

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE RIVERSIDE DICKENS FESTIVAL



Dickens Diary is published four times a year by the Riverside Dickens Festival, Inc., at the address below. Editorial submissions and queries may be sent there. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

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For more information on the Festival visit our website today!
www.dickensfest.com

This is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization,
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President's Message

Happy Fall Everyone!

It won't be long until the 30th anniversary of Dickens Fest in 2023! We hope you and yours are as excited as we are. Our theme for our next season is, "The Pickwick Papers." The board of directors have been busy planning all the fantastic festivities for the fall/winter season as we gear up fundraising for the big February Fest.

October comes with fall leaves and big breezes, but best of all, the Dickens Fest Halloween Fundraiser. This year we're trying something new by hosting a Murder Mystery Cocktail night with some of your favorite authors involved in our original whodunit, "The Plot Thickens."

Join us Saturday, October 15th at the 1st Congregational Church Basement for an evening mystery and MURDER...

Appearances by Travis Wilson as Edgar Allen Poe, Thomas Moore as Nikola Tesla, Erin Flynn as Mary Shelley and many more. All proceeds go towards the upcoming festival so please get your tickets on eventbrite.



Shanna Lovette
Dickens Fest President



Art & Writing Contest

Every journey has a beginning, and for the literary career of Charles Dickens it was *The Pickwick Papers*. *The Pickwick Papers* acts as a creative bridge between the Regency Era and Victorian Times.

Using the theme of Journeys and Discoveries, explore how the world changed from these two eras. Topics may include, but are not limited to: visual arts, performing arts, food and culinary arts, literature of all kinds and genres, customs and cultures, fashion, lifestyles or any associated or relevant topics related to the theme of Journeys and Discoveries.



Submissions will be accepted from established scholars, students at all levels and those who are specialists in their fields. Abstracts should be no longer than 500 words in length and are due no later than January 1, 2023.

Please send all submissions to pjacques@craftonhills.edu.



Our volunteers are Indispensable!

As an all-volunteer nonprofit organization we need your help. If you have an interest, lots of energy, a talent or skill and some time to give, we need you.

If you want to help with the planning committees and/or with the various activities during the festival, please contact us NOW!

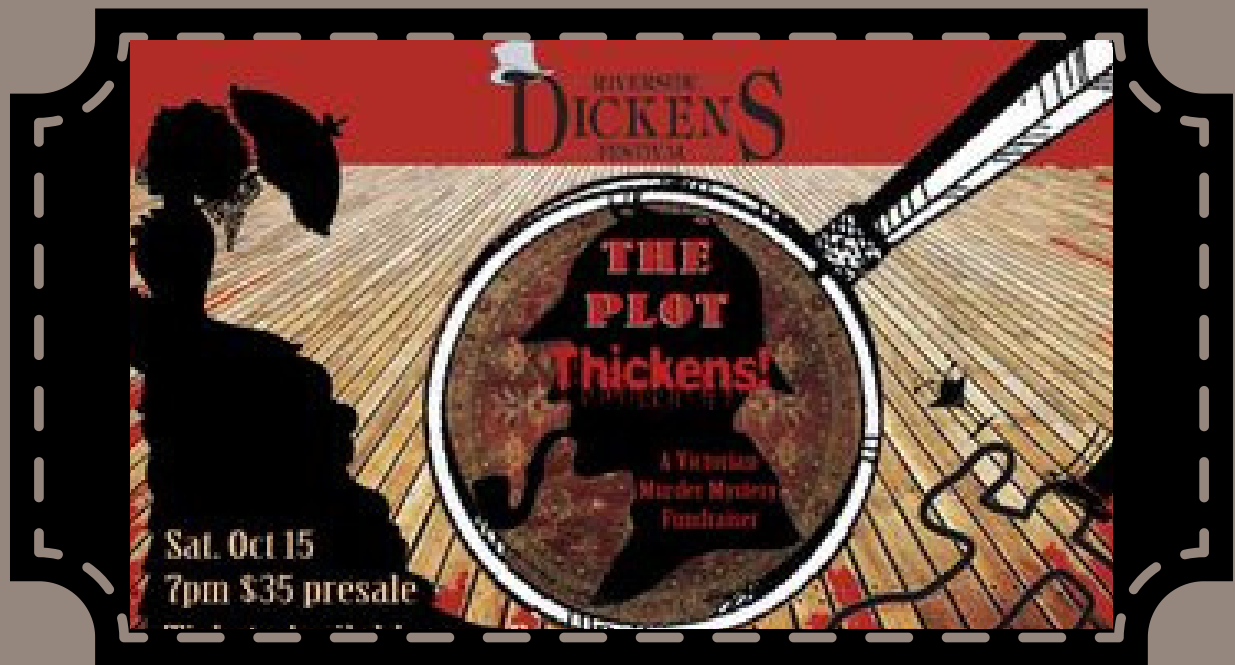
Contact us on our website at www.dickensfest.com or call and leave a message at (951) 781-3168.

THE PLOT THICKENS!

Ladies and gentlemen,

You are cordially invited to attend Lord Birmingham,
at the first annual Birmingham Publishing's Authors' Gala.

To take place at 7pm the evening of
October 15th, 2022 .



Join us for an evening spent mingling with all your favorite
writers, but remember no party is complete without a little

MURDER.

Can you find out who did it before the evening is through?

\$35 Tickets available on eventbrite

Victorian Spooky Season: Halloween traditions



The people of the Victorian era loved social gatherings; Halloween parties were no exception. Queen Victoria hosted lavish events at Balmoral Castle, her part-time home in Scotland. The anticipation and level of preparation that went into this event were parallel to that of Christmas. In 1877, the Queen wrote about one of these special nights in her diary. The entry detailed how she had hurried back from a drive to be in time for the parade. Her daughter, Princess Louise, walked at the side of her carriage carrying a torch looking at the Queen ‘like one of the witches in Macbeth’. Queen Victoria and her family became so connected to the festivities at Balmoral that the occasion became dubbed the Queen’s Halloween.



Parlor games were thought to have some insight into a person’s future and were immensely popular during this time. One of the more prominent games involved a woman standing in front of a mirror, peeling an apple in a dark room. The hope was to see the reflection of the person they would marry. If they were to see a skeleton, this meant that they were to die alone. A good costume could get the eyes of a suitor firmly upon you, and making sure you wore an acceptable outfit was highly important. Bats, witches, cats, and devils were the favored choices. Altered dresses became costumes, while Men customized their regular apparel with gothic-style accessories to become anything they wished.



Though now accustomed to carving pumpkins at Halloween, etching ghoulish faces into turnips was more common practice (at least in Ireland and other Celtic nations). The belief is that between October 31st and November 1st, the veil between life and death is at its narrowest, thus allowing spirits to roam freely between both realms. Extremely fearful that they would encounter monsters, demons, or evil spirits, they looked for something that could offer protection. People began carving faces into root vegetables, particularly turnips, but in some cases, potatoes, radishes, and beets. The turnip was hollowed out to allow a lit candle to lay inside. The spooky carvings were left outside their homes or carried as lanterns believing it offered protection from harm or at least a light that could cut through their dark surroundings.



Author Spotlight: Edgar Allan Poe

Poe's Ghost

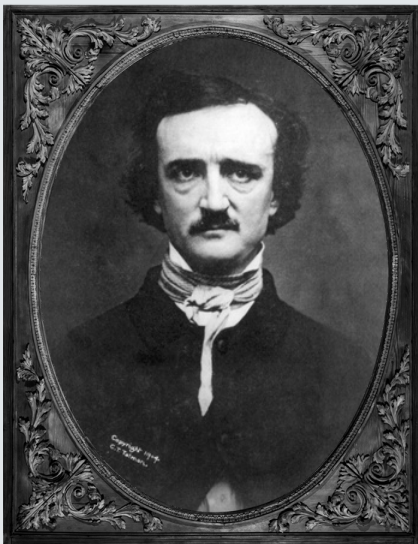
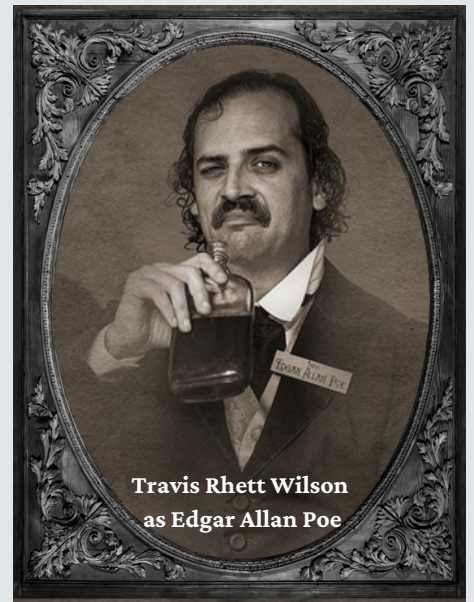
Written by Travis Rhett Wilson

Master of The Macabre. A fitting title for Edgar Allan Poe, no doubt, and always in season, given the contemporary reader's obsession with the more gruesome side of the human condition. Halloween, naturally serves as the preferred month for a celebration of his explorations into his tales of terror. Also, do not forget that Poe died in October.

Yet, most are unaware that horror makes up only a small portion of Poe's vast body of work. Of more than sixty short stories, less than a third of them were horror. If asked today, Poe would perhaps wish to be celebrated more for his abilities as a poet than as an author, though the pride Poe possessed in his works of fiction would most assuredly have been immense.

His most famous three works, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Raven* and *Annabelle Lee* are regarded by many as his horror-triad. It is, however, the short story *William Wilson*, that serves as his most autobiographical work. Wilson is a shadowy figure who quarrels with his guardians and leads a life of debauchery and solitude, driving away all of his loved ones. This leads to Wilson succumbing to a tragic fate at the end of the story. (No more spoilers. READ IT). Numerous parallels exist within its pages, such as Wilson attending the same boarding school in England as Poe, and even having a school master with the same name. Yet it is the theme of self-destruction resulting from alcohol addiction illustrated in this story as well as such stories as *The Black Cat*, *The Imp of The Perverse* and even the lighthearted *Angel of The Odd* that is frequently cited by Poe scholars as the reader's most vivid glimpse into his inner struggles.

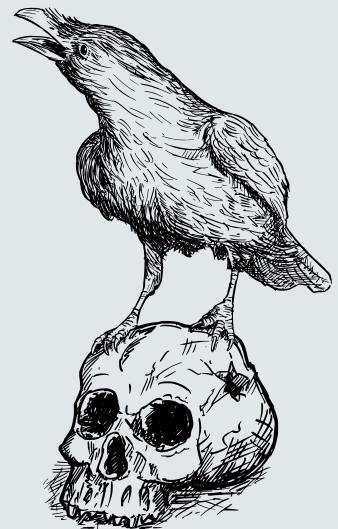
Whatever the circumstances by which Poe attained his inspiration, there is little argument even among his harshest critics that Poe's thumb-print is still very much visible within nearly all aspects of horror and Gothic fiction. Even the circumstances of his death remain a mystery. That said, the "Ghost of Poe" will continue to remain very much alive within the dark and imaginative minds of generations of fascinated young readers.



Happy Halloween and Pleasant Nightmares

TRW

The Inland Empire's Edgar Allan Poe



Literary Corner: Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*



Glimpse into the characters

Narrator:

The narrator is unreliable. Meaning a narrator whose credibility is compromised. He is aware of his insane thoughts and yet justifies them as sane because he can still strategize and think intelligently. His guilt becomes his undoing.

Old Man:

What we know of him is based on what the narrator tells us. He seems to be on good terms with the narrator and is, by all means, a good person. However, he has one ugly looking pale eye and that creates a problem in the mind of the narrator.

Neighbor:

Hears the old man shriek in the night. Suspecting foul play the neighbor contacts the police to lodge a report. Is a mentioned character but never appears in the story.

Policemen:

The men are jovial and are easily deceived by the narrator's calm demeanor. They are without suspicion of foul play till the narrator shouts out his confession.

The Tell-Tale Heart is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe first published in 1843.

The story follows an unnamed, unreliable narrator who insists on his sanity after murdering an old man with a "vulture eye". This carefully calculated murder, results in our narrator cutting the old man's body into pieces and hiding them underneath the floor. Ultimately the narrator's guilt manifests itself into hallucinations that the man's heart is still beating under his floorboards.



How Thanksgiving came to be: Victorian America

Decrees of thanksgiving were frequent in the times of early America. These were days of prayer and focusing gratitude to God for reasons such as a military victory, ending of a drought, or good weather leading to a bountiful harvest season. President Washington was the first to issue a nationally designated thanksgiving Day on October 3, 1789, and once again declared a day of thanksgiving in 1795. In 1815 President Madison declared two national days of thanksgiving with neither day resulting in autumn. The day we have now come to associate Thanksgiving with was in thanks to President Lincoln. His 1863 proclamation declared Thanksgiving to be celebrated as a national holiday, collectively on the last Thursday of November.

And no Thanksgiving dinner is complete without a delicious pumpkin pie for dessert...

Why not try a Victorian recipe to put a new spin on your family's get together.



Pumpkin Pie.—To two cups of stewed pumpkin add one cup of rich sweet milk, half a cup of New Orleans molasses, half a cup of granulated sugar, one tablespoonful of melted butter, one tablespoonful of ginger, one even teaspoonful of salt, and two eggs beaten very light. Stir well together, line a deep tin pie pan with paste rolled moderately thick, sift a little flour evenly over the bottom, and fill about three quarters full with the prepared mixture. Bake until the pie is brown in the center, serve cool or cold. The quality of pumpkin pie depends largely upon the manner of cooking the pumpkin. In preparing the pumpkin use very little water. Cover the kettle, in which it is cooking, closely, and stew until the pumpkin is perfectly soft, then remove the cover and continue the stewing, stirring frequently until the moisture evaporates and the pumpkin becomes a smooth paste. Rub through a fine sieve and use for filling the pie crust or paste.

This recipe comes from “The Art of Cookery: A Manual for Home and Schools” by Emma P Ewing, copyright 1896.

Newer copies of this cookbook can be found on amazon. (instructions on cooking times from Kendra Nordin Kitchen Report)

2 cups stewed pumpkin purée

**1 cup rich sweet milk
(sweet condensed milk)**

1/2 cup molasses

1/2 cup sugar

1 tablespoon melted butter

1 tablespoon ginger

1 teaspoon salt

2 eggs, beaten lightly

(start the oven at 425 degrees F. for 10 minutes, then reduce the heat to 325 degrees F. and bake for 45 minutes. When a knife inserted near the center comes out clean, it is done. Cool on wire rack for 2 hours. Serve immediately or refrigerate.)

A Perfect Day to try something new!

Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901 forever changed the way that people celebrated Christmas in Britain and the United States. When an illustration of the royal family's Christmas celebrations was published in 1848, the world was immediately inspired to adopt similar traditions for themselves. Though carols originally used to be written and sung for all seasons only the tradition of singing them at Christmas has survived. The Christmas carol is one of the lasting Christmas traditions attributed to Victorian England with many of the carols we are familiar with today originating during this time period.



December 20th, 2023 is the perfect day to try something new and possibly create a new tradition for you and your family.

Here are a few ways you can celebrate:

1) Look up lyrics to a new carol! Be it a modern composition, or an old classic, look up the lyrics of a carol and sing along to it around the house or your neighborhood.

2) As the name of the holiday suggests, go caroling! Gather your friends and family and get your sing on. Sing all the Christmas songs you sang growing up.

3) Host a carol party! If you have a musical instrument in your house, be it a guitar or a keyboard, host a party at your place and sing along to your favorite carols.



If you've never gone out caroling before, here are a few tips to get started:

1. Plan early to set a time that works for everyone.
2. Build your caroling song list, make sure everyone knows the lyrics!
3. Plan out your caroling route and which neighborhoods to cover.

Prince Albert and the Christmas Tree

By Richard Rasner

When Queen Victoria married her consort, Prince Albert, she brought not just a German into Windsor Castle; but a healthy bit of his family traditions. The origins of decorated evergreen trees date well back to medieval Germany (then known as Prussia). Albert had a true boyhood love for them and brought the tradition to England. The Queen Mum (Good Queen Charlotte, the German wife of George III) proposed the idea to the Palace some years before in 1800, but in 1848 Christmas trees became a full-blown phenomenon. Prince Albert sent decorated trees to schools and Army barracks around town. The populace, eager to emulate the Crown as always, quickly followed the trend. An 1848 woodcut of the Royal Family decorating the tree in Windsor Castle (see inset) also solidified the tradition of decorating the tree on Christmas Eve as a family-friendly event. Mostly relegated to the middle and upper-class, Christmas trees nevertheless found their way to the people ; by way of cities and shires putting up trees in the center of the town marketplaces.



By far, the fir tree is the most popular; and was chosen for Windsor Castle. However, spruce, pine, and other evergreen trees often were used as what one could find and afford. Lit candles, gingerbread, handmade ornaments, and garlands made using dried cranberries strung on a thread; were used to decorate the tree. Ornaments varied from apples and oranges studded with cloves to multi-colored paper roses, wafers, gold foil, sweets, and more. In fact, the ever-popular German candy cane originated in Christmas Eve church traditions and was a natural decoration for such a tree. An Angel was the most popular tree topper, with a small percentage opting for a star or baby Jesus instead.

Several other Germanic holiday traditions, such as the placing of stockings or boots on the hearth, are also attributed to Prince Albert. Others, like "the Christmas Pickle, " originated in America by German immigrants; but never took hold in the British Empire. With that said, when you celebrate Christmas this year, maybe take a moment to stop and ponder how different our holiday traditions would be had the Queen say, married an Icelandic prince (giant Yule cat, anyone?)

