



Flooding is not a recent phenomenon in Iowa. The 1903 flood sent the Des Moines River rolling down Church Street in Ottumwa. A more extensive look at Iowa's City of Bridges through the years can be found in *Ottumwa* (part of the Images of America series), coauthored by Lemberger and Wilson J. Warren and featuring selected photos from Lemberger's collection.

The couple has attempted to have the collection appraised, but no value has ever been established. They say that appraisers from insurance companies typically spend some time looking through the collection and then throw up their hands in defeat. "It's pretty much irreplaceable," says LeAnn, echoing their assessment.

The diverse collection needed to be shared with the state, the couple decided, and they looked at several options, finally choosing the University of Iowa because the libraries there agreed to take the entire collection instead of just cherry-picking the Iowa-related photos. Among the huge array of photos are scenes from London, Paris, and South America. But many Iowans will be captivated by images of Mars Hill Church south of Ottumwa, which was destroyed by arson in 2006 and has since been rebuilt; images of the now-defunct Parsons College in Fairfield; images of Iowa cornfields, windmills, and rivers — reliving moments they might have known, learning a history they certainly share. "What this comes down to is preserving heritage more than making an investment," says LeAnn. "This collection belongs to the people of Iowa."

Sharing his political collection online is a "test run," says Lemberger. If all goes well, the hard copies of his negatives and photographs of his entire collection will be donated to the University after his death. It's a collection the University is proud to obtain, says Sid Huttner, Head of Special Collections & University Archives at the University of Iowa Libraries. "Few journalists have covered such a range of personalities, fires, floods, barns, buildings, animals, picnics, and papal visits, and

his tens of thousands of images are carefully organized and described," he says. "It is an enormous privilege for the University to take on the challenge of preserving and sharing this extraordinary treasure, not only for its students and faculty but also for the people of the state of Iowa, the rest of the nation, and the countless international visitors we expect will come to the digital site in the coming years."

Lemberger says he's proud to begin sharing his collection with Iowans online, especially in light of the timeliness of the presidential election this fall. He says that many of the images offer viewers a time machine, transporting them back to one moment in time. "While we should not worship the past, it is something that we need to know and not forget where we came from," he says. "It can help us not to make the same mistakes of the past and to be proud of our forefathers and the hardships and freedoms they both suffered and enjoyed." #

Digitization of Lemberger's photo collection has begun, with initial images of Iowa politics now online at <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/lemburger>. Learn more about Lemberger and his career at www.mlemburger.com.

Valerie Van Kooten is a freelance writer in Pella, who couldn't stop humming the opening lines of that old Bread tune "If" while writing this story.