



What's a Sofa doing in a Dining Room?

A Sneak Peek at the Historic Furnishings Plan

The final report of the Museum's first-ever Historic Furnishings Plan isn't due until late June, but we just couldn't wait to implement one of the recommendations. So when you next visit, you'll see that the Federal sofa that was in the front parlor has been moved downstairs to the family dining room.

Based on contemporary diaries, household manuals, and memoirs, we know that these front basement rooms were actually much more than dining rooms. They were, in every sense of the word, "living rooms" and were furnished not only with a dining table and chairs, but other useful pieces, including rocking chairs, sewing tables, chests — and sofas.

First We Had to Stabilize Our 176 Year Old Building

Of necessity, capital projects have predominated for well over a decade, as we implemented recommendations for restoring our 1832 landmark building as set forth in the Historic Structures Report. (And faced unexpected challenges.) First, we tackled the east wall, then the west wall, then the front windows, but then back to the east wall (remember the termites?), and finally, we couldn't believe it, the roof. It goes without saying that we are thrilled to be able to move inside and finally focus attention on our landmark interior, last restored in the late 1970s.

Now It's an Inside Job

In January 2007, the Museum and the Historic House Trust engaged

museum consultant Ellen Denker to develop an Historic Furnishings Plan. In brief, a furnishings plan is a written strategy based on historical research and documentation for furnishing an historic structure to meet its interpretive objectives.

Ellen, who created a Historic Furnishings Plan for Springwood, Franklin Roosevelt's Hyde Park home, among other historic houses, worked closely with the staff and Museum Historian Mary Knapp, who is nearing completion of a book on the Merchant's House as it represents social and domestic life of the period.

The implementation of the plan, which is projected to take three years, will show the house as it looked in the 1850s, when New York had become the center of U.S. commerce and a "world city" — and merchants like Seabury Tredwell were prospering.

The changes will be house-wide, dramatically affecting all floors of the Museum, including the 4th-floor Servants' Quarters, now used for storage.

Recommendations for changes will cover wall finishes, floor coverings, window treatments, and lighting. For example, we will repaint all exhibition rooms, hallways, and stair areas in accordance with findings of the 2004 Paint and Finishes Analysis (which revealed the rooms were never painted white, as they are today). We will also replace the badly worn stair carpets that were installed in 1980 with a period-appropriate option.

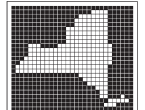


By the 1850s, the Federal sofa, with its elaborate hand carving and eagle feet, was definitely old fashioned, demoted from pride of place in the front parlor to the family dining room in the basement.

The plan will also recommend which of the more than 2,500 objects in the collection — e.g., furniture, lamps, decorative and household objects, paintings — should be on permanent exhibit and how they should be arranged. The result will be a uniquely authentic New York City family home of the 1850s.

Support for the Museum's Historic Furnishings Plan has been generously provided by: NYSCA, National Trust for Historic Preservation/ Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors, Historic House Trust of New York City, and Individual donors.

State of the Arts



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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.

The Merchant's House is grateful to the following donors for their especially generous support in 2007. Without their continuing confidence, the work we do would not be possible.

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Life in the Past Lane

The entries below are from the 1858 diary of 28 year old John Skidmore, who lived with his parents in a row house similar to the Tredwells', just three doors to the east.

This contemporary source gives evidence that the "basement," or ground-floor, family dining room in the Tredwell house was used by the family for private leisure activities. John even mentions napping on a sofa, like the one we just moved downstairs.

The landmark Skidmore house, still standing, is currently undergoing a much-needed restoration.

~ ~ ~

Monday Feb 1

Spent ev'g at home in basement. Wrote verses till Bob got thro' studying his lessons (8 1/2 p.m.) and then Jim and I played whist agst D.K.A & Bob.

Tuesday Mar 2

Spent ev'g at home. Read newspapers in basement. Napped on sofa.

Friday April 16

... We then walked home and spent rest of ev'g in basement with our folks except Ed & Ben. We had cake & beer. I then got on sofa & napped and got to bed by 10:40 p.m.

~ ~ ~

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

PLANT SALE & AFTERNOON TEAS TO BENEFIT THE GARDEN

Sunday, May 4, 9 a.m. to Noon

Annual Garden Plant Sale

Co-sponsored by the North American
Rock Garden Society, NY Chapter.

Plant divisions and seedlings from our historic
Garden; astilbes, epimediums, aquilegias,
hostas, sedums and sempervivum, ferns, ivies,
herbs, and an assortment of shade perennials.
Free admission. Reservations not required.

Sunday, May 11, Seatings at 1 & 3 p.m.

Mother's Day Tea in the Garden

Sunday, June 15, Seatings at 1 & 3 p.m.

Father's Day Tea in the Garden

Bring your favorite mother or your dear "old"
dad for an old-fashioned afternoon tea in the
Merchant's House Museum's exquisite 19th-
century style garden. Delicacies include dainty
sandwiches, scones with clotted cream, and
tempting sweets. Followed by a tour of the
Museum. \$40 per person, \$30 members.

Saturday, May 31 (rain date Sunday, June 1), Noon to 6 p.m.

19th-Century 'Fancy Fair' –

Charity Bazaar for the Merchant's House Museum

In addition to great bargains, shoppers will enjoy a festive atmosphere as
the Merchant's House Museum hosts a 19th-century-style charity bazaar.
Vintage fashion, collectibles, furniture, books, music, DVDs, furnishings,
art, and much more will be on sale. Free admission. Reservations not required.

Donations of gently used items to be sold at the charity bazaar gratefully accepted
(tax-deductible). Call 212-777-1089.

SUMMER AMUSEMENTS IN THE GARDEN

Come gather in the Garden (resplendent with mid-summer foliage) for
a themed talk and pleasant conversation. Wine and light hors d'oeuvres
will be served. \$25, \$20 students & seniors, \$15 members.

Thursday, July 10, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Fans, Flowers, and 19th-century Flirting

Explore secret languages of romance with historian Kerrienne Biele.

Thursday, July 24, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

19th-Century Fortune Telling

Learn about the ancient art of divination and its 19th-century revival
with astrologer Roberta Alessandra.



The Museum's educational programs are supported, in part, by public
funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.



Thanks beyond measure to the volunteers & interns who gave so freely of their time and wondrous talents in 2007.

Volunteers Henry Allen, Ryan Andes, Anthony Belov, Stephanie Bennett, Kerrienne Biele, Sarah Brockett, Heide Cleary, Marguerite Durret, Ethel Fisher, Kevin Foley, Rosalind Gnatt, Rachel Good, William Herrlich, Cathy Hiller, Margaret Kaczorowski, Ron Kuriloff, Christine LaPlume, Lindsay Leggett, Julie Linnard, Mary Loram, Kate McCoy, Deborah McMillan, Kiriki Metz, Ann Michell, Karen Murphy, Aimiende Negbenebor, Kristina Nazimova, Delphine Oravetz, Robert Psotto, Judith Rickman, Stan Ries, Alley Scott, Christine Scott, Gus Senilus, Kay Seward, Tracey Shumpert, Nadia Sztendera, Alice Stryker, Ivan Ulz, Julia & Robert Van Nutt, Dayle Vander Sande, Johannes Weinkirn, Joanna Williams, Gloria Withim, Margaret Zamos, Debra Zaroni, Sarah Zimmet **Interns** Marjorie Jonas, Sarah Kim, Catherine Lukaszewski

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,
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IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT

JOIN THE **MERCHANT'S HOUSE MUSEUM** IN CELEBRATING THE
HIGH LIFE, AND THE NIGHTLIFE, OF THE GLAMOROUS 1930S.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2008, 6:30 TO 9:30 P.M.
ON THE ROOF OF THE ARSENAL, 5TH AVENUE AND 64TH STREET



GREY GOOSE MARTINI BAR! DANNY STILES'S BIG BAND MUSIC!
HORS D'OEUVRES! DELIGHTFUL, DELICIOUS DUMPLINGS! HOOCH!
CHICHI SILENT AUCTION! VELVET ROPES! AND MORE!



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All Proceeds to Benefit the Museum's Restoration, Conservation, and Education Programs.

MERCHANT'S HOUSE MUSEUM

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HOURS

Thursday through Monday,
12 to 5 p.m.
(Closed Tuesday, Wednesday)

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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