

# Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

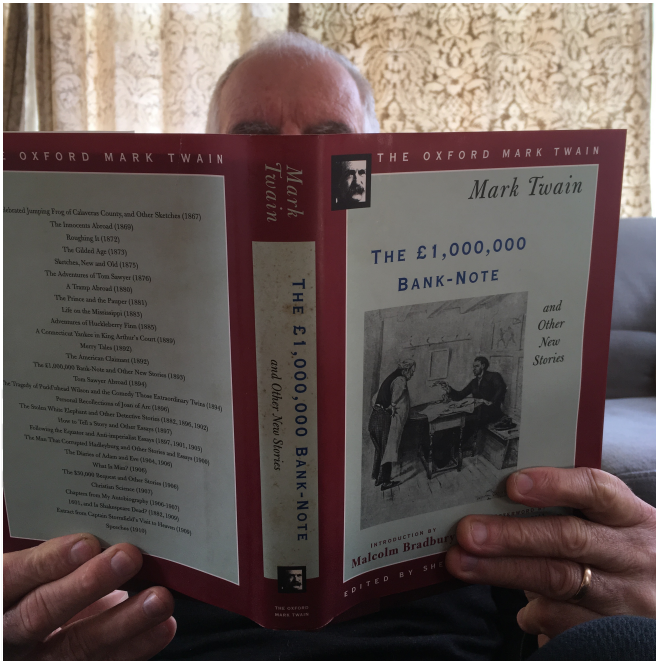
Volume 32

November 2018

Number 2

## President's Column

Lawrence Howe  
Roosevelt University



**I am no lazier now than I was forty years ago, but that is because I reached the limit forty years ago. You can't go beyond possibility.**

*- Mark Twain in Eruption*

Although Mark Twain often portrayed himself as inveterately lazy, we all know that he was a very determined and hardworking writer. His narrative method may have been undisciplined, but his productivity attests that he was no slouch with his pen. I mention this because members of the Mark Twain Circle

and others in the Mark Twain community are themselves no strangers to hard work. As we come to the close of another characteristic year of productivity in Mark Twain studies, all that hard work, it seems to me, is worth celebrating.

The Mark Twain Circle and its members have participated at numerous conferences and other confabs to share their work and ideas about the ever-intriguing writer who continues to trigger our curiosity. Kicking off 2018, we sponsored a panel at MLA in New York, followed by two Mark Twain

panels at ALA in San Francisco on the usual Memorial Day weekend get together. The Mark Twain Circle and American Humor Studies Association held their joint quadrennial conference in Chicago this past July, at Roosevelt University. This event enjoyed near-record attendance and included a very vibrant program of smart presentations.

Works in print by Twain scholars proceed apace. *Mark Twain Annual* released another remarkable issue of rich material, and they've put out a call for a special issue on "Mark

## Inside This Issue

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ALA 2019

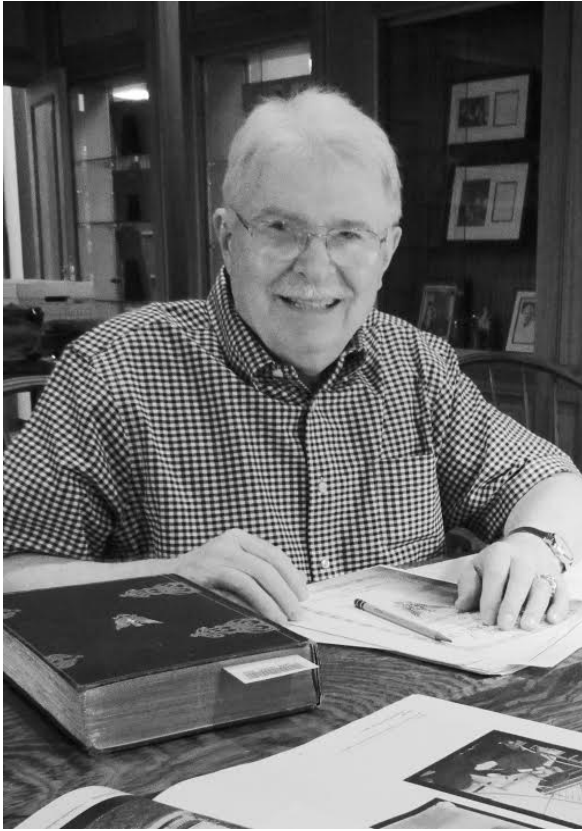
Hannibal 2019

*Recent Publications*

*(continued on p. 6)*

# Twain Talk

## An Interview with Alan Gribben



### **What's your earliest memory of reading Mark Twain?**

*I found *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in the public library during my early teens. It was a great read from the very first page.*

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

*As for the masterful sequel to *Tom Sawyer*, well, the middle and high school teachers of my generation (the 1950s) in the small town where I grew up near Kansas City were still staunchly dedicated to British authors, so I never encountered *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* until my literature survey course in college. The book came as quite a revelation inasmuch as it violated so many conventions and yet carried so much literary and moral freight on that raft. Even the smallest details reverberated for*

*me. For example, I had lived at the edge of town and often fished in a nearby creek or in our river, so the night sounds of bullfrogs and the smell of discarded gar fish (in Chapter 19) were familiar to me. These days, however, I have to pull up YouTube recordings of bullfrogs and Google photographs of gar fish so that my students can imagine these things. They have never heard frogs croaking in the country or seen a fish outside their grocery store.*

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

*In 1967 Frederick Anderson, then the General Editor of the Mark Twain Project, hired several graduate students as editorial assistants, and I was lucky enough to be one of them. Eventually, after considerable training, he assigned me to write the introductions and annotations for Notebooks 1, 2, 19, and 20. These tasks immersed me in Twain's nineteenth-century world and I resolved to write my doctoral dissertation on this fascinating author. Although I had benefited from taking classes from Frederick Crews, Larzer Ziff, and James D. Hart, it was logical that Henry Nash Smith, a former Editor of the Mark Twain Papers, would direct my research. In reality, though, it was Frederick Anderson who looked over my findings day-by-day and made arrangements for me to have access to all of the Twain materials at his disposal. Fred lived to see the completion of my dissertation but not the book that grew out of it, *Mark Twain's Library: A Reconstruction* (1980).*

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

*Not that much. I have always tried to avoid idolizing the figure I have principally studied all of my life. (I edited a collection of Edith Wharton's letters to her lover Morton Fullerton and I made a few forays into other literary subjects, but primarily I have focused on Twain's life and works.) Human beings are never perfect in their actions and*

emotions, and Twain clearly made errors that should be acknowledged. Among other problems, he clung to his father's pro-slavery stance far too long, he was periodically cruel to his elder brother Orion, and he made mistakes (as we all do) as a parent. What sets him apart from the rest of us is that he himself recorded these missteps—and many other faults—because he wrote compulsively and continuously. He analyzed his own life as though he were a literary character, and he invites us to do so, too. We see ourselves reflected in him, and measure our better and worse decisions in reading his accounts of an incredible rags-to-riches-to-rags-to-riches-and-grief life story.

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

*Twain's willingness to play the role of comical jester for Henry H. Rogers and his political and Wall Street cronies is a little hard to take, even if one sympathizes with how beholden Twain felt to his financial savior in the final decade and a half of his life.*

*I have concerns about the impact of a drastic transition underway in Twain studies. Graduate students are being urged to study broad issues of race, class, and gender rather than to specialize in individual authors, especially where a white male writer of the nineteenth century is concerned. The majority of the best work on Twain lately has been accomplished by independent scholars rather than professors belonging to a university faculty. Those of us who knew personally the earlier giants in our field—such as Henry Nash Smith, Walter Blair, Howard G. Baetzhold, Edgar M. Branch, Lewis Leary, John S. Tuckey, Victor A. Doyno, Thomas A. Tenney, Lawrence I. Berkove, Hamlin Hill, Everett Emerson, and Louis J. Budd—are aging fast ourselves. We will soon retire and slip from the scene. Only two of my graduate students have chosen to follow me into Mark Twain studies. Much good work has already been accomplished, of course, and many questions have been answered. But it bothers me to think that future commentaries on Twain will necessarily be written by non-specialists. Will they fully comprehend the complexities of Twain's life and thought, or completely appreciate the tenor of his times? The prospect of their ill-informed guesses weighs on me.*

**What common misperceptions about Twain do you strive to correct?**

*We can never stress enough the capacity of this mercurial writer to alter his views and redirect his energies. To those people eager to typecast him as a passionate atheist, a devout Native American-hater, an anti- or pro-women's suffrage citizen, a pro-colonialism or anti-colonialism advocate, a pro-business or pro-union partisan, and dozens of other labels, I always say: "First, specify the decade of his life." Twain was always striving to achieve the largest possible perspective on a problem. More than anything, one has to admire his capacity to change, which was often the result of his appetite for daily reading of every sort of book.*

**What do you consider your most important contribution to Twain studies?**

*For nearly half a century—since I initially chose my dissertation topic in 1969—I have endeavored to expand our information about Mark Twain's library and reading. Not during every evening, I will admit, and not during every weekend, and sometimes not for months at a time, but little by little, as classes, grading, and family responsibilities would allow, I have made a concerted effort to increase our awareness of Twain's literary knowledge. This has seemed to me the most useful and enduring contribution I could make to our common field of study, and I leave behind my forthcoming three-volume compendium as a tribute to those who taught me as a student, encouraged me as a fellow working scholar, and proved themselves truly collegial in sharing what they had learned.*

**What is your best story about a Twain scholar from an earlier generation?**

*My doctoral dissertation sprawled far more than I had ever imagined owing to the evidence I found in various places that registered the contents of Twain's library and recorded the extent of his reading. Ultimately I conceived a catalog form that consolidated all sorts of information. Frederick Anderson was forever urging me to include everything I could find in this catalog (partly because those results would benefit the Mark Twain Project), whereas my dissertation director Henry*

Nash Smith was really only interested in my preliminary five chapters assessing the effects of Twain's reading, and was impatient with the whole concept of the catalog form.

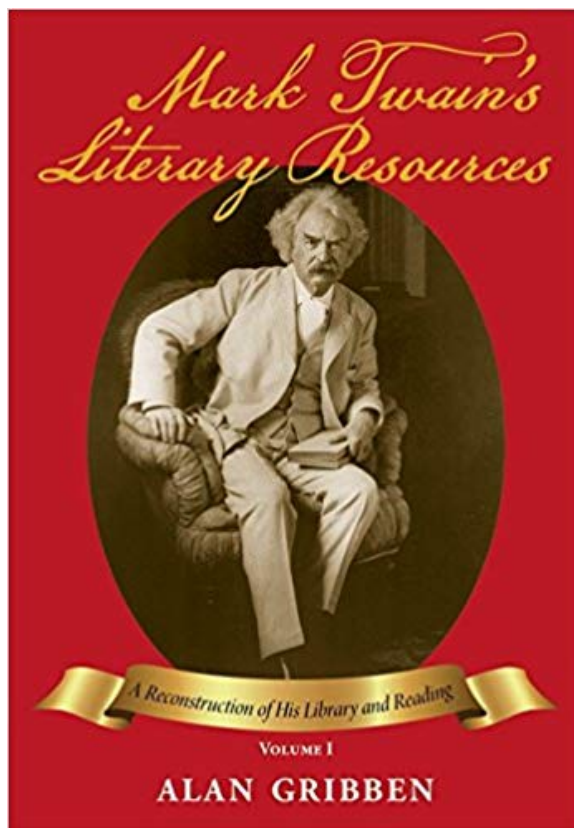
When I landed an assistant professorship at the University of Texas at Austin in 1974 I was expected to show up there on a certain day in August with a Ph.D. degree in hand, and I was also under pressure to wrap up the now-2,370-page dissertation by the summer deadline for filing for graduation. By then Professor Smith had retired and moved away from Berkeley, so on the night before the filing deadline my wife Irene and I drove down the coast to Pacific Grove where Henry was residing in order to obtain his crucial signature on the title page.

Henry was a very careful, deliberate person, and to my horror I soon realized that he did not consider this a pro forma ritual at all, even though he had previously read and approved drafts of the five chapters that preceded the huge catalog. He took the seven bound volumes into his study at the rear of the large apartment and disappeared. After two hours it dawned on me that he intended to read every single page of that massive dissertation before he would consent to sign it, even the huge catalog that he had never been favor of my compiling. After four hours I contemplated the probability that he had found something he disliked and was writing an explanation of why he could not sign the document. My wife dozed fitfully on the couch in the living room, but I was too distressed to think of sleep. I could see my new teaching job vanishing. I began to think of ways I could support us, jobs I might apply for while we stayed in Berkeley and I sought a new, less demanding dissertation director. Maybe Fred Anderson would rehire me as an editorial assistant. Then suddenly, at 6:00 a.m.,

Henry opened the door and emerged. He rather solemnly announced that he was ready to sign my work. He found a pen and wrote his famous name on the line, I staggered out the door, drunk with relief, and drove sleepily back along the twisting coastal highway to the Bay Bridge and the University campus, where I waited until the Office of Graduate Studies opened for the day. I had never been so alarmed in all my life.

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

The greatest need in our guild is to work to return Mark Twain to the middle school and high school classrooms. Because teachers are not familiar with



any works by Twain other than Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, as these novels get erased from the reading lists because of their racial slurs the students rarely study Twain during their entire education. We should encourage teachers to substitute the piloting chapters from Life on the Mississippi, excerpts from Twain's travel books like Roughing It, A Tramp Abroad, and Following the Equator, or selected short stories in schools where his controversial novels are prohibited. Many colleges do not require a course in American literature for most majors, and for that matter an increasing number of college

instructors are dropping Twain from their syllabi rather than engage in the inevitable debate about whether the n-word should be included in assigned readings. If this trend continues Mark Twain's name will become less recognized and he will no longer be accorded a prominent place in the American pantheon of great authors. We should struggle against this dismal prospect. To lose Twain would be to lose one of the finest planets in the literary solar system.

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

*Mark Twain's travel writings continue to be alluded to rather than read and studied. Partly this is the result of a surfeit of televised information about all places and all people. But look how well Twain taught Paul Theroux and Bill Bryson the wry, curmudgeonly poses that have earned them so much money. Jeffrey A. Melton and I tried to resuscitate Twain's reputation as a travel narrator by shedding the factual passages and collecting the funnier portions in our jointly edited Mark Twain on the Move: A Travel Reader (2009), yet it did not make much of an impact. Maybe someone can figure out a way to salvage this delectable portion of Twain's writings. All five of his travel books deserve to be more widely known than they now are.*

*I would also encourage younger students to follow up on the books that I have proved Mark Twain read and see how these works fit into his patterns of thought and writings. Dozens of good dissertations could derive from the findings now conveniently presented in this vast catalog. Only a relatively small proportion of his library and reading has ever been studied in depth.*

*Two energetic people should consider taking over The Mark Twain Journal: The Author and His Era after Irene and I retire. It really requires two people to maintain the momentum; the journal fell behind its publication schedule when previous editors tried to do everything by themselves. The Mark Twain Journal was one of the earliest scholarly journals devoted to a single author, and there is a definite place in Twain studies for an eclectic periodical of this nature. It merits a centennial.*

*I wish the Mark Twain group much success and satisfaction. My study of this engrossing writer has brought me good friends and much enjoyment. Let us hope that many successive generations will be able to enjoy these privileges.*

**Alan Gribben teaches English at Auburn University at Montgomery where he was named the Nance Alumni Professor in 2006. He is currently preparing an expanded revision of his Mark Twain's Library: A Reconstruction (1980). Volume I of Mark Twain's Literary Resources: A Reconstruction of His Library and Reading will be published in Spring 2018. For more information visit [alangribben.com](http://alangribben.com).**

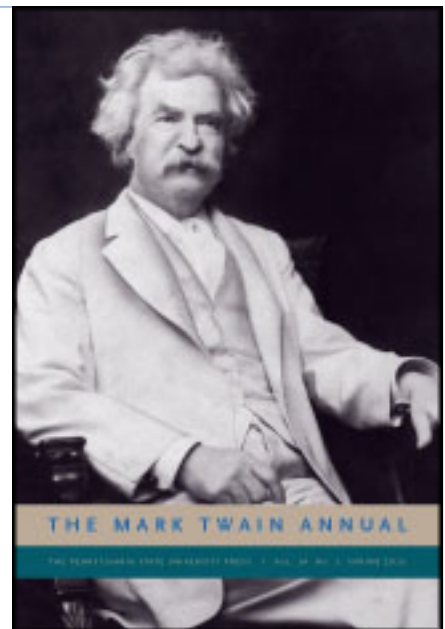
## The Mark Twain Annual

### The Journal of the Mark Twain Circle of America

Ben Click, Editor

Kerry Driscoll, Book Review Editor

*The Mark Twain Annual* focuses on critical and pedagogical articles about Mark Twain's works. Founded in 2003 by the Mark Twain Circle of America, this annual fall publication is sent to all members of the Mark Twain Circle and published by Penn State University.



For submission inquiries and information about the journal please contact Chad Rohman at [crohman@dom.edu](mailto:crohman@dom.edu).

(continued from p. 1)

Twain and the Natural World” (contact [Ben Click](#) for more info). *Studies in American Humor* published a special issue (5.2) on “Mark Twain and Satire,” with articles that were developed from presentations at the Elmira quadrennial conference in 2017. This year was also a good year for impressive books on Mark Twain. Notable among them are Kerry Driscoll’s much anticipated *Mark Twain Among the Indians and Other Indigenous Peoples* (California) and Gary Scharnhorst’s *The Life of Mark Twain: The Early Years, 1835-1871* (Missouri), the first of a three-volume biography. And, of course, the editorial staff at the [Mark Twain Project](#) continues their meticulous work both in print and online editions. Their advances in digital humanities are invaluable to members of the Mark Twain Circle.

Affiliated sites have also maintained a very full schedule of activities that keep the Mark Twain flame burning bright. The Elmira College [Center for Mark Twain Studies](#) hosted its ongoing series of public lectures at Quarry Farm, as well as a teacher workshop in the summer and a symposium on “Economics and the New Gilded Age” in October. This year also saw a full slate of Quarry farm residency fellowships, enabling scholars to work amidst the peace and comfort of “Mark Twain’s summer home.” [The Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum](#) enjoyed a full calendar of public programs, notably its “Music Under the Stars” series and its “Taste of Twain” festival

in September. Educational programs included the annual teacher symposium in July. And the [Mark Twain House](#) in Hartford had a very busy year of public programming: performances, readings, lectures, and writing workshops.

This is a remarkable array of labor, labor of joy, that comes with the satisfaction of mutual support among our many members of the Mark Twain Circle. We should all take a measure of pride in these accomplishments and activities, for they are evidence that Mark Twain remains a vital figure in our culture. Next year looks to be equally busy with MLA in Chicago this January, ALA in Boston come May (deadline for proposals is January 2, 2019—[see the call here](#)), and the Hannibal conference in July (contact [Henry Sweets](#) for more information), along with the full line-up of events that the affiliated sites regularly host.

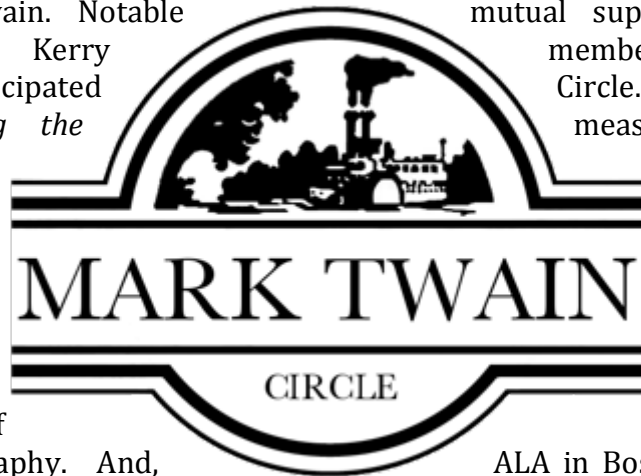
As our organization and Mark Twain studies continue to prosper, we might keep in mind some wise words:

**Prosperity is the best protector of principle.**

- *Following the Equator*; Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar

Yr Obt Svt,

--LH





MEDIA RELEASE

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[www.MilwaukeeRep.com](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com) | @MilwRep | #RiverOfSongMKE

## Complete Cast and Creative Team Announced for Milwaukee Repertory Theater's World Premiere of



*Featuring several Hootenannies throughout the Run!*

December 3, 2018 [Milwaukee] [Milwaukee Repertory Theater](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com) is pleased to announce the complete cast and creative team for the world premiere of **Mark Twain's River of Song**, from the creators of The Rep's hit production *Back Home Again: On the Road with John Denver* **Randal Myler** and **Dan Wheetman** in the Stackner Cabaret, January 18 – March 17, 2019.

**Mark Twain's River of Song** cast features three dynamic performers **Harvy Blanks** (*Jitney*, Broadway), **David Lutken** (*Back Home Again: On the Road with John Denver*, Milwaukee Rep) and **Spiff Wiegand** (*Indecent*, Palm Beach Dramaworks).

**Mark Twain's River of Song** creative team includes director and creator **Randal Myler**, music director and creator **Dan Wheetman**, set designer **Kristin Ellert** (*McGuire*, Milwaukee Rep), costume designer **Leslie Vaglica** (*Grounded*, Milwaukee Rep), lighting designer **Greg Hofmann** (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, Paramount Theater), sound designer **Sarah D. Espinoza** (*The Arsonists*, Strawdog), dramaturg Associate Artistic Director **Brent Hazelton**, and stage manager **Audra Kuchling**.

For performers and music lovers alike **David Lutken** will host his famous **Hootenannies** after three Thursday shows during the run on [January 31](#), [February 21](#) and [March 14](#). Audience members for those performances are encouraged to bring in their own instruments and join in on the fun after the show sharing stories, song and revelry with David and cast.

**Mark Twain's River of Song** is an exploration of the music and culture of America's first superhighway, the Mississippi River. From the iron red water in Minnesota to the deep, dark Southern Delta, the river carries the stories and songs of the people. Performed by three world-class musicians, it's a journey through America's Heartland and features traditional songs like "Dance Boatmen Dance," "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," and "Deep River Blues."

**Mark Twain's River of Song** is a **John D. Lewis New Play Development Program Production** and is part of the **Camille and David Kundert Stackner** Season with Executive Producers **Camille and David**

**Kundert, Kris and Wayne Lueders and Adlon Partnership.** The Rep is sponsored in part by **The United Performing Arts Fund.**

***Mark Twain's River of Song*** runs January 18 – March 17, 2019 in the Stackner Cabaret. Opening night is set for Sunday, January 20th at 7pm. Purchase tickets at [www.MilwaukeeRep.com](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com), by calling the Ticket Office at **414-224-9490** or in person at **108 E. Wells Street** in downtown Milwaukee.

For more information, please visit [www.MilwaukeeRep.com](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com)

**About Milwaukee Repertory Theater**

Milwaukee Rep is the largest performing arts organization in Wisconsin in terms of audiences served and one of the largest professional theaters in the country. Each year, The Rep welcomes up to 275,000 people at nearly 700 performances of 15 productions ranging from compelling dramas, powerful classics, new plays and full-scale musicals in its three unique performance venues – the Quadracci Powerhouse, Stiemke Studio and Stackner Cabaret. Now in its 65<sup>th</sup> Season, The Rep has gained a national reputation as an incubator of new work, an agent of community change and a forward-thinking provider of vital arts education programs. Under the leadership of **Artistic Director Mark Clements** and **Executive Director Chad Bauman**, Milwaukee Repertory Theater ignites positive change in the cultural, social, and economic vitality of its community by creating world-class theater experiences that entertain, provoke, and inspire meaningful dialogue among an audience representative of Milwaukee's rich diversity.

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# Mark Twain Circle Calls for Papers

**American Literature Association**  
Boston, MA: May 23-26, 2019

The Mark Twain Circle is accepting proposals for paper presentations for two panels:

1. In recognition of the grim fact that 2019 marks the 400th anniversary of the African slave trade in colonies that would become the United States, while 2018 marked the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, panel one will focus on Mark Twain's engagement with issues of slavery, abolition, race, and racism in the United States. We invite proposals that critically analyze how Twain's texts represent these topics in complex ways literarily, politically, historically, or any combination. Papers that deal with aspects of race and gender are especially welcome.

2. Panel two is an open call for papers on any aspect of Mark Twain's life and work. We are eager to include presenters who are interested in continuing the tradition of performance of Twain texts under the auspices of the "Mark Twain Players."

We enthusiastically encourage junior and emerging scholars to present their work. Graduate students chosen to present may apply for a grant from Mark Twain Circle's Louis Budd Travel Fund to help defray some of the costs of attending the conference. While we seek submissions without restriction, all presenters must be active members of the Mark Twain Circle at the time of the conference (information about membership is available at our website <https://marktwaincircle.org/join-the-mark-twain-circle-of-america-2/join/>).

Presentations sponsored by the Mark Twain Circle are often developed into articles that appear in the Mark Twain Annual, published by Penn State University Press.



**MARK TWAIN CONFERENCE**  
Hannibal, MO: July 25-27, 2019

The Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum is hosting its third Mark Twain Conference in Hannibal, Missouri, July 25-27, 2019. The museum is calling for papers for presentation at the conference.

Abstracts for proposals are being accepted immediately through February 15, 2019. These should be e-mailed in Word format to Henry Sweets at [henry.sweets@marktwainmuseum.org](mailto:henry.sweets@marktwainmuseum.org) for review. Abstracts should be 500-750 words in length. Presenters will be limited to a 20-minute presentation at the conference.



Subject matter is wide open. Presentations are expected to address some topic related to Mark Twain, his life, or his works. Preference will be given to papers addressing Mark Twain in Hannibal, in Missouri, or on the Mississippi River.

In addition to the papers being presented, the conference will include visits to the Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum, touring Mark Twain Cave, riding the Mark Twain Riverboat, and traveling to Florida, Missouri, to the Mark Twain birthplace museum and the Quarles farm site.

Contact Henry Sweets with any questions.

# Renew Your Membership in the Mark Twain Circle of America for 2019!

And if you haven't yet renewed for 2018, you can use this form, too.

**\$30 Individual (US and International)**

**\$15 Graduate Students and K-12 Educators**

**\$75 Three-year Individual**

Membership helps support the educational and social activities of the Circle, including scholarly panels at academic conferences such as MLA and ALA. It also includes our newsletter, *The Mark Twain Circular*, which will keep you connected to all things Twain, and the *Mark Twain Annual*, published by Pennsylvania State UP. Previous issues will be available to members through JSTOR.

Send queries regarding the *Mark Twain Annual* to:

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*The Mark Twain Annual*  
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For *Annual* submission information or to submit a manuscript, visit the *Annual's* Editorial Manager website: <http://www.editorialmanager.com/mta/>

**Memberships now payable online via PayPal (credit, debit, or PayPal account)**

<http://marktwaincircle.org/join-the-mark-twain-circle-of-america-2/join-or-renew-electronically/>

**Or, send your check—payable to the Mark Twain Circle of America—to**

Jarrod Roark, Executive Coordinator  
Mark Twain Circle of America  
3725 Thompson Circle  
Kansas City, Kansas 66103

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Affiliation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Questions? Jarrod Roark can be reached at [jarrodroark@gmail.com](mailto:jarrodroark@gmail.com)

# Mark Twain Bibliography

## Recent Publications

### ***Mark Twain Annual (2018)***

Editor's Re: Marks, Chad Rohman

#### **Featured Essay**

"The England Trip of 1872: Mark Twain's First Season in Hell," Joseph Csicsila

#### **Critical Essays**

"Rhetorical Listening, Silence, and Cultural (Dis)identifications in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: Revisiting the "Raft Episode" Again, Ugh!" Ben Click

"The Colorless History of That Dull Country Town: Color-Blind Racism in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," Virginia Maresca

"This Way to the Egress: The Humbug of Barnum and Twain," Christine Benner Dixon

"Mark Twain's 'Assault of Laughter': Reflections on the Perplexing History of an Appealing Idea," Holger Kersten

"A Populist in King Arthur's Court," Andrew Alquesta

"Mark Twain Explains the Trump Presidency: Mark Twain's Political Commentary Remains Relevant Today," Donald Tiffany Bliss

"The Art of Judicious Lying," Gregg Camfield

"Ornithorhyncus Platypus Extraordinariensis: Modernist Metafiction and the Assault on the Reader in Melville's *The Confidence-Man* and Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*," G. R. Thompson

#### **Pedagogical Essays**

"Reading, Writing, and 'Riffmatic': Using Twain in a Writing Class," John T. Gatten

"Miles to Go: *The Prince and the Pauper* in Film and Television," Hugh H. Davis

#### **Book Reviews**

*The Introspective Art of Mark Twain* by Douglas Anderson (Review by Alecia Alexander )

*Critical Insights: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by R. Kent Rasmussen (Review by Barbara Schmidt)

*Mark Twain and France: The Making of a New American Identity* by Paula Harrington, Ronald Jenn (Review by Jeffrey Melton)

*The Letters of Mark Twain and Joseph Hopkins Twichell* by Harold K. Bush, Steve Courtney, Peter Messent (Review by Ann M. Ryan)

*Mark Twain and Money: Language, Capital, and Culture* by Henry B. Wonham, Lawrence Howe (Review by Tracy Wuster)

*The Life of Mark Twain: The Early Years, 1835–1871* by Gary Scharnhorst (Review by Jarrod Roark)

*Wonder and Irony with Henry James and Mark Twain in the Venice Ducal Palace* by Rosella Mamoli Zorzi (Review by Hal Hellwig)

## **Appendix**

“Filmography of *The Prince and the Pauper*,” Hugh H. Davis



## ***The Mark Twain Journal (Fall 2018)***

This issue celebrates the achievements of the **directors of the Center for Mark Twain Studies at Elmira College** in Elmira, New York. In a mere quarter of a century these five individuals turned a donated farm house into a scholar's retreat and an international promoter of Mark Twain studies. As Mark Twain in *Elmira* (1977, 2013) reminds us, Clemens and his family spent many summers in Elmira; his sister-in-law's home there, Quarry Farm, contributed greatly to his ability to compose his greatest works. When Jervis Langdon, Jr. donated this site to Elmira College, it fell to a succession of imaginative directors of the Center for Mark Twain Studies, beginning with **Herbert A. Wisbey, Jr.** and then **Darryl Baskin**, to decide how it could be utilized to best advantage in serving Twain scholars around the world. **Gretchen Sharlow**, the third director, recalls the challenges they were confronting in the early years when she started as a volunteer in 1983. Bryan Reddick, the longtime chief academic officer of Elmira College, witnessed this astonishingly rapid transformation, and here gives his impressions of the directors he knew, including **Barbara Snedecor**. Elmira College professor Matt Seybold characterizes the accomplishments and goals of the current director, **Joseph Lemak**. The Center for Mark Twain Studies serves as the editorial address for the *Mark Twain Journal* and since 1989 has sponsored quadrennial conferences on the State of Mark Twain Studies. In 2017 the Center hosted the eighth of these international events.

**Thomas J. Reigstad's** article, "Mark Twain and the Coal Question," investigates some provocative social issues that have troubled his biographers and clearly bothered Twain, too.

**Kevin Mac Donnell** traces tantalizing suggestions that a religious denomination played a role in Twain's masterpiece; readers should suspect some surprises as they begin "Was Huck Quaker? The Inner Light in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*."

**Liam Purdon** tightens the connections between an unlikely pair, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This may be the definitive study of Huck's remark in Chapter 17 about the "tough" book he found on the Grangerfords' parlor table.

**Deborah Collins** takes a close look at the reception Mark Twain received during his travel around India in 1896, contending, among other things, that his exposure to the tenets of Hindu philosophy had a lasting effect on the writer.

**Lizzy Nichols** explicates the balancing act that Twain's oral performances and published writings attained during an era when the improvements in printing technology were rapidly standardizing the English language.

Virtually all critics agree about certain resemblances between the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Mark Twain, but **Dennis W. Eddings** adds to our awareness of specific resemblances between a number of their publications.

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