

The Filson Historical Society

**Flood of 1937
Papers, 1937-1995**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, contact the Collections Department.

Size of Collection:
0.33 cubic feet

Location Number:
Mss. BH F631

Flood of 1937 Papers, 1937-1995

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains various records concerning The Great Flood of 1937 transferred from the Filson Historical Society's vertical files. Included are eight (8) folders primarily composed of primary source documents from the flood. Folders 1 contains bulletins and letters to customers from various businesses in Louisville such as the Louisville Courier Journal, the Brown Hotel, Louisville Gas and Electric, and the Pendennis Club. Folders 2 contains correspondence from Filson Club staff to various libraries and court houses inquiring about the condition of their collection during the flood. Folder 3 contains personal narratives of the flood, including letters from Wilbur B. Cogshall, editor of the Courier Journal, written to his family.

In Folder 4 are permits and passes issued to allow entry into quarantine zones. Folder 5 contains Red Cross progress reports and the Red Crosses' response to grievances with relief services as well as a broadside issued by the Mayor's Committee on Morale in conjunction with the American National Red Cross concerning public safety. Folders 6 contains memorandums and bulletins from the mayor's relief organization and various committees, while Folder 7 holds records from different committees recording the damage caused by the flood and various relief efforts. The final folders contain miscellaneous reports and ephemera including telegrams concerning the flood sent to Fiorello LaGuardia, the mayor of New York City, reports of the actions of Mammoth Cave National Park during the flood, a list of relief stations, a report of the construction of the Pontoon bridge, and a horse race ticket.

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Historical Note

Beginning in January of 1937, the Great Flood swept the entire Ohio River Valley. The flood was catastrophic for many cities along the riverbank. Louisville, Kentucky was underwater for nearly a month, and the rest of Jefferson County also suffered severe conditions. While the loss of life was minimal given the circumstances, the flood created a refugee crisis, and the city was under de facto martial law. Furthermore, the economic toll was massive numbering in the tens of millions.

References:

Encyclopedia of Louisville by John E. Kleber, ed.
The Filson Club History Quarterly, Vol. 11, No. 2 (April 1937)

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Folder List

Box 1

- Folder 1: Business Correspondence, 1937.
- Folder 2: Filson Club Correspondence, 1937.
- Folder 3: Personal Correspondence and Testimonies, 1937-1995.
- Folder 4: Permits and Passes, 1937.
- Folder 5: The American National Red Cross, 1937.
- Folder 6: Flood Committees' Papers, 1937.
- Folder 7: Flood Damage and Relief Records, 1937.
- Folder 8: Miscellaneous, undated.

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Subject Headings

American National Red Cross.
Brown Hotel (Louisville, Ky.)
Cogshall, Wilbur B., ca. 1900-1976.
Disaster relief.
Filson Club.
Flood damage – Kentucky – Louisville – 20th century.
Flood damage – Kentucky – Louisville.
Flood damage – Ohio River Valley.
Floods – Ohio River Valley – 20th century.
Mayors – Kentucky – Louisville – Neville Miller, 1894-1977.
Pendennis Club (Louisville, Ky.)
Presbyterian Committee of Home Missions (U.S.)