

IN THIS PLACE

Stories of Us from the Catskill Mountain News



Mud for all seasons by Trish Adams

Since it's been such a brutal snowy winter, I thought I would remind readers about the next seasonal trial: mud. However, my research revealed that the plague of mud, although most often a spring affair, could occur just about any time of year. And in the days before paved roads, it could be almost as debilitating to traffic as floods and blizzards. So before we have to deal with it ourselves, let's take a look at how mud gummed up the works for our ancestors.

March 27, 1908 from "The Stroller"

I decided to go to church last Sunday morning and wended my way up toward the Presbyterian edifice. All went well until after I turned the corner from Walnut Street but then I was stuck. The only way to proceed further was to wade. I looked ahead and saw several churchgoers and they were wading. The mud was well nigh up to their ankles but they were heroic and waded through. I did the same, about spoiled my shoes to say nothing of the looks of them. There seems to be no way to get to the church mentioned without wading through the mud. Now this could easily be remedied, why don't somebody fix it.

April 4, 1908

Delaware & Eastern engine No. 1 was caught in the mud at Muir's cut last Friday and was not liberated until Tuesday. A mud slide occurred just as the train was passing through the cut which caught the engine and derailed it. The mud kept sliding and was soon nearly to the top of the drive wheels. A slide in Kaufman's cut below at the same time prevented help going to the aid of the disabled engine. The mails and passengers were taken from that point to Andes by wagon.

This gruesome tale of murder at first glance seems like the earliest recorded instance of "road rage," but subsequent issues of the paper revealed that these young men — led on by Linsley and liquor — plotted the murder and decided who would shoot on a coin toss. One wonders if the murderers' courage would have prevailed had they reached their destination . . .

April 6, 1917 G.F. Shaw Killed In Cold Blood Last Sunday Former Margaretville business man murdered because his auto stuck in the mud

George P. Shaw of Binghamton, a former business man of this village, was murdered in cold blood near Binghamton just after midnight Sunday by one of a party of four youths who had employed him to take them out for a ride. He was shot through the heart and through the head on no other provocation than that his car had become stuck in the

mud on a dirt road.

The Binghamton Herald tells the following story of the murder:

Hundreds of citizens formed themselves into posses to help the police search for the alleged murderer, Floyd Linsley of No. 403 Chenango street, who, it is believed, is hiding in the hills and woods south of the city, together with two of his accomplices, Teddy Gates, aged 17, of Brook Ave., and Charles Faatz, aged 19, of Water street.

Shaw, according to Leon Perkins, aged 17, one of the party and who the police are holding as a witness, was shot down in cold blood. He did not have a chance to say a word, says Perkins. There was no quarrel, and no motive for the crime can be found.

The youth claims that there were four in the car beside the driver. They were Floyd Linsley, Teddy Gates, Charles Faatz and himself. Briefly, his story is this:

"We went for a ride, Linsley having suggested it, and were going along Vestal avenue, near the Moore Farm, when the car suddenly stopped. "The driver turned and told us that he could go no further because he was stuck in the mud. I jumped out, Teddy came next, then Faatz, and last Linsley.

"When Linsley jumped from the car he turned toward the driver, who had also left his car. He fired two shots. I was scared and run for the nearest house I woke up a man and woman. I told them a man had been murdered and asked them to help me. I asked them to let me come inside, but they wouldn't let me. I ran to the house across the street and woke two men up.

"I went with them to the car. We found the driver lying on his back in the mud. Then the police came. That's all I know."

Asked as to any conversation that had taken place, Perkins said: "No one said a word to him until we got stuck in the mud. Then the driver turned and said: "'Boys I'm afraid I can't take you any further. I can't get out of this mud-hole.'"

"Then we jumped out and before I realized it, and before anyone said another word, Linsley started firing.

"How do you know it was Linsley?" asked Detective Stephenson. "He always carried a gun. He was the 'bad' man of the bunch. I'm sure it was he. I'm certain I saw him fire the shot."

The coroner found that one bullet had pierced the heart and that another had entered the brain back of the ear. Either would have been sufficient to cause death.

Just 80 feet southeast of the place where the shooting occurred was found a 32-calibre Iver-Johnson revolver. It was fully loaded and the barrel had sunk deep into the soft mud. In the clay of a plowed lot further on three distinct tracks of the fugitives were found. They led diagonally into a corner of the woods just west of Pennsylvania avenue. There the track was lost.

But every farmer within 50 miles in that direction is now armed and watching. So are the scouting parties, which continue to search through the woods and on the roads day and night.

The police admit the men may hang out for a day or two longer, since they know the woods in that direction better than most boys know their own back yard.

The only possible motive for the crime the police say is robbery. This, though, seems unlikely. One of Shaw's pockets was turned inside out, but a roll of bills was found in another pocket by Coroner Hooks. It is possible, the police say, that the boys became frightened while searching the body and ran away without completing their task.

George Shaw, the murdered man, was one of the best known taxicab men in Binghamton. Taxicab drivers throughout the city were wild with rage when they heard of the murder. They were the most eager of all to lay hands on the man who shot their friend.

Shaw was quiet and seldom spoke a cross word.

"Why if someone cheated him out of his fare he wouldn't threaten them the way most taxi drivers do," said a State street chauffeur yesterday, "he'd merely remark: "'That's a fine trick to play on a fellow.'"

Mr. and Mrs. Shaw left Margaretville about four years ago. While he resided here Mr. Shaw conducted a barber shop in the Easman block. He lived here about a year.

The latest reports from Binghamton are that the murderer has not yet been captured.

December 15, 1911 "Don" From Lincoln R. Long's "Practical Talks"

It takes a world of patience in these days of muddy roads for one to travel across country. Autos are nearly all out of commission and it is too soft underfoot for the pedestrian and the only way seems to be to start early and plow through the mud with the pasty stuff sticking to the wheels at each turn until half way up then to drop on the hub suggesting wagon washing when the journey is over. If the driver gets exasperated with the tediousness of the trip and tries to hurry he will soon be made willing to drop back into the steady plod by the flying softness that spatters all over coats and robes until they are a sight to behold.

Now is the time for "Don." No matter how deep the mud or how sticky the pastiness he never gets worried as do your thoroughbreds but calmly goes ahead as if all were smooth going and the best ever. No nervousness about "Don." He lifts his feet deliberately and sets them down surely without jerk or haste and you can rest sweetly on the cushion and resign yourself to meditation without a fear that all will not be well. You will need to start early for he is no lightning express

but you may be assured that sometime you will get to the end of the journey safely. Just get ready to do your back thinking and dreaming and enjoy the trip as best you may and don't be impatient and all will go well.

Of course never take "Don" when the roads are good and you are in haste. In such a case you might lose, your pity even if you are a professor of goodness. For "Don" is not moved by harsh words or the stroke of the lash. His heart and his skin are alike unfeeling when such appeals are made to him, "Don" never hastens, believing that "haste makes waste." A tail switch will be the only reward for your impatient urgings. Only in muddy weather should "Don" be hitched to a road wagon.

But "Don" is a good horse to have. It is a comfort to once in awhile drive a horse that does not get excited if you chance to hit him with the whip when absentmindedly flicking flies or aiming at leaves along the way. We need some horses like him and same folks, too. Of course we want the nervous hurried and the mettlesome ones but sometimes we want "Don." We get tired of the eternal rush and hustle and of the dynamite kind of folks who are ready to blow you up on notice or even without notice and we sigh for "Don." Let him get into the harness and we can sit back and bid good bye to worry and enjoy life without dreading an explosion. When life gets too strenuous, give us "Don."

May 3, 1929 Can't Find Mud Hole

Unique in the list of lost automobiles is that of a New York city man whose machine got stuck in a mud hole near Binghamton a few days ago. He can't find the mud hole, nor, therefore, the automobile. Taking the wrong road out of Catskill the other night, his car stuck in the mud as he attempted to turn around in a farmer's yard. The farmer, perhaps suspicious of robbery, refused to let him use the telephone to call a garage. After walking back to Catskill and waiting until daylight for a garage to open, the motorist was unable to recall which road he had taken. Search has failed to reveal the location of the farm or the automobile.

Here is a bizarre escapade in which mud both saves, and then nearly kills, a pilot in a crash.

June 19, 1936 Army Bomber In Crash At Grand Gorge, Friday Pilot Saved by Neighbors From Suffocation in Soft Earth

Luck rode with Lieutenant O. S. Picher, Selfridge, Michigan, when the army bombing plane, which he was piloting crashed near Grand Gorge Friday morning at 11:30. Lieut. Picher emerged from the wreckage uninjured. The pilot was enroute from Buffalo to Hartford, Conn., when engine trouble forced him to land in a field not far from the Wetmore farm. Due to the heavy rains Thursday night the field was soft and as the plane landed, it dug its nose into the soft earth and turned over on its back pinning the pilot beneath with his head buried deep into the mud.

Mr. Wetmore, Miss Evelyn Mattice and Mrs. Roy Vermilyea had been watching the circling plane. At the crash they dashed

to the wreck. As they neared the wrecked plane they heard the pilot shouting "Can you hear me, can you hear me? For God's sake get me out of here in a hurry."

Miss Mattice ran to the Wetmore home and telephoned to Grand Gorge village for help. In the meantime, Mr. Wetmore, Mrs. Vermilyea and Miss Mattice were digging the mud from about the pilot's face to give him more air. The first to reach the scene of the accident were Robert Renz, Claude Lutz, James Fuller and Ferris Wetmore, who raised the plane and dragged the pilot free. Lieut. Picher later said that if the ground had not been soft and had he not tightened his safety belt he would probably be killed or seriously injured. The pilot was taken to Streeter's Hotel in Grand Gorge by John Foote of Hobart and later in the day to Oneonta by Victor Moore, where he boarded another plane for Albany.

The plane was a Boeing-P-26 and was smashed to quite an extent. Lieut. Picher was uninjured. On Sunday a large Army truck from New Jersey took the plane away. -Grand Gorge Cor.

October 22, 1937 Call Troopers to Rescue Horse

Delhi Farmer Saves Horse from Bath of Mud

Such is the slogan of Cornelius Buckley, a Delhi farmer, who lost a horse in the mud on Monday. When the horse became mired the farmer used his best methods to get it out. He worked all day then sent in a call for the troopers. Trooper J. P. McGarvey of this village answered the call and went to Delhi where he enlisted the services of the wrecker at the Coulter garage. Trooper McGarvey, garage men and some others went to the horse scene and found the animal literally "up to its neck" in the mud. It required considerable hard work and some ingenuity to rescue the animal, but it was done. The horse was too weak to walk after its 24 hours in the mud and was taken to the barn on a stoneboat.

February 22, 1939

Hardy Ski Folks Smile in Mud

In the midst of the downpour on Sunday, three busloads of skiers arrived here, and parked on the Galli-Curd road. Anyone who watched that crowd will never again cast aspersions on the hardness of New Yorkers. When they first got out of the buses none of them seemed to realize that it was raining. An hour later, the fact had penetrated, figuratively and literally. The trip back to New York in those soaked ski clothes could hardly have been a pleasant prospect. But, to make it worse, they had to wait while the drivers struggled to turn the heavy buses around in the slush and mud. To give credit where credit is due, we did not hear a single grumble, and we did see good many smiles. Skiing is a wonderful sport. Such enthusiasm must be deserved!

Even Clarke Sanford, who is usually waxing rhapsodic this time of year about trout and sap and spring could get cranky when it came to mud.

March 20, 1942 From Mountain Dew

Yes, I know about the bluebirds and the robins and sap running and all those nice spring dreams. But I meet mostly mud. Mud is everywhere except on the narrow beaten track.

Stray a few inches with the car and you're fast. There is no bottom. Step off with your feet and the ooze covers golashes.

The whole earth is soft as a kid's mud pie. The mud runs like sour milk, sticks like wallpaper paste, spatters like a thunder shower. There is no bottom, no top, no middle.

I begin to realize why the women have spring house cleaning. It's to get rid of what remains of the mud the men track into the homes.

I never wore an adhesive plaster on my back, but I have mud plasters on my shoes every day and they won't for a minute cure my disposition.

You listen to the bluebirds, I'm going to cuss the mud.

Quality Leather Tops

Here is foot-comfort for the coldest day or the wettest snow. These rubbers have a pure gum over with thick, durable soles and heels. Heavy wool socks inside will keep your feet warm. High-grade leather tops protect ankles and legs.

BALL-BAND

Both the Duck Lawton and the Ribbed Logan are "Ball-Band" Footwear — the kind that gives More Days Wear.

DUCK LAWTON (with Heel)

RIBBED LOGAN (Pure Gum Spring Heel)

The Lawton is the same as the Logan except that it has heels and tap soles instead of spring heels, and is made with heavy duck linings, while the Logan is a heavy ribbed over. Made by Mishawaka Woolen Mfg. Co., "The House that Pays Millions for Quality."

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UP TO YOUR ANKLES — With our evidence that mud season can occur just about any time of year, this December 7, 1923 footwear ad presents readers with about the only surefire defense against the murky elements in "all weathers."

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