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UD COMMEMORATES 90th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ‘GREAT FLOOD,’ TRAGEDY BROUGHT OUT DAYTON’S HUMAN SPIRIT, ENGINEERING INNOVATION

DAYTON, Ohio — In the shadow of Dayton’s celebration of 100 years of flight comes another significant anniversary for the city — one borne of tragedy rather than triumph, but nonetheless evoked the same innovative spirit that propelled the Wright Brothers.

The University of Dayton will mark the 90th anniversary of the day the Great Miami River overflowed its banks — March 25, 1913 — with a series of free and public events in March commemorating the city’s devastation and rebirth.

“Riverchild: Tragedy and Triumph Over the 1913 Flood,” will feature an exhibit of artifacts and photographs from the Miami Conservancy District and Montgomery County Historical Society as well as a symposium featuring flood survivor Charles Adams of Yellow Springs.

Events have been coordinated by UD’s Library Advancement Association and include:

March 15-April 30 — An exhibit of artifacts and photographs of the flood and dam-building will be on display in the first- and second-floor exhibit areas of Roesch Library. Featured artifacts from the exhibit include an iron diving helmet, weighing more than 50 pounds and used to check the structural integrity of bridges; a jar of flood water; a full-size replica of a boat used for recovery; a 35-by-19-foot U.S. flag that flew at the old downtown courthouse during fund-raising rallies for flood relief; black-and-white photographs of Dayton taken during the flood and 50 years later; and a series of 16 black-and-white photographs depicting construction of the Miami Conservancy District network of five dams. Roesch Library hours will vary in March. For current hours, call (937) 229-4221.

March 25, 7 p.m. — Symposium, Part One: “The Tragedy of the Flood: Historical and Human Aspects,” Roesch Library first-floor gallery. Flood survivor Charles O. Adams of Yellow Springs will share compelling tales of the flood’s devastating force and the human spirit that brought about Dayton’s rebirth. Born April 8, 1912, Adams was just shy of 1 year old when his family’s home on Rung Street — now Neal Avenue — was submerged to the roof.
flood stories capture the memories of his parents and grandparents, and Adams recalls his own memories of the testing of the first dam model and other events during reconstruction.

There will also be a screening of 15 minutes of film shot during the flood, followed by a reception with Adams and local author Curt Dalton, who has written a number of books on local and Ohio history. Dalton will sign copies of Through Flood, Through Fire: Personal Stories from Survivors of the Dayton Flood of 1913.

**April 1, 7 p.m.** — Symposium, Part Two: The Triumph After the Flood: Engineering, Social and Civic Aspects,” Roesch Library first-floor gallery. Kurt Rinehart, assistant chief engineer for the Miami Conservancy District, will talk about the innovative engineering feat that has drawn engineers from Europe, Japan and South America to study the world’s first flood-control system based on a connected network of dams. Rinehart will also talk about the self-governing worker camps built at dam construction sites that developed into “models of social justice,” as well as the resulting civic, social and environmental impact the rebuilding project had on Dayton’s quality of life.

Also, Carl Becker, professor emeritus of history at Wright State University, will sign complimentary copies Keeping the Promise: A Pictorial History of the Miami Conservancy District, which he co-wrote with Patrick Nolan. James Farrelly, UD professor of English, will read his poem “Riverchild.” A reception will follow.

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For media interviews with Charles Adams or members of the Library Advancement Association, contact Pamela Gregg at (937) 229-3391 or via e-mail at gregg@udayton.edu.