

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 4 1977
DATE ENTERED DEC 7 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Des Moines River Locks #5 and #7

AND/OR COMMON

Bonaparte and Keosauqua Locks

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

at Des Moines River

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Bonaparte & Keosauqua

VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Ia

19

Van Buren

1977

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

___DISTRICT

___PUBLIC

___OCCUPIED

___AGRICULTURE

___MUSEUM

___BUILDING(S)

___PRIVATE

X UNOCCUPIED

___COMMERCIAL

___PARK

X STRUCTURE

X BOTH

___WORK IN PROGRESS

___EDUCATIONAL

___PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

___ENTERTAINMENT

___RELIGIOUS

___OBJECT

___IN PROCESS

___YES: RESTRICTED

___GOVERNMENT

___SCIENTIFIC

___BEING CONSIDERED

___YES: UNRESTRICTED

___INDUSTRIAL

___TRANSPORTATION

X NO

___MILITARY

X OTHER: ruins

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

#5: City of Bonaparte, Bonaparte, Iowa; #7: Ancil Parker, Keosauqua, Iowa

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder's Office, Van Buren County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Keosauqua

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Water Transportation Survey

DATE

1976

___FEDERAL X STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Des Moines River Improvement Project is represented by two structures which comprise a discontinuous site along the Des Moines River in Van Buren County. These are the remains of river locks, built during the 1850's and abandoned soon thereafter. The lock at Bonaparte is constructed of large blocks of locally-quarried limestone, set on a limestone bedrock foundation. Ninety feet of the outside wall and 120 feet of the inside wall are still extant, beginning at the lower end. Both walls are 3½ to 5½ feet thick. The lock gates were originally in two pieces, upper and lower, which opened upstream and relied upon water pressure to keep them watertight when closed. Recesses for the lower gates are still visible, as are a number of iron rings once used to tie boats. Apparently in a long-ago effort to stabilize the structure, stone from the walls was removed to build a third wall across the lower end of the lock. The lock is now silted in, and has a number of large trees growing within in. The area around the lock is now a city park.

The lock at Keosauqua presently consists of one wall, that on the landward side. This remaining wall is complete from the lower end up to the recess for the upper gate. It is 160 feet long, and 5 feet wide at the top, made of large blocks of locally-obtained limestone set on pilings. Many bolts and brackets, which held wood slab "bumpers" (2' x 12') are still in evidence. In its original form, this lock chamber was 110 feet long, 44' wide, and 8-12 feet deep. A single wooden gate on this lock is estimated to have been 44' long, but because the other wall is no longer extant, it is not possible to determine the exact design of the gate or gates. A dam, of which nothing remains, was originally built in conjunction with the lock. Today the lock wall is surrounded by a cornfield and grove of trees, and is situated about 30 feet from the river bank.

These locks are the only known remains of the Des Moines River Improvement Project. The stretches of river between them are not included in the nomination, because the Improvement Project was a man-made project, and no canal was constructed along the river between the two dams. Lock #5 (Bonaparte) is just above mile 35; #7 (Keosauqua) is at mile 47.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1849-1858

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Meeks and Sons
Bonney and Whittelsey

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bonaparte and Keosauqua locks are the only known structures remaining from the Des Moines River Improvement Project, which during the 1850's sought to make the Des Moines River navigable from its mouth to Des Moines. As conceived, the project was to turn 204 miles of river into a navigable stream by a series of 28 locks and dams. Each lock was to have a capacity to chamber boats as large as 44' x 160', and have an average lift of six feet. Although only three locks were completed (the other at Bentonsport), the project was partially successful: navigation via locks was possible as far upriver as Keosauqua; however, the project was ended in 1858, and the locks abandoned, as a result of mismanagement and the growing competition from the Keokuk and Des Moines River Railroad.

By the mid-1840's, steamboats on the Des Moines were the most important means of transportation to the interior of Iowa. But due to the erratic stages of the river, the shipping season was too short for the satisfaction of businessmen along its banks. From this dissatisfaction the Des Moines River Improvement Project was developed. The Iowa State Legislature in 1846 obtained a Federal grant of land, in alternate sections, for a depth of five miles on each side of the river to its mouth. The land was sold to pay for the navigation project. Although until 1851 there was confusion over exactly how far upriver the grant extended, work began in 1849 on several of the locks and on a ten-mile canal at the mouth of the river, each under a separate contract. In 1851 the Legislature decided that the work could best be carried forth by a single contractor, selecting Bangs Brothers of New York. The contract called for the land grant land to be sold at \$2.50/acre (twice the price of other Iowa land), and for the work to be completed in four years. Neither provision proved realistic, and Bangs Bros. defaulted on the contract, with almost no work completed. Between 1851 and 1853, the state attempted to carry on the work. In 1853 Henry O'Reilly of New York was awarded a contract. Under O'Reilly, work progressed at good pace, although cost overruns became a problem. During 1856, charges were made that O'Reilly and several of his partners were skimming off large portions of the project funds for themselves, and O'Reilly himself accused his partners of the same thing. After a long inquiry, the state terminated O'Reilly's contract, along with the entire river improvement project. The land grant was given to the Keokuk and Des Moines River Railroad, which by then was developing into a cheaper and more efficient mode of transportation than the waterway. The total cost of the project was \$1.5 million, and was the most extensive project of its kind in the country in terms of the number of locks and the length of river improved until the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Nine-Foot Channel Project on the Mississippi in the 1930's.

See Continuation Sheet

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hubler, David, "Des Moines River Navigation: Government Expectations Unfulfilled", Annals of Iowa, 3rd Series 39(4) (Spring 1968), p. 287.
 Hussey, Tacitus, "Steamboating on the Des Moines River from 1837 to 1862," Annals of Iowa 3rd Series 4(5); pp. 323-382.

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A

15	67070	4500
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B

	182330	5507560
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Hans Muessig, Historical Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

B-13 MacLean Hall

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

Iowa

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Adrian A. Johnson

TITLE

Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

25 March 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. Smutys

DATE

12/5/77

ATTEST:

Charles W. ...

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12.5.77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Des Moines River Locks #5 and #7 -- Van Buren County, Iowa

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

Negus, Charles, "Des Moines River Improvement," The History of Lee County, Iowa, Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1879.

Swisher, Jacob A., "The Des Moines River Improvement Project," Iowa Journal of History and Politics 35: 142 (1937)

U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting with a letter from the Acting Chief of Engineers, reports on examination and survey of Des Moines River, Iowa. HD 1063, 62 Cong. 3 Sess. (1912), SS 6392.

Continuation, Item 8, page 1

Nothing remains of the two completed dams and the lock at Bentonsport. A dam was begun at Iowaville, but floods washed it out before it could be completed. Most of the limestone used in the various projects was, after the program was terminated, hauled away by individuals over the years to be used in houses, bridges, and other structures along the river.

The Bonaparte lock was begun in 1849, completed in 1852, by local contractors Meeks and Sons. The Keosauqua lock was begun about 1851, completed in 1856, after major structural difficulties. Contractor for this latter structure was Bonney and Whittelsey, of Keosauqua.