

**Bessie A. (Mrs. Elbert E.) Maxham**  
**1927 Flood Letters to Nellie Rosa Maxham**  
MS 974.31 M768mn

Letters written by Mrs. E. E. Maxham, 8 Spring Street, Montpelier, Vermont  
to her daughter, Nellie Rosa Maxham, a student at UVM,  
living at 87 South Willard Street, Burlington, Vermont

Montpelier, Vermont  
[Friday] Nov. 4, 1927

I hope it will be so you can come the 19<sup>th</sup>, but can't tell yet how things  
will be here. So much repairing to be done. (written upside down on top  
of page)

Dear Nellie:

When you see the papers I expect you will be worrying you head off about us, but I sent a telegram, or the telephone by my nearest neighbor, to Mr. Holmes and am hoping you will get it. Don't try to come home now as you couldn't get to us and we have no way to feed you or anything, except a place to sleep on third floor. Mrs. Montague has taken us in to board until we can do differently. This is the worst experience we ever went through, last night was a night of terror, with the water to the top of the door casings down stairs and a swift current running by the house on both sides. About everything we left down stairs is ruined, and all our other neighbors as far as I can see, (even over to L. D. Tafts), are in the same fix. We are better off than most in that Mr. Montague has some fuel upstairs and we can have a fire for another day or two. They are taking the people out of the house now in boats as it is so cold for them. The water is below the kitchen floor now and daddy is down there trying to clean out some of the mud. The lower story of most all the houses are a sight, windows broken on all sides, foundations crumbling, barns and garages here near us, off their foundations and standing at all angles. A big landslide on the steep side hill back of us came down on Mrs. Thompson's house, trees and all. Our car was in their garage. I don't expect there is much left of it. We don't know much about anything outside of the city as telephone connections are all cut off. We know they must have had terrible rain storms up the branch somewhere. A lot of bridges are swept away, and I am afraid we shall hear of lives lost, but so far we haven't. You must not expect any washing returned or food sent for a while. I don't know but your clothes you sent home are all ruined. I had them all boiled and ready to rinse out, when we had to hustle so to get our dry clothing in the closets and a few other things and carry upstairs, and left your clothes on the stove little thinking the water would get higher than top of the stove. We feel pretty thankful to be alive and as comfortable as we are. You had better put on your winter underwear and get along the best you can. It is time you ought to anyway. I do hope you are all right, and will write more and call up on the phone soon as I can get through. Wear clothes enough to be comfortable and don't get more cold. We send oceans of love. All of us are so glad you weren't in this. Mother

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Montpelier, Vt. [Thursday] Nov. 10, 1927

Dear Nellie:

We have been and still are having "the time of our lives." Have had a terrible experience and am thankful every time I think about it that you were not here to go through it. Also am glad that "Squeaks" was not here to be drowned.

I don't know what your Mother wrote you about it, or if you got her letter.

We went up stairs, and expected for a while to be obliged to go still higher.

The water came quite a lot higher than I can reach in our rooms. We put some things up high thinking they would be dry, but water tipped most everything over, wardrobe, china closet etc., and took two doors off the hinges and threw them down. Most of our windows were broken, and river flowed through with great force carrying timbers logs and drift wood of all kinds.

A good many of our things floated right out of the windows and never came back. Your Mother's sewing cabinet lodged right in the window, poised on the window sill, about half of it out side, but was rescued after water went down. A lot of the furniture was about ruined, Desk, Sewing machine, Tables, Chairs, etc. and some of the pictures are entirely spoiled. Most of the things on walls were stripped right down. Stoves are all rusty and red.

Mud is every where, several inches deep. Awful sticky mud, you can't get rid of it any where. I found our clock in the mud on the floor in front room. Could not get a shovel for a while, so I used Mr. Montague's fire shovel. Pretty slow getting all that mud out that way.

Our suits and overcoats were in the attic, but lots of sheets and all kinds of laundry are so full of mud that your Mother can't wash them. Your laundry case floated away out the broken windows. I saw it going. A lot of books went also, and most all that are left are spoiled.

Garage where I stored the automobile was crushed by an avalanche, and the roof is lying on top of our old "Chevy." The "auto" top is crushed and wind shield broken in about 1000 pieces. I can't get it out now and don't know if it ever runs again or not.

We have not yet been down cellar, can't get the door open. Doors that are open are swelled so they won't shut tight. "Dossie" took it very well in deed and has been the life of the Place. She has gone up to Grandpa's for a little visit. No school this week. (Probably Thanksgiving vacation). We are eating in Montague's rooms. Both families furnishing food, and I am furnishing wood at present. Delmar brought a little yesterday. Not much road to get any where. I sent a telegram to you, and they would not let me pay there and then, so it had to be sent "collect". I am sorry about it but can't help it. Hope your money is "holding' out well. I hear that the safe deposit boxes at Bank are full of water, so I suppose mine is also. I must find out to day and dry the stuff if possible. Our loss is heavy, but suppose we are lucky it was no worse. We are about as usual and hope you keep well. Suppose telephone and mail will be much better soon. Let us hear from you when you can and don't worry. We are digging out but, Oh so slow! Linoleum will all have to be taken up. Much love from "Daddy" and everybody.

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(Thursday Morning)

Dear Nellie,

Will write just a line. I suppose Daddy has told you all the news he had time to. You will have to wear your winter underwear now and get your laundry done down there for a while. The steam laundry will be cheap as anything perhaps. Everything is in awful shape here, but we are better off than a good many. If we keep well we shall try to be thankful and I hope you can. Eva Alden took your washing home and did it. (as your clothes came out better than any others left down stairs,) They are all safe and wearable, but can't tell when we could get them to you. Your laundry case we saw go sailing out the window when the water got down part way. Don't know where it is by this time. Most all our windows were broken, but most of the stuff stayed inside. We were lucky to get our outer clothing and our best rug and the long mirror, also the mattress and bedding on the couch upstairs. The water came to the top of the door casings downstairs. Everything in the rooms tipped over except the stoves.

Will talk with you on phone as soon as I can get through.

We sent a message to you Monday and got yours yesterday. Do hope you have it by this time. I am so sick of the site and smell of mud. Mud everywhere you go, three inches deep on our floors. Dot went to Grandpa's yesterday for a few days. Keep up your courage and don't worry about us as we are alright, and all your folks as far as we know.

Heaps of love

Mother

PS If your money is getting low you had better write to Mrs. Taft and see if she can send some. Everything is so slow don't wait too long. If they can't send it go to Mr. Bailey and see what he can do to help you out for time being. M.

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Dear Nellie;

I am sending your laundry at last and hope you will get it soon. They send all the packages they can, or small ones. You can use your sheet two weeks alright if you need to as you sleep alone. You can send your course laundry to the steam laundry for a while if you want, and your silk stockings and blouse and find things you can send home perhaps. I have washed some every day as all my towels, table linen etc was down stairs. We had a man to set glass today, so all our windows are done. We make a little progress each day but my pantry is the only room all clean. Kitchen partly done, but all the furniture will have to be washed by hand. They are having some sales down town on hose and zippers, etc. I may send you some hose for winter if I can get away long enough to buy any. Had you rather have zippers or rain boots for this winter? Be sure and say next time you write. The road is terrible up to Grandpa's no road at all some places, so they go through the field many places. Daddy thinks you need not pay 10 cents to send letters home, that if you put it the P.O. it is up to them to get it through for 2 cents. They are sending mail from here to Burlington by air plane every day now. There is no out break of sickness here of any kind yet. I don't know how soon our telephone will be connected up, but just as soon as it is, and they will let me talk to you I will call up. Daddy expects a man here tomorrow to help clean out the cellar. It is an awful mess, our potatoes, apples, wood canned goods all mixed up with mud. One big cupboard of canned goods tipped over forward, so don't expect to save much of that. The streets are lined with heaps of mud and rubbish to be carried off. I walked down Elm St.

as far as Court tonight. First time I have been out. It doesn't look natural parts of houses where they never were before and some places none at all. Down near Court St. the water line shows where the water came up to middle sash of second story windows. Have you heard from Mrs. Taft yet? Let us know soon as possible. Hope you are feeling all right and everything is going good. We were all puffed up with pride over your marks in Math & English. The French & Latin was good too. That ought to encourage you a lot. We expect there will be some way for you to get home by Christmas, or we are hoping so. We shall be in a mess here for weeks yet. Heaps of love from all & write often. Mother

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Montpelier  
Sunday

Dear Nannie,

Although you owe me a letter instead, of my owing you one I'll write just the same. I went up to Grampa's Wes Thurs Fri & Sat last week. It was an awful flood.

The best rug in the parlor we took up stairs also the big mirror. The rug in the dining room will stand water as it was linoleum. The radio was up-stairs excuse my writing as I have a blister on the end of my finger and can't write awful well. I found a book that was Mrs. Puffer through out the window that the pages were all right. I saved it for you to read. The name is "The Girl from Montana" by Grace Livingston Hill, alias Mrs. Lutz. It is dandy. Your little french books went out the window and all of my favorite ones also. I am so sorry. One of your books was the three musketeers in french. There was about a dozen prs. [?] of steps sailed by here during the flood time.

All the minister[s] worked that Sun in Randolph. Our school, The union I mean, is the only school that is going to open next week. I am mad. Primary and High are going to have another week of it.

Miss Trenier and Miss Holden were stranded here during the flood. Mr. Jameson and rest of teachers got home before the flood they were insting [?] school.

Love  
Dot

P.S. Delmar has got a German police dog that Harold won for 50¢. Her name is Boscoe.

P.S. Write soon

[Dot (Dorothy E. Maxham) was Nellie's sister.]