

CANAL <b>Marsh Lake Lock</b>		STATUS <b>Operating</b>			ACS
STATE/PROVINCE: <b>Yukon Territory</b>					HAER
COUNTIES:					
LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal): <b>Yukon River at Whitehorse</b>					
TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS: <b>Whitehorse YT 2°</b>					
		ENLARGEMENTS			
		DATES IN USE	LENGTH CANAL SLACKWATER TOTAL		LIFT LOCKS No./ SIZE
		1 1969			1/12x30'
		2			
		3			
		4			

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:**  
 Steamboats began running the Yukon in 1869, years before the 1896 Gold Rush saw a peak of 75-100 of them, run by steamboaters from the Mississippi and Columbia; some steamers pushed a barge, in spite of the swift current. More common craft were the Yukon poling boats, 20-30'x2½-3', tapering at both ends; and keelboats similar to those on the Ohio, 50x12-15' with a crew of 10 polemen. These could be pulled and poled upstream some 10-20 miles a day, and could be fitted with a square sail or hauled by men or dogs from the bank.

The rapids on the Yukon claimed up to 200 boats a week in the early days of the Gold Rush. At Whitehorse, where the railway from Skagway ends and the Yukon navigation begins, the rapids were bypassed by a horse-drawn tramroad with wooden rails. These rapids were run by some early arrivals (including Jack London) but were never tamed for navigation. In the 1920's the White Pass & Yukon Route built a dam across the rapids which was used to flush the ice out of the river in the spring, but it had no lock. Today there is a hydro dam at Whitehorse, and the Marsh Lake Dam about 20 miles upstream towards Marsh Lake (part of the Yukon River) is used to supply water to the hydro plant in the winter. There was no lock until 1969 when the present one was built, long after the steamboat era. This takes small boats from Marsh Lake into the Whitehorse Dam pond, <sup>and</sup> is operated by the boatmen. The lift varies from 1½' in the spring to 8' at high water.

There were, however, navigation improvements for steamboats below Whitehorse. At Five Finger Rapids 20 miles below Carmacks steamboats winched up a 5/8" wire cable attached above and below the falls; the cable was removed on the last trip but the rusted cable end attached to a deadman at the head of the falls, on the right bank, can still be seen from the river, although not from the bank. There should also be a ring bolt below the falls. At Hell's Gate, 10 miles below Minto, there are remains of a wood and stone wing dam which contained the channel; also here, for the same reason, the White Pass & Yukon sunk an old barge. The Yukon navigation was also improved by blasting: every spring one of the Steamer Masters would make a trip by small boat, accompanied by an explosives workman.

**NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANALS PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:**  
 The lock is maintained by the Northern Canada Power Commission, P.O. Box 4278, Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada.

**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:**  
 Satterfield, Archie, THE YUKON RIVER TRAIL GUIDE, Stackpole Books, 1975 has material on the lock, steamboating, and boats, with photos of poling boats.  
 Becker, E.A., KLONDIKE '98, Binfords & Mont, 1967  
 Brooks, A.H., BLAZING ALASKA'S TRAILS, U. Alaska Press, 1973, has material on boats.

**UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, PHOTOS, DRAWINGS (CEHR, HAER, HABS, Local or Regional Historical Societies, Libraries, etc.):**  
 Much of the above information is from letters from Mr. Henry J. Breaden, Area Superintendent Northern Canada Power Commission, and from Mr. R. Barry Redfern, Department of Tourism, Yukon Territory, Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6, Canada. There is no flyer on the lock

**EXISTING OR RECOMMENDED LANDMARK STATUS (CEHR, National Register, etc.):**  
 None.

**REPORTER'S NAME & ADDRESS:** W.E. Trout, III, 1932 Cinco Robles Dr., Duarte, CA 91010 **DATE:** 8Sept'81

**RETURN TO:** CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE, c/o P.H. STOTT, HAINES ROAD, MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549