing from or seeing you before long - I remain

Yours very truly

Thomas Cole

Direct to me
Catskill

N York
May 3 1838.

PAID

Wm. A. Adams Esq.
Zanesville
Ohio

NEW-YORK
MAY 4

Mr. Ed.
May 1838

Catskill May 26/38

My dear Lie,

I received your very kind & obliging Letter, & your Mark & Rectus Gallery; which last contains some exceedingly spirited Heads - I was much grieved to learn that your health was so miserable, but I hope the change to more active life will speedily restore you - that I cannot soon expect to see you & that you did not send a picture are both sources of regret to me - How vividly your letter & sketches recall to mind days of Auld Lang Syne - I cannot say the reminiscence would be agreeable were it not accompanied by the recollection of your friendship to the poverty-stricken wanderer that shines like a solitary star amid the darkness of the time. those days were indeed gloomy & overcast - inexperienced, ignorant of the profession I presumed to practise & constrained by outrageous fortune to assume an appearance of the knowledge which I did not possess; I was next to miserable and nothing but a hope that could not be quenched sustained me - Our Exhibition is now open - the thin-skinned Artist in the field to be hunted & torn & worried by the Mongrel Pack of Critics who break forth ravenous & keen after their yearly fast - My dear Lie I am sick, disgusted at the ignorance the flippancy the slang the falsehood that is daily vomited by the Press, to feed the sickly & diseased appetite of the multitude - I do not allude to what is connected with Fine Arts merely, but to all & every subject - You may be led to suspect from what I have said

that I have been recently irritated by some unfavourable criticism on my own works - this is not the case, though there are such; but I grieve to find criticism so low as it is - Fulsome praise - stupid presumption & interested detraction make up the amount of News paper criticism on the Fine Arts - but enough of this - I will only add this. if in any of the papers you see my works extravagantly praised do not believe the Critic & if you see them censured extravagantly do not believe the Critic -

I am glad you have seen Mr Marchant & that you are pleased with his pictures I think very highly of them - I was much pleased to receive the Papers containing the Advertisement to Architects & still more pleased to find your name on the list of Commissioners, I commend the choice - & I truly hope that the building to be erected will be an honour to the State & to yourselves - Do you know I am something an Architect! My Nephew, I believe you were informed when here, was studying under Mr Town, he is now with Mr Rogers who is erecting our Great Exchange - He is the first American Architect who has had an education expressly for the profession & my hopes are great - I state this that you may not be surprised if we send you a Design. If we do & it should happen to be worthy it perhaps will not be the less prized for having been made by one who almost considers Ohio his own State & by one who is actually a native of Steubenville Ohio - Of course this is to my friend W A Adams & not to the Commissioners - The Design the Design is all with him - Will you favour us as soon as convenient with answers to the following items of enquiry - The Form of the Ground & Situation of it - The Dimensions Number & Purpose of the Rooms - The Materials of which the Building is to be Constructed - The expense of the principle Materials as delivered on the spot - The situation of the place with regard to the Transportation of Materials - The Quality of the Earth with regard to Foundations - The Sum appropriated - the I suppose the Labour & many of the Materials will not differ much from N York Prices - I would ask too how the Drawings & c should be sent -

I hope these enquiries will not be vain ones & that the Design we may send, if not successful may be worthy of your individual approbation -

Do not suppose that this Architectural business is my only inducement in writing now - without it, though pressed by rather extended Correspondence, I should have written if it had only been to thank you for your attention to the Fossils & your congratulations - Changes & c from Single to Double Blessedness & c - Last not least, because it gives me pleasure both to write to & hear from you -

In the hope that your health is restored

I remain -

Yours truly

Thomas Cole -

To W A Adams Esq

Zanesville -

Mr Cole who has often heard me speak of you would join me in best respects -

25

Wm A Adams Esq
Zanesville
Ohio -

MAY 7

Mar 1 38

My dear Durand

I have just received your letter & it is welcome although ~~it~~ written by a monster with seven heads & ten horns; I perhaps should not have the courage to answer were I not horned & hoofed too — But I find myself among the cast offs in public favour, as well as odious as a Hangman — Detraction is croaking & casting its venomous sparrow on my reputation — We hatched a pretty Brood that's certain The Chickens begin to crow before they are fairly out of the shell — some of them make bad wry necks in the attempt though — The Lie Mongers are making a feast of us that's certain but they may find a bone stick in their throats yet, he can't mastricate the whole of us — They have given us horns & hoofs & I think we shall yet show them they are not merely ornamental — I intend to be with you towards the end of the week in the mean time I think I shall write an article with horns — or at any rate ~~make a few remarks~~ set down a few thoughts that you & I — in fact the Council may perhaps ~~weave~~ twist into a cord that will strangle these croakers & Daughtie Critics — But Courage my dear friend! Detraction you know always crawls at the heels of Merit. We know that our motives as Hangmen have been pure ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ and as Artists although advised (that is by some of the Knowing ones) to take lessons from unlicked

& favourite Cubs. we know a B from a Bulls Foot — & although transformed into quadrupeds we will dance after our own fashion — I believe with all my weight of woes I shall have to set up for comforter. Ingham wrote to me a few days ago pithy though sad. The times are indeed dull. and I hope Mr McMurtrie will help to make them brisker he has made a promise of the land to me. I wish he would come & cheer us both — You ask me what I am doing — Alas! scarcely anything — I commenced Mr Fair's picture — dashed along beauty the road seemed all clear, but staring about me my ~~[illegible]~~ Hack got capsized into a Bog & there I have been floundering day after day — ragged & tan bit out at elbs but my Hacks & Steeds are clean gone — in fact I commenced with Stout Generous & her Lovier & have ended with a Solitary Tower & Shepherd Boy looking dead into the moons eye — My subject was swamped — I must attempt something else for Mr Fair — I am sorry very sorry but it cant be helped — You shall see the fixed fragments when I come down — As for excursion my dear fellow — I want one & we will talk it when I see you — I believe I shall go abroad if all goes well next Spring — Remember me to all our fellow Roaymen in the hope that we shall continue to hang together — Mr Cole joins me in respects to Mrs Durand ~~[illegible]~~ She intends to come down with me —

I remain
Yours very truly
Thomas Cole

Catskill
May 2d 1838 —

1838

12½

A B Durand Esq

82 Duane St

New York

No 31.

Dear Sir,

As the Exhibition will close towards the end of this Month & consequently your pictures must be removed I am desirous to learn where they may be sent — I am anxious that you should have them in your private apartments for I fear that the publick exhibition of them has by no means enhanced their value in your estimation — For pictures that appeal to the imagination & require a contemplative tone of mind in the spectator an Exhibition Room is the most unfortunate place in the world — It is the place for pictures that merely amuse the eye — I am sure the flippant Criticisms of the Newspapers whose praise is mostly through ignorance & whose censure is the expression of detraction or conceit, will not affect you; but I assure you I shall not be sorry when my works are removed from the buzzing of these dirt-flies — When at your leisure you can view the pictures I have executed ~~for~~ I feel a strong hope that their merits will so far exceed their defects that they will be satisfactory & be a source of lasting pleasure —

With respect to the Money still due to me as I am not in the immediate want of it, I am not urgent & your own convenience will most probably be mine —

I had thoughts of writing a discription of the Pictures, a work

of Story but the Reason has not yet offered & perhaps it may be better ~~that~~ to allow the imagination of the Spectator to form the Chain after its own fashion that shall bind the incidents of the pictures together —

I remain
Your very Truly
Thomas Cole

Catskills
June 18th 1838

Albany June 18th 1838

My dear Sir,

I received yours of the 7th inst & am much obliged for your attention to my request & for your remarks on the subject of the Architecture of the State House ~~which~~ they are in accordance with my views & I believe with true taste — There are some particulars that may be of ~~one~~ importance in the Design of such a building not mentioned in your Circular I again take the liberty of troubling you although unwillingly, for I feel that I have already trespassed too much on your time & kindness — Although the building ~~will~~ present four fronts it may be ~~of importance~~ of consequence in point of Economy, Convenience and perhaps Beauty that one should be of more importance — If so which side ought it to be — It is desirable to know the Colour of the Free Stone & the Limestone — as the ~~effect~~ effect of projections may depend on this — If you have time you will perhaps favour me with information on these particulars —

I am sorry to perceive that the Exterior of the Building is likely to be of two different kinds of Stone — I hope this will be avoided if possible as it will destroy all Unity & Harmony of parts — If the public taste was

sufficiently advanced to admit of the Polychromick Embellishment of the Greek Temples the difference of material would be of little importance, but I believe that is not the case — You know that the Grecian Buildings even those constructed of white Marble were painted on the exterior, a few members only ~~but~~ excepted — The discovery is somewhat modern & at first view Polychrome Embellishment is extremely offensive to Modern notions of Taste — but as a knowledge of the principles on which it was conducted by the Greeks is increased I have no doubt it will be found in perfect conformity with the exquisite Taste of that wonderful people — Indeed ~~Modern~~ the living Architects of Europe are becoming reconciled & several successful ~~attempts~~ examples are already executed in Germany — ~~Have studied~~ I believe I have been able to discover the principles on which the Grecians worked, but I may be mistaken as I often am when I am most confident — I hope you will pardon me for imposing so much trouble on you & for spinning out a letter with matter ~~that~~ about which you ~~know~~ perhaps as much or more than I do —

I remain
Yours sincerely
Thomas Cole —

I have written such a slovenly letter that I am afraid you will not be able to decypher it — but I have not space for a Glossary —

Paid 25

Wm A Adams Esqr

Zanesville

Ohio

CARRIER
JUN
18

7 Pcs.

18 June 1838

Catskill Augt 7th 1838

Dear Durand —

I have received your note accompanying the Book of Costumes & the Canvassing — for which I am greatly indebted to you — The Book is amusing but the Costumes are of no age nor Country & I am sure that some of the Nobles who exhibited in them must have cut ludicrous figures — Complete Card Kings, Queens & Knaves —. The Canvass seems excellent I have not yet put any paint on it I think I must get the rest prepared — Mr Inghams Costumes are good as far as they go — And I am obliged to him — So Newburgh has taken your Fancy. I want you to tell me something more of its advantages. I know it is a pleasing Country about; but I fear there is very little rich forest scenery near & few fine isolated trees. And as for mountains where are the Catskills — But let me know your experience, Do let me hear from you when you get an

-mong the Gnarks I hope you will find every
thing there your heart can wish — Don't forget that
I owe you for the Canvass, or how you arranged it
with Dechaux, for him to charge me — I have been
on the eve of starting to N York several times since
I saw you but the warm weather threw cold water on
-to the matter — I think it is probable I shall be
with you in the course of a week or so. that is if
you are in N York at Pattern — There is at this
moment a grand but distressing sight from our
Grove the City of Hudson is enveloped in Flames a
dreadful fire has been raging there all afternoon &
it must have destroyed a great part of the City — the
wind is blowing strong from the N West — I have
scarcely done any thing since I saw you although
I have worked day after day I sometimes think
I am falling off, have forgotten almost all I knew
of painting — Mrs Cole is well & the Boy thri-
-ving — She wishes to be remembered to Mrs D & you
-self — This last day or two I have been be-
-gaged in drawing on the Canvass a sort of Giant Grumbs
Castle. it will be well if it does not turn into
the Castle of Giant Despair — My self his prisoner —
My dear friend I have written you a letter all
about nothing: but I assure you my intention
was to express how much indebted I am for the
trouble you have taken in procuring Canvass &c
for me — Hoping to hear from you soon &
desiring you to tender my regards to Mrs D

Remain

Yours ever truly

Thomas Cole —

Paid 1½

A. B. Durand Esq

82 Duane St

N York

My dear Durand,

Day after day I have been expecting you & day after day disappointed - not on account of Schroon but because I wished to see you - You have sent me a letter at last - why did you not come yourself - You give rather a poor account of your Summers work - mine is about dito - As for Schroon - the season I am afraid is rather too far advanced & to tell the truth much as I regret the circumstance I cannot very conveniently perform the excursion this season; but yet if you could it & I made the agreement I will go with you willingly if you desire it - but suppose we abandon it & you come up here & we will make an excursion of a day or two to Schoharie - where there are finer & I believe beautiful scenery - do come - immediately if you can and if we cannot kill Schroon we will have a rap at Schoharie - Come here at any rate ~~& [illegible]~~ & I will be bound to show you better scenery than Shongo of which I

never had any high opinion - the mountains are not of the right cut for me - Come Come Come is all I can say now whatever I may feel hereafter — Write immediately if you do not come — And believe me

in great haste

Yours truly

Thomas Cole

Catskill

Sept 4 1836

Mrs C send her respects

1838

Mr A. B. Durand Esq
Post Office
Saugerties –

Catskill Sept 10th 1838

My dear Sir,

If I had followed my inclinations I should have answered your of the 26 June much before this time; but as it would have been the gratification of myself, perhaps at your expense, I have deferred it until now: thinking it better, as I generally write to ask favours, to let those demands on your kindness be as far between as possible — For the information you gave me concerning the State House I was & am much obliged & although my time has been very much engaged in my regular profession I have been able to ~~spare~~ design a plan — The drawings of which are nearly executed, though not by my hand ~~for~~ my other avocations would not permit. ~~[illegible]~~ Of course I shall not give any description of what I have done as I should be unwilling to believe that your friendship for me would prejudice you in my favour in a matter of such great & general importance — The object of my letter is to speak of the means of forwarding the drawings

in time — As I know of no other means I must avail myself of your offer to get one of your citizens to call for it in N. York — and I am almost afraid there are few persons willing to be encumbered with a Tin Tube nearly three feet long & more than two inches in diameter — If you think with me, and can devise another plan I wish you would favour me by writing immediately — I may be mistaken, some man with a long trunk may come from your neighborhood — I should be sorry not to send the plan — Mr Ingham to whom the Fresco was directed has been out of the City some time; but when last I saw him, in July, they had not arrived — most probably that is not the case now. I expect to soon hear from him every day & to learn of their arrival. I am very desirous to see them & shall inform you when I have seen them —

Polychrome embellishment does not seem to have affected you very favourably, & certainly it does knock some of our old notions in the head — But there are very slight grounds in this polychromick fact cover for the argument that our notions of beauty are conventional — ~~But~~ But the Greeks were not quite such Barbarians as you seem to suppose — ~~The frieze~~ The sculptures on the Metopes were not painted. the ground was painted blue — The sculptures might have been tinted as the best modern sculptures are, to take away the cold effect of the marble — The shafts of the Columns were not painted such was the case with several other members — I believe this object in painting architecture was to give value to form colour was subordinate — it was used to aid & not to usurpe the place of form — The vestiges of colour discovered on the Temples at Athens by their arrangement confirms me in this opinion — And unwilling as I was to believe that the virgin Marble could be improved by paint I am still more unwilling to believe that Phidias & Ictinus were barbarous in Taste — But enough for the day — of Polychromy; you are a painter & must speak well of paint; nothing like paint —

I sincerely hope your health has been improved and that you have enjoyed the summer. I am sure you would have enjoyed a few hours if you could have seen some of our fine Mountain sunsets — I sat down fatigued with a hard days work & have scribbled & scribbled until I find myself near the end of the sheet — that it is so near is perhaps a fortunate thing for you, for thinking of you & talking by pen to you seems to refresh me; for fear I should fret you to death I will say that I remain

Yours very truly

Thomas Cole —

The person who you may commission to call for the drawings must be furnished with a tube of the dimensions on the outside of the sheet

Mr. T. Cole
Sept 1838

Mr. A. Adams Esq
Zanesville
Ohio

Paid 25

FREE
SEP 11

My dear man be ready for us at
the Spring Boston - at Detroit
No 1 Cascade St Detroit. Leave a board
No 7 Jefferson St - Pittsburgh is mistake the Steamer
must be hailed coming from Erie -

Catskill
Thursday Eve.

My dear Durand,

[Sep. 13, 1838]

I write to say that I have a notion of making a very hasty trip to the Natural Bridge region & perhaps a little farther — I cannot be more than ten days away or a fortnight at the most — The facilities are great — I find I have fagged too much & must have an excursion — Can you & will you go along. I shall be down next week — So make ready if you have the spirit — It is to be a running excursion — I should expect you here in a day or two were it not for my change of purpose which I hope you will excuse — I am not quite determined on the trip, so that we can yet ramble a little about Catskill. Write in the greatest haste for the mail —

Yours

Kindest Remembrances — Respects to Mrs D.
Yours truly Thos Cole

10 Duane

A B Durand Esq.

P2 Duane St.

N York.

Sept 25 1838
N York -

My dear Sir,

I received yours of the 18th Inst & have since seen Mr Hall who will have the politeness to convey the Drawings to Lanesville, but he will not arrive there until the 8th or 10th of October — I hope this will not be too late as the Design has cost me more labour than I anticipated & although it is very probable they may be cast among the Rejected Addresses yet I should like to have it read — The Design is now completed & only now, for several of the Drawings did not satisfy me & I have executed others in their stead, but even these are not very satisfactory — In order to execute it more speedily one of them I have done in Oil & Turpentine, which vehicles are not very favourable for the precision of line desirable in Architectural drawings — Here they are & I hope if there is any Architectural good in them it may be seen through all their imperfect pictorial representation — I have perhaps sent more drawings than was necessary but after the Exterior was finished in one Order I felt that another would be better & so forth — but I believe you are not to Know by whom the drawings are executed until the appointed time — My Fingers ends itch to tell you which are mine & though they may not be guilty of such offence I have a strong Guess that you cannot but recognize them — I understand you

are likely to have plenty of designs to choose from — Tom Dick & Harry all send & all feel fully competent. You write most likely too have designs good on paper but utterly impossible of execution — others poor on paper & good in execution — among these latter ones may class we certainly have offered nothing that cannot be executed with facility & nothing that we did not consider necessary & fit — We have really studied our design — But hold! lest I am too severe to ourselves you must excuse me for ~~from~~ out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh —

I learn that several persons are on their way to Columbus with the intent of getting the Superintendance of the Building ~~if not to influence~~ — I hope you may be able to select some person who is realy capable. I know it is difficult for there are few Builders in the Country who ~~are also~~ understand ~~a Mathematical person~~ — understand any thing of Mathematics & consequently are incapable of calculating the thrust of arches &c — I trust too you may be able to get an Artist or a man with an Artists mind to superintend the Architectural & Decorative part of the Work, I mean that which belongs to Architecture as a fine art — I feel confident that without such a person ~~whatever~~ however excellent the Design may be the Builder will cut it up & destroy its by his own notions — I have seen so many instances of this that I have great fears for your State House —

Michigan I understand is about to erect a State House & they have sent for Mr Davis and are best Architects — There will perhaps be some rivalry between you — Whoever may furnish the design or superintend its execution I sincerely hope your State House may be an honour to the State & a monument of good taste — and I shall rejoice to find a good thing has been carried through the whirlpool of Politics & Utilitarianism without wreck —

After the decision of the Commissioners I hope you will inform me (my design rejected of course) what you have chosen & say fully what you think of ~~my design~~ mine — I ought not to forget to inform you that the Box of Fossils is arrived and Mr Lapham & myself are both obliged & delighted — some of the specimens are truly valuable — Mr S desires me to express how much he is indebted to you — He fills up an interesting the Sketch of the Eagle but I have not yet seen as Mr S had mislaid it — but I shall.

I have written very very hastily which you will excuse, but I am afraid you will not be equally indulgent for my pugnacious demands on your time & kindness — Yet do write to me and direct as usual to

Yours as ever
Thomas Cole

Wm L Adams Esq
Zanesville
Ohio —

NEW-YORK
SEP
26

7 Cents
Sept 1838.

Cornwall Feb 21 1838

My dear Sir,

I have just received yours of the 25th ult. and am grieved to learn that your health has been so bad. I trust it will be restored before this reaches you — I am not surprised to learn that there are ~~seve~~ many designs among those forwarded to you extremely beautiful both in design & execution and it will by no means be an unexpected disappointment if mine is found among the rejected ~~and~~ I shall be pleased to know that a worthier one has been adopted — As the decision is not yet made I would make a few remarks on the subject of my design although I must make them in extreme haste — You are afraid the style of the design is too rigid for this region — It is indeed rather too much so for my own taste — but I was under the impression that Economy was one of the greatest ~~consideration~~ considerations with you — But my plan as I have stated is capable of much greater richness & lightness by substituting the Ionic or the Corinthian in place of the Doric and making half columns in place of the Antæ ~~[illegible]~~ I have given an Ionic Ele-

Did you receive the Descriptions

-vation which though hastily executed will give you some idea of the difference produced in chang-ing the order — The Dome does not appear to you to harmonize with rest of the building although better than some of the others — There is as I have before intimated an difficulty almost insuperable in making a Dome harmonize with a building of regular & compact form but with the best possible design I do not think a Dome can be represented in a drawing in an adequate manner — It must be viewed from every side. The view shown in my perspective is the one in which the dome appears worst & I could not take another view without rendering the design of principal part of the Building imperfect — The fact is the Models & not Drawings should be made — The great Architects seldom spend drawings — Phidias & St Paul's men models, and Michel Angelo it is said would never look at a drawing of a Building Elevation. Considering it, as in truth it is, dependant on skill of the Draftsman more than the Architect — I could, if my intention had been to make a spectacle have made a design much more beautiful, but I should have neglected the necessities of Construction too — You will excuse me if I suggest that in examining the drawings you would endeavour to see them as Models — that the whole together be considered not only as to its beauty in Elevation but in its connection with interior arrangements & structure. You do not say a word about the Ground Plans — I had much more faith in our Ground Plan than in the Elevation — I am inclined to believe that for compactness & convenience I do not know how it can be greatly improved. I speak more confidently of this as my Nephew (an Ohio Architect) has had the greatest share in the designs. I am glad to hear that you propose adjourning for a time before you decide — bearing that you have so many designs to examine much time is necessary — At first you will dwell on the exterior appearance of the Designs & will be inclined to accept those that appear most beautiful — but on further examination you may find the necessary connection between the exterior & interior arrangements may not have been observed — that what is beautiful in elevation may be incongruous or impossible in connection with the Ground Plans — but I am dwelling what is unnecessary to you, but I know you will excuse me when I say that what I have suggested is not without a want of confidence in your taste & judgment, but from a fear that you may be hurried to a decision before the designs have been examined in all the bearings & capabilities, exterior & interior. I would say too that in execution I could make the Dome harmonize more complete, that as designed. And that by changing the Ionic order the richness, lightness & harmony of the whole would be wonderfully improved — I regret much that my Respected Patron's Design was not executed in that style as the Ground plan is suitable for any style. The Statues, you say I must send you the Heads — they may be difficult to find to be sure — but perhaps we can find Busts, if not certainly casts are to be had — With respect to the recessed Porticos I am at variance with your colleagues in execution they will produce great breadth of light & shade — You say that one of the Designs is said to be by an Ohio Architect — If such a fact has any influence as it is probable it may have, there can be no impropriety in letting it be known that my design is in part made by a native of Ohio — and perhaps you will be surprised, but I am inclined to think that my Nephew executed the Design you allude to for Mr Rapes of New York. Mr R having sent it in under a fictitious name. If it is so I may be mistaken. I should be grieved at its adoption for it really appears to me to be a heap of absurdities, indeed to both of us — it is a pile porticos & gables thrown into a great heap without harmony of parts or picturesque effect. I should not have expressed myself so freely if I had not felt confident that you will not attribute any illiberal

and fear it is scarcely intelligible – With respect to the awarding of Premiums I am prepared – And my best hope is that my Design has found some favour in your sight – and that you will write to me fully on the subject whether favourably or unfavourably – I remain Yours truly Thomas Cole

Mr A Adams Esq
Lawrenceville
Ohio –

T Cole
Sept 1838

48
13
81

15
30–
450
15–
3.75
468.75

94
6
34

as inducing these remarks. I may be quite mistaken in the Ohio Artist Design the one I allude to is a very large perpendicular Drawing, if so look at the interior arrangements as well as the exterior – the building has one of those low pudding shaped Domes so fashionable now – But I have written a long letter for one in such haste

Catskill Nov. 12 1838

My dear Sir,

I have neither heard, seen, nor even dreamed of you for ~~age~~ such a great length of time that I have almost forgotten the date. You disappointed me sorely in not coming here as you promised. You last much I won't tell you what, for I mean to torment you wofully — I will begin now by asking you ~~to what~~ a few questions — In the first place we have some thoughts of spending the winter in the City — Have you any objection? (Question 1st) Can you make a little enquiry whether a comfortable reasonable Boarding place could be obtained for us. My little Child delight (Ques. 2) Can you tell me where to find a painting Room (Q 3) Is Chapman's available (Q 4th) We have thoughts of studying French this Winter & think it would be well if a French Family could be found to board us decently (Q 5) I think I shall be down upon you in a week or ten days. What particular objection have you? (Q 6) Will you answer this letter as soon as you can (Q 7) And tell me what you are doing (Q 8th) We can well know and you & Mr Durand (Q 9th) I write in extreme haste Can you understand what I have written 32 10ths I would have made up a Dozen Questions but have not time — Did you sing? —

I remain Yours truly Thomas Cole

1838

1 2½

A. B. Durand Esq
Artist –
Duane St
N York

[1838]

My dear Sir,

I received yours of the 14th inst with the enclosed Statements of the State House — You have rather overrated my anxiety on the subject which you infer from the letter I wrote. I wrote in too much haste & I was afterwards sorry that I had done so; for (as is too often the case with me) I expressed myself with too much confidence if not with asperity. I am not disappointed because I anticipated disappointment & if I had not, the chagrin occasioned by the rejection of my Design would have been a very transient one, for I do not place my hope on frail Brick & Mortar — The truth is that I am more affected by your disappointment & mortification than I am for being considered by your fellow-commissioners & one of no likelihood in Architecture — In my letters on the subject of the State House I was & in the Description & Estimate I am conscious of being egotistic & over-confident; but this has arisen (I hope) not from any extravagant notions of my own capacity, but from an anxiety for the advancement of my Nephew who had a share in the Design and of whose talents I have a high opinion — The interior arrangement was almost entirely his & in speaking of it I felt myself speaking of the work of another — I was indeed misled on the subject of expense, or rather I was mistaken, that mistake was made partly through the expression of low estimate and partly through my Nephews presentiment that cheapness,

as it too frequently the case, in this part of the County, would be of almost paramount importance – I ac knowledge ~~the error~~ your error & regret it because from the first to the last it crippled me – Willing as I am to submit with deference to your decision as to the Architectural merit of my design, I cannot but feel surprised that the lowness of the estimate should operate so much to the disadvantage of the Designer when that lowness is in great measure the consequence of the choice of Material (Wood instead of Stone) the adoption of either is entirely your own – I have always understood that estimates (and I believe in your country it is generally allowed by Architect themselves) ~~that~~ are random things little more than guesses – The grand object in view, ~~is~~ certainly to get the best Design, the choice of Material by the Designer of no importance so that his Design is adapted to the Material he commences using my choice – Speaking of the Material I am inclined to think that your stone from very small blocks is very inadequate to the construction of a building of the magnitude you propose – Your Columns will have to be made of many pieces – & I am afraid that the difference of Colour will break up the masses in a greater degree than you might suppose from comparing the sides of the stone in small pieces. Brick I think ~~capable of~~ much more durability & fitness for great Architectural works than we generally suppose – In the Rome & its vicinity are several Ancient Building (Temples) entirely constructed of it – the Columns the ~~Ent~~ Entablature & in ~~illustrations~~ even the Cornices ornaments – the Brick & Cement are good & are moulded to the forms desired – & I find in some Schinkel's works they have been ~~apt~~ used with great elegance & propriety – You ask me to give my opinion of the Design you think will be adopted – I will do so with candour – I admire its simplicity & the ~~appearance~~ appearance of lightness it presents, which latter is given to it by being raised on the high Terrace, this you know as well as myself, but I speak of it because I think, that it is not necessary, or at any rate its effect ~~in the~~ fine as it certainly is in the Drawing ~~will~~ (I am afraid) ~~be daughing but agreeable~~ will not be so agreeable in reality – The site of the Building on a Terrace is lovely & it will appear very needless ~~accompaniment of the building~~ appurtenance & even worse form.

masses are extremely large & as they seemed from a little distance & below would ~~take much~~ detract away from the principal part of the Building much of its effect – (the expense will be very great) – There's a want of principal mass in the Building the parts being too equal & in the language of a very intelligent friend of mine "it looks like four buildings backed up to one another" – The Dome if Dome it can be called which Dome is not, is as poor & meagre as any thing can be – and ~~the~~ construction will appear perched on the top like a thing that has no connexion with the rest of the Building & whose removal could be made without ~~disparagement~~ disparagement to the rest – ~~I am sufficient to set any Dome on the ridge of a roof~~ I am persuaded that a Dome cannot with good effect spring from a ~~pitched~~ ridge roof – or a roof such as you will always appear as entirely unconnected with the rest of the building, set on it not belonging to the Edifice – it is in fact at variance with all the principles of composition even as regards ~~this~~ – A Dome or any Great Mass must be continued down to a horizontal base – that somewhere either on the ground or higher as the roof – in other words there must be a horizontal line to ~~base~~ spring from or the whole will appear "hasty fabric" – ~~perched on~~

~~gothic forms are constant ridge~~

But you will think me inclined to write an essay instead of giving you my simple opinion – Which is that the ~~building~~ Design which you have selected will disappoint you in execution – that the Masses ~~are~~ (with the exception of the dome) as equal & will appear like separate edifices. that the Dome is in company & uncommunicated ~~but~~ ~~and will not~~ and that the terrace will have the effect of high walls hiding & degrading the principal buildings ~~and at an enormous expense~~ ~~applicable~~ and is entirely unnecessary – as the Site of the building is already happily elevated – and the expense which will be enormous might be much better expended in making the principal part of the building more magnificent & lofty – You should will not think this criticism is pointed by my disappointment – it is offered in candour & I hope will be considered as sincere as if I had not made a design for the same object –

New York Nov 27th 1838

Dear Sir.

I received yours of the 14th inst with the enclosed sketch of the State House – You have rather overrated my anxiety on the subject. I wrote in too much haste & was afterward sorry that I had done so, for (as is too often the case with me) I expressed myself with too great confidence if not with asperity – I am not disappointed because I anticipated disappointment & if I had not done so, the chagrin occassioned by the rejection of my Design would have been very transient, as I certainly do not plan my hope on frail Bricks & Mortar – The truth is that I am more affected by your disappointment & mortification than I am for being considered by your fellow Commissioners as one of no likelihood in Architecture – In my letters on the subject of the State House & in the Description & Estimate I am aware of being Gothic & over-confident; but this, I hope, has not arisen from extravagant notions of my own Capacity but rather from anxiety for the advancement of the interest of my Nephew, who had a share in the Design & of whose talents I have a high opinion – The interior arrangement was almost entirely his & in speaking of it I felt myself to be speaking of the work of another – I was indeed misled on the subject of expense, or rather I was mistaken, & the mistake was made partly through the expression of "low estimate" & partly through my Nephews strong presentiment that Cheapness (which is too frequently the case here) would be of paramount importance – I acknowledge my error & that there is scarcely an excuse for it & I regret it because from the first to the last it has cramped me. Willing as I am to submit with deference & respect to your decision on the Architectural merit of my Design I cannot but be surprised that the lowness of the Estimate should operate so much to the disadvantage of the Design when that

lowness is in great measure ~~in~~ the consequence of the Choice of Material (Wood instead of Stone) the selection & adoption of which is entirely ~~in~~ the power of the Commissioners!! It is generally allowed by Architects themselves that Estimates for great Buildings are random things, little better than guess-work - The grand object in view in offering Premiums is to obtain the best Design: the Choice of Material by the Designer is of no importance whatever so that his Design is adapted to the Materials the Commissioners may choose - ~~I am indeed at a loss~~ - Speaking of the Material I am somewhat afraid that your Stone being in such small Blocks is inadequate to the Construction of a Building of the Magnitude you propose - Your Columns will have to be made of many pieces & the projections of the Entablature be very difficult of execution - I fear too that the difference in the Colour of the Stone will break up the Masses in a greater degree than you might imagine from comparing the two kinds together in small pieces - Could not Brick moulded into the necessary forms & well made have more durability & fitness than small stones? There is nothing new in its application to such works - In Rome & its vicinity are several Antient Buildings (Temples &c) that are entirely constructed of Brick Columns Entablatures even elaborate ornament - And I find too in Schinkel's Works they have been used with great elegance & propriety - You wish me to give my opinion of the Design of which you have sent me a Sketch. I will give you my impressions with candour, although I perhaps ought to hesitate as my opinion may possibly be affected by the predilection I have for my own Design. If there is such (& I am unconscious of its influence) you will know what allowance to make - I admire its simplicity & lofiness of effect but fine as it certainly appears in the drawing I fear it will disappoint you when executed - The lofiness it presents is produced by the high Terrace on which the Building is lifted - The Site of the Building as I understand it is a Natural Terrace the ground falls on every side - Now the use of Terraces is ~~to lift~~ found on plains or in valleys where surrounding objects would overtop and degrade an Edifice - or on the sides of ~~steep~~ precipitous hills where that natural disadvantage is to be overcome - But to raise a high Terrace on the top of a hill seems like painting the Lily: a very needless appurtenance - But your Terrace is even worse than that, its masses will be extremely large which will degrade the effect of the principal Building & in most points of view will appear like a great wall hiding from sight the more important Edifice - The expense too will be enormous which expense applied to the main building would contribute wonderfully to its magnificence & grandeur - There is a want of principal mass in the Building, the parts being too equal; in the language of a very intelligent friend of mine it will look like "four buildings backed up to each other" - The Dome, if Dome it can be called which Dome is not, is as poor & meagre as can well be, & if executed will appear to have no more Connexion with the rest of the Building than a Bird Cage would hung out of one of the Windows, with this difference that the Bird Cage is put out for an agreeable object & cannot appear likely to break down the Building - The Dome on the other hand will appear to crush or be crushing in the roof when it has been placed by some Wicked Genius - I am persuaded that no Dome can spring with good effect from a peaked roof or roofs - it is in fact at variance with all laws of Composition a Dome or any other Mass must be continuous down to a horizontal Base ~~collar~~ that Base may be on the ground or higher but there must be a Horizontal Base to spring from, or the whole will indeed appear a Baseless Fabric? - But you will think I am writing an elaborate essay instead of giving you my simple opinion - Which is that the Design wants Unity - that the Terrace is worse than unnecessary & that the Dome is incongruous - It gives me great pleasure to learn that I may have the pleasure of seeing you before long I could wish you here now as there is ~~at present~~ a very fine Exhibition open - I think it probable that I shall spend my Winter in the City when I wish you to address me at No 1 Laight St and the sooner you do it the more agreeable it will be to me - When you have done with my Design, I would wish it returned to me if there is a suitable opportunity - It will probably be more useful to me than anybody else - If it only reminds that a Design for a State House requires more study & opportunity than a Modern Painter can well ~~avoid bestowing upon it~~ grave - With the hope of hearing from you soon - I remain

Yours truly
Thomas Cole.

Jan 1838

Mrs L. Adams

Jacksville

Ohio