

# Museum Of The White Mountains Opens

By SEAN HURLEY · FEB 25, 2013



*Thomas Cole's "Morning Mist Rising" on display at the Musuem of the White Mountains*

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*The Museum of the White Mountains had its Grand Opening this past weekend in Plymouth. Correspondent Sean Hurley spoke with Director Catherine Amidon and sends us this story.*

It was 1828 and the painter Thomas Cole was walking alongside the Pemigewasset River when he came upon a view of Barron Mountain rising in the mist beyond the rough water. The romantic results of his encounter became *Morning Mist Rising*, a landscape painting at the forefront of a new aesthetic. And as Musuem Director Catherine Amidon says, the painting also inspired the inaugural exhibit at the brand new Musuem of the White Mountains:

"I have to say that the fact that we have the diary entry of this, Thomas Cole, and the fact that the concept of the show came out of reading about his experience. That specific day and how slow it was - and the fact that it's so close to Plymouth. This one will always be sort of near and dear."

"Through the pass called Franconia Notch," Thomas Cole's diary entry reads, "there is a good road on which a small coach passes on its way to Plymouth. After taking a hearty breakfast and securing a little bread and cheese I sallied forth expecting the coach to overtake me in the notch."

In addition to Thomas Cole, the inaugural exhibit "Passing Through, The Allure of the White Mountains" features the landscape paintings of Benjamin Champney and Frank Shapleigh, among others. As Catherine Amidon says, these artists were not only at the forefront of a movement, but they also shaped the story of America itself:

"It was the early days of fine arts in America ... they had a special role in, essentially, nation-building - in creating an image of what America is. It was this vision going from nature being a savage almost scary place, to nature being a tame place to escape the intensity of city life and urban living."

Not only is the Thomas Cole painting from 1830 near, but so is the source location a few miles north just off Route 3 in Woodstock. And along with a number of interactive games and quests for kids and families to experience inside the museum, there is also a special "Points of View" map marked with GPS coordinates...

"So that you can go stand in the very spot that the artist was standing and look at what it looks like today."

Which is one of the main missions of the Museum - to encourage its patrons to "sally forth" as Thomas Cole did, into the White Mountains themselves.

"Because what is important about this is that it's not just a site or a place – it's a gateway. It's the gateway to the White Mountains. You come in, you learn about the White Mountains - history, geology, tourism, meteorology - and then from here, you go out into the White Mountains."

And while exploring those vistas that inspired the White Mountain artists, you can also upload your own photos of such scenes directly to the Museums' community interactive website.

So, if you find yourself GPSing your way to telephone pole 243 north of the Glen House and uploading a photograph of a scene Samuel Gerry painted more than a century ago, you may rethink your idea of what a museum is - but that's the point. Online, offline, real, virtual, the Museum of the White Mountains and its Director, Catherine Amidon, want to blur the line between where the gallery ends and the world begins.

<https://www.nhpr.org/post/museum-white-mountains-opens#stream/0>