

An Uphill Town Underwater: The flood that made history in Sharon, Vermont

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November, 1927 Vermont



LS00172_000 (Main St during the flood, Richford, VT)



LS00172_001 (Present day Main St, Richford, VT)

October, 1927 rainfall for the state of Vermont was already 50% above normal.

A tropical storm, thought to go out to sea, collided with a high pressure barrier in New England causing torrential downpours on Vermont

Governor Weeks pronounced the disaster as "The greatest catastrophe in Vermont's history"

9,000 people were left homeless; 275 houses destroyed; 1500 damaged; 1250 bridges destroyed; 84 dead.

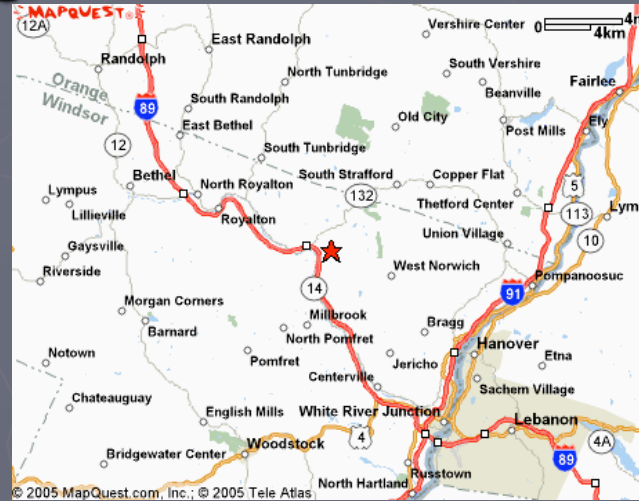
Sharon, VT

Sharon is a six square mile town located in the eastern-central part of Vermont

Sharon was chartered in 1761

The White River flows diagonally through the center of the town

Currently, there are 1411 people living in the town according to the 2000 census report



www.mapquest.com (map of town)



Sharon's location in the state



Highway bridge, center of town

The 1927 Flood: Sharon, VT



Aerial view of Sharon and the white River, November 1927, and April 2000

LS01448_000 (November 1927, White River flooded)



LS01448_001 (April 2000)



Two aerial photographs, one taken in 1927, and the other taken in 2000. In the 1927 photo, the destruction of the flood can be seen. There are flood deposits visible, along with the excess water expanding the width of the river at the top of the picture. The 2000 Picture is the same, though without the flood damage. The railroad bridge was rebuilt and there is now an interstate running through what use to be a forested area.

What happened to Sharon?



Markings were made along the northern interstate bridge of how high the water rose during the flood.

Currently, the markings read up to sixteen feet.

The spring thaw usually raises the river in this spot not much more than a few feet.

Water passing underneath the interstate bridge is seldom seen over one foot in depth.

The Flood: Sharon, VT



LS06374_000 (washout during the flood)



(Current view) 7/05



LS06374_001 (1928 new bridge)

Before the iron bridge was built in 1928, there was a wooden bridge that stood in the same spot. It was swept away during the flood. The new iron bridge was built higher and stronger than the old bridge.

Restored in 1994, the iron bridge is still in use today

The Railroad Bridge



(05A-878I-8/11-8-27-1115A/12-3000) RAILROAD BRIDGE SOUTH OF SHARON, VT.

LS01450_000 (the washout of the railroad bridge in Sharon, 1927)

Just over \$7,000,000 in damage was done to the railroads throughout the state, including the Central Vermont Railroad (CVRR) that ran right through Sharon.

The CVRR bridge in Sharon was one of the first railroad bridges in the valley to fall.

There is still debris in the water, left from the previous bridge, that has proven to be treacherous to swimmers and bridge jumpers. Though the water is naturally deep, railroad ties and spikes were left behind.

The Deaths Resulting: Sharon

3 of the 84 deaths that occurred in Vermont happened in Sharon.

Claude Reynolds and her two children were washed away in their house, after an attempt to be saved by her brother.

The picture shows where part of the highway washed out just a little south of Sharon. Steep banks are visible where the water washed away part of the road.



(035-8781-8)(11-8-27-11²⁹A)(12-3000) HIGHWAY WASHOUT SOUTH OF SHARON, VT.

LS01451_000 (Aerial view of the white river)

The Sharon Dam



Pictures taken 7/05, The Sharon Dam



It was the rush of water from the fall of the dam that took the lives of the Reynolds family. It was also the suspected reason for the amount of damage done to West Hartford, VT a few miles down the river.

Broad Brook

Two bridges along the road were washed away due to the rising water of the Broad Brook in Sharon.



(A Shallow Chute of the Broad Brook in Sharon, 7/05)



(A view of one of the rebuilt bridges on Broad Brook, 7/05)

Baldwin Hill

The overflow of Quation Brook along Rt. 132 in Sharon caused a washout on Baldwin Hill leading into Strafford, VT.



(Baldwin Hill leading into Strafford, 7/05)

Sharon Roads

After the flood, it was estimated that more than 25% of all the roads in Sharon were washed out, including the washout of the steel highway bridge.

The picture shows part of the washout along the highway in Sharon.



LS06606_000 (Flood damage to the highway just south of Sharon)

New Roads were built due to the damage the flood left behind



LS06607_000 (Construction work for a new road in Sharon)

Road Construction that was being done in Sharon for a cutoff road in 1928

Closing Thoughts...

The Flood of 1927 was one of the greatest disasters the state of Vermont has ever seen. The whole state felt the effects of the flood, along with other areas all throughout New England.

Sharon, the small town along the White River, survived the disaster though it saw a significant amount of damage. Roads, bridges, railroads, and homes were all destroyed along with people's lives. Somehow, people were able to work together, and rebuild the small town into what it is today.

Photos

Photos:

Landscape Change Program Website

<http://www.uvm.edu/perkins/landscape/>

(*Photos with LS captions)

Other Photos taken by Gregory Baldwin.

Sharon, Vermont. July 23, 2005.



(Sharon Church, and Historical Society 7/05)



LS01448_001 (April 2000)

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