



## Mitigation Case Study: Pipemaker's Canal

For more than a decade, the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) has reviewed projects that have the potential to affect a series of drainage canals located throughout Savannah and Chatham County. Most of these were subject to compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act because of federal permitting through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As early as 2001, HPD review staff found in reviewing these projects that these non-transportation canals such as Pipemakers, Strawberry, and Hardin should be considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Although not a lot of information was available beyond the structures themselves, it was evident that the series of drainage canals formed a system that permitted the development of otherwise marshy or poorly drained wetlands. Therefore, it was our opinion that these drainage canals should be considered eligible under Criterion A, for association with the development of Savannah, and C, as structures. While they continued to serve their historic function of draining water, we understood that continued improvements to the canals were necessary in order to maintain them and increase their capacity.

In 2006, Chatham County Engineering Department proposed improvements to Pipemakers Canal that included doubling the width, dredging and slope work and the addition of maintenance roads. In consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, HPD entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Chatham County to mitigate the adverse effects that would result from this work. One of the mitigation measures was preparation of a written report concerning the history and development of Pipemakers Canal. Ellen I. Harris of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, Savannah for Chatham County Department of Engineering prepared this document entitled A Developmental History of Pipemakers Canal, Chatham County, Georgia. The report is very informative and contains key general background material as well as site-specific documentation. For example, while we originally thought the canals were primarily for development, it turns out that the major impetus was public health, with development following. Also, some of these canals were the result of one of the largest Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects in the state. Pipemakers Creek/Swamp was fully converted into a canal by 1930 and as suburbanization spread across Chatham County after World War II, the canal system was maintained and utilized to drain wet areas to build new subdivisions and accommodate new development.

The report illustrates just how important this network of non-transportation canals was in the history of Savannah, providing drainage for prevention of disease, for agricultural cultivation and for land development. In addition, it is a valuable tool in understanding a historic resource that is being altered both directly and indirectly as a result of modern development.