

Merchant's House Museum

Newsletter

Spring 2004



Called By the Bell

Bridget Murphy, Martha O'Brien, Annie McNulty, Betsy Kelly, Mary James: these were some of the domestic servants who lived at 29 East Fourth Street. Their names, and others, appear on the census reports during the five decades between 1840 (the first census year after the Tredwells moved from Dey Street to Fourth Street) and 1890. There were always four servants living in the house. Their ages ranged from 18 to 40.

Unfortunately, these women left no diaries or letters, but we know what they did. From dawn to dark, 12 to 15 hours each day, they lit and maintained the fires, prepared, cooked and served the meals, washed the dishes and scoured the pans, polished the silver and brass, cleaned the oil and kerosene lamps, washed and ironed the clothes and linens, swept and scrubbed the floors, cared for the Tredwells' eight children, helped the women in the family into their corsets, and made countless trips up and down the house's five flights of stairs carrying coal and ashes and chamber pots and stacks of laundered linens.

The servants were on call day and night. The brass call bells on their rockers in the kitchen and in the fourth floor servants' quarters summoned them at all hours. To identify the caller's location in the house, each bell had a different tone.

The Irish girls who worked in the elegant rowhouses of the Bond Street neighborhood were far from home; the work was onerous; the life was lonely; the wages meager – in 1860, the average wage was three to four dollars a month. Even so, many managed to send money home, and while some of them married and remained in the United States to raise the next generation of Irish Americans, others eventually returned to their homeland.

Of one thing about these women we are certain: the comfortable lives of the Tredwells and their neighbors would have been impossible without them.

Saturday, May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Behind the Scenes:

A Rare Opportunity to View the Servants' Quarters

During May, Saturday tours of the Merchant's House will include the servants' quarters. Come climb the narrow stairs to the fourth floor dormer rooms where the young Irish women lived and did some of their work. Tour included with regular admission.

"Passion for the Grape": Thomas Jefferson's (261st) Birthday Celebration

While ambassador to France, TJ toured the country's wine regions, including the Loire, the closest to his beloved city, Paris. Loire wines were fixtures in the city's wine bars and are known to be among his favorites. At TJ's annual Birthday Party, we'll taste sparklers, whites, and reds from the new winemakers of the Loire, courtesy of Louis/Dressner Selections. And we'll sample foods that TJ liked best, including "garden stuffs," "mustard eggs," "cooked peanuts," Double Gloucester cheese, baked Virginia ham, "basil shrimps" – and coconut cake.



Tuesday, April 13, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

\$50 per person, members \$40. Reservations and prepayment required; cancellations and full refunds accepted up to 48 hours prior.

The Merchant's House acknowledges with gratitude the following contributors who were especially generous in their support during 2003

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Sotheby's Institute of Art and the Merchant's House Museum Present

The Timeless Allure of the New York Townhouse

Illustrated Lecture by Charles Lockwood

Author, *Bricks and Brownstone: The New York Row House, 1783-1929*, and Townhouse Restoration Consultant

Monday, April 26 Reception and Book Signing 6 p.m., Lecture 6:30 p.m., Closing Reception 7:30 p.m.

Charles Lockwood will trace the development of architectural styles of the New York townhouse - from the Federal style red-brick houses that blanketed lower Manhattan in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, to the mid-19th-century "brownstone fronts" that stretched from 14th Street into the East 60s and 70s and still cover much of "brownstone Brooklyn," to the grand limestone-fronted Renaissance style townhouses of the early 20th century.

Using the Merchant's House Museum (1832) located at 29 East Fourth Street as a case study, Mr. Lockwood will describe how families lived in New York's first townhouses, and how advances in technology over the decades contributed to the transformation of townhouse design and the everyday lives of the New Yorkers who resided within these homes.

\$25 (\$20 for members)

At Sotheby's, 1334 York Avenue, at 72nd Street

Reservations 212-894-1100

Yes! I (We) would like to join the Merchant's House Museum

- Good Neighbor - \$50 Family/Household - \$75 Protector - \$125 Cultural Hero - \$250
 Princely Supporter - \$500 Leading Light - \$1,000 Paragon of Virtue - \$2,500
 Over 65/Student - \$25

Please make checks payable to the Merchant's House Museum or charge your contribution to: Amex Visa Master Card
You may be eligible for a matching gift from your employer. If so, please include a matching gift form.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

ON EXHIBIT

The Tredwells:

A Family Tree in Pictures

Images of Tredwell family members taken from the Museum's collection of 19th-century photographs.

Through June 30

The Changing Silhouette of Fashion: Six Decades of Tredwell Costumes, 1830-1880

Fourth in our parade of fashion is a one-piece day dress of chocolate brown silk faille with long pagoda sleeves from 1861-1864.

Highlights from the Collection:

Women's Work

This display focuses on artifacts documenting the domestic world of the Tredwell women in the 19th century.

City of New York
Parks & Recreation



HISTORIC HOUSE TRUST
OF NEW YORK CITY

Thursday, March 25, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Winter's Last Blast: Big Reds, Ports, and Sherries

We'll gather in our cozy 19th-century kitchen and ward off those still-icy March winds with a selection of hearty reds, ports, and sherries. Spring may be wishful thinking, but who cares? \$35 per person. Reservations and prepayment required; cancellations and full refunds accepted up to 48 hours prior.

Mid-April to Mid-May

Bulbs-a-Burstin'

Come "smell the dirt" and view the brilliance of spring as multiple varieties of crocii, snowdrops, daffodils, and grape hyacinths make their showy appearance in our garden.

Sunday, May 2, 10 a.m. to Noon

Spring is Sprung: Our 2nd Annual Plant Sale in the Garden

Plant divisions and seedlings from our historic Garden. Proceeds to benefit the Garden Fund. *Free admission.*

Sunday, May 9, Seating at 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Annual 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, and frosted confections. All served with pots of brewed English tea. Includes a tour of the Museum after tea. \$40 per couple, members \$30. Additional guest per couple \$15.

Reservations and prepayment required; cancellations and full refunds accepted up to 48 hours prior.

Coming in June!

Sundays in June, 1:30 and 3 p.m.

Afternoon Tea in the Garden: "The mere chink of cups and saucers tunes to the mind to happy repose."

June 6: Mad Hatters Tea

June 13: Flag Day Tea

June 20: Fan Tea

June 27: Tussie-Mussie Tea

\$40 per couple, members \$30

Wednesday, June 16

June Garden Party Benefit

Kasbahs, caftans, couscous and caravans. We're rounding up the usual suspects and taking the high road to Morocco this year. Join us for a very Fez-tive evening of wine, romance, and belly dancing under the stars. Play it again, Seabury.

Call for an invitation.



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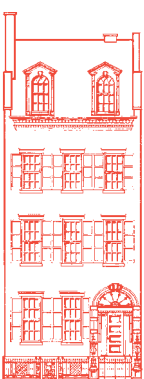
Head Gardener



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.

Visit Saturday, Sunday, Monday 12 to 5 p.m., Thursday, Friday 1 to 5 p.m.
29 East Fourth Street, New York, NY 10003 212-777-1089 www.merchantshouse.com

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Merchant's House Museum
29 East Fourth Street
New York, NY 10003-7003