



Gas Chandeliers: Keeping Them Hanging On

Photo by Andrew Marlay



On their way to the conservator. The historic chandeliers were removed from the Museum on February 14.

After more than a year in the planning, the conservation and restoration of the Museum's matching pair of gas chandeliers is finally under way. Our thanks to historic lighting expert and project coordinator Vincent Plescia for his help in lighting our way.

The chandeliers, believed by many experts to be possibly the oldest domestic gas fixtures *in situ* in the United States, were taken down in February and are now safely in the Pennsylvania

studio of metals conservator Julie M. Baker. Ms. Baker, President of Objects Conservation Associates, has conserved objects from the nation's foremost collections.

While the gaseliers are dismantled for evaluation, cleaning, and repair, we will explore the possibility of incorporating a fiber optic lighting technology system that would simulate the characteristics of gas illumination, including the color, shape, and movement of the flame. This enhancement would enable us to more accurately depict for visitors how the parlors might have appeared to the Tredwell family and, in turn, will serve as an educational platform for explorations of the role that artificial illumination played in 19th-century life.

We expect the gaseliers will be returned to their rightful place of glory in the Greek Revival parlors in late September. The cost of the entire project will be close to \$50,000. A donation in any amount will be an enormous help. Contributors at the \$1,000 level – Leading Lights – will be invited to the gala celebration planned for the triumphal return of the gaseliers.

Come Hear the Music and See the Light, as We Celebrate Our 70th

Two springtime events will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the opening of the Merchant's House to the public on May 11, 1936.

A musical prelude to the celebration of the May opening will take place on April 30 when the Museum's own Bond Street Euterpean Singing Society presents a program of rarely performed 19th-century songs in the Greek Revival parlors. Then, on May 11, we will mark the anniversary of the 1936 opening reception with an open house. On that date 70 years ago, 50 invited guests got their first glimpse of the Tredwell home preserved as a museum.

“The atmosphere of another century and another way of life pervades it.”

The New York Times, May 3, 1936, on the upcoming opening of the House to the public.

Since that time seven decades ago, we have been committed to our mission of preserving this unique historical treasure. To highlight our most current effort -- conservation of the 19th-century gaseliers -- we will illuminate the 21st-century neon stand-ins. Lighting expert Vincent Plescia will then conduct a tour, explaining the many 19th-century lighting fixtures and lamps on display, and describing what it was like to live in an age when turning on a light meant igniting a flame.

In a Different Lite

While the gaseliers are away, Lite Brite Neon Studio of Brooklyn (www.litebriteneon.com) has generously loaned us a pair of neon glass sculptures. Designed in 2004, the ultra-modern, yet hauntingly similar fixtures inspire visitors to view the rooms in a whole new light. Because of the effect of the ultra violet waves emitted by the neon light, the fixtures will be lit on a limited schedule. Check our website for the next illumination.



Photo by Nathaniel Eldridge

Continued inside . . .

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.

The Merchant's House Museum is owned by the City of New York, operated by Old Merchants House of New York, Inc., and is a member of the Historic House Trust.



An Affair to Remember

As We Imagine It Would
Have Been Reported in
Town Topics, March 18, 18--

This city has not yet seen an event so glittering as the one offered by the venerable Merchant's House on the sixteenth of March at the India House in Hanover Square. From the elegance of the ladies' full toilettes to the nobility of bearing of the gentlemen escorts, a more handsome crowd could not be observed in any other American city, nor in many of the European capitals. The appointment of the Rooms was premier, with silver sticks and candles so high, one venerable guest noted, that jewels were shown to great effect. The chairs of the event issued the following statement to the reporters gathered:

In achieving the completion of the oft' arduous but rewarding task of dinner-giving, we must tender our sincerest thanks to those, who through their efforts, and by the sincerest proofs of their affection and loyalty, have aided us in our goals. We thank with the most sincere enthusiasm Rusty Thomas Entertainment Design of Bucks County in the State of Pennsylvania for the floral tributes and his arrangements of the Rooms; Donald Burg of Tugboat Designs, for his paper-goods, including the elegant design of the invitations; and YB Services for the exquisite stampings thereof.

We must also acknowledge the kind attentions of the honorary chairs, Kitty Carlisle Hart, Mr. and Mrs. Schuyler Chapin, and Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Hardy, whose support was paramount. We must also thank the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers of the Merchants' House, without whom, we profess, we are nothing.

Continued from Page One:

It was Eliza Tredwell's grand nephew, George Chapman, who decided that the Tredwell home should be preserved as a Museum. He undertook a three-year restoration at his own expense and established a non-profit organization that still runs the Museum today. It was a bold and visionary thing to do at the time of the Great Depression, and his efforts resulted in the preservation of New York City's only 19th-century home to have survived intact with original family furniture and personal possessions. We'll drink to that.

Old-Fashioned Rum Punch

Served at the Opening of the
Merchant's House Museum
on May 11, 1936

3 qt Green Tea
1 ½ qt. Jamaica Rum
1 ½ qt. Brandy
1 lb. Sugar
Juice of Four Lemons

From *How to Mix Drinks,*
or the *Bon Vivant's Companion*, 1862

*For details of both events, please see the
Calendar of Events on Page Four.*

**The Merchant's House
acknowledges with gratitude
the following contributors
who were especially generous in
their support during 2005:**

Mrs. Martin E. Anderson, Jr., Stephenson B. Andrews, Timothy Beard/The Colonial Lords of Manors in America, Sharon Benensen/The Vesper Foundation, Helen Bonebrake, Elizabeth Bramwell, Christopher H. Browne, Brunschwig & Fils, Betty Chaurize, Corita Charitable Trust, Pauline Herd/The Constance Culver Foundation, Frances Eberhart, Anne Fairfax & Richard Sammons, Timothy Forbes, Felicia Fund/Pauline Metcalf, Agnes Gund & Daniel Shapiro, Merrikay Hall, William Happel, Historic House Trust of New York City, Carl Jacobs Foundation, Kane Lodge Foundation, Pamela Kendall, Albert Kunstadter Family Foundation, Arthur Loeb, James A. MacDonald Foundation, Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, Deborah McWilliams, John E. Oden, Avis Ogilvy Moore, Robert J. Osterhus, Kate Ottavino, Daniel P. & Nancy C. Paduano, Peter G. Pennoyer, Paul and Klara Porzelt Foundation, David Schaeffer, Gilbert Schafer, Schiavone Corporation, T.G. White Fund, New York University, Karen A. Treadwell, Richard Tredwell, Taylor B. Wagenseil, Basil Walter Architects, Roy Zeluck, Anonymous

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For reservations, call 212-777-1089 or email nyc1832@merchantshouse.org

Saturday & Sunday, April 22 and 23, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Called by the Bell: A Rare Opportunity to View the Servants' Quarters

Come climb the narrow staircase to see the fourth floor servants' quarters (normally off limits to visitors), where the young Irish women lived and did some of their work.

Part of NYC's annual Immigrant History Week. Tour included with Museum admission.

Sunday, May 7, 10 a.m. to Noon

Spring is Sprung – Annual Plant Sale in the Garden

Plant divisions and seedlings from our historic Garden -- astilbes, epimediums, aquilegias, hostas, sedums and sempervivum, ferns, ivies, herbs and an assortment of shade perennials.

Proceeds to benefit the Garden Fund. Free admission.

CELEBRATING 70 YEARS AS A MUSEUM 1936 - 2006

Sunday, April 30, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Salon Music: Bond Street

Euterpean Singing Society

Songs and arias by 19th-century composers, performed in the Museum's Greek Revival double parlors. A reception with the artists follows.

Free for Members, \$20, \$12 seniors.

Thursday, May 11, 6 to 8 p.m.

70th Anniversary Party

Come toast our founder as we celebrate 70 years of preservation by lighting the neon chandeliers - part of our latest project detailed on the front. Includes a discussion with historic lighting expert Vincent Plescia. *Free for members, \$20.*

~ AFTERNOON TEA ~ IN THE GARDEN

Sunday, May 14, Seating at 1:30 and 3 p.m.

Mother's Day Tea in the Garden

Celebrate this memorable day with a traditional afternoon tea in our 19th-century Garden. Scones served with clotted cream and jam, finger sandwiches, frosted confections, and pots of brewed English tea. Tour of the Museum following tea.

Sunday, June 4 and 25, 1:30 and 3 p.m.

Where Pinkies Find Their Purpose

"The mere chink of cups and saucers turns the mind to happy repose." See above for delicious details.

\$50 per couple, members \$40. Additional guest per couple \$20. Reservations and prepayment required; cancellations up to 48 hours prior.

Proceeds to benefit the Garden Fund for landscaping and upkeep of our historic Garden.

EXHIBITIONS

Through September 25

Conservation and Restoration of the Gas Chandeliers

The pair of gas chandeliers that hang in the double parlors, believed by a number of experts to be the oldest domestic gas fixtures *in situ* in the country, have been removed for conservation. In June, they will be back with their original 19th-century bronze finish revealed. This exhibition will track the project with photographs and explanations of the conservation and restoration process, from de-installation to triumphal return.

April 6 through July 3

Alone & Together:

The Tredwell Family in the Religious Community of 19th-Century New York

This exhibition will focus on the religious affiliations and private devotions of the Tredwells. On display will be a number of the family's well-used religious books, hand-written sentiments from the daughters' copy books, and pictures and memorabilia from various neighborhood churches attended by the family throughout the 19th century.

Thanks beyond measure to the volunteers & interns who gave so freely of their time and wondrous talents in 2005.

Volunteers Daniel Arnheim, Anthony Bello, Roberta Belulovich, Kerianne Biele, Audrey Boguchwal, Betty Chaurize, Heide Cleary, Elissa Scarlett Daine, Jennifer Finn, Kevin Foley, Anna Horst, Linda Kahwaty, Kyle Knauf, Melissa & Eric Lindbeck, Valeria Mastroso, Andrew Marlay, Kate McCoy, Linda McDonnell, Deborah McMillan, Gladys McNish, Kiriki Metzo, Ann Michell, Karen Murphy, Gia Neswald, Delphine Oravetz, Shay Pantano, James Papp, Karen Plitt, Robert Psotto, Dale Rejtmar, Judith Rickman, Stan Ries, Catherine Roach, Philip Scandura, Ginny Schumacher, Gus Senilus, Kay Seward, Susan Stanley, Julia & Robert Van Nutt, Dayle Vander Sande, Cynthia Vogt, Sandi Weisfeld, Gloria Withim, Margaret Zamos, Debra Zannoni, Valerie Zinner, Charles Zivancev. **Interns** Dawn Assuma, Bianca Cabrera, Lisa Chavez, Alison Clark, Kellie Honeycut, Lindsay Martin, Sarah Zimmet.

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

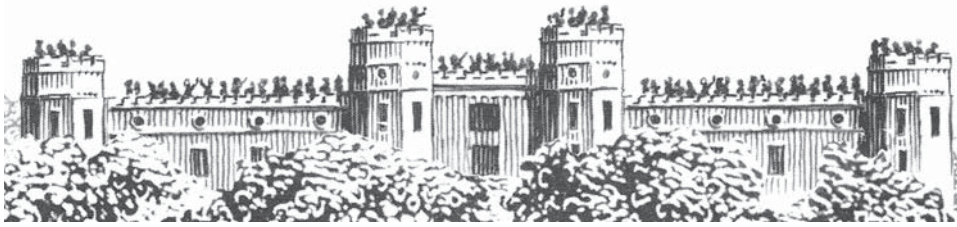
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THE FIRST DAY OF SUMMER: ROOFTOP BENEFIT



Wednesday, June 21, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

We're returning to the rooftop of the historic Arsenal in Central Park, at Fifth Avenue & 64th Street, to celebrate the first day of Summer. Vodka Martini Bar, Kitchen Club chef and owner Marja Samsom and her outrageously delicious dumplings, Hors d'oeuvres, Wines & Spirits, Silent Auction, Live Jazz.

Call for information and an invitation 212-777-1089.

New online at www.merchantshouse.org

360-degree Panoramic Tours

Our just-created 360-degree interactive panoramic tours invite cyber-visitors to 'step inside and take a look around' our authentic 19th-century rooms, arranged as they were when the Tredwell family occupied them for nearly 100 years and described by *The New York Times* as "the real thing."

Brilliantly captured by photographer Jook Leung, the panoramas are the closest one can get, without actually being here, to the atmosphere of Old New York that pervades the Merchant's House. A virtual reality.

MERCHANT'S HOUSE MUSEUM

29 East Fourth Street
New York, NY 10003

Tel 212-777-1089
Fax 212-777-1104

nyc1832@merchantshouse.org

HOURS

Thursday through Monday,
12 to 5 p.m., self-guided tours
(Closed Tuesday, Wednesday)
Join us for a guided tour every
Saturday & Sunday at 1 p.m.

ADMISSION

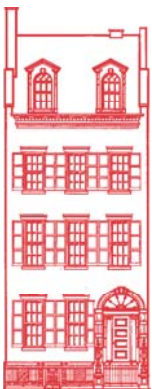
Members Free
Adults \$8, Students & Seniors \$5

GROUP TOURS

Guided tours are offered seven
days a week by appointment.

www.merchantshouse.org

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29 East Fourth Street
New York, NY 10003