

ADVENTURES OF

MARK TWAIN

IN THE WEST
HOW I BECAME AN AUTHOR

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EDITED BY PETER CLARK

*Adventures of Mark Twain in the West
How I Became an Author*

Chapter I
*without acknowledgements or full
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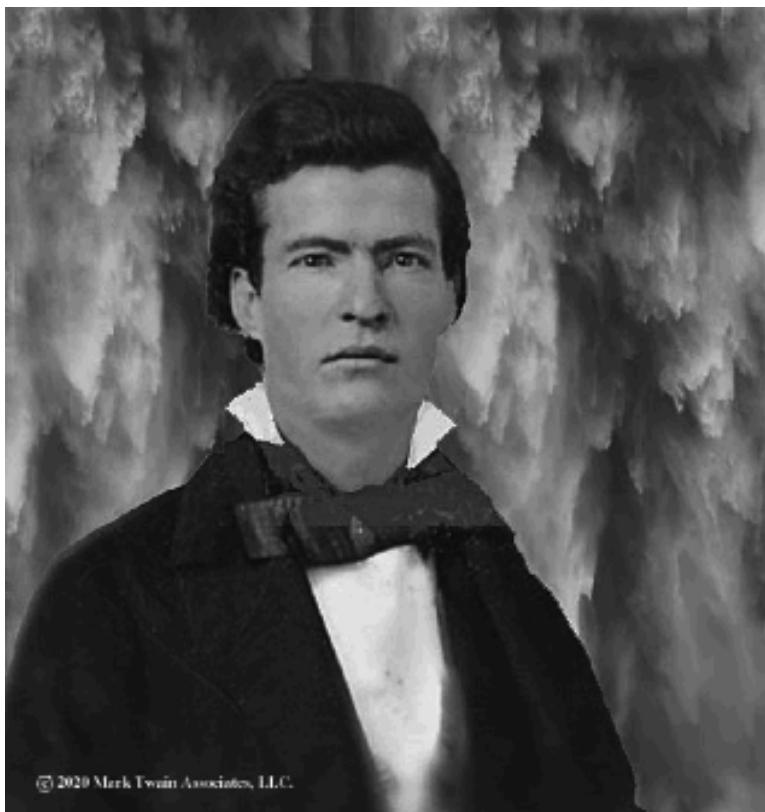
Adventures of

MARK
TWAIN

In the West

How I Became an Author.

SAMPLE CHAPTER I



1. **Samuel Clemens**, aka Mark Twain, at the start of his journey across America during which he became an author (enhanced photo)

Dedication

*“Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority
it is time to reflect.”*

We are called the nation of inventors. And we are. We could still claim that title and wear its loftiest honors if we had stopped with the first thing we ever invented, which was human liberty.

- Foreign Critics speech, 1890

This book and its companion are dedicated to America, in all of her promise. May the light of freedom bless us all eternally.

America is not interested in “*The Truth...*”

What America wants is a good story. (Chapter 2, Page 21)

If my wishes were respected, the rumors of my actual demise would have happened over a hundred years before the publication of the story defined by this work. And those rumors, in this case, would not have been exaggerated in the slightest.

-MTa

See the Book for Acknowledgments

As well as the Preface, and a full Table of Contents

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Preface

*It's not that there are too many fools,
but that the lighting ain't distributed right.*

You may know me from my books of fiction:

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, where I wrote about having a full childhood... what I dreamed about and missed. However, I wrote other books of fiction as well. I also wrote some books of fact- For example, *Life on the Mississippi* and *Innocents Abroad*, where I endeavored to tell the truth. But I didn't tell the whole truth, as it happens that I was sworn to keep mum about certain things. I explore those things in greater depth in the companion volume to this one, about my "**Early Travels.**"

This is the story of how I became an author.

Now I've been told that I'm *America's Greatest Storyteller*, so you'd better believe that the oath of silence I took has chafed at me like a burr in a saddlecloth. As a result, I took my oath to have a statute of limitations of one hundred years after my death. I arranged to have these works delayed in publication until that hundred years is well past as a result. I am assuming that my wishes were respected and that you are reading these words sometime in the 21st Century- or later.

How do I introduce myself to a world yet to be? The first thing that I need to confess is that my given name was Samuel Clemens. Mark Twain is the pen name that I finally settled on after trying on a half dozen or so others. Those other names included: A Dog-be-Devilled Citizen, W. Epaminondas Adrastus Perkins; W. Epaminondas Adrastus Blab; Rambler; Peter Pencilcase's Son; Grumbler; John Snooks; Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass (the Third, Esquire); and Josh.

Josh was the name I used in the Nevada Territory just before I started to use the name Mark Twain.

While this book tells of the events that were occurring at the time when I came to use that pen name, I tell how I came to the name Mark Twain in my *Early Travels* story that includes my time on the steamboats of the Mississippi River. Some of the most exciting events of my life occurred then, and I was sworn to keep mum about them.

I have always been a storyteller and have always wanted to make a living doing so. I suppose I was a product of my time, in that I was born in 1835, during the decade when daily newspapers first appeared. The New York Sun and Herald, the Philadelphia Public Ledger, and the Baltimore Sun were all available for a penny and circulated nationwide, with a synopsis printed weekly. The papers were consumed with enthusiasm, upsetting the previous order as a new kind of discourse began in America that reflected its paradoxes. It opened new horizons in America, so I imagine that this influenced me.

Like Tom Sawyer, I lost my father when I was young. We were both troublemakers as well, I suppose. But I warnt able to play around the way I described Tom Sawyer's life. I became what you'd call a child laborer when I was twelve, as a printer's assistant, typesetter, and then editorial assistant on newspaper presses, while studying what I could from the libraries that were available to me. It was a hard life, and I also did odd jobs to save money to travel to the big cities, where I hoped to be hired as a full newspaper columnist. So, like Huck Finn, I took to traveling when I was young, which provided me with an education that you just can't get in school. And while that expanded my horizons, I'll have to admit that I never did learn to spell worth a hoot. So, I was fortunate to find some d----d fine editors... some of the best writers of our time, in fact.

I never found treasure the way Tom and Huck did, excepting in my writing and telling of stories.

When word came that gold was discovered in California. I was barely a teenager and not fully weaned. I was completely without the resources to head West for the rivers and golden hills of California at that time. That gold just warn't within my reach, then, or later, as it

turns out, even though I was attracted to it like everyone else. So, I had to sit back and watch as the older brothers of some of my friends built a wagon and headed West to Saint Joseph's and the California Trail.

I reckoned the stories about gold to be mostly illusion anyway. Most of those who found gold lost it soon afterward, being as their life was about the search, and so what they found had to be lost again to bring meaning back to their lives. That was certainly the case with the Comstock Lode in Nevada, as I explain in that chapter.

I figure that I found the true and lasting gold in my stories.

Perhaps it is presumptuous of me, but I feel that telling stories and the laughter evoked by those works of fiction that I already mentioned has helped to heal the wounds of our great nation after a tragic war. I am hoping that this work of fact can continue the process, with the healing of those wounds that may continue to divide Americans even a century and a half after the Civil War. A divided America would be a weak and pitiful thing, as, in the biblical wisdom repeated by President Lincoln, "*A house divided upon itself cannot stand.*" (Mathew 12-25, of the King James version). However, I believe that an America whose wounds are healed and who celebrated its diversity would be truly marvelous to behold!

These are some of the things that I could not release in the writings that were published in my lifetime. There are important reasons for my creative renditions of the events of the past, as I will now start to relay. The most important of those reasons is that I took a solemn oath to keep mum about some of those facts. That oath was no small thing—intended to protect my compatriots and the families of those who were risking their lives.

The truth had to be meticulously disguised.

I know that I said that in my book, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, I told the truth, mainly in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. But I reckon that there was far more truth in *Huckleberry Finn* than in *Tom Sawyer*, and its truth was profoundly important... and that statement that *Tom Sawyer* was mostly true warn't one of them. But that is not

something to fret about. I have never come across any living soul in my life who hadn't all but lied one time or another. The facts be, when someone doggedly insists that he is telling the truth when nobody even thought to question it- that is a sure tell that the person is crafting a con to hide his involvement in something that he deems best kept from public knowledge.

With Huck Finn, I reckoned that any truth that I started out to tell, I stretched so far out of gauge as for it to be unrecognizable. The facts be, I told important truths about what I was doing in *Huckleberry Finn*, in reverse, and then told how I did it in *Life on the Mississippi*. I did that as a kind of code that could be deciphered once these works are published. So, these current works are intended to be like a Rosetta Stone for making sense of that period of my life.

You might say that this is my obituary, written prematurely and then delayed a century in the telling. However, I see these writings, most importantly, as the obituary for two of my brothers: Orion, my oldest brother, who died in obscurity after a life of exemplary service to our nation; and to my dear younger brother, Henry, delayed for a century and a half. The latter is a way of saying that Henry's murder did not go un-avenged.

I apologize. I guess I still have some unresolved anger. It appears that I can use some of that healing for myself, which I just expressed is needed in our nation. And maybe that is what this book is truly about. I suppose that is what an obituary is for as well, so that analogy seems apt.

Henry's death has been a cloud that has hovered over me all these years. I am hoping that this document will provide me with the solace that I have sought since then- like the penance that I understand a Catholic might engage in to be absolved of sin.

Suffice it to say, these chapters contain some memoirs that will not be in my full autobiography- unless something has gone terribly wrong.

Now and then, I say things and do things with a stretch of sarcasm, but where the paradox is not fully appreciated. The opening paragraph of the Prologue may be an example. You may call it my tragic flaw, and I tell you I have gone through a kind of purgatory as I have contemplated my impending demise. Yes, I realize in retrospect that I pulled some pretty bone-headed ruses in my day, and my sense of paradox led me to commit acts I later discovered warn't exactly orthodox. But I'm thinking that over 100 years after my death, you, dear readers of the 21st Century, may appreciate a bit of the humor in it- as the humor of any day is generally someone else's tragedy from the day before.

I foresee your time in the future as being one where humor such as mine will be appreciated in a way that would be difficult for those in my time to contemplate.

Yes, dear Reader, I can finally tell the things that I had to keep bottled up inside of me all these years. Think of it as a deathbed confessional, except stretched out for over a century. What writer would not want the opportunity to write such a document if they really thought about it! But most of us do not implore the possibility, us being human and all, and always preoccupied with the activities of our daily lives.

I suppose I might be a tad different than most writers, though—I have gone through a kind of purgatory, as you will no doubt surmise by the time you finish reading this book and its companion- about my *Early Travels*.

-MTa



Bemusements

(See the Book for the Prologue)

Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first.



What a wondrous world you must be living in, dear reader! Over the next century, I imagine that science will have developed a great many marvels, perhaps including the things that Jules Verne wrote about in “20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.” My friend, Nicola Tesla, has certainly been inventive, as has Mr. Edison and Mr. Bell.

Who knows? Maybe books will be passé by your time, with stories sent telephonically and recorded phonographically, so that you will not be reading these words at all, but instead hearing, or otherwise sensing them. I have had a premonition about that and will let you be the judge about whether it has come to pass.

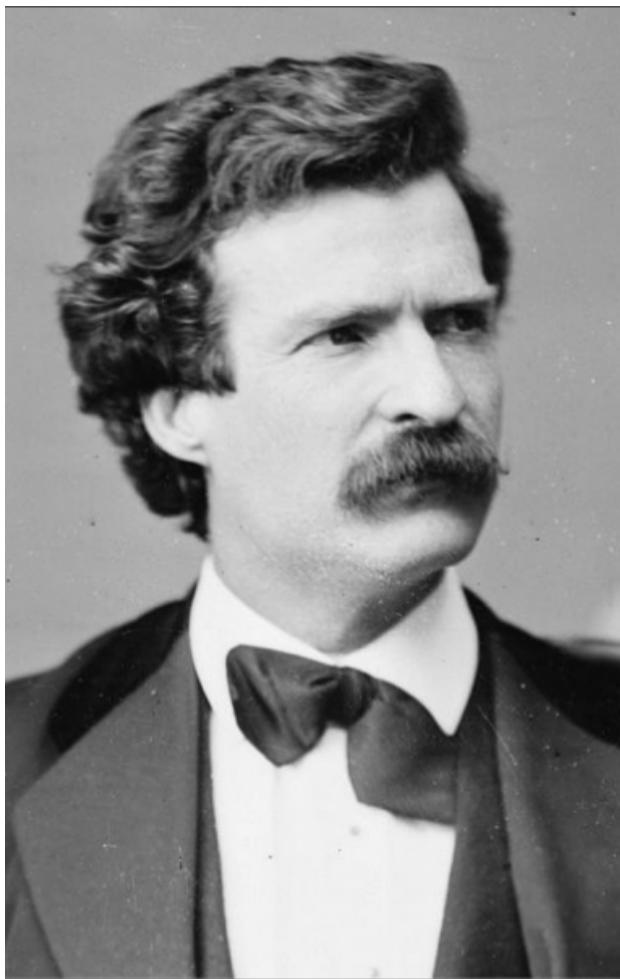
I imagine that all the Earth’s problems will not have been resolved—and that some new ones will have emerged in your time, dear reader, for which I wish you, and our dear planet, the absolute best... as you circle, gaily, around that fiery orb, the Sun, in your journey through a Universe that I may not be a physical part of soon.

At least not in corporal form.

See the Book for the Prologue

I would rather have my ignorance than another man’s knowledge, as I have so much more of it.





2 **Samuel Clemens, aka Mark Twain**, after his journey across America, during which time he became an author.

Portrait circa 1871 by Mathew Brady, Wikimedia Commons.

Chapter I

I Was a Know-Nothing When Pappy Died in 1847

*I was sorry to hear I'm considered a great author,
as it leaves me with a feeling of dread...*

*Because whenever authors reach such high esteem,
they have a habit of ending up - dead.*



I told stories as a child and always dreamed of parlaying that into a career as an author. But when I was young, the Missouri frontier was a mighty dead-end place for that kind of aspiration. In truth, not much happened on the frontier that would be of interest to readers from a city anyhow—just a few murders, here and there, of people who never accounted to much, anyway.

And the audience for a writer in Hannibal, Missouri? Why, it just warn't important enough to raise a fuss about either, even if it warn't an example of me trying to be a prophet in my own town.

I knew from fairly early on that if I wanted a serious writing career, I would have to move to New York.

My father hailed from Virginia. He got married, became saddled with debts to his father-in-law by his diligent study to become a lawyer, and moved to Kentucky. Then he moved to Tennessee to apply his legal skills, where he figured such skills might be in shorter supply and began a family with my oldest brother, Orion, and my sister Pamela, before moving to Florida, Missouri, where I was born. And those student debts chased after him, making it hard to get ahead in life.

In 1840, when I was four years old, the family moved to the town of Hannibal, on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River, 100 miles upstream by steamboat of St. Louis, just below the rapids on the

Missouri side of the Mississippi River. My father brought his sense of humor with him, all the way from Virginia. As it turned out, that marked him as an outsider, as I will explain.

Hannibal became the second-largest city in Missouri as I came of age but maintained the snug atmosphere of a small town, with modest dwellings whose whitewashed one and two-story frame exteriors were almost concealed from sight by climbing tangles of rose-vines, honeysuckles, and morning glories. Most of these pretty homes had a garden in front, fenced with white palings and opulently stocked with hollyhocks, marigolds, touch-me-nots, prince's-feathers, and other old-fashioned flowers; while on the windowsills of the houses stood wooden boxes containing moss-rose plants and terra-cotta pots in which grew a breed of geranium whose spread of intensely red blossoms accented the prevailing pink tint of the rose-clad house-front like an explosion of flame.

When there was room on the ledge outside of the pots and boxes for a cat, the cat was there —in sunny weather— stretched at full length, asleep and blissful, with her furry belly to the sun and a paw curved over her nose. Then that house was complete, and its contentment and peace were made manifest to the world by this symbol, whose testimony is infallible. A home without a cat —and a well-fed, well-petted, and properly-revered cat— may be a perfect home, perhaps... But how can it prove title?

Hannibal was a slaveholding town, with a rich slave-worked grain and pork country back of it. The town was on the overland route to the Oregon and California Trails through Saint Josephs, the jumping-off place for the steamboats on the Missouri River. As a result, Hannibal became a cross-roads of sorts— While that gave Hannibal a degree of importance, it also meant that the town saw more than its fair share of strangers passing through, so those who grew up in Hannibal were aware that there was an outside world, where discourse was not limited to the health of the pigs and the corn harvest, but of loftier intellectual pursuits as well. However, for the people of Hannibal at the time of

my youth, the pursuit of such things marked a man as an outsider and a kook.

My father was a handsome, dark-haired young fellow when he came to Hannibal, with intelligent brown eyes that held frankness and comradeship, as well as a covert twinkle of a pleasant sort. But for an unfortunate remark of his, he would no doubt have entered at once upon a successful career as an attorney in Hannibal.

My father made his fatal remark the first day he spent in the village, and it gauged him. He had just made the acquaintance of a group of citizens when an invisible dog began to yelp, snarl, howl and made himself very comprehensively disagreeable, whereupon my father said, much as one who is thinking aloud—

“I wish I owned half of that dog.”

“Why?” somebody asked.

“Because I would kill my half.”

Now, as I understand it, in Virginia at the time, it was the mark of a gentleman of refinement to underestimate the obvious and to tell jokes in perfect deadpan, as if the teller had not the slightest comprehension that there was any humor in what he said. Laughing at your own joke was considered boorish and uncouth. But does anybody admit to having couth to begin with?

In Virginia, a joke like what my father told would have made a fine calling card for a new person in town. The townspeople would acknowledge the multi-level cleverness of the repartee by smiling and nodding politely, and in that way, accept the new person into the social circle as if as part of a rite of passage.

People in this small town on the Mississippi River were not so charitable. Instead, the group searched my father’s face with curiosity, with anxiety even, and found no light there, no expression that they could read. In Hannibal, the citizens fell away from my father as from something uncanny and went into privacy to discuss him.

One said: “Pears to be a fool.”

“Pears?” said another. “Is, I reckon you better say.”

“Said he wished he owned *half* of the dog... the idiot,” said a third. “What did he reckon would become of the other half if he killed his half? Do you reckon he thought it would live?”

“Why, he must have thought it, unless he *is* the downrightest fool in the world; because if he hadn’t thought it, he would have wanted to own the whole dog, knowing that if he killed his half and the other half died, he would be responsible for that half just the same as if he had killed that half instead of his own. Don’t it look that way to you, gents?”

“Yes, it does. If he owned one half of the general dog, it would be so; and if he owned one end of the dog and another person owned the other end, it would be so, just the same; particularly in the first case, because if you kill one half of a general dog, there ain’t any man that can tell whose half it was, but if he owned one end of the dog, maybe he could kill his end of it and—”

“No, he couldn’t either: He couldn’t, and not be responsible if the other end died, which it would. In my opinion, the man ain’t in his right mind.”

“In my opinion, he ain’t *got* any mind.”

No. 3 said: “Well, he’s a lumox, anyway.”

“That’s what he is,” said No. 4, “he’s a labbrick—just a Simon-pure labbrick if ever there was one.”

“Yes, sir, he’s a dam fool; that’s the way I put him up,” said No. 5. “Anybody can think different that wants to, but those are my sentiments.”

“I’m with you, gentlemen,” said No. 6. “Perfect jackass—yes, and it ain’t going too far to say he is a corn pone. If he ain’t a corn pone, I ain’t no judge, that’s all.”

My father stood elected. The incident was told all over the town and gravely discussed by everybody. Within a week, my father had

lost his first name; **Corn Pone** took its place. In time he came to be liked and well-liked too, but by that time, the nickname had got well stuck on, and it stayed. That first day's verdict made him a fool, and he was not able to get it set aside or even modify it. This destroyed any possibility of my father ever landing a job providing legal services to the citizens of Hannibal, as who, other than a fool, would seek out a fool for an attorney and thereby become a fool by this or any similar transitive process?

The nickname eventually ceased to carry any harsh or unfriendly feeling with it to my father among the adult citizens of Hannibal, but that was long after my father took down his shingle as an attorney and attempted to earn a living as a grocer.

Our family became doomed to poverty as a result.

While the nickname lost its meaning to the adults in town, it held its place among the youngsters. The taunting I received from the other kids was merciless, and its mark on me persisted.

While my choice of career contributed to my desire to leave the confines of our village and venture forth into the world before I attained eighteen years of age, I suppose that desire must have begun as the result of the taunting I received as a child—because my father was treated shoddily through no fault of his own except to have acted honorably pursuant to the heritage of the Great State of Virginia. This may have also augured why the plight of the downtrodden and victims of bullies became of such concern to me throughout my life.

I do not suffer bullies lightly... or bullying behavior.

In 1847, when I was at the impressionable age of eleven, my father was finally able to land a job as Justice of the Peace, and the family was giddy with joy. But the celebratory mood was short-lived, as my father had to ride through the pouring rain to accept the job, caught pneumonia as a result, and died shortly thereafter.

I had to leave school as a result (which I saw as a blessing) and set out to look for work. This shifting took me out of the range of insults

and gave me space to start my career as a writer, but I soon found that jobs were in short supply. I finally became a printer's assistant for the *Missouri Courier* in exchange for food and two sets of clothes per year, whether I needed them or not. The relationship between the size of those clothes and my own was somewhat arbitrary, I recall.

I soon realized that the working class fit within the category of downtrodden and thus of concern for me.

Six months or so after my father died in 1847, Orion came back home and bought another local newspaper in Hannibal: the *Hannibal Western Union*. From my perspective as a 12-year-old laborer, it appeared that Orion did so to allow me to transfer my conscription to a newspaper business over to his flag. I put on my best puzzled look and spoke particularly slowly:

“Why would you abandon your chosen career path as a liar in Saint Louis to become one in Hannibal, where the lies would be of far less consequence?”

“First of all, I’ve been training to be a LAWYER, not a liar...”

“Is there a difference?”

Orion smirked and continued— “And secondly, I intend to maintain the highest standards of integrity in my foray into the newspaper business in Hannibal.”

“Integrity in the newspaper business? Isn’t that an oxymoron?” I asked. I had just run across the word “oxymoron” in my typesetting for the *Courier*, so I knew what it meant (after looking it up in the thousand-pound unabridged dictionary in the print shop), and I didn’t want that knowledge to go to waste.

“It is in far too many cases,” my brother admitted. But as the man of the Clemens family in Pappy’s place, I’m dedicated to making sure that our paper will be different- and a step above the fray.”

“Then our family is doomed to perpetual poverty,” I lamented. While my words were intended in jest, they proved prescient.

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Standards for checking facts were not well established or universally adhered to during that time. The first daily penny newspaper had only become available as of 1830 or so, and it was soon discovered that newspapers sold because of the sensationalism of their headlines, not due to a reputation for veracity.

Regardless, I soon traded my position of monetarily uncompensated servitude from the *Courier* to the *Union*, now as a typesetter and editorial assistant to Orion. At least he was family.

As a result of all of this, you might rightly say that I was the victim of undeserved misfortune. And I suppose I resented what life had dealt me in that time and could have been described as an angry young man. But my career as a writer began shortly after I started work for Orion, so it may be that it was the hardship that I experienced as a child instilled in me a drive to succeed in my chosen field.

It took me years of reflection to understand these things.

In the meantime, I saw life as being unfair and became susceptible to the stories of the fringe elements such as the *Know Nothings*.

The Papal Conspiracy!

The Know Nothings believed that the reason for the scarcity of jobs and low pay in Missouri was because the immigrants were streaming into America by the millions, and were taking the jobs away from us righteous, God-fearing AMERICANS that sought those jobs.

But then I heard that the Know Nothings believed that the immigrants didn't actually come here to escape starvation in Ireland due to the Potato Famine, as my mother had told me; or, as my older brother, Orion explained—to escape political persecution in Germany after the failed revolution of 1848 against the German Confederation that had been created by the Congress of Vienna after the fall of Napoleon.

Someone who claimed to be a former nun wrote a book in which she said she was witness to Catholic priests raping the nuns and then burying the bodies of strangled newborn babies in the basements of the

nunneries. What's worse is that it all seemed reasonable at the time—to me and to the other gullible children of all ages.

So even before I heard that it was all part of a conspiracy by the Pope in the Vatican City-State to seize control of this fair country of ours, I was ready to take up arms and join the children's brigade of vigilantes to protect America from the perceived threats that the Catholics represented... Fortunately for me, my mother knew something and set me straight in a gentle way.

The wisdom imparted by the Know Nothings was that the Pope, in the Vatican City-State of the ancient Roman Empire, had sent the immigrants to America to undermine the moral and spiritual underpinnings of America's youth; to rape our women, to destroy democracy, and to bring us pestilence and disease for good measure along the way.

Being a youth myself at the time, I was tickled pink to be the subject of such attentions. I was proud to be an American youth. What an honor it was to be the target of such an evil conspiracy directed by the Pope, himself, to undermine the spiritual underpinnings of my innocence as an American youth!

Second, I was terribly flattered that The Pope would go to the trouble- for me, the innocent Youth of America! I was touched that I would be thought to be of such virginal constitution as to engender the attention of the Pope, way over there, across a wide Ocean and sea to the Vatican City-State inside of the ancient Roman Empire. And I was impressed that he had such power that he could convince his cohort, *God Almighty*, to fulminate not only pestilence onto Ireland; but also instigate the political dissension that would cause a failed revolution against the German Confederation, and resulting clan warfare that was driving people from their ancestral homes to cross the Atlantic Ocean to America so they could subvert me over to become a Catholic Papist, or a Lutheran agent of Satan himself!

The Know Nothings claimed they could prove it, too!

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Some guy had heard it from someone else who said he knew!

But who needs proof, anyway, in the face of a good story?

I was also told that the Pope wanted to get me to oppose the law and order in Missourah and throughout the United States that had been built to track down those cutthroat runaway slaves that were trying to escape up the Mississippi to the bastions of abolitionism and bestiality in the Canadian Provinces and destroy many other of the great foundations of my heritage in Missourah. Those provinces of abolitionism and bestiality were a part of the British Empire, whose otherwise invincible forces had defeated even mighty Napoleon, the great champion of our French allies, at Waterloo. That was after America had defeated those same overwhelming British forces—twice!

I felt a deep sense of honor, realizing that all of this was being done on my behalf, on account of my youthful American innocence and all.

Then I realized I had been deceived.

It was my brother, Orion, and my mother, bless their souls, who ran my ship aground:

First, Orion pointed out that the person who claimed to be the escaped Nun had been revealed to be nothing of the sort: The stories that the woman told in her “tell-all” book were all fabrications—for which she profited mightily from the proceeds. There was thus a significant financial disincentive for the publisher to fact-check the book before publication.

When I took that into account, I realized two things:

Firstly— just because something is told to me doesn’t make it true; Secondly— being deceitful in print can be profitable.

I put both lessons into practice during the time I spent out West.

But it was after I had repeated a particularly irate rant I had heard about “those d----d Irish stealing our jobs” that my mother drove home

to me that the Know Nothings were lying to me in an attempt to manipulate my beliefs, so I'd join a vigilante mob that they whipped to a frenzy on election days to suppress the vote:

“You do know that your ancestors- me, you, the Know Nothings, and everyone you know, are all descended from immigrants, don’t you, puddin’?”, my mother asked drolly. “Where do you think that red hair o’ yours comes from?”

“It’s the Irish in ya,” Ma quipped with the hint of a brogue before I could respond. She had a twinkle in her eye, the twinkle that told me to look for the irony and paradox in what she was saying, and it twisted my head a bit... like a top, so it took a bit for the spinning to stop, and for me to settle back to Earth. Ma’s humor had that kind of effect on people, and I was her favorite straight man.

“Huh?” was my clever retort. I was a boy of few words back then.

“Now you know we’re all descended from immigrants,” my mother continued. “And where do ya think your Granny Lara came from, with that red hair of hers? I’m proud of my Irish ancestry. I hope you can be as well.”

I was quiet for quite a while after that as I grappled with the significance of what my mother had just said. It put me in a bit of a pickle. Of course, I was proud of my heritage. I just hadn’t quite put together the fact that the Irish of my Granny Lara was the same Irish that the Know Nothings were being so disparaging about.

I guess I was “special” in that way.

I had never met Granny Lara, my GREAT grandma, as she had died before I got the chance. But those that knew her would remark about how I took after her, in looks, and in temperament. So, I guess I felt a bond with Granny Lara for that reason. “Why should it matter where an immigrant is from, anyway?” I told my younger brother, Henry. “They’re people, just like us!” But that was because of my close feelings for Henry, with whom I’d play make-believe games when I was younger. It warnt something that I’d admit in public, what

with the disparaging things the Know-Nothings were saying about the Catholics, in particular.

My resentment, even anger, built, and I bottled it up inside. By perpetrating lies, some of our leaders, in politics and in the church, were manipulating me and my country for their personal gain while causing harm to innocent people. By such deceit, they whipped up hatred within vigilante mobs to do things that no sane person would do if they thought it through, and innocent lives were lost to lynching.

And THAT, I guess, is what really got my dander up.

They were bullies. And I don't suffer bullies lightly.

Orgies in Congress???

I gauged that the Know Nothings needed to be taken down for a schoolin.' I thought I might get an opportunity when my friend, Lyman, launched into a discourse about how the members of the Whig Party held wild orgies in Congress with satanic rituals that involved the sacrifice of their child prostitutes. I was invited to find out more by riding out with Lyman in his daddy's wagon to a Know-Nothing rally that Lyman's cousin was hosting on his pig farm out toward Moberly.

I am white and from a Protestant heritage. I warn't Catholic, Mormon, Lutheran, or an Irish immigrant (and I kept the Granny Lara part of my lineage mum), so I must have seemed like a perfect prospect to become a Snobbish SOB Know-Nothing initiate. My mind was pretty well made up against the movement by that time, but I still wanted to know more about it- to fill in the gaps, if only to use the information in an exposé that I thought I might write for the *Courier*.

I had been told that if you asked OSSB acolytes about The Order, they were conditioned to say, "I know nothing," which is how the movement got its name. So, I tried it on my friend, Lyman, at the beginning of Summer in 1851 by placing a question before him for his speculation. "I was warned not to question. Curiosity, however, implores me to wonder, Lyman. What is The Order, precisely, about?"

After much pondering about what not to say, Lyman finally came out with what it was he was supposed to relay about his knowledge on the subject: “Can’t tell you, Sam. I Know Nothing. However, if curiosity has gripped your mind, why don’t you accompany me to the rally on Saturday? I could use a compatriot.” His reply told me he was an acolyte and thus was one of the few that *did* Know—and not *Nothing*.

“I’d be d---ed to purgatory if I didn’t take that offer,” I replied, So I agreed to ride with him...and we invited our friends, Frank and Ben, as well. But first, I had to get Orion’s permission to step back for the day from my responsibilities of setting type for his newspaper, the Hannibal Western Union. Part of the deal for my working like a slave for Orion was that he would print the things that I wrote when there was a match between my writing and a space that needed filling.

“I wanna go too!” pleaded my younger brother, Henry, when he heard.

“This is a political meeting, Henry. It’s not for kids!” I retorted. I was fifteen years old, after all, and feeling my oats.

Before my father died, Henry and I used to play Injun in the cornfield near our home, or steamboat pilot, the latter being what I and every other kid in the Mississippi River Valley dreamed to be. But with the death of my father, I had to move quickly to a man’s estate, while Henry stayed in school for a few more years. We both missed that time of innocence that we spent together. But things got serious right quick when Frank, Ben, Lyman, and I met just before dawn that next Saturday, and Lyman got out a sheet of paper on which he had written an oath and read it.

The oath that Lyman had written swore every boy to never tell any of the secrets that we were to learn, and if anybody done anything to any boy in the band, whichever boy was ordered to kill that person, and he mustn’t eat, and he mustn’t sleep till he had killed them and hacked a cross in their breasts, which was the sign of our gang. And nobody that didn’t belong to the band could use that mark, and if he

did, he must be sued; and if he done it again, he must be killed. And if anybody that belonged to the band told the secrets, he must have his throat cut and then have his carcass burnt up and the ashes scattered all around, and his name blotted off the list with blood and never mentioned again by the gang, but have a curse put on it and be forgot forever.

This was not the only oath I took in my youth. All were solemn. Most of the others were not as flowery in their oratory but made up for it in the seriousness of their purpose, and in their significance to my life, to the lives of my compatriots, and to the maturation of our country.

I'd like to point out that in my discourse here, I do not divulge the secrets of the Know Nothings— their secret handshakes, passwords, or doctrines. Nor do I talk about the secret groups that were a part of what has continued on to the time that I pen these words. What I relay here is what the Know Nothings, themselves, said publicly, my feelings about what they said, and the conditions surrounding those feelings to give the reader a better understanding of the times in which I lived.

Back to the appointed morning with Lyman: After taking the oath, we commented on its excellence, signed it in blood, and set off on the Moberly Road- the land route to Saint Josephs and the California and Oregon Trails. We were bound for Lyman's cousin's pig farm on a warm, hazy Saturday in the Summer of '52. As we traveled, we imagined that the hot, damp air that we moved through as we bumped along was a tropical ocean breeze, and we were pirates on a pirate ship in the warm, wind-whipped waters of the South Seas.



Companion Volume to ‘*in the West*’- ‘*Adventures of Mark Twain • Early Travels*’

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—*Letter to San Francisco Alta California, dated May 18th, 1867.*

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***People born to be hanged
are safe in water.***

-Jane Clemens
—about her son, Sam
Clemens, after he almost
drowned - 9 times.

ADVENTURES OF
MARK TWAIN
IN THE WEST
HOW I BECAME AN AUTHOR

Mark Twain did heroic things as a teenager in troubled times, but he was sworn to keep mum— so he kept his full story from the public for 100 years after his death. Twain's true story must now be told to help heal the rift in America that continues today. This book tells part of the story — how Mark Twain became an author.

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) was an irreverent 20-something in the Nevada Territory in 1861, debating state's rights (& wrongs) with **Governor Nye** and Sam's brother, **Orion**. In 1863, famed humorist, **Artemus Ward**, taught Twain comedic timing, but Twain's writing was so caustic in the *Territorial Enterprise* newspaper he had to run for his life to **San Francisco** after a duel to the death.

In San Francisco Twain joined a fraternity of Bohemian writers. Led by **Bret Harte**, they helped define American culture by giving a new voice to our literature. **Fritz Hugh Ludlow**, author of "*The Hasheesh Eaters*," was a mentor. **Charles Webb** and **Charles Stoddard** were friends, and enchanting poetess, **Ina Coolbrith**, was the apex of a love triangle.

Twain was held back from printing his writing about important issues of the day and became suicidal with depression. He had to escape San Francisco for a hiatus in California's Gold Country, and *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras* emerged. This was before Twain went to Hawaii. When he returned to San Francisco, he gave a talk that was so hilarious it defined a new performance genre: **Standup Comedy**. This book tells the story using Mark Twain's words, perspective, and droll humor, to bring those events to life. Mark Twain was sensitive, but bitingly sarcastic; fancifully tongue-in-cheek witty, but serious. He was wise and deeply compassionate for those in need, but he stretched the truth way past its natural range, realizing that:

America doesn't want the truth — It wants a good story.



Edited by Peter Clark
www.MarkTwainAssoc.com