

**PUBLISHING**

# For Twain, it's acceptance — but 125 years late

By CHARITY VOGEL

*News Staff Reporter*

A mere 125 years after editors rejected him, a former Buffalonian is getting another chance to publish his work.

The Atlantic Monthly, a prestigious national magazine, has bought the rights to publish Mark Twain's story "A Murder, A Mystery and A Marriage" from the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library. The sale price has not been disclosed.

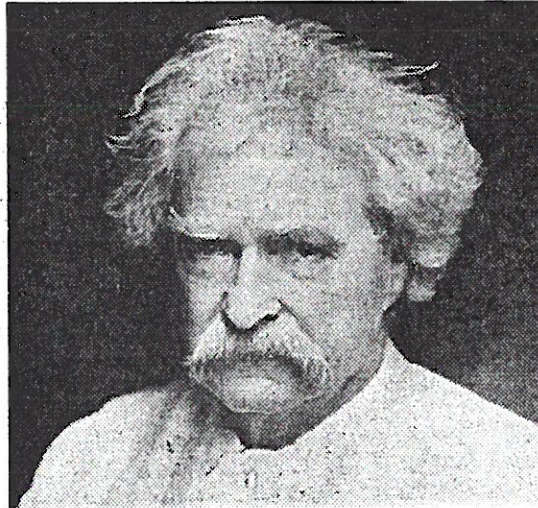
The irony gets better: The Atlantic was the magazine Twain originally pitched the story to — way back in 1876.

"We're having the Atlantic change its mind, as it were, after 125 years," said Patrick E. Martin, attorney for the Public Library Foundation and negotiator of the landmark sale.

"I think," Martin said, "they just felt it belonged to them."

Twain's short story was written in 1876, the year the author began "Huckleberry Finn."

The story was conceived by Twain as a friendly contest, not a literary masterpiece. According to Twain's idea, each of a group of seven or eight writers — mostly Twain's friends and cronies — would take a shot at writing a story that would fit



Associated Press

Mark Twain may have the last laugh on the Atlantic Monthly. The magazine will publish Twain's "A Murder, A Mystery and A Marriage" in June — 125 years after it rejected it the first time.

a particular outline. William Dean Howells, among others, was in on the plan.

The only thing is, Twain is the only one who ever finished the project.

"A Murder . . ." is the result — a tale of crime, romance and mistaken identity.

Diane J. Chrisman, library director,

**See Twain Page A4**

*Buffalo News*  
*1/22/01*

## Twain: 3-month contest will give writers a chance to craft ending

*Continued from Page A1*

said the story's publication will fit perfectly with the writing competition the library is holding this year.

The contest — in which writers will be given the first part of Twain's story and will be asked to finish the tale — will begin March 1 and will end June 1, two weeks before the story appears in full in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

"This is wonderful for the city," Chrisman said. "It brings acclaim to the library and it showcases Buffalo's literary treasures. These are such treasures, and we need to appreciate them."

The story will also be published as a hardcover book by W.W. Norton & Co. later this year.

Library officials said neither of the winning bids will be revealed, just as the winning bid for Buffalo's

sale of print rights to the complete "Huck Finn" manuscript was never revealed. But library sources said the figure for "A Murder . . ." was substantial for a short story.

"I can tell you this: They've exceeded our expectations," said Martin, the attorney.

"This brings a whole new awareness to Buffalo and Erie County as a place of culture and entertainment," said Erie County Executive Joel A. Giambra. "This ties in very nicely with what we're hoping to do in cultural and heritage tourism."

Martin said the *Atlantic Monthly* will publish the story in an issue that will hit newsstands June 15. The Norton book publication will take place in September, he said.

For information on the contest, check the library's Web site at [www.buffalolib.org](http://www.buffalolib.org) or call 858-7182.