

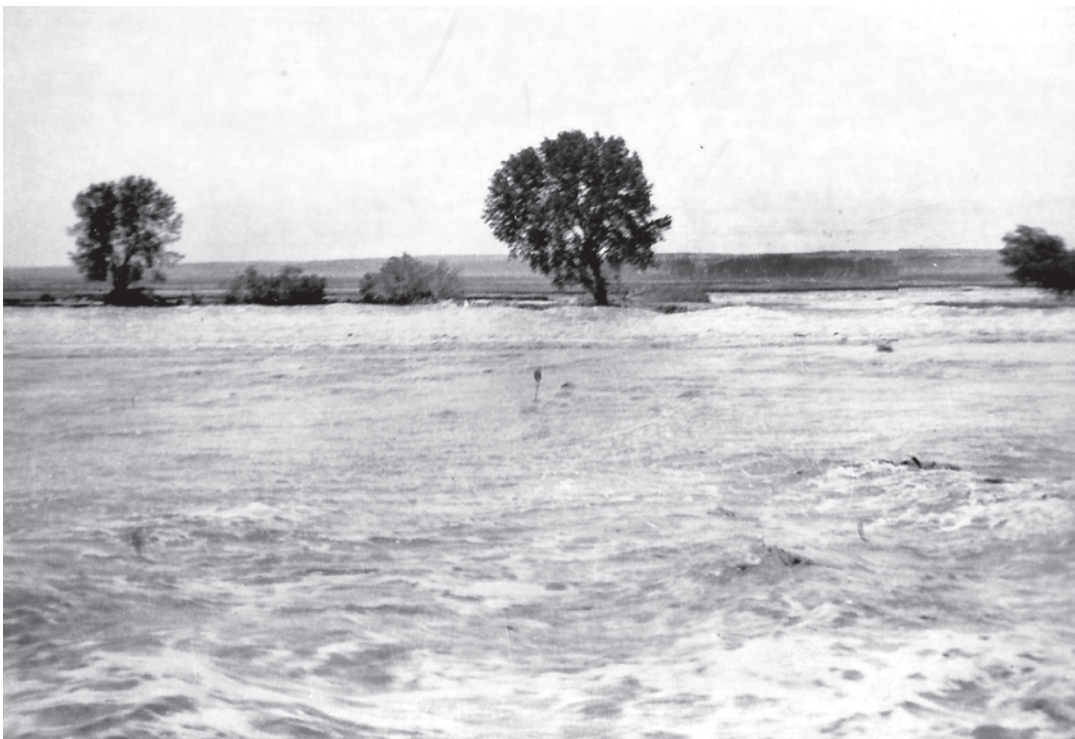
Memories OF THE LAST Millennium

Supplement to *The Burlington Record*

Memories of 1935 Flood

Thursday, June 24, 2010

75th Anniversary of the **1935 FLOOD**



Trees tumble down in flooding waters of Republican River.
Photo from Kit Carson County Colorado History Book, 1988.

Few events have shaped the land and the history of our area with such dramatic and lasting results as the flood of 1935.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of what is known as the 1935 Flood. In this issue of *Memories of the Last Millennium* we give you articles and photos taken from *The Burlington Record* and *Republican*, *The Burlington Call*, *The Flagler News*, *Kit Carson County History Book* and the book *Bluff to Bluff* by Marlene Wilmot. There are also quotes and comments from several area residents who shared their memories of the big flood.

In commemoration of the anniversary, the National Weather Service at Goodland, Kansas, has put a study of the events of May 30-June 2, 1935 on a website: www.weather.gov/gld/ The site features stories, photos and weather information gathered from newspapers, books and from survivors and their families.

THE FLAGLER NEWS
JUNE 6, 1935

Eastern Colorado Flooded By Heaviest Rain Ever Known

MANY LIVES LOST AS STREAMS OVERFLOW; HIGHWAYS AND RAILROADS WASHED OUT

What was without doubt the biggest cloud burst ever known to man struck Eastern Colorado last Thursday. As much as five to eight inches of rain fell in places in the space of a few hours. Many lives were lost, a great deal of property damage occurred and rail and highway traffic was paralyzed for days by washouts.

The rain began west of here Thursday afternoon and caused heavy damage west of Limon and at Colorado Springs. Thursday night the rain began falling here and what was estimated as five inches fell in about four hours. Every low place was filled with water. In places hail accompanied the rain and also did damage.

Every dry creek and draw began pouring water into the main water courses and they were transformed into raging torrents in a short time. The Republican river rose to heights which it had never before reached, as did the Arickaree and other streams. Bridges of every description stood for only a short time against the torrent. Houses which have always stood on dry ground were inundated with water and some were swept away. At least three persons near here lost their lives. They were Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Gesner and Mr. Lothian who lived in a house on Sand creek just west of Seibert. The flood struck their home during the night and they apparently had no warning of it. The house was swept away and only one body, that of Mr. Gesner, has so far been

found. His body was washed up north of Stratton. Searching parties have combed the creek bed for miles trying to locate the other bodies.

Many persons had narrow escapes from death in the flood. Just west of town the Charles Blair family, living on the former A. A. Deal place, were flooded out and only escaped in time. Mr. Blair awoke in the night to find several inches of water on the floor. When he opened the door a three foot wall of water deluged the place. He succeeded in getting his family out and up to the Petty place and then he walked to town for help. Pearl Lord, Lon Eads and others went back with him to try to save the stock in the barn. Mr. Blair swam out to the barn and went down in the water when Mr. Lord reached him. Mr. Lord got a finger hooked through a knot hole in the barn wall and supported both of them until the other men built a raft and rescued them. The water had backed up behind the railroad and made a huge lake. The house was floated clear off its foundations.

Many other people had similar narrow escapes. Some were caught in high water and spent the night on top of their houses. The storm came so suddenly that many were unable to reach high ground. Much stock was killed by the hail and drowned in the flood. Many farmers lost their tractors, trucks and cars when they were washed away

by the water. Most of John Verhoeff's dam south of town was washed out.

Mail service into eastern Colorado has been completely tied up since last Thursday. The railroads are washed out in both directions. The big rail bridge over Sand creek was completely isolated when hundreds of feet of approach to it were washed out. The railroad bridge at Bovina was washed away. Between Limon and Denver so many washouts occurred that railroad officials estimate that service will not be restored for at least two weeks. The railroad to Colorado Springs was repaired early and crews have been working at Bovina and at Sand creek. It is expected that the trains will be running to Limon by Sunday.

The big highway bridge over the Republican river was washed away as well as the approaches to it. The Sand creek highway bridge also went out and traffic was tied up. Cars have been detouring to

the south over the bridge at the Parrott place. Three big highway bridges between Deer Trail and Denver were washed out but cars have been going that way and are being pulled across the creeks by highway department tractors.

The greatest loss of life was in southwestern Nebraska where rain added to the flood and a tornado ripped its way through. It is estimated that altogether over 200 people were killed by the Memorial Day floods. As the water makes its way eastward toward the Missouri, other floods have occurred and even today and Tuesday the rivers are out of their banks in Kansas with the water from Colorado and Nebraska.

As we go to press today mail service is still tied up but Postmaster Robb is making attempts to get some through. He has made trips to Burlington and Limon with outgoing mail and tried to pick up incoming mail but most of it is tied up elsewhere.



Republican River after the 1935 flood with Gordon Hitchcock and Merton on the Corliss Ranch northeast of Stratton.

THE BURLINGTON RECORD AND REPUBLICAN
JUNE 6, 1935

In the Wake of the Flood

Bones unearthed at the C.C. Gates farm

At the C. C. Gates farm, near Seibert, a huge bone from some prehistoric animal was found, washed out by the flood waters. The piece measured six and one half feet in length and was about 12 inches in diameter. It is now on display in Seibert and later will be turned over to a Denver museum.

Materials lodged in various places

Material from bridges, buildings, fence posts and a conglomerate mass of other lumber in large quantities found lodging places near Hale as the flood water subsided.

At the Rosser Davis ranch, a horse swept downstream, caught the branch of a tree in its teeth and after hanging on for hours was finally rescued as the water receded.

The monument, shade trees and part of the improvements at the Beecher Island battle ground are reported to have been swept away by the wall of water which went down the Arickaree river bottom, where this historic spot is located.

One of the peculiar things noticed after the flood is the presence of mud balls left in the river bed. These range in size from two or three inches to a foot in diameter—some much larger. Some object, started rolling by the force of the rushing water, gathers mud and gravel on its journey and the result is an almost perfect sphere.

Davis and Corliss families had harrowing experience

The Rosser Davis and Sherman Corliss families had a harrowing experience Thursday night during the high waters. Mr. and Mrs. Davis and the twin boys were compelled to seek the upper story of the house to get away from the water. Escape was impossible since the house is on higher ground than that adjoining. When the water finally receded it had left a silt deposit several inches deep all over the floor of the lower story. At the Corliss ranch water cut away the ground surrounding the home until it became unsafe. Here too, any attempt to leave the house would certainly have meant disaster, and the foundation withstood the flood so that all were safe.

Mail made it to Stratton

Yesterday (Wednesday) a government truck brought a load of mail into Stratton from the west. Word was sent here that there was also some mail for Burlington and George Cockrell made the trip to Stratton bringing back five sacks of first class mail—the largest consignment to reach here in days.

Miles of damage to railroads and highways

Miles of railway roadbed and numerous bridges on the highway still remain to be repaired before transportation can be fully restored. Highways are being made passable with temporary bridges but it will be days yet before Rock Island service will be regular.



June 1, 1935, 11 a.m. overlooking the flooded Republican River bottom, looking north across the river to the Harvey Wood Ranch north of Stratton. Photo from Kit Carson County Colorado History Book, 1988

There have been several books written about the 1935 Flood in Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska.

- *Bluff-To-Bluff, The 1935 Republican Valley Flood*, by Marlene Harvey Wilmot, published by Wilmot Ventures, Greeley, Colorado, 1995.
- *Bluff-To-Bluff, Too! The 1935 Republican Valley Flood*, by Marlene Harvey Wilmot, published by Wilmot Ventures, Greeley, Colorado, 1996.
- *Swept Away*, compiled by Mary L. Sherk, printed by Prairie Print, Broomfield, Colorado, 1989.
- *High Water Mark* by Raymond Borchers, published by Raymond Borchers, printed by Accent Printing, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1983.
- *Forty Years Against the Tide A Washington Memoir* by Carl T. Curtis and Regis Courtemanche; Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1986.
- *Significant Tornadoes 1680-1991* by Thomas A. Grazulis printed by St. Johnsbury, VT: The Tornado Project of Environmental Films, 1993.



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The Wray Gazette
Wray, Colorado, Thursday, June 13, 1935 [Page 1]
IDALIA COMMUNITY SUGGESTS
PAYING TRIBUTE TO STATE LINE HEROES
(Idalia Correspondent)

On the forenoon of May 30 residents living between Idalia and the South Fork of the Republican, coming into town to try to ascertain the extent of the damage done the night before, reported a river flood without precedent except in Indian tradition running back far before our earliest pioneer days but remembered by our early Idalia settlers in a warning given by a friendly Indian Chief to the founder of the Bar-T ranch, "White man, build too close to the river. Indian sees water from bluff to bluff."

At the Burlington crossing the whole bottoms were a waste of tossing water, covered with great trees that had stood for generations and with lighter debris of every kind; with a terrific current in the center which appeared to stand many feet many feet above the water along the bluffs and in addition was covered with rolling white capped waves that appeared in places to rise twelve or fifteen feet in height; while the whole valley was filled with a roar that could be heard inland a distance of five or six miles.

The first intimation to Idalia of the tragic deaths and heroic rescue east of Hale came in late afternoon when Joe Busby and Kenneth Wiley passed going west in an attempt to gain telephone connections with Kanorado or Goodland to ask them to try to send rescue parties through to the south side of the river at a point near the state line.

No one seeing them could fail to be impressed with their appearance and anxiety and eager haste.

Below Hale, they said, the whole Harding family: father, mother, Myrtle, Alta, Alfred, and Rodney had been swept away at five o'clock by a wall of water that in places seemed to be twenty feet in height.

The father, the mother and one child had been lost. The remaining three

children had carried for [sic] down stream but had caught in trees and rescuing parties from the State Line Community were attempting to reach them from shore.

Here in the early morning had come Melvin Catt of Jaqua, and an unknown young man from near St. Francis, strong swimmers, both determined to swim a three hundred yard channel into which to venture was almost certain death.

They were kept almost by force from making the desperate attempt and that afternoon a raft was built, launched, and manned by men never before on a raft and driven across the still furious current, free--unrestrained by ropes, to rescue the oldest girl, Myrtle, just before a blinding dust storm came up from the east.

In the meantime the younger girl had escaped on the south side and the upper force shifted one mile down stream where another State Line group was trying to reach the remaining child. Here working all night by dim lantern light the combined forces, just at day-break, succeeded in a seventh attempt to drive across the a captive raft guyed by ropes and rescued Alfred, the remaining child.

Dr. Garcia, who had been taken to the scene to render first aid and remained all night, says that the actions of these men, working in a practical darkness, were those of unquestioned heroism.

The Idalia community pays since tribute to their neighbors on the state line who have risen to a height of stature that will keep their names in remembrance as long as we honor our truly great.

This account was taken from The Wray Gazette and is on the National Weather Service 1935 Flood website
www.weathergov/gld/

There are many more personal stories and photos on the website you may want to it check out.

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The flood in 1935

An interview with my mother. This was a report for history that I wrote as an assignment when in the eighth grade at Liberty School. Regina Whipple Oldham.

We lived on the Republican River when I was a kid, John Homm owns the place where we lived. I have some vivid memories of that flood and some people now wonder if we who lived then aren't exaggerating a bit. No, words cannot tell it how it was. We date our lives by before or after the flood because it made such a change in our lives.

We had had several years of extreme drought. In the spring of 1935, we had had fierce dust storms too. But on May 30 to June 1, we had water. Momma had a hot bed with tomato and cabbage plants, north of the house, in the fenced lot with the cherry tree. This evening she sent Joe (my brother) and me out to put the frames over the bed as she feared the threatening storm. Both of us became so fascinated by the clouds that we forgot what we were doing and were startled when Dad shouted to hurry. The sky was all black, whirling, clouds. Such furious energy and churning! The clouds were darker and denser than any we'd ever seen and were all moving to the south west as if driven by a high wind. Dad and all the family were hurrying to secure the livestock and give them protection.

I can remember the rains — it started after dark and was just a down pour and it was still raining when I went to bed. We were awakened at dawn with a distant roaring sound and my older brothers who slept in the bunkhouse calling for us to come look at the flood. We did.

It was just getting daylight and I can remember how frightened and awe struck I was, there was water everywhere. All of the bottom land was under water. Our usual river of about 12 feet wide and at most 10 inches deep was now a mile wide. Dirty, muddy water rolling huge cottonwood trees end over end, making waves as high as a two story house. But Mom and Dad didn't let us look long as they made ready to leave if necessary.

We dressed warmly and packed food and clothing and bedding. We didn't have to move to higher ground. We were protected by a natural dam or hill which was south of the small spring fed stream which flowed close to our door. In a few hours, it seemed that the water wouldn't come any higher so we children just watched.

Later, we learned much about the cause of the flood. What had happened was that a rain, measuring anywhere from 12 inches to 25 inches, fell over a large area. It started above the head of the rivers flowing northeast and just followed the water shed down stream. Since it covered such a large area all the draws and fields and sand creeks flooded and converged into the river channel at the proper time to swell the flood. We had about 15 inches at home. Rosser Davis, up river, had an empty cow tank which was full after the rain, depth of 24 inches. Mr. Hershberger, who printed the Stratton Press, had printed an ad he meant as funny. It ran: Wanted: Rain. He said later the he regretted it as they had 17 inches there and he wondered if the Good Lord was reprimanding him.

We watched the rolling waters for hours but the older people were busy saving what animals they could. Cattle and horses floated by but sometimes some would be swimming and the men would try to rescue them. My older brothers, Alex and Bob, rode the saddle horses and hurried to cut a fence as some cattle and horses were washed against it and would have drowned; they were saved. Our work horses had gone down stream but were stranded on a high piece of ground. Old Mr. Chase went out with a bucket of oats and coaxed them over to land. They just made it. A big wall of water with a tangle of wire and posts washed by just then and all that livestock would have been trapped and drowned by the tangle. Alex rode all day, cattle would be washed to shallow water and would be so exhausted they couldn't get on

to dry solid land. He'd help them. Once he turned a herd of horses that were so frightened they were unmanageable but he headed the leader towards safety and the rest followed.

After the water receded, we found the channel changed and all the beautiful hay meadows were sand bars. The trees were washed away. Any machinery left on the bottom land was lost. We believe it sunk in the sand. We found an old horse drawn mower because the tongue was sticking up a foot above the sand. Lots of machinery was never found. During the preceding winter and spring Dad had sold or given hay to poor farmers who were desperate for feed for their remaining cattle. He was a frugal man and believed he should keep hay over from year to year in case of a crop failure but often said how thankful that he had not let that hay be washed away in the flood.

The aftermath of the flood was severe. We needed supplies. We had no access for several days to a town but did finally make a way to Kirk, mail went out from Kirk. The county road past our place was a route for people north to get to Burlington. People built their own roads, there was at least a mile or more of impassable sand bar from our house to the other side of the river. A trail was broken or planned out and then the men hauled manure and trash to make a solid base so a car could travel across. But the wind would blow that trail full and they would have to haul more manure and eventually built up an elevated track and people could carefully drive over it. They often had to pull travelers across and especially across the stream bed as a car would bog down in the loose sand. We had a miserable time getting to church in Burlington, didn't go very often as it took a team to get us across the river and one to get us home. We had to help many people over that sandbar that summer, fall, and winter and summer again. It struck me as odd, the way

some people act when faced with a hardship. Some people who needed to cross on the trail would apologize for the inconvenience they caused. Some offered to pay, others would help shovel the sand away or push their vehicle, some acted as if it was our doings that there had been a flood which left blowing, drifting piles of dirty sand. Many a time our men would have to unhitch the team from whatever they were doing and rescue someone who needed help. Sundays were especially trying as people like to visit or supplies were needed and so they attempted to travel, it was no better at any of the other river crossings all along the length of the river. Once or twice I saw my brothers hurt or angry or just plain disgusted at the treatment they received and other times they felt well rewarded for a difficult job done. One especially trying day we all laugh about now, Alex took a four horse team to pull a car back on to the track after it had churned until it became stuck. The woman passenger heaped verbal abuse on his head, yelling for him to hurry, and accusing him of not knowing how to drive horses, etc. Finally, without saying a word, Alex unhitched his team and started for home. The man begged him not to leave them stranded and Alex agreed to help him but only if she kept quiet.

One day that summer while out helping hunt calves I found an iris in bloom. It sat all alone in a pile of mud and rubbish and I wondered about the woman who had planted it. Mom told me that if that flower could live and bloom that we could find courage to go on living too.

In 1938 we left the river place and moved to a farm on the hills east of Kirk. Those were trying times and the 1935 flood changed our way of life.

by Regina Whipple Oldham

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THE BURLINGTON CALL
JUNE 6, 1935

VONA NEWS ITEMS

Vona reservoir

The subject of absorbing interest here for the past few days has been the floods. The rain began here at 9:30 p. m. Thursday and continued until about 2 a. m., and during that time about 2 1/2 inches of water fell. The precipitation was much heavier north and west and lighter east and south. In some localities as much as 7 inches of rain is claimed, be that as it may, but the fact remains that the flood waters rose to greater heights than ever recorded in the memory of the old inhabitants.

The Vona reservoir, even though a five foot culvert had been placed at nearly the base of the embankment (thanks to our state highway department) and notwithstanding the immense amount of water carried out thru the culvert, the water rose to a height of about 30 feet and run out the wasteway for a couple of hours. The highway bridge was submerged to a depth of 13 feet. The highway north of the Rock Island was washed out by the water from the reservoir so that tourists were stranded here 30 hours.

While the water in the reservoir was the greatest since 1897, little if any damage was done. The fill settled slightly where the culvert was placed and a little water seeped thru around the culvert.

Harper Place

At the Harper place, 2 1/2 miles west of Vona, the farm was swept clean of all buildings and structures except the windmill; the Rock Island fill just north of the place formed a dam that held back the water, inundating the buildings. In spite of the fact that a double culvert was under the fill at this place the water rose, overflowing the railroad, the two culverts being about 8x10 ft., and which have always been able to handle the flood waters for the past 47 years, proved far too small.

Gesner family

The improvements on the farm one mile west of Seibert, occupied by the Gesner family, were entirely wiped out and floated away, supposedly when the railroad fill went out. The family, consisting of father, married daughter and her husband were swept away in the house and only the body of the son-in-law being recovered so far.

Bert Kvestad Ranch

At the Bert Kvestad ranch, the barn on the place was flooded, drowning several head of cows and the house was threatened, Mr Kvestad having a ladder ready to take to the roof, in case the water continued to raise.

Highway bridge

The highway bridge 6 miles west of Vona, which was recently built, was washed out and destroyed and traffic is detoured one mile west until a new one can be built.

Carlstedts

The Carlstedts, who have been visiting relatives in Fairbury, returned home Monday evening. They give a very interesting account of the flood in Fairbury and Lincoln. The entire Platte valley was flooded from Grand Island west to Julesburg. In many places the highway was surrounded by water on both sides and in places water was over the road and guards were on duty, directing traffic. Instead of coming direct to Vona from Joes, it was necessary to detour via Cope, Flagler, then south and east to Vona. In all they traveled over 600 miles Monday and Monday night.

Radio Reports

Radio reports this morning, June 4, indicate a destructive flood in Kansas, especially in the Kaw valley and this reminds us of the flood of 1903 which was at its height June 1. Corn planting that year along the Kaw continued until July 10 and while the corn did not fully mature, none of it was an entire loss on account of being late.

About 400 feet of the Rock Island fill was washed out at Sand creek, west of Seibert, and the railroad company has a crew there building a piling bridge.

Monday a number of the higher officials of the railroad were viewing the wrecked track and fill, including President J. C. Gorman of Chicago.

Amount of rainfall
in flood's path

The storm that caused the heavy rainfall on the Republican River Basin during the night of May 30-31, 1935, began just east of the mountains in the forenoon of May 30.

In the area local residents measured, chiefly during the afternoon, as much as 20 inches, including some hail, in stock tanks.

This storm followed general northeasterly direction across the headwaters of the Republican River and ended a few miles east of Curtis, Neb. on May 31.

The airline distance from the head of the Republican River in northeastern Colorado to Curtis is 215 miles.

Within this area the rainfall was concentrated chiefly in the South Fork of the Republican River but extended along the ridges dividing that basin from the basin of the Arickaree River nearly to Benkelman, Neb.

Outside this concentrated area there were undoubtedly small areas of concentrated rainfall, as shown by the record of 11 inches in Section 24, Township 6, Range 55 W, but only 1 inch two miles farther south.

Unfortunately the area of heaviest rainfall contained no Weather Bureau precipitation stations, and it was therefore necessary, in determining the location and approximate amount of rainfall, to obtain from local residents such information as could be furnished by those who had measured the rainfall in improvised rain gauges.

Some listed are on Sec. 24, T6S, R 55W, 11 inches, measured in paint can;

Sec. 36, T6S, R 55W, 1 inch, measured in paint can; Genoa Sec. 12, T9, R 53W, 3 inches, rain and hail in can;

Arriba Sec. 1 T9S, R 53W, 00 inches, storm did not touch Arriba but there were black clouds all directions.

Flagler, Sec. 2 T9S, R 51W, 2.5 inches, measured in a glass tube;

near Cope Sec. 1 T4S, R 30W 1.5 inches, Weather Bureau;

Seibert Sec. 34, T5S, R 49W, 7.0 inches, measured in glass tube gauge;

near Seibert Sec. 11, T8S, R49W, 13.0 inches, measured in concrete tank;

near Joes Sec. 5, T5S, R 47W, 7.5 inches, measured in 3 gallon can;

near Idalia Sec. 22, T4S, R 44W, 5.5 inches measured in vertical can;

Stratton Sec. 36, T8S, R 47W, .2 inches, Weather Bureau;

Burlington Sec. 33, T8S, R 44W, .1 inches, Do?;

Newton Sec. 10, T5, R 44, 12.8 inches, measured in stock tank.

By Della Hendricks, 1988 edition Kit Carson County History Book

How much rain?

"Some say that we had a total of 20 to 24 or more inches of rain. Some had 5 gallon buckets that ran over and also some had empty stock tanks that ran over. They are 24 inches deep. There were many large lagoons in the area and one in particular east of Idalia suddenly drained and soon a large crack in the ground formed stretching some 2 miles north and west from that lagoon. Bluff to Bluff

Strobel family north of Bethune watches
as the Republican River rages away.

— photo from Kit Carson County History Book.

THE BURLINGTON CALL
JUNE 6, 1935

STRATTON and VICINITY

Earl Messenger was one of the first to get down to Stratton to tell of the effects of the Republican river rampage. Earl had 70 acres of newly listed corn washed out and several of his neighbors had the same luck. Dave Sealock's barns and windmill were washed away and several head of his cattle drowned. Earl said the pastures were nearly strewn with dead stock, the river bed had changed its course. We at Stratton are lucky so far, tho we are having no train service and none expected from Denver for two weeks.



THE BURLINGTON CALL
JULY 11, 1935

From Kit Carson County History Book

For Flood Control Dams

Commissioner Geo. Baxter and J. A. Vierhoff were over from Flagler, Wednesday. They were interviewing local business men in the interest of dams for flood control in the county. The state planning board have signified a willingness to cooperate with this county on a program of that character. It is thought a million dollars will be available for that purpose if the proper effort is made to secure it.

"This flood caused the government to have the river surveyed and an engineer employed to build a dam across the river and land was purchased, which is known as Bonny Dam and reservoir, the latter is filled with water one mile wide and six miles in length with a depth capacity of 153 feet at the dam. — Myra Davis in 1988 edition of Kit Carson County History

THE BURLINGTON CALL
JUNE 20, 1935

IDALIA ITEMS

(Last week)

Since the flood we have had some nice weather. Many are replanting corn and will be for another week. Weeds are going to be bad in lots of corn, as some is getting thru the ground with plenty weeds in the row. We believe that about one-half stand will catch the best fields as it is going to make it late for corn.

Mr. and Mrs. Clark Elliott came down from Denver Memorial Day to visit relatives. They got in ahead of the flood by a hair.

Noah Morris and Wm. Fentress were in Saturday for supplies. They report plenty of rain up Sand creek.

Our mail service is again on time after several days of none and no place to cross the river. Mr. Goin came by Beecher for several days, but the road is passable now on 51.

Miss Helen Boden and uncle, Geo. Boden were up from the South Fork, Saturday. George figures about half

of his cattle swam out of the flood but has not found any dead cattle with his brand on.

J. I. Conrad came out from Wray last Thursday with his son Lawrence, to look over the conditions out this way.

Billy Brenner got his oil truck going again. He got caught between the Launchman and South Fork and was marooned at the Newton school house by the flood.

Chas. Langendoerfer and mother drove out from Burlington last Tuesday. They came by way of Stratton, and Kirk, which is the only way at present.

We understand a temporary bridge will be put in this week across the south fork of the Republican on 51, which will put us in touch with the south railroad again.

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Weddle drove out to the Kirk vicinity Sunday to see how his cattle stood the storm. He has a bunch of cattle north of the Arickaree in the hills.

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Trees vanish in flooding water. Photo from Kit Carson County History Book 1988

**THE BURLINGTON RECORD AND REPUBLICAN
JULY 4, 1935**

LOTHIAN'S BODY FOUND

The body of C. A. Lothian of Seibert was found Sunday fifteen miles east of St. Frances, Kansas. His body has been missing since it was carried down the Republican river by the Memorial day floods. Burial services were held at Cheyenne Wells Wednesday.

Last week the body of Josiah Harding of near Hale was found.

Mr. and Mrs. Harding and one son were all victims of the flood of May 30 and the bodies of Mrs. Harding and son had previously been found. Of the six in this territory who perished in the high waters of a month ago five bodies have now been recovered, that of Mrs. Wayne Gessner of Seibert being still missing.

**THE BURLINGTON RECORD
AND REPUBLICAN
JUNE 13, 1935**

MEMORIAL SERVICES

FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

Memorial services for Mr. Clarence A. Lothian and Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Gesner were held in Seibert Monday at eleven o'clock at the Evangelical church, conducted by Rev. J. L. Tyner.

Although systematic and thorough search has been made, the bodies of Mrs. Wayne Gesner, formerly Frances Melba Alexander, and her step father, C. A. Lothian, have not been found as yet. Wayne Gesner's body was found Sunday, June 2 and his burial services were held Wednesday, June 6, conducted by the Rev. J. L. Tyner also.

Mrs. Lothian escaped being in the tragedy as she had just left for a visit with her daughter in Kansas.

Harry Hill of Flagler, Wm. Hill, prominent merchant of Fort Collins, and Senator Hill, all brothers of Mrs. Lothian attended the services.



1935 Flood waters under Vona bridge (railroad).

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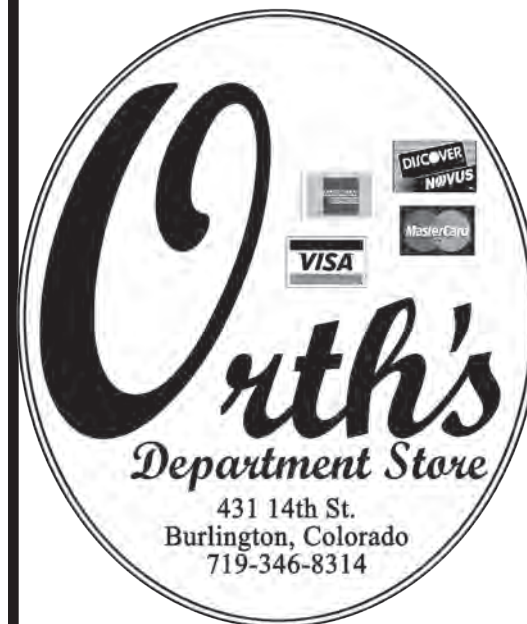
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THE GREAT FLOOD OF 1935

From Kit Carson County Colorado History Book, 1988

A series of dry years, beginning in the late 1920's, culminated in the driest of all years, 1934, when less than a five-inch total was recorded in much of the Great Plains area. The "Black Blizzards" of the Dust Bowl days darkened the skies at midday. The year 1935 began no less ominously. Up to the first of May little moisture had fallen. Then began three weeks of almost unceasing rains. The ground was soaked and county roads were like bogs. About May 25 the rains stopped. Up to the afternoon of May 30, mild and sunny days prevailed. Memorial services were held under auspicious weather conditions, although in a few places light afternoon showers occurred.

Towards evening, dwellers in the tri-corner of Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska described heavy cloud banks in the northeast. Similarly in the locality where Colorado and its three southern neighbors meet, thunder heads were observed at dusk, away to the southwest.

How little those who idly noticed the cloud banks realized just what was taking place! For three days a tremendous low pressure area had been developing along the Canadian border and moving eastward towards the Great Lakes. In like manner, a storm center had been generated in lower California and Arizona and was moving eastward into New Mexico. During the forenoon of May 29, the storm-center nearing the Great Lakes suddenly halted, changed course and began moving at accelerated speed to the southeast. It was as if the two storms foci, like two huge angry giants, had suddenly sighted each other and halting, moved forward to do battle. By evening of May 30, the one storm center was over Central Nebraska while the other was at the Southern Colorado border. The stage was set for the most terrifying clash of opposing aerial forces ever seen in this country! The center of that stage was a spot just within the Colorado border, an area in northeast Colorado, between the Republican River and the Arickaree, where those streams cross the state line. There, was the focus of the low-pressure area and there, the two opposing storms met. From that whirling vortex the tempest spread in all directions for perhaps 150 miles.

At the focal point of the cloudburst, twenty-four inches of water fell, and most of it in the forty minutes of the storm's greatest fury. Fifty miles away in the same period of less than an hour saw as much as twelve inches of rainfall. It staggers the imagination to picture two feet of water being laid down over hill and valley in less than an hour. The downpour was accompanied by the most incessant and vivid lightning, while the earth shook with the continual roll of thunder. Over most of the area the height of the storm came between 7:30 and 9:00 p.m., although it was a few hours later that the sweeping waters reached the area around what is now Bonny Dam. People huddled terrified in such groups as could get together. At the height of the cataclysm in the western part of Kit Carson County, Colorado, several earth tremors were distinctly felt. None tried to reason this out nor to account for it at the time, but the explanation, or at least the result, was shown later.

At last the rain settled to a mild drizzle. By mid-night most of the fury of the elements was spent. The day dawned clear, with fleecy clouds overhead and low valleys wrapped in feathery fog. By 10:00 a.m. the wind came up and from the rapidly drying surface of the ground, dust was whipped up in a few places to form miniature but growing "black blizzards".

But what a scene of havoc and death greeted the eyes of the thousands of searchers who were out at daybreak along the valleys of the rivers and creeks. Word had spread that many who had retired early had been caught by the rushing walls of the water that swept down the unusually dry creeks and river beds, and carried away to die, in a hopeless battle against the icy waters, in darkness and alone. Scores of houses in the lower valleys had been quickly toppled from their foundations. Survivors who had escaped and fought their way to shore or to trees through the long night, had, when daylight came, found themselves surrounded by animals dead and dying. Often human beings were hard put to hold their places of safety

against the approach of desperately swimming animals and snakes. For, struggling in the frigid flood, trying to avoid the debris of houses, fences, trees, hay and floating animals, the victims faced the added danger of venomous rattlesnakes, coral snakes and other vipers.

Hay meadows that had been warm and green in the May sunshine were now only desolate patches of hot and glistening sand. The channels of streams had been altered; huge bowls torn in the rivers' beds revealed the bones of beasts that dwelt on this earth ages before the coming of man. A single leg bone measured nine feet, while a tooth from some prehistoric monster was found to weigh twenty-seven pounds.

The deluge that drowned thousands of jackrabbits and birds on the plains also washed away millions of cubic yards of the rich topsoil requiring countless thousands of years to build up. Hundreds upon hundreds of old Indian camps were brought to light, and it was revealed that at one time this country had been covered by dense and huge timber.

Those who had believed they felt the earth tremble at the height of the storm had ample proof of their belief. All over the northwestern part of Kit Carson County and that part of southern Washington County huge cracks had been opened, leading into the bowels of the earth. Some of these cracks, extending for miles, were as much as six feet across, and in them, hundreds of feet below the surface, the roar of rushing water could be heard for days. Wind and farming operations have filled the upper parts or obliterated these crevices since, but there are plenty of creditable witnesses to testify to their reality. An earthquake? Well, with nature in such a convulsion, is it to be doubted?

The storm was one of the major disasters in America's western history. More than 100 lives lost, and the loss in farm and town property, highway and railroad bridges and roadbeds was estimated conservatively at the fourteen million dollar figure. No one could guess nor calculate the loss caused by depleted soil; people had been made homeless and all the other products of this tragic class of elements. Rivers more in name than in fact, that usually were dry water courses, ran a mile wide and twenty feet deep, carrying a wealth of property and topsoil into the sea.

To most of us, Bonny Dam, and the many similar dams all over this plains country, are places of beauty, of rest and relaxation. But back of all this lies the comforting thought that should there come such another flood, or even any of the many that occur each year in lesser violence, Bonnie Dam stands as a bulwark of safety.

Augmented by the practices of soil erosion prevention at the community and individual level, such structures guarantee us against another like disaster as that of the memorable night of May 30, 1935. For Bonny Dam indeed makes possible the slogan: Preservation of the soil saves death and loss and toil.

by Bonny Gould

THE BURLINGTON RECORD AND REPUBLICAN
JUNE 13, 1935

Heavy rains this week make traffic problems

Thirty Foot Vona Fill Gave Way Last Evening Releasing

Large Body of Water

Heavy rains Monday and Tuesday have undone all temporary repairs which had been made to highways since the Memorial Day flood, and last evening the big railway fill east of Vona gave way releasing a body of water said to have been 30 feet deep, into the creek bed below.

This water would enter the already swollen Republican River just west of the Rosser Davis ranch and fearing another flood Sheriff Gates and several volunteers drove out along the river to notify residents there in advance of the rushing water. C. D. Reed, Burt Ragan, Geo. Cockrell and possibly others volunteered to make the trip.

The five foot tube under the railway fill proved inadequate to handle the water which reached a depth of more than 18 feet over the top of the highway bridge at that point before the fill finally gave way, taking out about 200 feet of Rock Island track and part of the east approach to the highway bridge.

Monday night 1.36 inches of water fell in Burlington and again Tuesday 1.38 inches came.

These rains came in a short time and flooded streets to the extent that homes at the south end of main street had several inches of water on the floor and a number of basements were filled.

At Seibert reports are that as much as seven inches of rain fell doing damage to highways and necessitating a detour on North 40. Other localities report rainfall of lesser proportions but nearly all received some moisture.

THE BURLINGTON CALL
JUNE 13, 1935

RAINS HAVEN'T SOLVED SOIL EROSION PROBLEM

Contrary to general belief, recent rains have not solved the soil erosion problem for drought stricken areas of southeastern Colorado and western Kansas, declared officers of the Southeastern Colorado Soil Erosion Control Association in Las Animas recently.

The association "demands immediate action of responsible agencies of government for an emergency listing program against repetition of wind erosion this year," stated a resolution which was adopted and telegraphed to Washington, D. C. authorities.

"We suggest," the resolution continued, "blank listing of all eroded areas and planting favorable areas with sorghums to insure cover crops from which the government can secure seed, thus being reimbursed. Other listed areas to be allowed to grow to weeds and eventually reseeded."

"We have not forgotten the wind erosion program and we further suggest work relief projects in affected counties be devoted to this program."

Establishment of at least one CCC camp for soil erosion control work in each of the counties of southeastern Colorado also was urged.

THE BURLINGTON CALL
JULY 4, 1935

SIX INCHES OF RAIN SOUTH OF TOWN WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Last Wednesday night between 11 and 1 o'clock a bad storm was raving southwest of town. The worst part of it struck the J. P. Ritzdorf place. The rain was a genuine heavy downpour, together with hail, strong wind and much lightning. The noise was such that it was hard to tell what was coming. Six inches of rain fell during the storm, coming from all directions, two feet deep, the low places looking like a real flood.

Mrs. Ritzdorf had a fine garden which was destroyed by hail. She had several hens setting on eggs in cardboard boxes and enough water leaked in on the nests to float them away, but the hens stayed right on the job.

This is one of the worst storms and heaviest rainfalls the Ritzdorfs can remember in the last 24 years they have lived on the place.



The Strobels could hear the roar of the water four miles south of the river — notice the waves.

Anecdotal reports of the flood

Alvin Langendoefler now of Burlington, Colorado, wrote his thoughts about the flood for Marlene (Harvey) Wilmot in her book Bluff to Bluff, Volume II.

"My thoughts and remembrances of the Flood of 1935.

"I was 15 years old at that time. We had several years of dry weather prior to the flood and there was virtually no vegetation in our area. This was 4 miles west and one south of Idalia, Colorado.

"We had cattle and no feed or grass, so my dad and two older brothers had gone north of Wray, Colorado, to try to rent or buy some grass. This left my mother and I at home. It began to rain mid afternoon with some softball-sized hail. It looked like the whole world was raining.

"About sundown the phone rang and it was dad calling saying that they had been told to stay in Wray. That was the last call because all communications went out.

"The next day we had cattle on what few spears of wheat pasture there was and I, being young, thought I needed to get those cattle in that were some 3 miles from home. I tried but soon wore my horse out, then on foot I soon wore out. About then the wind came up and it sounded like thunder again.

"We were approximately midway between the Arickaree River and the South Fork of the Republican River and this noise was caused by the two roars of the rivers clashing. I was 3 miles from home, my horse worn out, and me also, and being just a boy was scared to death.

"When I got home I found mother also scared to death, but she had figured it out and praise God our old faithful one line, just bailing wire, telephone still worked just between a few neighbors.

"On the second day a group of people strung a rope across the Arickaree which was over 7 miles wide and several people, including my brothers, came across holding onto the rope. On the third day my dad was able, with the help of county and state crews, to get the car home.

"Some people in the area were loosing horses; everybody worked horses then; they said they had dust packs in their stomachs. One owner

near this crack in the ground said he could take his dead horses to one place and pull them in and never see them again.

"I didn't see that spot but toward the west end that was only about 1/2 mile north of Idalia, some kids and I went out there and they would go down in there out of sight. I never went in as I was always afraid of that sort of thing.

"There were boot leggers in the area then and these kids said they found 2 gallons of whiskey in there that almost got some of them in trouble.

"These memories are very vivid to me and these are some of the high points. I hope they might be of some interest."

"Hazel (Mrs. Ernie) Langendoefler lived with her parents on a place located on the hill between the South Republican and the Launchman Creek.

She was awakened by a loud roar and went to the east window and found all she could see was water.

She awoke her family and they drove down the road and found the water was too high to cross.

She says they looked across to Foster Grove and all the big trees were gone."

"Hugh Gerber, who lived 1 mile west and 1 3/4 north of the Port of Entry, northeast of Idalia, said, "After the storm Hugh and his father went to check a water gap on a small creek, when they got there the road and bridge were gone.

"They continued on and found the Arickaree rose to its highest on record.

"Theodore McCoy had a J.I. Case tractor that had a Cross motor. It disappeared in the sand.

"Hugh said mail to and from Wray was nonexistent for several days. Swimmers would carry the mail across the Arickaree which stayed high for some time.

He said this continued till they got the bridge built. The McCoy brothers reported that about a mile below, 51 highway crossed the Arickaree and they found several logs washed up that were 8 foot through. They say they are still there to view. They feel they were covered up by previous floods."

— Bluff to Bluff

THE BURLINGTON CALL
JUNE 27, 1935

FROM THE PRESS OF THE EASTERN SLOPE

Saint Francis Herald.

14 DEAD, 8 GONE IN AREA

Fourteen persons known to be dead and 8 persons missing is the toll of life taken by the Republican river in the two floods May 31 and June 16, along about 80 miles of its course thru this section. This loss of life occurred in an area extending from about 23 miles west of St. Francis in Colorado down the river north to Benkleman, Nebr., 28 miles from here.

In Cheyenne county, Mrs. Harvey Barnhart drowned in the flood of May 31, and Mrs. Harold Mosier, farther down the river, was drowned at their home in a canyon on June 19. Two are still missing in the county and are known to have been washed away. They are Pete Court-right of the State Line filling station and Betty Jane Mosier, age 4, who was swept away with her mother.

No trace of the six other persons still missing in the area has been found. They include Mr. and Mrs. Burt D. Faylor, Burt Faylor Jr., Miss Merna Faylor and Mrs. Johanna Osborne, all of whom lived near Benkleman, north of here. The other person not yet found is Josiah Harding, father of the family of six, just across the Colorado line west of here, of whom three lost their lives when their home was washed away in the flood of May 31. It is thought certain all the missing are dead.

THE BURLINGTON RECORD AND REPUBLICAN
JULY 11, 1935

MILE-LONG FISSURE ON CHINBERG FARM

H. A. Chinberg, living northeast of Burlington, reports finding a fissure on his farm approximately a mile long and varying in width from a few inches to four feet and from a foot to 15 feet deep, running in a northeasterly direction from his home.

It appears to have opened at first in the middle and radiated out, ending in several smaller crevices.

The fissure can easily be followed, being lined with weeds that seem to thrive better along the cracks.

Just what caused the earth to open is unknown although several theories have been advanced. A mile north and a half mile east of the Chinberg farm the fissure extends across the road being approximately 15 inches wide at this point.

This is the second time Chinberg has had a fissure appear on his land the first being on a farm in Kansas.

THE BURLINGTON CALL
JUNE 20, 1935

RAILROAD BRIDGE GOES OUT AT BETHUNE

HEAVY RAIN SUNDAY SENDS
LAUNCHMAN ON RAMPAGE

One of the heaviest rains ever to visit the vicinity southwest of Bethune, occurred Sunday evening, when it is estimated that over six inches of rain fell in about two hours. Even a heavier downpour is reported in the territory southwest of Bethune, over the watershed tributary to the Launchman or Launchman creek that runs north just west of Bethune. It is there that the Rock Island and highway bridges span the Launchman ordinarily a dry creek bed. The creek is wide there and a sectional steel bridge has served the Rock Island since 1897. The highway bridge is of concrete and just south of the Rock Island. The stream rose rapidly and by 10:00 p. m. was at the danger mark, and going higher. Section foreman John Clifford noted the danger earlier and notified the railroad officials. He was ordered to stay at the bridge and flag No. 5, a passenger train, if the danger was imminent. No. 5 arrived at the scene of the disaster about or nearly midnight and was promptly flagged to a stop by Mr. Clifford, who in company with the engineer, walked to the edge of the bridge to view the flood. In a few moments the bridge began to sway and soon the entire structure, from bank to bank, was washed away. The train certainly would have gone down into thirty feet of flood water had it not been stopped.

The highway bridge held but the west approach was badly damaged and a section about 15 feet wide was entirely washed out. Our local highway supervisor George Martin, secured men and trucks as quickly as possible Monday and began rebuilding the fill. To his credit, and we don't see how he did it, traffic was going across at 5:00 p. m.

About 75 men are busy at the railroad bridge, day and night shifts, and a conservative estimate from a railroad official is that trains should be going across by Friday at midnight. In the meantime train service is being maintained once a day run from the east and west. Passengers, baggage, mail and express being transported at the bridge.

The precipitation here Sunday nite was 2.20 inches. Lower Burlington was again under water.

South of town the Beaver and Smoky were out of their banks Monday morning. North the rain seemed even harder and there is scarcely a bridge left in that part of the county.

HAD CLOSE CALL

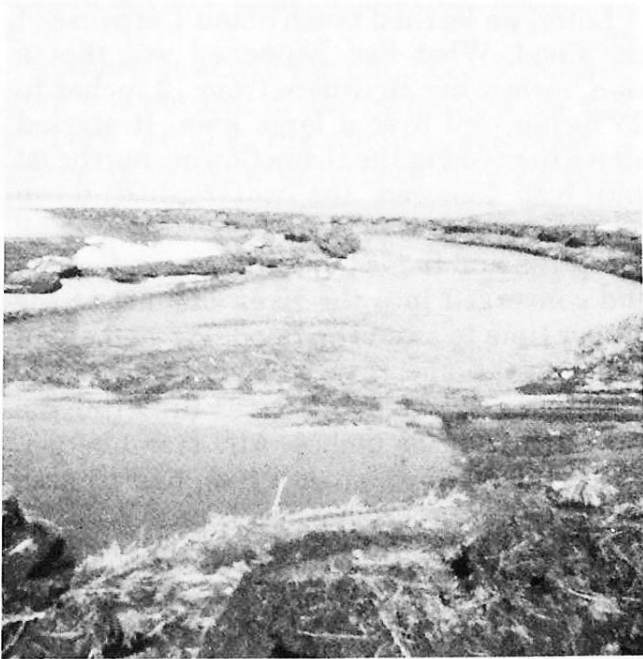
H. J. Sandstead, manager of the Safeway and cousin, A. E., who lives northwest of town, were driving in Sunday night thru the rain. They were stopped just barely in time to avoid going into 20 feet of water over the highway at the creek, two and a half miles west of town. It sure was a close call for them.

Many listed fields were swept clean as the proverbial Mother Hubbard's cupboard. Some farmers say it is getting late for corn and will replant with feed crops.

Just the same the Washington "brain trust" has another guess coming as to this country being a dry desert. Trees, flowers, grass and even weeds never looked better or made a more rapid growth in this country than now. Even the proposed tree shelterbelt would have to hump itself to beat the rainfall we're having now.

Later—As we go to press, word is received No. 8 will come over the R. I. bridge at Bethune this p. m.

THE FLOOD IN 1935 T58



Hell Creek north of Vona

More about dust balls

"They walked down to the McCoy ranch and found large waves would break and a puff of dust would come out of the water.

"These dust balls may have been inside the mud balls talked about. They had

washed from up river and would become almost as bladders as water wouldn't penetrate the dust.

"These dust balls could also be the beginning of the mud balls found after the flood. — Hugh Gerber, Bluff to Bluff

Unearthed by the flood

"At the C.C. Gates farm, eight miles north of Seibert a huge bone from some prehistoric animal was washed out by the flood waters. The piece measured six and one half feet in length and was about twelve inches in diameter.

"Another bone was discovered, while two men were digging in the edge of the valley, eight miles north of Seibert, which seemed to be a tusk. Other unusual bones were found, so the men decided to let the Colorado University Museum Archeologist examine the bones and dig up the remains." — Myra Davis in 1988 Kit Carson County History Book

ATTENTION!

The Kit Carson county chapter American Red Cross and the American Legion and Auxiliary are making an appeal for anything you may have to give in the way of household goods, such as furniture, bedding, dishes or pots and pans. Also any used clothing. These things are for the people in the Kit Carson county flood area.

Anything you have to donate for this most worthy cause will be greatly appreciated. Kindly leave same at the Beatty cafe and it will be placed in the hands of the ones needing the same who were in the flood area. Kindly bring whatever you have as soon as possible.

The Seibert Settler tells us: "Flood Unearths Mammoth Bones."

"The flood, worst in at least fifty years and perhaps a thousand, brought to light a relic of the time when this country lay thousands of feet below the sea.

"A leg bone of a huge mammal was found in the river north of the Frank W. Jones farm by Ross Oliver.

"The fragment, evidently the femur of an herbivorous quadruped, weighs 58 pounds, is 41 inches in length and 36 inches in circumference at the joint.

"The animal must have been mired along the seacoast in prehistoric times. The bones, partly petrified, have lain there for perhaps millions of years.

"In the great subsidence which sank this portion of the continent at least 4,000 feet below the sea, the bones were buried by washing sands of ocean. Mute testimony to the fact that this has been sea bed is found in the vast quantities of sea-gravel and sand brought to light by the flood.

Miller finds sea shells

"Jess Miller found sea shells, oyster shells, abalone, snails and other forms and large bones that would have had to make the animal at least fifteen feet high at the shoulder.

"He found the large bone about a half mile below the Seibert-Cope road, on the main channel of the Republican.

"When the flood began, the water fell from the ledge about ten feet. At the peak of the flood it may have scooped out a basin fifty feet in depth. After the flood the basin was about 20 feet deep.

Ricks find huge bones

Ed Ricks, a farmer northeast of Seibert, found the remains of a huge animal that outsized the bones found by Jess Miller

"Ricks was digging a silo pit in a field on the farm. They found fragments of a knee joint, before they finished they found many bones and found a leg bone, that even the joint knuckles at the ends were missing was eight or ten feet long.

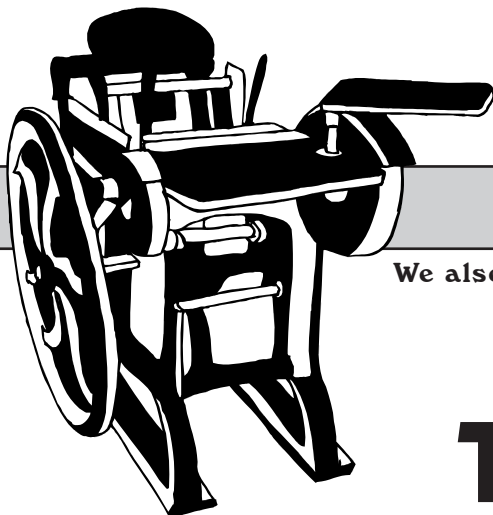
Fitzpatrick thinks from Jurassic Period

"Mr. Fitzpatrick thought it the remains of a pterodactyl, a flying reptile that flourished in the Jurassic Period of the earth's history.

"The creature was of the great size common in the living things of that era. This bone, 10 or 12 feet in length, could have been the bone from the first joint of a wing.

Bluff to Bluff

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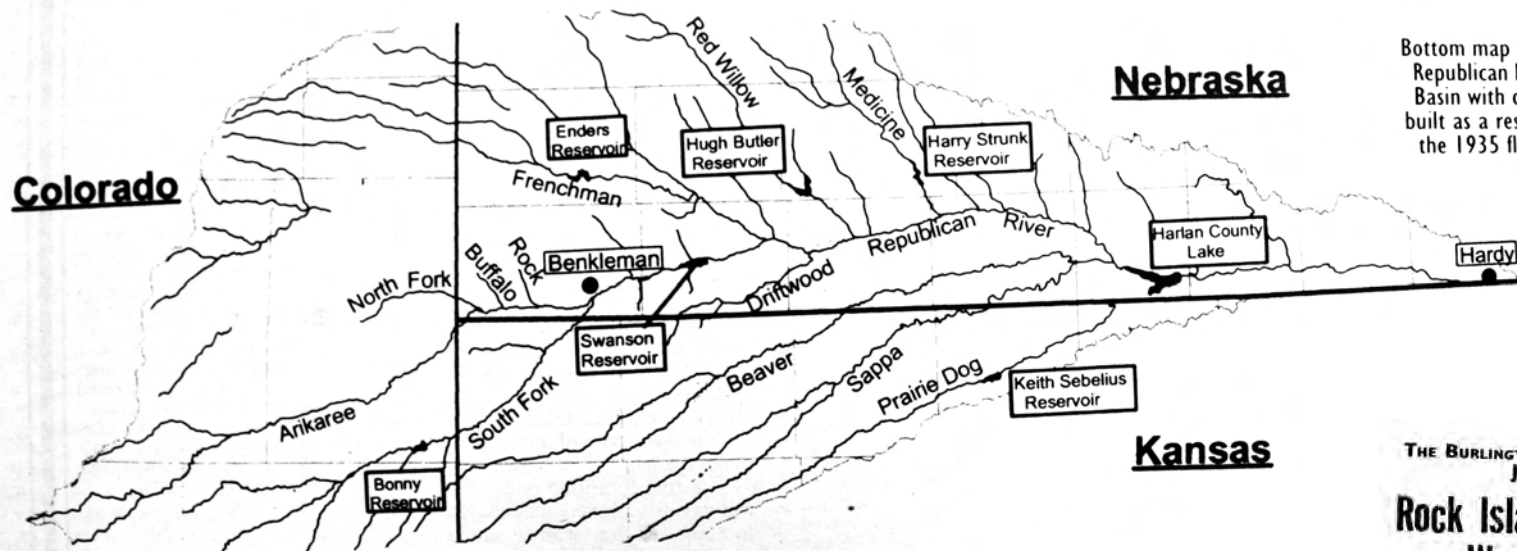
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THE BURLINGTON RECORD

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Bottom map shows Republican River Basin with dams built as a result of the 1935 flood.

THE BURLINGTON RECORD AND REPUBLICAN
JUNE 6, 1935

Disastrous Floods Sweep Across Colorado, Kansas and Colorado, Leaving Desolation and Waste

Torrential Rains Over Northeastern Colorado Turn Dry Creeks and Rivers Into Raging Streams, Dealing Death and Destruction

Memorial Day rains, and flood waters that followed, claimed several lives, destroyed millions of dollars worth of farm land and property, killed hundreds of head of stock and destroyed all means of transportation in Eastern Colorado and Western Kansas and Nebraska. Heavy rains fell in the vicinity of the Black Forest early Thursday morning, flooding that section. From there the rains moved across Colorado in a northeasterly direction, flooding dry creek bottoms and the Republican and Arickaree river valleys. In the neighborhood of Seibert from 6 to 10 inches of rain fell, it is reported.

In this section of the state three people were killed and three others are still missing.

Known Dead:

WAYNE GESNER, Seibert.
MRS. HARDING, Hale.
JUNIOR HARDING, Hale

Missing:

MRS. WAYNE GESNER, Seibert.
C. H. LOTHIAN, Seibert.
MR. HARDING, Hale.

Mr. and Mrs. Gesner and her step-father, Mr. Lothian, lived a short distance northwest of Seibert. Following the terrific rain last Thursday night their home was washed away and it is thought all were in it. Gesner's body was found Sunday near the Rosser Davis and Corliss ranches several miles down stream from where the home had stood. The bodies of the other two are still missing although large bands of searchers worked long stretches of the river bed Monday and Tuesday.

Funeral services for Wayne Gesner were held at the cemetery at Seibert, Wednesday at 11:00 a. m. He was 25 years, 11 months and 10 days old.

At Hale the Harding family were caught in the flood. Two daughters were rescued but Mr. and Mrs. Martin and the son, about six years old, were swept away. We are informed that the body of Mrs. Harding was recovered near Benkleman and that

of the boy about five miles from the scene of the tragedy.

As the rain fell the water rose to unparalleled heights, sweeping everything before it. Trees were uprooted, farm homes destroyed, bridges and fills were washed away, stock drowned and crops ruined.

In the Republican and Launchman river valleys north of Burlington the farm lands have been rendered barren as the result of silt deposition. For many miles along the river there are no traces of fences or bridges. The stock remains free, pasturing wherever suitable grass can be found.

Swirling out of Colorado at the eastern boundary the flood, augmented by heavy rains in northern Kansas and southern Nebraska, continued its destruction at St. Francis, Kansas, Benkleman, McCook and other Nebraska towns and again entering Kansas did further damage at Bellville.

There has been no regular train or trucking service between the state line and central Colorado for the past week. It is impossible to predict when transportation facilities will again be restored to normal, possibly within 10 days.

People living in the stricken area have now settled down and are attempting to rehabilitate their property and searching for lost farm equipment. The Board of County Commissioners and the sheriff's office have issued a warning to people concerned to make absolute proof of ownership of property before removing it.

In numerous places the rivers have destroyed valuable farm lands by cutting new channels, depositing silt and debris and undermining banks.

An estimation of the amount of damage done is impossible at this time, however it mounts into the millions. Railroads and highways may be rebuilt and a few farms reclaimed but the loss of life, farm lands in general and farm equipment is complete.

THE BURLINGTON CALL
JULY 4, 1935

BODY OF FLOOD VICTIM RECOVERED

The body of Clarence H. Lothian of Seibert, who was drowned in the Memorial Day flood, was recovered Sunday, June 30, just one month after the terrific downpour. The body was found about ten miles east of St. Francis, Kans., and was brought to the Penny mortuary. Burial was at Cheyenne Wells, Wednesday.

The deceased, together with his step-daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Gesner, was drowned when their home was swept down stream by the high water.

The body of Wayne Gesner was recovered several days after the flood but the body of Mrs. Gesner has not yet been found.

THE BURLINGTON CALL
OCTOBER 3, 1935

VONA NEWS ITEMS

Walt Thompson of Yuma county, residing in the neighborhood north of Kirk, was in Vona recently and in conversation with him, found him a very agreeable gentleman and he gave a very interesting account of his experiences in the flood last summer. He lives on the Arickaree, a tributary to the Republican, and in his residence in that vicinity, which began in 1886, he had never known the water to reach as high as his house. To quote him:

"The night of the flood, on account of the heavy downpour, I did not go to bed until about 2:00 a. m. I opened the door and looked out, the water surrounded the house, and was soon over the floor and rapidly increasing in depth. One of my grown sons, who was at home, kept his presence of mind and helped us to the attic, which we reached by the aid of a kitchen table, but soon the water was up there, so he kicked a hole in the roof near the peak, and we climbed out on the roof and assisted the other members of the family out there, where we stayed until 8:00 a. m., when the water subsided and we could get down from the roof. The

house had moved about 100 feet off its foundation and lodged in some cottonwood trees which saved us from being swept downstream and drowning. I saw my barn swept away containing 12 head of horses and mules, some of which had broken loose from the mangers and swam to land at once. None of the horses or mules, strange to say, was killed or seriously injured. One old gray mare was found down stream, still tied to the manger, alive, but bruised, and the last time I saw her she was turning summersaults in the flood.

"I made an estimate of the damage done me and it amounted to approximately \$12,000. My irrigated hay land was ruined and where last year I cut 500 tons of hay, this year the yield was about 10 tons. Strange to say not one of my 500 head of Hereford cattle were lost, they were back in the hills above the flood."

Incidentally it might be stated that Mr. Thompson has rebuilt his house, back in the hills, is rebuilding his barns in the old location and has rebuilt miles of fence and will continue ranching operations. Among other assets he has 5000 acres of land, the most valuable irrigated land being almost ruined.

Flood victim bodies recovered

"The Wayne Gessner family, who lived two and a half miles west of Seibert were victims. Wayne, his wife and father-in-law, Mr. Lothian, were swept away. The bodies of the men were found and buried at Seibert. Months passed; then it was discovered that a body found and interred at McCook, Nebraska bore the description of Mrs. Gessner. Investigation was made and positive identity made by a ring on a finger. The body was interred at Seibert by the Orin P. Penny Mortuary of Burlington. The body had traveled 35 miles." — Bluff to Bluff

THE BURLINGTON RECORD AND REPUBLICAN
JUNE 20, 1935

Rock Island Bridge Wrecked by Flood

Nearly Five Inches of Rain in Week Wrought Havoc to Railway and Roads

Transportation facilities are again at a standstill throughout this section of the state as the result of a two inch rain which fell last Sunday evening.

Perhaps the greatest damage was done about a mile and a half west of Bethune where the Rock Island bridge over the Launchman creek and the west approach to the highway bridge on North 40 were washed out.

The east approaches of both bridges were still intact but a 200 foot gap was cut through the railway bridge and fill.

The ties and rails were still suspended across the yawning chasm as the waters receded early Monday morning but they were later cut down so that immediate reconstruction could begin. A 15 foot wide and 20 foot deep gap was made on the highway approach.

The westbound passenger train was halted on the east side of the bridge so that section men might inspect the structure before the train crossed. Just as the men neared the bridge it began to weave and finally fell with a crash, one section of the iron frame work being carried several hundred feet downstream. This precaution on the part of railway men avoided a repetition of the wreck west of Stratton in July 1929, when several lives were lost by a railway bridge giving way due to floods.

The highway bridge on 51 across the Smoky was washed out as was also that on the road north of Bethune. Numerous smaller bridges and fills were damaged and the county commissioners estimate damage to highways and bridges at approximately \$100,000.

Temporary repairs had been made since last week's rains and through service was expected again Monday but the rain and destruction resulting from it will again delay all plans of scheduled transportation.

There were several feet of water across North 40 between Burlington and Bethune in two low places but traveling was possible early Monday.

The south end of Burlington was again inundated because of improper drainage.

A heavy rain was reported over the county and according to reports much corn is badly washed and highways and bridges over the county are in bad condition.

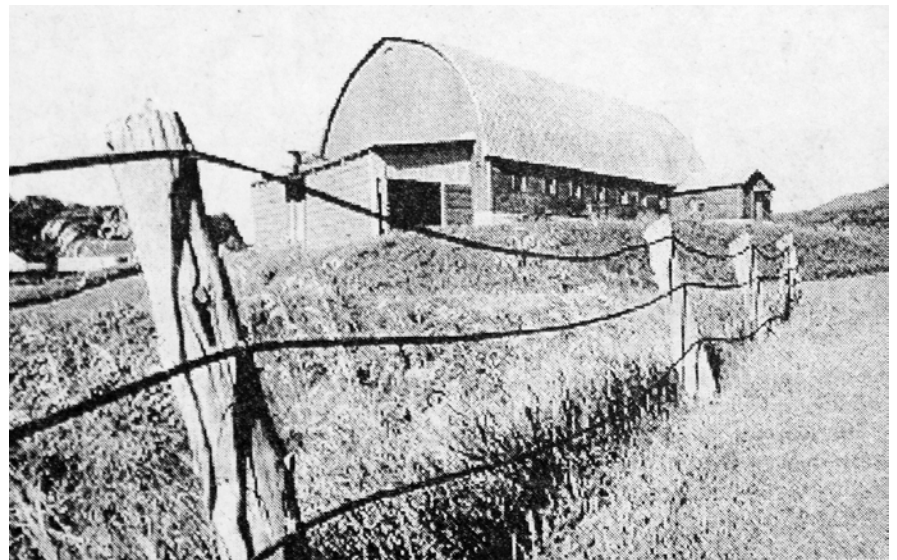
Last Sunday's rain raised the total amount of rainfall for the past seven days to 4.74 inches.

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THE FLAGLER NEWS
JUNE 6, 1935

HUGE FLOODS CAUSED BY HEAVY RAINS THIS WEEK

Railroad and highway traffic in Eastern Colorado was tied up for several hours again Tuesday morning after a heavy rain caused new floods in several places. In Flagler the rain was only a long gentle shower which will help along the grass and growing crops.

At Vona the railroad embankment was washed so badly that repairs were necessary before trains could be operated over it. It is said that water rose fifteen feet over the highway bridge. The lake there was recently drained by tunneling under the railroad but the heavy rain filled the lake faster than the pipe could carry it away.

The recently opened highway detour between here and Seibert was also impassable for a time Tuesday morning. The highway department tractor went to the aid of motorists again, however, and began pulling cars across Sand creek. At Deer Trail the creeks were up again and the road crossings were washed away. A heavy hailstorm accompanied the rain there and in places the highway was blocked with the

ice to a depth of three feet. North of Flagler the Arickaree was up again and traffic could not cross it until late Tuesday.

Another rain fell over this section and east of here Tuesday night. It is reported that it reached flood proportions north and east of here and that the creeks were running full force.

The Rock Island railroad completed repairs to its lines east and west of here the first of the week and the first trains came through Monday from Colorado Springs, bringing the mail. Previous to that the mail had been carried by car from Limon. Train service has not yet been established from Limon to Denver.

A highway crew moved in here the last of the week to begin the rebuilding of the bridge over the Republican river. They began work Tuesday but plans for the new structure were not announced. Many local people have been given employment with the highway and the railroad crews and an idle man is hard to find.

"Chester Weiser spent much time during and after the flood in the Bonny Dam area. He walked the bank near a tree where a Harding girl was in a tree.

Chester stayed on the bank all night with a lantern until a man by the name of Dallas Whipple rode in on a horse and rescued the girl.

Chester says there were 2 tractors near where he walked with the lantern, and they were gone the next morning.

Clark Rolow lived just east of Bonny Dam spillway with his folks and 2 brothers. They were located high enough that they were in no danger.

His one memory was of the Hale bridge just north of Hale. It was about 50 feet long and was mainly made of metal with 2/4 laid edge ways for a floor. It had wide metal banisters and the school kids walked over these banisters on the way to school. The bridge washed out and is now south and east of where it was with just a part of a banister out of the ground.

Raymond Armkeet lived with his folks 1/2 mile east of Rolows. He remembers that he and his brothers and the Rolow brothers spent most of the day along the north side of the river looking for things.

His grandfather lived at what is now the State Lakes, which are a few miles down stream from Hale, Colorado. Their grandfather was alone there and he stayed in a cement house until he was rescued. He was 90 years old and survived the flood.

Mrs. Harvey Wood recalled the river came near their buildings on the north side of the river and when the flood was over the main stream it was south a long ways. She also said her husband had 3 empty stock tanks and after the rain stopped they were full and had run over.

Several people said the Indians said there was a bad flood and that it was coming again.

Virgil Lundvall came home the day before the flood. He awoke during the night. He was able to save some of the horses, but they lost the cattle and hogs.

The Foster Farms just purchased some land on the Republican and bought a new International tractor and disc and lost them to the flood. The water formed a whirl pool around the tractor and disc. All the sand was sucked out from under the implements and they sank and are now beneath the Bonny Dam. — Bluff to Bluff

Rosser and Katie lived on the Davis ranch close to the Republican River until 1935 when a Memorial Day flood took the lives of many of their cattle, horses, and hogs. The flood also destroyed most of the haying equipment and ruined the hay meadows. After this disaster the Davises moved to a rented ranch south of the river. Then in 1942, they purchased a new farm and home east of Burlington where they resided until retiring and moving to town in 1960. — 1988 History of Kit Carson County

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Was there an earthquake?

Rynold Fager of Flagler said, "He called the National Earthquake Center and got a Mr. Glenn Regar who is in charge of earthquake records.

There was a 2.8 quake recorded at 10 p.m. the night of the flood. It seems this quake was at Newton and the people in charge decided that it was in Newton, Utah, close to 600 miles from Boulder.

The town of Newton in Colorado is across 385 north of where you turn to go to Foster Grove on the north side of Bonny Dam. — Bluff to Bluff

Wray Gazette

From an article in the Wray Gazette written by Wayne Wilcoxon.

"Did Idalia Have an Earthquake?"

"On the night of the big Memorial Day flood in 1935, Ed Ramseier was standing on the steps of the Idalia Flour Mill visiting with Ed Bender, a local carpenter. Black clouds were forming overhead into what was to become one of the biggest downpours known in the history of Idalia.

"The thunder reached such a tremendous roar that Ed remarked it was so loud it was making the ground shake. Did the ground actually shake? Was it caused by the thunder? What happened that night along with the deluge of rain, one wonders.

"The day after the big rain it was discovered that the ground

had split open at different intervals, starting at about one and three-fourths miles north and one-fourth west of Idalia, (Southeast of the Gerald Zion farm) running in a southeasterly direction through the lagoon in the Carl Helling pasture two miles east of Idalia.

"At intervals where the crack appeared it varied in width from a foot or so to about 30 feet, narrowing down to just a slit at a depth of 20 or 25 feet.

"The widest place found was in a field then owned by Bob Spring and in later years by Hugh Flick. This large crack was a mile east of Idalia and between one-fourth and one-half miles north.

"With the amount of rain that fell that night, all of the lagoons, including the Helling lagoon, were overflowing. The day after the rain the cracks in the Helling lagoon gave way and drained it down to where several cracks appeared. Helling later fenced these off to keep any livestock from falling in. — Bluff to Bluff

Edward Pfeiler and Harry Thomas

According to "Edward Pfeiler and Harry Thomas who were on horseback two days after the flood a little more than a mile from the Helling lagoon." They could put their ears to the ground and hear underground water running.

No one has ever explained this phenomenon. Was it a quake?

What caused the ground to split open?

Wayne Ramseier

"That fall Wayne Ramseier was moving a patch of alfalfa just south of Idalia. Suddenly the front end of his little "C" Case tractor fell into a hole. It turned out to be a fissure similar to the one to the north but smaller. This crack started just east of the present Dean Ramseier machine shed south of Main Street and ran southeasterly toward the lagoon just south of Idalia. It was approximately one-fourth mile long.

"An interesting note: The night of the Yellowstone Park earthquake in 1935 was the same night that the irrigation well casing on the Gerald Zion farm ruptured. Another interesting note: Bob Garcia found a gallon of bootleg whiskey hidden in a crevice on the bob Spring farm. Bob was going to make a lot of money selling his find. As it turned out every prospective buyer wanted to sample the merchandise before buying and before Bob knew it, his valuable find had been guzzled away." — Bluff to Bluff

Harold Ebeler

"Harold Ebeler lived 4 west and a little south of Idalia. This land was very flat. When his father woke up he found

water all over. They lost some pigs from drowning but none of the larger animals. He remembers the lagoon east of Idalia was full of water when this huge crack appeared and went clear across the lagoon draining it completely. The crack extended about two miles to the northwest. One man said he dumped 2 drowned horses in it and couldn't see them. They could hear water running but couldn't see anything. He also said several young men found some moonshine in this crack and almost got in trouble over it." — Bluff to Bluff

Misc. Interviews

"Several people I talked to referred to the large cracks that appeared in the fields and pastures in the area running from east of Idalia to northwest of Flagler. They were from 6" wide to 3 to 4 feet. They said you could hear running water from the cracks. — Bluff to Bluff

This is V.S. Fitzpatrick's theory

"Beginning near Genoa there is a "break" or escarpment where the ground lying south of the line has subsided or fallen, roughly 60 feet. In geological language, this is a "fault."

"The electrical and magnetic tension that could build up in such a violent storm as that of May 30-31, 1935, that tension

could be exerted in the ground as well as in the air.

"This tension could overcome the inertia of the rocks of the fault and let slippage occur. Even a fraction of an inch such slippage of such tremendous weight could cause earth movement that produced the cracks. — Bluff to Bluff

Excerpts about earthquake

"Probably a week had passed when we visited my aunt and uncle, the Enos Goodriches. They lived about three miles away on what we called the Butler Place.

"There we saw evidence of the earthquake. In the pasture not far from the house was a gap in the earth; it seems like it was three or four feet wide and 50 to 60 feet long.

"The earth had just separated. That was quite a curiosity for all of us in that area. As far as I know there was no damage to structures. — Faye Savage in Bluff to Bluff

"There were many large lagoons in the area and one in particular east of Idalia suddenly drained and soon a large crack in the ground formed stretching some 2 miles north and west from that lagoon." — Alvin Langendoerfer in Bluff to Bluff

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Worst Flood In History Swept Republican Valley Last Thursday Night

THREE PEOPLE DROWNED AT SEIBERT

Raging Water Swept Everything Before It. Loss of Live-stock, Improvements and Crops Over A Million

NO TRAIN SERVICE HERE EAST OR WEST

A most disastrous flood, which started with cloudbursts above Colorado Springs last Thursday, continuing with downpours at Seibert and northwest of Burlington, was the worst in the history of eastern Colorado. A score of people are reported drowned in Colorado Springs, many missing at Kiowa and Elbert, inland towns that were almost completely swept away. At Seibert, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Gesner and his father Bert Gesner, were drowned, when the high water swept their dwelling down stream. The body of Wayne Gesner was recovered Sunday from the Republican river in the vicinity of the Rosser Davis ranch, said to be fifty miles by stream from where he was drowned. The others had not been found as we go to press.

The terrific cloudburst and downpour at Seibert lasted over two hours with a rainfall estimated at over 12 inches.

All streams in the vicinity of Seibert went out of their banks and the Republican river became a raging torrent, flood bent for destruction of life and property. The entire Republican river valley is reduced to a flood ruined, shambles, with bridges, trees, fences, improvements, and fields swept away. The well known ranches of C. C. Gates, Pughs, Rosser Davis, Corliss, Lengel, Reinhold and

all the others along the river suffered enormous loss and damage.

It is conservatively estimated that the property loss in this county is well over a million dollars. The Rock Island fill west of Seibert is washed away for several hundred yards and it will be the last of the week at best before trains can get through. Water was over the bridge at the Vona reservoir, not a bridge is left on the Republican river, and it is reported the Memorial monument at Beecher Island is washed away.

The loss at Colorado Springs is estimated at many millions, with the Mountain States Telephone Co. alone suffering a loss of a million and a half.

With the wall of water sweeping down the Republican, St. Francis was almost submerged and it will take years to recover from the loss. Into Nebraska the flood gained added impetus from local rains and the conditions were well high indescribable at Oxford, McCook and on east. To add to the tragedy, a cyclone at McCook took additional toll of life and property.

The Rock Island bridge at Scandia was closed Sunday as the high water made it unsafe. There has been practically no train or mail service here for a week now, and business is somewhat demoralized as a result.

THE FLAGLER NEWS
JUNE 6, 1935

THREE PEOPLE DROWNED AS SAND CREEK OVERFLOWS

Three people, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Gesner and Mr. Clarence Lothian, lost their lives Thursday night when their house was swept away in the roaring torrent that came down Sand creek just west of Seibert. The Gesner home was located on the bank of the creek near the Claude Ervin home.

No one knew of the tragedy until Friday morning when it was found that the farm buildings had disappeared. No trace of the three people could be found, and it was believed that the flood struck the house while they were asleep inside.

Searching parties have been combing Sand creek for miles trying to locate the bodies. Monday the body of Mr. Gesner was recovered north of Stratton. It had traveled thirty-five miles. Although the search for the others is being continued it is believed they are buried in the sand.

Mrs. Clarence Lothian is a sister of T. H. Hill of Flagler and Senator Vern Hill of Denver. She had just gone away for a visit and thus was not at home during the flood. Mr. Hill and family had gone to Denver for Memorial Day and did not learn of the tragedy until later and then were unable to get home until Sunday on account of washouts. He has been leading the search for the bodies.

THE BURLINGTON CALL
JUNE 6, 1935

Thousands of acres of rich Republican river bottom land is rendered practically worthless for years to come. Irrigation ditches are leveled and whole fields covered with sand and mud. In places the river cut new channels thru farm fields, and fences are as completely wiped out as the NRA.

It was a harrowing night for several families who were trapped in their houses, waiting through the night and hoping, as the water rose higher and higher, that they could get out alive. This was the experience of the L. L. Pugh, Rosser Davis, Corliss and other families, an experience one will never forget.

The damage from Limon to Denver is appalling with not a railroad or highway bridge left standing. Traffic to Denver over the highway has been resumed, however, as detours have been provided.

There was only a slow drizzle of rain in Burlington Thursday night and Friday a duststorm from the south gave the weather a decidedly freakish turn.

No doubt relief labor will be employed to gather up the waste and debris of the flooded valley district and rebuild bridges.

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