

Dingmans Ferry

Delaware Water Gap
National Recreation Area

National Park Service
Pennsylvania/New Jersey



The Village of Dingmans Choice

Andrew Dingman (1711-1801), a descendant of Dutch settlers living in Kinderhook, New York, moved to Pennsylvania in 1735. He crossed the Delaware River about where the present bridge is located, and lay claim to a tract of land which, as was the custom in those days, he named *Dingmans Choice*.

Dingman then established a ferry to enable himself and other settlers to bring across supplies, cattle, and crops. So from 1735 up to this day, there always has been either a ferry or a bridge at this location. In 1868, when a ferry was operating, the town name changed to *Dingmans Ferry*.

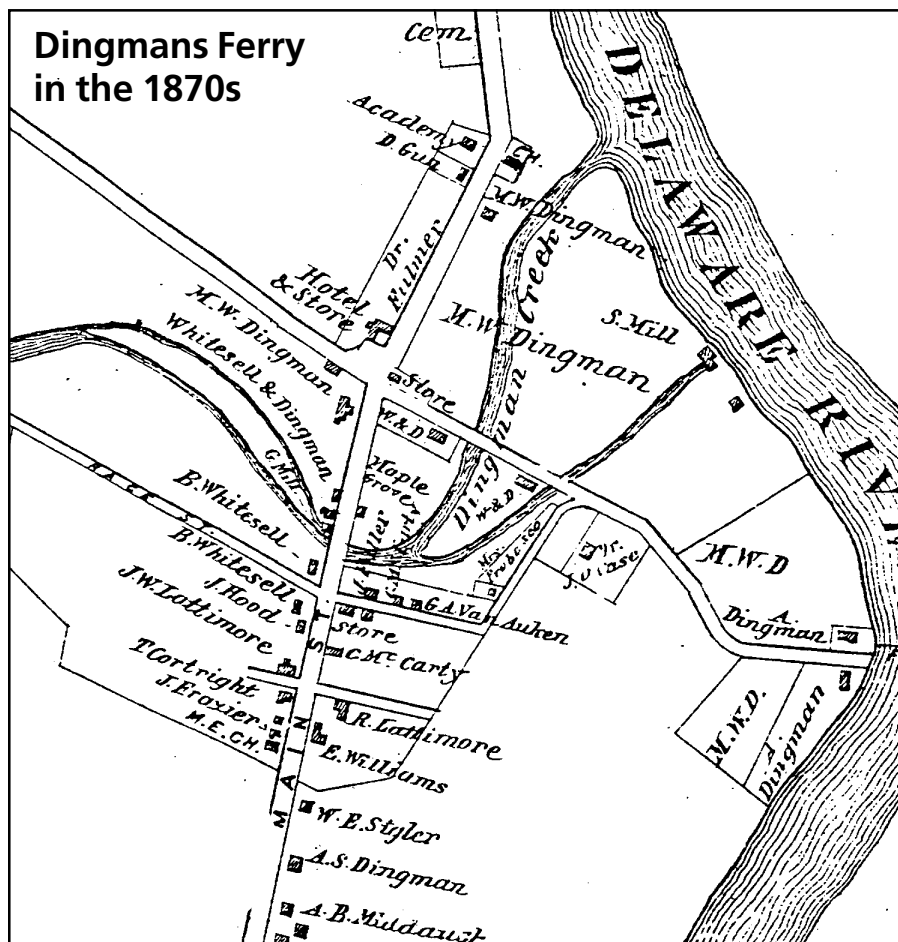


Lower Main Street around 1910

The settlement at Dingmans Choice prospered under the leadership of Andrew and his descendants. His grandson Daniel (1774-1862) served in the state legislature and later as a judge. In his many years on the bench, the Judge conducted hearings in a most informal manner, often dressed in shirt sleeves, and without shoes or socks.

Dingman was unlearned in law and some of his judgments were frontier classics. In one of his reputed decisions, he sentenced a larcenous lad by advising: *Get off the face of the earth, young man! Go to New Jersey!*

You can still see his stone home on the left at the bridge as you bravely cross into New Jersey today.



After the Civil War, with the advent of railroads and bicycles, the entire region developed into a tourist and vacation area. Hotels and boarding houses sprang up everywhere. Hunting, fishing and "admiring the scenery" were the main attractions of this area close to New York and Philadelphia. The plentiful supply of milk and dairy products, farm produce, and other food supplies, plus local labor to work in the hotels, also contributed to the growth of the area.

With the coming of the automobile, the tourist trade dropped off. Still, films starring Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and Tom Mix were shot here. Champions such as Bill Tilden and Don Budge moved here or were pro at the many tennis clubs. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the federal government bought out and removed many village buildings in the expectation of building a dam on the Delaware River at Tocks Island. Dingmans Ferry dwindled, but the dam was never built. Only the remnants of the village survive.