

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) in the Town of Elmira
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By Scott W. Deming

The world-renowned author, Mark Twain, was a frequent visitor to our area where he spent summers on Quarry Farm located on East Hill in the Town of Elmira. Mark Twain's connection to the area began when he met native Elmiran, Charles Langdon (who was 14 years Twain's junior and the son of a wealthy coal merchant), in 1867 on a steamship cruise to Europe, Egypt and The Holy Land. Twain had been sponsored on the cruise by a San Francisco, California newspaper to write about his travels during the five-month cruise. During the cruise Charles showed Twain a picture of his sister Olivia and Twain later claimed it was "love at first sight".

His first visit to Elmira was in 1868 from an invitation by Charles Langdon to visit the area and meet his family. This is when he first met Olivia, his younger sister, at the Jervis Langdon Home that was then located on the northwest corner of Church and Main Street in Elmira. It was during this first visit that Twain fell in love with Olivia. As he was leaving the Langdon home, after the week-long visit, Twain was thrown to the ground from the horse drawn surrey but was not seriously injured. He saw this "accident" as an opportunity to remain at the Langdon home a while longer and he was taken back to the house. Olivia proceeded to nurse Twain back to health after a four-week long extended stay. Over the next year Mark and Olivia exchanged numerous letters with Twain proposing marriage in one of the letters and Olivia turned him down. After finally convincing Olivia and her father Jervis Langdon for his daughter's hand in marriage they were engaged in February 1869.

Mark married Olivia Langdon on Feb 8, 1870 at the Langdon home. After their marriage they moved to Buffalo, New York for a year and one half and then relocated to Hartford, Connecticut. They went on to have four children, a son Langdon and three daughters Susy, Clara and Jean. Mark and Olivia were frequent summer guests of Mrs. Susan Langdon Crane (Mrs. Clemens' older sister) and her husband Theodore at Quarry Farm on Crane Road in the town. Prior to his summer visit in 1874 Mrs. Crane had the study built as a surprise for Twain. As a token of her admiration for Clemens she wanted her frequent summer guest to have a quiet place to do his important work while visiting. The study was designed as an exact replica of a pilot house from a Mississippi River boat. The study was originally located about 100 yards from the Quarry Farm house in a location with a wonderful view of the City of Elmira and the Chemung Valley. Many of Mark Twain's famous writings including Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn among others were written over the 30 summers spent at the study.

The last writing in the study was done by Mark Twain in 1903. He came to Elmira in 1904 to bury his wife Olivia following her death during a visit to Florence, Italy. His final visit to Elmira was in 1906. Twain died at his home "Stormfield" in Redding, Connecticut on April 21, 1910 and he is buried in Elmira's Woodlawn Cemetery alongside his wife and their children. Mark Twain's study was donated to Elmira College by Jervis Langdon (Twain's nephew) and was moved in 1952 after 78 years at Quarry Farm to the Elmira College campus so that it would be more accessible to visitors of the area. Today the study is a popular destination for tourists to the area and is visited by thousands of people each year.



Quarry Farm on Crane Road in the Town of Elmira in the 1870's



Mark Twain Study at Quarry Farm on East Hill



Mark Twain on his final visit to the study in 1903



Mark Twain Study being moved to Elmira College Campus in 1952



Mark Twain Study on Elmira College Campus

Information for this Mark Twain Study article were taken from various information from the Elmira Star Gazette articles, Elmira College website, Center for Mark Twain Studies and various sites on the internet.

Writers Note: I continue to look for historic subjects (people, places, homes, historical events, old schools, family history, etc) about the Town of Elmira to write about. If you have any suggestions or information for future articles please e-mail them to me at demingsw@yahoo.com or call me at 607-426-2957