

**Sunday, Dec. 17, 2006**

## **THE DICKENS CRIER**

Hear ye, hear ye, welcome to *The Dickens Crier!*

This space will be devoted to weekly announcements regarding the Dickens Victorian Village, a project supported by Cambridge Main Street that runs through Jan. 15, 2007, in downtown Cambridge.

### **How Did This Project Come About?**

The Dickens Victorian Village began with one man's vision, and in the span of one year, has developed and grown into a full community-wide success story.

The project is the brainchild of local businessman and artist Bob Ley, who envisioned the concept, created sketches of each scene, and organized the beginnings of the Dickens Victorian Village committee.

"The idea for Dickens Victorian Village was inspired by my wife, Sue, during a discussion about what we could do to bring visitors to our downtown," said Ley. "She noted our Victorian architecture, street lamps, benches and our English heritage."

From, there, Ley designed a mannequin that could be posed, and after leafing through his wife's extensive collection of Dickens books, he drew pictures of potential scenes.

Community volunteers with a variety of necessary talents and excitement began to appear, and the Dickens Victorian Village committee was formed.

"Community projects take the commitment of many volunteers," noted Jonett Haberfield, Dickens Victorian Village committee co-chair. "Bob handpicked a strong group of sub-committee chairs with specific talents, leadership abilities and the experience to get things done!"

"Early on, this group sat down and committed to a long range plan, a vision and a mission for what we wanted this project to become and we have gradually checked off the accomplishments with the final rewards of our work yet to be seen," said Haberfield.

"We are blessed to have outstanding, spirited, and aggressive leaders such as Bob Ley and Jonett Haberfield of the Victorian Village project," said Cambridge Mayor Sam Salupo. "This terrific program and all of its volunteers make me proud to live and work in Cambridge, Ohio."

As the project's plan became more widely known through the local media, sponsorships from individuals, businesses, and organizations provided continued financial support for national marketing, materials and supplies.

Early support from the Ohio Arts Council, Urban Development Action Grant, Cambridge/Guernsey County Visitors & Convention Bureau, Guernsey County Historical Society, Mid-East Career & Technology Center, Cambridge Kiwanis Club, and businessman Grant Hafley gave the committee the necessary resources to achieve success in developing the project to what it is now.

Of particular note is the contribution from members of the Eastern Ohio Art Guild. Each of the 106 mannequin heads and faces have been uniquely and artfully sculpted and painted by members of the guild, giving each a unique character.

"We had a great time working on this project with so many different people and groups in the community," said Martha Jamail of the Eastern Ohio Art Guild.

"The expressions are priceless!" noted Ley.

Local volunteers spent every Tuesday evening for 11 months building and clothing the mannequins.

"We had many motor coach tours from several states coming to enjoy the Dickens display as well as related attractions and events in our area during the holiday season," said Debbie Robinson, director of the Cambridge/Guernsey County Visitors & Convention Bureau.

"Downtown Cambridge, as an Historic District, makes a great backdrop for the Dickens scenes," said Linda Adkins, president of the Guernsey County Historical Society. "It brings an exciting new aspect of heritage to our Christmas celebration," she added.

According to Ley, future plans include the lighting of many of Wheeling Avenue's second story windows to show scenes of home life from 1850s London.

"And maybe a few ghosts from Christmas Past!" said Ley.