

CANAL Panama Canal		STATUS In Operation		ACS																											
STATE/PROVINCE: Canal Zone, Panama				HAER																											
COUNTIES:																															
LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal): Colon on the Atlantic, to Panama City and Balboa on the Pacific.																															
TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS:																															
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">ENLARGEMENTS</th> <th rowspan="2">DATES IN USE</th> <th colspan="2">LENGTH</th> <th rowspan="2">LIFT LOCKS No./ SIZE</th> </tr> <tr> <th>CANAL</th> <th>SLACKWATER TOTAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>1914-</td> <td>18 lake, 32</td> <td>50</td> <td>6 pairs, 110x1000'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		ENLARGEMENTS	DATES IN USE	LENGTH		LIFT LOCKS No./ SIZE	CANAL	SLACKWATER TOTAL	1	1914-	18 lake, 32	50	6 pairs, 110x1000'	2					3					4					
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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Begun in 1904 by the Americans after the "magnificent failure" of the French Canal and of the American canal across Nicaragua. Utilized, in hindsight, the "Artificial Nicaragua" plan proposed in 1879 for the French Canal by Baron Godin de Lepinay: a man-made central lake to both tame the Chagres and put it to use, with flights of locks at each end. The six pairs of locks were twice the size of those finally started on the French Canal - only 250' shorter than the Empire State Building. Every aspect of the project has its superlatives, which have filled many books, although its completion in 1914 was not celebrated with an opera, as the French did for Suez. Not least among the secrets of success were major technological advances, and great strides in medical research; it was not until 1898 that it was proved, in India, that mosquitos carry malaria. The Corps of Engineers had also given Col. Goethals practice in building monolithic concrete locks, such as Plaquemine Lock in Louisiana. Major work did not stop with the opening of the canal; the unstable Culebra Cut had to be cleared of recurring landslides

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

(some sailors once managed to plant their flag on an island which suddenly appeared in the channel) and excavations for a third series of locks were begun, and abandoned, before WW II. In 1977 a treaty was signed which will return the Canal Zone to Panama by the year 2000.

Technology has now advanced to the point where the possibility of a sea-level canal must be taken seriously. The most popular route parallels the present canal about 10 mi. to the east; deepening the present canal would of course impede its use for a few years and not leave us with some abandoned locks to make parks of. Problems include the feasibility of using nuclear explosives; a lock to control tide-water flow; and environmental consequences of joining the two oceans, a subject speculated upon by Thomas Jefferson almost two centuries ago.¹

NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANALS PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:

Information Officer, Panama Canal Company, Balboa Heights, Canal Zone

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:

The Path Between the Seas, by David McCullough (Simon & Schuster, 1977)
 "Panama Canal Sweepstakes," by Ernest H. Schell, AMERICAN CANALS 32:7 and 33:4-5(1980)
 "Ship Canals and Aquatic Ecosystems," by W.I. Aron & S.H. Smith, SCIENCE, 1 Oct. 1971:13-20
Joseph Pennell's Pictures of the Panama Canal, J. Pennell, Lippincott 1912
 Numerous other books have been published on the canal; Information Officer has a selected list, and one can subscribe to the PANAMA CANAL REVIEW @\$1.50 for 2 issues a year.
¹ Thomas Jefferson, Scientist, by E.T. Martin, H. Schuman, N.Y., 1952, p.208.

UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, PHOTOS, DRAWINGS (CEHR, HAER, HABS, Local or Regional Historical Societies, Libraries, etc.):

EXISTING OR RECOMMENDED LANDMARK STATUS (CEHR, National Register, etc.):

REPORTER'S NAME & ADDRESS: W.E. Trout, III, 1932 Cinco Robles Drive, Duarte CA 91010 DATE 23 Sept 81

RETURN TO: CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE, c/o P.H. STOTT, HAINES ROAD, MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549