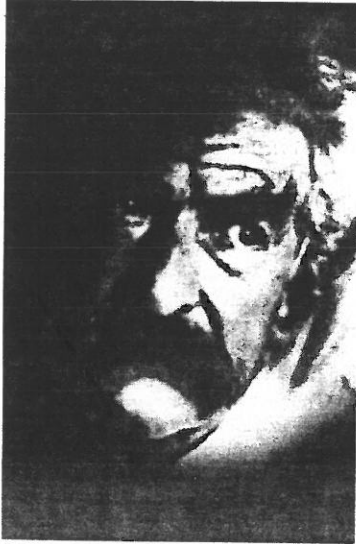


Collaborate with Mark Twain - County Library Launches Writing Contest



In 1876, Mark Twain composed his unpublished short story, "A Murder, A Mystery and a Marriage," shortly after he had moved his family from Buffalo to Hartford, Connecticut.

His tale intertwines a cast of characters where relationships among family members, young lovers, enemies and a mysterious stranger lead to a heinous crime in a remote mid-western town. Twain sent the story to William Dean Howells, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, with the idea that several leading authors of the day would develop the plot described in his work into their own story, each of which would be published thereafter in the magazine. For reasons unknown, the idea never materialized and Twain's version of the story remained unpublished.

This is where the Buffalo & Erie County Library (B&ECPL) comes in. Now, the B&ECPL is making good on that proposal.

The Mark Twain Writing Contest will give professional and amateur writers of Erie County and all over the world, the chance to make Twain's idea materialize. The library has posted the first two chapters of "A Murder, A Mystery and a Marriage"

on its website, www.buffalolib.org and participants will create their own ending based on these chapters. All entries must be postmarked by June 1.

A young writers category with local and international divisions is being held for students ages 14-18.

After an initial screening by the State University of New York at Buffalo (UB), adult finalists will have their work judged by accomplished authors and scholars. They include novelists and area natives Joyce Carol Oates and Lauren Belfer, humorist and Atlantic contributor Roy Blount, author and documentary filmmaker Dayton Duncan and scholars Robert Hist of the Mark Twain Project and honorary member Leslie Fiedler of UB.

A panel of Western New York educators and writers will evaluate final entries from the young writers category. Panelists include: author and screenwriter Gabrielle Burton, Orchard Park Superintendent Chuck Stoddart, Buffalo State professor and Twain specialist Tom Reigstad, writer and Canisius College professor Mick Cochran, Arts Council of Buffalo and Erie County Executive Director Celeste Lawson and Buffalo News First Sunday editor Charles Anzalone.

Winners will be announced in October and honored at a recognition reception. Cash prizes of \$5,000 for first place, \$3,000 for second and \$1,000 for third will be awarded in the international competition. The young writers also will have a shot at three cash prizes; \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second and \$250 for third. Winning entries from all categories will be posted on the library's website.

After 125 years, *The Atlantic Monthly* will publish Twain's complete version of "A Murder, A Mystery and a Marriage" in its July issue.

The B&ECPL has a long history with Twain and his writings. Twain himself was a member of the B&ECPL's predecessor, the Young Men's Association, while he lived in

Buffalo and served as editor of *The Buffalo Express* newspaper from 1869-1871.

Those interested in participating in

the Mark Twain Writing Competition should visit www.buffalolib.org or call 858-7181 for complete details and contest rules.