

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2026

Contact: Marisa Espe
Director of Communications
espem@albanyinstitute.org
518-463-4478 x408

ALBANY INSTITUTE MARKS FREDERIC E. CHURCH BICENTENNIAL WITH NEW EXHIBITION



Morning, Looking East Over the Hudson Valley from the Catskill Mountains, Frederic E. Church (1826–1900), oil on canvas, 1848. AIHA, gift of Catherine Gansevoort Lansing, x1940.606.7

ALBANY, NY—2026 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Hudson River School painter Frederic E. Church (1826–1900). To celebrate the artist’s legacy, the Albany Institute of History & Art presents *Your Friend, Frederic E. Church*, on view June 6 through October 12, 2026. The exhibition focuses on the friendship between Church and Albany-based sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer (1817–1904), who was among the leading portrait sculptors of the second half of the nineteenth century. Friends for half a century, Church and Palmer wrote to each other about their art and life and visited each other frequently.

Among the 72 letters from Church to “My dear Palmer” in the Albany Institute’s collection is one dated July 7, 1869, where he writes the now famous words “About an hour this side of Albany is the center of the World – I own it.” This reference was to Olana, the 250-acre living landscape, home, and estate near Hudson, New York, created by Church and his family, which stands today as one of the most well-preserved artistic environments in the United States.

Church owned ten works by Palmer—more than by any other artist. He lived with them at Olana and in his New York City studio. The letters show that the artists encouraged each other and reported to one another about their successes and failures. On January 1, 1863, Palmer wrote to Church about a sculpture he carved in reaction to the Civil War: “I never made sorrow before as it is expressed in this head. It is not grief but sorrow & compassion.” In this letter, he mentions the title of the work, *Peace in Bondage*, for the first time. The sculpture, in the Albany Institute’s collection, and the letter, in Olana’s collection, will be united for the first time in this exhibition.

“As institutions across the country celebrate Frederic E. Church’s bicentennial, this exhibition offers a uniquely intimate perspective on one of the most important figures in American art,” says Kayla Carlsen, Executive Director. “By drawing on the Albany Institute’s extraordinary holdings, *Your Friend, Frederic E. Church* contributes to a national conversation while underscoring the depth of storytelling rooted here in Albany.”

In addition to examples from Church and Palmer’s correspondence, the exhibition includes sculpture, drawings, paintings, and manuscripts drawn from the Albany Institute’s collection, paired with significant public and private loans. Among these are twelve objects borrowed from the collection of Olana State Historic Site that further illustrate the deep friendship between the Church and Palmer families, as well as a memorial painting, *The Evening Star*, painted by Church for Palmer in 1858 after the death of two-year-old Frederick Church Palmer, on loan from a private collection.

The exhibition also features work by Church and Palmer’s mutual friends, including Albany-born composer George William Warren (1828–1902), who dedicated music to both Church and Palmer, including his 1863 piece, *Marche di Bravura: Homage to Church’s Picture Heart of the Andes*. The exhibition also brings together art and archival materials that highlight Church’s relationship with Thomas Cole (1801–1848) and the entire Cole family, including a newly conserved print of Church’s masterpiece *Heart of the Andes* inscribed “To Mrs. Thomas Cole with the kind regards of Frederic E. Church” from the Albany Institute’s collection. The exhibition also explores the relationship Church had with Erastus Dow Palmer’s son Walter Launt Palmer (1854–1932) who studied with Church and briefly shared a New York City studio with him.

“This exhibition approaches the life and work of Frederic E. Church through a distinctly regional lens, situating the artist within the social and cultural networks of the Capital Region,” says Diane Shewchuk, Chief Curator and curator of *Your Friend, Frederic E. Church*. “By examining his correspondence and relationships, we gain a more nuanced understanding of how place and personal exchange shaped his practice.”

To celebrate Church’s enduring impact on American art, museums across the country are presenting exhibitions and programs related to the artist’s life and work. Among the dozens of planned commemorations, *Your Friend, Frederic E. Church* uniquely focuses on a remarkable body of personal correspondence preserved in the Albany Institute’s collection. By bringing these materials into dialogue with works of art and key loans, the exhibition offers insight into the relationships that shaped one of America’s most important artists.

For more information, visit albanyinstitute.org.

###

PUBLIC PROGRAMS & EVENTS

A series of public programs will accompany the exhibition, including lectures and collaborative events with regional partners. The Albany Institute will host an opening reception on Friday, June 5, 2026, from 5–7PM. In partnership with the Friends of the Albany Rural Cemetery, the museum will offer offsite tours on Sunday, August 16, and Saturday, September 19, exploring the resting place of Erastus Dow Palmer and highlighting examples of his sculpture in situ. On Sunday, September 13, Victoria Johnson, author of *Glorious Country: How the Artist Frederic Church Brought the World to America and America to the World*, will present a lecture on Church's life and work. Additional programs include a talk and painting demonstration by artist Lauren Sansaricq on Sunday, September 27, and the annual Norman S. Rice Memorial Lecture on Sunday, October 4, by Thayer Tolles, Marica F. Vilcek Curator of American Painting and Sculpture at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Family Free Day on October 12 will feature exhibition-themed activities for all ages. A full schedule of educational programs and events for schools, families, and adults will be offered throughout the exhibition.

SUPPORT

Lead support for *Your Friend, Frederic E. Church* programs and events is provided by Donald and Ann Eberle. Additional program support is provided by Todd Slingerland and Jennifer Krieger and Hawthorne Fine Art. Support for the exhibition is provided by Douglas L. Cohn, DVM. Conservation support for works in this exhibition is provided by Dr. Lawrence and Mrs. Louise Marwill and Evelyn Trebilcock.

Leadership support for annual exhibitions and programs is provided by Phoebe Powell Bender and Christine and George R. Hearst III. Albany Institute programs and exhibitions are made possible in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.

ABOUT THE ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

Founded in 1791, the Albany Institute of History & Art is New York's oldest museum. Its collections document the Hudson Valley as a crossroads of culture, influencing the art and history of the region, the state, and the nation. With more than 25,000 objects in the collection and one million documents in the research library, it is a resource for the region. Permanent exhibitions include one of the largest collections of Hudson River School paintings, a history of Ancient Egypt, and other fine art, ceramics, and furniture, as well as rotating temporary exhibitions.

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

PRESS IMAGES

Your Friend, Frederic E. Church

June 6–October 12, 2026

The following images may be used by the media solely for purposes of publicity related to the exhibition at the Albany Institute of History & Art. Images may not be altered and must be accompanied by the captions noted below. Access image files via [Dropbox](#).

Please contact Marisa Espe, Director of Communications, at espem@albanyinstitute.org or 518-463-4478 x408 for all media-related inquiries.



Twilight (Sunset)

Frederic E. Church (1826–1900)

Oil on canvas, 1856

Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of Beatrice Palmer, 1942.34.44



Morning, Looking East Over the Hudson Valley from the Catskill Mountains

Frederic E. Church (1826–1900)

Oil on canvas, 1848

Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of Catherine Gansevoort Lansing, x1940.606.7



Peace in Bondage

Erastus Dow Palmer (1817–1904)

Marble in original wood frame, 1863

Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of Frederick Townsend, 1910.1



Imogen

Erastus Dow Palmer (1817–1904)

Bronze, 1874

Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of Mrs. Katherine H. (Joseph) Gavit, 1960.10

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

PRESS IMAGES

Your Friend, Frederic E. Church

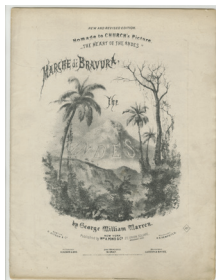
June 6–October 12, 2026

The following images may be used by the media solely for purposes of publicity related to the exhibition at the Albany Institute of History & Art. Images may not be altered and must be accompanied by the captions noted below. Access image files via [Dropbox](#).

Please contact Marisa Espe, Director of Communications, at espem@albanyinstitute.org or 518-463-4478 x408 for all media-related inquiries.



A Sculptor's Studio (Studio of Erastus Dow Palmer)
Tompkins H. Matteson (1813–1884)
Oil on canvas, 1857
Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of Walter Launt Palmer, 1907.51



Marche di Bravura (Homage to Church's picture Heart of the Andes)
Composed by George William Warren (1828–1902)
1863
Albany Institute of History & Art, Sheet Music Collection, FD 783