

# MUSICAL NOTES

A Guide to Goodspeed Musicals Productions  
2008 Season



# BIG RIVER

THE ADVENTURES OF  
HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Music and Lyrics by

Roger Miller

Book by

William Hauptman

adapted from the novel by Mark Twain

September 26—November 29

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# Big River: SYNOPSIS

**Notice: Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot. By order of the author...Mark Twain.**

This "Notice" is found in all editions of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and so it is true of *Big River* as well. And when Huck Finn appears on stage, he utters the same words that Huck speaks in the novel: "You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*."

Once all this is taken care of we are off with Huck and "the story I'm enacting tonight. It's about me and my friend, a runaway slave named Jim, and a long journey we took together." But to begin the journey, we have to begin at home...in this case, in Missouri, at the home of Widow Douglas, Huck's guardian, ever since his father disappeared. She and the school teacher, Miss Watson, are worried that Huck is going to turn out as worthless as his father and warn him that

***You better learn to read and you better learn your writin'  
Or you'll never get to heaven 'cause you won't know how.***



another of Huck's protectors, and the rest of the townspeople urge proper behavior

***You better do your reading  
And you better read your Bible  
Do you wanna go to heaven if you don't go to hell***

Huck would much prefer to be with Tom Sawyer and the gang. So as soon as possible, he sneaks off to Injun Joe's Cave. There, the boy's vow...

***Well if the bunch of us all stick together  
And we all go down as one  
We could be highway robbers  
We could be killers just out to have fun***

Huck have bigger dreams to "light out for the Western territories; to steal some horses and go live amongst the Injuns." But Huck's not sure that Tom will follow through on these plans.

***I have lived in the darkness for so long  
I am waiting for the light to shine.***

There are horizons he wants to cross, dreams that need to be fulfilled.

Back at the Widow's, there is a surprise waitin' for him...his father, Pap, who insists that as his rightful father, and a reformed one at that, Huck should be livin' with him. (More important, he's also got his mind set on helpin' himself to Huck's share of the money Huck and Tom found in Injun Joe's Cave—that happened in *Tom Sawyer*.) Nothing legal can stop him from taking Huck, and they head off to Pap's cabin on the Illinois side of the Mississippi.

There Pap, with a few too many drinks in his belly, rails against the injustices of the Guv'ment and how they have their hands into everything, leaving the poor citizens helpless to stop them, especially when "a man's got his son all raised up at last, ready to go to work and do something for him to give him a rest—they try to take him away. What kind of government is that?" More drink leads to a brief scuffle between father and son, before Pap passes out...with a slight bit of help from Huck.

The next day Huck runs away after, first, killing a wild hog and spilling its blood around so that people would think that he had been murdered. As a way of thanks to the hog, Tom Sawyer sings a eulogy to it

***Well, I always heard but I ain't too sure  
That a man's best friend is a mangy cur  
But I kinda favor the hog myself  
How about a hand for the hog.***

Stealing his father's canoe, Huck paddles off to Jackson's Island, in the middle of the Mississippi.

The next day he watches search parties on the river hunting for his body. Feeling lonely, he begins to explore the island and discovers Miss Watson's slave, Jim, who has run off and plans to go down the Mississippi to the junction of the Ohio River and then head north to the free states. This, of course, is highly illegal and could cost him his life. Huck decides that they should flee together. "You can't do it alone. But if I come along, I can tell people you belong to me, and they won't bother you."

As they make plans for travel, they hear dogs and people approaching, so though the raft is not completely ready, Huck and Jim shove off and head down the river.

***Look out for me, oh muddy water  
Your mysteries are deep and wide  
And I got a need for going someplace  
And I got a need to climb upon your back and ride.***

On the way down river, past St. Louis, they pass a flatboat filled with runaway slaves who have been caught and are being returned. Jim vows that when he is a free man he will work to make money enough to buy his wife and two children, all of whom are slaves. Huck begins to realize the magnitude of what he is doing with Jim, and he is torn between his friendship and the need to obey the law and give Jim up. At the moment, he comes down on the side of helping Jim.



Unfortunately, the raft sails past Cairo, Illinois, where the Ohio joins the Mississippi. They are now heading deeper into the South and danger. Along the way, they pick up the King and the Duke. Plotting continuously, these two ne'er-do-wells, sometime actors, fakirs, swindlers and cheats manage to convince Huck and Jim of their authenticity and rope them into working with them in their various schemes...many of which Huck admires. The most outrageous of all is "The Royal Nonesuch"

***She's got one big breast  
In the middle of her chest  
And an eye in the middle of her nose  
So says I, if you look her in the eye  
You're better off looking up her nose.***

In Bricktown, Arkansas, they set up a traveling show to present some poetry of William Shakespeare and this freak of nature, "brought from the jungles of Borneo at great expense." For fifty cents, one half of a dollar, servants ten cents (ladies not permitted) the customers can see this shocking sight for themselves. With the King outfitted in an outlandish hermaphroditic costume, the show goes on and a wagonload of money is collected, even though the audience feels they have surely been swindled. While the King and the Duke celebrate, Huck goes back to tell Jim of their success.

Jim is chained to the raft—his current situation since the King and Duke have joined them—for he is their backup plan: any trouble, and they'll turn Huck in for a slave stealer, and sell Jim down the river. Huck and Jim know they can't just up and leave and need to be careful with how they deal with their traveling companions. Jim believes that Huck will think of something, because he's the "only white person ever kept his word to Jim." But Jim also knows that

***I see the same stars through my window  
You see through yours  
But we're worlds apart  
I see the same skies through brown eyes  
That you see through blue  
But we're worlds apart***

Yet another scheme, involving pretending to be someone's long lost relative, brings the King and Duke the possibility of enormous wealth. Huck sensing that there has to be something better about human beings, works to foil the plot. As things begin to spin out of control, Huck finds himself in a very dangerous situation, one that could cost Jim his freedom, but he tells the audience "blessed if it doesn't look like the truth is actually safer than a lie. I never seen nothing like it. So I says to myself—I'll chance it this time, though it does seem like sitting on a powder keg and touching it off just to see where you'll go."

The reason he's willing to go that far?...a woman, Mary Jane; the very woman whom the King and the Duke are trying to bilk out of her inheritance and worldly goods. Mary Jane, who" had the grit to pray for Judas, if she took the notion; and when it come to beauty and goodness, she lay over them all."

As the King does his part to wrap up the nefarious scheme, he sends the Duke off to sell Jim for whatever he can get, "so long as it's enough for two steamboat tickets out of here." Huck, however, has proven to Mary Jane that she is being deceived. She alerts the sheriff, and as Huck watches, the Sheriff arrives and the entire plot falls apart. Huck is disappointed about one thing, though..."I kept hoping Miss Mary Jane would show up—but it didn't look like she was going to. No, I ain't never seen her since. But I reckon I thought about her many and many a million times."

Racing through a raging thunderstorm, Huck heads back to the raft to free Jim, but he is not there. Figuring that Jim had broken his chains and went to hide and would return, Huck sits down to wait. Hours go by, when a tarred and feathered Duke shows up. Huck is told that Jim had been sold to Silas Phelps who lived two miles down the road.

Once again, Huck is conflicted about what is right and wrong. He's been brought up to believe that helping a runaway slave condemns one to the everlasting fire, but he can't help but think about his time on the river with Jim, "a-floating along, talking, singing and laughing. And him saying I was his only friend in the world...All right, then, I'll go to hell! I'll steal Jim out of slavery again."

He sets off for the Phelps place. He's greeted by Sally Phelps who greets him as his Aunt Sally. Confused, Huck plays along until Silas shows up. It's then that Sally introduces him as their nephew Tom Sawyer, whom they have been expecting...today! Again, Huck plays along, but sneaks off to make sure that he gets to Tom first and explain everything. Once Tom knows that Jim and Huck have been together, he agrees to help Huck free Jim, though he does try to make the whole thing a good deal more complicated than is in any way necessary.

For Jim, though, it means freedom again. As he waits for the evening, he and the other Phelps slaves sing a hymn to another kind of freedom

***I wish by golly  
I could spread my wings and fly  
And taste that sweetest taste of freedom  
For my soul  
Then I'd be free at last***

The escape is successful and Tom, Huck and Jim meet at the raft...except that during the escape, Tom was shot in the leg by Phelps and is bleeding badly. In short order, Huck fetches a doctor; the bullet, with the help of Jim, is removed; Huck explains how things got to where they are; and Tom is returned to his Aunt and Uncle. Jim, however, is still considered a runaway slave, one to be chained, locked up and made an example of for all the trouble he's caused.

"You won't lock him up!" Tom yells. "Ole Miss Watson, who Jim belonged to, died two months ago. She set him free in her will!" Jim is, indeed, a free man.



Jim and Huck return to the river, where Huck tries to get Jim to join Tom and him for some adventures amongst the Indians. But Jim needs to head north, to get to the free states, to make enough money to buy his wife and children. But "whatever road I go walkin' down, you'll be walkin' alongside of me. The old true Huck." And he leaves.

When Huck is alone he admits to the audience that if he'd a knowed what trouble it was to enact this history, "I never would a tackled it; and I ain't a-going to no more. I'm lighting out for the western territories; because Aunt Sally, she's going to adopt me and civilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before."

Huck walks off toward the river, as the stage lights fade to black.

## PRODUCTION DESIGN: Michael Schweikardt (Set Designer)

Michael Schweikardt recently created the set for *Ella*, a new musical about Ella Fitzgerald, which is appearing in cities all across the country. He designed the American premiere of Frank McGuinness' *The Bird Sanctuary* for Pittsburgh Public Theatre (starring Elizabeth Franz and Hayley Mills) as well as the critically acclaimed productions of Donald Margulies' *Collected Stories* (starring Lynn Redgrave) and Joe Sutton's *Restoring the Sun*. For Blue Light Theater Company, Michael designed the set for Clifford Odets' *Golden Boy* directed by Joanne Woodward. He would go on to design two more productions for Ms Woodward: *Waiting for Lefty* (starring Marisa Tomei) and *The Big Knife*. Michael continued his association with Blue Light, designing sets for *The Seagull* (directed by Austin Pendelton) and Michael Cristofer's *Amazing Grace* (starring Marsha Mason). Other credits include *All Under Heaven* (starring Valerie Harper) and *Tallulah Hallelujah* (starring Tovah Feldshuh). He has designed for Arizona Theatre Company, St. Louis Rep, Sarasota Opera, Syracuse Stage, Philadelphia Theate Company, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Julliard, NYU, HB Playwrights Foundation, Abingdon Theatre Company, Barrington Stage Company, Florida State Opera, Riverside Theatre, SoHo Rep, Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Sacramento Music Circus, Contemporary Stage Company, Cincinnati Playhouse, San Jose Rep, Asolo Rep, Alabama Shakespeare Festival and TheaterWorks in Hartford, CT. Mr.Schweikardt has also designed the set for James Taylor's *One Man Band Tour*.

### SET MODELS





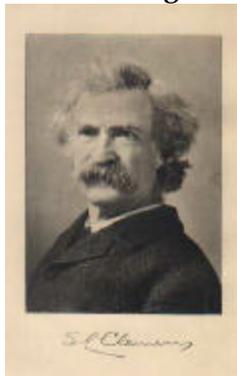
# In Context

## Biographies:

**Roger Miller:** The Tony® Award-winning score of *Big River* was written by Miller, who was one of the great country singer-songwriters. Born in 1936, Miller wrote countless country gems, including “Invitation to the Blues,” “King of the Road” and “Dang Me.” He received an unprecedented 11 Grammy® Awards and held that record for 20 years. In 1985, *Big River* won seven Tony® Awards, including Best Score and Best Musical. Roger Miller died in 1992 at the age of 56 and was elected posthumously to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1995. He is survived by his wife, Mary, and seven children.

**William Hauptman:** Born in Texas and graduated from the University of Texas at Austin and the Yale School of Drama. His plays include *Heat, Domino Courts* (Obie Award)<sup>1</sup> and *Gillette* (Drama-Logue Award).<sup>2</sup> *Big River* won him a 1985 Tony® Award for Best Book of a Musical. His fiction has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories* anthology, and he has published a collection, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, and a novel, *Storm Season*. He has taught at the Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas, written screenplays for the studios and published nonfiction in *The Atlantic* and *Texas Monthly*. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife Marjorie and their son, Max.

**Samuel Clemens:** As Samuel Clemens' literature provides insight into the past, the events of his personal life further demonstrate his role as an eyewitness to history. During his lifetime, Sam watched a young United States evolve from a nation torn apart by internal conflicts to one of international power. He experienced the country's vast growth and change - from westward expansion to industrialization, the end of slavery, advancements in technology, big government and foreign wars. And along the way, he often had something to say about the changes happening in America.



Samuel Clemens<sup>3</sup> was born on November 30, 1835 in Florida, Missouri, the sixth of seven children. At the age of four, Sam and his family moved to the small frontier town of Hannibal, Missouri on the banks of the Mississippi River. Missouri, at the time, was a fairly new state (it had gained statehood in 1820) and comprised part of the country's western border. It was also a slave state. Sam's father owned one slave and his uncle owned several. In fact, it was on his uncle's farm that Sam spent many boyhood summers playing in the slave quarters, listening to tall tales and the slave spirituals that he would enjoy throughout his life.

In 1847, when Sam was 11, his father died. Shortly thereafter he left school, having completed the fifth grade, to work as a printer's apprentice for a local newspaper. His job was to arrange the type for each of the newspaper's stories, allowing Sam to read the news of the world while completing his work.

At 18, Sam headed east to New York City and Philadelphia where he worked on several different newspapers and found some success at writing articles. By 1857, he had returned home to embark on a new career as a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi River. With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, however, all traffic along the river came to a halt, as did Sam's pilot career. Inspired by the times, Sam joined a volunteer Confederate unit called the Marion Rangers, but he quit after just two weeks.

<sup>1</sup> Annual awards bestowed by *The Village Voice* newspaper to Off-Broadway theatre artists in New York City.

Similar to the Tony® Awards for Broadway productions, the Obies cover off- and off-off-Broadway productions.

<sup>2</sup> An award established by the publishers of *Drama-Logue* newspaper. *Drama-Logue* was bought out by the industry trade paper *Back Stage* in 1998.

<sup>3</sup> This biography is reproduced here through the courtesy of **The Mark Twain House & Museum**, 351 Farmington Avenue Hartford, CT 06105

In search of a new career, Sam headed west in July of 1861, at the invitation of his brother, Orion, who had just been appointed Secretary of the Nevada Territory. Lured by the infectious hope of striking it rich in Nevada's silver rush, Sam traveled across the open frontier from Missouri to Nevada by stagecoach. Along the journey Sam encountered Native American tribes for the first time as well as a variety of unique characters, mishaps and disappointments. These events would find a way into his short stories and books, particularly *Roughing It*.

After failing as a silver prospector, Sam began writing for the *Territorial Enterprise*, a Virginia City, Nevada newspaper where he used, for the first time, his pen name, Mark Twain. Wanting a change by 1864, Sam headed for San Francisco where he continued to write for local papers.

In 1865, Sam's first "big break" came with the publication of his short story, "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" in papers across the country. A year later, Sam was hired by the *Sacramento Union* to visit and report on the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii). His writings were so popular that, upon his return, he embarked upon his first lecture tour, which established him as a successful stage performer.

Hired by the *Alta California* to continue his travel writing from the east, Sam arrived in New York City in 1867. He quickly signed up for a steamship tour of Europe and the Holy Land. His travel letters, full of vivid descriptions and tongue-in-cheek observations, met with such audience approval that they were later reworked into his first book, *The Innocents Abroad* in 1869. It was also on this trip that Clemens met his future brother-in-law, Charles Langdon. Langdon reportedly showed Sam a picture of his sister, Olivia, and Sam fell in love at first sight.

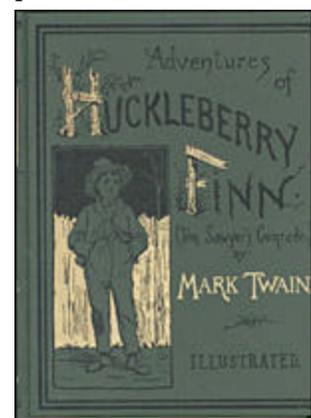
After courting for two years, Sam Clemens and Olivia (Livy) Langdon were married in 1870. They settled in Buffalo, New York where Sam had become a partner, editor and writer for the daily newspaper the *Buffalo Express*. While living in Buffalo, their first child, Langdon Clemens was born.



In an effort to be closer to his publisher, Sam moved his family to Hartford, Connecticut in 1871. For the first few years the Clemenses rented a house in the heart of Nook Farm, a residential area that was home to numerous writers, publishers and other prominent figures. In 1872, Sam's recollections and tall tales from his frontier adventures were published in his book, *Roughing It*. That same year the Clemenses' first daughter Susy was born, but their son, Langdon, died at the age of two from diphtheria.

In 1873, Sam's focus turned toward social criticism. He and Hartford Courant publisher Charles Dudley Warner co-wrote *The Gilded Age*, a novel that attacked political corruption, big business and the American obsession with getting rich that seemed to dominate the era. Ironically, a year after its publication, the Clemenses' elaborate, \$40,000, 19-room house on Farmington Avenue was completed.

For the next 17 years (1874-1891), Sam, Livy and their three daughters (Clara was born in 1874 and Jean in 1880) lived in the Hartford home. During those years Sam completed some of his most famous works. Novels such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) captured both his Missouri memories and depictions of the American scene. Yet, his social commentary continued. *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881) explored class relations as does *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) which, going a step further, criticized oppression in general while examining the period's technology explosion. And, in perhaps his most famous work, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) Clemens satirized the institution of slavery and railed against the failures of Reconstruction and the continued poor treatment of African-Americans overall.



*Huckleberry Finn* was also the first book published by Sam's own publishing company, The Charles L. Webster Company. In an attempt to gain control over publication as well as to make substantial profits, Sam created the publishing company in 1884. A year later, he contracted with Ulysses S. Grant to publish

Grant's memoirs; the two-volume set provided large royalties for Grant's widow and was a financial success for the publisher as well.

Although Sam enjoyed financial success during his Hartford years, he continually made bad investments in new inventions, which eventually brought him to bankruptcy. In an effort to economize and pay back his debts, Sam and Livy moved their family to Europe in 1891. When his publishing company failed in 1894, Sam was forced to set out on a worldwide lecture tour to earn money. In 1896, tragedy struck when Susy Clemens, at the age of 24, died from meningitis while on a visit to the Hartford home. Unable to return to the place of her death, the Clemenses never returned to Hartford to live.



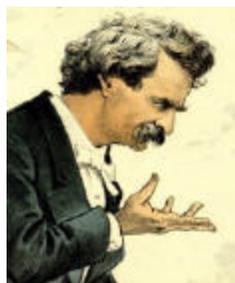
From 1891 until 1900, Sam and his family traveled throughout the world. During those years, Sam witnessed the increasing exploitation of weaker governments by European powers, which he described in his book, *Following the Equator* (1897). The Boer War in South Africa and the Boxer Rebellion in China fueled his growing anger toward imperialistic countries and their actions. With the Spanish-American and Philippine War in 1898, Sam's wrath was redirected toward the American government. When he returned to the United States in 1900, his finances restored, Sam readily declared himself an anti-imperialist and, from 1901 until his death, served as the vice president of the Anti-Imperialist League.

In these later years, Sam's writings turned dark. They began to focus on human greed, cruelty and questioned the humanity of the human race. His public appearances followed suit and included a harshly sardonic public introduction of Winston Churchill in 1900. Even though Sam's lecture tour had managed to get him out of debt, his anti-government writings and speeches threatened his livelihood once again. Labeled by some as a traitor, several of Sam's works were never published during his lifetime either because magazines would not accept them or because of a personal fear that his marketable reputation would be ruined.

In 1903, after living in New York City for three years, Livy became ill, and Sam and his wife returned to Italy where she died a year later. After her death, Sam lived in New York until 1908 when he moved into his last house, "Stormfield," in Redding, Connecticut. In 1909, his middle daughter Clara was married. In the same year Jean, the youngest daughter, died from an epileptic seizure. Four months later on April 21, 1910, Sam Clemens died at the age of 74.



Like any good journalist, Sam Clemens/Mark Twain spent his life observing and reporting on his surroundings. In his writings he provided images of the romantic, the real, the strengths and weaknesses of a rapidly changing world. By examining his life and his works, we can read into the past - piecing together various events of the era and the responses to them. We can delve into the American mindset of the late nineteenth century and make our own observations of history, discover new connections, create new inferences and gain better insights into the time period and the people who lived in it. As Sam once wrote, "Supposing is good, but finding out is better."



## Samuel Clemens Time-Line

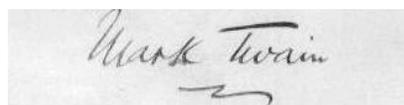
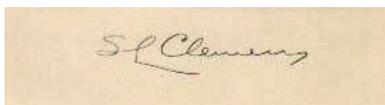
- 1835:** November 30, Samuel Langhorne Clemens is born in Florida, Missouri to John M. and Jane L. Clemens (5<sup>th</sup> surviving child).
- 1839:** Clemens family moves to Hannibal, Missouri.
- 1840:** Begins school.
- 1845:** Takes first steamboat to St Louis. Olivia Langdon, future wife, born in Elmira, New York.
- 1847:** John M. Clemens, father, dies. Begins delivering papers and working as an errand boy for the *Hannibal Gazette*, ending formal education at the age of 11 (5<sup>th</sup> Grade).



- 1848:** Works as a printer's apprentice for the *Hannibal Courier*.
- 1850:** Works for brother Orion as reporter and printer at the *Hannibal Journal*, runs paper when Orion is away.
- 1851:** "A Gallant Fireman," Clemens' earliest known sketch<sup>4</sup> appears in the *Hannibal Journal*. Sketches appear in Philadelphia's *Saturday Evening Post*.
- 1853:** Works as itinerant printer in St. Louis, New York City and Philadelphia. Corresponds for Iowa's *Muscatine Journal* from Philadelphia.
- 1854:** Works in Orion's Ben Franklin Book and Job Office, Keokuk, Iowa.
- 1856:** Gives first public speech at printers banquet in Keokuk, Iowa
- 1857:** Cub (apprentice) riverboat pilot on Mississippi River under Horace Bixby.
- 1858:** Brother Henry Clemens dies from injuries sustained in explosion of riverboat *Pennsylvania*.
- 1859:** Earns steamboat pilot license. Works steadily as a river pilot on the Mississippi River between St. Louis and New Orleans.
- 1861:** Piloting career ends with closing of Mississippi River due to Civil War. Joins band of Confederate irregulars around Marion County for a few weeks. Brother Orion is appointed Secretary to the Nevada Territory. Sam travels with him by stagecoach to Virginia City. Prospects, unsuccessfully, for silver in Nevada.
- 1862:** Writes for the *Territorial Enterprise* in Virginia City, Nevada.

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<sup>4</sup> "A brief description (as of a person) or outline. A short literary composition somewhat resembling the short story and the essay but intentionally slight in treatment, discursive in style, and familiar in tone." *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, page 1079; © 1981 by G.&C. Merriam Co.



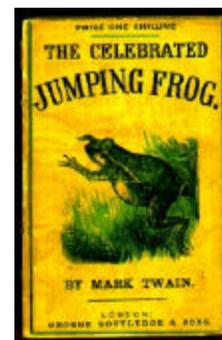
**1863:** Adopts pen name “Mark Twain,” an old riverboat term which means the line between safe water and dangerous water.<sup>5</sup>  
Visits San Francisco.

**1864:** Is a reporter for the *San Francisco Morning Call* and the *Sacramento Union*.

**1865:** Writes “Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog.”

**1866:** Goes to Sandwich Islands<sup>6</sup> as a reporter for the *Sacramento Union*.

**1867:** Meets Olivia Langdon in New York City.  
Publishes *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Stories*.



**1868:** Visits Hartford, CT to see publisher, The American Publishing Company.  
Meets Harriet Beecher Stowe.

**1869:** Formally engaged to marry Olivia (Livy) Langdon.  
Publishes *The Innocents Abroad*.

**1870:** Marries Olivia Langdon on February 2. Couple settles in Buffalo, NY. A son, Langdon Clemens, is born.



**1871:** Moves family to Hartford, CT.

**1872:** March 19, Olivia Susan (Susy) Clemens, daughter born.  
June 2, Langdon dies  
Publishes *Roughing It*.

**1873:** Clemens family buys property in Hartford and commissions E.T. Potter, architect, to design the house.  
Lectures and travels with family to England  
Patents *Self Pasting Scrapbook*  
Publishes *The Gilded Age* with Charles Dudley Warner

**1874:** Clara Langdon Clemens, daughter, born. Family moves to new Hartford home.

<sup>5</sup> Clemens, himself, said “Mark Twain was the *nom de plume* of one Captain Isaiah Sellers, who used to write river news over it for the *New Orleans Picayune*. He died in 1869, and as he could no longer need that signature, I laid violent hands upon it without asking permission of the proprietor's remains. That is the history of the *nom de plume* I bear.”

<sup>6</sup> Hawaii

MARK TWAIN'S NEW BOOK,  
THE ADVENTURES OF  
**TOM SAWYER.**  
PRONOUNCED BY ALL WHO HAVE SEEN IT TO BE THE MOST HUMOROUS AND  
WONDERFUL PRODUCTION OF THE AUTHOR'S PEN.

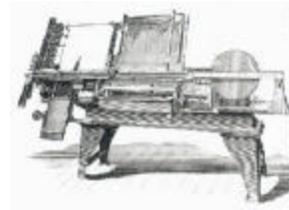
- 1876:** Publishes *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.  
Starts to work on *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but stops several months later.
- 1878:** Travels with family in Europe for nearly 2 years.
- 1879:** Resumes work on *Huckleberry Finn*. Stops at chapter 21.
- 1880:** Publishes *A Tramp Abroad*.  
Jane Lampton (Jean) Clemens, daughter, born.  
Begins modest investments in Paige Compositor.<sup>7</sup>
- 1881:** Hires Louis Comfort Tiffany and Associated Artists to decorate public rooms of  
Hartford home.  
Publishes *The Prince and the Pauper*.
- 1882:** Travels down the Mississippi River researching for *Life on the Mississippi*.  
Witnessing the failure of Reconstruction in the South, returns to work on *Huckleberry Finn*.
- 1883:** Publishes *Life on the Mississippi*  
Finishes *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
- 1884:** Finds Charles L. Webster Publishing and Co.  
Lectures throughout the United States.



- 1885:** Publishes *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.  
Charles L. Webster and Co. issues first volume of *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*.
- 1886:** Forms partnership with James Paige to further develop Paige Compositor. Buys  
half-interest in invention.
- 1888:** Awarded honorary Master of Arts degree at Yale University.
- 1889:** Publishes *A Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.
- 1890:** Jane Lampton Clemens, mother, dies.
- 1891:** Financial hardship forces family to leave Hartford home for less expensive life in  
Europe.

<sup>7</sup> The Paige Compositor was an automatic–typesetting machine invented by James W. Paige. Though the Paige Compositor was faster than the Linotype, its 18,000 parts were prone to malfunction. Paige's invention exhibited superior technological achievement, but its price and temperamental nature made it unattractive to a business world that had already embraced the Linotype.

**1894:** Publishes *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.  
Charles L. Webster and Co. fails.  
Paige Compositor tested and found impractical.  
Declares bankruptcy.  
Publishes *Tom Sawyer* abroad



**1895:** Begins world lecture tour to pay off debts.

**1896:** Meets Mahatma Gandhi  
Susy Clemens dies of spinal meningitis in Hartford home  
Publishes *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*.

**1897:** Publishes *Following the Equator* (based on world tour)

**1898:** Meets Sigmund Freud  
Pays off creditors

**1901:** Rents house in Riverdale, NY  
Receives honorary Doctor of Letters from Yale University  
Serves as Vice-President for Anti-Imperialist League for the next 9 years.

**1902:** Visits Hannibal for last time  
Livy becomes seriously ill.

**1903:** Lives in New York and Italy.  
Sells Hartford home to the Bissell Family.

**1904:** Livy dies in Florence, Italy. Twain returns to New York.



**1906:** Testifies before Congress for Copyright legislation (wearing white suit...beginning trademark of wearing the white suit year-round in public).

**1907:** Awarded honorary Doctor of Letters by Oxford University (along with Rudyard Kipling, Auguste Rodin and Camille Saint-Saens).

**1908:** Moves to "Stormfield," his new home in Redding, CT.

**1909:** Last writing: "Turning Point of My Life."

**1910:** April 21, dies at "Stormfield" at age 74.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Clemens is quoted as saying, "I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835...I expect to go out with it." Halley's Comet did, in fact, appear in both 1835 and 1910.

## “Arrival of a Showboat”



***Like so many other boys growing up during the golden age of Mississippi River traffic, Sannuel Clemens had it in mind that the only job worth pursuing was that of a riverboat pilot... captain.***

***After working for several years as a printer's apprentice at the Hannibal Courier and then reporter and printer for his brother Orion at the Hannibal Journal, in 1857 he manages to persuade a riverboat pilot to take him on as a "cub pilot."***

***He managed to obtain his license and found employment on the river as a pilot until 1861, when the Civil War closed the Mississippi to most traffic. The love of the river, of course, never left him.***

***The following excerpt from "Life on the Mississippi," published in 1883, illustrates the intense passion that Clemens felt regarding riverboats and how a life working among and with the men on the river would be exciting and fulfilling. It was written more than twenty-five years after his piloting life ended, but it is easy to see that this experience worked a powerful spell on his imagination.***

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When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village<sup>9</sup> on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns; the first negro minstrel show that came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life; now and then we had a hope that, if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates.

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<sup>9</sup> Hannibal, Missouri

These ambitions faded out, each in its turn, but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained.

Once a day, a cheap, gaudy packet arrived upward from St. Louis, and another downward from Keokuk. Before these events, the day was glorious with expectancy; after them, the day was a dead and empty thing. Not only the boys, but the whole village, felt this. After all these years, I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores, with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the wall, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep—with single-shavings enough around to show what broke them down; a sow and a litter of pigs loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds; two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the "levee;" a pile of "skids" on the slope of the stone-paved wharf, and the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow of them; two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun; the dense forest away on the other side; the "point" above the town, and the "point" below, bounding the river-glimpse and turning it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one. Presently a film of dark smoke appears above one of those remote "points;" instantly a negro drayman, famous for his quick eye and prodigious voice, lifts up the cry, "S-t-e-a-mboat a-comin!" and the scene changes!



The town drunkard stirs, the clerks wake up, a furious clatter of drays<sup>10</sup> follows, every house and store pours out a human contribution, and all in a twinkling the dead town is alive and

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<sup>10</sup> A heavy wagon with no sides

moving. Drays, carts, men, boys, all go hurrying from many quarters to a common center, the wharf. Assembled there, the people fasten their eyes upon the coming boat as upon a wonder they are seeing for the first time. And the boat is rather a handsome sight, too. She is long and sharp and trim and pretty; she has two tall, fancy-topped chimneys, with a gilded device of some kind swung between them, a fanciful pilot-house, all glass and "gingerbread," perched on top of the "Texas" deck behind them;<sup>11</sup> the paddle-boxes are gorgeous with a picture or with gilded rays above the boat's name; the boiler-deck, the hurricane-deck,<sup>12</sup> and the texas deck are fenced and ornamented with clean white railings; there is a flag gallantly flying from the jack-staff; the furnace doors are open and the fires glaring bravely; the upper decks are black with passengers; the captain stands by the big bell, calm, imposing, the envy of all, great volumes of the blackest smoke are rolling and tumbling out of the chimneys—a husbanded grandeur created with a bit of pitch-pine just before arriving at a town; the crew are grouped on the forecabin; the broad stage is run far out over the port bow, and an envied deck-hand stands picturesquely on the end of it with a coil of rope in his hand; the pent steam is screaming through the gauge-cocks; the captain lifts his hand, a bell rings, the wheels stop; then they turn back, churning the water to foam, and the steamer is at rest. Then such a scramble as there is to get aboard, and to get ashore, and to take in freight and to discharge freight, all at one and the same time; and such yelling and cursing as the mates facilitate it all with! Ten minutes later the steamer is underway again, with no flag on the jack-staff and no black smoke issuing from the chimneys. After ten more minutes the town is dead again, and the town drunkard asleep by the skids once more.



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<sup>11</sup> The Texas deck, a long and narrow cabin for officers, was located on a raised section over the skylights of a steamboat. This type of deck was added to many steamboats at the same time Texas became a part of the United States. It was customary to name cabins after states...thus we still refer to them as "staterooms."

<sup>12</sup> The uppermost deck.

## Samuel Clemens, Cub Pilot

***In 1887, a cigarette company—Duke's Cigarettes—issued unsigned miniature biographies of famous individuals as "premiums" with each packet purchased. These were entitled "Histories of Poor Boys Who Have Become Rich and Other Famous People." In one particular such issue, "Life of Mark Twain,"<sup>13</sup> we hear of the following "true incident" concerning Samuel Clemens, as told by a crew man on the steamer "Aleck Scott."***

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"I was the first engineer of the Alexander (Aleck) Scott when Sam Clemens was a cub in her pilot house. He was a chipper young chap, with legs no bigger 'n a casting line, and fuller of tricks than a mule colt. He worked off jokes on everybody aboard, from the skippers down to the roustabouts, and they were all taken in good part; but I lay by two or three to pay back. About the time that Sam got the run of the river enough to stand alone at the wheel, the Scott went into the lower river trade; carrying cotton from Memphis to New Orleans. If you know anything about cotton, I needn't tell you that you may cover it from stem to stern with tarpaulins and keep your donkey engine steamed up, but if a spark of fire touches cotton enough to fill a tooth, your boat's a corpse. It's quicker 'n gunpowder to burn, and no pilot can reach the lower deck from the texas in time to save himself, let alone his Saratoga.<sup>14</sup>

"So, you see, everybody in that trade is on the watch, and an alarm of fire in a boat loaded with cotton will turn a man's hair gray quicker 'n an alligator can swallow a [negro].

"Sam, being a young pilot, and new to the cotton trade, was told over and over again how the profession would lose a promising cub if ever a fire broke out on the Scott, and the boy got nervous. My striker and me always managed to be in the lunch-room when Sam came off watch, and as he came in we would talk about the number of cotton boats that burnt in such a year, and how such a cub would have made a lightning pilot if he hadn't got burnt up in the cotton trade - and we always noticed that Sam's appetite failed

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<sup>13</sup> New York: Knapp & Company, 1887

<sup>14</sup> Large traveling trunk

him after that, and instead of going to bed he would go prowling round the lower deck and peering about the hatchways, smelling at every opening like a pup that had lost its master.



Engineer and his "striker" 1898

"One day, when we backed out of Memphis with a big cargo of cotton, I complained in Sam's hearing that the mate had loaded the boat too near the engines. The boy followed me into the engine-room, and, without seeming to notice him, I told my striker I would do my level best to keep that cotton from catching fire; but that it was a slim chance, with bales piled up right in front of the furnace doors. Sam got whiter 'n a bulkhead, and went up to the texas, where he packed his Saratoga, ready for any business that might come up before the meetin'. When he went on watch I posted the second clerk to keep an eye on him. He hid behind a smokestack and saw Sam alone in the pilot house, his hair on end, his face like a corpse's, and his eyes sticking out so far you could have knocked them off with a stick. He danced around the pilot-house, turned up his nose as if he was smelling for a polecat, pulled every bell, turned the boat's nose for the bank, and yelled 'FIRE!' like a Comanche Indian on the war-path. That yell brought everybody on deck. We had a big cargo of passengers, and the women screeched, the men rushed for cork pillows, and the crew yanked the doors off their hinges and rushed to the guards, ready to go overboard at the first moderation of weather. The skipper had hard work to make the crazy passengers believe that there wasn't any fire, but he brought them to reason finally. I paid no attention to Sam's frantic yells, so the boat didn't run her nozzle against the bank he aimed for.

"The captain, and pilot, and a lot of passengers, after hunting all over the boat, couldn't find a sign of fire anywhere outside the furnaces, and then they went for Sam. He swore up and down that he smelt cotton burning; no use talking to him--he knew the smell of burning cotton, and, by thunder, he had smelt it. The first pilot said kinder soft and pitying to him: 'Sam, my boy, if you'd told me you was so near the jim-jams, I'd stood double watch for you. Now go and soak your head in a bucket of water, take a good sleep, and you'll be all right by to-morrow.' Sam just biled. over at this; and when a pretty young woman passenger said to the skipper, loud enough for Sam to hear: 'So young and nice-looking, too - how sad it will make his poor mother feel to hear how he drinks!' he fairly frothed at the mouth. You never see a fellow so toned down as Sam was after that; and, though the boys never quit running him, he never talked back, but looked kind of puzzled - - as though he was trying to account for that smell of cotton smoke."

"And what was the cause of the smell!" the old engineer was asked.

He chuckled a full minute and then said: "You see, there's a speaking-tube running from the engine room to the pilot-house. I had in mind the tricks Sam had played me, and, having worked him to a nervous state about fire I waited till he was alone in the pilot-house, and then set fire to a little wad of cotton, stuffed it into the speaking-tube, and the smell came right out under his nose."



Samuel Clemens, River Pilot

## From Page to Stage

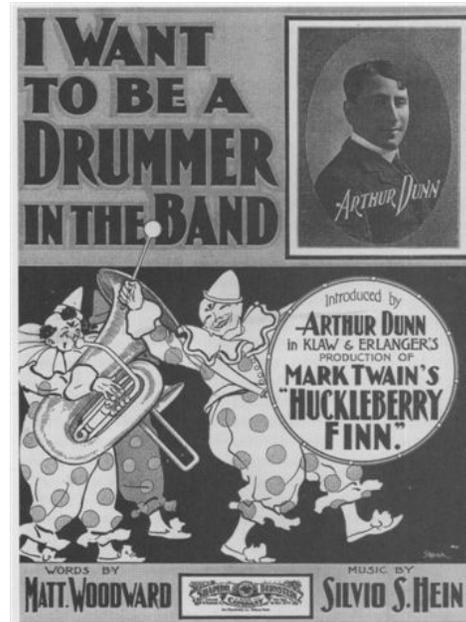
There is no question that *Huckleberry Finn* is a great adventure, an adventure that seems to cry out for a theatrical treatment of some kind. It contains wonderful characters, a compelling story and the magnificent “scenery” of the Mississippi River as a backdrop.

Shortly after *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was published, Mark Twain, recognizing its dramatic potential, began using excerpts from it in his “Tour Around the World” lecture series. One excerpt that was especially popular dealt with how Huck saved Jim from slavery. In a review of a performance, the *Minneapolis Tribune* described the story as “one of the prettiest pictures of ante-emancipation life on the Mississippi that has ever been penned.” The *Minneapolis Journal* followed this with “possibly the best of all was the story of Huck Finn helping the Negro Jim to escape from slavery.” Audiences found all of this quite accessible and entertaining. It was time to put Huck “on the boards.”

While in the process of writing and editing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain had tried, unsuccessfully, to dramatize *Tom Sawyer*. As others have discovered, writing a play or musical requires a different skill set and understanding of conventions than that used in writing a novel. Twain turned to others, who completed a script, but it was never produced in his lifetime. Undeterred, in 1902 he contracted with Klaw & Erlanger, a powerful theatrical syndicate of the time, to create an elaborate musical dramatization of *Huck Finn*. The “for-hire” playwright, Lee Arthur, produced a piece that sounded nothing like Mark Twain and scarcely resembled the novel.

Although Twain was credited as co-author, he barely had anything to do with it. He did hear a reading of it and gave Klaw & Erlanger permission to advertise it as **Mark Twain’s “Huckleberry Finn” adapted for the Stage by Mark Twain and Lee Arthur**; but there is no record of his actually having seen a production. It opened in Hartford, CT on November 11, 1902 to “respectable” reviews (Twain did not attend, saying his daughter’s health did not permit it). It was an enormous spectacle and expensive to support on its subsequent tour, and it closed in Baltimore after less than forty performances. A New York trade paper, the *Dramatic News*, said it was “a

dreadful fiasco. It is a little bit of everything and not much of anything, besides being extremely tiresome, without one redeeming feature.” Indeed, soon after opening, Twain insisted that the producers make certain that it was clear *he* had not written it.



Sheet music cover, 1902

In 1951, Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill, the creative team of *Lost in the Stars*, began work on a musicalization to be called “Raft on the River.” It seemed to be a natural fit for these two musical luminaries. As Weill biographer Foster Hirsch says, *Huckleberry Finn*, like *Lost in the Stars*, is a story that is, in part, “about a friendship between a black and a white character who must overcome ingrained prejudices.” Unfortunately, Weill died after just five songs had been written. “This Time Next Year,” written for Jim, was the last song Weill ever wrote. Anderson went to both Irving Berlin and Frank Loesser, trying to get them to continue with him on the project, but had no success. “This Time Next Year” and another of the five “River Chanty,” are still sung by artists performing the Weill repertoire.

Except for an opera written for The Julliard Opera Center in May of 1971, the majority of *Huckleberry Finn* adaptations have been as films or productions for television. In the 1930’s, the novel was twice made into a black and white film, with the 1939 version featuring Mickey Rooney as Huck. Other films were produced in 1960 (with Eddie Hodges), 1974 (Jeff East—who also played Tom Sawyer in an earlier film—and Paul Winfield as Jim), and 1985...with such

stars as Richard Kiley, Geraldine Page, Jim Dale and Patrick Day as Huck. It is, of course, also possible to find dramatic adaptations that have had much less exposure, but are still available for an audience's pleasure.

All in all, since 1918, there have been 12 films made based on the novel; including one made by Disney in 1993, that starred Elijah Wood... probably much better known as Frodo Baggins of *Lord of the Rings* fame.



But it is *Big River*, that catches the spirit, characters and imagination of the Twain classic best. Perhaps that is because the creative team of Roger Miller and William Hauptman, along with director Des McAnuff, knew the power of the image of the Mississippi and that it should be the titular character, or they realized that the bluegrass and country music of Middle America would best convey Twain's uncanny ear for language and rhythm, or they understood the dramatic flow of the novel better than those who came before. Some might even say that part of its success was that it appeared on Broadway at a time when what was needed was an authentic American musical sound in an era, the mid to late 1980's, that was dominated by British musicals.



It is, finally, a strong and engaging musical that brings the mighty Mississippi, Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, Jim and assorted characters both high and low onto our stage...a stage built during a period that nurtured the unmatched voice of Mark Twain.

## The Mississippi River

The Mississippi River, formed by glaciers, moving and melting millions of years ago, is the centerpiece of the second largest watershed in the world, covering over 1.2 million square miles, and includes tributary rivers from 33 states and two Canadian provinces. It begins as a tiny brook and 2,350 miles later empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Millions of people each year use the Mississippi River for recreation, but the Mississippi is, and always has been a working river. An average of 175 million tons of freight is shipped each year on the Upper Mississippi. The 29 lock and dams on the Upper Mississippi make that shipping possible, allowing for navigation from St. Louis, Missouri, to Saint Paul, Minnesota, a total distance of 854 miles.

There are records of human habitation along the Mississippi river that date back more than five thousand years. Four thousand years ago, American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley began establishing communities with large, elaborate earthen architecture. Much later around 1000 A.D., larger and more elaborate complexes of mounds were constructed by a culture referred to as Mississippian. Typically, these towns contained anywhere from 1 to 20 mounds, which often were used as platforms for temples or the residence of leaders.

The Ojibway Indians of northern Minnesota called it "Messipi" or "Big River," and it was also known as the "Mee-zee-see-bee" or the "Father of Waters." European explorers who mapped all the river's channels and backwater areas called it a "gathering of waters." The Native Americans of different tribes who originally lived near the Mississippi and used it for canoe transportation, hunting and fishing, often viewed the great river as the center of the universe.<sup>15</sup>

Other nicknames for the Mississippi include **The Great River**, **Body of a Nation**, **Old Blue**, and **"Of Man River"** (immortalized by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern in *Show Boat*).

<sup>15</sup> Center for Global Environmental Education.  
[http://cgee.hamline.edu/rivers/Resources/river\\_profiles/mississippi.html](http://cgee.hamline.edu/rivers/Resources/river_profiles/mississippi.html)