

# A Twist of Dickens



Newsletter of the Cleveland Branch  
International Dickens Fellowship

[www.clevelanddickensfellowship.org](http://www.clevelanddickensfellowship.org)

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## Meeting Schedule

2021-2022 Book of the Year:  
*American Notes*

Meetings, free and open to all admirers of Charles Dickens, begin at 7:00 pm.

**We will meet via Zoom until we feel comfortable meeting indoors. Please watch your email for the Zoom link to a specific meeting, or the news that we will meet at the library.**

Thurs. Jan. 13. Zoom. Peggy Smith tells us about a new biography of Poe and his relationship with Dickens in America.

Thurs. Feb. 10. Zoom. Bill Owen looks at means of transport (trains, boats, coaches, etc.) Dickens used in America.

Thurs. March 9. Will we Zoom? Watch the *etwist* for venue. Paul Siedel discusses Dickens's great pal Wilkie Collins, and Collins's *Woman in White* which first appeared in Dickens's periodical *All the Year 'Round*.

Thurs. April 14. Anne Meissner gives us the fruits of her research on Georgina Hogarth, Catherine's sister, who managed the Dickens household from the trip of *American Notes* until after Charles's death.

Book of the Year for 2021-2022:  
*American Notes*

January 2022

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## Georgina recalls holidays at Gad's Hill

—from Arthur Adrian's

*Georgina Hogarth and the Dickens Circle.*

Of all the conviviality at Gad's Hill, Georgina enjoyed Christmas most. Then the house so overflowed that some of the men had to be quartered at the historic Falstaff Inn across the way or in 'the bachelors' cottage' nearby. Unwilling to miss the excitement of all the preparations, Dickens usually took the whole week off. Christmas morning the guests found the dining-room hung with holly and ivy. Later ...Mamie decorated the table for the main feast. Christmas dinner—it was unforgettable! Seated round the large mahogany table with the family were the house guests and a few near neighbours. With his ready humour the host sparked the conversation, keeping the servants in a titter whenever they waited on him. The climax of the meal was the entry of the flaming Christmas pudding. Holly-trimmed and resting on its special dish of repousse china, it was placed before the host to the accompaniment of spontaneous applause.

(Continued on p.2)

Model of Gad's Hill decorated for Christmas. This model is no longer available.



PENGUIN CLASSICS  
**FANNY TROLLOPE**  
**DOMESTIC MANNERS  
 OF THE AMERICANS**



**Captain Marryat. *Diary in America* 1839.** As a Tory he was highly critical of Americans, didn't approve of democracies. He also wrote novels, mostly sea stories.

*\*Info gleaned from Goldman and Whitley's intro to Penguin 1972 Edition of American Notes. -K. S.*

## Here was a market for a writer willing to travel!

During the period 1815-1860 fellow Brits published over 200 travel books about America. Dickens read many of them before he left England. Various axes were ground: democracy (pro and anti), labor relations (unionization), slavery (Brits loved *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), educational and penal reforms.

On our side of the pond, Americans ginned up support for owning their own literature, culture, etc., i.e., not borrowing from the old country. This, while they pirated British authors!

Many English authors came here out of curiosity, some to investigate trade, farming, government, the hardships of living in the wild. \* Here are a few.

(Left) **Frances Trollope. *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. 1832.**

At the age of 52, after six children, she faced up to her husband's inability to support them all and took on the job of making money. After some tries at business, mostly in Cincinnati, she wrote this book which sold like wildfire. She was tough on us, went after lack of education, culture, slavery and our inability to brook criticism. One critic says her later novels were more popular than Austen's or CD's.

(Right) **Captain Watson's *Travels in America*.** During 1814-1817, Watson visited and painted Boston, Philadelphia, and the Hudson River Valley. He's one of the founders of the Hudson River School of Art.



## Georgina's fond memories from Gad's Hill *(Cont'd from p. 1)*

And of course the dinner could not pass without Dickens's traditional toast: *'Here's to us all! God bless us!'* His Christmas benediction Georgina recorded for ever in her heart:

*Reflect upon your blessings—of which every man has many—not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some. Fill your glass again, with a merry face and contented heart. Our life on it, but your Christmas shall be merry and your New Year a happy one!*

*So may the New Year be a happy one to you, happy to many more whose happiness depends on you! So may each year be happier than the last, and not the meanest of our brethren or sisterhood debarred their rightful share in what our Creator formed for them to enjoy.*

*New Year's Eve brought another memorable observance. A large party always assembled in the drawing-room, passing the time with games and conversation until midnight. A few minutes before the hour struck, the butler played chimes on the dinner gong, threw open the house door, and ushered everyone into the large, square hall. With Dickens keeping an eye on his watch, there was a hushed wait for the village bells. At the first peal he exclaimed, 'A happy New Year to us all! God bless us!' What handshaking then, what congratulating, what kissing of the old year out and the new one in! The ensuing frolic always included a dance, the host sometimes starting off with the cook as his partner. After these exertions there was a great demand for lively draughts from the punch bowl mixed by Dickens himself.*

## Gretta Ryan expands on Dickens's rail against copyright laws.

Charles Dickens, not yet 30, disembarked in Boston on January 22, 1842, to an unprecedented welcome, Bozmania sweeping America. On February 2, at the first official dinner in his honor, his speech took to task the press as bowing to public opinion, and guests as conspirators in theft—piracy of his writings. The Boston Morning Post fired back, “You must drop this, Charlie, or you will be dished.” So began a public relations nightmare. As the press attacked him, the more vocal he became in his views. The press responded, calling him a “foreign, spoiled ingrate,” “a conceited, mercenary Cockney,” even ridiculing his appearance. The word “copyright” does not appear in *American Notes*, but it did figure emphatically in his

speeches. Letters to John Forster detailed growing animosity between Dickens and the press. Unauthorized sales of reprinted works, no royalties given, were rampant on both sides of the Pond. (Sir Walter Scott, Dickens's model novelist, died bankrupt.) Dickens referred to himself as “the world's biggest loser under the present laws.” He had been campaigning at home for protection of authors' rights and international copyright agreements, helping to found guilds and philanthropic ventures to assist artists and writers. In 1837, a copyright bill before Parliament failed, but by 1842, Britain recognized the writer as owner of his works until his death, later extended to 60 years beyond. Also in 1837, a copyright bill failed in the U.S. Congress, lobbied against by industries involved in making and selling books. By



Dickens saw his hard-earned flying away.

“gentleman's agreement,” the first to co-opt an author's work owned the rights. A landmark case in 1865, Sheldon (publisher) v. Houghton (printer), a lawsuit brought as their partnership dissolved, paved the way for change. Ironically, they battled over rights to a successful edition of Dickens's works. The judge ruled that neither party had rights, the verdict making way for the Chase Act of 1891, protecting foreign authors in the U.S. The Berne Convention, 1886, had guaranteed reciprocal rights to authors and artists in signatory countries; however, the U.S. didn't sign until 1988! Not surprisingly, *American Notes* was not well-received here, nor was *Martin Chuzzlewit* two years later. By his second trip, in 1867, Dickens had been forgiven. He had granted to an American publisher, in advance, the rights to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The readings he gave from his books drew tens of thousands of attendees. Though a triumph, the toll taken on his health possibly contributed to his death in 1870. *Drood* was left unfinished.



## Dickens writes his autobiography!

This author, Derwin Hope, takes a different approach to the life of Charles Dickens. Hope, a retired Judge who lives in Portsmouth, spent twenty-five years or more studying Dickens's letters, journals, articles, and documents to create this very personal autobiography.

The result is very informative and comfortable to read. Many of the things I knew about Dickens were strengthened by the information presented in the book.

I especially turned to sections about Nellie Ternan and how he treated Catherine, his wife, when they broke up.

In an interview with Novel Kicks, Mr. Hope talked about two issues Dickens had. One was about politics and Parliament. He called it “The Dust Heap of Westminster.” He later felt the same about American politics. The other was his judgment on newspapers in Britain and America. He said many of the newspapers were only fit to be used as water closet doormats.

It's a great book and I recommend it for all. *Charles Dickens—My Life*. Find it on Amazon for \$20. —Beth Bliss

A Twist of Dickens is published three times yearly by the Cleveland Dickens Fellowship. Coeditors: Beth Bliss, Kathleen Schuerger. For mail changes call Beth at 216-533-0813, email her at ebliss1967@gmail.com, or write to her address on page 4. Articles may be emailed to k.schuerger@outlook.com



### Micawber and Trotwood lead the way.

Great names for **Beth Bliss's** Scotties, no? Know anyone else's pets with Dickensian names?

**Kathy Broz** once had a cat named Huffam.

Barkis seems a natural name for a dog.

Put hanging ID tags on a pet and call him Mr. Jingle.

How about a hamster named Peggotty with a wheel in the cage? Onomatopoeia.

Or an animal named Heep, so you could call him by hanging out the back door doing a W. C. Fields imitation?

Submit your ideas to Beth. She started it. —K. S.



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### We search the new international website for treasures: [www.dickensfellowship.org](http://www.dickensfellowship.org)

**Beth Bliss** pioneered the treasure hunt. From "Home" (top toolbar), she chose "News," then, of the 3 categories pinned with the Dickens red flowers, "General interest," and from the 2 Gresham College lectures, she listened to Michael Slater's take on the last 10 years of CD's life.

See what more of us found.

**Bill Owen:** The new website makes it easy to see a list of all local branches worldwide and to link to the branch websites. Click on "About/Branches."

**Linda Ehrbar:** I found an interesting article entitled "My Lady Ludlow" in which the author (Dickens?) briefly describes (and complains about) changes in the traveling experience and in letter writing and the delivery of such, both of which are not the improvements they were supposed to be! "Letters, which once might be keep sakes, have become short jerky notes!" Sounds like texts to me! My path through the site: "Home," down to "More Dickens Resources," down to "Dickens Journals Online," to *Household Words*. Then XVIII, to page 1 of the journal.

**Ed Moritz:** On "Home," I clicked on "News," "General Interest," then down to *Bleak Health*. I am happy to see that *Bleak Health: A medical history of Charles Dickens and his family* by Nicholas Cambridge will be published in July 2022. I have been interested in the subject, including his penchant for cigars and booze, for many years. So, too, was Dickens himself.

**Anne Meissner:** "Home," to "Calendar." In October I found, "Serious Issues in American Notes," **Gretta Ryan**. And a recording: Emily Bell (ed. of *The Dickensian*), "Shadows in Dickens." In 2022, thanks to the website calendar postings and Zoom, Dickens Fellowship events will showcase on a world stage. We're not in Kansas anymore!

**Charla Coatoam:** Home page has a link to *The Dickensian* offering some free online issues. Subscribers receive login passwords and so I was able to search the Pro Quest database archive for a 1977 article about the famous Dolly Varden painting. This academic source of indexed back issues starting in 1905 is now available for all subscribers!