Carson Williams

3-23-2004 The Block Factory

Walter Hall lived one mile south of the river bridge. His block factory was just a the end of the river bridge, turn east follow the road, first right close to the road was the dressing rooms and the swim suit rentals. Just south of the building was the better of the swimming areas. On down the road was the brick entrance way, to the park and picnic area. Very nice prairie grass large area, tables etc. for picnic.

South of all this was the concrete block factory, the thing I think of is the narrow gauge tracts for the small engine railroad line. They would make the blacks and place on the cares behind the engine. They would haul the blocks out away from the factory for storage.

Walt has a large gravel service, which ended up with several small lakes where we would swim at times. He hauled gravel all over southwest Nebraska.

Year, 1935, the flood year, the river was from bank to bank, across the entire valley. The block factory was wiped out, but Walk rebuilt the gravel business, which was located on the west side of the same road and entrance about the same location on the west side. This became the local swimming area, which might show signs of the pits yet to this day.

3-24-2004 1934-35 Hand Dug Well by Joe Williams and Leige Wederski

Located on the Joe Williams Farm, 4 miles east of Walt Halls home place. This well was hand dug and was in operation just ahead of the flood. Note the old Case tractor which has the belt driven power. Biggest problem was getting the right pulley to match the power, as to pull the water level too low too fast. Note the lugs on the tractor. I was ten and eleven years at that time. I did help run the water into the fields. This well was destroyed by the flood. During the month ahead of the flood, my father with his 7 teams of mules were working on another irrigation project. Men worked for my father for a dollar a day.

Many years ahead of the 1935 flood, someone had dug a ditch on the contour just below the hills to the south of my dad's farm. These men and teams of mules dig out this old ditch with scoop and had completed the project just days ahead of the flood. I was there when they made the rip rap so that the river water would flow into the ditch they had made. Everything was set to run water to a natural lake in the pasture.

It began to rain that night, very heavy, at 3 in the morning my father got up and went to the ditch to shut off the ditch gate. He wasn't able to return to the bridge south of Stratton, so he drove to Trenton, crossed their and came back to Stratton. It was near 5 in the morning when he woke up us and told of the flood. He then though of the southwest area of Stratton. I followed him to see if everyone was awake. They were all asleep. I recall, that dad went to the porter house first, they were all asleep with a foot of water in their house. Then it was on to Boston's, Irelan, and others to wake them to the fact. All asleep. A brooder house of little chickens was floating and all at once it same, was connected to

electricity, my father managed to disconnect the power. They became concerned about Grandmother Reed. Her house was just a little higher than some of the others, but water was creeping up pretty high. My father, Joe Williams, went into her souse. She had her rug on the table, with a rocking chair on top of the run. She was sitting in the chair. The water was almost up to the table top when my dad gathered her in his arms (all 80 lbs.) and took her out of her home. She was pounding on his back saying she wanted to stay.

By that time, most of the town people were in that area. The bridge at the river had broken in the middle and the water was rising very fast. No time at all the water was at the south edge of Stratton, just below the ____cliff house.

Trash of all kinds, water tanks, hay stakes with chickens on them, were floating by. Small buildings and almost anything you could think of. Just before it rose to the base of the hill a man came driving up. They advised him to turn around, in doing so he got the right rear wheel off into the ditch, he went up town to get a wrecker to pull him out. I was there, the water came up so fast that the car was washed across the road over turning and it went out of sight. Never was found in my time in Stratton.

Had to go home for dinner, about three in the afternoon my dad took me along to check the farm home 4 mile east and across the river. Valley was full of water. This is south of the little lake on Norval Diehl land east of town, then south a mile.

___ watch the house on the Diehl land south of the river, floated away. The barn remained and was still standing after the flood. About 4 pm now and I noticed that the Stonecifer house moved. We went to their drive right away, the house and buildings were surrounded by raging water. Family in the house that was tilted about 40 degrees. The boy and his dog were in the lean-to barn to the west of the house.