

## RECOLLECTIONS OF THE 1935 FLOOD

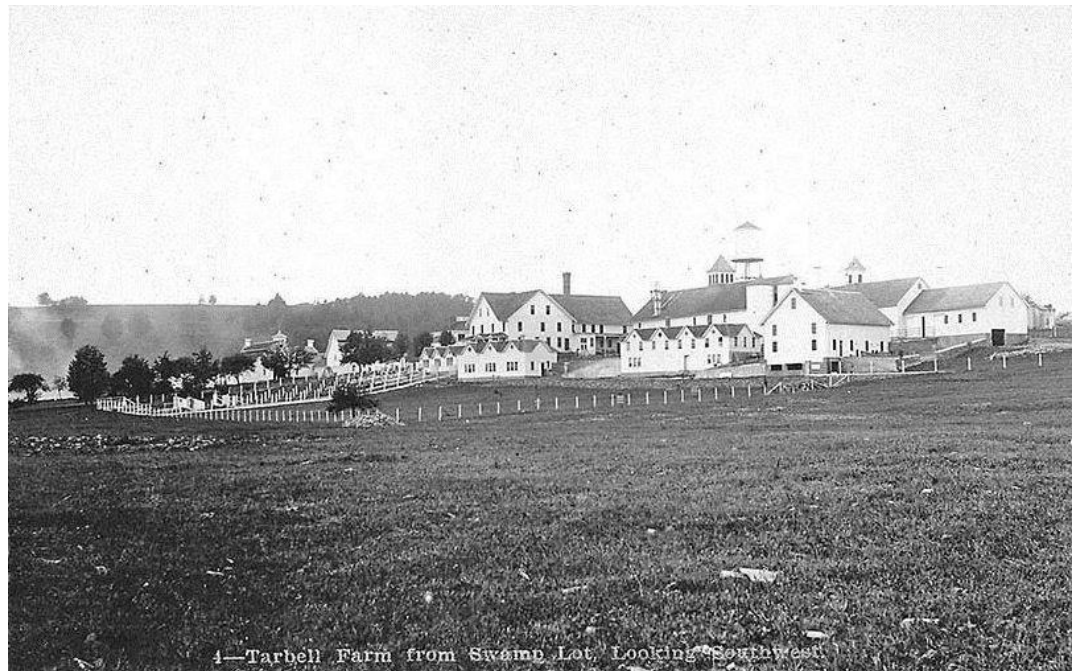
Fred Auwarter (1924-2003)



I was about eleven at the time of the historic Flood of 1935. It rained all day and night, torrents. That night, my brother, mother, father, and I went up and spent the night at the Ticknor Hotel. It wasn't running then, but it was the biggest building in town. Several other families were there too. No food. Water poured by. Several houses or barns washed by—one with chickens on it. Nigger Block's (?) pool hall washed away.

*Ticknor Hotel ca. 1915*

The next day our family, and many others, went up to Tarbell Farms. They fed us there, but it was a problem of not enough places to sleep, since so many were there.



*Tarbell Farms ca. 1915*

My mother wouldn't go home because there was only a ladder over the creek in Smithville. The bridge had washed out. This was Red Creek, the little one through town. When the Cincinnati Lake dam went out, this little creek got the brunt of it. It tried to take its old route around town and went behind the schoolhouse. Tarbell Farms was pretty decent. They sent drinking water down to the town afterwards.



*Smithville Flats looking West after flood*



"The Crazy House", Result of Flood of July 8, 1935, Smithville Flats, N. Y.

Smithville Flats is where the Crazy House was. Originally it belonged to the Fords. Mrs. Ford died not long after the flood. They had a terrible night during the storm, and she never got over it. A lady took over the house and started charging admission after kids (including me and two of the minister's sons) got in and started breaking windows.

No one died in Smithville, although one woman drowned at Petonia Lake. There was much cleanup left, mud in basements, the bridges to be rebuilt. The Hansmann's Mills dam held; it just washed out on the far side. The road bridge by the mill held too, but there was a road washout up near the Flanagan farm. The mill owners [Fred's grandfather and family members] had to bond \$40,000 to get the business going again. This wasn't paid off until the 1950s.



*Hansmann's Mills mid-flood July 1935*



A forerunner to the CCC called "transients" was sent to town. The men (who were mostly bums) were under the control of army officers and came to do cleaning, like the basements. They got to know the local ladies, but that's another story.

*Ticknor Hotel, transients on porch during flood cleanup 1935*

The flood came during the Depression, so losing canned food was a real problem. There was a Poor Master who gave out some government food. The Red Cross was a disappointment, but they did provide what we called two-holers, or two-hole outhouses.

*Fred's memories were written down by Joan Barker. The original undated notes are in the files of the Smithville Historical Society.*

*Smithville Historical Society, 2023.*