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Author Elizabeth Osta heads back to her house after working in her writing cabin that is located behind her Pittsford home. / SHAWN DOWD staff photographer

Sometimes the journey of self-discovery can be the most challenging. For Pittsford Author Elizabeth Osta, the journey to her first novel, *Jeremiah's Hunger*, involved several trips to Ireland, her ancestral land, to learn her family history. It also required developing the resolve to confront a book idea which stuck with her for decades; and writing a heart-felt novel through the ordeal of breast cancer treatments.



Written by **GARY McLENDON** Staff writer

Osta, a former special education teacher, and central office administrator who retired in 2001 from Rochester City School District after 26 years, was also the principal of St. Micheal's and Corpus Christi schools.

Osta said she loved writing as a young adult but an episode with a teacher who accused of plagerizing a paper — she said because the professor did not believe she could write so well — put her off writing for a time.

That began to change in 1989, when she visited *Writers and Books* and met mentor Finvola Drury.

“One of the first things she did was say to me, ‘You’re a fine writer’ and, ‘Only you can tell your story,’” Osta said.

Her story evolved after a trip to Ireland in 1994 where she discovered a photograph of her grandmother’s home town. She also discovered her great-grandfather, Jeremiah Buckley, was married in 1859 — 12 years after the worst of the killer potato famine in 1847.

“What were they living through?” she said she thought. The discoveries peaked her interest.

She said she learned about the Fenians who “caught my heart.”

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"In 1848 they launched a rising rebellion in a cabbage patch in Ballingarry. These guys changed the course of Irish history," she said.

After starting to write the book in 2003, she went back to Ireland in June 2008 for more book research. Two days after returning home, she said: "I had a mammogram and they told me I had breast cancer."

After learning that she had breast cancer, Osta said she thought: "What's going to happen to my book?"

Her writing slowed as the cancer treatments increased, but at 2 a.m. Oct. 2, 2010 Osta said she wrote the last word of the book with tears running down her face.

"It was great relief that's why the tears came," she said.

Osta's said she is back to good health, and her book launch was held at the Pluta Cancer Center, which she credits with her recovery. A portion of the proceeds of the sale of the book are going to Pluta.

Copies are available at Writers & Books; Irish Imports at the Marketplace and Greece Ridge malls; Walker's Celtic Jewelry; Wegman's in Perinton, and Liftbridge Book in Brockport.

Jeremiah's Hunger tells a universal story of survival, Osta said.

"It's a story of how people overcome adversity, and do it in a way that's loving and courageous," Osta said. "It's a sacred work. It was a holy story. They are stories that need to be told and need to be revered."

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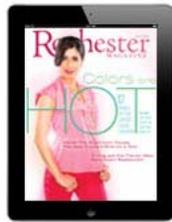
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