



A Perfect Heap of Ruins

Standing here on the night of April 18, 1861, you would have seen billowing smoke as fire raged in the armory workshops. Virginia had just seceded from the United States. Virginia militiamen were coming toward Harpers Ferry. Vastly outnumbered and unable to defend government property, U.S. soldiers “set fire to the Carpenter shop & grinding mill, Stocking shop, & the 2 arsenals” leaving a “perfect heap of ruins.”

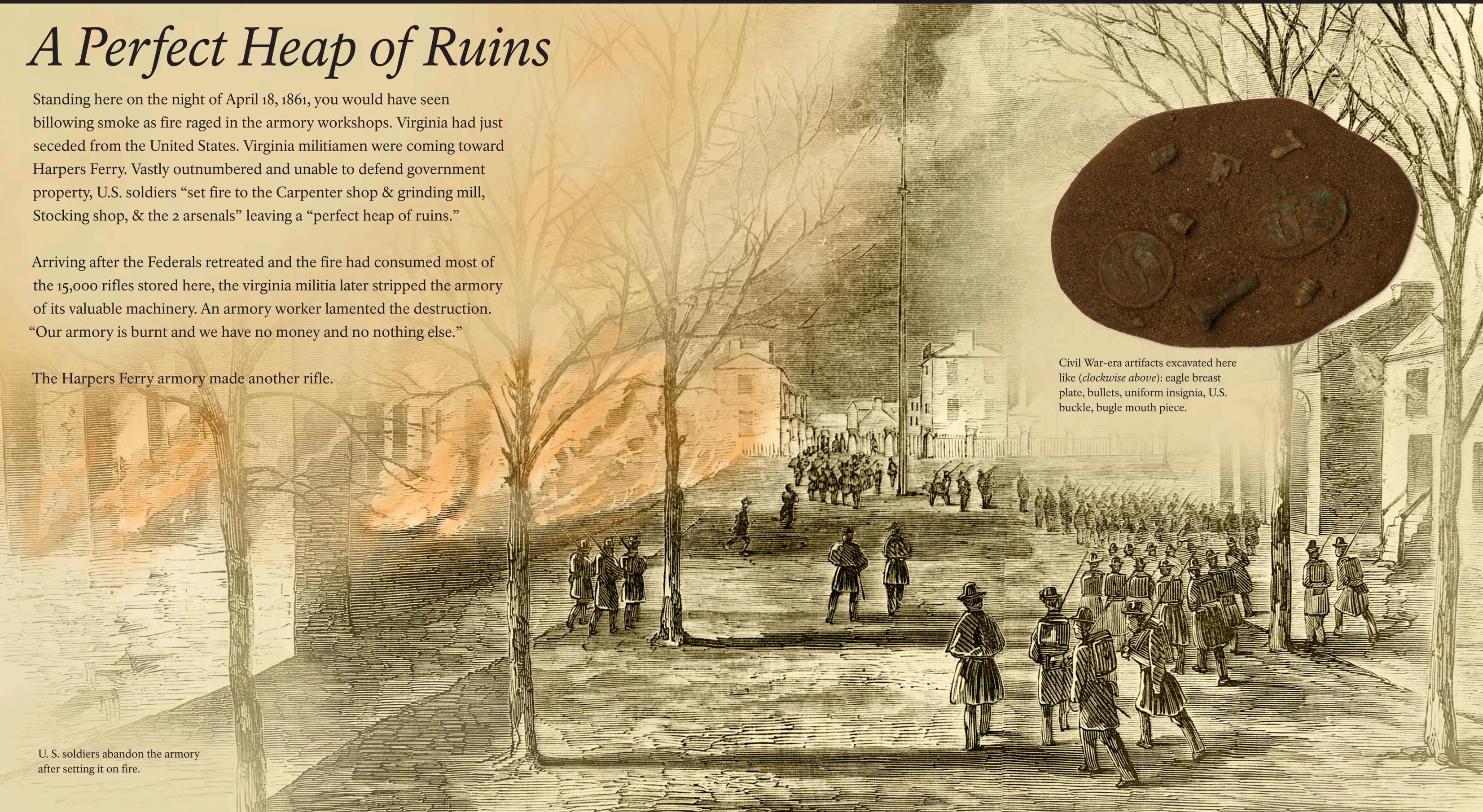
Arriving after the Federals retreated and the fire had consumed most of the 15,000 rifles stored here, the Virginia militia later stripped the armory of its valuable machinery. An armory worker lamented the destruction. “Our armory is burnt and we have no money and no nothing else.”

The Harpers Ferry armory made another rifle.



Civil War-era artifacts excavated here like (clockwise above): eagle breast plate, bullets, uniform insignia, U.S. buckle, bugle mouth piece.

U. S. soldiers abandon the armory after setting it on fire.





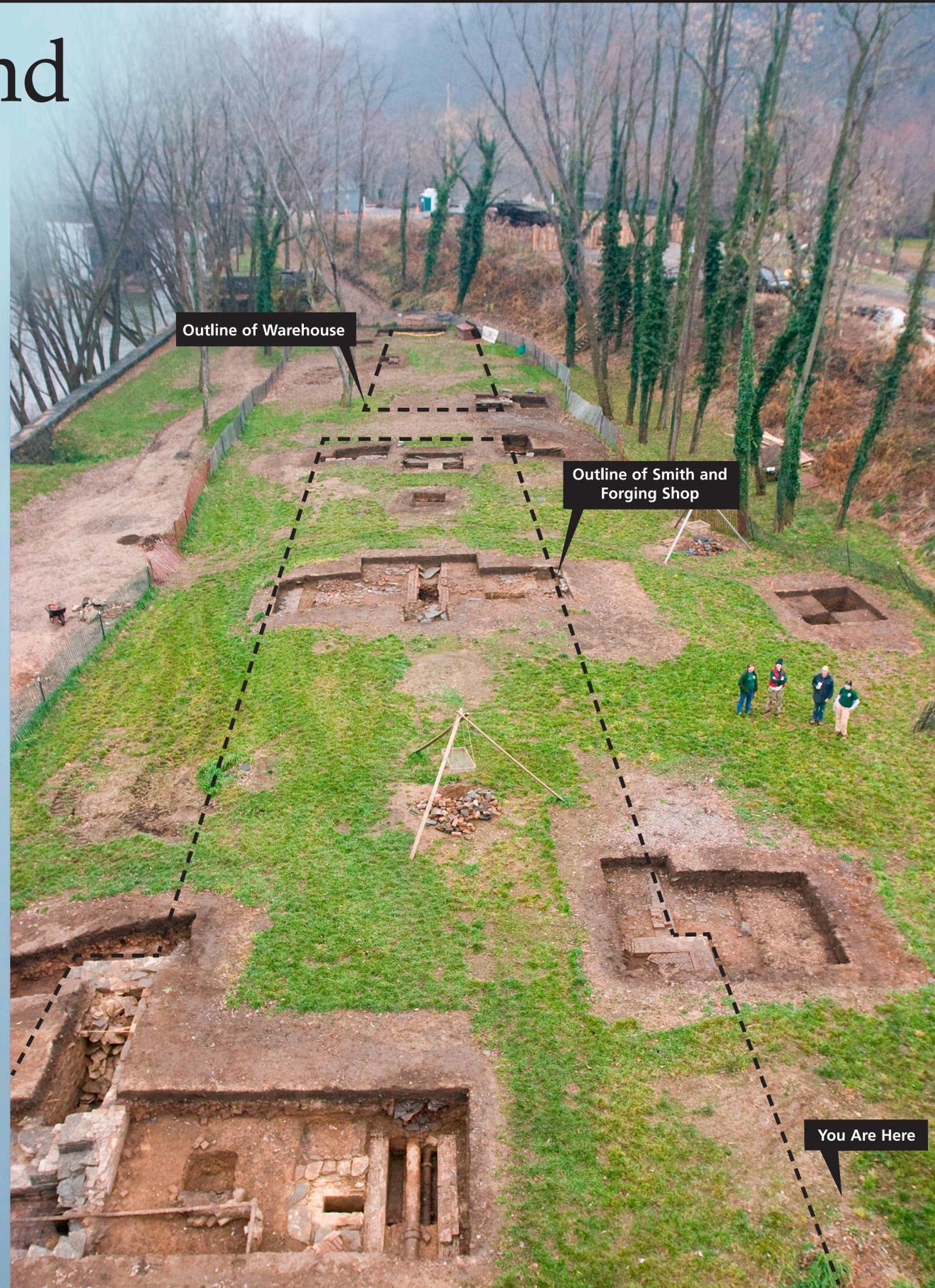
Found Underground

The ground around you hides the remains of the U.S. Armory at Harpers Ferry. Beneath the surface archeologists discovered walls, floors, pipes, and the base of a massive 90-foot chimney. As the team slowly and painstakingly excavated small pits throughout the site, they uncovered over 28,000 artifacts—some in almost pristine condition—providing a glimpse into the past.



Artifacts found here include (*clockwise*): a bone-handled toothbrush, an apothecary's weight, a carved pipe bowl, a file modified into a wrench, printer type, and a lice comb.

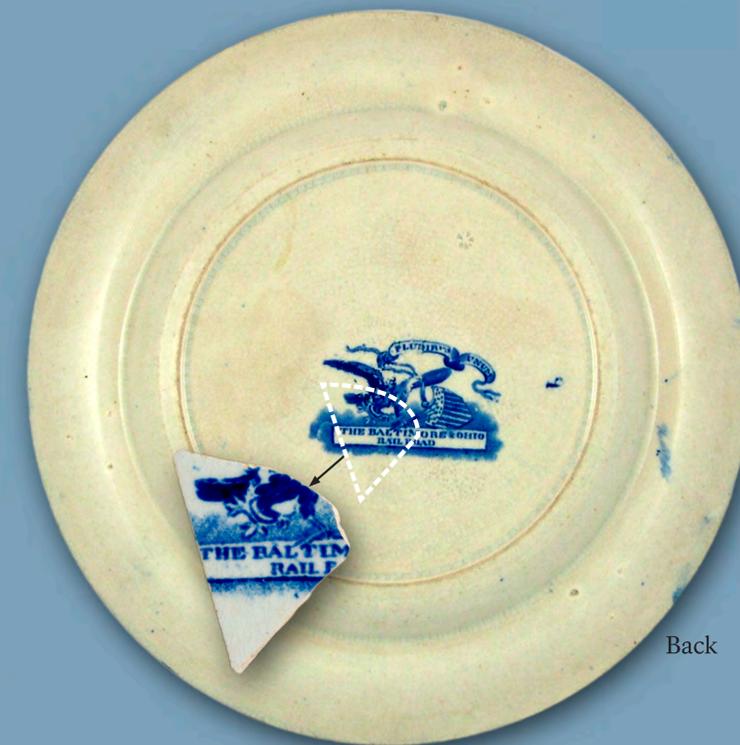
National Park Service archeologists began their excavation in 2005, exposing corners, floors and doorways of the Warehouse and the Smith and Forging Shop. They later refilled the pits to preserve the site.



Outline of Warehouse

Outline of Smith and Forging Shop

You Are Here



Back

Archeologists found this fragment of ceramic (*above*). It is identified by its maker's mark, which matches an 1827 English plate commemorating the founding of the B&O Railroad.



Front



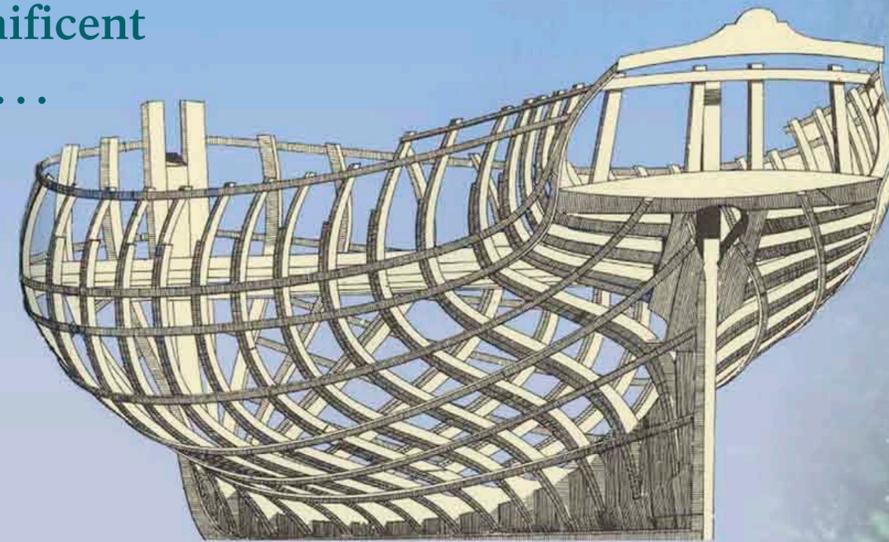
First Federal Tree Farm

From small acorns come massive live oak trees—and mighty ships. The live oak’s dense, rot-resistant wood and large arching branches were ideal for building ships in the 1700s and 1800s. Over 2,000 live oaks might be used to build one hull. To provide wood for naval ships, President John Quincy Adams

designated the first federal tree farm here in 1828. A resident, Henry M. Brackenridge, was hired to cultivate the trees. He initiated several experiments, but Adams’ successor, Andrew Jackson, closed the reservation in a political squabble.

The live oak ... is one of the most magnificent and delightful shade trees in the world ...

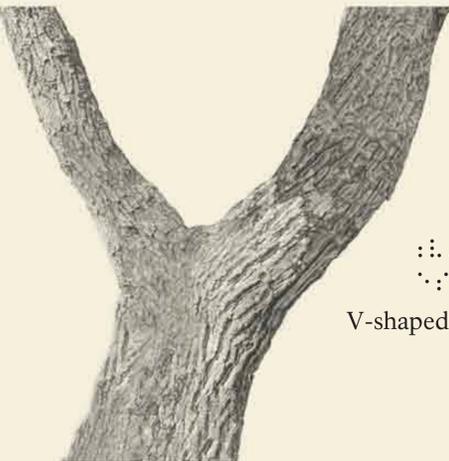
Henry M. Brackenridge



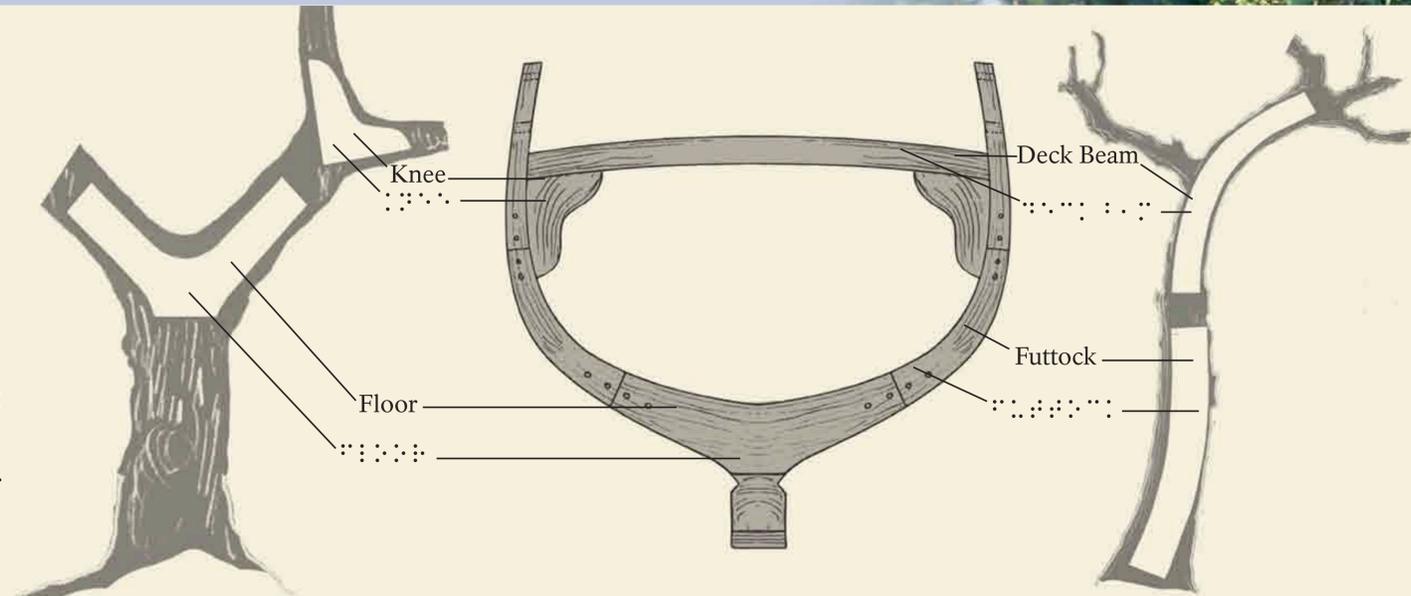
Crooked live oaks provided knees, futtocks, and other timbers for building wooden ship hulls.



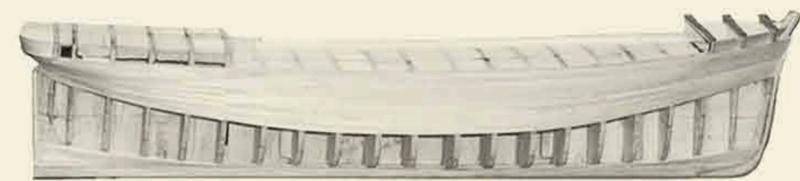
crooked live oaks provided knees, futtocks, and other timbers for building wooden ship hulls.



V-shaped joints provided essential timbers.



Side view of a wooden ship frame



Side view of a wooden ship frame