

## Washout at the Tunnel

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*Railroad Tunnel Washout – August 22-23, 1910*

Thunder, lightning, wind, rain, and sometimes hail descended upon our quiet village Monday night, 22 August 1910. It proved to be one of the fiercest and most prolonged electrical storms ever experienced in this section of the country, as reported by the local papers.

The first bombardment began around eleven o'clock on Monday evening and it was after one o'clock on Tuesday morning before the storm subsided.

Crash after crash filled the air and a vivid electrical display made the illumination almost continuous. No one could sleep through the great roar and splashing of rain upon the houses and after every recurring clap of thunder it came nearer and more fearful until it seemed the next would surely be the fatal stroke.

The morning finally dawned with a peculiar yellow tinted sky, the air was pure and delightfully refreshing, the parched earth had received its fill and everything in nature seemed to have new life. But a survey of the village and surrounding countryside revealed evidence of the havoc brought on by the great storm.

Buildings, barns and trees had been struck by lightning, washouts of greater or less magnitude were found here and there and the corn in the fields lay flat on the ground.

The Tannery smokestack was wrenched and crippled.

The Will Flagstead home at Maple Grove was struck and the family had a narrow escape from being killed. The front of the house was badly demolished, including a part of the foundation. Here the lightning played some very freakish antics by entering the bedroom and encircling the bed where a young lady and two of the Flagstead children were sleeping. None of them were injured in the least except the young lady whose finger was slightly burned beneath the ring on her finger. Mr. and Mrs. Flagstead were both stunned by the shock, but soon recovered.

The German Lutheran church in Montague was also struck and the steeple split in halves. The bolt ripped off the shingles and scattered splinters of material clear out into the road. After reaching the belfry the bolt went inside where it went down through a partition and doing considerable damage.

Peter Delemarter's barn in Montague was also struck but quick action by the fire department saved it from being destroyed by the fire.

At the Conklin farm three cows belonging to Jacob Stobbe were killed by the lightning. They were found lying together in the middle of the field.

Trees seemed to be favorite marks, and several were struck in the village and country. A large elm tree standing between the homes of Mrs. M. G. Hollis' and August Tornbloom, owner of Troy Laundry on Colby, was struck and splintered.

Telegraph and telephone communications were cut off, crops were laid flat, and peach and apple trees were broken down.

The heavy fall of water washed a large hole in the street in front of Andrews' livery barn and lightning struck a corner which was torn off the front of the building. The rain also washed away a large part of the roadbed on the west side of the tunnel filling it so that the trains were blocked for several hours. The first train finally was able to get through between 1 and 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

In August 1910 post cards of the "Washout at the Whitehall Tunnel" were made available for sale. The complete series of 9 views was available for 40 cents or 5 cents each. It seems that there are 5 of the views still in circulation.