In April, the Historic House Trust was awarded the prestigious New York Landmarks Conservancy’s Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award for an Organization. We are thrilled to receive this honor and thank the Conservancy for its recognition. A special thank you to all of our partners in preservation.

We are proud to announce that this newsletter contains our first-ever annual report, for Fiscal Year 2009. You’ll find it as an insert after page 6.

“Adults cringe at my apartment — I don’t have a lot of stuff and it’s not tasteful enough!”

EMILY PROVANCE
Historic Richmond Town’s 2010 Chili Cookoff.

As fresh, hand-churned butter and local eggs are used to make cornbread the old-fashioned way at Historic Richmond Town, the kitchens at HHT houses are not always just for show. Their hearths, both indoor and out, often turn out historically inspired treats to tempt visitors, who learn about cooking methods and tools, foodways of the past, and the social customs surrounding preparing and serving food. Many houses host food-related events and workshops in their kitchen or garden. These activities also provide opportunities for building relationships with restaurants or other nonprofit groups in the community.

BY CATHY KAUFMAN

FEW THINGS TELL US MORE about our identity and culture than the foods we eat. From Brillat-Savarin’s famous aphorism, “Tell me what you eat and I’ll tell you who you are,” to Marcel Proust’s madeleine, one bite of which might remind you of your childhood, food is a reflection of changing patterns in our culture. When traveling to Wyckoff Cottage, I have lunch at Footloose, the Caribbean fusion restaurant nearby. When visiting Latimer House, Bowne House, or Kingsland homestead in Flushing, I stop at Joe’s Pharmacy and liquor store. Yet stepping in was like entering a German beer garden in Munich. The food and setting would have been right at home there!

One way to understand who we are and where we come from is to examine our history through the culture of food. What did the Dutch Wyckoffs prepare for a hearty farm dinner in 1679? How did Madame Jumel use food to showcase her wealth and prestige at dinner parties in the 1830s? How did the Native Americans of Long Island prepare food in their seaside and forested residences? How did people of African descent use food to make their way through the challenges of slavery and freedom?

It is likely headily perfumed with ambergris, orange-liked limes, and cinnamon. It is also sweet and crispy. For information on corporate membership call 212-360-8282.

2 cups sugar
1 cup butter
2 eggs
3 teaspoons baking powder
Put in three cups sifted flour, flavor and add fruit.
colonial chocolate days

The Colonial Chocolate Day event at the Morris-Jumel Mansion combines interactive, hands-on demonstrations with scholarly lectures to inform visitors about the complex history of cacao. In the 18th and 19th centuries, when the Morrises and then the Jumels were in residence, chocolate was a fashionable beverage only available to the wealthiest members of society. Both Mary Morris and Eliza Jumel would have had fine porcelain pots that were imported from England or France, designed specifically for the serving of chocolate. Colonial Chocolate Day events bring new audiences to the Mansion by presenting a varied and exciting experience for both new and returning visitors.

on line!
http://vimeo.com/2293652
Watch a video to learn more about the Morris-Jumel Mansion Museum.

hort history trust of new york city

creamed in popularizing the concept of sustainable agriculture. Seasonal events from pie-eating contests to the October 3 Apple Festival that promotes the country's largest apple cobbler make for delightful on-site eating, but even more important is that the Farm continues in its historic role as a source of fresh produce for the bustling markets of Manhattan. The Farm proudly proclaims that none of its produce travels more than fifteen miles from picking to point of sale and boasts a stand at the Union Square Greenmarket, where the public can find fresh eggs, local honey, and seasonal produce. It also provides food for several Manhattan and Brooklyn restaurants focusing on local foods and sends produce to City Harvest and other food banks, thus serving both the well-housed and the needy.

The Farm is a cook's delight for those who visit with shopping for dinner in mind, with pasture-raised heritage pork for sale that is an amalgam of three historic breeds: Large Black, Tamworth, and Gloucester Old Spots. Those pigs forage for part of the feed and receive the remainder from spent brew grains from a local brewery, making them exceptional eating. A visit to these handsome hogs is a great reminder that meat doesn't come naturally on styrofoam trays; the opportunity to look at dinner makes us all wiser and more appreciative diners.

The Merchant's House Museum, located on East 4th Street in Manhattan, just west of the Bowery, is a townhouse rather than a country estate, but it, too, wavers the importance of dining into its history. Home to Seabury Tredwell, a successful hardware merchant, his wife, Eliza, and their eight children, the house is unique in that it remained in the Tredwell family for nearly one hundred years, depending on styrofoam trays; the opportunity to look at dinner makes us all wiser and more appreciative diners.

The Merchant's House was located in Manhattan's most fashionable and liveliest neighborhood of the 1830s, where married families built fantastic homes from Washington Square to Lafayette Place. On Broadway, two short blocks from the Tredwell house, New York's poshest restaurants, such as the Astor Place Hotel at Waverly Place, first opened in 1853, would have served wealthy patricians like Seabury with French haute cuisine. Even closer, at Pratt's Cellar, near Broadway on

(continued on page 10)
Committee, a group of internship came out of the BETTIS is helping us to intern Ashley Bettis

Chris Matthews of Hofstra University excavated the privy shaft at King Manor in 2005. The investigation yielded many interesting artifacts, including this mouth-blown glass bottle.

Historic Richmond Town displays two reconstructed privies to give visitors a sense of how they were once a part of daily life. The Burger Privy was constructed in about 1870 and was discovered in 1987 when the house was moved to Historic Richmond Town. Made of wood, the privy is 12 feet wide, has three windows, and seats six. The Journey Privy was relocated to Historic Richmond Town in 1970 and is currently located behind the Stephens-Black House. This privy was built around 1869, has one window, and seats two.

Archaeologist Arthur Bankoff has been conducting investigations at the Hendrick I. Lott House over the past decade and has found a late 18th century privy. Upon excavating, he found glass and ceramic fragments, including dolls’ heads, among other refuse material. Bankoff believes that there may have been an earlier privy located in the area that is currently covered by a garage. With upcoming plans to remove the garage, if the location of the privy at the Lott House has survived, we have much to look forward to in the near future.

Archaeology helps us discover the lifeways of people in the past. Artifacts allow us to determine the social status, cultural practices, and lifestyles of individuals in a certain place and time. Through studies of ceramic vessels, faunal, and floral remains, we can even determine someone’s diet. Finding well-preserved artifacts to shed light on such details can be a difficult task. Yet archaeologists continue to discover culturally valuable artifacts and are able to give us insight on matters such as past foodways. How and where would you find such well-preserved privy artifacts or similar-rich artifacts? The answer may surprise you. One of the best places to find them is in privies.

ARE YOU PRIVY?

BY ASHLEY BETTIS, INTERN

Archaeology kick off its Internship Program. Since then, we have had help with projects ranging from historical research to database entry to hands-on preservation. Thank you for your great work!

Hannah Barrett
University of Boston curatorial

Ashley Bettis
City College archaeology

Molly Caplan
Columbia University preservation database

Quinn Delzoppo
Syracuse University education

Kimberly Hermann
Harvard University government relations

Mark Karten
publications

Johanna Lovecchio
NYU historical research

Christine Matheson
Columbia University office

Kai Reynolds
Williamburg High School for Architecture and Design guidance counselor

Kaitlyn Ryan
events

INTERNS ASHLEY BETTIS is helping us to consolidate all of our plans pertaining to archaeology at the houses. Her internship came out of the formation of a new HHT Archaeology Advisory Committee, a group of scholars from across the city. This Committee will help inform decision-making in the early stages of planning future restoration projects.

COMMUNITY MARKETS AND HISTORIC HOUSES

BY JOANNA LOVECCHIO, INTERN

ACH SUMMER THERE ARE more and more community gardens, farmers markets, and restaurants serving local food to New Yorkers. This growing trend in how we eat reaches beyond just our dinner table and into our communities and neighborhoods, our environment, and our changing culture. This growing interest in local food has provided a new outlet for our houses to engage with their communities. Old Stone House, Queens County Farm Museum, and the Wyckoff Farmhouse have developed partnerships with community groups to bring local food into the neighborhood.

This summer, Old Stone House (OSH) in Brooklyn will be embarking on its fourth year of working with Community Markets on a Sunday farmer’s market. The partnership between OSH and Community Markets, a group dedicated to “making locally grown produce and locally made products readily available and at the same time providing an ideal place for the community to come together,” draws more people to the park and to the house. According to Executive Director Kim Maier, this partnership “reinforces OSH’s historic relationship with the landscape as well as our engagement with environmental and native and useful plants in the present. Held at Washington Park on 5th Avenue and 4th Street in Brooklyn, this market is open every Sunday from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm from May through December.

The Queens County Farm Museum (QCFM) has developed a relationship with Greenmarket Farmers Markets of New York and has since seen a blooming of new visitors and volunteers. Amy Fischetti-Boncado, Executive Director, credits the buzz around sustainable and local food for the increased attention given to their site.

QCFM has made great connections with the community, and its visitor base has expanded to include younger people who visit the farm, volunteer, and come to learn how to start their own gardens. Since school tours are given at the market to teach urban youth about local agriculture, QCFM has also been able to expand its visiting school groups. Mrs. Fischetti-Boncado calls it “one big healthy circle!” QCFM produces such items as honey, eggs, and vegetables and sells them every Friday at the Union Square Farmers Market in Manhattan.

Brooklyn’s Wyckoff Farmhouse, in collaboration with Just Food, a nonprofit organization that supports urban agriculture, has developed the Community Demonstration Garden. The garden, says Wyckoff Executive Director Byron Saunders, “brings to life the site’s agrarian history and actively engages the local community in the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum through its weekly farmers market.” The garden has been successful in producing over 30 vegetable crops and 15 herbs and flower crops, and in 2006 the market was expanded to include new vendors and food stamp access. The market is open on Thursdays from June to October on Clarendon Road near Ralph Avenue.

Plugging into this new trend has been a great way for the Conservancy to get folks out to visit. These partnerships with local nonprofits to develop markets not only cultivate new audiences for the houses, they provide an important community service that enriches the health and vibrancy of our city.

Philadelphia History

The roof raisers enjoy special events like this behind-the-scenes tour of the New York State Pavilion at the 1964 World’s Fair Site. Special thanks to John Krawchuk, Parks Director of Historic Preservation, for leading the April tour.

HISTORIC HOUSE TRUST OF NEW YORK CITY

SUMMER 2010

HISTORIC HOUSE TRUST OF NEW YORK CITY

SUMMER 2010
The Ubiquitous Oyster

Nineteenth-century fast food in New York wasn’t McDonald’s. It was the ubiquitous oyster stalls, cellars, and bars, where patrons could dash in and, for a reasonable price, quickly consume a plate of oysters. Like McDonald’s, the food was plentiful, predictable, affordable, and appealed to a wide variety of social classes. And like today’s street food, oysters were an easy bite on the go.

Alice Austen documented life during the late 19th century with her camera. She was particularly interested in scenes of street life among the working class. Here she captures men shucking oysters, New York’s “fast food” of the day. Alice Austen Collection, Staten Island Historical Society.

Food, oysters were an easy “something” to believe to be the remnant of a stucco coating comprised of animal hair, oyster shells, and other organic additives that once covered the house. Typical of the 18th century, the stucco coating would have covered imperfections of the building materials—brick and different types of stone—and provided a protective coating. Microscopic analysis of the stucco remnants also shows the presence of a gray lime wash, probably tinted to mimic the color of the stone.

When sourcing a historically appropriate material for pathways at our historic houses, we often turn toward crushed oyster shell pathways. Most oyster shells today are recycled back into the oyster production industry, and many discarded shells are used to create new ocean habitats for oysters and other marine life. Historically, oyster shells often were crushed and installed as paths in parks and estates across the city. Not only was this a creative reuse of a byproduct, but the crushed shells helped reflect back available light to assist pedestrians in finding their way down the path in the days before street lamps. A visitor can find crushed oyster shell paths at the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, surrounding their gardening beds, and around the kitchen garden at the Van Cortlandt House Museum.

The influence of oysters in New York goes beyond noted streets like Pearl, which was named after a shell mound in lower Manhattan, and even beyond the lucrative industry surrounding them. One of the first fully recyclable materials, they have been incorporated into the very fabric of New York’s built environment.

Making Tabby

1 part lime
1 part water
1 part sand
1 part oyster shells & ash

Mix thoroughly and apply as a covering to exterior surfaces. It will dry to a hard finish and act as a protection against water infiltration.

Mollusks and Mortar:

The Influence of the Oyster on Historic Buildings

By Jonathan Rellion and Sarah Tseng

Fried, smoked, steamed, broiled, raw, baked—these are just some of the ways that we eat oysters, which have been a source of sustenance since prehistoric times. Cultivated and traded in Roman times, harvested in the 19th century to feed a growing urban working class, and depleted in the 20th century enough to require restoration efforts in many areas, oysters remain part of our daily existence.

The history of New York is inexorably intertwined with the oyster, a once-abundant mollusk found in the Hudson River, the East River, and the Long Island Sound. It fed New York’s ever-changing population. For example, the Lenape Native American tribes that once called Mannahatta to the densely packed immigrants of the 18th and 19th centuries, when harvesting was banned due to polluted waters. Not only did the oyster provide sustenance over the centuries, it offered a substantial and wonderfully useful byproduct: the oyster shell.

Oyster shells proved to be useful in a number of ways, especially in construction. They might be used to make a cement-like aggregate called tabby, popular in the coastal south; to create a lime paint used in a mortar or plaster; or simply ground up to supply gravel for paths. Native American shell mounds, called middens, provided the earliest supply of oyster shells. Middens, or piles of refuse that modern day archeologists use to mark a human presence, were commonly found throughout the five boroughs.

Lime, normally produced from the burning of limestone, is an integral part of historic construction, particularly in mortar and plaster. Where limestone was in short supply, oyster shells—or any other material containing calcium carbonate, such as clam or mussel shells—could be burned to produce lime. A readily available byproduct of New York’s love of the oyster, the oyster shell was quickly integrated into the building techniques of the burgeoning city. Lime, when mixed with sand or another aggregate and water, created the plaster used in constructing walls. Many of the houses in the HHT collection feature these historic building materials, and we still use many of these traditional techniques in restoration work.

Poe Cottage in the Bronx will soon undergo an extensive exterior and interior restoration. During the design phase of the project, HHT and the Parks Department commissioned a report on the condition and analyses of the interior plaster walls. Prepared by Jakobski Berkowitz Conservation, Inc. (now Jakobski Building Conservation), the report found that much of the historic plaster was made with lime—in this case, probably from oyster shells.

If you look closely at some of our historic houses, you may also see the tiny white flecks of oyster shells embedded into the mortar between the brick and stone. At the Van Cortlandt House Museum in the Bronx and the Conference House on Staten Island, oyster shells were used as aggregate in the mortar. Given the proximity to the nearby Van Cortlandt Park and the abundance of oysters in the 17th century, oyster shells would have been an obvious choice for creating building materials for the Conference House.

On closer inspection of the façades of the Van Cortlandt House Museum, you might also notice something on the stone. Brownish in color, that “something” is believed to be the remnant of a stucco coating comprised of animal hair, oyster shells, and other organic additives that once covered the house. Typical of the 18th century, the stucco coating would have covered imperfections of the building materials—brick and different types of stone—and provided a protective coating. Microscopic analysis of the stucco remnants also shows the presence of a gray lime wash, probably tinted to mimic the color of the stone.

When sourcing a historically appropriate material for pathways at our historic houses, we often turn toward crushed oyster shell pathways. Most oyster shells today are recycled back into the oyster production industry, and many discarded shells are used to create new ocean habitats for oysters and other marine life. Historically, oyster shells often were crushed and installed as paths in parks and estates across the city. Not only was this a creative reuse of a byproduct, but the crushed shells helped reflect back available light to assist pedestrians in finding their way down the path in the days before street lamps. A visitor can find crushed oyster shell paths at the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, surrounding their gardening beds, and around the kitchen garden at the Van Cortlandt House Museum.

The influence of oysters in New York goes beyond noted streets like Pearl, which was named after a shell mound in lower Manhattan, and even beyond the lucrative industry surrounding them. One of the first fully recyclable materials, they have been incorporated into the very fabric of New York’s built environment.

Fried Oreo Cakes

HHT is partnering with the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program (ISP) to present a new project as part of the ISP exhibition Undercurrents: Experimental Ecosystems in Recent Art. Artist Gina Badger’s project, Rates of Accumulation, includes a sound art composition to be broadcast on FM radio from the Little Red Lighthouse.

(left) Oysters have played a significant role in the history of New York—in more ways than one. Students from Columbia University conducted an analysis of the exterior masonry at the 18th century Van Cortlandt House Museum in the Bronx. Their investigation found traces of lime and lime, indicating that the house may at one time have been covered in stucco. The shells are still visible in the mortar today.

(right) This hand-drawn postcard shows what the Van Cortlandt House may have looked like covered in stucco. Mid Manhattan Library Picture Collection.

The broadcast weaves together oyster sounds recorded underwater near a natural oyster reef, the imagined aural history of the lighthouse, and ambient moments from other sites in New York. Badger has also created drawings and a multi-channel video installation incorporating footage of the Hudson River and Manhattan skyline filmed from the top of the lighthouse.

Rates of Accumulation on view at the Little Red Lighthouse, May 27 – June 19 178th Street on the Hudson River

Whitney
(continued from page 5)

Richmond Town. The reflective surface would have been


Throughout much of the 20th century, Seabury

leaving the neighborhood. Seabury would feel right

reaches of the globe. Each of these establishments

classic techniques with ingredients from the farthest

very culinarily creative fusion restaurants that blend

searing vindaloo curries, Polish pierogies, a Japanese

snacks to go with the wine, by the glass with

whether one fancies a chic Italian bar offering wines

stop in an endless array of eateries and markets,

condominiums and trendy restaurants. Within a few

renaissance, with architecturally distinctive luxury

become synonymous with skid row, flophouses,

in the late 19th century, wealthy families had already
decamped uptown, and the nearby Bowery would

become synonymous with skid row, flophouses,

a paltry two blocks long, hardly compare to these

a roast pig, large or small, as the center attraction.

booths lining each side of it, in every booth there was

remarkable, Broadway being three miles long, and

sugar, and many other indescribables. But what was

summer 2010

stoops and share fruits and treats while everyone chats.

everyone interacts—in the heat of the summer everyone comes outside to sit on

parties. Emily loves her Washington Heights neighborhood because of the way

day, and especially loves performing as a servant at the museum’s colonial tea

volunteer at Morris-Jumel Mansion. She serves as an educator for both youth

and adult programs, assists with special events such as colonial chocolate

has ever felt like she has combined her love of education with her need for

explains. Until recently Emily worked as a stage manager for a theater company.

same energy as color has. They are straightforward, simple, and honest,” Emily

has a lot of stuff—and it’s not “tasteful” enough!” In truth, her environment is a

maps hung on the walls. “Adults cringe at my apartment,” she muses. “I don’t

and leaves the neighborhood. Seabury would feel right at home.

Merryat quote from Andrew F. Smith, “The Food and Drink of New

England”.

Cornbread fades in a traditional oven on the hearth of the Guyan-Lake-Tyson House’s 1820s kitchen at Historic Richmond Town. The reflective surface would have been used to control and contain heat from the fire.

CORNBREAD

Historic Richmond Town

2 c cup flour
2 pinch salt
1½ tsp spoon baking soda
2 c cupermal
1 c cup honey
2 tbsp sugar
2 eggs
1½ c cup sour milk, add 1 tsp cider vinegar per cup

CATHERINE WYCKOFF’S WASHINGTON CAKE

Wyckoff Farmhouse c. 1855

½ lb of butter
¾ lb of sugar
1 lb of flour
4 eggs
1 cup of cream
1 teaspoon (a heauster, or like baking powder)
spice
fruit (such as raisins or currants)

Each of HHT’s sites presents different opportunities to explore foods past and present. The following “receipts,” as recipes were known, are simply lists of ingredients. In the past, cooks relied heavily on an oral tradition of passing on recipes, so the preparer would have known how to assemble the listed ingredients and just needed an aide-memoire to jog her memory on quantities. Try your hand at baking like a colonial dame!

Machine-printed wallpaper, c. 1850–1860. Room-specific wallpaper designs have a long history, and this pattern of chickens and roosters feeling would have been appropriate for the kitchen. The gold stippled background, so popular in 19th-century design, becomes the grain on which the chickens feed. Gift of Wendy Wines, Cooper Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

FOR THE END OF EACH DAY, Emily Provance walks up the 68 stairs to get to her 4th floor walk-up just a few blocks from the Morris-Jumel Mansion Museum. Although sparsely furnished, her one-bedroom apartment is awash in colorful objects: curtains, rubber ducks, hooks, and maps hung on the walls. “Adults cringe at my apartment,” she muses. “I don’t have a lot of stuff and it’s not ‘tasteful’ enough!” In truth, her environment is a direct reflection of her professional love: education. In fact, volunteering to help with educational programming at Morris-Jumel Mansion is the first time Emily has ever felt like she has combined her love of education with her need for feeling more grounded in a place.

“My apartment is full of childlike, colorful objects because kids have the same energy as color has. They are straightforward, simple, and honest,” Emily explains. Until recently Emily worked as a stage manager for a theater company. Her life consisted of traveling the country, but as a result she never had a permanent address or grew roots in any one community—until now. Emily gave up her well-paying job to pursue her true love of education and now works for a nonprofit organization called LEAP. Learning through an Extended Arts Program, where she teaches all kinds of arts programs across the boroughs. Her love of teaching stems from growing up in Illinois, when her parents taught her how to

get out of a cornfield if she ever got lost in one. “That may sound odd,” she laughs, “but in Illinois, it is as important to teach that to children as it is to teach kids in New York City not to speak to strangers.”

Even though her teaching schedule is grueling, she still manages to volunteer at Morris-Jumel Mansion. She serves as an educator for both youth and adult programs, assists with special events such as Colonial Chocolate Day, and especially loves performing as a servant at the museum’s colonial tea parties. Emily loves her Washington Heights neighborhood because of the way everyone interacts—in the heat of the summer everyone comes outside to sit on stoops and share fruits and treats while everyone chats.

For the first time in her life, she now has her own apartment—full of books and rubber ducks.