



## Merchant's House Cloned in Classic Film

*The Heiress*, the haunting 1949 film that tells the story of Henry James's classic novel, *Washington Square*, will be shown in the Museum's Greek Revival parlors on the evening of Feb. 13. The film is based on a play of the same name written in 1947 by Ruth and Augustus Goetz.

Now those who attend the Museum screening will have the unique experience of viewing the movie in the very same rooms that designer Emile Kuri used as a model for the film's interior sets.

The story, which takes place in the 1850s, concerns the ill-fated romance of Catherine Sloper. The fictional Miss Sloper and her physician father lived on the north side of Washington Square in a house very similar to the Fourth Street home of their flesh and blood neighbors, the Seabury Tredwell family.

Rumor has suggested that Gertrude Tredwell may have been Henry James's inspiration for the character of Catherine Sloper, but that is not the case. According to family legend, Gertrude, like Catherine, was refused permission to marry the love of her life. But there the similarity ends. James himself indicated that the plot for the novel was suggested to him in 1879 (the novel was published in 1881) by a bit of after-dinner gossip about an English heiress and her conniving suitor. Nevertheless, the film, directed by William Wyler and starring Oliva de Havilland and Montgomery Clift, offers a fascinating look at the way privileged New Yorkers lived in the rowhouses of Bond Street and Washington Square at mid-century.

*Continued inside.*

## In Memory — Karen Treadwell



Karen Treadwell, a member of the board of directors of the Merchant's House since 1990, died on November 11, 2007, after a four year battle with breast cancer. She was 48.

In her 17 years as a key member of our board, Karen saw the house through times thick and very thin. As many of you may remember, the late 1980s/early 1990s were pretty dark days for the house, for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that the rowhouse next door had been demolished, without warning, leaving our 1832 landmark building dangerously unstable.

I'll never forget talking — and laughing — with Karen at one of our annual holiday parties about all that lay ahead. In spite of the daunting challenges we faced (more than half a million dollars worth of structural repairs were needed —

money we didn't have), we were both confident, and excited, knowing what the house could be. Karen was stalwart in her commitment. We will all miss her very, very much.

As one of the Museum's long-time friends, Karen made a real difference in strengthening and securing this unique resource for the appreciation and study of 19th-century New York City. In her memory, many of her friends, relatives, and colleagues have made contributions to the Merchant's House. Thanks in part to their generosity, we will continue her work, enhancing our public education programs for adults and schoolchildren; conserving our original collections; and restoring our landmark 1832 building.

At the time of her death, Karen was Vice President and Treasurer of the Rockefeller Group in New York City. She is survived by her husband, Alan Eugley, her children, Elizabeth, 18, and Seth, 11, and her parents, Kenneth and Sally Treadwell. To all those in Karen's immediate and extended family, and to her co-workers and colleagues, we offer our heartfelt condolences.

Pi Gardiner  
Executive Director

## 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.*



*Continued from cover*

In the film, the interior of the Sloper home was copied so faithfully from the Merchant's House Museum that it even includes such historically anachronistic details as this curving stair to the third floor — shown here in a still from the movie. The Tredwell family modified the stairs sometime in the 19th century, shifting them to accommodate a hand-operated elevator.

Other architectural and decorative elements that made their way onto the silver screen straight from the Museum include the elaborately carved mahogany newel post at the base of the stairs in the first-floor hall and the magnificent Ionic columns that flank the pocket doors in the double parlor.

See the Calendar of Events for details about the screening.

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### Life in the Past Lane: The Secret Language of Fans

During the mid-19th century, no fashionable lady's toilette was complete without a decorative hand fan — an elegant accessory that had long been used more for flirting than for fanning. "Women are armed with Fans as Men with Swords, and sometimes do more Execution with them," wrote Joseph Addison in 1711.

The following directions for communicating romantic emotions via fan are excerpted from a pamphlet, distributed in America as an advertising ploy, by 19th-century French fan maker Pierre Duvelroy.

- § Carrying in right hand in front of face: *Follow me*
- § Touching tip with finger: *I wish to speak to you*
- § Pressing the half-opened fan to the lips: *You may kiss me*
- § Presented shut: *Do you love me?*
- § The shut fan held to the heart: *You have won my love*
- § Touching the unfolded fan in the act of waving: *I long always to be near thee*
- § Twirling in the left hand: *We are watched*
- § Cover the left ear with the open fan: *Do not betray our secret*
- § Placed behind head: *Don't forget me*

Learn more about the languages of fans — and flowers — at an afternoon tea and tour on Saturday, February 9; details are on the Calendar of Events.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Unless otherwise noted, reservations and prepayment are required. Call 212-777-1089 or email [nyc1832@merchantshouse.org](mailto:nyc1832@merchantshouse.org)*

## AFTERNOON TEAS & TOURS

*Saturday, February 9, Seatings at 1 & 3 p.m.*

### Flowers & Fans:

#### Old Fashioned Languages of Love

Enjoy a delectable afternoon tea, then learn to express emotions through floral bouquets and flirt with a wave of your fan. Just in time for St. Valentine's Day.

*Saturday, March 15, Seatings at 1 & 3 p.m.*

### 'Wearin' O' the Green' Tea & Tour of the Servants' Quarters

In the mid-19th century, the majority of New York City's domestic servants were Irish. Enjoy a tasty afternoon tea served by Irish maids, then climb the stairs to the fourth floor servants' quarters (usually off limits to visitors) and see where the servant girls slept and worked.

*Saturday, April 19, Seatings at 1 & 3 p.m.*

### 19th Century Strip Tea-se

Ever wonder what those mid-19th century ladies wore under their hoop skirts? Here's your chance to find out, as costume historian Christine Scott performs an educational strip tease à la 1855. Before the show, you'll also enjoy a delectable afternoon tea.

*All teas \$40 per person, \$30 members.*

Private afternoon teas & tours are now available for groups of 10 to 35 people. Contact the museum for details.

*Wednesday, February 13, 7 to 9:30 p.m.*

### Film Screening – "The Heiress" (1949)

Based on *Washington Square*, Henry James's classic novel of mid-19th century New York City, this haunting film tells the story of young love, and a father who didn'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. Introduction to the film by noted videographer Anthony Bellov. \$25, \$15 members.

*Monday, March 17, 7 p.m.*

### Reading – Yeats in New York:

#### Simon Loekle Presents 19th-Century Irish Poets

In honor of St. Patrick's Day, renowned Joyce scholar, cartoonist for the *James Joyce Quarterly*, and WBAI radio personality Simon Loekle will read selections from 19th-century Irish poets and ponder the fabled New York sojourn of W.B. Yeats. \$20, \$10 students & members.

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## THE TREDWELLS NEED YOU.

When was the last time you helped organize a 19th-century funeral? Served afternoon tea on fine china? Planned a Stoop Sale? The range of opportunities to give your time — day or night — as a Merchant's House Museum volunteer is endless. Without our talented and dedicated volunteers much of what we do would be impossible. As members of our 'family', volunteers are invited to public as well as just-us Museum events and programs. Other benefits include learning about 19th century NYC history; enjoying the camaraderie of other volunteers and staff; and of course, the undying gratitude of the Museum's board and staff.

### ~ Won't You Join Us? ~

Call 212-777-1089 or email [education@merchantshouse.org](mailto:education@merchantshouse.org) for more information. Or go to our website: [www.merchantshouse.org](http://www.merchantshouse.org).

*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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## Merchant's House Set to Launch Digital Video Channel



This January, the Merchant's House Museum joined YouTube's new nonprofit program. As a member of this free program, the Museum will receive additional promotion for its video postings, as well as the ability to accept donations directly from the YouTube website. The dedicated Merchant's House Channel is located at [www.youtube.com/merchantshouse](http://www.youtube.com/merchantshouse). Log on now to see 'rare archival footage' (taken in December 2007) of curators rehangng the mirror in the rear parlor.

### MERCHANT'S HOUSE MUSEUM

29 East Fourth Street  
New York, NY 10003

Tel 212-777-1089

Fax 212-777-1104

[nyc1832@merchantshouse.org](mailto:nyc1832@merchantshouse.org)

#### 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](http://www.merchantshouse.org)

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29 East Fourth Street  
New York, NY 10003