Charles Ellet Encyclopedia Article

Charles Ellet

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Charles Ellet

1810-1862

American civil engineer who designed and built wire suspension bridges. Influenced by European engineers, Ellet wrote pamphlets addressing transportation technology. The federal government contracted him to survey the Mississippi River, which led to his suggestion of creating levees for flood control. Ellet established a railroad across Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains and the James River and Kanawha Canal in that state. Commanding a fleet of Civil War ram-boats he produced, he secured Memphis, Tennessee, for the Union in 1862, dying from a battle wound.