



Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies

The Trouble Begins at Eight

Spring 2009 Lecture Series



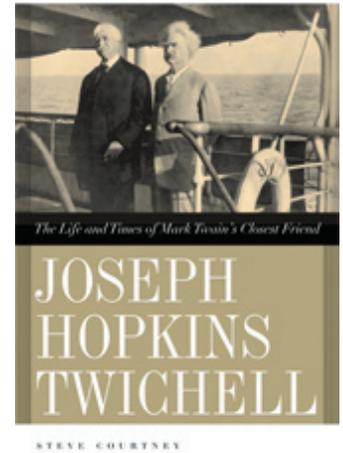
Wednesday, May 13th in the Barn at Quarry Farm, 8 p.m.

“This Damned Fool’s Example”:

The Rifts Between Mark Twain and Joe Twichell

Steve Courtney *Independent Scholar*

In the summer of 1883 close friends Joe Twichell and Samuel Clemens fell out over a piece of unwanted publicity the minister had published in the *Hartford Courant* – an incident with Quarry Farm origins. Clemens sent the clipping to relatives, scrawling on it: “I send this to beg that at least you folks will avoid this damned fool’s example.” It was one of several events that stand in relief against the two men’s normally loving association, incidents in which Twichell stepped over lines of behavior firmly established by Clemens – in his own mind, at least. But unlike his stormy rifts with others, those with Twichell always reached some kind of a resolution. Steve Courtney explores the origins of these blowups and what they meant for this famous friendship.

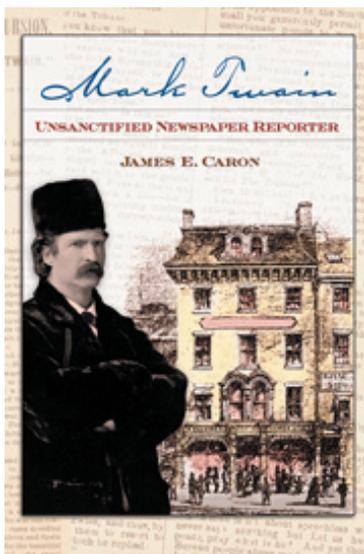


Doors open at 7:30. *The Trouble Begins at Eight*.

Wednesday, May 20th in the Barn at Quarry Farm, 8 p.m.

Mark Twain, Unsanctified Newspaper Reporter

James E. Caron *University of Hawai‘i*



Sam Clemens began his professional writing career as Mark Twain by repeatedly demonstrating that he was an “unsanctified” newspaper reporter, that is, an inveterate jokester, master of raillery, and yarnspinner. A madcap character whose fundamental comic tactic was to disturb normative middle-class thinking about what constituted respectability, Mark Twain allowed Sam Clemens to dramatize a comic vision of the world. Mark Twain enacts that comic vision by “playin’ hell,” that is, by embodying what proper society might call social “sins.” These laughable antics of Mark Twain are meant to improve the body politic, comically highlighting communal values by disrupting them. This communal function suggests a symbolic cultural role for Sam Clemens’s literary alter ego: the Citizen Clown. Analogous to sacred clowns performing ritually within traditional societies, the Citizen Clown dramatizes what ought to be done in his modern democratic society by behaving in ways that transgress social norms. Dr. Caron will show how Sam Clemens’s studied and artful humor of raillery operated in the first three phases of his professional writing career, from September 1862 to December 1866: his initial reporter’s job in Virginia City, Nevada Territory; his freelance writing in San Francisco; and his first major assignment as a correspondent, reporting on the Kingdom of Hawai‘i.

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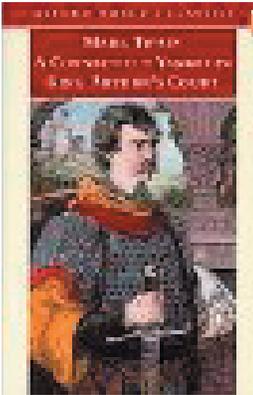
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Wednesday, May 27th in the Barn at Quarry Farm, 8 p.m.

Hank Morgan on Film: Adaptations of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* M. Thomas Inge *Randolph-Macon College*



Mark Twain's works, like Mark Twain himself, have been favorite sources of adaptation in American popular culture ~ in film, television, radio, and comic books. Except for the *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* novels, the most frequent work to be adapted to the film medium and television has been *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Professor Inge will survey several film versions of Hank Morgan as portrayed by Will Rogers (1931), Bing Crosby (1949), Thomas Mitchell (1952), Bugs Bunny (1977), Paul Rudd (1978), Dennis Duggan (1979), and even a black child actress, Keshia Knight Pulliam (1989). He will discuss why this particular novel has attracted so many film producers, how Hank Morgan has been interpreted through six decades, and what this tells us about the continuing influence and relevance of the Yankee from Connecticut.

Light refreshments will precede this concluding lecture of the Spring series.

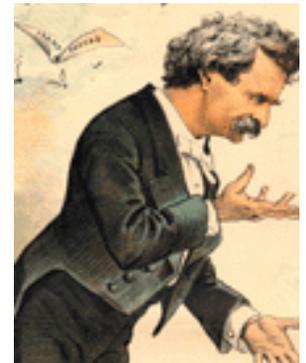
Doors open at 7:15. *The Trouble Begins at Eight*.

Unable to attend our lecture series? Why not listen online?

Go to <http://www.elmira.edu/twain>. Click on The Center for Mark Twain Studies and then on *The Trouble Begins at Eight*. Scroll down and click on the link for the appropriate audio file where live audio recordings of lectures are available (with individual speakers' permission).

Directions to Quarry Farm for local attendees:

From Elmira College, head east on Washington across the Clemens Center Parkway to Sullivan Street. Turn right on Sullivan. Turn left on East Avenue. Turn left on Crane Road. Quarry Farm will be on your left. Please park on the grassy area behind the Barn. Quarry Farm is a fragile, natural environment. Please exercise care.



The Trouble Begins at Eight is made possible by the support of the Mark Twain Foundation and the Friends of the Center.

Elmira College
Center for Mark Twain Studies
(607) 735-1941
twaincenter@elmira.edu



Director
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Quarry Farm Caretaker

Barbara Snedecor
Kathy Solometo
Timothy Morgan