



ALLEN CREEK VALLEY SHAPES THE TOWN



ANN ARBOR CENTRAL MILLS ON FIRST STREET BETWEEN LIBERTY AND WASHINGTON WAS ONE OF TWO LARGE FLOUR MILLS BUILT ON ALLEN CREEK. CONSTRUCTED IN STAGES AFTER 1882 TO BE NEAR THE NEW RAILROAD, IT USED THE FOUNDATIONS OF HAUSER'S 1853 CITY BREWERY, WHICH HAD USED THE WATERS OF ALLEN CREEK. PHOTO AFTER 1900.

LOOKING WEST ON LIBERTY FROM MAIN STREET GERMAN AMERICAN DAY, 1870S

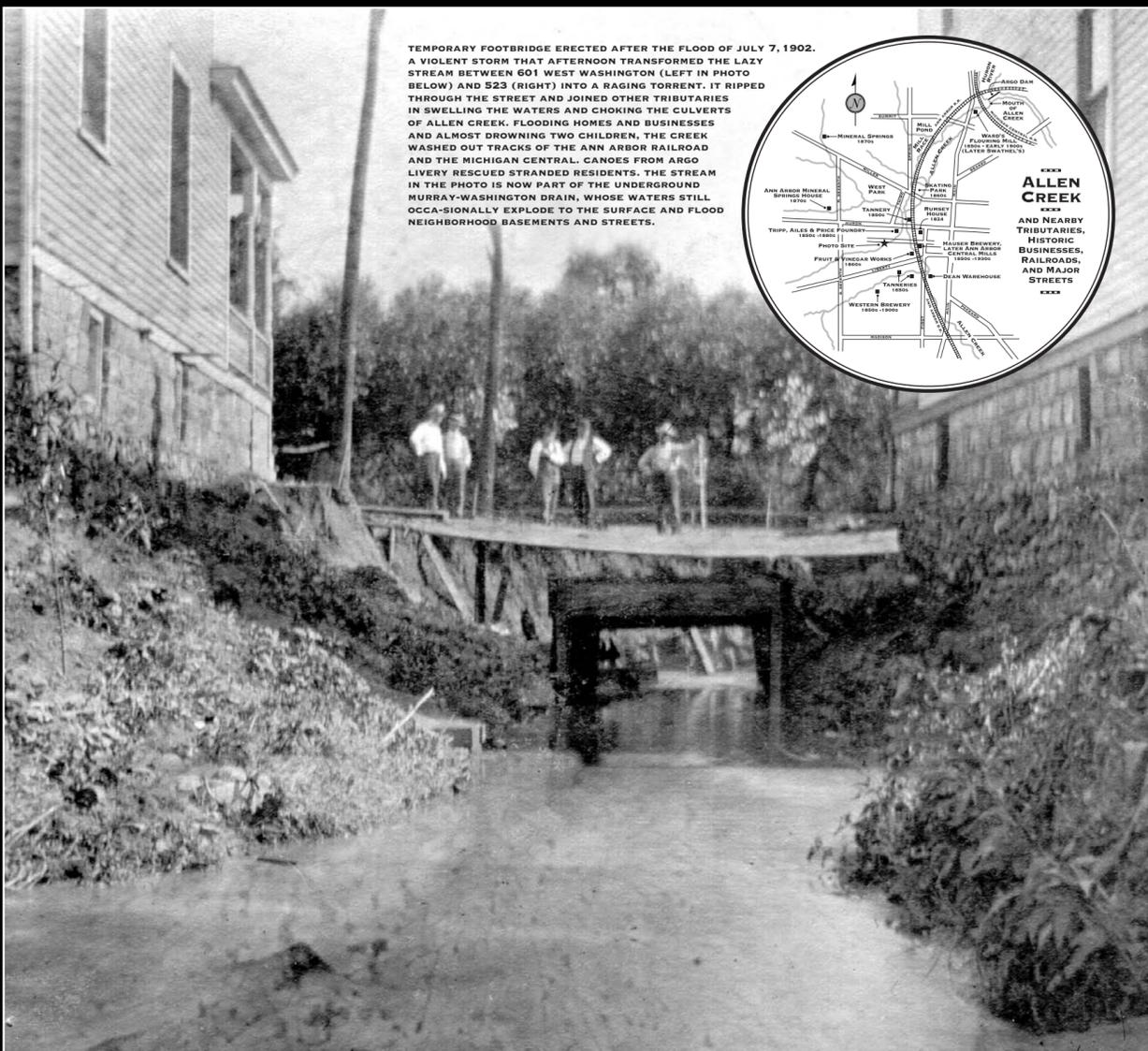


Residents living on the west side in the 1870s drove their buggies or walked across the bridge over Allen Creek, climbing the Liberty Street hill to join the celebration of German American Day. In the distance you can see the rooftops of their homes built after 1845 in what is now the Old West Side. Close by, saw mills, grist mills, tanneries, foundries, and breweries, mainly German-owned, took advantage of the creek as a source of power and water.

From Ann Arbor's founding in 1824 until today, the presence of the waterway has defined the shape of the center of town. The creek provided the site for the city's earliest known bathhouse, an octagonal Victorian structure built over the creek at Liberty and First streets. Early skating parks and swimming areas also were located along the creek. In 1878 the first passengers on James Ashley's new Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad arrived in town. The railroad followed the

valley and spurred increased industrial development along the creek.

By Ann Arbor's centennial in 1924, property owners near the creek, upset by frequent flooding and pollution, demanded that the city put the creek into a storm sewer. Although it was buried in twelve miles of pipe, heavy downpours sometimes exceeded the capacity of the pipe, resulting in flooding along its watershed.



TEMPORARY FOOTBRIDGE ERECTED AFTER THE FLOOD OF JULY 7, 1902. A VIOLENT STORM THAT AFTERNOON TRANSFORMED THE LAZY STREAM BETWEEN 601 WEST WASHINGTON (LEFT IN PHOTO BELOW) AND 523 (RIGHT) INTO A RAGING TORRENT. IT RIPPED THROUGH THE STREET AND JOINED OTHER TRIBUTARIES IN SWELLING THE WATERS AND CHOKING THE CULVERTS OF ALLEN CREEK. FLOODING HOMES AND BUSINESSES AND ALMOST DROWNING TWO CHILDREN, THE CREEK WASHED OUT TRACKS OF THE ANN ARBOR RAILROAD AND THE MICHIGAN CENTRAL. CANDORS FROM ARGO LIVERY RESCUED STRANDED RESIDENTS. THE STREAM IN THE PHOTO IS NOW PART OF THE UNDERGROUND MURRAY-WASHINGTON DRAIN, WHOSE WATERS STILL OCCASIONALLY EXPLODE TO THE SURFACE AND FLOOD NEIGHBORHOOD BASEMENTS AND STREETS.

