



2018 PARK CHURCH SUMMER LECTURES

Wednesday, June 13 at The Park Church

7 p.m.

“Fingerprints and Microbe Time: Mark Twain and Scientific Skepticism”

James W. Leonard, *The Citadel*



It is well known that Twain took contemporary social, political, and particularly racial beliefs to task through an incisive skepticism which outpaced many of his generation. But Twain also understood the role that science and empiricism played in the formation and justification of social projects. Like many of his time, he was thrilled by the explosion of new technologies and systems that characterized the 19th century. For example, we know from his personal writings how excited he was to include Francis Galton's discovery of fingerprinting in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. But even in that excitement, Twain never lost sight of his characteristic skepticism, and a closer look at his literary portrayal of science reveals a visionary's understanding of how empirical facts--and the systems organizing those facts--would be increasingly scrutinized as social and political tools in literature of the 20th century.

James W. Leonard recently received his PhD from Tufts University and is currently an adjunct professor of English at The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. While much of his research focuses on 20th-century authors (particularly Djuna Barnes, Cormac McCarthy, and Leslie Marmon Silko), he is particularly interested in Mark Twain's capacity for identifying and articulating complex forms of social critique that would only be popularized years after his death. His current research on Twain looks at his insistence on filtering empiricism through satire.

Wednesday, June 20 at The Park Church

7 p.m.

“...there is only one thing of real importance...”: The Letters of Olivia Langdon Clemens

Barbara Snedecor, *Elmira College*

The letters of Olivia Langdon Clemens reveal her deep emotion as well as the more ordinary impulses of her thought. In communications with friends and family, and with her world-famous spouse, Olivia exposes her intelligence, fortitude, gentleness, kindness, humor, love for husband and children—along with her anxieties, self-deprecation, and flaws. Possibly the following statement, written to her husband during their plunge towards bankruptcy, best indicates her world view: “I feel so strongly these days that we have not a great while to stay here and that there is only one thing of real importance to us. To do all the good that we can and leave an irreproachable name behind us” (9 April 1893). The presentation will summarize critical views of Olivia as well as highlight selections from her letters.



Olivia Langdon Clemens

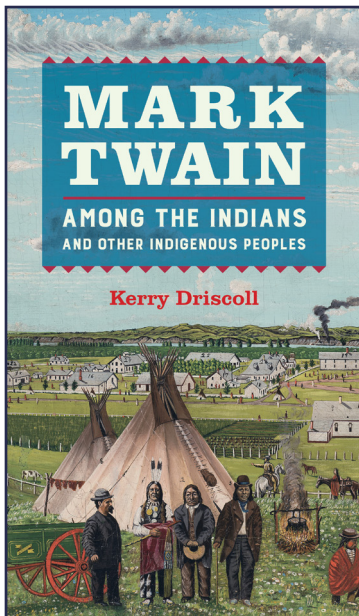
Barbara Snedecor directed the Center for Mark Twain Studies and was an Assistant Professor of American Literature at Elmira College. In 2015, she was awarded the Living Heritage Award by the Chemung County Chamber of Commerce. In 2017, she received the Henry Nash Smith Award. She has published novels, personal essays, and poetry as well as *Mark Twain in Elmira*, Second Edition, and scholarly essays connected with Mark Twain Studies. She currently is preparing a collection of the letters of Olivia Langdon Clemens for publication.

Wednesday, July 11 at The Park Church

7 p.m.

“Mark Twain and The Native Other”

Kerry Driscoll, *University of St. Joseph*



In his 1899 essay “Concerning the Jews,” Twain states: I am quite sure that (bar one) I have no race prejudices, and I think I have no color prejudices nor caste prejudices nor creed prejudices. Indeed, I know it. I can stand any society. All that I care to know is that a man is a human being—that is enough for me; he can’t be any worse.” Although the writer refused to name the one bias he admits to harboring, abundant evidence in his work suggests that the allusion is to Native Americans, whom he referred to in print as “reptiles,” “vermin,” and “good, fair, desirable subject[s] for extermination.” This presentation explores the origin and evolution of Twain’s attitudes toward indigenous peoples and probes the reasons underlying his animus.

Kerry Driscoll is Professor of English (emerita) at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford, CT. She is the past president of the Mark Twain Circle of America, a member of the editorial board for the Circle’s journal, the *Mark Twain Annual*, and serves on the Board of Trustees at the Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford. In addition to numerous essays she has published on Twain’s work, she is the author of *Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous Peoples* (University of California Press, 2018), the first book-length study of the author’s conflicted attitudes toward, and representations of, Native Americans.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A RECEPTION IN BEECHER HALL FOLLOWING THE LECTURE.

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.



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

Visit the “Trouble Begins Archives” at MarkTwainStudies.org for a downloadable recording of all these talks and other past lectures. You can also see past “Trouble Begins” programs and our quadrennial conference and symposia programs.

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