

A photograph of the Morris-Jumel Mansion, a large white neoclassical building with a portico supported by four columns and a balcony on the second floor. The building is surrounded by green trees.

Monthly Mansion Minute

News from the Morris-Jumel Mansion



What's New at
the Mansion



Restoration
Report



Education
Station



Calendar



Spotlight On
Eliza Jumel

Mansion Minute

Letter from the Executive Director

Hello everyone,

Since moving to New York City a year and a half ago from the Midwest, I have enjoyed much that it has to offer and been proud of Morris-Jumel Mansion's place in this diverse fabric of NYC. In the past couple of months, I attended the Women in the Heights art exhibition opening at the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NOMAA), an historic dance and music performance at the United Palace Theatre, a New York Junior League Women's History Month panel, and a lecture on The New York Society Library in the age of slavery and abolition.

In addition to all these, I have also attended MJM's own varied programs, and I found Jean Zimmerman's Virtual Parlor Chat during Women's History Month on the changes for women between Dutch and English rule over this city especially fascinating. It made me wonder at how different it would have been had we adopted Dutch ways concerning women's rights! I was surprised and delighted to see so many little ones and their families in the Mansion for our Easter Egg Hunt. There is clearly room to grow in our programming for Pre-Kindergarten. So when you are choosing which event to take in from the great wealth of NYC offerings, don't forget to check out what's happening at Morris-Jumel Mansion!

Yours,
Catherine Hughes



What's New at the Mansion

On March 23rd, despite the pouring rain, MJM hosted a fabulous Easter Egg Hunt, in partnership with Ivy Fairchild of Landmark Consultants. Many thanks to Assemblyman Al Taylor and MJM Board member Warren Whitlock for sponsoring the event. Our more than 260 guests enjoyed activities that were moved inside like storytime, face painting, and the chance to have their picture taken with the Easter Bunny. Keep an eye on our website and this newsletter for more free family-oriented programs, and check out our monthly ConEd Family and Community Day events, including this month making seed mosaics.

Face painting





Click here to watch the Virtual Parlor Chat about the restoration.

Phase 1 Progressing

This past month has been a very critical time for Morris-Jumel Mansion's Exterior Restoration and Accessibility Project, which we know is of great interest to our supporters and community. The Historic House Trust has been managing a competitive bidding process to find a contractor that is best suited to complete the first phase of construction. To ensure that competitive prices are received, they have extended the due date to provide additional bidders time to prepare and execute their bids and backup documents. Project Manager Danielle Monopoli has invited additional qualified contractors to submit bids, and both the Historic House Trust and the Morris-Jumel Mansion teams are confident that the extension of the bidding process will prove beneficial to the project.

The Historic House Trust hopes to provisionally award the project to a contractor by mid-April and begin submitting the paperwork to register for construction as soon as possible after award. The Morris-Jumel Mansion and Historic House Trust teams thank the public for its understanding and patience while everyone works to ensure that the project is set up for success during this sensitive construction project. In the meantime, Historic House Trust expects to receive authorization to move forward with the additional shoring at the south porch soon, to be designed by structural engineers (SGH), to address the failure of the easternmost column. The Historic House Trust and the Morris-Jumel staff, Board, and volunteers all look forward to celebrating a renewed and restored Mansion in the near future.

Meanwhile, all programs and events will continue during the construction phase, and we will welcome visitors to our building and grounds. Register for the April 17 Virtual Parlor Chat to learn more from the experts involved in the project.

Calendar



Virtual Parlor Chat

Restoration Update Part 2

Wednesday, April 17 7:00-8:30PM

[Register Here](#)



ConEd Family and Community Day

Springtime Seed Mosaics

Saturday, April 13 1:00-3:00PM

No Registration Required



Paranormal Investigation

Saturday, April 6 7:00-9:30PM

[Register here](#)



Harlem Chamber Players

Free Outdoor Concert:

An American Dreams PopUp Concert

Part of the Harlem Culture Crawl

Saturday, April 27 3:00-4:00PM

RSVP [here](#)

Mansion Minute

Education Station

Cultural Immigrant Initiative

For the second year, Morris-Jumel Mansion is proud to have received a grant from New York City Council discretionary funds, through Council Member Carmen de la Rosa for a Cultural Immigrant Initiative. The Education team at MJM has created a program with this funding called What Does It Mean To Be An American? This question has always been at heart of immigration, including when our fledgling nation became independent and “Americans” had to be defined as separate from subjects of the British Crown.



To implement the program, MJM is partnering with PS 4, the Duke Ellington Elementary School near the Mansion, where a third-grade class has been chosen to participate. Loren Silber, a veteran MJM educator, will be the lead Educator of the program, working with teacher Donna Lennon and her students. Beginning in April, they will examine historic documents and artifacts, and learn about historic biographies connected to the Mansion. Through art activities, students will process their responses to their research, and consideration of the primary question of what it means to be an American. They will also be invited to share and incorporate their own perspectives and lived experience. Sessions will take place at both the school and MJM.

The culmination of the program in early June will be an exhibition made by the students, which will be on display at the Mansion. Parents, family, and friends will be invited to a special event to hear the students present their findings and show their exhibition.

Spotlight On Eliza Jumel

Born Betsey Bowen in Providence, Rhode Island, on April 2, ca. 1775 to John Bowen and Phebe Kelley, the woman who would become Eliza Jumel had a tough early life. Her mother was arrested for keeping a “Disorderly House” in 1785. Her father drowned at sea in 1786. It is believed that during Eliza’s youth in Providence she was indentured to the family of a sea captain named Samual Allen. Eliza’s mother eventually went on to marry Johnathan Clarke in 1790, but Eliza and the family remained in poverty. Eventually, her mother and stepfather were expelled from Providence on the count of vagrancy, which caused them to move to the Carolinas. Tragedy struck once again when Eliza’s mother, along with her stepfather, died in 1798, leaving Eliza and her siblings orphaned.

As a young woman, Betsey moved to New York City. Upon her arrival, she changed her name to Eliza Brown, and became an actress at New York’s Park Theater. Records show she might have also run a boarding house and then owned a grocery. Her life changed when she met the wealthy wine merchant Stephen Jumel. They married in 1804 and purchased the Morris-Jumel Mansion in 1810.

During her marriage to Stephen Jumel, Eliza’s savvy intelligence flourished and she gained an interest in art and business. On an 1815 trip to Paris with her husband, Eliza became enamored with European art and began to collect. Eventually, archival records show that she boasted a collection of over 200 pieces, establishing her as a major American collector of European art.

Using her husband’s power of attorney while he was in France, Eliza’s business acumen led her to begin buying and selling properties, which increased the their fortune significantly. When Stephen Jumel died in 1832, Eliza was an extremely wealthy widow, living in comfort at the Mansion for the rest of her life — a far cry from her humble beginnings.

There are many open questions about Eliza’s life, and we will share more about her life after Stephen Jumel’s death in another Mansion Minute. We do know she was a fascinating and independent woman, who survived and overcame poverty, defying the social constructs of her time by becoming an immensely successful businesswoman and a prominent figure in New York. April 2 was her birthday, and we always look forward to raising a toast in her honor and remembering the incredible woman that she became.



Mansion Minute



JOIN US FOR THE 2024 MORRIS-JUMEL MANSION GEORGE WASHINGTON DINNER

SUNDAY, JULY 14, 2024

6:00 - 9:00 PM



Liberty • Equality • Brotherhood

Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité

Save the Date

Click [here](#) for up to date info on tickets

Mansion Minute

Thank you to our members and new donors

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