



Jane Austen Society of North America Vancouver Chapter

Newsletter No. 114
November 2011

The theme of this issue is women of accomplishment

Elizabeth Blackwell's "A Curious Herbal": The Inspiration behind our Christmas Lanterns

by Joan Reynolds

I like pottering about and making things, especially with glue and paper. I had found a pretty 18th century picture of a sprig of holly on the Chawton House Library website (www.chawton.org). I thought it would make just the thing to use on paper lanterns to decorate our December meeting lunch tables. A quick search of The Republic of Pemberley's texts of Jane Austen's novels produced appropriate quotations to add to the design. The lanterns were duly made and used, and are now safely tucked away in my attic awaiting their seasonal re-appearance at future December meetings.



But as is the case with many things, it set me off on another path, a quest if you like. Looking at the finished lanterns on the tables, I now had time to reflect on the holly illustration I had selected. What were its origins, what was its connection to Chawton House, Jane Austen or the period in which she wrote her novels? A look back at the Chawton House website revealed that the illustration had come from Elizabeth Blackwell's, 'A Curious Herbal', first published in 1739, an edition of which is held in the collections at Chawton House Library.

To my delight I found that the British Library also held a copy of Blackwell's book, and that thirty-eight illustrations from their volume are available to view page-by-page at the British Library's website. The Botanicus website goes one better, having all 500 images of the plates with their original text from Blackwell's book. Hurrah for digital technology!

Each hand-coloured copperplate engraving is a feast for the eyes, and is accompanied by a description of each plant's herbal and medicinal properties. Who knew for example that the leaves of the garden cucumber boiled with wine and honey would bring relief from dog bites?

The British Library provides this introduction to this book and its author:

"Elizabeth Blackwell's A Curious Herbal is notable both for its beautiful illustrations and for the unusual circumstances of its creation. A herbal contains illustrations and descriptions of plants, their medicinal preparations, and the ailments for which they are used. The first herbal was written by the Greek physician Dioscorides in the first century AD.

Elizabeth Blackwell was born in Aberdeen in about 1700, but moved to London after she married. She undertook this ambitious project to raise money to pay her husband's debts and release him from debtors' prison.

Blackwell's Herbal was an unprecedented enterprise for a woman of her time. She drew, engraved and coloured the illustrations herself, mostly using plant specimens from the Chelsea Physic Garden.

The Herbal was issued in weekly parts between 1737 and 1739, each part containing four illustrated plates and a page of text. It was highly praised by leading physicians and apothecaries (makers and sellers of medicines), and made enough money to secure her husband's freedom.

This finely-bound copy of A Curious Herbal is from the collection of King George III, held in the British Library. “

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I was intrigued and wanted to know more about this 18th century female illustrator. I was unable to find a definitive biography, but there are a number of short accounts of her life, including one on each of the British Library and the Botanicus websites, and a more detailed account on the *Health Information and Libraries Journal* website.

Although all accounts differ in the details, the common thread tells a story worthy of any melodrama. Elizabeth (Blachrie) Blackwell's Aberdeen upbringing was affluent and she was well educated in the arts. She married (some accounts say she eloped) with her second cousin, Alexander Blackwell. Initially, he practiced as a physician, but this hit a snag when it was discovered that, although well educated, he had failed to obtain any medical qualifications along the way. After a swift removal (escape?) to London, he then began a printing business without having served the required apprenticeship in an approved guild. The resulting fines that were imposed landed him in debtor's prison. Elizabeth was left alone with a child to support, and an urgent need to earn money. Armed with her knowledge of publishing and her training in illustration, she undertook to produce the Herbal. Its success put them back on their feet. Unfortunately, once her husband was released from prison, it appears he continued his involvement in ill-conceived ventures, and ran up huge debts again. Being unable to find a job in England, he eventually moved to Sweden. Elizabeth was left behind selling off her copyright piecemeal in order to keep financially afloat. In Sweden her husband became embroiled in dubious political dealings, was arrested for treason and eventually beheaded (or possibly hanged – accounts vary). Elizabeth died about ten years later, apparently in declined circumstances. She is buried in the graveyard of Chelsea's Old Church.

I encourage readers to look online at the work of Elizabeth Blackwell and enjoy the exquisite details of her herbal plant drawings that range from parsley to pansies, holly to hyacinths. As for me, the next time I am in London I hope to visit the Physic Garden in Chelsea (formerly the Botanic Garden of the Apothecaries' Company) that was founded in 1673 and where Elizabeth Blackwell spent so many hours gathering information and specimens for her book.

As often happens, one thing (such as a simple paper lantern project) leads to another. In my case it led me to the discovery of a remarkable 18th century woman who, out of expediency, undertook to create a supremely crafted publication that is still valued today.

Joan Reynolds is the former Regional Coordinator for JASNA Vancouver.



Below are the sites referenced in the article. For additional sites, please contact the author joanar@shaw.ca

British Library: 1) Pages from *A Curious Herbal* 2) Elizabeth Blackwell's Life

1. <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/blackwells/accessible/pages1and2.html#content>

2. <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/landprint/blackwell/index.html>

Botanicus: 1) Elizabeth Blackwell's Life 2) Plates and text

1. <http://www.botanicus.org/creator/706>

2. <http://www.botanicus.org/title/b12082181>

Sewing a Regency Style Man's Linen Shirt Using Period Construction Techniques

by Jennifer Bettiol

When I decided to make my husband a Regency outfit for English country dancing, I didn't anticipate spending many hours studying period appropriate cutting and construction techniques or ending up with a completely hand sewn man's shirt appropriate for an English gentleman of 1808.

In 21st century fashion, I started with an Internet search for a suitable pattern, linen and notions. I found what I needed at Wm. Booth, The Draper, <http://www.wmboothdraper.com/>, a retailer of dry goods and haberdashery to American Revolution re-enactors.

A Kannik's Korner pattern (\$12) for a Man's Shirt 1790-1830 "... identical to [an] extant shirt at the National Maritime Museum" sounded ideal. Fine 3.7 oz. white handkerchief linen (\$39 for three yards) was described as perfect for a gentleman's shirt and ruffles. Dorset thread buttons (\$7.50 for 5) "used on men's shirts and other undergarments from the late 17th into the early 19th century" and 60/2 linen thread (\$11 for 498 yards) were also recommended. I placed my \$69.50 order and, to my satisfaction, all arrived within a few days. I pulled out my sewing machine, intending to whip off a fair facsimile of the shirt in just a few hours. Then I started reading the pattern – it included a list of six extant shirts on which the pattern and construction techniques were based, 11 pages of actual instructions for making up the shirt and four pages of hand sewing techniques. There were pattern pieces that I had never encountered in modern sewing, such as sleeve binders and shoulder straps (to reinforce and finish the sleeve and shoulder areas) and numerous gussets. The sewing of the sleeve gussets (underarm squares that allow greater arm movement) and neck gussets and side gussets (to reinforce seams and openings) seemed particularly finicky and not suited to machine sewing. I decided to sew the shirt by hand.



Honeycomb



Singleton



Blandford Cartwheel

Samples of Dorset Thread Buttons

The economic use of fabric was an important household management skill in Jane Austen's time. "An enormous roll of green baize had arrived from Northampton, and been cut out by Mrs. Norris (with a saving by her good management of full three-quarters of a yard)...." (Mansfield Park Chapter XIV Chapman page 130). However, it wasn't difficult to efficiently arrange the pattern pieces, as all were square or rectilinear. (There were no darts or shaped seams in the shirt construction and all shaping was done by gathers). An accomplished seamstress wouldn't need a shirt pattern, just the measurements of the pieces.

"There is all the new calico, that was bought last week, not touched yet. I am sure I almost broke my back by cutting it out." (Mrs. Norris Mansfield Park Chapter VII Chapman page 71) The instructions recommended using the period technique of "cutting cloth by the thread" – pulling a thread to mark where to cut. This technique keeps the cutting on the grain, resulting in fewer frayed edges. However, cutting cloth by the thread turned out to be too time consuming with the fine linen I had chosen. Since my scissor-cut pieces weren't perfectly on the grain, I wasn't able to use another period technique, "pulling a thread", to mark a straight line for stitching. This method certainly would have improved the overall quality of the finished shirt; even Rebecca, the Prices' slatternly servant, would have looked askance at my often-uneven stitches.



The shirt construction used “fell seams”. Mrs. Norris, not surprisingly, underestimated the work involved when she told Fanny “There are but three seams; you may do them in a trice.” (Mansfield Park Chapter XVII Chapman page 166) . To finish a fell seam, a small amount of one seam allowance is folded and then sewn over the raw edge of the other seam allowance to create a neatly encased seam with an extra row of stitching for durability. The pattern recommended “creasing” the linen (by tool or hand) when folding or flattening seams and hems. This worked well with the crisp linen and turned out to be much easier than the modern technique of ironing folds, seams and hems. Sewing the shirt required more than basic hand sewing (running stitch, back stitch, gathering and plain hem). Detailed instructions were provided for hand rolling hems, whipping gathers and hand-made buttonholes (not easy to do well).

Dennis, my husband, reports that the shirt, looser and longer than its modern equivalent, is comfortable to wear provided the collar is not starched.

While it is easy to hand launder the shirt with modern detergent, it would have been a much harder job to scrub and boil the shirt, using the harsh lye soaps of Jane Austen’s day. Of course, linen also needs a lot of ironing and the voluminous shirt would have been very tedious to iron without a modern steam iron! No matter how laundered, linen is a strong fabric and the thread buttons do not break easily – this shirt should last my Mr. Darcy for many years.

Sewing was an important skill for women of Jane Austen’s class. Jennifer Forest says, in *Jane Austen’s Sewing Box*, “The women of the family turned yards of linen into nightwear, shirts and cravats needed by their men.” They were also expected to make clothing articles for the poor. Mrs. Norris told Fanny “If you have no work of your own, I can supply you from the poor basket.” (Mansfield Park Chapter VII page 71). The many hours it took to make a shirt by hand made me realize what a daunting task it would have been to clothe a large family and to provide for the less fortunate, too. “Fanny...by working early and late, with perseverance and great despatch, did so much that the boy was shipped off at last, with more than half his linen ready.” (Mansfield Park Volume II, Chapter VII, Chapman page 390).



Jennifer Bettiol is Treasurer of JASNA Vancouver



**Miss Woodhouse possessed quite the flair
For matchmaking many a pair
For herself she saw no-one
That was worth her devo-shun
Although Knightly was standing right there!**

**It's hard to be kind to Miss Bates
Whose manner so irritates.
Though her income is meager
No one is eager
To suffer her rambling narrates.**

**Mr. Darcy was loathed for his pride
But once Pemberley Lizzie had spied
This gave cupid a shove
She fell madly in love
And so healed the emotional divide.**

Thanks to Joan Reynolds for her clever limericks

The Young Ladies of Little Flower Academy Dance for JASNA Vancouver

Dancing! Costumes! Dressing up! Scrumptious afternoon tea! Prizes galore! Classroom dramatics! Reading *Pride and Prejudice*! Art! Music! What's not to like?! Well, we enjoyed it all, when JASNA member Julie Mills brought 30 members of her senior English class to perform for us on May 14, 2011. Julie combines her interest and achievements in dance and literature to prepare her students for a Jane Austen Tea Dance which is held at this all-girl's private school each February. Julie uses a variety of sources, such as films, TV series and her own CD collection to choose music suitable for the Georgian era dances she choreographs.

As head of her department Julie feels, contrary to many contemporary English teachers, "That (her) students could come to love, enjoy and appreciate Austen's works, and her world." She obtained permission and a small budget from the LFA administration for a solidly academic multi-disciplinary project which would engage imagination and involve just plain fun to enhance learning. When Julie was a student at the University of Sydney, she had attended and enjoyed "weekends with Jane Austen" organized by her professor and JASA member, Dr. Penny Gay.

For the program at Little Flower Academy, the students originally studied *Emma*, but now read *Pride and Prejudice*. In September, the first priority is to pick a partner, and decide who will be the male and who the female. Then the students study sketches and film clips to get an idea of the costumes. The girls are encouraged, however, not to rent costumes or spend a lot of money. Rather, they haunt the thrift shops, sew the dresses (or perhaps Granny will), search out accessories and suitable dance slippers, and practice hair styles. The "males" look suitably tailored in blazers with trousers (which are tucked into boots or long socks) and upturned collars on their white blouses. Scarves and lace serve as cravats and cuffs. Prizes are awarded for the best costumes, which Marie Disiewicz and Joan Reynolds of JASNA have been invited to judge.

The students are taught four dances with Julie dividing them into groups of eight, but all 90 come together at lunch for just one dress rehearsal to look at positioning before the Tea Dance. The girls are taught simple instructions such as how to put expression into their performance by tilting their heads and shaking hands with friendliness, and Julie finds their infectious enthusiasm one of the most rewarding aspects of the project. At the event, a male member of faculty introduces the participants during an official walk-in, half having new male Christian name. They all previously decided on their titles, whether "Lord" or "Sir" or "Miss" or "Lady".

Our English dance instructor Marie Disiewicz has been invited to adjudicate, and two groups of eight receive prizes for each dance. Julie says, "Marie is an excellent judge who gives sound and helpful reasons for her choices." The students become engaged in the dancing, and, frankly, surprise their teacher at how quickly they become proficient given the limited time available.



Prizes are also awarded to three of the 10 tea tables, which are judged for authenticity, attractiveness and attention to detail. A typical tea time menu of scones and cream, cucumber sandwiches, apple tarts and other tempting treats is suggested, and each group is asked to bring a punchbowl for a pink or cranberry coloured

beverage. Each girl brings a tea cup, and the groups consider colour schemes for napkins, flowers, and other pretty things to put on the tables.

In 2010-11, Julie's Advanced Placement Class of students in her enriched college level literature course studied *Pride and Prejudice* in depth, and were asked to write a script highlighting many of the important scenes in the novel. They worked independently and their scripts required little editing. With such characters as a very funny Mrs. Bennet, a most affable Mr. Bingley, and an extremely austere Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the players were able to hold the audience member's attention. The students work in groups of three, or individually, to paint scenes from the novel, which are displayed on big black drama dividers. The LFA's art teacher judges and gives awards to the best three or four. The paintings, if suitable, are used in the play, and two impressive canvasses were brought to our May meeting.

At the end of the lecture, we all went into the church hall, where the girls performed the dances, to universal applause. Julie brought this most entertaining morning to a conclusion by inviting us to the Tea Dance in February, 2012.

- Meeting report by the Editor

Editor's Note

The following is an excerpt of a report by Louise West, Curator of Chawton Cottage, which appeared in the May/June 2011 edition of Jane Austen's Regency World. Perhaps it illustrates that, in the world of Austen studies, the great minds of gifted teachers think alike.

"Our 'Gifted and Talented' programme is aimed at small groups aged around 14, to offer these pupils activities which challenge them. They are presented with the task of adapting a scene from one of the novels. Their day includes close textual analysis, the use of primary sources, and preparing a script. It combines traditional literary criticism with an engagement with the museum site and its objects, in order to enhance their understanding of Austen's life and times as they exist in her writing."



The Navy of 1812: Sailors on the Lakes

There has been a considerable amount of publicity lately, concerning the fact that next year is the 200th anniversary of the start of the War of 1812, which was a pivotal event in the development of Canada. Jane Austen's sailor brother, Frank, fought in the War of 1812, and world war was the backdrop to almost all of Jane Austen's life. She was born in 1775, the year that the Battle of Bunker Hill started the American Revolution, and died just two years after the Battle of Waterloo brought the Napoleonic wars to an end. The following article is reprinted, with the kind permission of Nancy Stokes, from the Toronto region's newsletter.

A unique naval event is being held at Niagara-on-the-Lake on the weekend of July 13-15, 2012, a "living history" event partnered by Parks Canada and the Navy's Directorate of Naval History and Heritage. It will involve over 20 replica longboats and crews, five "tall ships", and some 350 naval and marine re-enactors.

The Toronto region has been invited by Captain (Navy) Victor Suthren CA MA, the event designer, to help recreate the era of 1812 and the Regency by "bringing something of Jane Austen's world to the encampment on the evening of Saturday, July 14." He wrote, "Our hope would be that your members, in period dress, would visit the encampment as our guests as 'ladies and gentlemen of quality', to role-play and wander amusedly through the encampment and observe our activities. They will be very warmly welcomed by the re-enactors, and would help give the visiting public a deeper understanding of the colonial world of Canada in 1812." Costume Society of Ontario members have also been invited, plus other JASNA Ontario chapters informed, and Captain Suthren (suthren@magma.ca) wrote that if the group arrived before 4:00 p.m. on the Saturday, they would be welcomed at a 'Commodore's Reception' and "Up Spirits!" (wonder what that is). "They would share in the fun of the evening, the historical ambience of the encampment, the period music, and the respectful camaraderie of the sailors, marines, and 'camp followers'. They would raise the social tone most assuredly!"

- Contributed by the Editor

On Being a Japanese Janeite

Persuasions #3, 1981, Pages 7-8

by Keiko Kimura Parker
Burnaby, British Columbia

Joan Austen-Leigh suggested that I write a short article on being a Japanese Janeite. She thought it would be interesting to the readers of *Persuasions* to read about someone from a different culture who has become a Jane Austen enthusiast.

May I state in the way of introduction that I was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan. My formal education represented that blending of Japanese and Occidental teaching that all Japanese have experienced since the early twentieth century. Perhaps it was fortunate that I made a special effort in my study of the English language (which starts in Grade Seven in Japan), since that enabled me later to appreciate the subtle nuances of Jane Austen's writing directly, rather than through translation.

My early teen years were spent mostly in reading German and French literature in translation, as well as Japanese and some English literary works. One of my most vivid memories of those days revolves around the stage productions of *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* given at our high school. These stage productions, together with art exhibitions (for instance, the showing of art works from the Louvre) and my hobby of reading, helped gradually to mold my taste.

Thus Western culture did not suddenly burst on and demand of me an enormous adjustment. It was simply part of my being in my formative years. When I entered the Tokyo Women's Christian University, it was with the express purpose of studying English literature. In the course of four years, I studied many English literary works, but the centre of my attention was Shakespeare, and my published graduation thesis was on *King Lear*. Specifically, my focus was on "appearance and reality" as seen in *King Lear*.

No doubt this question was still on my mind when I came to Canada a month after graduation from my university to get married. It was at this point that I came upon *Pride and Prejudice*. Here was a literary work that dealt with the question of "appearance and reality" from a totally different aspect, expressed with wit, elegance, and insight. Needless to say, I was enchanted, I felt that I had never read any literary work where heart and mind were so happily met.

I went on to read all the other Jane Austen works, and it soon became evident to me that *Persuasion* was my favourite, with *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* following close behind.

In fact there really is not that much difference between the East and the West in the realm of one's feelings. When I read all that Anne Elliot felt and thought in *Persuasion*, I am reminded of that other famous novel, *The Tale of Genji*, written by a court lady of 10th to 11th century Japan. Perhaps those familiar with *Pride and Prejudice* in Japanese will not totally disagree with me when I suggest that there are similarities between the anxieties and joys felt by the Japanese court ladies in the novel, and those felt by Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*.

An inevitable topic in all Jane Austen novels is, of course, the subject of matrimony. I remember well how my grandmother used to say "I hope someday Keiko will marry the second son of a wealthy family." (Marrying the second son meant wealth without the onerous responsibilities of the Japanese family system.) Although my grandmother is no match for Mrs. Bennet, one can see the "universally acknowledged truth" of the wish to have one's daughter or granddaughter for that matter well married!

高慢と偏見*

Recently, Joan Austen-Leigh kindly let me read a copy of a Japanese translation of *Pride and Prejudice* from her collection. The translation was done by Professor Nakano, with whom I studied English literature at college. It was a unique and interesting experience for me. From time to time, the original passage would come back to me and make the reading of it doubly enjoyable. And then, I thought to myself that wit, humour, elegance, refinement of expression, but above all Jane Austen's well-regulated mind does "captivate me still".

(Keiko and her husband John have three children. Their two sons are both scholarship students studying to become career pianists – Jon Kimura Parker (age 21) at the Juilliard School in New York, and James (age 18) at the University of British Columbia. Both boys are winners of Canada-wide piano competitions. John and Keiko also have a daughter Elizabeth Anne Fumiko (age 12) named after the heroines of Pride and Prejudice and Persuasion.)

* (*Pride and Prejudice* in Japanese)

2011 Update on the Parkers, a very accomplished family

Jon Kimura Parker has an international career as a concert artist and is Professor of Piano at Rice University, Houston, Texas. James Parker has an international career as pianist with the Gryphon Trio, and is Head of Piano at the School of Music, University of Toronto. Elizabeth Anne is a writer and freelance publicist, focusing on the arts and music, and lives in Toronto.

Keiko now has three grandchildren, but sadly, her husband John died in 2009. They had been married 52 years.

Keiko reports that she has gathered together a group of a dozen Japanese friends living in Vancouver, to read Jane Austen in Japanese. She says their mission is to spread the word.

Thanks to Phyllis Bottomer for suggesting we reprint this article

Four Book Reviews

Sisters of Fortune: America's Caton Sisters at Home and Abroad by Jehanne Wake, 2010

Since the theme of this issue is women of accomplishment, we suggest it is the widely held view (if not universally acknowledged) that when someone has beauty, wealth, and youth, combined with intelligence and the charm of courteous manners, she can go a long, long way. Such is the story arc of the four remarkable Caton granddaughters of Charles Carroll of Maryland. Carroll was the owner of vast plantations and many slaves and, being of Irish descent, was the only Roman Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the most long-lived. The saga of Marianne, Bess, Louisa and Emily was played out against a backdrop of war, politics, wealth incorporating great financial acumen, marriage in the highest circles, and service at Queen Adelaide's court. Marianne married Marquess Wellesley, to the intense jealousy of his brother, the Duke of Wellington. Bess, who gambled on the international stock and bond markets, married Baron Stafford, while Louisa captured the heart of the Marquess of Carmarthen. He was heir to the Duke of Leeds, so Louisa became his duchess upon the death of his father in 1838. Emily, who became wealthiest of all, married John McTavish, scion of the family which controlled the North West Company, and together they ultimately returned to Maryland from Montreal.

The book drags in places, but one of the most interesting things about it is the insight it provides into the economic and financial pitfalls and schemes of the era. The money economy was developing, there was little regulation, great booms and busts occurred, and one had to be very wide awake indeed to protect one's assets. Their grandfather, who had seen the plight of women in his family who were not sufficiently protected financially, safeguarded the sisters from their father Richard Caton's huge debts as a failed and bankrupt business man. Carroll's motto was "Fortunes are as frequently dissipated by negligence and inattention to

pecuniary concerns as by vice and extravagance." The friend George Washington described as "the most moneyed man he knew", enjoined his granddaughters to a prudent economy. The sisters, especially Bess, were shrewd investors, protecting their fortunes from predatory male hands through trusts and, when married, kept investments in the name of a sister or trusted female friend. They also used the existing laws of inheritance to their advantage, but sometimes had to protect themselves in law suits.

Interestingly, the author did not encounter a word about slavery in any of the sisters' letters, but she dishes the dirt about the family of the Duke of Leeds, as well as that wild Irish bunch, the Wellesleys. Emily's Canadian connections add some useful details to this book. In the chapter on the War of 1812, there is a good, brief introduction to the forces which caused it. Jehanne Wake also provides references to such sources as Frederick Merck's *Fur Trade and Empire*, and Peter C. Newman's *Caesars of the Wilderness*.

-- Contributed by the Editor

Three books about Mary Granville Pendarves Delany (1700-1788),
an 18th century woman of accomplishment:

Mrs. Delany and Her Circle, edited by Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts. Yale University Press, 2009

The Paper Garden: An Artist Begins Her Life's Work at 72, by Molly Peacock, McClelland & Stewart, 2010

Mrs. Delany: Her Life and Her Flowers, by Ruth Hayden, Colonnade Books, British Museum Publications, 1980, republished 2000

Edmund Burke remarked that, "Mrs. Delany was the woman of fashion of all ages." Although her achievements have long been known to some students of the Georgian era, the book listed at the top is the first comprehensive academic study of her life in the context of her times. It is the catalogue of an exhibition at the Yale Center for British Art in 2009, and Sir John Soane's Museum in 2010. The volume itself is a work of art, with superb reproductions of the plant and flower collages, clear typefaces, and fine paper, plus Yale's accessible system of referencing academic sources, all of which contribute to the reader's pleasure.



Both the editors are fine scholars. Alicia Weisberg-Roberts points out that, "according to traditional historiography, Mrs. Delany's role would be nugatory and therefore her contribution would be obscured by value judgments." True as this observation is, it raised a loud harrumph from your reviewer, especially when the dictionary revealed that the definition is, "having no worth or meaning." Well, it has to be admitted that the

traditional maps and chaps view of history does have its place, but thank heavens people who could see the worth of Mrs. Delany's letters and artistic creations did save them. The flower collection is preserved in the Print Room of the British Museum. It was donated by her great grandniece Lady Llanover, who also published a collection of her letters in the 19th century.

A listing of a few of the chapter headings in the book gives an idea of the range of analysis it contains: Mary Delany's Embroidered Court Dress; The "Paper Mosaick" Practice of Mrs. Delany and Her Circle; Mary Delany and Her Use of Paper, by the forensic paper historian and paper analyst Peter Bower; and The Theory and Practice of Female Accomplishment, by the incomparable Amanda Vickery. Vickery quotes from Mrs. Delany's letters, "At candlelight, cross-stitch and reading gather us together at Bulstrode," to illustrate her opinion that "needlework married perfectly with reading aloud," and this is exactly how I imagine the Georgians enjoyed Jane Austen.

In Molly Peacock's biography, Mary Granville really *is* the heroine of her own life. At 16, Mary is manoeuvred into a forced marriage by an unscrupulous uncle, and then is widowed. When an old lady, in her second widowhood, her neighbour Queen Charlotte drops in to her house unannounced, and requests the recipe for an orange pudding!

Some people find it irritating that Molly Peacock weaves contemporary events from her own life, and her family's life, into her study of Mrs. Delany, but I think she deserves credit for introducing her subject to a wide audience through the popularity of her book.

When she was 72, Mary Delany injured her foot, and this loss of mobility prompted her to begin an ambitious project. Her goal was to create 1,000 botanically-correct reproductions of flowers and plants using a technique she called "paper mosaick", and she completed about 985 before age and infirmity forced her to stop. Experts believe that she may have had help completing some of the very late ones. In any case, the flower collages are the culmination of a lifetime of artistic skill with scissors, paper, shells, water colours, oils, silk, needle, thread, and other media. Vickery says, "Women's crafts were productions of supreme individuality."

The third book listed above is an entertaining biography by Ruth Hayden, who is a descendant of Mary's sister Anne. She quotes extensively from the letters, and began to write out of love for the memory and accomplishments of her long-ago relative. The volume is beautifully illustrated, with colour reproductions funded by Paul Mellon.

- Contributed by the Editor

Our 2011-12 Meeting Schedule

Dec 17 Feb 18 Mar 17 Apr 28 May 26 (Jane Austen Day) June: TBA

This Newsletter, the publication of the Vancouver Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America, is issued periodically. All submissions on the subject of Jane Austen, her life, her works and her times, are welcome.

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