

Blame it on rain? No, blame it on plaster!

Posted on [April 20, 2013](#) by [David Britten](#)

Happy Hollow returned with a bit of vengeance this week. Record rainfalls for the month of April led to Plaster Creek once again spilling its banks and filling the old Alabastine plaster mining area with a foot or two of water. Godfrey-Lee's athletic complex is temporarily more suitable for aquatics than football, soccer, baseball or softball.



Not the first time, nor will it be the last.

Plaster Creek enters the Godfrey-Lee district at the corner of Clyde Park and Burton Street. It meanders alongside the Kalamazoo interurban electric train route just west of the old Leonard-Kelvinator plant. The creek exits the district only after crossing Chicago Drive and Godfrey Streets destined for the Grand River.

The creek once had a very different route through what kids referred to as Happy Hollow. It actually curved up to the east edge of the football field before heading back towards Chicago Drive. Back when Chicago Drive was known as the Grandville Road, the creek was more



1876 plat map of the Godfrey-Lee area

equaled by any in the United States, they hope to receive a share of patronage



Alabastine Company Factory No. 1 on old Grandville Road (Chicago Drive, today)

The Alabastine building today. It's been home to Dossin Foods that bottled Pepsi Cola, a paper company, and now a building supply company. The building sits on Chicago Drive across from the start of Lee Street and our East Lee Campus.

By the 1870's, the company quit using this area as its quarry, instead moving north along Plaster Creek towards Hall Street and then west to the area where today sits Marquette Park. By 1911, Alabastine decided to tunnel underground in the site of its second mill, Alabastine No. 2, at the north end of Nagel and Judd Streets, next to the Wyoming Yard train depot. Today that site is home to Michigan Natural Storage.

The end result from all of this plaster quarrying is a very low creek basin that, particularly when the Grand River is high, sheds its excess water across our athletic complex and area streets. In effect, historic Lee Field constructed on what was once the Happy Hollow swamp and a portion of Plaster Creek itself, serves three missions: as a sports facility for God

Men dug out Lee Field by hand in 1936-38 as part of the Depression-era Works Progress Administration, filling in a part of Happy Hollow on the old Alabastine plaster quarry area. For many years in the early 1900's, the site was used as a neighborhood dumping ground.

So once again, we patiently await nature to return our ball fields. Soon, we hope.

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