

Environment – Ice

The winter of 1917-1918 was the coldest recorded in Virginia. Snow fell some three times its normal average and the Potomac River and its tributaries froze. Additionally, the entire length of the Chesapeake Bay was frozen, with Chincoteague Bay frozen to a depth of 10 inches at its mouth. When the ice began to thaw and recede in Falmouth, ice flows jammed against bridges, causing their collapse.



This picture from the Belmont Archives captures the destructive scene of the Falmouth Bridge wrecked by ice on the morning of February 13, 1918.



This picture taken from the Fredericksburg side of the Rappahannock shows the damage to the Falmouth Bridge. Notice that Belmont is visible on the hill to the left.



After five spans of the Falmouth Bridge were destroyed by ice, Falmouth residents W.E. Brooks and Nelson Berry, immediately gathered a group of Stafford citizens to salvage broken parts of the destroyed spans. A footbridge was constructed from the debris to allow residents to cross the Rappahannock River. Many citizens of Falmouth and south Stafford worked at the Washington Woolen Mill in Fredericksburg and were needed by their employers to return to work.