

Henretta Moore Interview Excerpts A  
Shawnee College Oral History Program

SHAWNEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
LOCAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Henretta Moore  
Interviewer: Edward Whitaker  
Subject: The 1937 Flood in Cairo; Camps for Flood Victims  
in Wolf Lake  
Date: November 6, 1975

W: When did you first come to Cairo?

M: I come to Cairo in 1933 or 1934.

W: How did you happen to come here?

M: I moved to Cairo with my family and was staying on 25th Street when the flood came. There was more water than I ever seen and I've been in the world a long time. I was born and raised in Mississippi. It covered all the highways. They had to put stakes for you to travel so you would know where the highway was.

We first left Cairo and went to Wickliffe. Horner was the governor then. We went to Wickliffe and stayed there until Governor Horner called the people back. They brought all the women and children back to Wolf Lake. They kept all the men to sack the levee to keep the water from coming over

the top. So the men stayed here and the women and children had to leave. More than a thousand women and children went to Wolf Lake. The only way to save Cairo was to bomb that levee over in Missouri and let the water come in the spillway.

W: Did they let that water in on those people in Missouri?

M: No, they told the people to get out so they could bomb that levee and let the water in the spillway. If they hadn't, Cairo would have been sunk in the Mississippi. We stayed at Wolf Lake a long while until they got this levee back and the water went down. They had moved . . . all these wholesale stores out of Cairo. . . .

W: Did Grandpa have to. . . .

M: He had to stay here.

W: He had to help pack bags?

M: Yes. They kept my oldest boy here, but John was too little. . . .

W: I guess it was kind of like Wickliffe last year.

M: It was rougher. . . .