



LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT MUSEUM PLANS NEW CHAPTER

NEW EXHIBITS WILL EXPLORE THE STORIES OF CHINESE, PUERTO RICAN AND JEWISH IMMIGRANTS IN THE MID-20TH CENTURY

January 14, 2014, New York, NY— The Lower East Side Tenement Museum begins a new chapter today as it announces plans for new permanent exhibits exploring the stories of Chinese immigrants, Jewish holocaust survivors, and Puerto Rican migrants who began new lives on the Lower East Side after World War II. The Museum will honor the experiences of these more recent immigrants in conjunction with the German, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrant stories that it currently interprets. Since its founding in 1988, the Museum has been a pioneer in exploring social history and has stimulated dialogue on immigration—both past and present—for millions of visitors.

“Now more than ever, the Tenement Museum’s mission and work is deeply relevant,” said Museum President Morris J. Vogel. “The story of our nation’s immigrants is America’s defining narrative, and the joys and challenges of establishing new lives and new communities continue for present-day immigrants around the world. We’re proud and excited that we’ll soon be able to explore a wider range of these stories for a larger audience.”

The Tenement Museum currently serves 200,000 visitors annually, but turns away many others due to space limitations. These new exhibits will significantly expand the Museum’s capacity as well as its scope. The exhibits are in the early planning stages; an opening date has not yet been set.

As in its exhibits at 97 Orchard Street, the Museum’s new offerings will take a place-based approach to history, interpreting the complex and fascinating stories that unfolded in the 1888 tenement at 103 Orchard Street, located just two doors away from the Museum’s original historic tenement at 97 Orchard. Recent legislation authored by Representative Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) will recognize the building’s significance by expanding an existing law which honors 97 Orchard.

The new exhibits will combine technology and immersive environments to build on this work, inviting visitors to explore re-created homes of past residents in an historic tenement at 103 Orchard Street. They will be located on an upper floor of the building, which also houses the Museum’s Visitor Center, gift shop, and classrooms.

Like the Museum’s existing programs, the new exhibits will explore highly personalized narratives of struggle and adaptation, tracing the family histories of a select group of past residents of 103 Orchard Street. While the Museum’s narrative currently ends in 1935—the year that 97 Orchard Street closed to residents—the more recent history of 103 Orchard Street will enable the Museum to share the stories of post-World War II America. The new exhibit will reveal how Chinese, Puerto Rican and Jewish experiences have intersected, celebrating the interwoven experiences of these diverse groups for the first time in a museum setting.

About the Lower East Side Tenement Museum

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, founded in 1988, is located in a landmarked tenement building at 97 Orchard Street. The building was home to more than 7,000 immigrants from more than 20 nations between 1863 and 1935. Anchored in a neighborhood that has long been home to thousands of poor and working class people, the Tenement Museum is dedicated to using the history of its site as a tool for addressing issues that are still relevant today, including immigration. In 2008 the Museum was honored with the Preserve America Presidential Award and the National Medal for Museum Service.