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Jane Austen Sets Theme for the Historic Odessa Foundation's Christmas Holiday Tours



ODESSA, DE – December 2008 – Step back in time this holiday season to the Georgian world of Jane Austen and the enthralling yuletide customs evoked from her famous novels in scenes and vignettes that will come to life in the Historic Houses of Odessa's newly restored Corbit-Sharp House, as part of the Historic Odessa Foundation's 2008 Christmas Holiday Tours.

From Nov. 28 through Dec. 31, this year's 2008 Christmas Holiday Tours, organized by the nonprofit Historic Odessa Foundation will feature:

- **“A Jane Austen Christmas: Vignettes of Customs and Traditions,”** which will set the Corbit-Sharp House as the stage for holiday recreations as inspired by the writings of Jane Austen
- **“Family Trees Exhibit,”** a display of Christmas trees showcasing books and works of children's literature in the Brick Hotel
- **“School and Family Holiday Tours,”** includes special tours and holiday craft making; reservations required
- **“Historic Odessa Foundation Dollhouse Collection,”** a magical collection of dollhouses dating back from 1910 to 1980, on display in the Wilson-Warner House
- **NEW “Scrap Ornament and Dollhouse Collections,”** a new addition to the Holiday Tours includes a magical collection of 19th century dolls and Victorian scrap ornaments
- **“44th Annual Christmas in Odessa,”** Saturday, Dec. 6, 2008

For the past 20 years, the Historic Houses of Odessa, an enclave of 18th and 19th century structures located in the village of Odessa, Del, has been the setting for interpretive scenes from classic literature every holiday season. Each year the literary theme is different and never repeated and this year's theme, **A Jane Austen Christmas**, will see the era appropriate, Georgian style Corbit-Sharp House transformed into a scene right out of one of Jane Austen's novels complete with games and charades, a Twelfth Night Ball, a sumptuous Christmas dinner, children's holiday preparations, and the kitchen's overwhelming preparations.

“Jane Austen is a beloved and renowned novelist,” says Brian Miller, Historic Odessa Foundation's assistant curator (and Middletown High School art teacher). “Many are familiar with the novels and film adaptations of her work such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Sense and Sensibility*.” Austen is known for her realism and her witty commentary on society.

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“This year’s theme was inspired by Austen’s novels, which take place in the same era as that of the Historic Houses of Odessa. The Christmas season in Georgian England was a festive time of the year to divert one’s attention from the cold and dark months of winter. The Historic Odessa Foundation welcomes everyone to experience a house thrown open at Christmas with unusual hospitality,” says Miller.

Other delightful events that coincide with the Jane Austen Christmas include an **18th century Children’s Christmas Tea** on Dec. 14 at 11 a.m. and **Festive Foods of the 18th century** on display in the Collins-Sharp House. Also, to kick off the holiday season, the Historic Houses of Odessa will be hosting a **Wreath Making Workshop and Christmas Tree Lighting** on Nov.29 from 1-5 p.m.

Keeping in the spirit of celebrating literature and a love of reading, the **Family Trees Exhibit**, in the Brick Hotel (c. 1822) will showcase up to 40 trees designed and decorated by families and organizations with themes inspired by their favorite children’s book. Families are also invited to take part in **Story-Time Saturdays** which takes place on November 29, December 13, 20, and 27.

As a special addition to this year’s tour, visitors will be able to view a magical collection of children’s toys, which includes the private doll collection of Mary Cowgill Barnard Richards. The unique exhibit, **Adventures in Toyland: 19th Century Dolls and Other Playthings**, will be on display in the Wilson-Warner House, appropriately beside the popular **Dollhouse Collection**. Also, visitors will have a unique opportunity to view the historic **Scraps of Christmas Past**. This collection will showcase the museum’s Victorian Christmas scrap ornament collection which are usually displayed on a tree, but can now be viewed up-close.

In addition to the Historic Odessa Foundation’s season-long Christmas Holiday Tours, the 44th annual **Christmas in Odessa**, organized by the Odessa Women’s Club and featuring eight beautifully decorated, traditional and contemporary private homes, will be open for tours on Saturday, Dec. 6, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Christmas in Odessa tours will also include all the Historic Houses of Odessa and will feature a Christmas craft sale, antique sale and seasonal, fresh cut greens sale in the Odessa Fire Hall; ongoing refreshments, concerts and activities will fill the day. Profits from the one-day event will benefit local students for college scholarships, the local library and educational activities. For more information on Christmas in Odessa, call 302-378-4900 or visit www.christmasinodessa.com.

For information on the **Historic Odessa Foundation’s Christmas Holiday Tours** call 302-378-4119, or visit www.historicodessa.org. Admission to the Historic Odessa Foundation holiday tours include \$10 for adults; \$8 for groups, seniors and students; \$3 for children five to 11, children under 5 are free.

Open from March through December, Thursday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 4 p.m., the Historic Odessa Foundation offers tours to the public, families, groups and schools of its landmark properties that house the foundation’s collection of more than 4000 objects and furnishings that span an interpretive period in regional decorative arts from 1760 through 1850 and provide a backdrop for a variety of educational programs for schools that include 18th Century Cooking, the Apprenticeship System and 18th Century School Days among others.

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The Historic Houses of Odessa is an enclave of 18th and 19th century structures located in the village of Odessa, Del. between the Appoquinimink River and U.S. Route 13. The historic buildings along with a well-documented collection of more than 4000 objects and furnishings are owned and operated by the nonprofit Historic Odessa Foundation, and offer a unique picture of Delaware’s colonial period in a rural village that played a vital part in America’s commercial history. For information on the Historic Houses of Odessa, public tours of the properties, and the foundation’s Living History Education program, call 302-378-4119, or visit www.historicodessa.org