

Scenes Of Past And Present Destruction Wrought By The Cape Fear River In Bladen County



Damage estimated at \$500,000 has been done to farm lands in the Bladen county district in the area of the White Oak swamp and Lyon swamp drainage districts, since the September, 1945, freshet of the Cape Fear river. The damage extended into Pender county also, when the White Oak and Lyon levees broke under the pressure of the rushing waters of the Cape Fear. And the damage continues today, as these pictures illustrate, when the river stage at Fayetteville reaches 20 or 30 feet, a not unusual occurrence. The levees have not been repaired because the farmers of the area, without a 1945 crop harvest, do not have the money to do the work. The major break in the Lyon swamp levee, shown in the lower left photo, above, was at a mill-pond of exactly the same water level as the nearby Cape Fear.

Thus, a rise of even two feet in the river is reflected in a corresponding rise in the millpond, which overflows and sends water into the farm section around Kelly. Two weeks ago the river stage reading at Fayetteville was 40.5 feet. The picture in the lower right-hand corner shows the result: 30 acres of corn and soybeans on the farm of J. B. Owens were flooded. The farmers of the affected areas have sent a delegation to Washington to tell congressmen that unless immediate relief is given them, chances for 1946 crops are faint. Another delegation has requested an audience with Gov. R. Gregg Cherry to seek State aid in re-building the levees. Built in 1905-1906 and in 1911-1912 by the farmers themselves, the two levees broke in 1928. Farmers, with State help, repaired the breaks. Col. George W. Gillette,

district U. S. Engineer, has scheduled a meeting with the local group, known as the Flood Control committee, in Kelly to review damage done by the river waters and to formulate plans for the temporary and permanent relief of the area, in the event the Federal government takes a hand. The above panel of pictures, taken by Pete Knight, Star-News staff photographer, illustrate the precarious position in which the farmers find themselves today. Top row, left, is a view of one of the breaks in the Lyon levee and a pool of stagnating water—good breeding ground for malaria. Top row, center, former site of a two-story barn on the farm of T. E. Potter, Kelly—when the levee broke at 8 p.m., Sept. 20, 1945, the water swept the barn away, dug up a pump shaft 18 feet in the ground, and covered a peach orchard

with white sand. Potter never has found a trace of his barn. Top row, right, R. K. Henry, farmer, rural mail carrier for 30 years, and member of the Flood Control committee, indicates with his hand the height the September waters reached on an electric light pole in front of his house in Kelly. Lower row, left, is the widest breach in the Lyon swamp levee—120 feet—at the site of the mill-pond. Lower row, center, Kelly residents Earl Bradshaw, center, and Pvt. Eugene Owens, right, stand with Star-News Reporter Jay Jenkins on the edge of the Lyon swamp levee at the point the levee broke. The levees, made entirely of dirt, are constructed on a ridge of high ground, are approximately 20 feet in height and width. Lower row, right, is the flooded farm of J. B. Owens.

Records Indicate Lower Bladen, Pender Will Be Flooded 10 Times During 1946

LEVEES BROKEN

Unchecked High Waters Of Cape Fear Turning Farm Land Into Bog

By JAY JENKINS Staff Writer

KELLY, Feb. 23—There was a deep, ominous rumble in this small Bladen county community at almost exactly 8 o'clock, Sept. 20, 1945, and a long, lingering growl as the Cape Fear river tumbled through the breached Lyon Swamp levee.

Earl Bradshaw, farmer, was inside his house but he heard it. "It sounded like a train," he said. "As soon as I heard it, I told my wife, 'The dam's broke,'" said R. K. Henry. "It was almost as loud as a crack of thunder."

There was a medley of sounds. The Cape Fear's part in the eerie orchestration was that of a bass musical background. Audible were the excited cackling of chickens—935 were lost—the squealing of pigs—152 were drowned—and the lowing of trapped cattle. There was also the sharp sound of breaking timber.

Farmers of Kelly and vicinity who were on higher ground than their neighbors close to the breached levees of Lyon Swamp and White Oak, went into action with wagons, trucks and tractors. They hauled human beings first, and then began rescuing the livestock until the height of the water made further work impossible.

Camp Lejeune, the Marine base, dispatched jeeps and boats to the stricken area. Other boats came from Pender and surrounding counties. As the rescue work proceeded, whole families were moved into temporary quarters at White Lake for 10 days; when they re-

turned they found a morass where neat fields had been.

River stage reading at Locks No. Two, Browns landing, one mile, east of Elizabethtown, was 49.4 feet. On Sept. 21, the reading climbed to 52.2 feet, the Sept. 22 reading was 54 feet, and on Sept. 23, the reading had gone up to 55 feet. The water came on and on and on.

Damage Set At \$500,000 It is still coming, still adding to the \$500,000 damage done in Bladen county alone. Considerable damage was done in Pender, too, because the two levees constituted the only artificial brake to the overflowing Cape Fear river between Kelly and the ocean.

Today the damage being done by the river to Kelly and other lowland farm communities along the Cape Fear is not being done with the sudden, dramatic intensity of a flood. The breached levees, unrepaired because the farmers cannot finance the work, are spilling water into the land every time the Cape Fear river stage in Fayetteville reaches a height of 20 to 30 feet, a common happening.

A one-foot rise in the Cape Fear causes water now standing in the major levee breach to rise one foot. In effect, the river's water-level is extended two miles inland where it is in position to flood the farms under the slightest impetus of high water.

In 1944, the river stage readings at Brown's Landing, far below Fayetteville, 11 times reached more than 37 feet in 10 months. During the first nine months of 1945, readings there went higher than the 37-foot mark more than 19 times.

Unless the breached levees are repaired, then, farmers in this community and others ranged in the lowlands along the river face the dire prospect of watching their

rich lands disappear under muddy water about 10 times this year.

Grain Fields Flooded

It will not take that many overflows to render the area as valueless as the worst bog in Eastern North Carolina. Last year some of the Kelly farmers planted small grain crops in early October in an attempt to reclaim a fraction of their crops. In early February, the river rose to 40.5 feet at Fayetteville, and that was enough to flood the grain fields of those farms not located on the highest ground in the area.

Appeals have been made to federal and state governments for aid in the repair work. Restoration of the levees and immediate relief has been the theme of the pleas. Farmers here are willing to wait, even glad to do so, for permanent improvements in the drainage systems if they can get immediate relief. But two experts, agreeing that the levees first of all will have to be repaired, say the entire system will have to be improved and expanded in order to afford the farmers a measure of permanent security.

H. M. Ellis, agricultural engineering specialist from N. C. State College, surveyed the levees and estimated the amount of soil necessary to repair the breaches—56,400 cubic yards—adding, "In my opinion to rebuild them as they were will not be sufficient."

Col. George W. Gillette, district U. S. engineer, as early as 1939 recognized the temporary nature of the levees and undertook a study of the area. He expects immediately to resume that study in the light of recent flood conditions in the section.

More than 200 new types of radio tubes were developed during the war.

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Brigade Boys, Jaycees Plan Paper Collection

The Brigade Boys' club and the Junior Chamber of Commerce will conduct a paper scrap drive Sunday, March 3, funds of which will go to pay off the Bruce B. Cameron camp debt incurred during the past summer.

W. A. Stewart, New Hanover County Salvage committee chairman, said 60 members of the Senior Fraternity and Jaycees, will work during the day with 20 trucks in the collection, which will get under way at 1 o'clock in the afternoon.

The paper will be collected, rain or shine, Stewart said, with the salvage to be delivered to the Wilmington Paper Stock company.

Alleged Axe Wielder Freed Under \$500 Bond

SOUTHPORT, Feb. 23—David Howard, Navassa Negro, today, had been released under \$500 bond for appearance in Recorder's court here on charges of breaking and entering and assault with a deadly weapon, according to Rural Policeman O. W. Perry, Brunswick county, who arrested the Negro. Howard is alleged to have broken into the home of Bertha Kelly, Navassa Negro, Thursday, and to have assaulted her with a hatchet.

GO SOUTH, YOUNG MAN GO SOUTH

ATLANTA—(AP)—In Georgia the accent seems to be on youth. Three years ago the state elected Ellis Arnall governor, who was then 35, the youngest in the nation.

An estimated 57,209 million quarts of milk were produced in the United States in 1945.

ADVERTISING MEN SELECT OFFICERS

CHAPEL HILL, Feb. 23.—(AP)—R. H. Carson, advertising manager of the Raleigh News and Observer, today was elected president of the Carolinas Advertising Executives association, succeeding Roy Zeigler of the Charleston, S. C., News and Courier.

Election of officers was a feature of the concluding business session of the association's two-day mid-winter meeting.

Other officers named included C. W. Patterson, Jr., of the High Point Enterprise, first vice-president; Lee Rickard of the Anderson, S. C., Independent-Daily Mail, second vice-president; and Rudy Fonville of the Burlington Times-News, secretary-treasurer.

Directors elected today included Zeigler, C. E. Godfrey of Spartanburg, S. C., Howard Cooper of Greenwood, S. C., C. A. Eure of New Bern, M. F. Murdaugh of Durham, I. W. Williams of Charlotte, Rex Freeman of Winston-Salem, and F. Earl Crawford of Charlotte.

"The trend in America toward authoritarian government is unmistakable, but many people are unaware of it because most of the steps in that direction have been taken in the name of security and a better way of life," he said. "They are dangerous trends, and I believe that the force of advertising should be used to warn the public of these dangers."

Mr. Neal addressed the banquet session at the Carolina Inn of the mid-winter meeting of the Carolinas Executives association which drew more than 100 advertising executives from North and South Carolina for the two-day program.

Mr. Neal was introduced by Rex Freeman, advertising manager, Winston-Salem Journal-Sentinel. Dr. George B. Cutten offered invocation. The program opened with music by a string trio from the University Music Department. Roy Zeigler, Charleston, S. C.,

president of the association, opened the morning session and turned the meeting over to Howard Cooper, Greenwood, S. C., who presided. Dr. D. Kelley Barnett, Chapel Hill minister, gave the invocation. Mayor R. W. Madry extended the welcome and John N. Roberts, Fayetteville Observer, responded. The morning session featured a retail clinic at which the speakers were Ralph P. Grant, general manager

of Ivey's, Asheville, and John Geisen, New York, director, retail division, Bureau of Advertising, ANPA. Mr. Grant emphasized the partnership relations between advertisers and retailers, stressing the view that the best promotion, follow-up, and cooperative methods be found and used. Mr. Geisen gave an optimistic report on the accomplishments of

the ANPA's bureau of advertising and outlined future plans.

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