



# Mark Twain

IN 2010

by Bonnie Miller

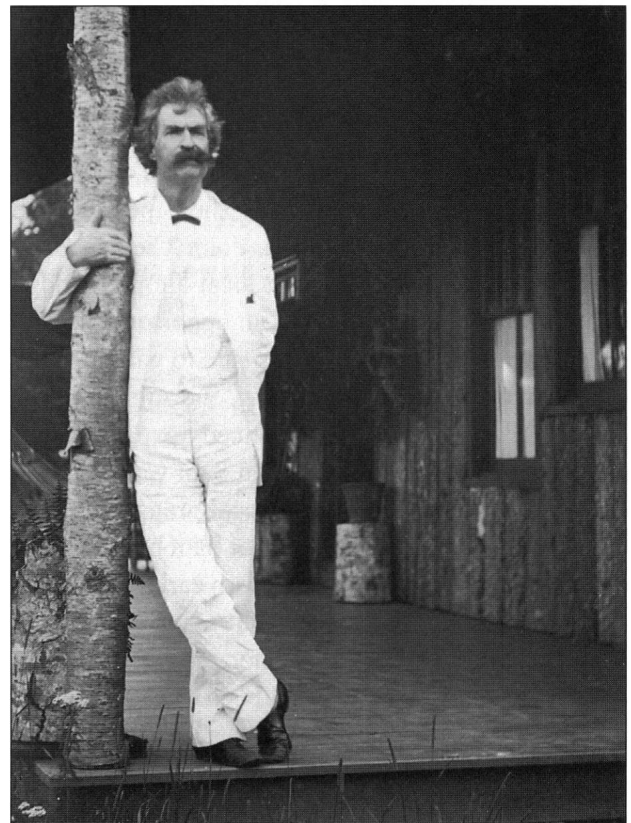
The year 2010 marks several reasons for us to remember Mark Twain. It is the 175th anniversary of his birth, the 100th anniversary of his death, the 145th anniversary of the publication of the jumping frog story, and the 125th anniversary of the publication of his book *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

To all of this ballyhoo, Twain would have said:

*"What ought to be done to the man who invented the celebrating of anniversaries? Mere killing would be too light. Anniversaries are very well up to a certain point."*

Perhaps the jumping frog story's 145th anniversary doesn't have such distinction with the number, but it is always worth taking a second look at it, especially in our neighborhood. There are several things afoot this year that Angels Camp and the Mother Lode are to be proud of, and residents should be sure to visit.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens came from humble beginnings, and his fame never outgrew that



upbringing. He scratched his way to fortune, lost it and won it again many times over, but never forgot what it was like to live in poverty and shame.

Let us take another look at the wit and wisdom of Mark Twain. Every school child knows the legend of the young boy from the south, Samuel Clemens, who grew up on the banks of the Mississippi. Those childhood experiences became the basis for the great American classics, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. But before all of that, Clemens was just a young newspaper reporter who made his way west to seek his fortune, like so many young men of his day. One hundred years after his passing, he is still as viable as he was then. He was a most unique man.

In the small town with the big sounding name of Florida, Missouri, Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born on November 30, 1835 while Halley's Comet blazed in the night sky. He was born two months early to John Marshall and Jane Lampton Clemens, the sixth of seven children. The boy was named Samuel for his paternal grandfather, and Langhorne for an old friend of his father's. Florida had 100 inhabitants at the time, and Sam's birth increased the population by one percent, a greater achievement than most men could claim about their own hometowns, he would later recall.

When Sam was four the family moved fifty miles to the larger town of Hannibal, Missouri where they hoped to improve their poverty-like living conditions. They didn't. John Clemens was always scraping to get by as a local attorney, judge and justice of the peace when an opportunity to run for County Clerk arose. He was sure to win the election, but while out campaigning one night he was caught in a storm and succumbed to pneumonia. John Clemens passed away when Sam was only ten, leaving Jane widowed with four children.

His mother was surprised that Sam had survived early childhood. Besides being born early, he seemed destined to get into trouble from a young age. He would pull pranks such as memorize bible verses so as to convince her that he had been to church when he hadn't.

When Clemens looked back, he recalled that he loved growing up in Hannibal, despite the poverty.



He loved the freedom afforded children. He loved living alongside a thriving river, although he recalled being pulled from the water at least nine times "in a substantially drowned condition." His mother scoffed it away, explaining "People who are born to be hanged are safe in the water."

The Clemens family owned a slave but Sam didn't realize it. When she had to be sold he cried, because he had thought she was one of the family. He recalled seeing slaves in the town square to be sold, and always remembered they were the saddest, sorriest people he ever saw. These impressions from his youth stayed with him for the rest of his life and provided the vivid substance of his literature.

By the time Sam reached the age of thirteen, the family financial situation was dire. Jane apprenticed Sam at a printer's shop, effectively indenturing him for wages for the family to live on. His formal schooling was terminated.

### *Life Presses On*

Hannibal, the town along the Mississippi, had grown to greater than 3000 people while young Sam grew up there. When he was seventeen he had become highly skilled at the printing business. He had continued to read books on his own, and when the editor was out of town he would fill in writing a few items to fill the spaces. He left Hannibal to join his older brother Orion who was also in the newspaper printing business. Although he continued to dabble in writing pieces in Orion's paper, his efforts were not appreciated. Sam tended to poke fun at people who took life too seriously, while Orion felt Sam didn't take things seriously enough. In truth, Sam was an excellent and tidy typesetter. He was bored with his work and not challenged.

Orion's newspaper struggled as much as life at home in Hannibal had been a struggle. Sam bounced around working as a printer and correspondent in St. Louis, New York City, Cincinnati and Philadelphia as well as for Orion's struggling paper. While working in the larger cities Sam attempted to further his education by visiting the public libraries. His membership in a printers' union gained him access to libraries. He felt he had access to wider sources of material than he would have had he stayed in a traditional school.

*"It is noble to teach oneself, but still nobler to teach others—and less trouble."*

At the age of 21 Sam was tired of being a typesetter and occasional correspondent and was ready to move on in life. He boarded a river steamship in February of 1857, one of the almost 1000 steamships on the river at that time. He intended to sail to Brazil for the purpose of trading profitably in Coca plants. While on the ship he was reminded of a childhood ambition to be a riverboat pilot—a glamorous well paying job. Many of his childhood friends had realized this dream and were successful steamboat pilots. He abandoned his Brazilian quest and apprenticed himself to a riverboat pilot who agreed to take him on in the training position of cub-pilot.

Sam thoroughly enjoyed the riverboat life. He envisioned himself living out his days sailing up and down the mighty Mississippi, knowing every twist and turn of its 1200 mile course by heart, and drawing the high wages of \$250 per month. It was at this time in his life that he began to pay special attention to his clothing and appearance, although he did not start wearing his trademark white suits until after 1904. He had inherited a full head of red hair from his mother, as well as her sunny disposition, although only three of her children would live to see adulthood.

Sam talked his younger brother Henry into joining him as a river pilot, and they agreed to meet at a certain location, but fate intervened. Henry was killed in a boiler explosion in June of 1858, and Sam never forgave himself for getting his brother into the mess in the first place.

Sam did obtain his license the following year, in April of 1859, and began piloting his own boat. In his career he piloted six different boats. He loved his job, and he was finally in a position to send real money home to help his mother. He took particular satisfaction in knowing that he earned as much

money as the Vice President of the United States. He enjoyed his job for three years until fate intervened again and the Civil War broke out in April of 1861, stopping all commercial traffic on the river. Sam dutifully went home and joined the local militia.

Sam didn't really care for politics or fighting, and only joined the Hannibal Militia out of a sense of duty. Since Missouri was a Confederate State, it had no organized military, so all militias were local affairs. He claimed that they went out to the woods and marched around for about two weeks. They didn't even have any uniforms. But when talk came around to actual fighting, he "skedaddled." That was the end of his military career.

Meanwhile, despite Sam's abhorrence for politics, his brother Orion was a Union abolitionist. Orion had obtained an appointment as the new Secretary to the Governor of the Nevada Territory. Sam didn't want to have anything to do with the war and begged his brother to take him along, even



**Press room of the Territorial Enterprise newspaper in Virginia City, Nevada.**

*Photo by Bonnie Miller, September 2010.*



**The desk that Mark Twain used at the Territorial Enterprise. The desk was disassembled and displayed at the San Francisco World's Fair.**

*Photo by Bonnie Miller, September 2010.*

offering to pay both their \$150 stage tickets. Orion agreed, and off they went. The rugged two week stage ride across the country inspired some of his later writings, *Roughing It*. The Clemens brothers went west instead of to war.

### ***Go West***

Sam's newfound wealth from his pilot's job was quickly gone. He tried his hand at gold mining but found the work difficult, tedious, and not very rewarding. By 1862 he was destitute again. He decided to try for a "regular" job, in journalism, for a reliable income. This cycle of prosperity and near poverty became a pattern in his life ever after.

The newspaper in Virginia City, Nevada, the *Territorial Enterprise* decided to hire Sam when they learned that he had penned several humorous letters under the pseudonym "Josh". The editor Joseph Goodman and Sam got along, and Goodman afforded Sam many leniencies in his writings. On

his first day of work at the *Territorial Enterprise*, he met the famous journalist Dan DeQuille, of whom he would develop a fond friendship. DeQuille gave him some friendly advice: "Get the facts first, then you can distort them as much as you like." Another fellow he met at the *Enterprise* was a man named Steve Gillis, whose acquaintance would ultimately change his life.

While reporting for the *Territorial Enterprise*, he reported on anything from silver strikes, local weddings, small pox outbreaks, fires and firemen's balls, and he had a local column which reported legislative proceedings, social events, and a shipment of salt in 1863 via camels from Walker River. While reporting in the Owens River Valley in 1865 he witnessed some disagreeable military actions against the native Indian population.

It was the newspaper style of the times to fill the columns, and not necessarily with the truth, so Sam had a lot of leeway to exercise his comic writing style. He could cover, or even create, burlesque pieces, satires, and even hoaxes. Sam loved to twist words

and jerk the stories around for amusement, and he was forever amused at the gullibility of people.

The year 1863 is the first known record where the byline "Mark Twain" appeared. That writer was a distinctly different persona than Sam Clemens. The Twain writer was for comic writing; he was unpredictable. Mark Twain could be a drunkard, he may be gullible, innocent, a fool, etc. The reader never knew when the joke would come, or who the joke was to be played upon. Twain may have been the writer, and Clemens the man behind that person, or interchangeably.

The name Mark Twain has always been believed to have come from the call of the depth finding on a riverboat. A mark of two (twain) fathoms is the full depth necessary for the steamboat to pass without running into obstruction or running aground. Clemens himself explained in his story *Life on the Mississippi* that he lifted the name from a fellow boat captain who abbreviated notes

from his ship's log. Recently Twain scholars have suggested another source for the name came from Clemens' running a bar tab at a saloon in Virginia City. All of these versions have their own appeal and romance.

His first hoax was about a petrified man; it made fun of an incompetent coroner, but appealed to a budding national interest in science and a strange zeal for "petrification." The desert provided the right atmosphere for something to be petrified. On 4 October, 1862, Mark Twain reported on the finding of a petrified man with a wooden leg. The description of the location is very exact, and very wrong. He figured that anyone remotely familiar with the area would recognize the mistake. Secondly, the position of the petrified man, should one pay attention to the great detail in the writing, clearly shows that the man is frozen in the position of thumbing his nose at the world. Twain did not regret his newspaper piece, and it did serve to embarrass the local coroner.

His second hoax was a sensational murder that proved to be a little too believable. He described a sensational story of a man who galloped into town,

bloodied from the murder of his family while baring the slash of his own knife across his throat from ear to ear. He allegedly carried the warm, bloody scalp of his wife, screaming about his own dead children at home. Such tales were believable, as pioneers were known to crack under the pressures of frontier life. Yet the man in question was found to be living, and so was his family. The following day Clemens merely printed the correction, "I take it all back." Such writings may seem preposterous today, but they did sell papers.

Another situation that did not turn out so well was when he got into a poison pen campaign with the editor of a competitive newspaper. As the words escalated, Twain jokingly challenged the other editor to a duel. He fully expected it to be declined as dueling was forbidden by law. To his surprise the challenge was accepted, and Clemens found himself having to leave Nevada as a fugitive.

Mark Twain relocated to the more civil city of San Francisco. His humorous letters had preceded him and he had a reputation among newspapers of the west. He soon landed other employment but again found himself at odds with political figures.



Jim Gillis' cabin on Jackass Hill in 1895. Gillis is seated with his legs crossed.

His reporting of corruption and graft in the fire and police departments was not appreciated. He witnessed many incidents of harassment toward the Chinese population. When he wrote of mob violence toward the Chinese he was dismayed that his own editors would not print about it.

### *A Cold, Wet Fortuitous Winter*

Clemens had bailed his *Territorial Enterprise* colleague Steve Gillis out of jail one night in San Francisco after Gillis got in a fight with a bartender. Later he met Gillis' older brother Jim. Not anxious to come up with the \$500 bail, Clemens set out with the older Gillis brother to escape the San Francisco situation. Jim Gillis had built a cabin on Jackass Hill near Tuttletown in Tuolumne County, and that's where they headed. Later they were joined by Jim's brothers Steve and William, and another miner Don Stoker. The Gillis brothers, Stoker and Clemens became fast friends, a friendship that Clemens maintained for the rest of his life.

(The Gillis family was from Georgia. In addition to the three boys, their parents lived in San Francisco. Occasionally the boys would go to the city to visit.)

Jim held a degree from the Botanic-Medical College of Tennessee which trained him in herbal medicine. He was considered a naturalist before the term naturalist existed. Dan DeQuille regarded Jim Gillis as the "Thoreau of the Sierras." Jim was extremely well read in English, Greek and Latin. In later years Clemens called his old friend an "old philosopher."

The winter of 1864 and 1865 proved to be miserably wet, often trapping the miners inside on Jackass Hill for days at a time. Fortunately for the rest of us, they got to telling stories amongst themselves. Jim Gillis was a lively, amusing story teller, and Don Stoker was the model for Twain's character Tom Quartz in *Roughing It*. Clemens

wrote down many of the humorous sketches that he heard throughout that cold, wet winter.

*"January 23rd, 1865. Rainy, stormy.  
Beans and Dishwater for breakfast...  
Dishwater & beans for dinner, & both  
articles warmed over for supper.  
January 24th. Rained all day  
—meals as before.  
January 25th. Same as above."*

Some days Clemens ventured out of Gillis' cabin and made his way to Angels Camp. It is believed that he had a sweetheart in that town. He certainly believed

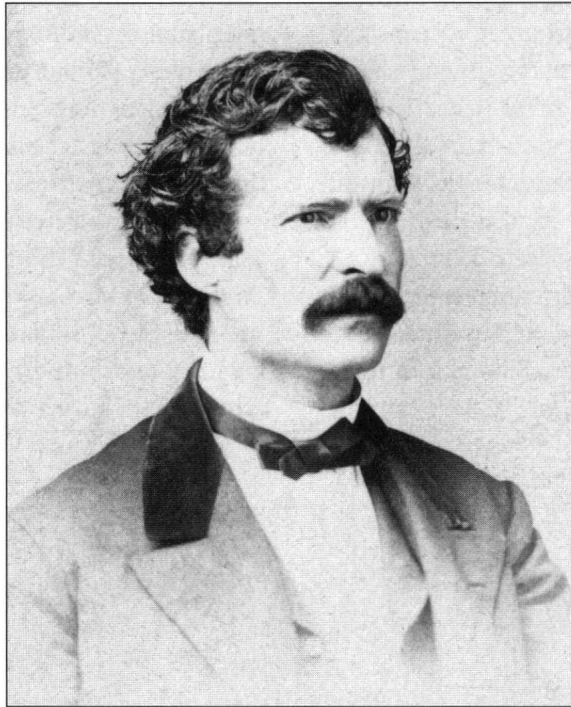
that he would be around long enough to consider the area home for a while. Clemens was a member of the Angels Masons, Bear Mountain Lodge No 76. The lodge minutes of 8 February 1865 listed Clemens as a Junior Deacon.

It was during one of those Angels Camp visits that Clemens is reputed to have visited a saloon where he met his old acquaintance Ben Coon. Coon had been a riverboat pilot on the Illinois River. Coon recounted to Clemens a quirky story he had heard about a fellow who would bet on anything,

and bet on his own jumping frog. Clemens later jotted down the story amongst his notes of Gillis' humorous stories and sketches. He later surmised that if wrote the frog story well, he could get that story to jump around the world.

### *The Jumping Frog Story*

Clemens' acquaintance Artemus Ward had sent a letter to him asking for a short story to be included in a book that Ward was producing. Clemens thought by the date of the letter that he was too late, but Ward asked him a second time. Clemens perfected a version he felt satisfactory for printing, but by that time Ward's book was too close to its date of publication. Instead, Ward submitted Clemens' story to the New York magazine *The Saturday Press*.



Twain's first draft placed the story in a fictitious town called Boomerang. It was based on Angels Camp but he renamed it to reflect the swings in the economy: it had initially boomed with the gold rush in 1850 then fallen to ruin. When Clemens was in the area in 1865 he was witnessing a resurgence in the economy from heavy corporate investing from the hard-rock capitalists from back east. This up and down economy gave Twain the idea to rename the town Boomerang in his first, odious draft of the story. He later abandoned that draft and much of that story altogether. He instead used the true name of Angels Camp in which to base his story.

It was in this era of capitalists' development when small miners like the Gillis brothers, Stoker and Clemens himself couldn't make much of a living out of their own placer mining anymore. The individual miner turned toward employment at the company mines instead. This economic backdrop shaped much of Twain's character in later years.

The frog jump story first appeared in the 18th of November edition of 1865 of *The Saturday Press*. The story was titled "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog." It was soon reprinted many times over. When Bret Harte printed it on the 16th of December in his magazine *The Californian*, the title had been changed to "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" and Smiley's name was changed to Greeley. Another, later version was called "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

In all Twain wrote five versions of the jumping frog story, only three of which were actually published. This year, as an anniversary special, the Angels Camp Museum Foundation, in collaboration with the Bancroft Library, is publishing a consolidated book of all five versions of the jumping frog story. The book was sponsored by local mining interest Pacific Fareast Minerals, Inc and Mother Lode Gold Mines Consolidated. This book is sure to be

an exciting collector piece for any Mark Twain enthusiast. It is the only collection of all five versions of the story, including the unpublished Boomerang draft.

Another version of the jumping frog story can be found in Edna Buckbee's book, *Calaveras County Gold*

**Rush Stories.** There have been later claims, with much authoritative documentation, that the actual frog jump contest that Clemens heard about took place in a saloon in San Andreas. Apparently it was even reported in the paper. Clemens probably understood that the event took place somewhere else than where he heard it, but he chose to place his story in Angels Camp. Besides, Angels Camp sounded better than Boomerang.

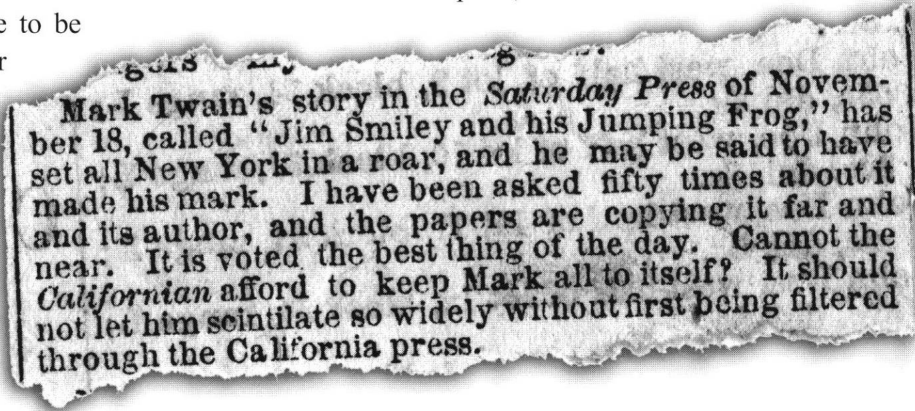
In later years Twain discovered a French translation of the jumping frog story. He did not find it amusing, so he translated it back to English to prove why it was not well received in France: it did not make sense. Of course he had translated the exact French grammar which doesn't translate word for word. He then published all three versions under the title "The Jumping Frog: in English, then in French, and then Clawed Back into a Civilized Language Once More by Patient, Unremunerated Toil."

### ***Early California Writings***

California in the 1860s was starved for news so newspapers proved to be a good match in providing employment to the verbose Clemens. He was fortunate to have met and worked with many famous early California literary figures such as Bret Harte of the magazine *The Californian*, Dan DeQuille of the widely distributed newspaper the *Alta California* as well as Artemus Ward, Ambrose Bierce, and Joaquin Miller.

After the wet winter in Gillis' cabin, Sam returned to San Francisco when he learned that the Civil War was over. He wanted to return home, having had enough adventure in the west. He was deeply despondent over his failure as a miner and a writer. He wrote to his mother that he contemplated suicide, just weeks before the jumping frog story was published.

Communications from the east to the west were very slow, weeks at a time due to the overland mail. To Sam's surprise, he learned that the



Mark Twain's story in the *Saturday Press* of November 18, called "Jim Smiley and his Jumping Frog," has set all New York in a roar, and he may be said to have made his mark. I have been asked fifty times about it and its author, and the papers are copying it far and near. It is voted the best thing of the day. Cannot the *Californian* afford to keep Mark all to itself? It should not let him scintillate so widely without first being filtered through the California press.

"A lie carries with it its own antidote"

There — I don't know who is the author of it, but it is the most gravely humorous maxim that exists. The humor of it, is, that it is a palpable & impudent lie itself, yet carries no antidote with it, for every goose in Christendom believes it

Truly Yours  
Mark Twain

Oct 27, 1880

Portion of a letter written to a lady in Angels Camp dated October 2, 1880. Original letter property of the Angels Camp Museum, reproduced by permission.

jumping frog story had been a moderate success. Suddenly he was in demand again, and he was enlisted in March of 1866 to sail to the Sandwich Islands. Upon his departure he penned a quick letter to his friend William Gillis, where he claimed he was going as a special correspondent to the *Alta California*. He noted that he hoped to see Gillis and the boys again at Jackass Hill.

While Clemens was in the Sandwich Islands he sent home several travel letters to the *Alta California* and the *Sacramento Union* about Hawaii. He witnessed the sudden funeral for the Hawaiian Princess Victoria Kamamalu, and the landing of the survivors of the shipwrecked *Hornet*. While suffering saddle sores, he was carried on a stretcher to the hospital to interview the survivors of the shipwreck and produced what was the most serious piece of work in his series, and a scoop for his papers.

He reported on nude native ladies, volcanoes, and surf-bathing, all things exciting and new to readers back home. He also gave uncomplimentary comments about the missionaries and the passing of the Hawaiian native way of life. When he returned to California a friend suggested he give a lecture about

his adventures. Twain was thoroughly reluctant to do so, but borrowed the money to rent the Maguire's Academy of Music in San Francisco to give a lecture on 2 October 1866. He was such a success that he went on to give lectures throughout the gold country. In addition to writing humorous sketches, he proved to be an excellent lecturer.

Suddenly Mark Twain was attractive and he was in demand as a travelling correspondent. He was then enlisted in 1867 to travel to Europe. His experiences there provided material for his books *The Innocents Abroad*.

"All you need is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure."

### At Home

By 1867 Clemens was using the name Mark Twain. He was fully engulfed in his lecturing life. Another newspaper funded a trip to the Mediterranean where he penned more humorous travel writings. Those correspondence letters later were compiled as *Innocents Abroad*. During these travelling years Twain declared that he wanted to settle down and find himself a good wife. A couple of them if they were particularly good. On that trip he met Charles Langdon, the man who was to become his brother-in-law. Langdon showed him a picture of his sister Olivia, and Twain claimed it was love at first sight.

The Langdons were from Elmira, New York. Twain considered their family wealthy but liberal, and thoroughly enjoyed their company. Through them he would meet such dignitaries as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frederick Douglass, of whom he was proud to make their acquaintance.

Twain and Olivia "Livy" Langdon were married in February of 1870. He advised the Gillis brothers of his pending marriage and invited them, but knew that they probably could not make the overland journey from California to New York. The newlyweds eventually settled in Hartford, Connecticut where they built a home. They had four children, a boy who died of diphtheria at the age of nineteen months, and three daughters. Twain's family life was deeply saddened in later years by the passing of his eldest daughter when she was only twenty-four. He also saw the passing of his third daughter, and his wife in his lifetime. It was after the death of his third daughter that he started wearing white suits full time.



In 1885 Twain's book *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was published in the US (Twain was adamant that there was no "the" in the title). It is still believed to be one of the greatest American novels, probably the first ever written in the vernacular, in the first person. The book was controversial from the outset, but has outlasted the controversy. Twain found censorship of the book amusing, and speculated that it would increase sales (it did). Once in response to a school board that had chosen to ban his book from their library, he wrote them and said: "But the truth is, that when a Library expels a book of mine and leaves an unexpurgated Bible lying around where unprotected youth and age can get hold of it, the deep unconscious irony of it delights me and doesn't anger me."

Twain believed that he had two true callings in life that he had wished to pursue: being a riverboat pilot and being a preacher. He succeeded at the first and found the second to be disagreeable to his character, although he liked to talk to an audience. When he began to court Olivia, she made it her mission to make a Christian man out of him, but he did not like to go to church. His daughter claimed, somewhat in jest, that her father could not stand to hear anyone else but himself speak for any length of time. When it came to lengthy oration, he could go on and on.

### ***Financial Woes***

Mark Twain was plagued by financial problems throughout his life. From early childhood until his death he experienced periods of prosperous wealth and robust living, followed by poor investments, only to come crashing back down again to near poverty levels. He was ashamed of his poor financial situation and tried to hide it. Once in a down time in his Virginia City days he told his mother that he had mastered the art of slinking so as to avoid detection by his landlord and other creditors.

Twain's colleague Bret Harte was equally poor with money and went to Europe to avoid his creditors. Twain had no desire to avoid his creditors. He actually felt quite ashamed of his situation. He tried to put up a good front, which often led others to believe that he was better off than he really was. Regarding his lack of finances, he once lamented:

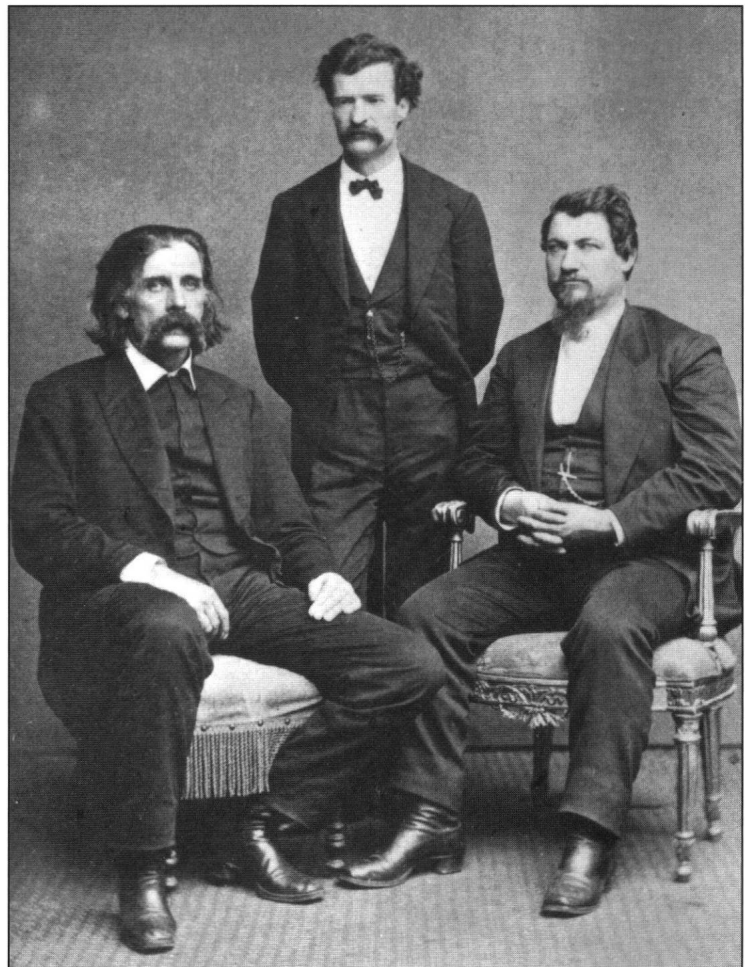
*"The newspapers are trying to make me out a rich man, but the continued discrepancy between my income and my outgo convinces me that they are not succeeding."*

When he found himself in deep debt to his creditors, he would quickly generate more written material or embark on another lecture tour which was quite lucrative. Fortunately he was considered the foremost lecturer of the day, and his lectures were always in demand to sell-out crowds. The downside of this financial cycle was that his rapid writing during these demanding periods was probably not his best, according to Twain scholars.

### ***Mark Twain the Person***

He loved billiards, cats, sported a mustache all of his adult life, and he disliked Teddy Roosevelt.

*"If man could be crossed with the cat it would improve man, but it would deteriorate the cat."*



This 1869 photo was titled *The American Humorists*. Left to right, Josh Billings, Twain, and Petroleum V. Nasby (all are pen names). The other two never gained the same fame that Twain achieved.

He was fascinated by science and technology and in 1894 paid a visit to the laboratories of Nikola Tesla (for whom the modern electric car is named). Twain himself owned three patents for his own inventions: one was called “an improvement in adjustable and detachable straps for garments” to be used instead of suspenders; another was a game of history trivia; and the most commercially successful of his inventions was a self-pasting scrapbook that used a dried adhesive that only had to be moistened before usage. Licking an envelope comes to mind.

Twain’s faith in technology at one point in his life almost proved to be his undoing. During a period between 1890 and 1894 he sank almost his entire net worth, \$300,000 or the equivalent of greater than \$7.5 million today into the endeavor. Twain’s background as a typesetter convinced him of the value of the highly-engineered Paige typesetting machine. Regrettably the machine was rendered obsolete by the Linotype before it was perfected.

The Paige typesetter failure and other poor investments again found Twain in financial ruin. Fortunately a growing friendship with Standard Oil executive Henry H. Rogers saved Twain. Rogers became a close confidante for Twain in later life, and helped him get his financial house in order. With

Rogers’ assistance, Twain filed for bankruptcy and was relieved of his debts. But Twain didn’t feel right about walking away from his debts.

*“Denial ain’t just a river in Egypt.”*

Again with Rogers’ assistance, Twain arranged another profitable international lecture series to pay off all of his debtors even though he didn’t have to.

### ***Strengthening Principles***

The 1873 book *The Gilded Age* was an early hint of his personal beliefs and rhetoric to come. The story was jointly written with Twain’s neighbor Charles Dudley Warren, mostly out of a challenge from their wives to write a novel together. The book poked fun at the excesses of Washington politicians and their lust for money. Although the book was not a commercial success, the term “the gilded age” has become synonymous with the post-civil war greedy politicians.

As much as people loved to meet him, Twain loved to meet other interesting people. Such encounters broadened his worldly view. Of particular note was his deep friendship with his next door neighbor, fellow author and famous abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe. In 1895 he befriended Helen Keller.



Mark Twain with his family in Hartford, Connecticut, 1884.

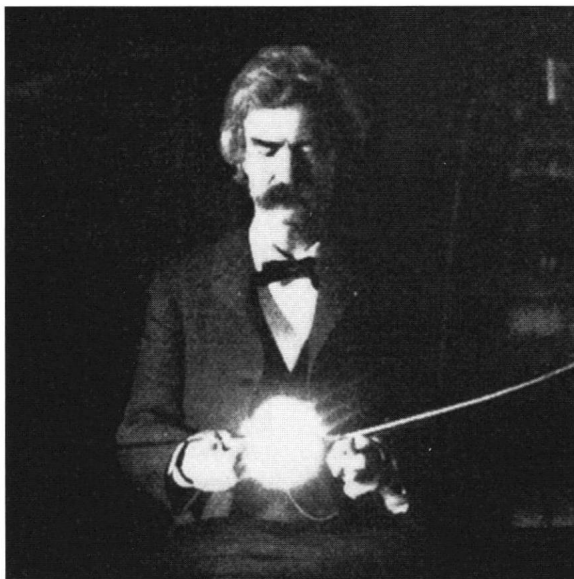
In 1896 he met Mahatma Gandhi, and in 1898 he met with Sigmund Freud. These encounters led Twain toward a continually pacifist outlook in later life.

As Twain aged, his principles matured. Some say he grew increasingly bitter with age. He was forever amused at the gullibility of people as his hoaxes and the responses to his humorous writings proved. Therefore he was equally disgusted that the populous could be so easily duped by politicians and government. The time and age when he grew up in the south and west allowed him to witness many atrocities perpetuated upon many peoples. This was when he was embracing writing as a career. These experiences shaped the mature man in later years. He grew more outspoken against discrimination of any kind. He strongly supported labor unions, for example, and he came to resent American Imperialism across the globe.

Olivia counseled Twain to withhold some of his more provocative writings as she thought they may damage his reputation. He was leaning more toward satire than toward humor, poking at the ridiculousness than the frivolity of government, economics, or politics. He took her advice as long as she was alive, but when she passed away he began to publish some of his more opinionated material.

*"I was young and foolish then—  
I am old and foolisher now."*

Twain fell into a deep depression after the passing of his first beloved daughter and his wife. His surviving daughter surmised that it was at this point that he "created the habit of vituperating the human race." Perhaps it was this low point that caused him to generate one of his more controversial pieces in 1905, *The War Prayer*, a short piece considered so inflammatory that it was not to be printed until after his death. His own publisher refused to print it, and contractual obligations prevented another publisher from doing so. Even he recognized that it would not be printed, as he stated to a friend in a letter, "I don't think



**Twain visited the laboratory of Nikola Tesla in 1904. Despite his own failures, he never lost his faith in technology.**

the prayer will be published in my time. None but the dead are permitted to tell the truth." The story goes that a church is praying for their soldiers going to war, for victory and honor. An older, wiser visitor enters, claims he is a messenger from their god, and advises them that they are praying for death even if it is to their enemies; in essence, think about the cost of war. The church members ignore his as a ranting lunatic. In later generations, Viet Nam war protestors and others have

used this timeless piece of Twain's as an example of a common sense argument against war.

*"There are rest and healing in the  
contemplation of antiquities."*

As Twain aged his opinions solidified. In one of his most memorable reversals is the issue of women's right to vote. He was an early, although humorous, opponent to the suffragist movement. Yet later as he expanded his worldly views and gained friendships with people like Beecher Stowe, he reversed that position. In 1901 he gave a famous speech in support of women's right to vote. In it he said of the women there, "If all the women in this town had a vote today... they would rise in their might and change the awful state of things now existing here."

Women did not gain the right to vote until 1920.

### *Twain in the Twentieth Century*

Samuel Langhorne Clemens left school at the age of thirteen but he never quit learning. He never went to college and yet he received numerous advanced degrees such as the Master of Arts (1888) and Doctor of Letters (1901) from Yale. He actually found all of the attention around *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to be somewhat of a surprise. He found it amusing that it was called the first Great American Novel or a "classic" of American Literature.

*"A classic is something that everyone wants  
to have read and nobody wants to read."*

Samuel Clemens as the writer Mark Twain was an extremely prolific writer. He wrote twenty-four volumes of fiction, short stories and prose. Clemens wrote greater than 2600 known personal letters in his lifetime. In the thirty year period between 1853 and 1880, he wrote more than 2300 letters.

When he looked back on his own writings he was continually amazed at some of his successes. He was also amused at the gullibility of people. Yet he was a writer ahead of his time. Newspapers, letters and lectures were his medium. Twenty percent of the country was still illiterate. All aspects of science were intriguing to people. It is a wonder to us today that something as elemental as the Petrified Man could dupe so many people, and Twain thought it incredulous that he perpetuated such a silly hoax.

*"Praise is well, compliment is well, but affection—that is the last and final and most precious reward that any man can win, whether by character or by achievement."*

Twain had lost his first daughter in 1896, then his wife passed away in 1904. In May of 1909 his close friend Henry Rogers died suddenly, and later that year his second daughter passed. Twain's depression deepened. He said:

*"I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835. It is coming again next year, and I expect to go out with it. It will be the greatest disappointment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's Comet."*

His wish was granted. Twain died of a heart attack on 21 April, 1910, in Redding, Connecticut, one day after the comet's closest approach to Earth. His grave is marked with a twelve foot monument, or two fathoms high, the depth of the mark of a twain.

Back in California sixteen years later in 1926, in Calaveras County, the Angels Camp Boosters was formed. Its purpose was to promote business in the community which had slackened due to the rise in gas prices. In the spring of 1928 Angels Camp wanted to do something special to celebrate the paving of Main Street (now the highway). A visiting minister Reverend Brown suggested that the Boosters re-enact Twain's frog jump contest. The idea was a hit and the first frog jump was set for May 19 and 20 right on the newly paved street. It was called the "Jumping Frog Jubilee." The first winning jump was 3' - 9" by a frog named "Pride

of San Joaquin." The event was so successful that ten years later it had to be moved to the fairgrounds, but it is still run by the Boosters to this day.

History rarely talks about the downside of Mark Twain, such as his constant battle with finances and depressions. Or the time he put a gun to his head when he wanted to go home to Missouri but he was so ashamed to go home a failure at gold mining and writing. Or that he was put in jail for public drunkenness. Some of these demons he overcame, and some plagued him for the rest of his days. What we do know is that he experienced the early west and saw it before most of it was settled. His time in the west shaped him and his attitudes and values for the rest of his life, as clearly evidenced in his writings.

His enduring legacy is that he could always look at us, at people, at human nature, and find humor in humanity. He found people to be infinitely amusing and entertaining even though he had fewer nice things to say about humanity as he aged. What he did say is ageless.

This is the man whom the country embraces as its greatest humorist. There are numerous towns and buildings that bare his name, and awards given in his name. The Mark Twain Prize for American humor is given annually at the Kennedy Center to people who have had a positive impact on American society through the use of humor. This award is given to prestigious comedians such as Bill Cosby and George Carlin.

### **Mark Twain Today**

The year 2010 marks several significant anniversaries regarding the man we know as Mark Twain. We in the west feel particularly close to Mark Twain. Where he lived in Virginia City and the Mother Lode are the least changed locales of all the places that he lived.

In Calaveras County those anniversaries have been celebrated throughout the year at various functions such as the County Fair and the unveiling of a new exhibit at the Angels Camp Museum on May first. The new Angels Museum exhibit was developed in cooperation with the Mark Twain Boyhood Museum of Twain's home town of Hannibal Missouri, the U.C. Berkeley Bancroft Library, and leading Mark Twain scholar, Dr. Gregg Camfield at U.C. Merced. The final display is adorned with exceptional archival materials obtained through cooperation with the Bancroft Library. A trip to Angels Camp should include a visit to this outstanding new display of material on the author everyone thought they knew so well.



The Angels Camp Museum exhibit honoring Mark Twain in 2010. Photo by Bonnie Miller, August 2010.

*"The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice."*

Visitors to the new exhibit are greeted with a three foot bust of Mark Twain. This magnificent sculpture is by artist Ushangi Kumelashvili of Tbilisi (Russian) Georgia, on loan from the Calaveras County Arts Council.

The entire display was dedicated in honor of the late Paul Raggio, lifetime resident of Angels Camp (1931–2009). The display was made possible through donations made in Paul's honor.

In October the community will further honor our most famous writer with the Mark Twain Motherlode Festival, or the "Censeptquintennial Celebration." This three day event will be held October 15, 16 and 17 at Greenhorn Creek in Angels Camp, celebrating Twain's eighty-eight days in the California foothills between 1864 and 1865. For more information, visit [www.marktwainfestival.org](http://www.marktwainfestival.org) The celebration will include the unveiling of Twain's "autobiography", compiled one hundred years after his death, as he requested. This work has been completed by Twain scholars from the Bancroft Library. It includes previously unpublished material written by Clemens, such as his true religious beliefs. Volume I will be available for purchase at this pre-publication release.

*"You had better shove this (letter) in the stove—for... I don't want any absurd "literary remains" or "unpublished letters of Mark Twain" published after I am planted."*

*Letter to his brother Orion Clemens, October 19, 1865; just prior to the publication of the Jumping Frog story*



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# Calaveras County Historical Society

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The Calaveras County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation. It meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the County. Locations and scheduled programs are announced in advance. Some meetings include a dinner program, and visitors are always welcome.

The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas; and the historic Red Barn Museum at 891 Mountain Ranch Road, also in San Andreas, which is open Thursday to Sunday, 10:00 to 4:00.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museums while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058, or contact us at: CCHS@goldrush.com; Red Barn Museum (209) 754-0800.

## New Members

*The Calaveras County Historical Society welcomes the following new members:*

### **July–September**

Aaron Plunk, Valley Springs  
Sallie Harlan, San Luis Obispo  
Donald DeYoung, Walnut Creek  
Terry Clark, Valley Springs  
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## Donations

*The Historical Society appreciates the following generous donations:*

### **July–September 2010**

Wally Motloch—Donation in memory of Jeff Tuttle  
Gary Lowe—Donation of two books, *Before the Works—The Mammoth Tree—A Gold Rush Adventure*  
Hal Mintun—School registers from Keystone School from 1885–1907  
Beverly Burton—Man's suit and hat from pre-1920s  
Bill Wennhold—Photographs of dairy man and milk house, house on Court Street, farming equipment, cowboy rounding up animals  
Jo Anne Sadler—"A First Book of Composition" belonging to Verna Cuslidge, found in a bookstore in Glendale, California  
Patricia Sparacino—Copy of *The San Andreas Independent* dated October 3, 1857  
Michael Vosganian Sr.—Marriage License of Edward F. Walker of West Point and Louise E. Shipley of Mountain Ranch dated May 1, 1918 signed by Judge J.A. Smith  
Jeanne Boyce and John McDonagh—Donation in memory of Jeff Tuttle