Mark Twain and the West: Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Roughing It

The 8th Annual Quarry Farm Symposium
October 1 - 3, 2021
1. Hamilton Hall*
2. Fassett Commons*
3. Cowles Hall*
4. Mark Twain Study*
5. Gillett Memorial Hall*
6. Alumni Hall
7. Carnegie Hall*
8. Kolker Hall
9. Watson Fine Arts
10. Harris Hall
11. McGraw Hall
12. The College Store
13. College Post Office
14. The College Cottages
15. Anderson Hall
16. Columbia Hall
17. Meier Hall
18. Gannett Tripp Library
19. Clarke Health Center
20. Twin Towers
21. Campus Center
22. Speidel Gymnasium in Emerson Hall
23. Gibson Theatre in Emerson Hall
24. Tompkins Hall*
25. Perry Hall
26. The Office of Admissions & Financial Aid
27. Campus Field

*Listed on the National Register of Historic Places
“MARK TWAIN AND THE WEST”
Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of *Roughing It*

The Eighth Annual Quarry Farm Symposium

*Symposium Chairs*
Ben Click, St. Mary’s College of Maryland
Joseph Csicsila, Eastern Michigan University

*Keynote Speaker*
Bruce Michelson, *University of Illinois*

*Presenters*
Blake Bronson-Bartlett, Mark Twain Papers and Project, UC, Berkeley
James E. Caron, University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa
Christopher Conway, University of Texas at Arlington
Kerry Driscoll, Mark Twain Papers and Project, UC, Berkeley
Dwayne Eutsey, Independent Scholar
Sarah Fredericks, Auburn University at Montgomery
Andrew Hebard, Miami University of Ohio
Myrial Holbrook, Stanford University
B. Scott Holmes, Independent Scholar
James Wharton Leonard, The Citadel
Jeffrey Melton, University of Alabama
Jeanne Campbell Ressman, University of Texas at San Antonio
Matt Seybold, Elmira College
Todd Nathan Thompson, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Alex Trimble Young, Arizona State University
Friday, October 1 in Cowles Hall on the Elmira College Campus

6:00 p.m.  Opening Reception
   Enjoy hors d’oeuvres, an assortment of drinks, and conversation with old and new friends in close proximity to the Mark Twain Study and the Mark Twain Exhibit.

7:00 p.m.  Opening Dinner
   Elmira College Welcome
   Patricia Ireland, Provost, Elmira College
   CMTS Welcome
   Joseph Lemak, Director, Center for Mark Twain Studies
   Dinner
   Joseph Csicsila, Eastern Michigan University
   Keynote Introduction
   Keynote Address
   Bruce Michelson, University of Illinois

“Mercurial Texts and Turbulent Times”

For a conference on Roughing It, one implicit imperative is to account plausibly for its stubborn appeal -- including its intuited relevance, how it transcends bookshelf-identity as yet another travelogue by Mark Twain. Our conversations this weekend will likely engage with at least four dimensions of this text that may account for this appeal: (1) the specific and ephemeral historical moment in which the action unfolds, when an American Wild West -- “Wild” in new ways as Sam encounters it — undergoes sudden, decisive changes to its geographical and cultural remoteness and otherness; (2) its innovative attention to human conduct and personality, not to embellish or distract from its landscapes, but rather to situate them as sites of human experience; (3) its comic celebrations of unpredictability, not only in and among these landscapes but also among conditions of mind; (4) its challenge to civilities of published biographical narrative and to basic assumptions upon which those civilities are sustained. These include the possibility and value of truth; the imperatives of sustained attention; and the possibility and survival of a coherent self. From such perspectives, we may see more clearly how Roughing It resonates with big-scale challenges, discontents, and insanities pervading the world in which we return to its pages now.

Bruce Michelson is the author of Mark Twain on the Loose and Printer’s Devil: Mark Twain and the American Publishing Revolution, as well as many articles and book chapters about Mark Twain and other writers. He is Professor Emeritus of American Literature at the University of Illinois, and a past president of the Mark Twain Circle of America and The American Humor Studies Association. A Contributing Editor at Studies in American Humor, he is also a Fulbright Ambassador, having received two fellowships from the Fulbright Program. His most recent work includes a translation of George Clemenceau’s writings on Claude Monet and the fine arts, and A Mark Twain Quartet, four one-act comedies about the family life of Sam Clemens.
Saturday, October 2 at Quarry Farm

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.  Breakfast

9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.  Session One: Comparative Authors  
**Moderator:** Ben Click  
Dwayne Eutsey, “‘Thick as Thieves’: Mark Twain and the West’s Spiritual Frontiers”  
B. Scott Holmes, “Roughing It from Missouri to Nevada Territory, the Journeys of Samuel L. Clemens and Richard F. Burton”  
Jeanne Campbell Reesman, “The Mountain Meadows Massacre, as Told By Mark Twain and Jack London”  
James E. Caron, “Mark Twain’s Rival Washoe Correspondents: William Wright and J. Ross Browne”

10:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.  Session Two: Competing Contexts  
**Moderator:** Joseph Csicsila  
Todd Nathan Thompson, “WHY WE SHOULD ANNEX”: Reprints and Repercussions of Twain’s New York Tribune Letters on Hawai’i”  
Blake Bronson-Bartlett, “The Wild Traces of Calaveras County in Notebook IV”  
Matt Seybold, “The Mail-Bag Bed of Empire: Roughing It & The Gossamer Network”  
Kerry Driscoll, “Mark Twain’s Masculinist Fantasy of the West”

12:00 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.  Lunch

1:00 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.  Session Three: Contemporary Influences  
**Moderator:** Bruce Michelson  
Christopher Conway, “Postwestern Crossings in Phong Nguyen’s The Adventures of Joe Harper (2016) and Robert Coover’s Huck Out West (2017)”  
Myrial Holbrook, “The Terra Comica Between Mark Twain and Sherman Alexie”

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.  Session Four: Insult, Irony, and Satire  
**Moderator:** Kerry Driscoll  
Sarah Fredericks, “Thumbing the Nose and Maligning the Turnip: Mark Twain’ Western Rhetoric of Insults”  
Alex Trimble Young, “‘The Vigorous New Vernacular:’ The ‘Goshoot’ Episode and the Politics of Irony in Roughing It”  
Andrew Hebard, “Corruption and Reform in Mark Twain’s West”

3:15 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  Session Five: Contextualizing Landscapes  
**Moderator:** Lawrence Howe  
James Wharton Leonard, “Mark Twain’s Ambivalent Encounter with the Western Landscape”  
Jeffrey Melton, “Nature and Mobility in Mark Twain's Roughing It”

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.  Closing Reception  
The gathering will begin on the Porch at Quarry Farm where participants can discuss the day’s events, take in the view of the Chemung River Valley, and enjoy an assortment of refreshments. CMTS staff will also conduct a tour of Quarry Farm for all those interested.

7:00 p.m.  Closing Remarks by Ben Click and Joseph Csicsila, followed by Dinner

Sunday, October 3 at Quarry Farm

8:00 a.m.  Farewell Breakfast
Blake Bronson-Bartlett, Mark Twain Papers and Project, University of California, Berkeley
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“The Wild Traces of Calaveras County in ‘Notebook IV’”

I propose a reading of “Notebook IV,” a record of Clemens’s months in Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties, California in early 1865. I demonstrate how the specific social and cultural milieu at Angel’s Camp and Jackass Hill shaped his later writings by forcing him to take advantage of the affordances of portable notebooks and pencils, which allowed him to write in the moment, without the encumbrances of quill and inkpot, and on the go. In the anarchic graphite scribbles of “Notebook IV,” we see Clemens learning to transcribe events and ideas as they emerged in real time, to compile abbreviated versions of campfire tales, and to innovate the blend of journalism, memoir, and proto-ethnography characteristic of his regionalist and digressive prose works. I conclude with a preview of Mark Twain Project Online’s prototype of Clemens’s notebooks, complete with images, transcriptions, and annotations, to illustrate how manuscripts may inform how we read Twain in the context of American material culture.

Blake Bronson-Bartlett is associate editor at the Mark Twain Papers and Project, UC, Berkeley. Previously, he taught American literature at Technical University of Dortmund and University of Iowa. His research has appeared in Walt Whitman Quarterly Review, ESQ, J19, Poe Studies, American Literature, and Mark Twain Annual. Other projects include his co-translation (with Robert Fernandez) of the poems and manuscripts of Stéphane Mallarmé (2015) and a digital resource on Poe editor Thomas Ollive Mabbott, Mabbott Poe (mabbottpoe.org).
“Mark Twain’s Rival Washoe Correspondents: William Wright and J. Ross Browne”

As a contribution to a literary portrait of Nevada that provided some of the background for *Roughing It*, this essay examines two newspaper correspondents who were contemporaries of Sam Clemens to discern similarities and differences in their travel writings: William Wright, who also worked for the *Enterprise*; J. Ross Browne, who traveled to Virginia City to report on the beginning of the Comstock silver strike for *Harper’s Monthly*. Both writers evince the vividness, intimacy, and accurate detail Mark Twain said defined a good correspondent. Though both writers employ comic elements, Browne comes closer to the Mark Twain persona in his willingness to burlesque and satirize.

James E. Caron retired as Professor of English at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, where he taught American literature for thirty-six years. He has published articles on satire, the tall tale, antebellum comic writers, laughter and evolution, Mark Twain, George Washington Harris, Frank Norris, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Faulkner, Charlie Chaplin, Hunter S. Thompson, and Bill Watterson. In addition, he has published *Mark Twain, Unsanctified Newspaper Reporter* (2008) and co-edited a collection of essays on Charlie Chaplin, entitled *Refocusing Chaplin: A Screen Icon in Critical Contexts* (2013). His new book, *The Poetics of Satire: Postmodern Truthiness and the Comic Public Sphere*, was published May 2021 from Penn State University Press. He is the former president of the American Humor Studies Association and senior associate editor of its journal, *Studies in American Humor*.
My presentation examines two twenty-first century literary sequels to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* that are set in the West: Phong Nguyen’s *The Adventures of Joe Harper* (2016) and Robert Coover’s *Huck Out West* (2017). Both of these novels, the first by a major, emergent voice in Asian American literature, and the second by one of the deans of postmodern American fiction, interrogate the canonical stature of Twain’s novels through parody and pastiche, and dramatically reject the exceptionalist mythologies of the American West. Like *My Jim* (2005) by Nancy Rawles, and *Finn* (2008) by Jon Clinch, Nguyen and Coover’s novels reimagine Twain’s characters to expand upon nineteenth-century notions of identity and literary representation. In Nguyen’s case, the literary decentering of Twain’s characters speaks to a postcolonial critique of whiteness and empire, while in Coover’s we find a more grotesque and ludic postmodern sensibility. My paper frames these novels within broader conversations about rethinking exceptionalist and nationalist interpretations of the American West. After Frederick Jackson Turner’s enormously influential “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893), which distilled American historical development into a triumphalist and exceptionalist narrative about the frontier, Herbert Eugene Bolton’s *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (1921) redirected historians to think about American history and the West in more transnational terms. However, Bolton’s romanticism and reductivism ultimately limited the critical reach of his approach. In the 1990s, in the wake of conversations about the need for a “New Western History,” and the impact of works such as Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), studies about the literature and culture of the American West took on a more poststructuralist and postcolonial point of view. This “postwestern” approach redirected conversations toward a more local and less mythological sense of place, immigration and transnationalism, and the uncovering of marginalized experiences and voices. Nguyen’s novel may be read as an “Eastern Western” that reroutes stories about the West toward alternate histories and futures related to the Asian American experience. Coover’s *Huck Out West* uses the grotesque body to wound the Western and the adventurism of Tom Sawyer while applying indigenous folklore to imagine alternate forms of representation and organizing knowledge. Although both novels are iconoclastic, Coover skewers and lampoons all ethnic categories while Nguyen carves out a literary space for imagining, and commemorating, the Asian American experience.

Christopher Conway is Professor of Modern Languages at The University of Texas at Arlington. His publications include the books *Nineteenth-Century Spanish America: A Cultural History* (2015) and *Heroes of the Borderlands: The Western in Mexican Film, Comics, and Music* (2019), as well as the edited volume *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (2010). In the Spring of 2022, the University of Nebraska Press Postwestern Horizons series will be publishing a book coedited by him and Antoinette Sol about global comic book Westerns. Conway is currently reading and writing about American literary Westerns, and American and international Western comics.
“Mark Twain’s Masculinist Fantasy of the West”

In Chapter 57 of *Roughing It*, Mark Twain nostalgically extols his experience of the West in terms that are at once highly idealized and strangely skewed: “It was a wild, free, disorderly, grotesque society! Men—only swarming hosts of stalwart men—nothing juvenile, nothing feminine, visible anywhere!” (392). This description, however memorable, is also blatantly false. According to historian Ronald M. James, analysis of the 1860 federal census for Nevada Territory indicates that “the roots of a family-based community on the Comstock were established early.” Of the 111 women recorded as living in Virginia City and Gold Hill at the time, “83 were living with husbands…and 43 of these were looking after more than 100 children.” Clemens’s cognizance of this fact is reflected in the domestic circumstances of his own brother Orion, who, within a year of their 1861 arrival, was joined in Carson City by his wife Mollie and eight year-old daughter Jennie, as well as in his reporting for the Virginia City Enterprise wherein the presence of women is noted on a regular basis, ranging from his description of the “long trailing dresses” of female dancers “anchored” under the heavy boots of local miners at the 1863 “Sanitary Ball” and effuse praise for “Miss Clapp and Mrs. Cutler,” the capable proprietors of a Carson City school. My paper proposes to critically interrogate both the personal and cultural underpinnings of this omission, examining it both in relation to the doctrine of manifest destiny and 19th-century gender hierarchies.


Kerry Driscoll is an Associate Editor at the Mark Twain Papers and Project (University of California, Berkeley). She is Professor of English, Emerita at the University of St. Joseph (West Hartford, CT). Her publications include *Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous Peoples* (2018); “Race and Ethnicity: Native Americans” in *Mark Twain in Context* (2020); “Mark Twain’s Music Box: Livy, Cosmopolitanism, and the Commodity Aesthetic” in *Cosmopolitan Twain* (2008); and numerous other essays on Mark Twain. She is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Mark Twain House and Museum, a member of the editorial board of *Mark Twain Annual*, and past president of the Mark Twain Circle of America.
“Thick as Thieves’: Mark Twain and the West’s Spiritual Frontiers”

Looking back on his career as a humorist, Mark Twain reflected, “I have always preached…If the humor came of its own accord and uninvited, I have allowed it a place in my sermon, but I was not writing the sermon for the sake of the humor.” This admission seems at odds with Twain’s irreligious reputation. However, when understood within the context of his friendships with eminent liberal ministers on the Western Frontier, it unironically suggests a deeper theological level to his “low” literary calling to “excite the laughter of God’s children.” This paper examines how the prevalent progressive theology of these frontier ministers may have influenced this key aspect of Mark Twain’s literary calling. Among other sources, it will draw from sermons they wrote, Twain’s journalistic writings, and Sandra Sizer Frankiel’s *California’s Spiritual Frontiers* to trace the role these ministers played in Twain’s development as a humorist in the 1860s.

Since completing his master’s thesis on Mark Twain’s religious views at Georgetown University, **Dwayne Eutsey** has established himself as an independent scholar on the subject. He has published numerous articles, lectured at academic conferences and in public venues, and is currently writing a book re-examining Twain’s complicated religious views, *“There is No Humor in Heaven”: Mark Twain and the Religious Liberalism of His Times*. Dwayne is a full-time writer/editor with a non-profit company and lives with his wife and family in Easton, MD. He has also co-authored *The Abide Guide: Living Like Lebowski* (2011), a popular fan book among *Big Lebowski* enthusiasts worldwide.

**Sarah Fredericks**, Auburn University at Montgomery
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“Thumbing the Nose and Maligning the Turnip: Mark Twain’s Western Rhetoric of Insults.”

Mark Twain’s literary experimentation in the West gave rise to his most recognizable narrative voices, tropes, and techniques—including expressions of anger. Twain’s endeavors in the Virginia City *Territorial Enterprise* featured and were fundamentally shaped by invective, especially the insult, a surprisingly robust and flexible form of verbal abuse. Editorial sniping was in vogue, and Twain bandied about slapstick humor and malicious insults alike with surprising regularity. In keeping with prevailing journalistic conventions, Twain engaged in both real and fictitious feuds with personalities at other papers as a matter of pride as well as for the pleasure of his reading public. In his mock rivalry with Clement T. Rice of the *Union*, Twain experimented with good-humored insults and comic abuse. By drawing on classical commonplace or “stock” topics that aligned with nineteenth-century stereotypes about reporters in the West, Twain crafted entertaining insults that had the ring of truth even when their absurdity belied their veracity. In utilizing these loci of invective, Twain explored the power of the grotesque and the shifting boundaries between fact and fiction—a dynamic tension that would later characterize some of his most famous literature. Of course, not all of Twain’s insults were benign. In numerous newspaper pieces, Twain crafted insults to subvert his various targets’ personal and public esteem. From the “Petrified Man” squib that quite literally thumbs the nose at G. T. Sewall, and the racially and sexually charged abuse of various female acquaintances in “How to Cure a Cold” and other articles on fashion and society balls, to his condem-
nations of coroners and undertakers, Twain utilized sarcasm, absurdity, and comic raillery in his insults to malign individuals and groups that he felt had offended him. For Twain, the insult was a rhetorically constructivist form, able to simultaneously entertain one audience while punishing another, exploiting and subverting cultural norms even as it reinforced them. This talk analyzes the multiple rhetorical dimensions of Twain’s varied forms of mock and malicious insults (including scenario, intensity, vehicle, and loci of invective) and considers their lasting influence on his expressions of anger in both his published fiction and private writings.

Sarah Fredericks earned a Ph.D from the University of Arizona and a B.A. and M.A. from Auburn University at Montgomery, where she works as a writing consultant. Her publications on Twain include “Playing at Work and Working at Play in Mark Twain’s Writing,” co-authored with Alan Gribben, in Examining the Power of Children’s Play in Literature (2018); “‘Pow-wows of Cussing’: Profanity and Euphemistic Variants in Huckleberry Finn” in Critical Insights: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (2017); and “The Profane Twain: His Personal and Literary Cursing” in the Mark Twain Journal (2011). She edited Critical Insights: Lord of the Flies (2017). She has published on such various authors as Maya Angelou, Edith Wharton, and Jane Austen and has contributed to volumes on Feminism, LGBTQ literature, and the American novel. She is currently writing a book on Mark Twain’s anger.

Andrew Hebard, Miami University of Ohio
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“Corruption and Reform in Mark Twain’s West”

Much of Mark Twain’s Roughing It is taken up with accounts of legal and bureaucratic institutions that invade the everyday lives of westerners. Despite popular depictions of a lawless and sparsely populated West, the West was, as the historian Richard White has argued, actually the site of a “bureaucratic revolution,” a place where institutions managed and regulated in ways that were unprecedented and at times experimental. Given this context, this paper examines how the West was formative of Twain’s political imaginary and more particularly his writings on corruption that appear in novels like The Gilded Age, and in some of his later satirical essays. Focusing on the tension between romance and realism in his depictions of the West, this paper traces Twain’s relation to 19th-century accounts of corruption that saw corruption as bureaucratic, quotidian, and systemic rather than as criminal and exceptional. Given the way that recent Supreme Court cases like Citizens United have very narrowly defined corruption through the term “quid pro quo,” Twain’s accounts of corruption amidst the emergent institutional forms of the West can help us to recover a much broader conception of the term.

**Myrial Holbrook, Stanford University**
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“The Terra Comica Between Mark Twain and Sherman Alexie”

David Moore in *That Dream Shall Have a Name* (2014) argues that “the biggest joke on America is the survivance of Indians…[it’s] a reversal of America’s originary, foundational, constitutive story of the vanishing Indian.” There is a “terra comica,” he suggests, in the works of many contemporary Native American authors, particularly the works of Sherman Alexie. To my knowledge, there is as yet no comparative study of Twain’s humor and that found in contemporary Native American literature. I propose to put Alexie’s *terra comica* into conversation with Mark Twain’s own, illustrating how they often perpetuate the vanishing Indian myth, while also inflecting it. I will focus primarily on *Roughing It* and *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. Twain is not renowned for his sympathy toward Native Americans, but a reading of his work in conjunction with Alexie’s will perhaps reveal more of the embattled attempt at understanding on Twain’s part, as well as the longstanding significance of humor as both divider and uniter between whites and indigenous peoples.

**Myrial Holbrook** is an English PhD student and Knight-Hennessy Scholar at Stanford University, where she specializes in 19th-century transatlantic literature. As a Marshall Scholar she studied at the University of Cambridge for an MPhil in Education (Critical Approaches to Children’s Literature) and the University of East Anglia for an MA in Creative Writing (Prose Fiction). She graduated from Princeton University with an A.B. in Comparative Literature, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa.
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“Roughing It From Missouri to Nevada Territory, the Journeys of Samuel L. Clemens and Richard F. Burton”

The intention here is to compare and contrast the travel narratives of Samuel L. Clemens and Richard Francis Burton. Both authors provide views of western North America for the period between its initial colonization by “the white man” and its near-total transformation wrought by the coming of railroads. Chapters 1 to 21 of Mark Twain’s *Roughing It* cover Sam and Orion Clemens’ 1861 journey from St. Louis to Carson City. Richard F. Burton’s “The City of the Saints” tells of his 1860 journey along much the same route. Mark Twain’s narrative is, for the most part, fanciful anecdotes and tall tales strung along a chronology provided by Orion’s sparse notes. Burton provides detailed narrative of physical and cultural geography as well as his own anecdotes from the journey. The two narratives, except for a few significant points, compliment each other. Important exceptions occur in regards to North American Natives and Mormons.

B. Scott Holmes is Mark Twain aficionado and literary dilettante. He has degrees in Geography from California State University, Northridge. He was a professional cartographer/remote sensing analyst for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He was also a database application programmer and web site developer. His involvement with Mark Twain is not “professional” but entirely for personal satisfaction and sharing with interested others. This includes the creation of several hundred YouTube videos with narrations from the works of Mark Twain, and the development of the web site “Twain’s Geography”.

James Wharton Leonard, The Citadel
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“Mark Twain’s Ambivalent Encounter with the Western Landscape”

When Mark Twain sets out on his journey west in chapter 1 of *Roughing It*, he is looking forward to seeing Indians and such creatures as buffalo, prairie dogs, and antelopes; traveling through (or near) magnificent plains, deserts, and mountains; and at the end of the journey, gathering bucketfuls of easily obtainable gold and silver nuggets. What he carries with him, however—aside from some clothing, his Smith & Wesson seven-shooter, Orion’s Colt revolver, and an unabridged dictionary (belonging to Orion)—are some pretty standard preconceptions about the West and its inhabitants. His expectations for the literal landscape “pan out” well enough (unlike the anticipated gold and silver). One notable feature of his narrative, in fact, is the frequent and notably well-crafted rhapsodizing on the beauty and grandeur of the West’s natural features. Twain’s ideological landscape, on the other hand, shows vividly in his linking of scavenging birds, coyotes (which he refers to as “an Allegory of Want”), and the Goshoot Indians (whom he lumps with “all other Indians” as “prideless beggars”) In my paper/essay, I’ll explore the contrast between his respect for the West-as-nature and his sorting of human and animal life according to usefulness and thus to their role in Manifest Destiny and colonial aspirations in general.
James Wharton Leonard received his PhD from Tufts University in the Fall of 2017 with a specialty in 19th/20th American Literature, and is currently an Instructor of English at The Citadel. His dissertation and current book project examines relationships between taxonomic discourse and American national identity and focuses on the works of Mark Twain, Djuna Barnes, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Cormac McCarthy. He has published and/or presented on Twain, McCarthy, Monica Ali, John Updike, Malcolm Lowry, D. H. Lawrence, and James Joyce.

Jeffrey Melton, University of Alabama
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“Nature and Mobility in Mark Twain’s Roughing It”

This presentation examines Twain’s nature imagery in *Roughing It* as tied to sensibilities popular in mid-nineteenth-century America. It places Twain’s narrative experiences in conjunction with tropes of landscape description tied to Hudson River aesthetics and touristic assumptions. The paper isolates several episodes within the narrative that exploit Twain’s direct interactions with the natural environment to illustrate this context. In particular, it offers a more in-depth look at the overland journey and Twain’s other perambulations, especially around Lake Tahoe, as key components of his overall response to the West. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate not only how Twain *frames* nature but also how he moves within the landscape (by foot, horse, boat, stagecoach, etc.). Twain’s interactions with nature, as he presents them to readers, are rarely static evocations of beauty or of the sublime; rather, he is often keenly attentive to dynamic movements suggested by the complex interactions between the natural environment and human aspirations. Twain deftly evokes the vitality of nature by emphasizing movement as its definitive characteristic. Likewise, mobility is the key to human expression. Although he comically asserts in the prefatory that *Roughing It* derives from “variegated vagabondizing,” the narrative suggests a more nuanced immersion into the American West built upon the persistent desire to move.

Jeffrey Melton is Professor of American Studies at the University of Alabama. He is author of *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism: The Tide of a Great Popular Movement* (2002) and co-editor of *Mark Twain on the Move: A Travel Reader* (2009). He has published articles on Mark Twain, humor, and travel writing in *Studies in American Humor*, *South Atlantic Review*, *Studies in Travel Writing*, and the *Mark Twain Journal*, among others. He has contributed essays to *Mark Twain in Context, Mark Twain’s Geographical Imagination*, and *A Companion to Mark Twain*. He is past President of the American Humor Studies Association and co-founder of the Society for American Travel Writing.

Jeanne Campbell Reesman, University of Texas at San Antonio
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“The Mountain Meadows Massacre as Told by Mark Twain and Jack London.”

The events of September 11, 1857, known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre, were infamous and have remained a source of sadness and regret to the present day. That a Mormon “militia” were allied with and perhaps disguised as Paiute Indians is no longer disputed, but from whence exactly the decision came to murder 120 California-bound emigrants from Arkansas who were passing through Utah Territory, the Fancher-Baker par-
ty, and kidnap 17 small children, is still not completely clear. Did John D. Lee and his fellows act on their own or did orders come down from the church hierarchy, even from Brigham Young himself? However, history continues to portray that deadly day, it is an interesting and not often remarked upon fact that unlike the vast majority of Americans at the time, the two leading fiction writers of the day (also two of the most famous and influential American celebrities), Mark Twain and Jack London, offered in their literary works thoughtful and nuanced accounts not only of the massacred settlers but also, surprisingly for the time, of their assailants and of Mormonism in general. I propose to explore in my lecture how Twain in *Roughing It* (1872) and London in *The Star Rover* (1915) present the victims of the massacre and the situation of Mormons in America from both sides. According to widely recognized Mormon sources there are some interesting contradictions to consider.

Jeanne Campbell Reesman is Professor of English and Jack and Laura Richmond Endowed Faculty Fellow in American Literature, University of Texas at San Antonio, where she has served since 1986. She is former Division Director of English, Classics, Philosophy & Communication and former Graduate Dean as well as Director of the PhD in English with emphasis in Latinx Studies, now a 20-year-old award-winning program. She is devoted to her diverse and exciting students and has taught numerous Twain courses or comparative courses with another author and Twain. In Spring 2021 she taught a new course, “Reading Mark Twain Post-Black Lives Matter.” She has been the recipient of two U.S. Fulbright Professorships, in Thessaloniki, Greece, and Aix-en-Provence, France. Reesman edited Vol. C. 7th and 8th edition of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* and is a co-author of Oxford’s 6th edition of *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. She is the author of numerous books on American literature including *Jack London, Photographer* (2010) and *Jack London’s Racial Lives* (2009), as well as a number of articles on Twain. Many of these essays reflect her book in-progress, *Mark Twain Vs. God: The Story of a Relationship*.

Matt Seybold, Elmira College
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“The Mail-Bag Bed of Empire: *Roughing It* & The Gossamer Network”

Among the most famous scenes in Mark Twain’s *Roughing It* is his account of riding through Western Nebraska atop a makeshift bed of mail-bags. His stagecoach was overloaded with correspondence, catalogs, packages, and periodicals headed to the newly incorporated Colorado Territory and what Cameron Blevins characterizes as the second artillery line of the rapidly-expanding U.S. postal service. As Blevins outlines, the “sprawling, fast-moving, and ephemeral” infrastructure of the U.S. Post formed the largest communications network in the world up to that point. This network was integral to the settler colonial project and inextricable from the military and commercial endeavors which enabled it.

This paper follows Twain’s travels through the “gossamer network,” a complex and rapidly-changing web of public investment and private enterprise. Banks, brokerages, and police forces were built on the back of the gossamer network. Via his engagement with it, Twain learned to regard graft and government capture as endemic to American expansionist politics. He would sustain an ambivalent relationship with the postal service for the remainder of his life, dependent upon it for his livelihood, but vehemently critiquing it nevertheless. Blevins’s new book, Paper Trails (2021) and the associated Digital Humanities project, GossamerNetwork.com, provoke us to
think about communications networks as imperative to empire. This paper thus frames Twain’s early encounters with the mail as formative lessons on American imperialism.

Matt Seybold is Associate Professor of American Literature & Mark Twain Studies at Elmira College, as well as scholar-in-residence at the Center For Mark Twain Studies, editor of MarkTwainStudies.org, and host of The American Vandal Podcast. He also co-edited the Routledge Companion To Literature & Economics (2018) and a 2019 special issue of American Literary History on “Economics and American Literary Studies in the New Gilded Age.” Other recent work on Twain appears in American Literary Realism, Los Angeles Review of Books, Mark Twain Annual, and at MarkTwainStudies.org.

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“WHY WE SHOULD ANNEX’: Reprints and Repercussions of Twain’s New York Tribune Letters 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, who had gained nationwide fame based on his popular comic lecture, “Or Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands,” which he delivered across the US and abroad between 1866-1873. Between January and March of 1873 at least 56 newspapers and magazines reprinted excerpts of Twain’s Tribune letters. In my talk I will consider how these reprinted excerpts decontextualize or mischaracterize Twain’s insights as well as what they reveal about the American reading public’s views of Twain as both a comedian and as a serious expert on 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* (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.*

Alex Trimble Young, *Arizona State University*
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“‘The Vigorous New Vernacular:’ The ‘Goshoot’ Episode and the Politics of Irony in *Roughing It*”

In this paper, I will argue that Twain’s notorious representation of the Goshutes in *Roughing It* is a complex satire directed at both the Indians he encounters and those among his white audience who attribute the Indians’ abjection to essential racial traits. This satire does not rescue the passage from an irredeemable racial logic, but it does mark Twain’s thinking on race as substantially different from those among his audience who would have believed that the genocide of the Indians was scientifically justified. The many critical readings of this episode cite it only partially, excising or dismissing the final humorous parabasis in which Twain compares the Goshutes to the white employees on the employees of the Baltimore and Washington Railroad Company. Exploring Twain’s sources, I argue that this parabasis tinges the entire episode – including the racist anthropological catalog and the overdetermined pun on the invitation to genocide present in Twain’s spelling of “Goshoot” – with irony. The leveling effect of this irony presages a shift in the US’s settler colonial “logic of elimination” from frontier homicide to assimilationism, and the subsequent modes of liberal thought (most notably Richard Rorty’s) that imagine irony as a necessary mode of subjectivity for a citizen in a pluralist democracy.

Alex Trimble Young is an Honors Faculty Fellow at Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University. He received his PhD in English at the University of Southern California in 2015. His recent work on transnational settler colonialism and the culture of the US West can be found in journals including *History of the Present, Theory & Event, Social Text,* and *Western American Literature.* His first monograph, *The Frontiers of Dissent: the Settler Colonial Imaginary in US Literature after 1945* is forthcoming from the University of Nebraska Press.
“The Miner’s Dream.” Illustration from Roughing It by Mark Twain, Fontispiece (1872)
Established in 1989, the Center for Mark Twain Studies “International Conference on the State of Mark Twain Studies” is the oldest and largest gathering devoted to all things Twain. During times so turbulent and uncertain as to require that the quadrennial conference on the State of Mark Twain Studies be postponed by a year, the theme of change and growth “speaks to our condition,” as the Quakers say.

We encourage you to begin pondering ideas that might grow and germinate into a proposal for the conference. We invite papers on any aspect of Mark Twain’s work and legacy, but have a particular interest in the questions listed below:

- How might Twain scholarship change in the future?
- What are the dynamics of growth and change in Twain’s ideas, moral attitudes, literary aesthetics, etc.
- What lessons about coping with change can Mark Twain teach us?
- How did changing circumstances in Twain’s life shape changes in his thinking and writing?
- Why and how do Twain’s characters grow or change?
- How does travel—in the U.S. and abroad—change Samuel Clemens and the works of Mark Twain?
- How might we look at Mark Twain and his era in new ways?
- How does our understanding of Samuel Clemens and Mark Twain change when scholars consider disease, financial panic, and cultural upheaval?
- How can or should our teaching of Mark Twain and his time change?
- What impact did the radically shifting racial structures in the U.S. have on Mark Twain?
- How can the study of Mark Twain and his era help scholars and students understand systemic racism?
- How might Mark Twain fit into an anti-racist pedagogy?
- How has America’s response to Mark Twain changed over time?
- How have responses to Mark Twain around the world changed over time?
- How do we grow and change as scholars? As teachers?
- What previously neglected texts by Twain speak to us today and deserve to be reconsidered?
- What ideas that we had earlier would we now change or reject?

Developed abstracts and panel proposals (700 words) should be sent as an electronic attachment to Joseph Lemak at jlemak@elmira.edu by Friday, January 7, 2022. Include a cover letter containing your contact information (name, mailing address, etc.) in the body of the email. Final papers must be suitable for a 20-minute presentation. Panels must be between 75-90 minutes. Proposals will be reviewed anonymously by members of the conference planning committee.

**Important Dates and Deadlines**

- Paper and panel proposal deadline – Friday, January 7, 2022
- Decisions deadline – Friday, February 26, 2022
- Conference registration deadline – Friday, July 15, 2022
- Elmira 2022 Conference – Thursday, August 4 to Sunday, August 7, 2022
Quarry Farm Fellowships are open to any scholar working in any field related to Mark Twain Studies at any career stage. This is a unique opportunity to work on academic or creative projects at Quarry Farm, Mark Twain’s summer retreat where he penned *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and other iconic works.

Ten Quarry Farm Fellowships will be offered in 2020:
- Three one-month residencies, including housing at Quarry Farm and a $1500 honorarium for each residency
- Six two-week residencies, including housing at Quarry Farm and a $1000 honorarium for each residency
- At least one month-long and two two-week fellowships will be reserved for graduate students, contingent faculty, and faculty three or fewer years removed from completion of their Ph.D.
- At least one fellowship will be reserved for writers and artists working on creative projects

Applications are due: November 30, 2021
Visit: www.marktwainstudies.com for more information
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