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FLOOD DIARY

JANUARY - FEBRUARY

1937

COMPILED

- by -

Marion Groh

XX

TIME: January-February 1937

PLACE: 2010 East Elm Street  
New Albany, Indiana

CHARACTERS:

Residents:

Edward M. Groh, father  
Grace C. Groh, mother

Ada C. Groh, sister  
Emma D. Groh, sister

Marion Groh, daughter

\* Albert E. Groh, son,  
- Absentee -

Refugees:

Louis Groh, brother  
Eva Groh, his wife

Home -- 128 W. Spring,  
City.

Roger W. Murr, son-in-law  
Julia E. Murr, daughter

Home -- 2223 Reno Ave.,  
City.

Monday, January 18

Black Creek has backed up south of Spring Street. Situation bad but not yet alarming.

Tuesday, January 19

Family drove to Jeff and through New Albany to view high water. They were not able to go more than a quarter of a mile down the Budd Road.

Wednesday, January 20

A Red Cross emergency hospital was set up at the recreation hall on Third and Spring Streets. People are being taken from houses on West 8th and Spring by rowboats. The water is several feet high on Reno Avenue and rising rapidly. Julia and Rog not yet decided to move. Most neighbors are moving out leaving but a few on Reno.

Thursday, January 21

We drove to Jeff today and could hardly get through, the water being over the hubs of the car at the underpass of the Penn. R.R. and at Spring and Tenth. It also covered Indiana Avenue as far as visible from intersection at Spring Street. The situation is dangerous and people are greatly alarmed. The water is rising steadily and reports indicate much higher water.

We went to the Falls City Transfer Co. to see Albert. His car was stalled and he had no idea whether by nightfall he could get home or not. (He telephoned) about 12 P.M. and said he had sent for clothes and that he had no idea as to what he would do but not to worry. Louie went up in the truck to bring him home but he stayed at his work.

Julia and Rog had to move here last night and brought just a few clothes in hopes the water will be down in a few days.

All roads between Jeff and N.A. closed by water. National Guards called out.

**RAIN!**

Friday, January 22

The water has risen over Second Street bridge. Before or about noon today, we got the report that the water had come over the Clarksville levee and all of Jeff was endangered.

Business College closed at noon as water was so high in the basement that it was impossible to have a fire.

The electricity was turned off at 5:15 P.M. and our telephone service is out tonight.

Before the electricity was out, we heard warning on the radio the everyone East of East Street and south of the alley between Spring and Elm should evacuate immediately. This puts us just out of the danger zone.

We brought Uncle Lou's new Pontiac up here in our garage for safety. Water is getting very near him and he is beginning to move stock.

All downtown merchants are moving stock out of their basements believing the water may get them.

Saturday, January 23

Early Saturday morning around 1:30 A.M., the levee at Gohmann's factory gave way and the water came rushing over to flood the whole of the East End as predicted by radio yesterday. We could hear the roar as the levee gave way and the water came plunging over. It rushed through the East End so rapidly that people who had been high and dry, seemingly safe from any water invasion, only several hours before, were forced to evacuate and salvage what little property as was possible. Dot Neeld informed us that they had to wade through water to get out.

We had Aunt Ada's and Uncle Lou's cars in our garage, and when the noise of the people evacuating woke me around 1:45, I got up, in doing so woke Aunt Emma, and between us we roused Aunt Ada who went out to get the cars out of the garage before the water reached us. John Bourkenheim, our neighbor, helped her and after several stalls both were brought to high and dry land. When they backed the first car into the alleys, the alley was dry and the water could be heard above us nearing Silver Street. By the time the second car was backed out the water in the alley was knee deep so fast did it move.

This excitement over, we went back to bed and awoke later on to find the

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ground covered with snow, and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  out back yard in water and ice. Our telephone was dead also.

Rog worked from 7 - 11 or 12 and expects to continue thus until the situation is relieved.

The water at Silver and Spring is approximately 9 feet deep. RAIN poured down all day causing the water to rise more than was predicted.

We received word from Al's boss that Al was safe at Port Fulton. He is staying at Dodson's and we certainly are relieved to hear that he is safe as all sorts of reports of Jeff being completely wiped out were. However, our newspapers inform us that there are two and only two dry places in all Jeff, Rose Hill and Port Fulton.

Today the Pearl Street merchants were forced to evacuate their basements and move to first and second stories. Business was at a standstill. But not so with the water which was fast rising.

Uncle Lou and Aunt Eva were forced to move to their second story. Pop and Louise are taking coal oil to them by boat.

Natl. Guards and Am. Legion men were stationed at Jay and at Silver all day.

Sunday, January 24

The water has come dangerously near the house and the sewer is backing up in the basement. We worked all morning getting up coal and salvaging a few things. We tried to stop the sewer but to no avail. Two feet of water has entered during the day.

The water is in the second stories on Reno. All travel on the K. & I. is at your own risk. No street cars are in operation.

There is a free clinic at High School and at Silver Street school as all residents must be inoculated for typhoid fever.

Louie informs us that the water is visible from his house at 2227 McLean Avenue.

Aut Eva and Uncle Lou came here today. They had to leave their home by way of a window on the second floor and were then boated to dry land. They passed under Frank Koehler's window and he dropped his car keys into the boat so that Uncle Lou could get his car which was parked in front of the Grand Theater and drive it to safety.



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Luckily they managed to bring a few clothes and ten pounds of beef with them. This will sure come in handy if things continue as they are now.

We bought a stove from Richard's second hand store and have not yet been forced to light it although we have it set up and ready for use. We expect the water to be high enough to put out the furnace in a few hours. The water is reported to be in the ground floor of the Elsbj Building.

It's raining cats and dogs again.

All water must be purified with either chlorine or iodine.

There are but two ways out of N.A. now: A round about way to Floyd Knobs and the Monon Railroad.

Wilbur left for Louisville and we've not heard from him since.

#### NOTE

Up to this time all news was written at night or the morning after they occurred. From now on the sentences may seem disconnected and hectic due to the fact that in copying no change was made from the original which was written just as events ~~occurred~~ occurred and not summed up later.

Monday, January 25

Water still rising! We have nailed a yardstick at the top of the second step of the stairs on the back porch and have marked in red pencil; a danger line, the estimated crest, and the point where, if reached by the water, we will have to move. According to this yardstick the water is rising at a rate of about an inch an hour.

We used the stove this morning but it smoked so much that we had to carry out the burning coals and dump them in the river in our backyard.

The water is up to the house and starting around it. If we have more than three feet we must move up to the attic. However, we have unofficial word the the river is at a standstill at Cincinnati so we still have hopes of staying put.

We now have fixed the bad stove, which by the way cost us \$10, and also have another one in the dining room. We borrowed this from Genungs.

Bee Sands just dropped in and told us of the terrible condition at the Masonic Temple where they are feeding refugees.

Three of the Koehlers came just now to get their car and told us that they had

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had to chisel out a part of the wall to get their mother, who was sick, out of their home.

Julia is at Louie's ironing Rog's shirts so he will have some to wear to work.

This morning we took two capsules apiece to inoculate for typhoid fever.

We just noticed that several houses on Reno are floating around.

We can stand a little over two feet before we move to the attic.

Bread is being shipped in from Bedford now and all we eat is soup and hash.

Main, Market, and Spring Streets from East Seventh to West Eighth are reported to be flooded. The river has long ago met the backwater and a great part of Jeff, New Albany, and Louisville is inundated.

The most popular thing in town is rubber boots. Just now the "beautiful Ohio" is quite muddy and ugly as it endeavors to climb its way up our back stairs to reach our floor level. The water is lying in Rear Market just above Vincennes but has now yet entered those houses.

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The river is reported to be falling at Cincinnati and this along with a bit of sunshine now and then is very cheerful news to us who have seen enough water in the past week to bathe a nation every Saturday night for the next Century.

A while ago there was a big launch at Silver and Spring which was carrying food to the Flood sufferers. It is getting to be quite a game to run to the back windows which face Spring St. and watch all sorts of objects go floating down the alley. Row boats, canoes and motorboats go skimming through our back yard. We have made quite a joke over the bucksaw which formerly of our back yard is now residing at Pritz's on Spring Street. Evidently our iron gate, supported by boards from beneath, felt lonesome without the bucksaw so it too followed suit.

Pop broke into our own coal which is in the basement by going through one of our basement windows. We brought up several more buckets full and now expect to have enough. The back porch looks like a pig pen, and we hope and pray it will stand the weight on it and not fall into the river.

By the way the average rise of an inch an hour today is a decrease over that of the previous two days which as near as we could estimate was over two inches per hour. News just reached us that the crest is expected to reach us Wednesday.

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The level is now  $55\frac{1}{2}'$  and the crest is expected to be  $57'$  a rise of  $1\frac{1}{2}'$ . We have marked the heights on our yardstick and are much cheered by this news. The water is over Elm at Silver. We expect it to come down Elm by Wednesday perhaps about knee deep. Tonight the water main at Silver and Elm broke. The pressure is very low and the water is fast moving down the street.

Reading at 12 P.M.:  $12\frac{1}{4}"$

Radio predicts crest at Cairo, Ill. on Wednesday.

Tuesday, January 26

Reading at 6 A.M.  $17\frac{1}{2}"$  Rise of  $5\frac{1}{4}"$  in 6 hours.

Reading at 8 A.M.  $17\frac{3}{4}"$  Rise of  $\frac{1}{4}"$  per hour. The rate of rise from 6-9 is  $\frac{1}{6}"$  per hour. This rise is decidedly slower than heretofore.

The water is almost to the front of the house and that coming down Elm Street is not far away. This morning Aunt Ada drove her car into the front yard. Unless the river stands absolutely still within 24 hours, we expect to be surrounded. The sun is shining again today and for that we are thankful.

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Julia and Rog think their marriage license is washed out on Reno. What a laugh! Walk was about to run out of drugs but Rog received word this morning that a National Guard truck brought them a fresh supply. This is a great help.

The river is at a standstill at Cincinnati. Reading at 10 A.M. 18". No rise! 11:30 -- there's quite a current in the backyard now. We just got a report that the water at Louisville had fallen 1/10 in. in the last hour.

This afternoon we all walked across the K. & I. Bridge. The sound of the rushing water was equal to Niagara Falls. Houses and all sorts of objects including, I am told, a live horse, are floating down. You cannot get off the bridge at the Louisville end except by boat.

The water has reached Vincennes at Rear Market. The sewer has backed up and covered 15th and Elm in sufficient quantities as to force a few people to move out. The water down Elm Street is in front of the house. We estimated a four inch rise all day today. Crest some time tonight. We hope and pray for fair weather. The water has risen so slowly all day that there has been no special event or further alarm. There is nothing much to do but look at water and sleep. We play cards but the lights are bad and even that becomes boresome.

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Transformers have been set up at Bud Daley's at Main and Vincennes, right off this end of the bridge and we are now receiving current from Scottsburg. However our house and others on our side of the street do not have lights but must burn coal oil lamps and candles. In the bathroom we placed a coal oil stove which adds to the comforts of all.

10 P.M. Paul Sullivan reports over WLW that the river is definitely falling. So--oo--oo Rog, Julia, Pop, and Aunt Em took it upon themselves to celebrate by playing pinochle till 12 P.M. Incidentally keeping the rest of us awake.

Wednesday, January 27

Our yardstick measures same as last night. The sun is shining brightly. There is quite a wind and the thermometer registers 60° F.

This afternoon we received word through Jumpy Snyder, a fellow who lives in Port Fulton, that there is a man from New Albany staying at Dodsons and further identified him as Janet's boyfriend. So we know that this is Al and that he is safe. Jumpy also told us that though they had no conveniences or communication that there were plenty of stores and water and Port Fulton is high and dry.