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# FIRSTS

THE BOOK COLLECTOR'S MAGAZINE

Nancy and Plum  
BY BETTY  
MACDONALD



*Illustrated by Hildegard Hopkins*

**Potter  
Perplexities**

**Collecting  
Betty  
MacDonald**

**Dickens  
Update**

# Charles Dickens: *Ten*

by LEE BIONDI

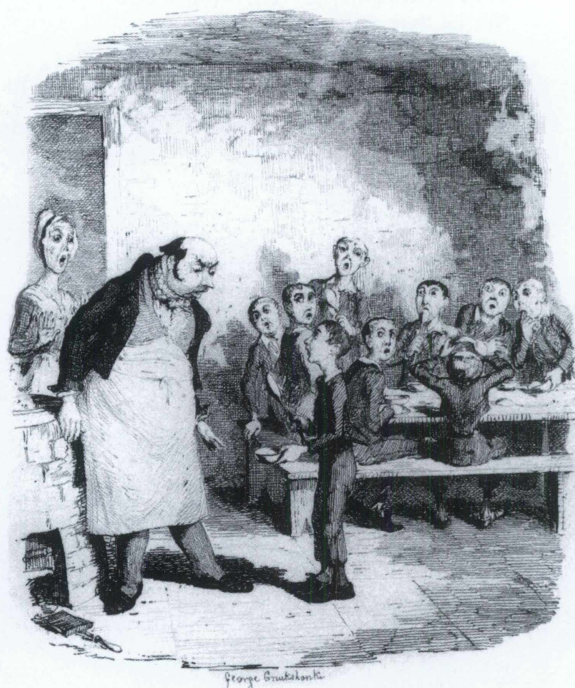
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED in literature, you are interested in Charles Dickens: he is the most important English writer between Shakespeare and Joyce. If you are interested in the history and sociology of printed texts, you are interested in Dickens: he changed the face of printing and distributing books and the very nature of popular readership. If you are interested in collecting books, you are interested Dickens: he is ideal for

collecting. A Dickens collection can be built at various price levels to fit almost any budget and the “degree of difficulty” is challenging without posing impossibilities.

Although *Firsts* has, since its Jules Verne and Charles Dickens issues, dealt with other great Nineteenth-century authors (e.g. Twain, Poe and Melville), the thrust of the magazine remains modern firsts, that is, Twentieth-century literature. Let’s refresh our Nineteenth-century memories for a moment.

In the world of modern firsts there is generally more clarity than in Nineteenth-century collecting: one usually knows that what one wants is the first trade edition of a book, in dust jacket (if obtainable). Then it is a matter of whether one can afford the object sought. Either you can afford a nice *Catcher* in jacket or you can’t: there really isn’t an alternative solution. Such is the case with most modern firsts. *Ulysses* is an exception in that a rebound copy is not completely silly. And some titles are acceptable in the real world without jackets—books like *My Antonia*, *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, *The Great Gatsby*—since most collectors will never find a copy with its original jacket. So even in the arms of disappointment, at least there is clarity.

Not so with Nineteenth-century authors. There are usually state and issue points; there are original binding states of boards or publisher’s cloth (more than you encounter in modern firsts). There are serializations and parts issues. Sometimes bindings are acceptable, sometimes not. What about recased original cloth? Or repairs? (This is becoming more of an issue in Twentieth-century collecting, as dust jacket restorations

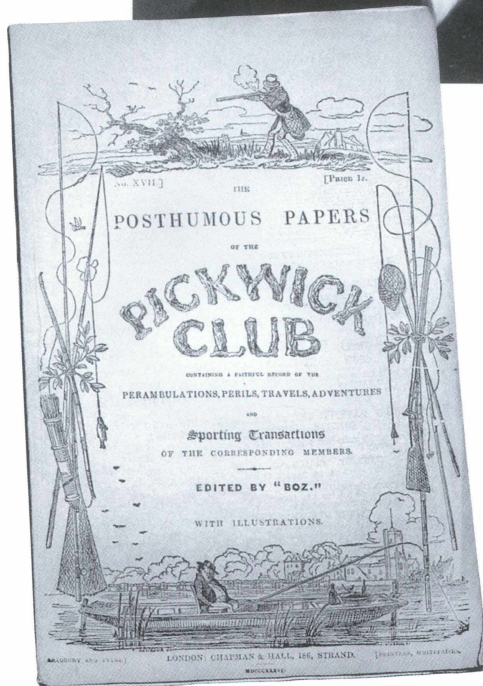


*Oliver asking for more.*


# Years On

become more acceptable—or at least more prevalent.) If a Nineteenth-century title is rebound, which is preferred: a contemporary full calf or a modern morocco? What about the ads and other inserts in parts issues? Ownership inscriptions? Levels of foxing for certain titles? All in all, it's just more complicated. That's my long-winded way of saying that price guides for Nineteenth-century literature are harder to nail down, or require a broader range. Some titles will have a very broad range (e.g. *The Pickwick Papers* and *A Christmas Carol*)—so broad as to be of no help without experience in this or that particular book.

Each Dickens title presents its own set of points and acceptable compromises, and these are dealt with pretty thoroughly in the September 1997 issue of *Firsts* (Volume 7, Number 9). This revisiting will not repeat those details so, if you're interested, you should consult the five articles in that issue: "Strategies of Collecting," a chronological title-by-title guide to Dickens' major works, what to



look for from a collector's standpoint and what the books were worth in various formats; "In the Beginning," about *Sketches by Boz*; "Rise to Fame," about how *Pickwick* changed the world of reading and publishing; "The Charles Dickens Reference Shelf"; and "Great Complications," which puts into perspective the intricacies of the bibliography and pricing of *Great Expectations* (which was also the subject of that month's "Books Into Film" column).

Charles Dickens remains as popular as ever. His first editions are and always will be collected. He's a rock solid blue chip if ever there was one. Let's take a look at the state of affairs, 10 years on. 

# Dickens Values, 1997-2007

IN THIS CHART, it is assumed that a BOUND copy is attractive and sound full polished calf or morocco, nothing extraordinary. ORIGINAL CLOTH assumes an above-average copy, very good to near fine; truly fine could double the near fine price. PARTS assumes respectably attractive and collating decently close to Hatton and Cleaver. Again, fine condition of the wrappers would push up the suggested price. In some parts issues, particular ads are of particular note (e.g. Lett's in *Copperfield* and the cork ad in *Drood*). One should consult the original September 1997 Dickens issue of *Firsts* to get a feeling for what types of copies in each instance are being compared. The text in that issue will also explain why some of the entries below have such a broad range (e.g., *Pickwick* in parts) or seem counterintuitive in the overall picture (*Sketches* and *Oliver* in parts; *Great Expectations* in cloth

and bindings; and *A Tale of Two Cities* in parts and cloth). Auction records and other listings are too numerous to be specifically cited and certain individual records or entries are often too anomalously high or low to be relied upon. Dealer prices are always copy specific and there are a lot of variables with first edition Charles Dickens; only dealers with a lot of experience with Dickens in volume at every condition level can really be counted trustworthy as price guides.

These December 2007 prices are generic, as defined above, based on my 18 years experience and constant tracking of the marketplace.

"N/A" means not applicable, in that a particular format was not specifically price-estimated in the September 1997 issue of *Firsts* or the 1998 edition of the Ahearn's *Collected Books: The Guide to Values*.

TITLE	<i>Firsts</i> 1997	Ahearn 1998	<i>Firsts</i> 2007
<b>Sketches by Boz</b>			
<i>Sketches by "Boz"</i>			
First and Second Series, London: Macrone, 1836 and [1837]			
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$10,000-\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000-\$20,000
BOUND:	n/a	\$3,000	\$3,000-\$5,000
Chapman and Hall, 1839			
PARTS:	\$15,000+	\$30,000	\$35,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	n/a	n/a	\$4,000
BOUND:	\$350-\$500	n/a	\$500-\$1,000
<b>The Pickwick Papers</b>			
<i>The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club</i>			
Chapman and Hall, 1837 [Parts issue began April 1836]			
PARTS:	\$3,500-\$20,000	\$5,000	\$5,000-\$25,000
(There are LOTS of points to consider. There are no "prime Pickwicks in parts available; a set would bring \$250,000)			
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$2,500-\$10,000	\$5,000	\$6,000-\$20,000 (FINE would be \$50,000)
BOUND:	<\$1,000	\$600	\$1,500-\$3,000

TITLE	<i>First</i> 1997	Ahearn 1998	<i>First</i> 2007
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## Oliver Twist

*Oliver Twist; or, The Parish Boy's Progress*

Bentley three-decker, 1838

ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$7,500-\$10,000	\$15,000 ( <i>with first points</i> ) \$3,500 ( <i>with second points</i> )	\$8,000-\$15,000
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This is where Charles Dickens really starts in the American experience and imagination. General American readership and the school curriculums tend to ignore *Sketches by Boz* and *The Pickwick Papers*. (*Sketches*, okay, but *Pickwick*? One of the world's truly great pieces of fiction?) *Oliver Twist* is really not at all rare in original cloth in average or better condition, but the marketplace likes this book more than I do.

BOUND:	\$2,000+	\$2,000-\$3,500	\$3,500-\$4,500
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*The Adventures of Oliver Twist*

Bradbury & Evans, 1846 one-volume octavo revision

PARTS:	n/a	\$15,000	\$25,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	n/a	\$2,500	\$4,000
BOUND:	n/a	\$400	\$800-\$1,000

## Nicholas Nickleby

*The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*

Chapman and Hall, 1839 [Parts issue began April 1838]

PARTS:	"up to \$5,000"	\$2,000	\$4,000-\$5,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$5,000-\$8,000	\$3,500	\$5,000-\$8,000

(FINE would be \$20,000)

BOUND:	<\$1,000	\$450	\$1,500-\$2,000
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The marketplace doesn't seem to like this novel as much as I do. In my opinion, it's one of Dickens' finest novels, and a early balancing act *par excellence* of his darker and lighter sides.

## Master Humphrey's Clock (comprising *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*)

*Master Humphrey's Clock*

Chapman and Hall, 1840-1841 [Parts issue began April 1840]

88 WEEKLY PARTS:	\$2,500-\$3,000	\$2,500	\$3,000-\$6,000
20 MONTHLY PARTS:	\$2,500-\$3,000	\$2,000	\$3,000-\$5,000
CLOTH (First stamping):	\$1,250-\$1,500	\$1,250	\$2,000
BOUND:	n/a	\$400	\$950

Not rare in nice condition in any of the above formats, and the above ranges assume a better condition than often seen with other, more popular titles. Title is not well known to the general public now because the two novels are mostly only known separately.

First separate printings of *Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* are not really "collectable" but should be considered if in original cloth in near fine or better condition; they'll still be affordable.

## Martin Chuzzlewit

*The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*

Chapman and Hall, 1844 [Parts issue began January 1843]

Parts:	\$1,250-\$1,750	\$2,000	\$3,000-\$5,000
Original cloth:	\$1,000-\$2,000	\$6,000	\$3,000-\$6,000
Bound:	\$350-\$650	\$400	\$1,250-\$2,000

## THE CHRISTMAS BOOKS

I will deal with *A Christmas Carol* on its own and the subsequent titles together. I will estimate prices on copies in original cloth only for two reasons: They are readily available in original cloth, and bindings on these tend to be finer bindings than standard, often quite decorated, and therefore expensive on their own account.

### A Christmas Carol

*A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*

Chapman and Hall [December 1843]

One must refer to the original *First*s issue for a summary of points involving text, title-page, endpapers and casing. In that original article, I did not hazard a range of value for this title because it would have been embarrassingly widespread. It still is because of all the variables and the increments of condition. One should only buy this book from a qualified dealer or get a qualified dealer to vet a copy you are considering from a dealer with limited experience.

<i>First</i> s 1997	Ahearn 1998	<i>First</i> s 2007
I didn't put in a range but, if forced to, I would have said \$3,000-\$25,000	\$3,500-\$20,000	\$5,000-\$50,000

### The Chimes; The Cricket on the Hearth; The Battle of Life; The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain

*The Chimes. A Goblin Story of Some Bells That Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In.*  
Chapman and Hall, 1845 [i.e., December 1844]

*The Cricket on the Hearth. A Fairy Tale of Home.*  
Bradbury and Evans, 1846 [i.e., December 1845]

*The Battle of Life. A Love Story.*  
Bradbury and Evans, 1846

*The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain. A Fancy for Christmas-Time.*  
Bradbury and Evans, 1848

The ranges below are for "standard to gorgeous" and assuming third or fourth state engraved title for *Battle of Life*.

<i>First</i> s 1997	Ahearn 1998	<i>First</i> s 2007
\$250-\$1,000	\$750 for <i>Chimes</i> \$750 for <i>Cricket</i> \$600-\$1,250 for <i>Battle</i> <i>Haunted Man</i> not listed	\$750-\$2,500

TITLE	<i>First</i> s 1997	Ahearn 1998	<i>First</i> s 2007
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### Dombey and Son

*Dombey and Son*

Bradbury and Evans, 1848 [Parts issue began October 1846]

PARTS:	\$1,000-\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000-\$3,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$1,000-\$8,000	\$3,500	\$2,500-\$8,000
BOUND:	\$500	\$450	\$1,500-\$2,000

### David Copperfield

*The Personal History of David Copperfield*

Bradbury and Evans, 1850 [Parts issue began May 1849]

PARTS: ( <i>with Lett's ad correct</i> )	\$8,500-\$12,000	\$8,500	\$10,000-\$15,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$7,500 +	\$7,500	\$8,500-\$12,500
BOUND:	\$1,000-\$1,500	\$750	\$1,500-\$2,500

TITLE	<i>First</i> 1997	Ahearn 1998	<i>First</i> 2007
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## Bleak House

*Bleak House*

Bradbury and Evans, 1853 [Parts issue began March 1852]

PARTS:	\$1,000-\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,000-\$3,500
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$3,000+	\$4,500	\$3,500-\$6,000
BOUND:	\$500	\$400	\$1,250-\$1,750

## Hard Times

*Hard Times. For These Times.*

Bradbury and Evans, 1854

PARTS: No parts issue. Serialized in *Household Words* from April though August, 1854.

ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$1,000-\$1,750	\$1,500	\$2,000-\$2,500
BOUND:	<i>Too readily available in original cloth to have to buy in a binding, unless preferred.</i>		

## Little Dorrit

*Little Dorrit*

Bradbury and Evans, 1857 [Parts issue began December 1855]

PARTS:	\$1,000-\$2,500	\$2,500	\$4,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$2,500-\$5,000	\$3,500	\$5,000-\$7,500
BOUND:	\$500	n/a	\$1,500

## A Tale of Two Cities

*A Tale of Two Cities.*

Chapman and Hall, 1859 [Parts issue began July 1859]

[Serialized in *All the Year Round* from April to November 1859]

PARTS:	\$10,000+	\$12,500	\$20,000-\$25,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$5,000-\$15,000+	\$10,000	\$20,000-\$30,000
BOUND:	>\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,500-\$3,500

## Great Expectations

*Great Expectations*

Chapman and Hall, 1861

[Serialized in *All the Year Round* from December 1860 to August 1861]

*No parts issue.*

ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$25,000-\$45,000	\$25,000	\$75,000-\$100,000
BOUND:	\$7,500+	\$8,500	\$15,000-\$30,000

## Our Mutual Friend

*Our Mutual Friend*

Chapman and Hall, 1865 [Parts issue began in May 1864]

PARTS:	\$1,000-\$2,000	\$1,750	\$3,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH:	\$1,000-\$2,000	\$2,500	\$3,500
BOUND:	n/a	\$350	\$1,250

## Edwin Drood

*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

Chapman and Hall, 1870 [Parts issue April-September]

PARTS: ( <i>with cork ad</i> )	\$1,000-\$1,250	\$1,000	\$2,000
ORIGINAL CLOTH: ( <i>sawtooth</i> )	\$500	\$750	\$1,500-\$2,000

*Too common in parts and original cloth to settle for a bound copy unless that is preferred.*