

OBSERVATIONS ON THE 1935 REPUBLICAN

RIVER FLOOD IN NEBRASKA

BY

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At the time of the 1935 Republican River Flood, my wife and I were living in Lincoln, Nebraska. I was a Territory Service Representative for International Harvester Company. I came home for the week end and we were listening on the radio to accounts of property damage and missing persons in the Edison and Oxford, Nebraska area. We never gave a thought that any problem could exist with my parents near Benkelman, Nebraska. However, we were worried about my sister, Mrs. Merlin Martin, and her family who lived on a farm near Edison.

About midnight we could stand it no longer so Ralph and Tarnie Andrews and I got in the car and drove to Edison, arriving there early Sunday morning. The farm was deserted. The water, which had receded, lacked only a few inches of getting in the house at its highest point. We found the family safe at a neighboring farm on higher ground. Merlin's parents who lived nearby had waded with Merlin, Florence, and family to higher ground and safety in the middle of the night. The parents' car, home, and all belongings were washed away.

The scene was terrible, homes gone, trees uprooted every where, and water still covering the entire valley.

When we arrived home in Lincoln about midnight we were contacted by phone by Uncle Olin (O.J. Ferguson) who read a small article from a Kansas City paper to the effect that an "aged couple by the name of Ferguson were last seen near Benkelman floating in midstream on the roof of their house". Needless to say that was a shock to us. Telephone connections were practically nonexistent, but I finally talked with the County Sheriff at St. Francis, Kansas who told me he thought the folks were rescued but he did not know for sure. We were unable to contact any other town so just hoped his statement was true.

Having seen the amount of the flood and the destruction near Edison, I was almost sure the only bridge that remained standing would be at Superior, Nebraska, so I left immediately for Superior, hoping to cross and go to St. Francis through Kansas. Travel through Nebraska west of McCook was almost impossible. I arrived at Superior but water was over the road at each end of the bridge and was too deep to travel through. After waiting several hours the water receded enough that I could cross. I arrived at St. Francis about noon on Tuesday and immediately hunted up a county tractor and operator to drag me across the river. There were no bridges left. The water was still deep enough to be over the floor boards of the car. When I arrived at the farm of Cris Ferguson (my brother), I found that he had rescued the folks and had them there with him and Mabel.

I remained there and worked for a few days and while there we went back to the folks' place to see if we could find anything. We were having trouble getting a location of any kind because all of the buildings, trees, fences, etc. were gone and everything was covered with fine sand. Finally, one of us stubbed a toe on the one quarter inch