

Annie Christmas

An American Legend



Annie Christmas was easy to spot. She was six foot seven. She was 250 pounds. She had rich, dark skin. She had an easy laugh. She had a loud laugh. It sounded like a foghorn.

Annie lived in New Orleans, Louisiana. She worked on the docks. She worked on her boat. It was a keelboat. It was named Big River's Daughter. A keelboat is flat underneath. You move it using a long pole.

Annie was very strong. She was stronger than most men. She could carry three barrels of flour at one time. She carried two barrels in her arms. She carried one on her head.

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Annie could pole her boat both downstream and upstream. Going upstream is hard. She had to fight the river's strong current. No man could pole upstream.

Annie was very tough. She beat up the bullies on the dock. She beat mean men. She beat up bad men. She beat up a lot of men. No one messed with her.



Annie wore a necklace. It was made from pearls. Each time she beat up a man, she added a new pearl. Her necklace was 30 feet long.

Annie's husband died long ago. She raised 12 strong sons. They were all handsome. They were all seven feet tall.

Annie took a vacation. She went on a fancy steamboat. It was called *Natchez Belle*. She had the finest cabin on the boat. She met the captain. But she didn't like him. He was not a smart captain. He was not a good captain.

One day, the steamboat sailed into a storm. The river churned. The *Natchez Belle* rocked dangerously. The passengers huddled together. They hoped for the best. The captain didn't know what to do. He steered them to the wrong part of the river. Annie knew the river like the back of her hand. She told the captain to turn around. But he refused. The ship hit a sandbar. It got stuck.



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Luckily, Annie had her keelboat tied to the ship. She told all the passengers to get on her boat. They climbed on. Just then, the *Natchez Belle* began to sink. Annie's boat was full. It was too full. It was too heavy. It was barely above the water. The storm raged. It shook the keelboat. Annie poled for her life. She was strong for sure. But poling all those people on her keelboat through that storm was a lot even for Annie Christmas. Finally, Annie poled the keelboat ashore. She saved hundreds of passengers that day. But working so hard overtaxed her heart. Soon after, poor Annie's heart gave out.

