

Letter from Chicago

Summer 2015

Fall Program

Saturday, September 26, 2015

2:30 pm to 4:30 pm

From Agrimony to Yarrow: A Jane Austen Herbal

Nancy Melvin, Chicago Waldorf School

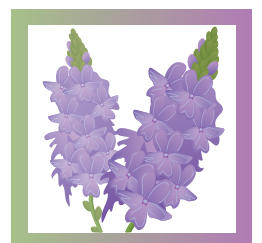
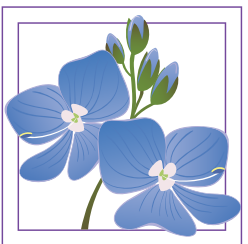
Nancy Melvin is a teacher, gardener, and textile artist.

She will speak on medicinal, culinary, and household herbs used in the Regency era and mentioned in Jane Austen's writing.

Veterans Room
The Oak Park Public Library
Main Library
834 Lake Street
Oak Park, Illinois 60301

Free and Open to the Public

The Main Library Parking Garage is located on the lower level of the library and is accessible from Lake Street.



onscreen revolve around either the 1940 Greer Garson/Laurence Olivier version or the 1980 Elizabeth Garvie/David Rintoul version, it was the 1995 mini-series that really put Austen on the pop culture map. Yes, Colin Firth's smoldering sexuality and damp shirt had a lot to do with it. Beyond all that, though, the combination of a faithful but not overly reverential screenplay, superb acting, and beautiful production values proved that Jane Austen could be smart, humane, sexy, and fun. After that moment, "Jane Austen" truly became a brand: membership in JASNA practically exploded, as did the whole phenomenon of both Austen-inspired fiction and Austeniana. If your bookshelves and your Amazon Wish List are filled with items with "Darcy" and/or "Pemberley" in the title, or you have actually used Jane Austen toothpaste or bandages, you can thank the success of the 1995 *P&P*.

Clueless is a fascinating case: Austen fandom is often dismissed as "nostalgia", but Heckerling's clever update of *Emma* demonstrated that Austen's novels are "adaptable" in every sense of the word. Like so many of us, Heckerling knows that Austen's characters are instantly recognizable, whether in a country village in Regency England or a modern Beverly Hills high school. And in an irony that Austen herself would doubtless enjoy, *Clueless* has become the object of nostalgic devotion over the past few years, for those '90s fashions, music, slang (much of it apparently coined by Heckerling herself), and big clunky phones.

So celebrate this banner anniversary year by (re)watching your favorite Austen film, and mark your calendar for our Free Fall Program on September 26!

Summer Program

Elia Rivera

Age of Indulgence: Beer and Wine in the Era of Jane Austen

By-the-bye, as I must leave off being young, I find many douceurs in being a sort of chaperon, for I am put on the sofa near the fire, and can drink as much wine as I like.

Letter to Cassandra, Nov. 6, 1800

Indeed, Jane, here's to leaving off being young! Over 60 JASNA-GCR members and guests certainly did during our 2015 Summer Program "Age of Indulgence: Beer and Wine in the Era of Jane Austen."

The program was held on Sunday, July 12th at the Goose Island Brewery in Chicago. Members and guests enjoyed lunch and drinks before our presenter, Lucas Livingston, guided

us through a brief history of the popular drinks of England in Austen's time and the contemporary rise of the craft beer revival.

Lucas is the Assistant Director of Senior Programs in the Department of Museum Education at the Art Institute of Chicago where he directs the life-

long learning opportunities for adults and visitors with disabilities. He has degrees in Ancient Civilizations from the University of Notre Dame and the University of Chicago and studied Egyptology at the American University in Cairo.

For our presentation, Lucas drew primarily from Austen's personal letters as well as cooking and household management books of the 18th and 19th centuries. His research led us through a refreshing exploration of the



The Karl Strauss Room at Goose Island Brewpub.

Programs

Debra Ann Miller, Program Director

We have had sad weather lately, I hope you have liked it.—Our Pond is brimfull & our roads are dirty & our walls are damp, & we sit wishing every bad day may be the last.

JA in a letter to her niece Caroline,
March 13, 1816

I had to look twice at the reminder that I needed to write a letter for the summer edition of the newsletter. Summer? It is 69 degrees and raining. It feels more like September than July. I was reminded of one of the many quotes that Lucas Livingston used in his presentation for our Summer Meeting “Age of Indulgence: Beer and Wine in the Era of Jane Austen.”

We hear now that there is to be no Honey this year. Bad news for us.—We must husband our present stock of Mead; & I am sorry to perceive that our 20 Gal: is very nearly out.—

Letter to Cassandra,
September 8-9, 1816

Mr. Livingston explained that in 1816—referred to as the ‘year without a summer’—the weather in Europe and North America took a bizarre turn that resulted in widespread crop failures due to the eruption of Mount Tabora the year before. Without flowers, the bees made little honey. For those of you who were not able to attend the presentation, it was lively, informative and a great deal more upbeat than this single quote conveys. You can read a full review of our Summer Meeting written by Elia Rivera in this issue.

My head is full of Jane Austen quotes lately. From the research that I did for William Phillips’ in-depth presentation for the Spring Gala, to answering “Ask Jane” inquiries from the JASNA GCR website, to the “Talk Like Jane Austen Quote of the

Day” on Facebook, I hardly have a thought lately that doesn’t remind me of a Jane Austen quote. For example, our Spring Gala:

Our party went off extremely well. There were many sollicitudes, alarms, and vexations, beforehand, of course, but at last everything was quite right.

Letter to Cassandra,
April 25, 1811

For a full description of everything that was ‘quite right’, see Lori Davis’ article.

Our Summer Program:

Fanny & I ... were very much entertained;—and our Dinner & Evening went off very well.

Letter to Cassandra,
March 5-8, 1814

As to our Fall Meeting:

I shall now try to say only what is necessary. I am weary of meandering—so expect a vast deal of small matter concisely told.

Letter to Cassandra
January 30, 1809

I look forward to seeing you all at our annual free meeting which will be held at the Oak Park Public Library on Saturday, September 26th, from 2:30 to 4:30. In addition to the business of voting on new board members, we will have Nancy Melvin, life-time gardener and teacher, present to us on herbs, herbal remedies and recipes. Look for further details soon on our website, Facebook page and in your email.

You deserve a longer letter than this, but it is my unhappy fate seldom to treat people so well as they deserve.

Letter to Cassandra
December 26, 1798

GCR Elections

By Jeff Nigro

Once again, it is time for JASNA-GCR Board elections. Since the adoption of the current GCR By-laws in 2010, we now elect part of the GCR Board each September. This year, as in all odd numbered years, we have six (6) of the eleven (11) board positions up for election. Last September (2014) we elected the following five board members to serve until September of next year (2016):

Jeff Nigro, Regional Coordinator
Debra Ann Miller, Program Director
Becky Dolin, Membership Secretary
Laura Whitlock, Member at Large (even numbered years)

Russell Clark was elected GCR Treasurer at that same time. With Russell's passing (see page 9), the Board is entitled to fill that position until it is time for the next Board election in September 2016, and we are working on doing so. In the meantime, I am grateful to **William Phillips**, who has graciously agreed to help out with GCR fiduciary matters (receiving and depositing checks, for example) until a temporary Treasurer is appointed.

I also extend my thanks to the other members of this year's Nominating Committee, **Debra Ann Miller** and **Kathy Mueller**, for their willingness to help. Our task was made very easy this year, in that every one of the six board members who were up for re-election was eager to continue their outstanding work. How could the committee possibly turn any of them down?

As Regional Coordinator, I am thrilled that our dedicated board members are willing to continue, particularly since this will be the last chance for some of them to serve in their current positions. According to the bylaws of both JASNA and JASNA-GCR, a board member may only serve in one position for up to three consecutive two-year terms (i.e. for a total of six consecutive years). My own term as Regional Coordinator will come to an end in September 2016, and several of the positions that will be up for election in 2017 fall into this category.

Leaving such thoughts until another time, however, the 2015 Nominating Committee is delighted to present the slate of candidates for the 2015-2017 term:

Deputy Regional
Coordinator:

William Phillips

Recording Secretary:

Linda Reinert

Publicity Director:

Elia Rivera

Publications Director:

Sara Okey

Education Outreach
Director:

Diane Capitani

Member at Large
(odd numbered years):

Georgia Cibul

If you don't see your name on either of the lists above, fear not, we can always use more help! Committee work is always available, and there are always tasks that need doing. Do you have skills that you would love to put to good use? Let us know! The board election will take place at the September 26 meeting, immediately preceding the program.

Spring Gala

love of the theater, entitled "Entertaining Jane: Austen in the Theatre". William credited many of his insights to two sources: Debra Ann Miller's wonderful database and one of his Top Ten of All Time Favorite Works of Austen Scholarship: Penny Gay's *Jane Austen in the Theatre*. He shares Gay's

opinion that the myth that Austen disapproved of theater stems from misinterpreted remarks from her letters, when these comments show "someone who loves theater and wants better acting." Key London theaters were enlarging to 3,000 seats. In dim light, nuanced performances were sacrificed to

continued from p. 6

lavish, non-content-oriented, huge-scale displays. Likely, Austen craved the older-styled shows in smaller theaters, and brilliant use of language and plot.

William offered examples of Jane's own dramatic work: a burlesque of a burletta, then a "knowing, extremely accurate satire" she named *The Mystery, An Unfinished Comedy*. This was performed by actors from Terra Mysterium. After which, they performed snippets of two plays Jane saw: John Holmes's edifying tragedy, *Douglas*, which Thomas

Bertram referenced ("And I am sure my name was Norval every evening of my life through one Christmas holiday.").

They concluded with the equally improbable, but far happier, *Heir at Law*, by George Coleman the Younger, which features a Henry Morland. Is this name reflected in the union of Henry Tilney and Catherine Morland?

I so enjoyed these two longer presentations that provided our presenters with the time they deserved to help us experience what Jane saw. And all without a time machine.

In Memoriam

Tribute to Russell Clark

Russell Clark, a stalwart and much loved member of JASNA and GCR, died on April 21, 2015 after a brief illness.

A native of Jacksonville, Florida, Russell received his B.A. from Boston University and an M.A. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Minnesota, in addition to further graduate study at the University of Pittsburgh. He was also proud to be a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Russell's professional experience took him from Southern Illinois University and Malcaster College in St. Paul to the University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; and Nagoya, Chitose (Hokkaido), and Hachioji (West Tokyo) in Japan, where he was Program Director and Instructor in the English Language Centers operated by Arizona State University. More recently, he had concentrated on the Midwest, with positions as Director of the English Language Academy, DePaul University, and Executive Director of Programs in English as a Second Language, The Ohio State University. He returned to Chicago to organize, open, and serve as Program Director of the International Student Center at Roosevelt University, a joint venture between Study Group and Roosevelt.

Russell became a legend in the field of international English education; he was known to many in the profession as "THE Russell Clark". He served successively as Board Member, Treasurer, and President of Illinois TESOL Bilingual Education, the state affiliate of the international organization TESOL (Teachers of English to

Speakers of Other Languages). We at JASNA-GCR were very fortunate that Russell was willing to serve as GCR Treasurer, a position he only assumed in September of 2014.



His devotion to Jane Austen increased under the influence of his spouse, William Phillips, who survives him. He was able to combine two of his passions through his research on Austen and the theater. He became the foremost authority on *First Impressions*, the 1959 Broadway musical version of *Pride and Prejudice*; his intrepid investigations included an interview with the show's co-composer, Glenn Paxton. He also rediscovered and presented on what was thought to be a lost 1932 play about Austen, *Dear Jane* by Eleanor Holmes Hinkley. His enlightening and entertaining presentation on this play was a memorable part of our GCR Spring Gala in 2013. He and William also presented on the play to the Jane Austen Society of Australia.

Russell was always a gracious and gentlemanly presence at GCR events, and we were immensely grateful that, despite his busy schedule, he was able to devote so much time, effort, and care to our region. He was also a well-respected figure in JASNA generally. GCR is proud to note that a generous anonymous donation to the JASNA Essay Contest has been made in honor of both Russell and William.

Sightings/Citings

By Elsie Holzwarth

New Books

In connection with the much-hyped release of **Harper Lee's**, (what shall we call it? an old novel, new to us), *Go Set a Watchman*, **Joel Rose** at npr online recalled a radio interview she gave 50 years ago in New York. She said, "I would like to be the chronicler of something that I think is going down the drain very swiftly. And that is small-town, middle-class Southern life. There is something universal in it . . . There's something to lament when it goes, in its passing. In other words, all I want to be is the Jane Austen of South Alabama."

Another Austen wannabe seems to be **Alexander McCall Smith**, best known for his detectives, whose *Emma: A Modern Retelling* is now out. According to **Leah Price** in the *New York Times Book Review*, Emma is "a budding interior decorator," Mr. Woodhouse is "a germophobic food fadist," and Harriet Smith "was sired by an anonymous sperm donor." "Yet this modernization remains half-hearted," opines Price. "A 21st-century Emma wouldn't paint a portrait of her friend Harriet, as McCall Smith's heroine does: She would Instagram her."

Alyssa Rosenberg reviewed **Kevin Kwan's** *China Rich Girlfriend* for the *Washington Post's* Opinions Section pop culture blog. The entry is entitled, "In this year's best beach reading, Jane Austen meets Singapore." Rachel, "a Chinese immigrant and economics professor," meets Nicholas, "a scion of an outrageously large fortune back home in Singapore." Lest we jump to conclusions, Rosenberg finds them "more Bingley and Jane than Darcy and Elizabeth." The main reason is that they are "sweet." But, she concludes, "Kwan isn't precisely a contemporary Jane Austen, a sobriquet that at some point gets attached to anyone who writes love stories that reviewers don't feel embarrassed about

reading. If Jane Austen tended to treat social class and the strictures on female behaviour as things that could be overcome by true goodness, real intelligence and moral growth, [Kwan's novel has] a slightly more skeptical perspective."

Perhaps the most "Austen-esque" might be **Kazuo Ishiguro** (*The Remains of the Day*), whose latest novel *The Buried Giant* is set in a mythical time long ago peopled by ancient Britons and Saxons. Christine Smallwood reviewed it in *Harper's*. "Choosing your own kind is what novels do, at least according to Marxist critic **Raymond Williams**, who defined the novel as 'a knowable community.' His point was that novels make value judgments about who can be known, about who counts as a person. (He pointed to Jane Austen's works, in which the community is far-ranging in space yet excludes all the laborers in between country houses; those people are not the kind of people that Austen's people can know.) But what I also understand by this phrase is that the novel, particularly the realist novel, has an interest in making persons known.

[Ishiguro's] remarkable power as a writer of thinking minds lies in the subtle ways he shows the flaws and failings of his characters while allowing them to speak for themselves: the reader ultimately knows them better than they know themselves." Just like Austen, wouldn't you say? And, yet . . .

Writing for the centenary of the birth of **Saul Bellow** (June 10), **Ron Grossman** was moved to say in the *Chicago Tribune*, "Bellow, who died in 2005, is being hailed for freeing the American novel from slavish adherence to British literary models. His achievement means that writers in New Jersey and Ohio don't have to sound like Jane Austen or Thomas Hardy." But we know what a marvelous sound that still is.



Annual Regional Membership 2015-2016

- One-Year JASNA-GCR Membership Dues are as follows:
With full-color e-newsletter* Individual: \$20.00; Family** \$30.00
With full-color e-newsletter AND black and white printed newsletter delivered by mail: Individual: \$30.00; Family** \$40.00
- Membership dues cover the present to August 31, 2016
- Membership includes newsletters, discounts on JASNA-GCR events, and the opportunity to invite your friends to events open only to members and their guests
- Please fill out this form and return with check made out to JASNA-GCR or renew online at www.jasnachicago.org

Important Information: This form and your payment are for Regional Dues only.

Our Charter requires you to join or renew with our parent organization, the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA), requiring **separate dues**. The JASNA membership form is available online at www.jasna.org.

Check one: Renewing Member New Member

Name: _____

Street Address: _____ Apt. _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ - _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Please indicate if any of the above information has changed, so that we may update our records. Your complete address, including apartment number and 9-digit zip code, will help ensure timely delivery of mail. If you are not receiving regular e-mails from JASNA-GCR, please provide your current e-mail address to be used for all online transactions.

DUES and CONTRIBUTIONS

AMOUNT ENCLOSED

I am enclosing \$\$ for JASNA-GCR Regional Dues 2015-2016:

- \$20.00 for Individual w/e-newsletter _____
- \$30.00 for Individual w/mailed newsletter ... _____
- \$30.00 for Family w/e-newsletter _____
- \$40.00 for Family w/mailed newsletter _____
- \$_____ for a 2015-2016 Gift Membership .. _____

_____ Fill in Gift Membership type.

- Contribution to JASNA-GCR..... _____

Send my Gift Membership to (please provide name and address or e-mail):

TOTAL _____

Renew Online or Mail this form with your check to:

JASNA-GCR—c/o William Phillips, Deputy RC
4020 N. Damen, Apt. 405, Chicago, IL 60618

If you have any questions, e-mail info@jasnachicago.org. For more information, visit our web site www.jasnachicago.org

*Requires valid e-mail address

**Family defined as two family members at the same address

LETTER FROM CHICAGO

JASNA-GCR
11133 Meadow Lark Lane
Belvidere, IL 61008



Calendar

- September 26** **Free Fall Program.** 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. “From Agrimony to Yarrow: A Jane Austen Herbal”, Nancy Melvin, Chicago Waldorf School. Oak Park Public Library, 834 Lake St., Oak Park, IL
- October 9-11** **JASNA AGM,** “Living in Jane Austen’s World”, Louisville, KY
- December 5** **Birthday Tea.** 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. “Village Life in Jane Austen’s England”, Sara Bowen, JASNA-Wisconsin. The Fortnightly of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Pl., Chicago, IL
- Feb.7, 2016** **Winter Meeting.** 12:00 noon-3:00 pm. “You Can Get a Parasol at Whitby’: Jane Austen and Circulating Libraries”, Claire Bellanti, JASNA President. Marcello’s Lincoln Park, 645 W. North Ave., Chicago, IL
- May 7, 2016** **Spring Gala.** Topic TBA. Woman’s Athletic Club of Chicago, 626 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL

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