

THE GREAT FLOOD OF 1883

On the stairs leading to the second floor is a door with a high-water mark inscribed on it. The mark tells the story of the awesome power of nature and how a near tragedy can bring a community together.

The story begins during the winter of 1882-1883, which was one of the worst anyone could remember. There were stories of snowfall that was so deep it covered the fences and was frozen hard enough that horses could pull sleighs right over the fences. Naturally, the Creek next to the mill was covered with ice. In February the weather suddenly warmed with two days of warm weather followed by a torrential rain.

Anticipating the flood, Herman Huchendorf and his two employees Otto Kroeger and Mike Missel moved as much flour as possible to the second floor. After dark the workers decided they would take their chances and try to make it to higher ground. They were swept away by the raging water but managed to grab onto the bridge and pull themselves out of the water. Making their way to a neighbor's house they weathered out the storm. Meanwhile, Huchendorf had climbed to the top floor, torn up a blanket, and tied himself to a post in the desperate hope that, even if the mill

broke up, he could use it to stay afloat. He wrote a note on a flour bag giving his name and asking that if he did not survive would whoever found his body return it to his family.

When the flood arrived it came with such force that it carried away the part of the sides of the mill. The floodwaters rose almost to the second story. Windows were broken. Machinery was wrecked. Siding was ripped away. Over 100 bags of flour were scattered through the woods and out onto the ice on the frozen Mississippi river

Earth around the foundation was washed away. Luckily the mill stood and Huchendorf was safe, but damage to the mill was devastating. Huchendorf would have been ruined if it weren't for his neighbors. The people of the community gathered up the bags of flour. It was found that only the first half inch inside of the bag was damaged. The rest was salvaged for sale.

The mill being so necessary to the local farms and families the donated money and labor, enabling Mr. Huchendorf to repair the damage to the mill and continue in business.



Pine Creek can still have flash floods. One June morning in 1990 the area had heavy rain that continued all day. The water level in the creek rose all day. By 7PM the creek was flowing over the rock wall on the right of the photo. The flood water had reached the floor of the bridge, trees floating down the creek battered the bridge bending some of its steel work.

A considerable amount of siding had been ripped off of the mill's sides by the water. Inside the mill the machinery was coated with mud. In front of the mill the water had washed a huge hole in the ground and damaged the foundation.

All of the damage was quickly repaired by the Department of Natural Resources.