

Radio Station



W W V A



1936 WHEELING
FLOOD SOUVENIR

WWVA Radio Souvenir of the 1936 WHEELING FLOOD



● ORDINARILY A BEAUTIFUL STREAM lazily winding its way toward the sea amid the peaceful foothills of the Alleghenies, the Ohio River transformed into a raging torrent of destruction, wrought disaster and suffering in its three-day reign of terror. The above panoramic view taken from the WWVA Air Castle windows, shows the Steel Bridge at the left and the Suspension Bridge at the right. In the background "The Island," the garden spot of Wheeling, is completely inundated.

● *To the thousands of "friendly" WWVA listeners who responded with unselfish devotion to the call of "Their Station" for help in an hour of great need, this 1936 Wheeling Flood Souvenir is respectfully dedicated.*

FOREWORD

TUESDAY MORNING, MARCH 17, 1936, at 9:00 o'clock, Radio Station WWVA received its first official warning from the Wheeling Chamber of Commerce that high water was on its way to Wheeling and surrounding country. The report advised a crest of 42 feet by Thursday morning, March 19th, or six feet above flood stage. However a heavy snow fall followed by heavy rains in the Monongahela and Allegheny Valleys soon changed such predictions. An avalanche of water poured into the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers which in turn emptied their swollen raging torrents into the Ohio River. Crest predictions for Wheeling changed hourly and by Wednesday at midnight, it was firmly established that the district would experience the most disastrous flood in its history.

Foot by foot the river rose with merciless persistency—its roaring devastating expanse of flood-maddened water carried with it both the works of man and nature in a furious rush down the Ohio Valley. Finally at 3:00 o'clock, Thursday afternoon, this raging giant of destruction reached its peak proportions of 54.5 feet at the Wheeling Wharf or 18.5 feet above flood stage. A flood record which stood for over a half a century was broken by more than two feet and history does not record higher water for Wheeling than the 1936 mark.

Approximately eight square miles of business and residential property was under water. Houses were completely submerged; water reached the second floors of business establishments; automobiles and motor trucks were abandoned and left to the mercy of flood waters; trees were uprooted; houses and garages were torn from their foundations and indiscriminately distributed for miles along the shores of the Ohio River. Damage ran well up into the millions.

From the very first fearful cry that pierced the blackness of night and pleaded for help until the last person was taken from the flood stricken areas, men and women worked feverishly to save human life and aid the helpless.

Countless unsung heroes; deeds of bravery innumerable; sacrifice without precedent and an overwhelming evidence of unselfish devotion to friends and neighbors in dire distress—all combined to avert panic and minimize suffering. Silent and dramatic testimony of this magnanimous service is evidenced in the fact that

but 17 lives were lost in the greatest catastrophe which ever visited Wheeling and vicinity.

For the rare privilege of contributing to this supreme loyalty and devotion with 92½ consecutive hours of broadcasting, WWVA will ever be grateful. It is good to have strengthened our right to the title, *The Friendly Voice From Out of the Hills of West Virginia*.

Wheeling's Major Flood Records

March 19, 1936	54.5 Feet
Feb. 7, 1884	52.4 "
March 28, 1913	51.1 "
March 15, 1907	50.1 "
Feb. 10, 1832	48.11 "
Nov. 10, 1810	48.0 "
April 20, 1852	48.0 "
Feb. 18, 1891	44.11 "

The "Valiant WWVA Voices" Which Served the Flood Stricken Areas for 92½ Consecutive Hours



WAYNE A. SANDERS

Quiet, unassuming and marked by this trademark of ability, "Still waters run deep." His was the service of the inspired.



WALTER PATTERSON

Program Director, loyal and devoted to the point of exhaustion—the sunshine of his voice will linger long in the memory of those who needed help.



MURRELL POOR

"The Friendly Voice" that pierced the days and nights of tragedy to inspire courage in the weak and urge the strong to greater efforts.



PAUL J. MILLER

Production Manager, under whose brilliant direction "The Big Broadcast of 1936" earned a prominent niche in the hall of fame.



PAUL MYERS

WWVA's youngest announcer in point of years and experience; yet a veteran could have done no more to serve his fellowmen.



CARL W. GUSTKEY

Who volunteered his valuable service as emergency announcer and labored unceasingly at an outpost broadcast point on the Steel Bridge.



They Poured Out Their Hearts in Music

MMUSIC STANDS IN MUCH CLOSER RELATION to real religion than any of the other arts. It is the child of prayer and the companion of the Christian. It cleanses the understanding, inspires sentiment and lifts into a realm which could not be reached if it were not for music.

It was such a contribution which the following "Friendly" WWVA entertainers made to 92½ continuous hours of flood broadcasting. Hour after hour their melodies went out over the air to inspire, to encourage and to excite response for urgent help. Their echoes fed the deep ineradicable instinct and to them can be attributed a large measure of the unprecedented response from WWVA listeners. Their reward is a job well done.

●

Marybelle Dague
Royal Serenaders
Cap, Andy and Flip
Tony and Dominic
Hugh Cross' Radio Pals
Cowboy Loye and the Blue Bonnet Boys

●

Vivian Miller
Samuels and Idahl
Jack and Velma
Lehman Evangelistic Party
Slim Cox and "Flyin' X" Gang
Tex Harrison's Texas Buckaroos

●

Lucille Jackson
Bud Taylor
Eleanor Martin
Elmer Crowe
Jack Lloyd
George B. German
Molly Weith

WWVA Flood Broadcasting Outposts in Action

FREDERICK W. CROPP

Co-Chairman Disaster Committee, Wheeling Chapter of the American Red Cross, making one of his many urgent appeals to WWVA listeners for help for flood sufferers from the "firing line." A minister by profession, yet a man among men, Reverend Cropp endeared himself to the entire WWVA organization.



A Citation

Alert, efficient and courageous, WWVA engineers worked incessantly to keep transmitter equipment in perfect order to withstand the severe strain of 92½ hours of continuous broadcasting. Due to flood-crippled telephone service, in some cases they were compelled to run their own lines from WWVA straight into the danger zone, so that outpost broadcasts and communication with headquarters would not be silenced. The boys who did the job—

Glenn G. Boundy, *Chief Engineer*
Eddie Keim
Jack Supler
William McGlumphy
Carl Beseler
Harry Duvall

"FEEDING CHAIN"

At right Walter Patterson, giving network listeners (Columbia Broadcasting System) a few highlights of Wheeling's most disastrous flood from the Steel Bridge outpost broadcast point. Above—man in raincoat and cap, telling harrowing rescue experience to "chain" listeners. Paul Miller is seen at right in conversation with Jack Supler, WWVA engineer.



Boats to the Rescue of the Marooned



● Every available boat for miles around was put into service to rescue those who were held prisoners in water-barred homes. This rescue scene was taken on the North end of Wheeling Island.



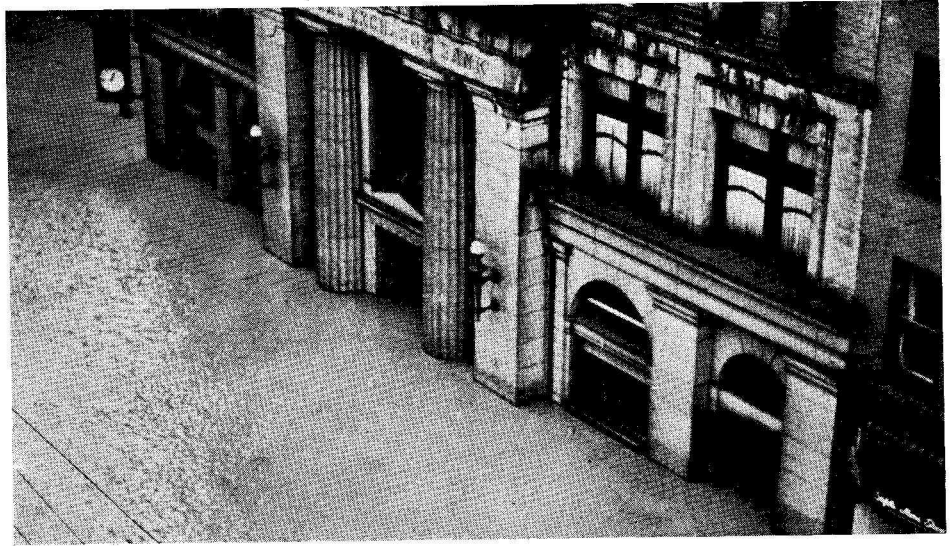
● Boats of every description were used to transport valuable possessions to safety. Wheeling's main business thoroughfares were transformed into Venice-like canals as this scene on Market Street indicates.



● Rescue boat reaches safety after thrilling experience riding the raging currents. The rescued, a woman taken from a second story window of her home is being assisted to safety at the West end of the Steel Bridge.

Flood Waters Made Generous "Deposits"

When on a rampage, the Ohio River is no respecter of persons or buildings. Banks also took their share of high water as these scenes indicate. The National Exchange Bank at Main and Twelfth Streets was completely surrounded by muddy flood waters.



National Bank of West Virginia, the oldest bank in State, founded in 1817 is the tall building at right, with marquee over entrance. For a short time only, it was a case of no boat, no checks cashed.



Out on National Road in Fulton, the Fulton Bank and Trust Co. accepted its share of flood waters as this scene indicates. It took nothing short of 54.5 feet of water to close this bank—and then for a few days only.



Wheeling Island Flood Scenes



● Flood scene in North Erie Street looking North. At the right can be seen what remains of three houses. They were practically demolished by the raging flood waters.



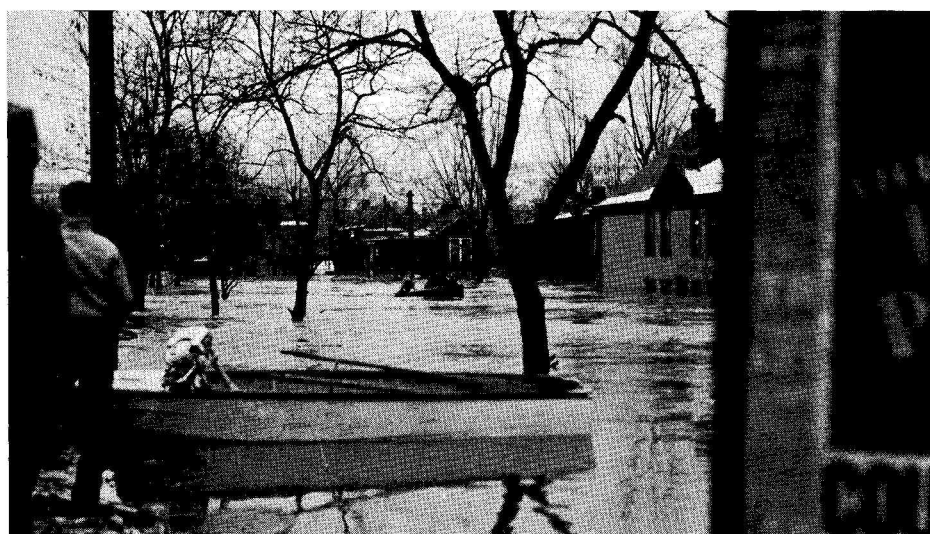
● One of the beautiful garden spots of Wheeling Island completely inundated. Somewhere beneath the muddy Ohio is Belle Isle park.



● Belle Isle under water. Perhaps the age-old tree in the foreground recalls the 1913 flood when the Ohio River with a 52.1 foot crest failed to end its life. And once again it will live on, despite raging torrents.

Wheeling Island Rescue Scenes

● The 1936 Wheeling Flood had its many unsung heroes—men who labored to the point of exhaustion that human lives might be saved. Such is the man at the helm of the rescue boat in this scene. But it's just another trip to him.



● Brave men took to oars that women and children marooned in flood-bound homes might be saved from exposure. Their deeds will live as long as the present generation exists.



● Just a snow covered roof accentuated by a stately row of barren tree tops—a rather picturesque scene despite the tragedy of it all.



Theatres Had "Full House" During Flood



Several beautiful Wheeling theatres were completely inundated by flood waters. In this scene the Colonial Theatre in the foreground at right is shown as the crest rose within a few feet of the top of marquee.



Beautiful marquee of Rex Theatre, Wheeling Paramount home, is shown at left of scene. Note the sign "Give Us This Night." It is hardly likely that the theatre management referred to that history-making night of Thursday, March 18.



The Liberty, popular Wheeling theatre, also entertained flood waters to "capacity." It is shown at extreme left of scene. Could the boat in the background be a flood taxi on the way to the theatre?—hardly!

Business Bows Temporarily to Flood Waters

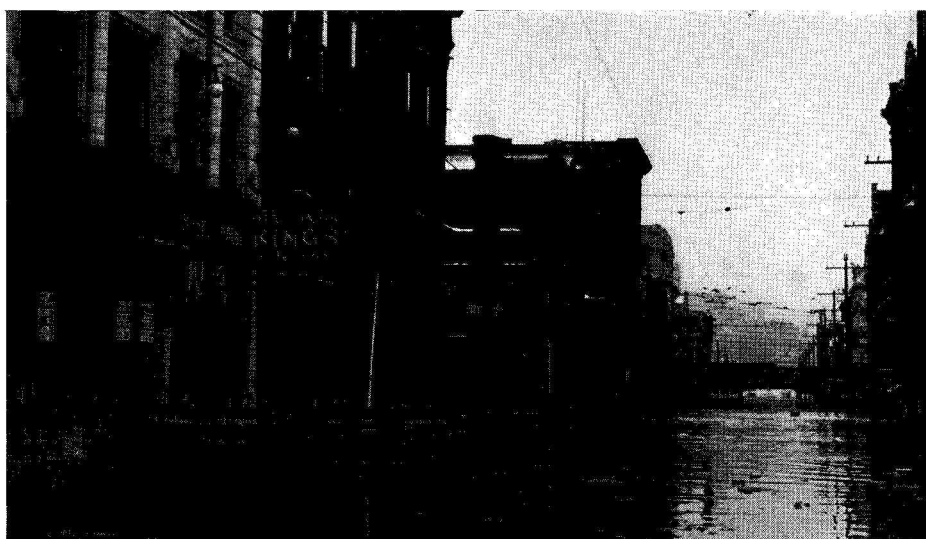
West side of Market Street below Fourteenth Street is shown "Temporarily closed for business." Suits and topcoats even at "Twelve-fifty," gave way to rubber boots and boats. The Hollywood Grill took no chances as a barricaded front indicates.



Flood scene at 12th and Main Streets, one of Wheeling's busiest corners. The building dominating the picture is the Hazlett Building and at the left in the foreground can be seen the top of the Earle Rogers Co. building.



Market Street looking South. At the left in the foreground is seen the A & P Store followed in order by the King Jewelry Co. and the Hub Department Store. Traffic light marks Market and Fourteenth Streets.



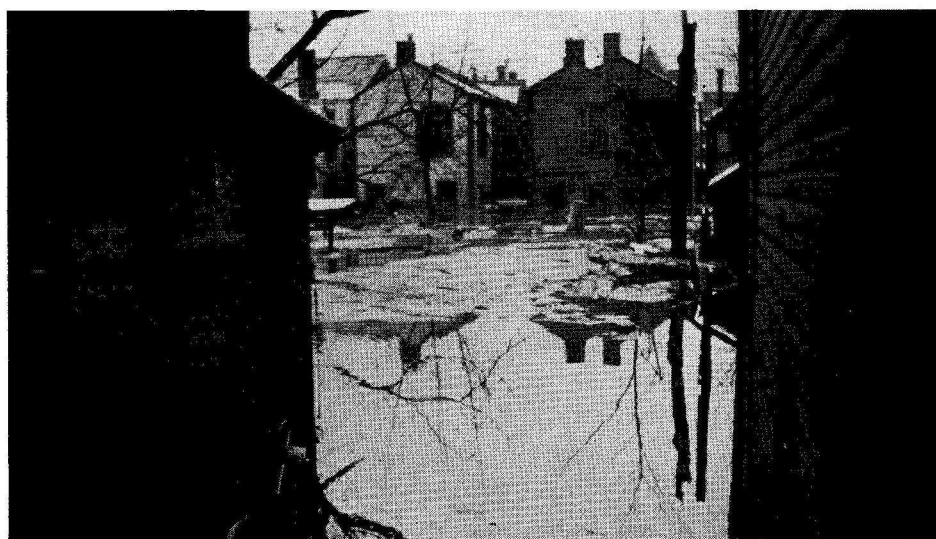
South Wheeling Flood Scenes



The viaduct which connects South Wheeling with Wheeling proper is completely submerged in the center of this scene taken at 20th and Market Streets, looking North.



South Wheeling and its thrifty citizens suffered great damage from flood waters as this scene indicates. It shows 33rd Street looking west from McColloch Street.



Hundreds of business establishments and residences in South Wheeling were completely surrounded by record-high flood waters. This scene shows houses on Chapline Street between 27th and 28th Streets.

Blizzard Adds to Refugees' Hardships

As flood waters receded a blinding blizzard took the stage to add to the discomfort of refugees and hamper rehabilitation activities. A street in Belle Isle is shown covered with a mantle of snow.



Receding flood waters left debris of every kind and description in its wake. The garage shown was torn from its foundation and deposited in the middle of a Belle Isle Street.



Three houses "piled up" in the back end of Erie Street, Wheeling Island. Snow-covered debris contributes to the desolation wrought by raging torrents.



Camera Tour After Flood Waters Receded



Above—What was once a garage, out of location.

Below—Close-up of houses that paid the penalty of Raging Current.

Top, center—A refrigerator decided to move without permission of owner. Note it is empty.



Left—Note tree trunk driven through side of house in foreground. Of the other house there isn't much left to tell the story.

Above—What was left of a boiler plant.

Below—Garage piled up against Island Car Barn.



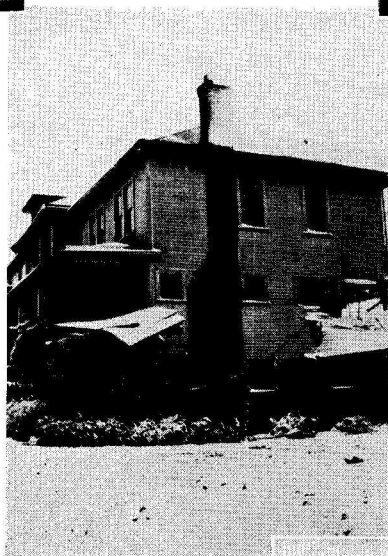
Scenes of Destruction Wrought by Flood Waters



Above—Where Wheeling Gospel Tabernacle once stood.

Below—Delicatessen store moved twenty feet; telephone pole stopped further progress.

Top, center—Debris which may once have been a house of "seven gables."



Left—A corner of this house went "South" with the flood.

Top—Three houses in a "flood huddle."

Below—Telephone pole attempted to bar the entrance to this Island home.



