The Okeechobee Waterway (U.S. Engineers)

STATUS: In operation

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION & CLOSURE: 1930 & 1938 below

LOCATION (ENDPOINTS OF CANAL): Punta Rassa- Stuart, Fla.

TIDEWATER: & CANAL: All Sludge, 40.7, Total 51.7

LIFT LOCKS: 4

LOCK CHAMBER: 30 ft.

DIMENSIONS: 1440 ft. X 50 ft.

OVERALL: 250 X 50 ft.

AGUERUET: None

SECTION SIZE: None

TUNNELS: None

DESCRIPTION: [Type of navigation, features of route (include U.S.G. coordinates where useful); e.g., feeders (navigable and otherwise), locks other than above; type of locks, use of unusual material or methods of construction, present user, present use & conditions, etc.]

This report is confined to the above canal only. The former canals that were built in the past along this same route will be under another report. The present canal was built to provide drainage of Lake Okeechobee and to provide a cross-state navigation system from the east coast to the Gulf of Mexico. In canal sections water is 6 ft. Tide-water 10-12 ft. Sargass and smaller vessels including yachts etc. Locks are of concrete and modern. Last lock (Olga Lock) was completed in 1968, divides salt & fresh water. Routes #1 & #2 through Lake Okeechobee are optional for certain craft. The Waterway was opened in 1937. In 1969 (freight tons) were over 430,000. Recent 1970 canal map to ACS members should be corrected as above. Olga lock cost $15 million dollars.

NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANAL'S PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:

Federal Government U.S. Army Engineers Corps


Inhabitants of (all sections) in the Lake Okeechobee Region.

REPORTER'S NAME & ADDRESS:

A.W. Gould 1455 East Beach Blvd., Fort Myers, Fla. 33905 #114 Jan. 1, 1974

HISTORICAL SUMMARY: (Original name of company; date of incorporation, prominent engineers, cause of closure, significant alterations to structure or route, height of traffic data, transfers of ownership, etc.)

It should be stated here- that nearly all canals of any type in the State of Florida are primarily drainage canals. However, there are several that were large enough to provide commercial use as well. These canals opened up much of the wilderness territory before roads were even built. These waterways will date back to the period close to the turn of the century. The greatest activity on these canals ended after World War I, although used today in some sections by smaller boats. Most of these canals had locks. Waterway enlarged 10 ft. to 225 ft. in width. (Old canal width 90 ft.) Reports on these canals occurring in other sources. None as yet from Department of State at Tallahassee, Florida

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: [Published works relating to canal]

U.S. Engineers Corps: "Okeechobee!" Okeechobee-Boats & Skippers

"Unknown Florida" and others. Please Note- At some locks on the Waterway will be "Park Areas." Camping, picnic grounds etc. All lock areas are clear.

UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, LOCATION OF PHOTOS, DRAWINGS & IMPORTANT PERIODICAL REFERENCES

U.S. Engineers- Photos & Maps; Classified Listing: Directory 1974

Cruise-guide by Gulf Oil Co; Texas Oil Co; (Route Maps)

Map of Military Importance-1856. Proposed canals(2) St. Johns River-Tampa

NATIONAL REGISTER & HAER (HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD) STATUS:

Federal Government.

RETURN TO: CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE C/O P.H. STOTT, MAINE ROAD, MOUNT KISCO, NEW YORK 10549

USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS AS NECESSARY.

TO MAKE AN INDEX CARD SUITABLE FOR FILING, CUT ALONG THE HEAVY LINES AND FOLD BACK ALONG THE DOTTED LINE.
**CANAL: OKEECHOBEE WATERWAY**

**STATE/PROVINCE:** Florida

**COUNTIES:** Martin, Glades, Lee, Hendry

**LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal):**
- Punta Rassa, FL -- Stuart, FL

**TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS:** 1:250,000
- PT PIERCE, WEST PALM BEACH, TAMPA

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:** An improvement on previous canals following the same route, the present waterway was established in 1937 to provide drainage for Lake Okeechobee as well as shoal draft passage across the Florida Peninsula. The Federally maintained 8-foot channel, authorized in 1945, is operated year round 6am to 10pm without tolls. In the canal cuts its width varies between 80 and 90 feet.

- St. Lucie Inlet & River, tidal for 15 miles to St. Lucie Lock: 13-foot lift to summit level; size: 250'x50', built in 1941. It replaces an earlier lock (130x30) built in 1925, now auxiliary.
- St. Lucie Canal: 23 Miles to Port Mayaca, where remains of an earlier lock are visible.
- Lake Navigation: Port Mayaca to Clewiston, 27 miles.
- Lake fringe canal: Clewiston to Moore Haven, 13 miles.
- Moore Haven Lock: 2.5-foot lift; size: 250'x50', built in 1935; combines lock with a hurricane gate through the levee at east end.
- Caloosahatche Canal: Moore Haven Lock to Ortona Lock, 12 miles.
- Ortona Lock: 11-foot lift; size: 250'x50', built in 1937.
- Caloosahatche River; elevated dredged channel, 25 miles.
- W.P. Franklin Lock at Dam at Olga: 3.5-foot lift; size: 400'x56' completed 1966 at a cost of $3.6 million. (One of the largest locks in Florida, it passes vessels of 12-foot draft.)
- Caloosahatche River, dredged channel to Port Meyers.

**Tonnage 1969:** 430,562; 1970: 728,954.

**NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANALS PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:**

- US Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, PO Box 4970, Jacksonville, FL 32201

**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:**

- Corps of Engineers: maps & data
- "Okeechobee Waterway," Cruise Tips, 1971, pp 31-47
- Newport News Times-Herald 2/19/73, p. 31
- Classified Boating Directory, 1974

**UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, PHOTOS, DRAWINGS (CEHR, HAER, HABS, Local or Regional Historical Societies, Libraries, etc.):**

**EXISTING OR RECOMMENDED LANDMARK STATUS (CEHR, National Register, etc.):**

- None.

**REPORTER'S NAME & ADDRESS:** A.C. Brown, 220 James River Drive, Newport News, VA 23601
- A.W. Gould, 5558 Palm Beach Blvd., Ft. Myers, FL 33905

**DATE:** 2/10/73

**RETURN TO:** CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE, C/O F.H. STOTT, MAINES ROAD, MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549

**DATE:** 1/1/74
Okeechobee Waterway

Lock images following this page are from east to west on the waterway.

The are:
   East of the lake
      St. Lucie Lock
      Port Mayaca Lock (at the east shore)

   West of the lake
      Moore Haven Lock
      Ortona Lock
      W. P. Franklin Lock