Media Update No. 2

This article updates information on Mark Twain media not listed in The Mark Twain Encyclopedia or the first “Media Update” published both in the Mark Twain Circular (July-Sept. 1995) and on the Mark Twain Forum online. Please forward any information not listed in these sources to me for inclusion in future updates.

Publications

R. Kent Rasmussen’s 1995 Mark Twain A to Z contains much information on Twain media not listed in The Mark Twain Encyclopedia. His reference work contains synopses of Twain films, such as the two Adventures of Mark Twain, and his articles on books made into movies, such as A Connecticut Yankee and Huckleberry Finn, provide lengthier analysis than was possible in the Encyclopedia. For example, his commentary on A Connecticut Yankee includes a musical version not previously listed along with cast notes and observations on various films’ approaches.

Chapter 16 of Charles Norton’s 1983 Writing Tom Sawyer (McFarland and Co.) is a brief, four-page discussion of film adaptations of the novel, emphasizing the early black-and-white versions beginning in 1917. The previous chapter discusses dramatic stagings of Tom Sawyer during Twain’s lifetime.

Andrew Hoffman’s 1991 “The Unspendable Fortune” (in the Connecticut Review) traces the development of “The One Million Pound Banknote” into Trading Places, a 1983 John Landis comedy starring Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd. Hoffman also discusses Man With a Million (1954), a Gregory Peck film directed by Ronald Neame also based on Twain’s story. Hoffman describes this film as being closer to Twain than Trading Places, and notes MGM-UA has not issued the 1954 film on video and has destroyed most of the prints, and that the film is only available on rare television airings and 16-mm. non-theatrical releases available in film archives such as the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, CA. (See also Movies, below.)

James S. Moy’s 1993 Magical Sights: Staging the Chinese America (U of Iowa P) contains much useful discussion on Twain and Bret Harte’s 1877 play Ah Sin. Unfortunately not indexed, Moy’s lengthy passages on Ah Sin repeatedly intermingle with his broader discussions on American culture’s perceptions of the Chinese on stage.

Glen M. Johnson’s review of Clyde V. Hap’t’s Huckleberry Finn on Film: Film and Television Adaptations of Mark Twain’s Novel, 1920-1993 (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland and Company, 1994) finds Hap’t’s overview of eleven films “frustratingly uneven, but valuable for the amount of information it contains.” Despite the “omissions, oddities, and weaknesses,” Johnson praises Hap’t’s eye for visuals, Twain and movie trivia, and insights into the various endings of the films. Johnson also notes other sources on Twain media.

Movies

A third adaptation of the “Million Pound Bank Note” was released in 1994, A Million to Juan (also known...
by A Million to One), produced by Trimark Pictures and directed by Paul Rodriguez, who also stars in the title role. Other actors include Polly Draper, Larry Linville, Liz Torres and Cheech Marin. "Written by Robert Grasmere, Francisca Matos, and Mark Twain," the rather flat, low-budget effort borrows from Twain's plot, transporting the setting to a Hispanic neighborhood.

In 1995, Disney released two Twain-related projects, the juvenile-oriented A Kid in King Arthur's Court, which reprised the 1989 television version starring a child in the Hank Morgan role. Of more interest was Tom and Huck, arguably the best, if imperfect, rendition of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Directed by Peter Hewitt, starring Jonathan Taylor Thomas and Brad Renfro, the film was produced by Laurence Mark and John Baldecchi. Written by Stephen Sommers, David Loughery, and Mark Twain, the film is darker than previous versions, with much alteration of the novel's plot and characters. (Available on video.)

Director Michael Gottlieb's A Kid in King Arthur's Court is far more removed from its source, listing the authors as Michael Part and Robert L. Levy without mentioning Twain. In the film, Little Leaguer Calvin Fuller (Thomas Ian Nicholas) falls into a tunnel leading him back to the time of Camelot. Calvin befriends King Arthur (Joss Ackland) and his daughters, and helps them save their kingdom from the evil Lord Belasco (Art Malik). Produced by Robert L. Levy, Peter Abrams and J.P. Guerin for Trimark Pictures and Tapestry Films.


The PBS series Frontline episode "The Shakespeare Mystery" (#110F) quotes lengthy passages from Twain about his skepticism regarding Shakespeare's credibility. Produced and directed by Kevin Sim with correspondent Al Austin, the episode was first aired in 1989, then repeated on April 23, 1996. Transcripts are available from Journal Graphics (WGBH Educational Foundation) or at:

The script first quotes Twain's description of Shakespeare's bust, then maintains, "It was at the wheel of a Mississippi riverboat more than one hundred thirty years ago that Mark Twain began to have doubts about Shakespeare of Stratford. Twain learned the language of Shakespeare while he was learning the language of the river. From a riverboat captain who kept mixing the poetry and his commands together." Then, Horace Bixby's oration from Life on the Mississippi is quoted to illustrate the point that Twain could not believe a glove maker had the experience to write Shakespeare's plays.

One episode of CBS's Murder, She Wrote, entitled "The Wild and Wooly West," centered its plot on a Mark Twain scholar's murder as he attempted to authenticate what turned out to be a bogus Twain manuscript. Twain scholars beware!

Victor Doyo, Random House Huck Finn contributor, appeared on the Today show on May 14, 1996 and was interviewed in the studio by Katie Couric.

Music

According to Jim Zwick, the world premiere performance of "The War Prayer Oratorio" (music by Herbert Haufricht, libretto by Mark Twain) took place on April 22, 1995 at the Ulster Choral Society in Kingston, NY. An announcement and poster (which features Civil War flags rather than those of the Spanish-American War that inspired the story) can be found on the internet at:

According to Bill Cosgrove, Roger Miller's Big River (listed in the MT Encyclopedia) was presented in part on the television series Fame, including some raft scenes and the song "River in the Rain." On May 21, John Goodman sang "Government," based on Pap Finn's speech, from the same musical on the David Letterman Show.

Singer and actor Jim Post wrote the script, lyrics, and music for...
Mark Twain and the Laughing River. According to Ed DeJean, "the music/lyrics have a restful, wholesome lilt. Plus, he does a most acceptable Mark Twain as he gives his lines" accompanied by musician Luke Nelson. In early 1996, performances occurred in Old Town (North Side Chicago) in The Theatre Building, 1225 West Belmont Street. The telephone number for information or tickets is (312) 327-5252.

Harry Belafonte's 1954 recording Mark Twain and Other Folk Favourites (RCA Victor LPM-1022) is not directly related to Twain, but the title song features the words of a riverboat singer singing personal observations between river measurements. These lyrics indicate different meanings for these measurements than Twain stated in Life on the Mississippi.

Audiobooks and Radio

In 1995, Audiopartners released three cassette books: Patrick Fraley's The Complete and Unabridged Adventures of Tom Sawyer; Hal Holbrook's Mark Twain Tonight; and McAvoy Layne's Mark Twain: Wild Humorist of the West. Of these, the most significant was the long-awaited re-issue of Hal Holbrook's first two Columbia record albums of his "Mark Twain Tonight" impersonations. Layne's Mark Twain: Wild Humorist of the West, a two-cassette set of his one-man show, is less satisfying. Fraley's unabridged reading of Tom Sawyer is both useful and entertaining. (A more detailed review of these books is available at The Mark Twain Forum website.)

The Commuter's Library (Sound Room Publishers) has two audiotapecs of Mark Twain Stories. "A Double Barrel Detective Story" is one volume, and Jumping Frogs to Cannibalism includes "The Beef Contract." For information, contact them at (800) 643-0295.

In addition to "The Stolen White Elephant" adaptation listed in The Mark Twain Encyclopedia, the CBS Radio Mystery Theatre, hosted by E.G. Marshall, produced two other Mark Twain stories in 1979. "The Goddess Caper," based on "The Legend of the Capitoline Venus," featured Twain assisting a young sculptor in a script by Sam Dann. Dann also scripted a version of The Mysterious Stranger starring Tony Roberts (later a member of Woody Allen's stable of character actors) as an adult Victor Fisher who learns about the "Moral Sense from Satan. Both adaptations keep to the spirit if not the letter of Twain's stories and are well worth Twainians' attention.

Victor Doyno, Justin Kaplan, and Jane Smiley (by telephone) appeared on the May 14, 1996 Talk of the Nation program on National Public Radio, discussing the new Random House edition of Huckleberry Finn. Audio cassettes of the program may be ordered for $15.45 by contacting NPR Audio Services at (202) 414-3232.

Nearing Further Information

According to a member of the American Literature List-serve, an animated Japanese film called The Dagger of Kamui (or Kamui?) has Mark Twain speaking in Japanese.

Word has it that a popular Japanese television series features Tom Sawyer in a treehouse.

I am still seeking information on a film of Roughing It with James Daly as "an elderly Mark Twain" and Andrew Prine as the younger Sam Clemens. Robert Saudek Associates produced it.

Does anyone have information about "The Great Rocky Mountain Chase," in which Sam Clemens and Mike Fink have a contest?

Graham Allan reported hearing "a very good radio documentary dealing with Huckleberry Finn." It was broadcast in the UK in May 1996 by BBC Radio 4. "There was a good range of erudite contributors," including Justin Kaplan. Produced by Paul Quinn, but we have no other information about it.

Please send any information about Twain media adaptations not in the Encyclopedia or the first two updates to:

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Sherman, TX 75090
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MT Circular  April–June 1997  p. 3
A Short Bibliography of Twain Media Reviews


Baskin, Barbara. “Audiobook Reviews.” *Booklist* 91.10 (1/15/93): 946. Reviews audiobooks from Audio Bookshelf, including *The Mark Twain Sampler*.


Hiett, John. “Video reviews.” *Library Journal* 119.3 (2/15/94): 199. Reviews the videotapes *Mark Twain* (Famous Authors) and *William Faulkner* (Famous Authors), by Landmark Films.


Markuson, Carolyn. “Audiovisual media: CD-ROMs.” *Booklist* 92.7 (12/1/95): 645. Reviews the *CD-ROM The Best of Mark Twain*.


Mark Twain Among the Critics: Call for Essays

Twentieth-century critics have often concerned themselves with various sub- and extra-literary questions about Mark Twain—whether he practiced "bad faith" in his work, whether he subverted his genius to the status quo of the Gilded Age, whether he was a plagiarist, an opportunist, a racist, a sexist, an imperialist, a drunkard, a psychopath, a homosexual, a pedophile, etc. etc. Unpublished and recently published
essays on the skeptical side of these questions (and essays on the implications of such questions) are invited for a proposed volume edited by Jim McWilliams and Rick Hill. Payment will be in copies of the book and/or a small honorarium, pending final arrangements with the publisher. Essays should be 10-20 manuscript pages and follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Send one paper copy of abstract or complete manuscript (or a photocopy of published work) along with a vita and S.A.S.E. to Rick Hill, Department of English, Taylor University, Upland, IN 46989 by August 1, 1997. For further information, call or e-mail: Rick Hill: (765) 998-4971; rchill@tayloru.edu.

Re-Foruming

The following reproduces a message recently sent by Taylor Roberts, founder and manager (1992–97) of the electronic Mark Twain Forum, to Forum members:

This brief message is to let you know that the administration of the Mark Twain Forum has recently changed. The Forum has demanded an increasing amount of time from me, while my other (non-Twainian) responsibilities have multiplied. After considering giving up the Forum entirely, Kevin J. Bochynski has come to the rescue by assuming management of the e-mail list; I expect that my freedom from this task will allow me to maintain my participation in the Forum by continuing to coordinate and edit the book reviews, and maintain TwainWeb.

Henceforth, queries about your subscriptions to TWAIN-L should be addressed to Kevin at <kbochynski@meen.mississippi.edu>, as I no longer have any control over the e-mail list. Messages about book reviews, however, should still be addressed to me (troberts@mit.edu).

Kevin has always been very helpful to me and to all Forum members, and I’m looking forward to any new directions that he might bring to the Forum.

SAML Program

1997 SAML Annual Conference: Nov. 13–15; Peachtree Plaza; Atlanta, GA

Session Topic: Mark Twain at the End of the Century

Sponsor: Mark Twain Circle

Chair: John Bird (Winthrop U)

Secretary: Allison R. Ensor (U of Tennessee-Knoxville)

Panelists:

1. Robert A. Alsop (Southern Illinois U at Carbondale): “Atoms” and “Artificialities”: Performing Identity in Mark Twain’s A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court” (20 min.)

2. Alan Baragona (Virginia Military Institute): “Re-engineering the Connecticut Yankee for the End of a Third Century” (20 min.)

3. Terry Oggel (Virginia Commonwealth U): “Twain’s Most Troubling Statement About Race: The United States of Lycherdom: Twain Really Wrote” (20 min.)

Respondent: Louis J. Budd (Duke U) (10 min.)

Business Meeting (10 min.)

Nominating Committee: James S. Leonard (The Citadel), Alan Gribben (Auburn U-Montgomery), Janet Gabler-Hover, Chair (Georgia SU)

Current Mark Twain Bibliography

James Leonard
The Citadel

“Current Mark Twain Bibliography” is a means of giving notice of what’s new in Mark Twain scholarship. Where annotations are used, they are in most cases descriptive blurbs provided by publishers (or in some cases, by authors) with value judgments edited out. If you have recently published something that you would like to have included in this list, send it to me by e-mail (leandrdj@citadel.edu), or by other means.

Books


Mark Twain’s boyhood home of Hannibal, Missouri, often brings to mind romanticized images of Twain’s fictional characters Huck Finn or Tom Sawyer exploring caves and fishing from the banks of the Mississippi River. In City of Dust, Gregg Andrews tells another story of the Hannibal area, the very real story of the exploitation and eventual destruction of Iasley, Missouri. In 1901, the Atlas Portland Cement Company built a cement plant outside Hannibal. Shortly thereafter, Iasley, whose name was an acronym for cement manufacturing ingredients, quickly developed as a town for the plant’s predominantly immigrant labor force. The introduction of Rumanian, Slovak, Italian, and Hungarian immigrants into this agricultural area located next to Tom Sawyer’s cave on the edge of Little Dixie created cultural and social tensions. These tensions peaked during a 1910 strike when Governor Herbert S. Hadley ordered the National Guard to occupy the “foreign colony.” Following the strike, Atlas sought to control its labor force by controlling the saloons, other businesses, and real estate of Iasley. Atlas officials and Hannibal community leaders also sought to legitimize the company’s presence by portraying it as the caretaker of Twain’s boyhood home and historic heritage. Atlas steadily gained control over Iasley properties and increased its influence in the Hannibal area. Soon the company had the power to determine Iasley’s future. Ultimately, Atlas
officials, Missouri highway officials, and local business leaders promoting the growing Mark Twain tourist industry closed ranks to relocate scenic Highway 79 through the heart of Lasco, effectively destroying the town. *City of Dust* weaves together labor, social, business, immigration, and environmental history. [Text from dust jacket.]


In this study, Ladd "argues that writers like Cable, Twain, and Faulkner cannot be read exclusively within the context of a nationalistically defined 'American' literature, but must also be understood in light of the cultural legacy that French and Spanish colonialism bestowed on the Deep South and the Mississippi River Valley, specifically with respect to the very different ways these colonialist cultures conceptualized race, color, and nationality." [Text from dust jacket.]

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**Dates to Circle**

**August 14-16, 1997.** "The State of Mark Twain Studies" conference at Elmira College (Elmira, NY)

**October 9-11, 1997.** American Literature Association Symposium on "The Trickster"; Lake Tahoe, CA. Contact Jeanne Campbell Reesman (U of Texas, San Antonio).

**November 13-15, 1997.** SAMLA Annual Conference; Peachtree Plaza Hotel; Atlanta, GA. Mark Twain Circle session: "Mark Twain at the End of the Century." Chair: John Bird (Winthrop U).


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MIT Circular  April-June 1997  p. 6
ABOUT THE CIRCULAR. The *Mark Twain Circular*, newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle, was launched in January 1987 by Thomas A. Tenney (Editor of the *Mark Twain Journal*). James S. Leonard (The Citadel) assumed editorial responsibility with the February 1987 *Circular* and has continued in that capacity until the present. The *Circular* is published four times per year (Jan.–March, April–June, July–Sept., and Oct.–Dec.), and is mailed, by the editor, to all members of the Mark Twain Circle. The *Circular* prints news of Mark Twain events and scholarship, directories of members, short biographical articles and critical commentaries, and current bibliography. Subscribers are distributed among 44 states and 17 foreign countries.

ABOUT THE CIRCLE. The Mark Twain Circle of America was formed at an organizational meeting held at the 1986 Modern Language Association convention in New York; the membership has since grown to approximately 400. Current officers are displayed on p. 8. Past Presidents are Louis J. Budd, Alan Gribben, Pascal Covici, Jr., David E.E. Sloane, and Victor A. Doyno. Past Executive Coordinators: Everett Emerson, James D. Wilson, Michael J. Kiskis, and Laura Skander-Trombley. Although many members are academic specialists, the Circle also includes many non-academic Twain enthusiasts. The Circle is in communication with other Mark Twain organizations, including those associated with sites important in his life, and cooperates with them.

ABOUT THE MARK TWAIN JOURNAL. Founded in 1936 by Cyril Clemens, the *Mark Twain Journal* is the oldest American magazine devoted to a single author. In 1982, the *Journal* moved to its present home in Charleston, S.C., under the editorship of Thomas A. Tenney. There are two issues per year, Spring and Fall, with a new volume each year (rather than every second year, as in the past). The *Journal* tends to appear late, and begs your patient indulgence. New subscribers may wish to begin with the 1995 issues rather than the 1997. Back issues from 13:1 to the present are available at $5.00 each, postpaid ($2.50 on orders for ten or more; pre-1983 issues are thinner than modern ones, and some are badly reprinted). An index 1936-83 counts as a back issue.

To: Prof. Joseph A. Alvarez
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**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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**Don’t Forget:** "The State of Mark Twain Studies" Conference at Elmira College, August 14–16, 1997.

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Publication of the *Mark Twain Circular* is funded in part through a grant from the Citadel Development Foundation.

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Mark Twain Circular    ISSN 1042-5357