

Artist: John Banvard

John Banvard

Ancestor Of The Movies

The scenes unrolled one at a time as the renowned Louisville artist presented his three-mile painting

By **MARION PORTER**
Courier-Journal Staff Writer



One-time Louisvillian John Banvard is credited as being originator of the moving panorama.

ON A rainy night more than a century ago the world premiere of the world's largest painting was held in Louisville. But no one showed up for the opening.

The dismal outcome of that opening night in 1846 surely was disheartening to the artist, John Banvard, who had painted three miles of canvas depicting the "Panorama of The Mississippi." But resourceful indeed was the man who had spent 400 days in a skiff on the Mississippi drawing preliminary sketches; who built a large wooden structure in Louisville, where he did the actual painting, and who had worked day and night for six years to complete the Herculean project.

The next day Banvard went to the busy docks and talked to boatmen about the picture. He told them it was their river he had painted and they must see it. He distributed tickets. The rivermen came that night, bringing friends.

The gigantic canvas, attached to two upright revolving cylinders, was unrolled. Familiar scenes 12 feet across passed before their eyes. The viewers were delighted; they spread the word about the beauty and accuracy of the painting, and soon Louisvillians in droves rushed to see the panorama.

(Banvard is credited as being the originator of the moving panorama. But one authority refers to John Rowson Smith,

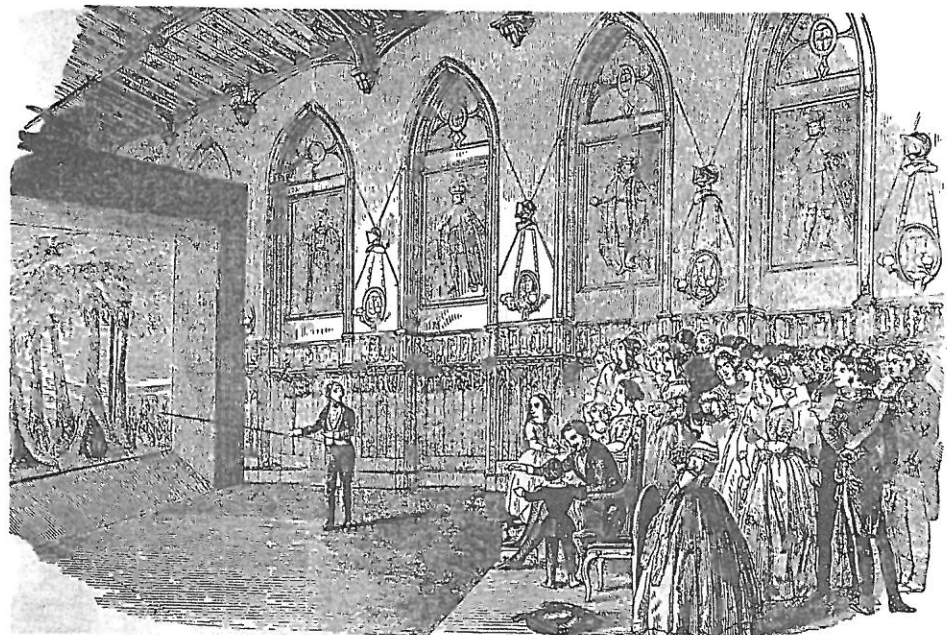
who showed a moving panorama of the Mississippi in Boston in 1839.)

Banvard took the painting to New York and Boston, where it was wildly popular. Railroad companies ran excursion trains to these cities bringing 400,000 people to see the picture in 1847-48. (These trains might be described as the forerunner of our theater trains; similarly, the moving panoramas of the 1840's and 1850's have been termed the "ancestors of the modern moving picture.")

When the artist showed the painting in London, the excitement was greater even than in America. Queen Victoria commanded him to present the exhibition at Windsor Castle, "where a large and brilliant assemblage of the Court" inspected it. Fame and fortune at last were Banvard's.

He displayed the panorama in several English cities and in Paris. He traveled in Asia and Africa and painted many more pictures which subsequently were exhibited.

Banvard was born in New York in 1815. A branch of his family includes the three brothers De Bonivard, who, because of their liberal opinions, were held in the famous European political prison, Chillon. Francois De Bonivard, kept chained to a stone pillar for years, is the subject of Lord Byron's poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon."



The 1936 June quarterly of the Minnesota History magazine had a drawing of Banvard presenting his painting, mounted on hidden cylinders, before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in 1853.



This is one of the sketches Banvard made during the days he spent on the river before he began the painting.

When Banvard was 15 his family lost its money. Seeking his fortune, young John arrived in Louisville the same year. He got a job in a drugstore. He lost this post when his employer discovered him sketching on the walls when he should have been making pills. Next, at the age of 16, he was hired "to ornament and decorate a public garden" in Louisville.

Then the youth began his adventuring on the river, and adventuring it was. In a pamphlet describing the artist's background, published in New York in 1862 (at that time his panorama was on display there), is a graphic account of Banvard's earlier river experiences. It was at this time, while he still was in his teens, that he determined to paint the largest painting in the world.

Next, we find Banvard and some companions in New Harmony, Ind., where they built a flatboat and laid in a supply of dioramic paintings to exhibit on their way downriver. The young men had their troubles. They ran out of money and food. They continually got caught on snags and sandbars. Banvard became ill from exposure and overexertion. But they persevered, taking potatoes, eggs, onions and chickens as admissions to the art display. Upon arrival in New Orleans, Banvard sold his interest. He painted in New Orleans, and later in Cincinnati and Louisville and was "liberally

Continued on Page 47



Here is another pencil sketch found in Banvard's effects by a granddaughter, Adele Banvard, 64, of Freeport, L. I.

"Together we got rid of 77½ pounds and loved it"

Sisters Lillian Lang and Aida Krause of New York tell how they improved their figures with the famous Knox Eat-and-Reduce Plan



John Banvard worked night and day for six long years at Louisville to finish the world's largest painting

GIANT PAINTING *Continued*

rewarded," according to the 1862 pamphlet. Before he was 20, Banvard became the proprietor of the St. Louis museum. He lost all his earnings in this venture. By selling a "revolving pistol" and some of his paintings, he got together enough capital to operate a produce boat along the river. He made several speculations, and by time he was 25 he had \$50,000 and was ready to embark on his long-cherished ambition.

In the spring of 1840 he sallied forth in a small skiff on the Mississippi. He made hundreds of sketches. For weeks he heard no human voice. His rifle kept him supplied with game, which he cooked and ate "with his biscuit, with no other beverage than the wholesome water of the noble river that glided by him." At night he slept under the upturned skiff. Loneliness, hardships and the vagaries of the weather didn't swerve him from his purpose. After more than a year of this preliminary work he came again to Louisville and erected a wooden building and began transferring his sketches to canvas.

In April of 1846 he had a visitor, a former classmate, who wrote a letter published in the New York Home Journal about the artist and his work. The visitor commented on the immense wooden building on the outskirts of the city "far removed from the noise and bustle of the town." The studio was all "chaos and confusion . . . paint-pots, brushes, jars and kegs were strewn about while along one of the walls several large cases were piled containing rolls of finished sections of the painting.

"The remarkable truthfulness of the minutest objects upon the shores of the river . . . will make it the most valuable historical painting in the world, and unequalled for magnitude and variety of interest by any work that has ever been heard of since the art of painting was discovered.

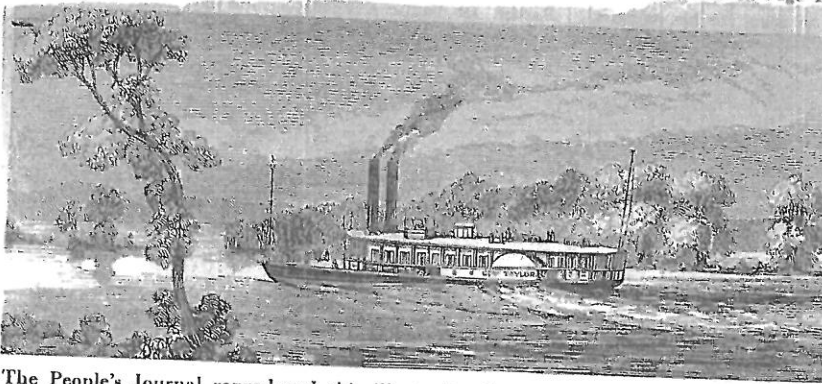
"As a medium for the study of geography it will be of inestimable value. The manners and customs of the aborigines and settlers, the modes of cultivating and harvesting the peculiar crops—cotton, sugar, tobacco, etc.—the shipping of produce, in all the variety of novel and curious conveyances employed on these rivers . . . are here so vividly portrayed, that but a slight stretch of the imagination would bring the noise of the puffing steamboats from the river and the songs of the Negroes in the fields . . ."

A shortage of money again slowed down the artist. For a time he laid aside his project and sought other jobs. One of them was decorating regalia for an Odd Fellows lodge here.

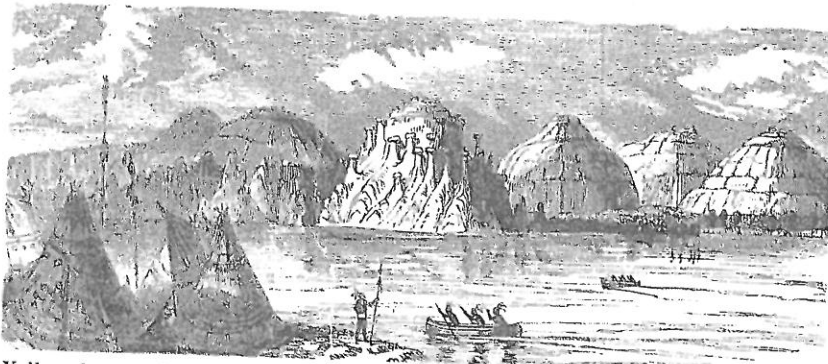
Late in 1846 the painting was finished. But Banvard's trials in Louisville were not over. Before the gas company agreed to install fixtures for the opening night, it "compelled him to deposit double the price of such fixtures in their bank." To raise this amount he gave "a piece of philosophical apparatus (unnamed) to a society in the city, provided they bought 50 tickets in advance."

The old pamphlet concerning Banvard continues: "The City authorities also ordered him to pay a tax for exhibiting his work."

Continued on Page 13



The People's Journal reproduced this illustration from Banvard's three-mile painting.



Yellowed pages of the Journal, date unknown, also presented this Banvard scene.

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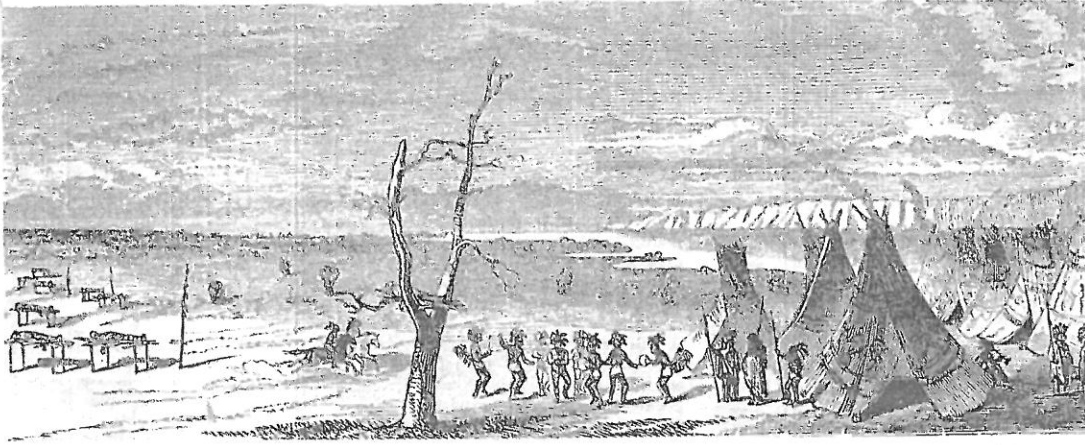
"Her home is lovely . . . she keeps it clean . . . but oh! that awful smell of stale household odors and cheap perfume-y deodorizers!"



handy wick... or spray



nothing kills o



"City of The Dead" was the title given to this scene by Banvard or The People's Journal. Pages from the publi-

cation were loaned to The Courier-Journal by Adele Banvard, one of the artist's two surviving granddaughters.

Information from Banvard was used by the Union to capture an island

GIANT PAINTING *Continued*

a work of which they ought to have been proud, and which would not only reflect honour upon the city, but make it noted throughout the civilized world."

All these last-minute problems—and then not even the holders of the society's tickets came to the opening night. Louisville was busy with its own affairs that year. A new theater at Fourth and Green (now Liberty) had just been completed. The University of Louisville's medical school began functioning. Industries were springing up, among them the E. F. Avery and D. H. Avery Company's plow factory.

After he cajoled the rivermen to come see his painting, Banvard's progress was a series of triumphs at home and abroad. He traveled; he lectured; he wrote poetry which was published; two of his plays were enacted, one in Boston, one on Broadway. He continued to paint. One picture, "The Orison," was the painting from which the first chromo made in America was taken.

During the Civil War, Banvard furnished to Generals Fremont and Pope information about Island No. 10, held by the Confederates, which assisted in its capture. Many years later he publicly was given credit for his help.

Little information about Banvard's later years is available. He built a handsome home at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, and called it Glenada. He lived there many years with his family. In 1880 he moved to Watertown, S. D., where his son Eugene had started a bank. Eleven years later the artist who had traveled the world over and received wide acclaim, died at the age of 75.

Two granddaughters, Adele Banvard, who provided much information and several illustrations for this article, and Mrs. Joseph G. Roza, live at Freeport, L. I. Two grandsons are dead.

One was James Banvard, who died in Texas. The other was Edward Banvard, the first mate on an oil tanker, one of the first United States ships sunk by the Japs after Pearl Harbor. He died in a lifeboat several days later.

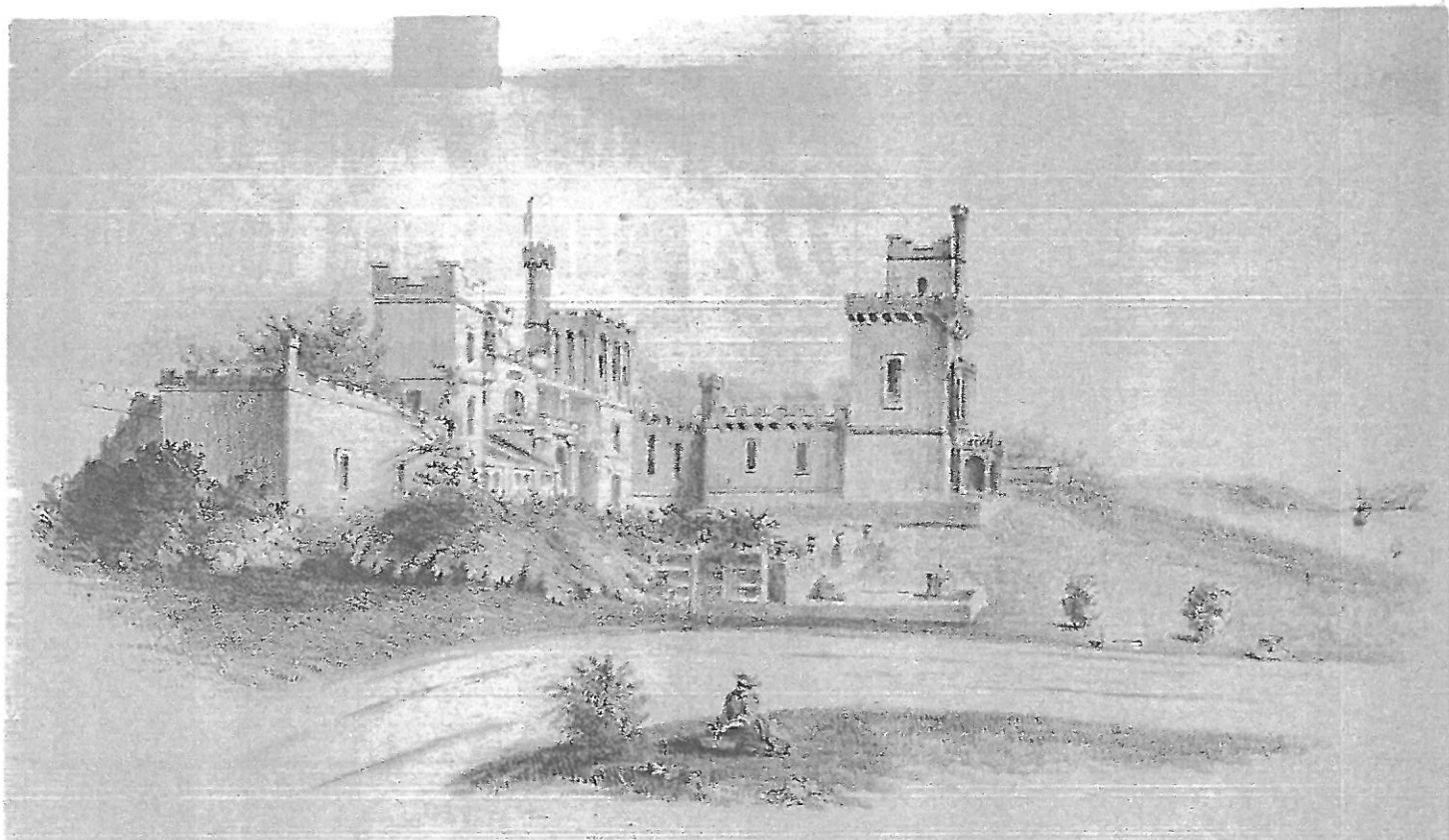
What finally happened to the world's largest painting? There's no authentic record of its fate, but here's one version for whatever it might be worth: As the huge canvas began to wear out, it was cut up and the various scenes were used as backdrops and curtains for vaudeville houses then springing up across the land.



J. P. Frankenstein did this sketch of Banvard when he was about 19 and a promising painter in Louisville.



"Stack Island Mississippi," was the title penned on this painting, apparently done by Banvard in preliminary work.



Banvard built this imposing home, known as Glenada, at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, where he lived for many years with his family.

Later he moved to Watertown, S. D., and lived with his son, the late Eugene Banvard, a banker. The elder Banvard died there at age 75.

THE HIDDEN CAUSE DOCTORS SAY!

- 1. SETTLES
YOUR STOMACH!**
- 2. RELIEVES
YOUR HEADACHE!**



John Banvard

Mississippi Panorama, February 23 - April 1

What's 2,000,000 years old and inspires people to do curious things? The mighty Mississippi. Of course, 19th-century artist John Banvard may have been odd to begin with, when a river voyage inspired him to create "the largest painting in the world." A three-mile-long painting is hard to ignore in any century. And where might such a colossal idea come from? Join John Banvard on a phenomenal journey through time to a mystical, animated place, teeming with outlandish characters. It's a magical, music-filled tall tale with touches of reality. Because a majestic old river has secrets to reveal -- to you.

<http://www2.bitstream.net/~iras/ctc.htm>

The most ambitious new work on the Minneapolis theater's season is "Mississippi Panorama," created by a pair of locals -- playwright and actor Kevin Kling and composer Michael Sommers. Artistic director Peter Brosius describes the show as a "fantastical fable," concerning the Mississippi and a 19th-century artist named John Banvard, whose dream was to create a 3-mile-long painting celebrating the glory of the river.

Brosius and Sommers will co-direct the production, which, like this season's "Starry Messenger" is a product of Threshold, CTC's new-play development program.

<http://www.pioneerplanet.com/columnists/docs/PAPATOLA/docs/033253.htm>

Issue No. 3

TIMOTHY McSWEENEY'S
WINDFALL REPUBLIC
(Incorporating Timothy McSweeney's
Quarterly Concern and Timothy
McSweeney's Blues-Jazz Odyssey, and
predating Timothy McSweeney's
Unsuccessful Inward, Timothy McSweeney's
Finicky Corridor, and Timothy McSweeney
-- Leprosarium Years.)

Banvard's Folly, by Paul Collins

[Continuing his Loser series, Collins here tells the story of John Banvard, a 19th-century showman and inventor of the "Three-Mile Painting." How did the most famous artist of his time die broke and unknown?]

<http://www.mcsweeneys.net/subscribe/issue3.html>

Encyclopedia Britannica

Also in the mid-19th century, the rolled panorama, a kind of portable mural, became a popular amusement and educational device. Accompanied by a lecture and often music, the painting, on canvas and wound between two poles, would slowly be unrolled behind a frame or revealed in sections. Sometimes theatrical realism was utilized in the form of real steam, smoke, and sound effects. Among the longest and most ambitious of these rolled panoramas was one 370 m (1,200 feet) long (deceptively advertised as 3 miles [nearly 5 km] in length), depicting the landscape along the entire course of the Mississippi River, by the American John Banvard.

<http://www.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/2/0,5716,59742+1,00.html>

Filson Club Quarterly

Vol. 32, 1958

JOSEPH EARL ARRINGTON, John Banvard's Moving Panorama of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers

http://www.filsonclub.org/1957_61.html

One of the most ambitious panoramas was that of the Mississippi River by John Banvard, an itinerant scene painter. Banvard spent a year making sketches of the river, then four more years translating it into a panorama. The 12-foot-high canvas was said to have stretched 1,300 feet in length, depicting stretches of the eastern bank of the Mississippi from the mouth of the Ohio River to New Orleans.

<http://www.bergen.com/previews/pilgrim05199902055.htm>



family guide

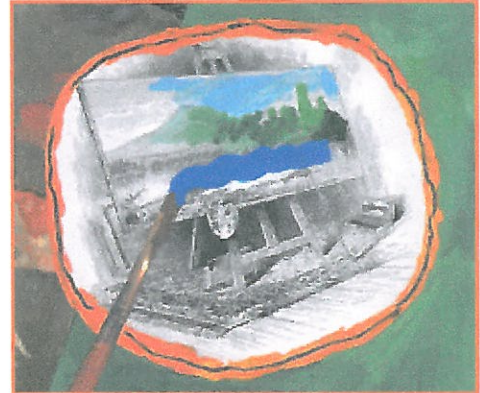
MISSISSIPPI PANORAMA: A TALE AS WILD AS THE RIVER ITSELF

By Kevin Kling
 Lyrics and music Kevin Kling and Michael Sommers
 February 20, 2001 - April 1, 2001

What's 2,000,000 years old and inspires people to do curious things? The mighty Mississippi. This CTC original world premiere, born of the wonderfully quirky mind of playwright Kevin Kling and the theatrical artistry of Michael Sommers, is mischievous, mysterious, magical, and musical-- a must see.

A synopsis of the story

At the end of the 1800s, a young artist named John Banvard journeyed from one end of the Mississippi to the other and was inspired to paint a picture that would capture the glory of the river. The painting, which no longer exists, was said to be three miles long, yet he carried it all over the world in order to show people the wonder of the mighty river. Mississippi Panorama is inspired by the spirit of that painting, and the creative essence of the man who made it.



The river is first seen as it rolls by on a crankie, an old-fashioned device that could make a painting move long before the animator's art was born. In a series of images, it is seen at its point of origin as many feet - of animals, native peoples, explorers, and settlers - step over the river's beginning. Then it is sung to life by a choir/chorus as a collection of droplets pour together and become a torrent with the name Mi-ss-i-ss-i-pp-i. A character by the name of Professor Leakey emerges, personifying the river water.

He meets a young John Banvard standing on the bank and says, "I make flowers grow, I play tug a war with the moon; I roar, I coo, I bubble, I burst; I wash away sins, I quench the thirst; Paupers or kings, I don't care the name; Dump 'em on in, I drown 'em the same....I go up and around and back to the ground, Give the dinosaur a little drink, go up and around come back to the ground, come out a kitchen sink....Who am I?" John guesses, "Water," and finds that the river also knows his name. This is the beginning of his deep connection with the river. He also meets Lady Bones Johnson, a ghostly character made of bones who knows and carries the stories of the dead who are buried in the silt and flow of the river. She is searching for her lost love, 30 years gone from a riverboat explosion. She knows stories both funny and fearsome.

Banvard's head begins, literally, to fill with dreams of the river. In fact, his head often feels so big that he's not sure what to do. On the bank of the river he meets Winter and shares his cold fire. Winter gives him a burnt stick and coaxes him to draw in the snow. In this way John

learns the only thing he can do to relieve the bigness of his head is to paint what he sees and feels.

The map maker, Para Nunzio, is also studying the river, but from a very different point of view. He and Banvard are the absolute opposites of one another. Banvard loves the river, wants to feel it, glorify it. Nunzio wants to use it, control it, to map it, and possibly dam the river, "dam it all!" He tries to buy John's sketches of the Mississippi. Unwittingly, Banvard is traveling down river on a raft stolen from Nunzio by Cap'n Thibideaux and Sneaky Pete, who are transformed into an alligator and a muskrat (due to a wish Pete made on a maiden voyage).

When Banvard is thrown overboard in a violent storm which floods the river, and nearly eaten by a giant catfish on the river bottom, the Cap'n and Pete save his life. They also help him find his three miles of canvas, and once it is painted, travel with him up and down the river as he shows his panorama to the townspeople. Their spirits are healed by their commitment to the rightness of the river as they journey with Banvard and defy Nunzio in his attempt to capture the river.

John Banvard lives on the bank of the Mississippi all his life, knowing that when he dies, "the water in [him] will go up and around and back to the ground," just like the water in the river.

Things to look for

From the author, Kevin Kling: "It is important to discuss the form of the play. This play is a journey. It is both the journey down the Mississippi, by John Banvard, and also a journey of an artist, with the river as metaphor. John Banvard, like his creation, needs to be larger than life, his experiences archetypal, his triumphs and failures grand. We have adopted the convention of a chorus from the ancient Greek theater, and our chorus will give us the embodiment of the Mississippi. They will voice its beauty and rage, properties and laws, they will create the environment of the river as a force greater than those it serves. Likewise, the characters Banvard meets are of a great stature. Bones can tell a story, animals divulge their secrets, superstitions take on life. In this way we are able to explore arenas forbidden by the laws of nature. Through Banvard we can achieve a greater understanding of this beautiful body of water, the Mississippi River."

As you get ready to see the show

Go see the river.

You can investigate the factual background for the show by talking about the geography of the Mississippi. This can be as simple as tracing the river on a map, finding the source in Itasca, Minnesota, and the mouth on the Gulf of Mexico. Or you can talk about how the river historically affected the way our country developed. For example, discuss the progression from canoe, to boat, to paddle-wheeler, to steamboat, etc. and how this affected both social and business commerce.

To get a feel for the mythological and fanciful aspects of the show, it would be fun to read the tall tale about [Mike Fink](#), a larger than life river rambler.

Mark Twain also loved the Mississippi. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#) conveys a wonderful feeling of being on the river in a way similar to the way John Banvard must have experienced it.

After you see the show

Go see the river.

Do you have any personal experiences that revolve around the river? Share them with each other.

Para Nunzio's maps and John Banvard's panorama try to capture the essence of the river in very different ways. How would you try to capture the essence of a river?

Write a description of a part of the Mississippi you've seen, or of another body of water that you know. Draw your own picture or map.

Find a bone and tell its story.

Imagine what kind of animal you would turn into if you had a wish, and what you would be like. Your whole family can do this together - what a crazy combination of creatures you might become!

Make a family story into a myth. Tell it at the supper table... and laugh a lot.

An Old Riddle:

Mississippi is a long name. Can you spell it?

[Return to show page](#) · [Going to the Theatre](#) · [Performance Schedule](#)

CTC Family Guides include detailed descriptions of each play, including things to do and think about, for parents to share with their families.

CTC 2000-2001 Family Guide

Developed and written by Chris Kliesen Wehrman

Managing Editor - Linda Jacobs

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Birth / Death	State:	Often Known For:
1815 - 1891	KY (Strongest affiliation)	panorama, landscape, portrait

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Year	Author	Title	SubTitle	# Pages	# Illus.	Color
2000	AskART.com	The Artists Bluebook:	24,000 North American Artists	332	0	No
1996	Davis, John	The Landscape of Belief	Encountering the Holy Land in 19th Cent American Art	264	107	Yes
1993	Southwest Art	Master Index 1971-1993	Artists in Southwest Art	64	0	No
1990	Gerdts, William H	Art Across America (West)	(Vol 3)	396	310	Yes
1990	Gerdts, William H	Art Across America (Central/South)	(Vol 2)	396	306	Yes
1986	Opitz, Glen B (editor)	Mantle Fielding's Dictionary	American Painters, Sculptors et al	1081	0	No
1985	Dawdy, Doris	Artists of the American West	A Biographical Dictionary (3 vols)	1184	0	No
1980	Perkins, Robert/Wm J Gavin III	The Boston Athenaeum	Art Exhibition Index 1827-1874	325	28	Yes
1979	Baigell, Mathew	Dictionary of American Art		390	0	No
1976	Coen, Rena Neumann	Painting and Sculpture in Minnesota	1820-1914	146	150	Yes

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Year	Author	Title	SubTitle	# Pages	# Illus.	Color
1976	Samuels, Peggy and Harold	Encyclopedia Artists American West	(The Illustrated Biographical)	549	322	No
1974	Parry, Ellwood	The Indian and the Black Man	The Image in American Art	189	120	No
1973	Naylor, Maria	Exhibition Record 1861-1900	National Academy of Design (2 Vols)	1075	0	No
1958	O'Connor, William Van (editor)	A History of the Arts in Minnesota		62	50	No
1954	Peat, Wilbur D	Pioneer Painters of Indiana		254	84	No
1952	McCracken, Harold	Portrait of the Old West		216	0	Yes
1950	Barker, Virgil	American Painting	History and Interpretation	715	100	No
1948	Mallett, Daniel Trowbridge	Index of Artists	International Biographical (2 Vols)	811	0	No
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Birth / Death	State:	Often Known For:
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We are seeking any biographical data about our artists. Creating or improving our biographies is a work in progress, and we welcome information from our knowledgeable viewers.

Artist Bulletin Board

1. Anyone wishing to post information regarding this artist may do so by clicking on the Artist Bulletin Board button.

This biography from the archives of AskART.com.

Known for his panoramic views of the Mississippi River Valley and for his traveling demonstrations of his pieces, John Banvard was from New York City and settled in Louisville, Kentucky from where he traveled extensively on the Mississippi River for subject matter.

He was part of a group of artists including John Rowson Smith, John Egan, Samuel Hudson, and Leon Pomarede who competed with each other to create the largest and most accurate views of this region. One of Banvard's river valley scenes began as twelve feet high and thirteen-hundred feet long and was enlarged from there.

In 1846, he began to travel with this panorama, now lost, and in London, England more than six-hundred thousand people came for the viewing. He took the painting to Windsor Castle for a private showing to Queen Victoria. Also while traveling abroad, he created a panorama of the Holy Land and the Nile River valley.

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Cornell University Library

Bibliographic Citation

Author: Joseph Banvard

Title: Plymouth and the Pilgrims, or, Incidents of adventure in the history of the first settlers. New ed., rev. and enl. /

Publisher: D. Lothrop

Publication Date: 1886

City: Boston

Pages: 332 page images

Subjects: [Massachusetts -- History -- Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775.](#)

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Banvard, John

Description of Banvard's panorama of the Mississippi River.

Banvard, John, 1814-1891.

Panoramas.

Mississippi River-description and travel.

P 917.7 D449

The Encyclopedia of Louisville / John Kleber editor in chief; Mary Jean Kinsman, managing editor; Thomas D. Clark, Clyde F. Crews, George H. Yater, associate editors.

Louisville (KY)- Civilization-Encyclopedias.

Louisville (KY)- History

976.9911 E56

pg. 684

The lost panoramas of the Mississippi.

McDermott, John Francis, 1902-

Panoramas.

Mississippi River- description and travel.

Banvard, John.

Who Was Who (4 vols.)

920 M 357

NOSTALGIA

C-J Aug 5, 1979

Louisville biggie: A 3-mile-long painting

By JEAN HOWERTON COADY
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Will wonders never cease as to Louisville's multitudinous claims to fame?

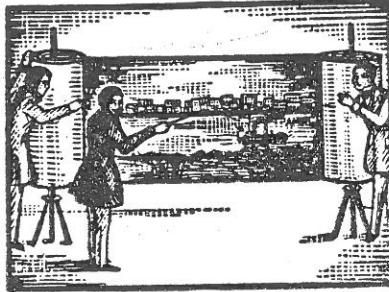
Now comes "the world's largest painting," said to be 4 feet high and 3 miles long, that has been described as "a Leviathan picture, a moving panorama and the ancestor of the motion picture."

The 1846 painting was called "The Panorama of the Mississippi." John Banvard, its creator, spent a year and 35 days in a skiff on the Mississippi River sketching the countryside for a distance of 1,200 miles.

Then he came to Louisville, built a huge wooden studio on the outskirts of the city and began painting on a canvas specially woven in Lowell, Mass.

A pamphlet about Banvard published in New York in 1862 tells the story. It took him six years to complete the panorama that "depicted the manners and customs of the aborigines and settlers, the modes of cultivating and harvesting cotton, sugar, tobacco etc., shipping of produce in all the variety of novel and curious conveyances employed on the river ... all so vividly portrayed that but a slight stretch of the imagination would bring the noise of the puffing steamboats from the river and the songs of the Negroes in the fields."

Banvard was born in New York in 1815, and, at 15, came to Louisville to seek his fortune. He got a job in a



Part of John Banvard's painting of the Mississippi Valley.

drugstore but was fired when his employer found him sketching instead of working.

The would-be artist and some friends went from New Harmony, Ind., to New Orleans by flatboat, exhibiting their art works along the way.

At 20, Banvard became the proprietor of the St. Louis Museum, in which he lost all his earnings. His next venture was operating a produce boat on the river. At age 25, he had enough money to set out on his Mississippi River venture. For 400 days he drifted and sketched and ate game that he shot, cooked and ate "with no other beverage than the wholesome water of the noble river that glided by him."

The first night the completed panorama was exhibited in Louisville, nobody came. Banvard then cajoled some rivermen to come and see it. As

the gigantic canvas, attached to two upright revolving cylinders, was unrolled "to the accompaniment of narration by the panoramist," the boatmen couldn't believe their eyes. The panorama became a sensation overnight.

The *Louisville Courier* reported, "It is the greatest and proudest work of art in the world. Two hours were required to watch the picture passing in review. In consequence of the extraordinary length of the picture, the Panorama commences traveling at half past seven o'clock precisely."

Banvard took it to New York and Boston. Special excursion trains carried 400,000 people to see it in those cities in 1847-48. When it was shown in London, Queen Victoria commanded Banvard to show it at Windsor Castle, "where a large and brilliant assemblage of the court inspected it." Next it went to Paris.

Information about Banvard's later years is sketchy. He built a home at Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island, N. Y. In 1880, he moved to Watertown, S. D., where a son had started a bank. There the creator of "the largest picture executed by man" died in 1890 at the age of 75.

Nobody seems to know what happened to the painting. One theory is that as the huge canvas began to wear out, it was cut up and the various scenes were used as backdrops and curtains for vaudeville houses that were springing up across the land.

Oct. 45 - Dec 1968

A RARE ACCOUNT OF NEW SWEDEN, A THESIS FOR PETER KALM, 1754

7 BACKMAN, DANIEL AND. MED GUDS WÄLSIGNANDE NAD WEDERBORANDES TILSTAND YTTRADE TANKAR, OM NYTTAN SOM KUNNAT TILFALLA WART KJÄRA FADERNESLAND, AF DES NYBYGGE I AMERICA, FORDOM NYA SWERIGE KALLADT, UNDER HOGADLE OCH WIDTBEROMDE OECONOMIE PROFESSORENS OCH KONGL WETENSK. ACADEMIENS LEDAMOTS HERR PEHR KALMS INSEENDE, TIL ALLMANT OMPROFWANDE OCH FORSWARANDE DEN 13. JULII. 1754. I ABO ACAD. OFRE LÄRO-HUS, FOR MAGISTER WÄRDIGHETENS ARHALLANDE, AF DANIEL AND. BACKMAN, ALANDNINGE. Abo, Jacob Merckel, [1754]. \$ 225.

8vo. Printed pamphlet. [6 pages], 1-[16]. Title a bit soiled.

An account of New Sweden and its advantages. Rare.

THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT CELEBRATED

8 BAIRD, JAMES C. THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT. CELEBRATED MAY 19th. 1870. New York, Published by Thomas Kelly, 1870. \$ 75.

Original lithograph print of 1870, modern coloring, somewhat heavy, circa 1929. 24 x 30 inches. In fine condition.

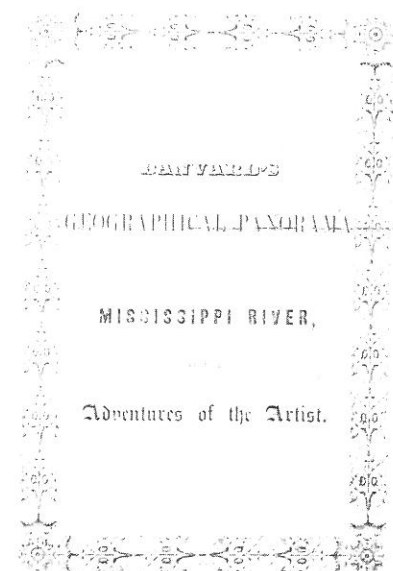
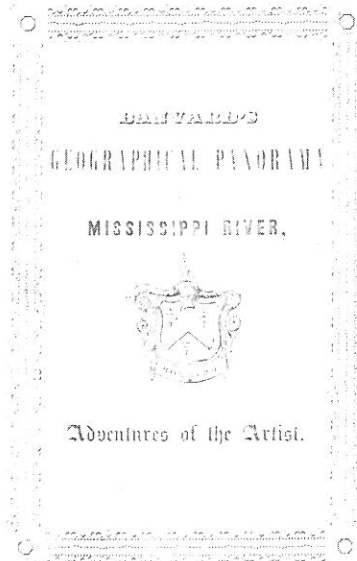
Aside from the central celebration scene, which shows a parade complete with floats, there are sixteen border vignettes with titles such as: "The Ballot Box Is Open To Us"; "Our Representative Sits In the National Legislature"; "Education Will Prove The Equality Of The Races." Among the men portrayed are Dulany, Duglass [sic] and Revels.

BANVARD'S GEOGRAPHICAL PANORAMA OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

9 [BANVARD, JOHN] DESCRIPTION OF BANVARD'S PANORAMA OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, PAINTED ON THREE MILES OF CANVAS.... Boston, John Putnam, 1847. Two variant issues, the two \$ 125.

"The idea of gain never entered his mind when he commenced the undertaking, but he was actuated by a patriotic and honorable ambition, that America should produce the largest painting in the world."

In addition to the wrapper variants [see illustrations], the text itself varies, with minor to major changes ("The Panorama" section, for example, in the issue with the coat-of-arms wrapper has a St. Louis entry of eleven lines, while the other issue has an entry of forty-two lines). The two issues have different arrangements of same or similar text, and the periodical sources as given for the section on "Adventures Of The Artist," are English in one case and all American in the other. Both issues have 48 pages, identical title pages, and identical "Opinion of the Press" on their back wrappers.



(Copied from the Morning Courier, Louisville, Monday, June 29, 1846)

BANVARD'S GRAND MOVING PANORAMA of the Mississippi River--the largest painting ever executed by man--will open at the Apollo Rooms, on Monday evening, June 29th, and continue every evening until Saturday, July 4th.

The drawings of this immense picture were commenced in the year 1840, and the work has been in progress to the present time. It exhibits with the greatest accuracy of the city, towns, villages, etc, of this great "monarch of waters."

Admission, 50 cents; children and servants half price. The Panorama will commence moving at quarter past 8 precisely. Tickets to be had at Peters & Webster's Music Store, where seats may be secured during the day.

(Advertisement)

THE GREAT THREE-MILE PAINTING TO-NIGHT!

Our fellow-citizens will have an opportunity to-night, of seeing one of the greatest achievements of industry and genius on record. Mr. Banvard will exhibit a mile or so of his great Panorama of the Mississippi, at the Apollo Saloon. As a Louisvillian we are proud of Mr. Banvard, and we hope our citizens will show their appreciation of his talents and unconquerable industry, by crowding the Saloon during the representation of the picture. Mr. B., has spent thousands of dollars in this city in getting this great work ready, and well does he deserve remuneration. The following from the bill of the day briefly states some of the leading points of the picture:-

"The Panorama exhibits, with remarkable accuracy, all the beautiful scenery and characteristics along the margin of the mighty Father of waters; all the cities, towns and villages, which adorn its banks; the picturesque islands and woodlands, covered with the richest foliage, or tresselled with the graceful moss; cotton and sugar plantations, with the laborers engaged in the culture of the respective crops, the princely mansion of the wealthy planter; the rustic cabin of the lonely woodman; the endless variety of water craft; the majestic steamer; the noble ship; the rude flat-boat; the light canoe; in fact, all the diversified scenery and objects that change of latitude would produce on this "inland sea," pass in slow review before the spectator. Any description of this leviathan picture that should be attempted in a bill like this, would convey but a faint idea of what it really is."

JOHN BANVARD
November 15, 1815—May 16, 1891

BOOKS

- Banvard, John Description of Banvard's panorama of the Mississippi River, painted on three miles of canvas. 1847.
- Burnet, M. Q. Art and artists of Indiana. p.34-37, 93, 356.
Dictionary of American biography. v.1, p. 582-583. Banvard, John
- Fielding, M. Dictionary of American painters.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

- not in list* Howitt's Journal of Lit. and Pop. Prog. 111, 211
- Living Age 14: 594-596. 25 Sept. 1847. Painting three miles long.
- Living Age 15: 511-515. 11 Dec. 1847. John Banvard's great picture
Life on the Mississippi.
- Living Age 20: 314-315. 17 Feb. 1849. American panorama.
- not in list* People's Journal VII, 26, 281
- Antiques 56: 108-7. Aug. 1949. John Banvard's, New York.*

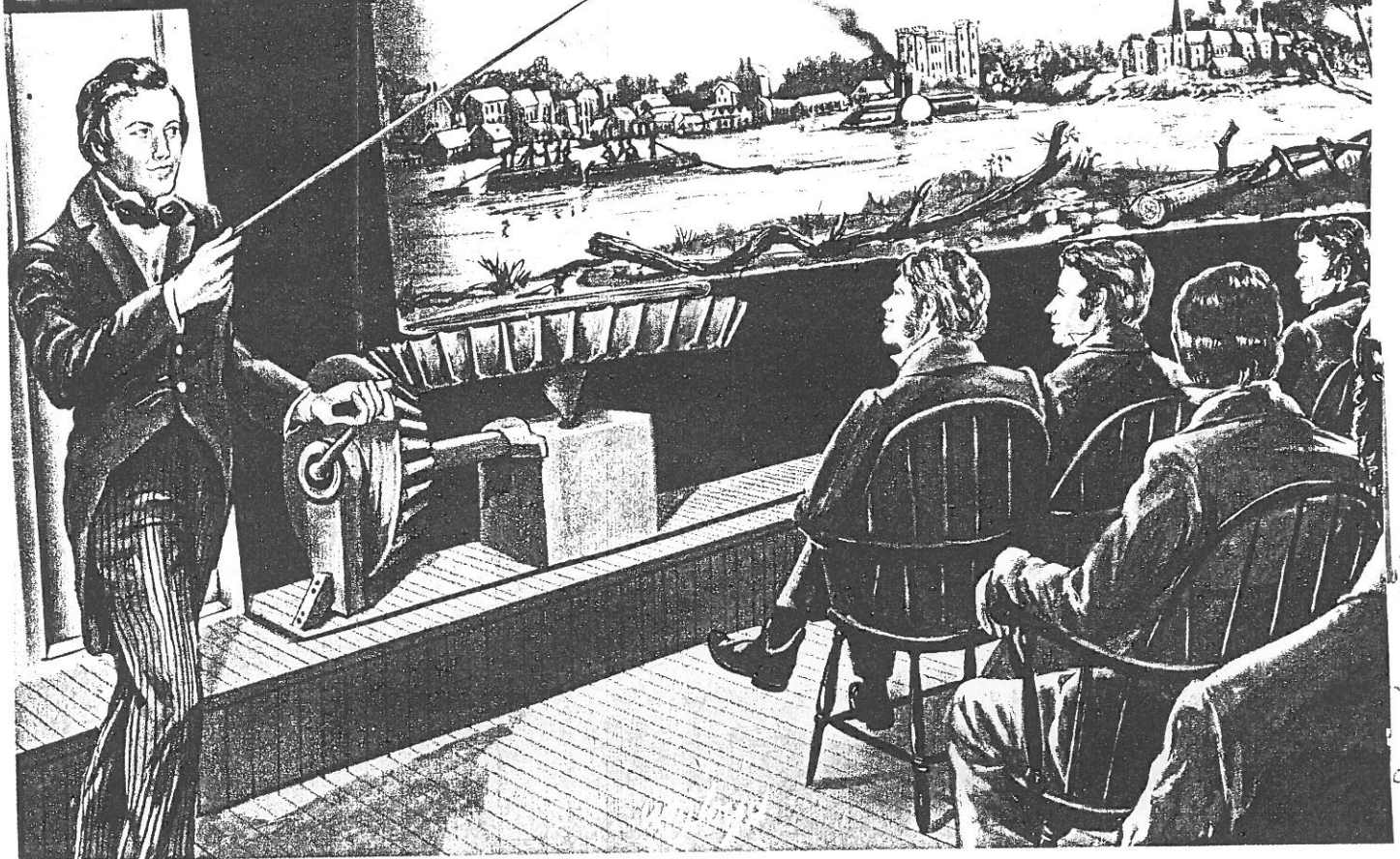
NEWSPAPERS

- Boston Evening Gazette. April 1847. Banvard's panorama in Boston
April, 1847 (Not in L.F.P.L.)
- Morning Courier. Louisville, June 29, 1846—July 7, 1846. Banvard's
panorama of the Mississippi River.

PAMPHLET

- Banvard; or the adventures of an artist. 1851
(This is an anonymous biographical pamphlet, and
one of the chief sources of information) (Not in L.F.P.L.)

DEEP in DIXIE



The River Panorama

New Orleans Times Picayune Oct 15, 1967

From earliest childhood, John Banvard had one consuming ambition—to paint the biggest picture in the world! At 15, he set out on his own, leaving New York and going West to seek his fortune—and to fulfill this burning desire. Although he knew nothing of the intricacies of painting and had no formal instruction in art, Banvard felt confident he could accomplish what he set out to do. He had decided that he would become one of the mid-1800s' self-made men! Banvard had youth, energy and drive, and he felt these traits would pave his way to success.

For several years, the young would-be artist worked around Louisville, Ky., at odd jobs. He painted dioramas in his spare time. In 1840, he seriously began preliminary sketches for his long-dreamed of painting—a tremendous panorama depicting scenes along the Mississippi River. He wanted this work of art to be as impressive as the mighty river.

Innocent and eager, Banvard left Louisville that spring for his trip downriver, a trip that turned out to be longer, harder and lonelier than he had ever imagined. He traveled hundreds of miles in an open skiff, sometimes crossing and recrossing the swift currents just to get the right view. The hand which held the sketching pencil grew calloused from constant rowing. Sometimes, Banvard went weeks at a time without seeing or speaking to another human. Oftentimes, before the sun set, he would have to land his skiff and go into the

woods to shoot or snare his supper.

Late that summer he reached New Orleans. Yellow fever was raging in the city. Despite this dread peril, Banvard made sketches in the plagued metropolis. He thought that, by now, he was accustomed to the elements. But in New Orleans, he suffered severe sunburn. The skin peeled off his hands and face, making work difficult.

Finally, with all preliminary sketching done, Banvard returned to Louisville and set up a studio for the actual painting of the panorama. Since he couldn't afford an assistant, Banvard ground his own pigments and did all the other menial tasks around the studio. To obtain ready cash to buy the yards and yards of canvas, he took odd jobs. One of the more lucrative ones was decorating the city's Odd Fellows Lodge.

At last, in September of 1846, Banvard had the Mississippi on canvas and boasted its three-mile length made it the world's longest painting. Now that the great work was done, he planned a grand opening in Louisville. The program was printed. The producer put up the usual deposit on the gas fixtures in the hall and paid a special tax levied by the city. Since this was a moving panorama, and much longer than any previously shown, it was placed on upright revolving cylinders. The canvas was to be rolled gradually before the spectators as Banvard explained the passing scenes.

All the show preparations were made—but the artist had not reckoned with

the weather. On the grand opening night, it rained torrents. Not a single person came to witness the spectacular show! Banvard despaired. He had endured privations, disappointments and perils to sketch and paint this panorama. Now it seemed that all would be in vain.

However, Banvard was too determined to accept defeat. Doggedly, he trudged out into the slush and rain to drum up trade. He gave away free tickets to the boatmen at the riverfront. More than 100 rivermen came, including captains and pilots. They were delighted with what they saw. Enthusiastic comments and cheers filled the theater as each well-known scene or town smoothly rolled by on the huge canvas.

Their enthusiasm was infectious. The next day, the townspeople rushed to see this colossal painting and praised the artist and his work. Banvard's showing of the panorama was a financial triumph! With this success and good press coverage, Banvard and his tremendous panorama went on tour to New Orleans, Boston and New York—even to Paris and London. Banvard had set out to paint the biggest known picture. He also conquered the world with his enthusiasm and drive!