

# Rafting



Daniel Skinner and Josiah Parks are credited with running the first raft down the Delaware River to Philadelphia in 1764. Daniel Skinner had been a sailor in the West Indies before settling in this area and seeing the straight tall hemlocks felt that these would make excellent masts for the tall ships. After several failed attempts at floating these timbers down river, he developed a method of mortising the ends of the mast timbers, inserting a white oak spindle and pinning the ends of lumber creating a raft. The raft was then fitted with a perpendicular pin cross-log on each end of the raft for hanging oars. This design was successful and his first raft of six masts was floated to Philadelphia.

This raft was 15 feet wide and 80 feet long, it took eight days to reach Philadelphia and Skinner was paid \$20 in gold for each mast. It took Skinner and Parks two weeks to walk back to their homesteads. This began the exciting and dangerous era of the Delaware River timber rafting industry.

The East Branch of the Delaware River is credited as being the headwater proper of the great rafting stream. The New York State Legislature declared the Delaware River a public highway for floating logs in 1823.



Shinhopple Lumbermen



Log raft on East Branch of Delaware near Long Flats

"The men who "rocked the cradle of the rafting industry" were the pioneer settlers who floated one or two rafts a year on the average, spending the remainder of the time in wresting a bare living from the land they cleared and planted "around the stumps."

*Rafting on The Delaware River*-Leslie C. Wood, 1934