

Rosenberg Library Announces Museum Book Club Winter Selection

As part of its ongoing Museum Book Club series, Rosenberg Library is teaming up with Galveston Historical Foundation to present a special joint program on Wednesday, February 22 from 12 noon to 1 p.m. The book selection is Edith Wharton's classic novel *The House of Mirth*.

The program will include a historical presentation related to the 1891 Galveston Mardi Gras and Deep Water Jubilee celebrations followed by a book discussion. Original documents and artifacts related to those events will be on view.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Published in 1905, *The House of Mirth* made author Edith Wharton a well-known figure in American literature. The novel is set in turn-of-the-century New York, and its heroine, Lily Bart, hails from a wealthy family who is part of the city's powerful elite class. Blessed with both good fortune and beauty, Lily's future seems promising until an unexpected downturn in the family's finances coupled with the death of her father. Desperate and penniless, Lily must choose whether to leave behind her high-ranking social position or enter into a marriage of convenience in order to maintain her station in life. As she navigates a path for herself, she begins to act as a liaison between New York's long established wealthy residents and an emerging class of newly rich but poorly connected people who desire to be part of the influential class.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

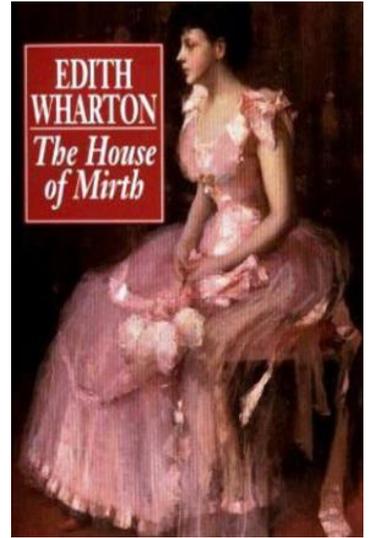
Edith Wharton was born Edith Newbold Jones in 1862 during the height of the American Civil War. Her parents were descendants of wealthy European businessmen and bankers, and she grew up in a privileged household in New York. Many of her written works are set in the world of the fashionable upper class.

Wharton spent part of her childhood living in Europe and found it to be a welcome escape from the increasingly materialistic environment in late 19th century America. After many return trips, she settled permanently in Paris during the early 1900s.

Though it was discouraged by her parents, Wharton developed a passion for writing at a young age. She first attempted to write a novel when she was just 11 years old, and by the age of 13, her German poetry translations were published in a magazine.

In 1885, after the death of her father, 23-year-old Edith Jones married Edward Wharton, a wealthy man from Boston who was twelve years her senior. The couple's marriage became a difficult and unhappy one, and they divorced in 1913.

Despite her personal setbacks, Wharton achieved great success in her professional life. She published a total of 16 novels and novellas, 8 volumes of short stories, two collections of poetry and numerous articles. In 1921, her highly acclaimed novel *The Age of Innocence* won the



Cover image of *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton.

Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, marking the first time a woman had received the honor. Wharton was also the first woman to be recognized as a chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur by the French government for her tremendous efforts in providing aid to European refugees who fled to France during WWI.

Edith Wharton died in 1937, but her legacy as a pioneer in American literature continues to be celebrated today.

FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Since *The House of Mirth* explores turn-of-the-century social customs, participants will get a glimpse of Galveston's own elite social events from that time period. They will have the opportunity to view beautifully designed invitations from the 1891 Galveston Mardi Gras and Deep Water Jubilee ball as well as the gown worn by debutante Sallie Trueheart, the Momus Queen that year.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM BOOK CLUB

Rosenberg Library's Museum Book Club offers participants the chance to experience art and literature in a more interactive way. Members have the opportunity to view rarely exhibited art and historical artifacts from the library's permanent collection as they discuss related books.

Registration is required for all Museum Book Club meetings. Established book clubs are encouraged to participate. Groups of over 10 people are asked to call the Reference Desk in advance to arrange accommodations.

The House of Mirth is available for check-out at Rosenberg Library in **hard copy**, **E-Book**, and **E-Audiobook** formats.