

# The Nature of a Flood

## Chittenden County and the Flood of 1927

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# Introduction

- The flood of 1927 caused an astonishing amount of damage through out Vermont.
- The flood was caused by torrential rains from a warm air mass that contained the remnants of a tropical storm. (<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/pr97/nov97/noaa97-r248.html>)
- This rain fell on an already saturated landscape and caused rivers to overflow.
- This slideshow focuses on the damage

- The flood is the most legendary natural disaster in the state's history.
- 85 Vermonters were killed, including the Lt. Governor. The state also suffered over \$25 million in damages.  
(The Story of Vermont: A Natural and Cultural History, pg. 103)
- In addition to the loss of life and property Vermont saw a shift in public policy.
- Towns devastated by the flood looked to the state for assistance. In turn the state reluctantly turned to the federal



This is an aerial view of Winooski that also encompasses Colchester Ave. and Chase St. in the bottom of the image. The bridge that connects the two towns has completely washed away and a small, temporary pontoon bridge can be seen connecting the towns. Both ends of the now demolished bridge show signs of the floods intensity. To the right, on Winooski's side of the river, the remains of several houses can be seen as well as a clearing where houses were totally destroyed.



This is another angle of the Winooski River. Burlington can be seen on the left and Winooski on the right. Once again you can see where the river flowed over the riverside into Winooski. The water level is still high, and some remaining floodwater can be seen pooling in open fields north of Winooski.

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(029-8770-8) (11-12-27-12 M) (12-3000) WINOOSKI-BURLINGTON RAILROAD BRIDGE

Here is one more aerial shot of a bridge washed away by the flood of 1927. Over 1200 bridges were destroyed by the flood. This railroad bridge connected Winooski to Burlington, and the remains of a cement pylon can be dividing the river. Debris is strewn through out the river north of the bridge and the shoreline in Burlington and to the north has been visibly stripped and eroded by raging floodwater.

The torrential downpour that preceded, and was the cause of the flood set records throughout the state.

Burlington: 4.9 inches in 24  
hours

Northfield: 7.61 inches in 24  
hours

Somerset: 8.77 inches in 24  
hours.

Source: <http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/pr97/nov97/noaa97-r248.html>

# Now for a closer look



This lanternslide shows Burlington's side of a railroad bridge destroyed by the rushing waters. Huge rocks, a large pipe, mangled railway tracks, and wires are all thrown together into one tremendous mess. A crowd of people can be seen in the background observing the tangled debris.

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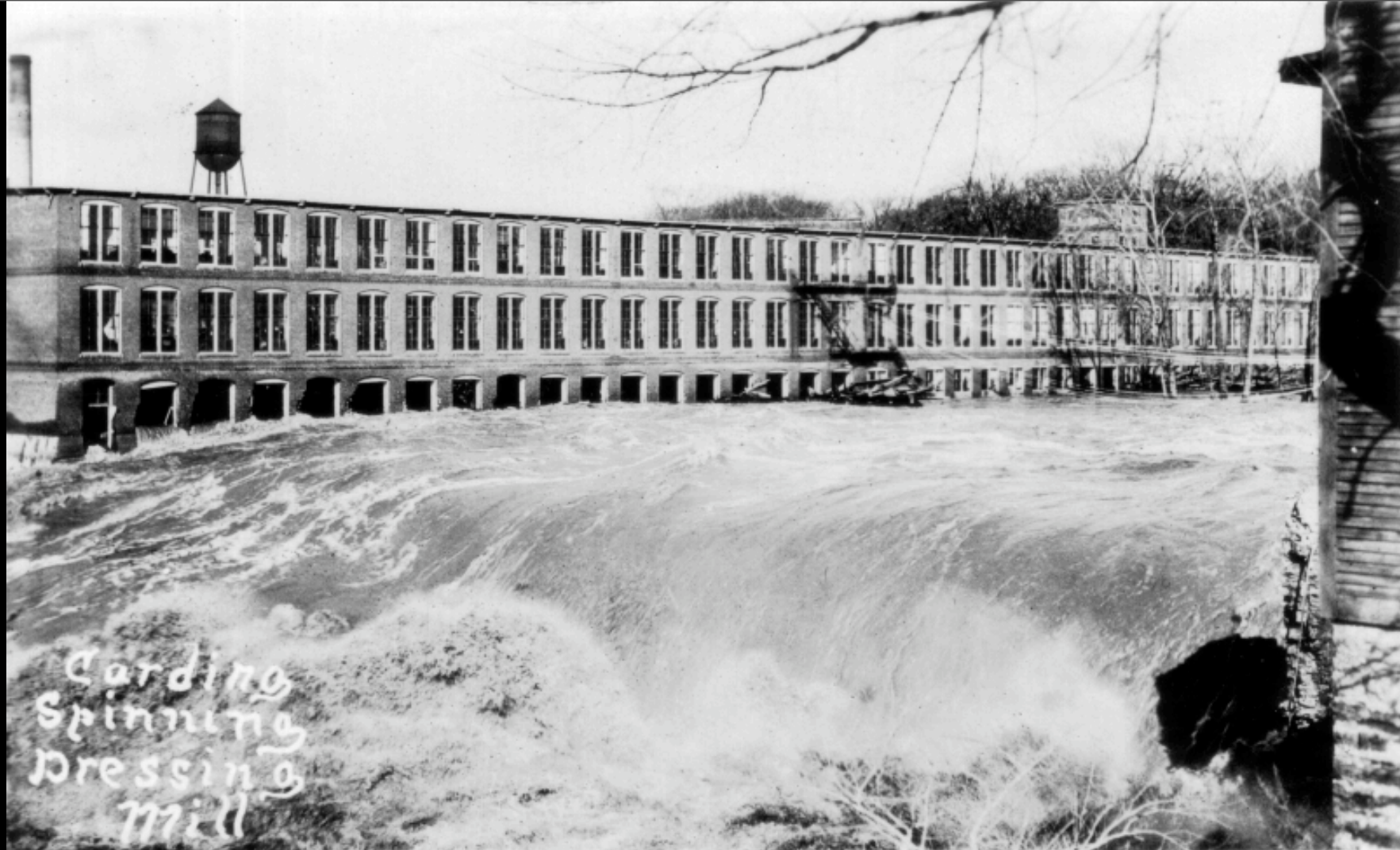


Here is the Burlington/Winooski Bridge before it was washed away. Several men can be seen working to save the bridge; Unloading something from the back of pick up trucks. Floodwater can be seen everywhere in the photo, submerging plants in the foreground and threatening to flow over the



Here is a modern shot taken from the same vantage point. This image is a stark contrast, with almost a 20 foot gap between the bridge's bottom and the river. Floodwaters overran where the car is parked in this shot. The massive amount of water is truly a natural marvel.

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This is another shot of the mills in Winooski. Floodwater can be seen rushing through out the first floor of the building and over the dam. The floodwater is violently churning as it washes over the dam. The windows are also visibly washed out by the raging waters and debris can be seen in the building in the distance.

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This view again shows the damage that the flood inflicted upon Winooski. The modern image should be a familiar image to any one who has ventured into the town. In the image from 1927, the Champlain Mill is submerged up to its first floor. The tip of another house can be seen protruding from the floodwater which is shadowed by two other partially submerged buildings. Several trees can also be seen poking out of the water to the left as well as some





This image of Winooski River captures the intensity of the flood. Water rapidly washes through the gorge sweeping trees and other debris away with it. The trees to the right are thrown against neighboring trees. The water is blurred, giving the impression of tremendous speed. Floodwaters with this power forever alter the landscape they sweep over.

# Conclusion

- The flood did a tremendous amount of damage to the town of Winooski. Its proximity to the river made it an immediate target. The town's infrastructure, industry, and residents were all severely effected by the record setting rainfall seen in early November 1927. The power possessed by nature is never to be underestimated, and this event goes