

Mark Twain Circular

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President's Column

Kerry Driscoll

University of Saint Joseph



Mark Twain, Reader

"Who's he when he's at home?"

-James Joyce, *Ulysses*

Like Benjamin Franklin, Sam Clemens was an autodidact; unlike Franklin, however, who never tired of bragging in his *Autobiography* about depriving himself of sleep in order to find the time to read and broaden his intellectual horizons, Clemens professed himself a habitually "lazy man." Yet even a cursory glance at books from his personal library tells a very different story.

He was not only an active, engaged reader, but also a deeply immersive one. As Sam wrote to his mother at age 17, within a week of his arrival in New York City he had found not one but two libraries—available free to printers—where he could spend his evenings "most pleasantly." "If books are not good company," he writes, "where will I find it?" (L1 10). Reading provided just that—essential, deeply satisfying companionship—throughout the writer's life.

Pen or pencil always in hand, Clemens interacted with his books, not in the way that most of us English professors are accustomed to doing (e.g., underlining passages we find memorable or important), but passionately and often at great length. Rather than passively accepting the "truth" or authority of ideas he encountered in a published text, he often took issue with them—debating, extrapolating upon, or satirizing key statements. For this reason, Clemens' marginal annotations offer unprecedented insight into both his mercurial temperament and habits of mind. Case in point: over the past year or so, I've spent a great deal of time at the Mark Twain Papers examining his marginalia in the work of Francis Parkman, the eminent 19th century

Inside This Issue

Twain Talk:

Bruce Michelson

Mark Twain Circle:

Member Renewal

Mark Twain Bibliography:

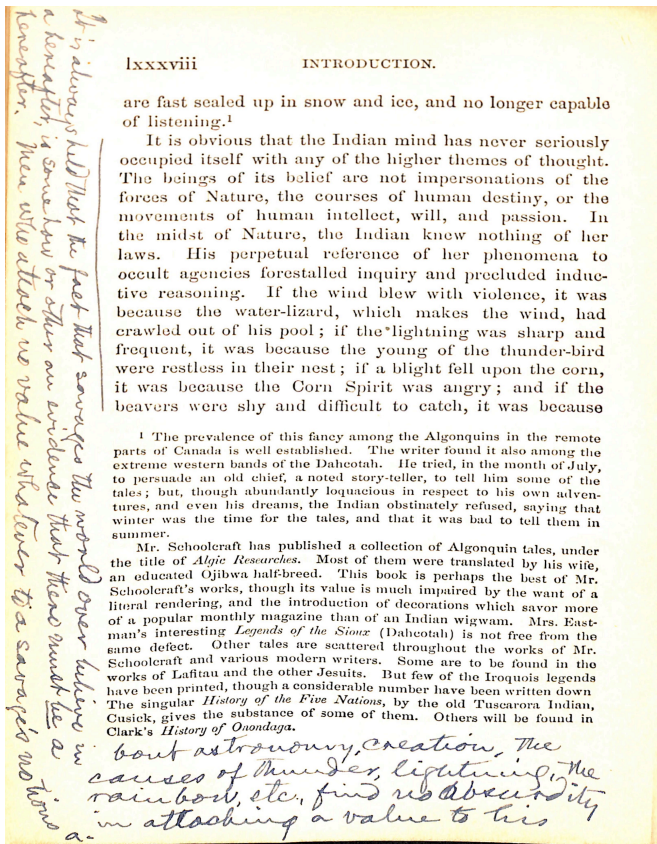
Recent Publications

Conference Info:

Elmira 2017

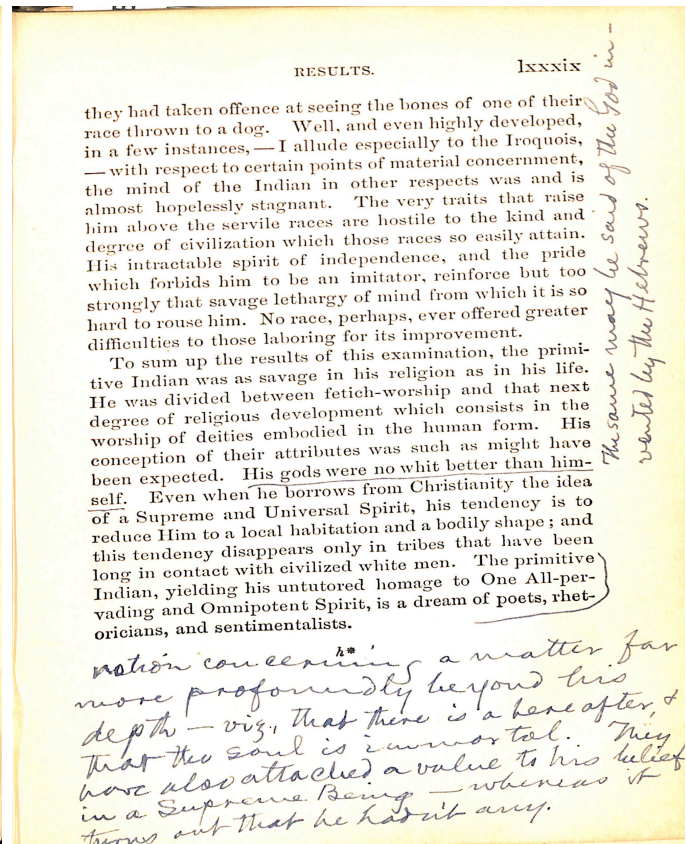
historian of the American West. Clemens apparently purchased an eight-volume set of *Parkman's Works* in 1881; five of them are now housed at Berkeley, while the whereabouts of the remaining three are still unknown. The most heavily-annotated of these books, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, illustrates the intensity and unfiltered immediacy of his responses. Parkman's description of Iroquois religion in the volume's introduction, for example (reproduced here), unleashes an

hereafter. Men who attach no value whatever to a savage's notions about astronomy, creation, the causes of thunder, lightning, the rainbow, etc., find no absurdity in attaching a value to his notion concerning a matter far more profoundly beyond his depth—viz., that there is a hereafter, & that the soul is immortal. They have also attached a value to his belief in a Supreme Being—whereas it turns out that he hadn't any.



astonishing fourteen lines of commentary, beginning in the left margin, running down to the bottom of the page then spilling over onto the blank space at the bottom of the next as well. The penmanship itself is a revelation, testimony to the rapid pace of Clemens' thoughts, transcribed as they occur in real time:

It is always held that the fact that savages the world over believe in a hereafter, is somehow or other an evidence that there must be a



(Images courtesy of the Mark Twain Papers)

What I find so fascinating about this annotation is that it's like a jazz riff—spontaneous, improvisational, a critical interrogatory inspired by Parkman's ideas and expanded into a philosophical meditation on mankind's need to invent the concept of Heaven.

Not surprisingly, some of the other marginalia in the volume are humorous—
(continued on p. 9)

Twain Talk

An Interview with Bruce Michelson



What's your earliest memory of reading Twain?

*Actually, Mark Twain first hit me as schoolwork, in 6th grade at the Burr Farms School in Westport, Connecticut. Ms. Jack, our young teacher (yes, I had a crush on her) did a unit with Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and a chunk of *Roughing It*, topped with clips from the old Fredric March movie and an excursion to Hartford to see the house, which was then in the earliest stages of restoration. So I was eleven or twelve, and this was probably my first real immersion in a single author—other than Franklin W. Dixon (Hardy Boys, Tom Swift, and other stuff from that shelf). I can't say that my life and aspirations changed there and then—but something probably took root.*

What was your dissertation topic and who directed your dissertation?

Yikes! This was at the University of Washington

*(where I'd fled to do grad school at maximum distance from the East Coast, where I'd grown up); and when I finally reached the dissertation stage the place was sliding into the era of totalizing formulations, the years of *The Frenchman of the Month*. Because American writers had seemed easy to engage, and because they had paid such rapt attention to what the Brits and the French were up to, I'd done nearly all of my coursework on British Lit, with a big dose of their French contemporaries, Stendhal, Hugo, Flaubert, that gang. Eventually all that proved helpful. But sneezing in those critical-theory winds, I half-decided to plug received wisdom about play (Huizinga, Caillois, etc.) into Mark Twain's books to see which ones, with just a little coercion, would light up. But because I wasn't confident about what I was doing, for a director I went to the most skeptical guy on that faculty. This was Harold Simonson, an ordained Congregationalist pastor as well as a prof who wrote about Jonathan Edwards and Calvinism. For me, he turned out to be perfect—merciless on my thinking and writing in all sorts of ways that have continued to matter over the years. After many trips through steam-washers, a handful of articles did come out of that diss—but I haven't looked at the whole primordial thing for decades. I don't keep it in the study. At last report it was in the guest-room closet, upper shelf, somewhere near the fondue set.*

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

As you know, I've cheated on Mark Twain more than once for sizable stretches, dismaying some of our friends. But sometimes I need what works for me as an antidote—the measure and polish of the poet Richard Wilbur, the way he goes into dangerous territory without losing his composure; and Tom Stoppard, for his wonderful concoctions of flash and style and risky adventure. I've come 'home' to Mark Twain again and again because of how much he encompasses: the scope of the life, those powerful,

innocent responses to personal and cultural crisis and change, and how his wit and his humor enact that complex relationship between the self and the utterance, those strange ways in which we mean what we say—and also, in that same moment of saying, not quite.

What, if anything, have you grown to dislike about Twain that man?

I wouldn't have wanted to work for him. As boss of the Webster Company, as an anxious and second-guessing partner or investor, he'd veer unpredictably between bouts of micro-management and sloughs of negligence. He could literally drive people to distraction, like poor Webster himself. But all that just puts Clemens in distinguished company: our American Parnassus includes plenty of people we can admire as writers, but wouldn't want as relatives, or colleagues, or even as overnight houseguests.

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

*The two books I've done come at him and his legacy from something like opposite directions. In the first one, *Mark Twain on the Loose*, I had fun operating without a net, letting go of any potato-peeler methodology of literary analysis. In some ways it was a gut reaction to much of the heavily-thematic criticism I'd been reading and taking too much to heart. I think it helped me, and some other readers, break free of doctrinal approaches to him and to see and enjoy him with fresh eyes. The other one, *Printer's Devil*, was also in some ways an act of self-indulgence. I'd come through several decades accepting the story told in anthologies and literary histories, of authors begetting other authors in a smooth genealogy in which 'author' meant the same thing from one era to*

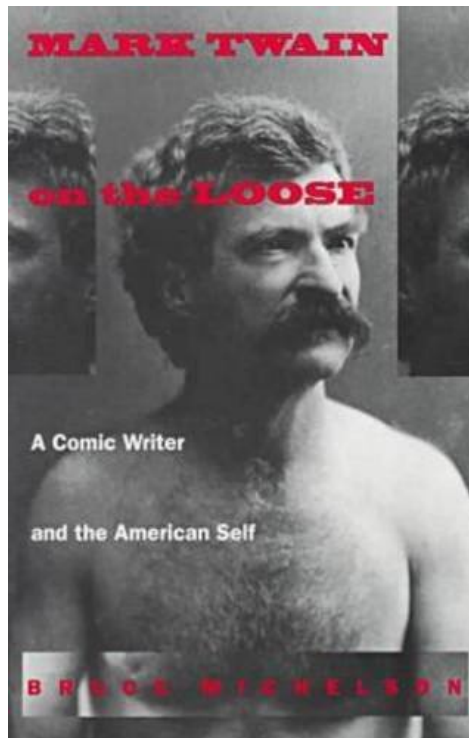
the next. Starting, with some raw curiosity, from the fact that Sam was raised as a printer and always embroiled himself in the tech and logistics of printing and publishing, I decided to learn about that—and wow! Everything about the book and journal business got turned on its head when Sam was growing up, and things kept somersaulting and ramifying right to the end of his life. You can still carve his name on the library lintels next to Bradstreet and Cooper and Emerson; but for Mark Twain, it was a new art, a new business, and a new world.

What's your best story about a Twain scholar from an earlier generation?

Going back about twenty years: Vic Doyno and I were invited to do a talk-show on WGN radio in Chicago, "Extension 720," which had an elastic schedule, as it went on air when the station was finished with whatever Cubs game they were

broadcasting that night. So you showed up safely early, drank cups of water in the studio, and waited until the wrap-up of the wrap-up. The host, Milt Rosenberg, wants us to do a reading from Huck, the passage where Huck and Jim debate about language and cats and human beings. Frankly I was squeamish about doing Jim: at that time I was teaching big lecture courses downstate, and on a 50,000 watt clear channel station, I was afraid of blowing it, sliding into caricature, and offending some of my students. Vic volunteered—and his handling of Jim's accent and dialect, live on air, was masterful in the grace, the music, and the implicit respect it conveyed. Vic

was an immensely generous scholar, open and cordial with his ideas and his energy. When I think of the best people that have been in this trade, I think of him.



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

I think that the challenge facing us is going to keep morphing—not just for people who work on Mark Twain, but for anyone in the humanities. When scholars of my generation warn that the Sky is Falling, younger people should take that forecast with a few tons of salt—but I can't avoid thinking that everything in American cultural life is in a state of disruption: what we read, how we read, how we decide what's worth reading and keeping in mind, as our world drowns itself in images and words, daily deluges that can make an attention-span and stewardship over a literary past seem futile. One great thing about Mark Twain, however, is that he's unlikely to be swept away soon in these tides—countless people still read him for pleasure, cite him, enjoy him, venerate him. So we still have a basis for conversation with a broader public—especially considering that so much in his legacy seems relevant for this new age.

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

I don't want to end this chat on a sour note, but the job market for good literature people has ranged

from lousy to awful for most of my career. That's a reason that I've never gone hunting for proteges. I've worked happily with young, resilient undergraduates who can major in English and then go on to other adventures without burning too far into precious years of full adulthood. If you do have a fire in your gut, no one who has enjoyed this life so much should discourage you from doing what you feel you must—but as you prepare, do go for versatility, acquiring skills and experience that can show a department that you can 'bat left and throw right,' handle a range of responsibilities and be a benefit to them in a lot of dimensions. However, if you want to be a scholar of an old-school sort, what Joseph Conrad calls a sequestered egotist -- well, a partner with a hedge fund might be a good idea....

Bruce Michelson is Director Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is currently at work on two books, Mark Twain Past and Present and an English edition of selected essays by Clemenceau. Bruce is also the 2013 recipient of the Louis J. Budd Award.

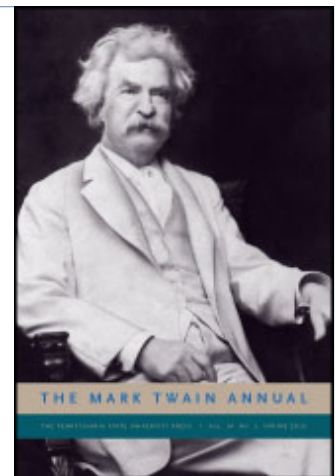
The Mark Twain Annual

Journal of the Mark Twain Circle of America

Chad Rohman, 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.



Renew Your Membership in the Mark Twain Circle of America for 2018!

And if you haven't yet renewed for 2017, 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, beginning fall 2013. Previous issues will be available to members through JSTOR.

Send queries regarding the *Mark Twain Annual* to:

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Name _____

Address _____

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Academic Affiliation (if any) _____

Questions? Jarrod Roark can be reached at jarrodroark@gmail.com

Mark Twain Bibliography

Recent Publications

Books:

The Letters of Mark Twain and Joseph Hopkins Twichell. Edited by Harold K. Bush, Steve Courtney, and Peter Messent. University of Georgia Press, 2017.

This volume collects the complete texts of all known correspondence between Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) and Joseph Hopkins Twichell. Theirs was a rich exchange. The long, deep friendship of Clemens and Twichell—a Congregationalist minister of Hartford, Connecticut—rarely fails to surprise, given the general reputation Twain has of being antireligious. Beyond this, an examination of the growth, development, and shared interests characterizing that friendship makes it evident that as in most things about him, Mark Twain defies such easy categorization or judgment.

Harrington, Paula, and Ronald Jenn. *Mark Twain and France: The Making of a New American Identity*. University of Missouri Press, 2017.

While critics have generally dismissed Mark Twain's relationship with France as hostile, Harrington and Jenn see Twain's use of the French as a foil to help construct his identity as "the representative American." Examining new materials that detail his Montmatre study, the carte de visite album, and a chronology of his visits to France, the book offers close readings of writings that have been largely ignored, such as *The Innocents Adrift* manuscript and the unpublished chapters of *A Tramp Abroad*, combining literary analysis, socio-historical context and biographical research.

Omiya, Takeshi. *Mark Twain and Europe*. Osaka Kyoiku Tosho, 2015.

In *Mark Twain and Europe* Takeshi Omiya, an independent Mark Twain scholar from Fukuoka City, Japan, "aims to examine the influence that Europe, at that time, had on Mark Twain and his works, that is, the significance of Europe to Twain." The book is divided into two major sections with the first devoted to Darwin's influence on Twain. The second section discusses the interactions and influences of Robert Louis Stevenson, Matthew Arnold and Shakespeare on Twain and his writings, particularly *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *The Innocents Abroad*.

Wuster, Tracy. *Mark Twain, American Humorist*. University of Missouri Press, 2016.

Mark Twain, American Humorist examines the ways that Mark Twain's reputation developed at home and abroad in the period between 1865 and 1882, years in which he went from a regional humorist to national and international fame. In the late 1860s, Mark Twain became the exemplar of a school of humor that was thought to be uniquely American. As he moved into more respectable venues in the 1870s, especially through the promotion of William Dean Howells in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Mark Twain muddied the hierarchical distinctions between

class-appropriate leisure and burgeoning forms of mass entertainment, between uplifting humor and debased laughter, and between the literature of high culture and the passing whim of the merely popular.

Mark Twain Journal (Spring/Fall 2017):

As the guest editor for this double issue of the *Mark Twain Journal* Joseph Csicsila had the privilege to honor **Barbara Schmidt** as a Legacy Scholar. **R. Kent Rasmussen** and **Taylor Roberts** have collaborated with Schmidt in numerous capacities over the last two decades as she has worked tirelessly to establish an enviable online presence for Mark Twain studies, and they have both contributed essays detailing Schmidt's pioneering contributions to the field.

Just prior to the release last winter of the award-winning feature film *Band of Robbers*, writers-directors **Aaron and Adam Nee** talked with Csicsila about their cinematic re-imagining of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn as adults in contemporary American culture. *Band of Robbers* will be featured this summer at the Eighth International Conference on the State of Mark Twain Studies in Elmira, New York. A transcript of that conversation leads the volume.

Ronald Jenn and **Linda A. Morris** collaborate to discuss the role of the French and English sources used by Mark Twain in the writing of *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*. Their analysis of the marginalia in these texts reveal that Twain, who was typically wary of European affairs, became entangled in one of the most passionate and longstanding intellectual debates of nineteenth-century France, the assessment of the role and scope of Joan of Arc's career, as well as her impact on French and world history.

In a second essay on Joan of Arc, **Mary A. Knighton** reflects on the challenges that Twain may have faced personally and with his readership in creating female characters on a par with his male characters. She speculates that his failure in having achieved critical success with his beloved novel merely obscures what Twain himself aimed for in this literary experiment and finally found in it, which appears to have been a highly personal, mostly private, achievement.

Betina Entzminger adds to the discussion regarding the influence of Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* on Sam Raimi's 1992 film *Army of Darkness*. Having discovered that Raimi's original ending for the film (which was changed when the studio requested a more upbeat conclusion) resembles Twain's penultimate Sand-Belt scene with its discordantly dark tone and its cave setting, Entzminger suggests that both works reflect fin de siècle anxieties about the impact of new technologies in a rapidly changing world.

Historical geographer **Peter B. Mires** takes note of Twain's use of architectural imagery throughout his body of work and argues that Twain not only understood architecture well but that he masterfully employed architectural descriptions as a literary device over the course of his career. **Sandra Hedicke Clark** contributes original pen and ink illustrations to this essay.

Alan Gribben returns to the subject of the nineteenth-century "Boy Book" and offers an intriguing theory about why Twain and other American authors who one way or another avoided service during the Civil War might have been drawn to writing narratives focused on the rituals of adolescent male bonding.

Twain's earliest representations of Hartford, Connecticut are the subject of **Elizabeth Preysner's** essay. In letters from the late 1860s, Twain's portrayals of Hartford use the urban pastoral language of contemporary reformers, presenting a romanticized view of the city and its design. She contends that for Twain, Hartford came to represent an idealized space of reconciliation, where industry and culture were united via a domesticated urban pastoral cityscape.

Ina Coolbrith, born Josephine Donna Smith, was the niece of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith and a poet affiliated with the San Francisco circle of writers that included Bret Harte and Charles Stoddard. **Nicole Amare** and **Alan Manning** hypothesize that Twain and Coolbrith may have shared a brief romance during Twain's time out west and that his subsequent writing about the Mormons is in large part the result of her impact on his life.

Three selections in this volume analyze various aspects of Twain's "Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts." The first by **Kristen Rotherham** explores Twain's use of the dream as a metaphor for self-discovery in *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*. **Rebecca Cantor's** essay discusses the significance of names in "The Chronicle of Young Satan," "Schoolhouse Hill," and *No. 44*. Finally, **Rebecca Johnston** examines a little-known pamphlet that Twain relied on while drafting the sections of *No. 44* involving the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

Twain sleuth **John Lockwood** provides another installment of his newspaper findings from the Library of Congress.

Photographs from the "**Mark Twain and Youth**" **Symposium** at the Center for Mark Twain Studies in October 2016 bring back pleasant memories of a beautiful autumn weekend in Elmira.

Sadly, we note the passing of **Victor A. Doyno, Thomas K. Meier, John O. (Jack) Rosenbalm,** and **Margaret Tenney**.

Books Received include **R. Kent Rasmussen's** *Critical Insights: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, **Joe B. Fulton's** *Mark Twain under Fire: Reception and Reputation, Criticism and Controversy, 1851-2015*, and **Tracy Wuster's** *Mark Twain: American Humorist*.

The *Mark Twain Journal* is pleased to add two new names to its Editorial Board: **Judith Yaross Lee** and **Gary Scharnhorst**.

(President's Column continued from p. 2)

revealing that some of Twain's choicest bits remain private and unpublished. For instance, next to Parkman's discussion of a Huron deity named Oscatarach, who "dwelt in a bark house beside the path, and...[whose] office was to remove the brains from the heads of all who went by, as

a necessary preparation for immortality," he notes: "In our time this is done as a necessary preparation for the reception of religion." The complex interplay of text and commentary in these pages illustrates how profoundly Mark Twain the (public) writer is linked with Sam Clemens the (private) reader.



ELMIRA 2017 QUADRENNIAL CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Elmira 2017, the Eighth International Conference on the State of Mark Twain Studies, will convene at Elmira College this August 3rd through 5th, 2017. The Conference will commemorate the 150th anniversary of Sam Clemens' participation in the famous Quaker City Tour to Europe and the Middle East. In addition, the Conference acknowledges the sweeping and ongoing importance of Mark Twain's satirical writings with its theme

The Assault of Laughter.

More than 50 scholarly papers will be presented over three days prepared by Mark Twain scholars from around the world. Ben Tarnoff, author of *The Bohemians: Mark Twain and the San Francisco Writers Who Reinvented American Literature*, will give the keynote address. Aaron and Adam Nee, co-authors, co-directors, and actors, within the movie "Band of Robbers" will give a screening of their film with a Q&A to follow. "Band of Robbers" re-imagines the characters Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn in contemporary times. Nathaniel Ball, with help from Kevin MacDonnell and the staff of the Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, Connecticut, will showcase items related to the Quaker City Tour.

Special presentations from Mark Twain collectors, special whiskey and spirit tastings from Finger Lakes Distillery, special dinners, and a Closing Picnic at Quarry Farm will round out the 2017 conference.

Go to www.marktwainstudies.org for constant updates on Elmira 2017

Conference Fees: The registration fees for Elmira 2017 - including all breakfasts, lunches, dinners, snacks, special receptions, and programs, is as follows:

Full Conference Registration	\$375
Daily Rate	\$140 per day

Housing Fees: Conference-goers will benefit by an option to stay in Elmira College's residential halls. The residential halls are organized into singles and doubles. Selection of specific room types will be based on a "first come, first serve" basis.

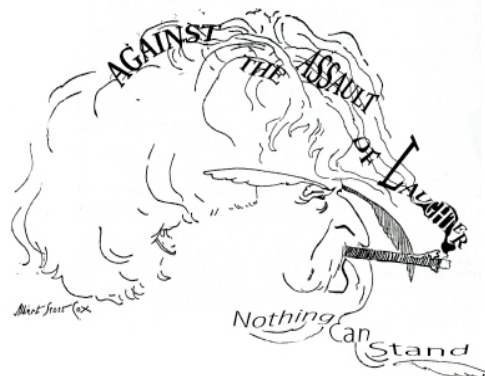
Lodging at EC Meier Hall (with A/C)	\$70 per night
Other EC Dormitories (without A/C)	\$50 per night

Monies are available from the Renée B. Fisher Foundation Fund to help international scholars present their work at the the Conference. This grant may be used to support travel and defray conference expenses (registration fees, lodging, etc.). Contact Dr. Joseph Lemak if you are interested in this opportunity.

Checks can be mailed to:
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 Elmira College, 1 Park Place, Elmira, New York 14901.

Please make checks out to "Center for Mark Twain Studies."
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Please e-mail twaincenter@elmira.edu if you have any questions.



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