

After the American Revolution, the mines came under the control of Moses Austin, father of Stephen Austin, the future "Father of Texas." In an historic case of "like father, like son," Austinville was named after the elder Austin, and Austin, Texas, was named after the son.

During the Civil War, the mines, then known as the Wythe Union Lead Mine Company, were the chief domestic supplier of lead to the Confederacy. The company name didn't protect it from Northern raids, and it was attacked twice by Union troops.

## A NEW OPPORTUNITY

New River Trail State Park is a 57-mile linear park, following a former Norfolk and Western railroad line. The park stretches from Galax to Fries to Pulaski and parallels the banks of the New River for 39 miles. Foster Falls is a major recreation area for the park and provides both trail and river access.

With the recent acquisition of the nearby Historic Foster Falls Village another area of historic significance will be preserved for future generations to enjoy. Dating back to the mid to late 1800s, Foster Falls Village features a railroad depot, hotel, saw/grist mill, iron furnace, and numerous associated buildings. In its heyday, the village was inhabited by more than 100 families and was a bustling mining and railroad community. Planning is underway to preserve and protect the area as part of the New River Trail State Park.

For information and schedules, call or write:  
Superintendent  
New River Trail State Park  
Route 2, Box 126F  
Foster Falls, Virginia 24360  
(540) 699-6778  
(540) 699-1791

The Department of Conservation and Recreation offers tours of the Shot Tower through out the summer season. Contact New River Trail State Park for the exact hours of operation. Picnicking facilities, rest rooms and water fountains are available at the park.



The Shot Tower is located just off of U.S. Rt. 52, near where the highway crosses the New River in Wythe County. The park can be reached via I-77 from the Poplar Camp interchange, #24. Travel approximately 1.5 miles west on U.S. Rt. 52 to the park entrance.

For information about other Virginia State Parks, call or write:

Department of Conservation and Recreation  
203 Governor St., Suite 213  
Richmond, VA 23219  
(804) 786-1712

<http://www.state.va.us/~dcr/>

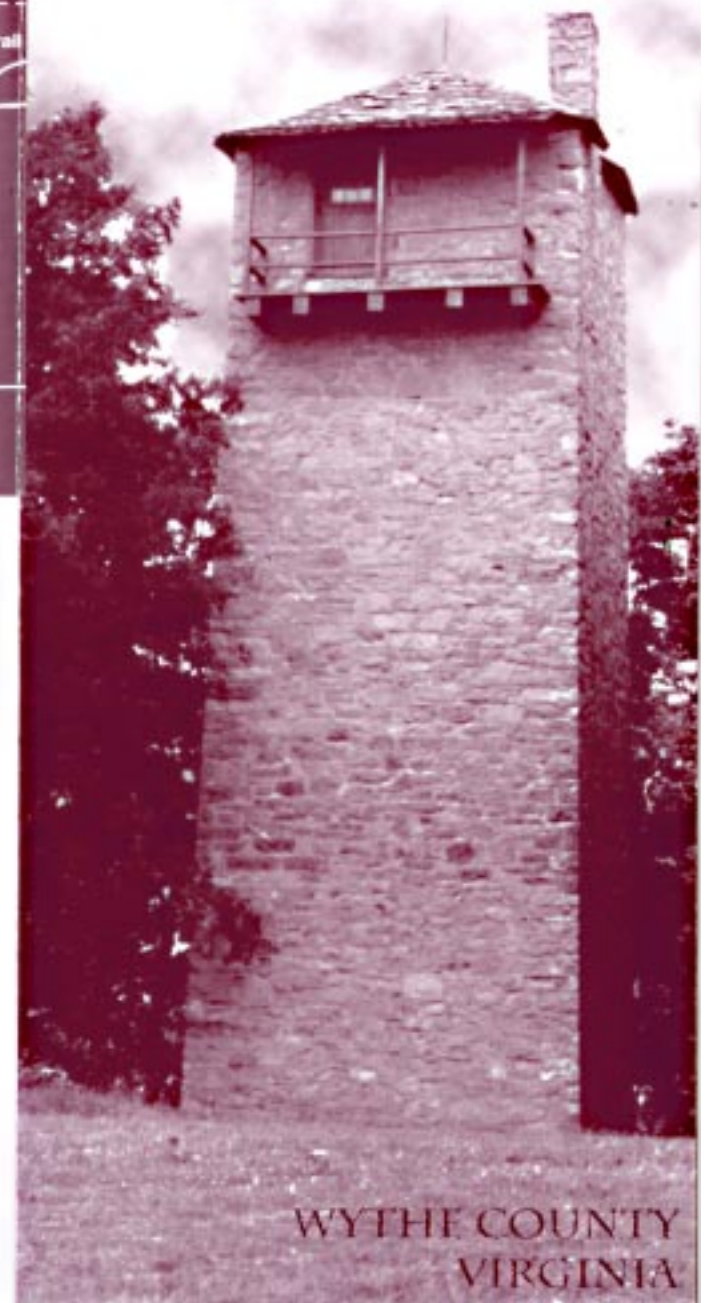
James S. Gilmore, III, Governor  
John Paul Woodley, Jr.,  
Secretary of Natural Resources  
David G. Brickley, Director,  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Joe Elton, State Parks Director,  
Department of Conservation and Recreation



Department of Conservation & Recreation  
CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

# SHOT TOWER

## HISTORIC STATE PARK



WYTHE COUNTY  
VIRGINIA



# HISTORY AND CONSTRUCTION

Local miner and business owner Thomas Jackson took about seven years to build the Shot Tower, which was completed around 1807. Here shot of varying size would be molded, sorted and shipped down river where it would be sold to hunters, traders and merchants.

Standing 75 feet high, the tower looks more like a fortress than a factory. The stones for the 2 ½ feet thick walls were quarried from a limestone deposit about a mile away. Twenty feet square at the base, a lower shaft from the tower floor drops 75 feet to the river level.

A restored interior winding wooden staircase leads to the tower's top room, where there was a large kettle heated by a furnace. The lead was melted and then poured through different sized sieves, producing shot of varying sizes. Historians believe that either slave labor or a pulley system was used to move the lead to the top of the stairs.

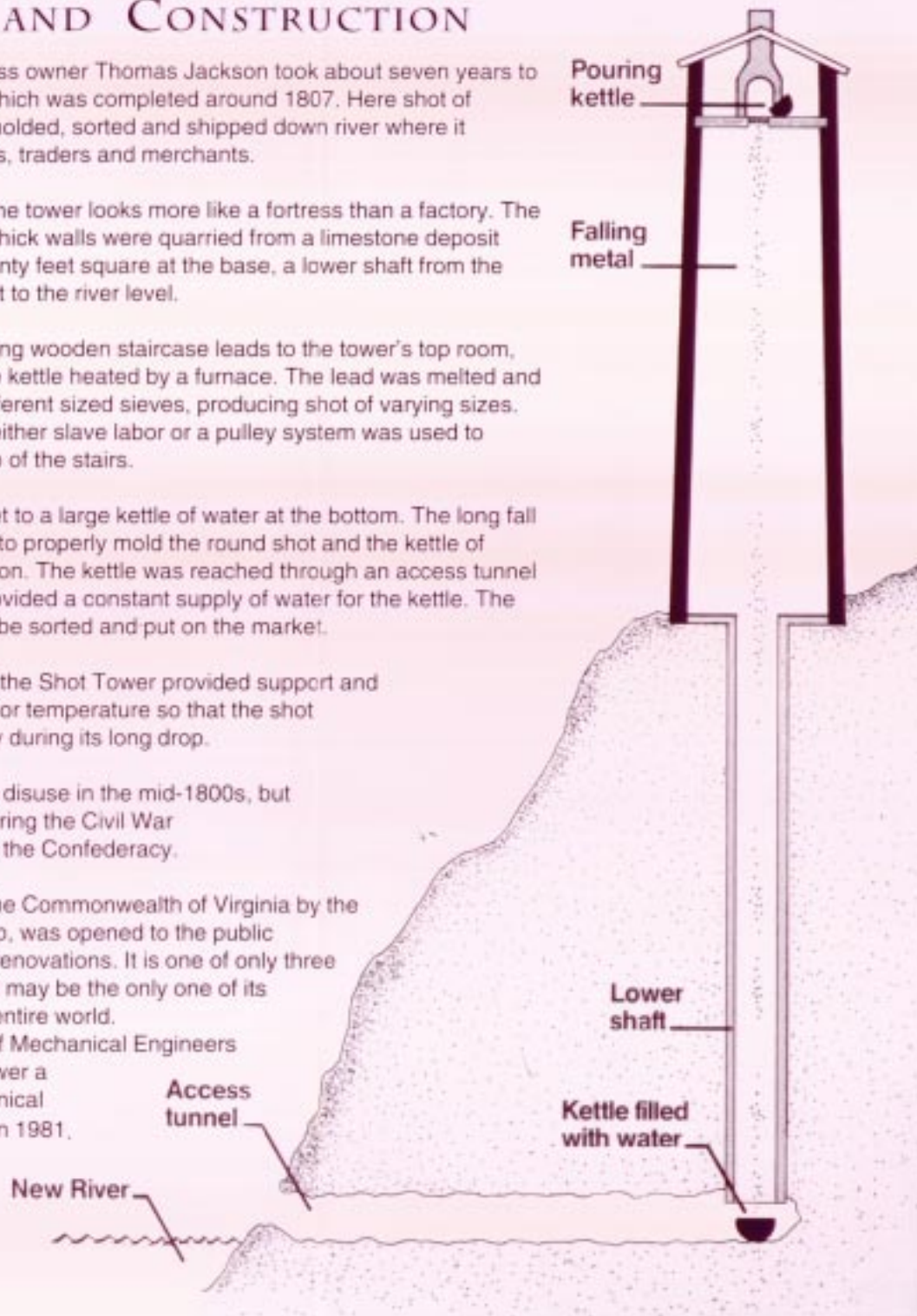
The hot lead fell 150 feet to a large kettle of water at the bottom. The long fall was thought necessary to properly mold the round shot and the kettle of water served as a cushion. The kettle was reached through an access tunnel near the river, which provided a constant supply of water for the kettle. The cooled shot would then be sorted and put on the market.

The thick stone walls of the Shot Tower provided support and insured a constant interior temperature so that the shot wouldn't cool too quickly during its long drop.

The Shot Tower fell into disuse in the mid-1800s, but was reopened briefly during the Civil War to supply ammunition to the Confederacy.

The tower, donated to the Commonwealth of Virginia by the Lead Mines Ruritan Club, was opened to the public in 1968 after extensive renovations. It is one of only three in the United States and may be the only one of its particular design in the entire world.

The American Society of Mechanical Engineers designated the Shot Tower a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark in 1981.



# THOMAS JACKSON

1762-1824

Thomas Jackson was born near Appleby, England, on Nov. 8, 1762, and emigrated to Virginia in about 1785. An experienced miner, Jackson eventually became a co-owner of the lead mines in nearby Austinville.

Jackson had several legal disputes with mine co-owner David Pierce, and it is believed that Jackson built the Shot Tower at this site to establish sole ownership.

The site also has several other benefits. The steep bluff made digging the access tunnel easier and allowed for walk-in access. The New River also served as a practical source of transportation, and the proximity of the ferry made the site an ideal location for commerce.

Thomas Jackson also was a skilled mechanic, a successful farmer, and the owner of the main public ferry over the New River. He operated the Shot Tower until his death in 1824. Today it stands as a monument to Jackson's enterprise and to the industry of a growing new nation.

# AUSTINVILLE LEAD MINES

Mining of lead began shortly after discovery of the metal in the area by Col. John Chiswell in 1757. Daniel Boone, Gen. Andrew Lewis and other famous colonial explorers were known to have stopped at the "Lead Mines," as Austinville was then called.

In 1775, the *Fincastle Resolutions* were drawn up at Lead Mines. The resolutions, containing a list of grievances against the British government and proclaiming the willingness of the signatories to die for their liberty, are considered a historical forerunner of the Declaration of Independence.