

# Nev. newspaper where Twain started is revived

By Martin Griffith, AP

The historic Nevada newspaper where Mark Twain cut his journalistic teeth is back in publication for the first time in three decades, and its owners plan to uphold tradition by offering more than just real news.

The *Territorial Enterprise* was revived as an online and monthly print publication this week by Capitol Publishing Group, the parent company of a weekly newspaper in Jefferson City, Mo., that focuses on politics and government.

Samuel Clemens, Twain's real name, assumed his pen name and developed his penchant for western tall tales when he was a reporter from 1862 to 1864 at the feisty newspaper in Virginia City, about 20 miles southeast of Reno.

The *Territorial Enterprise*, based by its new owners in nearby Carson City, plans to feature yarns in keeping with Twain's spirit, and cover politics, government, business and culture across the state.

"For the most part, the news content will be professional, solid reporting," editor Elizabeth Thompson said. "Sprinkled in and among that we intend to have fun with fictional and partly fictional stories from time to time."

Ron James, former Nevada state historic preservation officer and author of four books on Virginia City, welcomed the newspaper's return to publication.

"Anytime you resurrect an institution like that it's a positive thing and we have to be pleased with that," he said.

James said the *Territorial Enterprise* was one of the most

prestigious newspapers in the West in the 1860s and 1870s because of its serious coverage of mining in one of the richest mineral troves ever: the Comstock Lode.

Twain was among a group of talented journalists at the newspaper who perfected the art of the western tall tale with articles that became legendary for their wit, he added.

“I’ve always said Samuel Clemens was born in Missouri and Mark Twain was born in Nevada, and without his western sojourn there’s no way he would have been a nationally renowned author,” James said. “He and the other reporters didn’t spend all their time lying to the public, just a portion of their time.”

Still, the newspaper was regarded as good journalism, James said.

The Territorial Enterprise, the first newspaper printed in Nevada, was founded in 1858 and ceased publication in 1893. It has sputtered to life from time to time since then but has not achieved its former prominence except for a decade in the mid-20th century when it was under the ownership of writers Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg. It was last published in the 1980s.

Thompson referred questions about the newspaper’s new owners to Scott Faughn, publisher of both the *Territorial Enterprise* and the *Missouri Times*. He did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Faughn, a former mayor of Poplar Bluff, Mo., was a campaign manager for Rod Jetton, a Republican who served as Missouri House speaker from 2005 to 2009 and now co-owns the Jefferson City, Mo., newspaper.

Faughn told the Associated Press in 2013 that both are committed to providing unbiased news coverage.

Both have had legal problems in the past. Jetton was charged with felony assault of a woman at her home in 2009 and was sentenced to probation after pleading guilty to a reduced misdemeanor charge in 2011.

Faughn was convicted in 2007 on three felony counts after he was accused of forging checks on an account for a highway expansion in southeast Missouri. He was fined \$1,500.

Thompson is a former publisher of the Nevada News Bureau, an online news service run by a leading Nevada conservative anti-tax activist. It shut down in 2012.

She points with pride to her inaugural edition of the *Territorial Enterprise*, which included a Twain-like fictional piece titled "The True Story of the Comstock Lode Discovery," along with an interview with Gov. Brian Sandoval, profiles of freshman Nevada lawmakers and a story on a request by Nevada cities for a rate increase for releasing public records.

The newspaper will start out by being published monthly with the help of one reporter and freelancers, Thompson said.

"I'm absolutely thrilled to, in some small way, be carrying on the tradition and spirit of Mark Twain and bringing something new to the publication as well," she said.