

HOLIDAY EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, reservations and prepayment are required. Call 212-777-1089.

December 3 through January 11

Holiday Exhibition:

New Year's Day in Old New York

Learn about the Old New York custom of "calling on New Year's Day," with scenes of holiday preparations recreated throughout the House.

Included with Museum admission, reservations not required.

Wednesday, December 16, 7 to 9 p.m.

"To All, Wassail":

19th-Century Holiday Concert

The Bond Street Euterpean Singing Society will present a concert of vocal quartets, solos, holiday readings and sing-alongs. A wassail reception to meet the artists will follow.

\$25, FREE for MHM Members.

Friday, January 1, 3 to 6 p.m.

Come Calling:

New Year's Day Open House

Relive the elegance of Old New York's most important holiday, when gentlemen sallied forth to pay respects to neighbors in honor of the New Year, with readings and refreshments from the period. *\$20, \$10 MHM Members.*

Please Join Us at the Merchant's House Museum's Annual

19th-Century Holiday Party

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Enjoy holiday decorations, savor festive delicacies, drink from the 'Bowl of Bishop', and join in the caroling led by the Museum's own Bond Street Euterpean Singing Society.

A silent auction and holiday gift bazaar will complete the festivities.

RSVP 212-777-1089

\$25, Free for Members

New Year's Day Calling

In mid-nineteenth century New York, New Year's Day was the most celebrated winter holiday — a day when the gentlemen of the city hurried from home to home, calling upon all of their friends, family, and acquaintances.

The custom of paying calls on New Year's Day was "almost peculiar to New York," according to 1820s mayor Philip Hone. It was introduced by the City's Dutch founders, who were famous for their holiday hospitality. Nineteenth century hostesses continued the tradition, serving their gentlemen callers glasses of potent punch and elaborate buffets featuring, among other delicacies, the dish of dishes for New Year's, pickled oysters.

Preparations for the New Year's Day reception were begun far in advance. Houses were cleaned or even refurnished; pantries were stocked with holiday fare; and new

clothes were procured.

It was considered a mark of social prestige to pay or receive a great number of calls. Philip Hone recorded this entry in his diary on January 1, 1844: "There must have been more visiting than on any former New Year's Day. I was out more than five hours, and my girls tell me they received one hundred and sixty-nine visits."

By the end of the Civil War, New Year's Day calling was on the wane. "This custom began when the city was small, but it has now quite outgrown those possibilities which the original usages of the day could compass without difficulty" (*Social Etiquette of New York*, 1879).

Help recreate this grand and gracious tradition at the Merchant's House Museum's New Year's Day Open House on January 1, 2010. Celebrate with readings and refreshments from the period, and toast the New Year with a glass of warm punch.

Life in the Past Lane: New Year's Day Punch

"To set well a New Year's table requires taste, patience, tact, and cash. It must contain ample provision for a hundred men. It must be loaded down with all the luxuries of the season . . . and above all — punch. This mysterious beverage is a New York institution. To make it is a trade that few understand. Men go from house to house, on an engagement, to fill the punch bowl. Lemons, rum, cordials, honey, and mysterious mixtures, from mysterious bottles brought by the compounder, enter into this drink. So delicious is it, that for a man to be drunk on New Year's day from punch is not considered any disgrace."

Sunshine and Shadow in New York,
Matthew Hale Smith, 1869

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Merchant's House Museum
 29 East Fourth Street
 New York, NY 10003
 www.merchantshouse.org



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Love in the Parlors: Valentine's Day Concert
 Sunday, February 14, 5:30 p.m.
 A program of romantic songs and arias by nineteenth-century composers, performed in the Museum's Greek Revival double parlors by members of the Bond Street European Singing Society. \$20, \$10 MHM Members.

Bridget Murphy's St. Patrick's Day Celebration
 Wednesday, March 17, 6 to 9 p.m.
 Join us for a rollicking salute to New York City's Irish heritage — and the Irish maids who once lived and worked here. \$25, \$15 MHM Members.

Coming in 2010 . . .
January & February, dates to be announced
Concert Series on Our Just-Restored 1840s Square Piano
 Mid-19th parlor songs, as well as classics from the Romantic Era composers, will be played on the Museum's original, in-situ, 1840s square piano. Call for details.

The Turn of the Screw
 Two Turns Theatre Co. & Merchant's House Museum Present
 Adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher from Henry James's classic ghost story and performed in the Museum's Greek Revival double parlors. \$25, details and tickets at www.twoturns.com.

Please Consider Making a Year-End Gift. (Donations are tax-deductible)

[] Good Neighbor \$60 [] Family/Household \$80 [] Protector \$125 [] Cultural Hero \$250 [] Princely Supporter \$500 [] Leading Light \$1,000 [] Paragon of Virtue \$2,500 [] Senior/Student \$30

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 [] MasterCard

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