

American Canal Society Canal Index

CANAL South Hadley Canal		STATUS Abandoned		ACS																														
STATE/PROVINCE: Massachusetts				HAER																														
COUNTIES: Hampshire																																		
LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal): from the South Hadley side of the "great dam" 2 1/4 miles north																																		
TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS: SPRINGFIELD NORTH																																		
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">ENLARGEMENTS</th> <th colspan="2">D A T E S I N U S E</th> <th colspan="2">L E N G T H</th> <th>L I F T L O C K S</th> </tr> <tr> <th>CANAL</th> <th>SLACKWATER</th> <th>TOTAL</th> <th>No. / SIZE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>1795-1805</td> <td>2 1/4</td> <td>2 1/4</td> <td>1 20x40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>1805-1848</td> <td></td> <td>2 1/4</td> <td>6 20x40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		ENLARGEMENTS	D A T E S I N U S E		L E N G T H		L I F T L O C K S	CANAL	SLACKWATER	TOTAL	No. / SIZE	1	1795-1805	2 1/4	2 1/4	1 20x40	2	1805-1848		2 1/4	6 20x40	3					4					
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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Early attempts to open navigation on the Connecticut River led to plans for short canals on various rapids in the river. The first to be completed was the South Hadley Canal. The company to undertake this work was formed in 1792 and called the Proprietors of Locks and Canals on Connecticut River. Surveys were made by Christopher Colles in the summer of 1792, and the work placed under the direction of Maj. Benjamin Prescott of Northampton to build a dam across the river and a canal 2 1/4 miles in length. The 3300-foot dam, in height 4 feet above the normal surface of impounded water, followed the bed of rocks across the river with an irregular course. According to FitzSimons, the canal extended 2 1/4 miles north from the South Hadley end of the dam, entering the river "above a wing dam projected obliquely outward. Most of the way the cutting was through solid red slate rock, and proved costly." A guard lock at the upper end and a plane and lock at the lower end were the principal feature of the canal. The plane (q.v.) was the first incline in North America. Dwight notes that the canal was beset by problems from the beginning. A portion of the dam was carried away before

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:
completion, and the contractor was unable financially to make the repairs; the arduously cut canal through solid rock was found to be too shallow; cables constantly broke on the plane; and the great dam across the Connecticut caused fevers and ague in Northampton, hitherto one of the healthiest towns in New England, resulting in a multitude of law suits. In 1805 the canal was deepened and five locks were substituted for the plane. The competition of the railroads and the corresponding decline in the river traffic resulted in the canal's abandonment in 1848.

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

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:
Dwight, Timothy. Travels in New-England and New York. (London, 4 vols., 1823), vol.2, pp.286-9
FitzSimons, Neal. "Benjamin Prescott and the Hampshire Machine," Civil Engineering, Dec. 1970
Bacon, . The Connecticut River (Bangor, Me., 1911)
Love, N. DeLoss, The Navigation of the Connecticut River (Worcester, 1903)

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

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

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