



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum
Town of Deerpark Historian, P. O. Box 621, Huguenot, New York 12746
www.1863schoolhouse.org
(845) 856-2702—historian@townofdeerparkny.gov

June 2021

Vol. 18

No. 2

- **A Short History of Neversink River Floods**
- **News Articles about 19th & 20th Century Floods**
- **Flag Depository Box**
- **Historic Marker Project**

A Short History of Neversink River Floods

From time to time the area in the Neversink valley has been flooded, especially in the Tri-State area at the confluence of the Neversink and Delaware Rivers.

Official USGS flood records at Godeffroy have been recorded since 1937. Flooding prior to that time has been recorded in newspapers.

Editor's apologies for some of the pictures in the newsletter. They are not too clear since they originated from newspapers.



Swartwout Home 1955 Flood

New York Daily Herald, New York, NY December 12, 1878 Around Port Jervis

"Reports from all points in this vicinity show that immense damage has been done by the rains. Every bridge between Monticello and Mongaup Valley is gone. At Oakland Valley, on the line of the Port Jervis and Monticello Railroad, the flood has been very destructive. The Neversink River is overflowing and carrying away the suspension bridge at Paradise which values at \$4,000; also other bridges are being carried away, dwellings are flooded and families are driven from their homes. A large farm house and barn, owned by Mr. Skinner at Rose Point, (Cuddebackville), were completely destroyed. The farm was destroyed by a new channel being cut through it. The pens of Mr. Wehinger were washed away, together with twenty hogs...

"The river has risen about twelve feet, the highest known for many years. Two hundred thousand dollars will not repair the total damage in this neighborhood."



Port Jervis & Monticello RR Crew

The Port Jervis Union April 10, 1895 Spring Freshets Creating Havoc in Many Places

"The most disastrous flood that has visited this section for 17 years is now prevailing. Since seven o'clock this morning the rise of water in the Neversink has been very rapid. One observer reported a rise of four feet from 7 to 9 o'clock and another of two feet from 9 to 11 o'clock. The fields, along the entire course of the river from Westbrookville to Tri-States, are flooded...

"The Neversink and Delaware rivers have overflowed their banks and fields for miles along their courses are submerged. Farms along the Neversink valley to Oakland (Valley) have great damages from destruction of buildings, erosion of soil and

otherwise. A large bridge across the Basha Kill was swept away as well as many smaller ones in the vicinity of Huguenot and Sparrowbush, including the foot bridge of the Pipe Line company.”

§

The Evening Gazette

September 30, 1902

Crops damaged by floods

“The heavy rains caused floods in the Delaware and Neversink Rivers and much damage to crops to farmers along the latter stream. The rise in the Neversink was rapid, The water reaching its highest stage at noon yesterday.

“The farm lands along the river of Mrs. F.A.Tymeson, C.J. VanInwegen, Benjamin C. Swartwout, the Witlocks and Henry G Cuddeback were submerged for the space of six hours and corn, buckwheat and pumpkins were destroyed or carried off.....”

§

The Evening Gazette

March 8, 1904

The Neversink Valley

Badly Flooded

The Gorge at Godeffroy's

“A gorge formed above the highway bridge at Godeffroy's Jan. 28th and has been there since, weakened somewhat by the thaw two days ago. Another gorge formed above it yesterday from up-river ice and about nine o'clock this morning the mass of ice started. The ice stopped just before it reached the Summitville railroad bridge and is now piled high between the two bridges.

“The water broke over the banks on both sides of the river and is spreading over a great area of farmland and the gorge is

stranded on the river bottom.

“The water poured over the Neversink Dyke and at last advice was running down between the canal and railroad banks to a depth of 18 inches and spreading over the farms below. Mr. William Norris was at his barn and Mrs. Norris ran to their store-house on high ground when she saw the water coming. Boats were soon in use and the residents of Godeffroy were soon able to get about. The water will find its way to the Neversink through Spring Brook at Huguenot.”

• Editor's Note—The ice jam caused the iron railroad bridge over the Neversink to slip from its footings. A cable wrapped around a tree and saved it from heading downstream.



*Port Jervis & Monticello RR Bridge
Ice Jam at River crossing — Godeffroy*

§

Middletown Times Herald

July 23, 1938

Water 9 Feet Above Normal

“Water left the banks of the Neversink at a turn a short distance below the Cuddebackville bridge, crossed the Grove and the Godeffroy-Graham road, in the grove of Camp Achvah. The force was so great at the Graham Bridge that the roadway was washed away in a short time. The water level at

that bridge was twelve feet, approximately nine feet above normal...

“The Neversink which rises and falls more rapidly than the Delaware in times of heavy rain began to leave its banks at about eleven am yesterday and continued to rise at an average of one foot every two hours until four in the afternoon. The swift flow below the Cuddebackville bridge on Route 209 provided a barrier for the slow moving Basha's Kill where it empties into the river and forced the water over the lowland fields. By noon the roadway leading to Otisville was covered by three feet of water for a stretch of about seventy-five feet. Many cars and trucks attempted to pass through during the next few hours, but most of them stalled and were pushed to higher ground by volunteers, who waded through to their rescue. The road was closed by State Highway Department employees at 12:30 pm.”



Godeffroy/Guymard Bridge

§

Rescue Helicopter



Tri-States Flood '55

A pictorial record of human courage during trying times

August 1955

"It had been a dry summer. ...then on August 12th and 13th this area was blessed with seven inches of rain. [Editor's note: On Wednesday night, August 17th and Thursday morning, August 18th, Hurricane Diane hit the Tristate area.] The ground was pretty well saturated when on the 18th of August it started in earnest. In just about 24 hours the Tri-State area had 8.32 inches of rain. All the brooks and creeks that normally trickled into the Delaware River, became a raging menace to life and property...

"The Tri-State section where the Neversink and Delaware met...suffered the most damage, thanks to the Delaware River backing into the Neversink. The Delaware breached a dike laying open the West End and Riverside areas...[Editor's note: As well as Sparrowbush.]

"Sparrowbush took major damage from the Delaware River and local brooks. The fierce waters ripped homes from their foundations, tore up roadways, highways and bridges, and made Main Street a roaring stream. Automobiles floated in the Eddy Farm parking lot. Stranded residents were rescued by boat, helicopter and Army Amphibious Ducks. [Editor's note: This year's Deerpark Diaries are about the Neversink River, the 1955 Sparrowbush Delaware River flood will be another issue.]

"As the Delaware River backed up into the Neversink River at Tri-State, flooding con-

tinued upstream through Huguenot, Godeffroy, Cuddebackville and well beyond Oakland Valley. Homes and farmlands along the Neversink were inundated. Roads and bridges became impassable for days. Residents were rescued by boat and helicopters

"Summer camps took a severe beating. It was Parents' Day at most summer camps when the flood hit. Many camps were cut off, such as Jubilee Ranch (Godeffroy) where the children were rescued by helicopter. They had exciting tales to tell when they returned home."

There were tremendous amounts of damage throughout the entire region. Estimates are unclear, but some statistics show the possibility of a billion dollars (1955 dollars) in damage along the entire east coast. The huge amounts of damage which occurred along the Atlantic coastal area, caused the name Diane to be retired from the Atlantic hurricane name list.



The Neversink River rampages over its banks . . . and the bridge . . . at Huguenot, N. Y. It was several days before the water had receded enough so that the bridge could be used again.

§

Union Gazette

January 28, 1976

Ice Cuts Power, Floods Area

By Doug Hay

"Cuddebackville residents lost their power, streams and riv-

ers surged and yielded their ice and volunteer firemen and public works crews...put in another busy night fighting surface water problems.

"An ice jam and surge on the Neversink River took down some H-frame primary line structures, and Orange & Rockland Utilities had to cut the line free because of the hazard to the transmission system, according to a utility spokesman.

"About 35 customers on Prospect Hill, Franke and Big Pond Roads, in Cuddebackville have been without power since 10:42 last night, the spokesman said. The estimated 8,000 feet of downed line should be restored by 3 or 4 pm today, he predicted.

"The thaw and ice break-up caused the usual precautions at low-lying points along rivers and streams..."



Ice Along the Neversink River

§

Union Gazette

February 12, 1981

Deerpark declares emergency

"Deerpark Supervisor Kehlenbeck issued the following statement this morning:

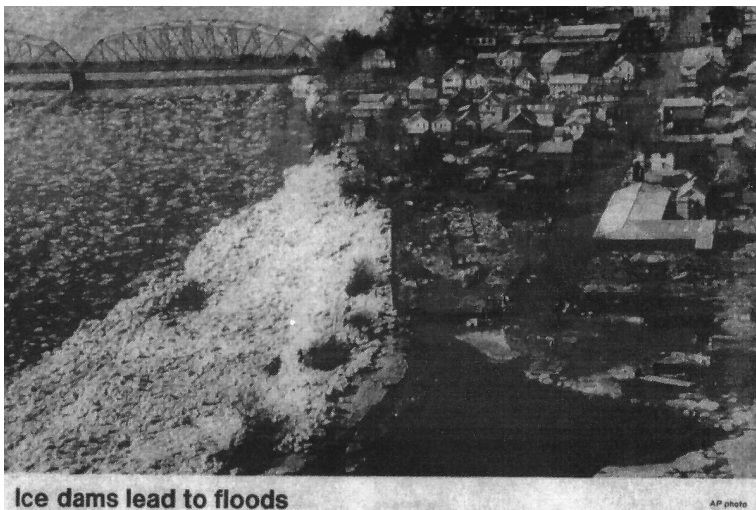
"Due to the flood conditions in the Town of Deerpark and the difficulties that arrive therefrom affecting the people and property in the town, Supervisor

John Kehlenbeck has determined that the public safety and general welfare of the inhabitants of the town and visitors thereto will be adversely affected. It is deemed necessary to command and call out all town policemen, constables and firemen to fulfill their duties and labors in order to control any and all disorders that may arise and further, to alleviate to the best of their ability any resulting harm that may arrive therefrom.

"Therefore, I, John Kehlenbeck, Supervisor of the Town of Deerpark, Orange County, hereby declare the Town of Deerpark to be in a state of emergency, pursuant to Section 24 of Chapter 640 of the law of 1978.

"Therefore, pursuant to such declaration of emergency I am: (1) prohibiting all vehicular and pedestrian traffic, except for residents and emergency vehicles and personnel in the Skinner Lane, Riversedge, Doverkill, Maple Avenue Mobil Park, areas of the Town.

"Any persons evacuated from their homes shall not return to them until permission has been granted by the Town of Deerpark police."



Ice dams lead to floods

Aerial view of ice jams at the mouth of the Neversink River causing flooding in the Tri-State area of Port Jervis and the Town of Deerpark.

February 12, 1981

What's New!

U.S. Flag Disposal Box



U. S. Flag Disposal Box

Located at Town Hall Huguenot

Many Americans proudly fly the U.S. flag at their homes and places of work, but what do you do with it when it's old and tattered and you're ready for a new one? Don't throw it in the trash like any other old item--that's considered disrespectful.

Sometime in June a U. S. Flag Disposal Box will be installed at the Deerpark Town Hall, 420 Route 209, Huguenot. An old mailbox was given to the Town of Deerpark Museum for this purpose. Local artists, Susan Miiller and Joan Kehlenbeck, decorated the mailbox with patriotic themes.

The used flags will be collected by the VFW and given the proper flag disposal ceremony.

U.S. Flag on the Moon

On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong placed the first U.S. flag on the moon, as part of the Apollo moon, the first manned landing. Five moon landings from mission Apollo 12 (November 19, 1969), Apollo 14 (February 5, 1971), Apollo 15 (July 30, 1971), Apollo 16 (April 21, 1972), Apollo 17 (December 13, 1972), resulted in five more flags being planted on the surface of the moon.

Over the past 50 years, the colors of all of the flags have faded to white because of the direct sunlight and lack of atmosphere.



§

A New Historic Marker Project

Tom Faggione, Chair of the Recreation Committee, the Deerpark Highway Department and Norma Schadt, Town Historian are collaborating on a project to restore and paint all the Historic Markers in the Town.

The plan includes involving Scouts and other youth groups to help paint the 50+ signs, thereby they will learn first-hand about the history of the Town.

A station for sign painting is set up at the Grange Building, 35 Grange Road, Huguenot.