

May 10, 2023  
*Trouble Begins*

CENTER FOR MARK TWAIN STUDIES

Steve Courtney

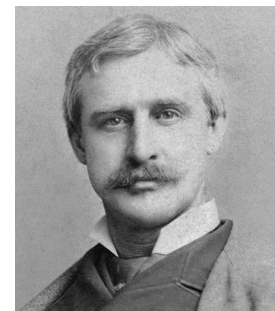
"Somewhere Between Where You Live and Where I Live  
 is the Place Where We Ought to Live"

**The Friendship Between the Revs.  
 Thomas K. Beecher and Joseph H. Twichell**

Thomas K. Beecher of Elmira was the outspoken 19th-century minister who turned his Park Congregational church into a force in the community, rejected creeds, and espoused a populist form of politics. The Rev. Joseph Hopkins Twichell of Hartford, Connecticut, ministered to a gilt-edged church, was friend and traveling companion to Mark Twain, and remained of a conservative and relatively placid frame of mind throughout his life. The two men co-officiated at Samuel and Livy Clemens's wedding and occasionally swapped pulpits. They remained close despite differences. Their frank and warm relationship provides a fascinating tale and casts light on the social background of Mark Twain's world.



Thomas K. Beecher



Joseph H. Twichell

*Steve Courtney* is the author of *Joseph Hopkins Twichell: The Life and Times of Mark Twain's Closest Friend* (Georgia, 2008), winner of the Connecticut Book Award; *'The Loveliest Home That Ever Was': The Story of the Mark Twain House in Hartford* (Dover, 2011); and *Mark Twain's Hartford* (Arcadia, 2016), among other works. He is co-editor, with Peter Messent of the University of Nottingham and Harold K. Bush of St. Louis University, of *The Mark Twain-Joseph Hopkins Twichell Letters* (Georgia, 2017, paperback edition published 2020). He has been a journalist for forty years, much of that time at *The Hartford Courant*, and has served as both publicist and curatorial project coordinator at The Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford, Connecticut.

7:00 pm, Quarry Farm Barn  
 131 Crane Rd, Elmira NY 14901



*Trouble Begins Lectures*  
 are Free and Open to the Public



(detail) *Laura's Visit to the Bookstore*  
 from *The Gilded Age* (Chapter 36)

Between Mark Twain and Bella Z. Spencer:  
**Satire and Sentiment on the Subscription Book Market**

Ask a literary critic about the American subscription book market, and almost inevitably the conversation will turn to one figure: Mark Twain. Twain was both a subscription bookselling wunderkind, selling more than eighty-thousand copies of 1869's *The Innocents Abroad* in just a year and a half through this method, and a favorite of the literary establishment, who considered him an exception to the low-quality offerings they believed typified the subscription business. Even so, the emphasis on a single author has resulted in a neglect of figures besides Twain who operated within it. One such figure is Bella Zilpha Spencer, whose 1866 novel *Tried and True, or Love and Loyalty: A Story of the Great Rebellion* pre-dates Mark Twain and Charles Dudley's Warner's *The Gilded Age* – long considered the first novel sold by subscription – by seven years. In putting Spencer's work, and her novel's life on the subscription market, in conversation with Twain's, we expand our understanding of fiction's relationship to this pervasive and diverse system of distribution.

*Jessica Jordan* is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Stanford University. She is currently at work on her dissertation, *Anxieties of Abundance: Book and Body in America's Gilded Age*, which explores how the late nineteenth century "book flood" heightened the already-troubled sense that books were people with minds (and bodies) of their own. Her work on women in the subscription bookselling trade has been honored with a California Young Book Collector's Prize and she is a 2022-2023 Fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center.

Made possible through the generous support of **The Mark Twain Foundation** and **Katherine Roehlke**

7pm  
 May 14

7 pm  
May 24

# Ann M. Ryan

## The Dangers of Loving Mark Twain

Teaching the life and works of Mark Twain has become an increasingly fraught endeavor, complicated by any number of political and cultural forces. There are those who insist that Twain was a committed racial progressive and that any suggestion otherwise is simply the by-product of "cancel culture." At the other extreme are those who point to Twain's love of racial caricature and racist vocabulary and then relegate Twain to the literary dustbin, just one more white man whose privileges have expired. This talk explores a pedagogy that may exist somewhere between these extremes of misreading the author and misreading his works. We'll discuss the relevance of Mark Twain at a moment when all sorts of cultural icons--from Flannery O'Connor to Dr. Seuss--are being questioned by virtue of their racial politics, at the same time that the entire field of African American studies is being attacked and censored. There may be a place for Twain in an objective, honest exploration of race and racism (two separate categories) in American culture. If Twain has any relevance in a 21st century classroom, however, we have to end our love affair with "St. Mark"--the white hero in the white suit--and we must embrace the somewhat grittier, more complicated human being that was Samuel Clemens.



From LIFE magazine, February 28, 1901

*Ann M. Ryan* is Professor of American Literature at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York. She is the past president of the Mark Twain Circle, the former editor of *The Mark Twain Annual*, and co-editor of *Cosmopolitan Twain*. Her research focuses primarily on issues of race and racism in Mark Twain's life, his writings, and the culture that produced him. She is completing a book that explores all of the above entitled *The Ghosts of Mark Twain*.

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"Poet Lariat" from *The Innocents Abroad* (Chapter 10)

# Lawrence Howe

## Mark Twain, Property, and Poetry

Mark Twain is famous for writing prose—sketches, tales, and novels—not poetry. However, early in his career, he did at times turn his pen to verse satirically. The topic that often inspired these occasional poetic forays was property. A close reading of several neglected poems, such as "My Ranch," which appeared in the aptly titled sketch "Real Estate versus Imaginary Possessions, Poetically Considered" (1865); "A Story of a Gallant Deed," embedded in a sketch titled "A Memory" (1870); and a couple of occasional poems about his Hartford mansion reveals Twain's humorous experiments in this highly structured and compressed form of writing and connects to what he understood about the difficulties of ownership and inherent problems in the language by which property is claimed and validated.

Unlike Sam Clemens, who embraced the American ethos of ownership, Mark Twain reveals a skepticism about the language of ownership.

*Lawrence Howe* is Professor emeritus of English and Film Studies at Roosevelt University. His published work includes *Mark Twain and the Novel: The Double-Cross of Authority*, and with Harry Wonham, *Mark Twain and Money: Language, Capital, and Culture*, and other articles, many of which focus on Mark Twain and Gilded Age economics. He is a former president of the Mark Twain Circle of America and a member of the Strategic Planning Committee of the Center for Mark Twain Studies.

Made possible through the generous support of **The Mark Twain Foundation** and **Katherine Roehlke**

7 pm  
May 31