

Greater Dayton JASNA

January 2009

New Location for Sunday, February 8 Reading Group

2:30-4:00 at 6241 Hempstead Mews

Northanger Abbey, Book 2, Chapters 1-6

On February 8 our Reading Group will meet at Marilyn Rueth's home at 6241 Hempstead Mews. Please RSVP to Marilyn at 937-435-7387 so that she can set up the room appropriately.

Gary Mitchner asked Marilyn to host this meeting after seeing her home featured in the December issue of Housetrends:



Stepping across the threshold into the formal entrance hall of Fred and Marilyn Rueth's home is a trip back in time. The house is an accurate replica of a colonial home merged with modern amenities.

From the floor plan to the paint colors, Marilyn made every decision with historical accuracy in the back of her mind. Her attention to detail is no surprise considering she studied period design at The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, VA.

The article goes on to describe the splendid woodwork throughout the house, all of which was built on site, the historically accurate paint and wall coverings, and the antique furnishings.

Immediately off the formal entrance hall are the formal dining and living rooms. The dining room features modillions, which are fancy moldings created in three separate pieces. They are classic Greek architectural pieces, and they were created on site. The dining room also features documented, historic wallpaper. The yellow background features a floral print. The living room across the hall features a historic paint, Apollo Room Blue.

I always thought it a fortunate coincidence that such a keen Janite lives on a street named Hempstead Mews. The article explains that, as the first residents, the Reuths were allowed to name the street themselves.

Besides continuing our discussion of *Northanger Abbey* and enjoying our usual tea and cookies, this meeting will offer us a chance to explore a really fine home and its antique furnishings.

See next page for directions.

Directions to Hempsted Mews and Parking Instructions

Hempsted Mews is off Mad River Road, which runs between SR-725 (Miamisburg-Centerville Road), right across from the main entrance to the Dayton Mall, and David Road in Kettering, west of Far Hills (SR-48). On Mad River Road, look for Hempsted Mews between Whipp Road to the north and Alex-Bell (the Alexander-Bellbrook Road) to the south, just north of the windmill. The 725 exit from I-75 is just a couple blocks west of Mad River Road, so that would be the most convenient exit if you're coming from Cincinnati.

Marilyn's house is below street level, and the driveway is very steep. She recommends that if there is snow or ice, we should park on the street and walk down to the house. Otherwise, we may park by the garage or along the driveway. She also asks that we enter the house through the garage, since the front steps and walkway tend to be slippery throughout the winter.

Greater Dayton JASNA Officers

Area Coordinator	Gary Mitchner	937-299-1663	gary.mitchner@gmail.com
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Wishing Jean Another Good Recovery

Last year Jean Long, leader of our Reading Group, underwent two knee replacement surgeries, one at Thanksgiving 2007 and one around Valentine's Day 2008. She came through both with flying colors, and is now walking perfectly well. But this February, on the fifth, she will be having yet another joint replaced—that in her right shoulder. She says she is fast becoming the bionic Janite. After her surgery at Miami Valley Hospital, she will spend the first stage of her recovery at Bethany. We all wish her a smooth recovery (as smooth as that kind of recovery can be), and we look forward very much to her return as our guide in exploring *Northanger Abbey*.

Marsha Huff to Speak Saturday, April 18 at Dayton Art Institute



Save Saturday, April 18, for Marsha Huff, President of the national JASNA organization, when she will be addressing our Chapter on the subject “Viewing Austen through Vermeer’s *Camera Obscura*.” The venue will be the Dayton Art Institute, chosen to complement her topic. Both Austen and Vermeer are known for their richly detailed depictions of domestic life, and it will be interesting to see what the parallels will reveal about the two artists.

Marsha holds Bachelors and Masters degrees in English from the University of Tulsa (her hometown) and a J.D. degree from Loyola University of Chicago School of Law. She practices law at Foley & Lardner in Milwaukee, with a specialty in tax-exempt organizations. In her home region, Wisconsin, Marsha served as Regional Coordinator and as Co-Coordinator of the 2005 Milwaukee AGM, whose theme was “Jane Austen’s Letters in Fact and Fiction.” She also served on the JASNA Board of Directors for several years before becoming President. Marsha is long-time fan of Austen and Vermeer, having discovered both when she was a teenager.

The meeting will take place somewhat earlier than usual, to accommodate Marsha’s airline schedule. The schedule for the meeting will be:

10:00 – 10:30	Arrival
10:30 – 11:15	Talk
11:15 – 12:30	Buffet Lunch
12:30 – 1:30	Museum Tour led by Gary Mitchner, who is now a docent

The fee will be \$25 for members and \$28 for non-members.

Jane’s Birthday Celebrated in Style

In December we celebrated Jane’s birthday at Gary Mitchner’s home. After a meeting of the Reading Group (actually during it as well), we ate our way through one of our best teas ever. It included champagne, an opera cream cake from the BonBonerie in Cincinnati, and many other tasty treats. We owe special thanks to Peter LePage, who left his wife’s sickbed to bring the cake from Cincinnati to Dayton.



Toasts from the party are reproduced at the end of the newsletter.

***Northanger Abbey* Proves a Delight**

Our Reading Group is now half way through *Northanger Abbey*. Our sessions have been very well attended, and members agree that the book makes up in charm for any lack in profundity. Like the original versions of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey* was written when Jane was in her early twenties. Unlike them, it was not revised during her mature years. It is a spoof on the Gothic craze of the late eighteenth century, and since that fad had passed by 1810, she did not think it worthwhile to take up that novel again.

Northanger Abbey, then, gives us a unique opportunity to Jane's voice before she had undergone the harsh years between leaving her childhood home and settling at last in Chawton Cottage. Catherine Moorland is the only one of Jane's heroines who has two sensible, loving parents. At 17, she is the youngest of Jane's heroines except for Marianne. Although as innocent and ignorant of the world as it is possible to be, her innate good sense and good taste pull her through. She wins the hero's love through her unqualified admiration of his wit and knowledge, illustrating Jane's assertion from Chapter 14



Northanger Abbey
"He is a happy man," said the General.
P. 216

Where people wish to attach, they should always be ignorant. To come with a well-informed mind, is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing any thing, should conceal it as well as she can."

The male characters in *Northanger Abbey* have a good deal more to say than those in her later works. Catherine has two suitors—the awful John Thorpe and the charming Henry Tilney. John Thorpe subjects Catherine to endless monologues on his horses and carriages. We ladies can, from our youth, remember unfortunate conversations that went much the same as this one from Chapter 9.

"Oxford! There is no drinking at Oxford now, I assure you. Nobody drinks there. You would hardly meet with a man who goes beyond his four pints at the utmost. Now, for instance, it was reckoned a remarkable thing at the last party in my rooms, that upon an average we cleared about five pints a head. It was looked upon as something out of the common way. Mine is famous good stuff to be sure. You would not often meet with any thing like it in Oxford—and that may account for it. But this will just give you a notion of the general rate of drinking there."

"Yes, it does give a notion," said Catherine, warmly, "and that is, that you all drink a great deal more wine than I thought you did. However, I am sure James does not drink so much."

Henry can speak on any subject—muslins, landscapes, history, or nothing at all. This excerpt from Chapter 10, of a conversation conducted during a dance, displays his quirky wit.

“I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage. Fidelity and complaisance are the principal duties of both; and those men who do not chuse to dance or marry themselves, have no business with the partners or wives of their neighbours.”

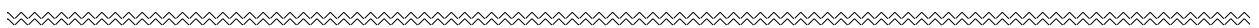
“But they are such very different things!—“

“That you think they cannot be compared together.”

“To be sure not. People that marry can never part, but must go and keep house together. People that dance, only stand opposite each other in a long room for half an hour.”

“And such is your definition of matrimony and dancing. Taken in that light, certainly, their resemblance is not striking; but I think I could place them in such a view.—You will allow, that in both, man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal; that in both, it is an engagement between man and woman, formed for the advantage of each; and that when once entered into, they belong exclusively to each other till the moment of its dissolution; that it is their duty, each to endeavour to give the other no cause for wishing that he or she had bestowed themselves elsewhere, and their best interest to keep their own imaginations from wandering towards the perfections of their neighbours, or fancying that they should have been better off with any one else. You will allow all this?”

And so it goes on, a duet between Henry’s rich imagination and Catherine’s stout common sense.



To continue or renew your acquaintance with this great cast of characters, attend the rest of our Reading Group sessions. NOTE that the April and May meeting dates have been changed, to allow for Easter and Mother’s Day.

Feb. 8	Volume II, Chapters 1-6, pp 131-175
Mar. 8	Volume II, Chapters 7 - 11, pp 176-221
Apr. 5	Volume II, Chapters 12 - 16, pp 222- 261
May 3	Radcliffe's novels and their relationship to <i>Northanger Abbey</i> --Dierdre LeFaye’s notes to be passed out on <i>A Sicilian Romance</i> (1790), <i>The Romance of the Forest</i> (1791), <i>The Mysteries of Udolpho</i> (1794), <i>The Italian</i> (1797).

Janite Survey Results

Last year Jeanne Kiefer conducted an on-line survey of Janites and presented the results at the Chicago AGM. She queried over 4000 Austen readers about their own backgrounds—age, profession, income, etc.—and their taste in Jane’s novels. For her full results see <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol29no1/kiefer.html>.

I found most interesting the respondents’ picks as favorite and least favorite novel, hero, heroine, villain, etc.

When the difficult but inevitable “choose your favorite” questions were posed, *Pride and Prejudice* reigned, but perhaps not quite as supreme as one might expect. P&P was the favorite novel of 53%. Second place went to *Persuasion* (top choice of 28%), trailed by *Emma* (7%), *Sense and Sensibility* (5%), *Mansfield Park* (4%) and *Northanger Abbey* (4%). In all, 40% cited *Northanger Abbey* as least favorite, although younger respondents liked it more than older ones.



Lizzie Bennet (58%) was trailed as favorite heroine by Anne (24%), Elinor (7%), Emma (5%), Fanny (3%), Catherine (2%) and Marianne (1%). Voted least-favorite were Fanny (35%) and Catherine (25%). Younger participants were less likely than older ones to appreciate Anne and dislike Catherine.

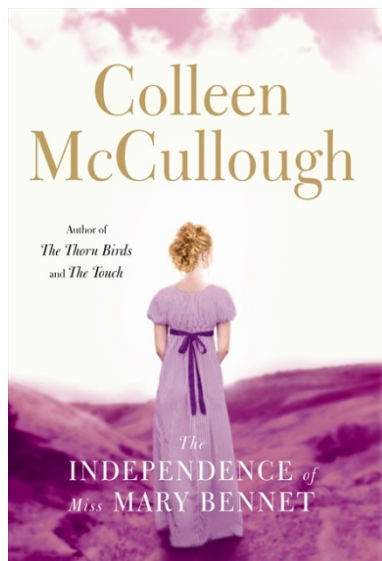
Runners up to Darcy (52%) were Wentworth (17%), Knightley (14%), Tilney (10%), Brandon (5%), Ferrars (1%) and Bertram (1%). Interestingly, males were a good bit less likely to choose Darcy. The least-liked hero by some measure was Edmund Bertram (40%).

Favorite bad boys? Wickham aced out Willoughby (33% to 28%), followed by Henry Crawford (16%), Frank Churchill (10%), William Elliot (7%) and General Tilney (6%). It’s noteworthy that males looked somewhat more favorably on Willoughby.

When Janeites weighed in on the very worst parents in the novels, Sir Walter Elliot took the prize (54%), followed by Mr. and Mrs. Price (16%) and Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram (15%). Least objectionable was Mrs. Dashwood (2%).

There were four comic characters who especially delighted respondents: Mrs. Bennet (74% voted her “a favorite”), Mr. Collins (70%), Admiral Croft (56%) and the inimitable Miss Bates (50%).

A New Addition to Our Library



Gary tells us that he has contributed his publicity copy of Colleen McCullough's *The Independence of Miss Mary Bennet* to our Chapter Library, and it will be available for check-out as soon as his wife finishes it. When I first saw the publicity blurb for this book, I was not impressed: Mary as beautiful and accomplished as Elizabeth? What??

However, the following excerpts from a Washington Post review show that, however Austenian or not, the book is probably a lot of fun to read.

"... McCullough has now joined the legion of "Pride and Prejudice" chroniclers, but she strikes out on her own by choosing Miss Mary Bennet as her heroine. Austen mercilessly described Mary as "the only plain one in the family," with "neither genius nor taste." ... McCullough has reduced her

chances further by giving her "shocking suppurating spots" all over her face and "a front tooth that grew sideways." Two decades since the events described in "P&P," she has by now spent many years as "the sacrificial goat" caring for her widowed mother at Shelby Manor, a dwelling provided by Mr. Darcy to keep his crotchety mother-in-law as far away as possible from his seat at the opulent Pemberley.

"Isolated from both family and friends, Mary has spent her time reading through an extensive library that came with the house. Mrs. Bennet conveniently dies on Page 2 of the novel, not in the slightest mourned by her middle daughter, now 38. During Mary's seclusion with her ailing mother, her newly affluent sister Elizabeth has sent her to a skilled apothecary and to her own dentist with startling results: No longer spotty with crooked teeth, Mary is now free of her burdensome mother, independent, almost as beautiful as Lizzie and, to the horror of Mr. Darcy, determined to take charge of her own money.

"All five Bennet girls attend the funeral: Jane, still beautiful but worn down by 12 pregnancies resulting in eight surviving children; Elizabeth, mother of first "one womanish boy" and then, to Darcy's dismay, "four wretched girls"; Mary, the self-educated aunt; Kitty, married to a rich elderly lord; and Lydia, George Wickham's widow with a bad reputation and a drinking problem.

"Refusing offers of a home at Pemberley or at Jane's residence, Mary makes a decision: "I will journey to see England's ills, write my book, and pay to have it published." She wants to entitle her book "The Ills of England" and plans to go in person to "orphanages, factories, poorhouse, mines -- a thousand-and-one places where our own English people live in impoverishment."

"She sets out taking the public stagecoach and learns more than she bargained for about the habits of the lower classes. Her adventures, including imprisonment in a cave, make up the plot

of the novel. ...As the plot thickens, one Bennet sister comes to a bad end, but the other four manage to prosper...

“It would be pointless -- and silly -- to spend time opining on whether this highly colored romp has any likeness to Austen's quiet, elegant and often biting prose. These are 21st-century characters in 18th-century costumes. But it's fun to see Mary brought to life as an idealistic and unrealistic social reformer. She has become a beauty at 38, even if she still dresses appallingly. It is harder to witness Elizabeth, whose quirky spirit and ironic viewpoint power every page of the original novel, struggling to reconnect to a Darcy turned ruthless and judgmental. But McCullough, a romantic at heart, finally reconciles her borrowed characters and brings peace to Pemberley.”

Louisville Gala in July

The 2nd Annual Jane Austen Festival will take place July 18 & 19 at Historic Locust Grove, a circa 1790 National Historic Landmark in Louisville, KY. Last year's festival was a great success, with about 700 attendees.



This event is hosted by the Greater Louisville Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America. It will include Afternoon Tea; a Regency Emporium with lovely fabric, shawls, patterns, bonnets, jewelry and everything needed to create a Regency outfit; as well as antiquarian books; and a Regency Style Show. Plans for a Grand Ball are being made.

Guest speaker will be Margaret Sullivan, author of *The Jane Austen*

Handbook and editor of *Austenblog*. Her talk is entitled "Five Things a Janeite Heroine (or Hero) Needs to Know."

Historic Locust Grove (www.locustgrove.org) is located six miles from downtown Louisville and sits on 55 parklike acres. There are many stone and log buildings on the property that will temporarily house the shoemaker (live demonstration), the Mantua-Maker & Daughter (seamstresses with Regency dresses for sale) and other delights.

Admission to the festival is \$6 which includes a tour of the circa 1790 Georgian House. Afternoon Tea (four courses) is \$25 (includes admission). Reservation required for tea.

For more information, contact Bonny Wise, Regional Coordinator at 812-923-7808, visit www.jasnalouisville.com or email wises4@insightbb.com. For anyone traveling to the area, advice gladly given about hotels, B&B's, etc.

Costume Exhibit at Taft Museum in Cincinnati

Oscar season will be in full swing at the Taft Museum of Art this year when *Fashion in Film: Period Costumes for the Screen* opens. This will be the only regional showing of this exhibition, which has been setting records and charming visitors around the country. The exhibition runs from January 31 through April 26.

The sumptuous costumes span four centuries of clothing design and four decades of filmmaking, with the represented films, including *Titanic*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Room with a View*, and *Ever After*. This exhibition, organized by the Trust for Museum Exhibitions, Washington, D.C., in cooperation with Cosprop, Ltd., London, England, features costumes worn by Cate Blanchett, Julie Christie, Gwyneth Paltrow, Nicole Kidman, Meryl Streep, and many others.



Evoking the Renaissance through the mid-20th century, the 36 costumes perfectly complement garments worn by sitters and other figures in paintings in the Taft's permanent collection. This exhibition is curated by Nancy Huth, the Taft's curator of education.

Cambridge Edition of Austen's Works Now Complete

The last volume of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen* has just come out. This volume, *Later Manuscripts*, is edited by Janet Todd of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge and University of Aberdeen.

At the last Reading Group, some of us were wondering what the Later Manuscripts might include. According to the publicity release

“The manuscripts that survive from Jane Austen's maturity offer a unique insight into her life as a creative writer. This volume collects together, for the first time, all the literary manuscripts from Austen's adult years (with the exception of the cancelled chapters of *Persuasion*, in this edition printed with the finished novel), together with letters discussing the art of fiction, and her record of responses to her novels. Included here are the novella 'Lady Susan', the novel fragments of 'The Watsons' and 'Sanditon', poems and charades, and the comic 'Plan of a Novel'. In an Appendix are collected other works ascribed to Austen, including the play 'Sir Charles Grandison' and three prayers. The introduction offers a history of the manuscripts and a full account of the current state of scholarship on them, and the texts are accompanied by explanatory notes and contextual information.”

Toasts for Jane's Birthday

Martha's Toast, to the Tune of "Let it Snow"



Oh, John Thorpe's driving is frightful
But Henry's smile is so delightful
And Bath's ballroom is all aglow
Let us go! Let us go! Let us go!

Mrs. Allen has gone out shopping
And Catherine isn't stopping
She reads *Udolpho* 'til the lights get low
[What's behind the black veil?]
Let us know! Let us know! Let us know!

When Isabella flirts all night
The Captain claims it will do no harm
But Catherine is proven right
When James is cured of her charm.

Northanger Abbey sounds so frightful
But the Tilney's are so delightful
And the General won't take "No"
So let us go! Let us go! Let us go!

Catherine finally sees the Abbey at night
And finds a chest by the light of the storm
But come the morning light
A laundry list holds no evidence of harm!

Gothic fears are slowly dying
'Til she's thrown out with no goodbye-ing
But Henry still loves her so
He's her beau! He's her beau! He's her beau!



Gary Mitchner' Toast

Here's to Jane who always persuades us to rise above false pride and dangerous prejudices to become that exemplary man and/or woman in our chosen fields, not so morally that we must become the *north* star of some dissolved abbey, but to "*hang, er, in there*" (to use anachronistic language), until we gain common sense and humanitarian sensibility, no *emmanuels*, just common readers.

Peter LePage's Toast



Here's to one my very best friends,

JANE AUSTEN,

Who has provided me with a wonderfully pleasurable profession for many years and also given us enough bread to buy shoes and college educations for our children--she is richly, wonderfully talented, making books that are great to read and even more fun to reread, letters and stories that are a joy to teach, to discuss, to write and read about. I have been ever so lucky, Jane Austen, in knowing you and talking about you as a profession and also as a pleasurable pastime. Thank you. Thank you ever so much. Thank you again and agai

What is a Sedan Chair

At our December Reading Group someone asked exactly what a sedan chair was. To imagine being carried about town in a man-powered taxi is quite a stretch for us today. Martha has come up, not only with a picture of a chair, but with a pattern for constructing one.

The adjacent picture is "A Modern Belle Going to the Rooms at Bath" by James Gilray (1756-1815),

