JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA--GREATER CHICAGO REGION

Letter from Chicago

AUGUST 2018

Join Us for Our Annual Free Public Event...

JASNA-GCR FALL MEETING!!
featuring a lecture by two ladies:
SUE FORGUE AND
VICTORIA HINSHAW

HOPE IN ALL
THE WRONG PLACES:
Mrs. Smith
AND
Mrs. Clay
IN
PERSUASION

commencing at twelve-thirty in the afternoon
SATURDAY, THE FIFTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER
at the
Evanston Public Library
Sue Forgue and Victoria Hinshaw present

**Hope in All the Wrong Places: Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Clay in Persuasion**

**Saturday, September 15**
12:30 - 4:00 pm  
Evanston Public Library  
1703 Orrington Avenue, Evanston

Coffee, tea, and cookies following the presentation. For parking and transit information visit:  

**About the Presentation**

In *Persuasion*, Jane Austen presents two poor widows, Mrs. Clay and Mrs. Smith. Austen leads us to believe one is purer in purpose than the other. When one examines their back stories, motives, strategies, and ulterior motives, the differences might not be so great. Which of them will have the happiest outcome in the years following the novel’s action?

**Sue Forgue** is the founder and webmaster of the research website, *The Regency Encyclopedia*. She has contributed articles for the *Letter from Chicago* newsletter, *JASNA News*, *Jane Austen Knits* magazine and has also served as one of their historical consultants. She has presented at the Brooklyn, Minneapolis and Louisville AGMs, for many JASNA regions and for Road Scholar. She is an accountant in her life outside of JASNA.

**Victoria Hinshaw** is the author of a dozen novels and has spoken at previous AGMs in Toronto, Tucson, Fort Worth, Minneapolis, Montreal, and Louisville, for various JASNA regions and Road Scholar. She holds a B.S. from Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, and an M.A. from The American University, Washington DC.

*Victoria Hinshaw and Sue Forgue*
Help Wanted

**Event Reviewer:** We seek to fill the position of press attache to review the JASNA-GCR Fall Meeting.

**Event Photographer:** Individual with artistic eye and attention to detail sought to capture the day in images. No portfolio necessary.

Inquiries about any of the above should be addressed to Ms. Laura Whitlock at llwhitlock@yahoo.com

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**Upcoming GCR Events**

**Annual Birthday Tea**  
"Wealth and Warfare in the Novels of Jane Austen"  
Seebany Datta-Barua and Jonathan S. Masur  
Saturday, December 1  
The Fortnightly Chicago

**Winter Program**  
Saturday February 2, 2019  
Lloyd’s Chicago

**Spring Gala**  
Saturday May 4 2019  
Woman’s Athletic Club Chicago

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**JASNA-GCR Board Elections**

On September 15, JASNA-GCR will hold elections for the Board of Directors at our Fall Meeting. This year two longtime members, Debra Miller and Jeffrey Nigro, are vacating the positions of **Regional Coordinator** and **Program Director**, respectively. In the coming days, JASNA members will receive an email with election information including the slate of candidates.

If you have any questions, or for further information please contact Deputy Regional Coordinator Maureen Collins, 7collins@jmls.edu
October 5, 2018 will be the 39th anniversary of the first meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America, a meeting attended by only one hundred people. In spite of this modest attendance, the gathering, held at the Gramercy Park Hotel in New York City, was worthy of a mention in the New Yorker Magazine’s “Talk of the Town”.

The Jane Austen Society of North America, “dedicated to the enjoyment and appreciation of Jane Austen and her writing,” has come a long way in 39 years. From that modest meeting of 100 enthusiasts we have grown to 79 regional groups in the US and Canada, and as of May 31, 2018, JASNA membership numbered 5,328!

JASNA Chicago Area Chapter, as our Region was originally called, was “founded” at that first meeting by Cappie McQuarrie and Harriet Rylaarsdam. From 20 original members, we have grown to 218 strong.

JASNA is a nonprofit organization, staffed by volunteers, without whom there would be no meetings, no AGM, and no Persuasions—online, or in book format. The Board of the North American Society and our Regional Board are all volunteers. This newsletter is beautifully laid out and sent to you by Laura Whitlock; the list of members is current, and each new member receives a warm welcome thanks to Becky Dolin; and our expenses, charitable giving, and budget are shepherded by Elizabeth Schraft. Georgia Cibul saw a step in our planning process that was a frequent stumbling point and took up the task. Jeff Nigro and William Phillips have held almost every position on the board and have been instrumental in our growth. My thanks go to them, and to Carl Johnson, Maureen Collins, Andrea Kayne, and Linda Reinert for six adventurous years on the Board.

At our September meeting we will welcome two new board members. I look forward to seeing where that infusion of new energy and new ideas will lead our Region. We had a few people who were interested in being on the board this year who were not yet officially members of JASNA. You must be a member in good standing for one year before you can join the board, so I encourage those who are not members, or have let their membership lapse to join now, so that you are eligible to become part our Board in September of 2019. If you are already a member, or have been in the past, go to www.JASNA.org and access your member portal to renew your membership. If you are joining as a new member, you
can visit [http://www.jasna.org/join/](http://www.jasna.org/join/) for information on dues and benefits.

Being a member of the Board of JASNA-GCR has been challenging and exciting, and the lessons I have learned here will be with me always. Being a member JASNA has been and will continue to be a source of continual delight, for as Jane wrote in her novel *Persuasion*, “My idea of good company...is the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation; that is what I call good company.’

'You are mistaken,’ said he gently, 'that is not good company, that is the best.”

Janeites are the best company.

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**From the Program Director**

**Jeffrey Nigro**

The GCR celebration of *Persuasion* continues with our Fall Program on September 15. Two of our most devoted members, Sue Forgue and Victoria Hinshaw, will be our presenters. Sue is a former board member of JASNA-GCR, and Vicky is a longtime member of both the Wisconsin and Greater Chicago regions of JASNA. Both continue to be favorite and in-demand presenters at JASNA programs in Chicago and Wisconsin, and for other JASNA regions and at AGM’s, and if you have heard them, you know why: their presentations combine a profound understanding of Austen’s novels and her era with an engaging style of delivery that I have no doubt Jane Austen herself would enjoy.

The title of Sue and Vicky’s joint presentation will be “Hope in All the Wrong Places: Mrs. Clay and Mrs. Smith in Persuasion”. Their premise is an intriguing one, and will no doubt inspire thought and discussion: so many of us are accustomed to thinking of Mrs. Smith as a saint and Mrs. Clay as...well, not so much, but as widows in a socially and financially precarious society, they might have more in common than many of us like to think.

Once again, we will be returning to the Evanston Public Library, which remains a member favorite for our Fall Meeting. The event is free and open to the public, so bring an Austen-loving friend!

The one item of business at the September 15 event will be the GCR Board Election. As you will have heard at previous events, or read in GCR emails and elsewhere in this issue of *Letter from Chicago*, I have decided not to seek reelection to the GCR Board. This was not an easy decision. I have served on the JASNA-GCR board for ten years, first as what was then called Academic Liaison, followed by six years as Regional Coordinator, and two years as Program Director. The ancient Maya believe that the end of a ten-year cycle marked an important moment for change, and of course the Maya are not the only culture that likes to
measure things in decades. So it seemed like a good moment to step aside and give others the opportunity to help shape this vibrant and extraordinary organization.

I am very grateful for the many kind words and good wishes I have received from so many GCR members. I have been telling them that it has been both a joy and a privilege to serve on the GCR board, which is of course absolutely true. Like everyone else, I have attended many going away/retirement parties at places I have worked, and at every one of them the honoree will say “It’s the people that make this place so special”. That sounds like a cliché, but it’s also absolutely true with GCR. It has been a pleasure to serve with so many wonderful people as fellow board members, and to have met and made many friendships with our dedicated and enthusiastic members.

And, in case you’re wondering, I’m not going anywhere! I continue to be a Member at Large on the board of our “parent” organization, and JASNA is too much a part of my life for me to quit it entirely. Where else could I find such a group of smart, warm, funny people who are as nuts about Jane Austen (and history and literature and the arts) as I am? I look forward to seeing you all at JASNA-GCR events in the future, and to continuing to share our love for Austen.

**Summer Program Review**

Laura Whitlock
On Saturday, July 21, members of JASNA-GCR gathered at Reza’s Restaurant on North Clark Street in Chicago, seeking the company of our fellow clever, well-informed people. After a great deal of conversation, Regional Coordinator Debra Ann Miller and Program Director Jeff Nigro welcomed the crowd, reminding us of their upcoming departures from their current positions with reassurances that they would remain stalwarts of JASNA-GCR.

Jeff laid out the day’s program, “What Persuasion Means to Me,” which would include seven presentations in which members could listen no longer in silence. They would speak to us by such means as were within their reach in order to share just how Jane Austen’s final novel had changed their lives. Would they pierce our souls? We would soon find out.

But first things first. The buffet. Table by table, we were set loose to make our selections from a delightful array of Persian delicacies including beef, lamb and chicken kabobs, various rice and vegetable dishes, hummus and salads. As we finished our coffee and Persian rice pudding with a hint of rose, Jeff handed things over to master of ceremonies William Phillips.

William first introduced Barbara Lanctot, whose moving presentation described her love of Persuasion’s plot of second chances. She described a painful experience in which chronic back problems forced her to resign from her beloved 35 year post as a docent for the Chicago Architecture Foundation. This, combined with the loss of her favorite detective novelist, Sue Grafton, drove her into a deep melancholy. Barbara’s second chance, we learned, came in the form of inspiration to present a seminar on Grafton’s work at the Newberry Library.

Next, we heard from Holly Field. She spoke about friendship and the convivial joys of book clubs. Holly described a reading of William Deresiewicz’s A Jane Austen Education: How Six Novels Taught Me About Love, Friendship, and the Things That Really Matter and his chapter on Persuasion titled “True Friends.” She found inspiration in his examination of the relationships of the Harville-Benwick household, which the author likened to his own personal experiences of community in a youth movement, with the enduring message that constancy of friendship is paramount.

Lori Mulligan Davis spoke of the inspiration she found in the character of Mrs. Smith, as summed up in the quote, “Here was that elasticity of mind, that disposition to be comforted, that power of turning readily from evil to good, and of finding employment which carried her out of herself, which was from nature alone.” Lori described her husband’s recent job loss and the stress it has caused her family. Inspired by the items Mrs. Smith crafted to raise money for the poor, Lori and husband Scott worked together to make
each attendee a lovely needle case. Decorated with Lori’s own calligraphy and a quote from the book of Matthew, her gift served to remind us to keep our misfortunes in perspective as did Mrs. Smith.

**Bao Bui**, whose own dissertation focused on the social and gender history of letter-writing in the 19th century, chose to discuss the letter which he says, “provides the emotional climax of *Persuasion.*” Many have argued, he told the audience, that Captain Wentworth’s letter to Anne Elliot is simply too good to have been written by a man. While we realize that it was, in fact, written by the greatest author of all time, Bao enthusiastically stated that men wrote superb letters throughout the nineteenth century. He cited several examples, not only of men having written well, but of expressing admiration for their brethren who excelled at letter-writing.

In *Persuasion*, **Gerti Zaccone** found clues to Jane Austen’s regrets as well as her awareness of advancing age and declining health. She stated, “*Persuasion* to me then is a book written by an older woman about the regrets she had in life, most specifically, Jane’s regret about not marrying Thomas Lefroy.” Gerti found redemptive hope in Austen’s choice to allow Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth to cast off the conventional, superficial norms of the time and pursue a relationship based on love. “This moral decision,” Gerti stated, “is at the heart of *Persuasion* for me.”

**Christine Shih** seeks answers to medical problems in literature. She shared her poem, “Ode to Jane’s *Persuasion,*” which dealt with her very personal connection to the 2013-14 Ebola crisis, and the parallels she found in the novel. In her poem, Christine described the Ebola molecule as “twisted shapes that resemble two people holding each other while ringed in fire; red, painful inflammation.” She found correlation between Anne Elliot’s loss of bloom and the perpetuation of disease, and sees the lovers’ reunion as an escape from a vain and unhealthy world.

**Lauren Burke** and **Hannah K. Chapman** of the Bonnets at Dawn podcast rounded out the afternoon with a lively, hilarious debate over the merits of *Persuasion.* Hannah, who represents Team Austen in their regular discussions, declared *Persuasion* to be her all-time favorite book and Anne Elliot the “the ultimate aspirational heroine.” Lauren, after strongly disagreeing over the merits of the main character, stepped out of her Team Bronté role to find some value in the novel—that of the secondary characters. Lauren even went so far as to make a fangirl poster declaring love for her hero of *Persuasion*—Sir Walter Elliot.

And with that, the Summer Program drew to a close and we chuckled our way home.
Summer Program Highlights

Clockwise, from top left: Jeanette Naumiec and speaker Holly Field; Master of Ceremonies William Phillips; Maria Saenz-Pena and Itxel Pena; Lively conversation with Debra Ann Miller; Kathy Mueller and Lynn Shevelenko; Program Director Jeff Nigro kicks off the festivities
A Trip to the Jane Austen Festival

Debra Ann Miller

“This morning has been spent in Doubt & Deliberation: in forming plans, and removing difficulties” JA to Cassandra, 18 September 1796

“I will not make another gown, I will not make another gown, I will not make another gown.” This was my mantra the entire span of July 9-12, as I gathered shoes and hatpins, petticoats and gloves in preparation for my second annual trip to Louisville, Kentucky for the Jane Austen Festival, sponsored by JASNA Louisville at Locust Grove. But here, on the morning of Friday the 13th, as I packed my car, I began to regret my decision. I had finished all the repairs to the three gowns I have, and even made a turban to match the dress I made last year, but nothing compares to the delight of a new gown.

It’s Friday the 13th, I told myself. I might get lucky and find a gown I like at Matti’s Millinery and Costume, and it’s certainly a lucky day already because by 6pm tonight I will be among Janeites. So I stuffed my car with three gowns, six pair of shoes, four hats, (including my new turban), two suitcases and one very excited woman. I was on the road by 9:45 and on track to meet my roommate at the hotel with plenty of time to spare.
“My day's journey has been pleasanter in every respect than I expected. I have been very little crowded and by no means unhappy” JA to Cassandra, 24 October 1798

The trip wasn’t without its setbacks, but nothing so profound as could sink my spirits or turn me back. I made it to Louisville with plenty of time to get settled, and dress for the evening’s festivities.

Mary Miller, RC of JASNA Indy, her friend Kemberly Locke Payton and I had a lovely scenic trip to Locust Grove where the shopping was merely the beginning. Friday night’s main attraction was an abridged reading of Sarah Rose Kearns stage adaptation of *Persuasion*, which was funny, tender and well written. The script is faithful to the novel (though not enslaved to it), and the transitions are cleverly accompanied by sailors’ songs of love and faithfulness.

As the fireflies began to wink, the play concluded and we made the trek to the car which was slow going as we hugged and helloed our way to the parking area. Mary Miller gave us a treat by stopping at the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery to contemplate our mortality.

My roommate arrived at last, and we spent the rest of the evening catching up and sewing on her gown, which was not quite finished, but we ironed and sewed and laughed as I imagine Jane and Cassandra would have done, before settling in to dream of Saturday.

“What dreadful hot weather we have! It keeps one in a continual state of Inelegance” JA to Cassandra, 18 September 1796

It is July in Kentucky, so no one should be surprised when the mercury rises to near 100, but that doesn’t mean we can’t all talk about it, and IT WAS HOT. It was the opening topic of conversation as we engaged in the main activity– Shopping! First stop– Bingley’s Teas to replenish my supply of *Emma’s Perfect Match* and *Titania’s Fairy Tea* (both of which make excellent iced tea). I was able to snatch up a toasting glass with Jane Austen’s silhouette that I had been eyeing last year. Then to buy a reticule to go with my everyday dress, which I found at Pickaway Plains, along with a little pair of amber glass earrings– just in case a sailor brother should give me an amber cross.
All that shopping can give a girl an appetite, so I made a quick stop at Half Crown Bake House for a slice of plum cake and Hellinger Kurtz Kaffeehaus for coffee, before finding a seat in the big tent for the presentation “Rears and Vices: The Georgian Royal Navy” given by the entertaining and informative Patrick Stokes, a direct descendant of Jane Austen’s brother Charles. The presentation was enlightening and Mr. Stokes was hilarious.

I would have gladly stayed for the fashion show but there was more shopping to do, the costume exhibit in the manor house, and so many people to see. I spent a little time with all our friends at Matti’s Millinery and Costume, but they hardly had a moment to look up for all the business. The lovely ladies of Shocking Bad Hats had a more leisurely day, as they had sold nearly all their stock on Friday night, and so I made a little video with their help

https://www.facebook.com/250645988323148/videos/1796444593743272/?t=6

New friends included LBCC Historical Apothecary, whom I hope we can convince to vend at our Spring Gala, and the charming and talented Zach Pinsent of Pinsent tailoring.

No Jane Austen Festival experience is complete without tea, and this year’s tea selection from Bingley’s Teas featured Mary Miller’s favorite The Patience of Miss Price, and a new offering, A Dance for the Musgrove Sisters, which brought me back to the Bingley’s Teas table to buy more tea.

All this excitement and bustle (and heat) was too much for me, and I missed the ball, but the loss of a ball was more than made up for in a delightful dinner with Lauren Burke, Hannah Jerry Chapman and the fans of their podcast Bonnets at Dawn, followed by Graeters ice cream and then regret.

Sunday we awoke to overcast skies and cooler breezes, and though the drizzle dirtied our hems, it couldn’t dampen our spirits. My roommate was determined to purchase a corset from Red Threaded, so we arrived just as they opened the grounds and as luck would have
it, they had just the garment in the perfect size. Good luck was the theme for the day and we were granted an audience with Lady Caroline Linnington, who graciously received us, and just as graciously sent us on our way in time to secure front row seats for the Regency Fashion Show, followed by Zach Pinsent’s presentation on Georgian and Regency menswear, and then Jeremy Strong’s presentation, “Austen Meets (Patrick) O’Brien: Persuasion and the Aubrey/Maturin novels”. After such an afternoon we felt smarter than Mary Bennett, and shopped with a determination to rival Lydia’s. After Zach Pinsent’s presentation and our discussion the day before about the importance of proper undergarments, I will confess to buying a Regency undergarment from Red Threaded as well, but I am still not convinced that I need to hand sew a gown.

As the sun began to sink below the clouds, we packed our treasures into our horseless carriages, thanked Bonnie Wise and the volunteers and members of JASNA Louisville for another spectacular weekend, and bid goodbye to the Festival Friends we had met; with promises all around to meet again next year. Hand sewn or not, I am determined to have a new gown.

Photos, from top: Traffic on I-80; Kemberley Locke Payton, Mary Miller, Deb Miller. Photo courtesy of Mary Miller; The Cast of Persuasion; “…a very useful gown, happy to go anywhere,” photo courtesy of Amy Weinbrecht; Patrick Stokes, photo courtesy of Mary Miller; Deb Miller and Zach Pinsent; Greta Biedermann and Deb Miller

Voting Continues for Pride & Prejudice in The Great American Read

There’s and old saying here in Chicago, "Vote early and vote often!" While that may not be legal in a real election, it's perfectly permissible in The Great American Read. Place your vote for Pride and Prejudice, by visiting https://www.pbs.org/the-great-american-read/home/ Book lovers are invited to vote once per day. The winner will be announced in a finale on October 18. For further information, or to view the premiere episode, visit https://www.pbs.org/the-great-american-read/watch/
Call for Papers
JASNA AGM 2019
The Southeastern Virginia Region eagerly invites proposals for AGM breakout sessions related to our theme, “200 Years of Northanger Abbey: ‘Real, Solemn History.’” Both traditional lecture formats and more unusual ones such as debates or multi-media presentations are encouraged. Submission deadline is October 8, 2018. For more information and specific guidelines, please visit http://www.jasna.org/agms/williamsburg/call-for-papers.html

Upcoming Events
Jane Austen at the Elmhurst Public Library
Monday, August 20 7 pm
125 S. Prospect Ave, Elmhurst IL www.elmhurstpubliclibrary.org

JASNA Annual General Meeting “Persuasion: 200 Years of Constancy and Hope”
September 28-30
Westin Kansas City at Crown Center
*Please note: The AGM is currently sold out. To be added to the waitlist, visit http://www.jasna.org/agms/kansascity/registration.html

Northanger Abbey and Persuasion: An Exploration of Two Jane Austen Novels
Wednesdays, September 19 - October 17 (no class 9/26) 5:45 - 7:45 pm
In observance of the 200th anniversary of their publication, Jeff Nigro and the class will read and discuss the two Jane Austen novels that were issued posthumously. Northanger Abbey deals with the dangers of confusing fiction with reality. Persuasion, meanwhile, is a richly textured work addressing social change, human integrity, and romantic second chances. Together, they provide a window onto Regency-era culture and show a celebrated author operating at the height of her powers.
For more information and registration: https://newberry.org/F18Austen

Mansfield Park
by Kate Hamill
November 8- December 16
adapted from the novel by Jane Austen directed by Stuart Carden
Northlight Theatre
9501 Skokie Blvd, Skokie
Playwright Kate Hamill, known for her acclaimed adaptations of Sense and Sensibility
and *Vanity Fair*, brings her unique sense of playfulness and theatricality to Austen’s classic tale of the clash between love and conscience.

https://northlight.org/events/mansfield-park/

**Emma**

May 24 – July 14, 2019

A world premiere based on the novel by Jane Austen

Adapted by Phil Timberlake

Directed by Elise Kauzlaric

Lifeline Theatre

6912 N Glenwood Ave, Chicago

Making his Lifeline playwriting debut, ensemble member Phil Timberlake joins ensemble member Elise Kauzlaric, director of 2012’s *Pride and Prejudice* and 2016’s *Northanger Abbey* for a fresh, intimate look at this beloved Austen romp.

http://www.lifelinetheatre.com/

**Join JASNA**

JASNA membership is open to everyone interested in the life and works of Jane Austen.

Benefits of membership include:

- A subscription to *JASNA News*, the Society’s newsletter, which is published three times a year and includes news, feature articles, and book reviews.


- Membership in one or more of our regional groups.

- An opt-in email subscription to JASNA’s monthly e-bulletin and other timely announcements.

- An invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting, our "members-only" three-day conference.

- Advance notice of tours to England tailored for JASNA members.

**Artwork Credits**

Fall Program: Handbill Graphic, Laura Whitlock; Morning Walking Dress, June 1810, La Belle Assemblée; Morning Dress, March 1803, Le Miroir de la Mode. Summer Program Photos: Becky Dolin, Ronnie Jo Sokol, Laura Whitlock. JA Festival Photos: Debra Ann Miller, Mary Miller, Amy Weinbrecht. Upcoming Events: Wallpaper border, colour print from wood blocks on paper; from the stock of Cowtan & Sons; England; ca. 1820
Letter from Chicago
Published by the Greater Chicago Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America Debra Ann Miller, Regional Director; Laura Whitlock, Designer/Editor; Lori Mahoney, Editorial Consultant

JASNA-GCR OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

- Regional Director--Debra Ann Miller, janeaustenspeaks@gmail.com
- Deputy RC/Parliamentarian--Maureen Collins, 7collins@jmls.edu
- Program Director--Jeff Nigro, jennigro@mac.com
- Treasurer--Elizabeth Schraft, 73eas2014@gmail.com
- Educational Outreach Director--Linda Reinert, lindaehrenhardtreinert@gmail.com
- Membership Secretary--Becky Dolin, becky.dolin@gmail.com
- Publicity Director--Andrea Kayne, Andreakayne33@gmail.com
- Publications Director--Laura Whitlock, llwhitlock@yahoo.com
- Recording Secretary--William Phillips, waphi3@gmail.com
- Member at Large--Georgia Cibul, hgcib@comcast.net
- Member at Large--Carl Johnson, johnson34411@sbcglobal.net

Direct newsletter correspondence to: Letter from Chicago, c/o Laura Whitlock; 4945 Howard St.; Skokie, IL 60077, llwhitlock@yahoo.com