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Huck Finn's journey toasted in New York

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NEW YORK — Harold Evans bent over the round glass-topped table in his sunlit corner office, studying the top page of the 5-inch-thick stack of pages penned by Mark Twain more than 100 years ago.

"NOTICE," the author begins in block letters centered at the top.

"Persons attempting to find a motive in this story will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a point in it will be shot."

"So this is it, is it?" Evans, the pub-

lisher and editor in chief of Random House, mumbled in a clipped British accent.

"This is the famous first page," answered Patrick Martin, the Buffalo lawyer who had hand-carried the copy of the long-missing first half of Twain's original manuscript of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," from the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library to the midtown publishing house Thursday.

The 635 pages weigh at least 10 pounds.

Soon, corks popped, expensive champagne was poured, and book editors and lawyers toasted the completion of the manuscript's long journey from a

steamer trunk in a Los Angeles attic — where it was discovered five years ago, in what some scholars heralded as the literary find of the century — to the edge of publication in book form.

Easily the happiest celebrants were Evans and Alberto Vitale, Random House chairman, who outbid six competitors for rights to the new material, and Martin, who negotiated the deal for the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library Foundation.

Random House, Evans said, aims to bring out a new edition of the famous novel containing the previously unpub-

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lished material by Nov. 1.

"We're pleased to be publishing what will become the standard edition of Twain's classic," he said.

Royalties from sales of the new version, and subsequent editions, will be shared by the Library Foundation, the Mark Twain Foundation of New York and the California granddaughters of James Fraser Gluck, the Buffalo library trustee who received the manuscript from Twain after the author donated it to the library in 1885.

The parties also will split royalties from sales of the June 19 fiction edition of *The New Yorker* magazine containing a passage of the newly discovered material and from future sales of the manuscript in audio cassette and other forms.

The income will quickly cover the undisclosed sum the Library Foundation spent in 1992 to settle a dispute with Gluck's grand-

daughters and the Twain Foundation over ownership of the manuscript, which subsequently was returned to Buffalo and recently went on public display in the Central Library's new Mark Twain Room.

Gluck apparently took the first half of the manuscript home with the intention of having it bound but died before he could carry out the plan. The material, presumed lost, apparently moved with his descendants to Los Angeles, where one of the granddaughters found it in her attic in 1990.

The newly discovered passages demonstrate how Twain's characters and the novel itself developed in different stages, according to Victor Doyno, a University of Buffalo professor and Twain scholar.

Others noted how Twain's words flow gracefully, with few deletions or corrections.

"He was on a roll," said Raniel Menaker, the Random House senior editor who acquired the book.

"He was a natural storyteller,"

said Susan DiSesa, managing director of the company's Modern Library division.

Although "Huckleberry Finn" is more than 100 years old, the novel still has star power in the book world, Ms. DiSesa noted.

Evans, who gained fame as the crusading editor of the *Times of London*, and is married to New Yorker editor Tina Brown, had his reasons for wanting the material.

"I began reading Mark Twain at age 12," he said. "I devoured every book in the library, every Twain piece I could get my hands on, starting with 'Tom Sawyer.'"