

# Alice in Jamesland



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著者:Gunter, Susan E.

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"Alice in Jamesland", the first biography of Alice Howe Gibbens James - wife of the psychologist and philosopher William James, and sister-in-law of novelist Henry James - was made possible by the rediscovery of hundreds of her letters and papers thought to be destroyed in the 1960s. Encompassing European travel, Civil War profiteering, suicide, a stormy courtship, seances, psychedelic mushrooms, the death of a child, and an enduring love story, "Alice in Jamesland" is a portrait of a nineteenth-century upper-middle-class marriage, told often through Alice's own letters and made all the more dynamic because of her role in the James family. Susan E. Gunter positions Alice as a lens through which to view the family, as a perceptive observer privy to knowledge of relationships to which those outside the James family were not. She also portrays Alice as the cohesive factor that held the Jameses together, bridging the gap between brothers William and Henry and acting as the stable centre for a highly gifted but eccentric family. An idealistic, serious young woman, Alice was uniquely suited to join this clan, bringing psychological soundness and unshakeable personal conviction to her union with the Jameses. Her life's story provides a fascinating view of one of America's most important intellectual dynasties and offers new insights into the lives of nineteenth-century women.

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