

This photo, taken by Oliver Mateer, shows the back yard of his neighbor, Jeff Brown, during the rain of Friday, August 11th. Water covers all.

...Birchland Avenue's water (cont.)

[continued from front page]

"That's nothing," Mr. Brown said. "Things were really bad in the spring. The basements of some houses were ankle-deep."

John Alcorn, of 305 Birchland, is one resident who has had serious flooding problems. He showed our reporter the warped floorboards in his bedroom, and the crack in his basement wall, both of which, he said, were caused by dirty water pouring into his basement.

A broad stain, apparently caused by a minor avalanche of mud, flowed from Mr. Alcorn's basement window to the floor. Both the stain and the wall around it had obviously been energetically scrubbed. "The stain just wouldn't come out," Mrs. Alcorn said, grimly.

Most of the houses on one side of Birchland Avenue have been affected by the flooding. The houses are all worth at least 40 thousand dollars, and the possibility of extensive damage keeps homeowners awake on rainy nights.

"I used to enjoy the sound of the rain," Mrs. Mateer said, "Now, it frightens me."

The muddy run-off comes from a field in Mount Joy Township, but Birchland Avenue is located in Mount Joy Borough. Neither government will take complete responsibility for the situation. The field which causes the problem is owned by a woman who rents it to a farmer, which dilutes responsibility even further.

The problem began two years ago, after a fence row was ripped out, and the field, which had been used to grow alfalfa, was planted in soybeans.

"Before that," says Mr. Mateer, "we used to get some water, but it was clear." After the field was plowed for beans, both the quantity of water and the amount of lost topsoil, which ended up on Birchland Avenue increased tremendously.

Residents would like to see a storm sewer installed on their street, but no funds have been appropriated for that expensive project. They would also like to see extensive conservation measures adopted by the owner of the field, but once again, the price of doing the work is an obstacle.

A ten-foot swathe of grass, which was sown this year between the beans and the small backyards of residents, did not seem to do much good. "We hear,"

said Mr. Mateer, "that the field will be planted back to alfalfa next year. I hope that makes a difference, because it doesn't look as if Council is going to do anything to help us."

Angry Birchland Avenue residents attended the last Borough Council meeting in force. They have also approached the state Department of Environmental Resources, in an attempt to force soil-conservation measures on the owner of the field.

"You know what they told us at the DER?" Mr. Mateer says. "They told us they couldn't do anything, until a house was destroyed or a serious disease broke out."

"You can write that it doesn't look as if anybody is going to do anything about the situation."



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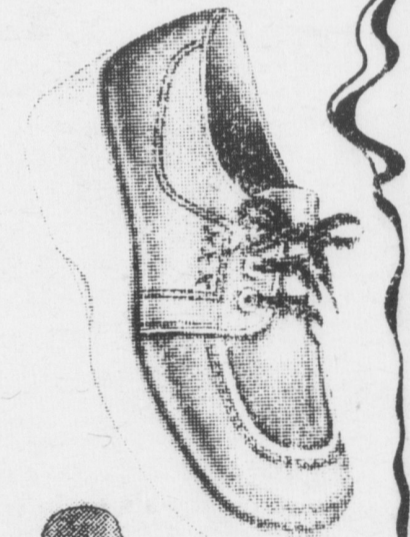
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