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INTRODUCTION

About “Mark Twain in the West”

This exhibition was created for the Seventh International Conference on the State of Mark Twain Studies. It was organized by Victor Fischer, of the Mark Twain Papers and Project, who selected and scanned the images, and wrote the captions and supplementary materials.

Where did these materials come from?

The images in this exhibition, taken almost entirely from materials in the Mark Twain Papers of The Bancroft Library, show a sample of the surviving items from Clemens’s years in the West. Clemens kept many of the items, including letters, notebooks, and autobiographical dictations, until the end of his life. They formed part of the original Mark Twain Papers collection, with Albert Bigelow Paine acting as Clemens’s first literary executor. Other items shown here, including letters, scrapbooks, mining deeds, and photographs, were acquired by the Mark Twain Papers in 1954 as part of the Anita Moffett Collection—the portion of family papers given by Pamela Clemens Moffett, Clemens’s sister, to her son, Samuel Moffett, and passed to his daughter Anita. The collection was found and identified in a warehouse sale in 1953, a year after Anita’s death, and purchased by the University of California. (The papers passed by Pamela to her daughter, Annie Moffett Webster, now make up the Jean Webster McKinney Family Papers at Vassar.) Copies of the Robert M. Howland photographs were given to the Papers by Howland’s grandson, Robert M. Gunn, and Mrs. Gunn. The photographs of Dan DeQuille and Bret Harte are from the photographic archives of The Bancroft Library. Other sources for images are identified in the captions.

What more is out there to find?

A great number of items which bear on the Western years are irretrievably lost, including “almost four trunks” of letters “from Mark Twain to his mother, running through many decades, from youth to worldwide fame,” burned in 1904, after Mollie Clemens’s death, by the executor of her estate, John R. Carpenter. “He had a treasure of incalculable value and an imperative order to destroy it. … It took him several long evenings to complete the job thoroughly” (“Mark Twain Letters to Mother Burned at Direction of Author,” unidentified clipping, datelined 14 December 1935). A great deal of Clemens’s early newspaper writing is also lost—three complete archives of the Territorial Enterprise were destroyed by fires, one in Virginia City in 1875 and the other two in San Francisco in 1906. Scholars have searched local libraries and collections for much of the last century unearthing and identifying lost items. And yet letters and photographs are still being found, along with newspaper printings or reprintings of Clemens’s early journalism and sketches, as family collections of letters and photographs come to light, and especially as nineteenth-century local newspapers and other materials become available on the web.
**Chronology of Clemens in the West**

**1861**
July–August: 21-day stagecoach journey from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Carson City, Nevada Territory.
September: Trip to Lake Bigler (Lake Tahoe). Timber claim. Trip to Aurora, Esmeralda County (disputed between California and Nevada Territory). Mining claim: “Black Warrior.”

**1862**
February–March: By then, clearly a Union sympathizer, Clemens encloses Matthew Whittier’s “Ethan Spike” letters to family.
April–August: Aurora, Esmeralda, by now a town of 2000 (6 hotels and restaurants; 11 billiard saloons; 10 quartz mills). Various mining claims (tunnels and ledges—“Red Bird,” “Pugh,” “Governor,” “Douglas,” “Live Yankee”; etc.). No money to work them. Sends letters to Orion requesting money, as money is sunk into working and paying help to work one claim after another. Writes “Josh” letters to Enterprise, culminating in July offer to be on staff.

**1863**
3 February: First known newspaper piece signed “Mark Twain”—“Letter from Carson City.”
May–June: First visit to San Francisco, with Clement T. Rice (the Unreliable).
8 September–9 October: San Francisco.
October–December: Travels between Carson City and Virginia City; in Carson, reports First Territorial Constitutional Convention; in Virginia, has uproarious 10-day visit with Artemus Ward in December. Rooms with Dan DeQuille.

**1864**
May: Sanitary Fund Ball (Gold Hill) duel controversy in Virginia City, J. W. Wilmington and James L. Laird of Union versus Clemens and Steve Gillis. Duel averted only when Gillis shoots head off a sparrow and convinces Laird’s seconds that Clemens had done it. Controversy and challenges continue. Exit to San Francisco.
Summer–Fall: Writes for San Francisco Call, Golden Era, and Californian. Backs $500 straw bond for Steve Gillis; Gillis a no-show. Exit from San Francisco: steamboat to Stockton, stagecoach to Tuttletown, Tuolumne County.

4 December 1864–22 January 1865: Jackass Hill, near Tuttletown, in a cabin with Dick Stoker, Jim and Billy Gillis. Hears Jim Gillis’s “Tragedy of the Burning Shame” (Huckleberry Finn); Gillis’s tale about Dick Stoker’s cat, Tom Quartz (Roughing It); and Gillis’s “Blue-Jay Yarn,” again attributed to Dick Stoker (A Tramp Abroad). On 1 January visits Vallecito, where he notes a “magnificent lunar rainbow.”

**1865**
22 January–20 February: Angel’s Camp, mostly confined in cabin until 6 February telling tall tales and anecdotes, and afterwards spends time at Angel’s Hotel bar. Hears “Jumping Frog” story. Makes note for “The Californian’s Tale” (“Boden crazy, asking after his wife, who had been dead 13 years—first knowledge of his being deranged”). Travels to Calaveras Big Trees and Yosemite.
20–23 February: Jackass Hill.
23 February: Back to San Francisco.
26 February–September: Writes for Californian and Territorial Enterprise (“An Unbiased Criticism,” “Answers to Correspondents”).
1 September–16 October: Struggles to write “Jumping Frog” story, rejecting two attempts as “flat and stale”—“The Only Reliable Account of the Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” and “Angel’s Camp Constable.”
19 and 20 October: “I have had a ‘call’ to literature” letter to Orion and Mollie.

1866
March–early August: Travels to and from Sandwich Islands as correspondent for the Sacramento Union.
October: First Sandwich Islands lecture in San Francisco; subsequent tour of California and Nevada Territory.

1868
March: Travels to San Francisco to gain permission from the Alta California editors to use his Quaker City letters—written for the Alta during his voyage to Europe and the Holy Land in 1867—for his travel book (later entitled The Innocents Abroad). Gains permission by 1 May.
14 April–2 July: Lectures on his travels (“The Frozen Truth” and “Pilgrim Life”) for a benefit in Oakland, and then in San Francisco, the first of a tour that takes him to Sacramento, Marysville, Nevada City, and Grass Valley, California, and Virginia City and Carson City, Nevada, and San Francisco again.
6 July: Leaves San Francisco for the last time; sails back to New York, arriving on 29 July.
The Overland Trip

Samuel and Orion Clemens's Overland Trip West

Receipt for Samuel and Orion Clemens’s stagecoach passage from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Carson City, Nevada Territory, on the Wells Fargo and Pony Express’s Central Overland California and Pike’s Peak Express line (which soon became known as the “Clean Out of Cash & Poor Pay Express”). Orion paid $300 the day before their 26 July 1861 departure, and promised to pay the balance within thirty days. Orion wrote on the verso: “Fare from St Jo to Carson”.

Transcription:

Received St Joseph July 25, 1861 of Mr Orion Clemens Three Hundred Dollars on account of his and Saml L. Clemens fare to Carson City or any other point on our Route East of Placerville in Coach leaving St Joseph July 25, 1861.

$300.00/100

Paul Coburn Agt. C.O.C. & PPE&Co

Per Nat Stein

Rec’d St Jo. July 25, 1861, of M’ Orion Clemens His acceptance of this Date at 30 Days for One Hundred Dollars, favor of BM. Hughes, Prest—in full for Balance of above fares.

$100.~

Paul Coburn Agt COC & PPE&Co

Per Nat Stein
Sam Clemens’s cabin?
The cabin in Aurora that became known as Mark Twain’s cabin was evidently the cabin built by his friend Robert Howland. Clemens lived in at least three cabins, including one with a canvas roof, with a changing cast of cabin mates—including Horatio (Raish) Phillips, Dan Twing, and Calvin Higbie—in Aurora in 1862, as he attempted to make his fortune in gold or silver mining claims. This photograph was taken in 1891 by Scrutton, Superintendent of Esmeralda County, and given to Clemens’s biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, in October 1907. Paine had recently traveled West retracing Clemens’s footsteps.

Cans on the porch?
The cans on the porch were doubtless piled there to lend authenticity to a story that had become a local legend. As Howland told it to a reporter in 1876:

“Bob and Mark ... lived principally on hardtack and beans. On Sundays, however, they managed to get hold of some few extras in the grub line. When Sunday came they feasted on canned
oysters, canned turkey, chicken and the like, with something in the fruit and jelly line. When the cans had been emptied of these luxuries the ‘boys’ ostentatiously threw them out in front of the door of their cabin.

In the course of a few weeks the accumulation of cans ... began to attract attention. ... It was finally noised about the camp that Clemens and Howland lived like two princes—fared sumptuously every day.”

(“How They Played It,” Territorial Enterprise, 28 April 1976, 2)

Where is it now?

Once a town of up to 10,000 people, Aurora was abandoned and became a ghost town. This cabin was moved to Reno in 1924 to protect it but was thereafter picked apart and vandalized and had entirely disappeared by the 1950s (according to Clifford Alpheus Shaw).

Two photographs of Clemens’s friend Robert F. Howland. In the first, taken in 1861 when Howland was 23, Howland and his dog are seated in two chairs. In the second, taken in 1862 in front of a cabin in Aurora, Howland and his dog are accompanied by three friends and another dog.

Eight 1862 Mining Deeds and One Bond


2. H. Pferdsorff to Samuel Clemens, 28 January 1862, “ten feet in the Alba Nueva lead” in the Buena Vista District, Humboldt County, for $100.

3. Hugo Pferdsorff to John D. Kinney, 28 January 1862, “ten feet (10 ft) in that certain vein or lode of gold and silver bearing quartz known as the ‘National Company’s’, Buena Vista District, Humboldt County, for $500. Witnessed by Orion and Samuel Clemens.

4. John D. Kinney to Samuel L. Clemens, 1 March 1862, “One hundred feet (100 ft) in the ‘Allamoocha’— One hundred feet (100 ft) in the ‘Scioto’— Twelve and a half feet (12½ ft) in the 1st S Ex of ‘Winnemucca’— One hundred and twenty five feet (125 ft) in the ‘Horatio’— Two hundred feet (200 ft) in the 1st N Ex of ‘Fresno’— Two hundred feet (200 ft) in the ‘Carrie Corwin’— One hundred & fifty feet in the ‘Rosetta’— Two hundred feet
in the ‘Potomac’— Twenty five feet in
the ‘Danl Boone’— Twenty five feet in
the ‘Great Mogul’— Twenty five feet in
‘Long Island’ Fifty feet in the ‘Mountain
Flower’ ” for $1,000.

5. Unsold deed, D. W. Harroun, 12
July 1862, “fifty feet in each of the
following named Lodes or Ledges
Magna Charta, Quartz Ledge, Henry
Clay, Quartz Ledge, Leland, Quartz
Ledge, Margaretta, Quartz Ledge,
George-Anna, Quartz Ledge, and
Seward, Quartz Ledge,” in Santa Clara
District, Humboldt County, for $3,500.
Apparently no takers.

6. H. G. Phillips to S. L. Clemens,
22 July 1862, “Seventy five (75) feet
undivided in the Discovery Claim of the
Lashaway Co ... also an undivided (50)
fifty feet in the 1st north Extension of
the La Plata Lode ... also an undivided
(33) thirty three feet in the Discovery
Lode of the Annapolitan Ledge ... also
an undivided (66) Sixty-six feet in the 1st
Southwesterly Extension of the Fily-a-
Way Lode ... also (50) fifty undivided in
the Monitor Lode & Co” in Esmeralda
District, Mono County, for $300.

7. C. H. Higbie to Sam. L. Clemens,
3 October 1862, “Fifty (50) feet in
the First North Extension of the
‘Annapolitan’ Lode, situated on Last
Chance Hill in Esmeralda Mining
District,” for $200.

8. Thomas Nicholson to H. L.
Joachimsen, 28 October 1862, “Ninety
one (91) feet in ... Virginia Mining
District, County of Storey” for $10.
Perhaps given to Clemens as security for
a loan, or to hold.

9. $200 Bond from John Steiner to
Orion Clemens, 2 December 1862, in
repayment of a loan.

Deed to Sam Clemens from C. H.
Higbie, 3 October 1862, for $500:

“An undivided interest of Fifty (50)
feet in the first North Extension of
the ‘Annapolitan’ Lode, situated on
Last Chance Hill in Esmeralda Mining
District”
Letter from Aurora

Sam Clemens’s letter to Orion Clemens, 17 and 19 April 1862, written in the midst of the mining fever in Esmeralda County:

“As to the ‘Live Yankee,’ I will see the President in the morning, and get the Secy’s address.

No, don’t buy any ground, anywhere. The pick and shovel are the only claims I have any confidence in now. My back is sore and my hands blistered with handling them to-day. But something must come, you know.

We shall let a contract on the H. & Derby in a day or two. Most folks like these ledges. I don’t. It will not cost much more, though, to test it with the tunnel.

I, too, have seen very rich specimens from East Walker. Not quite so rich, and gold hardly as fine as that taken from the National, though.

The ‘Live Yankees,’ as you call them, are a pack of d—d fools. They have run a tunnel 100 ft long to strike the croppings. They could have blasted, above ground, easier.”
The "die" if you can, but pay Nærum no money. If I can dig pay rock out of a ledge near myself, I will buy—not otherwise.

"Yes— if we find good rock in the H. Y. Derby, well incorporate it." Raish and I would then have partial control of it—we represent 750 feet in it—got Billy's letter. Tell him to be kinder, brother wants you to certify his claim, as enclosed, or, if it isn't figured up right, why, figure it up right yourself, get the scrip for it, and if you can sell the scrip for 75 cents, do so, and forward the money—if not forward the scrip. I told him it was a d—d sight easier to sell tracts than scrip in Carson. It may be well enough, though, to sell enough to pay your fee for the deed, you know. All 60, 70, 80 acres and likewise for P. M. MacLane, who was messenger only, but traveled 30 miles more, (to Monroe) making 180 miles.

You can sell this for 50 cents, if any body offers. That, and send the money to me—Raish—don't cut me at your fee in this case, though. Cousin sent his little Kinney & Kinney once. Well, things are so glorious that I begin to feel really jolly and comfortable again. I enjoy myself highly now.

Saturday I have fixed the "line parties"—it is all right now. Everything the Bank's letters come to hand all right.
Virginia City

Pocket Map of Washoe and Storey Counties

Published by James & Stretch, Virginia City, Nevada Territory, c. 1863.

Joseph T. Goodman, editor and publisher of the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise, 1860s (halftone print from Effie Mona Mack’s 1947 Mark Twain in Nevada):
“Let me see—it was in 1862 that Sam Clemens came to work for us on the ‘Territorial Enterprise.’ He was prospecting in Esmeralda County and had sent us some voluntary contributions. They struck us so funny that we sent him word to come to Virginia City and take a job on the paper.

He came and we put him to work reporting local affairs. Later on we sent him to Carson to report a session of the legislature, and it was from Carson that he sent his first article signed ‘Mark Twain.’ He had asked me if he might sign a name to some stories apart from the regular reports of the daily proceedings in the legislature, and I had told him he might. So he wrote a humorous series of letters on what he called ‘The Third House,’ which described amusingly the carryings-on of a number of congenial legislators that were in the habit of gathering for a jolly social time after both houses of the legislature had adjourned over night.”


Advertisement for Joe Goodman’s and Denis McCarthy’s Daily Territorial Enterprise of Virginia City. From J. Wells Kelly’s First Directory of Nevada Territory, 1862, in which Samuel Clemens is listed as “Assistant Secretary Nevada Territory.”
Clemens’s “Letter from Carson City” of 3 February 1863, undated in Scrapbook 4, is “likely ... the first piece to which Clemens signed the name ‘Mark Twain,’” (Branch and Hirst, Early Tales & Sketches, Volume 1, 192). In this letter, purportedly telling why he stayed awake two days and consequently had to sleep the next two, Clemens manages to satirize his taciturn boss, Joe Goodman, and provide a description of a party at the Governor’s new house, including food, guests, and entertainment. Clemens uses his friend and “rival,” Clement T. Rice, “The Unreliable,” of the Virginia City Union, as a comic foil:

“Eds. Enterprise: I feel very much as if I had just awakened out of a long sleep. I attribute it to the fact that I have slept the greater part of the time for the last two days and nights. On Wednesday, I sat up all night, in Virginia, in order to be up early enough to take the five o’clock stage on Thursday morning. I was on time. It was a great success. I had a cheerful trip down to Carson, in company with that incessant talker, Joseph T. Goodman...

“So, having been awake forty-eight hours, I slept forty-eight, in order to get even again, which explains the proposition I began this letter with.

Yours, dreamily,
Mark Twain.”

Western Scrapbooks

These scrapbooks in the Mark Twain Papers are filled with clippings from the Western years, including Nevada Territory items of interest to Orion Clemens or written by him, and Samuel Clemens’s newspaper writing (pieces from the Golden Era, the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise, the San Francisco Call, and the Californian, among others). They were kept mostly by Orion and doubtless also by Mollie Clemens, with contributions and occasional notes by Sam Clemens.
Three 1863 Mining Deeds

Peter Cavanaugh to Orion Clemens, June 12th 1863:
"An undivided interest of Twenty five (25) feet in the Warfield Ledge, Cavanaugh Company, situate lying & being in the Eagle & Washoe Valleys Mining District" for the sum of $100.

A. B. Vance to Orion Clemens, July 11th 1863:
"An undivided interest of Twenty five (25) feet in the Mineral Point Ledge, Palermo Company" in Ormsby County for the sum of $1.

A. J. Simmons to Samuel L. Clemens, December 27th 1863:
"An undivided interest of Ten (10) feet in the Butte Ledge Tehama Mining Company, and an undivided interest in (10) feet in the Kentucky Ledge Union Tunnel Company both situated in Santa Clara Mining District" in Humboldt County for the sum of $1,000.
**1863 Mining Stock Certificate**

5 Shares of stock in Sonora Silver Mining Company, Virginia Mining District, dated San Francisco, August 1st 1863:

“This Certifies That I Clements is the owner of Five Shares of the Capital Stock of the Sonora Silver Mining Company...

CAPITAL STOCK . . . $1,200,000.
1200 SHARES . . . . . . . . $1000 EACH.”

William Wright (Dan De Quille) in 1864. De Quille, Clemens’s friend and sometime roommate in Virginia City, was local editor of the Territorial Enterprise from 1862 until his death in 1898. Widely recognized for his humorous writing and as an authority on mining, he wrote The Big Bonanza (1876) with Clemens’s encouragement.
San Francisco:
Mark Twain’s First Trip

Clemens’s first trip to San Francisco. Clemens and his friend Clement T. Rice (The Unreliable) get a sendoff in the columns of the Enterprise. The original and a partial type facsimile based on the original.

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Daily Territorial Enterprise.

Sunday .......... May 3, 1863.

Mark Twain.

Mark Twain has abdicated the local column of the Enterprise, where by the grace of Coke, he so long reigned Monarch of Mining Items, Detailer of Events, Prince of Platitude, Chief of Biographers, Expounder of Unwritten Law, Puffer of Wildcat, Profanter of Divinity, Destructor of Merit, Flatterer of Power, Recorder of Stage Arrivals, Pack Trains, Hay Wagons, and Things in General. As he assigned no adequate reason for this sudden step, we thought him the pitiable victim of self-conceit and the stock mania. He possessed some wildcat, and had lectured the Unreliable on manners till he fancied himself a Chesterfield. Yes, the poor fellow actually thought he possessed some breeding—that Virginia was too narrow a field for his graces and accomplishments; and in this delusion he has gone to display his ugly person and disgusting manners and wildcat on Montgomery Street. In all of which he will be assisted by his protegee, the Unreliable. It is to be regretted that such scrubs are ever permitted to visit the Bay, as the inevitable effect will be to destroy that exalted opinion of the manners and morality of our people which was inspired by the conduct of our senior editor. We comfort ourselves, however, with the reflection that they will not be likely to shock the sensibilities of San Francisco long. The ordinances against nuisances are strenuously enforced in that city. We said, at first we thought him the pitiable victim of self-conceit and the stock mania. In this charitable belief we reposed nearly a week. But a horrid suspicion begins to haunt us. Can it be? No, it is impossible. Yet the circumstantial evidence is strong. Ah, Mark Twain! With all your faults, dear to the hearts that loved you as the flowers of May—who ever suspected you of being a gay lothario? Who ever thought beneath that ingenuous face was concealed a heart that could wrong confiding innocence? Yet the angels fell, and why not Mark Twain? We weep for him as Raphael, leaning over the crystal battlements of Heaven, wept for Belial, fairest of the angels who fell.

Sam Clemens during his first visit to San Francisco, May–June 1863. Edouart’s Photographic Gallery, 634 Washington Street.
Letter from San Francisco

Sam Clemens’s letter to his mother and sister from the Lick House, San Francisco, 4 June 1863, “No. 3—$20 enclosed”:

“My visit to San F is gradually drawing to a close, and it seems like going back to prison to go back to the snows & the deserts of Washoe, after living in this Paradise. But then I shall soon get used to it—all places are alike to me. I have put in the time here, ‘you bet.’ And I have lived like a lord—to make up for two years of privation, you know. I haven’t written to the paper but twice, I believe. I have always got something more agreeable on hand. At the opera to-night I saw some one whom I took to be Bill of the H. & H., but he was to have been here this week, so I am very sure it was him—I never forget faces. I get fooled with them sometimes, though, so I want to give you an instance of it—a case which I consider very remarkable. The first birthday...
Virginia City Again

Letter from Virginia City

Sam Clemens’s letter to his mother and sister from Virginia City, 18 July 1863, after he returned from San Francisco, “No. 10—$20 enclosed”:

“Ma, you are slinging insinuations at me again. Such as ‘where did I get the money?’ and ‘the company I kept’ in San Francisco. Why I sold ‘wildcat’ mining ground that was given me, & my credit was always good at the bank for two or three thousand dollars, & is yet. I never gamble, in any shape or manner, and never drink anything stronger than claret or lager beer, which conduct is regarded as miraculously temperate in this country. …
You and Pamela only pay $8 a week apiece for board (& lodging too?) Well, you are not in a very expensive part of the world, certainly. My room-mate & I pay, together, $70 a month for our bedchamber, & $50 a month, each, for board, besides.”
San Francisco:
Clemens Writes for the Territorial Enterprise, the
San Francisco Call, and Other Newspapers

Mark Twain Reviews Adah Isaacs Menken in “Mazeppa”

Right: “Letter from Mark Twain,” Territorial Enterprise, 17 September 1883, excerpt. In “Mazeppa,” based on Lord Byron’s poem, a young Ukranian page in the Court of King John II is discovered having an affair with a young countess. In punishment, her elderly husband straps Mazeppa naked to a wild horse, taunts it and sets it loose to ride through Eastern Europe. Menken played the hero, Mazeppa. Type facsimile based on the original clipping. This review is not among the journalism pieces that Clemens later chose to keep in print.

Far right: Maguire’s Opera House, on Washington Street between Kearney and Montgomery, San Francisco, where Clemens saw Adah Isaacs Menken in Mazeppa in September 1863.

Advertisement for the San Francisco performances of “Mazeppa.”

“Miss ADAH Ascends and Descends to and from the Entire Height of this Immense Theater, lashed to the Bare-Back of the Wild Steed, a Feat never accomplished by any other Lady in the World.”
The Menken—Written especially for Gentlemen.

When I arrived in San Francisco, I found there was no one in town—at least there was nobody in town but "The Menken"—or rather, that no one was being talked about except that manly young female. I went to see her play "Mazeppa," of course. They said she was dressed from head to foot in flesh-colored "tights," but I had no opera glass, and I couldn't see it, to use the language of the inelegant rabble. She appeared to me to have but one garment on—a thin tight white linen one, of unimportant dimensions; I forget the name of the article, but it is indispensable to infants of tender age—I suppose any young mother can tell you what it is, if you have the moral courage to ask the question. With the exception of this superfluous rag, the Menken dresses like the Greek Slave; but some of her postures are not so modest as the suggestive attitude of the latter. She is a finely formed woman down to her knees; if she could be herself that far, and Mrs. H. A. Perry the rest of the way, she would pass for an unexceptional Venus. Here every tongue sings the praises of her matchless grace, her supple gestures, her charming attitudes. Well, possibly, these tongues are right. In the first set, she rushes on the stage, and goes cavorting around after "Olinka," she bends herself back like a bow: she pitches head foremost at the atmosphere like a battering-ram: she works her arms, and her legs, and her whole body like a dancing-jack: her every movement is as quick as thought: in a word, without any apparent reason for it, she carries on like a lunatic from the beginning of the act to the end of it. At other times she "whallops" herself down on the stage, and rolls over as does the sportive pack-mule after his burden is removed. If this be grace then the Menken is eminently graceful.
Carson City and Aurora

“Three of the suspected men still in confinement at Aurora.”

Photograph of William H. Clagett, Mark Twain, and A. J. Simmons, at the time of the third Territorial Legislature, Carson City, January 1864. Clagett was the representative from Humboldt County, Mark Twain was the correspondent for the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise, and Simmons was the Speaker of the House. In a letter of 18 March 1864 to his sister, he wrote that he was sending a copy (not this one) to his niece, Annie Moffett, for her scrapbook:

“I also send her full-length pictures of his Excellency Gov. Mark Twain, of the Third House, Hon Wm H. Clagett of the House of Representatives, and Hon. A. J. Simmons, Speaker of the same. Ma will know Clagett by his frowsy hair & slovenly dress. He is the greatest ablest public speaker in the Territory.”
Three Months in California Gold Country

Clemens was a friend of the Gillis family and especially of three of the Gillis brothers, Steve, Jim, and Billy. He first knew Steve from Virginia City, where Steve worked as a typesetter on the Enterprise. They were roommates in San Francisco, where Clemens stayed for a time in the boarding house of Gillis’s parents, Angus and Margaret, at 44 Minna Street. Reportedly Clemens signed a straw bond for $500 after Steve got in trouble with the police for intervening in a bar fight. Rather than report to court, Steve left for Virginia City and sent Clemens to stay with his brothers. On 4 December 1864, Clemens left San Francisco, with $300 in his pocket, and spent three months in the California Gold Country, first in the Gillis cabin with Jim and Billy and Jim’s mining partner Dick Stoker at Jackass Hill, near Tuttletown, and then in Angels Camp, with Jim and Dick Stoker.

The Gillis cabin, 1895, around the time when a number of miners or prospectors were living in it. Jim Gillis is seated next to the door. Courtesy of John Meiser. Second from left is Meiser’s father, Frederick, 17 years old, who worked at the Longfellow Mining Company.

The Gillis cabin, Jackass Hill, near Tuttletown, California, where Clemens stayed in the winter of 1864–65. What the Gillis cabin looked like in 1864–65 is not known. A series of later photographs, displayed here, shows it increasingly dilapidated during the latter part of the 19th century, torn down, and then “rebuilt” in the early 20th century. The rebuilt cabin, reconstructed yet again in the early 21st century, still stands as California Historical Landmark 138.
The Gillis cabin circa 1900. Photographed by C. Gladstone Bird of Oakland, California, who sent a copy to Samuel Clemens in 1908, and received the following reply from Albert Bigelow Paine, Clemens’s biographer:

“He asks me to thank you for it and to say that it is certainly the real cabin. ... A year ago I ... paid a visit to that very spot, though, of course, no trace of the old cabin is left. I did see Steve Gillis and his brother Billy, who were there so long ago, and got much rich material.”

Albert Bigelow Paine’s 1907 photograph of the site where the Gillis cabin formerly stood on Jackass Hill.
William R. Gillis (Billy) standing in front of the “reconstructed” or “rebuilt” cabin, May 1922.
place them on the bottom of a frying pan, draw a half circle around them, heat the pan till the last bubble over the line had to get supper.

Time 10:00 a.m.

land came into view.

Murphy's went in the Garson, because he had known no one or anything or company of other than an old man and the girl.

Some lecturing by old man in the cafe, discussing the dangers from Mexico to Cuba.

Where land got all over and had to get supper.
The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County (“Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog”). In this little notebook, which dates from early 1865, the 29-year-old Samuel Clemens made the first note in pencil for the story that would launch his national fame:

“Coleman with his jumping frog—bet stranger $50—stranger had no frog, & C got him one—in the meantime stranger filled C’s frog full of shot & he couldn’t jump—the stranger’s frog won.”

Later he wrote across it in ink: “Wrote this story for Artemus—his idiot publisher, Carleton gave it to Clapp’s Saturday Press.”

The remainder of the text shown reads:

Time Bob Howland came into Mrs. Murphy’s corral in Carson, & drunk, knocked down Wagners bottle of tarantulas & spilled them on the floor.

Louse betting by sold discharged soldiers coming through from Mexico to Cal in early days. The man whose louse got whipped had to get supper. Or place them on the bottom of a frying pan—draw a chalk circle around them, heat the pan & the last louse over the line had to get supper.

Jim story of Kilien & his method of furnishing lodgings to strangers so they could carry off some of the lice.
“I have had a ‘call’
to literature”

Letter from Sam Clemens to his brother and sister-in-law, Orion and Mollie, 19 and 20 October 1865, before “Jumping Frog” was published:

P.S. You had better shove this in the stove—for if we strike a bargain I don’t want any absurd “literary remains” & unpublished letters of Mark Twain published after I am planted.,

San F.—Oct. 19, 1865
My dear Bro & Sister:
Orion there was genius—true, unmistakeable genius—in that sermon of yours. It was not the gilded base metal that passes for intellectual gold too generally in this world of ours. It is one of the few sermons that I have read with pleasure—I do not say profit, because I am beyond the reach of argument now. But seven or eight years ago that single sermon would have saved me. It even made me think—yea, & regret for a while, as it was. (Don’t preach from the above text, next time.) Viewed as a literary production, that sermon was first-class.

And now let me preach you a sermon. I never had but two powerful ambitions in my life. One was to be a pilot with other a preacher of the gospel. I accomplished the one & failed at the other. Because I could not supply myself with the necessary stock in trade—ie, religion. I have given it up forever. I never had a “call to literature, of a low order—i.e. humorous. It is nothing to be
And now let me preach you a sermon. I never had but two powerful ambitions in my life. One was to be a pilot, & the other a preacher of the gospel. I accomplished the one & failed in the other, because I could not supply myself with the necessary stock in trade—i.e. religion. I have given it up forever. I never had a “call” in that direction, anyhow, & my aspirations were the very ecstasy of presumption. But I have had a “call” to literature, of a low order—i.e. humorous. It is nothing to be proud of, but it is my strongest suit, & if I were to listen to that maxim of stern duty which says that to do right you must multiply the one or the two or the three talents which the Almighty entrusts to your keeping, I would long ago have ceased to meddle with things for which I was by nature unfitted & turned my attention to seriously scribbling to excite the laughter of God’s creatures. ...
never is willing to do what his Creator intended him to do. If you are honest, pious, virtuous — what would you have more? Go forth and preach. When you preach from a pulpit, I will listen to you, not before. Until that time, I will read your sermons with sincere pleasure, but only as literary gems. That is my ultimation. Ever since 1869 — I have thought many, many a time what how you would tower head & shoulders above any of the small fry preachers of my experience. I know what I am talking about. If is the nature of man to see as by the light of noon-day. The talent of his neighbor, (to which that neighbor is blind as night), at the same time to be unaware of his own talent, while he is saying as far off at those of his neighbor, as a poodle. You see in me a talent for humorous writing, urge me to cultivate it. But I always regarded it as detrimentally partial to, attached no value to it. It is only now, when editors of famous literary papers in the distant east give me high praise, who do not know me, cannot of course be blinded by the flattery of partiality. That is really begin to believe there must lie something in it.
But I'll tie up with you. 4

Your letter has comforted me. I know — I don't suppose — I know you would be great and useful as a minister of the gospel, if I am satisfied you will never be any better lawyer than a good many others. Now I don't know how you regard the ministry, but I would rather be a shining light in that department than the greatest lawyer that ever trod the earth. What is the pride of saving the widows' property, or the homicide's trivial life, so snatching an immortal soul in mercy from the jaws of hell? Oah! the one is the glories of the firefly, the other the regal glory of the sun. But as I said, I will tie up with you. I will stop all trifling, wish after vain impossibilities, strive for a fame—unworthy reverence—though it must of necessity be— if you will second your promise to go hence to the stage, and preach the gospel when circumstances shall enable you to do so? I am in earnest. Shall it be so?

I am also in debt. But I have gone to work in a dead earnest to get out the good money pays me 50 a month for a daily letter, and the Savannah Chronicle pays me 10 a month. Without the latter I can't pay my rent now. Come up and see the Call, if more agreeable. I have to finish work. Nellie, my dear. I shall write another and love. Write at once. 11th inst. Mar.
In his 26 May 1907 Autobiographical Dictation, Clemens describes Jim Gillis telling tales in the Gillis cabin on Jackass Hill in the winter of 1864–65. Typescript made by Josephine Hobby; ink revisions and corrections by Clemens; pencil markings (ignored in the transcription below) by Bernard DeVoto, who published the passage in Mark Twain in Eruption (1940). The full text of the dictation will appear in the Mark Twain Project’s Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 3.

“In one of my books—‘Huckleberry Finn,’ I think—I have used one of Jim’s impromptu tales, which he called ‘The Tragedy of the Burning Shame.’ I had to modify it considerably to make it proper for print, and this was a great damage. How mild it is in the book, and how pale; how extravagant and how gorgeous in its unprintable form! I used another of Jim’s impromptus in one of my books called ‘The Tramp Abroad,’ a tale of how poor and ignorant woodpeckers tried to fill up a house with acorns. ... I used another of Jim’s inventions in one of my books—the story of Jim Baker’s cat, the remarkable Tom Quartz. Jim Baker was Dick Stoker, of course; Tom Quartz had never existed; there was no such cat—at least outside of Jim Gillis’s imagination.”
Clemens credited one of Jim Gillis’s tales about Dick Stoker to “Jim Baker” in *A Tramp Abroad* (1880). Here is the introduction to what later became known as “Baker’s Blue-Jay Yarn” from the manuscript of chapter 2:

“Animals talk to each other, of course. There can be no question about that; but I suppose there are very few people who can understand them. I never knew but one man who could. I knew he could, however, because he told me so himself. He was a middle-aged, simple-hearted miner who had lived in a lonely corner of California among the woods & mountains, a good many years, & had studied the ways of his only neighbors, the beasts & the birds, until he believed he could accurately translate any remark which they made. This was Jim Baker. According to Jim Baker, some animals have only a limited education, & use only very simple words, & scarcely ever a comparison or a flowery figure;
whereas, certain other animals have a large vocabulary, a fine command of language & a ready & fluent delivery; consequently these, & they are conscious of their talent, & they enjoy "showing off." Baker said, that after long & careful observation, he had come to the conclusion that the blue-jays were the best talkers he had found among birds & beasts. Said he:

"There’s more to a blue-jay than any other creature. He has got more moods, & more different kinds of feelings than other creatures; & mind you, whatever a blue-jay feels, he can put into language. And no mere commonplace language, either, but rattling, out-&-out book-talk—and bristling with metaphor, too—just bristling! And ..."
Samuel Clemens’s notebook describing his return to San Francisco in early August 1866 after his months in the Sandwich Islands as a correspondent for the Sacramento Union. He copied the passage from his “journal” letter to his mother before he sent it:

“In my journal I find:

The calm is no more. There are 3 vessels in sight. It is so cheering, sociable, to have them hovering about in this limitless world of waters. It is sunny and pleasant, but blowing hard. Every rag about the ship is spread to the breeze & she is speeding over the sea like a bird. There is a large brig right astern of us with all her canvas set & chasing us at her very best. She came up fast while the winds were light, but now it is hard to tell whether she gains or not. We can see the people on her forecastle with the glass. The race is very exciting. „She is to the setting sun—looks sharply cut & black as coal against a background of fire & floating on a sea of blood.„

Further along:
„Aug 13—„San Francisco—Home again. No—not home again—in prison again—and all the wild sense of freedom gone. The city seems so cramped, & so dreary with toil & care & business anxiety. God help me. I wish I were at sea again!”
Mark Twain’s First Lecture

“They said nobody would come to hear me, and I would make a humiliating failure of it. They said that as I had never spoken in public, I would break down in the delivery, anyhow. I was disconsolate now. But at last an editor slapped me on the back and told me to ‘go ahead.’ He said, ‘Take the largest house in town, and charge a dollar a ticket.’ The audacity of the proposition was charming.”—Roughing It, chapter 78.

Advertisement from the San Francisco Alta California of 2 October 1866 for Mark Twain’s first lecture, which he delivered that evening at Maguire’s Academy of Music. The lecture, which he later entitled “Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands” and frequently revised, was drawn from his experiences as the Hawaiian correspondent of the Sacramento Union in the spring and summer of 1866. Its success led to Clemens’s first lecture tour, in California and Nevada Territory towns, including Sacramento, Marysville, Grass Valley, Red Dog, You Bet, and Virginia City.

Maguire’s Academy of Music, where Mark Twain gave his first lecture on the Sandwich Islands, third building from right. Courtesy of Society of California Pioneers.
Stage Fright and Success

Sam Clemens in San Francisco, 1868, when he returned to negotiate with the Alta California for the rights to use his newspaper correspondence for *The Innocents Abroad*. His visit resulted in another lecture tour, after which he left California for the last time. Photograph by Bradley & Rulofson.
Paine recounts his adventures to Clemens and Isabel Lyon in this letter of 31 March 1907 from the City Hotel in Sonora, California:

“Dear King, and Secretary:

Goodman & I have just returned from Jackass Hill and Gulch and if we had picked all the year over we could not have had a more beautiful time for our trip. The weather is perfect and, as the King knows, there is no more peaceful, no more lovely spot on earth than this wonderful Valley and these hills where once every creek and run and rivulet washed a bed of gold. We found Billy Gillis at Tuttletown and Steve Gillis at Jackass Hill where mining still pays. In fact Jackass Hill is now a sort of Gillis Colony—Billy’s son and Steve’s daughter are both married & live there, and most of the other residents of the Hill are either relatives or connected with the Gillis holdings. The Gillis’s are rich in mines & the Hill is by no means exhausted.

Steve Gillis is wonderfully clear-eyed & smart and brimming over with fun. He talked over the old times and laughed until the tears came. But he is in a bad way. Repeated surgical operations have put him to bed, permanently, and he says that his time is short.

‘Tell Mark that I’m going to die pretty soon’ he said, when we came away, ‘and that I love him—that I’ve loved him all my life, and I’ll love him till I die.’
Billy Gillis looks older than Steve but is full of the Gillis fire, and I enjoyed meeting him. Jim Gillis is at this hotel; but I have not seen him, nor will he send any word, for the old fire in him is very low and cannot burn more than a few days longer. Goodman saw him last night, but he is beyond speaking more than a few sentences and those are only to repeat with a persistency which seems to give him comfort that he has entirely finished with the interest of this world and is simply waiting for the obsequies. Goodman thinks he might rally if he had not settled the matter in his own mind.

The trip up here, except for the disability of Jim Gillis has been a perfect success, and a great satisfaction— I wouldn’t have missed it for any price. In fact my whole trip this far has been all that I could hope for in every way. Goodman’s coming up here with me has doubled the enjoyment & value of the excursion, & he has enjoyed it, too. Only, he wishes me to say that I have corrupted him. He has never until now ridden on a RR pass, or in an automobile, or smoked cigars at luncheon, and for years has not drunk beer over a bar—. He has parted with all these virtues now and has none left that his family would wish to see him lose. Perhaps it is just as well that I move on, to Los Angeles, Tuesday.

I gave Steve Gillis a copy of Christian Science and three of the pictures I made last summer. His eyes filled with tears he was so glad to get them. He is beautiful in his old age—

With love & good wishes—

The Senegambian.”
Sonora, Cal.,

I would not have missed it for any price. In fact my whole life thus far has been a struggle to find a place where I could hope for in any man. Goodman, among us here and most has doubled the enjoyment value of the experience, I have enjoyed it, too. Only, he broke my day that I have corrupted him. He has now bought a new automobile, a Duesenberg, and for years has not drunk beer or alcohol. He has posted rent all these years, most, and has more left that his family will want to see him. Perhaps, it is just as well that I move on, to Los Angeles, Sunday.

I gave Slim Gulley a copy of Christian Science and three of the pictures. I made a few. His eyes filled with tears. He was so glad to get them. He is...
Steve Gillis, Clemens’s old friend from the Virginia City and San Francisco days, in 1907. Photograph by Albert Bigelow Paine. Gillis wrote Joe Goodman after Clemens’s death in 1910:

Dear Joe:

I am not sorry Mark is gone, on the contrary I exult. As you intimate, his work was done and he died in time to save his reputation. What Shakespeare hero was that who said when he died on the field of battle, ‘I have saved the bird in my bosom?’ That exactly fits the case. His fame is now secure. Poor old Sam! ... And think of the doctors cutting off Mark’s only comfort, his life-long comfort and inspiration—smoking. I am glad to know he died waving an imaginary cigar and puffing imaginary smoke.

Well, he has joined the old Enterprise Gang—Jerry Driscoll, Dennis McCarthy, Dan De Quille and Daggett. Perhaps he was already on the other side when he died smoking that phantom cigar. ...

About mining. Well, mining is in the doldrums. Everybody is borasco—and bacon 30 cents a pound. (24 April 1910)

“Borasco” comes from the Mexican Spanish mining term “borrasca,” meaning “oreless” or “unproductive.”
Joe Goodman in 1907 on Jackass Hill, the site of the former Gillis cabin. Photograph by Albert Bigelow Paine.

“Back in the old days Sam was the best company, the drollest entertainer and the most interesting fellow imaginable. His humor was always cropping out, and it has not failed him with advancing years. A few weeks ago I received a letter from him containing an invitation couched in droll terms so characteristic of him. He wrote:

‘Come on and visit me once more before we both get so old we can’t hear each other swear.’”

What the Lost *Roughing It* Manuscript Looked Like

One of three surviving leaves removed by Mark Twain from the *Roughing It* manuscript when he was revising it. The printer’s copy manuscript was probably discarded in 1871 after it had been set in type. Mark Twain incorporated many of his newspaper pieces in the book. The clipping is from the Buffalo Express, 8 January 1870. Page 968 originally began chapter 46:

“During the ‘flush times’ my brother the Secretary’s official fees amounted to about twelve thousand dollars a year, in gold, & he built a house at a cost of six thousand. He lived to sail from San Francisco with all his worldly possessions in his pocket ...”
Clemens Comments on Bret Harte’s Stories

Mark Twain’s appreciative comments on Bret Harte’s “The Luck of Roaring Camp.” In the margin of the 1870 edition of The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches he writes:

“good.”
“This is Bret’s very best sketch, & most finished—nearly blemishless.”

Bret Harte in 1871, a year after he left California.
And on the last page of “The Outcasts of Poker Flat,” he writes:

“This ranks next to ‘The Luck’ unquestionably.”
Mark Twain’s comments on three of Bret Harte’s stories in the 1879 edition of *The Twins of Table Mountain and Other Stories*, written when he was attempting to choose selections from other humorists for the prospective *Library of Humor*.

About “The Twins of Table Mountain”:
There isn’t humor enough in this to justify its admission to the Library. SLC.

About “An Heiress of Red Dog”:
A good enough yarn, but its specialty is not humor.

About “The Great Deadwood Mystery”:
I can’t discover anything in III but hopeless rubbish.
And in the margin of pages 174–75 he writes:

“How did he come to have her in his arms? Bret Harte is the very dullest observer that ever pretended to write about the ways of man.”

“So she is falling in love with this hoodlum who is learned & says ‘Freeze to the old gal,’ &c.”

“He held her in his arms an entire minute, between the ground & the saddle!”

Mark Twain’s exasperated comments on Bret Harte’s “The Great Deadwood Mystery” in the 1879 edition of *The Twins of Table Mountain and Other Stories*. In the margin of pages 164–65 he writes:

“A damned impossible lot of damned nonsense.”

“Goddamn the idiot, was it an arterial wound?”

“And all this between a Boston young lady & a person of hostler grade—damned nonsense.”
Victor Fischer. *Mark Twain Papers and Project.*
“Mark Twain in the West.”

Samuel Clemens’s photographs, letters, notebooks, and newspaper pieces show him as he looked in his late twenties and early thirties; they give his voice and tell his adventures and misadventures (at least those he was willing to tell) in his letters home; and they show him developing a writing style that we have come to recognize as inimitably his. These years in the West, 1861–1866, when he listened to the tales told in the voices of California pioneers from Pike County, Missouri, and elsewhere, provided the basis for stories he told, re-told, and transformed in literary works throughout his career.
Mark Twain in the West

From the Mark Twain Papers, The Bancroft Library

This Exhibition could just as well be entitled “What Samuel Clemens (and His Family) Kept” from his time in Nevada and California (1861–1866 and again in 1868). The items shown in high resolution prints include the July 1861 stagecoach receipt for Samuel and Orion Clemens’s passage from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Carson City, Nevada Territory; Esmeralda mining deeds from 1862; Sonora Silver Mining Company stock from 1863; pages from Clemens’s 1865 notebook, including his first note for the “Jumping Frog” story; numerous letters to his family and friends; clippings from Clemens’s newspaper writing in Virginia City and San Francisco; photographs; first editions; plus literary manuscripts including pages deleted from Roughing It; and marginalia commenting on Bret Harte’s prose style.