



Miracle on Fourth Street — The Merchant's House Commemorates its 175th

One hundred and seventy-five years ago, when most of Manhattan was countryside and forest, and Andrew Jackson was president, Joseph Brewster built a brick and marble rowhouse on Fourth Street in what was then a quiet, exclusive suburb of the city.

In 1835, just three years later, the house was purchased by a prosperous hardware merchant, Seabury Tredwell, and the Tredwell family continued to live in the house for almost 100 years.

Today, miraculously, that merchant's house still stands, though more than once it has come close to the brink of being lost forever.

The last surviving member of the family, Gertrude Tredwell, who had been born in the house in 1840, died in the house in 1933. Her cousin, George Chapman, recognizing the historic value of a 19th-century home that still retained its original furniture and family possessions, purchased the house, and after making extensive repairs, opened it as a museum on May 11, 1936.

For 25 years, Chapman provided almost all of the Museum's support with his personal funds, but by 1959, when he died, time had caught up with the old house and it was perilously close to being beyond repair.

In 1962, after limping along for three years with temporary caretakers, the Museum was taken over as a project of the Decorators Club of New York City. They hoped, by raising funds, restoring furniture and reproducing the draperies and carpets, they could continue to present the house to the public.

However, in 1968, serious water damage convinced the Decorators that extensive structural repairs were needed—repairs that were far beyond their ability to manage. Wisely,

they called on Joseph Roberto, New York University architect, to advise them.

It was not long before Roberto fell in love with the house and committed himself to a complete structural restoration that would take more than nine years to complete.

He and his wife, Carolyn, an interior designer, worked tirelessly to raise funds and Roberto then undertook the restoration, scrupulously maintaining the integrity of the original design. Then, assisted by the Decorators

Club, the Robertos restored and reinstalled the collection of the Tredwells' furniture and personal belongings and reopened the Museum to the public in 1979. The Robertos and the Decorators did it all on a volunteer basis. Following Roberto's untimely death in 1988, with the help of a number of the city's preservation organizations the Museum raised seed money to hire its first professional staff.

In 1997, the Museum received a one million dollar grant from the Vincent Astor Foundation, thus for the first time securing an endowment that would provide for its future financial security. In 1999, the House joined the

Historic House Trust of New York City, further ensuring its preservation for generations to come.

We have a lot to celebrate in this, our 175th year. The house is here today because of the countless friends and volunteers who came under its spell and so generously offered their time and financial support over the years. And, we can be sure many more will be drawn to East Fourth Street and become possessed (as we freely admit we are), and the house will still be standing in 2182—175 years from now. At the very least.



Gaseliers Make Their Triumphant Return

After a year of treatment by metals conservator Julie M. Baker of Objects Conservation Associates in Pennsylvania, the pair of gas chandeliers that hangs in the Museum's double parlors will be reinstalled by a

team of lighting experts and art handlers in early February. The fixtures have been fitted with fiber optics, a modification that will allow us to simulate gas illumination — and conserve energy. Please stop by soon to “see the light.”

Dinner at Delmonico's

In honor of our 175th Anniversary

Thursday, April 26, 2007

You won't want to miss this unique opportunity to dine in real 19th-century elegance at one of New York's first and finest restaurants. *Save The Date.*

MERCHANT'S HOUSE MUSEUM

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And Many Volunteers & Interns

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 2006. Without their continuing confidence, the work we do would not be possible.

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Lessons from the Past: Being Green is Easy

In 1824, Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier, a French mathematician and physicist, posited in *General Remarks on the Temperature of the Terrestrial Globe and Planetary Spaces* that gases in the atmosphere might increase the surface temperature of the Earth. And was he ever right. Today, we call it Global Warming.

To honor our past, and protect our future, the 175-year-old Merchant's House is taking on the role of eco-warrior, actively promoting the traditional values of 19th-century conservation. In the mid-1800s, recycling wasn't part of a movement to save the planet, it was a way of life.

Even wealthy Americans like the Tredwells prided themselves on their ability to remake and reuse. Old dresses were remodeled to fit the latest fashion; stained tablecloths became rags for cleaning; magazines and papers were cut into squares and used in the privy. If something broke, it was repaired, not thrown away. Things were valued for their durability (not disposability).

Among our significant eco-friendly projects this year is the transition to fiber optic lighting. Our newly conserved gas chandeliers are lit using fiber optics, which not only present better lighting and simulate the character of 19th-century gas light, but also protect the objects in our collection from damage — and save energy, resources, and dollars.

We are also moving towards email-only communications with members and friends of the Museum. Visit merchantshouse.org to sign up and find out what you can do to greenify.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

EXHIBITION

April 1 through April 15

Don't Be Fooled:

A Mid-19th Century Mix-Up

Many of the everyday things we take for granted in the year 2007, such as telephones, ball point pens, and scotch tape didn't exist in the 1800s. Just for fun — and to get you thinking — we've hidden objects throughout the House that could never ever have been here 150 years ago. Can you spot the things that don't belong? We'll award prizes to visitors who correctly identify all of our modern additions.

Sunday, April 1, Noon to 5 p.m.

No April Foolin', Admission Today is Free

Be the first to take a tour of our new exhibition, *Don't Be Fooled: A Mid-19th Century Mix-Up*. See if you can identify all the hidden objects. Then enjoy lemonade and cookies in the historic Garden. *Free Admission. Honest.*

Saturday & Sunday, April 21 & 22, Noon 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 who served the family lived and did some of their work. You'll also hear about the daily chores and general hardship of a life 'in service'.

Special guided tour included with Museum Admission. Members Free.

Tuesday, February 13, 2007 – Reception at 6 p.m., Screening from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Heiress (1949)

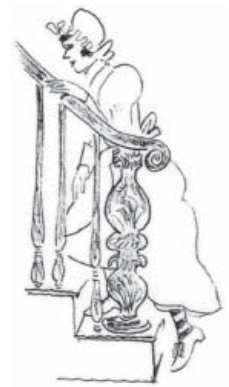
Presented by Miss Gertrude Tredwell & The Lafayette Place Lonely Hearts Club

Based on *Washington Square*, Henry's James's classic novel of mid-19th century New York City, this haunting film tells the story of young love, and a father who doesn'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. Join us before the show for wine, hors d'oeuvres, and an introduction to the film by noted videographer Anthony Bello. \$25, \$15 members.

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

A Tale of Two Chandeliers

The gas chandeliers have returned after undergoing a complete conservation treatment and installation of a fiber optic system that will allow more accurate simulation of 19th-century gas light. Join project director Vincent Plescia as he recounts the February 2006 removal of the chandeliers and recent reinstallation, the conservation process, and his ongoing research into how the Merchant's House Museum was lighted during the 19th century. \$10, FREE members.



Thanks beyond measure to the volunteers & interns who gave so freely of their time and wondrous talents in 2006.

Volunteers Daniel Arnheim, Anthony Bello, Stephanie Bennett, Heide Cleary, Elissa Scarlett Daine, Marguerite Durret, Jennifer Finn, Kevin Foley, Dennis Micah Fowler, William Herrlich, Margaret Kaczorowski, Julie Linnard, Christine LaPlume, Melissa & Eric Lindbeck, Valeria Mastrorosa, Andrew Marlay, Kate McCoy, Deborah McMillan, Kiriki Metzko, Ann Michell, Kristina Nazimova, Gia Neswald, Delphine Oravetz, Robert Psotho, Judith Rickman, Stan Ries, Catherine Roach, Christine Scott, Gus Senilus, Kay Seward, Keelie Sheridan, Nadia Sztendera Ivan Ulz, Julia & Robert Van Nutt, Dayle Vander Sande, Katherine Vecchio, Sandi Weisfeld, Vanessa Wendt, Gloria Withim, Margaret Zamos, Debra Zaroni.

Interns Karen Eckhaus, Marjorie Jonas, Caroline Lubin, Laura Pedersen, Abigail Sugahara

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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RAFFLE

Dinner For Four, In Old New-York

Authentic 19th-century multi-course menu, served in the Merchant's House Museum



Mabel Osgood Wright, in *My New York*, describes a dinner party given just a few blocks from the Tredwell home in 1850:

“... [The] offering of food was quite appalling,—beginning with large, fat Chesapeake Bay Oysters it meandered through nine courses until it reached a solid wall of plum pudding.”

TICKETS: \$10 EACH, \$20 FOR THREE

Visit www.merchantshouse.org or call 212-777-1089 to purchase tickets, or for more information about this once-in-a lifetime chance.

MERCHANT'S HOUSE MUSEUM

29 East Fourth Street
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HOURS

Thursday through Monday,
12 to 5 p.m., self-guided tours
(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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