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Dickens: Irish Friends & Family Ties

CATHERINE & ELLEN

Catherine Hogarth Dickens (1815-79)

Catherine was the eldest daughter of the journalist George Hogarth. She and Dickens married on 2 April 1836. The couple were particularly happy during the first years of their marriage, though they grew apart in the later 1850s. They were legally separated in 1858, when Catherine moved to London with their eldest son Charley. The other children remained with Dickens and Catherine's younger sister Georgina, who had joined the household in 1842.

Ellen Lawless Ternan (1839-1914)

Dickens hired 'Nelly' Ternan, along with her mother and sister, to perform in Wilkie Collins's play *The Frozen Deep* in 1857, shortly before the author separated from Catherine. It is commonly accepted (though never conclusively proven) that Dickens and Ellen were lovers. She is considered the inspiration for some of Dickens's later heroines, such as Estella in *Great Expectations*. In 1876 she married a clergyman and never mentioned her relationship with Dickens in later life.

THE DICKENS CHILDREN

Charles Culliford Boz ('Charley') Dickens (1837-1896)

Dickens's eldest child Charley (nicknamed 'Snodgering Blee', 'Toby', and 'Flaster Floby' by his father) was educated at Eton, and entered a business career, working first at Baring's Bank, then in Hong Kong in the tea trade. After going bankrupt in 1868 Dickens made him a sub-editor on his journal *All the Year Round*. After Dickens's death Charley continued as editor of the journal until closing it in 1893. He also gave readings from his father's work, and lectures about him.

Mary ('Mamie') Dickens (1838-1896)

Dickens's eldest daughter (nicknamed 'Mild Glos'ter and 'Mekitty' by her father) was named Mary Hogarth, the sister of Dickens's wife, who died in 1837. She idolised her father, and remained with Dickens after the separation, serving as housekeeper together with her aunt Georgina Hogarth. She did not visit her mother until after Dickens's death. She continued to live with Georgina, and the pair edited the first edition of Dickens's letters. She also wrote a volume of reminiscences, *My Father as I Recall Him* (1897).

Kate Macready ('Katey') Dickens (1839-1929)

Dickens's third child, and his favourite (nicknamed 'LuciferBox' for her tendency to fieriness), was the goddaughter of Dickens's great friend, the actor William Charles Macready. She married the painter Charles Collins in 1860, prompting her father to conclude that she did so in order to leave home. After Collins's death in 1873 she married the artist Carlo Perugini. Katey studied art at Bedford College and achieved some success as a painter. Many years later she was interviewed by Gladys Storey, and related her version of Dickens's relationship with the actress Ellen Ternan; these conversations were the basis of Storey's revelatory book *Dickens and Daughter* (1939).

Walter Savage Landor Dickens (1841-1863)

Dickens's fourth child was named for his godfather (the poet Walter Savage Landor), and nicknamed 'Young Skull' by his father (for his high cheekbones). He was nominated to a cadetship in the East India Company, and sailed to the Subcontinent in 1857. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant in the 42nd Highlanders, and distinguished himself during the so-called Indian Mutiny. He became ill, and was granted sick leave to return to England; but he died in Calcutta, leaving many unpaid debts for his father to settle.

THE DICKENS CHILDREN

Francis Jeffrey ('Frank') Dickens (1844-86)

Dickens's fifth child was named after his godfather (the Scottish judge and literary critic Sir Francis Jeffrey), and was nicknamed 'Chickenstalker' by his father.

He was said by his sister Kate and brother Henry to be the cleverest and best of the Dickens children. He was educated at an English school in Boulogne, but did poorly, perhaps because he stuttered and was partially deaf. After a short stay in Germany in 1859, where he began to study medicine, he returned to London, and was employed for a time in a commercial firm. He worked for a short time on his father's publication, *All the Year Round*, but this arrangement suited neither father nor son. After failing the Foreign Office examination, he managed to obtain a commission in the Bengal Mounted Poice in 1864, largely through family connections.

Frank spent seven years in India, returning to England in 1871 after the death of his father. He spent the next three years dissipating his inheritance, and quarrelling with his family. By 1874 he was destitute, and his sister Mamie (in letters in the PRONI collection) appealed to their father's friend Lord Dufferin (who was then Governor General of Canada) to obtain a position for Dickens in the recently formed North-West Mounted Police (the forerunner of today's Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP). Frank travelled to Canada in 1874 to take up his post as Sub-Inspector.

Frank was initially stationed at the NWMP's temporary headquarters, at Dufferin, Manitoba. He spent the next six years at the Headquarters, as it moved from Manitoba, to Alberta, and then Saskatchewan. Frank's reports were continually unfavourable: he was found to be drunken, lazy, and unfit to be an office in the Force.

In 1881 Frank was posted away, and was given charge of a twelve-man detachment at Blackfoot Crossing, Alberta. In several unnecessarily perilous incidents, Dickens, responding to complaints from white Europeans, tried to arrest Indians accused of crimes, without the customary effort to obtain the cooperation from the tribal elders to hear the aboriginals' side of the story. The accused resisted arrest, and took up arms against Dickens's unit. In one incident reinforcements were summoned on both sides, and the altercation was resolved.

Frank Dickens was then placed under close supervision, and in 1883 was assigned to command Fort Pitt, Saskatchewan. During the Métis rebellion of 1885, a band of Crees demanded the surrender of the fort; Dickens refused, and after a gunfight in which the NWMP suffered casualties, Dickens surrendered, and abandoned the fort, which was destroyed. Dickens took no further part in the rebellion, but acted as a Justice of the Peace in Battleford, Saskatchewan. He left the Force in 1886, and travelled to the United States, to begin a lecture tour. He died of a heart attack, just before he was to deliver his first lecture.

A series of Frank Dickens's letters from the 1870s and 1880 (now at the University of British Columbia) was published under the title *Dickens of the Mounted* (1989). The letters in this exhibition, written by Frank Dickens and his sister Mamie, are displayed for the first time ever.

THE DICKENS CHILDREN

Alfred D'Orsay Tennyson Dickens (1845-1912)

Dickens's fourth son, named for his two godfathers (the French aristocrat and artist Count Alfred D'Orsay, and the port Alfred Lord Tennyson) was nicknamed 'Sampson Brass' and 'Skittles' by his father. He was not suited for the military career which Dickens encouraged and at the age of twenty, he emigrated to Australia, and has a successful business career. After his father's Alfred lectured on his father's life and works in England and America. He died in New York on one of his lecture tours, during the Dickens centenary year.

