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Guide to the Charles Dickens Collection 1843-1868



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.DICKENSC
Title	Dickens, Charles. Collection
Date	1843-1868
Size	0.25 linear feet (1 box)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	Charles John Huffman Dickens (1812-1870) author often regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. The collection contains correspondence and documents relating to the author. Included are three handwritten, autographed letters, an inscription, and a document for the registration of the copyright for a story, "The Chimes..."

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Dickens, Charles. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note

Charles John Huffman Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, England, to John and Elizabeth Dickens. Dickens was the second of eight children and described himself as a "not-over-particularly-taken-care-of boy" during his youth. He was briefly educated in a private school in Chatham, but ended his education when his family moved on account of his father's recall to the Navy Pay Office headquarters. In 1824, Dickens' father was forced into debtors' prison and was accompanied by his mother and youngest siblings, as was customary at the time. Dickens himself boarded with a family friend, Elizabeth Roylance. Dickens held a number of occupations as a young boy to help pay for his board and for his family, including working ten-hour days in a shoe blacking factory (which inspired the harsh working conditions often depicted in his writing) and later as a junior clerk in a law office. During this time he also went to the theater obsessively, following his favorite actor, Charles Mathews. In 1828, he left the law office to become a freelance reporter.

In 1832, a 20-year-old Dickens joined a theater troupe in search of fame. Unfortunately, because of an untimely sickness, he missed his first audition. Dickens abandoned acting to pursue a career as a writer and submitted his first short story, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," in 1833. Dickens had also continued his reporting, eventually occupying a position at the *Mirror of Parliament*, reporting on Parliamentary debates. This journalism, reworked as sketches in periodicals, formed his first collection, *Sketches by Boz*, in 1836. The success of this collection led publishers Chapman and Hall to commission a work by Dickens. The resulting story became *The Pickwick Papers*, which marked the beginning of Dickens' popularity. The final installment of the story sold 40,000 copies.

Dickens' success continued throughout his life, and followed him across the globe. Throughout the 1840s, Dickens travelled to the United States, Italy, and Switzerland, giving lectures and furthering his work. In 1846, at the urging of Angela Burdett Coutts, Dickens founded a home for unfortunate women which aided in their education and reformation into society. The 1850-60s saw the production of some of Dickens' most enduring works, including *Bleak House* (1853), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1861). During this time he was also the publisher, editor, and major contributor to the journals *Household Words* (1850-1859) and *All the Year Round* (1858-1870).

In 1868-1869, Dickens gave a series of "farewell readings" in England, Scotland, and Ireland. He collapsed on April 22, 1869, and on a doctor's advice, the tour was cancelled. Dickens regained his strength and rescheduled a final series of readings completed between January and March of 1870. Dickens died of a stroke on June 8, 1870, in his home. He was buried (against his final wishes) in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

Scope Note

The Charles Dickens Collection contains correspondence and documents relating to the author. Among the collection are three handwritten, autographed letters, one of which mentions the "prodigious success" of Dickens story *A Christmas Carol*. Also included is an inscription transferred from Dickens' personal copy of *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* by Washington Irving. The inscription is written on stationery from Gad's Hill Place, Dickens' country home from 1857 until his death. Finally, the collection also included a completed application form by Dickens and Frederick Mullett Evans (1804-1870, an English publisher) to register their proprietorship of the copyright for "The Chimes, a goblin story of some bells that rang an old year out and a new year in." All items are dated (1843 – 1868) and are arranged in chronological order.

The collection was previously part of the *Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection*.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/scrc/findingaids/topics.php>

Subject Headings

- Dickens, Charles, 1812-1870
- Evans, Frederick Mullett
-

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Charles Dickens to Frederick, London, December 30, 1843

- Autograph letter signed. Dickens writes that the "Carol is a prodigious success."

Box 1

Folder 1

Document: Application for Registration of Proprietorship of Copyright for "The Chimes", December 16, 1844

- Autograph document. Completed application form by Dickens and Frederick Mullett Evans to register that they are the proprietors of the copyright of "The Chimes, a goblin story of some bells that rang an old year out and a new year in."

Box 1

Folder 1

Letter: Charles Dickens to unknown person [may be addressed to Albert K. Rollit, Esquire], Kent, April 9, 1863.

- The letter was laid into the volume by Dickens, A Christmas carol, in prose. Being a ghost story of Christmas. With illustrations by John Leech. London: Chapman & Hall, 1843. PR4572.C55 1843 c.2 Rege.

Box 1

Folder 1

Charles Dickens to Mr. Holsworth, Higham by Rochester, Kent, January 19, 1865

- Autograph letter. Dickens signed the letter with his initials. He writes that he will return a volume of Prospective Review to Mr. Edmonds.

Box 1

Folder 1

Inscription: Gad's Hill Place, Higham by Rochester, Kent England, July 20, 1868

- Transferred from Dickens's personal copy of Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus / by Washington Irving, call # alc E123.I701 Rare
- Autograph inscription signed. On stationery from Gad's Hill Place.