Rod- Dock and Ropewalk

Sun, 9/13 8:00AM • 6:28

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

ships, london, rope, town, river, indentured servants, annapolis, coming, east indies, chesapeake, trade, items, goods, middle, sails, tobacco, miles, south, talk, servants

00:04

Hello, my name is Rod

00:06

and we're here at London Town

00:08

on the South River.

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We're going to take

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the next few minutes

00:11

to talk about trade

00:12

and transportation in the colonial period.

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Places such as London Town,

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located on the water,

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were very important to the

00:20

colonial period.

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The South River here

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is just a few miles upstream

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from where the Chesapeake Bay is.

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And then you go south in the Chesapeake

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for about 100, maybe 120 miles,

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and you get to the Atlantic Ocean,

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and from there, the world.

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That's really important than the colonial period

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 because well, there are no airplanes.

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There is no internet.

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So the best way for you

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to be connected to the wider world

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is through ships.

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And these ships

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would carry things from

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across the world here to London Town,

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as well as carrying people

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to and from different sides of the river.

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Now London Town's location on the South River

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meant that it was well situated

01:01

for travelers going up and down the east coast.

01:04

If you were traveling from Williamsburg to Annapolis

01:07

you would be coming through London Town.

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You would be boarding the ferry

01:11

on the south shore,

01:12

taking about a half hour,

01:13

maybe an hour

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to get to the north shore,

01:16

and then another hour or three

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to get to Annapolis.

01:19

These ferry boats were either

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driven by force

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or by sails.

01:25

Either way,

01:25

they were pretty much

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manned by enslaved Africans,

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convicts servants, or indentured servants,

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bound individuals

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that were forced to work

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and a lot of times

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against their will.

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Now the river is also

01:38

pretty deep in the middle.

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And that's where you would have

01:41

the large sailing ships

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anchored in the middle of the river.

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They would be loaded

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with goods from all around the world.

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And speaking of those goods,

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why don't we go up to the bluff

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and talk about this

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at the rope walk?

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Welcome to the rope walk.

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As we just talked about

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a few moments ago,

01:59

down at dock,

02:01

here at London Town,

02:02

large ships from all across the world

02:04

would be coming up river.

02:05

On those ships

02:07

would be a variety of goods

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that the colonists here

02:10

would be waiting for.

02:12

There were not too many stores

02:13

 here in London Town

02:15

or in the Colonial Chesapeake.

02:17

Most of the time,

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you would be eagerly awaiting

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the fall arrival

02:20

of the large groups of vessels

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from all across the world.

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You would be taking

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the year to grow tobacco

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to trade for those items

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that had shown up on those ships.

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Tobacco was a very labor intensive crop.

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And it took

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most of the year

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to grow the tobacco you needed

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to trade for all of those items.

02:41

Now those ships would be coming,

02:43

like I said,

02:43

from all over the world.

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You'd be coming from the East Indies,

02:46

you'd be coming from Asia,

02:48

you'd be coming from Africa,

02:50

you'd be coming from Europe.

02:52

You'd see ships from the West Indies

02:54

and ships from South America.

02:57

Not only would you

02:58

have goods onboard those item

03:00

onboard those ships.

03:01

But you would also

03:02

have people

03:04

from Europe,

03:05

you would often have indentured servants,

03:07

and convict servants arriving.

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Convict servants were folks

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who had broken a law

03:12

back in England.

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And their punishment

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was to come here

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to serve their time.

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Indentured servants were folks

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who had traded their service

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to pay off a debt

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or for some other reason.

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And from Africa,

03:25

you would also have enslaved Africans,

03:28

individuals who had

03:29

forcibly been bound

03:30

into servitude.

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And their children

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were also bound in the servitude.

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All of those people,

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all of those items,

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were coming here

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to London Town for trade.

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Now those ships

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that are coming here

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across the ocean,

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they are very large,

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they would have

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a few dozen of crew aboard them.

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They would have multiple sails

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and they would be

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have to stop

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or they'd have to stay

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in the ocean for weeks

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or months at a time.

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They could be starting their voyage

04:01

in the East Indies

04:02

and getting items such as nutmeg,

04:05

a great spice to have for baking.

04:08

They could get then go to Asia

04:10

and get some tea.

04:12

Other ships would be starting over in England

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and Europe for manufactured goods,

04:17

nice fine porcelain

04:18

and ceramics,

04:20

maybe some metal ware or pewter,

04:24

bolts of cloth, clothes, furniture,

04:28

anything that took quite a bit of effort to make

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would be coming over

04:32

from England or Europe.

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As I also said,

04:35

you would get your people too

04:37

the convict servants, your indentured servants,

04:39

and your enslaved Africans.

04:42

Now these ships

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because they are powered by the sea

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or by the winds,

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and they're sailing the sea,

04:48

they require quite a bit of rope.

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Behind me is our rope walk

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a rope machine.

04:53

Here in London Town,

04:55

the first ropewalk in Maryland was created

04:57

in the middle part of the 1700s.

05:00

That meant that there was

05:01

a pretty good trade in,

05:03

in people coming here to London Town,

05:05

both people in the country

05:07

or on land to get rope.

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And of course,

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all of the ships coming up river.

05:12

The rope that would be made here

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could start off small,

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but then you would keep on making it bigger

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and bigger and bigger.

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The rope would be

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different sizes

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depending on

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what you needed it for.

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Rope as thick

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as your leg

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could be used

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to have the anchors

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dropped into the water,

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and it wouldn't break,

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if it was that thick,

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which is something you,

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of course,

05:32

would not want to have happen.

05:34

Now these ships

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because they're

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in the ocean

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for weeks or months at a time,

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they would have miles

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upon miles of rope

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ready to be used.

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Because if any

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of that rope broke,

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you can't stop

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in the middle of the ocean

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and buy new rope.

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So as you can imagine

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here in London Town,

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there were quite a few ships

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and sailors

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buying rope

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from the local rope walk.

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As time went on,

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though,

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the reason for London Town

06:00

being here

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went away.

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All the travelers

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started to go

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to different places.

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The ships would go

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to different ports

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such as Annapolis

06:08

or Baltimore.

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And by the time you got to 1800s

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 there was not really much

06:13

of a reason for

06:13

London Town

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to be around

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and it slowly faded away.