

Many Modes of Travel

Transportation Scavenger Hunt

People continuously develop new modes of transportation, where each generation improves upon the technology of the previous. For example, the James River and Kanawha Canal was left unfinished because railways became more efficient.

Look around you for the different ways we make travel easier, whether its a vehicle or a structure for vehicles. For each category below, write down the things you see.

by Foot

by Road

by Water

by Rail

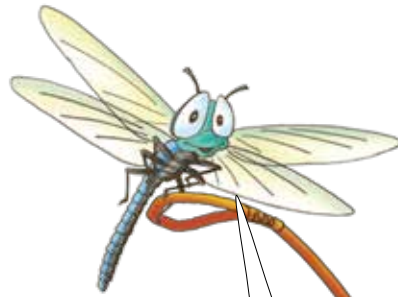
by Air

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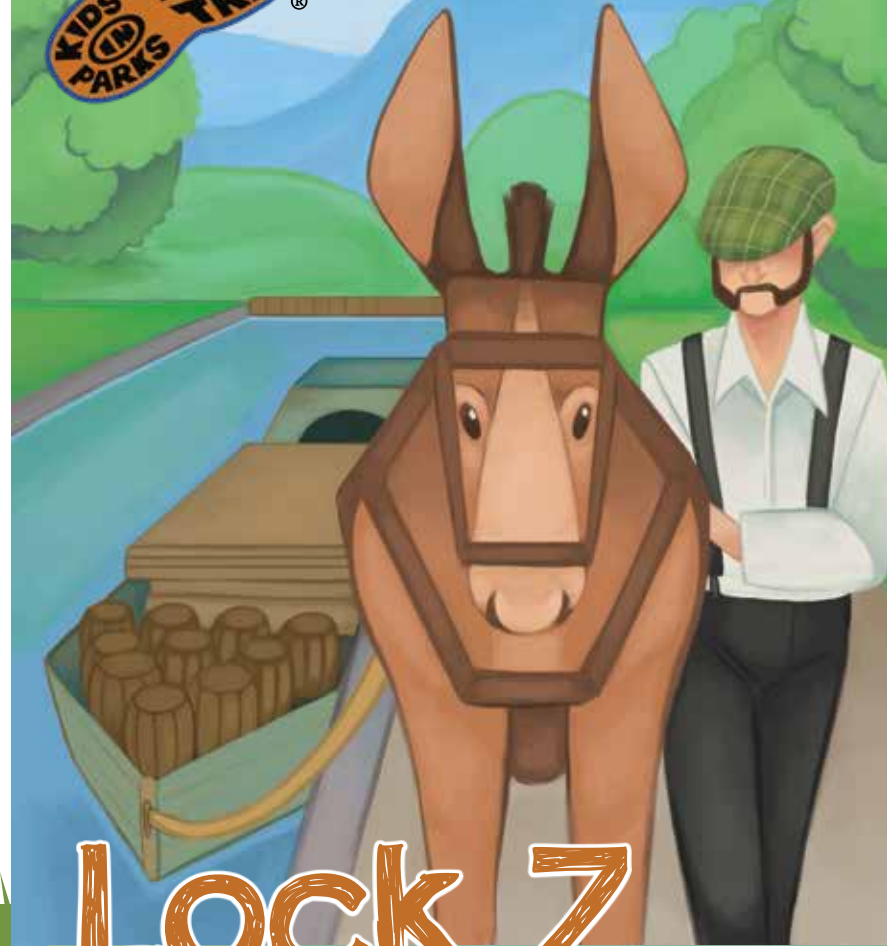
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Blue Ridge Parkway Mile Post 63



Lock 7

on the James River and Kanawha Canal

Before trucks and trains, boats were used to transport goods long distances. The James River and Kanawha Canal was built to connect the Atlantic Ocean to the interior cities of Virginia, and beyond. The canal stretched 196 miles, allowing goods and materials to be shipped in both directions.

At Lock 7, you can use this brochure to discover how locks were used in canal systems and how they helped in transporting goods and people.

Lock 7 Look & Locate

Canal systems provided many advantages to travel and were used when the river was too difficult to navigate. Lock 7—also known as the Battery Creek Lock—lifted and lowered boats, allowing them to safely travel up and down stream. As you hike the trail, locate some of the remaining features that helped the canal system work. Imagine how this area may have looked when the canal was operational.

● Waste Weir

The waste weir functioned like an overflow drain in your bathtub, preventing water from overflowing and eroding the towpath. Once the lock gates closed they created a temporary dam, causing water levels to rise. Excess water would drain into the waste weir and flow into the river.



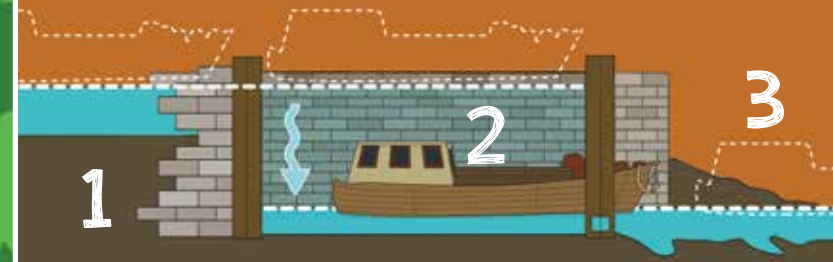
● Slack water

Slack water is the term used for sections of the river where the water was deep and slow enough for the canal boats to use. Digging prisms in these sections was unnecessary. Locks allowed boats to enter and exit slack water sections of the river.

JAMES RIVER

● Lift Lock

Locks were used to raise and lower watercraft to match up or downstream water levels. There were 90 locks on the James River and Kanawha Canal. Functioning much like an elevator, Lock 7 raised and lowered boats 13 feet. Boats traveling upstream were raised into the prism, while boats traveling downstream were lowered into the slack water section of the river. Boats could “Lock through” in about 10 to 15 minutes.



How the lift lock worked:

1. A boat traveling downstream would enter the lock.
2. The lock doors close on both sides. The sluice gate opens on the riverside lock door. This drains the water inside the lock to match the slack water level.
3. The riverside lock door opens, and the boat exits onto the river to continue its journey.

Blue Ridge Parkway

TRACK Trail

Original Prism Path

Battery Creek

● Prism

Canal boats traveled up and down stream in a “ditch”, called a prism, that paralleled the river. It was free from rocks and logs and wide enough for canal boats to easily pass by each other. 160 miles of prism were dug for this canal.



Today, Battery Creek flows into the prism, depositing silt, rocks, and debris, and creating islands. When the canal was operational, the creek would have been diverted away from the prism.

● Towpath

The towpath is the route that mules and horses walked to pull the canal boats between towns. This towpath was 15 feet wide and stretched between Richmond and Buchanan, Virginia.