Merchant’s House Cloned in Classic Film

*The Heiress*, the haunting 1949 film that tells the story of Henry James’s classic novel, *Washington Square*, will be shown in the Museum’s Greek Revival parlors on the evening of Feb. 13. The film is based on a play of the same name written in 1947 by Ruth and Augustus Goetz.

Now those who attend the Museum screening will have the unique experience of viewing the movie in the very same rooms that designer Emile Kuri used as a model for the film’s interior sets.

The story, which takes place in the 1850s, concerns the ill-fated romance of Catherine Sloper. The fictional Miss Sloper and her physician father lived on the north side of Washington Square in a house very similar to the Fourth Street home of their flesh and blood neighbors, the Seabury Tredwell family.

Rumor has suggested that Gertrude Tredwell may have been Henry James’s inspiration for the character of Catherine Sloper, but that is not the case. According to family legend, Gertrude, like Catherine, was refused permission to marry the love of her life. But there the similarity ends. James himself indicated that the plot for the novel was suggested to him in 1879 (the novel was published in 1881) by a bit of after-dinner gossip about an English heiress and her conniving suitor. Nevertheless, the film, directed by William Wyler and starring Oliva de Havilland and Montgomery Clift, offers a fascinating look at the way privileged New Yorkers lived in the rowhouses of Bond Street and Washington Square at mid-century.

Continued inside.

In Memory — Karen Treadwell

Karen Treadwell, a member of the board of directors of the Merchant’s House since 1990, died on November 11, 2007, after a four year battle with breast cancer. She was 48.

In her 17 years as a key member of our board, Karen saw the house through times thick and very thin. As many of you may remember, the late 1980s/early 1990s were pretty dark days for the house, for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that the rowhouse next door had been demolished, without warning, leaving our 1832 landmark building dangerously unstable.

I’ll never forget talking — and laughing — with Karen at one of our annual holiday parties about all that lay ahead. In spite of the daunting challenges we faced (more than half a million dollars worth of structural repairs were needed — money we didn’t have), we were both confident, and excited, knowing what the house could be. Karen was stalwart in her commitment. We will all miss her very, very much.

As one of the Museum’s long-time friends, Karen made a real difference in strengthening and securing this unique resource for the appreciation and study of 19th-century New York City. In her memory, many of her friends, relatives, and colleagues have made contributions to the Merchant’s House. Thanks in part to their generosity, we will continue her work, enhancing our public education programs for adults and schoolchildren; conserving our original collections; and restoring our landmark 1832 building.

At the time of her death, Karen was Vice President and Treasurer of the Rockefeller Group in New York City. She is survived by her husband, Alan Eugley, her children, Elizabeth, 18, and Seth, 11, and her parents, Kenneth and Sally Treadwell. To all those in Karen’s immediate and extended family, and to her co-workers and colleagues, we offer our heartfelt condolences.

Pi Gardiner
Executive Director
The Merchant’s House Museum

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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.

Life in the Past Lane: The Secret Language of Fans
During the mid-19th century, no fashionable lady’s toilette was complete without a decorative hand fan — an elegant accessory that had long been used more for flirting than for fanning. “Women are armed with Fans as Men with Swords, and sometimes do more Execution with them,” wrote Joseph Addison in 1711.

The following directions for communicating romantic emotions via fan are excerpted from a pamphlet, distributed in America as an advertising ploy, by 19th-century French fan maker Pierre Duvelroy.

- Carrying in right hand in front of face: Follow me
- Touching tip with finger: I wish to speak to you
- Pressing the half-opened fan to the lips: You may kiss me
- Presented shut: Do you love me?
- The shut fan held to the heart: You have won my love
- Touching the unfolded fan in the act of waving: I long always to be near thee
- Twirling in the left hand: We are watched
- Cover the left ear with the open fan: Do not betray our secret
- Placed behind head: Don’t forget me

Learn more about the languages of fans — and flowers — at an afternoon tea and tour on Saturday, February 9; details are on the Calendar of Events.
**I (We) would like to help preserve the Merchant’s House Museum**  (Donations are tax-deductible)

[ ] Good Neighbor $50  [ ] Family/Household $75  [ ] Protector $125  [ ] Cultural Hero $250

[ ] Princely Supporter $500  [ ] Leading Light $1,000  [ ] Paragon of Virtue $2,500  [ ] Senior/Student $25

Please make checks payable to the Merchant’s House Museum and mail with this form to 29 East Fourth Street, New York, NY 10003-7003, or charge your contribution to:  [ ] American Express  [ ] Visa  [ ] Master Card

Card No. ____________________________________________________________  Exp. _________  Signature _________________________________

Name/Company __________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Contact: _______________________________________________________________  City/State/Zip ____________________________________

Telephone _________________________________________  Email (please!)____________________________________________________________

**THE TREDWELLS NEED YOU.**

When was the last time you helped organize a 19th-century funeral? Served afternoon tea on fine china? Planned a Stoop Sale? The range of opportunities to give your time — day or night — as a Merchant’s House Museum volunteer is endless. Without our talented and dedicated volunteers much of what we do would be impossible. As members of our ‘family’, volunteers are invited to public as well as just-us Museum events and programs. Other benefits include learning about 19th century NYC history; enjoying the camaraderie of other volunteers and staff; and of course, the undying gratitude of the Museum’s board and staff.

~ Won’t You Join Us? ~

Call 212-777-1089 or email education@merchantshouse.org for more information. Or go to our website: www.merchantshouse.org.

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Unless otherwise noted, reservations and prepayment are required. Call 212-777-1089 or email nyc1832@merchantshouse.org

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**AFTERNOON TEAS & TOURS**

**Saturday, February 9, Seatings at 1 & 3 p.m.**

Flowers & Fans: Old Fashioned Languages of Love

Enjoy a delectable afternoon tea, then learn to express emotions through floral bouquets and flirt with a wave of your fan. Just in time for St. Valentine’s Day.

**Saturday, March 15, Seatings at 1 & 3 p.m.**

‘Wearin’ O’ the Green’ Tea & Tour of the Servants’ Quarters

In the mid-19th century, the majority of New York City’s domestic servants were Irish. Enjoy a tasty afternoon tea served by Irish maids, then climb the stairs to the fourth floor servants’ quarters (usually off limits to visitors) and see where the servant girls slept and worked.

**Saturday, April 19, Seatings at 1 & 3 p.m.**

19th Century Strip Tea-se

Ever wonder what those mid-19th century ladies wore under their hoop skirts? Here’s your chance to find out, as costume historian Christine Scott performs an educational strip tease à la 1855. Before the show, you’ll also enjoy a delectable afternoon tea.

All teas $40 per person, $30 members.

Private afternoon teas & tours are now available for groups of 10 to 35 people. Contact the museum for details.

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**Wednesday, February 13, 7 to 9:30 p.m.**

Film Screening – “The Heiress” (1949)

Based on Washington Square, Henry James’s classic novel of mid-19th century New York City, this haunting film tells the story of young love, and a father who didn’t approve. Our screening will take place in the Museum’s Greek Revival double parlors, whose amazing similarity to the film’s set is no accident – the filmmakers conducted extensive research at the Merchant’s House in the 1940s. Introduction to the film by noted videographer Anthony Bellow. $25, $15 members.

**Monday, March 17, 7 p.m.**

Reading – Yeats in New York:
Simon Lockle Presents 19th-Century Irish Poets

In honor of St. Patrick’s Day, renowned Joyce scholar, cartoonist for the James Joyce Quarterly, and WBAI radio personality Simon Lockle will read selections from 19th-century Irish poets and ponder the fabled New York sojourn of W.B. Yeats. $20, $10 students & members.

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This January, the Merchant's House Museum joined YouTube's new nonprofit program. As a member of this free program, the Museum will receive additional promotion for its video postings, as well as the ability to accept donations directly from the YouTube website. The dedicated Merchant's House Channel is located at www.youtube.com/merchantshouse. Log on now to see ‘rare archival footage’ (taken in December 2007) of curators rehanging the mirror in the rear parlor.