
Slipper's Soliloquies

by Fred Slipper

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Flood Talk in Hamilton

The recent excitement about moving the Town of Hamilton makes me wonder what the old, old timers might be thinking as they look down upon us from their spots in Heaven.

Floods have always been a part of living in Hamilton. Altho I'll admit in the past few years, they have been more frequent than I remember.

As I recall, each fall we had a flood scare. And then in the spring, the worst ones would come when we had a Chinook wind, and the winter snow pack up river melted in a hurry.

While I was looking back thru some of my previous columns, I found one in which I did talk about floods in Hamilton. So forgive me if I appear to be repeating myself.

Our flood gauge in those days was a stick on the river bank by Sam Morrell's living quarters, which at one time had been a hotel. When the water reached a certain point, my folks knew it was time to start preparing for high water.

High water then wasn't as bad as it has been recently. I recall once when it got into our house, dad got blocks from the woodshed and raised all the furniture about a foot off the floor. And the rugs were all rolled up.

There were many times when flood waters were all around the house. And after the water went down, there was plenty evidence of a flood. Everything that wasn't tied down floated from one yard to another. And everyone went around gathering up their stove wood, fence posts, wooden wheelbarrows, etc., which had scattered every which way.

One vivid memory I have is going out into the orchard as the waters receded. Naturally, the water in the low spots was the last to disappear, and in one large puddle I found a salmon that had been stranded. It was the biggest fish I had ever seen. I must have been about 10 years old then.

I ran to the woodshed, got the axe, and was whacking away on it when dad found me. He said, "this is one good thing we got from the flood." We ate salmon for a few meals.

It was easy to see how high the floods had risen each time, as the out buildings all had rings on them showing the various high marks the water had reached.

I consider myself a "new" old-timer to the Hamilton area; and therefore, have my own opinion on the cause of the floods. It seems to me that the river channel is much shallower than it used to be, and that the water spreads out much more at flood time.

I can remember when paddle wheel steamers used to come up to Hamilton (and previously, they went much farther up-river). Now it's so shallow that fishermen in their boats have to be careful following the channel.

You must have your opinion on the flood problem. Write me a letter and maybe we can come up with some interesting solutions.