



2010 Ghost Walk

Ghosts played by Jean Peterson, Bill Christofels, Marty King, Tina Eyer, Jim Wellington

Susan Crane

Although I was nearly 10 years older than my sister Livy we were very close. I also became close with her husband, perhaps you know him as Mark Twain. I knew him as Sam and on several occasions he called me ‘Saint Susan.’ For I know he certainly tried my patience at times.

Having grown up in Elmira it seemed natural that Livy would spend some time here when she had a family of her own. For nearly twenty summers Livy and Sam brought their girls (Susy, Clara and Jean) to Elmira. In fact all three girls were born right here in Elmira. Though they spent some time with Mother at her home on North Main Street, most of their time was spent up at Quarry Farm. My father, Jervis Langdon, had purchased the farm to get away from the heat of the city during the summer. After his death, my husband, Theodore, and I inherited the farm and we converted it our year-round home. As I wanted everyone to be comfortable and at ease, I nicknamed the farm ‘Do-as-you-please-hall’, though the girls liked to call it ‘Rest & Be Thankful.’ Livy conducted lessons with the girls, read, and visited with family and friends. The girls explored the farm, went on picnics, visited with their Langdon cousins, and played in their playhouse that I had built for them. The girls also enjoyed the animals – ducks, chickens, ponies, dogs, cats and even a donkey.

What did Sam do? Well Sam wrote, but there was just one small problem. When Sam wrote he smoked and when he smoked he wrote. He smoked between 30 and 40 cigars a day. After three summers of having my house constantly filled with smoke I had a study built for Sam. Located several yards away from the house, the study was designed in the shape of a steamboat pilot’s house and had 8 sides. There was just enough room for a sofa, table and a few chairs. Sam called it his ‘cozy nest.’ The study provided Sam the quiet and privacy he needed to work while saving the rest of us from the cigar smoke.

Every morning Livy made sure Sam had a good breakfast before he headed to the study as he often worked straight through till dinner without even stopping for lunch. Sometimes he wrote as much as 3,000 words a day. After dinner everyone would gather on the porch to hear what Sam had written that day. We heard *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Tramp Abroad*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and *A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur’s Court*. Those were good summers. I like to think that Sam wrote better in his study on the hill than anywhere else.



2010 Ghost Walk

Ghosts played by Jean Peterson, Bill Christofels, Marty King, Tina Eyer, Jim Wellington

Thomas K. Beecher

As the pastor of the Park Church for nearly 50 years, I've preached a lot of sermons in my day, but you didn't come here tonight for a typical Thomas K. Beecher sermon. No, you came here tonight to hear about Mark Twain. I knew him as Sam Clemens, husband of Livy Langdon, the daughter of my one of my dearest friend.

Now, I first met Livy Langdon when her father, Jervis, invited me to be pastor of the Park Church in 1853. Her family were wealthy, prominent members of the congregation, good people and staunch abolitionists. As a girl, Livy attended the Sunday School taught by my wife, Julia, and when she fell sick as a teen, I used to bring her books to read in bed. Yes, Livy was a fine, upstanding Christian woman, so her parents were just a bit worried when her suitor turned out to be a cigar-smoking, hard-drinking writer from out West.

Sam had met Livy's younger brother, Charlie, on the Mediterranean cruise ship *Quaker City* in June of 1867 and then he introduced the two of them over the New Year. I met Sam a few times while they were courting. He seemed Livy's opposite in every way; coarse where she was refined, loud where she was quiet, but he made her laugh and he thought the world of her and sometimes that's enough. At the time, I was in the middle of a row with Ministerial Union of Elmira and Sam wrote quite the editorial in my defense. I've never been sure how much of it he really meant, but it certainly went a long way to help win over the Langdons. I liked him though, for all his rough edges.

In the end, I married them on February 2, 1870 with a little help from Sam's old friend, Reverend Joseph Twichell. It was an evening wedding with dancing and dinner but no alcohol, something I think Sam regretted. The couple moved to Buffalo soon after, and then to Hartford later on, but they were back here in Elmira fairly regularly, summers especially. Livy made a point of keeping up with their membership dues at Park Church, even if they rarely attended, and I had the pleasure of baptizing their oldest girl, Susy. Unfortunately, I also presided over Susy Clemens' funeral too, and her brother Langdon's as well. God calls each of us to Him eventually, but it's always a tragedy when they go so young.

I saw the Clemens through good times and bad, as any good pastor should, but I like to think I was more than that to Sam. We were friends. My wife, Julia, and I lived just down the hill from Quarry Farm and he'd stop by for a chat or a game of billiards. We'd play whenever he was in town, either at my house or at the church or sometimes down at the Rathbun Hotel. Sam Clemens was a damn fine billiard player, a pretty good writer (*sarcastic, joking*), a devoted husband and a good friend.



2010 Ghost Walk

Ghosts played by Jean Peterson, Bill Christofels, Marty King, Tina Eyer, Jim Wellington

Rachel Gleason

Did you know back before my husband, Silas, and I opened our Water Cure in 1852 up on East Hill there wasn't a lady doctor to be had in the whole of Chemung County? Oh, there were midwives and such, but no one to help with all the ailments a woman might not want to see a male doctor for. I'm Rachel Gleason, Dr. Gleason, and I specialized in hydrotherapy, that's treating patients with water, and lady troubles. I used to lecture on women's health and even wrote a book, *Talks to My Patients: Hints on Getting Well and Keeping Well*, based on my lectures.

Now, I first met Sam Clemens, that's Mark Twain to his readers, through his wife, Livy. Livy was a lovely woman but a sickly one. She first became a patient of mine back in 1860. She was bedridden and in and out of sanitariums for years. She recovered eventually, of course, enough to meet and marry her Mr. Clemens, but her health was always fragile. In February of 1871 she got typhoid fever and that was when I became her personal physician. The Clemens were living in Buffalo at the time and Sam was convinced that their local doctor was actually making Livy worse. Well, Sam wrote for me to come and I stayed with them for over a month until Livy was recovered. After that, Livy would see no other doctor but me or someone I'd vouched for and Sam declared that I was the best physician in Elmira.

I didn't just treat Livy for all her various ailments, no, I was also the attending physician at the births of all three Clemens girls. Livy's first child, a boy named Langdon, had been born early while the couple was in Buffalo and both mother and child had a rough time of it. Their first daughter, Susy, was born right here in Elmira at the Langdon home. She was just shy of 5 pounds, which is rather small really. Of course, from the way Sam carried on you'd have thought she was enormous, although I suppose every father is convinced their new baby is remarkable. Clara and Jean I delivered up at Quarry Farm. Clara was born on June 8, 1874. My daughter Adella and I had gone up the night before to tend Livy and it was only after the baby was born that I learned that my dear father had passed away in the night.

Working for the Clemens certainly kept me on my toes. Livy was a dear woman but she was never really healthy. There were a number of times when I was called to their home in Hartford to tend to her and on occasion they'd write asking for the name of a reputable lady doctor when Livy fell ill while they were traveling. I retired in 1898 when my husband fell ill, but the Clemens and I never lost touch. I was always after Sam to quit his smoking, but wouldn't you know it, he outlived us all.



2010 Ghost Walk

Ghosts played by Jean Peterson, Bill Christofels, Marty King, Tina Eyer, Jim Wellington

Theodore Crane

Have you ever heard of “A True Story, Word for Word as I Heard It”? It was written by a man by the name of Sam Clemens, though I suppose you know him as Mark Twain. Oddly enough, it *is* true. My name is Theodore Crane and that was the story told to us, more or less, one summer’s eve up at the farm by our cook, Mary Ann Cord.

Now, the way Sam told it, her name was Aunt Rachel, but, other than that small lie, he was faithful to the truth. Mary Ann was indeed born a slave down South, just like Sam wrote. She had a husband and seven children, and loved them each dearly, although her clear favorite was little Henry, the baby of the family. Oh, the look on her face when she spoke of him, his boldness and mischief, and the nasty scar across his forehead which was the result of both. And, again, the look on her face when she lost them all, sold away for the sake of her mistress’s debt. Now, I had been an abolitionist all my life, but, even if I had not, the tears down that woman’s face as she spoke of her loss would have convinced me wholly of the evils of that particular institution. As they took her Henry, he gave her a ring and swore he would escape and come find her. The ring never made it into Sam’s version of the tale, but it was still on her finger when she told us of it.

Years later, towards the end of the Civil War, she was cooking on a plantation in North Carolina when a group of colored Union soldiers came in, more in search of trouble than food. I suppose it would have been a fine story if she had recognized her son right there, but the truth is she threw him out along with the rest of the trouble-makers, and if the world was a crueller place, that would have been the end of the story right there. Thank the Lord he came back for breakfast. It is the next morning where the truth gets might sticky. Now, in Sam’s version, Mary Ann tending the stove when she saw a man with a scar just like Henry’s and that was when she recognized him. According to Mary Ann, he was sitting at the table, fiddling about with his hair and that was how she came to notice the scar. I have had the story from Henry as well and he swears that deep down he knew she was his mother and that was why he pushed his hair back and revealed the scar just as she walked by. Either way, she saw the scar indeed and fainted dead away at the sight of it and that, of course, is when Henry saw the ring and knew for certain that she was indeed his mother.

Now, I met Mary Ann here in Elmira when my wife Susan and I hired her as cook at Quarry Farm in 1870, but I had already know Henry for years. He had come to the city in 1858, an escaped slave all of 13 years old, and set himself up as a barber. Why, my whiskers have certainly known the feel of his blades many a time. He had been searching, on and off for his mother for years when he finally found her and, after the war, he brought her home with him to Elmira. She married Primus Cord, a local man of some standing in the colored community, and made a well deserved name for herself as a top notch cook. Sam published her story in the literary magazine *Atlantic Monthly* in 1874, and you ought to read it if you have never had the pleasure. You will not regret it, nor forget it if you do.