

TOM SAWYER AND HUCKLEBERRY FINN - CHARACTERS

Mark Twain's Characters and Settings - *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

When writing *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain did not try to write an autobiography, but did incorporate characteristics from many real life people into the characters. He named some people as models, others have become local legend. The preface to *Tom Sawyer* states: "Huck Finn is drawn from life; Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual—he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and therefore belongs to the composite order of architecture."

Tom Sawyer – Tom Sawyer is a composite of Sam Clemens and two friends. He himself did many of the things attributed to Tom Sawyer. Others may have been John Briggs, Will Bowen or John Garth.

Huckleberry Finn – A real boy, Tom Blankenship, provides this model. He was described as "ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed, but he had as good a heart as ever any boy had." For a time the Blankenship family lived one block away from the Clemens family.

Becky Thatcher – Laura Hawkins lived across the street from the Clemens family. Laura was three years younger than Sam Clemens, but a good friend. She later married Doctor James Frazer and lived her entire life in the Hannibal area.

Aunt Polly – Mark Twain's own mother, Jane Lampton Clemens, became the model for Aunt Polly. Sam wrote: "She had a slender, small body but a large heart—a heart so large that everybody's grief and everybody's joys found welcome in it."

Cousin Mary – Sam's older sister Pamela Clemens.

Cousin Sid – Sam's younger brother, Henry Clemens. In his *Autobiography*, Mark Twain noted: "He is Sid in *Tom Sawyer*. But Sid was not Henry. Henry was a very much finer and better boy than ever Sid was."

Injun Joe – Local legend says drawn from Joe Douglass, part Osage Indian and part Negro. Douglas was bald and wore a red wig and had a face pockmarked from smallpox. Not identified by Mark Twain.

Joe Harper – Drawn from a playmate, John Briggs.

Jim – slave boy based on Clemens family slave Sandy

Schoolmaster – John D. Dawson, one of Sam’s teachers

Widow Douglas – Mrs. Richard Holiday who lived atop Cardiff Hill

Old Welchman, Mr. Jones – John Davies a bookseller in Hannibal

Minister – Rev. Joshua Tucker of Presbyterian Church

Dr. Robinson – Dr. Joseph Nash McDowell – St. Louis doctor who tried experiment with his daughter’s body in Mark Twain Cave

Huck’s Pap – Woodson Blankenship – Tom’s father

Muff Potter – Benson Blankenship – Tom’s brother

Locations in Tom Sawyer

St. Petersburg – Probably a deliberate reference to St. Peter and Heaven, indicating Twain’s memories of his Hannibal childhood.

Cardiff Hill – Later when asked why he chose the name “Cardiff Hill,” Twain remarked that in his travels he visited Cardiff, Wales, and the cliffs there reminded him of the hill in Hannibal.

McDougal’s Cave – A real cave about two miles below Hannibal, well-explored by the children. Originally Simm’s Cave, today it is known as Mark Twain Cave.

Mark Twain's Characters and Settings - *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Huckleberry Finn – Mark Twain said Huck was based on a real boy, Tom Blankenship.

The King and The Duke – During his riverboat days Twain saw many tramps who cheated and tricked honest people. By giving them titles he continued his attack on royalty.

The Phelps Family – The Phelps farm is very reminiscent of his Uncle Quarles's farm at Florida, Missouri.

Boggs and Colonel Sherburn – The murder of Boggs by Colonel Sherburn parallels the real murder of Sam Smarr by William Owsley which occurred while Sam Clemens was a boy in Hannibal.

The Grangerford Family – Imaginary family which incorporates aspects of Southern life Mark Twain did not like. The romantic southern customs were seen by Mark Twain as a cause of the failure of the south and he attributed aspects to Sir Walter Scott's writings.

Jim – Based partly upon Uncle Dan'l, a slave on the Florida, Missouri farm owned by Sam Clemens' Uncle, John Quarles. Sam spent several summers on the farm and time spent with the slaves there aided his use of the slave dialect in *Huckleberry Finn*.