A Guide to Virginia Transportation from the Colonial to the Civil War Eras

Transportation Basics
Hanes, J.C. *The History of Civil Engineering in Virginia*. VA Ref 624 HAN. Chapters on James River Canal, Alexandria and Georgetown Canal and Little River Turnpike. Basic histories of several different engineering projects. While not the most exciting reading, there are some good histories here.

Hunter, Robert and Edwin Dooley. *Claudius Crozet, French Engineer in America 1790 - 1864*. VA Ref Biography Crozet HUN. Trained under Napoleon, Crozet was the man who built Virginia. A very good general biography. Also Contains some good financial and funding information.

Larson, John. *Internal Improvement; National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States*. VA Ref 338.973 LAR. An excellent overview of the period from the national perspective. Well written and interesting. Answers many questions about what was happening outside Virginia.

Path to Turnpike
Researchers interested in particular counties are encouraged to search the Alexandria Library’s online catalog under the name of the county and the term “Road Orders.”

Gage, Charles. *Tobacco, Tobacco Hogsheads and Rolling Roads in Northern Virginia*. VA Ref 338.173 Gag. Tobacco was the life blood of the Virginia economy, a good introduction.


Kemp, E.L. *A History of the Weston & Gauley Bridge Turnpike*. VA Ref 388.122 KEM. Small local history with some good illustrations.

**Rivers and Canals**


Callahan, Donald. The Rappahannock Canal. VA Ref 627.13 CAL. Basic history of this short lived canal. Not terribly well written, but about the only thing on the subject.

Davis, Julia. The Shenandoah. VA Ref 975.59 DAV. Older title from the “American Rivers” series. Social history well told.


Gutheim, Frederick. The Potomac. VA Ref 975.2 GUT. Another title from the “American Rivers” series. What it lacks in detail it makes up in sweep and story.


Perez, L. Jeffrey. “Bonds of Friendship and Mutual Interest”: Virginia’s Waterways Improvement Companies 1784 - 1828. VA Ref 386.48 PER. A very good, if academic, overview of the canal movement in Virginia.


Shaw, Ronald. Canals for a Nation: The Canal Era in the United States 1790 - 1860. VA Ref 386.46 SHA. A broad overview of the subject; good for comparison and introduction to the topic.
Trout, W.E. The Slate & Willis’s Rivers Atlas. VA Ref 975.56 TRO. This is one of numerous river atlases done by Mr. Trout and the Virginia Canals & Navigation Society. Search under the author name or canal/river name to find the others. Intended primarily for canoeists, these atlases are a wonderfully detailed resource.


**Railroads**

Blake, Nelson. William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent. VA Ref B Mahone BLA. Builder, statesman, soldier. Mahone did it all but also insisted everyone should be aware of that fact. Decent biography of this important but flawed figure.


Johnson, Larry E. Breakdown From Within: Virginia’s Railroads During the Civil War Era. VA Ref 385.0975 JOH. A good history of Virginia’s transportation network during the war years.

Johnston, Angus. Virginia Railroads in the Civil War. VA Ref 385.0975 JOH. Covers similar ground as the previous title but in a less demanding style. A good place to start.


Mordecai, John B. A Brief History of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad. VA Ref 385.0975 MOR. A decent basic history but could use more detail.

Noe, Kenneth. Southwest Virginia’s Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis. VA Ref 385.0975 NOE. What do railroads and Secession have in common? Read this title and find out. Combines social and rail history well.

Prince, Richard E. Steam Locomotives and Boats, Southern Railway System. VA Ref 385.361 PRI. Well documented narrative history of this major rail line. A very good place to start if researching more modern railroads.

Ward, James. That Man Haupt: A Biography of Herman Haupt. VA Ref B Haupt WAR. As counterpoint to Johnson above, read about the man who made the U.S.M.R.R. work. An approachable biography.