APG 21307D
THOMAS COLE (American, 1801–1848)
View of Featherstonhaugh Estate near Duanesburg, New York, 1826
Oil on canvas, 34 x 48 in.
Signed and dated (at lower right): T. Cole / 1826

RECORDED: Elwood C. Parry II, *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1988), pp. 22, "List of Pictures Painted in New York, 1825–1826," one of nos. 9–12, as "Views near Featherstonhaughs," 30 fig. 6 illus. // Rebecca Bedell, "Thomas Cole and the Fashionable Science," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59 (1996), p. 357 // William L. Coleman, *Something of an Architect: Thomas Cole and the Country House Ideal,* unpub. Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2015, pp. 34–50, 126 fig. 37 illus. in color // William L. Coleman, "Painting the 'Baronial Castle': Thomas Cole at Featherson Park," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 80 (2017), pp. 635–65, 636 fig. 1 illus. // India Nash, "In Exhibit: A Look at rare works of Thomas Cole," *Daily Gazette* (Schenectady, New York), June 28, 2018, illus. in color

EXHIBITED: (possibly) The American Academy of Fine Arts, New York, May 1826, as "Landscape, the seat of Mr. Featherstonhaugh in the distance," no. 78 // (possibly) The American Academy of Fine Arts, New York, May 1827, as "Landscape View near Duanesburgh," no. 7 // (possibly) The American Academy of Fine Arts, New York, May 1828, as "Landscape view near Duanesburgh," no. 3 // The Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York, January 30–November 25, 2018, *Thomas Cole's Paper Trail*

EX COLL.: the artist; to George Featherstonhaugh, Duanesburg, New York, 1826; by descent, until the present

In December 1825, Thomas Cole accepted an invitation from George William Featherstonhaugh (1780–1866) to live and paint at Featherston Park, Featherstonhaugh's estate in Duanesburg, thirty

miles northwest of Albany, New York. Cole remained with the Featherstonhaugh family until late March or early April 1826, sketching scenery and producing four finished oil paintings of the home and property. Of these, one was lost when the manor house burned in 1829. Two others are in public collections: *Landscape, the Seat of Mr. Featherstonhaugh in the Distance* (Philadelphia Museum of Art) and *The Woodchopper, Lake Featherstonhaugh* (USC Fisher Museum of Art, Los Angeles, The Elizabeth Holmes Fisher Collection). The present work, *View of Featherstonhaugh Near Duanesburg, New York*, is the last of the surviving three to remain in the original private collection, descended for nearly two centuries in the family of George Featherstonhaugh. (The Featherstonhaugh episode in Cole's early career is treated in pp. 28–30 of Parry, cited above. A more recent and extended discussion is William L. Coleman's *Huntington Library Quarterly* article, a polished revision of a chapter in Coleman's doctoral dissertation, *Something of an Architect: Thomas Cole and the Country House Ideal* (University of California at Berkeley, 2015), see especially "Painting the 'Baronial Castle'", pp. 34–50. Coleman's scholarship is the basis for the following essay, unless otherwise noted.)

Thomas Cole's career was cut short by his death from pleurisy at the age of forty-seven. While Cole made his early reputation as the preeminent painter of American landscape, in his later years he devoted his energy to large, allegorical, didactic, historically themed canvasses. The present landscape painting, then, is an important document of Cole's early career. Moreover, given the fact of Cole's abbreviated life, it is one of a limited number of large and major Cole landscapes, most of which are already in public collections. The availability of a *View of Featherstonhaugh Estate near Duanesburg, New York* thus presents a notable and rare acquisition opportunity.

Thomas Cole was seventeen years old when he emigrated to America in 1818, traveling with his parents and two older sisters. In his native Lancashire, Cole had apprenticed with and worked as an engraver. In America, he spent his first five years in Pennsylvania and Ohio, working in his father's various unsuccessful artisanal businesses, teaching in his older sisters' schools, and most important, learning how to paint from a traveling artist and a published manual. Cole worked briefly and with minimal success as an itinerant portrait painter in Ohio. His ambition, however, extended further. In 1823, he left his family and went to Philadelphia, supporting himself with part-time jobs while taking advantage of the opportunity for self-improvement at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In late 1824, the Cole family moved to New York City where Thomas soon joined them. When Thomas Cole arrived in New York City in April 1825, he was a twenty-four-year-old self-taught artist at the end of his journeyman years. He placed some small landscape pictures in George Dixey's carving and gilding shop (all of these paintings were sold but remain unlocated today). Here Cole attracted the patronage of George Bruen, a businessman and art collector who offered to subsidize a late-summer painting and sketching expedition. There was high excitement in New York in 1825 attendant on the completion of the Erie Canal, linking the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, positioning New York to become indeed "the Empire City." (For a valuable contextual view of Cole's early years as an artist, see Catherine Voorsanger Hoover and John K. Howat, *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825–*

1861, exhib. cat. [New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000].) Cole headed north along the Hudson River to the picturesque Hudson Highlands and, beyond, to the Catskill Mountains, where he found himself enthralled and delighted with its dramatic scenery. Armed with sketches, he returned home in September to the studio garret of his family's rented house on Greenwich Street. Working there, he turned several of his sketches into three oil compositions that he placed for sale in William A. Colman's antiquarian bookshop and gallery space. And that is where the eminent artist John Trumbull found himself transfixed by these wild landscapes. The circumstances were fortuitous. New York's small coterie of artists and patrons needed a hero to prove New York's worth as the center of a genuine American cultural presence. And there was Thomas Cole, young, untutored, besotted with American scenery, and just the genius for the moment.

William Dunlap's description of the youth of Thomas Cole offers a romantic muddle of fact and conjecture but remains the source of the iconic story of Cole's "discovery" by Trumbull, William Dunlap, and Asher B. Durand. (Accounts from various sources differ in detail, but not in the essential outline. For Dunlap's version of Cole's biography and assessment of the artist, whom he knew, see William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of The Arts of Design in the United States*, vol. II [New York: George P. Scott and Company, 1834; reprint ed., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969], pp. 350–67). Trumbull immediately purchased one of the pictures, *The Falls of the Kaatskill* (unlocated), and proudly showed it to his friend, the artist, playwright, and journalist Dunlap, exclaiming (so it is said), "This youth has done what I have all my life attempted in vain." Durand, at the time New York's leading engraver, happened in, and together, the three returned to Colman's store where Durand and Dunlap each purchased their own Cole landscape. Dunlap explains that, needing funds (a chronic problem for him), he promptly sold his painting, for twice what he had paid, to Philip J. Hone, the Mayor of New York. This was *Lake with Dead Trees (Catskill)*, now in the collection of the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. Since Dunlap couldn't afford to share the profit with the young painter as he claims to have wished, he compensated by doing "my duty. I published in the journals of the day, and account of the young artist and his pictures; it was no puff, but an honest declaration of my opinion, and I believe it served merit by attracting attention to it." Taking credit where he believed it due, Dunlap continues, "From that time forward, Mr. Cole received commissions to paint landscapes from all quarters ... [and] was enabled to increase his prices... (Dunlap, p. 360).

William Coleman's excellent scholarship in excavating the context of the artist-patron relationship that produced *View of Featherstonhaugh Estate Near Duanesburg, New York* is an essential corrective to years of Cole literature that overlooked or dismissed Cole's Duanesburg work. There is, indeed, evidence in contemporary correspondence that Cole was unhappy during his time with Featherstonhaugh. After the artist's death, Featherstonhaugh was singled out for extended and harsh criticism by William Cullen Bryant in the poet and editor's celebrated 1848 funeral oration for the artist, delivered at New York's National Academy of Design. Five years later, in 1853,

Featherstonhaugh received printed opprobrium in (Rev.) Louis Legrand Noble's biography of the late artist, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole (*reprint ed., Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964). Both Bryant and Noble were Cole's close friends and had likely heard the artist's complaints directly. Dunlap sets the scene: Cole is a young but impecunious artist, living and working in cramped quarters with his family, but on the cusp of achieving recognition and success when he accepts Featherstonhaugh's offer of an art residency. It was reasonable enough on the surface: a commission for painting Hudson River scenery that came with free room and board. As it turned out, while the scenery was bucolic, it lacked the dramatic landscape elements that had delighted and inspired Cole the previous summer. Worse, Cole believed himself disrespected by Featherstonhaugh, treated as a social inferior, assigned cramped, cold quarters, and pressed to dine with the children. Cole voiced his dissatisfaction, albeit in moderate terms, in a letter he wrote to John Trumbull in February 1826: he explained that he would send Trumbull a promised picture "as soon as the river opens, perhaps bring it myself if possible.... I am anxious to return to New York. I am afraid I shall be forgotten" (as quoted in Parry, p. 31). Clearly Cole chafed at being isolated upstate, a frozen river away from the New York City art world where he had just begun to achieve recognition.

Two centuries later, the details of Thomas Cole's life remain readily available, but not those of his patron. In 1826, however, George William Featherstonhaugh was a prominent gentleman with multi-faceted interests and sterling social connections. Compared to that of the young artist he had hired, Featherstonhaugh's life has faded into relative obscurity. For insight into Featherstonhaugh's situation when he made his offer to Cole, Coleman cites Edmund and Dorothy Berkeley's 1988 biography of Featherstonhaugh, *George William Featherstonhaugh: The First U.S. Government Geologist* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988). The title of the Berkeleys' book indicates just one of the activities that engaged Featherstonhaugh. He was a geologist, but also a prominent agricultural reformer, an early railroad promoter, a political activist, author, translator, dramatist, and later in life, English diplomat. Born in London and raised in Yorkshire, he was a poor relation of an old and landed family. He arrived in America in 1806, and two years later, in 1808, married Sarah Duane, daughter of the late, eminent, and wealthy James Duane (1733–1797) and his wife, Mary Livingston Duane (1733–1821). Duane owned extensive land in upstate New York, in the area near Schenectady. He had bequeathed to his daughter, Sarah, 1,000 acres of that land on which the newlyweds immediately set out to establish themselves with a substantial house and extensive farmland. Featherstonhaugh enlarged the landholding and imported from England prized sheep and cattle as breeding stock for an ambitious program of animal husbandry. Featherstonhaugh's aspirations, however, outstripped his purse, and Coleman documents that, by 1825, Featherstonhaugh was in dire financial straits with creditors threatening to seize his property. He and his wife had lost two daughters to diphtheria in the spring of 1825. On a trip to New York City, Featherstonhaugh became acquainted with Cole and was impressed with his work. After Cole accepted Featherstonhaugh's invitation and arrived in Duanesburg, Featherstonhaugh seems to have been absent from home, spending substantial time in Albany attending to business (Coleman dissertation, p. 49, reference to Berkeley and Berkeley, fn. 86,

pp. 38–39). Featherstonhaugh's immediate prospects in the period following Cole's visit did not improve. Sarah Duane Featherstonhaugh died in 1828 and the manor house burned down in 1829. After these years of travail, Featherstonhaugh proved resilient. In 1831, he remarried and had three more children. In 1834, he was appointed the first U.S. Government Geologist, hired to travel, survey, and report on Louisiana Purchase territories in the present states of Missouri and Arkansas. In 1838, Featherstonhaugh returned to England. From 1839 to 1842, he worked as an English Commissioner in the negotiation of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, which resolved the disputed border between Maine and New Brunswick, Canada. For his service Featherstonhaugh received a British consular appointment to France. In 1848, using subterfuge, he successfully engineered the escape from Le Havre to England of deposed King Louis Philippe and his queen, fleeing Louis Napolean's coup. Featherstonhaugh remained a British diplomat in France until he died. He is buried in Tunbridge Wells, England.

Coleman details the ways in which William Cullen Bryant was overdetermined to dislike George William Featherstonhaugh, quite apart from any doings Featherstonhaugh might have had with Thomas Cole. Featherstonhaugh was a political ally of Bryant's bitter opponent Henry Clay. Both Clay and Featherstonhaugh shared a serious interest in agricultural reform, and Clay had pressed for protective tariffs for farmers. Adding insult to injury, in 1844, when he was safely in England, Featherstonhaugh published an account of his work as an American government geologist, calling it *Excursion Through the Slave States.* American pride had already been deeply offended by criticisms from eminent English visitors, among them Mrs. Fanny (Francis Milton) Trollope (Anthony Trollope's mother and an author in her own right) in her 1832 *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, and Charles Dickens in his 1842 *American Notes*. Dickens' barbs had been especially hurtful since the acclaimed author had been received and feted as an honored guest during his tour of America. Featherstonhaugh had been received as "one of us," in his years as an American before the publication of his book. Its tales of frontier lawlessness and vulgarity appeared a betrayal that further aggravated open wounds. Bryant reviewed Featherstonhaugh's book when it was published and returned to the topic four years later in the funeral oration. He called it at various times, a "wretched book,", a "stupid book", and the work of a man "involved in some mean and rascally tricks.... It is certain that he is a very superficial man, altogether unqualified to write a trustworthy book on any subject" (Coleman, dissertation, pp, 47–48). Worse yet was Featherstonhaugh's apostasy. After marrying two wealthy American women, he turned his back on America and returned to England. The new nation was less than 75 years old, and still grappling with its identity as a separate entity—what it meant to be American, as distinct, emphatically, from being English. Featherstonhaugh's repatriation represented a threat to a carefully tendered and nurtured budding American *amour propre.*

Patronage has ever been a fraught issue for artists. Cole's relations with his patrons and its effects on his art have been examined in depth by Alan Wallach in" Thomas Cole and the Aristocracy" (*Arts Magazine* 56 [November 1981], pp. 94–106) and in his essay, "Thomas Cole: Landscape and the

Course of American Empire," in William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, eds., *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History* (exhib. cat. [Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1994], pp. 23–11). Featherstonhaugh may have been the first patron whose behavior did not meet the artist's needs but was by no means the last. Larry E. Sullivan and Mary Alice Mackay examined Cole's contentious (but cautious, considering the circumstances) correspondence in 1826 with his important patron, Baltimore collector Robert Gilmor ("Another Clue to Thomas Cole," [*Arts Magazine* 60 (January 1986), pp. 68–71]). Gilmor urged Cole to replicate or convey "the effect of nature itself." Cole bridled at the proposed restriction of his "imagination ... shackled" (p. 69). The struggle never ended. Wallach quotes a letter, likely written in 1845, in which Cole lamented "I am not the artist I should have been had taste been higher.... For instead of indulging myself in the production of works such as my feelings & fancy would have chosen—in order *to exist* [italics in original] I have painted to please others" (*Arts,* p. 104).

When Cole met Featherstonhaugh in 1825, both men grappled with insecurity, though neither would have recognized it in the other. The multiple business failures of Cole's father, beginning in England, which prompted their immigration, and continuing in America, threatened the family's tenuous claim to a highly prized status of gentility. Rebecca Bedell looks at Cole's social insecurity (citing Wallach) through the lens of his interest in geology, an enthusiasm shared among gentlemen and specifically among Cole's elite friends and patrons. (See Bedell, "Thomas Cole and the Fashionable Science" (*Huntington Library Quarterly* 59 [1996], pp. 348–78; also, Bedell, *The Anatomy of Nature: Geology & American Landscape Painting, 1825–1875* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001], pp. 17–46.) As events in the 1830s unfolded, Cole's circle, especially Yale Professor Dr. Benjamin Silliman, brother-in-law of Cole patron Daniel Wadsworth, championed a version of geology intended to frame the findings of geologists with religious and moral narratives. Bedell details how, though conversant with geological terms and formations, Cole's representations of geologic structures in his art were determined by aesthetics, that is, the artist's "imagination, "and not by science. They were, important for him, shared by his socially, economically, and intellectually elite circle of patrons. Featherstonhaugh, by then a professional geologist, advocated for geology as an empiric, observation-based discipline. This would have served to further confirm Cole's negative feelings toward his old patron.

Featherstonhaugh's insecurity in 1825 was largely financial. His mother, a widow, ran a millinery shop in Scarborough. When he came to America, he had the social assurance of a gentleman, but not the money. With his alliance to the Duane fortune, he made a spectacular marriage on both accounts, but that did not protect him from a chronic problem with insolvency. What he wanted from Thomas Cole was a set of views confirming on canvas the material proof of his status as a gentleman landholder and forward-thinking agriculturist. As Wallach has cogently argued, this was never Thomas Cole's agenda: Cole's patrons "nurtured the artist to serve their needs, not his. In the end it was their needs, their taste that always mattered" (*Arts,* p. 104).

Despite the tensions in the patron/artist relationship, William Coleman makes a strong case for the Duanesburg pictures as logical and important steps in the progression of Cole's developing art. The three surviving pictures bear witness to the resolution that Cole found for the struggle between his own creative urge and the requirements of his patron. All three are taken from an aerial view of the property, with the artist observing from a modest height. (For a brief discussion of this, see Truettner and Wallach, *Landscape into History*, p. 109, note 171.) A similar perspective was certainly available from the manor house at Featherston Park, a "baronial mansion" as one Featherstonhaugh acquaintance joked (Coleman, *Huntington*, p. 642). The house stood on heights with a view that on a clear day extended to the Hudson River, roughly thirty miles to the east. But if Cole had painted his vista from the house, then the house would not have been in his pictures. In fact, Coleman says:

> I will argue that these [Featherstonhaugh] images are not anomalous [in Cole's oeuvre] by showing the ways in which they relate to the history of Anglo-American house portraiture, participate in a vibrant contemporary discourse about houses as instruments of nation formation and moral improvement, and serve as early evidence of Cole's engagement with the social possibilities of architecture (*Huntington,* p. 640).

The manor house in *View of Featherstonhaugh Estate Near Duanesburg, New York* is the center of the organizing energy that has produced Cole's view. Featherstonhaugh's house stands as an exemplum for the civic role of the country gentleman in the fledgling democracy. The architecture is neo-classical and ordered, a tasteful ornament to the surrounding area. This is a house that presides over a working estate. The manor may be a "baronial palace," but it is not a destination for leisure and idle pursuit. Situated at the top of an elevation, it occupies land that would not otherwise be cultivated.

The house was important to George Featherstonhaugh. He had it built in 1809, the year after his marriage. His wife was a New Yorker. He was an Englishman from Yorkshire. The house was their shared home, the place where they raised their family. What neither Cole nor Featherstonhaugh could have known in 1826, was that Cole's near microscopic views of the house would become, in the future, the only visual record of the structure taken three years before it was destroyed by fire. The manor house was large: sixty feet deep and one hundred forty feet long, comprising a central wing and two flanking wings. Echoing "the style of architecture to be found on gentlemen's estates in England," it had a hall with a "great fireplace." To aid in design and for help in arranging the employment of subcontractors and obtaining needed materials, Featherstonhaugh engaged the services of Philip Hooker (1766–1836), Albany's most prominent architect. Most of Hooker's work involved institutional structures: churches, schools, and government buildings. A few details of the Featherston Park construction as they involved Hooker have been published in Douglas G. Bucher and W. Richard Wheeler, *A Neat Plain Modern Stile: Philip Hooker and His Contemporaries, 1796–1836* (exhib. cat. [Clinton, New York: Emerson Gallery, Hamilton College], pp. 113–44.)

Had Cole taken his view from the house, the prospect he surveyed would also have extended far beyond the bounds of Featherstonhaugh's estate. Rather, the scene Cole paints in these pictures is all Featherstonhaugh property: a working farm, including a low lying pasture adjacent to a lake where sheep and cows graze. In 1825, Featherstonhaugh's position as a prominent agricultural reformer was essential to his own identity: he was more than an Englishman who married a rich man's daughter. In 1820, Featherstonhaugh had been a founding member of the New York State Board of Agriculture. This was more than an honorific piece of patronage. Featherstonhaugh edited the journal published by that organization, collecting, and disseminating the latest news of best practices in agriculture. Ironically, in his biography Rev. Noble bristled with indignation that Featherstonhaugh, the "heartless employer" who had "entrapped [Cole] into his service," "affected a contempt" "for the kind of picture which Cole then delighted to paint," that is, dramatic landscapes. Rather, Featherstonhaugh "advised him to turn his pencil to the bullocks of his [Featherstonhaugh's] farmyard. What Rev. Noble failed to understand was the crucial importance of Featherstonhaugh's herds to his work as an agricultural reformer. In the eighteenth century, Robert Bakewell (1725–1795), a Leicestershire farmer, played a

seminal role in the English agricultural revolution. Active in agronomy, he was most influential for his work in the selective breeding of livestock, sheep, cows, and horses. Charles Darwin acknowledged Bakewell's work in breeding as influential in the formulation of Darwin's theory of natural selection. Among Bakewell's numerous followers, was George Featherstonhaugh, who imported to America Bakewell-bred Border Leicester sheep and Holderness cattle to continue breeding experiments designed to transform the practice of American animal husbandry. While it is possible that the animals in all three of Cole's pictures may not have been important to the artist, they were proud possessions of his patron.

The house portrait has an art-historical genealogy that traces back to the Medicis in Italy and the genre of architectural painting in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Netherlands. House portraits could and commonly did serve as vanity projects. But for Featherstonhaugh and Cole, the house portrait was intended to illustrate the role of refined taste in domesticating the wilderness and using its fruits for the greater good. "In Cole's version of it, Featherston Park is the estate of a meritocrat, founded upon diligent intellectual endeavor for the good of the nation rather than decadent leisure" (Coleman, *Huntington,* p. 656). Cole went on to paint portraits of Daniel Wadsworth's Monte Video (1828, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and of Stephen van Rensselaer's Manor Hall (1841, Albany Institute of Arts and History, Albany, New York). Thomas Cole's own interest in architecture is well documented. The built environment figures prominently in his later allegorical works and he had ambitions to pursue architectural design himself. (See Annette Blaugrund, "Thomas Cole: 'Do you know I am something [of] an architect?", *Fine Art Connoisseur* [May/June 2016], pp. 62–68.)

Cole's view of Monte Video, painted for a patron who was also a friend, shares compositional features with the Duanesburg pictures. In fact, the paintings Cole executed for George Featherstonhaugh pictures fit neatly into a visual narrative of Cole's early landscape work, sharing many of the same landscape features that Cole employed in his other early canvasses. The blasted tree in the left foreground of *View of Featherstonhaugh Estate Near Duanesburg, New York*, to take the most prominent example, is a romantic symbol of mortality familiar to Cole from the work of Salvatore Rosa and Jacob van Ruisdael. He used it frequently in various configurations. It appears as early as 1825 in two Cole landscapes, *Lake with Dead Trees (Catskill)* and *View of Fort Putnam*. Similarly, the presence of storm clouds, hills and bodies of water mark many Cole landscapes, before and after his Duanesburg residency. There is evidence in Cole's correspondence that his Duanesburg pictures were "composed," and not simply transcripts of what he saw. In the same February 1826 letter to Trumbull, Cole defends his decision to enliven his composition with the added device of a squall, writing that it is "much more difficult to make a picture of a soft scene than of those that possess more character—and they cannot inspire that vivid feeling that I believe it is necessary an artist should have and by which he is enabled to work with spirit and effect" (as quoted in Parry, p. 31). Moreover, the palette suggests autumnal colors, a deliberate choice by the artist who had seen autumn in the Catskills, but never in Duanesburg. Discovery of loose pages of Cole sketches in the collections of the Albany

Institute and the Detroit Institute of Art make clear that there must have once been a Featherstonhaugh sketch notebook that was, somewhere along the way, dismantled, and its pages separated. These sketches relate to identifiable individual elements of the Duanesburg pictures.

While Cole was sequestered in Duanesburgh, he was elected as an associate of the newly founded National Academy of Design in New York. When Cole left Featherston Park in late March or early April, he visited Lake George, at the southern end of the Adirondacks. Then he returned to the Hudson Valley, where he boarded in the village of Catskill, the town that ultimately became his home. In May 1826, Cole showed seven landscape paintings at the annual exhibition of the American Academy of Fine Arts, John Trumbull's organization, and three landscapes at the first exhibition of the Academy's rival, the newly formed National Academy of Design, whose founding members included Asher B. Durand and William Dunlap. Cole was pleased enough with his work in Duanesburg to show one picture at the American Academy in each of three successive years: 1826, 1827, and 1828. In a letter of April 7, 1826, Cole, who must have been recently arrived in New York City, wrote to Featherstonhaugh inquiring about the two pictures the patron had agreed to lend for the American Academy exhibition. Cole specifies that they are "the two large pictures," indicating that these would have been the present work, *View of Featherstonhaugh Estate Near Duanesburg, New York* and the picture called *Landscape, the Seat of Mr. Featherstonhaugh in the Distance* (Philadelphia Museum of Art). The letter concludes with Cole writing "It gives me pleasure to hear that you had succeeded in gaining the group for the Rail Road—My best respects to Mrs. F and remember me to James." Clearly Cole intended to remain on good terms with Featherstonhaugh, whatever his private grievances might have been. (The railroad reference is to Featherstonhaugh's activities to establish a Schenectady-Albany rail line. The letter is held in the Featherstonhaugh family archive.) All the Duanesburg pictures have descriptive titles. Since they all showed the same scene with variations determined by Cole's artist's imagination, it has proven difficult, if not impossible, to determine which pictures were shown when. The same lack of documentation has led to speculation and disagreement about the order in which the pictures were painted. Cole's records do not clarify these issues.

A final note regarding *View of Featherstonhaugh Estate Near Duanesburg, New York* concerns its striking frame made of local curly maple. The frame is original to the picture and was fashioned by Solomon Kelly (1788–1851), described in a family genealogy source as "farmer, master carpenter, and public servant." Featherstonhaugh contracted with Kelly to craft the interior woodwork as well as the furniture of his home. This included windows, doors, mantlepieces, floors, staircases, and in the present instance, picture frames. The use of curly maple, a reddish-brown wood, may account for the red appearance of the manor house's red door in the Cole picture. Though most of Kelly's work for George Featherstonhaugh was lost, this picture frame survives, as do the fittings for another Duane family mansion in the same vicinity.

Thomas Cole, both as a painter and an art theorist, is regarded as the founder of the Hudson River School, a group whose practice reflected a departure from earlier bucolic landscape depictions in the direction of a dramatic romanticism, pictures revealing the beautiful and sublime aspects of the American wilderness. Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque, in his essay, "The Exaltation of American Landscape Painting" (*American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School,* exhib. cat. [New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987]), precisely stated the significance of Cole's early work to the group of patrons he attracted. "By those works, Cole delivered to the nation what it had desperately yearned for—a recognizable image of itself in art" (p. 24). Philip Hone understood it most clearly. "I think every American is bound to prove his love of country by admiring Cole" (*The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828–1851,* as quoted by Roque, pp. 24, 93 n. 9).

View of Featherstonhaugh Estate Near Duanesburg, New York is a document of Thomas Cole's early career. It is a surviving artifact of American history, documenting a time and place in the history of New York State and the young Republic and recalling the people who worked to make the country we have inherited. And at its most essential, it is a premier work by Thomas Cole, the first master of American landscape painting and founding father of the Hudson River School.

CONDITION: Very good. Conservation performed by the Williamstown Conservation Center. Canvas wax-relined onto an auxiliary canvas support and stretched onto a new six-member wood stretcher. Scattered spots of inpainting in the sky, including one broken 1–2 in. long vertical line about 12 in. from the upper-right edge and about 6 in. from the top right edge; nickel-sized circular patch of

inpainting above the tree horizon line and 5 in. to the right of the center tree; some strengthening to the lower trunk of the central tree, to the left of the distant flock of sheep. Striped-maple frame made by Solomon Kelly (1788–1851), who also fabricated the interior woodwork of the Featherstonhaugh home.