



Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

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Report from the President

Lawrence I. Berkove
Univ. of Michigan-Dearborn

Nov. 3, 2006

Dear Fellow Twainians:

This is the first of what I intend to be a series of regular reports on the Mark Twain Circle: what we have done, what we are doing, and what is in the offing. We have been reasonably busy since the ALA meeting when I became president with the following activities:

1. Thanks to the pro bono contribution of a friendly lawyer, we have managed to complete the application to the IRS for a 501 (c) (3) standing. If everything goes well, this will mean that we will be eligible for reduced rates for our mailings, and individuals will be able to contribute money to the Circle as a non-profit charity.
2. The Executive Committee and Board voted to change the name of our service award to the Thomas Tenney award. In the future, when we wish to honor individuals for their non-scholarly service contribution to Mark Twain studies, the Tenney award is available. Should any of you have suggestions to make for nominations, please contact me.
3. The Circle will participate in at least three national conferences this year. The first will be a joint meeting with the American Humor Association in New Orleans during Dec. 7-10. Panels will be sponsored by both the Circle and the AHA. Anyone who wants additional information should e-mail Ann Ryan at LeMoyné College or consult the AHA website. The Circle will be represented at the annual MLA meeting at Philadelphia from Dec. 27-30. Vice-president/President-elect Bruce

(Continued on p. 4)

Tribute to Ed Branch

Robert Hirst
General Editor, Mark Twain Project

Edgar Marquess Branch—known to everyone as “Ed”—died last August 14th at the age of ninety-three. I knew him well and worked with him almost continuously for the last twenty-five years of his life (since 1971), always on various projects and publications having to do with Mark Twain. I want to use this space to say some things about him that I know only because of that professional and personal experience, and that I suspect will not get into the more formal commemorations of his death.

Ed took his Ph.D at the University of Iowa in the same year I was born, 1941. By 1971 he had long since worked his way to full professor, spent five years as chairman of his department, and since 1964, served as Research Professor at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where he spent his entire professional career. In 1971 I had just struggled through my own Ph.D. orals and was continuing to work (as I had since 1967) as a graduate student assistant and sometime editor in the Mark Twain Papers at Berkeley. Ed was in the Papers, too, often for months on end, working on the texts and notes destined to be published in *Mark Twain's Early Tales & Sketches*, part of the fledgling edition known then as the Iowa-California Works of Mark Twain. He had been offered that assignment back in the 1960s when the edition was first organized by John Gerber, Walter Blair, Paul Baender, and others.

The I-C edition was at a sort of crisis point in 1971 and 1972, with those in charge trying to figure out how to get even its first volume inspected and approved by the Center for Editions of American Authors (CEAA), an agency of the Modern Language Association and then the only source of funding for

editions of this kind. The problem was that while the Iowa-California editors were all experts in one or another aspect of Mark Twain's work, almost none of them knew how to establish a text from the various relevant documents—say, from a manuscript and a first printing, with or without revisions between them. (It was true then, and is still the case today, that most graduate schools, including Berkeley, offered their Ph.D. candidates *no training* in how to edit a text. The graduate student assistants and editors at Berkeley had taught themselves all that they knew about this kind of editing.) Fred Anderson, editor of the Mark Twain Papers for whom I had worked since 1967, and the Iowa-California board of directors, decided that each of their appointed editors needed to form a partnership with one or another of the graduate student editors in the Mark Twain Papers, who would in turn assume the responsibility for establishing these texts. It was under those general circumstances that Ed Branch asked me to join with him in finishing the preparations for *Early Tales & Sketches*, on which he had been working by himself since the mid-1960s. His choosing me for this role was certainly not based on any track record I had for editing texts (I really had no such record, and had not even completed my dissertation). It was a kind of gamble, and an act of great, and to me almost unfathomable, generosity on his part—especially since he knew, at the time, that I was very close to abandoning any career in American literature, having had my fill of what the graduate school curriculum was trying to cram down my unwilling throat. Branch and I worked together for the next seven or eight years, preparing the first volume of *Early Tales*, which finally appeared in 1979, followed two years later by the second volume. By then I had left the Papers and joined the English department at UCLA, commuting almost weekly to Berkeley in continuing pursuit of our editorial project. But after Fred Anderson's death in 1979, I became general editor of the editorial project in Berkeley in 1980, which under pressure from the National Endowment for the Humanities (its only source of funding) had brought the I-C edition of the works and the Berkeley edition of the papers under one umbrella called the Mark Twain Project. All of the above by way of full disclosure and context for what I'd like to say here about Ed Branch.

Since his years as a graduate student (1938-41), Branch had focused his enormous energies, his seemingly indefatigable persistence, on finding, collecting, and editing sketches, letters, and newspaper squibs by Samuel Clemens which had been written or published, but were otherwise lost, in the decade and a half before he published his first book in 1867—Mark

Twain's so-called apprenticeship. Branch published a small pamphlet called *Mark Twain's Letters in the Muscatine Journal* in 1942, bringing half a dozen letters to light for the first time since their publication in the 1850s, and he followed that up with "A Chronological Bibliography of the Writings of Samuel Clemens to June 8, 1867" in the May 1946 issue of *American Literature*. This bibliography appeared four years before he published his revised dissertation as *The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain*, and he continued to correct and add to it for the rest of his life. Fifty years later, Branch was still finding and re-publishing pieces from the early career, and slowly working out the facts of Clemens's life on the river and in the west. He published his last article on this subject, "Bixby vs. Carroll: New Light on Sam Clemens's Early River Career," in the Summer 1993 issue of the *Mark Twain Journal*. That was one year after he published a small pamphlet which he called *Mark Twain and the Starchy Boys*, about the Western Boatman's Benevolent Association, the pilots union to which Clemens belonged, and the same year in which he co-edited (with Harriet Elinor Smith) the Mark Twain Project's second edition of *Roughing It*. (Fair warning: I am not going to attempt even an approximate bibliography of his publications here.)

Some of what Branch found by literally reading the newspapers of the time and systematically working through various archives of documents, he published in articles that appeared in journals like *American Literature*, *PMLA*, and *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, to name only a few. Some he published or planned to publish in *Early Tales & Sketches*, three more volumes of which were completed but as yet unpublished at his death. And some he planned to publish in a biography of Clemens's early years, which also remained unpublished and in progress when he died. The sheer volume of what he found and published, both works that Clemens published and then never collected (which were therefore lost until Branch found and re-published them), and meticulously detailed and documented accounts of various aspects of Clemens's life and career, have utterly transformed what we know about Mark Twain and how he learned to be the writer that he became.

It is not generally appreciated, I think, just how bold, brave, and imaginative it was to pursue this subject in the way he did throughout his career. One might suppose that his steady pursuit of, and success in finding, such things by Mark Twain would have drawn other scholars into the hunt, but

it did not, with very few exceptions (his younger colleague, Lou Budd, comes to mind as one of those exceptions). Branch occupied this field almost completely by himself, and because he never let up on the pursuit, he was almost single-handedly responsible for what we know about the pre-1867 writings. He became, to my mind, the pre-eminent scholar of Mark Twain's writing and career, more productive and better at it than anyone else I know, but he was also very much alone in that pursuit. I think it is not generally recognized that this interest of his was not always looked upon with approval by the rest of the profession. I remember, for example, when he found an 1859 sketch by Clemens, published in the New Orleans *Crescent* under the title "Soleleather Cultivates His Taste for Music" (this would have been a year or two after we had published the relevant volume of *Early Tales*, which therefore did not include it). He offered an essay explaining his reasons for attributing this piece to Clemens, and a text of the piece itself, in an article eventually published by *American Literature*, but not before one of the referees—himself an eminent academic who had written extensively about Mark Twain—wrote the journal editor, in exasperation, "Are we supposed to get excited and jump up and down every time some little old lady goes up into her attic and finds one more unknown piece written by Mark Twain?" (Let us kindly draw the curtain on this shameful burst of temper.) At any rate, the comment made me see really for the first time that large parts of the profession were utterly uninterested in what Clemens wrote in these early years, and that this indifference (and hostility) were things Branch simply had to endure and push through in his unstinting efforts to make those materials available to the scholarly world. Small wonder that he was virtually alone in his pursuit of a goal that he would be the first to say, even now, remains short of complete fulfillment.

Before I run out of space completely, I need to touch on Branch's extraordinary generosity to other scholars, something many of my readers will have experienced in person. As they will testify, he was always ready to offer what he knew to help others with their work. There was a kind of selflessness about him that I find shared by few scholars of any kind, let alone those with his depth of knowledge and experience. My own direct experience of this generosity, apart from *Early Tales* (already mentioned), came in several large bursts, but especially when he agreed to help the Mark Twain Project editors with the first volume of *Letters*, which covered a period of time in the career for which Branch was the unmatched expert in the world. He somewhat later agreed to help us with *Life on the Mississippi* (still in

progress) and with *Roughing It*, again, both books he was superbly equipped to help annotate. The second edition of *Roughing It* he worked on with Harriet Smith, Lin Salamo, and Rob Browning from the Mark Twain Project at a time when his eyesight was failing him and it was progressively harder and harder to read his own notes or to write or rewrite what that team was producing. But he persisted, as always. He was the only "academic" editor I have ever worked with who was capable of enduring the cross-examination fired at him by the Project editors, both on *Letters 1* and on *Roughing It*, during our standard process of testing and re-testing notes for accuracy and documentary support. (Most academics simply could not endure being cross-questioned by non-Ph.D.'s of limited fame but indisputable expertise. Branch weathered that experience without so much as an exasperated sigh. Well, maybe just one.)

Finally, this brings me to one other aspect of his professional life which I don't expect to see written about by others. Ed could seem to many who knew him casually or by limited contact an extremely placid, easy-going, entirely gentle creature. In many ways he was those things. But he could also be fierce in his defense of Clemens and what he (Branch) had so painstakingly documented about the early career. Those who have read his "Mark Twain: The Pilot and the Writer," published in 1985, will know what I mean, whether or not they agree with what he says there. Like his favorite writer, moreover, Branch could also be fiercely loyal to his friends. I will never forget his response, public and private, in 1985 when the Mark Twain Project, for which he was then a member of the board of directors, came under attack from two or three Mark Twain experts who shall go nameless here. With one exception, he was the only editor or scholar of Mark Twain who forthrightly and promptly and fearlessly came to our defense—and it must be emphasized that in doing so he was very largely responsible for saving the Project from an early demise. Naturally, I will never forget those letters to the powers-that-be, risking his own standing in defense of a project he saw as a natural extension of his own work in finding and preserving what Mark Twain wrote.

Ed Branch was, simply put, the finest scholar and the finest human being I have ever worked with on Mark Twain. No one has contributed more to what we know about Twain, or given more of himself and his time to our common pursuit. To say that he will be missed is scarcely adequate to the facts as I know them.

Report from the President (cont. from p. 1)

Michelson of the Univ. of Illinois is in charge of the program. The third program will be held in Boston, MA, May 24-27 at the annual American Literature Association (ALA) meeting. A call for ALA papers is out in the Mark Twain Forum, the *Mark Twain Circular*, and the ALA website. Paper submissions should be sent to me at the Univ. of Michigan-Dearborn, to be received no later than Tuesday, January 11.

4. In addition, in response to some expressions of interest at the last ALA meeting, we have been looking into the possibility of a meeting in late spring or early summer 2007 at Hannibal, MO. If everything works out this year Twainians who have never visited Hannibal will be afforded a chance to experience first-hand the sites of young Sam Clemens's boyhood: his birthplace at nearby Florida, MO; his home and other notable buildings of old Hannibal; Jackson's Island; and Tom Sawyer's cave. Henry Sweets, the curator of the Hannibal Museum, is cooperating fully with us. At present, however, the meeting is only tentative. We will keep you posted.

5. *The Mark Twain Annual* is on track for December publication. Once that issue comes out, we will have caught up to our promise of a yearly publication. Submissions for the 2007 issue, however, are welcome and may be sent either to John Bird, Winthrop University, or Ann Ryan, at LeMoyne College. Submissions are refereed, so send them in early. The *Annual* is the most important journal devoted to interpretation of Twain's works, and its book review section is up-to-date on recent publications.

6. The *Mark Twain Circular* will continue to come out under the dedicated and efficient editorship of Jim Leonard, of The Citadel. Please feel free to notify him of any worthwhile news items. Notices of any new Twain or Twain-related publications should also be sent to him with full bibliographical information. All of us stand to benefit when we are informed about current research.

7. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) will fund a summer institute on Mark Twain for high school teachers, at Elmira College during the month of July. Barbara Snedecor, the director of the Mark Twain Center, and I will be co-directors, and Joe Csicsila, of Eastern Michigan Univ. will be an adjunct director. If any of you know high school teachers

Huck Finn CD

Copies of *Huck Finn: The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Manuscript—Teaching and Research Digital Edition*, which was designed and developed, under the guidance of Victor Doyno, by the Poetry / Rare Books Collection of SUNY, Buffalo, and first made available in 2002, remain available and for sale to individuals and libraries. Orders can be sent to:

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who might be interested in this course, please encourage them to access the NEH website for detailed information about the program and application.

As active as the Circle is, we wish to grow, both in new members and library subscriptions to the *Annual*. Please notify colleagues (and your library) about us, and invite them to join. Do not be hesitant to proselytize. Twainians sometimes forget that relatively few of our colleagues really understand why Twain's works and life are so absorbing, and what skills and techniques we use to delve more deeply into them. Even fewer realize what a wealth of relatively fresh material is waiting for study. We welcome new members!

Current Mark Twain Bibliography

James S. 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 (leonardj@citadel.edu), or by other means.

Books

Berkove, Lawrence I., and Gary Scharnhorst, eds. *The Old West in the Old World: Lost Plays by Bret Harte and Sam Davis.* University of New Mexico Press, 2006. Two hitherto unpublished plays: Harte's dramatic revision of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and the Sagebrusher Sam Davis's comic opera *The Prince of Timbuctoo*.

Blum, Deborah. *Ghost Hunters: William James and the Search for Scientific Proof of Life After Death.* Penguin, 2006. Hardcover. 371 pages. \$29.95. Includes treatment of Mark Twain's "Mental Telegraphy" (1891) and "Mental Telegraphy Again" (1895).

Clinch, Jon. *Finn: A Novel.* Random House, 2007. One hundred and twenty years ago, Mark Twain left Huckleberry Finn's father dead in a room crowded with oddities: a wooden leg, women's underclothing, two black cloth masks, and more. Now Jon Clinch tells the story of how the brutal and explosive Finn met his end in a room jammed with the telltale artifacts of his strange and mysterious life. *Finn* is a novel about race, about the stain of slavery, and about the burdens of paternity.

Daggett, Rollin Mallory, and Joseph Thompson Goodman. *The Psychoscope: A Sensational Drama in Five Acts.* Published by *The Mark Twain Journal*, 2006. A play written by Twain's friends and editors on the *Territorial Enterprise*, published for the first time. Important for literary history, and possible lesson for Twain about realism.

Doctorow, E. L. *Creationists: Selected Essays 1993-2006.* Random House, 2006. Hardcover. xiii + 178 pages. Random House, 2006. \$24.95. Includes Doctorow's essay "Sam Clemens's Two Boys," about *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Michelson, Bruce. *Printer's Devil: Mark Twain and the American Publishing Revolution.* Trained as a printer while still a boy, and thrilled throughout his life by the automation of printing and the headlong expansion of American publishing, Mark Twain wrote about the consequences of this technological revolution for culture and personal identity.

Mark Twain Circle of America Call for Papers

The Mark Twain Circle of America will sponsor two sessions at the American Literature Association's 18th Annual Conference, May 24-27, 2007, in Boston.

- * The first topic will be "Mark Twain and His Contemporaries." This session will focus on Twain's interactions with individuals or societies of his own time: authors, political or cultural organizations, business relationships, etc.
- * The other session will be open: proposals on **any** aspect of Twain's literature will be welcome.

Please submit papers or proposals via US mail or e-mail so as to arrive by Tuesday, January 11, 2007, to the president of the Mark Twain Circle:

Prof. Lawrence I Berkove
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iberkove@umd.umich.edu

Audio-visual equipment: The ALA will normally provide the following: slide projectors and screens, VCR-DVD equipment, CD or cassette tape players, and projectors for Power-Point presentations.

Conference Information: The American Literature Association's 18th annual conference will meet at the Westin Copley Place in Boston on May 24-27, 2007 (Thursday through Sunday of Memorial Day weekend). For further information, please consult the ALA website at www.americanliterature.org or contact the conference director, Professor Lauri Ramey of California State University, Los Angeles at lramey@calstatela.edu with specific questions.

Location: The Westin Copley Place, 10 Huntington Avenue, Boston MA 02116-5798 (617-262-9600)

Conference Fee: For those who pre-register before April 15, 2007: \$75 (\$25 for Graduate Students, Independent Scholars, and Retired Faculty). After April 15, the fees are \$85 and \$35.

Printer's Devil is the first book to explore these themes in some of Twain's best-known literary works and in his most daring speculations on American society, the modern condition, and the nature of the self. Playfully and anxiously, Twain often thought about typeset words and published images as powerful forces for political and moral change, personal riches and ruin, and epistemological turmoil. In his later years, Twain wrote about the printing press as a center of metaphysical power, a force that could alter the fabric of reality. Studying these themes in Mark Twain's writings, Bruce Michelson also provides an overview of the technological changes that transformed the American printing and publishing industries during Twain's lifetime, changes that opened new possibilities for content, for speed of production, for the size and diversity of a potential audience, and for international fame. The story of Twain's life and art amid this media revolution is a story with powerful implications for our own time, as we ride another wave of radical change for printed texts, authors, truth, and consciousness.

Scharnhorst, Gary, ed. *Mark Twain: The Complete Interviews*. University of Alabama Press, 2006. 736 pages. ISBN 0-8173-1522-5. \$75.00 hardcover. Early in his career, Mark Twain was wary of reporters and interviewers. As a writer, he wanted to sell his words, not give them away. Luckily for us, his opinions changed over time. Especially during the last fifteen years of his life, Twain relied on published interviews as a key part of his self-promotion. However, it has been difficult until now for scholars—let alone general readers—to get their hands on all of the published Twain interviews. *Mark Twain: The Complete Interviews*, published as part of the Studies in American Literary Realism and Naturalism series, offers the first-ever annotated and indexed edition of every known interview with Twain. These 259 pieces span Twain's entire career. Only a fourth of them have ever been reprinted from their original late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century sources. And four are completely new to Twain scholarship.

These interviews are important records of Twain's oral performances. In them, he discusses

such personal issues as his bankruptcy and offers rare glimpses into the lives of his wife and daughters. He speaks openly about friends and employees and other writers. He holds forth on such topical issues as hazing and civil service reform. He condemns all manner of imperialism—from German imperialism in Africa to Russian imperialism in Asia and American imperialism in the Philippines—and scorns corrupt politicians and robber barons. And he shares his opinions on such enduring concerns as race and racism, women's suffrage, and international copyright

Articles

Gussow, Adam. "Beaten Boys and Frantic Pets: A close reading of *Tom Sawyer* reveals that Twain isn't as funny as he thinks he is." *The American Scholar* 74.4 (Autumn 2005): 94-99. Animal-rights criticism looks at *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

Audio

The Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies is pleased to announce that audio-files from our recent Fall Lecture Series are available online. Go to

http://www.elmira.edu/academics/distinctive_programs/twain_center/trouble_at_eight

- * "A Fossil Guide to Mark Twain's Essay 'Was the World Made for Man?'"—J. Michael Pratt, Assistant Professor of Management Information Systems, Elmira College
- * "Mark Twain, Orion Clemens, and the Mysterious Stranger"—Philip Ashley Fanning, Independent Scholar, San Francisco, CA
- * "Sailing to Bermuda with Mark Twain"—Donald Hoffman, Independent Scholar, Kansas City, Missouri

After November 30th, the following 171st birthday celebration lecture will be available:

- * "Mark Twain, Virtually"—Stephen Railton, Professor of English, University of Virginia

New on Twain

Printer's Devil

Mark Twain and the American
Publishing Revolution
BRUCE MICHELSON

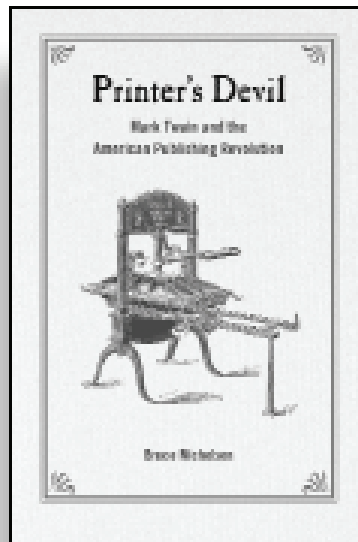
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ABOUT THE CIRCLE. The Mark Twain Circle of America was formed at an organizational meeting held at the 1986 Modern Language Association convention in New York. Although many members are academic specialists, the Circle also includes many non-academic Twain enthusiasts.

ABOUT THE CIRCULAR. The *Mark Twain Circular* is the newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America. It is published twice per year (April and November) 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, and current bibliography. Subscribers are distributed among 44 states and 14 foreign countries.

ABOUT THE ANNUAL. The Mark Twain Circle also publishes an annual volume titled *The Mark Twain Annual*, edited by John Bird (Winthrop University), featuring criticism and pedagogy related to Mark Twain and his works.

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Thanks to Libby Walker and Danielle Saia for their valuable work on this issue of the *Mark Twain Circular*.