

# Jane Austen Society of North America

VANCOUVER REGION - NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWENTY - NOVEMBER 1987

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, Dec.13, 11:30 a.m. - 1220 Eastlawn Drive, Burnaby.

*"If you can be induced to honour us with a visit...no endeavours shall be wanting on our side to make Northanger Abbey not wholly disagreeable" - and General Tilney will not be there.*

Get out and re-read your copy of Northanger Abbey in preparation for the December Birthday celebration. Masterpiece Theatre is showing the recent BBC production of Northanger Abbey on Sunday, December 6th. Since this might make quite a late evening, Keiko Parker will make a video-tape of the show, and we will view it comfortably the next Sunday, December 13, at our regular noon meeting time. We will assemble at 11:30 at Keiko's home, 1220 Eastlawn Drive, Burnaby (see the map, page 10) for a short business meeting, a pot-luck lunch (let me know what you are bringing: 988-0479), and a viewing of this early and delightful novel.

Most TV and movie versions of a book seem to feel the need to delete scenes and add others, change settings, and alter characters. Our response to the BBC Northanger Abbey may be sighs of satisfaction, murmurs of pleasure or the gnashing of teeth in despair and frustration - in any case, it should lead to a lively discussion afterwards. I hope you can be "prevailed upon to quit your scenes of public triumph and oblige your friends with your company".

Keiko's home is easy to get to, but members living in the same area may be able to arrange car-pools for easier travelling.

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## BIRTHDAY TRIVIA:

*"...bringing persons of obscure birth into...distinction". (Pers.)*

What in the world do these people have in common with Jane Austen? -

Lucien Bonaparte - the most gifted of the Bonapartes  
Charles Lamb - English essayist  
Anselm Feuerbach - German jurist  
André Ampère - French physicist  
J.M.W.Turner - English painter  
François-Adrien Boieldieu - French opera composer

They were all born in 1775.

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*Washday was called Blue Monday for a good reason. Before the scrub board, even before soap, washing clothes meant pounding them against rocks in the nearest stream. By 1797, the debut of the scrub board reduced the drudgery dramatically. Launderers were required merely to boil the rainwater, scrub and bleach the dirty wash, squeeze out the water, and hang the clothes up to dry.*

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SEPTEMBER MEETING: "...the argument ended only with the visit." (P&P)

A lively and sometimes impassionate discussion resulted from Dianne Kerr's August article about the two secret engagements in Emma - that of Jane Fairfax, and that of Emma herself. Dianne pointed out the different treatment - Jane Austen condemned Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, but glossed over the position of Emma and Mr. Knightley. Yet the dangers were the same in both cases: someone could be hurt by the secrecy, by falling in love with one of the engaged persons as Emma might have loved Frank Churchill, or Harriet, in love with Mr. Knightley, might have again, and irrevocably, refused Robert Martin.

Norah Morrow questioned the age difference between the young women, but Jane and Emma were almost the same age. Paula Peretto suggested that the Jane/Frank engagement lasted so much longer than the other, that it was condemned for that reason. But Emma's engagement lasted at least a month, long enough for anything to have happened. Flora Farnden pointed out the social gradations of the society: Emma in her position could do anything; Jane Fairfax had to be very careful of her reputation. Norah Morrow felt that the ones who might be hurt by Emma and Mr. Knightley - Harriet, for one - were not so important as those such as Emma who might suffer from the other engagement.

Pamela Delville-Pratt mentioned that Emma and Mr. K. had every opportunity of meeting and being together, whereas Jane and Frank Churchill could scarcely ever meet in private. Pamela also pointed out that P.D. James once said that if Jane Austen were living today she would be a writer of mystery stories - here is the mystery! Mary Anderson deplored that we were forgetting that this was a romance novel, and were spoiling it by wanting to do away with the lovely period of Emma's secret courtship. Viviane McClelland pointed out that Jane Austen is not always consistent: Captain Wentworth flirts with two sisters at once and is condoned; Henry Crawford does the same, and is condemned.

Everyone entered into the controversy, but we had to admit at the end that it was still a puzzling question.

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MORE THOUGHTS ON THE TWO SECRET ENGAGEMENTS: BY Keiko Parker.

[Keiko Parker came to the September meeting very well prepared, and her opinions deserve a section to themselves. *"Well may you wonder...at the obstinacy which could resist such arguments as these". (S&S)]*

I feel that I must come to the defense of my favourite Jane Austen hero, Mr. Knightley, and his beloved Emma - however little they may think such a defense necessary.

It seems to me that the important point to remember is how we perceive, or how Jane Austen would have us perceive, the two secret engagements. I cannot agree with Dianne Kerr's statement that "the motives of both secret engagements are identical". I am of the opinion that the motives of the two secretly engaged couples are very different from one another.

In the first instance, the engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax was kept a secret for fear of displeasing the imperious Mrs. Churchill - there can be no doubt of that. We may readily surmise that Frank Churchill would have risked disinheritance had he disclosed to the high and mighty Mrs. Churchill his betrothal

to so portionless a girl as Jane Fairfax. To put it another way, the Churchill/Fairfax engagement was kept a secret for selfish, gain-oriented motives.

That Jane Austen herself disapproved of their clandestine arrangement is manifest in the language she used in referring to it such as: "impropriety of his conduct....such a system of secrecy and concealment" (Mrs. Weston); "a very abominable sort of proceeding...a system of hypocrisy and deceit, espionage and treachery" (Emma); and "great deviation from the strict rule of right" (Mrs. Weston). These views on the matter are further reinforced by the sense of guilt and misery felt on the part of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax: "I have never known the blessing of one tranquil hour...a state of perpetual suffering to me...I have been acting contrary to all my sense of right" (Jane Fairfax); "she felt the engagement to be a source of repentance and misery to each" (Frank Churchill); and "she had done a wrong thing in consenting to the engagement " (Mr. Knightley).

Let us now examine the engagement between Mr. Knightley and Emma. Here I find the circumstances that made secrecy necessary quite different. This difference is best understood if one considers the extremely valetudinarian nature of Mr. Woodhouse's character. That this engagement must be kept a secret until the time is ripe is made clear from the outset; and here Jane Austen employs her matchless art of comedy to deal with it. Instead of casting it in the shade of a guilt-ridden misdeed as she did in the previous secret engagement, she states "Poor Mr. Woodhouse little suspected what was plotting against him". Moreover, it is clear that both Mr. Knightley and Emma are genuinely concerned with the problem of how best to approach Mr. Woodhouse. Mr. Knightley comes to visit Emma the very next day after their engagement with his proposal that he remove to Hartfield so as not to diminish Mr. Woodhouse's comfort and happiness - nor does he waste much time (one recalls William Larkins' taking up a lot of his time about Donwell farm matters!) informing his younger brother John in London of his intended marriage.

In the meantime, Emma decides to announce the engagement to her father "as soon as Mrs. Weston was sufficiently recovered (from her confinement) to admit Mr. Woodhouse's visits". Everyone acquainted with Mr. Woodhouse can acknowledge the wisdom of this decision. If to the anxiety of Mrs. Weston's state of health (for Mr. Woodhouse would have regarded confinement little better than a positive illness) were added the shock of his daughter's engagement, it might have been enough to carry poor Mr. Woodhouse away! As it transpires, when Mrs. Weston is recovered and Emma does broach the subject to her father, it is with gentle solicitude, representing her marriage to Mr. Knightley as an occasion promoting both happiness for herself and greater comfort and security for him. Vol.III, Chapter 17, with its eloquent scene on this point, makes us realize what a kind and patient daughter Emma really is in spite of all her faults.

The Churchill/Fairfax engagement was kept a secret not only from the protagonists but also from us the readers - probably accounting for the shock felt by protagonists and readers alike. The Knightley/Woodhouse engagement is known to the reader from the beginning, including the fact that it is kept a secret from Mr. Woodhouse. As a consequence we are supportive of Emma and Mr. Knightley as they variously try to overcome their problems. Jane Austen knows exactly where our sympathies lie.

As to the other party who is adversely affected by the Knightley/Woodhouse engagement, i.e. Harriet Smith, the solution to her problem is not so clear-cut. In Emma's defense let it be said that she immediately takes action to minimize the harm that may result from her previous actions. As soon as she realizes her own heart ("Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!"), she writes to Harriet the day

before her engagement, in an effort to "distance herself" from Harriet - to use a present-day expression. And Harriet's reaction? - she "submitted and approved and was grateful".

The day Mr. Knightley and Emma became engaged, Emma has a sleepless night worrying about Harriet as well as about Mr. Woodhouse. We are made aware of the remorse Emma suffers for having misled Harriet, of her exertions to do the best by Harriet, and of her efforts to spare her "protégé" unnecessary pain. The result is that Emma writes to Harriet again, the day after the engagement proposing a visit to the John Knightleys in London, thus "indulging in one scheme more" - note Jane Austen's use of humour here! Then follows the meeting of Robert Martin and Harriet in London, initiated, aptly enough, by Mr. Knightley, resulting in Harriet's engagement to Robert Martin. Harriet obviously recovered from her disappointment over Mr. Knightley if she could so easily transfer her affections back to Robert Martin.

In summary, I find much to justify in the conduct of Mr. Knightley and Emma for keeping their engagement secret in contrast to the less edifying motives of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill in sustaining their secret engagement. And I found the resolution of the plot a most satisfying one - how felicitous that Emma, "faultless in spite of all her faults", wins her Mr. Knightley, and Harriet gets her just reward in retaining the affection of a solid man like Robert Martin.

I too feel that Jane Austen knew very well what she was about. But it is clear to me that Jane Austen disapproved of the Churchill/Fairfax secret engagement as an arrangement that violates our sense of right, and that she found the Knightley/Woodhouse secret engagement to be justifiable because their hearts were in the right place.

May I close by quoting Jane Austen herself who was perfectly aware that human events are rarely a matter of simple black-and-white: "Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised or a little mistaken". (Emma, Vol.III, Chapter 13).

My defense rests!

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#### JASNA - VANCOUVER LIBRARY

*"What a delightful library you have at Pemberley, Mr. Darcy!" (P&P)*

We make no pretensions to rival the library at Pemberley - it was, after all, "the work of many generations". But we have made a start on a private collection for the Vancouver group. One of our members, Miss Viola Johnston, has donated a volume of the Vox Edition of the works of Jane Austen, containing The Watsons, Sanditon, Lady Susan, the Plan of a Novel, and the cancelled chapter of Persuasion, and illustrated with delightful watercolours by Maximilien Vox.

I have ordered from England three cassette tapes of Jane Austen novels, Pride and Prejudice, Emma and Persuasion, unabridged.

These will all be available for members to borrow and enjoy. Other purchases will be made from time to time - requests welcomed, and donations gratefully received!

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A PERPLEXING QUESTION: BY Dianne Kerr.

*"Well, this is very extraordinary! very extraordinary indeed! - That both should have the same name". (Sanditon)*

Among Jane Austen's "children" there are only two Janes. Sweet, good-natured, lovable Jane Bennet who cannot find fault with anyone, and who never gives offense. And talented, sensitive, sensible and practical Jane Fairfax. Neither can be faulted: Jane Bennet's reticence is commendable prudence; Jane Fairfax's imprudence is a defensible lapse - Emma and Mr. Knightley may censure her; we do not do so.

One appropriate question surely is: what was Jane Austen thinking and feeling when she "birthed" her two Janes? Are they as she actually saw herself, or are they as she wished herself to be, or are they as she thought others saw her, or...? We should consider a similar case: what prompted Fyodor Dostoyevsky to name that free-wheeling, high-spirited, rapacious and unprincipled old lecher after himself in The Brothers Karamazov?

Because one cannot ignore the fact that one's given name is almost as inextricable a piece of one's identity as one's eyes, ears and nose. Before one learns to say "Mommy" and "Daddy", one hears "Jane, do this. Jane, don't do that". Always after, whenever Jane hears "Is Jane in here...?", Jane automatically gives some reaction. Both Jane Austen and Fyodor Dostoyevsky had some certain true self-image, or some skewed self-image, or some wistful self-image in their portrayals. Their selections cannot have been neutral.

In Jane Austen's case, a more significant question poses: why did she never use the name Cassandra, or any of its usual diminutives, Cassie, Sandy, Sandra, etc.? Jane Austen's extended family and friends provided the "givens" for most of her "children". Many are repeats, and there are diminutives: Catherine and Kittys, Elizabeths and Lizzies.

If Jane Austen felt bold enough, or wishful enough, or quixotic enough, to put herself in the picture - AND her father in the picture, AND every one of her six brothers in the picture - why not her mother and sister? Is there a message here?

Footnote: An astute Janeite (Eileen Sutherland) has very kindly pointed out that a "third Jane" is not included above. She appears in an untitled fragment given the title The Watsons by J.E. Austen-Leigh when he included it in his 1871 Memoir. Since we know that Jane Austen habitually revised extensively - the body of her work, the titles, and the names of characters - we cannot know for certain whether this "third Jane" was a positive intention or a temporary convenience. Nevertheless, since Jane 3 is evidently a rather unpleasant person, she quite adds to the perplexity.

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CHATELAINE'S LEISURE ACTIVITIES

*"Her report was highly favourable". (P&P)*

As a direct result of the article in Chatelaine about opportunities for leisure activities, JASNA has gained 19 new members, two of them in the Vancouver region: Barbara Peacock and Janis Jeske.

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## NEW COINAGE

*"Some of [my money], at least my loose cash, would certainly be spent in improving my collection of music and books". (S&S)*

Since our new "loon" dollar came into circulation on July 1st, we have been trying to grow accustomed to the look and feel of the new coins in our purses. Jane Austen had a bigger problem - a whole range of new coinage.

In the late 1700's and early 1800's, there was a severe shortage of small change, only gold coins being produced in any quantity. The few copper and silver coins minted during the Hanoverian period became badly worn and were often counterfeited. Merchants, shopkeepers and innkeepers issued tokens for limited circulation to take the place of official coinage.

A remarkable copper twopenny piece appeared in 1797. It weighed a full two ounces and was so big and heavy it was commonly called a "cartwheel". These coins, the biggest British coins ever produced, were made of almost pure copper, and were thus too soft to stand up to heavy usage.

In 1816, the Royal Mint was moved from the Tower of London to a new site not far away. The presses and machinery were powered by steam, and this resulted in faster, more accurate production than the former hand-operated presses. The entire coinage was standardized as to size and weight. Gold sovereigns (20 shillings) and half sovereigns; silver coins in the denominations of threepence, sixpence, one shilling, half-crown and crown; and copper in penny, half-penny and farthing values, were all newly issued in 1816-17. For the first time the coins had a face value substantially greater than the value of the metal they contained. They show the head of George III, and the reverse is St. George and the Dragon, or a shield with the coat of arms.

The new silver coinage was announced in a proclamation on February 12, 1817, and on February 20th of that year, Jane Austen wrote and complimented her niece, Fanny Knight:

*"You are worth your weight in Gold, or even in the new Silver Coinage".*

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR DATES IN 1988

*"...all in happy enjoyment of the future". (E)*

Two important dates to mark on your calendars:

Saturday, February 13, 1988 - regular meeting, topic to be announced.

Saturday, March 12, 1988 - a Jane Austen Day, 10:00 - 3:00, lectures, lunch, etc.

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## CONTEMPORARY TRAVELLER

*"What a great traveller you must have been". (Pers.)*

Tim Nau is the Banquet of History columnist for CBC Radio's Food Show. For an August production, he wrote this account of the adventures of a contemporary of Jane Austen, Thomas Jefferson:

"If anyone asked Thomas Jefferson how he spent his summer vacation two hundred years ago, he might have answered 'I spent it turning myself into North America's first gourmet'.

"Jefferson, always an adventurous eater, took a tour of France and Italy in 1787 in which he devoted himself to learning about food and wine. At Dijon and Bordeaux, he tasted as many wines as temperance would allow. At Milan, he studied the manufacture of parmesan cheese, which he adored, and at Toulon he tasted capers for the first time and fell instantly in love with them. Wherever he went he kept careful notes on what he tasted and frequently sent samples to his ambassador's residence or home to Charlottesville, Virginia.

"His most exciting culinary adventure was in Italy, where a caper more piquant than the capers of Toulon could have cost him his life. He wanted to know why Italian rice was more popular in Europe than Carolina rice, so he crossed the Alps on donkey and by foot to find out. In Lombardy he discovered that the Italians simply grew a superior strain of rice. The Italians guarded this crop jealously and the penalty for exporting it was death. But the future president couldn't resist the temptation: he hired a smuggler to take some out, and, just to be sure, he hid a few handfuls in his own pockets. Whether because of ambassadorial privilege or just plain luck, Jefferson got across the border without being searched, and his friends in South Carolina received a large packet of seed rice a few months later. Unfortunately it turned out Jefferson had risked his life for nothing: the rice proved unsuitable for the conditions of South Carolina.

"Over his entire lifetime, Jefferson was responsible for the introduction of a long list of foods to North America, including waffles, macaroni, broccoli, tomatoes, endive, rutabaga, string beans and French-fried potatoes."

- Tim Nau, Toronto.

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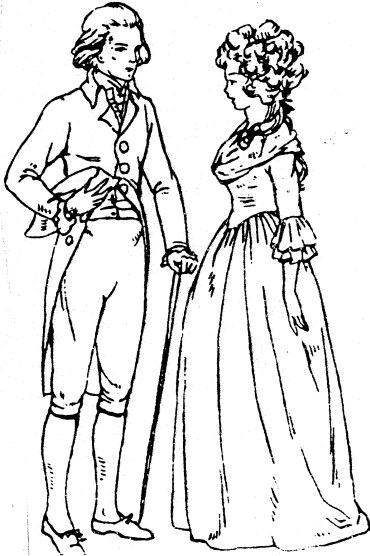
## HISTORY OF FASHION

*"Put on whatever of your clothes is superior to the rest". (P&P)*

On Friday, October 30th, Ivan Sayers gave the first (1750-1830) of a series of lectures, open to the public on a drop-in basis, for students of costume design at Vancouver Community College. This course is given twice a year, and the first lecture fits right in to Jane Austen's lifetime, describing the clothes she and her heroines might have worn. Using slides and actual costumes of the time, Ivan discusses the gowns, bodices, pelisses, bonnets and shoes, showing details of construction, describing the fabrics, and speaking of the way of life of the fashionable women who wore these beautiful outfits.

Ivan Sayers, the Curator of History at the Vancouver Museum, is a lover of Jane Austen, and much of what he had to say brought to mind characters and incidents in the novels. The gowns and petticoats were constructed with slits at the sides

which enabled the wearer to put her hands into the pockets (hanging loose inside from a cord tied around the waist), and also to manipulate tapes which could be tightened to raise the hem of the garment out of the dirt and wet. The front corners of the open-fronted robe could also be pulled up and tucked into these slits.



*"I hope you saw her petticoat. Six inches deep in mud...and the gown which had been let down to hide it not doing its office". (P&P).* One of the later gowns (1810) was slim, with high neck and little puffed sleeves, and of a filmy white material with metallic "thumbprint" dots. *"A woman can never be too fine while she is all in white...I like these glossy spots". (MP).*

Undergarments were also described and displayed in Sayers' talk, though not mentioned in Jane Austen's novels: the shift was like a modern round-necked, short-sleeved T-shirt, but with lace or ruffles meant to show at the neckline and the bottom of the sleeves. Over this was worn "stays" (called a "corset" after c.1800), with whalebone, steel or cane to make the garment very rigid.

Earlier dresses were robes open at the front over a matching petticoat, tied with bows. Catherine, late for dinner, *"had no leisure for speech, being at once blushing, tying her gown, and forming wise resolutions..." (NA).* To hide the stays where they would show at the open tied or pinned front of the robe, a "stomacher" was worn. This was a triangular piece of heavy fabric, or silk stitched to leather, which filled in the space and covered the stays. If Jane Fairfax *"does but send her aunt the pattern of a stomacher...one hears of nothing else for a month". (E).*

Over the gown was worn an elaborately decorated coat-like garment called a "pelisse". Mrs. Allen discovered *"that the lace on Mrs. Thorpe's pelisse was not half so handsome as that on her own". (NA).* For warmth, one often wore a "spencer" - a short-waisted jacket with sleeves, in earlier years with a long, pleated or tucked peplum at the back. *"I had got my bonnet and spencer on, just ready to come out". (E).* The petticoat was often heavy and quilted, to give shape to the dress, but also to give warmth to the wearer.

Many of the gowns shown had lines of previous stitching - all the sewing was done by hand and was not meant to last - seams were unpicked and the material was re-made into new gowns. Jane Austen's letters are full of plans to alter, or re-make old gowns and pelisses for herself and Cassandra. Harriet went to speak to *"a young woman making up a gown for her" (E),* possibly from an old one.

I have plans for a talk to the Vancouver group by Ivan Sayers in March, and I know you will enjoy hearing and seeing his lovely dresses for yourselves.

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## JANE AUSTEN COURSE FOR SENIORS

*"...established all his strictest notions of what was due to seniority" (P&P).*

The Extension Credit Programs of Simon Fraser University include a course on The Novels of Jane Austen (ENGL 378-4) open to Seniors only. The course is described in the calendar:

"The novels of Jane Austen resist facile interpretation and have remained of abiding interest. Her works speak to many of us in the later 20th c. as eloquently as they did to her contemporaries in Regency England, because of the author's realism of presentation and the universality of the questions posed. In this course, we will consider Austen's development as a novelist and examine some of her significant themes, including: the development of moral values in the individual, the influence of place, individual freedom and social constraint, and the position of women. The course will also touch upon the critical response to Austen's works and their social and historical context."

Previous university study is not required. Courses may be taken for credit toward the Certificate program, a degree program, or simply for interest. All credit courses are tuition free for seniors aged 60 and over.

For more information call: Senior Citizens' Certificate Program,  
SFU, Burnaby - 291-4354  
or SFU/Downtown - 685-6858

Registration days are Nov.17-20, at various locations: Downtown, Burnaby, or Brock House. Phone for exact time and date at each location.

<i>Location:</i>	SFU/Downtown 549 Howe Street, Vancouver
<i>Dates and Times:</i>	Every Wednesday January 13 to April 6 Seminar: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon 12:30 - 2:20 p.m.
<i>Instructor:</i>	C. Liotta

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## OXFORD AND THE LAKE DISTRICT

*"Her tour to the Lakes was now the object of her happiest thoughts". (P&P).*

The enclosed material about a forthcoming tour to the Lake District and Oxford in connection with the study of Wordsworth and Jane Austen will be of interest. Elizabeth Bennet never did get as far as the Lakes, but that was the original object of the Gardiners' tour. The men in Jane Austen's family were Oxford-educated, and this tour has included visits to Bath and other places of relevance to Jane Austen. It sound like a splendid trip!

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JASNA MEMBERSHIP NOW DUE

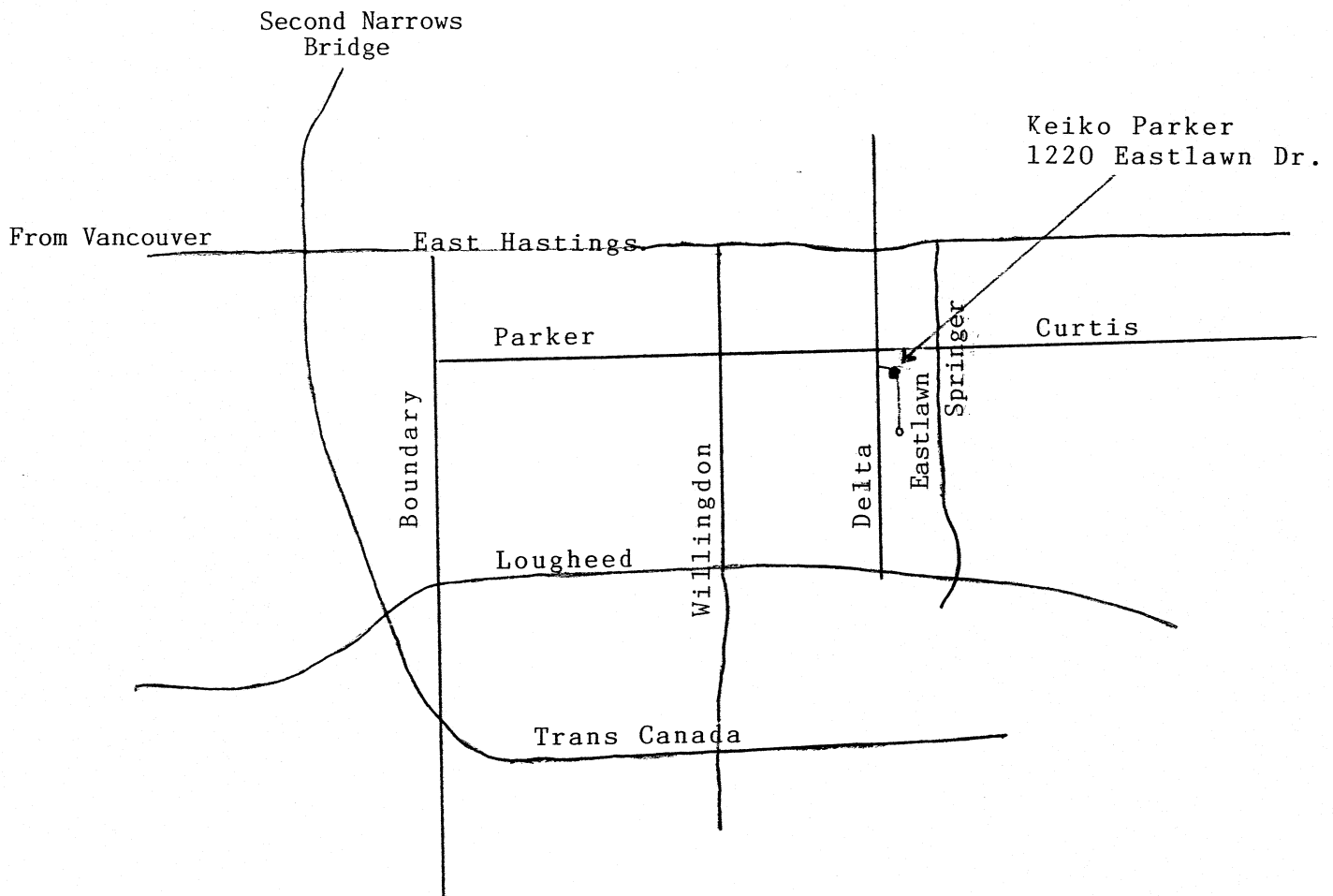
*"If he wants our society, let him seek it." (P&P)*

Your membership in JASNA is now due. Please send your cheque for \$10.00 to the Membership Secretary, Pamela Delville-Pratt, 820 Stewart Ave., Coquitlam. B.C. V3K 2N4. Membership runs December 16/December 16, and includes "Persuasions" at the end of the year, but mailed in January. Gift Memberships are available, announced to the recipient with an attractive Gift Certificate. Life Membership is \$150.00.

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MAP TO KEIKO PARKER'S

*"The only way of proving it...will be to turn to our maps." (E)*



"And with this pleasing anticipation" of our next meeting,

I remain, your obedient servant,

Eileen Sutherland