

## The 1893 Floods and Pre-Suburban 20<sup>th</sup> Century Floods

### The 1893 Floods

The first and the third floods of February 1893 were very major ones. They caused extensive damage in Brisbane and Ipswich, with deaths by drowning in both places. These floods, at their highest, were equalled – in European settlement time - only by the January 1841 flood. <http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/qld/networks/index.shtml>

On February 6 1893, a *Brisbane Courier* journalist reported on the flood in what is now known as the Centenary Suburbs area: “Opposite Fig-tree Pocket, in what is known as the Seventeen-mile Rocks district, there has been a great agricultural loss, but as far as could be ascertained there was no loss of life. The whole area from the river to the foot of the range of hills is an unbroken stretch of water“. Despite this, only one home in Seventeen Mile Rocks is known to have been flooded as the majority of farmhouses were built on higher ground.

Pioneers of the area recalled seeing houses and sheds floating downriver. These damaged the railway bridge at Indooroopilly. In the local area, settlers used row boats to traverse the roadways.

As the transport routes to the city were south of the river at that time, the destruction of the railway bridge at Indooroopilly caused considerable inconvenience for people who had unavoidable business in the city. In the immediate aftermath of the flood, trains were not running from Corinda. The *Brisbane Courier* reported on February 16 1893 “Many people, including women and children, have had to tramp, in sultry weather and over muddy roads, from as far as Oxley and Seventeen Mile Rocks, a distance in some cases of five and six miles”.

For more details about the impact of and local pioneers’ recollections of the 1893 flood in the Centenary Suburbs area, see our publication *When River Was Roadway*, chapter 1.2.6, “Fluctuations of Climate”. The *Wolston Estate* south of Wolston Creek and Wacol area was also flooded: for more details, see our publication *Pastoralists of Brisbane Town’s Fringe*, chapters 8 and 12 - <http://cshsoc.wordpress.com/our-books/>

### Floods in the Pre-Suburban Era, 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Subsequent to the 1893 floods, other floods, particularly the major flood in 1908 and the slightly lower one in 1931, affected the south-western areas of Brisbane. No specific



information has survived regarding the impact of these two floods in Seventeen Mile Rocks. However, anecdotes and photographic evidence from pioneer descendants indicate that flooding occurred in the creeks, cutting bridges and roads, between 1893 and 1974. The photo opposite shows the flooded Jindalee Creek looking west toward what was then

Round Hill Farm: this perspective in 2012 is approximately from the Home Base shopping precinct side of Centenary Highway, looking west across the Jindalee Golf Course toward Timbarra Crescent (Courtesy of Belz and Magee descendants).

The home of the Counihan family (formerly Magee), situated along Counihan Road on the upriver side of Seventeen-mile Creek, was not inundated by flood waters in the pre-suburban 20<sup>th</sup> century period though lower parts of the Counihan property were affected. Nevertheless, the creeks rose, cutting off transport routes and/or cutting farms in two. Like their 19<sup>th</sup> century forebears, farmers resorted to boats to transport milk and butter across creeks, then proceeded on horseback or on foot to Oxley Railway Station to transport goods to market.



The photograph at left of Seventeen Mile Rocks in flood was supplied by the descendants of Hugh White. This was most likely taken during the 1931 flood as this was the highest flood that occurred during the White family's time in Seventeen Mile Rocks.

For an overview of all known floods in the Centenary Suburbs area, see 'Floods in the Centenary Suburbs Area: Overview' on Natural and

Historical Features Page <http://cshsoc.wordpress.com/natural-and-historical-features/>