



Merchant's House Museum

Newsletter

Fall 1999

October 12-November 7 The Merchant's House Will Be Dressed in 19th-century Mourning

From October 12 to November 7, the Museum will present "A 19th-century House in Mourning." The House will be dressed in mourning, and tours will focus on 19th-century social customs surrounding death and bereavement, with special reference to the Tredwell family.

During the almost 100 years of their residency, eight family members died at home, and nine funerals took place in the parlors.

A rigid code of etiquette set forth complex and demanding expectations of dress and behavior for the bereaved. As a result, those living in the 19th century were obliged to confront their own mortality on a daily basis. As a Long Island diarist wrote, "Truly we live in a dying world."

Today, those mourning customs have almost completely disappeared. "A 19th-century House in Mourning" offers visitors the opportunity to learn about 19th-century customs surrounding death in a setting where they were actually practiced.

Museum hours are 1 to 4 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. Docents will give guided tours on Sundays; a self-guided tour booklet will be available to those visiting during the week.

Next . . .

Restoration of Original 1832 Windows

An emergency Challenge Grant of \$15,000 from the Landmarks Preservation Commission and contributions from individuals and foundations have brought us to within \$9,500 of the \$39,800 cost of restoring the Museum's original 1832 windows.

It is vital that this work be completed before snow flies, as the windows are in an advanced state of deterioration.

The work will involve restoring the windows, replacing the panes with UV glass, and re-installing the original shutters (now stored in the attic.) They will be freshly painted dark green, the original color.

But that's just the beginning. Our architectural conservator has advised us that the south facade of the building is

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The funeral urn and the weeping willow figured prominently in memorial prints produced during the second quarter of the 19th century.

Life in the Past Lane

From the New York Herald
March 9, 1865

Death of Seabury Tredwell

Among the deaths noticed in our columns today is that of one of our oldest and most respected merchants, Seabury Tredwell. He was a gentleman of the old school, dignified and accomplished in his manners and high-minded and honorable in all his transactions. He was born on Long Island in 1780—was the son of Doctor Benjamin Tredwell, of North Hempstead. His mother was a sister of Bishop Seabury. He came to this city in 1798, and after serving as a clerk for three years, started the hardware business on his own account, which he continued with uninterrupted success till he retired, in 1835. He then purchased his city residence in Fourth Street, near Lafayette Place, between which place and his farm in Shrewsbury, New Jersey, he spent the remainder of his days. He now goes out from us, one of the last of his generation, honored, respected and beloved by all.

Good Scary Fun Halloween Showing of A&E's Production "Haunted New York"

According to family legend, Gertrude Tredwell lost her one chance for happiness when her father forbade her to marry Louis Walton, a young doctor whom she loved dearly. Unable to marry Louis, the story goes, she vowed never to marry at all, and died, an aged spinster, in the upstairs bedroom of the house where she was born.

Come decide for yourself whether the tale is true when we present continuous showings of a segment of the A&E television production, "Haunted New York," on October 31 from 6:30 to 9 p.m. The show was filmed in the Merchant's House, where some say Gertrude Tredwell's lonely spirit still resides. Candlelight tours of the House will take place, and spirits, astral and otherwise, will be served.

"I've Eaten Oysters, but I've Never Had Enough" Third Annual NYC Oyster Festival

Gilbert and Sullivan may never have had enough oysters, but New Yorkers will be able to eat their fill at the Third Annual New York City Oyster Festival, sponsored by Guinness. The Festival will take place on Saturday, October 2, from noon until 9 p.m. The place: East Fourth Street between Lafayette and Bowery, where thousands will be drawn to this popular annual event.

In addition to prime Blue Point oysters, the Festival will feature perfect pints of Guinness, white wines, the New York City Oyster Shucking Championship, live bands throughout the day from the main stage, and other entertainments.

Many thanks to our title sponsor Guinness Import Company; our lead sponsors Bowsprit Productions, Fleet Bank, Gotham Seafood, New York Press, Triarc Companies, Inc., proud owner of Snapple Beverages, Wines of New Zealand, Wines of Rias, Baixas, Spain, Cava Sparkling Wine from Spain, and WFUV; and our NoHo Neighborhood sponsors Bond Street Theatre, The Cooper Union, Jean Cocteau Repertory, Plantworks, Republic National Bank of New York, Swift Hibernian Lounge, Time Out New York, and Tower Records.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Fall Exhibit

October 12 - November 7, 1999

"A 19th-century House in Mourning"

The House will be dressed in mourning, and the social customs surrounding death in the 19th century will be the subject of guided Sunday afternoon tours.

Sunday, September 12, 3 p.m., and

Sunday, October 10, 3 p.m.

"Autumn in New York"

Tea Time in the Garden

A wonderful season in the City and a great time to enjoy the garden. Join us for freshly brewed tea and traditional English tea-time fare. \$17.50. Proceeds benefit the Garden Fund.

Reservations (212) 777-1089.

Saturday, October 2,

Noon to 9 p.m.

Guinness Presents The Third Annual New York City Oyster Festival

East Fourth Street between Lafayette and Bowery will be closed for this popular free annual event. Oysters, Guinness, white wines, live bands, NYC Oyster Shucking Championship, and other entertainments.

Wednesday, October 20, 10

Sunday, October 24

Tour of the Old Dominion

Visit 18th-century plantations along the James River, a Palladian villa near Charlottesville, and a former plantation designed by Thomas Jefferson. Tour sponsored by Classical America and the Merchant's House Museum. For information and brochure, call Thomas Hayes (413) 528-9992

Wednesday, October 27

6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

A Bewitching Reading

Gregory St. John's reading of Charles Dickens's 19th-century stories "Sikes and Nancy" and "Captain Murderer" Reception. \$15, members \$10.

Reservations (212) 777-1089.

Halloween Sunday, October 31

6:30 to 9 p.m.

Good Scary Fun

Showings from the A&E television production "Haunted New York," featuring Gertrude Tredwell's lost love. Candlelight tours of the House highlighting the ghastly and the ghostly and reception with spirits (astral and otherwise). Reservations (212) 777-1089. \$50. Consult local listing for times of showings of "Haunted New York."

Saturday, November 13, 1 to 4 p.m.

Holiday Table Decorations Workshop

Using materials provided, create a centerpiece for the holiday table. Refreshments. \$17 donation benefits the Garden Fund.

Reservations (212) 777-1089.

Great New York Writers In Great New York Places

A year-long series of readings celebrating the history of New York City in significant architectural and historical sites. Sponsored by the Merchant's House Museum, the Historic House Trust of New York City, City of New York/Parks and Recreation, and The Library of America.

Reservations (212) 360-1378

Tuesday, October 26, 6 to 8 p.m.

Willa Cather

Salmagundi Club, 47 Fifth Avenue, Greenwich Village. Reception follows. \$25

Monday, November 15, and

Tuesday, November 16

"Guys and Dolls:"

Damon Runyon, Joseph Mitchell, A.J. Liebling, and John McNulty

Chumley's, 86 Bedford Street, Greenwich Village. Reception follows. \$25



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1832 Windows (continued)

also in urgent need of repairs to the marble, the brickwork, the ironwork, and the wooden cornice and soffit, as well as installation of thermal and moisture protection, all to the tune of \$104,000.

Preserving our building and maintaining its historical integrity is one of our highest priorities. Please help us with this important restoration project.

To Help Restore

The 1832 Windows

Make your check payable to the Merchant's House Museum, mark it "Windows," and mail to 29 East Fourth Street, New York, NY 10003. Your gift is tax-deductible.

Merchant's House Museum is the newsletter of the Museum.

Mary Knapp, editor

Merchant's House Museum

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We're in Cyberspace—

Visit our Web Site at

merchantshousemuseum.citysearch.com



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