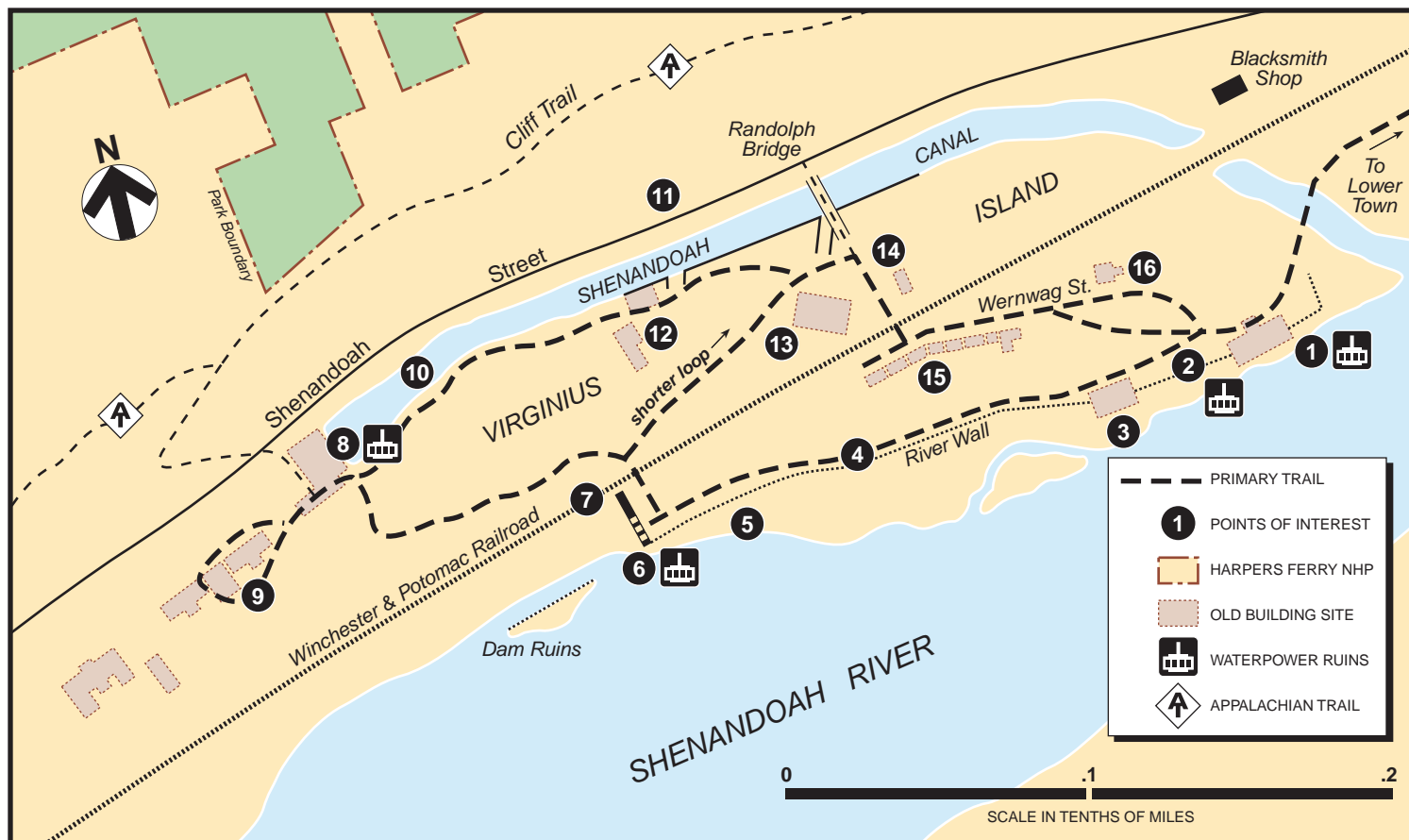


## VIRGINIUS ISLAND TRAIL GUIDE



**1. Cotton Factory.** In 1848, a four-story "Brick Factory Building, of the most permanent character," began operation here. The building was fitted with gas lights, heated by steam with pipes, and equipped with the latest cotton machinery. During the Civil War, the building served as a Union hospital. After the war, the building was converted into a flour mill and four Leffel Company iron turbines were installed. These turbines remain in the building today. The building was abandoned after the Flood of 1889.

**2. Water Tunnels.** These stone-arched culverts were part of an elaborate underground water-supply system that powered the Cotton Factory.

**3. Cotton Mill.** In 1849, a second four-story brick cotton mill was built on Virginius Island. Called "Valley Mills," a contemporary newspaper account reported that "this factory is capable of manufacturing 400 lbs. of Cotton yarn, 100 lbs. of Batting, and 50 lbs. of Candle wick per day." Fire destroyed the building in 1852.

**4. River Wall.** Water drawn from the Shenandoah River was stored in an inner basin here before being distributed to the

headraces of the various mills on Virginius Island. A stone wall separated the basin from the river. Silt, deposited by frequent inundation of this area, has filled the old basin.

**5. Shenandoah River.** Hard ledges of *Harpers shale*, tilted up on end some 230 million years ago, have created a series of rapids here known as "The Staircase." Over a distance of 1½ miles, the river drops 14 feet. This "fall" furnished 19th century millwrights with the waterpower necessary to drive their machinery.

**6. Intake Arches.** These headgates were originally built in about 1848. Control gates on the arches regulated the flow of water from the river into the Inner Basin.

**7. Railroad.** On March 31, 1836, the Winchester & Potomac Railroad opened from Harpers Ferry to Winchester, Va.—a distance of 32 miles. The line served to bolster the economy of Virginius Island, bringing grain and produce from the Shenandoah Valley, and providing a direct link to Baltimore. This railroad still carries freight—the last operating link to the rich history of Virginius.

**8. Shenandoah Pulp Company.** Opened in 1888, this pulp mill was outfitted with ten turbines which together developed more than 2,300 horsepower. These water wheels powered disc barking machines, shaking screens, wet press machines, and wood grinders which produced about 40 tons of "Spruce Ground Wood Pulp" daily. The mill operated until 1935.

**9. Hall's Rifle Works.** In 1820, John H. Hall began assembling his patent breech-loading rifles for the U.S. Government here. Hall was one of the first arms makers to combine mechanized production with the manufacture of interchangeable parts. In 1844, the government began replacing Hall's frame shops with a new brick Rifle Factory that produced standard U.S. Model rifles until the Civil War. In 1861, Confederate forces destroyed the factory.

**10. Shenandoah Canal.** Between 1806-1807, the Patowmack Company excavated a 580-yard canal just above Virginius Island. A double lift lock was erected at the lower end of this canal where the pulp mill ruins now stand. By deepening existing river channels above and below these locks—

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including the channel in front of you—a waterway over a mile long was created.

**11. Armory Quarry.** In the early 19th century, the U.S. Government quarried rock from these cliffs for use in the construction of Armory buildings.

**12. Iron Foundry.** In 1835, a tannery located here was converted into an iron foundry. Saws, straw cutters, wagon boxes, cast iron railings, and coal stoves were among the many items produced here.

**13. Herr's Mill.** In 1840, a large stone flour mill was built here on the site of an earlier grist mill. The building became known as Herr's Mill following its purchase by Abraham Herr. In 1861, during the first year of the Civil

War, Herr invited Federal forces to remove grain from his mill. When nearby Confederates learned of this act, they set fire to the building. The mill was never rebuilt.

**14. Herr/Child House.** In July 1867, Herr sold his Virginius Island holdings to the firm Child & McCreight. The Child family moved into a sturdy stone house that once stood here. During the Flood of 1870, the Childs were trapped on the second floor. They survived the ordeal, but 42 other local residents perished.

**15. Row Houses.** By 1850, a line of 11 rowhouses extended along the south side of Wernwag Street. These dwellings probably housed workers and their families employed in the mills and factories of Virginius Island.

**16. Wernwag's House.** A large 3½ story house formerly stood on these foundations. Lewis Wernwag, a nationally recognized builder of long-span wooden truss bridges, formerly lived here. Wernwag operated a nearby saw mill and machine shop.

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**Trail Information.** ¾-mile loop or 1¼-mile loop over a level, partially graded path. Allow about 45 minutes for the shorter loop and an hour and fifteen minutes for the longer loop.

*Protection of these irreplaceable ruins is your responsibility. Please leave them undisturbed.*