



Clinton County Trails

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CLINTON COUNTY FLOODED IN 1904

The following accounts of floods in Clinton County in the spring of 1904 were gleaned from local newspapers. Wilma Sowle discovered the articles on the disaster. With floods so much in the news lately, it seems an opportune time to recall this one.

● *The Clinton Republican*, Thursday, March 24, 1904.

Bridges Going Up!

The bridge across Stoney Creek on section 31, Bengal, was a foot and a half above the abutments yesterday morning. Highway Commissioner Sutton borrowed some chains of **John Halfman** and chained the bridge to trees conveniently located on either side of the creek.

● *The Clinton Republican*, Thursday, March 31, 1904

The warm weather last week, followed by rain Thursday night and Friday, created havoc throughout Michigan. St. Johns fared better than most places, but no trains have been running on the Suburban since last Thursday by the washing out of culverts between Lansing and DeWitt; and the D & M [Detroit & Milwaukee RR] had to abandon the Ovid Bridge Saturday on account of weakened abutments; and washouts between Saranac and Pewamo put that part of the road out of use from Thursday night until Tuesday noon. St. Johns rural carriers had many thrilling experiences. **Floyd Bingham**, of No. 9, tried to get to Maple Rapids Friday. He found three bridges washed out and two more too dangerous to cross and had to come back.

John Hugus, route No. 40, Essex and Greenbush, had

to get out in the water and back his horse away from a washed out bridge and change his route. **Burton Clark**, carrier No. 1, found two washouts Friday. One was near **Joshua Eldridge's**, north and west of St. Johns; the other near the farm of **F.W. Redfern**. Mr. Clark also found sluices out near the Frink schoolhouse. In spite of high water, he made his entire trip.

Archie Chant, on route No. 2, encountered no washouts, but in some places the water came up to the box of his wagon.

Will Holmes, carrier on route No. 3, was obliged to change part of his route to avoid washouts at Cooper's Corners in Bengal, the water being three or four feet deep on the bridge.

Cassius Sevey, on route 6, tells us that the water on Spaulding's Marsh in east Bingham covers the road entirely. Farmers in that vicinity say they never knew the water to be so high as at the present time. Mr. Sevey found one washout near the **Theron Shaver** farm in South Ovid.

Charles Johnson, carrier 5, cut out three miles of his route Friday. Culverts near **Perry Geger's** and **James Dunn's** were washed out. At the latter place Mr. Johnson was obliged to call upon his patrons to help him lead his horse over the washout.

Newton Smith, of No. 7, got into the water and came near losing \$45 money order money and his mail. He had to fasten his pouch up in the top of his wagon. He found six washouts Friday.

The worst place was on section 22 near the Jesse postoffice.

The Scott Road north of St. Johns is covered with water for sixty rods, and carrier **George Kelly**, on route 8, was obliged to cross a creek on planks, the bridge being washed away.

The approach of mild spring weather last week proved too much for the ordinarily peaceful Maple River and its tributaries in the vicinity of Ovid, and they assumed such rage that it looked for a time as if Ovid would be swept by its torrents into a thing of the past.

The "flats" in the southern limits of the town are usually under water in the spring, but never before were they so deeply covered. The water closely approached the foot of the large bridge south of town and swept under it with such force that the abutment of the bridge was destroyed, and had it not been repaired at once, the bridge itself would undoubtedly have been washed away.

The high road west of town was totally submerged the last of the week, and even now travel there is avoided. About three miles west of town, near Shepardsville, a bridge has been completely destroyed.

At **James Woodworth's** west of town, it was necessary to break the ice to keep the dam from giving way.

Residents in the southern part of the town suffered considerable loss on account of the water washing through the lower stories of their houses. Many were unable for awhile to leave their homes, save by boat.

Wilbur Church had a lot of stock loaded as usual Friday, but the condition of the Ovid Railroad Bridge prevented trains getting across the Maple River, and he had to unload the next day. Late Saturday night the bridge was sufficiently strengthened so the train could pass, and the stock was taken out.

Saturday morning Miss **Bessie VanDyne**, a former Ovid girl, and **William Gilmore** of Owosso came near being drowned. Mr. Gilmore and Miss VanDyne had started from Jerome Avenue to view the flooded portion on the north side of the river in a boat belonging to **A.L. Arnold**, and as the current was so swift, it was impossible to stay in the more quiet water near the shore. They were swept down the stream against the Washington Street Bridge. As they came near the bridge, both stood up and grabbed the iron braces and were able to support themselves until help came.

In Duplain considerable damage was done by the high water last week along the Maple River. The Hudson Bridge south of the Colony was carried off rendering that road impassable. The road north and south of the Birmingham Bridge was badly washed out and was not travelled until Wednesday noon this week. The Armour Bridge was moved about 3" off its foundation, and the road was badly gullied out. Several rods of wire fence were destroyed, and wood, brush, and logs on the river flats went downstream.

At Merle Beach the water reached the highest point Friday and Saturday known for more than 40 years. Benches, plank

walks, and everything movable have been carried to all parts of the grounds. A traction engine which was being moved to Lankton's sawmill was delayed until Monday because the bridge near **Amiel Hugulet's** went out Friday. A bridge on **M.F. Trowbridge's** farm was carried away Friday after Mr. Trowbridge had taken the precaution to place an iron roller and a quantity of stone upon it. At Merle Beach crossing on the railroad, the water on both sides of the track is about 3 feet deep. **Herman VanDyke** reports two feet of water in his cellar.

Postmaster **Loomis** is determined to do his part toward furnishing the mail for the patrons of Merle Beach routes. When the Suburban and special mail carrier failed to bring the mail Monday, he borrowed a hand car from the section hands and went after the mail himself.

At South Watertown, the report that Delta Bridge had gone out was false. The bridge is still there, but it looks like a mere toy the water reaches so far beyond it.

Owing to the high water no one could either go out or come into Hubbardston. The high water has taken out every dam on Fish Creek but the Slocum and Bennet dam in this place, which seems to be in good shape at this writing.

On account of high water around Bath, there have been no trains on this division since Thursday, and Bath has felt rather isolated from the rest of the world.

● *The St. Johns News*, Thursday, March 24, 1904.

