



# Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

Volume 28

April 2014

Number 1

**The President's Column**  
**Linda Morris**  
**University of California, Davis**

As always, there is a lot going on in the Mark Twain Circle, both formally and informally. I doubt there ever is a truly quiet time when it comes to our scholarship, the activities at the various Mark Twain houses and archives, and the private pleasures of reading and re-reading Twain's works.

As members know, one of the best opportunities for Circle members to get together on an annual basis is the American Studies Association conference held every May. Ideally, the conference alternates between an east coast site and a west coast site. This year, however, the conference will return once again to the East because of a labor dispute with the Hyatt Hotel in San Francisco, a dispute now resolved but too late for this year. We'll be meeting in Washington D. C. instead from May 22-25.

The Mark Twain Circle is sponsoring two panels at the conference, both on Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup>, and co-hosting a third with the William Faulkner society on Thursday. We'll hold our annual business meeting on Saturday as well, so

***The Mark Twain Circular is  
the E-MTC:***

The *Mark Twain Circular* is now distributed to all Circle members electronically: a pdf *MTC* file sent directly to members' email inboxes replaces the hard copy members were receiving through the mail. Please make sure to update your email with the Circle's executive coordinator: **Sharon McCoy** (sdmccoy@uga.edu)

please plan to come to that meeting if you're in the area. Among other items

on the agenda, we'll be electing a new President and Vice-President of the Circle. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

The South Atlantic MLA (SAMLMA) will be meeting November 7-9 in Atlanta, with Kathryn Dolan chairing a panel for the Circle on the topic of Twain and Food/Consuming/Consumption. Watch for the call for papers on the SAMLMA site and on our website.

## TWAIN TALK: An Interview with James S. Leonard



Citadel Professor Jim Leonard is an eminent Twain scholar who served as the first editor of the *Mark Twain Circular*.

### **Where and when did you first encounter Twain in the classroom?**

Twain's novels—*Tom Sawyer*, *Huck Finn*, *Connecticut Yankee*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, *The Prince and the Pauper*—were popular choices for book reports when I was in high school. I don't recall reporting on any of them myself, but the exposure led me to read (and enjoy) them. We also read the "Jumping Frog" story as a classroom assignment. What all of these had in common was that they were fun. The serious aspects seemed entirely to elude me, just as they did my classmates.

### **What was your dissertation topic and who directed your dissertation?**

Actually, it had nothing to do with Mark Twain. It was about Wallace Stevens and was directed by Mark Spilka (Brown University). My education in Mark Twain didn't begin in earnest until I met Tom Tenney, who began teaching as an adjunct at The Citadel a year or two after I joined The Citadel's English faculty in 1983. My private instruction by Tom was rich in anecdotes about Mark Twain and Twain scholarship, and he soon introduced me to the issue of Mark Twain and Race, which eventually led to our

jointly editing (along with Thadious Davis) the collection that we titled *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn*. Like many other young scholars of the time, I also received a lot of helpful and encouraging Mark Twain tutoring from Lou Budd.

### **Have your impressions of Twain and his work changed at all over the years?**

I've come to more fully appreciate the Twain who, though a bold speculator and an incredibly imaginative storyteller, insisted on a brutal (where necessary) encounter with what he saw as the realities of human nature and the human condition. Ironically, his confrontation with such "realities" happens, it seems to me, most meaningfully when he leaves behind the down-to-earth ethical dilemmas that the Realist era tended to showcase and goes quasi- (or pseudo-) metaphysical instead.

### **What, if anything, have you grown to dislike about Twain the man and/or Twain studies?**

I don't think there's anything to dislike about Mark Twain. He conducted himself with a lot of integrity. He had some very human weaknesses, but that humanness is a part of what draws us to him. I especially like the Mark Twain of "The Death of Jean," who seems determined to express directly and without irony the reality of his experience of loss. As for Mark Twain studies, I'd have to say that, on the whole, Mark Twain scholars are my favorite group of professional acquaintances—serious about their subject, but well attuned to the value of humorous perspective.

### **What are some of the common misperceptions about Twain that you strive to clarify/correct/amend?**

I think that far too much emphasis has been placed on Twain's personal "bitterness" in work on his late writings. It seems to me that those writings reveal a mature perspective based in a solid understanding of many of the important intellectual issues of his time. It's too bad that

many of the texts he produced in that period were left unfinished, but they're interesting even as fragments.

**Do you have a favorite memory or impression from one of the Elmira conferences?**

My inescapably favorite memory has to be from the closing picnic at the 2009 Elmira conference, when a large group, despite the light rain that had begun to fall, went up the hill to the former site of Twain's study and stood in the darkness, broken only by the glow of numerous Twain-memorializing cigars, listened to Hal Holbrook humorously recounting his meeting with Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch Samossoud, and then sang "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" It was an iconic Twain Studies moment. Another favorite is more of a bittersweet one: talking with Jim Wilson at the 1989 Elmira conference about his and J. R. LeMaster's plans for *The Mark Twain Encyclopedia* (which would appear in 1993). I remember it vividly because of Jim's radiant enthusiasm and because it wasn't many years afterward when he fell victim to a fatal cancer at a very sadly early age.

**What do you think still needs to be done in Mark Twain studies?**

We need to do a lot more of what's being done. I hope the Mark Twain Project can continue to publish new Twain resources and to further expand its online presence. The Mark Twain Circle has also begun to improve its online presence, and it seems to me that *The Mark Twain Annual* and the *Mark Twain Circular* are thriving—as well as Alan Gribben's new version of *The Mark Twain Journal*. Meanwhile, the Twain Center at Quarry Farm and the Mark Twain Boyhood Home in Hannibal are hosting highly rewarding Twain studies gatherings, and the Mark Twain House in Hartford remains a valuable resource. As to the areas of research in which Twain studies is moving forward significantly, we've had some interesting attention in recent years to Twain's portrayals of women, an increasingly productive focus on the later, more fragmented writings, and some good work on Twain as anti-imperialist. If something's lacking, I'd say it's a widespread interest in bringing Twain studies up to date in its relation to critical theory, especially more hard-edged analysis of

Twain's writings as reflecting the values of his time.

**What's your best advice for someone just starting in the field?**

My first piece of advice would be to attend the quadrennial Twain Studies conferences at Elmira and stay for the entirety. The second is to get involved in the activities of the Mark Twain Circle, which welcomes newcomers and is glad to give them an opportunity to participate. Throughout my own work on Mark Twain, I've found the level of collaboration among Twainians to be a remarkably wholesome aspect from which all involved seem to benefit.



**Check Out the Mark Twain Circle Website:**

**A FINE WORDPRESS.COM SITE @ <http://marktwaincircle.org/>**

# Calls for Papers

American Humor Studies Association  
Mark Twain Circle of America  
Quadrennial Conference 2014  
December 4-7, 2014  
Four Points Sheraton French Quarter

The American Humor Studies Association, in conjunction with the Mark Twain Circle of America, sends out this general call for papers on American humor and Mark Twain. The topics below are suggestions for topics that we think will be of interest; other topics are welcome, and we welcome especially submissions of sessions of three papers or roundtables. The topics are broad in the hope that scholars will be able to find one that fits their current research. Submissions should be sent to Jan McIntire-Strasburg via email ([mcintire@slu.edu](mailto:mcintire@slu.edu)). Please send your submissions by May 15, 2014.

Those sending in submissions for the Mark Twain Circle of America can email their proposals to Ann Ryan at [ryanam@lemoyne.edu](mailto:ryanam@lemoyne.edu).

Early American Humor and its European Roots  
Nineteenth Century Humor—from Southwest to Northeast to Far West  
20<sup>th</sup> Century Humor and the American Novel  
Regional and/or transnational humor  
New Media Approaches to Humor  
Humor in film, television, comics, and other visual media  
Humor and Theatre  
Stand-Up Comedy  
Online humor  
Humor and Ethnicity  
Humor and Gender  
Humor and Class  
Humor and Sexuality  
Humor and War  
Contemporary Approaches to Irony, Satire, Wit, and other topics  
Teaching Humor  
New Directions in American Humor Studies

THE MARK TWAIN CIRCLE OF AMERICA  
SAMLA  
November 7-9, 2014, Atlanta

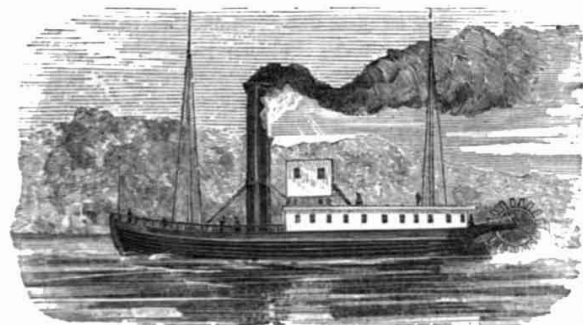
*From Corn-Pone to Delmonico's: Feasting with Twain*

Mark Twain is as popular a figure as ever. In "Corn-Pone Opinions" Twain writes, "The black philosopher's idea was, that a man is not independent, and cannot afford views which might interfere with his bread and butter . . . He must restrict himself to corn-pone opinions—at least on the surface."

Twain satirizes the age's customs and politics, using food-based metaphors. During his life, Twain went from corn-pone to Delmonico's. His dinner parties at Nook Farm were magnificent. However, he was also a powerful critic of the excesses and hypocrisies of society. How can we use Twain's writings to re-examine issues of consumption and overconsumption in U.S. society during the second half of the 19th Century? How does he engage in these issues within the Gilded Age that he helped name? Topics might include but are not limited to:

- Food and drink
- Class and race
- Imperialism/globalization
- Regionalism
- Consumption and the body
- Tourism
- Water
- The environment

By June 2, 2014, please submit a 300-word abstract and A/V requirements to Kathryn Dolan, Missouri University of Science and Technology, at [dolanke@mst.edu](mailto:dolanke@mst.edu).



ENTERPRISE ON HER FAST TRIP TO LOUISVILLE, 1815.

**ALA Sessions  
Washington D.C.  
May 22-25, 2014**

**Thursday, May 22 (12:00-1:20pm)**

**“William Faulkner and Mark Twain”**

Chair: Nathaniel Williams (University of California, Davis)

Robert Rudnicki, “‘Verbless Patriotic Nonsense’: Faulkner and Twain on War and Science Fiction” (Louisiana Tech University)

Michael Wainwright, “Artistic Successes at Game-Theoretic Failure: Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* and Faulkner’s “‘A Justice’” (University of London).

Rachel Watson, “Speaking as Corpses: History and Authority in William Faulkner and Mark Twain” (University of Chicago)

**Friday, May 23 (8:10-9:30am)**

**“Mark Twain’s Readers: Explorations in Reception”**

Chair: Ellen Gruber Garvey (New Jersey City University)

James L. Machor, “Readers Write Back: Mark Twain’s Fan Mail and Eccentric Receptions” (Kansas State University)

Jarrod Roark, “The Pistol and the Press: The Reception of Mark Twain, Sensational Reporter” (University of Missouri-Kansas City)

Philip Goldstein, “Reading Mark Twain’s Mysteries: From *Pudd’nhead Wilson* to a *Double Barreled Detective Story*” (University of Delaware-Wilmington)

**Saturday, May 24 (12:30-1:50pm)**

**“Mark Twain: Mixing and Metaphors”**

Chair: Ann Ryan (Le Moyne College)

John Bird, “Mark Twain’s Autobiography: The Metaphor of Invention, Encomium, and Invective” (Winthrop University)

Gretchen Martin, “‘The hated blood was in his veins’: Miscegenation and Rage in Twain’s *Which Was It?*” (The University of Virginia’s College at Wise)

Sodam Choi, “‘I will sell you down the river’: The River as the Site of (Im)mobility in *Pudd’nhead Wilson*” (University of Buffalo)

**Saturday, May 24 (2:00-3:20pm)**

**Business Meeting: Mark Twain Circle**

**Saturday, May 24 (3:30-4:50pm)**

**“Mark Twain: A Tramp at Home”**

Chair: Linda Morris (University of California, Davis)

Paula Harrington, “Accounting for the Creoles: Sam Clemens, Mark Twain, and Franco-American Culture” (Farnham Writer’s Center, Colby College)

Ann Ryan, “The Beggar as the Site of Economic Exchange in Mark Twain” (Le Moyne College)

John Muller, “Mark Twain’s Washington Boardinghouses” (D.C. Public Library)

**MLA Sessions  
Vancouver, Canada  
January 8-11, 2015**

**“Vulnerable Twain”**

Chair: Sari Altschuler (University of South Florida)

Molly Ball, “Twain’s Vulnerability in the Pacific” (University of California-Davis)

George Gordon-Smith, “‘Po’ Little Lizabeth!’: Vulnerability, Disability, and Race in *Huckleberry Finn*” (Emory University)

Christopher Morris, “The Vulnerability of Readers in Twain” (Norwich University)

**“Serious Autobiography”** Joint Session with American Humor Studies Association

Chair: Christopher Morris (Emory University)

Sari Altschuler, “Robert Montgomery Bird and the Troubles of (Auto)Biography” (University of South Florida)

Carlos Martinez, “Teaching the People Without History: Autobiographical Historiography in Junot Diaz, Diego Frances Golman, and Salvador Plescencia” (Framingham State University)

Danielle Fuentes Morgan, “The Personal is Performative: Race, Satire, and the Post-Soul Autobiography” (Cornell 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 Chad Rohman (Dominican University), featuring criticism and pedagogy related to Mark Twain and his works.

**To:**

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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 \$30.00 (\$25.00 for graduate students, and \$32.00 for a non-U.S. address) made out to “Mark Twain Circle of America.”

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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 Spring issue of the *Mississippi Quarterly*).

Thanks to Charlotte Moore and Chad Rohman, former *Circular* editor for their valuable help on this *Circular* issue.