

CANAL: HIWASSEE CANAL STATE/PROVINCE: Tennessee COUNTIES: Polk LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal): From McNair's Boat Yard on the Conasauga Creek () to the Ocoee Creek & Hildebrandt's Boat Yard (104905) TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS: BENTON, TN; PARKSVILLE, TN; FELKER, TN	STATUS: SURVEYED ONLY. <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">CANAL</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">SLACKWATER</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">TOTAL</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">LIFT LOCKS</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">No./ SIZI.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">DATES IN USE</td> <td style="text-align: center;">12</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0</td> <td style="text-align: center;">12</td> <td style="text-align: center;">15</td> <td style="text-align: center;">?</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">----</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		CANAL	SLACKWATER	TOTAL	LIFT LOCKS	No./ SIZI.	DATES IN USE	12	0	12	15	?	----						1						2						3						4					
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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: In 1826, the Tennessee Assembly chartered the Hiwassee Canal Co. to build between the above points. In turn, Congress was petitioned to obtain permission of the Cherokee Nation to build in their territory. The Indians refused, but the War Department, April 1827, sent Lt. Jefferson Vail and James Swift, a civil engineer, to survey the proposed route. Their report was published by the War Dept. in 1828. In effect the route was feasible, with five locks from the Conasauga to the summit and ten locks down to the Ocoee. A prism 50' wide and 5' deep was suggested. By the time the Cherokees had been removed, the railroads had begun to penetrate the back country, and the scheme died. The dream of connecting the Gulf of Mexico and the upper Tennessee basin, is however, still very much alive. The current plans for a canal between the Warrior River and the Tennessee in Alabama is the same scheme, much enlarged.																																											
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: The route is the site of an Indian portage at least 400 years old. When the white settlers in East Tennessee were desperate in their hunt for an easier, shorter way to the Gulf Coast markets than the traditional Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi river route, they began to use this portage. There then developed what was possibly the first amphibious freight operation in North America. Two Cherokees of mixed blood established boat yards and stores at the points mentioned as canal termini, Hildebrand on the Ocoee and McNair on the Conasauga. They built heavy wagons, similar to a modern boat trailer, and for a fee pulled loaded boats over the portage, utilizing as many as six span of oxen. The first record of this is in the Montgomery (Ala) Republican, March 1821. It announces the arrival of a boat from near Kingsport, 50' x 6' by 6' depth, 100 barrels, that had come "near 1000 miles" by the Tennessee, Hiwassee, Ocoee, Conasauga, Oostanaula, and Coosa rivers, without unloading! In 1827, 12,000 gals of whisky alone, went over the route.																																											
NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANALS PRESERVATION/RESTORATION: <p style="text-align: center;">None known</p>																																											
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: TENNESSEE, A HISTORY, Phillip M. Hamer, New York, 1933 SCRAP BOOK HISTORY OF POLK COUNTY (Tenn.), John M. Wooten, Chattanooga Public Library HISTORY OF NAVIGATION ON THE TENNESSEE, H. Doc. 254, Washington, 1936 FLATBOAT TRADE IN EAST TENNESSEE, J.D. Clemmer, KNOXVILLE SENTINEL, Jan. 18, 1925																																											
UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, PHOTOS, DRAWINGS (CEHR, HAER, HABS, Local or Regional Historical Societies, Libraries, etc.): National Archives: Report (March 22, 1828) of Lt Jefferson Vail on a Connection between the Tennessee & Alabama Rivers; map of the Vail/Swift survey																																											
EXISTING OR RECOMMENDED LANDMARK STATUS (CEHR, National Register, etc.):																																											
REPORTER'S NAME & ADDRESS: L.W. Richardson, Rt. 2, Box 346, Gainesville, GA 30501																																											
DATE: May 12																																											
RETURN TO: CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE, c/o P.H. STOTT, HAINES ROAD, MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549																																											