

# Jane Austen Society of North America

VANCOUVER REGION - NEWSLETTER NUMBER SEVENTEEN - FEBRUARY 1987

## POT-LUCK LUNCH AND CARDS

The fame of our card party two years ago, and the enjoyment of those who took part in the card-playing session at the Conference ("wonderfully rowdy"), have led to requests for another "Speculation" party this year.

Consequently, our next meeting will be a Pot-Luck Lunch and Card Party, Saturday, Feb. 28th, 11:30 a.m., at my home, 4169 Lions Ave., North Vancouver. RSVP 988-0479. We will play cards for an hour or so, stop for a pot-luck lunch with "leisure for unrestrained conversation", and then re-coup our fortunes with another session at "play". The gambling stakes will be pennies, so you will not have too much cause for regret if you are "sadly out of luck".

We will start with "Speculation". The rules are easy to learn - even Fanny Price, who "had never played the game nor seen it played in her life" could feel herself "mistress of the rules in three minutes".

Harden your hearts and sharpen your avarice in preparation for "some pleasant hours at Speculation", and other round games, at the end of the month.



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## JANE AUSTEN QUOTATIONS IN O.E.D.

Mary Millard of Toronto sent two more words she has come across, for which the OED refers to Jane Austen as a source of an early use in English literature.

"SET" - "a group of persons in Society having its own peculiar interests, fashions, and conventions; a social group of a select or exclusive character."

c1815 - Jane Austen "Persuasion": "...they will move in the first set in Bath this winter".

"PLAY" - "a particular amusement or diversion; a game, a sport. Now rare or obs."

1798 - Jane Austen "Northanger Abbey": "She was fond of all boys' plays..."

I am making a collection, so if you come across any others, let me know.

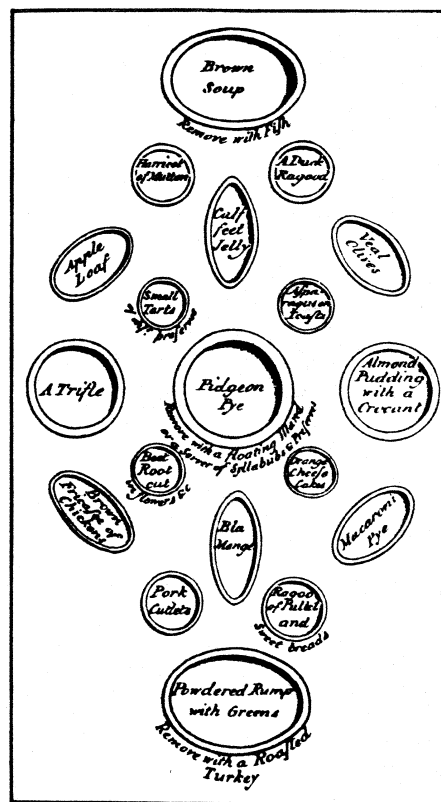
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GEORGIAN MEALS IN THE NEW WORLD

Formal dinners in Jane Austen's time consisted of several "courses" (Mrs. Bennet "did not think anything less than two courses could be good enough for a man on whom she had such anxious designs"), for each of which the table was re-laid with a dozen or more dishes - meats, savouries, jellies, puddings, etc.) - set in a certain specific pattern. In addition, there might be several "removes" when some dishes were replaced with others in the course of the meal. Usually the person nearest to each dish was responsible for the carving or serving of it.

At a similar time period in the New World, the artist Paul Kane described a Christmas feast in a Hudson's Bay Company fort, in The Beaver of December, 1986:

"...the fare set before us, to appease appetites nourished by constant outdoor exercise in an atmosphere of 40°-50° below zero. At the head, before Mr. Harriett, was a large dish of boiled buffalo hump; at the foot smoked a boiled buffalo calf....My pleasing duty was to help a dish of moffle, or dried moose nose; the gentleman on my left distributed, with graceful impartiality, the white fish, delicately browned in buffalo marrow. The worthy priest helped the buffalo tongue, whilst Mr. Rundell cut up the beavers' tails. Nor was the other gentleman left unemployed, as all his spare time was occupied in dissecting a roast wild goose. The centre of the table was graced with piles of potatoes, turnips, and bread conveniently placed, so that each could help himself without interrupting the labours of his companions. Such was our jolly Christmas dinner at Edmonton; and long will it remain in my memory, although no pies, or puddings, or blanc manges, shed their fragrance over the scene."



From: A Jane Austen Household Book, by Peggy Hickman.

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ON YOUR METTLE FOR METAL

Jane Austen doesn't mention many metals in the novels. Copper, bronze, tin or brass would be used mainly for kitchen utensils or other household items, and her heroines were not concerned with such matters. The precious metals - silver and gold - occur more frequently; and iron gates were common at most Great Houses. So test your "mettle" with these questions:

- (1) What house had a "great iron sweep-gate"?
- (2) What was decorated with "sword-case, splashing-board, lamps, silver-molding"?
- (3) Who quarrelled over a silver knife?
- (4) Who was "meditating much upon silver forks, napkins and finger glasses"?
- (5) Who had a "white and silver poplin" gown?
- (6) What was wrapped "within abundance of silver paper" inside "a pretty little Tunbridge-ware box"?
- (7) Who spoke of "nabobs, gold mohrs, and palanquins"?
- (8) What was to be made of "the ivory, the gold and the pearls"?
- (9) Who found "the lock was silver, though tarnished with age"?
- (10) What was "not absolutely ebony and gold"?
- (11) Who was "wasting gold paper" on a holiday?
- (12) Who received "a plain gold chain perfectly simple and neat"?
- (13) Who owned a "purple and gold ridicule"?
- (14) Whose gig had "not a sound piece of iron about it"?
- (15) Who squeezed out around a locked iron gate?
- (16) What great house had windows which looked "across a lawn to the beginning of the avenue immediately beyond tall iron palisades and gates"?

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THERE IS NOT THE LEAST WIT IN MY NATURE

Jane Austen's famous irony was in full force when she wrote in Northanger Abbey, "A woman, especially if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can".

But a source which she may have read, was written in stern and rigid earnestness:

"Wit is the most dangerous talent you possess. It must be guarded with great discretion and good nature, otherwise it will create you many enemies...Be even cautious in displaying your good sense. It will be thought you assume a superiority over the rest of the company. But if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding."

Dr. Gregory: "Legacy to My Daughters" (1774)

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NEW BOOKS FOR YOUR LEISURE ENJOYMENT

Several new books have arrived this winter. I haven't yet read any of them, but according to the advertisements, they sound very interesting and informative. Here are two reviews from the Times Literary Supplement of Nov.14, 1986:

The Rise of the Woman Novelist (From Aphra Benn to Jane Austen): Jane Spencer.

"A clearheaded and thoughtful account of woman novelists up to and including Jane Austen...Spencer's readings of the novels selected are alert and intelligent."

Jane Austen: Tony Tanner.

"In this excellent informative study of Jane Austen, Tony Tanner treats in fresh and illuminating ways the questions that have always occupied her most perceptive critics. He shows how she changed from a basically accepting to a questioning view of 'society' and considers the problems of authority, power, and the position of women as well as the relationship between ethics, language and behaviour.

In the second part of the book Dr.Tanner provides a lively and stimulating analysis of Austen's novels which is refreshingly free from critical cant to provide both a scholarly and accessible introduction to one of our greatest novelists."

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A CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Annabella Milbanke, who became the wife of Lord Byron, was considered very clever, intellectual and well read. In 1813, she noted in her journal that Pride and Prejudice "is at present the fashionable novel"; having heard that "it is written by a sister of Charlotte Smith's, and contains more strength of character than most productions of this kind".

Later she wrote to her mother: "I have finished the Novel called Pride and Prejudice, which I think a very superior work. It depends not on any of the common resources of Novel writers, no drownings, no conflagrations, nor runaway horses, nor lapdogs and parrots, nor chambermaids and milliners, nor rencontres and disguises. I really think it the most probable fiction I have read. It is not a crying book, but the interest is very strong, especially for Mr. Darcy. The characters which are not amiable are diverting, and all of them are consistently supported. I wish much to know who is the author or ess as I am told."

This is a good critique, not only of Jane Austen's novel, but of other novels of the period, by implication.

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ANSWERS TO QUIZ

- (1) Hartfield, home of Emma Woodhouse, Emma
- (2) Thorpe's gig, NA
- (3) Susan and Betsey Price, MP
- (4) Susan Price, MP
- (5) Mrs. Elton, Emma
- (6) Court-plaster and a pencil end, Harriet's 'most precious treasures', Emma
- (7) Willoughby, referring to Col. Brandon, S&S
- (8) A toothpick case for Robert Ferrars, S&S
- (9) Catherine on the chest in her room, NA
- (10) The cabinet in Catherine's room, NA
- (11) Maria and Julia Bertram, MP
- (12) Fanny Price, from Edmund, MP
- (13) Mrs. Elton, Emma
- (14) James Morland's, according to Thorpe, NA
- (15) Maria Bertram and Henry Crawford (and later, Julia), MP
- (16) Sotherton, home of Mr. Rushworth, MP

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OTHER REGIONS

The Chicago Regional Group of JASNA is planning their annual Gala Day, on March 22nd, with an exciting and varied programme. There will be discussion groups and a boutique, as well as a talk on Jane Austen's novels by Barbara Swords of Elmhurst College, and a dramatized reading of Lady Susan, along with other interesting talks and slide presentations.

The Victoria group held a pot-luck luncheon at the home of Joan Austen-Leigh on February 1st, with almost thirty members and friends present, including a contingent from Vancouver. The entertainment consisted of a BBC tape recorded at the Savannah Conference, and an enthralling reading by Anthony Jenkins of Kipling's story The Janeites.

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QUOTATIONS

John Galt was a Scottish novelist, a contemporary of Jane Austen. In a biography in the Scottish Writers Series, P.H.Scott wrote:

"Galt was at his best in the domestic scenes of everyday life, in the shrewd observation of character, in ironic self-revelation, in pungent dialogue in Scots. In all of this, he was continuously entertaining, usually comic, but with a balanced view of life that was not afraid of pathos. Although they are so far apart in their different national traditions and social atmosphere, there is something in Galt's irony, humour and detachment that has similarities with Jane Austen."

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In A Prologue to English Literature, W.W.Robson speaks of Jane Austen's "lemon flavour" - a description as terse, succinct and appropriate as one of her own inimitable phrases. In another section, he describes Shakespeare's Polonius as "drawn with the incisiveness of Jane Austen".

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WATCH FOR ...

Our Own Particular Jane on tape, recorded by the same cast that gave us the delightful performance after the Conference banquet. These actors are all busy people, with full-time jobs, and the actual recording session must be at their convenience, and subject to the availability of a studio, but we hope to be able to announce that the tape will be available in the very near future.

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Chatelaine Magazine is preparing an article on organizations in Canada open to the public for leisure time enjoyment. One of these, of course, is the Jane Austen Society of North America. The article will probably be in the March issue, and we hope it will attract many new members.

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REMEMBER ...

Pot-Luck Lunch and SPECULATION

Saturday, February 28th, 1987

11:30 a.m.

4169 Lions Ave., North Vancouver

RSVP 988-0479

All members and friends welcome

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Eileen Sutherland