

Hunter's Run Conservancy District

A Brief History of the District

The Beginning

- The flood of 1948 occurred in the early morning hours
- Damage exceeded one million dollars, some estimates higher
- 400 homes affected with some residents trapped in their homes.
- Foundations collapsed on new homes being built on Pierce Avenue
- 18 bridges destroyed within the county; US 22 bridge on Lincoln Ave was destroyed.
- Water was estimated at over 14 feet deep in several areas along George and West Wheeling Streets submerging cars and moving buildings from foundations.

Homes Along Pierce Avenue



West Side Home



Flooded Vehicles on South George Street



This daylight view, looking south on George-st from Wheeling-st, shows four parked automobiles half-submerged. At 3 a. m. the water was over their tops.

Unidentified Location on the West Side



Bridges Destroyed and Railroad Impassable



Columbus Sunday Dispatch. 6-29-1952



Penn. RR at Hunter's Run. 7-22-1948



US 22 Bridge over Hunter's Run. 7-27-1948

The Community was literally cut-off following the flood because bridges were destroyed and railroads were unpassable.

The Flood of 1948

Lancaster could spare itself a repetition of the "flash flood" disaster of last July 22 by building dams on the Hocking River and Hunter's Run, in the opinion of a citizens committee named by City Council to investigate the causes of the flood and possible preventative measures.

"Lancaster is not a safe place to live until something is done. This last flood was worse than the one in 1936. The next one may be more disastrous. It can happen in a minute. Let's do something now!"

WEATHER:

Partly cloudy and somewhat warmer this afternoon. Fair tonight. Thursday increasing cloudiness and somewhat warmer.

Lancaster Eagle-Gazette

YOUR NEWSPAPER SINCE 1809

ESTABLISHED 1809—NO. 149

LANCASTER, OHIO, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1948

Price Five Cents

NEWSPAPER WEEK

VOICE
OF THE
PEOPLE



YOUR RIGHT
TO KNOW IS
THE KEY TO
ALL YOUR
LIBERTIES

Dams Would End Flash Flood Threat, Investigation Committee Reports

Lancaster could spare itself a repetition of the "flash flood" disaster of last July 22 by building dams on Hocking River and Hunter Run, in the opinion of a citizens' committee named by city council to investigate the causes of the flood and possible preventive measures.

The committee also reported that "we believe the damages were more than double the amount of \$917,470.85 reported and listed by residents and businesses of the flooded area."

The committee, composed of Mrs. Fran Taylor, Ollie Smith, Jr., Homer Clapper, Orlo Leohner, and Tom Taylor, all of whom suffered flood loss to homes or businesses, held a dinner meeting at Hotel Lancaster to give farmers whose properties abut Hunters Run an opportunity to air their opinions and suggestions.

The committee also suggested to the State Department of Highways that the bridges on Route 22 in Rosebank, and in Lincoln-av, just west of Cedar Hill-rd, be increased in width, also made longer

and higher to prevent recurrence of debris wrecking the spans. The cement bridge in Rosebank was washed out last July by the force of the debris.

Mr. Taylor summarized for the farmers the flood's effects on Lancaster proper and asked their assistance and cooperation in finding a remedy.

Round table discussion produced the following agreement: "The damage caused by Hunter Run was due to a heavy rainfall that was held in abeyance by debris, trees and wheat that lodged against a bridge, causing a natural dam. Lancaster was safe as long as that dam held—proving that if we did have a dam that held and water was gradually released when the danger was past, we would avoid this threat to Lancaster."

The farmers voted full cooperation with any preventive measures devised by Army engineers that would definitely provide protection for their crops and for Lancaster proper. They said they

wanted the advice of experts to avoid bringing flood water into Lancaster but to concentrate on holding it back and getting it out of town by dredging out of town. Army engineers are expected to come here for a resurvey in several weeks, city council learned at its September 27 meeting.

The townspeople agreed that expert advice was needed—but fast! They termed flood protection a "must" with cost consideration incidental. They declared cost of protection would be more than paid for by saving crops and buildings from just one such flood as last July's and warned that the potential threat to Lancaster's chief industrial section.

Another point made was the threat to lives. It was stressed that "Lancaster is not a safe place to live until something is done. This last flood was worse than the one in 1935. The next one may be even more disastrous. It can happen in a minute. Let's do something now!"

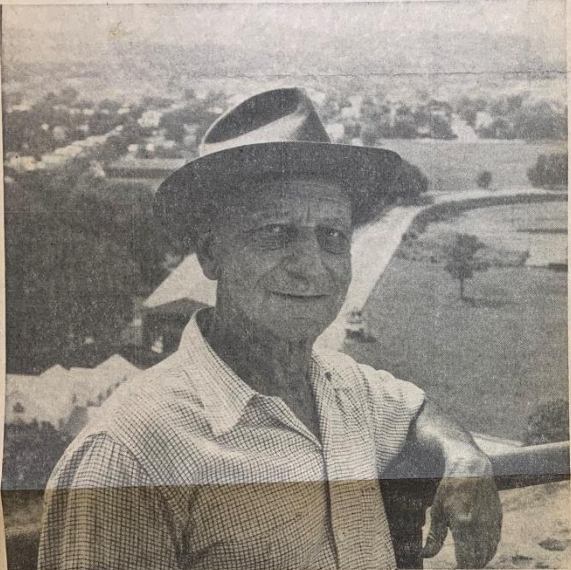
To substantiate their estimate of damage, the committee cited a survey made by the local Real Estate Board, which reported 600 buildings effected in the flood area here. The Board listed 334 houses with one-half to two feet of water; 437 basements with one to 12 feet of water; 35 foundations damaged; and two houses completely off foundations.

The committee arrived at an estimate of \$3 million property damage, based on the Board's survey. The affected real estate area will be worth only 50c on the dollar until preventive measures remove the flood menace, the committee opined.

Admitting they are not "experts nor engineers", the committeemen declared that they had accomplished their job to "get these figures compiled." They proposed to resign and recommend that the Chamber of Commerce elect a committee of experts qualified to "carry the ball from here on in and do a good job for Lancaster and Fairfield County."

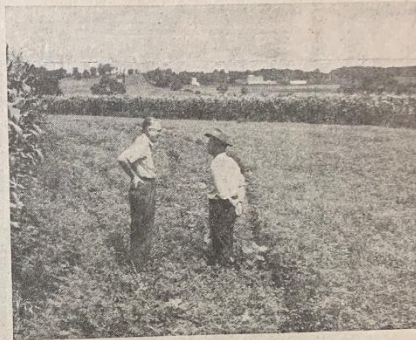
The Night That Topsoil Flowed in Ollie Smith's Living Room, He Went to Work

VOTE FOR A MAN WHO REALLY BELIEVES IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY



IT WILL TAKE A LOT OF OLLIE SMITHS . .

Growing symbol of our exploding population. Robert is 17 months old. When he is 16 years old our nation will need . . . tens of thousands more miles of new roads. 25 million new homes. Rehabilitation of many metropolitan areas. Over 50% increase in our present supply of water. Double the number of acceptable hospital beds. 45% more classroom facilities. More than double our electric power. 30% more lumber and 50% more pulpwood. Over 100 million additional farm acres under soil conservation. Thousands of water retention structures. 50% more mineral ores. Twice our present oil supply.



Ollie Smith likes to go out and inspect the structures and look at the prosperous farms in the area. Here he is shown with U.S. Soil Conservationist P. L. Fagle who has helped eliminate the \$100,000 yearly water damage to the area.

Nine structures have been built under the Small Watershed Development Act to slow down the water, while local farmers have co-operated with the U. S. Soil Conservation Service to conserve both their topsoil and the water that falls on it.

A \$300,000 elementary school is built on one of the lowest sections of Lancaster. Five years ago, real estate values in this area were so low that the land could hardly be given away. Today, land values have doubled and new schools and communities are springing up.

From Mt. Pleasant, Ollie Smith looks over the 49 mile square area where water once wreaked havoc on Lancaster and its surrounding farms.

THE NIGHT THE TOPSOIL FLOWED IN OLLIE SMITH'S LIVING ROOM, HE WENT TO WORK

Because he did, 30,000 people in the Upper Hocking Watershed are safe from floods, farm income is up \$84,000 a year and real estate values in the flood plain have more than doubled.

On July 21, 1948, Ollie Smith retired early in his small home in Lancaster, Ohio. He went to sleep to the sound of a driving rain. The next sound he heard was floodwater. The walls of his home broke in tearing out the plumbing and gas lines. Ollie and his wife waded through shoulder-high water to high ground. By the morning's light, he saw the damage — silt five inches deep in his front yard and an inch deep in his living room. The wheat strewn in his back yard represented a goodly bite from some farmer's income. Lancaster was a beaten city. Railroad tracks were washed out, bridges were gone, 400 houses were water damaged, and nearly a hundred cars had been submerged. But Lancaster didn't stay beaten thanks to Ollie Smith and other townspeople whose thoughts were best expressed by an editorial in the Lancaster Eagle-Gazette, "It Must Never Happen Here Again."

The silt Ollie saw represented precious topsoil from surrounding farms. He knew it would take the efforts of both farmer and townsman to make sure it would never happen again. Ollie learned that the answer would be a watershed development program to slow down the water, keep topsoil in place and give peace of mind to the people of Lancaster.

Ollie worked hard. There was a Christmas Eve he spent getting a hundred names on petitions before the deadline to form the Hunters Run Conservancy District. But with the help of the Fairfield Soil Conservation District, the U. S. Soil Conservation Service, townspeople and farmers, the Upper Hocking Watershed Development became a reality. A School has been built on land that was flooded in 1948. On farms, the topsoil stays where it belongs thanks to soil conservation practices. \$84,000 has been added to annual farm income. In town, flood-plain real estate values have doubled.

Across the land, hundreds of efforts like this must be made. Under the Small Watershed Development Act, it can be done. It must be done, as Ollie Smith knows well.

as published in March 22, 1963 Saturday Evening Post
Chrm. Ollie Smith For County Commissioner
J. L. Kraker, 418 E. Main Pd. Pol. Ad.

Creation of the District and Implementation

- The Fairfield County Common Pleas Court established the Hunter's Run Conservancy District (HRCD) in March 1952.
- The primary purpose was to act as local sponsor to implement the Work Plan prepared by the U.S Department of Agriculture
- Hunter's Run and Upper Hocking watershed encompass 49 square miles.
- The May 1954 Work Plan as amended called for the construction of eight flood control structures and twenty-two sedimentation control structures, to:
 - Reduce and retain potential flood waters
 - Reduce soil erosion and sediment transport
 - Improve local economic conditions
- The twenty-eight structures, currently owned and operated by HRCD, were completed between 1954 and 1961.

Projects Completed

- Completed engineering studies on two dams to determine need and recommend most economical means of repair
- Decommissioned one sediment control dam that was no longer needed
- Completed hydrologic and hydraulic (H&H) studies on six dams
- Replaced inlet riser on Dam R-46 on Betz Rd.

Projects In Progress

- NRCS continues engineering analysis for the rehabilitation of Dams No. 4 and No. 9 (Approximately \$1.2 million dollars with commitment from HRCD to follow through with rehabilitation at a 35% local cost share)
- Continuing with hydrologic and hydraulic (H&H) study of Dam 6 to determine impact of flooding in the event of failure of the dam during a historic rainfall event. Information will be used to develop the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for Dam 6

Rock Mill at Normal Pool



Rock Mill June 20, 2019



Rock Mill After The Water Recedes



Rock Mill Upstream



Rock Mill Downstream



Dam No. 4 Crest



Dam No. 4 Downstream



Reassessment Study in Progress

- The District was incorporated under Ohio Revised Code 6101
- The Code provides for an assessment process that requires the economic benefit to be determined for each property.
- Current assessment involves approximately 2300 parcels with most being within Lancaster, along with the City, County and larger corporations.
- There has never been a reassessment conducted since the first one in 1958
- Economic Benefit Analysis is in its final stages
- Goal is to assess all properties within the watershed, both the direct and indirect beneficiaries.

Continued

- The County provided \$139,000 from the American Rescue Act for this study
- The study requires economic benefit analysis, some engineering assessment, appraisal of benefit by our Board of Appraisers, public hearings and public relations activities
- More public education will be provided during open house events in 2023

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Hunter's Run Conservancy District Website

www.huntersruncd.org