

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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ORIGINAL "TOM SAWYER" MANUSCRIPT GOES ON VIEW AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
WITH LETTERS FROM MARK TWAIN COMMENTING ON LITERARY VANITIES AND THE
POSITION OF TRUTH IN THIS WORLD

The Museum of Modern Art, 14 West 49 Street, announces that it has obtained from Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., the loan of the original manuscript of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain written nearly sixty-five years ago. The manuscript will go on public exhibition today as part of the Museum's current exhibition The Making of a Contemporary Film, based on the Selznick motion picture production of Tom Sawyer soon to be released. The closing date of the exhibition has been extended to Monday night, February 14.

The exhibition includes several early editions of the book Tom Sawyer, pages from the original scenario and revisions, voluminous research material, production charts, models of sets, costumes, props, make-up materials, original color sketches, stills, production photographs and examples or reproductions of other objects, activities and memoranda that go into the making of a modern motion picture.

Georgetown University received the manuscript of Tom Sawyer in April 1934 as the gift of Nicholas F. Brady, who at one time lived across the street from Mark Twain's New York home on the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue and 9th Street. Tom Sawyer had been a favorite of Mr. Brady's since boyhood and he could glance across the street and see its author, whom he knew slightly, propped up in bed writing while he smoked a long cigar. When the original manuscript of Tom Sawyer became available years later Mr. Brady bought it. Mark Twain wrote Tom Sawyer on small, ruled sheets of tablet note paper, 876 sheets for the entire book. Most of the pages were written on only one side, with occasional corrections in the author's hand. It was written at the rate of about fifty pages a day. To outwit foreign book piracy the story was published and copyrighted in England by the firm of Chatto and Windus of London six months before its publication in this country in 1876 by the American Publishing Company.

A few years after the book was published many small travelling stock companies and shoestring producers were making their own dramatizations of Tom Sawyer without, as a rule, bothering to get permission from or even inform the author. One theatrical manager, however, wrote Mark Twain that he had "taken the liberty." To his letter Mark Twain replied: "You are No. 1365. When 1364 sweater and better people, including the author, have tried to dramatize Tom Sawyer and did not arrive what sort of a show do you suppose you stand?...Tom Sawyer is simply a hymn put into prose form to give it a worldly air."

Later, however, Mark Twain agreed to let Paul Kester dramatize Tom Sawyer and wrote him under date of March 24, 1900:

"I should like to see Tom Sawyer staged. If you will agree upon royalties with Mr. [William Dean] Howells I will accept the result....You need not submit the play to my approval--I'd much rather have the public verdict....Turn the book upside down and inside out if you want to. If you wish to add people, incidents, morals, immorals, or anything else do it with a free hand. My literary vanities are dead and nothing that I have written is sacred to me."

On March 9, 1903 he wrote Mr. Kester again:

"I shall express the play to Virginia today or tomorrow. Mrs. Clemens has read it and is as greatly pleased with it as I am.

"P.S. There are three instances of spitting in it. They mar it. They are truths; but Truth maintains the most of her credit in the world by getting crushed to earth every now and then by a friendly hand. Do her this service in this case."

Motion picture productions of Tom Sawyer started in 1917 with a silent film made by Paramount with Jack Pickford. Paramount also produced a sound film of the story in 1930 with Jackie Coogan. In addition to the Selznick Tom Sawyer soon to be released with Tommy Kelly as the lead, the Ukraine Film, Kiev, has within the last year completed a Russian Tom Sawyer in which Tom is played by Kotya Kulchitzki and Huck by Kolya Katzovich. Stills from all these motion picture productions of Tom Sawyer may be seen in the exhibition The Making of a Contemporary Film at The Museum of Modern Art through Monday, February 14.