



## THE TRUST

The Historic House Trust of New York City is a nonprofit organization founded in 1989 to help the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation preserve its collection of historic houses. The Trust works with Parks and the nonprofit boards of each house to restore, interpret, and promote the sites, which span 350 years of New York City life. From modest farmers' cottages to grand mansions, the 23 sites in the Trust's collection are located in all five boroughs and chronicle a wide range of cultural, historical, and architectural aspects of New York City.

One by one, the houses were saved by concerned citizens, civic organizations, or descendants of the houses' owners. Gradually they were acquired by the City, brought under the care of the Trust, and preserved. When the Trust was created, many of the buildings in its collection were in disrepair and the first mission was to stabilize them. While conservation remains a central focus, the Trust has expanded its services and aims to present the sites as a unified collection and strengthen the relationship between the buildings and the urban landscapes around them.

The Trust's staff includes experts in the following six areas: conservation, care of collections, education and interpretation, property management, fundraising, and marketing. Typical services provided by the Trust's staff include consultation on restoration projects, museum exhibitions and education programs; assistance with fundraising and promotion; and providing training opportunities for house staff and board members.

## PARTNERING WITH PARKS

Under the New York City Charter, the Department of Parks & Recreation is charged with the care and management of these houses for the beneficial use of the public. As stated in a 2002 memorandum of understanding, the Trust is in a public/private partnership with Parks, under the supervision of the Parks Commissioner and the Trust's Board of Directors, to oversee care and operation of the houses and to foster coordination of activities between Parks and the houses' boards and staffs. Parks partially funds the Trust, providing office space and assigning certain Parks employees to work exclusively for the Trust. In this capacity, the Trust serves as a liaison between the houses and city government.

## THE HOUSES

Collectively, the 23 sites, which reside in parks across the five boroughs, tell the story of New York City's evolution—and America's history in microcosm—from its beginnings as a Dutch outpost, through the American Revolution, to its rise as a mercantile center and great 20th-century city. Each house tells the story of a family or era, letting visitors experience—through scale, feel, texture, color, smell, and sound—how Americans really lived their lives in the past.

Many of the historic houses, most of which are New York City Landmarks and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are open to the public as museums. They offer cultural opportunities ranging from museum exhibitions to education programs to special events for more than 750,000 visitors each year, 480,000 of whom are New York City schoolchildren. Ambassadors from the past, the Trust's historic houses capture and preserve New York City's colorful and fascinating history.

Admission fees and hours, including group and guided tours, vary by site.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT**  
[www.historichousetrust.org](http://www.historichousetrust.org) or call 212-360-8282

## CONSERVATION

The Trust's Conservation staff consults on and manages all restoration projects, ranging from smaller repairs to large-scale capital projects. These projects include those funded individually by the houses, by the Trust, or through the City's capital budget. The Trust's Conservators offer expert consultation and ensure that work performed on the houses is historically accurate. The Trust approaches projects holistically, using not only the structural needs, but the sites' history, collections, and cultural landscape to make informed decisions. The Trust also sets high standards for day-to-day maintenance and serves as a liaison between Parks and the houses to coordinate routine repairs and emergency work.

The Parks Department and the Trust recently collaborated on a multi-year capital restoration of the Hendrick I. Lott House in Brooklyn, which was awarded the New York Landmarks Conservancy's Lucy G. Moses Award for excellence in historic preservation.



## CARE OF COLLECTIONS

The nonprofit organization that operates each site is generally responsible for its collections and furnishings; however, most lack the resources to employ a curator. The Trust's full-time Curator collaborates with the house staffs to ensure accuracy of exhibitions and interpretation and advises on the care of the museums' fine and decorative art objects. The Trust also works to improve general curatorial practices at all of the houses.

The Trust helps the house museums monitor and improve environmental conditions in order to protect the collections.

## EDUCATION

Educating residents and visitors about New York's rich history is one of the Trust's highest priorities. Each year nearly half a million children participate in diverse education programs at the Trust's sites. Through hands-on experiences, they learn what life was like hundreds of years ago, gaining a perspective that no textbook can offer. The Trust hired its first full-time Education Director in 2006 to help standardize and promote these programs, upgrade teaching materials, and ensure that each program is aligned with state and citywide curriculum standards. The Trust also participates in the Teaching American History grant program (TAHG), which facilitates professional training for history teachers.

The Trust teaches educators how to use resources in their own community to teach history.



## BUILDING BETTER ORGANIZATIONS

The Trust has recently expanded its mission to include strengthening and training the small nonprofits that operate each house museum. It provides professional development workshops for the houses' board and staff members to sharpen their skills in fundraising, board governance, and strategic planning. The Trust also advises member houses on fundraising initiatives and administrative issues such as appropriate by-laws, accounting procedures, and staff hiring.

## PROMOTION

Since its inception, the Trust has worked to increase public awareness of the individual sites and the collection as a whole. It produces and distributes collection-wide promotional materials such as brochures, rack cards, maps, and a quarterly newsletter. In 2006, the Trust re-launched its identity with a newly designed logo, website, and other collateral materials to brand the Trust and its member houses as a unified collection. With the addition of a full-time Communications Director in 2008, the Trust is expanding its collaboration with the houses on media coverage, marketing materials, cross promotions, and citywide events.

## FUNDRAISING

The Trust's Development staff works with the member houses to secure funding from foundations, individuals, corporations, and government agencies for a full range of projects. Each year, the Trust also awards grants to the sites for general operations and special projects. The Development staff also maintains a membership program and continuously researches potential funders.