



# Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

Volume 12

April-June 1998

Number 2

## President's Column

Michael J. Kiskis  
Elmira College

This is my final chance to write to you as president of

the Mark Twain Circle. It's time, then, for a story. And a sermon. Twain would have liked that.

Let me set a scene.

We have just ambled into a bar. There are two groups of people sitting around tables at opposite ends of the dimly lit room; table settings around the room have been cannibalized to make it possible for each table to support more people. Each group is intent on its business.

We can see that one group takes its business very much to heart. The conversation is muted and intense. Sincerity and unremitting concern oozes into the surrounding air. Men and women are hunched in their chairs, chins are cradled in folded hands, strict attention to the single speaker is uninterrupted. They are an earnest lot. The candles set on the table are more votive than celebratory; the small flames bow under the weight of the conversation. The other group catches our ears before our eyes. They raise a good bit of hell. There is a Mephistophelean glee; their comments are carefree and echo of inappropriate (even obscene) diction and premeditated mayhem. No one holds the floor unless it's to tell a joke or a story. And the primary voice is promptly replaced with another in rapid succession. It's customary for this

group to goad some unsuspecting member to buy the whole table drinks.

Here's the question. Wait for it.

Which group is the more scholarly?

There is a point to this little test. And at its heart is the predisposition to turn to the quieter and more studious group and assume that behavior corroborates seriousness of thought and depth of commitment to the intellect, to dismiss the more raucous gathering as uncertain, less than serious, profane (blasphemous?) and third-rate scholars. If they are "scholars" at all.

Those of us who devote a heaping share of our time to reading and writing about Mark Twain need to be careful about such frog-like leaps of faith. Some of us take that leap; some of us suffer because of those who are quick to judge and revel in stereotype. When I was a graduate student, a mentor taught me a valuable lesson: "Never," he said, "take yourself seriously. Take the work that you do seriously." Too few of us have learned that lesson. Fewer still, I think, believe it. Some of us have been hurtful to others because we refuse to learn it. I have seen careers hurt by it. I

have known people to shift the focus of their careers because of it.

The root of inquiry is in the quality of the work produced—whether that work comes out in print, informs our teaching, or helps to broaden our shared knowledge. Shoddy work, unclear argument, sloppy thinking are reasons for strong critical reaction. Yet criticism must be aimed at the work and presented in a clear voice that points to the slop. We have too often used our critical facility to defend our individual biases and jealousies: we don't like the idea so we discount the thinker; or worse, we conclude that the idea holds little merit because the thinker isn't our kind of thinker, or happens to have too good a time while practicing his or her scholarship. And we all know that enjoying oneself is a sure sign of third-rate scholarship. That, my

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friends, is slop.

As an organization of practicing scholars and thinkers, we need to display a healthier sense of skepticism about our individual worth, be less quick to assume the ignorance of others because they are not what we "expect" of scholarly bearing, be more self-reflective before we slide down the path that allows us all to make sounds like liberal (in its truest and freest intellectual sense) thinkers though we harden our hearts like good and conscientious authoritarians. Mark Twain would be ashamed of us. We all should be.

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## Twain at ALA '98

The Mark Twain Circle will sponsor two panels at the 1998 American Literature Association Conference in San Diego (May 28-31):

**Session:** Machines, Illustrations, and Indian Wars: Mark Twain's Creative Process (Thursday, May 28, 2:30-3:50 p.m.; Evans I)

**Chair:** Michael J. Kiskis, (Elmira C)

**Papers:**

1. "Mark Twain and the Technologies of Production," Jeffrey Steinbrink (Franklin & Marshall C)

2. "An Interesting Twosome: Mark Twain and True Williams," Beverly David (Western Michigan U, Kalamazoo)

3. "Eating Indians for Breakfast': Racial Ambivalence and American Identity in *The Innocents Abroad*," Kerry Driscoll (St. Joseph's C)

**Session:** Performing Dialect in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: A Roundtable (Friday, May 29, 1:00-2:20 p.m.; Evans I)

**Chair:** Laura E. Skandera-Trombley (Coe C)

**Participants:** John Bird (Winthrop U); Dennis Eddings (Western Oregon C); Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua (Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture)

**Description:** The discussion will focus on performing and teaching dialect from *Adventures of*

*Huckleberry Finn* and will take its cue from readings selected and read by the participants. Audience participation will be encouraged—perhaps coerced.

A discussion session titled "Creating the Oxford Mark Twain" will also be of interest to Twainians. The discussion will be led by Shelley Fisher Fishkin (U of Texas, Austin), editor of the Oxford Mark Twain. Time: 12:00-12:50, Saturday, May 30. Place: Evans I.

In addition to its panels, the Circle will also host an evening cruise on the Bahia's stern-wheeler. That cruise is scheduled for Thursday evening; we will board between 8:00 and 8:30 p.m. On that cruise we will have a brief business meeting of the Circle. New officers will be elected and firmly inducted. The Circle will also celebrate the contributions of two of its members with Lifetime Achievement Awards to Carl Dolmetsch and John C. Gerber. Those of us who work in Twain studies have profited mightily from the work of these two scholars, and it will be good to raise a glass in their honor. While both, however, will be unable to join us for the celebration, they have been assured that this is quite legitimate and that they will not be billed for drinks.

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## Twain at MLA '98

The Circle will also sponsor two panels at the 1998 Modern Language Association Conference in San Francisco (Dec. 27-30).

**Session:** The Author as Public Intellectual

**Chair:** Shelley Fisher Fishkin (U of Texas)

**Participants:** Siva Vaidhyanathan (U of Wisconsin); Jim Zwick (Syracuse U); Fred Kaplan (Queens C & CUNY Graduate Center); David Bradley

**Session:** New Perspectives on Established Works

**Chair:** Laura E. Skandera-Trombley (Coe C)

**Papers:**

1. "Mark Twain as Western Outlaw: Language and Manhood in *Roughing It* and *Life on the Mississippi*," Joseph L. Coulombe (U of Delaware)

2. "a man nobody wouldn't be ashamed of": Drinking and Temperance in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*," Rosemarie L. Coste (U of Texas)

3. "'The Crying Defect of My Character': Hank Morgan, Mark Twain, and the Business of Determinism," Susanne Weil (Whittier C)

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## Another Source for the Small-Pox Lie in *Huckleberry Finn*?

Louis J. Budd  
Duke U (ret.)

In 1860 a Polish political refugee spent several months observing life

in New Orleans. Especially alert to the workings of chattel slavery, his "diary" or memoirs later recalled that "trading in slaves encouraged fraud, cunning, and joking about subterfuges at moments of danger to the degree that even yellow fever sometimes played an extraordinary role." He continued, "Here is an example, which has grown into a local legend."

A lookout on a ship with two hundred or so contraband blacks sighted, at dawn, a British frigate. The captain rushed all the blacks and part of the crew below deck and ordered the rest of the crew to create an air of disarray. When the frigate sent over a boarding party, he hailed it eagerly, lamenting that his ship had stopped at Cuba during an epidemic and that even his son had died earlier that morning. He begged for fresh food, especially vegetables. The would-be boarding party backed off, promising to send food, but the frigate then distanced itself as quickly as it could.

That the pilot Sam Clemens might have heard this

story is obvious. Just as too obvious to spell out are the differences from the episode in chapter 16 when Huck keeps the slave-hunters from boarding the raft. But the parallels are worth considering along with the source offered by William L. Andrews (*Studies in American Fiction*, 9 [1981], 103-12).

I have been using the excerpt, pp. 104-05, reprinted in *Ameryka w Pamiętnikach Polaków* [America in the Diaries of Poles], ed. Bogdan Grzeleński (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Interpress, 1975). The original text (which I have not seen) is Jakub Gordon, *Podróż do Nowego Orleanu* (Lipsk: F. W. Brockhaus, 1867).

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## Index to the *Mark Twain Circular* Vol. 11 (1997)

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Wesley Britton  
Grayson County C

This update in a series of indexes of the *Mark Twain Circular* has

one major change. Since Thomas Tenney's "About Mark Twain" is no longer included in the *Circular*, the format will be simplified to reflect this change. Now, listings will only include a monthly code (J/M for January-March, A/J for April-June, J/S for July-September and O/D for October-December) followed by the page number of the listed item. Jim Leonard's bibliographical listings are incorporated in the general index without special notation. Not indexed are "Dates to Circle," conference or convention information, calls for papers, and the "About the Circle" page in each issue.

### Issues of Volume 11:

No. 1 January-March (J/M)

No. 2 April-June (A/J)

(includes "media Update No. 2," and a bibliography of media reviews)

No. 3 July-September (J/S)

No. 4 October-December (O/D)  
(includes 1996 index)

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- Ah Sin*. A/J 1  
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Zwick, Jim. A/J 2

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**Cancún 98: American  
Humor Studies / Mark  
Twain Studies  
Conference**  
**Call for Papers, Seminars,  
Chairs, Respondents**

The second American Literature Association Cancún, Mexico, conference, cosponsored by the American Humor Studies Association and the Mark Twain Circle, will convene on Thursday December 10, 1998, for an opening reception at 7:00 P.M. Full sessions will be offered Friday December 11, Saturday December 12, and concluding at noon on Sunday December 13. We hope not to offer conflicting sessions. This is a conference of specialists speaking to specialists (although non-specialists are welcome to attend) and was developed under the auspices of the American Literature Association and Alfred Bendixen. The University of Alabama Press will publish a book composed of eighteen papers from the 1994 conference under the title *American Humor: New Studies, New Directions* in April 1998.

Individual papers are desired on any topic relating to American Humor, Mark Twain, humor in translation, ethnic and dialect humor, performance comedy, television, popular humor; this conference seeks wide coverage. Selected studies of minor and major authors are also welcome. William

J. Harris (Penn State) has developed a panel on Ishmael Reed; Dennis Eddings (Western Oregon U) is developing a panel on "Humor of Places" (how humorists use regional stereotypes of people and places); a panel on humor and dialect is projected; and prospective chairs who wish to propose other panels should write at once for approval. We would also welcome round-table discussions featuring several participants in an open discussion forum.

To propose a panel, paper, forum, or serve as a chair or respondent (we need these), please write to David E. E. Sloane, University of New Haven, 300 Orange Ave., West Haven, CT 06516. To discuss possible topics, call Monday or Friday mornings (203) 777-0667 or leave a message at Dave's UNH office (203) 932-7371 anytime. E-mail: <dees@charger.newhaven.edu>

Monday the 14th or the preceding Wednesday has proven to be an excellent day to visit Chichenitza or other sites on the Yucatan Peninsula. We will again be at the Presidente hotel, with its human scale, pre-season rates of roughly \$100/night, proximity to shopping, and beautiful beaches and pool. Airfare is in the \$400-600 range and Conference Registration will be \$45. You may attend the conference without having a specific program spot.

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**Current Mark Twain  
Bibliography**

James Leonard  
The Citadel

"Current Mark Twain Bibliography" is a means of giving notice of what's new in Mark Twain scholarship. Where annotations are used, they

are in most cases descriptive blurbs provided by publishers (or in some cases, by authors) with value judgments edited out. If you have recently published something that you would like to have included in this list, send it to me by e-mail (leonardj@citadel.edu), or by other means.

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**Books**

Arac, Jonathan. "*Huckleberry Finn*" as *Idol and Target: The Functions of Criticism in Our Time*. (The Wisconsin Project on American Writers.) Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1997. 264 pp. 6" x 9". Bibliography, index. Cloth. \$39.95. ISBN 0-299-15530-7. Paper. \$17.95. ISBN 0-299-15534-X.

Arac's work will stimulate . . . discussion . . . through its central question: Is it possible that Mark Twain's comic masterpiece—America's most beloved book—has become an idol of institutionalized oppression?

. . . Arac investigates the work of leading critics who formed the image of *Huckleberry Finn*. At the same time that he subjects [their] arguments to rigorous examination, he persistently suggests ways of teaching the book that provide a context of comparison—removing it from its pedestal. . . . He advocates a new way of thinking about *Huckleberry Finn*, not simply nationally but globally. [Text excerpted from advertising flyer.]

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Clemens, Samuel L. *Mark Twain Letters Vol. 5: 1872-1873*. Ed. Lin Salamo and Harriet Elinor Smith. U of California P, 1997. 742 pp. Cloth. \$60.00. ISBN 0-520-20822-6. [Reviewed on the Mark Twain Forum by Wesley Britton (Grayson County C) on Jun 10, 1997.]

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Evans, John D. *A Tom Sawyer Companion: An Autobiographical Guided Tour with Mark Twain*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1993. 113 + viii pp. Cloth. \$37.50. ISBN 0-8191-9059-4. Paper. \$14.95. ISBN 0-8191-9060-8. [Reviewed by Carolyn Richey on the Mark Twain Forum.]

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Fatout, Paul, ed. *Mark Twain Speaks for Himself*. W. Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1997. 272 pp. Paper. \$14.95. ISBN 1-55753-101-3.

A collection of 76 sketches and orations assembled for the first time. This paperback edition features newspaper interviews, humorous columns, letters to the editor, speeches, and recorded interviews. Twain's persona is revealed in many notes: preacher, raconteur, hoaxer, and satirist. [Text excerpted from advertising flyer.]

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Twain, Mark. *Mark Twain's "Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc"*. Introduction by Thomas Maik. Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1997. 500 pp. \$109.95. ISBN 0-7734-8456-6.

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### Videotape

Engel, Elliot. *Mark Twain, A Light and Enlightening Look*. Media Consultants, 1996. (The Writing Wonders Series, vol. 4.) 51 minutes. \$39.95. ISBN 1-890123-05-6. [Reviewed on the Mark Twain Forum by Barbara Schmidt (Tarleton State U) on Feb. 8, 1998.]

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### Audiobooks

Twain, Mark. *The Humor of Mark Twain*. Great Authors Series, Entertainment Software Inc. Produced by Commuter's Library. Read by Thomas Becker, 6 cassettes. ISBN 1-883049-72-5. \$34.95

Twain, Mark. "The Double-Barreled Detective Story." Commuter's Library of Unabridged Masterworks. Produced by Sound Room Pub., 1996. Read by Thomas Becker. Two cassettes. 2¼ hrs. \$16.95. ISBN 1-883049-11-3.

[Both audiobooks were reviewed on the Mark Twain Forum by Wesley Britton (Grayson County C) on Apr. 16, 1998.]

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### Dates to Circle

May 10-15, 1998. "Collecting Mark Twain" course at Indiana University.

May 28-31, 1998. American Literature Association Annual Conference; San Diego. See "President's Column" for details.

Nov. 5-7, 1998. South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference.

Dec. 10-13, 1998. American Humor Studies / Mark Twain Studies Conference; Cancún, Mexico. See "Cancún 98" for details.

December 27-30, 1998. Modern Language Association Annual Conference; San Francisco, CA.

See "President's Column" for details.

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### Mark Twain Sites

#### What's Past, and Passing, and to Come

Mark Twain House (Hartford, CA)

*Late March*—Grand Opening of The Drawing Room, The Clemens Bedroom, and The Butler's Room  
*1998 Spring Lecture Series*: "A House Revealed: The Restoration of Mark Twain's Home"

*April 14*—"Uncovering History: The Butler's Room," Mark Twain House Curator Marianne Curling

*April 21*—"Silks and Saris: The Drawing Room," Writer Linda Linton

*April 28*—"Intimate Exchange: Love Letters of Samuel and Olivia Clemens," Twain Scholar Susan Harris (Penn State U)

*May 7*—1998 Clemens Lecture: Biographer, Lecturer, Historian, and Teacher David McCullough

*May 29*—Mark Twain Cigar Dinner (The Goodwin Hotel)

*June 10 & 24*—"Twain at Twilight" lawn concerts

*July 18 & 19*—Mark Twain Days

Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies (Elmira, NY)

*1998 Spring Lecture Series*: "The Trouble Begins at Eight"

*April 22*—"Mark Twain's Puritan Dilemma," Charles Mitchell (Elmira C)

*May 6*—"Yours Truly," Mark Twain: Reconsidering the Intellectual and Epistemological Dimensions of an Ironic and Elusive Mind," Chad Rohman (Bowling Green State U)

*May 20*—The Darby-Petrie Lecture: "'Noble Fight' or 'Long Tragedy'?: Mark Twain on the Civil War," Alison Ensor (U of Tennessee)



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All profits from the sale of "The Official Mark Twain Forum T-shirt" will be donated to the Mark Twain Project in Berkeley, California. The MTP is facing a crisis due to severe cut-backs in government funding. Here is a way to "show your colors," get a great looking t-shirt and help support the work of a national treasure—the principal repository of Mark Twain's manuscripts, letters and many other important documents.

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\*The Mark Twain Forum, founded in 1992 by Taylor Roberts, is an Internet discussion group for all persons having a scholarly interest in the life and writings of Mark Twain. Postings may include book reviews, queries, announcements, calls for papers or anything else related to Mark Twain studies. The Mark Twain Forum also serves as an excellent vehicle for current, informal discussion among international Twain scholars and enthusiasts. Like all such electronic discussion groups, there is no charge for subscribing. For information about subscribing to the Mark Twain Forum or for further details about the Mark Twain Project, contact the List Administrator at the above address, or write via e-mail to: Kevb@delphi.com

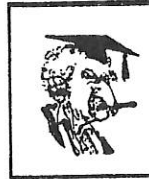
## Everything You Need to Know . . .



**ABOUT THE CIRCULAR.** The *Mark Twain Circular*, newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America, was launched in January 1987 by Thomas A. Tenney (Editor of the *Mark Twain Journal*). James S. Leonard (The Citadel) assumed editorial responsibility with the February 1987 *Circular* and has continued in that capacity until the present. The *Circular* is published four times per year (Jan.-March, April-June, July-Sept., and Oct.-Dec.), and is mailed, by the editor, to all members of the Mark Twain Circle. The *Circular* prints news of Mark Twain events and scholarship, directories of members, short biographical articles and critical commentaries, and current bibliography. Subscribers are distributed among 44 states and 14 foreign countries.



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



**ABOUT THE MARK TWAIN JOURNAL.** Founded in 1936 by Cyril Clemens, the *Mark Twain Journal* is the oldest American magazine devoted to a single author. In 1982, the *Journal* moved to its present home in Charleston, S.C., under the editorship of Thomas A. Tenney. There are two issues per year, Spring and Fall, with a new volume each year (rather than every second year, as in the past). The *Journal* tends to appear late, and begs your patient indulgence. New subscribers may wish to begin with the 1996 issues rather than the 1998. Back issues from 13:1 to the present are available at \$5.00 each, postpaid (\$2.50 on orders for ten or more; pre-1983 issues are thinner than modern ones, and some are badly reprinted). An index 1936-83 counts as a back issue.

To: Prof. Joseph A. Alvarez  
Exec. Coordinator, Mark Twain Circle  
English Department  
Central Piedmont Community College  
Charlotte, NC 28204

Please enroll me as a member of the Mark Twain Circle of America and subscriber to the *Mark Twain Circular*. I enclose a check for \$15.00 (\$16.00 for a non-U.S. address) made out to "Mark Twain Circle of America."

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To: Thomas A. Tenney, Editor  
*Mark Twain Journal*  
English Department  
The Citadel  
Charleston, SC 29409

Please enter my subscription to the *Mark Twain Journal* for the year(s) circled: 1996, 1997, 1998.

Subscription rates for individuals are \$10 for one year, \$18 for two years, \$25 for three years, or \$30 for four years. Libraries: \$18.00/year, no discount. Foreign: Add \$2.00/year for postage.

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

**Mark Twain Circle Officers:**

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**Editor, *Mark Twain Circular*:**  
James S. Leonard  
The Citadel

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See "Mark Twain Sites" (p. 5) for a list of Spring 1998 events at the Mark Twain House (Hartford, CT) and the Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies (Elmira, NY).

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

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Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Charleston, SC 29409  
Permit No. 779