

The Buzfuz Bulletin

Monthly Bulletin of the Philadelphia Branch of
The Dickens Fellowship

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The Dickens Fellowship joined the Philadelphia celebration of Charles Dickens's Bicentenary by hosting a banquet in his honor on his actual birthday - Tuesday, February 7, 2012 - in the Azalea Room at the Omni Hotel Independence Park.

An early taste of spring time that day ushered forty-two enthusiastic attendees into the Dickens love fest for the long anticipated event. An elegant reception room graced with violets (for February) and lit candles, set in front of beautifully framed portraits (one of Dickens, and the other of the Fellowship's 1912 centenary banquet), were placed with the birthday cake on a table set up in front of a large plate glass window overlooking the Greek Revival Structure that housed the former Second Bank of The United States.

After a reception of served hors d'oeuvres and wine, the group gathered around the window for the customary Toast to The Immortal Memory, which President Pat Vinci proposed at Dickens's reported birth time (6:59 pm EST), while we looked out onto the same view, from the same spot that Dickens stayed on, while he was here in Philadelphia in 1842.

'Banquet' continued ...

A full course dinner was served in the elegant dining room which adjoined the reception area, and was interspersed with Aden Halpern's reading of a poem written by Kate Dickens Perugini as a tribute to her father. Since Aden shares a birth day with Dickens, we gifted him with a copy of "Charles Dickens and The Street Children of London". Before dessert was served, Dr. Jay Friedlin shared some moving words on The Master written by Dr. Earl McWilliams, a former president of our branch. "Happy Birthday" was then sung to 'Charles' in anticipation of our share in his birthday cake which was served with a trio of Sorbet and Seasonal Berries and was well worth waiting for!



Photo by Herb Moskowitz

The celebration was not restricted to Fellowship members or those who live in the Philadelphia area. Traveling from as far as Washington State, Terri Elders came in to participate in all of the Dickens Bicentenary activities being held in Philadelphia that week; member Jim Forsell from Chicago was here specifically to attend the banquet and to meet his Dickensian friends for the first time; Aetna Thompson, a long time member, drove in from Silver Springs, MD with her sister, Dona Wazen; Pat Molen and Tom Callister came in from Rockville Centre, NY. Last but not least, Rick Bravo, President of The Philadelphia Pickwick Club, attended with his wife Eleanor, in representation of the group's beloved founder, the late Cedric Dickens.

The evening may sound all too perfect, but I assure you that it was! It was bathed in the same moon glow from the full moon that lit up the sky in its Celestial Toast to The Immortal Memory of Charles Dickens on his 200th birthday and shone on Dickens lovers all over the planet.



Banquet Attendees

Gus & Janice Bader, Bob & Nancy Behr, Rick & Eleanor Bravo, Frank & Helen Cassidy, Chickie DiMartino, Joe & Clara Duffy, Carl & Ellie Dunn, Robert & Katherine Eaddy, Terri Elders, Jim Forsell, Jay & Joan Friedlin, Aden Halpern, Paul Halpern, Bernice Kaplan, Carl & Eleanor Kummer, Fred & Kim Kurz, Liz Logan, Jim LoGiudice, Carol Love, Patricia Molen, Thomas Callister, Herb Moskowitz, Joan Kane Nichols, Elizabeth Nork, Nina Pileggi, Joe & Betsy Rondinelli, Robert Sloan, Aetna Thompson, Sandy Tucker, Patricia Vinci, and Dona Wazen.

Our Aden Halpern has the honor of placing a wreath on the head of the bronze statue of Charles Dickens as they celebrate his 200th birthday in Clark Park Sunday, February 5, 2012 in Philadelphia.

(AP Photo/Alex Brandon)



Philadelphians stage a birthday party for Dickens

February 06, 2012 | By Anthony Campisi, Inquirer Staff Writer

[Excerpted from article]

“And around this statue, Philadelphians on Sunday sought to honor the author's coming 200th birthday with a party in his honor - complete with men dressed with bells on their legs doing traditional English dances.

West Philadelphians have celebrated Dickens' birthday since at least 1974, but emcee Frank Chance was impressed with Sunday's turnout.

This year, crowds packed the 270-seat auditorium at the adjoining University of the Sciences, where actors and fans read from passages of noted Dickens works, including *A Christmas Carol*, *David Copperfield*, and *The Pickwick Papers*.

And they were treated to period songs - including a rousing round of "Champagne Charlie," in which the protagonist earnestly explains that "champagne drinking is me game" - sung by David Jones, a London native with a real cockney accent who lives in North Jersey.

After the readings, everyone enjoyed period desserts, including a Victorian-era spice cake, and followed a procession of the Kingessing Morris Men - a group who practice a traditional English dance that involves banging sticks together - to the Dickens statue, where three children laid wreaths on top of the author's and Little Nell's heads.”

Congratulations to our mutual member Bob Behr, and the Friends of Clark Park, in receiving worldwide coverage of their annual Dickens birthday celebration. Their vigilant maintaining of the Statue, and their hard work in organizing this annual event over many years, has finally paid off! The Dickens Statue might now be part of the Philadelphia historical trail for many visiting tourists.

Why Philadelphia?

In 1912, newspapers reported that Philadelphia was said to be the largest Dickens centenary celebration in this country. Move forward a century and it appears history has repeated itself.

In addition to the festivities held in Clark Park for this bicentennial year, The Free Library of Philadelphia is practically shouting Dickens from its roof top with colorful banners adorning the outside facade. Their world class Dickens collection is on exhibit in the Rare Book Department, as well as an outstanding display on the man and his musings in the West Gallery of the Lobby. In addition, the Library is holding a series of monthly lectures in the Elkins Library throughout the first half of 2012.



Photo by Jim Forsell

Traveling to the Dickens Fellowship's Banquet on the evening February 7, Jim LoGiudice noticed the Fox News marquee in big running letters announcing “Philadelphia celebrates Charles Dickens 200th birthday today”. It wasn't quite the Empire State Building, but the TV station is located at 4th and Market Street and Charles Dickens passed right by this spot as his carriage turned that corner on the way to the United States Hotel on the evening of March 5, 1842.

Philadelphia continues, as it always has, to go all out for Charles Dickens. This is as it should be because brotherly love is what Dickens is all about!



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