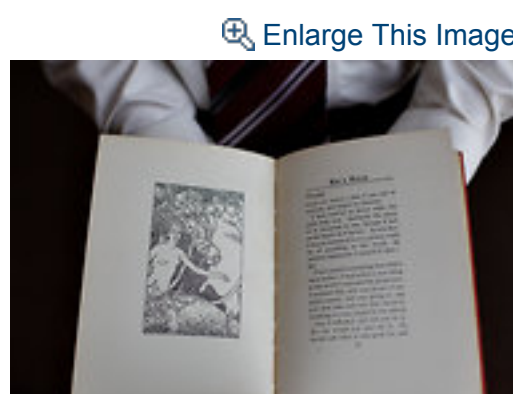


Century After It Was Banned, Place of Honor for Twain Tale

By **ABBY GOODNOUGH**
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Evan McGlinn for The New York Times
A copy of "Eve's Diary" (held by Richard Whitehead). The New York Times was among the newspapers that wrote about its banning in 1906.

Multimedia

[A Massachusetts Librarian Draws the Line at 'Eve's Diary' \(Nov. 24, 1906\)](#)

[All After 'Eve's Diary' \(Nov. 26, 1906\)](#)

Readers' Comments

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CHARLTON, Mass. — It took only 105 years, but "Eve's Diary" is back on the shelf.

Richard Whitehead was researching his new role as a trustee of the public library here when he stumbled on an old, forgotten controversy about the book, [Mark Twain's](#) sly interpretation of the Adam and Eve story.

In 1906, he learned, the library's trustees voted to ban "Eve's Diary" because the illustrations, by Lester Ralph, showed a naked (though not graphically so) Eve exploring the wonders of Eden.

"There's nothing outrageous about them," Mr. Whitehead said. "It's kind of a shame that for what seems to me like very good artwork, a great piece of literature was banned."

The book was among 100 that the small [Charlton Public Library](#) added to its collection that year, and the only one that the trustees — the town clerk, a minister and an undertaker — found objectionable. Newspapers around the country wrote with amusement or indignation about the ban, with [The New York Times reporting](#) on Nov. 24, 1906,

that the town's librarian, one Hattie L. Carpenter, had perused the Twain book before putting it into circulation and informed Frank Wakefield, a trustee, that she "had her doubts."

"After looking long and earnestly at one picture depicting Eve pensively reclining on a rock," said the Times article, which ran on the front page, "Mr. Wakefield decided to act."

More than a century later, Mr. Whitehead and his fellow trustees voted unanimously (with one of the six absent) on Tuesday to lift the ban and bring "Eve's Diary" back to their brick library on Main Street. Two copies of the book — with Mr. Ralph's illustrations, which now seem quite chaste — were put into circulation on Wednesday, as was an audio version for those who prefer to conjure their own images.

Mr. Whitehead, an engineering manager who has lived here for 20 years, also bought and donated an older edition of the book to be displayed in a glass case. It will be front-and-center in an exhibit the library is putting together for national [Banned Book Week](#), which starts on Saturday.

"Banned Book Week is about celebrating the freedom to read," Mr. Whitehead said, "and here our small-town library had been cited in numerous pieces as a place that had banned a book from a great American writer. This was an opportunity to set that right."

Mr. Whitehead said he and the other trustees did not want to cast aspersions on their predecessors. But Twain did, calling them "the freaks of the Charlton Library" in a 1907 letter signed with his real name, Samuel L. Clemens. He was already well accustomed to stirring controversy with his writings.

"But the truth is, that when a library expels a book of mine and leaves an unexpurgated Bible lying around where unprotected youth and age can get hold of it, the deep unconscious irony of it delights me and doesn't anger me," he wrote in [the letter](#) to a friend, Mrs. F. G. Whitmore of Hartford.

Cheryl Hansen, the library director, said she hoped to generate enough interest in "Eve's Diary" among the town's roughly 13,000 residents to make up for its century-long banishment. Ms. Hansen said she would recommend the book as a selection for the library's book club.

Shelley Fisher Fishkin, a Twain scholar at Stanford University, said the book, written in Eve's voice and focusing on her relationship with Adam, was "infused with his appreciation for the women he was close to." Twain wrote it shortly after his wife, Olivia, died.

Stefan Sage, another library trustee, said that while he was "not particularly" a Twain fan, "Eve's Diary" had captivated him.

"The first page just sucked me in," said Mr. Sage, who has moved on to the audio book. "I'm a very slow reader, but I finished it in one sitting."

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