

CANAL		STATUS			ACS
FEARN CANAL (Indian Creek Nav. Co.)		Abandoned			HAER
STATE/PROVINCE: Alabama					
COUNTIES: Madison					
LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal): From Big Spring (Pound Circle, Jefferson & Spring Sts., Huntsville) to Triana					
TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS: USGS Huntsville, 15', 1892 USGS NI 16.5, Gadsen, 1956					
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:					
<p>Huntsville, the most important trading center in northern Alabama in the early 1800's, was about 11 miles from the Tennessee River. To avoid the expensive wagon haul to and from Ditto's Landing, on Dec. 21, 1820, five citizens, led by Dr. Thomas Fearn, obtained a charter for the Indian River Navigation Co., the first canal in Alabama. Capital subscribed was \$10,000. Construction began in 1821, but went slowly. In 1824, a Canal Lottery put new life in the project. Some traffic moved in 1827 but it was not until April 5, 1831 that the first two keel boats arrived at the Big Spring in Huntsville. Because of Dr. Fearn's determination and leadership, the work was universally known as "Fearn's Canal," although it is sometimes called the Huntsville Canal today. The exact date of abandonment is uncertain. It was almost surely in the early 1840's, when railroads began to build in the area. However, the canal has been recognized as the most successful and longest lived of any privately financed waterway in the Tennessee Valley.</p>					
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:					
<p>From the Big Spring, in downtown Huntsville, 2½ miles of excavated canal south along Big Springs Branch; thence river navigation 10.5 miles to Looney's Mill at the confluence with Price Fork of Indian Creek; thence 3 miles to the Tennessee just east of Triana. Lock &amp; Dam #1 at head of river navigation at Sivley's Mill; L &amp; D #2, 1.5 miles further downstream at Acklen's Bluff. All structures of wood. No data on prism or lock size has been found. Depth would accommodate boats with a capacity of "80 to 100 bales of cotton and fifty passengers." No trace of works left. Much of the lower navigation now under new lakes and reservoirs. Nearly all of route is within the Red Stone Arsenal Military Reservation. From canals to rockets!</p>					
NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANALS PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:					
None					
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:					
<p>Early History of Huntsville, Alabama. S. C. Betts, 1909 (Rev. Montgomery, 1916) History of Alabama, etc., Thomas M. Owen, Chicago, S. J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1921 History of Navigation on the Tennessee River System. HD 254, 1937</p>					
UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, PHOTOS, DRAWINGS (CEHR, HAER, HABS, local or Regional Historical Societies, Libraries, etc.):					
MS in the Huntsville Public Library, Sarah Hunt Fisk. Includes excellent MS Map of Canal.					
EXISTING OR RECOMMENDED LANDMARK STATUS (CLHR, National Register, etc.):					
No					
REPORTER'S NAME & ADDRESS: L. W. Richardson, Rt. 2, Bx. 346, Gainesville, Ga. 30501					DATE 3/20/76
RETURN TO: CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE, c/o P.H. STOTT, HAINES ROAD, MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549					