
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.
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 Verheoef'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.
In the Wake of the Flood

Bones unearthed at the C.C. Gates farm

At the C.C. Gates farm, near Selbert, a huge bone from some prehistoric animal was found, washed out by the flood waters. The bone measured six and one half feet in length and was about 12 inches in diameter. It is now on display in Selbert 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 waters subsided.

Mail made it to Stratton

Yesterday's Wednesday mail 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 weeks' mail from class mail and consignment to reach here in days.

Miles of damage to railroads and highways

Miles of railroad washed 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.

- Forty Years Against the Tide A Washington Memoir by Carl T. Curtis and Regis Courtemanche; Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1986.
The Wray Gazette
Wray, Colorado, Thursday, June 13, 1935 [Page 1]
IDAALIA 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 check out.
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. It was a place where we lived. I have some vivid memories of that flood and some people now wonder if we who lived are not 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 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. Mamma 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. Rossiter 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 and 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 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.

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From horses to horsepower, from “old-fashioned fertilizer” to global positioning, we have been on hand to deliver whatever is needed to area farmers so they can continue to prosper from generation to generation. We have enjoyed taking care of all your agricultural needs over the last millennium and now look forward to this next 100 years. From planting to harvest, we will be with you every step of the way.
The storm that caused the heavy rainfall on the Republican River Basin during the night of May 30-31, 1938, began just east of the mountains in the forest 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 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 Arkansas River nearly to Benkelman, Nebraska.

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 53W, 11 inches, measured in paint can.

Sec. 36, T6S, R 55W, 1 inch, measured in paint can.

Sec. 12, T7S, R 53W, 3 inches, rain and hail in can.

Sec. 1 T9S, R 53W, 90 inches, storm did not touch Arriba but there were black clouds all directions.

Sec. 71 T9S, R 51W, 5 inches, measured in paint can.

near Cope Sec. 1 T4S, R 30W 1 1/2 inches, Weather Bureau.

Seibert Sec. 34, T9S, R 49W, 7 inches, measured in glass tube gauge.

near Seibert Sec. 11, T8S, R 40W, 13 inches, measured in concrete tank.

near Joes Sec. 5, T5S, R 47W, 7 1/2 inches, measured in 3 gallon can.

near Idaho Sec. 22, T4S, R 44W, 5 1/2 inches measured in 4 gallon 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 1/2 inches, measured in stock tank.

By Delta Hendricks, 1938 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 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 Idaho suddenly drained and soon a large crack in the ground formed. This was the area the water ran over and west from that lagoon... Bluff to Bluff...”

— photo from Kit Carson County History Book.

The Burlington Record, Thursday, June 24, 2010

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 3 a.m., and during that time about 33 inches of water fell. The precipitation was much heavier north and west, and lighter east and south. In some localities as much as 5 inches of rain is claimed, but that may not be accurate, 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 flood control reservoir 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 through the culvert, the water rose to a height of about 30 feet and ran 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 there 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, 21/2 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 farm 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 100 ft. and which have always been able to handle the flood water farther in 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 washed out and floating away, supposedly when the railroad fill went out. The family consisted of father, married daughter and her husband who were swept away in the house and only the foundation of the home is now left.

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 plugging 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.

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

— photo from Kit Carson County History Book.

Amount of rainfall in flood's path

The Burlington Call

June 6, 1935
No Matter What Part of the Millennium, we are here to take care of all your farm implement needs!

From Kit Carson County History Book

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

**Lothian’s Body Found**

July 4, 1935

The body of C. A. Lothian of Selbert 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 Jonah 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 Geeser, sister of Selbert being still missing.

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Shop at Orth’s for

*Excellent Selection
*Service with a Smile
*Competitive Prices

1935 Flood waters under Vona bridge (railroad).
A series of dry years, beginning in the late 1920s, 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 Blizzard" of the Dust Bowl days devastated the area. The year 1935 began no less ominously. Up to the first of May little moisture had fallen. Then began the unrelenting rains. The ground was soaked and county roads were like bogs. About May 25 the rains stopped. Up to that time the weather had been mild and sunny days prevailed. Memorial services were held under auspicious weather conditions, although a few places light afternoon showers occurred.

Towards evening, dwellers in the tri-corner of Kit Carson County, southeastern Cheyenne County and southeastern Nebraska described heavy cloud banks in the northeast. Similarly in the locality where Colorado and its three southern neighbors meet, thunderheads were observed at dusk, away to the southwest.

How little those who idly noticed the cloud banks realized just what was taking place! For the thousands of miles of area that had been developing along the Canadian border and moving eastward towards the Great Lakes, a great storm center had been generated in lower California and Arizona and was moving eastward into New Mexico. At the time of 6 a.m., May 28, the storm center near the Great Lakes suddenly balled, changed course and began moving westward. The southeastern United States was now the scene of the most serious and disastrous storm of the year.

It was as if the two storms met, like two huge giants. Suddenly sighted each other and bowled over for the trip. By evening of May 30, one storm center was over central Nebraska while the other was at the southern edge of the border. The stage was set for the most terrifying clash of opposing aerial forces ever seen in this country! The central pressure dropped to fifty-two inches and there was an increase of forty-three pounds of pressure in the space of an hour. A mass of air, warm and moist, covered the eastern states and the northern states. A mass of air, cold and dry, covered the western states and the southern states. The point at which these two met was the point of maximum turbulence. The point of the greatest pressure was the point of maximum violence. The point of the greatest turbulence was the point of maximum fury. Fifty miles away in the same period of time less than an hour saw as much as twelve inches of rainfall. There was 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 a vivid and incessant lightning, while the earth shuddered to the thunder. Over the area of the height of the storm came between 7:30 and 9:00 p.m., although it was a few miles away, and the whole sky was filled with stripes of zinc. The lightning was sufficient to create the fear of the unknown. The thunder was so loud that it was impossible to hear anything else. The rain was so heavy that it was impossible to see anything else. The wind was so strong that it was impossible to hold anything steady. The storm was a catastrophe 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 noon most of the fury of the elements was spent. The day dawned clear, with fleecy clouds overhead and low valleys wrapped in featherly fog. By 9:00 a.m. the wind came up and from the rapidly falling surface of the ground and rolled up in a few places to form miniature but growing "black blizzards." But what a scene of havoc and death greeted the eyes of thousands of searchers who were the weary daybreak along the valleys of the rivers and creeks. Word spread that many who had earlier been caught by the rushing waters of the water that swept down to the deep dry creeks and river bottoms, and carried away to die, in a hopeless battle against the icy waters, in darkness and silence. Scores of houses in the lower valleys had been quickly toppled from their foundations. Many of the pioneers who had escaped destruction and carried away to die, in a hopeless battle against the icy waters, in darkness and silence.

The Strobes could hear the roar of the water four miles south of the river — notice the waves.
Anecdotal reports of the flood

Alvin Langendoerfer now of Burlington, Colorado, wrote his thoughts about the flood in The Burlington Record, Thursday, June 24, 2010.

My thoughts and remembrances of the Flood of 1935.

It was 75 years old at that time. We had a few 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 Idaho, 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 me, father and 1 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 pasturing we had and 1 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 now was caused by the water going over the small dam from the Republican River. 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 praised 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 with the help of county and state crews, to get the car home.

"Some people in the area were loosing horses; everybody worked horses; 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 Idaho, 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 two loggers 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) Langendoerfer lived with her parents on a place located on the bluff between the South Republican and the Arickaree Creek.

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

She woke 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 3/4 north of the Port of Entry, northeast of Idaho, said, "After the storm Hugh and his father went to check the water gap on a small creek, where 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 with a record 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 600 feet below, 1 high road 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 saved up by previous floods."
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 task. 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.

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 mammoth 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.

“The great subsidence which sank this portion of the continent at least 4,000 feet below the sea, the bones were buried by wading sands of ocean. Muse 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 outsize 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 knee 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

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.

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 Hefty cafe and it will be placed in the hands of the organization at the same who were in the flood area. Kindly bring whatever you have as soon as possible.

From Generation to Generation We’ve Been With You.

The Burlington Record, your community newspaper since 1888, has been around to record the happenings of our community and area since the origination of the town itself. From news and social events to school events, we have been there to give you the best weekly newspaper possible.

We will continue to strive to offer the most comprehensive coverage possible not only for Burlington, but Kit Carson County and the surrounding area as well.

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The Burlington Record
202 South 14th St. Burlington, CO Phone 719-346-5381
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 Damage and Destruction

The Burlington Record, Thursday, June 24, 2010

Millennium Memories — 1935 Flood - 75th Anniversary
The Burlington Record and Republican, June 6, 1935

The Burlington Call
July 4, 1935

BODY OF FLOOD VICTIM RECOVERED

The body of Clarence H. Latham of Denver, who was drowned in the Memorial Day flood, was recovered Sunday, June 30, just one month after he was reported missing. The body was found near the St. Francis, Kansas, and was brought to the local mortuary. Burial was at Cheyenne, Wednesday, with a service to be held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Gesser. Investigation is to be made into the circumstances of the drowning.

The body was recovered near Seibert after a search of the area. The search was conducted by officers of the local police department. The body was taken to the mortuary and will be examined by the medical examiner.

The Burlington Call
October 3, 1935

Flood victim bodies recovered

"The body of Wayne Gesser, a local resident, was recovered following the 1935 flood. The body was found near Seibert after a search of the area. The search was conducted by officers of the local police department. The body was taken to the mortuary and will be examined by the medical examiner."
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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 flooding in several places. In Flagler the rain was only a long gentle shower which will help along the grass and growing crops.

At Von's 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 rain filled the lake faster than the pipe could carry it away.

The recently opened highway detour between here and Selbert was also impassable for a time Tuesday morning. The highway west of Flagler was up 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 and west of where 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 last 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 land 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 Armken lived with his folks one 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 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 hay 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 miles 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 Wilcoxen.

"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? What 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 Zoon farm) running in a southeastern 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 all night, all of the lagoons, including the Helling lagoon, were overloading. 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 Pfeifer and Harry Thomas
According to "Edward Pfeifer 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 ear 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 southeast 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 Zoon 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 carried 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 remembered 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 north and west of Idalia. 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 Eros. Goodniches. 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 large break in the earth, it seemed like it was three or four feet wide and 50 to 60 feet long.

"The earth laid 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

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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 beat for destruction of life and property. The entire Republican 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, Pugh, Rosser Davis, Corlies, Longef, 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 falls west of Seibert is washed away for several hundred yards and it will be the last of the week before trains can get through. Water is over the bridge at the Vorna 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 Mountaine 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 nigh indescribable at Omaha, 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.