

Letter from Chicago

Spring 2015

Spring Gala

Saturday, May 2, 2015,
10:00 am–4:00 pm

What Jane Saw



Dr. Janine Barchas,

University of Texas at Austin and JASNA Traveling Lecturer, presents **“What Jane Saw in 1813 and 1796,”** a discussion of art exhibits that Jane Austen attended.



Our second presentation will be **“Entertaining Jane: Austen in the Theatre,”** a discussion of plays that Jane Austen saw, with performances by Terra Mysterium Theater.



Morning Coffee and Tea • Three-Course Plated Luncheon

Ballroom of the Woman’s Athletic Club of Chicago • 626 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago
(Enter on Ontario Street)

Sale Tables from Jane Austen Books, Milwaukee Candle and Apothecary,
Anna’s Trunk and Used Book Sale Table

Valet parking: \$20 per car. For other parking options, go to www.jasnachicago.org

GALA REGISTRATION FORM

Members: \$75; Guests and Public: \$85

Registration deadline: April 24

Member Name _____

Guest(s) Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____

I would like to support the Gala with a voluntary tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____

10:00 am Coffee and Tea only

Luncheon Selectons:

Starter: Baby Greens Salad _____

Entrees: Chicken Schnitzel _____
Choose one or _____
per person Vegetarian Lasagna _____

Dessert: Seasonal Crème Brûlée _____

You can register by

1. Going online to www.jasnachicago.org and pay using your Visa or MasterCard.

or

2. Mailing your check—payable to JASNA-GCR— and this form to Russell Clark,

4020 N. Damen, Apt. 405
Chicago, IL 60618



Jeffrey Nigro



The Many Worlds of Jane Austen

JASNA-GCR continues our year of “Living in Jane Austen’s World” with our next event, the Spring Gala on May 2. It’s a good opportunity to ask the

question: what do we mean by “Jane Austen’s world”? That question has more answers than you might think, and those answers can vary not only from person to person, but from one time period to another. Scholars and critics like Claudia Johnson and Deirdre Lynch have traced the history of Austen fandom and how attitudes about her work have changed over the past 200 years.

For much of the 19th century and well into the 20th, the general consensus was that Austen’s “world” was a small one, “cozy” or “narrow”, depending on one’s point of view. For many Victorians and Edwardians, living in a culture changed and expanded by industrialism and empire, Austen’s

world and worldview were limited and proscribed, but comfortingly so. Her novels seemed to depict a society where everyone knows everyone else, everyone knows the rules, and problems and challenges seem reassuringly quaint. This was the world of those “three or four families in a Country Village” that Austen said she so loved to write about, responding to her niece Anna’s first attempt at novel writing. It is tempting to read this advice as an example of that classic admonition to aspiring authors, “Write about what you know”. But was the life of small English villages the only thing Austen knew?

More recently, biographers and critics have emphasized Austen’s awareness of the wider “world” of her time. This shift in attitude is perhaps not surprising, given that our culture supposedly prizes sophistication and irony over naïveté. Austen’s surviving letters are full of references to important events. She was made aware of contemporary political realities from friends and relatives, such as her cousin and sister-in-law Eliza, whose French husband

LETTER FROM CHICAGO

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was guillotined during the Revolution, and her sailor brothers, who experienced war and colonial stresses at first hand. As our Gala presenters will remind us, Jane visited London frequently, attended art exhibitions, and was an enthusiastic attendee of the theater, whether in the capital, in Bath, or in a reconverted barn at Steventon. Clearly, Austen was much more “worldly” than used to be supposed, which is good news for those of us who try to match her work with other disciplines: psychology or economics, art history or military history.


Today, Jane Austen can be said to have conquered “The World”. Her novels have

been translated into many languages, and there are Jane Austen societies in Australia, New Zealand, and Japan as well as the UK, North America, and continental Europe. Is this just more British colonialism? Perhaps. I would like to attribute the popularity of Austen in our Global Village to her core of humanity, to ideas and values that anyone anywhere at any time can understand and appreciate.

Speaking of times and places, though, you won't want to be anywhere else than the Woman's Athletic Club on May 2 for our 2015 Gala! You can read more about it on the cover and on page 4.


In Memoriam

Tribute to Linda Relias



All of us at JASNA-GCR were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Linda Relias in February, after a long struggle with cancer. Linda served as Regional Coordinator of what was then called the Illinois/Indiana Region (now Greater Chicago) from 2000 to 2004. Beverly Roth has fond memories of board meetings held in Linda's gracious home in Wilmette, “all decorated in much cheerful yellow with many flowers set about.” Among other projects, Linda's support of Noble Charter Schools resulted in the schools receiving grants for library books from our region.

A strong admirer of Austen's literary artistry, Linda was always happy to hear other great authors express the same sentiments. Natalie Goldberg recalls that Linda was delighted to hear E.L. Doctorow talk about Austen's influence on his work at a Printer's Row Book Fair. Linda and her husband were enthusiastic and adventurous travelers, whose journeys took them from Chawton to the rain forests of Costa Rica. She



also participated in the first two presentations by the GCR Readers' Theatre Group. She was a reader with the group in two successive Spring Gala programs: “Nothing So Useful as a Reference to Austen” (2006); and “The Manipulative and the Vicious: Lady Susan in the Best of the Worst Company” (2007).

Linda was also an active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and at the Church of the Holy Comforter in Kenilworth. She is survived by her husband, John, her daughters Ann Relias (Michael Kropp) and Alexandra Relias (Jonathan Cifonelli), and her four grandchildren. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to Linda's family.

Thanks to Natalie Goldberg, Beverly Roth, Ronnie Jo Sokol, Duwanna Wall, and William Phillips for sharing their reminiscences.

Jeff Nigro

Programs

February is always a busy month for me, and this year, February was so busy, it filled the first week of March as well. Although portraying Mary Todd Lincoln is my job throughout the year, President's Day, Black History Month and Abraham Lincoln's birthday make February the most popular month for performances in schools and museums. Combine this with the sesqui-centennials of the end of the Civil War and Lincoln's second Inauguration and you have a recipe for the busiest February in my 18 years of performing in this role. I have lived in "Mary Lincoln's world" for the last five weeks, and the few Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott performances I was able to do during that month were a welcome respite.

So I am happy to return to Jane Austen's world with a new appreciation of her life. I certainly don't mean to imply that Jane's life was easy. Both women suffered losses of family and friends; both lived in the shadow of war. Mary's experiences in both these categories were much more acute and, to my mind, more devastating because of a glaring difference in the lives of these two women: Mary's lack of support from her family and, with the exception of Elizabeth Keckley, no true friends in Washington.

In 2009 we celebrated the 200th anniversary of Jane's removal to Chawton Cottage. Chawton Cottage is the first permanent home Jane has had since she moved with Cassandra and her parents from Steventon to Bath in 1801. Jane's years in Chawton are her most productive as a writer and the little cottage becomes the "heart" of the Austen Family. In Deirdre Le Faye's ***Jane Austen A Family Record***, one can clearly see in her tracking of the family movements, that Jane's brothers and their families began to gather around the little cottage. After Jane, Cassandra, Mrs. Austen and Martha Lloyd moved in, Edward did not renew the lease on Chawton House, instead choosing to forego the income, and spent months at a time there with Fanny and the rest of his children, not to mention visits

Debra Ann Miller, Program Director

from brother Frank, who moved his family into Chawton Great House in 1814 and remained for two years before settling in nearby Alton. Henry established a branch of his bank in Alton, and after returning from Bermuda with his wife and children, Charles visited frequently and left his girls with the Austen women for a month in the summer of 1813. James and family visited frequently. Anna, James' daughter from his first wife, often lived at Chawton and as Mrs. Ben Lefroy moved to Wyans, just outside Alton.

Jane lived and thrived within the love and support of her family. The Austens were not perfect. In reading Jane's letters we see hints of alienations, injuries, embarrassments and misunderstandings, but for those eight years they were a family. Even in the face of Henry's bank failure and the loss of family money that had been deposited there, Jane wrote to Cassandra, "One knows the uncertainty of all this, but should it be so, we must think the best & hope the best, & do the best."

Within this world Jane was certainly able to "think the best...& do the best".

I hope you will join us for our annual Spring Gala on May the second from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Woman's Athletic Club. This year we welcome Janine Barchas, creator of the website ***What Jane Saw*** and author of *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen: History, Location, and Celebrity*, as our Keynote speaker presenting "***What Jane Saw in 1813 and 1796***," focusing on the British Institution and Shakespeare Gallery exhibits. Our second presentation will be ***Entertaining Jane: Austen in the Theatre***, accompanied by Terra Mysterium Theatre Company. Our market this year will offer tempting treasures from old friends and new: Jane Austen Books will return and will be joined by Milwaukee Candle and Apothecary and Anna's Trunk. Sunday we will be going to Chicago Shakespeare Theater to see *Sense & Sensibility*. There is limited availability for the discounted tickets, so please respond quickly.

Sightings/Citings

By Elsie Holzwarth



Constraints

In connection with the publication of her new book *How to Be a Heroine*, Iraqi-British author and playwright **Samantha Ellis** was

interviewed in *Psychology Today* magazine on the influence of her favorite literary women. “So often,” she said, “you see characters who are sure about everything, and that’s not anyone’s experience. We all make mistakes. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet is forever realizing that she’s made a terrible mistake and looking into herself and trying to the better.”

As to whether there is a tension between wanting to see dreams come true and acknowledging the real obstacles women face, Ellis replied, “To an extent, books can and should reflect the constraints we live under. Elizabeth has to get married at the end of *Pride and Prejudice*. It’s not that I want Jane Austen to say no, she discovers that she would rather go and, I don’t know, climb the Himalayas with Jane. I’m not asking books to take people out of their time. But I think you can show constraints and also show how people find accommodation in them.”

In Memoriam



Oxford don and literary critic **John Bayley** wrote his memoir *Elegy for Iris* about his relationship with philosopher

and novelist Iris Murdoch, her Alzheimer’s and the care he gave her. The 2001 film *Iris* starred Kate Winslet and Hugh Bonneville as the young couple and Judi Dench and Jim Broadbent as the older couple.

Bayley was an essayist who wrote about Austen. In the *Paris Review* he said, “I’m not sure the English novel, taken as a whole, is particularly witty but I am sure it’s full of humour. There’s not a clear distinction between the two but there is a difference. Jane Austen is both witty (see the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*) and humourous, but her humour goes deeper, is less comprehensive, less definable. Why should it be so funny for instance when Emma’s father Mr. Woodhouse—himself a wonderfully humorous portrait—keeps boring his family and the reader with some riddle about ‘Kitty, a fair but frozen maid.’ It doesn’t sound funny here but in the book it is—very funny—and as with all true humour one can’t say why. Barbara Pym, a contemporary novelist and in a sense a disciple of Jane Austen, is very funny too in this way if you like her novels—some people don’t. Humour, like taste, is unaccountable.”

Romance Writing



The University of Chicago Alumni Magazine interviewed alum **Gwyn Cready**, author of *Seducing Mr. Darcy*, for which she won the RITA award

from the Romance Writers of America. She said, “The romance novel world is the literary world’s punching bag. Every bad article about romance fiction includes the phrase ‘bodice ripper’ ... The reason in my mind that romance novels are so beloved by their readers is the same reason they are dismissed by the male-dominated literary world: they offer a view of sexual empowerment seen through the eyes of women. Romance novels assert that a woman’s sexual and emotional needs are important. That’s really subversive.”

Winter Luncheon

Sara Okey

Kim took us on a visual tour of landscape design, improvements, and the picturesque in Mansfield Park. With sharp wit and keen intellect, Austen made tart comments on the value of landscape improvements and contrasted Gilpin's romantic sensibility with the satire of Dr. Syntax.

On a beautiful Sunday, February 8, JASNA GCR assembled to enjoy an afternoon of learning and good company. We met at a new (and fabulous) location: Marcello's in Lincoln Park. Program Chair Debra Miller made the welcome introductions. Shortly after, we all enjoyed a hearty Italian lunch featuring lasagna, chicken parmesan, rice pilaf, and the traditional Italian dessert of fudge caramel brownies.

Kim Wilson, JASNA-Wisconsin Editor and author of *At Home with Jane Austen*, was our wonderful speaker. She revisited her and Victoria Hinshaw's Montreal AGM presentation "Gilpin, the Pictureque, and Dr. Syntax."

Henry Austen mentioned that Jane Austen admired Reverend William Gilpin. He was an English artist, Anglican cleric, schoolmaster, and author. He is credited as one of the originators of the idea of the picturesque. He said that natural scenery was like heaven. Gilpin set the tone of esthetic ideals in "An Essay on Prints." These ideals include savage grandeur, sublime, rough territory, and beauty.

Painters were able to capture this idea visually. First, the painter chose a low point of view and captured their subject looking up. Dark foregrounds accompanied light in the distance. Adding trees and ruins added broken lines. It was important to represent nature artistically, not accurately.

Many designers put these ideals into practice. Capability Brown, an English landscape architect and nicknamed England's greatest gardener, helped create these ideals all over the English landscape. Other designers added ha-has, a recessed fence that created a vertical barrier while preserving the view.

Humphry Rumpton added useful landscape elements like flower boxes, moved rivers, and animal housing relocations.

All these landscape ideas led to a boom in English domestic tourism. Guidebooks that taught the casual tourist how to visit the picturesque sites began to be popular. Jane Austen visited Stoneleigh Abbey, a Humphry Rumpton renovation success. Her family traveled to Netley Abbey, a ruined medieval monastery. In short, the Austens enjoyed their adventures in architecture and landscape design.

Jane Austen echoed Reverend Gilpin's thoughts on nature in her writings. She left her readers clues about her love of nature. All six novels include excursions. The setting of *Northanger* is full of beautiful walks and elaborate descriptions of Beechen Cliff. Another example of this affection for nature is extensive detail of the countryside in *Persuasion*. Every single heroine in her books loves nature. Even the not so lovable ones bend to the new nature laws. General Tilney from *Northanger Abbey* decided to leave a cottage undisturbed because of Catherine's comment.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. And Gilpin was no exception. William Combe created Reverend Doctor Syntax, a satire and at times a burlesque of Gilpin. From 1809 to 1811 he wrote for Ackermann's *Poetical Magazine* the famous *Tour of Dr. Syntax in search of the Picturesque* (descriptive and moralizing verse of a somewhat doggerel type), which, owing greatly to Thomas Rowlandson's drawing, was an immense success. Syntax ventured to see picturesque sites. Accompanied by his former racing horse Grizzle, Syntax only ran into misfortune. The story is told in a sing song, nursery rhyme manner for a comic effect. As Keith Weigle commented, it sounds like Dr. Seuss!

The picturesque stressed what is in contrast to what ought to be. Jane Austen's characters are defined by the way the view and treat the landscape. So when characters like

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Photos



Starting upper left: Kim Wilson and the title screen of her talk; Tycelia Santoro and Jane Wagoner ready to party; Del Cahill with daughter Frances; Sharing a group hug Elizabeth Schraft, John Jones and Dahila Klepac; Kim signing copies of her books; Attendees listening to Kim's presentation; Another view of the room during the presentation; Karen Miller and Brigitte Cox enjoying the afternoon; Jeanne Leidtka, Corinne Hill and Al Leidtka await the main course; Georgia Cibul, Diane Capitani and Becky Dolin chat; Martha Jameson shares a moment with Kim Wilson; Duwana Wall chats with new member Marilyn Baker-Buffington; Karen Doornebos shows off her signed copies of Kim's books. Photos courtesy of Margo Malos and Sara Okey.

She Said

By Sara Okey



We met at a Thanksgiving Eve party almost five years ago. I came with a group of girlfriends. He came alone. But I saw him at the bar surrounded by lots of very pretty ladies. He was all smiles and looked quite handsome wearing

a lavender shirt and brown pinstripe suit. I figured that he was taken.

One of the benefits of having girlfriends is that they ask guys the questions that you are too afraid to say. So I soon found out that he was single. Shortly after we began talking I realized that we had a connection. But I also knew that one of my friends had to leave, so we exchanged phone numbers. I texted him later that night and we soon made plans for a date after the holiday weekend.

Our first official date was at a bar to watch a Chicago Bears game. The conversation came easily. We talked about most of the things that you talk about on a first date: likes, dislikes, favorite this and that, etc.

And then Jane came into the conversation.

Keith soon found out that Jane Austen was one of my favorite likes and so he volunteered to read one of Jane Austen's books. He asked me for a recommendation and I said *Emma*. At the time, I didn't know that he already was an avid reader but had never read anything by Jane Austen. She can have a reputation for being prim and proper. (Real Janites know the truth about her writing but overcoming a false reputation could be difficult for someone new to the fold.)

He read it and loved it. He found her writing to be intelligent and witty through clever character development. He even wrote an article for the Winter 2012 JASNA-GCR newsletter as a part of our "My First Austen" series.

As our relationship continued, our Jane Austen connection has grown. He has attended GCR events and AGMs. We've watched many movies and series inspired by her books including *The Jane Austen Book Club*, *Austenland*, *Lost in Austen*, and more. I knew that he enjoyed learning about a passion of mine and he has grown an admiration for her too.

Am I saying that Jane Austen is responsible for our love? I'll admit that she definitely has influenced me and my values. I think that I'm a better person thanks to what I've learned from her and my love for Keith.

Winter Luncheon

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Mary Crawford comment about appreciating picturesque landscape and the designers, she reveals her ability to change and follow what is fashionable and popular. When Mr. Rushworth ignored the cottagers to do his will with the surroundings, he shows his self-indulgent behavior and disregard for (if not ignorance of) others. When Edmund Bertram is satisfied to leave the parsonage home and grounds unal-

tered, he clarifies his character to the two women that are, in essence, competing for his affection: Mary Crawford and Fanny Price.

In conclusion, tradition should be honored as long as it is not at the expense of others. Jane Austen would approve improvements in the landscape and homes as long as change is conducted carefully.

The Proposal

Sara and I are engaged! What follows is the story of the proposal.

We had talked about getting married and had even looked at rings together. There was never a formal proposal, however. How do I surprise her when we had already talked about the wedding? I came up with the idea to propose during our weekly trivia contest in front of the people we have spent every Tuesday night with for over a year and a half. I contacted the trivia host Ted and set the plan in motion. We had a few ideas go back and forth via email and I decided to act on the day there was a theme: Name That Tune Trivia.

The event was planned and how the proposal was going to place was set. Now I had to write my speech. Eeek! Given Sara's background in literature, especially Jane Austen, I knew I had to weave Jane into this speech. When you are involved with an Austen lover, you end up knowing a lot more about Jane Austen than you ever dreamed of knowing. I have attended Jane conferences, teas, and lectures in my quest to be a supportive partner. During these events, I have learned how important Jane has become to all of her fans. I figured I would use a quote from one of Jane's books. How could I possibly find a quote about marriage in a Jane Austen book?

Obviously there is no shortage of quotes about marriage in a Jane Austen story. I decided to use the opening line in *Pride and Prejudice*. "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." I honestly feel that Sara is my "good fortune." I had my quote!

On the Tuesday afternoon of the proposal, I met Ted at his office. Since it was Name That Tune night, Ted had the idea to call up a couple from every team to guess the song to gain more points. The whole idea is to get Sara up in front of everyone to guess a song. The plan was coming together. I picked the Bruno Mars song "Marry You" for Sara to "guess".

I stashed the ring in my coat pocket before we left on our weekly journey to the pub. I put on

my most inconspicuous face and we were on our way. Our team that night was seven people strong, including three of Sara's recently graduated students. It came time for the special portion of the night where a couple from every team was to guess their songs. A couple was called before us and I knew we were next. No one on our team knew what was about to happen. I was in the midst of convincing Sara that we should go up there and others on our team were thinking they should fill in for Sara. I finally convinced her to get up there in front of everyone with me. Ted started the Bruno Mars song. Sara had no clue, other than it was Bruno Mars. Her former students could see me standing behind her with a ring box and started to yell "Ms. Okey! I think he is asking you!" Finally Ted cut the music and I had the microphone. It seems the air let out of the room as everyone caught on to what was about to happen.

I started to speak in front of the 60 plus people in the crowd. "This has all been a ruse to get to this point. You have all played this game with us for a while now and you may not know our names. I'm Keith and this is Sara. Sara loves Jane Austen and I thought I would start with a quote from the beginning of one of Sara's favorite books. 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.' You, Sara, are my good fortune. I am honored to have you in my life. I love your intelligence, your beauty and above all your patience. 'There are no happy endings. Endings are the saddest part, so just give me a happy middle and a very happy start.'" With that being said, I got down on one knee and asked Sara if she would marry me. Through her tears and smile she said yes. Everyone cheered and the pub owner sent over a bottle of congratulatory champagne. To top it all off we won the competition that night as well!

History of the Novel

In his recent book, *The Novel: a Biography*, **Michael Schmidt** attempts to cover “700 years of the novel in English.” He devotes one chapter, “Manners”, to Fanny Burney and Jane Austen. Austen he describes as “A vicar’s daughter, rural, unpretentious, in youth a parodist, whose parodies propelled her into the heart of rhetoric, understanding how with language people restrict, maim, and deceive themselves... From parody it was a short step—the step Cervantes took, and Fielding—to genuine interest in character and in the manners, affectations, and sincerities that gave rise to it...”

[She] writes of a known world, wholly familiar to her and to her readers. In Austen, however, something new and remarkable begins to happen... In *Mansfield Park* Fanny walks alone in the shrubbery and reflects to herself in ways that do not advance the narrative but reveal the character she is *coming into being*, she gathers into herself her own reality... Austen is didactic quite as much as [Fanny] Burney, but at a different level, a level at which the nature of being human more than the rules of being good are explored.”

Her characters’ “worlds become so real that they can step outside the frame of their particular novel and companion us... In mature Austen, especially *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, it is not external events so much as internal changes that provide the drama.” We remember the heroines for their “unclosed complexity.”

Schmidt quotes other writers on Austen, including **Giuseppe Lampedusa** who said she is a writer who must “be read slowly: a moment’s inattention can make me overlook a crucial phrase, for her art is

one of nuances and ambiguities under an apparent simplicity.” Alas, Schmidt errs in calling Austen’s oldest brother John on one page and, correctly, James two pages later. Where was the editor, pray tell?

Letters

In *The Novel* Schmidt quotes E. M. Forster about Austen’s letters and the “poverty of material” in them which seems to prove that “the supreme thing in life to her was the family. She knew no other allegiance.” Schmidt agrees. He finds her letters “disappointing” and he’s rather snarky about it. Commenting on Austen writing that the art of letter writing is to express on paper what one would say to the person, Schmidt goes off the rails, saying, “to which one may ungenerously conclude that her conversations must have been more than a trifle on the dry side.” He notes niece Fanny’s remark that “Both Aunts were brought up in the most complete ignorance of the World & its ways (I mean as to fashion &c).” And he tosses in, “There is no further evidence of it than in Jane Austen’s letters.”

Schmidt does concede that Austen did not write her letters for publication, that the context of the letters’ contents was known to the recipient and to Austen, that she “wrote to Cassandra what she thought she wanted to know about,” and that Austen may have self-censored the letters because they might be read to or by others.

It is the importance of letters in the novels that interests Schmidt. “By choosing to have letters do so much work for her throughout her books, but rejecting her initial inclination to use letters and nothing else, Austen goes a long way in bridging the gap between old and new forms of fiction, and between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth.”

Book Review

By Karen J. Sennet

First off, I must confess that I am biased about Kim Wilson's book *Tea with Jane Austen*, since I myself enjoy researching what people ate during specific periods of time and in specific places. The book is a well-rounded look at the history and broad range of social customs, from medicinal use to everyday rituals, surrounding tea during Jane Austen's time. The book also includes snippets from her letters, books, and other contemporary references, including recipes for popular items that would have been taken with or in lieu of tea.

Tea with Jane Austen starts with breakfast and winds its way towards the end of the day, covering all instances when tea might be offered and consumed. It reminds us what was drunk prior to the introduction of tea in the United Kingdom around 1600, and that the taxation on tea was just as heavy there as it was in the United States at the start of the American Revolution. Readers also gain insight as to why we say "one lump or two", and the importance of tea regulation and quality control.

The book shows us how little human nature has changed; people still look to the rich and famous for direction. As Wilson says, "When Jane Austen's parents were young, dining in the early to middle afternoon was usual. People of fashion, to

distinguish themselves from common folk, dined later, perhaps three or four o'clock. Naturally, aspiring ladies and gentlemen changed their hours to imitate high society, which responded by pushing the dinner hour even later." I was, of course, struck by how enormously our social habits and the role of women in society have changed. Most people no longer have the luxury for teatime at any hour of the day (at least this reader doesn't), and educated women are no longer only expected to cultivate talents for the sole purpose of keeping their families entertained.

A variety of recipes are provided, thankfully with modern instruction. Recipes include recognizable favorites such as pound cake, ice cream, and punch to the more esoteric barley water, fish-based catsup, and syllabub from the cow. I am thankful for the modern interpretations, as I would have a difficult time finding a cow, let alone milking one.

Tea with Jane Austen is well written, informative, and a delight to read. I look forward to sitting down with a Wedgwood cup filled with Twinings tea and pondering the shared ritual between Jane and myself and, when ambitious, expanding that to a small party.

During our lunch, Regional Coordinator Jeff Nigro first took the podium to tell us about a wonderful exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago called "Ireland: Art and Design at a Cultural Crossroads 1690-1840." The collection will feature over 300 objects from public and private North American collections. Many art mediums are featured: musical instruments, silverware, portraits, furniture, glass, quilts, and more. It will be the first to explore the art and culture of Ireland during the 18th century. The exhibit appropriately opened on March 17 and runs until June 7.



Photo courtesy of Margo Malos.

LETTER FROM CHICAGO

JASNA-GCR
11133 Meadow Lark Lane
Belvidere, IL 61008

 *Spring Gala*
Saturday, May 2

Calendar

- May 2** **Spring Gala.** “What Jane Saw”. Woman’s Athletic Club, 626 North Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL. See front page to find out about registration.
- May 3** **2:00 pm. JASNA-GCR group visit to *Sense and Sensibility* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater.** Visit www.jasnachicago.org to find out how to order tickets.
- Summer** JASNA–GCR is planning another fun event—stay tuned for details!
- October 9-11** **JASNA Annual General Meeting.** “Living in Jane Austen’s World”. Louisville, KY

For more events and programs that will be of interest, visit our website at jasnachicago.org, and click on Events>Austen-Related Events.