



A BOAT TRIP THROUGH VAN WERT — Times-Bulletin Editor Sam Fitzsimmons and the Rev. Herbert Walther made an unusual sight-seeing trip Wednesday. The pair sailed through Van Wert on Town Creek in a canoe. The two were rained out at Center St. From Ervin Road the excursion took approximately 40 minutes. Times - Bulletin photographer John Lianez "caught" the pair as they passed under Market St. bridge.

1968

Cruising Down The Creek— With A Paddle

By SAM FITZSIMMONS
Times-Bulletin Editor

An adventurous twosome made a canoe trip almost through Van Wert Wednesday and nearly lost their way on the high seas of Town Creek.

It all began when the Rev. Herbert Walther asked us, "How would you like to take a canoe trip down the creek?"

"Dandy," we said, "What time does the yacht depart?"

"Three o'clock," the pastor replied, "and be sure to wear clothes that are immersable."

We dismissed any thoughts of a baptism.

Come three and we put in just south of the Ervin Road bridge. The pastor was aft. We sat forward.

Almost immediately we were silently gliding down stream at a rapid rate. The creek's current was swift due to heavy rains.

Feeling like a couple of Indians, we slipped along. The only sound was the lapping of the water on the bow of the canoe.

Then the creek channel turned north behind Central Mutual Insurance Co.

AT ONCE, it seemed we had left civilization. The trees and undergrowth on both sides of the creek channel, close to the water, made it seem as though we had entered a jungle.

We were surprised to see the various kinds of berries and flowers growing wild.

A couple hundred feet later we met the first big obstacle. The stream was completely blocked with several logs which had collected considerable debris. It looked like a solid island.

It wasn't.

The situation was, we were up a creek with a paddle — but no place to go.

TO PORTAGE over nature's dam, it was necessary for one of us to get out of the canoe, drag it over the half submerged logs, while the other controlled the craft from the inside.

We immediately gave the good preacher the honor and privilege of getting out of the boat — after all it was his canoe.

Besides we figured that he had better qualifications for getting out of a boat in mid-stream than we did.

Rev. Walther wouldn't have gotten wet either if he'd stepped where we told him.

It really didn't matter. As soon as we were underway again, it started to rain somewhat. We both got wet anyway.

THE TRIP through the downtown area went like a swift — no traffic or traffic signals. The rain stopped. (Only temporarily we were to learn.)

As we went under the Penn Central Railroad trestle, we were again back in the jungles.

We noted that it was probably at this point the Indians of long ago put in. On the east bank was once a spring which the Indians kept hidden with a piece of bark.

From this point on, the creek, or "Little Jordan" as it was once called, was probably fairly navigable in bygone days.

We were once told that "Pip's Landing" was in the area at one time and boats used to bring in fresh fruits to the city.

BUT WEDNESDAY, navigation was more difficult.

Around a bend we suddenly discovered our path again

blocked. A huge tree had fallen into the water.

It was possible, howsomever, to barely squeeze under the tree next to shore. Unfortunately, after we got our end through, we gave a big shove with the paddle, forgetting that the pastor still had to make it under.

The tree trunk hit him right in the mouth. This brought us to a sudden stop. He pushed backward and we got banged on the back of the noggin with the tree.

When we finally got underway again, the creek wound and wended its way and with the thick growth of trees and underbrush it was impossible to see any buildings or landmarks to tell where we were.

We were lost — and of all places on Town Creek.

SUDDENLY we came upon a bridge but it looked unfamiliar. (It is harder to recognize a bridge from its underside.)

Now it comes to pass that a Times-Bulletin carrier boy is crossing the bridge on his bicycle.

"What street is this?" shouted the pastor, waving his paddle.

The poor kid nearly fell off his wheel in his surprise at seeing two full-grown men in a canoe in Town Creek.

"Wall Street," blurted the carrier and peddled away as fast as he could — probably to spread the alarm.

About now, it begins to rain again only more so. It took us to the Center Street bridge to find a spot to land.

Residents of the area who might have been watching were probably somewhat shocked to see two men suddenly emerge from under Town Creek bridge and run pell mell down the street in the rain.

The minister is in better shape than we are, incidentally.

Fortunately he had a parishioner living a few doors from the bridge who had an unexpected pastoral call.

All in all it was quite a trip to go canoeing down Van Wert's waterway.

Shucks, the next time we might even charge admission to watch.