On New Year’s Day
Step Back in Time

On the first day of the new millennium, come back with us to old New York when ladies dressed in their finest to welcome the gentleman who called on New Year’s Day.

The Merchant’s House Museum will celebrate its old Dutch custom with a New Year’s Day reception from 3 to 6 p.m. featuring tours of the House, champagne, punch, confectionery, conversation, and—for those who care to join us—guided walks around our historic area will take place throughout the afternoon.

Our programme will include “calls” at six historic landmarked buildings and the site of an historic and bloody New York City riot.

We will begin at our own front door and proceed to the oncemagnificent 1845 Greek Revival home of Seabury Tredwell, his richly furnished house. We shall call on his cousin, Samuel Skidmore, who lived next door.

Then, around the corner, we’ll see the imposing building housing Cooper Union, a venerable New York City institution that opened in 1858 offering free higher education for working men and women.

Turning into Astor Place, we will stand at the site of the Astor Place Riots, where in 1849 ethnic and class hostilities erupted. The police and the soldiers of the seventh regiment fired directly into the mob, killing 22.

On Lafayette Street, we’ll pause to despair over the condition of the four remaining houses of the former LaGrange Terrace, whose ghostly marble columns recall the grandeur of the once-magnificent row of 26-room homes.

Across the street, we’ll see the Astor Library, the first great classical library widely accessible to the public, which today houses the Public Theater, and is an exemplary instance of the adaptive reuse of an historic building.

The Devine Building will be our last stop. This Romanesque structure housed the presses that printed the influential Schenectady’s Monthly, later called the Century Magazine, during the 19th and early 20th century.

Back at the Merchant’s House, we’ll rejoin the convivial group gathered there to herald the New Year.

Birth Day of the Year: A New Year’s Song
Composed expressly for Godey’s Lady’s Book, January 1851

Swell out, swell out, a merry peal, With gay and joyous cheer,
For morning’s fleecy clouds reveal the birthday of the year,
The little snowflakes gladly dance to sleighbells’ ringing chime,
While icy jewels sparkling gleam and merry hearts keep time.

The Museum To Be Bedecked With Holiday Decorations

The traditional tabletop tree in the parlor with its paper cornucopias filled with candies, its hand-blown German glass ornaments, its candles and its velvet ribbons and bows will set the tone for our period decorations this year.

The House will be adorned from top to bottom with pomanders, mistletoe “kissing balls,” gilded pine cones, garland upon garland of holiday greenery, and centerpieces for the table dripping with dried fruits and nuts and berries.

We are grateful to our friends at The Daily Blossom for helping to recreate the elegance and graciousness of 19th-century holidays in New York.

Our 1999 holiday season, 19th-century style, begins Sunday, December 6. At usual, the House will be open from 1 to 4 Sunday through Thursday with guided tours on Sunday.

See our Calendar below for the events and celebrations we’ve planned to welcome the Museum’s third century.

Holiday Calendar

19th-Century Holiday Party
Wednesday, December 8, 6 to 8 p.m.
The Wassail Bowl will be filled, and the House will be alive with music and holiday spirit. Please join us for candlelight tours and holiday savories and potables.

“The Best 19th-Century Holiday Party in Town”
The New York Times
$20, members free
Reservations (212) 777-1089

Sunday, December 12, 4 p.m.
A Dickens Celebration
Gregory St. John reads Charles Dickens’ 1843 holiday classic, “A Christmas Carol,” in the parlor by the decorated tree. Reception featuring port wine and our own “figgy pudding” follows at 5:30 p.m. $15, members $10.
Reservations (212) 777-1089

New Year’s Day 2000 Reception
Saturday, January 1, 1 to 6 p.m.
The Museum enters its third century for celebrations of the old New York custom of “calling” on New Year’s Day. We'll toast the future with champagne, punch and confectionery and remember the past with walks around our historic area throughout the afternoon.

$20, members $10
Reservations (212) 777-1089

Saturday, December 11, 12 to 4 p.m.
Winter Greenery
For the Holidays
We provide the materials for making swags, wreaths, and Mayapple trees for gifts or for your home. Bring a pair of cloth gloves. Refreshments. $17 donation benefits the Garden Fund.
Reservations (212) 777-1089

The Merchant’s House Museum is New York City’s only family home preserved intact—inside and out—from the 19th century. A National Historic and New York City landmark, the house was built in 1832 and was home to a prosperous merchant family for 100 years.

Visit Sunday through Thursday 1 to 4 p.m., and visit us on the web: www.merchantshouse.com
The Numbers Tell the Story—
3rd Annual New York City
Oyster Festival Was HUGE

16,000-plus pints of Guinness and 40,400 people packed East Fourth Street
for the 3rd Annual New York City
Oyster Festival on October 2. Another
typical day for the Museum.

We are grateful to our title sponsor,
Guinness Import Company; our lead
sponsors, Aer Lingus, Bechive Beer
Distributing Company, Baru Vodka,
Bowspiri Productions, Fleet Bank,
Gotham Seafood, M.J. Meehan & Co.,
New York Press, Triarc Companies,
and Cheers Lounge, Time Out New
York, and Tower Records.

And thanks to our neighborhood sponsors: BBaR & Grill, Bond Street
Theatere, The Cooper Union, Emergent
Savings Bank, Jean Cocteau Repertory,
Phoebe's Plantworks, Republican
National Bank of New York, Swift
Hibernian Lounge, Time Out New
York, and Tower Records.

And finally to the tireless volunteers, who once again showed the
depth of their devotion and dedication to the Museum.

Kenneth Loyal Smith Joins
Merchant's House as Curator

Kenneth Loyal Smith, formerly
Costume/Textile Conservator at the
Museum of the City of New York, has
joined the Museum as Curator. Mr.
Smith, one of the first Heritage Scholars
in Museum Studies at Old Deerfield,
Massachusetts, obtained his M.A. in
Museum Studies at F.I.T. He worked in
various capacities at several New York
City museums, as well as at the Pitti
Palace in Florence, Italy, prior to his
most recent appointment at the Museum
of the City of New York.

Did You Know...?

There are 1024 landmarked buildings in the
City of New York, but only 102 landmarked
interiors? No surprise, the Merchant's
House is both.

South Face Lift—
Restoration of Our 1832
Windows Has Begun

Thanks to the generous contributions of friends, members,
and corporate and foundation funders, we have been able to begin
restoration of the windows on the Museum's south facade.

Fifty Three Restorations, Inc., is
doing the painstaking work, which
will include reinstallation of the
original dark green shutters and the
incorporation of UV protection. The
window frames and sash will be painted a “yellowish white,”
the original color as determined in a recent
textile analysis. Look for the
scaffolding to come down around
the first of the year.

It's not too late to help restore our
windows (the north facade comes
next). Please send your check to the
Merchant's House Museum, 29 East
Fourth Street, New York, NY 10003.
All gifts are fully tax-deductible.

Joan Bull

The Board of Directors and staff
of the Merchant's House Museum
were deeply saddened by the death
on August 13, 1999, of Joan Bull,
who worked as Volunteer Coordinator
at the Museum. She was a model of what a
generous Board member should be:
perceptive in her analyses, considerate in her suggestions,
responsive to the ideas of others,
and prepared always to do her fair
share, or more, when necessary, for
the good of this institution.

Above all, she was sympathetic and understanding
to her friends, and we shall be greatly
missed.

Attention, Shoppers!

Be sure to stop by the Museum
Shop for one of our unique handblown
German tree ornaments. We also
have our signature Museum T-shirts and
mugs, original lithographs and
ceramics, as well as a wide selection of
antiques and collectibles. And please
consider gift memberships for your
friends.

Of course, we’re making our list
and checking it twice. Our curatorial
department really needs a high-capacity,
high-speed computer, and a digital
camera, the kind with a removable
floppy disk. As we launch into the 21st
century, we must be able to record
objects in the collection digitally,
storing images of items for cataloguing
and for research.

Of course, your donations would be
tax-deductible. And thanks.

City of New York
Parks & Recreation

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the Museum
Mary Knapp, editor
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The Historic House Trust of New York City