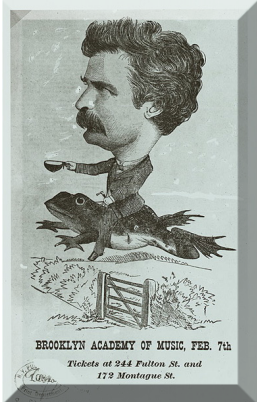


Wednesday, August 7 at the Park Church.....7 p.m.

“Views of Mark Twain”: Antics and Annexation in Twain’s New York *Tribune* Letters on Hawai’i”

Todd Nathan Thompson, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*



Poster from a Feb. 8, 1873 lecture on Hawai’i

The December 1872 death of Hawaiian monarch Kamehameha V spurred renewed interest among US citizens and politicians alike in the annexation of the Hawaiian islands. To satisfy the public’s increased curiosity about Hawai’i, in January 1873 the New York *Daily Tribune* sought testimony in the form of two letters from a well-known expert on the islands: Mark Twain. Twain had gained nationwide fame based on his correspondence from the Hawai’i to the Sacramento *Union* in 1866 and especially from his popular comic lecture, often titled “Or Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands,” which he delivered across the US and abroad between 1866-1873. In my talk I will examine how Twain’s humorous writings and lectures about Hawai’i led American editors and readers to view him as a serious authority on the islands. I will also perform contextualized readings of reprinted excerpts of his letters to the *Tribune* in other newspapers and magazines and consider what these editorial choices reveal about the American reading public’s views of Twain and of Hawai’i in the early 1870s.

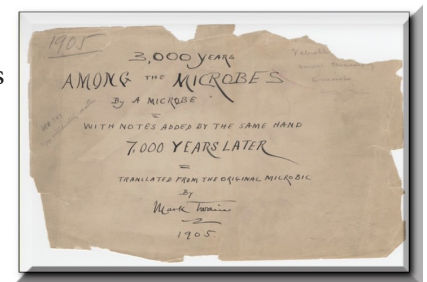
Todd Nathan Thompson is Professor of English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He is also Treasurer-Secretary of the American Humor Studies Association. Todd is author of *The National Joker: Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Satire* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2015). His work on political satire and pre-1900 American literature has also appeared in *Scholarly Editing*, *Early American Literature*, *ESQ*, *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, *Journal of American Culture*, *Teaching American Literature*, and elsewhere. He currently is at work on a book project entitled *Savage Laughter: Nineteenth-Century American Humor and the Pacific, 1840-1880*.

Wednesday, August 14 at the Park Church.....7 p.m.

“The Dread of Filth in Twain: Cultures of Mysophobia in Post-Pasteurian Medicine and 3,000 Years among the Microbes”

Don James McLaughlin, *University of Tulsa*

This talk examines Mark Twain’s unfinished manuscript *3,000 Years among the Microbes*, written in Dublin, New Hampshire in 1905. More precisely, I provide a historical backdrop for the manuscript by putting it in dialogue with two major shifts in medical thought at the end of the nineteenth century: (1) the rise of microbiology, introducing a new discourse for articulating the relationship of bacteria and viruses to infectious disease, established largely by Louis Pasteur’s successes in vaccination; and (2) the emergence of an international psychiatric discourse revolving around mysophobia, meaning a dread of filth and contamination. Written from the perspective of a cholera germ named Huck who has infected a tramp named Blitzowski, *3,000 Years* meditates on both discourses, exploring microbiology’s ramifications for human understandings of life, agency, and subjectivity, while also pursuing a mysophobic aesthetic: a state of readerly repugnance generated by the landscape of infection and bodily functions Huck and his microbe friends inhabit. I use *3,000 Years* to argue that we cannot understand the rise of mysophobia (as either a diagnosis or an aesthetic) without also understanding its historical relationship to the landscape of invisible infectious agents introduced to human consciousness through the birth of microbiology as a science.



Manuscript page, *3,000 Years among the Microbes*, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, U. of Connecticut

Don James McLaughlin is assistant professor of nineteenth-century American literature at the University of Tulsa and the 2018-2019 Hench post-dissertation fellow at the American Antiquarian Society. His work has been published in *American Literature* and the *New Republic* and is forthcoming in *Literature and Medicine* and *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*.

Wednesday, August 21 at the Park Church.....7 p.m.

“Where the ‘Wild West’ Ends and China Begins: Rethinking the Geography of Mark Twain and Bret Harte’s *Ah Sin*” Sunny Yang, *University of Houston*

In the fall of 1876, Mark Twain and Bret Harte embarked on a disastrous collaboration that would culminate in the frontier melodrama known as *Ah Sin*. Named after its Chinese laundryman character, who was taken from Harte’s 1870 poem “Plain Language from Truthful James,” the play is widely acknowledged as a literary and financial failure that contributed to the demise of Twain and Harte’s friendship. Yet despite its dubious artistic merit, *Ah Sin* has captured some critical attention because of the central role played by its titular Chinese character. Scholars have debated the play’s intervention into nineteenth-century American stereotypes about the Chinese and have exclusively interpreted the work in the context of domestic debates over Chinese immigration and legal testimony. This talk takes a different approach by analyzing *Ah Sin* through the lens of nineteenth-century commentary on Sino-American relations, focusing in particular on the U.S. foreign policy of extraterritoriality in China. Resituating the play in this transnational legal context offers fresh insights into Twain’s anti-imperialism at this moment in his career, while also suggesting new avenues for interpreting representations of Chinese immigrants and Chinese American politics in nineteenth-century American writing.

Sunny Yang is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Houston, where she specializes in American and multi-ethnic American literature of the long nineteenth century. Her research explores the imperial contexts of U.S. racial formation and cultural production with an emphasis on the intersections of law and literature. She received her PhD in English with a certificate in Africana Studies from the University of Pennsylvania and is currently completing her first book project, *Fictions of Territoriality*, with the support of fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the American Association of University Women.



Playbill for the Washington, D.C. run of Ah Sin at the National Theatre, May 1877



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.

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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