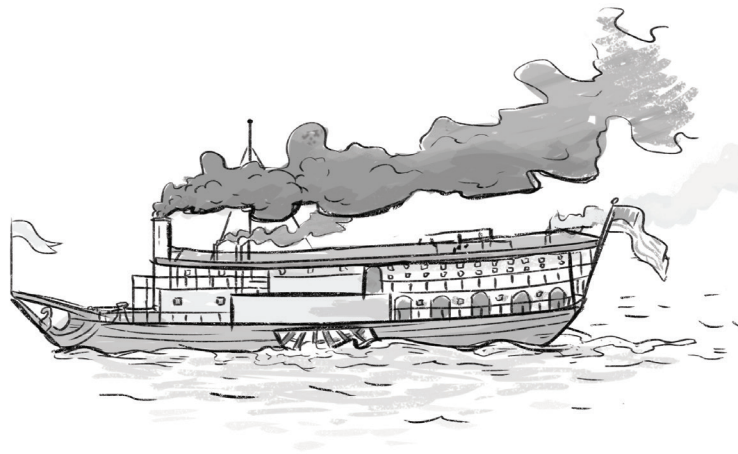


Adventures on the American Frontier

Pioneers on the Early Waterways

Part Eight

Sam Clemens: From Cub to Pilot



A Royal Fireworks Production

Royal Fireworks Press
Unionville, New York



Other books in this series:

Davy Crockett and the Ring-Tailed Roarer

Steam Fights the River

Henry Shreve's New Steamboat

Mrs. Trollope's Trip to Memphis

Shipwrecked by a Buffalo

Jim Garfield, Canalboatman

Ralph Keeler, Cabin Boy

Buffalo Bill Rides the Far West

Race of the Lee and the Natchez



This book features QR codes that link to audio of the book being narrated so that readers can follow along.

Copyright © 2020, Royal Fireworks Online Learning, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.

Royal Fireworks Press
P.O. Box 399
41 First Avenue
Unionville, NY 10988-0399
(845) 726-4444
fax: (845) 726-3824
email: mail@rfwp.com
website: rfwp.com



ISBN: 978-0-88092-893-9

Printed and bound in Unionville, New York, on acid-free paper using vegetable-based inks at the Royal Fireworks facility.

Publisher: Dr. T.M. Kemnitz
Editor: Jennifer Ault
Book and cover designer: Christopher Tice
Audio and narration: Christopher Tice



11mar20

The heyday of the steamboats came in the ten years before the Civil War. Up and down the Ohio River, the Mississippi River, and most of the Missouri River, steamboats kept the water churning around the big paddlewheels. Smaller stern-wheel boats nosed up every smaller river with enough water to float them. Railroads were beginning to take over the work of the slow-moving canalboats, but the steamboats were still the main carriers of people and goods wherever the rivers and lakes reached.





During this time, a young boy was spending his days on the banks of the Mississippi River in the little town of Hannibal, Missouri. The boy loved to hear the whistle of the steamboats and the calls



of the rivermen as they went about their work.

His favorites were the leadsmen—the men who stood at the prow of the steamboats to test the depth of the water. If a leadsman saw that the steamboat was heading into water that might be too shallow, he would drop a lead weight on a cord into the water. The cord was marked off at certain points, and the leadsman could read how deep the water was when the lead weight touched the bottom.

“Mark three! Ma-ark three-ee!” the leadsman would call. Then, “Quarter-less-three!” Less of the string would be in the water as he called out, “Half twain!” The words would float back to the shore where the boy listened as he watched the pilot nose the steamboat ahead, trying to choose a safe pathway between sand bars.

Then came the call that the boy loved best: “Mark twain! Ma-ark twa-ain!”

“Mark twain” meant that the water was two fathoms deep, or about twelve feet.



That was deep enough to float almost any Mississippi River steamboat in the 1850s, and the leadsman always sounded glad as he sang out again and again, "Ma-ark twa-ain! Oh, Mark twai-ain-n-n!"

The boy's name was Sam Clemens. When he began writing articles and stories many years later, such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, he remembered that old call of "Mark twain," and Mark Twain was the name he chose to use as an author.