



Mark Twain in Paradise: His Voyages to Bermuda (MARK TWAIN & HIS CIRCLE)

Donald Hoffmann

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For Mark Twain, it was love at first landfall. Samuel Clemens first encountered the Bermuda Islands in 1867 on a return voyage from the Holy Land and found them much to his liking. One of the most isolated spots in the world, Bermuda offered the writer a refuge from his harried and sometimes sad existence on the mainland, and this island paradise called him back another seven times. Clemens found that Bermuda's beauty, pace, weather, and company were just the medicine he needed, and its seafaring culture with few connections to the outside world appealed to his love of travel by water.

This book is the first comprehensive study of Clemens's love affair with Bermuda, a vivid depiction of a celebrated author on recurring vacations. Donald Hoffmann has culled and clarified passages from Mark Twain's travel pieces, letters, and unpublished autobiographical dictation—with cross-references to his fiction and infrequently cited short pieces—to create a little-known view of the author at leisure on his fantasy island.

Mark Twain in Paradise sheds light on both Clemens's complex character and the topography and history of the islands. Hoffmann has plumbed the voluminous Mark Twain scholarship and Bermudian archives to faithfully re-create turn-of-the-century Bermuda, supplying historical and biographical background to give his narrative texture and depth. He offers insight into Bermuda's natural environment, traditional stone houses, and romantic past, and he presents dozens of illustrations, both vintage and new, showing that much of what Mark Twain described can still be seen today.

Hoffmann also provides insight into the social circles Clemens moved in—and sometimes collected around himself. When visiting the islands, he rubbed shoulders with the likes of socialist Upton Sinclair and multimillionaire Henry H. Rogers; with Woodrow Wilson and his lover, socialite Mary Peck; as well as with the young girls to whom he enjoyed playing grandfather.

“You go to heaven if you want to,” Mark Twain wrote from Bermuda in 1910 during his long last visit. “I'd druther stay here.” And because much of what Clemens enjoyed in the islands is still available to experience today, visitors to Bermuda can now have America's favorite author as their guide. *Mark Twain in Paradise* is an unexpected addition to the vast literature by and about Mark Twain and a work of travel literature unlike any other.

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