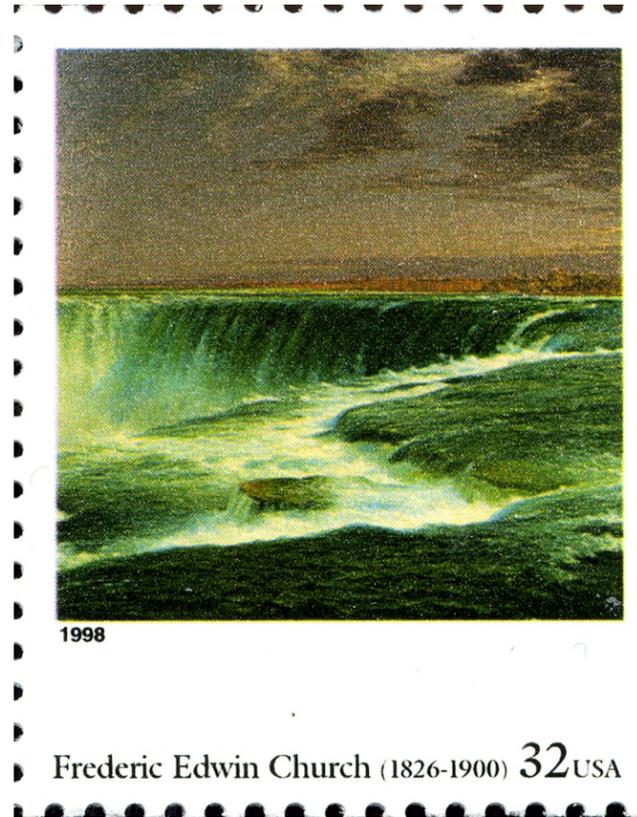


# Frederic Edwin Church

Artist (1826 – 1900)



“Niagara,” Corcoran Gallery.

Church became so concerned about the falls that he arranged for an international commission, headed by FREDERICK LAW OLNSTED, to study ways to protect the falls, leading to a treaty between Canada and the United States.

He was a good collector in many fields, but had the bad habit of improving his old masters by repainting them himself—which casts a certain light upon his eminently self-confident character.

FRANK JEWETT MATHER, JR.

Church, born in Hartford, Connecticut, developed an early interest in art and by the age of 16, he was studying drawing and painting with THOMAS COLE. By 20, he had been shown in the National Academy of Design annual exhibition; the following year, he sold his first major oil, to Hartford’s Wadsworth Atheneum. In 1848 he was elected as the youngest Associate of the National Academy of Design and was promoted to Academician the following year. That same year he took a studio in New York City, accepted WILLIAM JAMES STILLMAN as his first pupil, and turned out a number of pictures, all of which sold well.

Church settled into his own pattern of travel, hiking, and sketching from spring through autumn, followed by winter in New York painting. In April 1853, Church and his friend CYRUS FIELD [who laid the first trans-Atlantic cable in 1858] journeyed through Colombia and Ecuador. In 1855, his South American pictures were shown to great acclaim, and for the next decade he devoted a great part of his attention to those subjects. But it was his *Niagara*, completed in 1857, and *Heart of the Andes*, now in the collection of the Metropolitan, in 1859, that guaranteed him the role of America’s most famous painter.

In 1860, Church married Isabel Carnes and began to devote his creative energies increasingly to gentleman farming and to the designing of Olana, his “Persian” villa at Hudson, New York, a seemingly endless undertaking. The original architect of Olana was RICHARD MORRIS HUNT, but after an 18-month European and Near East trip, Church worked with architect CALVERT VAUX. From the 1870s until his death Church was afflicted with painful rheumatism of the right arm, which limited his work on major pictures, though he still managed to produce a few large impressive canvases. He died in 1900, a Centurion for 50 years.