

Many Other Storms Recalled By Former Resident

Cloudbursts Not Uncommon in Area, History Reveals

(Bert Mason, now a resident of Portland, but for many years a resident and store owner in Ione, compiled from files and from memory this record of some of the major storms to hit Morrow county. In most cases, streets referred to are in Ione.)

I have heard several early residents of the Heppner vicinity tell of a cloudburst which flooded Hinton creek very soon after the town of Heppner was started. That flood destroyed growing crops, fences, etc., and I have been informed by men who witnessed this flood that much more water went down Willow creek than during the 1903 Heppner flood.

December, 1883—

Saw 36 inches of snow over Morrow county, this went off in a warm Chinook. Two aged men were living along a small tributary of Clark's canyon, they were alarmed and tried to save some pigs which were penned in the small channel. Both lost their lives.

June, 1885—

A cloudburst occurred on upper Rhea creek which destroyed most growing crops and fences.

June 14, 1888—

A small cyclone destroyed a cottonwood grove along Willow creek and a small cow shed was ruined. Mrs. W. G. Brock was killed while trying to save a calf from the shed. She was the mother of seven children. Mrs. Ida Esteb, Ione, Mrs. Jack Hughes and Dan Brock of Heppner are members of the family.

A school house a few miles northeast of Lexington was destroyed, but the teacher was cyclone-wise and removed the children from the building. Three of Andrew Reaney's children and two others were badly injured and the building was completely destroyed and the materials carried away. Several farm properties were also damaged.

The same day a cloudburst occurred over Ione. A railroad grading camp, composed of local farmers, located about a half mile west of Ione lost much equipment and machinery in the storm. Another railroad camp further down the creek also lost much equipment and two men were nearly drowned.

June, 1891—

A cloudburst occurred on McKinney creek. Nearly all hay and growing crops, fences and bridges were destroyed.

July, 1903—

A short time after the Heppner flood of June 14, a flood which carried more water than passed through Ione the night of the Heppner flood, hit. The only damage was to fill wells and basements and leave a deposit of mud throughout the town. An epidemic of typhoid followed and a number of people were lost. Sam Warfield and his wife and a child were among the victims.

In 1906—

A Chinook wind melted 12 inches of snow at Ione and an hour after the wind struck, water was pouring over the bluff and

coming down Reitmann canyon. The lower portion of Ione was flooded and the basement of the Halvorsen and Mason store was filled. One week later the Chinook hit along the mountains and another flood occurred. This went around the south end of a dike which had been constructed after the Heppner flood, and came down 2nd and 3rd streets in Ione. Wagons and horses carried residents from houses.

In 1912—

A hail storm started about Mayville and covered a strip from 3 to 5 miles wide clear to the south end of Jordan butte. It destroyed most crops that had not been harvested and ended the harvest for many farmers who were harvesting a good crop, following a complete crop failure in 1911.

June 1, 1917—

Continued high waters had weakened the railroad bridge one mile above Morgan and the train carrying freight and cattle cars and passengers was running under slow orders. The section foreman was riding on the side of the engine to watch the track when it crashed through the weakened bridge and fell into the flooded creek. F. J. Heibelt was drowned and the fireman was carried down the stream for some distance. A reward was offered for the recovery of the body which was found by Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Broad two miles downstream from the wreck.

A hail storm broke over Ione and much of the wheat crop was destroyed. It covered a strip several miles wide as far north as Emigrant road. A few minutes after the hail storm had passed, a flood came down Reitmann canyon and flooded the full length of Ione's Main street. The flood left six inches of mud on sidewalks and nearly 18 inches in some garages. Nearly 100 sacks of sugar and some other merchandise in the store was overlooked and was soaked.

December, 1919—

From an item in the Ione Independent of the above date:

A COLD WAVE

We presume all Independent readers know that this section of the United States is at present experiencing some severe cold weather and very deep snow. It will not dilate at length. In Ione snow covers the ground to a depth of 20 inches and at 6 o'clock this morning the temperature was 25 degrees below zero, and 22 degrees below at 9 o'clock, about the same all along the line. Telephone advices this morning gives the temperature as 34 below with two feet of snow at Hardman and 45 below at Parker's Mill.

About 1920—

A cloudburst occurred over Cason canyon. The J. R. Nunnemaker family were living at a point very near where the store now stands at Ruggs when they heard the water and ran out of the house. Mr. Nunnemaker did not think the water dangerous and returned to the house. Mrs. Nunnemaker and three children ran



WRECKAGE AROUND THE METHODIST CHURCH is shown in this old panoramic photograph which was taken from about the corner of Gale and Church streets looking east up Hinton creek. The remains of the house in the foreground in front of the church is the same one that is shown in another picture taken from a different direction.

Some stories tell that this house washed in from its pre-flood location on Main street, but the exact site where it stood before the flood could not definitely be established. The scattered debris shows the height of the water in this section, a full two blocks above the creek.

down the road and were carried into Rhea creek.

September 13, About 1918

A cloudburst struck at the Doby and McCabe ranches and came down the canyon into Rhea creek. That was the highest water that had been seen in Rhea creek during the 52 years in which the Mason family had lived in a brick house on the bank of the creek. Crops were already harvested, but fences, bridges and many other items were carried away.

1934 or 1935—

A cloudburst occurred a few miles south of Heppner and went down Rhea creek destroying almost everything within its reach. It was the most damaging flood on the creek and the water was much higher at the Mason ranch than the ones a few years earlier. Had that water come down either Skinner creek, Balm fork or Donaldson canyon, Heppner might have had more history to record.

The following is taken from an editorial appearing in The Oregonian, Tuesday, June 16, 1903.)

THE HEPPNER HORROR

The news columns of The Oregonian, presenting a record of the events of the Pacific Northwest for more than half a century, have never chronicled a more terrible tale of disaster to our own people than that which is now coming in from the ruined and desolate remnant of the pretty and prosperous City of Heppner. So swift in its coming and so terrible in its consequences was this heartrending tragedy, which has still forever the voices of many of our fellow-men, that we sit dumb and appalled in its shadow.

The duty at this time is to extend immediate relief to those who have lost homes as well as friends and relatives. The City of Heppner was rich and prosperous. It is situated in a region of great natural resources, and will in time recover from the staggering blow it has just received. For the immediate present, however, assistance will be needed, and there will be no hesitancy in extending it. The disaster, coming like a bolt out of the blue, is of a nature so entirely foreign to anything previously experienced in this country that no human foresight could have guarded against it. The



COLLECTION SPOT FOR THE BELONGINGS of the victims of the water is shown in this photograph taken by Bert Sigsbee from the front of his photo studio which stood on the corner of Main and May streets. This view is looking west up May street where it bends around the foot of the hill to become Gale street. The buildings on the far side of the street are behind where the first

National Bank building now stands. Survivors are shown rummaging through the collection of trunks, dressers, pictures, barrels, bedding, etc., in an attempt to find something that belongs to their family. In many cases, the only belongings left to an entire family, was what they could salvage from these piles.

topography of the northwest shows occasional spots where centuries ago similar wild orgies of nature caused like results so far as forest and earth were effected, but not since civilized man wandered into the Pacific Northwest have the elements combined to leave such a trail of destruction in their path as now marks the banks of Willow creek. The tragedy is without an equal on the Pacific Coast. Let us hope it will never be paralleled.



ANOTHER VIEW LOOKING NORTH from about the center of the flood swept area. This picture is nearly the same as another smaller one in this section, but shows more of the area and also how clean the waters slicked off this section between Main street and the east bank of Willow creek. The two story brick building is the easily recognizable Case Apartment building, which was

then known as the Fair Building. The small building directly in front of it is sitting practically in the middle of what was then, and still is, Main street. It was washed in from some point further upstream. The hollow in the foreground was probably the basement of some home which was swept away, not even leaving a brick or a stone of the foundation.



WORKERS AND TEAMS GATHERING DEBRIS are shown in this old picture. The two story white house on the extreme left is still standing on the corner of Jones and Water street and until recently was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. O. M. Yeager. The low buildings in the left-center, partially hidden by trees are ware-

houses which were located along the railroad tracks. The force of the water uprooted nearly all trees in its path and where the current was the greatest, washed away much of the soil. This picture looks northwest with the road down the creek running off behind the houses on the left.

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