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## A taste of the big time!

### Sports Short



Reagan Ridout puts everything she has into a pitch. The baseball and softball teams had great weeks! Stories on Page 6.

(Photo by Todd Weber.)



Nine-year-old Libby McClure is all smiles as she runs onto the softball field with her teammates through the Cardinal varsity handshake lines.

The Little League softball teams were honored between games of a doubleheader last Wednesday. The Little League boys were honored in the same manner by the Cardinal baseball team Tuesday. Fun events like this are one reason the kids dream of growing up to play for the Cardinals one day!

(Photo by Todd Weber.)

## Iowa Farm Report

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Above average temperatures and below normal precipitation for the week led to 6.0 days suitable for fieldwork during the week ending June 25, 2023, according to the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Field activities included cutting hay and spraying crops. The persistent dryness has led to many reports of visible crop stress; however, north central and northeast Iowa received some much-needed rain.

Topsoil moisture condition rated 22 percent very short, 45 percent short, 32 percent adequate and 1 percent surplus. Subsoil moisture condition rated 24 percent very short, 44 percent short, 31 percent adequate and 1 percent surplus.

Some reports of corn starting to silk were received this week. Corn condition continued to decline, rating 56 percent good to excellent. Ten percent of soybeans were blooming, 6

days ahead of last year and 2 days ahead of the 5-year average. Soybean condition dropped to 48 percent good to excellent. Ninety-five percent of the oat crop has headed, roughly 2 weeks ahead of last year and the average. Twenty-five percent of oats were turning color, roughly 1 week ahead of last year and normal. Oat condition declined to 47 percent good to excellent.

The State's first cutting of alfalfa hay is virtually complete, and the second cutting reached 18 percent complete, 6 days ahead of both last year and the average. Hay condition declined to 32 percent good to excellent. Pasture condition rated just 23 percent good to excellent. Livestock producers continued to supplement with hay as pasture conditions deteriorated and reports were received about water supply concerns as some ponds and creeks continued to dry out.

## Smoke Over Midwest is Not a New Phenomenon

By Tom Emery

The smoke from Canadian wildfires has been a major news story this spring and summer, as the haze has enveloped American cities from the Atlantic coast to the Midwest. However, it's not a new phenomenon.

In past generations, smoke from forest fires choked entire regions and actually proved hazardous to shipping on the Great Lakes. One of the worst examples was 1871, when a massive drought sparked fires across the Upper Midwest and led to some of the nation's greatest tragedies.

Today, progressives point to the environmental disasters of the fires in Canada, but 150 years ago, there was far less concern for ecology. There were also far fewer regulations, as measures to prevent greenhouse gases, carbon footprint, and unhealthy air were still decades away.

In addition, environmental protections were not on the minds of most Americans, who did not understand the ramifications – and did not care. For Americans of generations past, basic survival was still a primary concern, while business owners were more concerned with the bottom

line than any notion of future ecological ruin.

On the Great Lakes, ship captains had few of the amenities of today, such as radar and electronic contact. Many wooden ships were still afloat, and firefighting equipment was rudimentary.

For ship masters of long-ago times, wildfire smoke on the Lakes was just one more

hazard to deal with, and they were certainly used to it. In his classic 1960 Great Lakes history *Shipwrecks and Survivals*, journalist and newspaperman William Ratigan writes that “for two generations the smoke of great forest disasters was a unique and dread-

ed peril on the Lakes.”

In colorful prose, Ratigan adds that “in the red, acrid fog haze ships... lost their bearings, went aground, rammed each other, caught fire, and burned like haystacks.”

Those ships that did survive came back with scars. Ratigan writes that old-timers “remember the

The shipping season of 1871 was particularly treacherous, as the Upper Midwest was hammered by one of the more severe droughts in American history. Less than half the normal rain fell between July and September, causing an outbreak of wildfires.

Ratigan writes that “dense smoke hovered over the Lakes like a pall,” causing extreme danger for ships. There were a mind-numbing 1,167 shipwrecks on the Great Lakes in 1871.

The severity of 1871 resulted in a deadly tragedy that fall, particularly in Chicago. Coupled with persistent winds, the dryness, in the words of one observer, turned “all the wood in wooden Chicago into tinder.”

In a time before sophisticated fire protection, Chicago's 334,000 residents had little to fall back on, as there were only 185 firefighters and 17 horse-drawn engines in the city.

On Oct. 7, 1871, a massive blaze leveled four blocks south of the Chicago business district, which required seventeen hours to extinguish. That simply set



(Continued on Page 3.)

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