



# Merchant's House Museum

Newsletter

Winter 2001

*You're invited....*

## HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

This year, more than any other, we all need a strong dose of sugar plums and old-fashioned holiday cheer. Please join us.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 6 TO 8 P.M.

### ANNUAL 19TH-CENTURY HOLIDAY PARTY

The House will be in festive holiday dress – with boughs of holly, wreaths and topiaries, swags and garlands, spice pomanders and fruits, a traditional table-top tree, cornucopia — and “kissing balls.”

The wassail bowl will be filled, and the house will be alive with music and holiday spirit.

Candlelight tours and holiday savories and potables. Holiday raffle, too. \$20. Members free.

*A portion of the proceeds will be donated to a fund for the families of the eleven firefighters from Engine 33/Ladder 9, our neighborhood firehouse, who lost their lives on September 11.*



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 6:30 P.M.

LECTURE:

#### THE HOLIDAYS IN 16TH-CENTURY NEW YORK *Celebrations, Culture, and Customs*

So many of our holiday traditions today took root in 19th century New York City: the New York Knickerbockers transformed the saintly St. Nicholas into the secular Santa Claus, and we began caroling, shopping (or Christmasing, as it was known), giving gifts, sending cards, decorating department store windows, and feasting. Christmas became the most popular holiday in America.

Illustrated slide lecture by noted architectural and cultural historian Sybil Groff will herald the season and St. Nicholas Day, December 6. Reception follows. \$12, members \$10.

*(Our thanks to Sybil for the historical information she provided for this Newsletter.)*



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 10 A.M. TO 1 P.M.

WORKSHOP:

#### WREATHS & EVERGREEN DECORATION

The use of greenery goes way back — 2,000 years — to the Druids, the Norse, and the Romans, who decorated their homes with greens, which didn't die in the dismal and dark winter. Because evergreens grew in the cold and darkness, and some like the holly and mistletoe even blossomed, they were thought to be magical and became a symbol of immortality. The greens were made into different forms including garlands, roping, and wreaths, a classical inspiration. Our front door is graced this holiday season with a magnificent wreath generously donated by the Incredible Christmas Store.

Evergreens, pine cones, dried materials, and ribbons will be provided to decorate *Ilex crenata* wreaths created by John Rommel, Head Gardener, from our own garden shrubs (not collection). Grape-wreath forms also available, or come with your own wreaths to decorate. Hot cider, tea, and cookies. Bring cloth gloves. \$25 donation benefits the Garden Fund.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 5 P.M.

#### A DICKENS HOLIDAY CELEBRATION: A READING OF *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

Published in 1843, *A Christmas Carol* was an instant success. When Dickens made his reading tour of America in 1867-68, Harper's Weekly reported that his stories were “pleas for humanity... the essential precept is...to love one another.” Oh, that humanity had listened.

Actor Gregory St. John, dressed in 19th-century costume, recreates the classic characters of Scrooge, Marley, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim — and all the ghosts, of course. Reception featuring port wine, English jumble and fruitcakes, and our own ‘figgy pudding’ follows at 6:30 p.m. \$15. Members \$10.



TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 3 – 6 P.M.  
NEW YEAR'S DAY 2002

In the 19th century, the gentlemen of New York City sallied forth on New Year's Day to make calls on friends, family, and acquaintances. The ladies stayed home to receive the guests and preside over a sumptuous buffet and a punch bowl liberally laced with alcohol. Needless to say, after the third or fourth visit, the January chill was usually vanquished.

We look forward to celebrating this New Year especially with friends by continuing this Old New York tradition of “calling”. We'll toast with champagne punch and feast on holiday cakes and confectionery. Guided tours of the House, informal talks on the etiquette of calling, and walking tours of the neighborhood throughout the afternoon. Bring your 21st-century calling card (personal or business) for our prize drawing. \$20. Members \$10.



## AN APPEAL AT YEAR'S END....

With the necessary (and appropriate) cancellation in early October of our largest annual fundraising event — the NYC Oyster Festival — the Museum now faces an *unprecedented* budget shortfall for the year.

Along with all that you are doing to help others in this time of extraordinary need, *please* consider also a contribution to Merchant's House — its continued survival in the historical course of New York City has *never* meant more.

YES, I want to preserve this unique landmark of 19th-century New York  
for generations to come with a tax-deductible donation of:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  \$1,000  \$500  \$250  \$100  \$50

Please make checks payable to the Merchants' House Museum or charge your contribution to  
 American Express  Visa  Master Card

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The Merchant's House acknowledges with gratitude these Members and Friends who have been especially generous in their support over the past year:

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We are left without adequate words to express our sorrow for the loss of eleven firefighters from Engine 33/Ladder 9, our neighborhood firehouse on Great Jones Street. They were our friends. We take great pride in their heroism. A portion of the proceeds from our 19th-century Holiday Party on December 12 will be donated to a fund for their families.

*The Museum's public education programs are sponsored in part through the generous support of the Public Service Award program of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.*



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