

# A 'Dickens' of good time along Holly's Battle Alley

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special writer

"Roasted chestnuts! Get your hot roasted chestnuts here, mate!"  
"Hot cider! Warm your hands on a cup of hot cider!"

Dirty faced merchants hawking their wares from outdoor booths on a cold December day, wearing knickers and torn gloves. Street people entertaining the crowds then passing the hat. Sleight rides behind horses, jingling with bells. The little pedestrian alley looks and sounds like a scene from a Dickens novel. You might even expect to see Scrooge walking purposefully to work, scornfully viewing Christmas decorations and chiding holiday shoppers.

In Holly's Battle Alley that's exactly what you'll see, but watch out, Scrooge doesn't take kindly to folks who aren't working, and he's not afraid to tell them so!

Holly is offering the Christmas spirit to visitors to the little town. With a downtown which boasts Victorian storefronts, Holly is a natural for the Dickens Olde Fashioned Christmas Festival. Joining Scrooge are other characters — the Christmas Ghols, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim and Old Marley — in tales of a Dickens' Christmas.

**MOST OF THE** activities center around Battle Alley, which was originally known as Martha Street. In the early 1900s, Martha Street was lined with bars and taverns. Holly was a railroad town in those days, with two different lines running through the village.

Fairground workers would visit the taverns on Martha Street. Later, when spirits were high, fights would break out between groups from the two railroads. After a particularly raucous brawl, Martha Street became Battle Alley.

Now Battle Alley is home to all kinds of shops, selling romantic Victorian merchandise, antiques and gifts.

During the Dickens Festival, the alley is also crowded with outdoor merchants. Many provide food — baked potatoes with all the trimmings, chargrilled sausage sandwiches, hot cider, funnel cakes, spiced almonds and, of course, roasted chestnuts.

There's also booths with unique gifts. One sells ocarinas, small, round carved flutes. Another sells unusual kaleidoscopes, including a huge one on a pedestal. Still another sells handmade dolls.

The already festive atmosphere is enlivened more by all sorts of entertainment. There is a family of jugglers — a father and his two sons — who juggle a flaming torch, a fry pan and an egg, cooking the egg in the pan over the torch as a finale.

**THERE IS A** sword swallower, and you can stand up close while he swallows the torch and watch him struggle to get it out. There's also a myriad of choirs and carolers, and even a brass band.

One of the most outstanding acts in Battle Alley this year is the Impassioned Troupe — Glenn Quill and Mrs. Peerybingle. They make hapless shoppers into helping them with a variety of comedy skits throughout the day. In one, Mrs. Peerybingle teaches manners to an impatient dragon. In another, greedy pirates sing about their exploits.

If you get hungry during the festival — in between your baked potato and funnel cake — the Holly Hotel is open for lunch and dinner. One of the cornerstones of Battle Alley, the hotel was originally built in 1891.

The structure has weathered several fires, reopening in 1989 after the last one as a restaurant only. The setting is clearly Victorian with lace curtains, stained glass in the windows, old-fashioned mirrors and prints and an axminster carpet.

The menu features many creative offerings — dishes like chicken strudel at lunch and roast lingonberry duck at dinner. The surroundings are beautiful, the service is pleasant, if somewhat slow, and the food is very good. Reservations are suggested during the festival. Call (313) 634-5208.

**HOLLY RESIDENTS** seem to enjoy the festival, which is in its 17th year, as much as the visitors. Volunteers serve as the Dickens characters and provide much of the entertainment, and most of the booths are manned by people from the area.

The whole town celebrates, decorated with simple, old-fashioned garlands and bows. Local people just seem to want to be there. Eve Dennison used to own one of the shops in Battle Alley. She's retired now, but has a booth during the Dickens Festival.

"I just love the festival," she said. "We're trying to give the impression of an old market where vendors shout and barter their wares."

They have hit that goal and surpassed it, creating for visitors just a wee bit of merry olde England and a lot of holiday fun.

The Dickens Olde Fashioned Festival continues on weekends until Christmas. The final weekend, which extends through Monday, Dec. 24, will be Father Christmas Weekend. Father Christmas, dressed in traditional green instead of the more modern red, will hand out gifts.

Call the Holly Chamber of Commerce at (313) 634-1900 for more information.



photos by PHYLLIS KREGOR STILLMAN

Jugglers James (left) and Paul Spitzer entertain the crowds in the tradition of Charles Dickens at Holly's Dickens Festival.



Dressed in 18th century clothing, carolers strike a "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" pose while singing.



Wearing a fur-trimmed green cape and a wreath made of holly, Dickens' Ghost of Christmas Present mingles with visitors to Holly's Battle Alley.

## Undoing a tattoo is a pain

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"SAY YOU HAVE a red piece of tattoo, when the beam is absorbed by the red, it's actually burning it," he explained. "If I can do it in several visits, I can just burn it gently each time then the person forms new skin."

"It has to be a period of time just enough to destroy some of the pigment and not the deep tissue."

Weissman, who recently retired from practice, said he removes the tattoo with a series of visits based on the size of the body marking. The average design, like an anchor on the arm, takes about a half dozen sittings that last about 20 minutes, spaced out by at least two weeks. That gives the skin a chance to develop a scab and the flesh to heal, he said.

There is no infection because bacteria can't exist at 10,000 degrees and there is no need for aftercare, he added. The total cost is \$300.

Patients with green or greenish blue colors in the tattoo would be referred to a physician with a ruby laser. That laser uses a ruby crystal and recognizes all colors except red.



photos by JIM JADDFELD/staff photographer  
Chris Page did a tattoo of a single rose on the ankle of his wife, Paula.

"The scarring is very little unlike the carbon dioxide laser (also used in tattoo removal) which is not color sensitive and will remove anything," Weissman said.

There is a layer of yellowish white fat beneath the epidermis, the outer layer of skin. The Argon laser beam, if it reaches that level, will bounce back, but a carbon dioxide laser won't, producing a major scar.

**IN THE PAST**, tattoos have been removed by surgery, skin abrasives, carbon dioxide laser and acid, but Weissman believes those may all be unnecessary with the Argon Laser. But he stresses that it's not a miracle worker.

## Tattoos come of age as artwork

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lived exposure to the sun can cause a tattoo to lose its glossy or colorful appearance.

"You can't tell how the person's skin is going to take color, whether the person is black or white," Woodlan said. "On a dark-skinned person some of the brightness isn't going to be as vivid in a lot of cases. But in some cases, it might not make much difference. It's more the body's metabolism."

Woodlan added that he recom-

mends tattoos in red, orange and green to his black customers.

There are sayings about the mixture of beauty, vanity and pain. No matter how professional, a tattoo artist can't prevent pain, but Woodlan said that what pain there is isn't bad.

"IT FEELS LIKE a sunburn while someone is scratching you," he said. "Your body produces a chemical, endorphin, the body's own morphine-like painkiller. As an artist continues to tattoo the skin, the body sends the

endorphin chemical to that area and a natural numbing process begins."

By the time the outline is finished, the inner area about to be shaded and colored is so anesthetized that the rest of the procedure is relatively painless, Woodlan said.

As for people wearing tattoos

Monica Stapleton of Taylor beat out her boyfriend Jim Hawes of Canton, a mixer at Awrey Bakery, when it came to getting a tattoo. She sports a rose with his name across the ribbon on it.



Duane Fager of House of Tattoos in Westland works on clown on the forearm of Dan Allen of Wayne.