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ART & DESIGN BOOKS DANCE MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION THEATER VIDEO GAMES EVENTS

A SALOON OF YORE

This was the third item in the Nov. 2, 2012
New York Times Art & Design section.

The [Lower East Side Tenement Museum](#) has simulated an 1860s rough-and-tumble bar that used to be on the premises. The bar, set up for a long-term exhibition, "Shop Life," is realistic, down to onion peels in the trash and a spittoon and a chamber pot at the ready. Now in previews, the show opens on Dec. 3 on the ground floor, with ghostly evocations of past commercial tenants in the museum's space.

The original barkeep, John Schneider, was a German immigrant, Civil War veteran and brass band player. Newspaper ads for his bar invited "fine friends and acquaintances as well as the honorable musicians" and promised "a superb lunch," cooked by his wife, Caroline.

[Historic Faux Foods](#), a New Jersey workshop run by the historian Sandy Levins, has molded reproductions of typical German sausages and cakes. Mustard seeds are suspended in a beige crock of fake brine and pickles, and a sculptured worm emerges from a bowlful of apples.

A back room is furnished as the Schneiders' bedroom, with floral upholstered chairs and a turned-wood bedstead draped with a paisley scarf. Thick curtains block the backyard view of outhouses. A sewing machine in one corner suggests that Caroline probably made and repaired clothes for her family and staff, in addition to doing the cooking and cleaning.

In 1885, at 50, she died of tuberculosis. John soon gave up the business and became a shoemaker. "I like to think he just couldn't run this without her," Annie Polland, the museum's vice president for programs and education, said during a recent preview of the space.

Museum staff members have not yet found any Schneider descendants, but they have interviewed people who remember the post-saloon occupants of the ground floor.

In another part of the exhibition, a century-old countertop has been converted into a giant touch screen. Visitors place vintage cocktail shakers and bricks on the surface to activate audio recordings and pop-up graphics (by the interactive design firm [Potion](#)), describing other local businesses: the Lustgarten family's 1890s butcher shop, Max Marcus's 1930s auction house for everything from liquor to machinery, and Sidney Meda's 1970s discount lingerie outlet.

Objects found during museum renovations are also on view. Perfume bottles and makeup containers turned up inside a sealed fireplace, for example. Descendants of Marcus, the auction-house owner, have provided a red leather bookbinding labeled "Solution for Retail Merchandising Problems." The binding is actually a practical joke; it has no pages inside, just a bottle of Scotch and two shot glasses.

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