

Slipper's Soliloquies

Floods, the headache of Hamilton



By Fred Slipper

Sitting at home last night (Dec. 26th) listening to the radio flood reports brought back a lot of memories. I may have reminisced on this subject in the past but that would have been in 1980, and this is a new year, so repetition doesn't count....

I thought when all the dams were built up river our floods were supposed to be controlled. At least that is what they told us in the old days. It seems the floods are worse than ever. The radio said Hamilton had been completely evacuated. Back in my childhood I don't remember anyone leaving town. Our house was built quite a bit above the ground, about four feet, and altho water did come in and cover the floor, my folks didn't leave. They did put all the furniture up on blocks dad had stored in a shed just for flood emergencies, and they rolled up the rugs and put me upstairs so I would be out of the way. Many of the other houses were built the same way—two that come to mind are the Jim Smith house and the house that was owned by Great Northern station agent, Mr. Belfry. Nick and Ella Brando are the present owners. Since I have lived there, many of the new houses are the type built on a slab so they are very susceptible to flood conditions.

Our flood gauge was a stick put in the ground down by Sam Morrell's and when the water got to a certain level everyone knew the water was coming. It used to cover the road first down past the school buildings, near the cheese plant owned and operated by Louie Castrilli. (I wonder how many of the present day residents of Hamilton know the cheeses produced by Louie won many blue ribbon awards at various World Fairs?)

When the flood waters finally receded the clean up began. We would find everything in our yard—fence posts, firewood, dog houses, anything that would float was moved to a new location. I could tell just how high the water on each preceding flood had risen by the mud rings around all of the out buildings. There was no way out of town, as the only road out was the old highway, and down near Val Adams (about half way to Lyman) the water got about two feet above the road level.

Then when the water finally receded the work began. In my younger days the houses didn't have wall to wall carpet and the rugs weren't fastened down so they could be rolled up and put on tables, etc. But the mud was still there. The first flood I can remember that covered the floor of our home was 1921. The summer before my folks had put hardwood floors in, and mom was afraid they would be ruined, but apparently they survived.
