Phelps Mansion Museum
Teacher’s Resource Pack
**Welcome to the Phelps Mansion Museum!**

We invite you to step back in history to America’s Gilded Era in Binghamton New York. Built by noted architect Isaac G. Perry in 1870 for Binghamton Businessman Sherman D. Phelps, this mansion has remained a focal point of Binghamton’s Historic Downtown for 145 years. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and later established under the NYS Board of Regents as a museum in 2005, the Phelps Mansion Museum is a dedicated historic house museum for the Gilded and Progressives Eras in Central New York.

In order for you and your students to gain the most out of your visit to the Phelps Mansion Museum this resource pack has been designed to provide you with additional information to support the new ideas presented during the tour.

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*Vocabulary Terms*
A glossary of terms introduced on the tour including 19th century ideas, architecture, and movements.

*History*
Here is a brief history about the Phelps mansion and some fun facts regarding Binghamton at the end of the 19th century

*In-Class Activities*
Activity worksheets designed to be photocopied and used in class before or after your visit.

*On Site Workshops*
The Phelps Mansion Museum is pleased to offer a variety of educational programs. Currently our workshops focus on Grade 4. All programs may be adjusted to serve younger or older audiences. These workshops can be incorporated during your visit.

*In-School Presentations with Yesterday’s Gentlemen*
We are please to offer in-school presentations that meet current NYS Department of education standards with Yesterday’s Gentlemen. These 45-minute in-school presentations are developed to work with a single classroom. Programs are presented by the staff of Yesterday’s Gentlemen with the support of the Phelps Mansion Museum. Public schools in New York States may be able to have a portion of the fee covered by Broome-Tioga BOCES. For scheduling, or additional information on any of these programs, contact Yesterday’s Gentlemen at (607) 687-3880 or the Phelps Mansion Museum at (607) 722-4873 or info@phelpsmansion.org.

*Further Reading & Resources*
A list of print, online, and other publications for further research and supporting materials on the Gilded and Progressive Eras.

*Why don’t we touch the objects?*
Even if your hands are clean, they still have oil. The oil in your hands can damage wood, fabric, art, and other objects found throughout the mansion. Please don’t touch and help us preserve our objects for future visitors!
Vocabulary Terms

**Gilded Age (1870-1892/3)**
During this time the U.S. population and economy grew quickly. There was a lot of political corruption and corporate financial mis-dealings and many wealthy people lived very fancy lives. The term *Gilded Age* came from a book written by Mark Twain. “Gilded” means covered with gold on the outside, but not really golden on the inside. The Gilded Age ended with the Panic of 1893.

**Industrialism**
A social system in which industry and factories are the basis of a country’s economy.

**Second Empire Architecture**
An architectural style that was popular from 1865 to 1890. This architecture style features a mansard roof with slate shingles, a tower, highly symmetrical, iron cresting on the roof, and central feature windows. Architect Isaac Gale Perry designed the Phelps Mansion in the Second Empire style.

**The Progressive Movement (1893 to 1920)**
This movement embraced a wide array of social and economic problems, including women’s suffrage, Prohibition, trust-busting, shorter work hours, the elimination of child labor, the adoption of social welfare programs, the adoption of a graduated income tax, and the conservation of natural resources to name a few.

**Muckrakers**
Expose writers who informed the public about many corporate evils and social injustices in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. Many muckracker articles and books pushed the U.S. government to launch social reform campaigns and contributed to the Progressive Movement.

**Square Deal**
The collective term for Theodore Roosevelt’s set of progressive domestic policies, which aimed to help regulate big businesses, help organized labor, protect consumers, and conserve the country’s dwindling natural resources.

**Conservatory**
A room designed with many windows to incorporate the late 19th century love of gardening. Conservatories originated in the 16th century when wealthy landowners sought to cultivate citrus fruits such as lemons and oranges that began to appear on their dinner tables brought by traders from warmer regions of the Mediterranean. Also known as a solarium or sunroom.

**Parlor**
The parlor was the showcase of a family’s possessions, a prime indicator of their tastes and social status. The parlor would be filled with expensive, exotic, and novel items such as vases, lamps, teapots, statuettes, and dried flowers. The parlor also served as a primary gathering place where family members convened for games, conversation, music, and other diversions from the rigors of career and homemaking.

**Immigrant**
A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

**Urbanization**
When society transforms from a rural-based, low-population village into a city with multiple industries and increasing population all in a centralized area.

**Robber Barons**
A negative term for the wealthy and powerful 19th century American businessmen (Captains of Industry) who used unfair practices. These practices included paying extremely low wages, squashing competition by acquiring competitors in order to create monopolies and eventually raise prices, and schemes to sell stock at inflated prices.
History

In 1868 and 1869 Sherman David Phelps, a banker and businessman, bought three adjoining properties along Court Street. The three existing houses were torn down so that construction could begin on a new home. The initial cost for the mansion was projected at $70,000. Local architect Isaac Gale Perry was hired to design the new home, and John Stewart Wells was hired as the primary contractor for the project. Wells owned a local brick manufacturing plant. Wells’ construction was completed in 1871 at an estimated cost of $119,000.

When the Phelps Mansion was built, it was the last in a row of elegant homes on the east end of Court Street. The site was most likely chosen since it was close to Mr. Phelps’ new Susquehanna Valley Bank. In 1872 “Judge” Phelps moved into his new home. That same year he was elected mayor of the new town of Binghamton.

The three-floor Second Empire-style home included a full kitchen and cook’s apartment in the cellar. The first floor had a variety of rooms for entertainment. There was also a kitchen, parlor, dining room, formal waiting area, and solarium. The second floor contained the family’s five bedrooms, a sitting room, and two bathrooms. A third floor included a billiard room, servants’ rooms, and storage. At the time Judge Phelps moved into the mansion, the household included the widower Judge Phelps, two teen-aged sons from his second marriage, a widowed niece who acted as social hostess, two farm girls who served as maids, and freed slaves who served as carriage driver and cook.

One of the highlights of the Binghamton social season was the New Year’s Day celebrations at the mansion, especially the one held in 1876 as part of the American Centennial. While the other mansions along Court Street were open to the public, it was the Phelps Mansion that was singled out for its beauty and hospitality.

Judge Phelps died on November 13, 1878 of Fells Disease. He was laid in state on the first floor of the mansion, and later buried beside his second wife in Spring Forest Cemetery. Following his death, Judge Phelps’ sons Robert Sherman and Arthur David lived in the house for a time. Arthur died on October 30, 1880 and Robert died on December 14, 1881. Robert’s widow Harriett “Hattie” Storey Taylor Phelps had lifetime use of the estate and lived in the mansion until her death in 1882.

The estate was passed on to Judge Phelps’ nieces and nephews, none of whom wanted to live in
the house. The mansion sat empty for several years being maintained by Andrew Jackson, a freed slave who had served the family as carriage driver for many years.

In 1889 the mansion was sold to George Harry Lester, a local shoe manufacturer. Mr. Lester was in the process of purchasing land near Binghamton to develop Lestershire (now Johnson City) for the purpose of enlarging his factory. Due to financial difficulties, the mansion was sold at an auction. In 1899 John Stewart Wells, the original contractor, purchased the mansion and rented it to the James Christopher Truman family. They lived in the home until about 1905 when Mr. Truman retired as the postmaster. In 1905 the home was again sold, and this time it was purchased as the new home for the Monday Afternoon Club. The club owned the property until it was transferred to the Phelps Mansion Museum to be operated as a historic house museum.
Interesting Facts

- The first train arrived on the Erie Railroad in 1848 and Binghamton was incorporated as a city in 1867.

- Binghamton industries included: cigars, sleighs, carriages, scales, book publishing, lumber, washing machines, pianos, furniture, oil refining, electrical supplies, machine shops, and leather tanning.

- Binghamton was given the name the “Parlor City” due to the large stately homes that emerged from new wealth of its industrial growth.

- By 1888, the cigar industry was the largest industry employing 6,000 people.

- Sherman Phelps was born in 1814 in Simsbury, CT.

- Sherman was a founder, owner and President of the Binghamton Gaslight Company.

- Sherman Phelps served as an associated judge in northern Pennsylvania for 2 years and for the rest of his life was referred to as Judge Phelps.

- The Phelps mansion was budgeted to cost $70,000 but the final cost came to $119,000, not including land and demolition.

- The staircase cost $10,000 to construct and it is made of Black Walnut, a wood also used in wooden airplane propellers and gunstocks.

- The term “Gilded Age” was coined by American author Mark Twain.
Pre-Visit In-Class Activities

I’ve come to call...
19\textsuperscript{th} century calling cards

Also known as a \textit{visiting card}, this small piece of paper would have one’s name printed on it and the card were specially decorated. These visiting cards became an important part of \textit{etiquette} with many rules. A person would not expect to see another person in his home, unless invited or introduced, without first leaving his visiting card for the person at his home. He would leave his card and might expect to receive a card at his one home in response. This would signal that a personal visit and meeting at home would be welcomed. On the other hand, if no card was sent in return, or it the card was sent back in an envelope, a personal visit was discouraged!

\textbf{Did you know?} If a card was left with a turned corner, it meant that the card had been left in person, rather than by a servant.

For this activity, you are to design your own calling card and bring it with you to the Phelps Mansion. Be sure to decorate the card to represent you and include your name and school! You will present your cards before you are invited into the mansion for your tour.

See example below.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
I have come to call \\
Your name \\
School name \\
Date \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
Pre-Visit In-Class Activities

Parlor Games

Long before television, or video games, or cell phones, what did people do for entertainment! Parlor games were fun, simple, and educational. It didn’t matter your social standing because everyone participated in parlor games. Try out a few below...

Lookabout
One person picks a small object and shows it to everyone in the room. Everyone else then leaves the room while the one person hides the item “in plain sight” among the other items in the room. Once the item is hidden, everyone else returns and tries to spot the item. Say nothing when you find it. Instead, they sit down once they have located the item. The last person standing is “it” and must hide the next item.

The Minister’s Cat
Sit in a circle. Going around the circle each person must think of an adjective for the Minister’s Cat in alphabetic order.

Person One: “The Minister’s Cat is Adorable.”
Person Two: “The Minister’s Cat is Bashful.”
Person Three: “The Minister’s Cat is Cranky.”

To make this game more of a challenge, have each person repeat the previous adjectives said.
Person Four: “The Minister’s Cat is adorable, bashful, cranky, and devious.”

Throwing the Smile
In this game the object is to win by NOT smiling. Everyone will form a circle. The chosen person will stand in the middle going about with a smile on his face, trying desperately hard to make someone else laugh or giggle. Then he will hurriedly wipe the smile from off his face and quickly throw his straight look toward someone trying to get them to laugh. This will continue until he can make someone laugh. Who ever laughs must sit out the rest of the game.
Post-Visit Activities

The Year is 1870

The President of the United States is Ulysses S. Grant.

There are 38,558,371 people living in the United States.

There are thirty-seven states.

The construction of the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City begins on January 3.

On January 10 John D. Rockefeller incorporates Standard oil, which would become the largest oil company in the world.

Still in the Reconstruction Era, Virginia and Mississippi rejoin the Union.

Women gain the right to vote in Utah Territory.

Christmas is declared a federal holiday in the United States.

Charles Dickens dies on June 9.

On August 15, the Transcontinental Railroad is completed in Colorado.

Postcards are first used in the United States on October 25.

The National Weather service issues its first weather forecast on November 1. The forecast warns of a windy day in Chicago.

Newspaper, The New York Times calls baseball the “National Game.”

Now, imagine you are living in Binghamton in 1870. Where do you work? Where do you live? What do you do for fun? Answer the following questions below...

1. What is your name?

2. Where do you live?

3. Can you vote?

4. What do you eat for dinner?

5. Can you read?

6. What do you read?

7. How do you listen to music?

8. Where do you work?

9. How much money do you make each week?

10. What activities do you do?
Post Visit In-Class Activities

19th Century Technology
Sherman Phelps instructed Architect Isaac Perry to build a home to impress people. Throughout the mansion you saw a few 19th century technologies that definitely would have impressed people.

Look at each image below and write what you think it is.
Speak Like a Stylish Victorian!

People have always used slang terms. See if you can remember some words and phrases used in the late 19th century! Match each phrase with its meaning below.

- **Making a stuffed bird laugh**
  - A term of endearment for one you love

- **Don’t sell me a dog!**
  - Don’t lie to me

- **Dash my wig!**
  - Something that is ridiculous

- **Chuckaboo!**
  - Smart, presentable

- **Skilamalink!**
  - Oh my goodness

- **Afternoonified**
  - Secret, shady, doubtful
On-Site Workshops

Museum workshops have been designed for Grade 4 in conjunction with NYS Common Core Learning Standards. Our workshops can be altered to accommodate older or younger generations.

- **Innovations! Contraptions! Inventions!**
  Learn about the process of an inventor in the 19th century. Discover stories about local innovators from Binghamton, and see 19th century technologies throughout the mansion. Students will re-create inventions popular in the late 19th century.

- **Gilded Age Mail Order Workshop**
  Discover the effects of mass production and how catalogs created a shared shopping experience and standardized American culture.

- **The Art of the Letter**
  For those in the Gilded Era, letter writing occurred everyday and it was important. Students will re-create late 19th century handwriting using templates from popular copperplate scripts such as French, Palace, and Edwardian.

- **Let’s Play! 19th Century Games & Toys**
  It’s hard to imagine a time without televisions, or smart phones, or tablets...so when lessons were studied and chores were finished, what did children do for fun? Experience 19th century games and toys as they would have been played 150 years ago.

For more information or to include one (or more) of these workshops as part of your visit please contact museum staff at info@phelpsmansion.org or 607 722 4873
In-School Presentations in Conjunction with Yesterday’s Gentlemen

The following in-school presentations have been developed to meet current New York State Department of Education Standards. Each of the 45-minute programs were developed to work with a single classroom. They work well with middle and high school groups given the focus on NYS History and STEM learning standards. Programs are presented by the staff of Yesterday’s Gentlemen with the support of the Phelps Mansion Museum. Public schools in New York State may be able to have a portion of the fee covered by Broome-Tioga BOCES. For scheduling or additional information on any of these programs, contact Yesterday’s Gentlemen at (607) 687-3880 or the Phelps Mansion Museum.

Yesterday’s Gentlemen has been offering education programs tied to cultural and natural history topics. Douglas Weeks began presenting his living history programs several years ago to help students better understand the rich history that so often remains under explored in history books. Working with a team of historians, Mr. Weeks will help students explore some of the lesser-known stories of the average person from the past.

Programs

The Gilded Age

➢ It was Mark Twain who first described the period between 1870 and 1893 as the Gilded Age. It was a time of great wealth and great poverty. A time of innovation and speculation. A time of failing banks and businesses that struggled to survive. The Gilded Age was also the period when New York State saw a tremendous growth. Here in Central New York we saw many of the same highs and lows, but the Gilded Age also ushered in many of the businesses that remain the backbone of the region. Students will be introduced to the challenges and rewards of the Gilded Age both here in New York and throughout the United States.

➢ The presenter will guide students on a trip back in time to the late 1800s. Using a variety of demonstrations, guided imagery, storytelling, stories published in the media of the day and personal diary entries, the students will become familiar with the average worker of the day as well as the business owner, and finally a member of the elite, the “400” of the day.

NYS STANDARDS

➢ Students will understand the relationships and common themes that connect mathematics, science and technology and apply the themes and other areas of learning.

Dr. Crispus Rumex and his Travelling Medicine Show

➢ In the old days when you got sick, it was not uncommon to rely on special tonics, salces, and poultices that were gathered from local plants. These remedies were traditionally passed on from one generation to the next. As time went on some of these remedies were bottles and sold by travelling salesmen. Some of these sellers of patent medicines went on to create some of today’s medical businesses. During this program students will be introduced to the healing powers of plants that can be found around us each and every day.

NYS STANDARDS

➢ Student will understand the relationships and common themes that connect mathematics, science and technology and apply the themes to these and other areas of learning.
War of the Currents

- When electricity was in its infancy two very different models were being developed. Both had potential and it was only a matter of time before things were going to come to a head. Thomas Edison was solidly backing the potential of direct current while George Westinghouse and Nikola Tesla were developing what they called polyphase current. New York State was destined to become the center of this battle.

- This program will introduce students to the many New York State connections to the War of the Currents. Students will be introduced to part of the science behind the generation of and transmission of electricity.

NYS STANDARDS

- Technology has been the driving force in the evolution of society from an agricultural to an industrial to an information base.
- Students will identify technological developments that have significantly accelerated human progress
- Students will explain how technological inventions and innovation have caused global growth and interdependence, stimulated economic competitiveness, created new jobs, and made other jobs obsolete.

To the Mansion Worn

- Today most of us wearing clothing that we purchased in some store. During the Gilded Age (1870 to 1893) very few of the clothes that people wore were purchased in a store. While the French fashions were featured in many of the magazines, most people could not afford them. Even those who were well off would often take these etchings to their local seamstress to have a custom-made gown made up for that special dance. It was not unusual for men and women to go through several changes of clothing throughout the day. This program will guide students through a “typical day” in the life of both the wealthy and the workingperson.

NYS STANDARDS

- Students will understand the relationships and common themes that connect mathematics, science and technology and apply the themes to these and other areas of learning.

Wonders from The Fair

- Before the internet one of the best ways to introduce new technology to the world was to chow them at one of the World’s Expositions. A few of the innovations that were showcased as these Expositions include: the light bulb, air brakes, telephones, electric boats, phonographs, moving sidewalks, computers, and so much more. During this program students will be guided through a few of the technological advancements that were introduced at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, the 1884 Cotton States Exposition, and the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

NYS STANDARDS

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For scheduling, or additional information on any of these programs, please contact Yesterday’s Gentlemen at (607) 687-3880 or the Phelps Mansion Museum at (607) 722-4873, info@phelpsmansion.org
Further Reading & Resources

PRINT


ONLINE

Digital History
http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/era.cfm?eraid=9

Gilded Age PBS
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carnegie/gildedage.html

America’s Story: Gilded Age
http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/gilded/jb_gilded_subj.html