

Virtual Tour

By Adam
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age 12



Special points of interest:

- Jackson's Island
- Lover's Leap
- The Mark Twain Riverboat
- Turtle Island
- Cardiff Hill



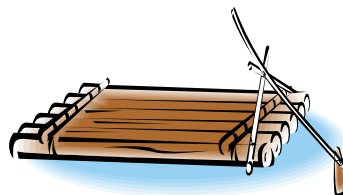
The river - one of Tom Sawyer's playgrounds, the river Huck Finn rafted from Hannibal to Arkansas, and the river Mark Twain writes about in all of his books. What is this river? It is Big Muddy, the Mighty Mississippi River.

The Mississippi is one of the most compelling rivers in the world. It is astonishing to see for miles the river winding its way through the trees like a giant shimmering snake cutting its way through grass and hills, towns and farms. With its wide banks and its rich brown color, it is one of the most irresistible sights to see in Hannibal. The river reaches from Minnesota to Louisiana. It cuts America right in half, dividing it into East and West. And Hannibal stands as one its most famous outposts.

As one of the most famous river towns in America, tourists flock to Hannibal from the United States and around the globe to see all this charming city has to offer. Without Mark Twain and the river,

Hannibal might be simply a quaint and quiet river town. But Twain's legacy has made Hannibal "America's hometown."

The Mississippi played an important role in Mark Twain's life. In all of his books the river takes an important role, even playing the lead character in *Life on the Mississippi*. In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Tom many times plays hooky from school and instead swims with his friends. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck, trying to escape normal society, joins with Jim, a runaway slave, and the two attempted to raft the Mississippi all the way to Cairo in Illinois, which was a free state. The river in many ways influenced



Huck and Jim rafted the river in search of freedom.

his writings.

From Cardiff Hill, Twain's description of the Mississippi still holds true: "*From this vantage ground the extensive view up and down the river, and wide over the wooded expanses of Illinois, is very beautiful—one of the most beautiful on the Mississippi it was satisfyingly beautiful to me...*"

Twain also described the Mississippi as an independent force: "*The Mississippi River will always have its way; no engineering skill can persuade it to do otherwise.*"

Cities like Hannibal know the river's strength and know what it can do. Hannibal has seen many floods and will see many more. Although the historical downtown is protected by levees constructed in 1993, citizens still worry when the water starts to climb. They know that Mark Twain was right: the river will always have its way.

For tourists in Hannibal the only real "accurate" way to cross the Mississippi River is by the Mark Twain



A statue of Mark Twain keeps an eye on the Mississippi River from this vantage point in Riverview Park.

“...one permanent ambition...”

Riverboat. The riverboat provides a historical and interesting way to experience Hannibal’s perspective of the Mississippi River. The riverboat takes tourists upstream, downstream, and then back to Hannibal. Captain Steve Terry uses an intercom to narrate the sites that are unique to Hannibal.

Sam Clemens himself spent four years piloting and traveling the river on a steamboat (1857-1861). He fondly remembered, “When I was a

boy there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was to be a steamboat man.” Had it not been for the outbreak of the Civil War, which closed river traffic, Sam Clemens might have remained a steamboat man and the term “mark twain” would have only meant “two fathoms” deep instead of becoming the pen name of America’s most famous author.

And although Clemens did leave his career on the river, he carried its exquisite memories with him the rest of his life. *“When I find a well-drawn character in fiction or biography I generally take a warm personal interest in him, for the reason that I have known him before--met him on the river.”*

~A.W.

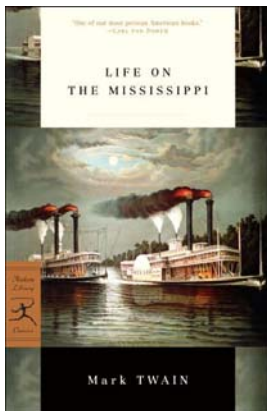


Summer 2008

During the floods of 2008 Hannibal’s levee was all that kept the mighty river from spilling into the downtown where Sam Clemens grew up. This building is on stilts, which is why it appears that the waters have not risen as high as the levee indicates. Across the way is the Illinois shore, also holding its own against the powerful forces.



“When I find a well-drawn character in fiction or biography I generally take a warm personal interest in him, for the reason that I have known him before--met him on the river.”
~Mark Twain



Recommended reading for all would-be river rats



The railroad bridge at Hannibal appears to be built upon the surface of the river. Both river traffic and trains halted during the flooding of 2008. *“The Mississippi River will always have its way.”* Mark Twain clearly spoke from experience when he penned those words.

This virtual tour of the Mississippi River in Hannibal, Missouri was written by Adam Williams from Jonesboro, Arkansas as a project for the 2nd Annual Mark Twain Young Authors Workshop.