

## Wednesday, May 5 - Online

“Mark Twain’s Roadshow: Travels, Travails, and the Inspirations of a Literary Giant”

Laura DeMarco, *Independent Scholar*

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts,” Mark Twain wrote in 1869. Few writers saw more of America, or the world, than Twain — a Southerner, Westerner, miner, river boat pilot and international traveler who died a Yankee. In her book *Mark Twain’s America Then and Now*, Laura DeMarco traces Samuel Clemens’ life journey through 69 major locales that shaped the great writer. His biography is told chronologically against the backdrop of the places where he lived and worked and visited. It begins in a one-room cabin in rural Missouri and ends in a sprawling mansion in Connecticut. In her talk, Laura will bring these sites and other lesser known stops on Clemens travels alive by pairing historic images with modern day viewpoints of the same location from the same angle and perspective — revealing how many of the sights important to Twain are with us today, and how his legacy continues to influence so much of American culture.



**Laura DeMarco** is a writer, historian and lecturer in Cleveland, Ohio. She is the author of the books *Lost Cleveland*, *Cleveland Then and Now* and *Mark Twain’s America Then and Now* (Pavilion Books). Her newest book, *Lost Civil War: The Disappearing Legacy of America’s Greatest Conflict* (Pavilion/Rizzoli) will be released in June 2021. Laura spent 20 years at the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* daily newspaper, and has written for a wide range of national publications. She is a frequent commenter on Cleveland television stations. She specializes in history, lost landmarks and literature. She also writes about historical preservation, architecture, art, film, and travel. She lectures at museums, schools, colleges and historical societies on these topics and more. She has a degree in English literature and art history from John Carroll University. Laura was honored by Cleveland City Council for “outstanding commitment, dedication and significant contributions as an Arts and Culture reporter for *The Plain Dealer* specializing in local history and lost landmarks.”

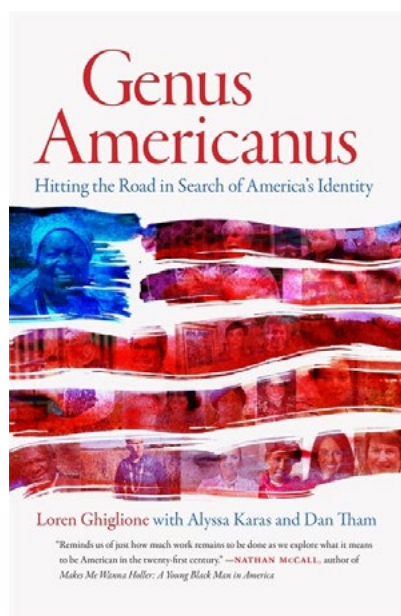
## Wednesday, May 12 - Online

“Traveling with Twain in Search of America’s Identity”

Loren Ghiglione, *Northwestern University*

Over three months, I traveled 14,000 miles by van with two young journalists, Alyssa Karas and Dan Tham. We followed the path of Mark Twain around America, beginning in his boyhood hometown of Hannibal, Missouri. Stops followed in St. Louis, Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo, Elmira, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. (with a side trip to New England). We then headed south along the Mississippi to New Orleans, north to Keokuk and Muscatine, Iowa, and west to San Francisco where our van fell victim to smash-and-grabbers. Along the way we interviewed 150 Americans about race, sexual orientation, gender, and other hot-button identity issues, reflecting on the differences and similarities in attitudes between Twain’s time and ours.

**Loren Ghiglione** is an emeritus professor at Northwestern University and a former dean of Northwestern’s Medill School of Journalism, is the main author of *Genus Americanus: Hitting the Road in Search of America’s Identity* (2020). Loren is the author or editor of nine books. Prior to his 21-year career in academe, he put out New England newspapers for 26 years and served as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. He received a B.A. from Haverford College, a Ph.D. in American studies from George Washington University, and a Master of Urban Studies and a law degree from Yale. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2004.



## Wednesday, May 19 - Online

### “‘A Work of Art?’: Mark Twain’s Influence on the American Use of Humor in Criticism”

Silas Kaine Ezell, *Oklahoma Baptist University*

My talk will explore the influence of Mark Twain’s famous roasting of James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* and its unspoken influence on contemporary film criticism found in comedic video essays on social media. Using parody and satire, Twain vents his rage at Cooper’s fiction and does much to convince his reader of Cooper’s crimes against literature. The essay has had remarkable staying power in American anthologies even though multiple critics have dutifully and successfully revealed Twain’s manipulations and exaggerations of Cooper’s text to arrive at his conclusions. Nevertheless, reception to Cooper’s novels has been forever altered by Twain’s criticisms. Many YouTube channels that provide satirical commentary on popular culture fulfill a similar function for the early 21st century, but the best example of Twain’s combination of humor and satire are the “Plinkett Reviews” on *RedLetterMedia*. Both Twain and *RedLetterMedia* serve as clear examples of the use of humor in the critical review of fiction that seeks to make broader arguments about how criticism can inform our sensibilities as consumers in American culture.



**Silas Kaine Ezell** is an Associate Professor of English at Oklahoma Baptist University, where he teaches courses in American Literature and English Education. He is the author of *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (2016), which explores the influence of American literary humorists on American animated television programs. In case it isn’t obvious, Ezell is fascinated with linking the past with the present, and his current research involves tracing the use of humor in critical review and its influence on the rise of the YouTube critical video essay.

## Wednesday, May 26 - Online

### “Twain’s Hartford”

Jodi DeBruyne, *The Mark Twain House and Museum*

Mallory Howard, *The Mark Twain House & Museum*



Samuel Clemens, his wife Olivia, and their three daughters, Susy, Clara, and Jean, called Hartford, Connecticut home for twenty years. Clemens called it the happiest and most productive period of his life. At the time Hartford was one of the wealthiest cities in the nation, booming with industry, publishing, and the arts. Today their Hartford house, which Clemens referred to as “the loveliest home that ever was,” is now the Mark Twain House & Museum (MTH&M). Join Assistant Curator Mallory Howard and Director of Collections Jodi DeBruyne as they take you through the House and the MTH&M collections using art, artifacts, and archives to share stories about the family’s daily lives and their engagement with the Hartford community.

The Mark Twain House & Museum’s Director of Collections **Jodi DeBruyne** and Assistant Curator **Mallory Howard** share the responsibility for the care, exhibition, and interpretation of the Mark Twain House and the museum’s collection of more than 20,000 artifacts and documents. Howard has aided countless researchers, done important work herself on Twainian subjects, and has spoken on aspects of Twain’s life and work in venues ranging from scholarly conferences to Mississippi riverboats. She earned her B.A. in American History at Central Connecticut State University and was inducted into the national history honor society Phi Alpha Theta. She holds a certification from the Modern Archives Institute in Washington, D.C. DeBruyne has worked at museums across the country including the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, VA, the City Museum in Juneau, AK, and the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, ME. She earned her B.A. in Art History at Old Dominion University and her M.A. in Museum Studies from Johns Hopkins University.

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