

Creative Team Builds Victorian Scenes for Dickens Victorian Village
by Beverly Kerr

Cambridge, OH (December 13, 2019) - Victorian scenes under every lamppost for five blocks create the setting for Dickens Victorian Village in historic downtown Cambridge, Ohio. Based on "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, the scenes either depict a part of the story or show life at that time in London.

While this all began about fifteen years ago, each year the characters must be refurbished so changes are constantly being made. Think about it! The scenes are taken to the street the last Sunday in October and stay there until the first Sunday of January. You can easily see with all the rain and snow during that time of year why they need to be redone each season.

All during November and December, the Creative Team checks on the scenes daily to make sure no damage has been done from the weather and wind. Because of their careful assembly of the scenes, the damage is usually minimal.

When the season is over, the scenes are returned to storage in an old pottery building that formerly housed our popular Universal Pottery. Now we call our section of the building Dickens Universal as a lot of creativity happens within its walls.

There have always been willing volunteers to move the scenes to the streets and back to the warehouse. The local Lions Club was a major source of manpower for many years but lately, Cambridge High School students have been a big part of moving out the scenes. This year the girls' and boys' track teams helped move the scenes to the street, and the football team will be moving them back into the warehouse the first of the year.

During January, the scenes dry out from their winter weather on the street. But from February through October, the Creative Team works weekly on renovating the scenes from any damage that has occurred.

Most of the clothes must be replaced. It is estimated that 80% of the Dickens' characters will need new clothes. Men's clothes can more easily be found and given a Victorian touch. Women's clothes often must be handmade by some of those creative ladies. A curtain might be changed into a skirt or a tablecloth for a cape. Their minds come up with so many clever ideas.

Damage to the heads also happens annually. These are constructed with a styrofoam base covered with paper mache and exterior paint. If that paint gets a crack, moisture seeps down inside and creates problems. Cracks must be patched and many areas of the face repainted.

Sometimes the wooden platform may have water damage and need to be replaced. This means removal of the characters from the platform while repairs are being made. Often you'll see one of the creative team members with a Victorian character sitting in the passenger side of their car...with a seatbelt on! That way they can also work on them at home.

Each week about four scenes are worked on. When they are finished, they are covered in plastic to protect them from dust and grime. These folks are dedicated to having the best looking Victorian characters on the street as possible. Great detail is given to putting on beautiful pins, necklaces, earrings and tiepins. All clothing is tacked down every couple of inches so the wind will not be able to blow it.

This takes great commitment and passion for the project. Next time you walk down Wheeling Avenue in Cambridge, Ohio during November or December look carefully at the characters to better understand the time and patience that is given to this project.

Dickens is fortunate to have these dedicated volunteers.

For more information about Dickens Victorian Village, visit DickensVictorianVillage.com.

