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## **LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT MUSEUM OPENS “SHOP LIFE” NEW EXHIBIT EXPLORES A CENTURY OF BUSINESSES AT 97 ORCHARD STREET**

**November 29, 2012, New York, NY** — On December 3, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum will debut *Shop Life*, its first new permanent exhibit since 2008. Located on the street level of the Museum’s historic tenement at 97 Orchard Street, the exhibit explores the diverse businesses housed in the building between 1863 and 1988. Through guided tours of re-created environments and the Museum’s first-ever use of interactive technologies, visitors experience the history of the Lower East Side’s vibrant community of immigrant entrepreneurs.

*Shop Life* begins with a re-creation of John and Caroline Schneider’s 19<sup>th</sup> century German beer saloon, which served as an important community gathering space when the neighborhood was known as Kleindeutschland or “Little Germany.” More than a bar, the saloon was also a venue for dining, networking, celebration and debate. Visitors also explore the dining room, kitchen and private quarters of the Schneider family, who lived behind the saloon.

Continuing through a series of preserved rooms in the historic space, visitors learn about other businesses once housed in the building, including Israel and Goldie Lustgarten’s 1890s kosher butcher store, Max Marcus’ 1930s auction house and Sidney and Frances Meda’s 1970s undergarment store.

“With the opening of Shop Life, we invite visitors to explore the individual stories of 97 Orchard Street’s shop keepers, as well as the larger history of the Lower East Side,” said the Museum’s President Morris Vogel. “Through these businesses, immigrant entrepreneurs and their customers forged new American identities and made the United States an entrepreneurial nation.”

*Shop Life* expands the Museum’s historical narrative, which currently ends in 1935 when the final residents left 97 Orchard Street. The exhibit traces the history of the building’s commercial tenants who remained in the building through the 1980’s. The exhibit also represents a significant milestone as the Museum’s first wheelchair-accessible exhibit at 97 Orchard Street.



*Max Marcus’ Auction House at 97 Orchard Street in the 1930’s*

“97 Orchard Street was a place of business for more than a century. Exploring this aspect of the building’s history is an exciting new step for the Museum,” said Vice President of Education Annie Polland. “These businesses were dynamic neighborhood gathering places that played important roles in shaping their communities.”

### **About the Exhibit’s Interactive Technologies**

*Shop Life* features the Museum’s first-ever interactive technologies. Created by Potion Design, these elements will be presented on a re-created sales counter seamlessly integrated into the historic space. Each visitor chooses an object from a shelf of historic “merchandise” associated with various chapters in history. When placed on the sales counter, the chosen object initiates a multi-media presentation.

Historic images, newspaper clips and text are projected from above onto the counter for visitors, and oral histories and other audio clips will be accessible through re-created vintage telephone receivers, allowing visitors to experience the voices, music and ambient sounds of the many shops once located in the space. These audio and visual elements play an important role in making *Shop Life* engaging and exciting for visitors of all ages and abilities.



*Sidney Meda at his 97 Orchard Street underwear shop in the 1970’s*

*Shop Life* concludes with video clips of present-day Lower East Side shopkeepers, including a Dominican bodega owner,

a Jewish fishmonger, a Chinese American baker, an Italian specialty food purveyor, and a Bangladeshi perfume salesman. The stories of these contemporary entrepreneurs make important connections between past and present.

*Shop Life* is made possible through the generous support of The David Berg Foundation. Major support has been provided by American Express, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, which is funded through Community Development Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; public funds from Office of the Mayor and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the Human Endeavor, and the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services. Additional support has been provided by Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, the David L. Klein, Jr. Foundation, The New York Community Trust, and the Sy Syms Foundation.

### **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. 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 contemporary issues, including immigration. The Museum has been honored with the Preserve America Presidential Award and the National Medal for Museum Service.

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