

JANE AUSTEN AND HER FAMILY

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775 in Steventon, Hampshire.

Parents: Rev. George Austen, a second generation Anglican clergyman, and Cassandra Leigh, whose father was also an Anglican clergyman.

Family of 8:

James (1765) - became an Anglican clergyman; second wife was Jane's good friend, Mary Lloyd; Had 3 children. After his father's retirement, took over the parishes of Dean and Steventon.

George (1766) - was handicapped (mentally deficient? deaf and dumb? epileptic?) Never lived with the family. Never married.

Edward (1767) - as a young teen, was adopted by a wealthy cousin, lived at Godmersham, Kent, a noted property in England, and took the name Knight. Married the well-to-do Elizabeth Bridges who was not too fond of Jane. Had 11 children.

Henry (1771) - was a soldier in the militia, a businessman, a banker and a clergyman. Married his cousin, Eliza de Feuillide, who was 10 years his senior. No children.

Cassandra (1773)

Francis (1774) - eventually became Sir Francis, Admiral of the Fleet; Had 11 children. Second wife was Jane's good friend, Martha Lloyd.

Jane (1775)

Charles (1779) - eventually commanded ships in the British Navy. Had 8 children.

*All married brothers except Edward married twice.

1783: Jane and Cassandra are sent for tutoring to a woman in Oxford and, after a few months, moved with this tutor to Southampton. A short time later, Jane became very ill, probably with typhus, which had been carried to England by troops returning from Gibraltar and the war with the French. Jane was taken home by her parents and very nearly died.

1785: Jane and Cassandra are sent to Abbey School in Reading. This school was renowned as a place for daughters of gentry. They were taught writing, spelling, French, needle work, drawing, music, dancing and some elementary arithmetic, history and geography. The family soon realized that they couldn't afford to keep both girls there and they returned home before the end of 1786. This ended Jane and Cassandra's formal schooling. However, Jane read widely in her father's extensive library, probably had some tutoring from her father, who was tutoring several sons of gentry families, and also participated in the writing and theatricals that her family loved to create.

1787 -1793: Jane writes her Juvenilia.

1794: Jane probably starts writing lady Susan.

1796: Jane starts "First Impressions", which eventually becomes "Pride and Prejudice".

1797: Jane starts to convert "Elinor and Marianne" into "Sense and Sensibility".

1800: Trial and acquittal of Jane's aunt, Mrs. Leigh-Parrot.

1801: Rev. George and Mrs. Austen, Cassandra and Jane move to Bath. From now until her move to Chawton Cottage, Jane does little writing.

1802: Jane receives and rejects a proposal of marriage from Harris Bigg-Withers at Manydown.

1804: Jane probably starts writing "The Watsons".

1805: Death of Rev. George Austen in Bath.

1806: Mrs. Austen, Cassandra and Jane move to Southampton to live with Frank, his wife and 11 children.

1809: Mrs. Austen, Cassandra and Jane move to Chawton Cottage at the invitation of Edward Austen Knight. Jane starts to revise "Pride and Prejudice" and "Sense and Sensibility" and begins work on Emma and Mansfield Park.

1811: "Sense and Sensibility" published.

1813: "Pride and Prejudice" published.

1814: "Mansfield Park" published.

1815: "Emma" published.

1816: Jane begins to feel unwell.

1817: At the beginning of the year, Jane starts work on "Sanditon".

May: Moves to 8 College Street, Winchester to be closer to her doctor.

July 18: dies. Is buried July 24 in Winchester Cathedral.

1818: "Northanger Abbey" and "Persuasion" are published.

THE WORLD IN JANE AUSTEN'S TIME

With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 to end the Seven Years' War, Britain became the world's leading colonial power and her navy became the most powerful in the world. However, from 1776/ the independence of the United States of America, Britain saw a gradual decline in its colonial and naval powers.

1789: French Revolution

1793: The French republic declared war against Great Britain. Napoleon eventually was in charge of the French military forces and then became, Emperor of the new French Empire. There was a definite and real fear of invasion of the French forces in the south of England during the entire period of war with France and a crippling blockade of products from Europe until the ultimate defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815.

1775: The Industrial Revolution began to gather momentum. Adam Smith, in his work "The Wealth of Nations" promoted private enterprise and free trade. Men and women began to leave cottage industries for work in city factories, the "dark, satanic mills" of William Blake. After 1815/ the Corn Laws, which had been destined to protect English farmers from imported grains, caused riots.

LITERARY INFLUENCES ON JANE AUSTEN

Authors just before her time:

Adam Smith (1723-1790) The Wealth of Nations

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa Harlowe;

Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (1759-1797) A Vindication of the Rights of Women; Mary; Maria;

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) Castle Rackrent, The Absentee;

Prose:

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) ; Waverley novels, Guy

Mannering Matthew Lewis (1775-1818) The Monk;

Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) The Mysteries of Udolpho, Romance of the Forest, Sicilian

Romance; Fanny Burney (1752-1840) Evelina; Camilla, The Wanderer

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly (1797-1851) Frankenstein

Poetry:

Wordsworth (1770-1850

Coleridge (1772-1834)

Keats (1795-1821)

Blake (1795-1821)

Byron (1788-1824)

Charles Lamb (1775-

1834) Percy Shelly (1792-

1822)

Robert Southey (1774-1843) Poet Laureate