

THE MERCER ARTS CENTER: THE VILLAGE'S ONLY CULTURAL HANGOUT

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ing year was called Burton's (new London) Theatre. In 1857 Edwin Booth, the "brilliant Shakesperian thespian," opened in Richard III. In 1865 (the theatre had been renamed the Winter Garden 6 years earlier), police had to protect Booth from angry crowds at the hotel who learned that his brother, John Wilkes Booth, assassinated President Lincoln.

The building underwent a strictly hotel phase when the Winter Garden was destroyed by fire in 1869. Lefarge House expanded and became "one of New York's most important caravansaries," according to Village historian Joseph Devorkin. First named the Grand Central Hotel, then the Southern, it finally became the Broadway Central Hotel.

Murder bloodied the hotel in the later decades of the 19th century when Edward Stokes, wealthy man about town, shot and killed—on the grand stairway—James Fish, unscrupulous tycoon and playboy, in conflict over the affections of Josie Mansfield, a beautiful showgirl.

During the "Gay 90's," "Diamond Jim" Brady, master salesman and wealthy epicure, dined and gave parties at the hotel.

After the turn of the century, Trotsky's Koshers Restaurant served the Broadway Central. Leo Borenstein, a Russian immigrant of Jewish background, was attracted to the hotel because of it. He subsequently revisited Russia, then returned several months later with forged documents under the name of Leon Trotsky. He afterwards settled in Mexico.

Inside the Center

Blow-ups of reviews in the Village Voice and



The Kitchen, a multi-media projection room.