

800 Vine Street
Cincinnati, Ohio
45202-2071
www.CincinnatiLibrary.org

Phyllis Hegner
Assistant Manager
Phone 513-369-4571
Fax 513-369-4564
Phyllis.Hegner@
CincinnatiLibrary.org

Richard Helmes
Public Information Officer
Phone 513-369-6959
Fax 513-369-4564
Rick.Helmes@
CincinnatiLibrary.org



Press
Release

October 28, 2004

Cruikshank Exhibit Illustrates Wit & Humor at the Main Library (November 19 – January 30)

The Rare Books & Special Collections Department located in the Main Library of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County has over 230 titles illustrated by the Cruikshanks. Come enjoy the delightful illustrations in the exhibit—**Wit & Humor: Illustrating Life Through the Artistry of George and Robert Cruikshank** on display November 19–January 30.

George Cruikshank (1792–1878) was once dubbed “the greatest comic etcher that ever lived” by art historian Albert Cohn. A lifelong Londoner, Cruikshank was a successful juvenile actor, whose gift for play-acting, mimicry, and storytelling informed all of his illustration. His elder brother Robert also inherited the artistic talent of their father Isaac, a noted graphics illustrator in his own right, but never achieved the acclaim nor produced the sheer volume of work that George did.

George first became very popular with his caricatures of Napoleon I and members of the British parliament. He used his sharp wit to poke fun at royalty, society, and politicians. Both humorous and poignant, his imagery is so stylized and vivid, as well as inventive and packed with detail, that one can immediately recognize Cruikshank.

In 1820 George began working with his brother Robert, illustrating Pierce Egan’s *Life In London*, which was published in monthly parts with 36 hand-colored aquatints. This widely popular publication marked the beginning of George’s move from political caricature to social observation and book illustration.

George’s book illustrations brought him recognition as the leading exponent of the art in Europe. His prodigious output of about 5,000 works included illustrations for Charles Dickens’ early works, the first English translation of the Grimm Brother’s *Fairy Tales* (London, 1823), the 1852 London edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and in 1853 he published his own *Fairy Library*.

Cruikshank illustrated Dickens' first book, *Sketches by Boz* (1836) and his third, *Oliver Twist* (1838), which was the last Dickens novel that Cruikshank illustrated. His collaborations with Dickens became strained since he felt cheated and never received the credit that he thought he deserved. George's eccentric personality was legendary and made it difficult for him to work at length with anyone.

At the age of 55 George became a passionate temperance advocate and gave up tobacco. His work *The Bottle* (1847) consists of a series of eight plates outlining the progress of a drunkard's life. In 1862, he published a work entitled *What Put My Pipe Out, Or, Incidents In The Life Of A Clergyman*, which conveyed the evils of tobacco.

In the 1850s George's career declined. Robert died in 1856, having illustrated only 17 books. By the late 1860s reprints of George's earlier works sparked a revival and he continued illustrating until his death in 1878.

Image Captions:

Illustration from *What Put My Pipe Out, or, Incidents in the Life of a Clergyman*

"Tom & Jerry in the Salon at Covent Garden" from *Life In London*, 1821

- ✓ **Our goal is to make our programs accessible to everyone. Please request ADA services one week in advance at 513-369-4406 (TTY 369-4409).**
- ✓ **Information about events at the Main Library and 41 branch libraries is available on the Internet site: www.CincinnatiLibrary.org.**