

# Flooding

## *Flooding of the Point (1755-1860)*

Records indicate quite clearly that the area of the Point is very prone to flooding events. Fort Duquesne weathered a bad flood in 1757 of which McKinney wrote:

*“The waters at some time rise so high as that of the whole Fort is surrounded with it so that canoes may go around it, he [McKinney] imagines he saw it rise at one time near thirty feet.” (Hunter, 1960).*

The threat of flooding was so bad that, in April 1762, Colonel William Eyre recommended that a new site be found for the fort (Reece, 1944), but General Stanwix held firm that the fort should stay where it was. Alternatively, Eyre made multiple recommendations on a more flood-resistant design of the fort.

The flood of January 9, 1762 rose about 4.8 feet above the parade ground level of Fort Pitt (Stotz, 1985). Flood waters badly eroded the earthen ramparts that rested on the walls of the fort. The flood waters also built up underground pressure and in several places boiled up through the surface of the parade ground. Of the same flood event, James Kenny, assistant to Josiah Davenport, the Indian agent at Fort Pitt, wrote in his journal on January 8, 1762:

*“that y<sup>e</sup> ice broke up this Evening & y<sup>e</sup> River Rose very fast.” Some of the Cabins near the fort were almost washed away (Lorant, 1980). The next day, Kenny wrote: “by Noon y<sup>e</sup> street fronting our door” was under water. By dusk the “water got into our celler increasing with y<sup>e</sup> same progress as at firt y<sup>e</sup> Celler having no Wall but mud banks we conclud’d to shut all y<sup>e</sup> Doors... & make our escape.” (Stotz, 1985)*

The flood of March 11, 1763 rose about 6.7 feet (Stotz, 1985). The damage caused regret for not facing the fort in brick, but that was considered too costly at the time. By comparison, the St. Patrick’s Day flood of 1936 had floodwaters at 11.6 feet.

Additional major floods in the 1800s included ones in 1832, 1852, 1861, and 1865 (Cowin, 1985).