

THE ANNUAL CHARLES DICKENS CHRISTMAS FAIR

*A series of festive memoirs, and drawings
From the 21st century, of a fantasized 19th*

From Thanksgiving weekend to the weekend before Christmas is the annual *Charles Dickens Christmas Fair*, held at the **Cow Palace** in **Daly City** across a street from the border of **San Francisco**. A 19th century **England** anachronistically setup to be a fantasy **London** diorama the public can interact within. An irresistible opportunity to indulge in a romanticized old world, as a play anyone could join – particularly when dressing the part! It's an environment of 19th century pageantry, and friends from the **San Francisco Cacophony Society** raved about it in the late 90s - early 00s, so about 2003 decided to go, but properly dressed. I went with then wife Alisa, who is an elegant beauty, dressed nicely. I had a top hat, but no 19th century coat. Still good!

Driving into the parking lot, was a mix of costumed and uncostumed attendees. Some fabulous dressers there – especially the stylish women. Fantastic!

From the outside the Cow Palace is a stern concrete pavilion with a curved roof. The sound of live music echoing from within; shanties, choral, waltzes, English dance hall music. Excitement grows, as we get in line with tickets.

Entering, greeted by ticket takers with a faux English accent: *“Happy Christmas! Welcome to London”*, with the inviting aroma of sweet cinnamon almonds baking. Yum! First stop, find those! While taking it all in.: the shops, theaters, pubs, dance halls, musicians, outfits! **Fezziwags** dance floor is near the entry, and the theater. We decided to check out some live **Gilbert & Sullivan** to start with. Great little performance! - onwards to the shops... The classy book shop, the crowds in costume speaking in faux English accents, the characters – chimney sweeps in coal covered rags with extreme cockney accents, posh aristocrats, busty bawdy broads, choir groups, sailors, puritans, the queen with cohorts, hurdy gurdy players, a lot to take in within the first few minutes!

Musicians! on accordions, banjos, mandolins, fiddles, singing, bagpipes, penny whistles, drums, guitars, etc, all over the place. Pubs, hallways, stages, all playing period pieces.

Jigs, shanties, limericks to carolers. Music is a major part of the fair.

Finding a stand for sweet cinnamon almonds – sold out, they need to make more. We find the chestnut stand, smelling wonderful, baked over a fire. The merchants couple had an outrageous cockney accent, clearly loved playing the part! “*get your fresh nuts! Roasted to perfection just for you, good sir!*” etcetera. Fun! And that is only a small slice of everything. We eventually got to enjoy cinnamon almonds after a long line (popular), ale at the Green Man pub, witnessed **Charles Dickens** himself (performed annually by the same fitting character) recite passages from his literature – and in his own fanciful living room! Bawdy dockside entertainment, and more I'll spread out in this writing. That first afternoon was only dipping my toe in, especially compared with what would come in the years ahead. The fair was our kind of thing. Think **Renaissance Faire**, but 19th century. Better! We're coming back, with improved garb next year!

Fitting in better

I ordered a great 19th century suitcoat, with ornate vest and cravat style tie. Alisa found a show stopping dress! More Edwardian than Dickensian, yet fit the event perfectly, representing the new modernism of the century. We set off for another years season in style, arriving to the same things but feeling better about fitting in with the overall pageantry helps to fuel a more Dickensian spirit.

Meeting up with good friend **Peter Doty** – an actor in local plays, and in Cacophony events would play roles more involved than anyone, bar none. He was a true dandy, seeming to hail from earlier eras. An anachronistic personality and self-proclaimed luddite. This fair was perfect for him! Peter carried an antique book by Dickens, reciting passages along the way. (forgetting which novel)

Peter knew the fair better, and raved about the *Naughty French Postcards Revue*, held in the theater. Early arrivals snatched up the tickets to that particular show. But the corsetry models that pose in the windows of the lingerie shop were all day long! The beauties would be creatively arranged as if they are living mannequins! Staying still for a few minutes at a time, and looking very very sexy. It's still a family event so nothing too risqué. I was astounded! [later sketching them becoming my main reason for being there

for days. Much more on this later.]

Meanwhile, my wife at the time was one of the most elegantly dressed beauties in the building! She even got given a special ribbon badge from someone working there, invited to possibly win in a fashion show later, for best dressed attendee! She accepted the badge with gratitude, but wasn't interested in partaking in a contest. Still, that was an honor well deserved.

We would only go one day per year, and took to the very last day turning out to be more amped up! Another suggestion by Peter. I can almost hear him raving enthusiastically about *“oh, you MUST go the last day for the blowout at **Mad Sal's Dockside Stage** going on beyond closing time! And good last minute sales on merchandise!!”*

Peter was a *bon vivant* spirit guide for the event!

We would run into other friends, **Vivian** from Cacophony – dressed smashingly, charismatically! ...and other acquaintances, and familiar faces from around town.

More years enjoying the fair,

and I don't remember when I started sketching at this. After missing 2007-2008, avoiding the event due to connecting it too much with my now ex-wife. (that divorce traumatized me to the core.) By 2009 I had a new date to attend with! **Joanne** was a lot of fun, and was enthused to go. I still had my 19th C threads in storage. So I went, meeting her there, who swiftly made a really nice white lace dress! Looking fabulous, and we had fun checking all out, walking through its labyrinth of attractions (and I forgot about the ex.) At **Dark Gardens** corsetry shop (where the models strike still poses), I brought a small pocket sized sketchbook, and started sketching a model who looked straight at me through the bay window, while holding a small telescope. Joanne remarked *“she really likes you!”* That model (who seemed to be transported directly from the 19th C.) did an awesome job posing still as I drew, and she didn't even wince. Impressive.

Meanwhile as I continued to sketch more, Joanne was trying on a corset, coming out to show me, and I flipped! What a cutie with a fantastic figure! Not her thing to buy though, they're not cheap, nor very comfortable.

Peter was there, we enjoyed the final day blowout at **Mad Sal's**, a bawdy entertainment

filled with antiquated sexual colloquialisms in old English dance hall songs, performed with can-can girls, dancing, jiggling, singing. A host of characters on stage, in a fun-filled extravaganza !

Afterwards we gave Peter a ride home. Great times, in great company!

2010 I had a new date, and easily the most fun for this event. **Cheryl** was really into it, dressing up with a fancy rented Victorian dress. Looking spectacular! We really enjoyed the fair so much, we returned the following weekend for more! She took to play the games like "**Boot the cat**"! A funny setup where you lay in an antique bed, in a mockup room. When the cat (phony) pops up from somewhere in the room, your goal is to throw a boot at the screeching cat! Cheryl won, naturally, and is a real cat owner.

We enjoyed absinthe at a unique bar, the pirate zone, the shows, and every time those cinnamon almonds would be #1, plus chestnuts sold by the same cheeky couple. So seasonal! Those and the bags of almonds are warm after just being baked, adding appeal. Walking around the hallways of this labyrinthine London mock-up, at one point I stepped on the edge of her long rented dress, slightly tearing it in a clumsy moment. Repairable but still not good, since it's rented.

We enjoyed the fair so much, we went back! I drove us from her home in **Half Moon Bay**, she really wanted to buy her own outfit there, so it was directly to the corsetry shop. I sketched the posing models in the windows, while she shopped. This was good, I started to flow with sketching these still models, but challenging with all the activities surrounding, I can't expect crowds to not block my view, so I learned quickly to pretend to be invisible! Now that doesn't happen either, because there are people interested in seeing what I'm drawing too. It's a fine line between.

Eventually Cheryl emerged from the shop, fully decked out, head to toe in the most complimentary vintage style corset for her type. Striking blues and burgundy to go with her long blonde hair, with striped leggings, and a small feathered hat. and wow – sexy! I was flummoxed., and she must have spent a whole paycheck.

All day I got comments of, "*you're a lucky man!*" Yep!

The best time at the fair! By the afternoon, good friends **Joe** and **Jane** show up! I'd been

trying to get them to join for years, knowing they'd dig this (we enjoyed the Ren Faire as far back as 1990) and they did! Good times toasting pints of special **Lagunitas** ale specifically made for this fair!

Cheryl brought two copper tankards to hoist ales from the pubs! Yep, she's a natural Dickens Fair type (who could have secured a job there annually) Excellent times, topped off with the bawdy entertainment of Mad Sal's Dockside Stage. Whew! One for the ages. Are we returning? Heck Yeah!

Return visits

I don't know how many times we went, possibly three that season? A year later we returned. Cheryl added more to her outfit, looking smashing! I was just in my same old clothes that worked. We were not very flush, so I parked early outside the venue, to avoid parking fees. Hey that's our ale change - or for cinnamon almonds!

Another excellent time, we started by indulging in harp maker **Chris Caswell's** shop and harp performance setup. Enjoyed his performances on his harps, and I took to trying to play one. Beautiful instruments – I got lost in its sounds as I strummed and arpeggiated away! (I had deft fingerpicking guitarist hands then) Chris was a nice solid guy to talk with. And later I realized he was in **The Merry Band** for **Robin Williamson** in the 70s, and we had the cd playing in my car on the way there that very morning of the album ***A Glint At The Kindling***. I gathered as good Celtic music for going to the Dickens Fair. I never suspected to meet one of its musicians that day!

[Unfortunately he passed from cancer in 2013]

Drawing more

I sketched a few more than last year in that one day in 2011, around 12 half decent drawings in a small pocket sized sketchbook. Getting better after being in practice that year of weekly figure drawing at **Sebs** in **Oakland** where I'd been living. I wanted to draw more, but not when you're with someone I didn't wish to socially isolate.

More fair fun

We must've gone twice that year. I believe she won yet another fun arcade game!

Something with an apparatus involved. Also more enjoying the features of years past — **Dr Flockmacher's** invention studio, with a march around the premises by that remarkable task master machine known as *The Steam Man* — the tall humanoid contraption that is promised will chop wood and clean your dishes for you!

The sea shanties by the musicians of the docks! The pubs! **The Officers Club**, like walking into an authentic club, rich with details and costumed characters. I had a nice chat with **Charles Darwin** there. The many musicians! The many shops selling quality wares. [ornaments, haberdasheries, **Harry Potter** style wands, fancy women's clothes, books, etc The musical players set up in random areas. The **Queens** procession, **Father Christmas** and the ghosts of Christmas past and future. This is pageantry. Attracting the cosplay crowd, sometimes out of context. I mean how would **Star Wars** characters fit in there? I was delighted to see some **Doctor Who's** around, the most noticeable being the **Tom Baker** dressalikes! I'd tell them that **Weng Chiang** is on the prowl! (The real fans got it) In fact, there was a poster advert for **Li H'sen Chang** at the **Palace Theater** from that 19th century episode, outside of Dr Flockmachers shop!

Falling for the last "date"

The following year 2012 I went once with a new date I met in **Seattle**. I really fell for **Stephanie**, who's a real stylin' beauty. Enjoying all that the fair had to offer, again. First thing was enjoying the performance of *The Mikado* in the theater. Later, Charles Dickens reading sections of *A Christmas Carol* in his stately living room, those almonds, roasted chestnuts, music, etc. I did a few small sketches like before, and never enough. We had a wonderfully romantic time, and that was my last time going to the fair with a date. She really got me by the heartstrings, but ended up being too narcissistic, caring more about her hair than me or my health. It was a fun year anyway.

2013, Going Solo

I was melancholic about attending alone for the first time ever, but it was a new, good beginning. I drew more! The musicians, bar patrons in costume, and most of all — the posing corsetry models in the bay windows of Dark Gardens — the quality vintage corset and lingerie shop! I got busy. Only going for one day, but loving it as a solitary artist. I

think that I must have gone for the last full day, or I would have gone more. I made around 24 good sketches that day. More better than previously when I was not going solo. I was busier that semester wrapping up classes that I taught at the **Academy of Art**, so it makes sense that I didn't attend more weekends.

The verdict was in: I used to bring hot dates to the fair. Now the sketchbook *is* the date.

2014, I was armed with ink pens, brushes and good sketchbooks! I went several days, fitting in one day per weekend. I was living in San Francisco again, feeling on the upswing personally with my teaching job more secured, living in a nice Victorian in my favorite neighborhood near good friends, the park and ocean, I was in strong shape, bicycling the hills better than ever. Nice! if not perfect.

I got accustomed to driving to the Cow Palace from the **Inner Sunset** neighborhood, being different from routes before. I did full days, to really take advantage of the time to stretch out and draw, and enjoy the fair. It felt sad when not busy sketching, but I did enjoy fraternizing more with the public. Play acting is a blast in that setting! Plus I could flirt with the abounding ladies! (I don't tend to very overtly) it's too easy to have crushes on most of the stylish women everywhere, dressed to the nines with cleavage displayed. Best to focus on drawing them, especially posing in those windows! One phenomenal blonde I've sketched in previous years was there again, who easily became my favorite. Eventually we met, she was curious to see my sketches. That was **Shawn**.

Feeling good about drawing, I would leave the fair in a proud yet melancholic haze. Still good strides were made as a more independent but lonesome artist. I still looked good, but everything was changing for the worse.

2015 was my devastating news year, first forced out of the apartment by the lease holding roommate (Roberta), then the much bigger fear was true. After more frequent physical failures, diagnosed with ALS.

I then did whatever I still could. One major function was being able to draw – and draw I did. By November the Dickens Fair time drew near, and sister **Joni** gifted me a season pass! (I knew I should have bought one for 2014) Fantastic! I geared myself up to attend every day until the end! With bigger sketchbooks by the **Handbook** brand, tools

prepared in advance for ease of use and access. Including **Noodlers** brand inks loaded in portable watercolor brushes, with separate colors. A few fountain pens, and a few pencils. Up earlier than usual for weekends, driving there from Oakland (where I found a spacious apartment) arriving with the first few in the doors. I headed directly to the cafe, bought coffee and pastry, talking to others at the table, broke out the pens, brushes and books, and started to sketch. Usually the musicians start playing early near the cafe, drawing them first, then to the corset models.

The window models

Always displayed with interesting ornate vintage accoutrements in themed vignettes. It might be a sailors theme, the model with a sailors hat, holding a sextant for navigation. Usually croquettish in nature, of various feminine poses. Sometimes an artist with a sketchbook or easel. A 17th century aristocratic style on one occasion. A puppet master, explorer in khaki with pith helmet, a **Calamity Jane** type with antique pistols, etc. Mind you these are all super babes – 19th century cuties and beauties and they know it! You can tell by their posturing and expression. I would stand, (with a cane needed by then) for hours drawing one after another pose, loving this indulgence.

The Crowds

I would not harbor the attitude that people would be in my way. If I did, it would only be more frustrating. Plus it's not my fair to use the spaces for myself only. It is a challenge to be drawing a good pose to have a group of people suddenly block my view, therefore unfinished sketches with awkward mistakes. Mostly I'd get appreciative crowds, watching me draw, but I'd need to ignore the distraction and try to stay focused. Some would lay on flattering compliments, others would check out what I'm doing silently, I suppose not to disturb the artist at work. For banter when in the right moment, I'd say things like: *"us artists must draw for our lives! That confounded new contraption known as the photographic cam-eraah threatens our occupation! I gather Dr Flockmacher is behind this technological madness."*

"oh, you've got one! Is there no hope for the sketch?"

"draw, humbug."

"may the queen save the sketch!"

A time I was asked by the events main photographer to pose as a character from a Dickens story (I don't remember who), I had to look dramatically frightened of an invisible goblin! Fun, and maybe the photos can still be found online? (if knowing that characters name from the story) I believe that most thought I worked for the event! I did have an association with the main director **Cat Taylor**, who I've had jam sessions with **the Haight Ashbury Free Band** in the early 90s (though she doesn't remember me). I would see her around the fair, say hi, she liked my drawings. Guessing if I tried I could have got a job with the fair, but my goals were freedom to draw and roam independently on my own terms. By then I was racing the clock. How many years/months/weeks further can I do this? With a keen realization of impermanent mortality. Like the stained glass sign in the Officers Club reads: *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis*.

Friends

It was great to have friends join in. **Bruce** joined me once! Good friend from the old neighborhood, and excellent artist! This was fun! Speaking of the Officers Club, I'd been invited by others from the **Pre-Raphaelite** artist group to join them when doing a scheduled pose. Inviting me because I was seen drawing and looking the part. I often missed out, more into my own independent agenda. Bruce and I did make it, drawing in a group a posed scenario from mythology. Very specific, maybe too much for me. I'd rather sketch buxom babes in vintage lingerie! Still it was a great drawing opportunity of still poses in a classy room.

Good **Minnesota** friend **Dhaivyd** was around for a visit, and loved the idea of the fair, so he joined me! We go way back. That was fun, and I still mostly sketched. He recognized my magnetism with the stunning beauty Shawn, who I eagerly drew every time possible. As I drew, she looked directly into me without moving, smiling. (whew!) I kept busy to avoid collapsing in self-conscious blushing, which did happen a few occasions. Pseudo-bulbar breakdowns didn't help, being a neurological weakness with ALS. I still had good control, drawing, driving, speaking getting worse but using the faux British accent seemed

to cover it up well enough.

After closing time, Dhavlyd was scheduled to meet his fiancée (now wife) **Diana**. Good to see her again after a long time! Briefly in the dimly lit streets, but good!

Another day was joined by good supportive friends **Seb** and **Lee**. My figure drawing cohorts, so we got to drawing! I'd been raving about the fair to them for years, so it was great to finally enjoy with them!

Running into friends and acquaintances, like **Phil** from Graphic Design, and also Free Band alumni **Larry the O**, and good friend **Kathleen** who appreciates creative events!

Musicians and Patrons

Usually all day at the corsetry windows, otherwise there was much else to draw, the musicians include the choir singing Christmas carols. Shawn would switch styles from the creative corset windows into carolers outfit – a major difference! Singing with a dozen or more others, and very Christmasey. A well accomplished group with a conductor, everyone in warm layers of 19th C style coats, hats and scarves as if outside. It was warm in the building, so I can imagine they were a bit too warm, especially the women in wide skirts. Singing old classics, some are too familiar like *Joy To The World*, *O Come All Ye Faithful*, and *Silent Night*. Beautiful renditions but I can't seem to handle their childhood based sentimentality very well. It's a bit emotionally overwhelming, and the religious content? Well it is Christmas time and it's a Christmas fair, so that's expected and good. A beautiful job done by the carolers! I did some good drawings of them, standing quite still enough to sketch and looking great.

Speaking of religion, I was pleased to see **Hanukkah** get a nod from the corset windows a few times, with a menorah. Otherwise the entire event is mostly secular in nature, even pagan-heathen centered. It is the bay area, creative anachronistic based, and inclusive.

More themes in the Dark Gardens windows

So many. Too many to record here! Listing a few standouts... A viking girl with a **Thors** hammer.. A **Krampus** woman wearing horns.. A coquettish **Marie Antoinette**,.. Shawn once was **Daenerys** from **Game of Thrones**, holding a large egg, and wearing a dragon

brooch... A steam punk woman with a big iron pipe wrench in arms,... A woman distressed by a headache holding a vintage ice bag to her head,... Sometimes a couple, occasionally male, but not often,... A wind-up life sized doll, with a crank in her back,... Maids with feather dusters ,... Earth goddesses festooned with leaves,... Valkyries, archers, crowned beauties, cowgirls, milkmaids, birders, chefs..., the list goes on. Not all Anglo Caucasians either. One thing in common is they looked stunning! Some could pose still longer than others. A minute for some, a few minutes for others. I became the main sketch artist of the event. Occasionally I'd see others doing this too, but not for as long. I might choose to sketch them sketching! (it's possible they're drawing all day every weekend by now!)

I would love when the models came out to see what I drew, with raves of appreciation! I'd be all smitten by these adoring beauties. They are phenomenal. I didn't catch all of their names, unfortunately.

Gifting back

Before the last day, I bought a batch of small frames, picking some of my best sketches, framed them, bringing to the fair in my sidebag, finding the models I filled in the frames, and gifted them. They were pleasantly surprised and absolutely loved them! Musicians too! That was satisfying to do – send them out into the world, and spread them around. The works had a purpose now, not just for my hoarding. I wouldn't linger after giving them out, accepting their gratitude then dashing off. I didn't want to seem like I expected anything in return. They're gifts, that's what the season is about, right?

Moving it along

After the models stop posing, it's off to sketch musicians and pub patrons, and enjoying the bawdy entertainment at Mad Sal's, as I mentioned before, has a big blowout on the final day, stretching past 6pm!

At the end of every fair day around 6pm, the grand finale is held in Fezziwags Dance Hall near the exit with a singalong **Handel's Messiah "Hallelujah"** section, and ***God Save The Queen***. I usually exit while hearing this pomp, but not the final day, that's at Mad Sal's!

[By the way, remember Peter? He was going through some personal difficulties, and I

didn't see him after 2009 again at the fair. Pity, because he was really into it.]

Departing, possibly for my last time ever, with a sense of achievement. I made a good stack of filled sketchbooks, that would not exist if I went with a date, I wasn't faced with a life threatening disease. So it's a bittersweet farewell to the 2015 Dickens Fair, as I get back to my car, re-entering the 21st century from the fantasy 19th. Back to the world of electronics, car traffic, and solitaire. Expecting to stay functional enough for next year!

2016 - my final Dickens fair

With another season pass, but only went twice! My abilities to get around were tougher, and getting dressed in this more detailed garb was more difficult. I now needed a walker, making it a challenge to navigate safely without falling. I did my best getting there, parking, and hobbling through the crowded fair. It was apparent that last year was a peak, with this year the decline. It makes me care less to go, when it's a discouraging source of despair and frustration. I still did what I could, that meant drawing while sitting in the walker that my brother **Brian** so generously brought me on an airplane trip earlier that year. It made sketching amidst crowds harder because of sitting so low. I still did so, remembering last year's success. The drawings are noticeably shakier and fewer. This was hard.

Since I was so recognized the previous year, some of the season regulars asked what happened to me, and why the walker? They were sympathetic, and some didn't know what to say. As I slowly step through the crowd, crouched over my walker. It was probably a saddening sight. I felt discouraged.

Friends make a good difference!

I still enjoyed the fair one time more, joined by good friends **Jamie and Althea**, visiting from the Midwest. Otherwise I probably wouldn't have gone. It became more fun to introduce friends from out of state, and we took a taxi/uber. Parking was not an issue! The fair became fun again! Friends make a difference. I think they may have wished to be decked out like the dedicated participants, but appreciated it. Fortunately I did get some partially decent sketches in.

The middle eastern music group

They really took to the middle eastern music being played on the stage/dance floor at the back of the building near the café. Some of the musicians switch from English dance hall jigs to middle eastern style musical instruments and clothing, at first playing for belly dancers, then continue playing in that style with exotic stringed instruments. (I don't know what they're called). I've enjoyed them for years, but that last time stands out, because Jamie and Althea dug them so much, we stayed until they ended, right around closing time, with a small audience, and I got some last drawings in.

We set off to meet our ride back.

Like I said, having friends join made this much happier. I knew my Dickens Fair days will never be the same. Not really knowing I'd never return, after all, I still got around the bay area for another year of careful navigating. Imagining returning in a wheelchair, but I opted out of considering that a worthwhile option.

Conclusions

It was like taking vacations to another time and place, and after the leaving felt like waking from a dream. It's like an illusion. A made up fantasy play.

Why did I love that fair so much? Well it is a good quality production! However, thinking about it now years later, it might have been influenced by my parents love for live theater. They used to enjoy period movies and plays with anachronistic costumes. This may have passed along from my childhood when they brought me to the **Friar's dinner theater** where they were regulars in downtown **Minneapolis**. Rooms of period costumes represented another world, where I would roam as a kid.

I always appreciated the old world of Europe, of 19th century styles – the romantic period of art and music influenced me for years before. To name a few: Paintings by **Turner, Friedrich, Gerome, Manet**, etc. Very mid-19th C music by **Gilbert & Sullivan**, English dance hall songs. Scientific discoveries by **Darwin, Maxwell**. Literature by **Byron, Coleridge, HG Wells, Jules Verne**, and of course **Charles Dickens**. Fabulous influential creativity. The clothing, architecture and designs are stupendous, from the Dickensian to the Victorian. It's a popular era, for a popular event.

I have since, and now feel the melancholy of missing out, after making it an annual tradition for such good years of my life. It's a sadness that can overwhelm. However, I have all of these drawings, that I'm really glad they exist! (imperfections and all) I count up to 397 drawings that I scanned. 235 of them are from 2015 alone. The artworks are in the moment, drawn from life, and it shows. Those, and this very memoir made it all worthwhile. The fair is about to start its 40th year. I might be hundreds of miles away, but it's happening, with new and old participants, probably new artists are sketching the posing corsetry models in those shop windows, and characters who helped define the fair have died, leaving memory impressions in others. I'm not dead yet, but I'm leaving behind a bunch of framed drawings of the fair, and this personal memoir. For now, I can still appreciate being haunted by the ghosts of Christmas fairs past, whenever I get the slightest whiff of something resembling those sweet cinnamon almonds, or hear the sounds of those 19th century songs performed... it haunts me like a series of fabulous dreams.

“He was conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long forgotten.”

- Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*.

- Dean Gustafson, November 2024

A few select sketchbook pages, posted here:

<https://dean-gustafson.com/artwork-essays/Dickens-Fair-Drawings.pdf>



