

Mark Twain Museum Interpretive Center



Hannibal, Missouri

Virtual Tour by Rachel Thornton, age 12

Special points of interest:

- * The timeline of Sam Clemens and his family
- * The printing press
- * The octagonal room that explains the real people behind the fictional characters
- * The dress worn by Sam Clemens' mother

The Interpretive Center serves as the introduction to the Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum. It was established in 1983 and reworked in 2004-2005 to provide exhibits relevant to Samuel L. Clemens and to share Mark Twain's reflections of Hannibal as described in his writings. This reinterpretation is part of the museum's Phase I master planning project, designed to create more exhibits throughout the museum complex.

This building includes two rooms. The first uses a timeline format to describe Clemens' 74 years, including his childhood in Hannibal. Here visitors can see a typesetting case and printing press similar to that which Clemens would have used as a printer's apprentice in his youth. The second room is octagonal in shape to suggest the writing study Twain used at Quarry Farm in New York where he wrote several of his greatest works. This room focuses on his books and on the real people who influenced the development



An old printing press like the one Sam Clemens would have used is displayed at the Interpretive Center. A typesetting case like the one on display surely played a role in Clemens' facility with language. Young Sam became a typesetter at the age of 11 when his father died unexpectedly, and Sam had to help support the family.

“Mind
your Ps
and Qs”

A timeline guides visitors through the important events in Clemens' life

of some of Twain's most famous characters.

The Interpretive Center is a visitor's first stop in Hannibal and sets the stage to learn more about America's most beloved author. The museum properties include the childhood homes of people who would serve as the inspiration for Becky Thatcher and Huckleberry Finn. Now that you have "visited" the Interpretive Center, please enjoy the rest of your virtual tour.
~R.T.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Because the lower case “p” and “q” were so similar in appearance, apprentices were told to “mind your Ps and Qs” - a term we still use today!
- Because fewer capital letters were needed, they were stored in the upper case of the typesetter's case. Smaller letters were more frequently used, so they were stored in the easily accessible lower case. Hmmm... upper case, lower case... guess those terms stuck!
- Have you ever felt “out of sorts” before? Well, each group of letter was called “sorts” and nothing was more frustrating than running out of sorts! Yes, another term from the early days of printing is still in use today!

This virtual tour of the Mark Twain Cave in Hannibal, Missouri was written by Rachel Thornton from Portage, Indiana as a project for the 2nd Annual Mark Twain Young Authors Workshop.