

## 2015-K1546

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the preservation of Olana as a New York State Historic Site

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commend the preservation of historical landmarks that serve to enhance the growth of the State of New York, ensuring that the complete history of our State and Nation is shared with present and future generations of citizens; and WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the preservation of Olana as a New York State Historic Site; and

WHEREAS, In 1964, Olana, the splendid estate and Moorish-inspired home of 19th Century landscape artist Frederic Edwin Church, was in danger of destruction when heirs decided to sell the property -- with its incomparable Hudson River views -- along with Church's magnificent art collections and invaluable bazaar of oriental treasures; and

WHEREAS, This news prompted public outcry and national attention to save the site and led to the introduction of legislation sponsored on March 23, 1966 by Assemblyman Clarence Lane and Senator Lloyd Newcombe to authorize the purchase of Olana by the State of New York and to open it to the public as a museum and park; at the same time, the Olana Preservation, as it was then called, was founded by Governor Nelson Rockefeller's cousin, Alexander (Sam) Aldrich, to secure funding to protect the site; and

WHEREAS, On June 22, 1966, when the bill was ready, as recalled by Aldrich's wife Phyllis, a Life Magazine article entitled "A century old refuge of art and splendor: Must this Mansion be Destroyed?" was placed on the desk of every state legislator; it included spectacular photographs of Olana and a detailed description about the importance of this

site to our state heritage; and

WHEREAS, The Lane-Newcombe Act passed unanimously, and the Governor stated, "Because of the efforts of those who are here present, that this unique spot, this truly beautiful spot will be available to citizens of the state and future generations to come and enjoy;" and

WHEREAS, Before the completion of the Legislative Session, on June 27, 1966, Governor Rockefeller flew to Olana by helicopter to sign the Lane-Newcombe Bill into law in front of Frederic Church's home; one year later, on June 3, 1967, Olana opened to the public as an official New York State Historic Site; and

WHEREAS, Fifty years later, Olana has flourished, becoming a nationally-treasured and internationally-recognized tourist destination and economic engine for our state and region, preserving 126 acres of farmland dating from 1860, as well as 18 acres which were added in 1866 to build the main house atop the hill; and

WHEREAS, Inspired by an autumn trip in 1867 to ancient ruins in Rome, Beirut, Jerusalem and Petra, Frederic Church and his wife, Isabel, commissioned renowned architect Calvert Vaux, who was then designing Central Park's buildings, to design their dream home just a few miles south of Hudson, New York; and

WHEREAS, Impressively situated atop a long slope overlooking the bucolic Hudson River Valley, the home incorporates a unique mixture of Victorian architectural elements with Middle-Eastern decorative motifs on the exterior, as well as with asymmetrical towers and block masonry punctuated by stained glass windows and porches; and

WHEREAS, While Frederic Church was a leader of the Hudson River School of Painting, America's first art movement, many consider the naturalist landscape that encompasses Olana's 250 acres one Church's greatest works

of art; today, it exists as one of the most intact artist-designed landscapes in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The estate was also used as a working and ornamental farm and

orchard with five miles of carriage roads for visitors to enjoy the native woodlands, meadows, artificial lake and sublime views of the Hudson River; and

WHEREAS, The 3,000 acre viewshed surrounding Olana was an essential part of Frederic Church's original composition and it remains astonishingly intact as a result of the 1966 law passed in this Legislature and the public-private partnerships built to protect the historic viewshed; and

WHEREAS, Steeped in a proud and distinguished past, the New York State Historic Site, Olana, may take just pride in its unique historical and artistic contributions as it looks forward to continuing to serve the educational, environmental, recreational and cultural needs of the community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the preservation of Olana as a New York State Historic Site; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Olana Partnership.