

The Batteau Era Fact Sheet¹

- A **batteau** is a flat-bottomed, shallow-draft boat, which was used to transport goods.
 - Batteaux (plural) were invented by the **Rucker brothers**, Anthony and Benjamin.
- A **flash flood** in 1771 destroyed most dugout canoes and large trees, and led the Rucker brothers to invent the **James River batteau**
 - Batteau quickly replaced **dugout canoes** as a way to transport goods.
- Benefits of the **James River batteaux**
 - Batteaux could carry **heavy cargo** and still travel quickly down the James River, although they were not as fast as dugout canoes
 - Batteaux were built with **wood planks**, but dugout canoes were built with whole trees, which were hard to find after the flood.
- Most batteaux that left from Scottsville carried **tobacco** to Richmond. Most batteaux returning to Scottsville carried French and English imports, furniture, dishes, and clothes from **Richmond**.
- By 1830, as many as 500 batteaux traveled on the **James River** from **Lynchburg** to Richmond.
 - **Scottsville** was one of the busiest trading centers on the river.
- Scott's Landing (later called Scottsville) was used to store **military supplies** during the **Revolutionary War**
- **General Charles Cornwallis** sent British soldiers to Scottsville to steal the military supplies that were stored there. However, **General Baron von Steuben** had warned the Americans that the British were coming to attack and most of the military supplies had been moved across the river to the **old Albemarle Courthouse**
- **Marquis de Lafayette** was sent to protect the military supplies stored in the Courthouse. He blocked **General Cornwallis** from reaching the supplies and forced him to retreat to the East.
 - General Cornwallis surrendered at **Yorktown** several days later and the Revolutionary War ended shortly afterwards
 - The events at **Scott's Landing** are considered the turning point in the **Revolutionary War**

¹ Information on this sheet is adapted from the exhibit text developed by Lauren Turek and Julie Schiff.

Game Questions
Station 3: The Batteau Era

Describe what a James River batteau looked like.

Who invented the James River batteau?

Name one reason why batteaux replaced dugout canoes as the main method of transporting goods along the James River.

How did the flash flood in 1771 lead to the invention of the James River batteau?

What was the main crop that batteaux carried from Scottsville to Richmond?

Scott's Landing (Scottsville) was a major port along the James River in part because it lay between what two major Virginia cities?

What was General Cornwallis trying to destroy or steal from Scottsville during the Revolutionary War?

Where were the military supplies moved to after General von Steuben warned the Americans about the British attack?

Why are the events at Scott's Landing considered the turning point in the Revolutionary War?

What is the name of the Virginia town where General Cornwallis surrendered shortly after failing to capture military supplies at Scott's Landing?

A

Learn about dugout canoes and batteaux

Directions:

Use the pictures and information (on the fact sheet and the next page) to fill out the Venn Diagram in part B.

Dugout canoe



Original image by Raymond Bial, 2008
(permission granted by photographer)
Photo Source: <http://www.raybial.com>

Batteau



Original image by Webb Griffith
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Photo Source: <http://trails.sierraclub.org>

A

Learn (more) about dugout canoes and batteaux

Additional sources consulted: The James River Batteau Festival 25th Anniversary. *Virginia Sportsman* April/May 2010 and Neal, Jacob.

Dugout canoes

- Made from whole trees
- Travel faster than batteaux
- Deep in middle
- Take a long time to build and more wood wasted
- Men use paddles to move it
- Used in early-mid 1700s to transport tobacco
- About 30-60 feet long
- Many destroyed in 1711 flood

Batteaux

- Made from wood planks
- Wide, flat bottom
- Shallow in middle
- Take less time to build than dugout canoes
- Men use poles to move it
- Used in 1700s to transport tobacco
- About 40-60 feet long
- Replaced dugout canoes

B Compare & contrast: dugout canoes and batteaux

Directions:

List at least two similarities and three differences in the Venn Diagram below. Use the information in part B and the fact sheet for this section to help you.

Dugout canoes

Both

Batteaux
