

BUILDINGS FLOATING IN RIVER; HANCOCK BRIDGE MAY GO OUT

**River Reaches 38 Feet at Williamsport and Still Rising;
Scores of Clubhouses Swept Into Swirling Waters;
Most Of Hancock Is Under Water.**

The Potomac River Valley today is experiencing its worst flood since the days of the memorable Johnstown flood of 1889. The swirling waters had passed the Johnstown flood peak at Hancock, in which section a number of houses on the West Virginia side of the river were carried away into the river and the bridge across the Potomac there threatened to collapse momentarily.

Four houses and a store building on the West Virginia side of Hancock were swept from their bases and were seen floating downstream. The river at Hancock rose four feet since 8 o'clock this morning. One section of the river bridge at Hancock was under water and is blocked off. The span is 65 feet above the river bed. The houses that were swept down the river were located at Brosius, on the West Virginia side directly across the river from Hancock.

The flood waters covered the western section of Hancock to the postoffice and the eastern part of the town had from three to four feet of water from the Myers whole-sale building to the residence of Thomas Gileece.

Warnings of the wall of water that could be expected during the night sent scores of families there scurrying to higher ground early last night and they abandoned their homes in the nick of time, for an unprecedented rise came during the night.

All roads leading in and out of Hancock were blocked by the high water. Neither trains nor buses were running. Boats are being used in the lower end of the town. The water was about nine feet deep in the lower end of the town, and four feet deep in the other end.

The Potomac at Williamsport was within one foot of the high water mark reached at the time of the Johnstown flood and was still rising at noon at the rate of 19 inches an hour.

Word received here at noon today told of many clubhouses of the Potomac Boat Club at Three Landing, Berkeley County, being swept away. A number also were carried off by the flood along Back Creek in Berkeley County.

Shortly before noon a large hay storage building, in the rear of Cushwa's warehouse was swept away and a carload of lumber for G. A. Miller Company was being salvaged on the railroad tracks. The water was up to the top of the warehouse door shortly before noon.

But encouraging reports from the headwaters of Potomac and its swollen tributaries indicated that the peak might be reached sometime tonight. Reports from Cumberland this morning heightened the feeling that no serious damage would be caused to numerous industrial and municipal plants located along the river, although private property, such as clubhouses in the lowlands are undoubtedly bearing the brunt of the damage caused by the rapidly rising waters.

Clubhouses and residences apparently have been hard hit from Hancock to Harper's Ferry, for several buildings were seen floating down the Potomac at Williamsport this morning.

Reports reaching here from Snyder's Landing and Shepherdstown told of flooded clubhouses and homes. The family of Wilbur Hebb, residing just above the towpath of the canal on Maryland side of the Potomac at Shepherdstown bridge moved out during the night and at 8 o'clock this morning water was in the first floor of the house, according to reports reaching Sharpsburg. The Potomac at that time was raising at the rate of a foot an hour at Shepherdstown. Many of the clubhouses in the Snyder Landing summer colony were roped down last night.

Clubhouses at Snyder's Landing had water in the second floors. Most of these were just above the towpath. Telephone service with this point went out during the night and it was impossible to reach there by automobile this morning.

Telephone communication with the Potomac Edison Power plant on the Potomac at Williamsport was cut off shortly after 8 o'clock at which time the river stood 33 ½ feet above normal and was still rising at the rate of a foot an hour. It was stated at the Potomac Edison headquarters here that an additional 6-foot rise is expected before the peak is reached late this afternoon and that suspension of service is not anticipated.

John Kirby, an employee of the Hagerstown pumping station on the Potomac above Williamsport went to work in a boat this morning. He reported to Albert Heard, superintendent of the Water Department that there was no danger there however, that the retaining wall had been built to take care of a rise of 45 feet. The river is expected to reach 40 feet at its peak.

A warning was issued today by Dr. W. Ross Cameron, health officer, to persons living in the river valley, that all drinking water should be boiled for a period of several weeks. There is always danger during and after a flood of contamination of wells, spring and cistern water.

Former Scenes Recalled

Conditions reminiscent of the floods of 1877 and 1889 were recalled around Williamsport as the Potomac leaped its banks and spread out over a vast area on both sides invading the lower end of Potomac street surrounding the warehouse of Victor Cushwa and Sons and other buildings nearby and flooding the Chesapeake and Ohio canal and the Western Maryland Railroad tracks.

The rise was the most rapid in many years and exceeded the flood of 1924, when the C. and O. canal was wrecked, by 19 feet of water. A score of more families living between the river and canal and along the river front at Williamsport moved out during the night and early this morning.

The frame home of Richard Obitts, near the canal aqueduct, was carried away after it had been vacated. The swift increase in the river held the Conococheague back until it overflowed Conomac Park and adjoining sections to a depth of about 20 feet.

Tannery Section Isolated

The stone bridge over the creek on the Clearspring road was submerged and water rose over the Western Maryland tracks and flooded a section of Tannery Row on the opposite side. Houses in that section were flooded nearly to the second stories.

That section, and the large tannery of W. D. Byron and Sons were isolated, the tannery being forced to shutdown. Several hundred employees were unable to reach the plant.

Appeals for (illegible) received at Williamsport early this morning from families living at Kemp's along the Conococheague, and Mayor R. G. Hawken and a crew of firemen

responded. Keller B. Bell's family was taken out in boats and the household goods on the first floor moved upstairs.

The Potomac was freighted with small buildings, trees and other debris as the flood rolled past Williamsport. A good-sized building lodged against the piers of the river-bridge was beaten to pieces by the current. A number of small boats were carried away.

Hundreds of persons from Williamsport and other sections visited Williamsport during the day to view the unusual scenes. Newspaper and camera men from Washington "shot" scenes and covered the flood from here. A plane carrying a photographer flew along the river to Cumberland to get pictures.

The Western Maryland Railroad and Blue Ridge Transportation Company cancelled all schedules today for points west. Crack B. & O. trains are being rerouted through this city over the Pennsylvania line from Martinsburg and thence via the Washington County branch of the Baltimore & Ohio to Weverton.

A truck driver, whose identity was not learned, narrowly escaped drowning last night when his machine stalled on the highway where the Tonoloway creek overflowed its banks. The driver was rescued by a man in a boat.

It was also reported that there were several landslides along the Western Maryland railroad between Hancock and Cumberland.

Hundreds of cellars in all sections of the county were flooded.

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Cat Rescued From Flood

An act of humanity was performed at Williamsport this morning when Luther Silvers and Newton McAllister rescued a cat from a tree standing out in the flood below the canal bridge.

The cat had taken refuge in the tree as the waters rose and was only a few feet above the rising flood when the rescuers reached it in a boat.