

**Exploring Rural Kentucky Through Documentary Art:
Creelsboro Landing, 1890s - Documentary Art Interactive
Unit 1 - Lesson Set 3 - Campbell's Ferry**

- For the Student -

BACKGROUND READING

Life in the Creelsboro Valley was connected to the rhythms of the Cumberland River, which rose and fell dramatically with seasonal rains. During dry periods - a "low" tide - wagons could easily drive across the river at numerous fords. But during wet periods - a "high" tide - crossing the Cumberland required a ferry. Campbells's Ferry at Creelsboro Landing was one of six ferries and landings that operated in the Creelsboro Valley at various times.

Ferries were powered in a variety of ways: human, river current, or animal. Some ferrymen pushed their ferry across the river using long poles, while others pulled their ferry across using



overhead lines. Sometimes the current of the river itself provided the propulsion. Horses or mules powered certain ferries. By driving the animals in a circle around a capstan that hauled in ropes, the ferry was towed along its route.

Ferries still operating today are usually powered by diesel or a combination of diesel-electric. They are often tourist attractions as well as a practical way to cross a river without taking a long detour to a bridge. But in the 19th century, ferries were often the *only* way to cross a river with a vehicle.

Campbells's Ferry at Creelsboro Landing. A detail from Creelsboro Landing, 1890s by Dennis Thrasher (2018).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

After reading the BACKGROUND READING, consider these questions:

1. Have you ever been on a ferry? Where and when? How was it powered?
2. Have you ever ridden in a wagon? Where and when?
3. Are there rivers close to where you live? Are there bridges across the rivers? How do you imagine it would feel to cross that river on a ferryboat?

Activity 3 - After examining the vignette, speculate about the characters in the painting:

1. What is each one doing?
2. How are the two passengers in the carriage related? Where are they going?