

Wednesday, October 10 in The Barn at Quarry Farm

7 p.m.

“Getting to Know Mark Twain through the Eyes of Grace King, a Southern Woman of Letters”

Miki Pfeffer, *Nicholls State University*



Grace King

New Orleans writer, Grace King, enjoyed a two-decade friendship with Sam and Livy Clemens and their daughters, Susy, Clara, and Jean. King visited the family in Hartford in 1887 and 1888 and in Florence in 1892. She wrote to her family about the Twain homes, meals, dress, and habits. From New Orleans, she exchanged letters with each Clemens, especially Livy, with whom she became a confidante. As each family member died, she kept in touch with the living, right through Clara’s brief messages around 1918. Miki Pfeffer will read from some of King’s captivating letters that offer a fresh view of the Clemenses and of Mark Twain as loving homebody, father, and generous friend to this ambitious southern woman.

Miki Pfeffer holds a Master’s Degree in English Literature and a Ph.D. in Urban History from the University of New Orleans. She is a visiting scholar at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana. Her book, *Southern Ladies and Suffragists: Julia Ward Howe and Women’s Rights at the 1884 New Orleans World’s Fair*, was awarded the 2015 Eudora Welty Prize for scholarship in Women’s Studies and Southern Studies from the Mississippi University for Women. Her current mission is to see Grace King’s letters published and appreciated, and she offers the collection of the family of Twain in a book to be published in 2019.

Wednesday, October 17 in Cowles Hall on the Elmira College Campus

7 p.m.

“Mark Twain, TV Star”

David Bianculli, *Rowan University and NPR’s Fresh Air with Terry Gross*

The real Mark Twain, Samuel L. Clemens, appeared in only one film in his lifetime, shortly before his death: a short silent movie of him walking around his Stormfield home, photographed by Thomas Edison’s Edison film company in 1909. But since then, Mark Twain has been on television dozens of times – immortalized, and impersonated, by a frankly startling array of actors on the small screen. The best of them, Hal Holbrook in his one-man show *Mark Twain Tonight!*, you know, and should. But the rest of them? Other actors portraying Mark Twain, in various programs over the 70-year-history of television, have ranged from Jimmy Stewart and Bing Crosby to Woody Harrelson and William Shatner. The character and image of Mark Twain have been kept alive by shows ranging from *Bonanza* and *The Rifleman* to *Touched by an Angel* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. David Bianculli will discuss and show clips from all these and more.



Woody Harrelson as Mark Twain

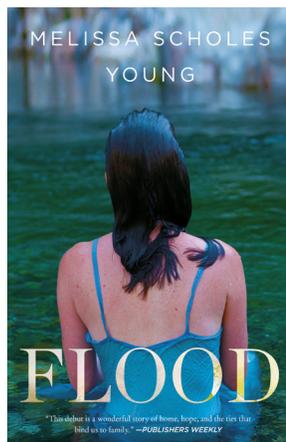
David Bianculli has been the TV critic for National Public Radio’s *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*, where he also appears as occasional guest host, since 1987. Beginning in 1975, he’s worked as a TV critic for newspapers in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York, most recently for the *New York Daily News* from 1993-2007. Currently, he is a full-time professor of TV and film history at Rowan University, and editor of the website TV Worth Watching (www.tvworthwatching.com) which he launched in 2007. Bianculli has written four books – *The Platinum Age of Television: From ‘I Love Lucy’ to ‘The Walking Dead,’ How TV Became Terrific; Dangerously Funny: The Uncensored Story of ‘The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour’; Teletiteracy: Taking Television Seriously;* and *Dictionary of Teletiteracy* – and has written chapters for and co-edited, with Douglas Howard, *Television Finales: From ‘Howdy Doody’ to ‘Girls,’* to be published by Syracuse University Press in November. Bianculli has a B. S. and an M. A. in Journalism and Communications, both from the University of Florida.

Wednesday, October 24 in the Barn at Quarry Farm

7 p.m.

“Writing from Roots in ‘America’s Hometown’: *Flood*, a Novel”

Melissa Scholes Young, *American University*



Literature and life often claim you can’t go home again, but what happens if you have to? In this book talk and author reading, Melissa Scholes Young will chronicle how Mark Twain’s own exodus from Hannibal parallels Laura Brooks’, the protagonist of her debut novel, *Flood*, who like the Mississippi River, once ran in the wrong direction in order to recalibrate. She’ll share her historical research and creative writing process as well as explore why Twain’s origin in rural America is more relevant than ever.

“Filled with pithy dialogue and cultural references, Scholes Young’s writing ties Laura’s journey of self-discovery squarely to Hannibal and its famous young troublemakers. As Laura reckons with her past, Scholes Young reckons with Twain’s influence on the region. This debut is a wonderful story of home, hope, and the ties that bind us to family.”

- *Publishers Weekly*

Melissa Scholes Young is an associate professor in the Department of Literature at American University in Washington, D.C. and a Bread Loaf Bakeless Camargo Fellow. Her writing has appeared in the *Atlantic*, *Washington Post*, *Narrative*, *Ploughshares*, and *Poets & Writers*. She’s a Contributing Editor for Fiction Writers Review and Editor of the anthology *Grace in Darkness*. Her debut novel, *Flood*, set in Hannibal, Missouri, the hometown she shares with Mark Twain, was the winner in Literary Fiction for the 2017 Best Book Award.

Wednesday, November 7 in the Barn at Quarry Farm

7 p.m.

“‘At the Farm’: Reliving Mark Twain’s 1884 Summer at Quarry Farm”

John Bird, *Winthrop University*

As he did for many summers, Mark Twain packed up his family (including dogs and cats, and in this case, a bicycle) and left Hartford for an extended stay at Elmira’s Quarry Farm. Part of my current work-in-progress, a micro-biography of Twain in the year 1884, my presentation will let audiences relive his and his family’s experience that summer. Even though Twain wrote his friend Joe Twichell near the end of the stay that he had not accomplished anything of value during the summer, he actually had an interesting and productive summer: he read proof of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and made some important revisions; he began a sequel even before he published his novel, *Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn Among the Indians*; he became fully engaged in national politics during the presidential campaign; and he sat for the bust Karl Gerhardt made (twice) at Quarry Farm for the frontispiece of *Huck Finn*. Just as importantly, he engaged with his family, writing a short but charming personal memoir, “At the Farm,” with humorous and heartwarming anecdotes about his daughters. Living with Mark Twain day-by-day for this summer brings him and his family back to life and gives us a window into life at Quarry Farm, a place central to his work and his life.



Quarry Farm during the 1880’s

John Bird is Emeritus Professor of English at Winthrop University. He is the author of *Mark Twain and Metaphor*, as well as a number of articles on Mark Twain. He is a past president of the Mark Twain Circle of America.

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