

THE MARK TWAIN MUSEUM GALLERY

120 N. Main St., Hannibal, Missouri

Virtual Tour by Haley Johnson, age 13

Special points of interest:

- 15 original Norman Rockwell paintings and corresponding sketches
- Original drawing by Dan Beard, illustrator for *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*
- Mark Twain's Oxford gown
- Original letters written by Clemens
- Family heirlooms
- The famous white suit jacket
- Twain's pipe and pocket watches



The first floor of the Museum Gallery consists of interactive exhibits from many of Mark Twain's books and short stories. Half of the entire room is dedicated just to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain's most famous works. Exhibits in these sections include whitewashing the fence, and when visitors touch the paintbrush handles they will see the apple, broken dog collar and other items that Tom acquired from the boys when he conned them into whitewashing. Another *Tom Sawyer* exhibit is the cave, a realistic, miniature tunnel a few yards long. As for *Huckleberry Finn*, the main attraction is a life-sized river raft similar to what Huck and Jim might



Tom and Huck appear to be riveted by Mark Twain reading from one of his books.

have used on their Mississippi River journey. There are benches on the raft where visitors can watch an excerpt from the film version of *Huckleberry Finn*. The raft is extremely realistic, set on springs

so that it rocks to and fro as if it really were a docked raft on the Mississippi.

Other exhibits include listening to some of Mark Twain's short animal stories such as "Tom Quartz," a tale about a mining cat, as well as other western stories, sitting in a replica of a stagecoach while watching a clip from a movie based on Mark Twain's book, *Roughing It*, which is based on his years out west when he tried his hand at silver mining in Nevada. Two of Twain's other books, *The Innocents Abroad* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* are also featured. There are even original drawings by Dan Beard, the illustrator for *Connecticut Yankee*.



Visitors can climb aboard a stagecoach to learn about Mark Twain's adventures out west.

The Mezzanine Level

The mezzanine level of the museum consists entirely of steamboat artifacts and pictures, including a replica of a pilot's cabin with a steering wheel and authentic steamboat whistle. This represents the four years that Samuel Clemens served as a steamboat pilot. Many of the stories about life on a steamboat were quite riveting, but three in particular stood out to me the most.

The first story that we heard from museum curator Henry Sweets was how pilots would have to "walk the wheel," meaning to put one's feet on the steering wheel in order to concentrate the entire weight of the body so as to turn the ship in fast currents which usually served difficult to negotiate.

Another interesting happening on the steamboat involved the leadman. Leadsmen measured the depth of the river by throwing a rope with a ball of lead tied to the end of it over the side of the boat into the river. The depth was measured using knots tied on the rope, and if the river was too shallow, he would start calling out terms used to measure depth. For example, "mark" meant six feet, and "twain" was two, so "mark twain" was twelve feet, considered "safe water" by steamboat men. This is where Clemens came up with his penname, from his experiences on the steamboat.

The last story is from Clemens's autobiography and *Life on the Mississippi*, describing how his younger brother, Henry, died. At the time, Sam



Visitors feel like they are piloting a steamboat on the mezzanine level of the museum gallery where the view includes the mighty Mississippi River.

was working on a steamboat called *The Pennsylvania*, and arranged for his younger brother, Henry, to get a job as a mud clerk. Eventually the pilot on the boat, Captain Brown, insulted Henry, and Sam got word. He started a fight with Brown that resulted with Sam being banned from *The Pennsylvania* when they reached New Orleans, although Henry was allowed to stay on board for the trip back up. Peculiarly, before the ship left, Sam dreamt that he saw Henry lying in a coffin with crimson flowers on his chest. This alarmed Sam, so when he was saying farewell to his brother he made sure to warn him of the dangers of boiler explosions and similar dangers and gave Henry advice on how to take care of women and children first, while also keeping himself safe.

Later on, while Sam was traveling back upstream on a different boat, he got word that *The Pennsylvania* had had a boiler explode near

Memphis, Tennessee, and that his brother had inhaled steam that badly scalded his lungs. Henry was in a makeshift hospital in Memphis, and when Sam arrived the doctors informed him that although he was in terrible pain, Henry would recover. Unfortunately, when Sam insisted that the doctor help ease Henry's pain, the young, inexperienced doctor administered what he believed to be the correct dosage of morphine. However, the overdose contributed to Henry's death, and Sam never forgave himself. The strangest part of all, though, was at the funeral, when Sam was looking at his brother in the coffin, it struck him that his dream had been wrong because there were no flowers. A few minutes later, however, their neighbor came in and laid some white flowers on Henry's chest, with a red rose at the center.



The Mark Twain Museum brings Twain's books to life. Ride a raft with Huck and Jim or hop a stagecoach bound for Nevada Territory. All you need is a little imagination.



The Second Floor

The second floor of the museum consists of artifacts from Clemens's life and books. Exhibits include Mark Twain's Oxford graduation gown that he acquired when he received an honorary degree from Oxford College in England, and his white suit jacket that he wore to make himself stand out in the crowd and earned the nickname "The Man in the White Suit." There are three larger-than life busts of Clemens that were donated to the museum by artists Emil Selete, Don Wiegaud, and Walter Russell. An unusual attraction is the collection of 15 original Norman Rockwell paintings done for special editions of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. There had been 16 originals, but when Rockwell borrowed the

paintings to go on tour with them, one was accidentally sold in his travels and was later donated to a museum in Maine by the elderly gentleman who bought the painting. Other artifacts include a jewelry box Clemens had specially carved for his wife while in Italy, a bronze casting of the author's hand, and the death mask of the Clemens' infant son, Langdon. The museum gallery takes visitors through Twain's books as well as his life and is just one of several buildings of the Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum.

~H.J.



Visitors can listen to some of Mark Twain's short stories at the museum gallery.



Visitors of all ages get lost in the original Norman Rockwell paintings at the museum gallery. Rockwell traveled to Hannibal to make sketches for the paintings, which were used as illustrations for special editions of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. These collectors' editions can be purchased in the museum's gift shop.



The Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum is committed to preserving the legacy of Samuel Clemens and his family. The museum is open year-round closing only for New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.