

Merchant's House Museum

Newsletter

Winter 2002

All Through the House **New Life for an Old Dress**

Crumpled, torn, and missing a sleeve, an 1840s cotton voile dress from the collection was the costume that Helen Kapidistrias, an F.I.T. graduate student, chose last spring to restore for her Master's thesis project.

Now the restoration is complete and an amazing transformation has occurred.

The first step was humidification of the fabric. Gentle steaming straightened the grain and restored the softness of the fabric.

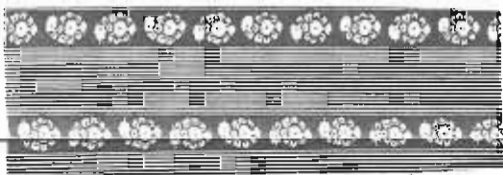
Then came the repair of a large tear and the job of reattaching the skirt, which had been completely detached from the bodice. Helen speculates that long ago someone had decided to remodel the dress but abandoned the project before it was finished.

So careful and meticulous was the restoration process that Helen used the original needle holes as she did the stitching.

However, the biggest challenge was the replication of the sleeve: first transferring the geometric floral pattern to silk screens, then matching the pigments, and finally screening replacement fabric. Helen then made a pattern, using the extant sleeve as a model, and created a new sleeve.

Finally she sewed appropriate undergarments, a collar and neck ribbons so that the dress could be placed on exhibit.

Helen worked a miracle on this historic Tredwell costume, and we wish to thank her for her fine work. The dress will be on display beginning January 8, along with a photographic step-by-step record of the restoration process.



The burgundy and black geometric floral design of the roller-printed fabric.

We're Making Our List . . .

Here are some items we'd love to see under our tree. The value of your gifts is tax-deductible, of course.

In order to display our outstanding 19th-century costume collection on a rotating basis: **A state-of-the-art Kyoto mannequin** designed to correspond to the ideal body type of the mid-19th century (achieved originally with serious corseting). These lifelike models are made of an inert material that does not emit destructive gases as many composition materials do. (Cost is \$1500.)

Antiques—furniture, china, glassware, decorative items—that you are ready to retire. We'll resell them to benefit the Museum.

Refrigerator, full-size and in good condition, to store the delectable fare for our parties. Our old one is on its last legs.

Our thanks to those who responded to our last wish list:

Stephenson B. Andrews and Terence Cook for the laptop computer that makes it possible to work on curatorial records on site. And also for a much-needed monitor.

Stan Ries and Aline Hill-Ries and Stephenson B. Andrews for the 1937 Berenice Abbot photo of our doorway.

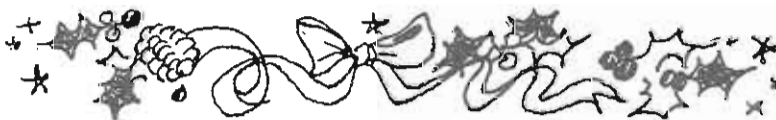
HOLIDAY CHEER

For information or reservations or to respond to our wish list, please call (212) 777-1089 or e-mail nyc1832@merchantshouse.com

Saturday, December 7, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Workshop: Wreaths & Evergreen Decorations

Evergreens, pine cones, dried materials and ribbons will be provided to decorate your personal fir wreaths under the direction of John Rommel, head gardener. Grape and wire wreath forms available, or bring your own live or dried wreaths for decoration. Bring cloth gloves. Refreshments of hot cider, tea and cookies. \$25 donation benefits the MHM Garden Fund.



Wednesday, December 11, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Our Annual 19th-Century Holiday Party & Silent Auction

The House never looks more beautiful than it does during the holiday season. Figured mahogany and crystal prisms will dance in the candlelight, just as they did 150 years ago. The tree will be up, and garlands of greens, flowers, and fruit will decorate the elegant parlors. The wassail bowl will be full, the table will be laden with holiday fare, and The Claremont Strings will fill the rooms with music. And for your delight—many unique items will be (silently) auctioned during the evening. \$20. Members free. (If you're not already a member, now is the perfect time to join. Return the membership coupon on the back.)

Wednesday, January 1, 2003, 3 to 6 p.m.

Traditional New Year's Day Open House

We celebrate the Old New York custom of "calling" on New Year's Day. We'll toast 2003 with champagne punch and hot cider and feast on holiday cakes and confectionery. Guided tours of the Merchant's House and walking tours of the neighborhood. \$20. Members \$10.

The Berenice Abbott Photograph Is Ours!

When the gavel came down at Sotheby's on October 23, the photograph of the Merchant's House by Berenice Abbott went to our bidder.

A gift to the Museum from Stan Ries and Aline Hill-Ries and Stephenson B. Andrews, the photo was taken in 1937, shortly after the Museum opened its doors, as part of a Federal Art Project of the WPA.

It is one of a series of photographs that Abbott made to document the changing face of New York City. She considered the Merchant's House an imperiled building, but rest assured, 65 years later, we're still here. The photo is hanging on the ground floor.

Built in 1832, the Merchant's House Museum is New York City's only family home preserved intact—inside and out—from the 19th century.

Visit Thursday—Monday 1—5 p.m.

www.merchantshouse.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January-March 2003

For reservations, please call (212) 777-1089 or e-mail
nyc1832@merchantshouse.com

Opening Thursday, February 6, 2003

Exhibit: "Flirting With Fans:

The Language of Love in the 19th Century"

The exhibit will feature fans (we have 17!), parasols, and gloves from the collection and explore how these items were used by women to communicate romantic feelings while under the watchful eyes of their elders. Lectures to be announced.

Winter Wine Tastings

In collaboration with our NoHo Neighbor,
Astor Wines & Spirits.
www.uncorked.com

Astor's resident oenologists will pour a selection of unique wines, and we'll be offering delicious hors d'oeuvres to match. Each tasting is \$45. Series of three tastings \$120.

Thursday, January 23, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Cheap Thrills

Amazing wines from around the globe for less than \$10 a bottle.

Thursday, February 13, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

French Kisses

From French vines come fine wines for Valentine's. Bubbles, reds, and whites that will captivate your senses.

Thursday, March 13, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Ports in a Storm

Ports, Sherries and dessert wines to help ward off March winds!

Space is limited. Reservations must be paid for in advance. Cancellations and full refunds accepted up to 48 hours in advance.

Friday, January 24, 2003, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, February 21, 2003, 6:30 p.m.

Inside Out: Dressing the Mid-19th Century Woman

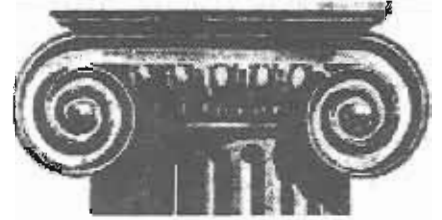
Costume historian Marci Morimoto will take the audience behind the scenes once again to discuss the many layers of clothing and accessories that comprised a woman's outfit in the 1850s and 1860s. Items brought out from storage will include drawers, chemises, petticoats, stockings, day dresses, capes, and hats. \$15. Members \$10.

May 15-26, 2003

Tour of Sweden

Classical America and the Merchant's House Museum will co-sponsor a 12-day excursion of Sweden focusing on the beautiful and charming 18th-century architecture and decoration associated with the monarch, Gustav III. Participants will also enjoy the cuisine and the hospitality of the Swedish people.

For a copy of the itinerary and travel information, contact tour directors Thomas Hayes and Lani Sternerup at Classical Excursions, 1-800-390-5536.



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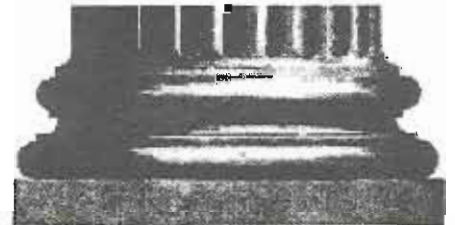
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Yes, Indeed! I (We) would like to become a member of the Merchant's House Museum

- Good Neighbor—\$50 Family/Household—\$75 Protector \$125 Cultural Hero \$250
 Princely Supporter—\$500 Leading Light—\$1,000 Paragon of Virtue—\$2,500
 Senior Citizen/Student—\$25

Enclose a check made out to the Merchant's House Museum and mail to 29 East Fourth Street, New York, NY 10003 or charge your contribution. Visa Master Card American Express

Card No. _____ Exp. _____ Signature _____

You may be eligible for matching contribution from your employer. If so, please enclose a matching gift form

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THE HISTORIC HOUSE TRUST OF NEW YORK CITY

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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