



# SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Jane Austen Society  
of North America - Connecticut Region

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## Summer 2021 Newsletter

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

Sunday, July 18<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm

*You did what???*

*Interview with Leo Rockas*

Outdoors, on the Wesleyan University  
Campus, Middletown CT.

This event will also have a simultaneous  
virtual broadcast.

Click [HERE](#) to REGISTER!

*(Once you have registered, you will get  
an email with a map to the parking area and  
picnic location on campus, or the Zoom link  
if you prefer virtual attendance)*



## LETTER FROM THE CT REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Dear JASNA Connecticut Members,

We send festive July wishes to you and hope you're having a memorable summer season.

Every July throughout my youth, my father would shake his head sadly and warn us that "*after the fourth, you know, summer is nearly gone.*" It was a sad torment to his children who loved the summer months, being out of school, swimming in our local lake, and spending many cool, quiet hours reading in a fabulous small town public library, my second home. We could hardly believe that the fourth of July foretold a heedless dash into early fall. But somehow his message always rang true. Even now, after the fourth of July, I quicken my attempts to salvage as much of the remaining summer days as I can. We hope you, your families, and loved ones are able to enjoy as much of the remaining weeks of summer as possible - because very soon we will be facing fall! Till we see you in person, we send our best wishes for a memorable Fourth of July holiday – and lovely, long summer season!

We also hope that many of you enjoyed some of our recent offerings, as well as those made available virtually from JASNA regions across the country. The most memorable events for some of us on the CT Region steering committee included the virtual conference *Perfect Happiness: Reading Jane Austen in the Pacific Northwest* and the *Race and the Regency* series offered by Jane Austen and Co. This latter event was offered for free over several weeks. Recordings of each presentation are available on their website <https://www.janeaustenandco.org/>. If you missed the original airings, please check some of the recordings out as they richly explored the slave trade history, the lives of blacks in Britain during the Regency period, depictions of race in art of the times, and much more. Some of us, too, enjoyed Susannah Fullerton's presentation on "*What makes a great heroine in literature?*" A heroine, Susannah, positioned must have a great voice and take action; she must also grow and develop, while learning from her mistakes. She queried, "*Does a heroine have to be heroic?*" After offering her perspective on the possibility of each of Austen's female lead characters being heroic, she awarded the 'gold medal' to Emma, arguing that Elizabeth and Emma share many characteristics and challenges, and both grow in self-awareness; both make mistakes and misjudgments. But in the end, Susannah found in Emma's behalf. Would you? What arguments would you make to award the title of heroic heroine to other Austen's great female characters?

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## LETTER FROM THE CT REGIONAL COMMITTEE (CONTINUED)

Besides a truly rich array of offerings, our CT region hosted a wonderful, informative, well-constructed presentation by Dr. Juliette Wells, "The History of Austen in Fourteen Objects," on March 27 to an enthusiastic audience. Dr. Wells led us through some thought-provoking questions, such as "How were Austen's novels first published in North America? Who read them and what did those first readers think?" The presentation was very well-received, with many participants reporting how much new respect they had for the publication process, readership, and the history of publication. This presentation was a lovely follow-up to that of our own Eileen Horansky, who helped deepen our knowledge about the iconic 'book', its production and early readership.

Our CT region also sponsored a lively interview with Dr. Shari Savoy, who shared her first-hand experiences in buying the Joseph Teel House, an historic mansion built in 1789-90 in Norwich. Originally intended as a tavern and inn (At the Sign of George Washington), it was noted for its fine assembly room! Our program coordinator, Kandie Carle interviewed Dr. Savoy, via Zoom, about her undertaking, including the challenges and joy of bringing this remarkable gem back to life. We discussed the upcoming Joseph Teel House virtual retreat, focusing on Austen's novel *Emma*, as well. Dr. Savoy handled the participants many questions with humor and good grace and informed attendees that challenges nonetheless abound in such an undertaking. Seeing each subsequent room of the house revert to its earlier beauty, however, continues to make the experience meaningful and worthwhile. Let's hope when community guidelines allow for indoor events, we can plan to meet and dance in the assembly room at this lovely, historic home!

Many of our region's members attended the virtual retreat sponsored by the Joseph Teel House, which took place January 29 – 31. The home provided a great backdrop for a terrific array of presentations. Among only a sampling of those exploring different aspects of the novel *Emma* were Damianne C. Scott, creator of *Black Girl Loves Jane* (<https://www.facebook.com/BGLJ1976>); Hope Greenberg, costume historian; Professor John Mullan, Austen scholar and author; Sonia Kamal, novelist; and Ayden Walden, author of the blog *Black Girl in a Big Dress*, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prpwxWLPwUI>) among many others. With such a great range of presenters, it's little wonder one of the key highlights of the virtual retreat was the rich, informative, reflective, and personal conversations we had on race and inclusion, as relating to Austen's work and the Regency period. Much deep material for thought emerged, such that many participants expressed a shared desire to follow this initial conversation with many more.

Well, that is a quick up-date of what we've been able to enjoy over the past few months. But please read on as our newsletter features some upcoming events you don't want to miss! All best holiday wishes go out to you and yours – and we look forward to seeing you at events in the months ahead!

- Maureen, Kandie, Eileen, Heather, Michelle, and Katelyn -

## PROGRAM UPDATES BY KANDIE CARLE



*You did what???*

*Interview with Leo Rockas*

Click [HERE](#) to REGISTER!!

Sunday, July 18<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm

Come hear why author Leo Rockas decided to finish and publish one of Jane Austen's earliest works:

*Catharine or The Bower.*  
The nerve of the man!

Program Description: The story was begun by Jane Austen ca 1792 when she was 14 years old, and finished by Leo Rockas in 2019, in the 90th decade of his literary life. The book was published by Sunbury Press, in September of 2019 <https://www.sunburypress.com/collections/leo-rockas> and is available everywhere, including at Jane Austen Books <https://www.janeaustenbooks.net>

### A quick synopsis of the story:

The novel features a young orphan named Catharine (Kitty) as the heroine, who, when disciplined by her aunt Mrs Percival, retires to the bower, where she finds relief. Kitty is separated from her good friends the Wynnes following the death of their parents. On a visit from Mr and Mrs Stanley of London, Catharine and Camilla become dubious friends, and Edward appears as a dashing possible suitor. London is now the location of Catharine and her cousins, the two Wynne brothers and the two Wynne sisters, as well as colorful friends of Camilla Stanley--resulting in various attachments between the young people, and eventual pairings, some of them quite unexpected.

Jane Austen Books says of Leo's efforts:

A lively completion that broadens Kitty's world by removing her from her bower and transporting her to London. Kitty's wider society admits that most audacious of Austen's early characters, Lady Susan Vernon, into the assemblage. An entertaining lark, well written and lots of fun, with plenty of in-jokes for fans of Austen's early works.

## PROGRAM UPDATES

BY KANDIE CARLE

Program Description (Continued): Leo Rockas is a Professor Emeritus of the University of Hartford. He has spent a lifetime teaching literature and writing. His wife and daughter were the primary fans of Jane Austen in his life, but Leo became a keen fan himself, and has, so far, had three essays on *Pride and Prejudice* published in *Persuasions*, the Jane Austen Society of North America's peer reviewed journal. A new piece he wrote exploring the character of Dick Musgrove, (from Jane Austen's final novel, *Persuasion*) is to appear in the next issue. Leo has also written several plays, with Jane Austen connections, that have had staged readings in NY City, mostly by Jane Austen members.

Leo, of course, taught Shakespeare, and over the last 10 or so years he has been working on a book on Shakespeare's plays, which he hopes will soon be self-published by Barnes & Noble.

So, bring your blanket or a lawn chair, a picnic, and sit under the trees to be part of JASNA-CT region's 'Box Hill' picnic (*Emma*).

Leo Rockas will be in the hot seat, interviewed a la Oprah Winfrey style.

Get yourself a copy of the book, bring it with you, as Leo will autograph one and all.

## MEMBERSHIP NOTES

BY HEATHER SMITH

**This is your regular reminder to make sure that your JASNA membership is up to date!**

**Make sure you choose Connecticut as your region!**

If you need to renew or update your membership, you can do so at any time [here](#).

If you are on our mailing list and would like to join the national ranks of JASNA, you can do so [here](#).

Thank you for becoming a member! Increasing our membership also helps increase our funds and thus impacts what kinds of programs and events we can offer.

If you have any questions, please email us at [jasnactregion@gmail.com](mailto:jasnactregion@gmail.com).

## WE ARE SEEKING NOMINATIONS

*Would you like to get more involved with our CT JASNA Region? At the end of the year, we will be voting on new officers for 2022 – 24. Nominate yourself or someone else – we need your involvement to continue to grow our Region!*

After this wonderful opportunity to serve as Connecticut's regional coordinator, it is time for me to resign and transition this leadership role to a worthy applicant! I have enjoyed the work and honor enormously. It has been a particularly unique pleasure to have gotten to know many of you, and in representing our Region with the general public and the national organization, and working with other coordinators from Regions around the country. I have learned so much – and still have much to learn. So I thank you for providing me with this special experience – and hope you will nominate yourself or another to take on this meaningful and entirely worthwhile role! You will have a great team to work with!

In addition, Kandie Carle, our magnificent program coordinator, is likewise stepping down. Committed to bringing diverse offerings to our members, from in-person presentations to virtual hands-on activities, Kandie's creativity has served our region enormously well. To say that she has been tireless in bringing fresh ideas for our consideration is an understatement. To tell you how hard she worked, keeping everything moving forward during the pandemic – even while many other Regions and organizations took time to set their course – would bring a blush to her cheeks. She has surely earned the accolades of our members, and will be missed in this role. Still, Kandie is ready to aid a new candidate, willing to take up the position and help keep our Region vibrant!

Thus, we reach out to you! Are you interested in serving as regional coordinator or programming coordinator? It's exciting work and a great opportunity to help determine new programming for the year ahead. Descriptions of responsibilities, as outlined in our JASNA by-laws follow:

*Regional Coordinator:* Tasks and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Presiding at meetings
- Managing the Region's overall of affairs
- Communicating with all members within the Region's geographic area about events and meetings
- Representing the Region to JASNA's national officers
- Serving as a conduit for information between the national board members and our region's members
- Promoting JASNA to the public at large
- Submitting information on the Region's meetings and activities to the editor of *JASNA News*;
- Holding Regional elections at least every two years
- Keeping and submitting records and reports as requested by JASNA,

## WE ARE SEEKING NOMINATIONS (CONTINUED)

*Program Coordinator:* Tasks and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating the development of program topics, with input from the Regional Coordinator, steering committee, and membership
- Publishing an annual slate of topics
- Coordinating with program leaders/speakers, prior to each meeting
- Preparing a budget for meetings and programs along with the Regional Coordinator and Treasurer
- Arranging meeting locations, audio-visual and technology resources, and speaker requirements

Both positions, like all others on the steering committee, which includes our Region's Treasurer, Membership Coordinator, and our Social Media Coordinator, are voluntary.

If you have an interest in serving – or wish to nominate a colleague willing to join a fabulous, motivated team, please let me know ([maucro12@gmail.com](mailto:maucro12@gmail.com)). We will need our new positions appointed at our annual birthday tea Regional meeting! We hope you will consider joining our team and helping us welcome in another new year of Austen enjoyment!

Finally, it is really challenging to even write that we must bid farewell to our social media guru, Eileen Horansky! She is about to be off on a new journey of scholarship as she begins her doctoral studies at Ohio State University. As we know first-hand what a gifted scholar Eileen is, we truly appreciate what an asset she will be to her University program. But it is so very hard for us to say good bye to her, knowing how much we enjoyed her presence on our steering committee. Her Austen knowledge; her understanding of JASNA's mission; her commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; her wit – and her social media skills have been so vital to us. She's been such a wonderful collaborator, colleague, and friend, that we are mourning even the thought of her leaving – even though we understand the importance of her desire to deepen her knowledge. Eileen moves on with all of our sincerest wishes for her success in her next journey.

As Eileen transitions to new university life in August, we are delighted to welcome Katelyn Kaplan who will be taking on our social media responsibilities. Katelyn is the director of Digital Media at Specialty Productions, where she specializes organizing events and graphic design. She has already stepped up, helping us plan a hybrid/in-person and virtual event for later this month. We are entirely delighted to have Katelyn join us and share her expertise. She will help insure that our events reach as broad an audience as possible. Welcome, Katelyn – and thank you!

## JASNA AGM UPDATE

*"A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages . . ."*  
or Chicago, here we come!!!

The JASNA AGM registration for *Jane Austen in the Arts* opens on Wednesday, July 14 at noon! This Chicago-based event, as you know, is sure to sell out very quickly, perhaps in less than an hour. We suggest that you prepare ahead of time by selecting the presentations and events you wish to attend in advance. You can go here: <http://jasna.org/agms/chicago2021/home.php> to register. Hotel bookings open at the same time and will close as soon as registration is full! The list of plenary speakers and the various breakout sessions can all be viewed on the registration page. Chicago awaits – and some simply fabulous activities along with great plenary speakers (Gillian Dow, Devoney Looser, and Desmond Shawe-Taylor) can be in your future. But you must act quickly (no pun intended).

In addition, we suggest that you prepare ahead of time by selecting the presentations and events you wish to attend before you start completing your online registration form. Doing so will help you complete your online registration form expeditiously.

For those who cannot travel to Chicago for the October 15 – 17 AGM, selected programming will be available in virtual format as well. More information about the virtual offerings will be forthcoming so stay tuned.

## NEW COMMUNITY GUIDELINES PUBLISHED

JASNA is enriched and strengthened by the diversity of the backgrounds, experiences, and opinions of our membership. The pleasure of our gatherings lies in the free exchange of ideas and the active participation of all who attend. As JASNA members, we have a shared responsibility for creating a welcoming, safe, and productive environment for everyone participating in our programs and on our digital platforms. To learn more about the community guidelines developed by JASNA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee/JEDI please visit: <http://jasna.org/about/jasna-community-guidelines/>.

## READ ON:

### WHAT WE ARE READING, A BOOK GROUP UPDATE

From *Mansfield Park* to *Master and Commander* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, our reading group wiled away some lovely Sunday afternoons in lively discussions.

*Mansfield Park*, of course, generates rather strong reactions in readers. Who among you, for example, would appoint the title of admirable heroine to Fanny? Or do you feel she's not at all a heroine but instead a dreary killjoy with an aptitude for inactivity and saying no? Instead, do you assign the role of heroine to Mary Crawford - or imagine her an illustration of the banality of evil? While Jane Austen suspected few readers would admire Emma as well as she did, she may still have been struck by those, including family members, who found Fanny too difficult to accept as heroine. After all, even Mrs. Austen responded that she did not like *Mansfield Park* quite "so well as P & P" - and found Fanny "insipid." Our conversation was such great fun - and illuminating as members shared their perspectives on the novel and its characters. Our discussion also considered Austen's position on the slave trade, portraying in one scene what might have commonly occurred around dinner tables in her time when the topic of slavery was broached: silence. With its many themes to unpack and debate, it is little wonder that conversation continues to reverberate with strongly divergent, well-reasoned (and debated) views - even over multiple readings.

We continued our routine of alternating reading selections from Jane Austen's own novels to those written by other writers of her day, nonfiction books about Austen's work or the Regency period, and current writers who use Austen's work as a point of departure. In this light, the group tackled *Master and Commander* by Patrick O'Brian and *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith. It was quite a disparate reading experience between the dense language and brilliant representation of Jane Austen's navy by O'Brian and the hilarious, mistaken identities at the core of Goldsmith's play. Some readers felt it took time and patience to manage the technical aspects of O'Brian's work, which is so thick with detail of ships, riggings, sailing tactics, etc., yet offered wonderful character development with sinister foreboding of what lurks ahead for the main characters. Goldsmith's play, on the other hand, was reminiscent of Shakespeare's use of disguise to uncover and reveal greater insights about key characters, all the while offering mirthful absurdities. The first performance of Goldsmith's play was March 15, 1773 in London where it was very well received. The play has been described as a "laughing comedy" and welcomed over the prevailing "sentimental" comedies that were commonly being produced. That, I suspect, must have pleased Jane Austen very much.

Our book group held its first movie-night, watching the 1995 A&E/BBC production of *Pride and Prejudice*. Connecting on Zoom, we discussed the first half of the series one night and the remainder of the series on the next. (Continued on Page 10)

## READ ON: WHAT WE ARE READING, A BOOK GROUP UPDATE

Continued from Page 9: We enjoyed sharing our various beverages and snacks virtually, while talking about performances, scenes, and comparing this production to so many others – including the Greer Garson/Laurence Olivier version. It was truly a wonderful way to share experiences across distances – and also a terrific way to spend an evening.

Next up for our July book group: *Catharine or The Bower* by Jane Austen and completed by Leo Rockas, and *The Bitch in the Bonnet* by Robert Rodi, a very snarky blogger! If you have an interest in joining our book group, please contact Maureen at [maucrol2@gmail.com](mailto:maucrol2@gmail.com)

# HAPPY READING!

