

1951 Flood Photograph Collection

This collection of 30 photographs provides images of the 1951 flood taken in the Kansas City area.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Unknown
Title: 1951 Flood photograph collection
Dates: 1951
Size: 1 box, 30 photographs
Location: P15

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

Additional physical form available: Photographs have been digitized.

Publication note: A book entitled *Newspaper Coverage-Kansas City Flood, 1951* (q627.4 K15) appears to have some of these photographs published in it.

Acquisition information: Unknown

Custodial history: Previously the collection had been classed as q627.4 K15 and was shelved with the book collection.

Citation note: 1951 Flood photograph collection (P15), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Scope and content note

This collection of photographs provides images of the 1951 flood taken in the Kansas City area. This flood was one of the most devastating natural events in the area. There are a total of 30 black and white images measuring 11" x 14". The photographer is unknown. Negatives are available for several photographs in this collection.

Each photograph includes a detailed description of the view, and these descriptions have been photocopied and placed with the collection as well as listed with the photograph entry online. Author of the text is unknown.

The images include aerial views as well as ground shots and show flooded streets, rubble, and flood destruction. Views include riverfront areas as the confluence of the Missouri River and the Kansas River, the West Bottoms area, and the Fairfax area of Kansas City, Kansas. It also contains views of the explosive fire of Phillips Petroleum tanks at 31st and Southwest Boulevard which occurred at the time of the flood. Several firefighters died while fighting this fire.

The Missouri Valley Special Collections department has numerous other photographs of the 1951 flood in this area. These are available online and can be viewed by placing "1951 Flood" in the search box of the Local History Index. The department's newspaper clipping collection also contains numerous local newspaper accounts of the flood. Film footage of the flood is also available in the audio visual collection and other resources can be found by searching the library's online catalog.

Collection Inventory

Photograph #1

"An aerial view of the Central Industrial Area looking east toward downtown Kansas City, with the Kaw River appearing in the lower right hand corner. The bridge to the left is the Intercity Viaduct."

Photograph #2

"A view of the mouth of the Kaw River as it empties into the Missouri River with the Intercity Viaduct spanning the picture from right to left. Two barges of the Federal Barge Company are shown in left center with the dike running from center to upper left corner. The Federal Barge Company Building appears in the lower center of the film, with the Central Industrial Area in the upper right hand center. The small building in right foreground is the Kansas City, Missouri, Turkey Creek pumping station which was inundated and completely inoperative for approximately 10 days."

Photograph #3

"Central Industrial Area from the corner of 12th and Liberty Streets. The end of the 12th Street Bridge may be seen in upper right hand corner. The Gustin-Bacon Manufacturing Company is pictured in the center."

Photograph #4

"A view of the Columbian Steel Tank Company building at 12th and Liberty Street in the Central Industrial Area."

Photograph #5

"A view of the Gustin-Bacon Building which is located at the corner of 12th and Liberty Streets in the Central Industrial stores."

Photograph #6

"A view of the Union Pacific truck terminal which is located on 12th Street between Liberty and Wyoming Streets. This terminal faces the Columbian Steel Tank Company."

Photograph #7

"Aerial view of Central Industrial Area looking west. The Hickory Street Bridge is shown in lower right hand corner and the 12th Street Bridge is shown in lower left hand corner. A view of the Central Avenue Bridge is shown in center background with the Kaw River shown at top as spanned by 3 railroad bridges and the Central Avenue Bridge. Our 2 story TBA warehouse may be seen directly over the top of the Crooks Terminal warehouse located in right center of the film. Flood water reached a height of 16 feet within our TBA warehouse."

Photograph #8

"Aerial view of Central Industrial Area looking west with the Intercity Viaduct shown in the lower right hand corner and the 12th Street Bridge in lower left hand corner. The Hickory Street Bridge is shown in lower center. The Kaw River appears in upper portion of the film running from left to right and being spanned by several bridges. The Kansas City livestock yards appear in upper left hand corner. The Argentine and Armourdale areas appear in top left hand corner."

Photograph #9

"Aerial view of Central Industrial Area looking west. 12th Street bridge in lower right hand corner and Central Avenue bridge leading to Kansas City, Kansas, is upper right hand corner. The Kansas City livestock yards are shown in upper left hand corner and in upper center is shown a railroad bridge spanning the Kaw River."

Photograph #10

"Central Industrial area looking south on Liberty Street from the foot of the 12th Street Bridge. The hogs in the foreground are some of the 6,000 lost by George Bennett Company."

Photograph #11

"A view of the Armour, Swift and Burlington Bridge looking south as it spans the Missouri River. These 3 empty barges escaped from their moorings and the bridge was swing open in an attempt to clear passage for these barges as it was feared they would demolish the bridge if they struck it. The mechanism failed and the result is shown. The obstruction which appears in the picture just right of the barges is a shoring leading to one of the bridge pillars. The Missouri River dike is shown across the upper portion."

Photograph #12

"Aerial view of the Central Industrial Area looking northeast. The Missouri River appears in upper right hand corner as spanned by the Armour, Swift & Burlington Bridge and the North Kansas City Bridge. Kansas City appears in upper portion of picture."

Photograph #13

"An aerial view of the West Bottoms looking southwest. The 12th Street Bridge is in the center foreground with the Kansas City livestock yards in left center. The Kaw River is shown just above the livestock yards and Swift and Company is shown in left center. In the background appear the Argentine and Armourdale Areas."

Photograph #14

"Aerial view of Central Industrial District after the flood. This view is looking south with the 23rd Street Bridge in the foreground and the American Royal Building in the lower right hand corner. The Kansas City livestock yards are identified in upper left hand corner and in the upper right hand corner are the switch yards."

Photograph #15

"An aerial view of the Kaw River looking north with the Kansas City livestock yards on the right of the River. The Intercity Viaduct joining Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas, appears in upper right hand corner with the mouth of the Kaw in extreme right hand corner of the picture. The Armour and Company and Swift and Company Plants appear just below the Intercity Viaduct."

Photograph #16

"Aerial view of the Fairfax District looking east. The Kansas City, Kansas, Water & Light plant appears in center foreground with the Missouri River running to the left of this installation. Our Fairfax Terminal tanks and Lube Plant are located in center foreground with the International Harvester Company east of these tanks. The flood water reached a depth of 3 feet on our property. The Missouri River is shown as it turns right in the upper center of this picture. The Phillips Petroleum Company Refinery tanks appear in upper right center."

Photograph #17

"Aerial view of the Fairfax Industrial District looking south toward the mouth of the Kaw. In the immediate foreground appears a portion of the Phillips Petroleum Refinery. At the left center at the edge of the trees can be seen the dike through which the Kaw River surged to flood the Fairfax District. The Kaw River joins the Missouri River at the right center of this picture. The various bridges spanning the Kaw are shown in the upper center with the Kaw again appearing in extreme upper center. The Central Industrial Area appears in upper left hand corner. At

the extreme upper left hand corner may be seen flame and smoke from the fire which swept the area of 31st and Roanoke Road."

Photograph #18

"An aerial view of the Fairfax District looking southeast toward Kansas City, Missouri. The Missouri River appears in the foreground as does the Buick Oldsmobile Pontiac Plant. The Phillips Petroleum Company refinery is shown in center. In right center can be seen the mouth of the Kaw River as it empties into the Missouri River which flows east."

Photograph #19

"Aerial view of the Fairfax Industrial Area looking east. The Socony-Vacuum Terminal and Lube Plant is shown in the lower left hand corner. The telephone and power line poles appearing in the center of this picture parallel White Eagle Road which runs to the east. The building in the center is the International Harvester, and the Buick, Oldsmobile, Pontiac Plant appears in the upper left hand corner with the Missouri River in the background as it turns to the right going south toward the mouth of the Kaw. The expanse of water in the upper center is the Fairfax Airport with two hangars shown in upper right hand corner. The area behind the Missouri River is North Kansas City."

Photograph #20

"Aerial view of Fairfax Industrial Area looking east. The Missouri River is shown in the left hand corner and again as it swings to the south across the center of the picture. In the lower center appears the Socony-Vacuum Fairfax Terminal tanks and the Kansas City Lube Plant. Appearing in the picture immediately east of our property is the International Harvester Company and to its right the Sunshine Biscuit Company. In the left center is the Buick, Oldsmobile, Pontiac plant. The Phillips Petroleum Company Refinery is shown in the right center. Immediately to the left of the Phillips tanks are two hangars of the Fairfax Airport, and the runways and landing strips are completely submerged as shown to the left of these hangars."

Photograph #21

"An aerial view of the Fairfax District looking west. White Eagle Road is identified by the telephone and power line poles running west in the left center of the picture. The buildings on the left of White Eagle Road include the recently completed Sunshine Biscuit Plant and on the right the large International Harvester Company Building erected a few months before the flood. Socony-Vacuum Terminal tanks and Lube Plant are shown in upper center, with the Kansas City, Kansas, Water and Light Plant appearing west of the tanks. The Missouri River is shown in upper right hand corner with Kansas City, Kansas, appearing in upper left hand corner."

Photograph #22

"An aerial view of the Fairfax Industrial District looking west. The Corning Fiberglass plant is shown in center with Sunshine Biscuit Company and International Harvester Company in upper left corner. Socony-Vacuum property appears immediately west of the International Harvester Company Building. The numerous containers shown floating in the lower center escaped from the Phillips Petroleum Company Refinery yard which lies immediately to the left of the Fiberglass Building."

Photograph #23

"An aerial view of the flood and fire looking west on Southwest Boulevard. In the left center may be seen 31st as it approaches Roanoke Road. At the foot of 31st Street in the flooded area may be seen our city bulk plant over which a fire hose is spraying water on the Phillips Petroleum Company tank. To the right, as 31st Street approaches the flood water may be seen another fire hose playing on the remains of a warehouse owned by Battenfeld Grease and Oil Corporation. A group of small industrial plants and repair shops is shown burning in the right center. The tanks in the lower right hand corner are owned by several independent oil companies. Flood water reached a depth of 12 feet in our bulk plant, office and yard."

Photograph #24

"A view of the flood and fire looking east on Southwest Boulevard. Our city bulk plant may be identified in the lower right hand corner with the fire just spreading into a small oil warehouse located on the north of our yard. Flames immediately to the left of our tanks are on the Phillips Petroleum Company city warehouse property. The flames have spread to Southwest Boulevard as paralleled by telephone wires, and several small plants are on fire along Southwest Boulevard."

Photograph #25

"A view of the fire and flood looking east toward downtown Kansas City. Southwest Boulevard may be identified by the power line and telephone poles paralleling the Boulevard. Our city warehouse may be identified in the lower right hand corner with flames visible to the left of Socony tanks. These flames are on Phillips Petroleum Company property and the fire has spread from that point to smaller businesses and manufacturing plants along Southwest Boulevard. The Missouri River is shown in upper portion of the picture flowing from left to right."

Photograph #26

"An aerial view of the fire and flood scene looking southeast. Our city warehouse is shown just to the right of the smoke. Phillips Petroleum Company property lies behind this smoke. Southern Oil Company fuel tanks are shown in left center immediately behind the building identified as the Shawnee Club. The tanks appearing in center are owned by the Conoco Oil Company. The tanks in the right hand corner are owned by the Kansas City Fuel Oil Company."

Photograph #27

"Aerial view of the fire and flood looking northeast. The Missouri River is shown in upper left hand corner as it flows south, then turning east. The mouth of the Kaw is at the point where the Missouri River turns east with downtown Kansas City shown in upper right hand corner. The flames in the lower center are on Phillips Petroleum Company property adjacent to our city warehouse."

Photograph #28

"A view of the flood and fire looking northwest. The flames appearing in left center are on the New Holland Machinery Company and Phillips Petroleum Company properties. The lumber shown floating in lower center escaped from several lumber companies in the vicinity. The two tanks in lower right hand corner floated from a Phillips Petroleum city delivery point as the shield sign on the upper tank will identify. The switch yards of several railroads are located in upper center."

Photograph #29

"A view of the aftermath of the fire looking northwest from the 3100 block of Southwest Boulevard. The containers in the lower left hand corner are from the Thompson-Hayward Chemical Company."

Photograph #30

"Aftermath of fire and flood scene looking east on Southwest Boulevard. 31st Street is shown from upper right hand corner as it runs west stopping at the foot of our city warehouse. The lighter colored building just right of the foot of 31st is our city warehouse. The extent of the fire is shown in this view."

Processed by Special Collections Librarian Sara Nyman, March, 1994; with additional processing done later by Special Collections Librarian Stuart Hinds.