

American Canal Society Canal Index

<p>CANAL: Tennessee Canal (Muscle Shoals Canal)</p> <p>STATE/PROVINCE: Alabama</p> <p>COUNTIES: Lauderdale</p> <p>LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal): North bank of Tennessee River, Long. 87° 20' to 87° 34' W. Foot of <del>_____ miles above Florence.</del></p> <p>TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS: Rogersville 1916, Muscle Shoals 1916, 15'</p>	<p>STATUS: Abandoned, site now under the water of Wheeler Lake.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 30%;">DATES IN USE</td> <td style="width: 10%;">CANAL</td> <td style="width: 10%;">SLACKWATER</td> <td style="width: 10%;">TOTAL</td> <td style="width: 20%;">LIFT LOCKS No./ SIZE</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="4" style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-size: small;">ENLARGEMENTS</td> <td>1</td> <td>1836 - ?</td> <td>14½</td> <td>0</td> <td>14½</td> <td>1 guard</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>16 lift</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		DATES IN USE	CANAL	SLACKWATER	TOTAL	LIFT LOCKS No./ SIZE	ENLARGEMENTS	1	1836 - ?	14½	0	14½	1 guard	2					16 lift	3						4					
	DATES IN USE	CANAL	SLACKWATER	TOTAL	LIFT LOCKS No./ SIZE																											
ENLARGEMENTS	1	1836 - ?	14½	0	14½	1 guard																										
	2					16 lift																										
	3																															
	4																															
<p>HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: This was the first attempt to solve the problem of navigation on the Tennessee River in Alabama. On May 23, 1828, Congress granted the State, 400,000 acres of public land, proceeds to be used for "improvement of navigation of the Muscle Shoals and Colbert Shoals." Jan. 15, 1830, Ala. General Assembly created "Board of Tenn. Canal Commissioners" to acquire land and oversee construction. That year, Col. Long, U. S. A., surveyed the line and work began in 1831. Originally intended to go from Florence to Brown's Ferry, 38 miles, as built, it only went around Big Muscle Shoals, leaving Little Muscle Shoals below and Elk Shoals above. It was completed in 1836, but as a result of poor design and planning it was closed for much of its life. Exact date of final closing is in question but it was soon after 1840. The cost was \$644,549. It would be nearly 40 years before work began on the second generation of Muscle Shoals canals.</p>																																
<p>PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: The canal line followed the north bank of the river very closely, never more than a few hundred feet from the water. The prism was; 42' bottom, 60' top and 6' deep. Locks were built of cut stone, 32' x 120' and most were still intact after nearly 40 years of floods and neglect. There were two serious flaws in the engineering design. First, there were no aqueducts or culverts, streams were directed into the canal prism. When there were heavy rains, the canal was closed for long periods because of washouts and debris in the channel. The second problem was that the bed of the channel was too high, in relation to normal water level in the river. Only when there was high water in the river, could boats enter the canal.</p>																																
<p>NAMES &amp; ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANALS PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">None known</p>																																
<p>BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: <u>History of Navigation on the Tennessee River System</u>, 75 Cong. H. D. 254  <u>Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers</u>, 1875.  <u>Internal Improvements in Alabama</u>, W. D. Martin, Johns Hopkins Studies, Ser. XX, No. 4          (Map) Muscle Shoals Canal, 1890, Map A, 59 Cong. 1st Sess., S. D. 83          " Muscle Shoals Canal &amp; Adjacent Land. Map B, 59 Cong., 1st Sess., S. D. 83          (Map A. is a general, small scale, view of the area. Map B. is the only one found that locates the line of the old canal and the sites of all locks.)</p>																																
<p>UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, PHOTOS, DRAWINGS (CEHR, HAER, HABS, Local or Regional Historical Societies, Libraries, etc.):</p>																																
<p>EXISTING OR RECOMMENDED LANDMARK STATUS (CEHR, National Register, etc.):</p>																																
<p>REPORTER'S NAME &amp; ADDRESS: <u>L. W. Richardson, Rt. 2, Box 346, Gainesville, Ga. 30501</u></p>																																
<p>DATE: <u>10/175</u></p>																																
<p>R E T U R N T O : CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE, c/o P.H.STOTT, HAINES ROAD, MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549</p>																																