



Massachusetts Historical Society: Justice Story, Admiral Wormeley, and Admiral Francis Austen.

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IN HIS BOOK ON SUPREME COURT JUSTICE JOSEPH STORY, R. Kent Newmyer describes the social milieu of early nineteenth-century Massachusetts in words that echo the settings of Jane Austen's novels. "Massachusetts in the 1820s," Newmyer says, "with Boston as its hub, developed a caste of first families who were connected by frequent intermarriage and constant interaction, who commanded immense economic power . . . [, and who] ran Harvard and most of Boston's churches, schools, and charitable institutions" (163). Josiah Phillips Quincy (1829-1910) had described Boston's social life in similar terms: "There was a decided first circle in the town, to which the barriers were not easily broken; though, as time went on, fortunate individuals were lifted over them with some ceremony" (6).

It is interesting to contemplate how readers in early nineteenth-century America passed on information about important books, and the holdings of the Massachusetts Historical Society can offer insights into some American connections with literary figures in England. First circle Bostonians Justice Joseph Story (1779-1845) and Josiah Quincy (1772-1864) were initially political foes, Quincy reporting the rage of fellow Federalists in 1811 when "Joe Story, that country pettifogger, aged thirty-two" (Josiah Quincy 195), was appointed an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. The relationship changed when Story, an influential member of the Harvard Board of Overseers and Corporation and a man eager to transform the university, was successful in promoting Quincy as president. Story accepted the Dane Law School chair created for him in 1829, and the men worked together in revising the Harvard curriculum and defining the Law School.

Justice Story had a great knowledge of literature and enjoyed reading and writing poetry.> It was said that when he listened to slow-moving court arguments he made notes in poetical form. On a coach ride from Boston to Washington in 1826, Josiah Quincy (1802-1882), the son of Josiah Quincy famous for his attack on Justice Story, remembers Justice Story's telling of his admiration for Mrs. Radcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, and Miss Burney, especially for her novel *Evelina*.> Later, he heard him "place Jane Austen much above these writers, and compliment her with a panegyric quite equal to those bestowed by Scott and Macaulay" (Quincy 188).

Justice Story recommended Austen's books to the Quincy family and may have recommended Maria Edgeworth's novels as well, for it is known that Susan Quincy read her work and that the two women corresponded. Susan and Anna Quincy became Austen admirers, and when Susan wanted to write to Sir Francis Austen in 1852, her intermediary in contacting him was Rear Admiral Ralph Randolph Wormeley, Royal Navy.

These connections are worth noting, for they suggest the intricate benefits of patronage in the services. Ralph Wormeley (1785-1852), spelled Wormley in the Quincy letter and elsewhere, was a Virginian taken to England by his father, James Wormeley, after the death of his mother, Ariana Randolph, in 1794. His parents came from English stock and his mother, daughter of John Randolph, king's attorney-general for the colony of Virginia, was also related to John Randolph of Roanoke.

Ralph Wormeley became a British subject and entered the Royal Naval Academy as a midshipman in 1799. As a young sailor he first saw action off Cadiz aboard the *London 98* which Francis Austen, the older of Jane Austen's sailor brothers, left in 1798. After serving on the Home, Newfoundland, and Cadiz stations and rising to the rank of Commander in 1814, Wormeley never received another posting. His obituary stated, "His efforts to procure employment since have been as constant as they have been unavailing" (*Gentleman's Magazine* 530). A memoir written by his daughters reveals that Wormeley's steadfast support of liberal political views pitted him against the Tory establishment. He applied semi-annually for a posting, but he received nothing but promises. He did, however, attain Admiral rank in 1848.

Trying to secure what he saw as a warranted promotion for his son, Francis, known as Frank, Jane Austen's father George Austen used his connections with Warren Hastings and through him Admiral Affleck, a member of the Board of Admiralty. It was not until 1798 that Admiral Gambier's influence finally prevailed and Frank was raised to Commander of the *Peterel*.> His father was convinced that all patronage in the Navy rested with Lord Chatham.

On a visit to the United States in 1820, Commander Wormeley shared a stagecoach from New York with Justice Story, "a most agreeable but singularly loquacious man. They talked all the way to Boston" (*Recollections* 80). Justice Story would have been glad to talk with an experienced sailor while involved with Admiralty and prize law cases. Story took Wormeley to comfortable quarters before they parted and may have introduced him further in local society. Wormeley already had local connections. He had married Caroline Preble of Boston, and there was a warm relationship between John Randolph of Roanoke and Josiah Quincy. These men met in Washington, and while it was said that two more dissimilar in temperament and opinions could not be imagined, they shared similar political views and a "love of good conversation, good books, classical letters and English culture" (*DAB* 18). Josiah Quincy visited his father's friend in Washington in 1826 on the second part of the trip begun with Judge Story.

Ralph Wormeley's family, including three daughters and a son, traveled widely. A biographical notice stated, "The childhood of the four Wormeley children was not monotonous. The family vibrated from London to Paris, to Boston, to Newport, to Virginia" (*DAB* 309). Their father preferred England, and in London visited the Royal Navy Club. Their mother never warmed to English social life and entertained overseas visitors American style. At one point Wormeley was asked by the Liberal Party to stand as Parliamentary candidate for Brighton but was dissuaded by his wife.

In 1848, the family began an American stay that continued after the Admiral died in 1852. They divided their time between Boston and Newport and had many friends in common with the Josiah Quincys, including the George Ticknors, William H. Prescotts, Franklin Dexter, and Frances Calley Gray.

Admiral Wormeley's literary interests show the influence of the classics on his tastes. As a midshipman, Wormeley studied with a schoolmaster and a French teacher on board ship where his reading was limited. His father supplied extra material—including a copy of the *Rambler* which a daughter blamed for his ponderous writing style. In later life, in enforced retirement, he read incessantly among all forms of non-fiction. But it is his connection with Jane Austen's brother Frank that brought one of Jane Austen's letters to the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Justice Story, novel reader and Austen devotee, was chided by his friend Chief Justice John Marshall for omitting Austen's name from a list of authors in a Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard. Nonetheless, Justice Story ensured that Jane Austen's novels were read by the Quincys, Harvard's first family. Through Admiral Wormeley's connection with her brother Frank, the Quincy sisters were given a letter that Jane wrote to her friend Martha Lloyd in November 1800: Martha (1765-1843) became Sir Francis Austen's second wife in 1828. This letter (No. 26 in Chapman's *Jane Austen's Letters* and in Deirdre Le Faye's *Jane Austen's Letters*), is dated "Wednesday 12—Thursday 13 November 1800" and was "given by [Francis Austen] to Miss Eliza Susan Quincy of Boston, Mass., in 1852" (Le Faye 371). This early letter from Jane Austen to Martha Lloyd, together with others written by Eliza Susan Quincy, Admiral Sir Francis Austen, and James Edward Austen-Leigh, is now in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

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Jane Austen described her writing as like trying to 'write with a fine brush on a bit (not two inches wide) of ivory as produced little effect after much labour' - it is such a self-deprecating quote and yet her writing reveals that every word is written with care and every word is written to have impact. She understood that creating a good story with great characters was all that really mattered and she succeeds with *Persuasion* in every chapter. *Persuasion* is a novel with everything and I hope you try to find the time to read it. The Assembly Rooms, Bath - Jane Austen's *Persuas...* Jane Austen was able to see through all of this excess and bluster and write realistic stories inhabited by the people living during that era. In partnership with the Tsongas Industrial History Center, we will explore the intersections of environmental history, science, and engineering. Chad Montrie, Professor See our calendar for all events. Like so many good

stories here at the Historical Society, it began with a reference question. Jeremy Belknap, hunting through his sources, asked Vice President John Adams for some help. Belknap, the Jane Austen (1775-1817) was the seventh of eight children born to respectable, middle class Parents. Her mother, Cassandra Leigh Austen (1739-1827) had family connections to a Duke as well as Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh Abbey. Her father, the Reverend George Austen (1731-1805) was known as "The Handsome Proctor" of St. Jo. The Reverend George and Mrs. Austen: A closer look at Jane Austen's Parents. Jane Austen (1775-1817) was the seventh of eight children born to respectable, middle class Parents. Her mother, Cassandra Leigh Austen (1739-1827) had family connections to a Duke as well as Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh Abbey. Her father, the Reverend George Austen (1731-1805) was known as "The Handsome Proctor" of St. John's College, Oxford.