



Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

Volume 23

November 2009

Number 2

The President's Letter

Bruce Michelson
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Elmira Conference Kudos

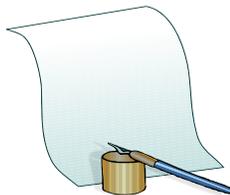
So at the end of three days packed with high-quality, adventurous scholarship and astonishing hospitality, many of the scholars at the Quadrennial Conference found themselves up on the wooded hilltop at Quarry Farm, in the dark, at the spot where Mark Twain's octagonal study once stood. We were brandishing cigars that a few of us were actually attempting to smoke—and listening to Hal Holbrook. This was all impromptu. In the center of the group, Holbrook was telling us stories about his earliest days doing Mark Twain Tonight! about fifty years ago—the Broadway and television presentations that not only set the benchmark for bringing this icon to life on the stages of the world, but also pioneered the art of meticulous and compelling reenactment, the art that has brought back to us Emily Dickinson, James Thurber, John Muir, and any number of other major American writers.

What an ending of a terrific weekend! To try to acknowledge all the effort and imagination that had gone into it, the following letter went out from the Board in the middle of August, copied to Gretchen Sharlow, Director Emeritus of the Center for Mark Twain Studies, and also to Thomas Meier, the President of Elmira College:

Barbara Snedecor, Director
Center for Mark Twain Studies
Elmira College

Dear Barbara:

When that amazing gathering of Mark Twain scholars scattered down the hill on August 8, after the culminat-



Dates to Circle

November 5-8, 2009. The Humor Studies Caucus at the 2009 American Studies Annual Meeting. Washington, DC.

November 6-8, 2009. South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference. Atlanta, GA.

December 27-30, 2009. Modern Language Association Annual Convention. Philadelphia, PA.

May 27-30, 2010. American Literature Association Annual Conference. San Francisco, CA.

October 15-16, 2010. Weekend Symposium: "Mark Twain's Travel Books: 'en route.'" Elmira, NY.

December 9-10, 2010. The American Humor Studies and The Mark Twain Circle of America quadrennial conference, San Diego, CA.

ing banquet at Quarry Farm, you heard a tide of the highest praise for the Quadrennial Conference; and the continuing buzz among Twainians here and abroad affirms that those three days, under your leadership and rapt personal supervision, constituted the very best scholastic gathering that most of us have ever experienced. The logistics, the details, the amenities were all just perfect, Barbara—so much so that they could eclipse our appreciation for the terrific content, for the pace and the substance of the schedule that you and Michael Kiskis worked out and implemented, to assure that those days were packed with intellectual adventure.

Small liberal arts colleges have to work very hard these days to affirm their distinction, their special place and unique missions amid a daunting array of educational choices for high-achieving American students. Over the last two decades, Elmira College has been exemplary in defining and showcasing its purposes and advantages →

—and what you and Gretchen Sharlow have done in building the fabric and the reputation of the Center for Mark Twain Studies is an important part of that overall and extraordinary success.

We hope that you feel deep joy about how it all turned out, how years of creativity and hard work came to such wonderful fruition. □

Meanwhile ...

As the first touch of autumn hit the Illinois air, three eager graduate students met in my office to talk about the possibility of prowling through the Rare Books and Special Collections holdings at the University of Illinois Library, to put together a modest exhibit of Twain stuff to mark the April 2010 centenary of his death. In about ten minutes we brainstormed a list of materials to consider: first editions; a couple of holograph letters on hand (including a feisty and playful one from Twain to Howells on the general awfulness of Edgar Allan Poe); examples of the sign-up books carried by Webster Co. and American Publishing Company sales agents to secure clients for Mark Twain volumes, sometimes before he was anywhere near finishing them—that sort of thing. One of these students, working on a degree in Library and Information Science, had ideas that hadn't occurred to the rest of us, and we came away with an expectation that this small exhibit could be a very pleasant surprise, even for the people who set out to put it together. □

To: Prof. Kerry Driscoll
Executive Coordinator, Mark Twain Circle
Department of English
Saint Joseph University
1678 Asylum Avenue
Hartford, CT 06117

Please enroll me as a member of the **Mark Twain Circle of America** and subscriber to the *Mark Twain Circular* and *The Mark Twain Annual*. I enclose a check for \$25.00 (\$27.00 for a non-U.S. address) made out to “Mark Twain Circle of America.”

(printed name)

(city, state, and zip code)

(email address—please write clearly)

“En route” (Fall 2010)

A Mark Twain Weekend Symposium: “Mark Twain’s Travel Books: ‘en route’.”

The Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies will host a one-and-a-half day symposium featuring two of Mark Twain’s travel books, *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), and *Following the Equator* (1897). The symposium will include a dinner and Keynote Address on Friday evening, ten paper presentations on Saturday, and a concluding dinner in the Barn at Quarry Farm on Saturday evening.

Conference fee: \$130 (not including housing).

For more information, visit the Mark Twain Forum website, or the Center for Mark Twain Studies website, or email Barbara Snedecor, the Director for Mark Twain Studies, at bsnedecor@elmira.edu.

Symposium Chair: Terry Oggel
Virginia Commonwealth University.

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 Ann Ryan (Le Moyne College), featuring criticism and pedagogy related to Mark Twain and his works.

**Minutes of the 2009 Business Meeting
Mark Twain Circle of America
American Literature Association Conference
Westin Copley Place Hotel, Boston**

1. President Bruce Michelson called the meeting to order at 2 p.m., and made brief introductory remarks about the robust health of Mark Twain studies, citing an unprecedented three panels devoted to Twain scholarship at this year's ALA meeting.
2. Executive Coordinator Kerry Driscoll then reported that the Circle currently has 207 members (170 national, 37 international) and that our treasury now totals \$15,029.80, which will increase by several thousand more dollars when all of this year's dues are paid in full. She also stated that the cost of producing the 2008 *Twain Annual* was \$4825.00 (193 copies at \$25.00 per copy), which is slightly less than the \$5000 stipend granted to the Circle each year by Wiley-Blackwell; in this respect, the cost of printing and mailing members' copies of the *Annual* is a "wash."
3. Emma Hennessey, representing Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, reported that "the kinks are still being worked out" in the library subscriptions for the new *American Literature Collection* (consisting of electronic issues of *Leviathan*, *Poe Studies*, *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, *The Mark Twain Annual*, and *Steinbeck Review*), and that she will get information regarding specific numbers and the schedule for the payment of annual royalties to Circle Vice President Jim Leonard as soon as possible. Ann Ryan then suggested that each of us ask our college or university library to subscribe to the *American Literature Collection*, which costs \$598 for all five journals, or \$133 for the *Mark Twain Annual* alone.
4. Following Kerry's and Emma's reports, general discussion ensued about the \$25 fee Wiley-Blackwell charges to produce and send hard copies of the *Annual* to individual members. Concern was expressed that if membership in the Circle grows considerably beyond 200 individuals (something we sincerely hope will happen), this could eventually have an adverse effect on the Circle treasury. A suggestion was then made to raise the dues. However, Kerry and Jim explained that, while the exchange of funds between the Mark Twain Circle and Wiley-Blackwell is a bit complicated and can therefore be confusing, the net effect of the financial arrangement—which includes an annual stipend plus royalties as revenue sources and a major cost saving from the Circle's not having to print and mail the *Annual*—is decidedly to the Circle's benefit. As a result of that, and with an additional boost from a one-time grant from the Mark Twain Foundation secured by Larry Berkove during his presidency, the Circle's financial condition is robust, and no dues increase is needed at present.
5. Jim announced two important personnel changes: Chad Rohman has become the Editor of the *Mark Twain Circular*, beginning in the Fall of 2008; and Ann Ryan has assumed the editorship of the *Mark Twain Annual*, beginning with Volume 6 (2008). John Bird then expressed thanks to Jim Leonard for his editorship of the *Circular* over the past two decades. Chad Rohman also thanked Jim for his guidance, and asked the group to submit news items to him for the next *Circular*.
6. Joe Alvarez and Jan McIntire-Strasburg announced that the American Humor Studies Association and the Mark Twain Circle will once again co-sponsor a conference to be held December 10-12, 2010, at the Bahia Resort in San Diego. Rooms will be available at the conference rate of \$119 per night. Jan asked for a volunteer to serve as a program chair to vet paper proposals concerning Twain for this meeting, and John Bird agreed to serve in this capacity. Joe Alvarez then made a motion requesting that the Circle provide some financial support for the committed sum of \$4100 to reserve the Bahia for the above-mentioned dates. Fifty percent of this amount (\$2050) was proposed, and the motion passed unanimously. Joe reminded everyone that technically this subvention is a loan, since if enough people attend the conference, the Bahia will refund the deposit, and the Circle will be reimbursed.
7. *Annual* editor Ann Ryan then expressed her gratitude to Wiley-Blackwell for the range of services and support which they provide in producing the journal. She reminded everyone that the deadline for submissions for this year's issue is July 1st. Ann also raised the possibility of eliminating the "Pedagogy" section of the *Annual* since it is difficult to find pertinent material for each issue. Judith Lee suggested instead appointing a "Pedagogy Editor," akin to a Book Review editor, whose responsibility would be to solicit essays of this sort. Ann agreed to take this idea under consideration.

8. Kerry Driscoll made a motion that the Circle donate \$500 to each of the four Mark Twain sites—the Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford; The Center for Mark Twain Studies in Elmira; The Boyhood Home and Museum in Hannibal; and The Mark Twain Papers and Project at UC/Berkeley—to support programming in commemoration of next year’s centennial. The motion was unanimously approved. It was then suggested that the Circle consider instituting an annual \$500 travel grant for a graduate student presenting on Twain at ALA. The Executive Committee agreed to explore how best to implement this suggestion. In conjunction with this proposal, the group also discussed the possibility of creating a special rate of \$15 for graduate student members which would not include a subscription to the *Annual*.
9. Kerry Driscoll proposed amending the Circle bylaws to include the Editor of the *MT Annual* and the Editor of the *MT Circular* to the list of officers eligible to receive an annual stipend in order to attend the Circle’s annual business meeting at ALA. This motion passed unanimously.
10. President Bruce Michelson then led a discussion about ways in which the Circle can help to promote the 2010 centennial of Mark Twain’s death. Many good suggestions were made, including the addition of an “Upcoming Events” link to the Mark Twain Circle website and a list of speakers which could also be posted on the website.
11. Judith Lee requested that the Circle continue the tradition established by past president Larry Berkove of hosting a happy hour reception at the ALA. It was proposed that the reception take place today at 6:30 p.m. following the last Twain panel, at Joe’s Bar and Grill, on the corner of Newbury and Dartmouth Streets. The motion unanimously carried.
12. The meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerry Driscoll, Executive Coordinator

More Conference Kudos: Elmira 2009 Awards

Besides all the other worthwhile aspects of the 2009 State of Mark Twain Studies Conference, I'd like to call everyone's attention to four richly deserved recognitions that occurred during the conference:

► The Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit was presented to **Shelley Fisher Fishkin** in honor of her immense scholarly contributions to Mark Twain Studies, including (but not limited to) her authored books *Lighting Out for the Territory* and *Was Huck Black?*, her edited book *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain*, and most impressively of all (in my opinion), the 29-volume Oxford Mark Twain. Shelley is also a former president of the Mark Twain Circle.

► The Mark Twain Circle's Thomas A. Tenney Service Award was presented to **John Bird** in honor of his superb work as the founding editor of *The Mark Twain Annual*. John is also a former executive coordinator of the Mark Twain Circle and is the author of *Mark Twain and Metaphor*. In his presentation of the award, Circle President Bruce Michelson failed to mention that John is (along with Mark Dawidziak and a few other cigar-smoking stalwarts) one of the keepers of the flame—

both literally and metaphorically—of the much-praised octagonal-study-site smoking and singing ceremony that occurs at each Elmira conference, but I'm sure Bruce will be glad that I'm filling that void here.

► The Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies presented the Henry Nash Smith Award to **Horst Kruse**, commemorating Horst's excellent scholarly work as carrying on the high standards in Twain studies that Henry Nash Smith represented in an earlier time. Horst is especially noted for his 1981 classic of Twain scholarship, *Mark Twain and "Life on the Mississippi."*

► The Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies presented the John S. Tuckey Award to **Tom Quirk**, whose contributions to Mark Twain studies include his books *Coming to Grips with Huckleberry Finn*, *Mark Twain: A Study of the Short Fiction*, *Mark Twain and Human Nature*, and *Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Documentary Volume*, as well as his current, highly successful general editorship of the University of Missouri Press's Mark Twain and His Circle Series. Tom is a former president of the Mark Twain Circle.

Major congratulations to all four. We're very fortunate to have them as colleagues. —**Jim Leonard**

The Mark Twain Circle at the Modern Language Association Conference 27-30 December 2009, Philadelphia, PA

Mark Twain in the New Millennium

Chair: Ann Ryan (Le Moyne College)

Presenters:

Jocelyn Chadwick (Discovery Education), "Staying Power: Twain's Place in the 21st Century Classroom and Beyond"

Anthony Berret (St. Joseph's University), "The Reading Group on *Huckleberry Finn*"

Juliana Chow (UC, Berkeley), "Science Fiction's Modest Witness: Ethical Consciousness and the Narration of Destruction and Creation in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*"

Mark Twain's Nineteenth-Century Context

Chair: Chad Rohman (Dominican University)

Presenters:

Philip Goldstein (University of Delaware), "Race, Liberal Realism, and *Huckleberry Finn*"

Richard Hardack (Independent Scholar), "Never the Twain Shall Meet: Travel and Double-Consciousness in the Works of Mark Twain and James Weldon Johnson"

Courtney Bates (Washington University in St. Louis), "The Persecution and Comfort of Mark Twain's Fan Letters"

The Humor Studies Caucus at the 2009 American Studies Annual Meeting Washington, D.C., November 5-8

The Humor Studies Caucus has put together two panels, which will be held on Friday November 6, as well as a "Business Meeting" to discuss future conference plans on Thursday November 5 (from 6:00 -7:45). All are welcome to all the events.

Humor Studies as American Studies: A Roundtable

Friday, November 6, 2:00-3:45

Chair and Commentary: Judith Yaross Lee,
School of Communication Studies, Scripps College of
Communication, Ohio University

Presentations:

Nerissa Blace, State University of New York at Stony
Brook
Title: Race, Laughter and Governmentality: Notes on
Racial Violence and Postcolonial Humor.

Contact Person:

For more information, contact Tracy Wuster, wuster@
gmail.com. See the Humor Studies Caucus website:
http://www.theasa.net/caucus_humor_studies/

Paul Rubio, City University of New York

Title: Ethnic Humor: Queer Stand-up Comedy and
American Studies

Amy Ware, The University of Texas at Austin

Title: "I Don't Get It": Incorporating Humorous History
into American Studies

Janice McIntire-Strasburg, St Louis University.

Title: Brave New World: Teaching Humor in Academe

"The Assault of Laughter":

The Meanings of Humor in Mark Twain's America

Friday, November 6, 4:00-5:45

Chair: Bruce Michelson,

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Presentations:

John Pascal, Seton Hall Preparatory School

Title: Artemus Ward: The Gentle Humorist and His Lec-
ture Influence on Mark Twain

Tracy Wuster, The University of Texas at Austin

Title: "The Plague of Jocularit": Mark Twain and the
American Humorous Character

Jennifer Hughes, Emory University

Title: Mark Twain, History, and the Legacies of Laugh-
ter



The American Humor Studies Association and The Mark Twain Circle of America

Invite you to join us for our 2010
Quadrennial Conference.

Dates: December 9-12, 2010
(Registration Fee TBA)



Location: The Bahia Resort Hotel, San Diego,
California. Rooms: \$119.00 per night single or double.

Send proposals for sessions and individual presentations
(along with any AV requirements) to the following persons:

American Humor Material

Jan McIntire-Strasburg
Department of English
St. Louis University
3800 Lindell Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63108
mcintire@slu.edu

Suggestions for Sessions

New Directions in
Humor Studies
1950s TV Humor
Gendered Humor
Ethnic Humor
New Literary Humor
Regional Humor
Talk Show Humor

Mark Twain Material

John Bird
English Department
250 Bancroft Hall
Winthrop University
Rock Hill, SC 29733
birdj@winthrop.edu

Suggestions for Sessions

Twain's Letters
Twain's Speeches
Mark Twain Abroad
Twain and [other 19th Century
literary or public figure(s)]
Twain's Literary Heirs
Mark Twain and Samuel Clem-
ens

Current Mark Twain Bibliography

James S. Leonard, The Citadel
Chad Rohman, Dominican University

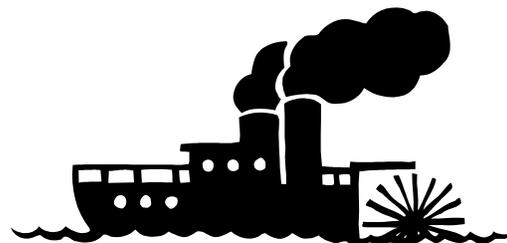
Current Mark Twain Bibliography is a means of giving notice of what is new in Mark Twain scholarship. Where annotations are used, they are in most cases descriptive blurbs provided by publishers (or in some cases, by authors) with value judgments edited out. If you have recently published something that you would like to have included in this list, send it to the current *Circular* editor, **Chad Rohman**, by email (crohman@dom.edu).

Books

Caron, James E. *Mark Twain, Unsanctified Newspaper Reporter*. University of Missouri Press, 2008. Cloth. 464 pages. Illustrations. \$49.95. ISBN 978-0-8262-1802-5. Before Mark Twain became a national celebrity with his best-selling *The Innocents Abroad*, he was just another struggling writer perfecting his craft—but already “playin’ hell” with the world. James Caron draws on contemporary scholarship and his own careful readings to offer a fresh and comprehensive perspective on those early years—and to challenge many long-standing views of Mark Twain’s place in the tradition of American humor. Tracing the arc of Clemens’ career from self-described “unsanctified newspaper reporter” to national author between 1862 and 1867, Caron reexamines the early and largely neglected writings—especially the travel letters from Hawaii and the letters chronicling Clemens’ trip from California to New York City. Caron connects those sets of letters with comic materials Clemens had already published, drawing on all known items from this first phase of his career—even the virtually forgotten pieces from the *San Francisco Morning Call* in 1864—to reveal how Mark Twain’s humor was shaped by the sociocultural context and how it catered to his audience’s sensibilities while unpredictably transgressing its standards. Caron reveals how Sam Clemens’ contemporaries, notably Charles Webb, provided important comic models, and he shows how Clemens not only adjusted to but also challenged the guidelines of the newspapers and magazines for which he wrote, evolving as a comic writer who transmuted personal circumstances into literary art. Plumbing Twain’s cultural significance, Caron draws on anthropological insights from Victor Turner and others to compare the performative aspects of Clemens’ early work to the role of ritual clowns in traditional societies. [Text drawn from publisher’s blurb.]

Morris, Linda. *Gender Play in Mark Twain: Cross-Dressing and Transgression*. University of Missouri Press, 2008. Hardcover. 196 pages. \$34.95. ISBN: 978-0-8262-1759-2. Huckleberry Finn dressing as a girl is a famously comic scene in Mark Twain’s novel but hardly out of character—for the author, that is. Twain “troubled gender” in much of his otherwise traditional fiction, depicting children whose sexual identities are switched at birth, tomboys, same-sex married couples, and even a male French painter who impersonates his own fictive sister and becomes engaged to another man. This book explores Twain’s extensive use of cross-dressing across his career by exposing the substantial cast of characters who masqueraded as members of the opposite sex or who otherwise defied gender expectations. Morris grounds her study in an understanding of the era’s theatrical cross-dressing and changing mores and even events in the Clemens household. She examines and interprets Twain’s exploration of characters who transgress gendered conventions while tracing the degree to which themes of gender disruption interact with other themes, such as his critique of race, his concern with death in his classic “boys’ books,” and his career-long preoccupation with twins and twinning. Morris reexamines the relationship between Huck and Jim; discusses racial and gender crossing in *Pudd’nhead Wilson*; and sheds light on Twain’s difficulty in depicting the most famous cross-dresser in history, Joan of Arc. She also considers a number of his later “transvestite tales” that feature transgressive figures such as Hellfire Hotchkiss, who is hampered by her “misplaced sex.” Morris challenges views of Twain that see his work as reinforcing traditional notions of gender along sharply divided lines. She shows that Twain depicts cross-dressing sometimes as comic or absurd, other times as darkly tragic—but that even at his most playful, he contests traditional Victorian notions about the fixity of gender roles. Analyzing such characteristics of Twain’s fiction as his fascination with details of clothing and the ever-present element of play, Morris shows us his understanding that gender, like race, is a social construction—and above all a performance. [Text drawn from publisher’s blurb.]

Rasmussen, R. Kent. *Bloom’s How to Write about Mark Twain*. New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism, 2008. 324 pages. ISBN 978-0-7910-9487-7.



Chad Rohman, Editor
Mark Twain Circular
English Department
Dominican University
7900 W. Division St
River Forest, IL 60305

E-mail: crohman@dom.edu
Fax: (708) 488-5056
Phone: (708) 524-6839

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Mark Twain Circular

ISSN 1042-5357

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The *Mark Twain Circular* is the newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America.

The *Mark Twain Circular* is published at Dominican University (River Forest, IL), and it is in part supported by Dominican University's Rosary College of Arts and Sciences.

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 Spring issue of the *Mississippi Quarterly*).

Thanks to Jim Leonard (The Citadel) and Mike Fair (Dominican University) for their valuable help on this issue of the *Mark Twain Circular*.