

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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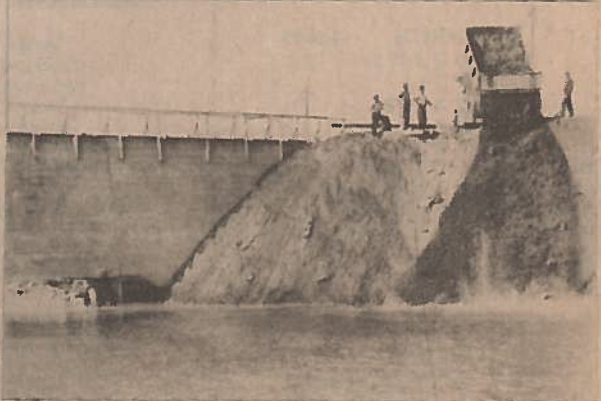
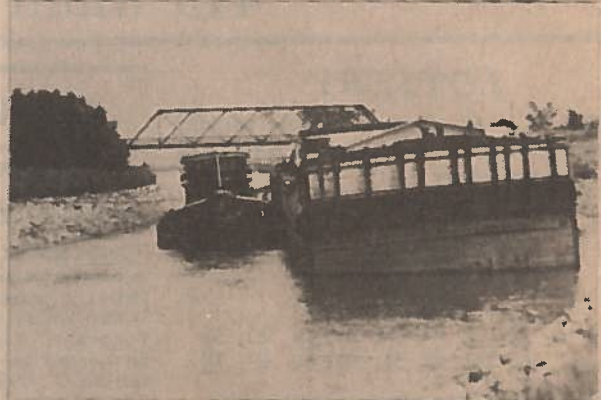
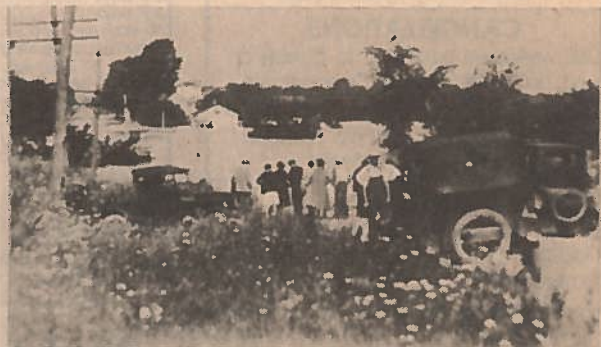
CANAL BANK OF 1927

With the emergency closing of the Albion Eagle Harbor Road in the Towns of Albion and Gaines, it ought to mind that deep trouble occurred in this immediate vicinity once before. This time it's the highway culvert over Otter Creek with a 23-foot deep hole like a well, from the road surface downward. Two youths walking along the road discovered it. The combination of old mortar and erosion have caused serious enough damage that the hole structure must be replaced.

It was sixty-five years ago that just to the north of the present problem, the canal broke where Otter Creek flows under it through another culvert. Because of the geographic terrain, high embankments of earth and concrete support the canal much above the level of Otter Creek. Early in August 1927 two boys who had been walking along the canal bank at that site noticed what appeared to be a small leak. (Sound familiar?) Upon arriving at Eagle Harbor they reported their discovery to Leon Walters, the bridge tender, but before any state officials or equipment could arrive on the scene the south bank had collapsed. A large piece of concrete which plunged down, blocked the southern opening of the culvert through which Otter Creek flows. Within minutes water started backing up Otter Creek which in turn flooded hundreds of acres of fertile land to the south. An inland lake two miles long and a half mile wide was reported south of the canal along Otter Creek. In places this water was fifty feet deep. It was believed that muskrats digging in the canal embankment caused the leak which grew bigger and bigger from the great pressure of water.

The house of "Skinny" Porter and another house next to it were under water up to the second floors. The residents of these marooned houses were rescued after spending a night in upper rooms. About one-half mile south of the gully, ran the tracks of the BL&R electric trolley which were under five feet of water. Trolley passengers were transported by autos, during this flooding, between the Gaines Basin Road and Eagle Harbor stops.

Stop gates on the Canal were closed as soon as possible shutting off other levels of the canal. This however, meant that canal navigation was tied up west of Rochester until the damage was repaired. Over one hundred feet of the canal embankment was washed away in the disaster. It took more than one hundred workmen with steam shovels, electrically operated concrete mixers, pile drivers,



ers, other machines and six weeks of steady labor to repair the canal bank.

The three photos here show the 1927 calamity. The first shows the Albion-Eagle Harbor Road looking west at the gully which is flooded, with curiosity seekers and their autos in the foreground. The second photo shows a tug and barge which went aground because the canal simply emptied out. The third photo shows the repair work in progress on the canal bank.