

## ALBUM MOSTLY MISSISSIPPI, A VERY DAMP ADVENTURE

### Album Description

Writer/artists Harold Speakman and Frances “Russell” Speakman traveled the length of the Mississippi in 1925. Their illustrated narrative of the journey includes paintings, sketches and drawings by both Speakmans. It was published in 1927 as *Mostly Mississippi, A Very Damp Adventure*.

I discovered the Speakmans through an article in *Big River Magazine*. I was drawn to a hand-drawn map that includes Winona, Minnesota, my Mississippi River town in SE Minnesota and numerous Mississippi River cities I have visited. Their tales and artwork recount their journey, first by canoe, later by houseboat. There are stories of interesting and diverse people they met as they traveled from the headwaters of the Mississippi in Minnesota to New Orleans. It is a glimpse back to another time.

Do you know anyone who has traveled the length of the Mississippi by boat?

Selected art work is included in this album. For a list of images of all images go to image 13 in the book. Use gallery view for a quick view of pages.

Big River, March-April 2022.

*Mostly Mississippi* was republished in 2004 by the University of Minnesota Press.

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Social Studies/History

Mississippi River

Art/Music

## RUSSELL LINDSAY SPEAKMAN



*Girl, houseboat, river.*

### Teaching Notes:

Harold's painting of Russell is the only work of color.

**Reference Link:** <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0004.jpg>

**HAND DRAWN MAP: IMAGE 408 OF MOSTLY MISSISSIPPI,****Teaching Notes:**

The map inset notes the journey “Being the bucolic voyage of HAROLD SPEAKMAN and his FAYRE FRIENDE, from the HEADWATERS of the MISSISSIPPI to the GULF in a twenty feet (or less) BOAT.”

Group: Examine the map and selected images

Individual: search for text and illustrations of a place where you have lived visited Read the text. What do you notice about how it is written? What can you learn? Examine the sketches and drawings

**Reference Link:** <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0408.jpg>

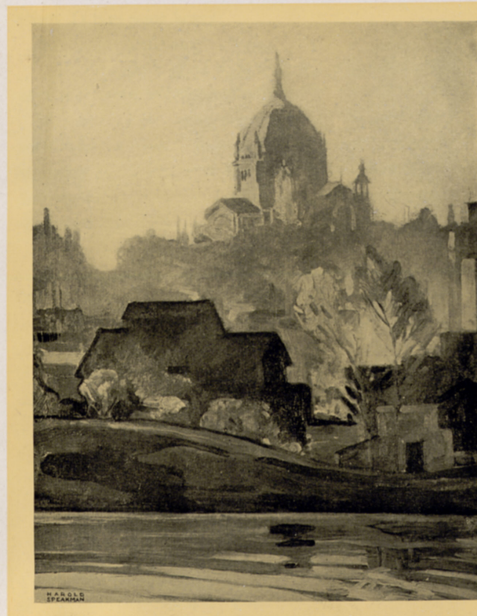
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## THE CATHEDRAL OF ST PAUL FROM THE RIVER



*The St. Paul Cathedral from the river.*

### Teaching Notes:

Have you seen the Cathedral today? Is the view similar?

**Reference Link:** <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0119.jpg>

## OLD LADY OF DUBUQUE READING THE NEW YORKER



### Teaching Notes:

What does the lady's reading material say about her?

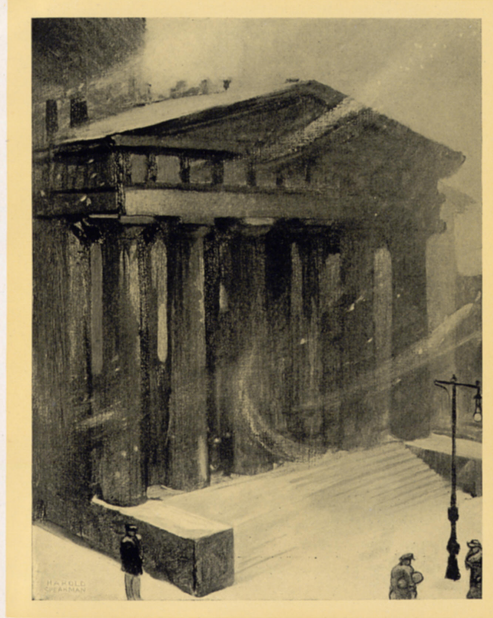
Locate Dubuque on a map.

**Reference Link:** <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0171.jpg>

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0171.jpg>



## SLAVES WERE SOLD FROM THE STEP OF THIS FINE OLD COURTHOUSE IN ST LOUIS



*Slaves were sold from the steps of this fine old court house in St. Louis.*

### Teaching Notes:

How far is St Louis from their starting point at the start of the Mississippi? How many states have they gone through? How has the terrain changed along their journey?

How can you learn more about this courthouse?

**Reference Link:** <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0231.jpg>

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0231.jpg>

## NEW ORLEANS CEMETERY



*The tombs in the ancient cemeteries of New Orleans were raised above the ground since water lay only a short distance below the surface.*

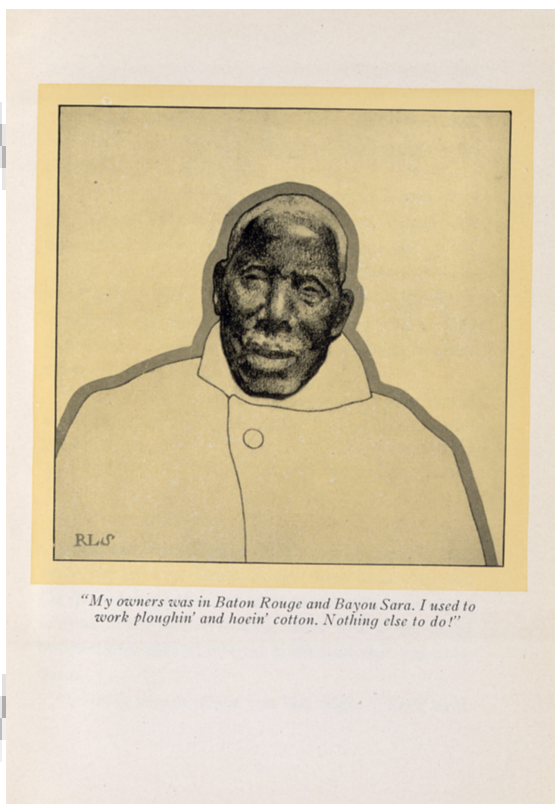
### Teaching Notes:

the tombs in the ancient cemeteries of New Orleans were raised above the ground since water lay only a short distance below the surface

### Reference Link: New Orleans Tombs

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0375.jpg>

## FORMER SLAVE IN NEW ORLEANS



### Teaching Notes:

My owners was in Baton Rouge and Bayou and Bayou Sara. I used to work ploughi' and hoe'n cotton. Nothing else to do."

**Reference Link:** <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0349.jpg>



## THE OLD PATONIA



### OFF DUTY

*The old "Patonia" at Memphis, Tenn., has carried her last gay party of gentlemen in brocaded waistcoats and ladies in crinoline.*

### Teaching Notes:

*The old Patonia at Memphis has carried her last gay party of gentlemen in brocaded waistcoats and ladies in crinoline.*

What are waistcoats and crinolines? Can you find some photos?

**Reference Link:** <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0267.jpg>

## THE INSPIRATION FOR MARK TWAIN'S BECKY THATCHER

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once to have a good look at his surroundings.

On the walls and ceiling thousands of names had been scratched into sooty smears made by the wicks of closely applied candles. Here was the signature of Admiral Coontz, there the names of two privates in the Army—more interesting, too, than the Admiral's, for the date that followed them was 1863. Nearby, some one had drawn a small round-stomached hieroglyph of a man hanging by the nape of the neck from a gallows and had scrawled underneath it, "Jeff Davis." Some one else—obviously another artist, for the technique is quite different,—had drawn another long figure hanging beside the first, this one bearing the title, "Abe Lincoln."

Here was Becky Thatcher's own rounded signature—not actually "Becky Thatcher," nor "Laura Frazer," but Laura Hawkins,\* her maiden name—bearing the date, 1855, and under it the signature of some old time admirer of hers. The chirography of the name "Laura" seemed to be identical with that which appears under the sketch at page 178. As I examined her autograph on the cave wall, an impression came to me from somewhere, that very probably Samuel Clemens and he of the name that stood next to hers, had shared the privilege of admiring the young lady with a good many more.

\* Mark Twain used the name "Laura Hawkins" in *The Gilded Age*.

### Teaching Notes:

Images 203, 205, and 218 describe Laura Frazer, the inspiration for Mark Twain's Becky Thatcher.

Can you find Hannibal, Missouri, on the map?

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/24707/0218.jpg> 218

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### **Teaching Notes:**

Thank you for this marvelous album!

One of my all-time favorite Library of Congress sources is the Bird's eye view of the city of Hannibal, Marion Co., Missouri 1869 – of course, the home of Sam Clemens, aka Mark Twain. Look closely, and you will see a small raft on the water!