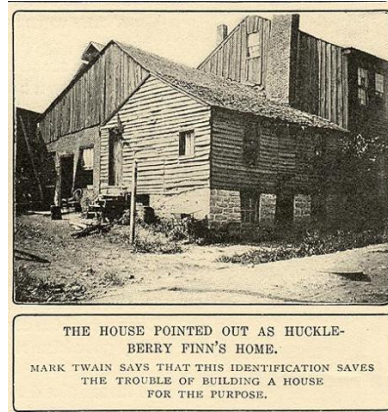


0. Tom Blankenship: The Real Huck Finn - Story
Preface

1. Samuel Langhorne Clemens
2. Samuel Clemens - Life on the Mississippi River
3. Samuel Clemens Becomes Mark Twain
4. Mark Twain Becomes Famous
5. Mark Twain and His Family

6. Tom Blankenship: The Real Huck Finn

7. Mark Twain and His Money Mistakes
8. Mark Twain and His Final Years
9. Mark Twain and His Broken Heart



Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) used real people and real places as models for his famous novels. He reportedly said that the small house, pictured in this image, was his model for the home of Huck Finn. The house was located in Hannibal, Missouri (where Twain spend his boyhood). Photos by H.M. Wharton and published in the September 1902 issue of *The Century Magazine*.

Ever since Mark Twain published his book, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, people have either really loved it or really despised it. Ernest Hemingway said it was the best American novel he had ever read:

All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called "Huckleberry Finn."... It's the best book we've had.

Within a month after its release in America, during 1885, *Huck Finn* was banned by the public library in Concord, Massachusetts. People there apparently thought the book had low morals. They also disliked some of its language.

In the 20th century, particularly in the second half, critics said the book was racist. In the 21st century, NewSouth Books—based in Montgomery, Alabama—even released the book with changed words.

Initially published in the UK, in December of 1884, the novel tells the stand-alone story of a poor boy who first had a supporting role in Twain's novel, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Twain used a real-life person as his inspiration for Huck Finn. His name was Tom Blankenship.

Sam Clemens knew Tom Blankenship when he was a boy living in Hannibal, Missouri. Four years older than Sam, Tom was born into a poor family. His father was known as the "town drunk."

In his autobiography, Mark Twain tells us why he picked Blankenship as the model for Huck Finn:

In Huckleberry Finn I have drawn Tom Blankenship exactly as he was. He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he had as good a heart as ever any boy had. His liberties were totally unrestricted. He was the only really independent person - boy or man - in the community, and by consequence he was tranquil and continuously happy, and was envied by all the rest of us.

We liked him; we enjoyed his society [that is, his company]. And as his society was forbidden us by our parents, the prohibition trebled and quadrupled its value, and therefore we sought and got more of his society than of any other boy's.

I heard, four years ago, that he was Justice of the Peace in a remote village of Montana, and was a good citizen and greatly respected. (See *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 1: The Complete and Authoritative Edition*, by Mark Twain, at page 397).

As Mark Twain's fame grew, from his novels like *Huck Finn*, so did his personal wealth. He didn't always manage his money very well, however.

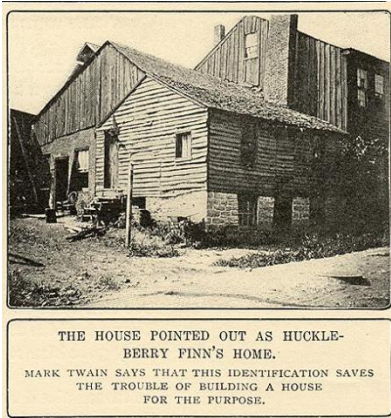
At one point, to keep his creditors at bay, he filed for bankruptcy protection.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Tom-Blankenship-The-Real-Huck-Finn-Mark-Twain>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Tom-Blankenship-The-Real-Huck-Finn-Mark-Twain>



Home of Huck Finn in Hannibal, Missouri

Image included with an article, by Henry M. Wharton, published in "The Century Magazine," September 1902 Issue. Online via University of Virginia Library.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Home-of-Huck-Finn-in-Hannibal-Missouri>