

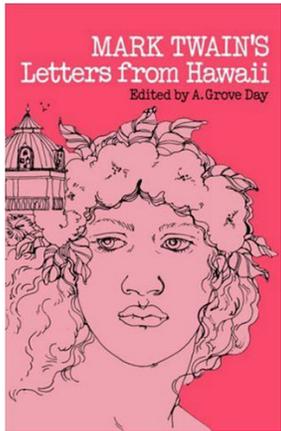


The 2017 Park Church Summer Lecture Series

Wednesday, June 14th at the Park Church

7:00 p.m.

“Twain and the Hawaiian Nation” Molly Ball, *Eureka College*



Mark Twain lived in an age of high nationalism. Twain’s lifetime (1835 to 1910) spanned decades in which many new nations emerged and competed for cultural prestige and political prominence. The pervasive nationalism of the nineteenth century raises questions about what exactly constitutes nationhood – what did the term mean in this period, and what allows a political entity to claim the status of nation? As a world traveler and keen social observer, Twain was poised to offer insight into such questions. This lecture will address Twain’s approach to nationhood in work that comes out of his 1866 trip to the Hawaiian Kingdom. In letters written for a Sacramento newspaper, Twain reflects on Hawaiian society in a moment in which Native Hawaiians sought to make their Kingdom legible to foreigners as a sovereign nation. By casting themselves as national, self-governing subjects, Native Hawaiians sought to ward off other nations’ attempts to make the Islands into an imperial holding. As Twain depicts Hawaiian scenes and settings, he troubles nationalist thought (dominant in the West in this period) which holds that national identity resides in a culturally homogenous citizenry.

Molly Ball is an Assistant Professor of English at Eureka College. She received her PhD in 2016 from the University of California at Davis, and she is currently at work on a book manuscript, tentatively titled, “Writing Out of Time: Temporal Vulnerability in Nineteenth-Century Narrative,” that explores narrative structure in Anglophone literature. She is particularly interested in questions about national identity and travel, and these questions draw her to Mark Twain – one of the century’s most well-traveled writers. She recently published an essay on Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* in *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture*, and her reviews have appeared in *Early American Literature* and *GLQ*.

Wednesday, June 21 at The Park Church

7:00 p.m.

“Conjuring the Superstitions of a Nation: Magic, Memory and *Huckleberry Finn*”

Sarah Ingle, *University of Virginia*

In *Following the Equator* (1897), Mark Twain wrote, “Let me make the superstitions of a nation and I care not who makes its laws or its songs either.” Yet, despite this indication that Twain viewed superstition as a supremely powerful social force, scholars have had surprisingly little to say about the role of superstition in Twain’s most famous novel. From Jim’s fortune-telling hair ball to Tom Sawyer’s “witch pie,” magic and folklore are much more than mere manifestations of “local color” and minstrel show humor in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Conjuring is Twain’s metaphor for the twin powers of memory and prediction that are at the heart of the novel’s critique of post-Reconstruction America. In *Huckleberry Finn*, conjure becomes a metaphor for two competing ways of reading: Jim’s fortune-telling and Huck’s transformative retrospection.



Illustration from the first edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Edward Windsor Kemble

Sarah Ingle is an English lecturer at the University of Virginia, where she received her PhD in English literature in 2014, specializing in 19th-century American literature and African American literature. She has visited Elmira several times as a Quarry Farm Research Fellow and as a presenter at several conferences. She has also taught a class on “Huck Finn and Cultural Conflict” and has delivered conference papers and published articles about the works of Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, Edgar Allan Poe, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Pauline Hopkins, and others. This talk is adapted from a chapter of her book manuscript, *Conjured Memories: Race, Place, and Cultural Memory in the American Conjure Tale*, which she hopes to publish.

Wednesday, June 28th at the Park Church

7:00 p.m.

“Artemus Ward: The Man Who Made Lincoln Laugh”

John Pascal, Seton Hall Prep School

It is generally accepted that during his lifetime, Mark Twain was considered the preeminent American master storyteller and lecturer of humor. The tsunami that is Twain’s literary achievement can easily overwhelm the earlier vast movement of the American literary scene that led to its creation. The “underwater earthquake” of this movement is Charles Farrar Browne, but his more famous pseudonym is Artemus Ward. While there were earlier, as well as contemporary, humorous writers, Artemus Ward was regarded by William Dean Howells as “the humorist who first gave the world a taste of the humor that characterizes the whole American people.” Indeed, in 1862, President Lincoln laughed heartily while he read to his Cabinet passages from Ward’s first book. Ward’s uniqueness in telling a story from the lecture platform enthralled thousands throughout the United States and in Canada; he was also “the first deadpan comedian to take England by storm.” Despite these views, today Ward’s literary reputation is largely forgotten along with his distinctive contribution to the tradition of American humor. Thus he certainly is well deserving of study. This lecture will analyze the construction of his literary reputation by showing that what made Ward so popular in his time was the fact that his literary humor was rhetorically gentle. Ward parlayed the success of his nationally published letters into a commercially successful career as the first comedic lecturer to tour the nation. His platform appearances helped Twain become more professionally aware of humor’s literary and commercial value.



Artemus Ward, from a photo owned by the Lotos Club, New York

John Pascal is in his sixteenth year teaching 9th and 11th grade English at Seton Hall Preparatory School in New Jersey. He is in his second year teaching a course he developed called “Writings of Mark Twain.” He is a contributing author to *Mark Twain and Youth: Studies in His Life and Writings* (2016); he is the author of *Artemus Ward: The Gentle Humorist* (2008); has presented papers on Mark Twain and Artemus Ward at Mark Twain Conferences in Elmira and Hannibal; and has reviewed books for the Mark Twain Forum. He holds a B.A. Cum Laude in English from Villanova University, an M.B.A. from Seton Hall University, and an M.A. in English from Montclair State University.



Mark Twain (left of center with a light-colored coat) in front of The Park Church.

The Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies was founded in January 1983 with the gift of Quarry Farm to Elmira College by Jervis Langdon, the great-grand-nephew of Samuel Langhorne Clemens. The Center offers distinctive programs to foster and support Mark Twain scholarship and to strengthen the teaching of Mark Twain at all academic levels. The Center serves the Elmira community and regional, national, and international students and scholars of Mark Twain.

Founded in 1846 by a group of abolitionists, **The Park Church** has been a strong presence in Elmira’s history and some of its congregation were close friends and family members to Mark Twain. Known for its striking architectural features, The Park Church contained Elmira’s first public library and has a long history of charitable service to the Elmira community. Currently, it is a United Church of Christ open and affirming congregation, welcoming all people to worship and participate in its communal life, regardless of ethnic origin, race, class, age, ability, gender, or sexual orientation.

Directions to The Park Church

From Interstate 86, take exit 56. Then proceed east on Church Street and turn left on North Main Street. You will see The Park Church on your passenger side. The Park Church GPS address is **208 West Gray Street, Elmira, New York.**

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