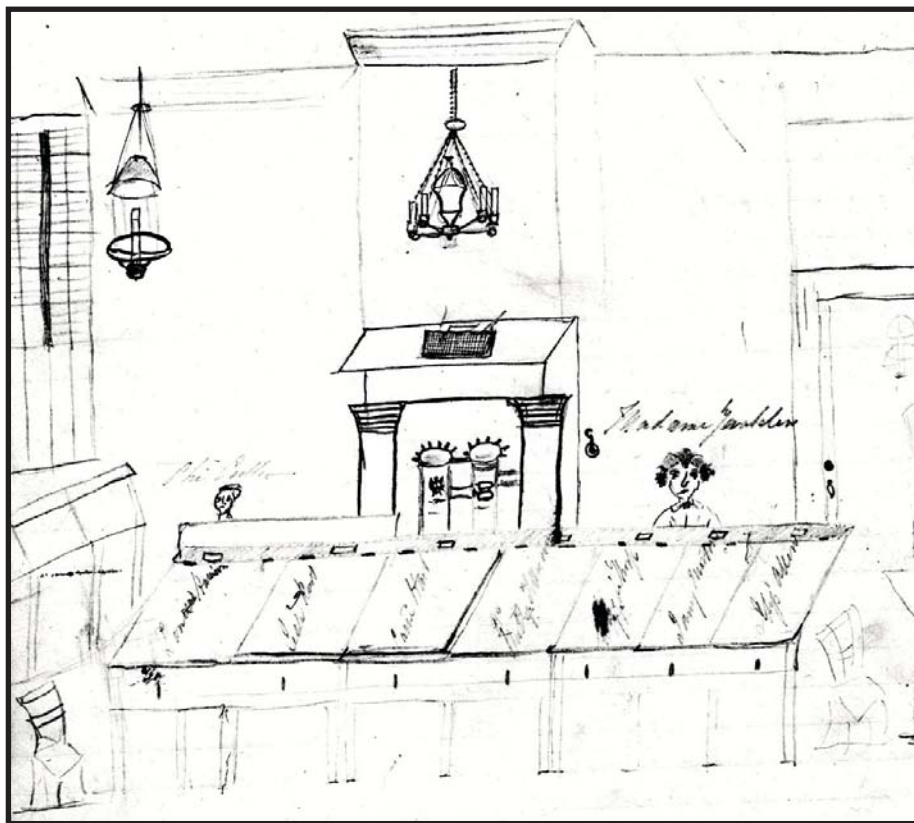




School Days for the Tredwell Girls



Classroom at Mrs. Okill's Academy, drawn by Maria Tillman, a boarding student in 1850, when the younger Tredwell sisters were students there. Courtesy Rensselaer County Historical Society.

“A Fashionable Education”

School copybooks belonging to the Tredwell girls provide evidence that they were students at Mrs. Okill's Academy, one of the most elite private female academies of the time. The books bear the comments and signature of Mrs. Okill herself. Typically girls completed their education in these academies around the age of 17 and were then courted for a few years before they married.

Located at 8-10 Clinton Place (now 8th Street), Mrs. Okill's offered a “fashionable education” to young ladies of the privileged class. The school was housed in two connecting buildings each with a floor plan similar to that of the Merchant's House.

Here boarding students from as far away as Ohio and Louisiana joined day students like the Tredwells in the study of academic subjects, including the French language. Knowledge of French was considered an essential accomplishment of refined young ladies. So was the ability to sing and play a musical instrument. Thus musical training was also part of the curriculum.

“Grand Musical Soirée”

A lengthy front page article in the *New York Herald* of February 27, 1840, recounts a “Grand Musical Soirée” held by Mrs. Okill to showcase the musical talent of her

students. An indication of the importance of the social event is that the *Herald* devoted almost as much space to describing the affair as it did to the famous Brevoort Ball, which occurred shortly afterwards.

In 1840, Mary Adelaide Tredwell was fifteen years old and a student at Mrs. Okill's. It is almost certain that she, her older sister, Elizabeth, and their parents were in attendance.

Twelve rooms were opened for the event, the four third-floor rooms designated as ball rooms for the dancing, which succeeded the concert.

The soiree attracted an enormous crowd and according to the *Herald* was a stunning success. “The effect was thrilling, the *tout ensemble* was exhilarating, the blaze of lights was brilliant, the blaze of beauty was infinitely more so, and the scene was now literally as splendid as youth, beauty, with wealth, gaiety, good taste, and grace could render it.”

Yet the idea of a “fashionable education” was not without its detractors. The reporter himself is representative of the critics: In conclusion, he opines: “Young ladies learn to sigh, dance, flirt, laugh, and act French vaudevilles; but never learn one useful thing that will enable them to perform the part of a wife and mother. When they are ‘finished’ under the present fashionable system, they are perfectly competent to ‘finish a husband.’”

And for Today's Children

The Museum offers unique tours for school groups focusing on its extensive collection of original family possessions and its landmark 1832 building. Students explore life in 19th-century New York and learn valuable lessons about historic preservation. Interactive, curriculum-based tours are available for 4th grade through graduate school, and also for families and home school groups.

With thanks to The T.G. White Fund of New York University for its generous support.

Call the Museum for more information or to arrange a tour.

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.



HISTORIC HOUSE TRUST
OF NEW YORK CITY

City of New York
Parks & Recreation

Art at Home In the 19th Century

by Catherine Roach

Today, New York City prides itself on being the center of the art world, with more galleries, museums, and starving artists per capita than anywhere else in the country. The same was true in the 19th century, when the city was home to a thriving art community.

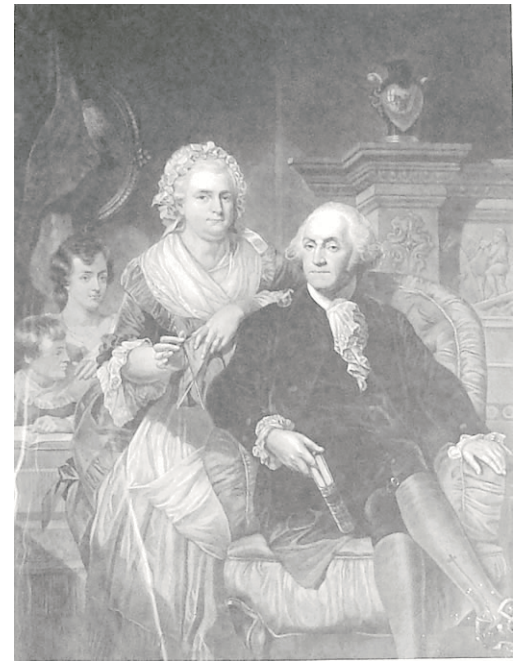
While this community is well documented, what is less clear is the role art played in the everyday life of the city. The built-in pegs on the Museum's parlor walls indicate that pictures were an expected element of a well-furnished townhouse. The art collection preserved in the Merchant's House offers a rare glimpse of the type of images an affluent New York family chose for their home, as well as the opportunity to view these images in the context for which they were originally created.

The Tredwells accumulated a range of artworks, from specially commissioned oil paintings to inexpensive color prints. The portraits of Eliza and Seabury Tredwell on view in the front parlor were created by another husband-and-wife duo, the artists Jeannette and Henry Loop. While not well known today, this couple had a highly successful career painting some of the city's most famous faces.

The posthumous portrait of Seabury was created with the aid of a photograph. Seabury's trademark hairstyle, the Revolutionary-era queue, which he is seen wearing in the portrait, is not visible in the source photograph. Examination of the painting has revealed that the queue was added later, no doubt at the family's request.

The Tredwell collection is also rich in another sort of portrait, engravings of notable historic figures, including two images of George Washington. One such image in the Tredwell collection, *Washington at Home*, was created by Alonzo Chappel, an artist who specialized in entirely new—and entirely fictitious—images of famous Americans. If the engraving provides little evidence about Washington's domestic arrangements, it speaks volumes about mid-19th century conceptions of class and family. The First Couple poses in a well-appointed interior much like the Tredwells' own luxurious parlors, where the image may once have been displayed.

Such juxtapositions of artwork and setting are what distinguish the Merchant's House collection. Seen within the domestic



Washington at Home by Alonzo Chappel, one of two engravings in the Museum collection featuring an image of George Washington. Here he is seen with his wife, Martha, and his two stepchildren.

interiors for which they were originally created, these images provide an invaluable portrait of art in the 19th-century home.

Art on View In the Neighborhood

The Tredwell home on Fourth Street was located in the midst of a flourishing art district. Strolling along Broadway, the Tredwells could have browsed the displays of print-sellers, picture dealers, and auction houses. Annual exhibitions of paintings at the National Academy of Design, located after 1858 at Broadway and Tenth Street, were highly attended and fiercely debated in the press.

Another nearby artistic venue was the Tenth Street Studio building. Designed by William Morris Hunt and completed in 1858, it was a combination showroom, workspace, and clubhouse for artists.

At about the same time, John P. Johnston converted the stable behind his house at Eighth Street and Fifth Avenue into an art gallery housing his large art collection. He opened the gallery to the public on Thursday afternoons.

Catherine Roach, a Ph.D. student in art history at Columbia University, was a member of the Museum's 2004 Summer Intern Program. She is currently conducting research on the Tredwell portraits, to be completed this fall in an independent study at the National Academy of Design.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Call 212-777-1089 for reservations, or email nyc1832@merchantshouse.com

Today's Writers on Yesterday's New York

Explore New York's past through the eyes of contemporary writers.

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

Robert Sullivan: Rats – Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants.

Everything you never knew you wanted to know about rats.

Thursday, November 11, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Kevin Baker: Paradise Alley
New York during the 1863 draft riots: angry underdogs, arrogant bourgeois, and pigs squealing in the streets.

Readings take place in the Museum's Greek Revival parlors and are followed by a book signing and reception.
\$15, Members \$10

Wednesday, October 20, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Great New York Writers in Great New York Places: Isaac Bashevis Singer at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, Battery Place

A joint program with The Library of America, the City of New York/Parks & Recreation, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage. This event forms part of the I. B. Singer Centennial, a year-long celebration of the writer and his work, directed by The Library of America. Reception follows.
\$20, reservations 212-360-1378.

Sunday, September 26, 3 p.m.

High Tea & Tour for Two

Traditional English three-course high tea served in our charming walled garden. Visit our website at www.merchantshouse.com for the full menu. Guided tour of the House following tea. \$50 per couple (additional guests \$20 each) to benefit the Garden Fund.

"Sacred to the Memory":

A 19th-Century House in Mourning

October 7 - November 8

The Merchant's House Museum presents an exhibition of death and mourning in a 19th-century home.

See back page for details and related programs.

Saturday, October 2, 1 to 3:30 p.m.

Investigating the Layers of History in Three Manhattan Neighborhoods: A Connoisseur's Walking Tour

Join townhouse restoration consultant and author Charles Lockwood for a tour of the Bond Street area and nearby SoHo that will reveal layers of urban development. A collaboration with Sotheby's Institute of Art. Reception follows in the garden. \$35.
Reservations 212-894-1111

ON EXHIBIT

September 9 - October 4

Lessons Learned: The Books That Taught the Tredwells

School texts and copybooks belonging to the Tredwell children provide a rare look at 19th-century education.

Fall Wine Tastings

In collaboration with our NoHo neighbor



Fall Wine Tastings and Delectables in our cozy 19th-century family kitchen.

Tuesday, October 19, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

A Spirited Tasting

In the spirit of all things ghostly during October, we'll be pouring various spirits for tasting, all generously donated by 5 Star Fine Products, Winebow, and Royal Wine. \$35

Thursday, November 18, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Beaujolais, Nouveau and Otherwise

Be the first to try the 2004 Beaujolais Nouveau -- only available starting on the third Thursday in November. We'll also taste wines from other regions of Beaujolais. Beaujolais generously donated by House of Burgundy, Gallo Premier, Lauber Imports, and Bowler Wines. \$35

Tuesday, November 16, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Herman Melville and Moby Dick

Simon Loekle discusses and reads from Melville's classic novel, published in New York on November 14, 1851. Reception and tours of the House follow. \$15, Members \$10.

Simon Loekle presents 'As I Please' every Saturday morning over WBAI FM NYC, and he also regularly presents programs of poems and prose at Swift Hibernian Lounge.

Help (!!) the Merchant's House Museum (Your donation is tax-deductible.)

- I'd like to join as a Member. Please call me so I can learn about the different levels and benefits of membership. My telephone is _____. (You may also call us at 212-777-1089 or visit our website at www.merchantshouse.com for membership information.)
- I'm really interested in becoming more *actively involved* in promoting and supporting the Museum. Enclosed is \$100 to become a Member of the 1832 Society.
- I'd just like to make a Contribution now of \$ _____ to further your outstanding work.

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 _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

"Sacred to the Memory": A 19th-Century House in Mourning

October 7 - November 8

Veiled in black crepe, its shutters closed, the Merchant's House Museum presents an exhibition of death and mourning in a 19th-century home. Ground-floor displays will explain the social customs surrounding death and bereavement during the period. Tableaus throughout the House will include the death bed of Seabury Tredwell (1780-1865) and his funeral at home in the front parlor.

Related Programs

Thursday, October 7, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Exhibition Opening Reception

With guided tours by the curators.
By invitation.

Wednesday, October 13, 6:30 p.m.

The History of Mourning Jewelry

Illustrated slide lecture by Melissa Cohn Lindbeck, a specialist in 19th-century decorative arts and domestic interiors. She will discuss the significance of mourning jewelry: why it was worn, what it was made of -- most notably jet and human hair -- and its common artistic motifs. \$12, \$8 Members.

Friday, October 15, 22, and 29, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Candlelight Tours and Ghost Tales

Evening terror tours of the house draped in black crepe will highlight the grim and ghastly -- and the ghostly. Hear spine-tingling stories of the spirits some say still walk the halls. \$20, \$13 Members.

Wednesday, October 27, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

A Psychic Soirée

Our 'seeing' friends, including Psychic to the Stars Frank Andrews, will offer readings, *if you dare*. Wine and spirits, astral and otherwise, will be served. \$25.

Halloween Sunday, October 31, 1 to 4 p.m.

New York Marble Cemetery Open House and Tour

The New York Marble Cemetery is the oldest public non-sectarian cemetery in New York City. Most of the 2,060 interments took place between 1830 and 1870. Second Avenue above Second Street. *Admission Free.*

Merchant's House Museum

29 East Fourth Street
New York, NY 10003

Tel 212-777-1089

Fax 212-777-1104

nyc1832@merchantshouse.com

Hours

Saturday, Sunday, Monday
12 to 5 p.m.

Thursday, Friday
1 to 5 p.m.

(Closed Tuesday, Wednesday)

Admission

Members Free

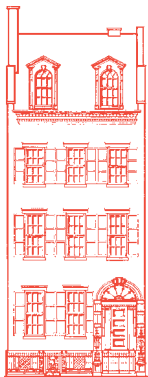
Adults \$6

Students & Seniors \$4

Group Tours

Guided tours for schoolchildren and adult groups are offered seven days a week by appointment.

www.merchantshouse.com



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29 East Fourth Street
New York, NY 10003-7003

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