

Weddings

NEW YORK

145

DREAM
VENUES

AND THE
Wedding
Night
Sex Poll

Did you
or didn't you?

THE BEST

DRESSES

ACCESSORIES

FLOWERS

CAKES

INVITATIONS

BANDS

HONEYMOONS

CATERERS

The
*Ultimate New York
Wedding Planner*

PLUS
Other People's
Weddings

Ten Couples Open Their Albums



Angel Orensanz Foundation

Feel Transported...

... without having to venture far at these one-of-a-kind New York-area venues.

BY MEREDITH BLAKE

IF YOU WANT AN OLD-ENGLAND FEEL, TRY

SYNOD HOUSE

FANS OF *THE TUDORS* don't have to resort to a Renaissance-fair wedding. Synod House is an antiquated gem on the grounds of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. "The main floor has wooden beams, sconces, and chandeliers," wedding planner Soraya Jollon says. "And the Undercroft, with its vaulted ceiling and stone columns, feels

like an enormous wine cave." An added bonus is that "you don't need to get married in the cathedral to be able to rent Synod." Either way, you might just run into one of the church's three famous peacocks.

Note: Currently under construction, Synod House should reopen in the next year or two.

Cost: Contributions for use of Synod House range from \$2,500 to \$9,000.

1047 Amsterdam Ave., at W. 112th St.; 212-316-7490; stjohndivine.org

IF THE VICTORIAN ERA IS YOUR TASTE, TRY

ALDER MANOR

"THIS MANOR has a wonderful *Great Expectations* feel," Jung Lee of Fête says. Thirty minutes from Manhattan, in Yonkers, Alder Manor is a charmingly dilapidated 72-room 1912 estate built by the same architects behind the Frick. With crumbling vine-covered gardens, fresco-decked interior walls, and an unused indoor pool, the effect is romantic and slightly melancholy. And there are quirks: The house has just two working bathrooms, so port-a-potties are a must, and you're locked in to using their caterer. The mansion was abandoned for years but is now owned by a small nonprofit that rents it out for film shoots (*The Royal Tenenbaums*) and events for as many as 250 seated guests (up to 400 for cocktails).

Cost: There is no rental fee; catering (you must use Chefs at Work) starts at a relative bargain, \$120 a head. 1097 N. Broadway, nr. Executive Blvd., Yonkers; 914-375-7872; taracircle.org

IF YOU ARE A FAN OF THE JAZZ AGE, TRY

INN AT IRVING PLACE

JUST SOUTH of Gramercy Park, the unassuming Inn at Irving Place is easy to miss. Behind its brownstone façade is a romantic throwback to New York's Gilded Age ideal for small receptions. The Inn has one large tea salon and two smaller private rooms, all with extensive period details and furnishings. The Inn also provides the option of opening up the downstairs Cibar (accessible via a secret staircase) to accommodate up to 100 guests.

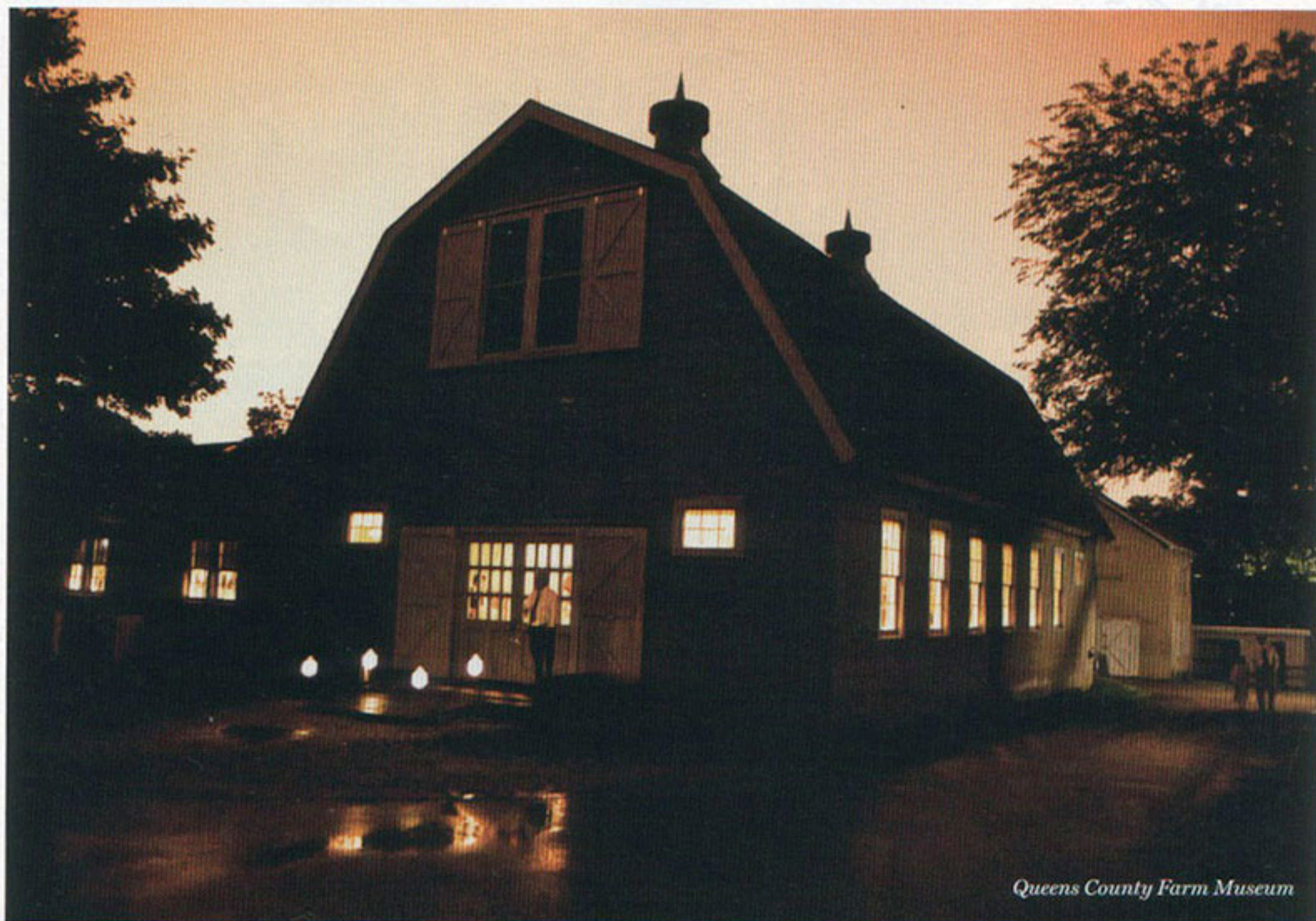
Cost: Three-course dinners start at \$100 a head; bar additional. There is no rental fee for groups larger than ten.

56 Irving Pl., nr. E. 17th St.; 212-533-4600; innatirving.com

IF YOU ARE A DEVOUT LOCAVORE, TRY

QUEENS COUNTY FARM MUSEUM

DATING BACK to 1697, the Queens County Farm Museum is an unlikely rural enclave on the edge of suburbia in Floral Park,



Queens County Farm Museum

Queens. The city's only working historical farm, its hay rides and variety of heritage livestock—including adorable Cotswold sheep—are more likely to remind visitors of apple-picking trips to New England than cab rides to JFK. The farm has two outdoor spaces, as well as a covered pavilion and a barn.

Cost: Rental starts at just \$500, up to \$2,000 for the Orchard. The in-house caterer is Bon Soir Caterers, but outside catering is allowed.

73-50 Little Neck Parkway, nr. 74th Ave., Floral Park; 718-347-3276; queensfarm.org

IF GOTH HAS
AN APPEAL, TRY

ANGEL ORENSANZ FOUNDATION

"THIS SPACE IS reminiscent of Prague. It has a very Gothic, European feel," says planner Leslie Price. Modeled after Germany's Cologne Cathedral, the Angel Orensanz Center was once a synagogue, but is now a secular venue (except on high holidays). Its high-vaulted ceiling and paint-chipped walls create an

atmosphere of faded beauty, but, Price warns, "it's not for brides who want everything perfect. The space transforms in so many ways, but it's dilapidated, so if you don't have the vision, it's not for you." The center can serve as both a ceremony and reception venue, accommodating up to 250 for dinner and dancing, and up to 600 for cocktails.

Cost: Price upon request.
172 Norfolk St., nr. Stanton St.;
212-529-7194;
orensanzevents.com

IF YOU DREAM OF GETTING
MARRIED IN A CASTLE, TRY

THE GATEHOUSE

A REGISTERED LANDMARK, the Gatehouse primarily functions as the celebrated home of Harlem Stage but is a well-kept secret as a wedding venue. Originally part of the Croton Aqueduct, the Gatehouse's Romanesque architecture and tall central tower seem out of place in their current locale. "It looks more like it should be surrounded by a moat than plunked in the middle of Harlem," says Jollon.

Between the dance and theater performances, couples can host a reception or ceremony for 200 guests in the 2,900 square feet of newly refurbished indoor space, or on the outdoor terrace.

Cost: \$3,000 rental fee; couples must bring in their own caterer.
150 Convent Ave., at W. 135th St.;
212-281-9240; harlemstage.org

IF YOU WANT TO GIVE A NOD
TO TRADITION, TRY

RIVERSIDE CHURCH

ONE OF THE CITY'S largest and most progressive congregations, Riverside Church is a transformative setting for a wedding ceremony or reception. "This space transports you like nothing else," says JoAnn Gregoli of Elegant Occasions. Modeled after France's Chartres Cathedral, it offers four banquet halls that can accommodate 50 to 325 guests for dinner and dancing. The remarkable Ninth Floor Lounge has an arched ceiling, a working fireplace, and views of the Hudson. Plus, there's a rooftop space.

Cost: Rental fees range from \$1,250-\$5,000, depending on

banquet hall; catering is additional and exclusively through Pasha Events.
490 Riverside Dr., nr. 122nd St.;
212-870-6762;
theriversidechurchny.org

IF EARLY AMERICANA IS
YOUR THING, TRY

MOUNT VERNON MUSEUM

WEDGED BETWEEN high-rises, the centuries-old Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden is a unique sight in midtown Manhattan. The stone building dates back to 1799 and was once a country resort for fashionable city dwellers looking to escape. Operated by the Colonial Dames of America, the museum's interior and tranquil 18th-century-style garden are available for rental for as many as 50 guests inside, and up to 75 outside. For larger parties, the Abigail Adams Smith Auditorium next door can hold up to 120.

Cost: Price upon request; caterers must be brought in.
421 E. 61st St., nr. York Ave.;
212-838-6878; mvhm.org