

# The Jane Austen Society of North America

VANCOUVER REGION - NEWSLETTER NO. ELEVEN - AUGUST. 1985

"...they were very well able to keep a good cook. and...her daughters had nothing to do in the kitchen". (1)

Here is the last section on cookery from the "Experienced English House-keeper" (1782) by Mrs. Elizabeth Raffald:

Most of the "pye" recipes in the cookbook are for meat, poultry, eels, giblets or lobsters, and a "Herb Pye for Lent" is filled with lettuce, leeks, spinnage, beets and parsley "of each, a handful", boiled, chopped, then added to groats, onions, a pound of butter, a few sliced apples - stewed a few minutes, then put in the crust and baked.



Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra that "good apple pies are a considerable part of our domestic happiness". No wonder, if they were made like Mrs. Raffald's: when the pie comes out of the oven, the upper crust is removed, cut into "snippets" and stuck in point upwards. Then a custard, made of a pint of cream, cinnamon, sugar, and the yolks of 4 eggs well beaten, is cooked until thickened and poured into the pie, with a little grated lemon peel scattered on top. Mr. Woodhouse's baked apples have no recipe, but there is one for boiled apple dumplings that Miss Bates would have liked ("Patty makes an excellent apple-dumpling"), and one for apple tarts for Donwell, made like applesauce, sweetened and mixed with six well-beaten eggs, put in a puff pastry shell, open faced, and sprinkled with fine sugar when baked.

Why was Charlotte Lucas "wanted for the mince pies"? The mincemeat would be already prepared and stored for use - "chopped tongue, 3 lbs. suet also chopped fine, 3 lbs. apples, 4 lbs. currants, 1 lb. raisins ("stoned" - seedless came later) chopped, 1 lb. powder sugar, mace, nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, and 1 pint French brandy".

Was Mrs. Weston's wedding cake like the "Bride's Cake", which starts with 4 lbs. flour, 4 lbs. butter, 2 lbs. sugar, 32 eggs,  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint brandy, and then currants, almonds, citron, candied orange and lemon peel, mace and nutmeg? No wonder Mr. Woodhouse would never believe that the little Perry children were allowed to have any.

Custards and creams include pistacho, chocolate, spanish, apricot rice, clotted cream, hartshorn cream, ribband cream ("lay red, green or coloured sweetmeats between every layer of cream"), raspberry, lemon, orange, burnt cream, La Pompadour cream, snow and cream ("Floating Island"), trifle, orange crumpets.

The chapter of "Wines, Catchups and Vinegars" includes wines made from lemon, oranges (in one of her letters, Jane Austen worried about the process of their own orange wine-making), Smyrna raisins, elder and Malaga raisins, ginger, pearl gooseberries, sycamore, birch, walnuts, cowslips, elder flowers, and balm (9 gallons of water to 40 lbs. of sugar); stum (used for renewing the fermentation of vapid wines); mead made from cowslips, sack or walnuts; ozyat (orgeat) made from almonds; lemonade, punch, shrub (milk, wine, lemons, oranges, rum, brandy

and sugar); and brandies (raspberry, black cherry, orange, almond or currant). Catchups were made from mushrooms, walnuts, "a catchup to keep 7 years (beer, wine, anchovies, shallots, mace, nutmeg, cloves, ginger), bottle it for use: it will carry to the East Indies". Vinegars: tarragon, elder flower, gooseberry, or sugar ("if you make it in February, it will be fit for use in August - you may use it for most sorts of pickles, except mushrooms and walnuts"). This is a good indication of the wide range of imported foodstuffs as well as the variety of locally-grown products in England at the time.

Besides the lavish use of ingredients, the time and labour required for some of these recipes seems incredible. For "Drop Biscuits", "beat 10 eggs with a spoonful of rose water, half an hour, then put in 10 oz. of loaf sugar beat and sifted, whisk them well for half an hour", etc. For "Common Biscuits" it is even worse: "Beat 8 eggs half an hour, add sugar and grated lemon and whisk it an hour till it looks light..." A "Plumb Cake" recipe ends: "It will take an hour and a half beating..." And to make "Bullace Cheese" (a wild plum), after boiling and sieving the plums and sugar, add more sugar and "boil it an hour and a half over a slow fire, and keep stirring it all the time".

In 1798, Jane Austen wrote to her sister: "My Mother desires me to tell you that I am a very good housekeeper, which I have no reluctance in doing, because I really think it my peculiar excellence, and for this reason - I always take care to provide such things as please my own appetite, which I consider as the chief merit in housekeeping".

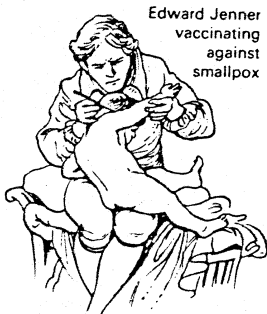
After reading Mrs. Raffald's cook book, I have even more respect for Jane Austen's prowess as a cook, and also for Serle, Hill, Patty, Mrs. Whitaker, Mrs. Hodges, Nicholls, et al, beating and stirring for hours at a time in their kitchens.

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"...no other look of an Invalid, than a sodden complexion." (2)

Jane Austen's sister-in-law, the wife of her oldest brother James, was considered a good looking woman, but unfortunately had a face badly marred by smallpox scars. The disease was common, and few families would have no incident of illness or death. But today the threat is almost non-existent.

Recently, however, an archaeological excavation in London's East End, at Nicholas Hawksmoor's 18th c. Christ Church, has been halted, because of danger from smallpox virus remaining active from that period. The archaeologists who were clearing old coffins in the vault of the church came across the remains of what appeared to be a smallpox victim, and the Health Department has ordered tests to be made to evaluate the danger. This is one "souvenir" from Jane Austen's era that must be thoroughly and immediately eradicated.



It was in 1796 that Edward Jenner performed the first vaccination for smallpox, taking serum from a woman suffering from cowpox, and innoculating a small boy, risking his medical reputation in this un-proven practice.

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"...a most pleasing remembrance of all the heroines of her acquaintance". (3)

Unfortunately, the June discussion of "The Heroines" had to be postponed. It will now take place on Sunday, Sept. 29th, at 11:30. Dust off your "heroines" quiz sheets, and the questions and answers will give us a starting point for an exchange of opinions. If you like, come prepared to read your favourite passage - long or short - about your favourite (or least favourite) heroine. We'll have an hour's talk, break for a pot-luck lunch, and then carry on as long as we wish. I'm sure there will be lots to say. Let me know as soon as you can whether or not you can join us. As usual, put up the notice in your library or community centre, in case some one else may be interested. Any friends are always welcome.



"So seldom that a letter...is ever carried wrong, and not one in a million... actually lost". (4)

Jane Austen was an avid letter writer. She and her sister Cassandra were often separated for months at a time, but kept in close touch by writing almost every day, describing the events, visits and activities of their daily routine.

Another busy letter writer of Jane Austen's time was B.C.'s Simon Fraser, whose messages went by Indian couriers to all the trading posts under his command. In an article in the Vancouver "Province", Leigh Gordon described a letter sent to him by David Thompson to Fort St. James: "It was dated August 28, 1811, and was sent from what is now Kettle Falls in the southern Interior. Eight months and eight days later, on April 6, 1812, six natives bearing the letter arrived by canoe at the trading post on Stuart Lake.

The letter had travelled about 1290 km. (800 miles), and had been carried in relays. Each Indian band sold it - at a profit - to the next. When it reached the addressee, it was sold at a price that covered the profits of all the intermediaries".

"...that is not good company, that is the best". (5)

A first edition of "Pride and Prejudice" was auctioned April 24th at Sotheby's in New York, along with the first four Folios of Shakespeare, first editions of "Jane Eyre", "Tom Sawyer", "Moby Dick", "Frankenstein", "Treasure Island", "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Paradise Lost". Also included in the sale were editions, inscribed by the authors, of "Pickwick Papers", "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" and "Madame Bovary". This was the private collection of an award-winning song writer, Paul Francis Webster, who died last year, aged 77.

"...only navy lists and newspapers for her authority". (6)



Royal Navy ships have traditionally been named after illustrious men, or famous predecessors. The luck of a ship was associated with its name, and it would not be propitious to name one after a ship which had met disaster. There are few ships now with reptilian names: in the past, the Navy has lost 5 "Serpents" and 3 "Vipers", as well as "Cobras" and "Rattlesnakes". In the 1850's, a surveying ship called the "Asp" had such a bad reputation for being haunted, it was difficult to find a willing crew.

But in "Persuasion", Captain Wentworth's first ship was the "Asp", and Admiral Croft says of her "Never was there a better sloop than the "Asp" in her day...You would not see her equal".

Another belief of sailors is that a ship with a name ending in "a" is doomed. It was the "Laconia" where Captain Wentworth met with "poor Richard" Musgrove. It proved a lucky ship for him, in spite of the ending "a" - "How fast I made money in her". Neither of these were names of ships Jane Austen's brothers sailed in.

When Jane Austen was writing "Mansfield Park", she asked her brother Frank if he had any objection to her using the names of his ships. William Price, in that novel, sailed on the "Antwerp" and the "Thrush", and Jane Austen wanted to refer to other ships at Spithead at the time. She mentioned the "Elephant" on which Frank Austen sailed, and the "Endymion" and "Cleopatra" which were Charles Austen's ships, and the "Canopus" - all these were familiar names of ships to her and her family.

"...rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker". (7)

My proposal for a series of lectures for the Fall programme of the North Shore Continuing Education, on various aspects of the background of Jane Austen's novels, was not accepted. However, there will be one lecture which I know will interest all our members. Dr. Mabel Colbeck (whom we have enjoyed as a speaker in the past) will be giving a lecture:

"Jane Austen - Her Life and Times: the woman, the author, and the influences that help shape her literary milestones".

Wednesday, Nov. 20                      7:30-9:30                      \$10.00

Carson Graham School, 2145 Jones Ave., North Vancouver.

I know Dr. Colbeck will be well worth hearing, and the more we support public lectures like this, the more will be offered. I suggest we meet for supper at my house (not far from the school), at 6:00 p.m., and go together to the lecture - phone me if you are interested. If you cannot make it for supper, and do not know where the school is, I can send you a map.

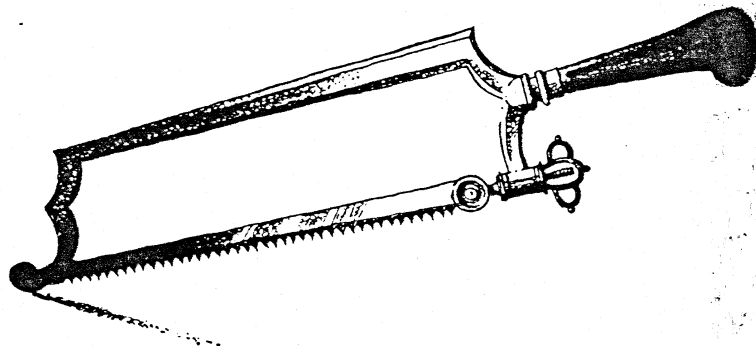
"Her blood was chilled by the sound of distant moans". (8)

An interesting museum to visit in Toronto is the Museum of Medicine, where over 12,000 artifacts illustrate the history of medical practice since pre-historic times. An article in the "Sun" by Sheryl Ubelacker from Toronto describes an amputation scene common during the early 1800's, before the properties of chloroform or ether had been discovered.

"A hush falls over the dimly lit operating room as the surgeon enters, his frock coat stiff and splattered with the dark red of coagulated blood, a status symbol he wears with pride. A patient lies waiting for the bite of blade to skin, his terror - and later the pain - numbed only by copious quantities of liquor. As orderlies restrain the man, the surgeon lifts his short-handled saw and swiftly begins to cut just below the knee..."

In the museum, surgical tools of the time are on display, as well as the apparatus needed for the common practice of "bleeding" - bowls of earthenware or metal for catching blood, small delicate knives for slicing veins, and even a bottle of preserved leeches, often used instead of knives.

Less spine-chilling parts of the exhibit are in the rooms devoted to medical firsts in Canada, such as the discovery of insulin, or the first kidney dialysis machine. A large collection donated by Dr. T.G.H. Drake, co-developer of Pabulum, traces the history of pediatric medicine, from "a pre-Columbian sculpture depicting a woman breast-feeding her child, to a coral teething rattle covered in tiny silver bells believed to ward off witches". The museum's entire collection is "concerned with people and helping, not with big, clever, heavy machinery". It sounds like a very interesting place to spend a spare hour or so.



Amputation saw. Mid-eighteenth century

"You think it a faithful portrait, undoubtedly". (9)

An interesting Jane Austen item was broadcast on the CBC Stereo Morning Arts Report in June:

"British Jane Austen devotee Henry Rice, a direct descendant of the author's brother Edward, claims he has an authentic full length portrait painting of Austen as a girl. The only accepted likeness is a pencil sketch by her sister Cassandra when Jane was about 35. The Jane Austen Society in the U.K. two years ago rejected Rice's claims saying the dress in the picture was of a much later fashion and that the painting was by an unconnected German, Johann Zofany. Rice says he now has the support of other experts who believe the painting is by the Englishman Osias Humphrey, who knew the Austens. They also say the dress depicted is in the style of the period. David Gibson of the J.A. Society says he's willing to reconsider but still would like more evidence, which Rice says he will eventually be providing."

"...I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace..." (10)

The Napoleonic Wars may at last be officially over. The "Manchester Guardian" reports that the town of Mostoles, just outside Madrid, has recently signed a peace treaty with France, after 177 years of unarmed hostilities. In 1808, the people of Madrid rebelled against the occupying French troops, and Goya's paintings have immortalised the bloody battles and massacres which followed. The peace celebrations in May began with a mass in Spanish and French for the dead in the "War of Independence of 1801", and a plaque was unveiled confirming the peace and friendship between the two countries.

"...after all that romancers may say, there is no doing without money." (11)

Postage rates have gone up, the coffers are empty, and the time has come to ask members for another donation to help pay for the expenses of this Newsletter and other items for the coming season. About \$3.00 from each member should keep us going for the time being.

Sources of the quotations:

- (1) Pride and Prejudice - Mrs. Bennet to Mr. Collins.
- (2) Sanditon - Charlotte Heywood, about Arthur Parker.
- (3) Northanger Abbey - Catherine, with Isabella.
- (4) Emma - Jane Fairfax, speaking to John Knightley.
- (5) Persuasion - Mr. Elliot, speaking to Anne.
- (6) Persuasion - Anne Elliot's thoughts about Captain Wentworth.
- (7) Pride and Prejudice - Elizabeth Bennet, thinking about Mr. Wickham.
- (8) Northanger Abbey - Catherine's imagination is aroused.
- (9) Pride and Prejudice - Mr. Darcy to Elizabeth.
- (10) Pride and Prejudice - Mr. Collins' letter to Mr. Bennet.
- (11) Northanger Abbey - Isabella to Catherine.

"I remain, with respectful compliments,

your well-wisher and friend, "

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