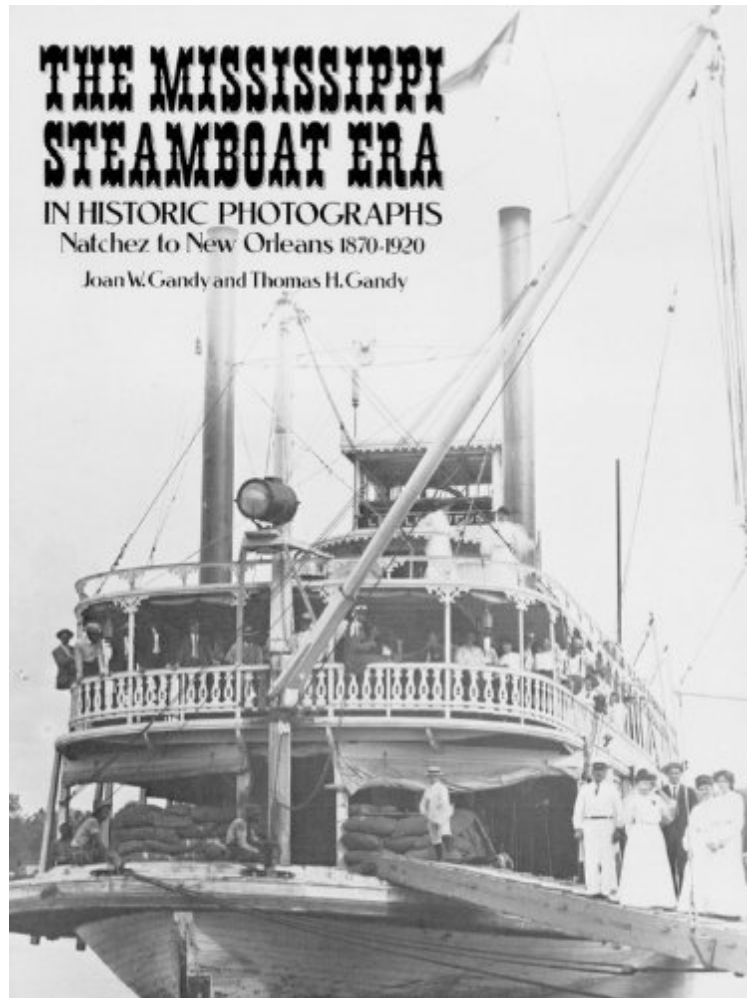


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The Mississippi Steamboat Era in Historic Photographs: Natchez to New Orleans, 1870ndash;1920

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Life on the Mississippi in the heyday of the steamboat lives in our imaginations through the artistry of Mark Twain, Edna Ferber, and Hollywood films, or perhaps a glimpse of a salvaged riverboat living out its last years as a theme restaurant. Surely the Mississippi steamboat era is among the most colorful and romantic in our history. But what was it really like, beyond our secondhand notions of stalwart river pilots, wayward boys and runaway slaves, of gamblers in tall hats and ladies in hoopskirts, of cotton, cakewalks, and carpetbaggers. This extraordinary book of recently discovered photographs, taken by a father and son who were professional photographers in Natchez, Mississippi, brings us for the first time a stunning array of images of steamboat life as it really was — from its glory days in the post-Civil War era to its demise in the years immediately following World War I. The photographers are Henry Norman and his son Earl. With boundless enthusiasm and curiosity, and the consummate skills of pictorial artists, they captured the beauties and rigors of a half-century of life on the Mississippi. Their priceless legacy has been preserved by Joan and Thomas Gandy, who recently acquired the extremely rare and valuable negatives and here present a collection of 170 of the most spectacular and arresting photographs of steamboat life. Together with an extremely informative text, replete with detailed information and fascinating anecdotes, the photographs make up a splendid account of the major steamboats that plied the great waterway and their essential social and economic role in river life. Vivid, beautifully composed images of stately ships, luxurious interiors, shipboard life, picturesque river towns, busy landings, paddle wheelers laden with cotton and other cargoes, and the disasters that claimed so many of these proud craft, comprise a stunning firsthand account of a long-lost — but now accurately, lovingly recaptured — way of American life.

From Publishers Weekly Between the Civil War and the turn of the century, the Mississippi River steamboat enjoyed its golden era: the boats were bigger, more elaborate and more efficient than their antebellum predecessors, and for a time they held off the railroad's challenge to their claim of being the predominant mode of transporting Deep South cotton. Here 170 pictures, taken by Natchez photographers Henry C. Norman and his son Earl, capture the period in startling clarity and freshness. There are shots of elegantly appointed dining rooms, workers posing in blackened clothes in front of furnaces, roustabouts unloading cotton and other cargo, passengers chatting leisurely on decks where spittoons were placed every six feet. The photos also capture river-town culture — the wharfs, warehouses, saloons — and show the mystery of the Mississippi, whose erratic force sooner or later destroyed most of the boats pictured. This is a wonderful document that includes informative essays and captions. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc.