



A ROAD MADE OF WATER



The river you see today was transformed in the late 1800s to meet the transportation needs of a growing industrial nation.

In its original natural state, the river was shallow and had a series of pools and rapids that sometimes dried out in the summer. When the first pioneers saw the Mon, they could walk across it in many places.

In the late 1700s, permanent settlements formed along the Mon and pioneers began shipping local goods, such as timber and agricultural produce, to Pittsburgh and ports in the south. River transportation evolved from canoes to flatboats and then to steamboats. From about 1820 to 1920, you could travel the river on "packet" boats, which carried passengers, freight, and mail.

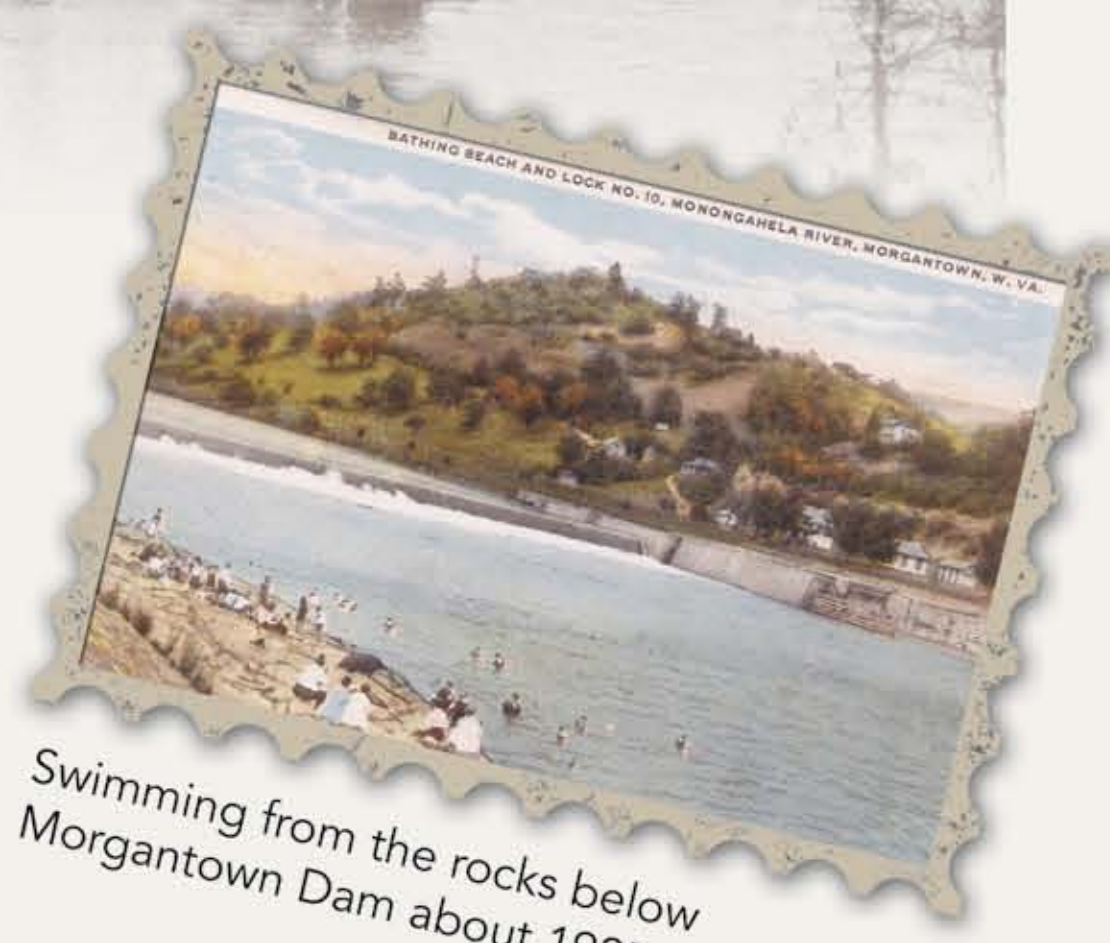
Nine locks and dams were built in the late 1800s, creating a deep, navigable "roadway." By 1904, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed this system of locks and dams, making the Mon the first American river to be navigable its entire length. The locks and dams maintain the river at a minimum depth of 9 feet and overcome a change in elevation of about 147 feet between Fairmont and Pittsburgh.



► **The Monongahela River**, known locally as the Mon, flows north 128 miles from Fairmont, WV, to Pittsburgh, PA, where it meets the Allegheny River to form the Ohio River.



Advertising postcard for river excursions.

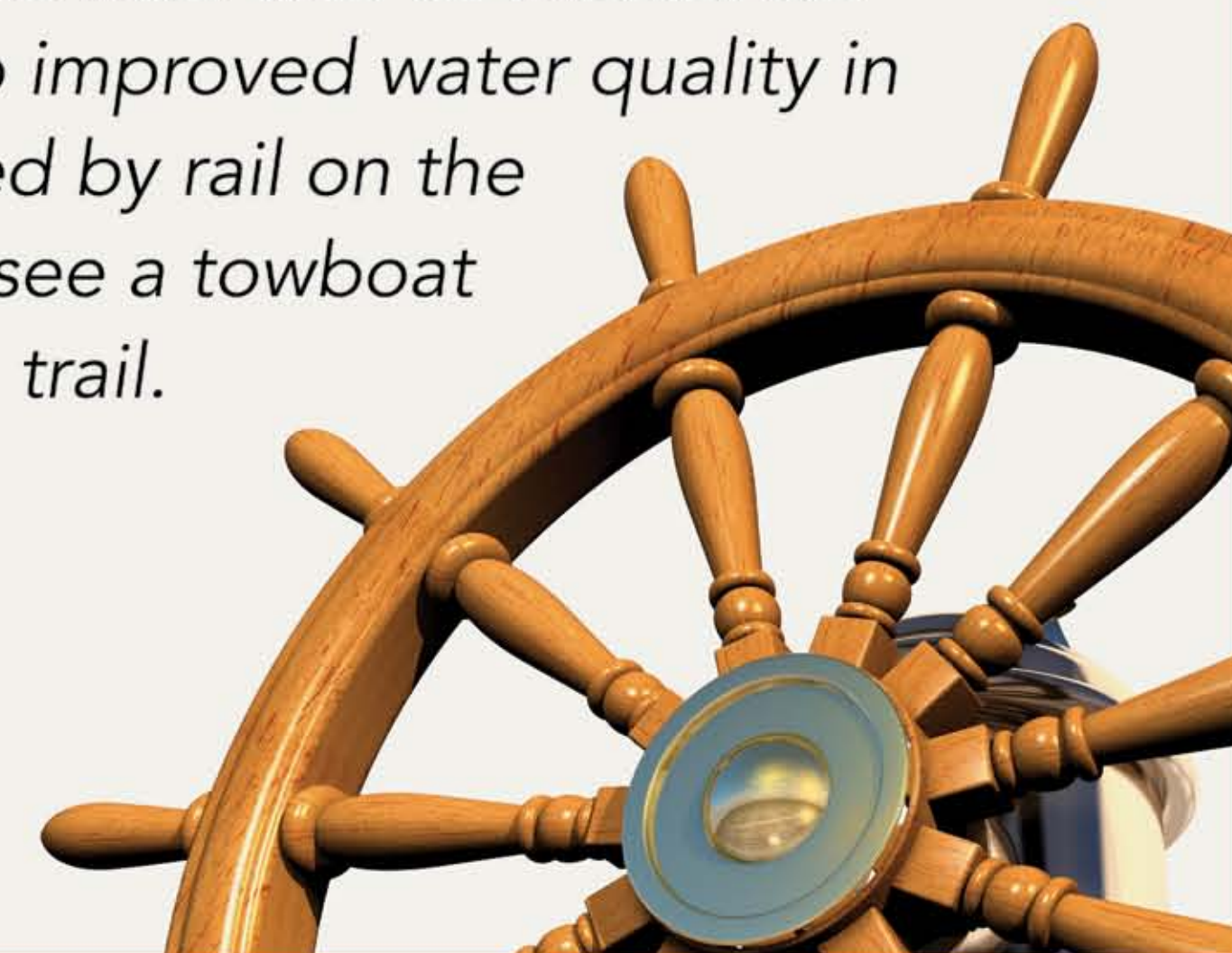


Swimming from the rocks below Morgantown Dam about 1925.

Upper Mon Water Trail Maps are available at the Greater Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau in the Wharf District: 1-800-458-7373.

King Coal

With the goal of moving West Virginia bituminous coal, the locks and dams were built to accommodate towboats with coal-laden barges. Millions of tons of coal have been delivered to steel mills in Pittsburgh and power plants along the Ohio River. Although coal has helped the Nation grow, water quality deteriorated because of acid mine drainage from mines along the river and its tributaries. The Clean Water Act of 1972 has led to improved water quality in the Mon. Today, most coal is transported by rail on the western bank of the river, but you may see a towboat pushing coal barges as you explore the trail.



www.montrails.org



www.wvdnr.gov