

HOW SAMUEL MADE HIS MARK

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

One hundred and 60 years ago, 27-year-old Samuel Clemens started work for a tiny newspaper in Virginia City, Nevada, and began writing under the pen name for which he'd become famous: Mark Twain, a term from his days as a Mississippi River boat pilot.

Here's a look at the life and times of one of America's greatest storytellers.

MARK TWAIN HOUSE & MUSEUM

NOV. 30, 1835

Born in Florida, Missouri, two weeks after Halley's comet makes its closest approach to the sun. Clemens is born two months premature and would be sickly and frail until age 7.

1839

The Clemens family — with Samuel, the sixth of seven children — moves to Hannibal, Missouri.

1847

Samuel's father dies. Samuel, age 12, quits school and becomes a printer's apprentice.



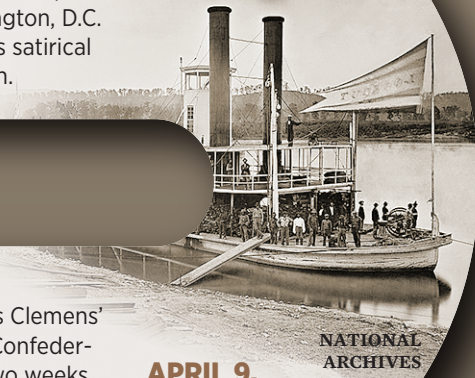
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JUNE 1853

Samuel eaves Hannibal as a journeyman printer. Over the next few years, Clemens works briefly in St. Louis, Philadelphia, New York and Washington, D.C. He occasionally writes satirical articles for publication.

APRIL 1857

Begins training as a Mississippi River steamboat pilot.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

1864

Challenges another reporter to a duel, has second thoughts and leaves Virginia City abruptly. Moves to San Francisco and begins work at the Morning Call newspaper.

FEB. 1863

Starts work as a reporter for the Virginia City, Nevada, Territorial Enterprise. First uses the pen name "Mark Twain," which is river pilot talk for water two fathoms or 12 feet deep: enough to safely navigate.

1861

The start of the Civil War ends Clemens' steamboat career. He joins a Confederate militia, which breaks up two weeks later when word comes that Ulysses S. Grant and his army is approaching. He travels via stagecoach to Nevada with his brother, Orion, to try prospecting.

APRIL 9, 1859

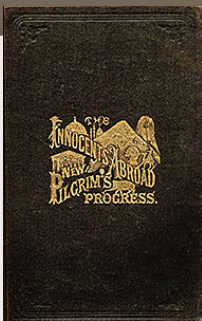
Earns his river pilot's license.

1866
Travels to the Sandwich Islands in the Pacific for the Sacramento Union newspaper. Begins speaking on the lecture circuit when he returns.



1867

Travels to Europe and the Middle East for the San Francisco Alta California newspaper. Publishes "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches."

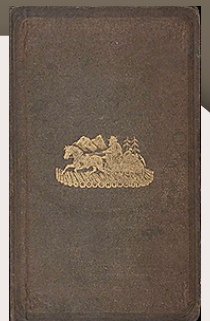


1869

Buys a partnership in the Buffalo Express newspaper. Publishes "The Innocents Abroad."

FEB. 4, 1870

Marries Olivia Langdon, sells the Buffalo newspaper and moves to Hartford, Connecticut.

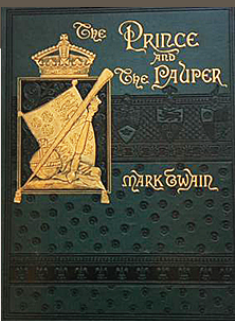


1872

Publishes "Roughing It."

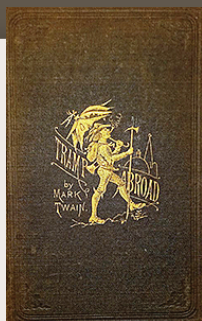
1883

Publishes "Life on the Mississippi."



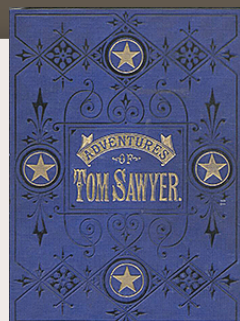
1881

Begins investing heavily in a new automatic typesetting machine that will ultimately fail. Publishes "The Prince and the Pauper."



1880

Publishes "A Tramp Abroad."

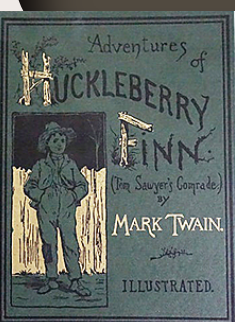


1876

Publishes "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."

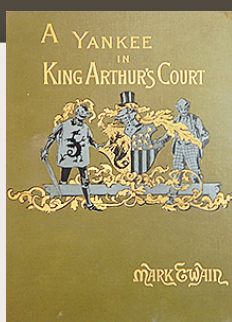
1873

Invents a self-pasting scrapbook, which sells well. Begins making occasional visits to England.



1884

Opens his own publishing company, which will publish "Huckleberry Finn" and "The Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant."

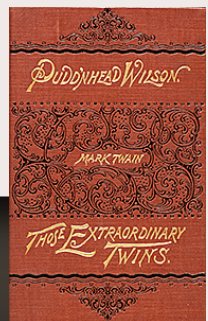


1889

Publishes "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court."

JUNE 1891

Heavily in debt because of the failure of both the typesetting device and his publishing company, Clemens moves his family to Europe.



APRIL 1894

Declares bankruptcy. Publishes "Pudd'nhead Wilson."

1904

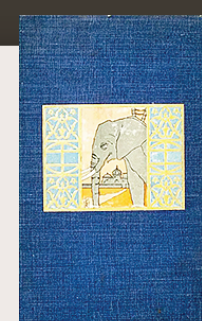
Returns to the U.S. and moves to New York City, where he begins work on his autobiography.

1903

With his wife, Olivia, in poor health, he moves his family back to Italy. She dies the next year.

OCT-OBER 1900

Returns to the U.S.



1897

Travels Europe extensively with his wife and daughters. They live for a while in Austria, Switzerland and England. Publishes "Following the Equator."

JULY 1895

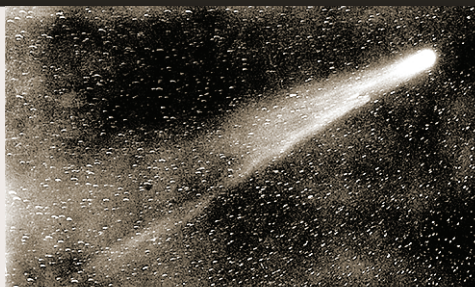
Although he's no longer obligated to pay off his debts, Clemens embarks on a world-wide lecture tour to raise money to do so anyway. He will settle his old debts by 1898.

JUNE 26, 1907

Is awarded an honorary degree from Oxford University in England.

JUNE 18, 1908

Moves to Redding, Connecticut, where he opens the Angelfish Club for young girls in the area.



APRIL 21, 1910

Clemens dies as he had predicted in his autobiography: the day after Halley's Comet makes its closest approach to the sun.

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