

Greetings Scouts! Do we have any history buffs out there? We are about to embark on a fantastic romp through some of the most storied and fascinating areas of our nation's history. Here's a few tidbits to wet your history whistle:

- Robert Frost traveled to the Dismal Swamp to commit suicide but was befriended by a local group of sportsmen who changed the course of Frost's life.
- Showboat Author, Edna Ferber experiences aboard the 122' x 34' converted log barge named the "James Adams Floating Theater", plied the Dismal Swamp canal bringing theater acts along the Albemarle Sound. The Showboat book and stage production, written as based on the Mississippi, was founded on the experiences of Ferber aboard the James Adams, including the tune Ol Man River.
- The Dismal Swamp Canal competed directly for commercial traffic with the Albemarle & Chesapeake Canal throughout most of the early days after each canal was viable for commercial traffic. Both canals were eventually purchased at bargain prices by the Federal Government with the Albemarle & Chesapeake winning out as the primary commercial traffic route.
- The Dismal Swamp canal is part of the Atlantic intercostals waterway that extends for 3,000 miles along the Atlantic seaboard and Gulf of Mexico, connecting Boston Mass to Brownsville TX.
- Merchants Millpond is over 190 years old. It outlasted many competing Mill operations by have a larger body of water, 760 acres, that assured it continued to operate even in times of drought.
- Merchants Millpond new visitors center is 6,500 sq ft costing 3.6 million dollars. It incorporates many LEED environmental minimally impacting designs including geothermal heat pumps, rainwater collection system, natural light capturing designs, and many low water use devices. The visitor center has over 220,000 visits per year and is the premier center for NC State Parks.
- The original boundary of the Dismal Swamp encompassed 1.28 million acres and has been inhabited by humans for over 13,000 years.
- In the early days of the Dismal Swamp Canal, it was determined that it needed more water flow. To accomplish that, a canal was dug to get water from Lake Drummond, titled "Feeder Ditch". The name and canal remain today.
- Along the Dismal canal where it intersects the state lines of NC and VA, a hotel was built around 1805. The hotel was frequently the location of lover's quarrels sometimes resulting in murders. Gambling also was a common outlaw activity at the hotel. Arrests were rarely made as the suspects simply moved to the opposite side of the main salon, which straddled the state lines, to avoid a sheriff's jurisdiction.

Doesn't facts like that just make you want to wiggle! I attached several links but my favorite is the 12 min video titled "The Great Dismal Swamp Canal" on the wn.com page. Another is the map on the nao.usace.army.mil page that really helped me picture the canals and swamp locations.

See you soon,

T2860SM

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<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-Intracoa.html>

http://www.nao.usace.army.mil/Technical%20Services/Operations%20Branch/atlantic%20intracoastal%20waterway/Images/AIWW_Layout_Front_crop.pdf

<http://www.architectmagazine.com/green-design/merchants-millpond-visitor-center.aspx>

<http://www.tidewaternews.com/2009/10/23/merchants-millpond-visitor-center-now-open/>

http://wn.com/Dismal_Swamp_Canal

Historical Time Line: Dismal Swamp Canal

1728	Colonel William Byrd II first proposes a canal.	1878	Company is nearly bankrupt, canal deteriorates, and assets are sold.
1787	Virginia authorizes canal construction.	1892	Lake Drummond Canal & Water Company takes over.
1790	North Carolina authorizes canal construction. The Dismal Swamp Canal Company begins digging. The causeway road opens, eventually becoming U.S. 17.	1896 - 1899	Major improvements made, locks cut to two. The United States Government is in the process of establishing a toll-free inland waterway along the East Coast.
1793	The Dismal Swamp Canal Company begins digging.	1913	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers takes over the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal.
1805	The full length of the canal opens.	1925	Congress authorizes purchase of Dismal Swamp Canal.
1812	The Feeder Ditch supplying water is cut. Number of locks is expanded from two to five or six.	1929	Purchase is finally made for the same price as the Albemarle and Chesapeake

			Canal, \$500,000.
1814	A 20-ton decked vessel passes for the first time. President James Monroe visits. Canal built connecting Dismal Swamp to Northwest River and Currituck Sound. Some remnants still exist.	1933	Canal Dredged to 50 feet wide, 9 feet deep.
1818	President James Monroe visits.	1933 - 1934	New U.S. 17 drawbridges completed at Deep Creek and South Mills.
1820	Canal built connecting Dismal Swamp to Northwest River and Currituck Sound. Some remnants still exist.	1935	New Control spillway built on feeder ditch.
1827 - 1829	Canal widened and deepened. Locks converted from wood to stone. President Andrew Jackson visits. Lake Drummond Hotel, the "Halfway House," opens.	1940 - 1941	New concrete and steel locks built at Deep Creek and South Mills.
1843	Gilmerton Canal , no longer in use, is made north of Deep Creek.	1974	Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge established by Congress. Navigational needs of the canal are made secondary to water conservation needs of the swamp.
1856	Turner's Cut completed, eliminating twists of Joyce's Creek.	1988	Dismal Swamp Canal placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is also noted as a Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.
1859	Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal opens	2000	Deep Creek Lock chamber dewatered and major repairs performed to the lock and

			gates.
1861 - 1865	Civil War takes toll on both canals. Ships sunk in Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal to block.	2004	Dismal Swamp Canal included in the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.
1866	Passenger service starts on Dismal Swamp Canal.		

Intracoastal Waterway c.3,000 mi (4,827 km) long, partly natural, partly artificial, providing sheltered passage for commercial and leisure boats along the U.S. Atlantic coast from Boston, Mass. to Key West, S Fla., and along the Gulf of Mexico coast from Apalachee Bay, NW Fla., to Brownsville, Tex., on the Rio Grande. The toll-free waterway, authorized by Congress in 1919, is maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers at a minimum depth of 12 ft (4 m) for most of its length; some parts have 7-ft (2.1-m) and 9-ft (2.7-m) minimum depths. Among some of the waterway's most often used canals along the Atlantic route are the Chesapeake & Delaware and the Chesapeake & Albemarle; along the Gulf route the most used are the New Orleans-Rigolets Cut, the Port Arthur-Corpus Christi Channel, and the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal at New Orleans. The separate Okeechobee Waterway, S Fla., crosses the Florida peninsula. Plans to build a canal across N Florida to link the Atlantic and Gulf sections were blocked in 1971 by a presidential order to prevent potential environmental damage. Many miles of navigable waterways connect with the coastal system, including the Hudson River-New York State Canal System, the Chesapeake Bay, the sounds of North Carolina, the Savannah River, the Apalachicola River, and the entire Mississippi River system. The Intracoastal Waterway has a good deal of commercial activity; barges haul petroleum, petroleum products, foodstuffs, building materials, and manufactured goods.