Major Railroads in Virginia
(from 1827-1860)

• Baltimore and Ohio (1827)
  – Winchester & Potomac (at Harpers Ferry)
  – Winchester & Strasburg
  -- North Western to Parkersburg, WV

• Manassas Gap (1850-54)

• Orange & Alexandria (1848)

• Virginia Central (1836)
  -- Blue Ridge (1858)

• Virginia & Tennessee (1850s)

• Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac to Alexandria (1834) & Fredericksburg & Charlottesville RR

• South Side or “Petersburg & Lynchburg RR” (1849-54)

• Richmond & Danville (1847-1856)

• Petersburg & Roanoke (river in NC) (1833)
  -- Richmond & Petersburg (1838)

• Norfolk and Petersburg (1853)

• Seaboard & Roanoke (river in NC) or “Portsmouth and Weldon RR” (1835)
Major RR Routes in Virginia by 1860
On March 8, 1827, the Commonwealth of Virginia joined Maryland in giving the *Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road (B&O RR)* the task of building a railroad from the port of Baltimore, MD West to a suitable point on the Ohio River.

The railroad was intended to provide a faster route for Midwestern goods to reach the East Coast than the successful Erie Canal across upstate NY. Construction began on July 4th, 1828. It was decided to follow the Patapsco River to a point near where the railroad would cross the “fall line” and descend into the valley of the Monocacy and Potomac Rivers.
Thomas Viaduct (on the B&O RR) spans the Patapsco River and Patapsco Valley between Relay and Elkridge, MD (1833-35) It was the largest bridge in the nation and today its still the world's oldest multiple arched stone railroad bridge
Further extensions of the B&O RR soon opened to Frederick and Point of Rocks on the Potomac river. A connection with the Winchester and Potomac RR opened at Harper’s Ferry in 1837. The B&O RR was completed to Wheeling, WV (then part of Virginia) in 1853.

In Virginia, the Winchester & Potomac RR and the Winchester & Strasburg RR connected with the B&O RR at Harper’s Ferry; and later in 1867, they became part of the B&O RR as it was extended South through the Shenandoah river valley to Stanton and then to Lexington, VA by 1890.
Baltimore & Ohio RR from Baltimore to Wheeling with extension up the Valley to Lexington by 1892

- Baldwin Stations
- Other Stations
Early RRs competed with canal-boats for freight and passengers. Pictured here, the *B&O RR* at “Point of Rocks” on the VA/MD border runs along side the C&O Canal with a Potomac River bridge (i.e., on present day Rt. 15 North of Leesburg) shown in the background.
B&O RR and C&O Canal going West “together” toward Harper’s Ferry (on the left)
Harper’s Ferry is a historic town in Jefferson Co., WV. It is situated at the fork of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. Historically, Harper’s Ferry is best known for John Brown's raid on its Armory in 1859 and as a RR junction.
Harper’s Ferry (looking East -- Beyer painting ca. 1855)
The picturesque Tray Run Viaduct bridge on the B&O RR was built over a gorge of the Cheat River near Rowlesburg, WV. It was the subject of a painting by Edward Beyer in his “Album of Virginia” made during travels throughout the State (ca. 1855).
Tray Run Viaduct near the Cheat River, WV (Beyer painting ca. 1855)
Tray Run Viaduct (Circled) near Kingwood Tunnel
Wheeling, WV with its “state of the art” Suspension Bridge over the Ohio River
North Western RR (1857) from Grafton Junction to Parkersburg, WV on the Ohio River. The town of Parkersburg was the terminus of 2 separate turnpike roads from Staunton and Winchester. Grafton is pictured here with its RR bridge across the Tygert River.
North Western RR was an extension of the B&O RR from Grafton to Parkersburg on the Ohio River.

At the Grafton Junction, the B&O RR itself went Northwest to Wheeling, WV (also on the Ohio River).
Rails were used to bring up coal in the mines (inset above) and coal was loaded onto RR cars under “tipples” for shipment (e.g., mine and RR cars at Clarksburg, WV on the North Western RR line)
Steam Engines and Passenger Travel in the 1800s
Engines carried wood or coal to “stoke” their boilers; but, stopped for water at “watering towers” along their routes.

Sketch from Harper’s New Monthly Magazine
Manassas Gap RR was chartered in 1850 to build from Manassas Junction at the Orange & Alexandria RR through the “Manassas Gap” to the extended B&O RR at Strasburg (1854) in the Shenandoah Valley.
Manassas Junction (formerly called “Tudor Hall”) on the Manassas Gap and Orange & Alexandria RRs South of Bull Run
At RR Junctions, passengers and freight were transferred between railway lines.
The *Orange and Alexandria Railroad* (O&A) was chartered by the VA General Assembly on May 28, 1848, to run North & South between Alexandria & Gordonsville. Construction began in 1850 and was completed in April of 1854 when it connected with the *Virginia Central Railroad* at Gordonsville in Orange Co.
Engine “Gen. Haupt” with “turn-a” round-house in the background (Alexandria, VA ca. 1863)
The “President’s Car” was parked in the O&A RR yard at Alexandria, VA (1865)
Catlett’s Station on Orange & Alexandria RR
Locomotive & Bridge on Orange & Alexandria RR (ca. 1862)
Culpepper Station on Orange & Alexandria RR line (ca. 1862)
Orange Courthouse Station on Orange & Alexandria RR Line with Train in Foreground
**Virginia Central Railroad** was chartered as the “Louisa Railroad” in 1836 by the VA Board of Public Works. It ran West from Richmond through Louisa Co. across the “central” part of the State and had its name changed to *Virginia Central Railroad* in 1850. It connected with the *Orange and Alexandria RR* at Gordonsville in 1854 and was extended through Charlottesville to Staunton (via the Blue Ridge RR tunnels through the mountains in 1858) and up the valley toward Lexington.
Gordonsville Junction between Virginia Central and Orange & Alexandria Railroads

The “grand” Exchange Hotel near the RR Depot originally built in 1859
In 1850, the Virginia Central Railroad connected Richmond with Charlottesville. More than 400 slaves, some purchased specifically for building the railroad, made up the construction crew. When completed, the connection was described as:

“...an important link in the connection of the metropolis with the West. The traveler may now leave Richmond soon after six in the morning, arrive in Charlottesville at one, and reach Staunton the same night.”

- Quoted in the Virginia Historical Register, 1851
Early views of Charlottesville RR Stations
In 1858, the state-built Blue Ridge Railroad was completed to connect the Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley regions of VA by going thru the Blue Ridge mountains at Rockfish Gap near Afton Mountain. The crossing was made with four tunnels, including the 4,263-foot “Blue Ridge Tunnel” at the top of the pass (then one of the longest tunnels in the world.)

This RR became part of the Virginia Central RR upon completion of the tunnels.
Rockfish Gap (View of the Shenandoah Valley looking northwest toward the town of Waynesboro on the western side of the Blue Ridge Mountain tunnels. Afton Mountain is on the right. The road with two travelers on horseback is on the approximate location of today’s Blue Ridge Parkway – Beyer Painting ca. 1855)
Built in the 1850s, the V&T ran completely through southwestern VA along the length of the Great Valley of Virginia. The railroad extended westward from its Junction with the Orange & Alexandria RR at Lynchburg, through a gap in the Blue Ridge Mts near the town of Big Lick (now called Roanoke); there, it turned south westward and followed the Great Valley to Bristol, TN.
Developed to Encourage “Agriculture & Commerce”, the V&T RR covered 175 miles from Lunchburg, VA to Bristol, TN plus a 9 ½ mile short line off the main track to the Salt Works at Saltville, VA
The Main East to So. West RRs from Lynchburg, VA into TN and other Southern States

Memphis & Charleston RR

East Tenn. & Virginia RR

Virginia & Tennessee RR

East Tenn. & Georgia RR
VA. & Tennessee RR depot and train shed (center/left), the V&T roundhouse (right), and a covered, wooden RR bridge across the James River (1875) at Lynchburg, VA
V&T RR from Lynchburg past the “Peaks of Otter” near Liberty through Buford’s Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains to “Big Lick” (i.e., Roanoke)
View of Liberty and Peaks of Otter
(Beyer painting, ca. 1855)
V&T RR near Peaks of Otter (Beyer painting, ca 1855)
V&T RR from Buford’s Gap through “Big Lick”, Salem and White Sulfur Springs South of the “Salt Pond” & “Coal Fields” in Montgomery, Co. VA
Salem, VA (Beyer painting, ca. 1855)
Little Tunnel (looking NE from Shawsville, VA) cuts through Middle Piece Mtn. This train is headed East toward Salem (V&T RR -- Beyer painting, ca 1855)
Yellow Sulfur Springs is a “Spa” that was accessed by stage coach from the V&T RR line (Beyer painting, ca 1855)
Much of the panhandle and north-central portion of present-day WV is underlain by bedded salt deposits over 50-feet thick in places. Salt mining since the late 1700s had taken out most of the easily mined salt by 1860 ("The Salt Pond" – Beyer ca. 1855).
V&T RR from Yellow Sulfur Springs to Wytheville Through Newbern in Pulaski Co., VA
Boissevain “Tipples” at the Pocohantas coal field in Tazewell County, SW Virginia near Bluefield.

A “tipple” was built over a RR track so that coal could be dropped down into the RR cars for shipment to market by rail.
V&T RR at the rural Newbern Depot (New Harpers Magazine Magazine Sept. 1857)
Wytheville, VA with a stage coach road through the town (Beyer painting, ca. 1855)
V&T RR from Wytheville into Washington Co., VA
V&T RR into TN at the Bristol Junction with the East TN & VA RR

Connecting RR “spur” to Saltville
Workers Making Salt at Saltville, VA
Bristol Station in TN at the end of the VA & TN RR line (175 miles from Lynchburg, VA) where the East TN & VA RR began
Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac RR (North of Richmond to Alexandria) and Fredericksburg and Charlottesville RR through Orange Court House
Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac RR
Passenger Train Leaving from Richmond Station going North
By 1861, major junctions of competing railroads in Virginia included:

- **Manassas** (Orange & Alexandria/Manassas Gap RRs)
- **Gordonsville** (Orange and Alexandria/Virginia Central RRs)
- **Charlottesville** (Orange and Alexandria/Virginia Central RRs)
- **Doswell** called “Chesterfield” or “Squashapenny” (Virginia Central/Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac RRs)
- **Petersburg** (intersection of several RRs)
- **Burksville** (South Side or “Lynchburg & Petersburg”/Richmond and Danville RRs)
The Richmond, Fredericksburg, & Potomac RR followed the present-day route I-95 from Richmond North to the “Potomac RR Yard” outside Alexandria, VA. It crossed the South & North Anna, Mattaponi, and Rappahannock Rivers with major junctions at Doswell and Fredericksburg.
Bridge over the **Potomac Creek** on the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Alexandria RR just north of Fredericksburg, VA.
Fredericksburg on far side of Rappahannock river with RR bridge pilings seen in river after bridge was burned (ca. 1862)
RR bridge over the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg (on far side of river) shown here under repair, ca. 1863
South Side Railroad (a.k.a. “Petersburg & Lynchburg” RR) was formed in Virginia in 1846. Construction from City Point (a port on the James River) began in 1849, it reached Burksville (a junction with the Richmond and Danville RR) in 1852, and was completed to Lynchburg, VA in 1854. It connected the farm country south and west of Petersburg and around Lynchburg, VA to the James River.

Following an indirect route, the railroad constructed a famous 21 span “High Bridge” across the Appomattox River valley near Farmville. The bridge was 2,400 feet long and as high as 100 feet in the center, one of the largest in the world when built.
South Side RR Map from City Point on the James through Petersburg and Burksville to Lynchburg
City Point Terminal on the James River, RR Yard, and Roundhouse
Burksville (this small town was a Junction of the Richmond and Danville and the Petersburg & Lynchburg RRs).
“High Bridge” near Farmville, VA (Beyer, ca. 1855)
Location of the 105 ft “High Bridge” on the Petersburg & Lynchburg RR over the Appomattox River near Farm V. (i.e., “Farmville”)
Richmond & Danville RR was chartered in 1847 and completed to Danville in 1856 (140 miles)
Richmond & Danville RR Bridge over the James River viewed from Gamble’s Hill
As a private enterprise, the Richmond & Danville RR was funded by selling shares in the company.

RR construction was supervised by Col. Andrew Talcott, who later served as an engineer in the Confederate Army of No. Virginia.
After the Civil War, the Richmond & Danville RR grew to 3,300 miles of track in 9 states. Today, its part of the Norfolk Southern RR.
Richmond and York (river) RR

Savage’s Station on the Richmond & York RR
Norfolk, VA (i.e., “Seaboard”) & Roanoke (river in NC) RR

Petersburg & Roanoke (river in NC) RR

Virginia

North Carolina

City Point

Norfolk & Petersburg RR

Suffolk
Petersburg was a major Junction of several RRs south of Richmond. At this station, locomotives needed to “turn around” on a rotating rail section as pictured here without a roof.
Norfolk and Petersburg RR

Beginning in 1853, William Mahone, a graduate of VMI, designed and built drawbridges across the busy Eastern and Southern branches of the Elizabeth River near Norfolk. He also designed and built an innovative RR roadbed through the Great Dismal Swamp employing a corduroy log foundation laid at right angles beneath the surface of the swamp. Mahone's RR roadbed design withstood immense tonnages of coal traffic through the swamp.
Restored Suffolk Junction Station and Museum between the Norfolk & Petersburg and Seaboard & Roanoke RR's

Seaboard & Roanoke RR to Weldon, NC
Portsmouth & Weldon RR (a.k.a. “Seaboard & Roanoke RR) was organized in 1833 and completed in 1835. It was the 1st RR to reach the Norfolk area and supported shipment of goods originating on the Roanoke River and its canal system from points West to the Norfolk area on the harbor of Hampton Roads.
Petersburg and Roanoke (river in NC) RR

The Port of Petersburg (i.e., City Point on the James River) became renowned as a commercial center for transporting and processing *cotton*, *tobacco*, *metal*, etc. produced and shipped from the region. As travel technology developed, *Petersburg became established as a railroad Junction*, with links to Richmond in the north, Farmville and Lynchburg in the west, and Weldon, NC in the south via the *Petersburg and Roanoke RR*. The Norfolk and Petersburg RR was the last major connection from Petersburg to the east when it was completed in 1858.
Hicksford Junction on the Petersburg & Roanoke RR was also a junction of several turnpike roads in southern Virginia.

[Hicksford, also known as “Hick's Ford”, became part of a Town and later the independent City of Emporia]

Where “Fort Road” of eastern Virginia crossed the Mecherrin River.
Weldon, NC (a major Junction station on the Roanoke River). Timber and other raw materials came down the Roanoke River from VA to the falls at Weldon and were transported by RR to markets via deep water ports in VA on the James River (i.e., Portsmouth, City Point, or Norfolk).
Private initiative and State supported private enterprise resulted in the incredible development of Virginia’s RR transportation infrastructure from 1827 – 1860.

But, the fierce competiveness that created this infrastructure had its limitations.

*Interconnectivity between competing railroads was a rarity.* For example, while 6 railroads had terminals at Richmond city, none provided direct connections to other railroads from the city. This later became a major problem for the Confederacy during the Civil War.
Six RRs in Richmond City – No Interchange

- Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac RR
- Richmond & Danville RR
- Richmond & Petersburg RR
- Central RR
- York River RR
- Chesterfield RR
The **economic impact** of this period of railroad building in Virginia **was huge**. By connecting mines, forests, farms, people, diverse regions, towns, and developing urban/industrial centers throughout the state, the railroads changed Virginia from a “farm economy” into a “market economy” based upon the production, distribution and marketing of goods (e.g., timber, coal, tobacco, salt) and services (e.g., tourism) within the State, with other States, and with other countries.

Inevitably, railroad building and the prosperity it brought had a **dramatic impact on Virginia’s social institution** (e.g., on slavery).
(Recap) Major RR Routes in Virginia by 1860

[Map showing major rail routes in Virginia, including major cities and rail connections.]

Key:
- Major RR Route
- Secondary RR Route
- Railroad Station

Notable Cities:
- Wheeling (Ohio River)
- Parkersburg
- Maryland
- Alexandria
- Petersburg
- Norfolk
- Roanoke
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**Credits:** Bybee, Dennis L., PhD, *Virginia History Series*, #6-08 © 2008
Learning Exercises:

A. Steam Locomotive Component Parts Worksheet

B. Viewer Presentation Response Sheet
(See Separate File)
Engine “Gen. Haupt” with “turn-a” round-house in the background (Alexandria, VA ca. 1863)
Steam Locomotive Component Parts Worksheet

Match the Numbered Part on the Locomotive with its name:

1. _____  2. _____  3. _____  4. _____
5. _____  6. _____  7. _____  8. _____

Names:
A. Smoke Stack    B. Coupler    C. Headlamp
D. Tender Box    E. Cab    F. Whistle
G. Water Compartment    H. Boiler