



ELMIRA COLLEGE

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

October 10, 2016

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Twain-Twichell Letters Reveal the Personal Side of Twain

Elmira, New York – The second lecture in the fall portion of *The Trouble Begins at Eight* Lecture Series will be presented by Peter Messent, at 8:00 p.m., on Wednesday, October 12 in the Barn at Quarry Farm. Doors open at 7:30 p.m., and attendees are invited to enjoy light refreshments preceding the lecture, which is free and open to the public.

“‘You know the secret places of our hearts’: The Mark Twain – Joe Twichell Letters” will use selected highlights from *The Mark Twain-Joseph Twichell Letters* (edited by Hal Bush, Steve Courtney, and Peter Messent, published by the University of Georgia Press in early 2017) in order to trace the development of the 44-year friendship between Mark Twain and Joseph Twichell, the Hartford Congregation minister. There will also be an emphasis on what the letters reveal, both about Twain as a family man, author, and celebrity, and about Twichell’s life as a minister, his key role as Twain’s “pastor” and the closest of personal and family friends, and his general position as minor satellite to Twain’s shining star. The talk will also focus on the later years of both men’s lives, and the way that, as Twain’s misanthropy became more and more pronounced, Twichell acted in the role of optimist to his pessimist, serving as “equilibrium restorer” as Twain funneled some of his most damning opinions about religion, politics and the human race at-large in his friend’s direction. The lecture will show how the two men’s exchanges are marked nonetheless by a (mostly!) good-humored tolerance for each other’s positions.

Peter Messent is Emeritus Professor of Modern American Literature at the University of Nottingham, U.K. He has written on a wide variety of American authors and texts but his main work is on Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, and Crime Fiction. His books on Twain include *Mark Twain* (Macmillan Modern Novelists), *The Cambridge Introduction to Mark Twain*, *The Short Works of Mark Twain*, and, most recently, the award-winning *Mark Twain and Male Friendship: The Twichell*,

Howells and Rogers Friendships. He also edited the *Blackwell Companion to Mark Twain* with Lou Budd. He is, at present, completing *The Mark Twain - Joseph H. Twichell Letters*, co-sharing the editorial mantle with Hal Bush and Steve Courtney

About The Trouble Begins at Eight Lecture Series

The Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies initiated *The Trouble Begins at Eight* Lecture Series in 1984. The title came from the handbill advertising Mark Twain's October 2, 1866, lecture presented at Maguire's Academy of Music in San Francisco. By invitation, Mark Twain scholars present lectures in the Barn at Quarry Farm in Elmira, NY, during the fall and spring.

About Elmira College

Elmira College is a private, coeducational, Phi Beta Kappa college founded in 1855, located in Elmira, New York. The College has an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 1,200 full-time mostly-residential students, and is the guardian of Quarry Farms where Mark Twain summered for decades and where he wrote many of his most iconic novels and is today a research center for visiting Twain scholars. The College has been ranked as a Best College in the Northeast by the *Princeton Review* and a National Top Tier Liberal Arts College by *U.S. News & World Report*, which has also ranked Elmira College as one of the leading colleges nationally for student internships. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* cited the Elmira College campus as 'picture postcard perfect.'

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Photo attached: Twichell_Twain.jpg

Caption: Throughout their 44-year friendship Joseph Twichell (left) and Mark Twain, exchanged many letters opining on such subjects as religion, politics, and the human race at-large.