

VLR-12/20/77 NRHP 3/25/80

Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Cat Rock Sluice of the Roanoke Navigation

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

.3 mile W of Brookneal corporate limits; in Staunton (Roanoke) River;  
.9 mile NW of U.S. Route 501/State Route 40 bridge over Staunton  
(Roanoke) River.

CITY, TOWN

Brookneal

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Fifth (W.C. Daniel)

STATE

Virginia

CODE  
51

COUNTY  
Campbell/Halifax

CODE  
031/083

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: None

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY (2) (see continuation sheet #1)

NAME (1) Mr. J.T. Davis

STREET & NUMBER  
P.O. Box 41

CITY, TOWN

Brookneal

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 24528

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Campbell County Courthouse/Halifax County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Rustburg/Halifax

STATE  
Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None previously recorded

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Cat Rock Sluice is at Staunton Scenic River Mile 9.85 (9.85 miles below the major Rt. 761 bridge at Long Island, and 0.85 miles above the U.S. 501 bridge at Brookneal). It begins at a deep cut about 10 feet wide, blasted through the south end of a wide rock ledge which extends across the main river channel. Blasting holes are visible at low water. On the south side of the sluice, parallel to the river and at right angles to the rock ledge, are the remains of a substantial stone wall about 6 feet thick and at least 5 feet high, which was probably originally continuous, from about 50 feet above the cut to 300 feet below it. This "towing wall" is still intact except in the vicinity of the rock cut, where it was probably damaged over the years by debris carried through the narrow sluice.

The sluice was designed to permit navigation through the rock ledge by batteaux; the towing wall not only helped to shunt the water into a single channel but allowed the boatmen, when ascending, to get out and pull their boats up the falls with a rope. Between major falls the ascending boats were poled; there was no continuous towpath along the river, only the relatively short towing walls at the major sluices. To force the river into a navigable channel, especially during low water, a large number of low dams of loose river rocks called "wing dams" were constructed along the route. These are only visible during low water and have not yet been mapped.

Most of the major sluices, with towing walls, however, have been mapped. There are at least eight other sites along the eleven miles of falls between Long Island and Brookneal; these are roughly similar to Cat Rock Sluice, with a main channel paralleled by a towing wall or wing dam. Some sites are not completely understood and will need further field work and excavation. In order to map the network of wing dams, low-altitude aerial photographs at extreme low water will be needed. A study of this sluice, towing wall, and wing dam network, probably the most extensive remaining in the country, should reveal a great deal of the techniques of riverbed navigation improvement a century and a half ago - techniques also used before the canal era on the James, Potomac, and many eastern rivers before railways supplanted river transportation in the Piedmont. Cat Rock Sluice is an excellent example of an advanced type (i.e., with a towing wall) of riverbed navigation improvement and can be reached by canoe or viewed from the north bank up river from Brookneal.

WET

# 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 checked="" 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

1827

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Samuel Pannill

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Cat Rock Sluice is one of the best preserved and most accessible components of the most extensive riverbed navigation complex for batteaux now known in this country. The 11-mile network of sluices and associated wing dams and towing walls was constructed by Samuel Pannill in 1827 for the Roanoke Navigation Company to permit the passage of poled river boats, called batteaux, through the falls of the Staunton, opening up the river as far as Salem (above Roanoke, Va.); 177 miles above its junction with the Dan. Constructed in the same substantial style as the stone buildings, walls, walks, and bridges on Pannill's plantation, Green Hill, a National Register property, the navigation works are still in good enough condition to be used by canoes. The major sluices, blasted through rock ledges, are paralleled by substantial stone walls called towing walls, used for hauling boats upstream. At the sluices and shallows along the route through the falls, there were many wing dams of piled river rocks to shunt water into the channel, especially at low water.

As most Piedmont rivers on the east coast, the Roanoke and its branches the Dan and Staunton enjoyed what was termed a "descending trade," with boats loaded with farm and mine products going downstream with the current to coastal markets (in this case, Norfolk). The boats were wooden craft about 60 feet long and 8 feet wide, with rudders or "sweeps" fore and aft and a crew ready to fend off boulders with metal-shod poles as they shot down the rapids and through the sluices. Typically, a proportion of boats would return light upstream with household goods and an augmented crew poling and rowing the entire distance, for there was no towpath for horse towing. Altogether, the Roanoke Navigation Company's works extended over more than 470 miles of river, including the Dan to Madison, N.C., 110 miles; the Banister to Meadville, 25 miles; the Staunton to Salem, 177 miles; and the upper (60 miles) and lower (100 miles) Roanoke River down to Albemarle Sound. In addition, to the sluice complex on the Staunton and a warehouse in Salem, the works included a canal at Danville, two short canals on the Roanoke near the state line, and a very substantial canal around the falls of the Roanoke from Roanoke Rapids to Weldon, N.C., with four locks and an aqueduct, now on the National Register. In addition, the Smith's River Navigation Company improved Smith's River for 50 miles, down to the Dan. The lower reaches of other branches of the Roanoke, Dan, and Staunton were also navigated (Corps of Engineers, 1976), but the full extent of navigation in the Roanoke basin has yet to be worked out, a task requiring more field work and local research.

(see continuation sheet #2)















