

# Annie Christmas

## An American Legend



Annie Christmas was easy to identify in a crowd. She stood six foot seven, weighed 250 pounds, and had rich, dark skin. She had a loud voice and an easy laugh that was as loud as a foghorn.

Annie worked on the docks of New Orleans, Louisiana where she had a keelboat named *Big River's Daughter*. A keelboat is a boat that is flat underneath. You move it using a long pole that you use to push off from the riverbed.

Annie was much stronger than most men. She could carry two barrels of flour in her arms and one on her head. She could pole her boat both downstream and upstream. Going upstream is difficult because you're going against river's strong current, something especially hard when poling a keelboat. No man ever tried to pole upstream.

---

## Annie Christmas

---

Annie was very strong and tough. She beat up the bullies on the dock and she beat men up who were being mean or trying to cheat others. She beat up so many men that no one



would mess with her. While Annie dressed in men's clothes most of the time, she wore a necklace made of freshwater pearls. Each time she beat up a man, she added a new pearl. It was said that her necklace was 30 feet long.

Annie was once married, but her husband died long ago. On her own, she raised 12 strong, handsome sons who were all seven feet tall.

Annie decided to take a vacation on a fancy steamboat called *Natchez Belle* where she took the finest cabin. She met the captain, but wasn't much impressed with him—he was not the smartest man she had ever met.

One day, the steamboat sailed straight into a dark, raging storm. The water of the Mississippi churned, rocking the *Natchez Belle* and tossing her about dangerously. The passengers huddled together and hoped for the best. Annie, who knew the river like the back of her hand, saw that the captain was steering them right towards a dangerous part of the river. She ran right up to him and told him to turn around, but he refused and told her to go away. Moments later, the ship struck a sandbar and got stuck.

Luckily, Annie had tied her keelboat to the steamboat before they left the port. She told all the passengers on board to get on her keelboat. Just as they climbed on, the *Natchez Belle* began to sink. So many passengers joined Annie on her keelboat that it barely floated above the water. The storm raged and pawed at the keelboat. Annie poled for her life and the lives of all the passengers. She was strong for sure, but poling all those people on her keelboat through that storm was too much, even for Annie Christmas. Finally, Annie poled the keelboat ashore. She had saved hundreds of passengers that day. But working so hard had overtaxed her heart and soon after, poor Annie's heart gave out.

