

Some Floods of Recent Date

Since 1922, Iowa river towns have been constantly reminded that the Mississippi could still go on its proverbial "bender." In 1938, the year the last of the 26 locks and dams was completed to create the 9-foot channel, the Mississippi surprised Iowans with one of its rare fall floods — something it had not done since 1881. The crest of 1938, however, was several feet below previous flood records and damage accordingly was relatively slight.

In sharp contrast were the floods of 1951 and 1952, each of which caused many living in the lowlands to evacuate their homes. On April 24, 1951, the *Burlington Hawk-Eye Gazette* reported the damage had mounted into the millions of dollars. The Red Cross estimated 7,000 had been made homeless in Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. Sabula and Port Louisa were the hardest hit little river towns, but from Dubuque to Burlington vulnerable sections of the Mississippi were being sandbagged. The National Guard worked strenuously at various points to ward off the onslaught of Old Man River. The *Burlington Hawk-Eye Gazette* of April 24, 1951 declared there was "discomfort and dislocation" all along the river accom-

panied by the "constant threat of outbreaks of disease" as the rising Mississippi disrupted "water and sanitary facilities."

A difficult situation arises in almost every flood crisis when curious sightseers interfere with those engaged in fighting the rising torrent. On April 23, 1951, the *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald* noted that 10,971 cars had jammed the Julien Dubuque Bridge approach, creeping along bumper to bumper, and sometimes backed up for eight miles. Most of the cars were reported to be from the Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, and Oelwein areas.

Once again, in April 1952, the Mississippi dealt Iowa river towns its one-two punch, and this time the preliminary estimate of a 24-foot crest, which would have been much higher than in 1951, proved to be excessive. On April 20, the *Telegraph-Herald* reported some 250 families had been made homeless and 2,700 men thrown out of work when the Dubuque Packing Company and other firms suspended operations until the river subsided. The Illinois Central had stopped crossing the river, the CB&Q had closed its depot, and the Milwaukee was expected to do the same. Typhoid shots were given at the city's expense and J. C. members were planning an all-out war on rats, hoping to exterminate thousands by poison as they congregated on high ground. Both the 1951 and 1952 floods were finally credited with a stage of 22' 7".