

Gettin' Stuck – It's Mud Season in Vermont

By Tacia Eriksen
GEOL 196

“Ahhh... Mud Season in Vermont”



Franklin
[LS06485](#)

- Vermont enjoys four official seasons each year, but also struggles through an additional bout with mud season, that persnickety period of time between winter thaw and spring growth when just about anything is liable to go wrong.
- This image shows a muddy and rutted road.
- There are a horse and buggy up the road in the distance.

Horse and Buggy in Mud

- Mud season is a unique time of year in Vermont, and there are many wonderful stories to be told of grappling with the muck, the mire, the dirt, and the sludge.
- Vehicles get stuck, horses get stuck, people get stuck, and that is just the beginning.
- This image shows a man and his horse and buggy on a very muddy road.
- The wagon wheels and horse's legs are deep in the mud.



Town Unknown
[LS05861](#)

Buggy on a Muddy Road



Town Unknown
[LS06477](#)

- Winter in Vermont officially begins at the winter solstice, which occurs on either December 21 or 22, and ends at the spring equinox, around March 21 or 22.
- Toward the end of March, the winter season begins to lessen its grip on the state and patches of bare ground appear while precipitation turns from snow to rain.
- This hand-colored lanternslide shows a horse and buggy on a muddy, washed-out road.

Traveling on a Muddy Road

- The rainy and wet transition from winter to spring is often referred to as mud season.
- In the past, when the majority of the state's roads were still dirt, mud season could bring travel to a standstill, schools would be forced to close until the roads dried out, vehicles, horses, and people alike would often become stuck in the mud.
- This image shows a traveler in a buggy braving a gravel road with muddy tire ruts in it.



Franklin
[LS06482](#)

Car on Muddy Road and Improved Road Later



Arlington
[LS06497_000](#)



Arlington
[LS06497_001](#)

- These images depict the before and after effect of mud season on a road in Arlington, VT.
- The improved road is wider than the old road.
- The large tree on the left side in the before photograph is not present in the after image.
- The improved road is not as muddy as the old road.

Car Stuck in Mud

- The Scenes of Vermont website lists this fond mud season memory from Liz Hurd on their Mud Stories page:
- “Mud season is the time when everyone piles into someone’s car after school and we struggle to make it down the old dirt roads. Many times we have to get out and push allowing ourselves to be covered from head to toe with mud. All true Vermonters love mud season!”
- This hand-colored lanternslide shows a black car on a very muddy road.



Rutland
[LS06164](#)

Car Stuck in Mud



Rutland
[LS06466](#)

- Another fun story, this one from Mike Allen, depicts car keys being lost in the mud after the driver of a stuck vehicle exited through the car's window, since the car was buried in mud up to the bottom of the doors.
- This hand-colored lanternslide shows a black car stuck in a very muddy road.

Car Stuck in Mud

- Dairy farmer Charles Keeler of Brookfield states:
- “You can plow snow, but not mud. There’s not much you can do about mud except wait for it to go away. The only thing to do is add gravel – 18 inches is a pretty good surface – but mud season occurs before the town gravel pit melts out.”
- This image shows a car stuck in the mud on a rural dirt road.



Town Unknown
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Road Curving Around Rock Outcropping



Town Unknown
[LS06505](#)

- The Green Mountain Club, with headquarters in Waterbury Center, VT both advertises and cautions against outdoor activities during mud season.
- On their website, mud season is listed as April 15 through the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend.
- This image shows a muddy road curving around a rock outcropping.

Dirt Road Through Forest

- The GMC also asks people to: “help protect the fragile alpine tundra and prevent soil erosion by staying off the trails during Mud Season,” while further cautioning about specific popular hiking trails, stating: “the sensitive alpine vegetation on the summits of Mt. Mansfield and Camel’s Hump are most vulnerable to damage.”
- This image shows a dirt road running through a forest, with several muddy tire ruts lining the road.



Stockbridge
[LS06559](#)

Wagon on Side of Dirt Road



Stockbridge
[LS06570](#)

- Some mud season hiking guidelines the GMC does offer include:
 1. Walk through the mud, not around it.
 2. Hike in the lower-elevation hardwood forest with southern exposure.
 3. Avoid the spruce-fir forests at higher elevations.
- This image shows a wagon on the side of a muddy dirt road which runs through a forest with rocky outcrops and large boulders.

Person on Muddy Road

- The Vermont Vacations website depicts Vermont's famed mud season, "as passing quickly as the hills turn to green."
- This image shows a person working on the side of a muddy, spring road.
- There are patches of snow and trees along the side of the road and a sludgy gully forming toward the front of the image.



Town Unknown
[LS09434](#)

A Muddy Street Beside Pittsburgh Paints



Springfield
[LS10415](#)

- In a Time Magazine article titled, “In Vermont: Mind over Mud,” Postman Julian Hill, who drives 63 miles a day on his rural delivery route, states: “detours add five miles in mud season.”
- This image shows a woman pushing a child in a baby carriage across a muddy street next to Pittsburgh Paints in Springfield, VT.

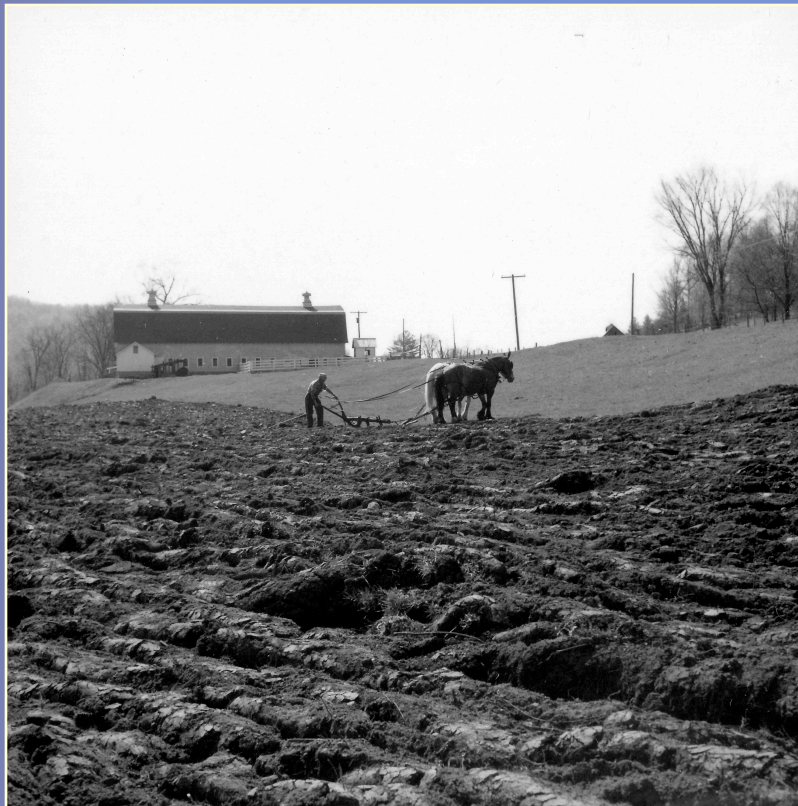
Park in Town Center

- The Vermonter's Vermont Blog describes mud season as: "that most wonderful time of year in Vermont," when there is "not much anything that anyone can do...except to wait for the ground to dry up enough for the towns to grade the road."
- This image shows the Woodstock town green surrounded by dirt roads and houses.
- The dirt street travels from the foreground at center and splits around the circular green.



Woodstock
[LS07759](http://www.vermonter.com/vtpress/?p=21)

Farm Plowing in Spring



Corinth
[LS09159](#)

- This picturesque excerpt, from Chris Bohjalian's *Midwives: A Novel*, details the correlation between maple sugaring and mud season:
- "...the mud was a nightmare that year, but the sugaring was amazing. That's often the case. If the mud is bad, the maple will be good, because mud and maple are meteorological cousins of a sort. The kind of weather that turns dirt roads in Vermont into quicksand in March – a frigid, snowy winter, followed by a spring with warm days and cold, cold nights – also inspires maple trees to produce sap that is sweet and plentiful and runs like the rivers swollen by melted snow and ice."
- This image shows a farmer plowing his field the old fashioned way with draft horses and a walking plow.

Tractor Pulling Car

- To conclude, mud season is...
- “That time of year when the simple task of making it home after a day at work becomes a challenge.”
- When the oft scoffed at, “jacked-up, four-wheel-drive trucks,” with tires bigger than cars become the most viable means of transportation, sometimes the only means of travel able to pass Vermont’s rural dirt roads.
- This image shows a tractor pulling a car out of the mud on a rural dirt road.



Town Unknown
[LS09433](#)

The End

- All images in this presentation may be accessed by typing in the LS number underneath each image in the quick search field at <http://www.uvm.edu/landscape>



Town Unknown
[LS11685_001](#)



Works Cited

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