

Membership

You can help promote the goals of the **Virginia Canals & Navigation Society** & the **James River Batteau Festival** by becoming a member.

The members and board of directors invite you to join them in supporting the Society's worthy ideals.

All members receive:

- A subscription to the *Tiller*
- Invitation to annual meeting and special events

Annual Memberships: June 1 to May 31

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2019 Membership Types - choose one:

REGULAR MEMBER (1 vote per person):
 Single \$30 Couple \$40 Student \$15

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LIFE MEMBER (1 vote per person):
 Single \$400 Couple \$550

ORGANIZATION MEMBER (1 vote per organization):
 School/Library/Non-profit \$30

Membership dues: \$ _____

Additional donation to VC&NS: \$ _____

Total of tax deductible dues and donations: \$ _____

Please make your check payable to VC&NS. Thanks!

JOIN ONLINE AT [VACANALS.ORG](http://vacanals.org)

OR

MAIL MEMBERSHIP FORM TO:

VC&NS

3806 South Amherst Highway

Madison Heights, VA 24572

EMAIL: membership@vacanals.org

THE 34TH ANNUAL



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JUNE 15-22, 2019

BATTEAU.ORG

The Festival

The James River Batteau Festival is an eight-day event featuring authentic replicas of the sleek, shallow-draft merchant boats upon which the Old Dominion rode to its first era of economic prosperity. Beginning on the waterfront of Lynchburg, the festival moves along a 200-year-old route, stopping each day in the historic towns and communities along the way. Each evening is a celebration of the cultural heritage of this legendary river basin in music, song, dance and storytelling, plus lots of plain old-time Virginia socializing.

The festival is a unique folklife festival uniting the rural communities along 120 miles of Virginia's James River. As the highway of the 1700s, the James was crucial to early settlement.

Robert Rose initiated the first commercial navigation in the Piedmont region in 1747 with his development of the earliest form of batteau, an adaptation of the Indian dugout canoes. In 1775, Anthony and Benjamin Rucker of Amherst County invented a new type of batteau made of sawn lumber and designed specifically for the shallow, swift waters of the region. Thomas Jefferson was present at the launch of the first Rucker batteau. Within a few years, 500 batteaux plied the waters of the James. Down river to market were carried tobacco and other products such as flour, iron, and

apple brandy, and poled upstream on the return trip came harpsichords, millstones, books, and even agricultural lime. The courage and skill of the boatmen are legendary.

Beginning in 1983, an archaeological excavation in Richmond rediscovered the nearly forgotten batteau and inspired the creation of the James River Batteau Festival. For those who ride the batteaux, those who follow along the banks, and those who attend the evening festivals, this romantic recreation takes history out of the history books and into peoples' lives.

Goals

1. To promote the building and operation of authentic replicas of James River Batteaux.
2. To promote awareness of the James River as an important natural resource.
3. To call attention to the James River basin as a geographical community of special significance to Virginia and the nation.



Join us on the River!

Have you ever thought about taking a canoe or kayak down a river and then been confronted with questions and obstacles? The James River Batteau Festival can provide answers—and a truly unique experience for anyone who enjoys the river.

Q&A

- 1. I don't know the river. Is it safe for novice boaters and kids?**
Everyone must make their own decision on what level of river rapids is safe. There are some rapids in the stretches of the James the festival covers. And yes, we do see some canoes capsized, but by and large, given normal water levels, someone with moderate abilities will do fine with the festival.
- 2. Will there be other boaters in the same general area of the river with me?** There are hundreds of canoes and kayaks with the festival during the first weekend and then the number tapers down to a few dozen by week's end. It's a big river and if you want solitude that certainly is possible, but if you prefer to stay within sight of others that, too, is possible.
- 3. I don't know the places to put in and take out.** The put-in and take-out locations are clearly marked in this flyer and in the *James River Batteau Festival Trail* atlas, many are public boat landings.
- 4. I don't know how many miles of river make a good day.**
The Festival strives to have the length of days be such that it's a worthwhile day but not a burden to make it to camp. Of course water levels dictate a lot in terms of ease of making the distances covered of 13–21 miles each day.
- 5. I'd like to camp and do multiple days on the river, is that possible?** We have permission from landowners to camp at all Batteau Festival stops and ask a modest \$5.00-per-day fee to cover expenses. Dinner meals are available for purchase at all stops, water and ice are provided or are available close by at all stops, and of course, portable toilets are provided at all sites.
- 6. I don't have a map of the river to know where I am.** The absolute best way to learn about the river and know your location while on the river is to purchase a *James River Batteau Festival Trail* atlas. The atlas has been created by the VCNS to help individuals on the river and costs \$15 on the Virginia Canal and Navigations Society online store vacanals.org.

Participating in the James River Batteau Festival will provide answers to the above questions and many more. We are anxious to find individuals who get the "Batteau Bug" and want to build a batteau. But many festival participants do so in kayaks and canoes and they are welcomed as part of the group.



1 Lynchburg Saturday, June 15

The Batteau fleet leaves Percival's Island at **11:00 AM** for the first leg of the 120-mile trip to Maiden's Landing. A roll call will be read as each batteau leaves the shore to the applause of those on the island.

Join in the celebration by coming to Percival's Island early and see the batteaux and crews as they make final preparations for the upcoming adventure.

2 Galt's Mill/Stapleton Saturday, June 15

(evening) The 14-mile run to Stapleton includes some moderately fast water at Joshua Falls in addition to shallows at Setting Pole Falls. The batteaux generally arrive at Stapleton between 4:00 and 6:00 PM. With the expected water release from the Lynchburg dam, Saturday is normally an easy day for batteaux, canoes and kayaks alike.

3 Bent Creek Sunday, June 16

The 15 miles between Stapleton and Bent Creek take you past Pettyjohn Island where you have the opportunity to go behind the island for a scenic run. Be aware that there is a bridge which, at normal river levels, is six feet off the water, but at high levels the bridge can be a serious impediment. One year three batteaux made the mistake of going behind the island at high water levels and had to sink the batteaux to float under the bridge, bailing them out again when they reached the other side. Also on Sunday you will experience the fast water of Wreck Island (which claimed a batteau in 1990) along with a fun run through Riverville falls. One of the crews' favorite swimming holes is late on Sunday at Higginbotham Falls where swift water makes for a relaxing setting to play music, swim and eat.

4 Wingina Monday, June 17

Depending on the water levels, the first few miles leaving Bent Creek is in one of the shallowest sections of the river. The multiple shoals and ledges have everyone hoping for at least an average water level this year. Nine miles into the day's 13-mile journey, we pass the Tye River and the ruins of Tye River Dam which mark the end of the James River State Park on river right. Just past the Tye there is a ledge which has proven difficult for batteaux in previous years. On the bank river right there is a sluice from the 1700s which was cleaned out several years ago during the JRBF fall meeting. Don't miss the opportunity to run this sluice and thereby miss having to fight the ledge.

5 Howardsville Tuesday, June 18

The 13-mile run to Howardsville presents the immediate challenge of Swift Island. River left is the preferred run but depending on the water level there is a ledge and gravel bar to choose between. The ledge has one good cut and with decent water and skillful navigation it presents only a moderate challenge for the batteaux. Eight miles into the run are Sycamore and Buford Islands presenting four channels to choose from. With respectable water levels, the run far right behind Sycamore island presents a narrow and scenic change from the wide and majestic main channels of the James. Another two miles and you experience Dog Island with a technical but very doable series of turns far river right followed by a fun and fast gravel bar. After this it's a short couple of miles to Howardsville where the Rockfish River of *The Waltons* dumps into the James.

6 Scottsville Wednesday, June 19

For many old timey batteau men and women, the 12 miles from Howardsville to Scottsville is their favorite day of the festival. The anticipation of reaching the Horseshoe Bend and a real city (Scottsville, population 575) brings with it hope for a shower and restaurant-cooked meal. But more than that the river presents challenges and history perhaps as much if not more than any other day. Four miles into the day Goosby Falls presents one of the most difficult situations which the festival will face. At low water levels the batteaux look like they're in a pinball machine navigating wildly from one bank to the other and back again bouncing off one rock then another. The famed "Oldsmobile" named for the fact that this rock is the size of one, and many other challenges make this rapid arguably the most fun of the entire festival. At the bottom of the rapid, boats congregate to tell lies about how they didn't scratch a rock and watch intently as other crews negotiate the challenge. Truth be told, in addition to talking and resting at the bottom of this stretch, many boats are also repaired at this location having met the "Oldsmobile" up close.

Having made it through Goosby

the batteaux pass Warren's Ferry which formerly ferried cars across the James until a flood took the ferry. Just before Rock Island and river right is one of the best preserved sluices from the 1700s. Run it for fun and history, and also to miss the river-wide shoal which made it necessary. Four miles before reaching Scottsville is Perkins Falls and Hatton Ferry. The ferry operates on weekends from mid-April to late October. (Check thehattonferry.org for hours.)

7 Slate River Thursday, June 20

After a great night in Scottsville, the 11-mile run to Slate River is the icing on the cake. After four miles of slow, flat, and uneventful water, you get into a series of islands which will go for over six miles. Picking whatever path water levels allow gives batteaux a chance to go behind small islands for the chance of close encounters with wildlife and the occasional "blocked channel" which requires a reverse in course. The Hardware River Management Area signals your arrival at the Hardware River, where, if you want to do some work and have respectable water, you can see the Hardware River aqueduct and its picturesque double arch. Coming up soon is Seven Islands and one of the fastest and most fun runs of the festival for three miles descending alongside the railroad tracks. At the bottom of Seven Islands where all the water comes back into one channel there is quite a ride waiting for the festival participants.

8 Cartersville Friday, June 21

In the first two miles of the day the batteaux pass through Bremono Bluff which is the last significant rapid for the festival. Drop through the first ledge center right and then between ledges go hard left and you'll have a great run under the car and railroad bridges. Halfway through the 21-mile day you'll pass historic Columbia where the Rivanna River meets the James. A mile after Columbia, water levels permitting, batteaux go river left and enter the six-mile run behind Elk Island. Almost in the middle of the run behind Elk is Byrd Creek and the beautiful Byrd Creek Aqueduct. Don't nap or you'll miss Byrd Creek and one of the larger, most picturesque, and best preserved of the aqueducts on the James.

9 Maiden's Landing Saturday, June 22

The 17-mile run to Maiden's is largely flatwater leaving the crews time to pole and reflect on their week on the James. Much of the discussion turns to trailering the boats back to Lynchburg, quitting jobs, and spending another week on the river. However, once the fleet reaches Maiden's reality sets in and the batteaux are trailered home with the often-broken promise of getting them back on the river before the next year's festival.

2019 is the 34th celebration of the Annual James River Batteau Festival. The enjoyment we've had over the past three decades along with the attention we've brought to the James, the Batteaux, and this interesting period in our history, make the festival a truly unique event for everyone involved.

