



Shantyboats and Roustabouts

The River Poor of St. Louis, 1875–1930

GREGG ANDREWS

Shantyboat dwellers and steamboat roustabouts formed an organic part of the cultural landscape of the Mississippi River bottoms during the rise of industrial America and the twilight of steamboat packets from 1875 to 1930. Nevertheless, both groups remain understudied by scholars of the era. Most of what we know about these laborers on the river comes not from the work of historians but from travel accounts, novelists, songwriters, and early film producers. As a result, images of these men and women are laden with nostalgia and minstrelsy. Gregg Andrews's *Shantyboats and Roustabouts* uses the waterfront squatter settlements and Black entertainment district near the levee in St. Louis as a window into the world of the river poor in the Mississippi Valley, exploring their daily struggles and experiences and vividly describing people heretofore obscured by classist and racist caricatures.

GREGG ANDREWS is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at Texas State University and the author of several books, including *Thyra J. Edwards: Black Activist in the Global Freedom Struggle*.

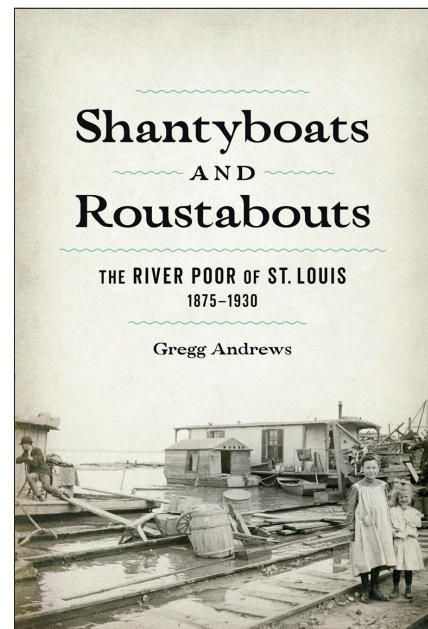
PRAISE FOR *SHANTYBOATS AND ROUSTABOUTS*

"In *Shantyboats and Roustabouts*, Gregg Andrews reveals what Hank Williams called 'a picture from life's other side.' The human stories he brings to light from the silty banks of the Mississippi are both heartbreaking and heroic, salvaged from the American nexus of poverty and freedom."—T. R. C. Hutton, author of *Bloody Breathitt: Politics and Violence in the Appalachian South*

"Andrews sensitively tells of the toil, racism, pain, joy, music, and preaching on the river. The reader benefits from a seamless narrative filled with unforgettable people. The river poor will enter your soul and you will not be able to lose them."—Noralee Frankel, author of *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi*

"Andrews continues his remarkable stream of intimate writings about poor and working-class people. His empathetic, colorful, and masterful account opens a new genre of 'history from the river bottoms up.'"—Michael K. Honey, author of *To the Promised Land: Martin Luther King and the Fight for Economic Justice*

"Andrews knows and understands the hard-working people of the Mississippi River bottoms. *Shantyboats and Roustabouts*, with admirable research and lucid prose, affirms their place in America's urban waterfront landscape."—Bonnie Stepenoff, author of *Working the Mississippi: Two Centuries of Life on the River*



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