

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Roanoke Canal

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

See continuation sheet #2

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Roanoke Rapids--Weldon

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Halifax

CODE

083

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: not in use

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Canal: Hoerner-Waldorf Corporation, Mill Division, Attn: C. L. Wills, Division Engineer

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 580

Millsite: City of Weldon, Mayor S. W. Oakley

CITY, TOWN

Roanoke Rapids

P. O. Box 551

STATE

VICINITY OF Weldon, N.C. North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Halifax County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Halifax

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1975

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Roanoke Canal extends from its emergence at the Roanoke Rapids Lake (where some canal remains are under water), southeast seven miles to the canal's return into the Roanoke River at Weldon. The width of the right-of-way (owned by Hoerner-Waldorf Corporation) is 165 feet. Throughout much of its length, the remains of the canal are more or less visible, although in places it is cut through by a road or other development and in other places it is disguised by vegetation. Punctuating the canal's length are three particularly important features: the middle or lift locks (photograph #1), the aqueduct (photographs #3 and #4), and the mill (photograph #5).

The Roanoke Canal was only a small part of the Roanoke Navigation System; yet it required the greatest engineering skill and produced the most significant structures of the entire system. The canal began at Rock Landing along the Roanoke River, a spot a little more than three miles above what is now Roanoke Rapids. At the entrance to the canal, a dam and guard lock were constructed (1822). Hamilton Fulton, chief engineer of the North Carolina Board of Internal Improvements, recommended these structures because of "frequent occurrence of accidents" due to floods in the river which caused the canal to fill with driftwood. Fulton's specifications called for a stone dam of dry coursed rubble construction, 6 feet wide at the bottom narrowing to a width of 1½ feet at the top. The guard lock, located about 400 feet below the dam and built of ashlar stonework, was 75 feet long and 16 feet wide with walls 8 feet thick at the bottom and 6 feet wide at the top. By 1899 both structures were in ruins and today their site is under the waters of the Roanoke Rapids Lake.

The first three miles of the canal runs through deep cuts into the bedrock, some as high as 20 feet, and across several valleys and streams which required four culverts. The culverts were major works. They had to be long in order to pass under both the canal bed and its embankments. The chamber of the first culvert along the canal was 103 feet long, 6 feet high and 3 feet wide. The other three were 100 feet by 9 feet by 3 feet; 85 feet by 10 feet by 3 feet; and 125 feet by 12 feet by 4 feet, all of stone, with stone wings at each end to support the canal banks.

The middle or Lift Locks are located a little more than three miles from the entrance. There were four locks, "built of the best description of hewn stone, neatly dressed," consisting of two sets of two lifts each. Each was 100 feet long and 16 feet wide (to allow for 2 batteaux of 7 or 8 feet in width simultaneously). Each had a lift of nearly 9 feet, making a total lift of 36 feet between the upper and lower canal. The first double lock (photograph #1) remains intact, an impressive and well-preserved example of stone construction. They are of fitted, coursed stone masonry. Stone ducts are formed into the lock walls, presumably for filling and emptying the locks. Iron gudgeons for the gate hinges survive at the top of the wall at the end of the gate recesses. On the north side of the first double lock are two brick buildings with hipped roofs. They were built in 1901 by the Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company as powerhouses (photograph #2).

North Carolina Highway 48 runs through what was once the basin between the sets of double locks. One-half of the second of the double locks has been partially torn away for a railroad track and the other half is not visible, perhaps buried beneath the surface.

For the next four miles below the locks, the canal winds along the river bank, without deep cuts or culverts, but with high embankments on the river side. Occasionally

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there are stone spillways in the bank, built to control excess water.

One mile from the lower end of the canal is its most outstanding structure, the aqueduct that carries the canal (photograph #3 and #4) over Chockoyotte Creek (also spelled Chockaott, Chocaott, or Chockyot). Although the original plans of Hamilton Fulton called for a structure of two elliptical arches of thirty feet span each, another plan was adopted, and the present structure is a single arch of thirty foot span. It was described in a report of 1831 as follows: "the aqueduct is of excellent workmanship and beautiful; it is formed of hewn stone, very neatly dressed, and of the most durable quality, resting on a rock foundation. It is 110 feet long, its greatest height 35 feet, and has a clear width of waterway of 18 feet; the arch has a span of 30 feet, is 29 feet wide, and is elevated 22 feet above the surface of the creek at common height." The aqueduct, except for repairs in the 1890s, remains as it was at the time of construction (1821-1823). The masonry joints are extremely fine, roughly one-eighth inch wide, with remnants of a yellow clayey mortar. Of coursed ashlar, the aqueduct spans the creek in a single, impressive arch. Voussoirs define the archivolt and smooth coursed ashlar frames the voussoirs. It is in good condition, although somewhat overgrown with vegetation.

A mile east of the aqueduct, the canal terminated in a large basin beside the Roanoke River at Weldon. The basin was connected to the river for a brief time (1832-1834) by a series of six wooden locks each 85 feet long with a lift of 8 feet. A freshet of the Roanoke River destroyed these locks and they were never replaced although their ruins could be seen as late as 1899 (see Bulletin 8, North Carolina Geological and Economic Survey).

About 150 yards above the site of the wooden locks stand a mill building, built in 1892, and a powerhouse, built c. 1904, both by the Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company (photograph #5). The mill is an imposing three-story brick structure with a gable roof and corbeled cornice on the parapetted gable ends. It is four bays wide with segmental-arched windows. The mill, equipped with rolls, dressers, and dryers, had a capacity of 2,000 bushels of corn a day. Later used as a recreation center for the city of Weldon, it is now abandoned. A similar two-story brick building is attached at the south side of the mill; it served for a short period as an office for the Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company. West of these buildings across a tail race stands the power plant, a one-story brick structure. At one time it was equipped with a 268 horsepower generator and furnished electric lights to the city of Weldon. It too is abandoned now as is the entire navigation and power system.

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Note: At the Weldon end of the canal, the district widens from its normal 165-foot right-of-way width to encompass the mill buildings, with half an acre around them; the latter property is owned by the city of Weldon.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES: 1819-1823, 1892, 1904 BUILDER/ARCHITECT: Hamilton Fulton

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

These seven-mile length of the Roanoke Canal contains some of the most impressive and best-preserved early nineteenth century canal construction in the nation. Begun before 1819 and completed in 1823, the canal was part of the ambitious Roanoke Navigation System, planned to connect the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Atlantic. The Roanoke Canal required the greatest engineering skill and produced the most significant structures of the entire system. Much of the construction was supervised by English engineer Hamilton Fulton. Important remains include the stone locks, a handsome stone aqueduct, several deep cuts along the canal route, and a later (1892) brick mill near the canal's eastern end.

The Roanoke Canal was built as part of the Roanoke Navigation System, an ambitious project designed to link the landlocked interior of Virginia and North Carolina with the seaports along the coastal plain. Although the project was conceived as early as 1783, it was not until 1823 that the Canal was completed and not until 1828 that the Navigation was prepared for Salem, Virginia, in the Blue Ridge Mountains to Norfolk on the coast, a distance of over 400 miles.

The Roanoke River, called "the river of death" by the Indians,¹ and its two forks, the Dan and Staunton (now Roanoke), flowed from the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia and North Carolina to the Great Falls above Weldon, North Carolina. From Weldon, the Lower Roanoke, and Albemarle Sound, led to the Atlantic Ocean--but through impassable coastal sandbanks--and to Norfolk, through the equally impassable Great Dismal Swamp. In addition to the great physical obstacles to the project, there was intense interstate rivalry² between Virginia and North Carolina over control of the proposed navigation.

The first efforts toward a Roanoke navigation began in 1783, when the citizens of Norfolk induced the Virginia General Assembly to pass a bill for that purpose. At the same time a bill was passed for a canal through the Dismal Swamp. North Carolina responded enthusiastically to the first bill by passing a similar one dealing with her part of the Roanoke, to make the system complete. North Carolina refused, however, to help finance and build a canal through the Dismal Swamp, which would siphon off all the trade to Norfolk, and instead contemplated the construction of a reliable ship channel through the coastal sandbanks near Roanoke Island--a project which would create a seaport in North Carolina. By 1790, nothing had come of these plans, and North Carolina finally gave in and agreed to help build the Dismal Swamp Canal. It was not until the canal was nearly completed, giving the Roanoke River traffic a route to market, that interest returned to the Roanoke Navigation project. In 1812, North Carolina chartered the Roanoke Navigation Company, to clear the river from the Virginia line to tidewater at Weldon. Because Virginia disagreed over financial details, however, the Roanoke Navigation project was again suspended.

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Instead, a new Virginia plan emerged to clear the Virginia part of the Roanoke and build a canal (called the Junction Canal) between Roanoke and Appomattox, giving Petersburg all of the Roanoke traffic.

The Virginia plan for Junction Canal was never implemented--partly because of its cost and partly because of the outbreak of war with Great Britain in 1812. The war also had the dual effect of creating a recognition for badly needed internal improvements as well as a new spirit of interstate cooperation. In 1816, Virginia chartered the Roanoke Navigation Company. To prevent conflicts with North Carolina's Roanoke Navigation Company, both were placed under the direction of the latter. After nearly a third of a century, a united company had been⁴ formed with sufficient funds and initiative to begin and complete the Roanoke Navigation.

The navigation system was composed of three parts: the lower (tidewater) Roanoke, over 100 miles long, which was to be cleared for large craft such as steamboats and barges from Norfolk; the Great Falls above Weldon, a major obstacle where the river dropped 100 feet in a few miles, which was to be overcome by a nine-mile batteaux canal with locks; and the upper Roanoke, Dan and Staunton, over 300 miles long, which were to be made navigable for batteaux by clearing and sluicing the river bed.

The Board of Internal Improvement of North Carolina hired Hamilton Fulton, an English engineer, to supervise North Carolina's proposed internal improvements, among them the canal around Great Falls. Fulton's credentials were impressive. He had studied with the noted Scottish engineer, John Rennie, and with Thomas Telford, builder of several outstanding canals in Europe, including the Ellesmere Canal, the Caledonian Canal, and the Gotha Canal. In 1819, Fulton made the acquaintance of Peter Browne of North Carolina who was in England looking for a principal engineer for the state. Browne persuaded Fulton to undertake supervision of North Carolina's internal improvements, and in the early summer of 1819, Fulton removed with his family to North Carolina, bringing with him his friend and fellow pupil under Rennie, Robert H. B. Brazier, who had been hired as assistant engineer.

Upon their arrival, the two engineers began to examine the principal coastal inlets, the sounds, and the primary rivers as well as to draw up plats and maps of their surveys. Fulton surveyed the Roanoke Canal in 1819 while it was being built. Although it was only nine miles long, it was a major undertaking for the early nineteenth century, requiring deep cuts, long and high embankments, culverts, locks, and an aqueduct. Fulton found construction on the canal already in progress at its upper end along the south bank of the Roanoke River. For the first three miles the canal ran through deep cuts into bedrock and across several valleys and streams requiring culverts. Four stone culverts were built along this upper half of the canal with stone wings at each end to support the canal banks.

After a little more than three miles, a series of four stone locks were constructed, sets of two lifts each. In a report of 1821 Fulton noted that although only three locks were proposed, he was adding a fourth because "four Locks of 9 feet each . . . will reduce the cost of the work very much, as it brings down the Canal on the low flat lands,

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whereas the level originally intended would have carried the line of Canal along the face of a steep bank, a great part of which is solid rock."⁸ Fulton was unable to change the plan to construct double locks, however:

"Although I do not approve of more Locks than one being built at one place, yet the work has so far progressed that I am compelled to adopt two double Locks, instead of four single ones. Double, treble, quadruple, etc. chains of Locks, cause much detention and waste of water . . ."

Fulton's specification for the remaining five miles of the canal from the "Locks to Weldon's Orchard" were also contained in his 1821 report. His plans included a canal bed 30 feet wide at bottom, 3 feet deep and 39 feet wide at the top. One mile from the lower end, an aqueduct over Chockoyotte Creek was proposed. "This Aqueduct," wrote Fulton, "is to consist of two elliptical arches of thirty feet span each, and to have a clear width of water-way for navigation of sixteen feet." Fulton's reason for the dual arch was that "it admits of a greater opening for the passage of the waters, and requires less masonry than any other curve of the same span." However, he did admit that a single arch would be sufficient and, in fact, the single stone arch was adopted as the final plan for the aqueduct. This arch spanned 30 feet. The cost was estimated at \$9,000.¹⁰

Later in 1821, Fulton reported that "a great part of [the Canal] . . . has been executed" and that "Workmen are employed in preparing stones for the aqueduct. These stones are got at Hamlin's quarry and are granite of an excellent quality."¹¹ In 1822 Fulton recommended a dam and guard lock for the upper entrance to protect the Canal in time of flood and to lower boats to the canal level when the pond was full. These additions were built some 150 yards below the head of the canal.¹² Finally, in 1823, Fulton could report that only the completion of five courses of stone on the single arch of the Aqueduct remained to be completed. "Whilst examining the Locks," he noted, "I had the pleasure of seeing a boat loaded with eight hogshead of Tobacco pass through them."¹³

In 1826 Fulton resigned his commission in North Carolina and did some work in Georgia before returning to his native England. The work of the Roanoke Navigation Company proceeded. From 1824 to 1828, the other components of the navigation were completed: a short canal around Eaton's Falls, another around the falls at Danville, and sluicing between Brookneal and Long Island. Finally, in 1828, one of the great objectives of the navigation was reached--Salem, in the Blue Ridge Mountains, 244 miles above Weldon. "The rough was made smooth," exclaimed the Roanoke Navigation Company, "the crooked straight."¹⁴

Over 370 miles of river was now open for batteaux traffic from the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina, funneling into the basin at Weldon for transfer to the eastern markets. For about a decade the traffic was considerable. Flour, tobacco, manufactured goods, and other commercial items passed through the Roanoke Canal and the Roanoke Navigation System. Tolls collected on the canal increased from \$1,825 in 1830 to \$7,500 in 1835 to nearly \$9,000 in 1838.¹⁵

As the traffic increased along the canal, the company went ahead with its plans to

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construct a series of locks at Weldon to provide passage for boats from the canal to the Roanoke River. The basin at Weldon was a major transfer point along the canal, but it was separated from the river by 1,800 feet and a fall of 51 feet. The basin had been purposely isolated from the river below it, not only because of the great expense of a flight of locks, but also because Virginia wished to discourage batteaux and their contents from continuing down the Roanoke to North Carolina markets. In 1828, in response to considerable pressure, and after assuring itself that Norfolk would get practically all of the trade anyway, the company agreed to build the Weldon locks. Work began in 1828 but proceeded slowly amid changes in engineers and disputes over specifications. The final plans called for six wooden locks, 18 feet wide and 85 feet long with a lift of 8 feet each. In November, 1832, the first three locks were completed, but the remaining three were not finished until the fall of 1834. Unfortunately, shortly after completion of the locks, the Roanoke River flooded, breaking the sides of the lower locks. The company directors decided against rebuilding the damaged locks, arguing that produce could be carried from the basin, by land, just as easily as it could through the locks.¹⁶ Thus a costly, time-consuming, and controversial aspect of the Roanoke Canal was aborted without functioning for any significant period.

Even as the Weldon locks were being completed, a new development in transportation--the railroad--signaled the beginning of the end for the canal and the inland navigation along the Roanoke River. In 1833 the Petersburg Railroad reached Weldon and took most of the trade that formerly went down river through the Dismal Swamp Canal to Norfolk. In 1837 another railroad, the Portsmouth and Roanoke, reached the Weldon area. And in 1840 two more lines, the Wilmington and Raleigh (renamed the Wilmington and Weldon Rail Road) and the Raleigh and Gaston, through a branch line, entered Weldon.¹⁷

Although the railroad did not spell an immediate end for the navigation system, it was clear that both the navigation and the canal were reduced to mere collectors of goods for the railroads. Neither could compete independently. As early as 1838, the president of the Roanoke Navigation Company, Samuel Pannell, reflected ruefully on the reality of the age:

At no period of our existence have the means of sending produce from home to any market been so great, or the transportation so cheap. The Roanoke region by means of [the Petersburg Railroad and the Portsmouth Railroad] now has access to any and all the markets of the Union; to predict which, twenty years ago, would have been considered madness. The improvements however, of the period, more particularly, the great revolutions which have been wrought by the use of steam power, have disclosed the fact that our sluice navigation is unsuited to and insufficient for the wants and convenience of the country through which our rivers flow. Our improvements were planned and constructed before the advantages of steam power were generally known. Were they now to be made, there can be no doubt ¹⁸our funds might be more advantageously applied for ourselves, and for the country.

Trade along the canal and parts of the navigation system persisted at least until the early 1850s. However, it was clear the days of canalling along the Roanoke River were

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over. In 1859, the North Carolina General Assembly granted permission to the Roanoke Navigation Company, to discontinue the use of the waterway, to sell its real estate, and to pay its debts.¹⁹ The General Assembly of 1874-1875 passed an act which allowed for the dissolution of the company, which went into the hands of a receiver on March 18, 1875.²⁰ The receiver then sold the canal properties to R. T. and S. P. Arrington, of Warrenton, North Carolina; General William Mahone, of Petersburg, Virginia; and Senator J. D. Cameron, of Pennsylvania. These men applied for a charter under the name of the "Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company," which was granted by the General Assembly on March 2, 1885.²¹ From the start, however, there was no intention of restoring navigation to the old canal. Instead, the incorporators planned to utilize the canal as a source of water power for manufacturing and utilities. In January, 1890, the company set its plans into motion by widening the canal, constructing head gates, and repairing the canal walls, the locks, and the aqueduct which had not been used in nearly 40 years. At a site about 200 yards above the old wooden locks at Weldon (which were abandoned and lay in ruins) the company erected its first manufacturing facilities in 1892--a corn mill, a 72-foot grain elevator, a cotton-seed oil mill, and a cotton gin and²² baling plant. Four additional mill sites were chosen for development along the canal.²³

But the plans of the company went largely unfulfilled. In the late 1880s, another group of businessmen sought to exploit the Great Falls section of the Roanoke River as a power source. This group, headed by Major Thomas Emry, was granted a charter on August 18, 1890, under the corporate name of the Great Falls Water Power, Manufacturing, and Improvement Company (later changed to the Roanoke Rapids Power Company). This company built a short power canal to run several manufacturing enterprises that were developed along the river at what is now the town of Roanoke Rapids.²⁴

Throughout the 1890s, the two companies were able to coexist using the same source of power because the volume of their business was small. However, after 1899, the Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company began to furnish power to companies other than itself. It constructed powerhouses at the locks at Roanoke Rapids and at the corn mill in Weldon and supplied power to several cotton mills in Roanoke Rapids and Weldon as well as to residential areas of these towns. As the Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company expanded its business, it required more power to meet and fulfill its contracts. In 1901 it extended its wing dam from the original 100 feet used by the old navigation company entirely across the channel of Little River, a tributary of the Roanoke. This new dam did not interfere immediately with the Roanoke Rapids Power Company's operations until the low-water period of 1907. At that time, Major Emry of the Roanoke Rapids Power Company asked for an injunction against the Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company's use of the wing-dam, claiming his company's riparian rights were being violated.

In 1909 the Halifax County Superior Court ruled that the intentions of the 1885 charter to the Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company gave it unlimited use of the river waters. However, the plaintiff (the Roanoke Rapids Power Company) appealed and the North Carolina Supreme Court reversed this decision, arguing that the charter did not confer a monopoly to the defendant but instead granted permission to use the water power of the river in a reasonable manner. The final decision was read in 1912.²⁵

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The Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company, unable to meet its obligation and reluctant to operate on a reduced supply of power, closed down its operations. The wing-dam was destroyed and the canal was allowed to fill with silt and debris; however, parts of the canal were kept open. The powerhouses at the middle locks (near Roanoke Rapids) and at the Weldon Basin were kept in operation by a successor company, the Roanoke River Development Company. Both stations were operating as late as the mid-1920s. In 1933 the city of Weldon bought the old corn mill and office for use as a recreation center. This complex is now abandoned. The entire canal system lies dormant now, no longer used for transportation or as a power source, although its seven mile contains some of the most impressive industrial and engineering sites in the state.

¹North Carolina, A Guide to the Old North State. Federal Writers' Project, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 475.

²Trout, William, "The Roanoke Navigation," unpublished manuscript on file at Survey Unit, Division of Archives and History, 1968, 1. Hereinafter cited as Trout, "The Roanoke Navigation."

³Rice, Phillip M., "The Early Development of the Roanoke Waterway," North Carolina Historical Review, volume 31 (January, 1954), 52-58. Hereinafter cited as Rice, "The Early Development."

⁴Ibid, 60.

⁵Trout, "The Roanoke Navigation," 3-4.

⁶Stephenson, George, "Hamilton Fulton," unpublished manuscript on file at Survey Unit, Division of Archives and History, 1975, 1.

⁷Trout, "The Roanoke Navigation," 3-4.

⁸Board of Internal Improvements (North Carolina), Roanoke Navigation Company, 1821, 22.

⁹Ibid, 22-23.

¹⁰Ibid, 23-27. (The quality of Fulton's engineering skills can be fully appreciated in the detailed specifications set forth for the construction of the aqueduct.)

¹¹Ibid, 41.

¹²Board of Internal Improvements (North Carolina), Roanoke Navigation Company, 1822, 5.

¹³Ibid, 1823, 31.

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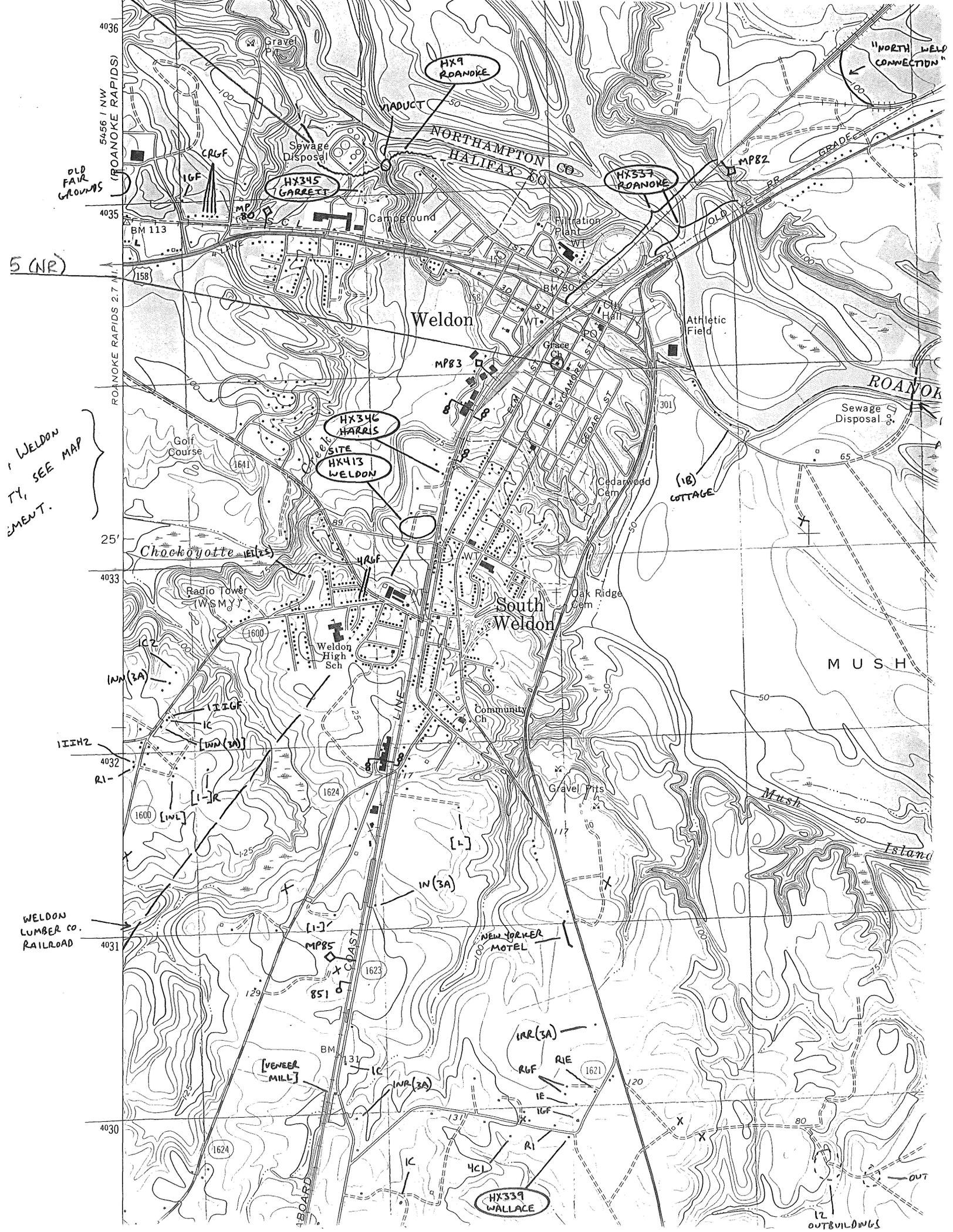
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- 14 Trout, "The Roanoke Navigation," 9a.
- 15 Hinshaw, Clifford R. "North Carolina Canals before 1860," North Carolina Historical Review, volume 25 (January, 1948), 40.
- 16 Ibid, 29, 37.
- 17 Rice, "The Early Development," 70-72.
- 18 Board of Internal Improvements (North Carolina), Roanoke Navigation Company, 1838, 34-35.
- 19 Laws of North Carolina, 1859, chapter 143.
- 20 Ibid, 1874-1875, 264.
- 21 Denny, Zeb R., "A Struggle for Power," A City's Heritage, 1972, 13-16; Laws of North Carolina, 1885, 904. Hereinafter cited as Denny, "A Struggle for Power."
- 22 Holmes, Joseph, "Waterways of North Carolina," North Carolina Geological and Economic Survey, Bulletin 8, 1899, 95.
- 23 Prospectus of Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company, 1892.
- 24 Denny, "A Struggle for Power," 14.
- 25 Ibid, 16.
- 26 Freeman, Ben C., Watkins, Harry C., North Carolina State University, School of Design, drawings, 21 pages, 1968, 14; Sanborn Map Company, Weldon (1893-1923); Roanoke Rapids (1915-1925).



4036
5456 / NW
(ROANOKE RAPIDS)
4035
ROANOKE RAPIDS 2.7 MI
25'
4033
4032
4031
4030

OLD FAIR GROUNDS

5 (NR)

WELDON TOWN, SEE MAP

WELDON LUMBER CO. RAILROAD

HX9 ROANOKE

HX345 GARRETT

HX337 ROANOKE

HX346 HARRIS

HX413 WELDON

HX339 WALLACE

"NORTH WELD CONNECTION"

Weldon

South Weldon

MUSH

Mush

Island

