NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Savannah and Ogeechee Canal
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Between the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers
city, town Savannah
county Chatham code GA 051
state Georgia code GA zip code 31401/31405
( ) vicinity of
( ) not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Category of Property:
( ) private ( ) building(s)
(x) public-local (x) district
( ) public-state ( ) site
( ) public-federal ( ) structure
( ) object

Number of Resources within Property: Contributing Noncontributing

| Buildings | 0 | 1 |
| Sites    | 3 | 0 |
| Structures | 15 | 35 |
| Objects | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 18 | 36 |

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 2 (two 1850s brick railroad bridges over the canal)
Name of previous listing: Central of Georgia Railroad Terminal Shops and Facilities (NR/NHL)
Name of related multiple property listing:
4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Mark R. Edwards
State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official __________________________ Date ____________

State or Federal agency or bureau __________________________

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register __________________________ 6/23/97

( ) determined eligible for the National Register __________________________

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register __________________________

( ) removed from the National Register __________________________

( ) other, explain: __________________________

( ) see continuation sheet __________________________

Keeper of the National Register __________________________ Date ____________

Savannah and Ogeechee Canal, Chatham County, Georgia
6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

TRANSPORTATION: water-related (canal)

Current Functions:

WORK IN PROGRESS
RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation, museum
GOVERNMENT: public works (drainage system)

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

N. A.

Materials:

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Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Summary Description

(by state historic preservation office)

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal is a 16.5-mile-long barge canal constructed in 1826-1830 between the Savannah and Ogeechee rivers. It extends from the Savannah River just west of the downtown Savannah's waterfront, under the Talmadge bridge, to the Ogeechee River approximately 2.5 miles upstream of the I-95 crossing. The eastern half of the canal runs east-west just north of and roughly parallel to I-16; the western half runs in a southwest-northeast direction from just east of the I-16/I-95 interchange to the Ogeechee River. When completed, the earthen canal was 48 feet wide at its top, 33 feet wide at its base, and five feet deep. In some places, the canal is built above the level of the surrounding countryside; in these places, the canal is formed between two parallel earthen berms. In other places the canal is slightly below the level of the surrounding countryside; in these places, the canal resembles a broad ditch, usually with slightly elevated banks. It was built within a generally linear right-of-way averaging 120 feet in width. After improvements in the 1840s, it featured six locks, each approximately 18 feet by 100 feet, with brick walls, wooden bottoms, and wooden gates, and five lock keeper's houses. Today long portions of the canal are intact, portions have been altered or overgrown, and a few short stretches have been intruded upon, blocked, infilled, or obliterated. Portions, at least, of all six historic locks remain—some are virtually intact with the exception of their wood gates—along with the known foundation sites of at least one lock keeper's house, clay borrow pits, and the site of a brick kiln. Also remaining, at least partially, is a short
Section 7--Description

Arched brick aqueduct over a drainage canal. Where the canal intersects the Little Ogeechee River, at its highest point, the canal walls impounded a water supply known as Half Moon Lake; the lake has been partially drained through a breach in the walls and is now overgrown. In the 1930s a flood gate was installed in the canal near the Savannah River and other alterations made to incorporate the canal into a regional drainage system.

**Detailed Description**

(provided by consultant; edited by the state historic preservation office)

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal is a 16.5 mile canal constructed in 1826-30 that linked the Savannah and the Ogeechee Rivers. The canal was constructed to transport lumber, cotton, and rice from the interior of Georgia to the port of Savannah, and manufactured goods to the interior.

When completed, the canal was 48 feet wide at the top, 33 feet wide at the bottom, and five feet deep. The canal property lines are generally 120 feet wide. There were six locks and five lock keeper houses (Locks 5 and 6 shared a house). The Little Ogeechee River was impounded to form Half Moon Lake, which provided the canal with water.

Three of the locks were originally built of wood, but these were replaced by locks of brick with stone coping before 1850. Travel along the canal was usually west to east, from the Ogeechee River to the Savannah River and Savannah's port. Locks 5 and 4 raised barges from the Ogeechee River to the level of Half Moon Lake, a total of 10 feet. Locks 3 and 2 lowered barges to the level of the Savannah River. Locks 6 (at the Ogeechee River) and 1 (at the Savannah River) were tidal locks.

The northeast end of the canal is on the southern bank of the Savannah River, just west of the downtown Savannah waterfront, near the intersection of River and Warner streets, almost underneath the Talmadge bridge. It is in a highly developed area dominated by the modern buildings and structures of the Georgia Ports Authority. The mouth of the canal, which resembles a ditch, is partially blocked by a modern loading dock which extends over a portion of the canal and the base of a modern bridge pier for the high-rise Talmadge Bridge (photograph 2, map 1).

Approximately 200 feet from the river is Lock No. 1. This lock was 35 feet wide—twice the width of the other locks on the canal—and 108 feet long, built of brick on timber piles, most likely with a wood bottom. It had a double set of wood doors at each end, no longer extant, so boats could be locked up or down to accommodate Savannah's eight-foot tides. The northern ends of the brick lock walls feature curved gravity-wall abutments with stone copings. Indentations detailed with stone quoins and vertical grooves in the brick walls accommodated the lock's wooden doors and other equipment (photograph 1, map 1). A low nonhistoric railroad bridge crosses the canal at this point. Portions of...
the lock were removed in 1891 when this end of the canal was converted into a basin. The surviving west wall of the lock is supported by steel braces to prevent increasing erosion and collapse into the canal.

South of Lock 1, for a distance of several hundred feet, the canal walls are vertical and lined with brick (photograph 3, map 1). These brick walls are built of timber piles evident at low tide. They end abruptly, with right-angled returns, just south of Indian Street (photograph 4, map 1). Two streets and railroads cross this segment of the canal on low nonhistoric bridges. A modern drainage pipe intrudes into the eastern brick wall.

South of Indian Street, the canal runs generally due south, west of and paralleling West Boundary Street, for approximately one mile, through an urbanized area with multiple street and utility crossings (photograph 5, map 1). Here the canal has the appearance of an urban ditch, although it follows its historic alignment, and many historic features remain. Some portions of the canal walls are sloped earth, with or without modern rip-rap, others feature historic low timber bulkheads, and still others are reinforced with modern concrete or metal bulkheads. The canal runs through the center of an approximately 200-foot-wide right-of-way.

A 1930s tide gate is located south of Lock 1, just north of the Oglethorpe Avenue crossing. (Although it does not date from the canal’s period of significance, the tide gate has been considered eligible for the National Register by the Savannah District Corps of Engineers and the state historic preservation office for its role in the 1930s incorporation of the canal into a regional drainage system with the assistance of the Works Progress Administration.) Several city streets and a railroad cross the canal in this area on low nonhistoric bridges. These small bridges are generally built on modern concrete gravity-wall abutments which flank the canal. Oglethorpe Avenue/US17A crosses the canal on a wide modern bridge. Low-overhead water, sewer, and drainage pipes also cross the canal in this area. At mile 0.6 of the canal (canal mileage being measured from the Savannah River), parallel to West Boundary Street just north of the Oglethorpe Avenue crossing, there are the remains of wooden bulkheads built in the 19th century along the sides of the canal for tying up barges serving the cotton warehouses that lined the canal between River Street and Bay Street.

South of the Oglethorpe Avenue/US17A crossing and just north of the Louisville Road crossing, approximately at mile 0.7, the canal is spanned by two arched brick bridges built in 1852-53 and 1859-60, approximately 100 yards apart, that once carried the Central of Georgia Railroad over the canal to the freight and passenger terminals and locomotive roundhouse along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (formerly East Broad Street) immediately east (photographs 6 and 7, map 3). The “Central of Georgia Railroad Shops and Terminal Facilities” including these two brick bridges are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated a National Historic Landmark; however, neither the history nor the significance of the canal which passes under these two brick bridges can be considered for eligibility in the National Register.
bridges is discussed in the National Register or National Historic Landmark forms (appropriately, perhaps, given the fact that it was this railroad which supplanted the canal and rendered it obsolete within 50 years of its construction). Louisville Road crosses the canal on a short, low, historic highway bridge; built c. 1920, it is a jack-arched steel-stringer design, with a concrete deck, with at least one surviving historic pipe railing (although significant in terms of the history of highway bridges in Georgia, this bridge post-dates the canal's period of significance and so is considered noncontributing for the purposes of this nomination).

Approximately one mile south of the Savannah River, immediately south of the Louisville Road crossing, the canal takes a sharp turn to the west and then roughly parallels Louisville Road to its north (photograph 7, map 3). Lock 2 stands 0.3 miles west of the Louisville Road crossing. Also known as Gay's Lock, Lock 2 is a brick structure with a wooden floor, measuring 18 feet wide and 101 feet long. The north wall is substantially intact but the south wall has been nearly obliterated by the rerouting of the Springfield Drainage Canal which now connects to the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal at this point. During this rerouting (to provide storm drainage), a 300-foot segment of the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal beginning at Lock 2 and proceeding west was filled (this segment of the canal is now noncontributing to the district). Lock 2 originally lifted the canal to cross over the original course of the Springfield Drainage Canal via an extant and partially exposed three-arched brick aqueduct just west of the lock (photograph 8, map 4). This stretch of canal, running through an industrial area, is crossed by the modern high I-16 Hutchinson Island connector viaduct, a city street (Stiles Avenue), and an at-grade railroad, all nonhistoric.

About 300 feet west of Lock 2 was the entrance to the first of two holding basins on the north side of the canal. These two basins have been drained, leveled, and filled, and a 20th-century residential subdivision known as "Williams Ward" now covers the area. Because these former basins have been totally obliterated by development unrelated to the canal, they are not included in the canal district.

West of Lock 2, the canal is overgrown and has been partially filled to convert it to a drainage canal. The canal right-of-way ranges from 200 feet to 250 feet. The canal edges are not clearly defined, although the course of the canal is clear. Along this two-mile stretch, the canal is crossed by several low railroad and street bridges, all nonhistoric or unrelated historically to the canal. The Central of Georgia Railroad crosses on a long tangent near Magazine Avenue. West of the Savannah city limits, the canal right-of-way is reduced to its standard 120-foot "rural" width. For another 1.5 miles, the canal continues to resemble a drainage ditch and is indistinct, although always identifiable. The canal is crossed by another railroad on a tangent, the Lynes Parkway on a high modern overpass further west, the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad on a low bridge just west of the Parkway, and Telfair Road on a low bridge just west of the railroad; again, all the crossings are either nonhistoric or unrelated historically to the canal. Further west, between two closely spaced Seaboard Coast Line...
railroad crossings at approximately mile 3.6 and mile 4.0, a 2500-foot stretch of the canal has been filled, a portion of which is paved as a parking area for the adjacent Savannah Railroad Terminal (this 2500-foot filled portion of the canal district is noncontributing due to loss of integrity).

West of the 2500-foot filled section, the canal is very well preserved for approximately 2.5 miles to Dean Forest Road. The canal retains its full historic width, and its earthen embankments are distinct, although overgrown. Along this stretch, the canal is crossed by the new Chatham Parkway, Heidt Street, and another branch of the Seaboard Coast Line railroad; these crossings are either nonhistoric or unrelated historically to the canal. Just west of Heidt Road, a private property owner has illegally filled in approximately 700 feet of the canal; efforts are underway to have this fill removed. Several drainage canals intersect at various points; small breaks in the canal’s earthen walls accommodate them. This stretch of the canal passes through land that is alternately developed and undeveloped. At mile 6.4 the canal is blocked by the four-lane Dean Forest Road, resulting in a short discontinuity in the canal district.

For three miles west of Dean Forest Road, the canal is exceptionally well preserved. Its historic width is maintained; its tree-lined banks are well defined. The water level in this stretch of the canal is close to what it would have been historically. The canal passes through land that is largely undeveloped. Just west of Dean Forest Road, the canal curves southward, then northward again, skirting a slight rise in ground. At approximately mile 7.1, at the west end of this curve, the canal is intersected by a drainage canal. There appears to have been a wooden culvert here that historically carried drainage under the barge canal.

Lock 3, also known as Couvoisier’s Lock, is located along this well-preserved stretch of the canal at approximately mile 8.6, just before the canal takes a turn toward the southwest. The lock measures 18 feet wide and 102 feet long. The brick walls of this lock are in excellent condition. The wooden floor has not been investigated. Adjacent to the lock, subsurface remains of the lock keeper’s house have been located archaeologically. Nearby is the floor of a brick kiln and the clay pit used in canal construction.

At mile 9.5 the canal is completely blocked by Interstate 95. A 1500-foot segment of the canal just east of I-95 was filled to direct drainage when the highway was constructed. At mile 10.4 the canal is again blocked, this time by Interstate 16. I-16 and I-95 create discontinuities in the canal historic district. A short discontiguous but intact stretch of canal remains “landlocked” northwest of the I-16/I-95 interchange.

For two miles southwest of I-16, the canal is again exceptionally well defined. The canal’s historic width is maintained, and its earthen banks are distinct. Several small dirt roads and one paved county road, Quacco Road, cross the canal on small, low, nonhistoric bridges or culverts. This
stretch of the canal passes through largely undeveloped land, some forested, some cleared, much of it swampy. A large new development known as "Savannah Quarters" is planned for the wedge of land west of the I-16/I-95 interchange; this development will take place on both sides of the canal. Several new bridges, designed to be compatible with the canal and its potential reuse as a recreational facility, will be constructed; several existing nonhistoric crossings will be removed. Additionally, a 50-foot no-build buffer zone along either side of the canal right-of-way will be retained.

At mile 12.3, at approximately the highest point of ground along the canal, the south bank of the canal becomes an earthen dam, 2500 feet long, impounding the Little Ogeechee River to form the 330-acre Half Moon Lake to the northwest (photographs 9 and 10, maps 20 and 21). This lake, located at the high point of the canal, historically served as the major source of water for the canal. The earthen dam is breached at the west end. The remains of the original wooden spillway race are visible near the west end of the dam, and the remains of a brick wall which protected the spillway race from barge damage can also be seen. Even though the historic lake has been partially drained as a result of the breach in the dam, water still stands in a substantial portion of it, and the rest remains a wetland. Because the lake was such an important part of the canal, serving as its main water source, its approximate historic outlines along with the dam have been included as contributing elements in the canal district.

After the canal crosses Little Ogeechee Neck Road, just southwest of Half Moon Lake, it is paralleled on the southeast by Bush Road, a two-lane county highway, for 2.4 miles to Fort Argyle Road. Here the canal passes through largely undeveloped and mostly wooded land. In 1990 this portion of the canal was partially filled along its length to allow Bush Road to be widened. The unfilled half, which now serves as a drainage canal, still retains one intact, visible embankment which clearly defines the northwestern side of the canal; presumably the other embankment is still intact under the shoulder of the widened road. At mile 14 along this stretch, at the slight bend in the canal, is Lock 4, also known as Burger's Lock (photograph 11, map 22). Built of brick, it measures 18 feet wide by 101 feet long. The tops of the brick walls were damaged when Bush Road was paved in 1990. The remains of the original wooden lock which preceded the c.1840s brick lock are visible.

At approximately mile 15.4, the canal passes under a small nonhistoric highway bridge carrying Fort Argyle Road. Bush Road terminates at Fort Argyle Road near this bridge. Just southwest of Fort Argyle Road, at mile 15.6, the canal enters Lock 5, or Young's Lock (photographs 12, 13, and 14, map 22). It lowered the canal to the average level of the nearby Ogeechee River. Built of brick, it measures 18 by 101 feet. The brickwork of Lock 5 is in good condition; the lock is virtually intact except for its wooden gates. The high ground adjacent to Lock 5 was used for encampment sites for both Confederate and Union forces during the Civil War battle for Savannah in 1864 and is included in the canal district. Also on this land is a small nonhistoric one-story house with several small...
nonhistoric outbuildings now used by the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal Society as its headquarters, visitors center, and museum. It is believed that this land also may be where the lock keeper’s house for Locks 5 and 6 was situated; records indicate that Locks 5 and 6 were operated by one lock keeper, while the other locks each had a separate lock keeper.

Below Lock 5, the canal runs through the broad, swampy, densely wooded Ogeechee River floodplain. The canal is clearly defined here, although some portions of its embankments have been eroded away by flood waters, and the canal itself has silted in considerably.

Lock 6 stands at mile 16, approximately 1500 feet below Lock 5, and just east of the Ogeechee River (photographs 15, 16, and 17, map 22). Built of brick, it measures 18 feet wide by 101 feet long. It is essentially intact except for the wooden gates. This lock served to keep the water level in the canal at navigable depth when the river level was low. The canal enters the Ogeechee River looking very much like a natural tributary with no structural embellishments (photograph 18, map 22).
8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

( ) nationally (x) statewide ( ) locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

(x) A ( ) B (x) C ( ) D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): (x) N/A

( ) A ( ) B ( ) C ( ) D ( ) E ( ) F ( ) G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

TRANSPORTATION
ENGINEERING

Period of Significance:

1824-1888

Significant Dates:

1824—canal chartered
1825-1826—construction begun
1830—canal opened for business
1888—canal closed

Significant Person(s):

N. A.

Cultural Affiliation:

N. A.

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

DeWitt Clinton, Jr.—original engineer
Loring Olmstead Reynolds—subsequent engineer
Edward Hall Gill—subsequent engineer
Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal is the oldest, longest, most complex, and the first of only three historic barge canals in the state of Georgia. It is historically significant at a statewide level in the areas of engineering and transportation.

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal today is a relatively intact example of an early 19th-century barge canal. Its design and construction clearly represent early 19th-century civil engineering principles and practices as well as canal construction techniques and materials. It retains its identity and physical integrity throughout much of its 16-mile length, especially considering that substantial portions of it pass through highly urbanized and industrialized areas, swamps, and the floodplain of a major river, all of which have assaulted and continue to assault the very fabric of the historic structure. Moreover, the canal includes all or major portions of six historic locks, an impounded water supply, portions of a short aqueduct, historic brick and wood bulkheads, the known locations of former lock keepers' houses, and other supporting features such as the known sites of brick kilns and clay borrow pits used during the canal's construction. The canal's brick locks are unique in the state (others are built of stone or concrete), as is its system of multiple locks to raise and lower boats (other canals in the state rely on either a single entry gate or paired tidal gates at each end). The brick locks, "second generation" structures dating from the 1840s, exhibit exceptional craftsmanship in their construction.

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal was built during the brief era of "internal improvements" in Georgia, part of a national movement, and it was boldly envisioned as part of a vast canal system that would link the Savannah, Ogeechee, and Altamaha rivers along the coast with the Flint and Chattahoochee rivers and the Gulf of Mexico to the west. Little if any of this vast network ever was built, however. More realistically, the canal was intended to preserve Savannah's hegemony as Georgia's principal port by siphoning off Ogeechee River traffic which might otherwise gone to Darien or Brunswick, and at this it succeeded. Although somewhat late in terms of canal construction nationally, and soon to be superseded by the railroad, this canal was the first in Georgia, and it remained the longest barge canal in terms of physical length and years of operation. Canal traffic consisted of river craft, keels, barges, and timber rafts. They carried cotton, rice, and lumber from interior portions of Georgia through the port of Savannah and manufactured goods from the port to the interior of the state. In doing so, the transportation services of the canal contributed significantly to the commercial and economic development of Savannah as well as the interior portions of the state. The increased trade in products such as lumber, cotton, rice, fruit, naval stores, and brick led investors to construct brick yards, foundries, warehouses, and wharves at the canal's terminus on the Savannah River. Though damaged during the Civil War, the canal aided in Savannah's post-war economic recovery.
The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal also was associated with three noted early 19th-century transportation engineers in America: DeWitt Clinton, Jr., the original engineer who designed much of the canal, and son of New York Governor DeWitt Clinton, promoter of the Erie Canal (which opened in 1825); Loring Olmstead Reynolds, canal and railroad designer and chief engineer for (ironically) the Central of Georgia Railroad; and Edward Hall Gill, internationally known canal and railroad designer. DeWitt Clinton, Jr. was the original engineer of the project and was responsible for much of its design. This was his first canal-engineering project. After leaving this project in 1827—possibly in part because of a disagreement over his recommended 16-mile water-supply feeder canal which never was built, much to the later chagrin of the canal operators—he continued his career with the Pennsylvania Canal. After Clinton left the project, his place was filled by nationally known engineers Edward Hall Gill and Loring Olmstead Reynolds. Gill was an internationally known canal engineer working in his native Ireland and England before coming to the United States where he worked on the Erie Canal. He first served as the assistant engineer on the Savannah-Ogeechee project and became the chief engineer when Clinton resigned in 1827. He also worked on water navigation projects throughout the eastern United States including the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, the Schuylkill Navigation Project, the Plymouth Canal, and the James River and Kanawha Canal. Later he left canal work in favor of railroad construction projects in Virginia. Reynolds became chief engineer of the canal project in 1828, although he made his name in railroads, serving as chief engineer of the Central of Georgia Railroad (which later became the chief competitor for the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal) and the president of South-Western Railroad. He may have engineering the upgrading of the canal and its locks during the 1840s-1850s, but this is not certain.

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal was built using African-American slave labor and Irish immigrant labor. It is potentially significant because its dependence on African-American slave labor, including some female labor, and Irish immigrant labor may help to unveil two as-yet untold stories in the history of Southern engineering and construction. Additional research and analysis is needed, however, to document this aspect of significance to National Register standards.

Small-scale archaeological investigations of portions of the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal have yielded important information about the locations of lock keeper’s houses and brick kilns associated with the construction of the canal. Archaeological investigations of the northern end of the canal itself, conducted by the Georgia Department of Transportation, have yielded little significant information about the construction or use of the canal. Broader archaeological investigations are planned to document artifacts contained in silted portions of the canal and to provide additional information about the canal's construction. When these investigations are completed, it may be possible to evaluate the canal's significance in terms of archaeology under Criterion D.

In the 1930s, long after it ceased operation as a transportation facility, the canal was fitted with a flood gate near the Savannah River and incorporated into a regional drainage system. The flood gate is reported to have been built with Federal funds through the Works Progress Administration.
The canal may derive secondary significance for its role in this early 20th-century regional drainage system, intended to improve health and reduce disease by draining swampy lands or stagnant water, reduce flooding, and drain land for development, but additional research and analysis is needed to support National Register eligibility of the canal as a whole in this area.

National Register Criteria

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal meets National Register Criterion A for its direct association with the “internal improvements” movement in Georgia and for improving transportation within the state of Georgia. It meets National Register Criterion C for its overall design, construction, and workmanship as Georgia’s first, longest, and most complex historic barge canal. It also is associated with three significant early American civil engineers associated with canal design in the early 19th century.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N. A.

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1824 when the canal was first chartered and construction may have began (although it is more likely that construction began in 1825 or even 1826) and ends in 1888 when the canal was purchased by the Central of Georgia Railroad and ceased being used for transportation.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Contributing Structures

Contributing structures were built during the canal’s period of significance (1824-1888), are directly associated with the construction and operation of the canal, and retain their identity as historic canal-related structures:

- Canal (earthen structure, 16.5 miles in length)
- Six brick-and-wood locks
- Brick-arched aqueduct near Lock 2 (partially exposed)
- Earthen dam (reinforced canal embankment) at Little Ogeechee River/Half Moon Lake
- Half Moon Lake (partially drained)
- Brick bulkheads attached to and extending south of Lock 1
Section 8--Statement of Significance

Timber bulkheads between Locks 1 and 2 (partial remains)
Two brick arched railroad bridges (Central of Georgia Railroad, 1850s)
Remains of original wood lock (visible at Lock 4)

Contributing Sites

Contributing sites are known, investigated archaeological sites locating archaeological resources
associate with the canal (additional archaeological sites are believed to exist along the canal but
have not been professionally investigated as of this date):

Lock Keeper’s House Site, Lock 3
Borrow Pit at Lock 3
Brick Kiln Site at Lock 3

Noncontributing Structures (listed in geographical order from Savannah to Ogeechee rivers)

Noncontributing structures were built outside the canal’s period of significance (after 1888). Most
are low-level highway and railroad bridges crossing over the canal; some are culverts or at-grade fill
crossings. Not counted are numerous pipe and utility crossings at the Savannah end of the canal,
especially between Locks 1 and 2. (Note that at least one “noncontributing” structure, the early 20th-
century Louisville Road bridge, appears to be National Register-eligible on its own as an important
example of a jack-arched steel-stringer concrete-deck highway bridge, and another, the 1930s tidal
gate, has been considered eligible for the National Register for purposes of Section 106 compliance
in relation to the development of Savannah’s 20th-century drainage systems.)

Concrete loading dock at the Savannah River end of the canal.
Bridge pier in the canal near the Savannah River.
Railroad bridge at the Savannah River end of the canal.
River Street/railroad bridge.
Indian Street/railroad bridge.
Bay Street bridge.
Bryan Street bridge.
Tide gate between Locks 1 and 2 (may be National Register eligible on its own).
Oglethorpe Avenue bridge.
Hull Street extension bridge.
Louisville Road bridge (may be National Register eligible on its own).
I-16 Hutchinson Island Connector high-level bridge.
Railroad crossing west of Lock 2.
Stiles Avenue/railroad crossing.
Magazine Avenue crossing.
Central of Georgia railroad crossings (three in succession west of Magazine Avenue).
Lynes Parkway overpass.
Seaboard Coast Line railroad bridge.
Telfair Road bridge.
Seaboard Coast Line railroad crossings (two in succession west of Telfair Road).
Chatham Parkway overpass.
Heidt Street crossing.
Lynah Avenue crossing.
Kelly Hill crossing.
Seaboard Coast Line railroad crossing at Kelly Hill Road.
Dean Forest Road crossing/culverts.
I-95 crossing (discontinuity).
I-16 crossing (discontinuity).
Quacco Road crossing.
Little Ogeechee Neck Road crossing.
Bush Road widening/encroachment.
Fort Argyle bridge.

Noncontributing Building

20th-century house at Lock 5 (now used as museum/canal society headquarters).

Other noncontributing aspects of the canal (not counted in resource count)

Several short stretches of the canal have been infilled, resulting in a loss of identity and historic integrity of design. These at-grade infilled sections of the canal have been included in the canal district as noncontributing features (but not counted in the resource count):

Approximately 300 feet of infilled canal west of Lock 2.
Approximately 2500 feet of infilled canal between the two Seaboard Coast Line railroad crossings west of the Telfair Road bridge.
Approximately 500 feet of infilled canal west of Lynah Avenue.
Approximately 1500 feet of infilled canal immediately east of I-95.

Additionally, two short stretches of the canal have been obliterated by Interstate highway construction on substantial elevated fill. These sections constitute discontinuities in the canal district:

Approximately 500 feet of built-over canal at the I-95 crossing.
Approximately 500 feet of built-over canal at the I-16 crossing.
Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

(Note: This developmental history was provided by the consultant and edited by the state historic preservation office.)

At about the same time that the construction of the Erie Canal in New York sparked nationwide enthusiasm for canals and other "internal improvements," what was commonly called "canal fever" also reached its peak in Georgia. Settlement and cotton planting in middle Georgia was increasing rapidly, creating a demand for improved transportation systems and access to markets. A series of treaties with Native Americans in the 1820s, opening parts of western Georgia to white settlers, also contributed to the "fever." Those caught up in the enthusiasm for canals envisioned a vast canal system that would link the Savannah, Ogeechee, and Altamaha river systems, each of which empties into the Atlantic Ocean, with the Flint and Chattahoochee river systems, which empty into the Gulf of Mexico. They hoped the canal could provide access to the rapidly growing settlement to the hinterlands, and lure Ogeechee and Altamaha river traffic away from rival ports in Darien and Brunswick. The State of Georgia even went so far as to hire an English canal engineer to make a plan for this network of canals.

In a more realistic action, in 1824, the State of Georgia granted a charter to build a canal between the Savannah and the Ogeechee rivers to Ebenezer Jenckes, a Savannah-area turnpike owner. One year later, his charter was extended to permit a further section to reach the Altamaha River (which would never be constructed). Construction on the canal may have begun in a limited fashion as early as 1824, to show tangible progress to potential investors, although it may not have started until 1825 or even 1826. During the early years, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for the project. Savannah's newspapers aggressively promoted the project with a rhetoric of republicanism and self-help. Supporters claimed the canal would attract enough cotton and timber to make Savannah the leading port of the South.

In the summer of 1825, Jenckes traveled to New York to meet with DeWitt Clinton, governor of New York and the Erie Canal's famous champion. Governor Clinton recommended his twenty-year-old


2 Georgian, 13 March 1826; Georgian, 23 March 1826.
son, DeWitt Clinton, Jr., for the job of designing the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal.\(^3\) After arriving in Savannah in December 1825, Clinton soon found himself in the midst of several controversies; many people questioned his age, experience, style, and recommendations. Notably, the canal company never followed his suggestion that a sixteen mile long feeder canal be used to guarantee an adequate water supply; later recognized as a short-sighted mistake. In 1826 the canal company apparently was reorganized under a new group of Savannah investors; furthermore, it was exempted from taxes and promised a $50,000 construction loan from the State of Georgia. In March 1827, Clinton suddenly resigned as engineer.\(^4\) He was replaced on the project by the assistant engineer Edward Hall Gill. Loring Olmstead Reynolds became chief engineer when Gill left the project in 1828.

The canal company faced countless hurdles. Costs continually exceeded the cash on hand, and disputes among engineers, major contractors, subcontractors, the board of directors, and stockholders were common. Countless investors, including the city of Savannah, were delinquent on stock payments, and about two-thirds of the outstanding stock was abandoned altogether.\(^5\) The canal company turned increasingly to local planters as subcontractors. As a result, many who owned lands along the canal prospered even before the canal was completed. While slaves received no pay for their labors, the system of leasing slaves permitted investors in the canal company to recoup an immediate return.

Though records are scant, the history of the canal workers seems an especially compelling story. At its peak in March 1828, the work force reached 577, the majority of whom were African-American slaves. Contractors "uniformly preferred as laborers the blacks, in preference to the whites," because they were harder working and not as costly as imported labor.\(^6\) Many of these slave

\(^3\) Ebenezer Jenckes to His Excellency [Georgia Governor] Geo. M. Troup, 22 October 1825, in Georgia. Executive Department. Western and Atlantic Railroad Correspondence, 1824-1826, 1835-1839, Georgia Department of Archives and Contributing History, Reel 201/12.

\(^4\) Minute Book I, 12 March 1827 and 14 March 1827, Savannah and Ogeechee Canal Company, Central of Georgia Railway Papers, Collection 1362RR-10, Georgia Historical Society. See also Georgian, 24 March 1827.

\(^5\) Minute Book I, 21 May 1828; 19 June 1828. See also Savannah Republican, 31 March 1830.

\(^6\) Georgia Guardian, 29 April 1830.
workers were female, were "employed as advantageously as the men, and [were] generally capable of performing the same task." For over four years, these workers cut timber, cleared paths, built embankments, and constructed locks in the heat, humidity, and disease environment of the Georgia low country.

Immigrant Irish laborers also briefly contributed their labor to the project. In 1826, a subcontractor named Peter McIntyre paid the passage for one hundred Irish laborers to Savannah to work on the canal project. They worked for one month on a stretch near Louisville Road, but in December began to riot. McIntyre and another contractor, Eze[liel] Baldwin, absconded with a seven hundred dollar payroll (six weeks' salary), "watches, money, and other valuables left in their hands for safe keeping," and debts to Jenckes of over $1100, leaving the workers "in deep distress," "in a state approaching starvation," and "pitiable in the extreme...." Desperate workers were aided by members of the local Hibernian Society.

Finally, in December 1830, work was completed on the sixteen-mile route that linked the Savannah and the Ogeechee Rivers, at a cost of about $175,000. Despite the promises, however, the canal suffered from numerous financial and technical problems during these early years. Between 1831 and 1835 the board of directors had to placate creditors, seek funds, and make repairs to rotten wooden locks and breached embankments. Just a few years after the canal had opened, even its supporters admitted it was "now but an imperfect affair," while others commonly described it as "the Folly." Moreover, railroad fever had replaced canal fever; the Central of Georgia Railroad, chartered in 1833, attracted investors who were disgruntled with the canal. Bankrupt, the canal was sold at a sheriff's sale for a fraction of its value in 1836.

New management revived the canal by replacing wooden locks with brick ones, deepening the channel, reworking the embankments and improving the tow-path. By the 1840s and 1850s, the canal has become an important element in the south Georgia economy. The canal's impact on the area's lumber trade was especially dramatic, as Savannah boasted one of the nation's largest sawmills along the canal basin. Cotton, rice, bricks, guano, naval stores, peaches, and other goods

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7 Ibid.


9 Savannah Daily Herald, 23 June 1865. See also Georgian, 25 July 1833; Georgian, 11 April 1834; and Georgian, 23 April 1834.
Section 8—Statement of Significance

also were shipped by canal, which served as a lifeline for the brick yards, foundries, wharves, and other enterprises on Savannah's west side—most of which relied on industrial slavery for their labor. 10

The canal remained operational during most of the Civil War. It lay directly on the route of Sherman's March to the Sea, however, and in December 1864 the canal was the scene of several skirmishes between Union and Confederate soldiers. The canal suffered much damage as a result; banks were cut, lock gates were damaged, trees and other obstructions blocked the channel, and Sherman's troops seized many canal boats for their own operations. 11 Yet by March 1866, repairs were made, the canal was fully operational again, and prosperity returned for the canal company. New lumberyards, brick yards, and industries located along the canal basin.

Later in the nineteenth century, the canal suffered a gradual decline. In 1876 Captain Charles Sheftall operated weekly excursions along the canal that included dancing, dining, fishing, and other festivities. Following heavy rains in June, though, canal banks were considerably damaged, and both fishing excursions and the canal operations were suspended. 12 The heavy rains were also linked to an even more serious crisis—a yellow fever epidemic in which over 1000 people perished. Public officials suspected that the canal's stagnant waters, overflowing banks, and inadequate drainage were linked to the pestilence. In 1888, the Central of Georgia Railway bought considerable stock in the canal company, curtailed barge service, and began using the canal basin at the Savannah River to benefit its subsidiary, the Ocean Steamship Company. By 1891, the company had removed at least portions of Lock 1, deepened the canal three feet for a short distance, raised bridges, and extended the basin 2100 feet to create a boat dock. 13

The canal played virtually no economic role in the twentieth century. Portions of the canal and the lumber basin were filled in, becoming areas for housing, road and highway projects, and parking lots (see description). In 1933 the Chatham County Relief Administration used WPA workers to drain

10 Georgian, 16 March 1839, 17 April 1839, 21 May 1839, 25 August 1839, and 25 November 1840.


12 Savannah Morning News, 19 June 1876. Minute Book III reports no activity between June 1876 and January 1877.

portions of the canal, construct a flood gate, and link the canal to the Springfield Canal as part of the drainage canal and flood control system still in operation. Mirroring postbellum trends throughout coastal Georgia, the canal eventually fell victim to a powerful railroad, deforestation, epidemic disease, and fundamental changes in the social and economic relationships of the South.

9. Major Bibliographic References


*Savannah Daily Herald.*

*Savannah Morning News.*

*Savannah Republican.*


*Western and Atlantic Railroad Correspondence.* Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History, 1824-1826, 1835-1839.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): ( ) N/A

( ) preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
( ) preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:
( ) previously listed in the National Register
(x) previously determined eligible by the National Register

Portions of the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal were determined eligible for the National
Register at the request of the Federal Highway Administration on February 15, 1980, and May
18, 1983.

( ) designated a National Historic Landmark
( ) recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
(x) recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal was recorded on a HAER Inventory Card as part of an
"Inventory of Historic Industrial and Engineering Sites in Georgia, 1974-75," by James E.
Brittain. The card is dated March 24, 1975.

Primary location of additional data:

(x) State historic preservation office
( ) Other State Agency
( ) Federal agency
( ) Local government
( ) University
(x) Other, Specify Repository: Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N. A.
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  
611 acres

Acreage was computed as follows:

- canal corridor  
  260 acres
- Half Moon Lake  
  330 acres
- Lock No. 3 associated property  
  7 acres
- Lock No. 5 associated property  
  14 acres

UTM References

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Savannah and Ogeechee Canal District is marked on the accompanying USGS topographic/quadrangle maps: (1) U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Savannah Quadrangle, GA-SC, 1978; (2) U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Garden City Quadrangle, GA, 1980; (3) U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Meldrim SE Quadrangle, GA, 1958 photorevised 1976. The boundaries of the district also are drawn to scale with heavy black lines on a series of 22 Chatham County property tax maps arranged in atlas form accompanying this form. These more detailed tax maps should be used as the most certain
Section 10--Geographical Data

representation of the boundary of the property nominated as the Savannah and Ogeechee canal. Because of the large size of this district, the large size of the original Chatham County property tax maps, and the number of maps required to cover the extent of the canal, and because the canal is so clearly defined legally if not environmentally, reduced copies of the property tax maps have been used for this nomination. Since the original property tax maps are at two different scales east and west of Dean Forest Road, the reduced copies also are at two different scales, as noted on the maps. Maps of this reduced scale proved workable for this project and can be easily reproduced in the 8-1/2 by 11 format of the nomination form.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property consists of property which was owned historically by the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal Company and used for canal construction and operation during the canal's period of significance (1824-1888), and which has retained its essential historic physical integrity and identity as a canal. This land is now owned by the City of Savannah. It includes the entire length and width of the historic canal corridor, land occupied by Half Moon Lake which provided the water supply for the canal, and property containing known associated resources such as the sites of the lock keeper's house, brick kiln, and clay pits at Lock No. 3, or the remains of the brick aqueduct at Lock No. 2. Also included, but as noncontributing features, are several short stretches of the canal which have been infilled but which do not totally break the continuous linear character of the canal corridor. Excluded are areas once associated with the canal which have lost their historic physical integrity, such as the water supply basins north of Lock No. 2 which were redeveloped as residential subdivisions in the 20th century. No buffer zones beyond the canal corridor have been included, in part because much of the canal's surrounding environment has changed so much since the end of the canal's period of significance (1888), and in part because the canal corridor itself is so easy to identify legally as well as environmentally. However, along the western reaches of the canal in particular, the relatively intact rural setting outside the canal district boundaries contributes to the character and significance of the canal.
State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Richard Cloues, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
street & number 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street  
city or town Atlanta  
state Georgia  
zip code 30303  
telephone (404) 656-2840  
date June 20, 1997

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance

name/title Christopher Hendricks  
organization Department of History, Armstrong State University  
street and number 11935 Abercorn Street  
city or town Savannah  
state Georgia  
zip code 31419  
telephone 912-234-9457

Additional Assistance Provided By

name/title Dave Spoolstra  
organization Savannah-Ogeechee Canal Society  
street and number P. O. Box 2165  
city or town Savannah  
state Georgia  
zip code 31402  
telephone 912-236-7375
Name of Property: Savannah and Ogeechee Canal
City or Vicinity: Savannah
County: Chatham
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: December 1996

Description of Photograph(s):

1 of 18. North end of Lock No. 1 at railroad crossing near Savannah River; photographer facing west (map no. 1).

2 of 18. North end of canal at Savannah River showing nonhistoric bridge pier and loading dock; photographer facing northeast (map no. 1).

3 of 18. Brick-walled canal with timber pilings, south of Lock No. 1, at River Street/railroad crossing; photographer facing northeast (map no. 1).

4 of 18. South end of brick-walled portion of canal, south of Lock No. 1, at Indian Street/railroad crossing; photographer facing north (map no. 1).

5 of 18. Urbanized portion of canal, south of brick-walled portion, south of Indian Street/railroad crossing; photographer facing southwest (map no. 1).

6 of 18. Canal at brick-arched Central of Georgia Railroad bridge (northern bridge), north of Louisville Road; photographer facing northwest (map no. 3).

7 of 18. Canal south of Louisville Road, below brick-arched Central of Georgia Railroad bridge (southern bridge); photographer facing north (map no. 3).

8 of 18. Remains of brick aqueduct which originally carried the canal over the Springfield drainage canal, just west of Lock No. 2; photographer facing northeast (map no. 4).

9 of 18. Half Moon Lake (water supply), from canal/impoundment dam; photographer facing northwest (map nos. 20, 21)
Photographs

10 of 18. Half Moon Lake (water supply), from canal/impoundment dam; photographer facing northwest (map nos. 20, 21).

11 of 18. Lock No. 4 on Bush Road; also showing Bush Road encroachment along southeastern side of canal; photographer facing northeast (map no. 22).

12 of 18. Lock No. 5, south of Fort Argyle Road; photographer facing southwest (map no. 22).

13 of 18. Lock No. 5, from within the lock, south of Fort Argyle Road; photographer facing northeast (map no. 22).

14 of 18. Lock No. 5, south end; photographer facing northeast (map no. 22).

15 of 18. Lock No. 6, from within the lock, just northeast of the Ogeechee River; photographer facing northeast (map no. 22).

16 of 18. Lock No. 6, southwest end, just northeast of the Ogeechee River; photographer facing northeast (map no. 22).

17 of 18. South end of canal at the Ogeechee River, showing Lock No. 6 (right-center) and the Ogeechee River (left); photographer facing northeast (map no. 22).

18 of 18. Ogeechee River at south end of canal (canal entrance is to the right, just out of the picture); photographer facing north (map no. 22).
Savannah and Ogeechee Canal
Chatham County, Georgia

CANAL DISTRICT SKETCH MAP (No. 1 of 22)

North:
South:
Boundary:
Photograph/Direction of View:
Reconstrucitng Resource:
Main Line with Adjacent Map:

1" = 285' (approximately)

Chatham County, Georgia Property Maps
Chatham County, Georgia, Property Maps

Savannah and Ogeechee Canal
Chatham County, Georgia

Match line w/ Adjacent Map (No. 14 of 22)

Scale: 1" = 285' (approximately)

Photograph/Direction of View: X

Noncontributing Resource: (nc)

Boundary: ——

North:____

Source: 

Match line with map 13

match line with map 15

match line with map 15
Savannah and Ogeechee Canal
Chatham County, Georgia

Scale: $1' = 1500'$ (approximately)

Source: "Chatham County, Georgia, Property Maps"