

THE FLOOD AT HOME.

Hagerstown Mail, June 6, 1889

THE CYCLONE FOLLOWED BY AN UNPRECEDENTED DELUGE.

**The Potomac Higher Than Ever Before—
Wreckage of the Canal—Vast Destruction of Personal Property and Ruin of Homes and
Business—Speedy Restoration of Railroad Travel and Traffic.**

The cataclysm of the past week which has appalled the whole reading world visited with unprecedented destructiveness our own immediate section of the country. Its first burst was noticed in THE MAIL of last week, when, as we were going to press, the telephone from Williamsport conveyed intelligence of the cyclone which had crossed the Potomac below that place into Virginia, swept around demolishing buildings on the property of Martin Boward, of Mr. Criswell and others, and then re-crossing the river above, sweeping in devastating course up the Potomac until, as afterward appeared, it struck the mountain spur and was there broken. A section of the storm passed over Licking Creek and carried ruin into Indian Spring District. At Mr. Criswell's the two men referred to as killed and fatally injured were James E. Powell, a pump-maker of Martinsburg, and Charles Vogle, a brother of Mr. Leonard Vogle, of Smithsburg. He died soon after and his remains were, with much difficulty, in consequence of the great flood, brought across the river. In the house of Mr. Boward were Mrs. Boward and Miss Alice Bloom, of Hagerstown, both of whom were painfully injured, from the effects of which Mrs. Boward subsequently died. The cyclone was phenomenal in this section, and took the regular funnel formation in its eccentric course up the river.

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Following upon the cyclone was the rain which commenced falling Thursday afternoon, and with slight intermissions poured down in torrents all that night, and until a few minutes before 12 o'clock Friday night. During the downpour, apprehensions of high water were entertained, but not in such phenomenal proportions as appeared on Saturday morning. Then it was found that every stream in the valley was swollen beyond all precedent. At Williamsport, as afterwards appeared, the Potomac and Conococheague were 7 ½ feet higher than ever before known—this year 44 feet and 4 inches above low water mark. What was chiefly apprehended during the rain was that the wheat fields would be beaten and the wheat crop seriously damaged, if not destroyed, and that the corn crop when planted would be also greatly injured, and where not planted as seriously injured by delay. Strange as it may seem, the growing wheat, although flattened by the down pour of the great rain, and afterwards again and again prostrated by showers, has risen and promises to be but little impaired, unless there should be greater injury to the blossom than at present appears. The corn has been so often overflowed and washed, in all the low grounds of every farm that it cannot be expected to rally there, but on the rolling ground it is doing well. Much however has not yet been got into the ground, and with almost daily showers, nothing can be done with it, as the earth is everywhere saturated with water.

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The telephone from Williamsport on Saturday morning conveyed to all parts of the valley information of the rising flood, and the damage being wrought, and at once a tide of human beings began to flow over the roads leading to that place, which was kept up all that day and was swollen into larger proportions the next day—Sunday. Every available vehicle and every horse in Hagerstown, and apparently every means of conveyance in the whole surrounding country was brought into requisition. Mr. Vogle, who reached Hagerstown with the remains of his brother, over the S. V. Railroad, could not find a horse in Hagerstown, Sunday afternoon to convey the body to Smithsburg. So, too, in Sharpsburg, and the lower portion of the county. A continuous line of vehicles passed to witness the ravages of the flood at Shepherdstown. To the thousands who lined the banks of the Potomac at these places, very much the same spectacle was presented as on the recurrence of previous floods, except that this year the space covered with water was greatly enlarged and the quantity of drift consequently increased. At the mouth of the Conococheague the combined streams were a vast lake, and the Western Maryland railroad track and canal were completely obliterated and their course only discoverable by the lines of trees which marked it. To form an idea of the height of the water, the eaves of the roof of the old Van Lear mill were under water and the water came within a few inches of the roof of the Western Maryland passenger station, from which the operator was hastily driven, Saturday morning. All this time, houses, bridges, barns, outhouses with live stock and chickens, were swept past and kept the crowd entertained, as the combined streams rose simultaneously, though the water in the Potomac backed up the Conococheague to some extent and deluged the Kemp mill and dwelling as high as the second story of each. The furniture in the dwelling was damaged, and 200 barrels of flour in the mill were under water, while a large quantity of mill stuff was ruined. In and about the basin, the largest losers were the De Frehns, whose chair factory, during the prevalence of the flood, seemed to be little short of a total wreck. The paint shop, in which a great many chairs were stored, broke in half and floated away at different times, and one-half lodged and was subsequently recovered and much property supposed to have been destroyed was saved. The machinery house is still standing and the machinery less injured than was feared. The loss first put down at six or eight thousand dollars will be much less. Mr. Victor Cushwa & Sons' buildings were of course all under water, and their phosphate and store house was taken from its foundation, but their loss will be replaced with a couple to thousand dollars. The frame plaster mill of Miller Bros. adjoining was partially demolished and serious loss sustained. Lower down the canal. Steffey & Findlay's coal yard was overflowed, but loss trifling. The greatest loser at Williamsport is Frank H. Darby, whose elevator, containing grain and fertilizers, was under water and who had a canal boat loaded with 4,000 bushels wheat swept away; it lodged or was driven ashore at Harper's Ferry and is now high and dry—the wheat greatly damaged if not ruined.

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During the whole of Saturday and until night the water continued to rise, when the fall was as sudden as the rise, and by Monday afternoon persons were walking on the towpath of the canal. During the height of the excitement, Saturday afternoon, a couple of young men were out in a skiff gathering floating chairs from the factory, when one of them, Theo. Wolf, aged 18, was seen by the crowd on shore to throw up his hands, as in a spasm, and fall back into the water, in which he immediately disappeared. The body was, after the subsidence of the water, found a short distance below. This was the only case of drowning

at this place, and the only other occurring was that of Mr. Creager, an aged citizen of the county, was drowned in the upper Antietam. By Tuesday, the streams were back in their banks and nothing remained to mark the flood but the debris and mud.

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It was on Saturday afternoon, about the time young Wolf was drowned, that the Cumberland Valley bridge over the Potomac at Powell's Bend, succumbed to the flood, and was seen to go, by the crowd on the banks at Williamsport. The first structure of wood had been washed away in like manner and the piers were then raised to a height which was deemed sufficient and an iron bridge laid upon them. The unprecedented flood this year wrought the same result; an accumulation of drift lodged against it and blows from floating masses, among which was the warehouse of Cushwa & Kreigh from the canal above Williamsport, did the work of demolition, one span after another going and all floating down the stream with the exception of the one next the Maryland bank, which lies in the water at the base of the towpath. The wooden portion over the canal also remains, and arrangements have been made by the C. V. Railroad Company to restore communication by means of a ferry at that point, on Monday next, which will be used until the bridge is replaced.

Rumors were afloat at the same time, that the Shenandoah bridge at Shepherdstown had been injured, but they were uninformed. For some time it was feared the B. & O. bridge at Harper's Ferry had been damaged seriously, but owing to the judicious precautions taken by loading it down with locomotives it was saved, though the locomotives were nearly covered by the torrent.—One end of the bridge was shaken but not seriously damaged. The wooden bridge over the Shenandoah River at that place was swept away and the trestling of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad washed out, while the town of Harper's Ferry was overflowed and the citizens driven, with great loss, to the heights above. Here, too, several lives were lost. Between the river and canal at Shepherdstown stood two dwellings and a store. One of the dwellings occupied by Mrs. William Jones, who saved her furniture, and the storehouse were swept away. The other, the lock-house, was of brick, with a frame back-building. A canal boat struck the latter, and the frame structure was crushed. The rest remains, although the water reached the second story windows. It and the store house were occupied by Levi Porter. Just opposite, on the berme bank, were L. W. Poffenberger's store, a feed and hay house. These with two carpenter shops belonging to the canal company, and the two canal bridges were carried away. The wooden bridge over the river was struck by two canal boats. One span went out, was driven against a pier of the railroad bridge and crushed. Later two other spans were swept away and in the afternoon the remaining span on the Maryland side of the river was lifted from the piers and floated off. The abutment on the West Virginia shore is also gone. The railroad bridge is, apparently, unharmed. It is one hundred and five feet above low water mark. The loss at this point will amount to fully \$20,000. Here also lies sunk the boat Geo. H. Sherman, belonging to Fred. Mertens and run by Joshua Yost, of Indian Spring district. It is loaded with 105 tons of coal and a lot of lumber.

At Rushville, one mile from Sharpsburg, are two warehouses—one of stone and the other of wood—belonging to C. M. Keedy. The wooden house was drifted from its foundation and canted upon one side. The tremendous force of the current at this point was illustrated by the following incident: Below the warehouses the towpath is protected on the river side by a wall known as the Slope Wall. On the towpath was a row of large willow trees. A

canal boat struck the first tree broadside, bent it over and tore it out by the roots. Pursuing its course, one tree after another was uprooted in the same manner and carried down the stream.

Several of the boats swept away near this point on Saturday were the J. B. Thomas, belonging to Gilmore, Meredith & Co., run by Isaiah Crampton of Sharpsburg district, and loaded with coal; the U, owned by Sheridan & Wells; the Bertha M. Young, owned by William T. Hassett, and a boat run by Daniel Bowers, of Sharpsburg.

Along the Potomac everything in the shape of a frame structure, along the line of the canal, and on the opposite bank, was either swept away or greatly damaged. The storehouse of the Potomac Pulp Mill was swept away and the mill machinery injured to the extent of several thousand dollars.

The loss at Antietam Cement Mills, two miles southwest of Sharpsburg, is estimated at two thousand dollars. Here the cooper shop, the stave shed for storing cooper stuff, with two hundred dollars' worth of material, 30,000 hoop poles and a large number of empty barrels were carried away. Two hundred and twenty five barrels of cement were ruined. The company's warehouse, about eighty by forty feet in size, was lifted from its foundation and twisted out of position. Water flooded the engine, boiler and lower story of the mill.

The lock-house at Dam No. 4 and the lock house occupied by Thomas Delanney, was lifted up and carried half a mile down the river. Lewis Charles' new frame two-story warehouse, about a mile below Dam No. 5; a house owned by a Mr. Jackson; T. E. Newkirk's hay shed, corn crib, store-house and ten tons of hay, one mile above Dam No. 5; William Ryan's house, with a portion of his furniture, above the Four Locks; the Light house and two others—one owned by a man named Conrad and the other by Thos. Hall—on the Little Pool; Hall's furniture was placed for safety on a canal boat which was carried across the river and lodged on George Mish's land; four valuable mules, the property of Bridges & Henderson, of Hancock, were lost off their cement boat in the Little Pool; the house on Licking creek, occupied by John Conrad; three houses between the canal and river a mile south of Dam No. 4, owned by Milton Ward, Joseph Turner and a man named Bitner; Daniel Driscoll's house and contents at Dam no.4; at McCoy's Ferry, above Dam No. 5, two houses belonging to the Green Spring Furnace Company, one occupied by a person named Crawford and the other vacant; sheriff Gatrell's saw-mill, barn and the buildings on his wharf at Mercerville; the Mercerville warehouses owned by H. S. Eavey, of Hagerstown, with about 3,600 bushels of wheat, 150 bushels of corn and 40 tons of hay, the property of Boyer and Heard, of this city; a portion of the Nancy Bowers property at Mercerville, recently purchased by sheriff Gatrell; Joseph Shiffler's house below Williamsport; J. H. Hammersla's house and furniture, saw and grist mills and warehouse above Dam No. 5; a large number of private dwellings and canal company's buildings between Harper's Ferry and Point of Rocks.

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A correspondent of the Baltimore American from Hancock estimates the loss in that vicinity at \$50,000. The entire west end of Hancock was submerged, and many of the houses are very badly damaged. Several of them will have to be rebuilt. At Lock No. 53, the store of S. Summer and the residence of Thomas Bootman were washed away. The house of Milton Honerwall, also in the same neighborhood, was carried away. The old ferry house at Hancock is gone. Joseph Light and Thomas Hall, of the same place, lost all their property. Along the river bottom the flood was so powerful that the top soil was

carried off for a considerable distance. The villages of Sleepy Creek and Sculltown, West, Virginia, the latter opposite Hancock, have almost disappeared. Wm. Dicken, residing about one half mile above Hancock, had all his property washed away except his mill, and this is very badly damaged. His loss is twenty-five hundred dollars. Bridges & Henderson's loss will now reach \$18,000. At the cement mill, the cooper-shop and all their out-buildings have been destroyed. The smoke-stack was broken down and the engine undermined and moved from its foundation. The firm has also five mules drowned. Capt. Emanuel Athey almost lost his life in an attempt to save the animals. The Rockville mill, owned by R. E. Taney, was also very much damaged, and his loss is heavy. All the roads near Hancock are impassable and the canal is fearfully washed. Many boatmen are returning to Hancock, having abandoned their boats along the canal.

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Superintendent Edward Mulvany, of the second division of the canal, unable to get out of Cumberland by rail, walked all the way from that place to Williamsport, where he arrived Tuesday afternoon about 5 o'clock. He communicates to the correspondent of the *Baltimore Sun* the following:

The basin at Cumberland is filled up with wash and there are two small breaks on the nine-mile level below Cumberland and the towpath is washed for one mile six inches deep. On the next level, a one mile lever, there is little or no damage. On the next, the eight-mile level, the towpath at Patterson's Creek bridge is half washed away for 200 yards, and there is a small washout at Little's road.

There is a large break at the culvert below Kelly's farmhouse. On the berme side 100 feet of the bottom of the canal is washed out sixty feet through the band and ten feet below the bottom of the canal. On the two mile level below Old Town the mule bridge at the culvert over the road is carried away. The timbers are close by. The towpath is washed eighteen inches deep for 300 feet, and the bed of the canal is filled up two feet deep for 200 yards.

On the three mile level at Town creek the top of the guard bank is washed off for one mile two feet deep. There are bad washes at Town creek on both sides of the canal. At Darkey's lock there is a break 75 feet long and 3 feet below the bottom of the canal. The bed of the canal is filled in 2 feet for 300 yards. On the seven mile, or tunnel level, it is badly washed from the tunnel to the 24 mile stake. There is a large break at the 24-mile stake and one at Mathew's farm 100 feet long and 2 feet below the bottom of the canal.

Everything is all right at the tunnel and tunnel locks. On the one-mile level below the tunnel the towpath is washed for one-half mile. On the four mile level there are bad washes. For two miles on foot is washed off the towpath and there is much filling in the bottom of the canal. There are heavy washes at Twigg's lock, on the Brick House level. There are bad washes and fills and a break at the Brick house lock, and the copings and wall of lock badly damaged.

On the two-mile level the canal is entirely filled up for 200 yards by a slide from the mountain side, and the towpath is badly washed. On the five-mile level the towpath is badly washed, and at McCauley's Bend the towpath is washed out its entire width to the bottom of the canal. The backing still stands. The waste-weir at Orleans aqueduct is washed out. Below Little Orleans there is a break 100 feet long. On the three mile level the towpath is entirely washed away for nearly a mile, and the canal badly filled. At Sidling Hill aqueduct, there is a bad break, and the wooden trunk at the aqueduct is

carried away, but the masonry is all right. At dam No. 6 the sheeting is off the upper side of the dam for 200 feet and on the lower side 100 feet of the crib or sheeting lately put on is off. There is a large gap about 20 feet wide in the lower crib, extending to the bottom. All the embankments around the feeder are gone and the bank is washed away.

The next, the four-mile level, is badly washed and filled. There is a small break above lock 53 and the lock-house is destroyed. The next, the seven-mile level is in bad shape. At Licking Creek aqueduct there is a break one hundred feet long. The bridge from the pike lodged against the aqueduct and caused it to overflow. At the Big Pool the towpath is washed for one mile one and one-half feet deep, and there is a break above the overflow sixty feet long and six feet below the bottom of the canal. The towpath at the lower end of Big Pool is washed out three or four feet for 400 yards, and there is a break below the Big Pool 100 feet long and two feet below the bottom of the canal.

On the two-mile level below Four Locks the canal is badly washed to Charles's Mill and all the embankment about the guard lock at dam No. 5 and the stone wall of the guard bank are gone. On the Williamsport level there are slight washes, and the bridge across the canal at Falling waters is gone. A number of canal boats are washed out in the fields, and some of them are badly damaged. Kelly's Company boat is washed in a field below Cumberland. The rest of the company boats are all right. Nearly all the waste way bridges along the canal are gone. Mr. Mulvaney says he went along the canal immediately after the flood of 1877, and he thinks twice as much damage has been done by the present flood as that of 1877.

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If anything has been clearly demonstrated by this flood it is the superiority of stone arched bridges over iron structures. From our neighbor of the Herald & Torch we take the following summary of losses to the county bridges, with this explanation: The stone bridge at Antietam Iron Works was immediately under the dam which gave way and was only partially destroyed. The stone bridge at Funkstown, which is reported injured was defective in the repair of its foundation and had been condemned by the County Commissioners:--

The iron bridge over Conococheague creek, known as the Fairview bridge, was thrown from the piers; it can be replaced at the cost of \$500.

Iron bridge at Kemp's over the Conococheague is entirely destroyed. Loss \$1,500.

The wooden bridge at Broadfording was carried down the stream, but it can be renewed for \$100.

All except one span of the stone bridge at Antietam Iron Works, together with one abutment, is gone: Loss \$3,000.

The iron bridge at Bowman's mill over the Little Antietam is lying near its proper site and one abutment is destroyed. These damages can be repaired for \$350.

Iron bridge over Licking creek, known as Martin's bridge, is totally destroyed.

A new bridge will be required over the Little Antietam, at Keedysville to replace the stone one. Loss \$1,500.

The iron bridge over the Little Antietam between Chewsville and Leitersburg is seriously injured; one abutment is entirely gone.

The wooden bridge at Greensburg was swept away. Loss \$300.

Five hundred dollars will replace two wooden bridges swept away on the Raven Rock road.

The wooden bridge on the Warner Hollow road, in Smithburg district, is gone, as is also the wooden bridge on the Pleasant Valley road, in the same district.

One wooden bridge in Beaver Creek district and three of the same material in Boonsboro district are destroyed.

Considerable injury was sustained by the stone bridge over the Antietam at Funkstown.

The stone bridge over the Antietam at Roland's Mill, near Hagerstown, is badly damaged.

One span of "Martin's bridge" in Indian Spring district is gone, and the bridge near David Hull's in the same district was entirely destroyed.

The bridge on the National turnpike between Indian Spring and Millstone Point, over Licking creek is washed away.

A covered wooden bridge over the Little Antietam on the Sharpsburg and Boonsboro turnpike at Keedysville was totally wrecked.

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The principal damage sustained by the county in roads and bridges was in the Districts of Hancock, Indian Spring, Rohrersville and Sandy Hook. A series of wooden bridges on the Western Turnpike beyond the Conococheague is washed away, inflicting so heavy a loss upon the Company that some of its officers have expressed doubts as to their ability to make the repairs required, and we understand there is talk among them of surrendering their charter and abandoning the pike. It may be that this will not be permitted until the road is made passable.

Exaggerated ideas have been entertained as to what will be required to restore the bridges and roads, and it is probable that it will not be necessary to add more than 10 cts. to the levy. This would produce about \$18,000, but we hope that when the damage is accurately ascertained the half of this amount will be sufficient. The most serious feature of the great disaster is the wrecking of the canal, which not only destroys a large amount of property belonging to our people, but throws numbers of them out of employment and deprives them of their means of livelihood. Considerable efforts are being made to lessen the suffering from their cause, and much relief to those most in need has been afforded, but much more is required.

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Whilst hundreds of our people on Sunday went over to see the flood, others who had been there the day before attended their usual places of worship, and the stillness of the day and exemption from suffering in contrast with our neighbors was calculated to inspire all with generous impulses towards those who had been so sorely afflicted, and it is hoped may bear fruit in the future. Telegraphic reports of the great catastrophe of Johnstown stimulated a longing for news which could not be gratified, and on the arrival of the train which came through from Harrisburg Sunday afternoon, an anxious crowd in waiting was doomed to disappointment, as not a single newspaper was to be had, and only meager reports were brought by word of mouth. This suspense was broken on Monday morning by the arrival of the Baltimore dailies, of that morning, which were carried by hand over the great break on the Western Maryland Railroad at the eastern foot of the mountain. In the afternoon the New York and Philadelphia papers were received, but it was not till Tuesday that our Williamsport friends received their supply of city papers.— This suspense was greatly felt by all.

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Considering the injury to the roads centering in Hagerstown or connected with it, the opening up of communication by rail, was remarkable. The Shenandoah Valley was the first to run its trains through without interruption and continuously, although it was at first thought that it would be the greatest sufferer from the flood which approached in that direction, and it was over its bridge at Shepherdstown that the only entrance into our valley or egress from it was practicable. Both the B. & O. and C. V. had for a time to avail themselves of this channel of communication. Passengers caught at Cumberland east bound reached their homes by this route, and others going south availed themselves of it. On Monday the Cumberland Valley road ran their trains regularly through, to and from Harrisburg, and the Western Maryland company availed themselves of the new line through Gettysburgh to restore regular travel between all points west and Baltimore, the time consumed being some forty odd minutes more and the prices of through fare the same as on the direct line. With marvelous energy, considering the extent of the damage to the Baltimore & Ohio road at Harper's Ferry and between Martinsburg and Cumberland, the new superintendent, Mr. Odell had that road open through from Baltimore to the Ohio River on Tuesday, and even had a special through the day before with relief parties for Johnstown, which was reached first by the B. & O. What the damage in many of these roads is likely to be is merely matters of speculation. They all suffer greatly. The Cumberland Valley company proper escapes with perhaps the least loss, but the Martinsburg and Potomac, which is an extension, will require some \$70,000 for the restoration of its bridge. The washouts on the Western Maryland road between Mechanicstown and Deerfield are the heaviest portion of the losses of the Western Maryland.

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The losses to the B. & O. are greatest between Harper's Ferry and Cumberland, and the Pennsylvania Railroad company is the greatest sufferer although best able to bear its burthen. The Washington County Branch of the B. & O. road was the last to be put in running order, all the bridges over Israel's Creek below Brownsville having been damaged or destroyed. A large force was put promptly to work making repairs, and on Wednesday night the first train was run over it, and now trains run regularly. During the suspensions trains were run for the accommodation of local traffic between Hagerstown and Brownsville.