Mark Twain Circular

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James S. Leonard, Editor, Mark Twain Circular
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Mark Twain and Ned Buntline Revisited

The article "Mark Twain and Ned Buntline Aboard a Sacramento Riverboat," which appeared in the Oct.-Dec. 1993 Mark Twain Circular without attribution, was, in fact, authored by Robert A. Pepper, Professor Emeritus, San José State University. My (clearly attributed) apologies to Professor Pepper for failing to acknowledge his contribution. In the future I'll try to limit myself to blunders at my own expense.

James S. Leonard
Editor, MT Circular

Mark Twain at MLA 1993

The Mark Twain Circle was active at MLA in Toronto with two seminars in the program, and in the Mark Twain Suite two cocktail hour readings and two breakfast hour presentations. An Executive Committee meeting was also held. Titles of programs and details have been published previously, so I will not present them again here. The cocktail hour and breakfast sessions, as they have in the past, offered a good chance for younger and older scholars to mix, trade professional information, and discuss publications and scholarly projects, as well as providing a setting in which the presenters could talk their papers rather than read them, and make engaging side comments and responses to questions that are often impossible in the more constricted formal program settings at MLA.

The Executive Committee accepted the Executive Director's Report, which showed our treasury to be in satisfactory condition. Rising costs and projects, however, led to a vote to raise the dues to $10 annually, which is still a bargain as most author societies go.

David Burrow has carried to completion the project of membership envelopes, and anyone wishing a stack of envelopes to distribute at various conferences should write to Dave at Northern Illinois University. Mike Kiskis at Elmira will soon have a number for distribution as well.

Two nominations were made. Michael Kiskis was nominated to become Vice President of the Circle at the 1994 ALA Conference in San Diego, when Vic Doyno will rise to the Presidency. Jennifer Rafferty was nominated to join the Board as a member at large.

Affiliate Status at SAMLA for the Mark Twain Circle has been obtained by Joe Alvarez. The Executive Board named Joe as
the official liaison with SAMLA. He has issued a CALL FOR PAPERS on Pudd'nhed Wilson (see “Call for Papers” below) with a May 30 deadline for reading at the SAMLA convention in Baltimore, November 11-14.

Our sister organization, the American Humor Studies Association, which loaned us several MLA slots while we were petitioning MLA for affiliate status, has offered to co-sponsor the Mark Twain suite with a modest annual donation in exchange for holding its executive board meetings in the suite, probably beginning in 1996. The Executive Board accepted this offer with thanks. Once the MLA reorganizes its convention slot assignment policies, the Circle will also hold its meetings in the suite rather than in an assigned conference room. Special thanks are due to Tom Tenney and the Mark Twain Journal for co-sponsoring the Suite at Toronto.

Victoria Thorpe-Miller is organizing the Circle’s High School Initiative and is interested in collecting names and strategies for the committee which she heads. Possible services for high school teachers might include a regular column in the Circular (featuring articles such as Jennifer Rafferty’s “Resources for Teaching Mark Twain: A Mark Twain Newspaper” in this issue), a separate mailing on “classroom idea exchanges,” and/or other services or information to those who join the Circle.

The Twain Forum on Internet was created by Taylor Roberts, who is now at the University of Florida, Columbia. Two years old, it now has 170 subscribers and is free. The Circle is welcome to promote itself and its activities on the forum. Taylor would like to do more book reviews and convention paper presentations; he requests and encourages submissions.

Most happily, looking forward to the San Diego American Literature Association Convention on June 2-5, 1994, the Executive Board voted a Distinguished Achievement Award to Robert Hirst of the Mark Twain Papers, to be awarded at that time. This is an advance word; more formal announcement will be published closer to the time. Programs for MLA 1994 (San Diego) and MLA 1995 (Baltimore) are in process now. The MLA program will be finalized on April 1, and tentatively includes panels on Mark Twain and Sex, and Mark Twain and Other Authors. The panels for the 1995 are tentatively scheduled to be on Huck Finn and on Mark Twain, travel, and related matters.

Respectfully submitted,
David E. E. Sloane, President, Mark Twain Circle

Distinguished Achievement Award.
David E. E. Sloane (U of New Haven)
James S. Leonard (The Citadel)

Mark Twain at ALA 1994

The Mark Twain Circle will present two panels at the American Literature Association Conference in San Diego, June 2-5:
I. “Conceptualizing Mark Twain’s Style” (Chair: David E. E. Sloane, U of New Haven)
Papers:
2. Christine De Vinne (Ohio State U), “History, Htery, and Heteroglossia: Multiple Voices in Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc”
3. William B. Millard (Rutgers U), “‘All the Poetry that you can’t understand’: Emersonian Strategies in the Language of Mark Twain”
Respondent: Laura Skandera-Trombley, SUNY-Potsdam
II. “Mark Twain and the Matter of Racial Response” (Chair: Vic Doyon, SUNY-Buffalo)
Papers:
Respondent: Jim Leonard, The Citadel
In addition, the American Humor Studies Association will sponsor a session titled “Jokes, Roles, and Identities, and the Mark Twain Circle” will attempt to convene a special gathering (possibly including an open cash bar cocktail party) for the purpose of presenting Robert Hirst of the Mark Twain Papers with a

Mark Twain at SAMLA

Call for Papers

In 1994 the Mark Twain Circle will for the first time sponsor a session at SAMLA (November 11-13, 1994; Baltimore, MD). The session title is “The Pudd’nhed Wilson Centennial: New Views.” Send abridged or completed 10-page paper to Joe Alvarez, Central Piedmont Community College, P. O. Box 35009, Charlotte, NC 28225-5009. Telephone: 704-342-6691; fax 704-342-5930; e-mail jalvarez@char.vnet.net. Participants must join SAMLA ($15.00 per year); deadline May 1, 1994.

Resources for Teaching Mark Twain: A Mark Twain Newspaper

Last semester I taught an undergraduate course on Mark Twain at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. I had a class of thirty-three students, who were predominantly freshmen with few prospective English majors. Since we were conveniently located in Hartford, which Mark Twain called home from 1871 to 1892, it made sense to have them do some research on Twain’s relationship to the life of the city. My students chose topics like The Monday Evening Club, Twain’s Hartford Politics, the design of his home, Twain and Twichell, Twain and Mental Telegraphy, Twain and Christian Science, etc. They used primary materials from the Mark Twain Memorial’s collection in Trinity’s Watkinson Library to supplement their research in Twain biographies and in Andrews’ book Nook Farm: Mark Twain’s Hartford Circle. The students gave their findings to the class and then wrote newspaper articles on their research. We then created our own newspaper which we professionally printed by the Norwich Bulletin. To aid in editing, students sent their articles into a DOC/TEXT (all-campus) file for our course. Using Aldus PageMaker software, we formatted the paper and left blocked out areas for photos. The Mark Twain Memorial was generous in helping us with research and in allowing us to scan some photo-images into
our paper. This project would be successful in a high school class as well as in undergraduate courses. If you would like more information on this project or would like to receive a xerox copy of the Twain Tribune, please contact me at 203-297-5256. Limited quantities are available.

Jennifer L. Rafferty
Visiting Assistant Professor
Department of English
Towson College
Hartford, CT 06106

Circular Exchange

Everett Emerson is revising his literary biography of Samuel Clemens. He is taking advantage of books such as Carl Dotimesch's and Jeff Stonebrink's, and he is seeking to eliminate all errors, including embarrassing one reviewers found and those identified by friends. He has consulted comments from members of the Circle. Now retired, he can be reached at 130 Lake Ellen Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

Mark Twain's "Original Jacob's": A Probable Explanation

Long ago, I opened up the puzzle of Mark Twain's recurring uses of the "original Jacob's" phrase in American Notes and Queries (April 1976, pp. 121-23), and with bulldog tenacity I am returning here to this problem fifty years later. The most intriguing example is the appearance of a chapter title in Life on the Mississippi (henceforth: LOM) that echoes the chapter title to which it seems related—aside from the general treatment of how "Mark Twain" acquired his world-famous nickname. I think James M. Cox's discussion in Mark Twain: The Face of Humor, 1966) rightly linked the pseudonym to a central aspect of Clemens' persona as a writer: his propensity for telling lies or fictions—that is, "elaborating upon facts. If we will ever find a persuasive explanation of "original Jacob's," it shall fulfill at least two requirements: chronologically, it should come at a period before or during the years when the pseudonym was first used; biographically, it should have some significant relationship to Clemens' career. There is a consensus among scholars that "Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain" in fruitful and sometimes told stories (as well as in biographical materials)—a name that might have been more appropriate for a non-black author. Of Yellin's initial summary (xii-xiv), concluding that "Clemens and the visitor's strange desire to create genuine Negro characters in his fiction. At this level, the word "original" means: Harriet Ann Jacobs—and not "Linda Brent.

Other dimensions of this problem involve the complicated story of Child's services as "editor"—spelled out in great detail by Yellin in his introduction and notes. When Jacobs first began publishing her story in Harriet Gage's New York Tribune as "Letter from a Fugitive Slave" (1853), a note made clear that the only editorial changes were "corrections in punctuation and the omission of one or two passages" (Yellin, xiii). As Yellin writes: "...the language and syntax of her (Jacob's) letters make it possible to trace her influence by anyone else" (xxi). Yellin quotes a letter by Child: "I abridged, and struck out superfluous words sometimes; but I don't think altered fifty words in the entire volume" (xxii). Yellin's central point is that "Twentieth-century scholars of Afro-American literature assign considerable significance not only to the role of the white editor, but also to the authenticating documents that accompany these texts" (xxii-xxiii). Also: "The struggle for freedom is not only recurrent, it is ubiquitous" (xxvii). There is no need to repeat Yellin's Introduction, which elaborately and eloquently places the Jacobs story in various contexts of anti-slavery literature and problems especially of women slaves sexually abused by white masters. However, for Mark Twain scholarship the problem remains of clarifying how the young Sam Clemens, during the years when he was "learning the river" and living out west, probably also quoting a well-known use of "original Jacob's" that his readers would recognize. But this need not be the case. I. A. Richards, in How to Read a Page (1942), Chapter Ten, "Seem, Be, Do, See," once took up this subtle question. The writers usually wobble every bit as much on their readers between naming something with their sentences and saying something else. While this is so their utterances must be the pivotal points of controversy. Our usual procedures when we are aware of this snare are:

1. To put the name in quotation marks to hint that it is the word as a name we are talking about, not names. E.g., "Freedom" is the absence of restrictions. . . .

2. To expand the sentence to become an explicit naming statement. E.g., "I understand by Freedom, etc." . . . Quotation marks, as we have seen, have other uses and can easily fit a naming statement with the suggestion that words like Freedom (or What-not) anyhow. (167-168)

In brief, quotes are often used for purposes of irony, duplicity, or humor—appropriate of course for the writings of "Mark Twain." Thus, perhaps Clemens was not quoting LOM but actually quoting a phrase, based on the Jacobs controversy but intended as a sort of joke. (And see the discussion of "Originality" in Raymond Williams, Keywords (1976)).

To conclude, I think this hypothesis probable because it satisfies both the chronological and biographical requirements. Of course, it is still possible that some student of the 1850s and 1860s will run across texts in which the phrase was used, and perhaps even picked up by others, as a key to the H. A.
Jacobs problem. But somehow I find this less plausible than the probability that Clemens, during the years when he was writing

Huckleberry Finn and LOM, made a political (abolitionists) joke, and liked this creation of his well enough to quote himself on a number of later occasions. In this case, the implication is that his pen-name meant “safe water” (the most popular interpretation), and more that it was an expression of his involvement with “unsafe” problems of slavery, the Negro, and the anti-slavery movement. Anyway, I should certainly welcome critical discussions of this proposed explanation.

Sholom S. Kahn
The Hebrew University
Jerusalem

Index to the Mark Twain Circular and
“About Mark Twain,” Vol. 6 (1992)

This index updates the ongoing listing of items in the Mark Twain Circular and items listed in Tom Tenney’s “About Mark Twain.” Each item is listed by its month’s initials (see below) followed by the page number on which the item appears. Items listed in the annotated “About Mark Twain” section are indexed as “AMT,” followed by the month’s initials and the page number. (Example: “Blair, Walter AMT, M/IA, 10.”) Both authors and subjects discussed in each listing are indexed.

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Wesley Britton
Sherman, TX

Dates to Circle

June 2-5, 1994. The Mark Twain Circle will sponsor two sessions at the American Literature Association conference in San Diego. See “Mark Twain at MLA 1994” (p. 2) for details.

Articles, etc.

BOYER, JOHN. "Perpetual Clemency: Why We Will Always Be in Twainings." *Northeast* (Sunday magazine of the Hartford Courant) (5 July): 13. A sidebar to the Condon article (see v.). The article and television shows demonstrate to Mr. Twain's continuing popularity. [Boyer is Executive Director of the Mark Twain Memorial, in Hartford.]

CONDON, GARRET. "Livy." *Northeast* (Sunday magazine of the Hartford Courant) (5 July 1992): 10-15. Strong praise for MT's wife, occasioned by the recent purchase of 79 letters (mostly unpublished) by the Mark Twain Memorial, from the estate of Chester Davis (tong the editor of the Twainian, and the one-man Mark Twain Research Foundation). Condon depicts Livy as strong, intelligent, and much in love with her husband, quoting several letters in full; they show her love for him, and her personal integrity and concern for his. Condon has consulted Twain scholars: Vera Willis, Laura Skandra-Trombley, and Justin Kaplan: Twainers will question a few interpretations, but this is a responsible and very appealing account.

HOWE, LAWRENCE. "Transcending the Limits of Experience: Mark Twain's Life in the Mississippi." *American Literature* 63 (September 1991): 479-99. LOHM's fictionalized autobiography stages MT's Mississippi experiences as allegories of the Civil War, to compensate for a lack of experience in the war which threatens his desire for representative status. Drawing on Freud and Bakhtin, Howe shows that the cub's conflicts with pilot/father figures undermines the authority of the pilot, supplanting it with that of the writer. Writerly authority formalizes diversity and expansiveness in the text of LOM, thereby conferring epic status on MT.


McMILLAN, LIZ. "New Theory about Mark Twain's Sexuality Brings Strong Reactions f rom Experimt. Biogrpapher Sugests Author's Early Male Friends Were Really Romantic in Character." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (8 September 1993): A7-A8, A15. On a paper delivered at a conference at Elmira College in August, and book forthcoming in 1995, in which Andrew J. Hoffman argues that MT's friendships with Dan De Quille, Artemus Ward, and Clement Rice in Virginia City were homoerotic. "This is part of his biography that has escaped attention," Mr. Hoffman said in an interview last week. "It mounts up so much that it's hard to argue against it. It may be hard to argue against it, but Mr. Hoffman freely admits that he has no proof for his thesis, and he doubts that any will ever be found." A number of MT scholars queried have expressed disbelief.

Letters to the Editor in the 6 October issue continue the discussion. Bill Houghton says: "There is an undertone throughout the article of great uneasiness about the possibility of Twain being homosexual, as if the very prospect made him somehow less than the writer he was." Gary Schmitz briefly writes: "The reports of my homosexuality are greatly exaggerated. Mark Twain."
LIBRARIANS: Please note in your computer that the *Mark Twain Circular* provides publication information on the *Mark Twain Journal*. This may help reduce avoidable claims.

FULFILLMENT NOTICE: Both 1991 issues of the *Mark Twain Journal* (29:1, Spring and 29:2, Fall) were mailed to subscribers on June 30, 1993. We hope to mail both 1992 issues (30:1, Spring and 30:2, Fall) in May 1994.

SERIAL LIBRARIANS: The *Mark Twain Circular* is entered selectively in the annual bibliographies of the Modern Language Association and the Modern Humanities Research Association, and in the *American Humanities Index*, the *Literary Criticism Register*, *American Literary Scholarship*, and "A Checklist of Scholarship on Southern Literature," which appears annually in the *Mississippi Quarterly* (Spring issues).

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