Gilberton's big flood hit in September 1924

Tuesday, September 30, 1924
Headline: "Heaviest Rainfall in Years Did Considerable Damage in This Section."

A record-breaking rainfall which began September 28 and continued all day Monday accumulated to almost seven inches within forty-eight hour period.

The previous record 3.5 inches on August 31, 1888 was long remembered. Gilberton, known for the past twenty-five years as the "Venice of Schuylkill," well noted that the borough was experiencing the worst flood in its history.

Three squares in the east ward were inundated and houses on the south side of Main Street were mired in a veritable sea of water. Mahanoy Plane also reported big floods.

The heavy rainfall caused an almost total cessation of mining operations.

Mountain streams were raised to proportions of little creeks and despite advanced preparations on the part of the coal company officials to guide the streams away from mine openings, the water found its way into underground workings and caused much damage. The company officials were, therefore, menaced.

Benton Run mine was so badly flooded that no attempt was made to start mine operations. At the Tunlaw Bridge Mine floods compelled a shut down at 9 o'clock, two hours after starting time. At 11 o'clock the Mahanoy City and North Mahanoy mines were slogging with the increasing waters, and dams were being hastily constructed in an effort to keep the main gateways free from the flood which threatened to fill up the colliery. In several sections of both mines men were forced to abandon their working places and return home. At the Lehighton, Neck Valley and Sanfield Collieries underground workings became so great that orders to evacuate all cutters was given at 11 o'clock that morning.

Colliery officials reported that conditions were the worst in many years.

Many new mine breaches appeared on the surface as the rain soaked earth over roiled and gave way and dropped into the underground openings.

The New Boston and Morea Collieries of the Madeira Hill Company were removed due to the heavy pressure of the water.

The Schuylkill Valley Railroad Company was abandoned and trolley service was cut off between the town and Wiggins.

Trolley tracks at Gilberton were covered to a depth of six feet or more and traffic on the Main Street was abandoned for several hours. The East Mahanoy Junction for a mile and a half was under water, and several homes being more adaptable for the purpose than the dumpy cars. The Reading Railroad reported that there were several washouts in the broad divisions but southbound trains ran between twenty and thirty minutes late but there was no damaging washouts along the railroad in that section.

Gilberton is suffering from one of the worst floods in its whole wet history.

The greater part of the town on the west side is submerged and people were marooned in their homes under several feet of water. A few homes were abandoned and the people unable to get into them. The same conditions prevailed along the Reading Railroad on the Dripps side. The people were shut out from the traffic over the streets there and the only way they could get to Gilberton was by foot travelling up the Dripps railroad siding to the main line back down to the Reading tracks to the crossing of the flatland but this was a very dangerous railroad route. The bridge which crosses the creek was closed and roses and chains were used in an effort to save a pipe line that crossed the creek at that point. The tracks were stopped by the people of upper Long Run. To get over to the trolley tracks was out of the question.

The trolley track through the main street of Gilberton was under several feet of water, the depth varying at different spots. Water in several pieces was on the first floors of homes and much suffering ensued. Drivers from down the valley points wishing to get to Mahanoy City were forced to go over Shamokin way.

At Mahanoy Plane the eastern end of and along Water Street and up around the heavy properties was under water.

The water from the Frackville Mountain was coming in torrents down the Frackville railroad and running over the railroad crossing at the foot of the hill, the stream being too great for the culverts to take. Outside of numerous slight washouts throughout Frackville the town had not suffered any serious damage from the storm.

Real flood conditions prevailed in the Linden Street-Calumet Street section of Mahanoy City where many cellars were flooded and other damage due to torrents which swept down both streets.

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At Maitland the water was up around the houses on the back street and crested from fifteen to two square feet of the Mahanoy railroad crossing eastward. At Mahanoy Plane at the eastern end and along Water Street and up around the heavy properties was under water.

The water had spread out in this section and taken a course over the upper end of Water Street. On Bridge Street the water in the creek was up to the bridge and was still rising.

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