

2011  
Wednesday  
MARCH 16

Established 1914 – Our 97th Year

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# The Hancock News

(USPS 234-300)

Hancock, MD 21750

Volume 98, Number 11



## Hancock at a Glance

### St. Patrick's Day dance

Hancock in Motion will sponsor a St. Patrick's Day Dance on Saturday, March 19 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Community Center. The dance is for grades 6-10 and a small admission will be charged.

### Art Fair

The Hancock Arts Council will hold its first ever Art Fair in the Performing Arts Center on Saturday, March 26. Judging of art will take place on Friday and the show on Saturday throughout the day. Quilts, wood-working, crafts and paintings will be on display.

### C&O Canal clean up

The recent flooding has damaged areas of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park. People visiting the park may find rough and eroded towpath surfaces, damp camping areas and picnic areas, debris, and closed restrooms. Boaters should follow the Maryland Department of

## The 1936 Flood: Oceans of Water

(from *The Hancock News*,  
March 20, 1936)

Hancock visited by the worst deluge in its history. West Main St., covered by 25 feet of water. Span of Potomac River Bridge washed out. Damage to Hancock real estate and personal property will run up into thousands of dollars. Some homes washed entirely away. Many autoists marooned here.

At the time of writing this article we are surrounded by oceans of water, in fact we are working to get out this issue with at least 12 feet of water under our plant. We travel to and fro by boat.

The Potomac River, swollen by the torrential rains of Monday night and all day Tuesday, overflowed its banks, as never before, to visit upon Hancock the most disastrous and appalling flood in the history of the town. The floods of 1889 and 1894, damaging and devastating as they were, cannot be compared with the havoc wrought by the inundation of March 18, 1936.

The rise of the turbulent waters was rapid and menacing and West Main Street, lying close to Little Tonoloway Creek, a tributary of the Potomac River, was in a short time an ocean of murky waves, completely inundating that portion of the town. Some residents of that section, anticipating

trouble, with the thought of safety, removed their household effects from the ground floor to the second story of their homes and fled to higher ground, while others fearing even worse, packed up everything and hid themselves to other parts of town, temporarily sojourning with friends.

About 3:30 Wednesday afternoon marked the worst stage of the flood, water on the main thoroughfare having reached as far east as the Geo. A. Anthony residence, finding its way at several points on High St., a thoroughfare of higher altitude running parallel with Main Street. The depth of the water varied anywhere from a half-foot to 25 feet. Lots and terraces running south to the Western Maryland Railroad tracks were completely submerged, the water reaching a level with the raging Potomac, which at that time had spread over the old C.&O. Canal and Western Maryland tracks. It was a common, yet distressing sight to see buildings torn from their moorings, floating about like tops.

Motor boats, row boats and canoes plied the artificial lake, as it were, and did much in relieving the distressed situation of those who, for some reason, had to be persuaded to leave their homes, and in



*Hancock's original Potomac River Bridge*, located behind the Lockhouse Restaurant, washed out in the flood. The present bridge was built upstream and opened a few years later.

recovering forgotten personal effects. Those who operated these little skiffs were very obliging and displayed that cooperative spirit that always asserts itself when trouble comes.

The stores and other business places to suffer incalculable loss were Anthony & Co., in which the water was ceiling high, White's Variety Store, where the water was practically the same height, T.P. Jenkin's Furniture Store, the Ford Garage, Courtney's Lunch Room, Dr. Chas. T. Pyles' Dental Offices, Exline

Hardware Co., Mason's Confectionery, the Post Office, Ingram's Restaurant, Lewis Glaser's Store and the Hoffman Chevrolet Co. The damage done to these businesses establishments, collectively speaking, will run into thousands of dollars, while the loss sustained on real estate — representing upwards of 50 homes — can hardly be approximated. Some citizens lost their homes temporarily, finding them carried elsewhere.

But, like former deluges, the West End of town, known as

"Swamp-poodle," was not the only part of our fair city to suffer from the high waters. That portion of Main St. known as "Ice Hollow," or the dividing line between the East and West sections of the town was also partly submerged, the water reaching as far east as the General Merchandise Store of P. T. Little Sons, who also suffered some damage, as did also the Maryland Garage, Yeakle's Feed Store, the Gulf Filling Station and several residences in that section.

(1936 FLOOD  
continues on page 3)



# 75th anniversary of the 1936 big one

(from front)

With the bridge spanning Little Tonoloway Creek on the west of us and the waters of Big Tonoloway Creek on the east, running wild, traffic east and west was completely cut off, and many motorists were practically marooned here. The only avenue of escape was by the way of McConnellsburg, Pa. As a result the local hotels and rooming houses were taxed.

To add to the already calamitous situation, about 2 o'clock Wednesday morning we were bereft of electric power and light as well as water for domestic purposes, the municipal pump house being flooded. The town now lies in darkness, and it will be some time before the local water plant will function.

No trains have been able to reach Hancock due to several bridges and sections of track being washed away. Agent E. E. Ogle expects through train service on the Western Maryland today.

After defying ravages of the elements for the past 47 years, the Potomac River Bridge, with its three steel spans, fell a victim to Wednesday's high waters, when the centre span was washed away. The bridge, constructed and completed in 1889, received a general overhauling several years ago and was considered in spick and span shape.

Widmeyer Memorial Park, west of town, was inundated, where the waters found their way into the Hancock High School which was closed on account of flood conditions.

Not until about 6 o'clock Wednesday evening did the silver lining in the overhanging cloud hearten the unfortunate ones, when the waters began to recede.

The flood waters Wednesday were eight feet higher than those of 1889.

The number of Hancock homeless, but by no means friendless, will reach fully 150.

Thomas Shives lost a cow and a number of chickens.

Harry Balaser, the well known lumber dealer, lost heavily in cross ties and lumber, both on this side of the river and over at Hancock Station.

Several homes at Brosius, across the river, were washed away, and a brand new automobile, just purchased by Mr. Martin Keefer, of that place, was also taken by the swirling waters.

The Red Cross appeals to the people around Hancock to contribute food, clothing, furniture, bedding, kitchen utensils and dishes. Call Red Cross headquarters at Conn & Fine's Store, or send same to the Fire Hall. Twenty-five families need rehabilitation.

A barracks with about 25 cots has been fitted up in the Fire Hall in connection with a

commissary where our homeless are being provided for, through the Red Cross.

An appeal from here was to Governor Nice for aid. \$15,000 is needed immediately for food, clothing and other necessities and \$5,000 for the same purposes in adjacent territory.

As we go to press this (Friday) morning all flooded areas in town as well as out of town are again in normal condition with through traffic possible on Route 40.

Linemen are busy stringing wires and it is hoped that by tonight lights will be restored.

The city dailies are printing many snapshot views of Hancock's flooded areas.

A train carrying high railroad officials passed over the Western Maryland this Friday morning.



Clarence Jones, Cliff Shriver and George Davis boat on Main Street, March 17 or March 18, 1936.



These men boating on the swollen Potomac River were identified by the unknown photographer as "Robey. Clark. Hare."



The train station near the Potomac at Great Cacapon was almost totally underwater. The flood was receding when this photo was snapped on March 18, 1936. In the far distance is a barn going downriver, according to the unknown photographer.