

Professor Bob Patten's new book "Dickens, Death and Christmas" takes a close look at the Christmas books of the 1840s and how they deal with issues that surface again in the novels, including "David Copperfield."

The book is an all-inclusive look at everything pertaining to Dickens, his life and his time, entertainingly told and lavishly illustrated. Available from OUP with a discount code, it is bit pricey now, with the option to wait until a paperback is issued.



Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

The Philadelphia Branch of The Dickens Fellowship

January Meeting

The Hero's Journey Continues

CHAPTERS 21-30

TRADDLES, & STEERFORTH

Bob Sloan

MICAWBER & HEEP

Jerry DeMenna & Ronni Scutaro

Saturday, January 20, 2024

We meet at

Cavanaugh's Head House Square

2nd & Pine Streets, Philadelphia

Lunch at noon with meeting to follow at 12:30 pm

Or join us via Zoom (link TBA)

Visit our website: dickens/phila.org

or on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550771992278&mibextid=LQQJ4d>

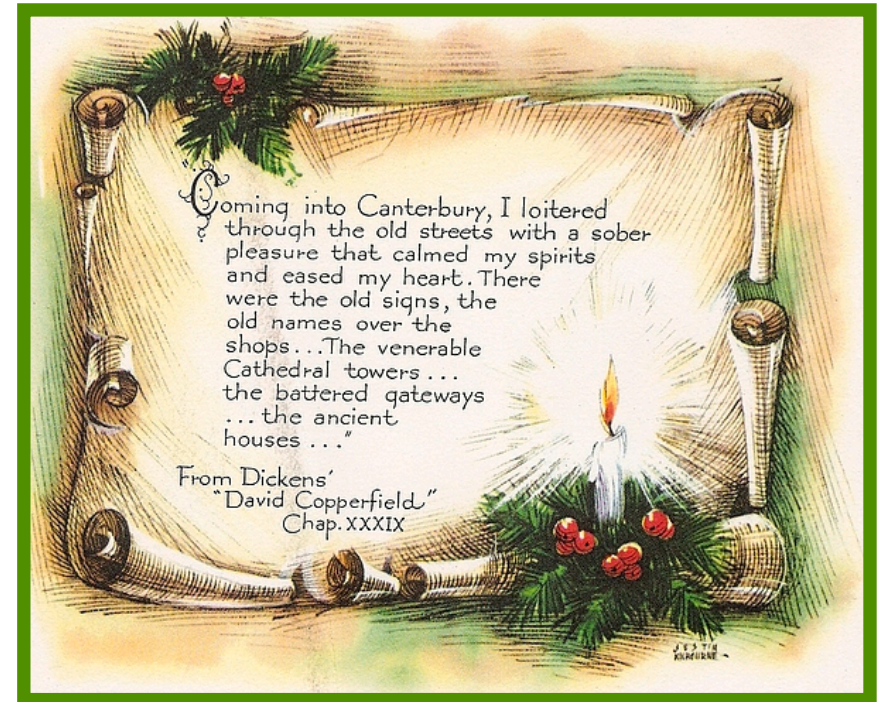
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The Buzfuz Bulletin

Monthly Bulletin of the Philadelphia Branch of
The Dickens Fellowship

Volume 76 December 2023 number 4



Charles Dickens never lived in Canterbury but visited the city regularly and knew it intimately. In *David Copperfield*, his most autobiographical novel, he used many Canterbury locations and buildings, blending and fictionalizing them to suit his purpose.

From this first visit David remembers 'the sunny streets of Canterbury, dozing as it were in the hot light; and with the sight of its old houses and gateways, and the stately, grey Cathedral.'

Later, Canterbury is where Betsy sends David to school, where he encounters the ostensibly 'umble but actually ruthlessly scheming and ambitious Uriah Heep, and where he is reacquainted with the penniless Micawber.

Our December Dickens Christmas Meeting

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the last Christmas of Charles Dickens's childhood in 1823. That's because just two months later his father was arrested for debt and was sent to prison. The twelve year old Dickens was sent to work in a blacking factory, an event he held in his heart, telling no one, but sharing it with the world disguised in his fictional account of David Copperfield's life. The secret ended with his life in 1870 when his best friend, John Forster, revealed it to the world in the first Dickens's biography.

Uplifting the meeting's mood, we began the day's program with an entertaining talk titled "Edwin Drood Revisited: Musically Speaking" presented by Joyce Kunkle who spoke about the songs and the highlights from the staged Drood musical. She embellished her talk by sharing beautiful enlarged photographs from the show as well as from the Kentish locale where the story is set and where Dickens lived.

Christmas in the Novels: From Pickwick to Drood

On assessing Dickens's penchant for including Christmas scenes in his novels one must look at the comparison between the beginning and the end.



In her introduction to the day's featured program, Pat Vinci noted how ironic it was to be focusing on the end of Dickens's artistic life by discussing Edwin Drood at our Christmas meeting. Tracing a definite pattern in Dickens's life one can see its beginning when he wrote his first novel - Pickwick - and repeated itself when he wrote his last, Drood!

Considering the only three Dickens novels in which Christmas is set - The Pickwick Papers, Great Expectations and The Mystery of Edwin Drood - a convergence of the tones of these Christmas scenes reflect periods of change and evolution in the author's life.

Christmas Day in Cloisterham

Contributing to the day's program, Ronni Scutaro offered a dramatic reading of the descriptive passages of the dark and stormy night that hit the area on Christmas Eve. The townspeople are all out to observe the damage on Christmas Day when they learn from Jasper that Edwin Drood is missing and the forever-unsolved mystery begins.

Christmas Dinner in Great Expectations



"A Tension-filled Christmas Feast"

A light-hearted wrap up to the program was provided by Jessie Oldham's expert reading of the hilarious Christmas dinner scene in Great Expectations. The Gargery's are experiencing the same old boring Christmas as every year, with little action but the back-and-forth of dialogue about pigs, church, children, and gratitude; Pip's clutching the table leg in terror every time he thinks the missing food will be discovered; Joe's serving him more gravy; and references to fugitives with iron on their legs; all work to create emotional action.

The Latest Buzz ...

Bob Sloan was sorry to report the passing of Joe Duffy, a 20 year member of our branch, who faithfully attended meetings with his wife, Clara. Our sincere condolences go out to her and their family.

Our thanks go to Ronni and Jerry for the tech that makes our hybrid meetings possible and for the desserts they bring to make every meeting sweet. e.g. festive plum pudding and pastries from their favorite bakery!

Su Quinn of FODNY invited members of our branch to join them for a Dickens birthday dinner on February 7th at the Penn Club in Manhattan. Guest Speaker is Lillian Nader. Please contact Su if you are interested in attending. Email: suyapaquinn@me.com