

CANAL		WASHINGTON DITCH, Dismal Swamp, Virginia		(FOR ACS USE)	
STATUS		In operation as drainage ditch and fire break		DATES OF CONSTRUCTION & CLOSURE about 1768	
LOCATION (ENDPOINTS OF CANAL)		Point on Route 32 west of Dismal Swamp (Nansemond Escarpment) to Lake Drummond		LENGTH CANAL 5 m SLACKWATER _____ TOTAL 5 m.	
LIFT LOCKS	NBR.	DIMENSIONS		AQUEDUCTS	TUNNELS
	spillway	LOCK CHAMBER _____ OVERALL _____		NBR. no SECTION SIZE _____	no
DESCRIPTION: [Type of navigation, features of note (include USGS coordinates where useful); e.g., feeders (navigable & otherwise), locks other than above, type of locks, use of unusual material or methods of construction, present owner, present use & condition, etc.]					
<p>Washington Ditch has a good claim at being the nation's oldest artificial waterway, having been built between 1764 and 1772, probably 1768. It may also claim to be the oldest "monument" to George Washington. In 1763, Washington and some associates acquired large tracts of land in Dismal Swamp which they proposed to drain and harvest the lumber. Washington's "adventurers" owned the land between 1763 and 1795. It then passed to a lumber company and ultimately to the Camp Lumber Co. (later Union Camp) which in late Feb. 1973 donated it to the Nature Conservancy for transfer to the U. S. Department of the Interior - a 50,000 acre tract valued at \$12.6 million. The Camp Company draglined the Ditch in 1955 and built a road paralleling it which is presently maintained for drainage and to provide a fire break.*</p>					
NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANAL'S PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:					
U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Washington. Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Research Foundation, Dismal Swamp Preservation Comm. (Mrs. Barbara Macine, pres. Virginia Beach, Va.)					
REPORTER'S NAME & ADDRESS:				23601	DATE
Alexander C. Brown, 228 James River Dr., Newport News, Va.					Jan. 9, 1974
HISTORICAL SUMMARY: [Original aims of company, date of incorporation, prominent engineers, cause of closure, significant alterations to structure or route, height of traffic date, transfers of ownership, etc.]					
<p>* Canal originally 5 miles long, 10 feet wide, 2 feet deep and was built on the route of a "carrero" road leading from Dismal Town (where slave lumbermen lived) in to the north end of Lake Drummond. Originally there must have been a crude form of timber lock about 100 yards from the lake. Canal ran slightly north of west to high ground west of Dismal Swamp. Jan 18, 1764, Virginia Assembly authorized Washington's company to drain "a large tract of marshy ground in Counties of Nansemond and Norfolk." Law empowered them "to enter upon . . . and make such canals or causeways" as required. First printed reference in Virginia Gazette, Nov. 19, 1772, offering land for sale "joining the great ditch in the Dismal Swamp." It was used for timber rafts and flats taking out lumber and shingles.</p>					
BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: [Published works relating to Canal]					
<p>Alexander C. Brown, THE DISMAL SWAMP CANAL (Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, 1970), p. 29 and bibliography. Also A.C. Brown, "Washington Ditch -- the First Monument" Daily Press New Dominion Magazine, Feb. 18, 1968.</p>					
UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, LOCATION OF PHOTOS, DRAWINGS & IMPORTANT PERIODICAL REFERENCES					
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Norfolk, map collection. Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, photographs					
NATIONAL REGISTER & HAER (HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD) STATUS:					
R E T U R N T O : CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE, C/O P.H. STOTT, HAINES 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.