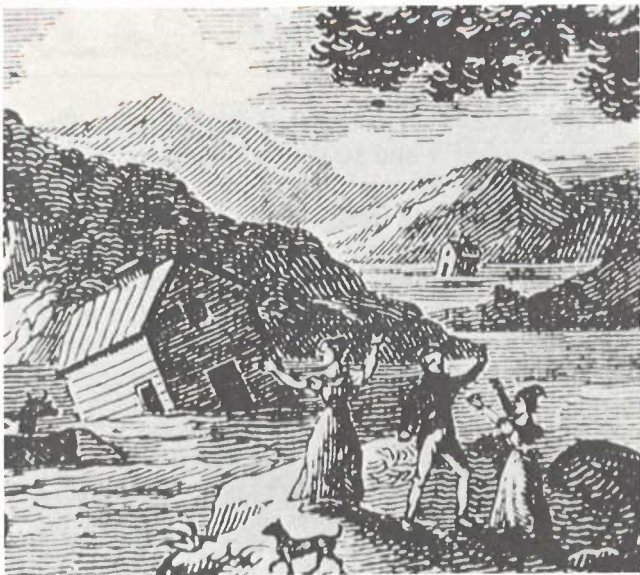


THE DAY THE POND RAN AWAY



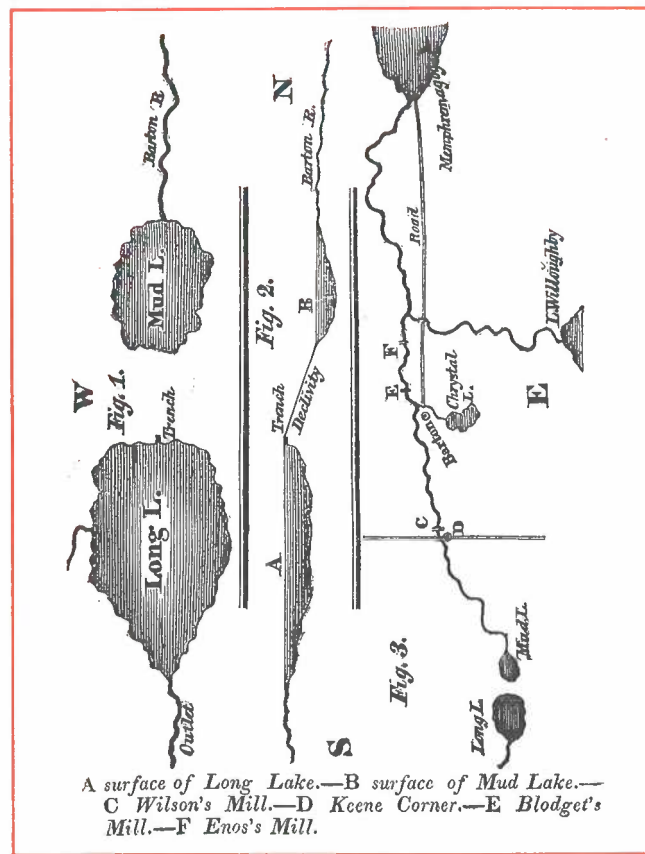
Today when **droughts** cause streams to slow, pond water to lower, and earth and plants to dry up, we are still able to buy food and other supplies. It is similar to when a sudden freeze damages the Florida citrus crop and prices for oranges go up. Food and other items cost more but are usually still available. This was not the case in earlier times.

In the 1700s and 1800s most Vermont ponds and swiftly flowing streams located in or around settlements had at least one mill on their banks and most had many more. The water provided the necessary energy to saw wood, grind grain, and **card** wool. Electricity was unheard of. When droughts limited the water supply, these important operations came to a **halt**. Lumber and flour needed by the settlers were unavailable at any cost.

Such was the case in 1810. There had been little or no rain that spring. The brooks and ponds were dry-

ing up. In Glover the situation was serious. The need for precious water to turn the wheels of the mills led to a disaster. It happened like this:

Glover, like so many towns in Vermont, was hard hit by the drought. Aaron Wilson operated a **grist** mill on an outlet from Mud Pond. The water level got so low that Mr. Wilson worried that he would no longer be able to grind grain for the settlers. Finally he came up with the idea to **divert** some of the water from Long Pond into Mud Pond. Long Pond, which was a mile long, half a mile wide, and 150 feet deep, was 80 **rods** south of Mud Pond and sat on land 150 feet higher. Long Pond's outlet flowed south into the Lamoille River.



On June 6, 1810, some fifty men with picks and spades began to dig the channel which would bring water to Mud Pond. No one was more excited than Mr. Wilson, the mill owner. He left his wife at the mill and headed south towards Long Pond to join in the work with his neighbors.

It took only a few hours to dig the narrow trench. As water began to gently trickle from Long Pond the workers sat back to rest and eat some lunch. They cheered at the **apparent** success of their work. In moments their cheers turned to screams as a wall of water emptied Long Pond. The sandy earth which had formed Long Pond's shore had given way. The water crashed downward carrying rocks, trees, and land towards Mud Pond. Mr. Wilson remembered his wife alone at the mill. Spencer Chamberlin, a young, part Indian man known for his running speed, was one of the workers at the channel. He raced the **torrent** and arrived at the mill only seconds before it. He grabbed Mrs. Wilson and pulled her to safety as behind them Long Pond swallowed the mill.

Joseph Owen, a resident at the time of the flood, described what happened in a letter to his sister:

“The waters of the two ponds rushed along, carrying everything before them. The Wilson mills went down, not a **vestige** of them has been seen since. The waters then covered Mr. Cobb's farm from two to four to six feet deep, then came to my farm. The waters came up to the **eaves** of the house but did not carry it away. It left about four feet of fine quicksand, as fine as flour, all over my meadow and land and carried away my timber, leaving jams of trees and rocks fifteen to twenty feet high.

“The ponds reached the lake (Memphremagog) a half hour after sunset. When it came down through Glover it was fifty feet deep. It raised the water of the lake a foot...”

If you should visit Glover today, you will see that the **debris** deposited by Runaway Pond has become fertile farm land. The barns and homes moved by the

water are gone as is Runaway Pond. Only a dry pond bed is left. In 1910, the one hundredth anniversary of the Glover disaster, a monument was erected along the side of Route 16 in Glover.



Courtesy of National Life Insurance Co.

VOCABULARY

drought - a long period without rain

card - untangle wool fibers before spinning

halt - stop

grist - grain

divert - to change a course or direction

rod - a linear measure equal to 16½ feet

apparent - obvious or clear

torrent - a raging flood

vestige - a visible trace or sign of something

eaves - overhang at the lower edge of a roof

debris - bits and pieces of something that has been destroyed