

Tons of iron would be ferried down the Shenandoah in boats called **gundalows** to be forged into weapons in Harper's Ferry. Also, because return trips up the river were not feasible gundalows would be disassembled at their destination and sold for parts. Many buildings used these parts in construction.

What Rockingham Boatmen Can Do.

The following will show what our hardy, persevering boatmen are capable of doing:

A fleet of boats, loaded with iron, was taken down the Shenandoah River, from Port Republic to Harper's Ferry, 165 miles, by the following named boatmen, viz.: Zachariah Raines, Capt.; Samuel May, Henry Pirkey, Alexander Pirkey, Jacob Raines, Reuben Raines, Jacob Hudlowe, George Rodeheffer, Henry Raines, Wm. Jones, Wm. Knight, James Anderson, privates, 12 in number. The boats were run through in four and a half days, and had in them one hundred and ten tons, (110,) making over nine tons to each man. They lashed the boats together, in twos, which were thus taken down the river. A portion of the trip was accomplished when the river was very high, making the management of the boats very difficult and dangerous. The fleet was commanded by that veteran navigator and sailor, Captain Zachariah Raines, living at the head of navigation, whose knowledge of the dangerous reefs and shoals and quicksands of the raging Shenandoah is perfect, he having passed over the same watery path for many years past, making several hundred trips.⁵

Gundalows were simple, flat bottomed boats capable of carrying tons of material. They were typically about 9 feet wide and could be as long as 90 feet. The boatmen who operated these gundalows were hardy and independent, and often drank and fought the whole hike back upstream after unloading their cargo and disassembling their gundalows.

The Shenandoah River was useful as a trade route for a few decades in the 1800s, but ultimately could not compete with advancing technologies. The opening of new transport routes like the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad drained commerce away from rivers. Turnpikes and railways were supplanting waterways in commercial endeavors—so passed the time of the gundalow.

52 ADVERTISEMENTS.

Baltimore & Ohio Railroad
RE-OPENED.

THIS GREAT NATIONAL THROUGHFARE
IS AGAIN OPEN FOR
FREIGHTS & TRAVEL.

The Cars and Machinery destroyed are being replaced by
NEW RUNNING STOCK,
With all recent improvements; and as the
Bridges and Track are again in Substantial Condition,
The well-earned reputation of this Road for
SPEED, SECURITY and COMFORT
Will be more than sustained under the re-organization of its business.

In addition to the *Unequalled Attractions of Natural Scenery* heretofore conceded to this route, the recent *Troubles upon the Border* have associated numerous points on the Road, between the Ohio River and Harper's Ferry, with painful but instructive interest.

CONNECTIONS

At the Ohio River, with Cleveland and Pittsburg, Central Ohio, and Marietta and Cincinnati Railroads; and through them with the whole Railway System of the Northwest, Central West and Southwest.
At Baltimore with Five Daily Trains for Philadelphia and New York.

TWO DOLLARS ADDITIONAL ON THROUGH TICKETS
To Baltimore or the Northern Cities, give the
Privilege of Visiting **WASHINGTON CITY** en route
This is the **ONLY ROUTE** by which Passengers can procure *Through Tickets and Through Checks to or from WASHINGTON CITY.*
W. P. SMITH, Master of Transportation, Balt.



.....

Shenandoah River State Park
350 Daughter of Stars Drive
Bentonville, VA 22610
Phone (540) 622-6840

Virginia State Parks

Shenandoah River State Park

The Shenandoah River: Transportation History



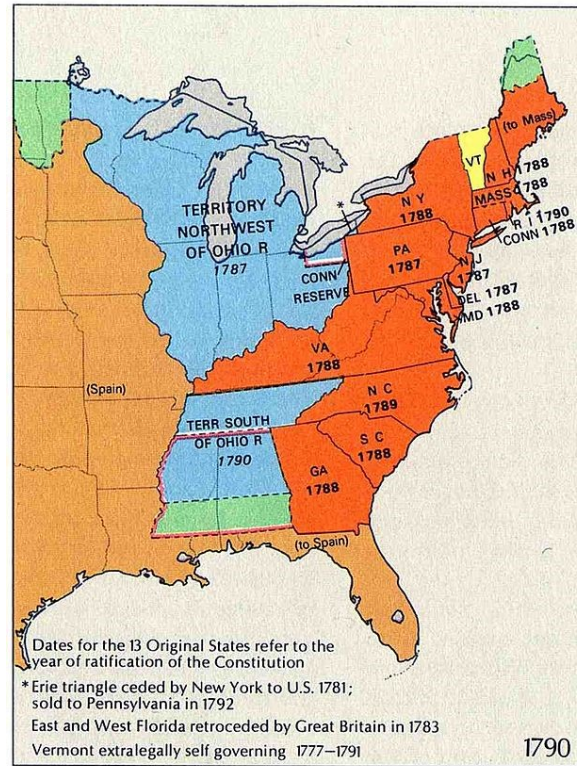
.....

www.virginiastateparks.gov

Beginning at the Bluebell trailhead, you can see a canal not unlike those which changed our nation's history in the 1800s. As you hike along the river, take note of its special properties: northward flow, shallowness and the rock ledges that stick up and obstruct the flow of water.

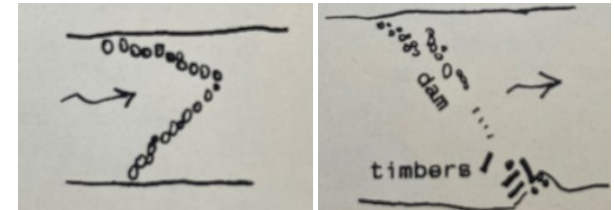


The Potomac and other rivers of this region like the Shenandoah were formed 3.5 million years ago. It was not until 1802, though, that the first organized navigational improvements were made to the Shenandoah River. These improvements were made by the Potomack Company, founded 1785. George Washington helped found this company and even served as its president until 1788, when he retired to assume the presidency of the newly independent USA. Washington wanted to create inland commercial trade routes and placed importance on waterways like the Shenandoah for this task.



“The great object, for the accomplishment of which I wish to see the inland navigation of the Rivers James and Potomack improved and extended, is to connect the Western Territory with the Atlantic States; all others with me are secondary.” - George Washington

By 1807 the Potomack Company had completed navigation improvements along the Shenandoah River from Port Republic (South Fork) to Harper's Ferry and the Potomac. Harper's Ferry was home to the United States arsenal, chosen because of President Washington's interest in navigating the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers.

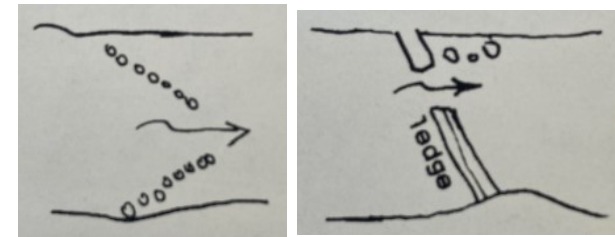


Indigenous Fish Trap

Cuts Through Ledges

Gundalow Wing Dam

Mill Dams and Chutes



Developing the Shenandoah River for navigation was complicated by man made fish traps and mill dams. These fish traps were not the stone designs of indigenous fishermen, but rather sloping wooden platforms in the rapids placed by European settlers. The General Assembly passed a special act in 1840 which penalized those who obstructed navigation.