



Mark Twain Circular

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President's Column

The Palmer House Remembers

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U of Texas, Austin
President, MTCA

Thank you to all the scholars who presented their stimulating papers at Mark Twain Circle sessions at the MLA in Chicago on December 27th and 28th, 1999: Carla Anderson (Michigan State Univ.), Ryuichi Asayama (Soka Univ., Japan), James Brecher (Univ. of South Florida), Joel Dinerstein (Univ. of Texas), Christopher Krentz (Univ. of Virginia), Bong Eun Kim (Koisin Univ., Korea), Eliza Russi Lowen McGraw (Vanderbilt Univ.) and Charles Martin (Florida State Univ.).

On Tuesday, December 28th, following the second Twain session, Mark Twain Circle members braved the Chicago winter and trekked the eight blocks from the Hyatt Regency to the Palmer House in the cold to commemorate a noteworthy historic event.

On November 13, 1879 the Palmer House was the scene of a grand banquet in honor of General Grant, who had just returned from his world tour. Twain attended "The Thirteenth Annual Banquet of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee." As Albert Bigelow Paine put it, "it seemed to him that there was something strikingly picturesque in the idea of a Confederate soldier who had been chased for a fortnight in the rain through Ralls and Monroe counties, Missouri, now being invited to come and give welcome home to his old imaginary pursuer." In

addition to Twain and Grant, the six hundred guests at that dinner included Generals Sherman, Sheridan, Logan, Vilas, Woodford and Pope. Paine wrote, "Chicago has never known a greater event than that dinner..."

The original Palmer House, founded in 1871, burned down in the Great Chicago Fire, and its second incarnation—the one that Twain visited—was later demolished as well. Building #3, designed by Holabird & Roche, was completed in 1924. Since the building in which the 1879 dinner had been held was long gone, I was certain that there was little we could do to "touch" history. I was wrong.

I learned from Mary Frances Madden and Ken Price of the Palmer House Hilton, that 1) they still had the extraordinary china used at that dinner—and a silver serving piece Twain himself was known to have used, and 2) the hotel chef still had the recipes.

Thanks to their very gracious help, the thirteen-piece 24-carat-gold-trimmed French Haviland bone china table setting used at that dinner was displayed in the Mark Twain Circle Suite, along with the silver water pitcher that Mark Twain used on that occasion.

Through the ingenuity of today's Palmer House chef, Daniel Legard, the sixty-some guests at the Twain Circle gathering sampled delicacies

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from the 1879 menu, prepared according to historic Palmer House recipes—including “Blue Point Oysters on the Shell,” “Roast Fillet of Beef Larded with Mushrooms,” “Breasts of Duck, Larded, Currant Jelly,” “Cakes, Assorted,” “Fruits,” “Hard Tack,” “Roquefort and English Cheeses & Celery.”

Guests from Korea, Japan, Great Britain, and across the U.S. examined the exhibit and dined on Chef Legard’s recreated menu as strains of “Marching through Georgia” and other songs the Civil War veterans sang at that banquet wafted through the air. Marta L. Werner, Project Manager of the *Huck Finn* CD-ROM project, gave us a complete and detailed update. Twain collector Robert T. Slotta of Hilliard, Ohio, surprised us by bringing original correspondence related to Twain’s relationship to Grant for guests to examine. Ken Price of the Palmer House regaled us with stories of the original Grant dinner. And we were privileged to hear some delightful excerpts from the famous speech that Twain delivered at that dinner by a speaker renowned for his platform performances on three continents: our own David E. E. Sloane, former President of the Mark Twain Circle and current President of the American Humor Studies Association, which co-sponsored the reception. Thank you, David, for your superb rendition of “The Babies.”

Everyone went home with a souvenir copy of the original dinner menu which was decorated with Civil War scenes and designed to be folded into a miniature tent. (Martha Stewart, take note!) For those of you who couldn’t join us, there is a copy in this *Mark Twain Circular*, ready to be cut out and assembled.

As I listened to the hum of animated conversation in the room, I remembered another Mark Twain Circle gathering at an MLA in Chicago, around ten years ago, the first MTC social event I had ever attended. I remember slipping nervously into the room, after braving the Chicago cold to find my way from the Convention hotel, and seeing no familiar faces. Then a tall man with a warm smile read my name tag and told me how pleased he was that I was there. It was the late Pascal Covici, Jr. He made me feel welcome. He made me feel that I belonged there. And soon that roomful of strangers was a roomful of friends.

At Palmer House, introducing myself to those I hadn’t met yet and introducing MTC members to one another, I remembered how important it is to “connect” with fellow Twainiacs in person every now and then. Reading each other

is good. Writing each other is good. But every now and then it’s nice to be in the same room, shake hands, make eye contact and share a glass of wine. As I welcomed everyone arriving at the suite at the Palmer House, I drank a private toast to Pascal.

As the Mark Twain Circle enters its fifteenth year, I hope it will remain a place where scholars from all over the world are able to feel “at home.” And I hope it continues to nurture Twain talk and warm fellowship long into the twenty-first century and beyond.

Dates to Circle

May 25-28, 2000. American Literature Association; Long Beach, CA. See “The Mark Twain Circle at ALA,” p. 4.

December 27-30, 2000. Modern Language Association; Washington, DC.



*Photo by
Ryuichi
Asayama.*

(From right to left) MTCA Vice President Laura Skandera-Trombley, David E.E. Sloane and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, in front of the tablesetting exhibit in the Mark Twain Suite at the Palmer House.



Menu from the Banquet in Honor of General Grant

Overbooking Halley's Comet

Louis J. Budd
Duke University

Hagiographers of Mark Twain like to have Halley's Comet streaking across the sky when Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born and then again when he died. This conjunction especially impresses people with a weakness for astrology. But Twainians should give that comet a rest (or stifle it with some stock-phrase that better fits such a fast-moving object).

Already warned about the pains in his chest, Twain himself helped start the gaping by declaring

in 1909—according to A.B. Paine—that "I came in" with Halley's Comet and "I expect to go out with it." He did so only if we arrange the facts loosely.

Crucial to those facts is: what dates the coming and going of that comet? The sun is its hub; as Twain might say, it hardly suspects our earth of being in the universe at all. Astronomers use perihelion as one of the pivotal (no pun) dates of its schedule. That's when its orbit comes closest to the sun. However, rubberneck fans of the comet date its fly-bys by its visibility without a telescope. In Twainian circles that usually means, furthermore, visibility from our northern hemisphere.

In 1835 such visibility began in very late September, peaked on 9 October in England, and faded

The Mark Twain Circle at ALA

American Literature Association Conference, May 2000 Sessions sponsored by the Mark Twain Circle of America:

Thursday, May 25, 2000, 10:00-11:20 a.m.; Regency C

Panel Title: *Why I Work on Mark Twain*

Chair: Laura Skandera-Trombley, Coe College

Panelists:

John Bird (Winthrop University), "Confessions of a Cabbage With a College Education"

Ryota Iijima (Fukushima University [Japan]), "Twain in a Foreign Language"

Bruce Michelson, (University of Illinois), "My Mark Twain: Notes from a Dysfunctional Relationship"

Louis J. Budd, (Duke University), "Been There Done That (Not): Still Stalking Mark Twain"

Video: "Why I Work on Mark Twain" – a video by Sandra Bradley

Friday, May 26, 2000, 8:30-9:50 a.m.; Seaview C

Panel Title: *Mark Twain and Native Americans*

Chair: Lauren Stuart Muller (University of California, Berkeley)

Panelists:

Patricia Riley (University of Idaho), "'That Murderin' Half-breed': The Abjection of Injun Joe in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*"

Carter C. Revard (Washington University, St. Louis), "Mark Twain, Injun Joe, and Critical Fancydancing"

Kerry Driscoll (St. Joseph College), "'Man Factories' and the 'White Indians' of Camelot: Re-Reading the Native Subtext of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*"

Bong Eun Kim (Kosin University [Korea]), "Mark Twain's Cyber Projection of Native Americans as Hyper-real Americans"

Friday, May 26, 2000, 2:00-3:20 p.m.; Regency F

Panel Title: *Mark Twain on Race, Ethnicity and Class*

Chair: Joseph B. McCullough (University of Nevada, Las Vegas)

Panelists:

Jocelyn Chadwick (Harvard University), "Forbidden Thoughts: Miscegenation, Twain and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*"

Michael Kiskis (Elmira College), "Samuel Clemens, Mark Twain and Me: Class and the Seduction of Twain Studies"

Joseph F. Goeke (University of South Carolina), "The Color Line and the Borderline: Missouri's Role as a Border State in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*"

Hal Hellwig (Idaho State University), "Following the Equator: Racial and Ethnic Boundaries in Time"

Other Mark Twain Circle Events at the American Literature Association Conference:

Thursday, May 25, 2000, 11:30 a.m. - 12:20 p.m.

Business Meeting: Mark Twain Circle, Regency F

Friday, May 26, 2000, 8:30 p.m.

Mark Twain Circle Dinner, Parker's Lighthouse Restaurant

out before the end of that month. (Track "Comet" through the precisely indexed London *Times*.) An astronomer in New England calculated that visibility would peak there on 16 October. (Scan the New York *Herald*, available on microfilm, for the low level of interest in the United States.) Perihelion occurred on 15 November, and the next Clemens baby arrived on the 30th.

In 1910 the earliest, dim sighting without telescope was claimed for 29 April. Visibility in New York City—at a commuting distance from Redding, Connecticut—peaked on 18 May. Twain had died on 21 April, the day after perihelion. To book Twain for a round trip by the criterion of the comet's closest ap-

proach to the earth, equal opportunity would have to include anybody born in the northern hemisphere up to at least six weeks before or after mid-October 1835 and dying within the month before or after 18 May 1910. We don't need demographics to suggest that many women and men would have qualified for boarding-passes. (As for how many when the best telescope was used—sheesh!) Halley's Comet was not Twain's unearthly Air Force One. There's enough that is unique and even uncanny about Twain without our hyping the facts. In sober truth he had—to bowdlerize Twain—a "quadrilateral astronomical incandescent" career.

Call For Papers

The Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies announces the First Call for Papers for **Elmira 2001: The 4th International Conference on The State of Mark Twain Studies**, August 16–18, 2001.

Ten page papers suitable for twenty-minute presentations are invited on the following topics:

- **Mark Twain and Visual Representation** (May include films, posters, television shows, documentaries, cartoons, illustrations)
- **Mark Twain and the Body** (May include bodies in pain, the racialized body, the gendered body, the sexualized body, transformed bodies)
- **Mark Twain and Status** (May include economic class, social class, racial class, manners, titles, behaviors)
- **Mark Twain and the Nation** (May include civic identities, racial identities, hybrid identities, nationalism, imperialism, exceptionalism)
- **Global Mark Twain** (Mark Twain in countries other than the United States. How is Mark Twain used in other countries?)
- **Mark Twain: Friends and Enemies** (Loyalties to and animosities toward his contemporaries)
- **Mark Twain: Narrative Strategies** (May include structure, persona, voice, closure)
- **Mark Twain in Pieces** (May include short stories, maxims, fragments, letters, sketches, speeches)
- **Mark Twain: 1900–1910** (May include biography, works, crusades, self-imaging)
- **Mark Twain in His Funniest** (. . .)

Papers will be read by juries without knowledge of authorship.

Send papers in **duplicate** to:
Gretchen Sharlow, Director
The Center for Mark Twain Studies
Elmira College
One Park Place
Elmira, NY 14901
Deadline: January 31, 2001

Ralph Wiley Revisited

When scenes from Ralph Wiley's unpublished "Spike Lee's Huckleberry Finn" were published in the October-December 1999 *Mark Twain Circular*, an important passage (including dialogue by both Jim and Huck) was omitted from scene 61. The scene is reprinted below with the missing passage restored.

From "Spike Lee's Huckleberry Finn" by Ralph Wiley

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61. EXT. RIVER RAFT. NIGHT. — *Jim is "sitting there with his head down between his knees, asleep, with his right arm hanging over the steering oar. The other oar was smashed off. The raft was littered with leaves and branches and dirt. So she'd had a rough time." Huck paddles up silently, quietly makes the canoe fast, boards the raft, lies down under Jim's nose, "and begun to gap, and stretched my fists out against Jim and says:"*

HUCK

Hello, Jim, have I been asleep? Why didn't you stir me up?

JIM

Huck? En you ain' dead—you ain' drowned? Lemme look at you, lemme see...

Jim touches Huck's shoulders and arms. Near tears with relief.

JIM

...no, you'se back, d'same ole Huck...thanks to goodness.

HUCK

What's the matter with you, Jim. You been a-drinking?

JIM

...Has I had a chance to be drinkin'?

HUCK

Well then, what makes you talk so wild?

JIM

How does I talk wild?

HUCK

How? Talkin' about me coming back and all that stuff, as if I'd been gone away?

JIM

Huck. Huck Finn. You look me in d'eye; *look me in d'eye; Ain't you been gone away?*

HUCK

Gone away? I hain't been gone anywheres. Where would I go to?

Jim pauses for a few seconds; decides to string along, affects a slightly stronger dialect.

JIM

Well...looky here, boss, dey's sumf'n wrong, dey is. Is I *me*, or who is I? Is I *heah*, or whah is I?

HUCK

Well, you're here plain enough, but I think you're a tangle-headed old fool, Jim.

JIM

(unamused) I is, is I? Didn't you tote out d'line in d'canoe fer to make fast to d'tow-head?

HUCK

Tow-head? What tow-head? I hain't seen no tow-head.

JIM

Didn' d' line pull loose, en de raf' go hummin' down d' river, en

leave you en d'canoe behind in d'fog?

HUCK

What fog?

JIM

De fog. En didn' you whoop, en didn't I whoop? En didn' I bus' up agin a lot er dem islands en have a turrible time en mos' get drowned? Ain't dat so—boss?

HUCK

It's too many for me, Jim. I hain't seen no fog, nor no islands, nor no troubles, nor nothing. *You been dreaming.*

Jim "didn't say nothing for about five minutes, but he set there studying it over. Then he says:"

JIM

...Well, den...reck'n I *did* dream it, Huck...never had no dream b'fo' dat's tired me like dis one.

HUCK

That's all right, because a dream does tire a body like everything, sometimes. Tell me about it, Jim, about your dream.

Jim purses his lips, knits his brow, then eases his features and speaks:

JIM

...well, d'fust tow-head mus' stan' for a man who gon' try t'do us some good; den d'curren's is 'nother man dat'll get us 'way from d' good man. D'whoops is warnin's dat gon' come t'us ever now en den, 'long d'way. D'tow-heads is troubles en all kine o' mean folk, but ef e mine's our bidness, don' talk back en aggravates 'em, we'll pull thoo en gits to d'big clear river, d'O-hi-o.

Huck's face clouds up, tiring of Jim's facility with the lie Huck himself had started, and not wanting to think about losing his companion at the Ohio. Huck's face then becomes smug.

HUCK

Oh, well, that's all 'terpreted well enough, as far as it goes, Jim. (points to dirt on raft) But what does *these* things stand for?

Jim looks at the detritus, then at Huck, levelly, emotionlessly, then back to the sticks, leaves and dirt; one side of his face—the side away from Huck—lifts in a fatalistic half-smile. He turns back to Huck looking at him steadily, without smiling, and says:

JIM

What do dey stan' for? I's gon' tell you...When I got all wore out wid work, en wid callin' for you, my heart was most broke because you was los' en I didn' k'yer no mo' what become er me en d'raf'. En when I wake up en fine you back agin, all safe en soun'...en all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. (*points to detritus on the raft, speaks calmly, clearly*).**Dat truck dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed.**

Jim slowly rises and enters the wigwam. Huck watches him, then looks out over the river, as if he is too proud to care. But then, he looks down.