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King & Queen of the River Review

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King & Queen of the River - Stan Garvey

Timothy Nunes



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I just finished reading a book that I can best sum up in one word: *imagine*.

Imagine a time before interstate highways or freeways, when traveling from your state's capital to The Big City nearby took most of a day, along slow, two-lane roads. Imagine being a businessman having to take such trips regularly and wishing there were a way you could arrive at your [destination](#) well fed, rested, and stress-free. Then try imagining a mode of travel that's both reliable and luxurious, where a round-trip ticket costs just \$3.00, and a five-course meal goes for a mere 75 cents more.



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If your imagination just failed you, you haven't read *King & Queen of the River* by Stan Garvey. In Garvey's book, readers are introduced to the Delta King and the Delta Queen, two historic riverboats whose true story spans more than seven decades, half a continent, and more than a million miles of water travel. Beginning with the birth of these two Million Dollar Pal Steamers (so called because of their construction costs) in Stockton, California in 1927, continuing along the Mississippi, Ohio, and other rivers to this day, *King & Queen of the River* recounts the often amazing and seldom predictable history of California's last two "n boats" (boats built for night [travel](#) and freight service).

With three passenger decks made of oak, mahogany, and Oregon cedar, skylights of stained glass above grand staircases of burnished wood, air-cooled staterooms with private baths and hot and cold running water, dining rooms with white tablecloths, and dance floors with [live music](#), the opulence of the Delta King and Queen lived up to the era of their birth, the Roaring Twenties. But the story of these two historic river steamers isn't limited to mere opulence. This book covers every bit of the boats' history—from initial construction in the 1920s and night-boat operations along the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers in the 1930s to riverboat vacations along today's Mississippi. The mysterious death of a star-crossed [movie star](#), hair-raising night voyages along ever-changing river channels in zero-visibility fog, steamboat races, even a night piracy all contribute to the fascinating history recounted in *King & Queen of the River*.

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To complement the many personal accounts of passengers and crew, fans and detractors, saviors and foes, the pages of Garvey's book are also filled with photos and other illustrations of these two great riverboats, one of which (the [Delta Queen](#)) is still the only operating



passenger boat that's listed both on the National Register of Historic Places and as a National Historic Landmark. The many photos and other illustrations, along with Garvey's very researched and engaging prose, make for an entertaining and informative read that you want to put down until you've reached the very last page.

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