

Newburg's

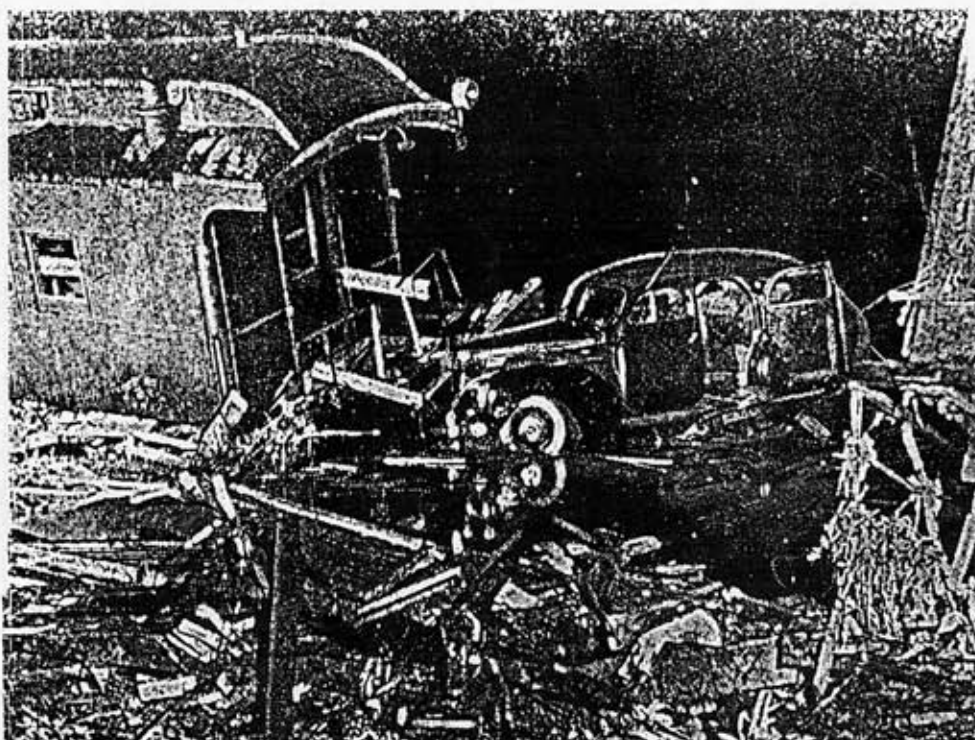
1945 Flood

With the recent flooding in the state of Missouri, it reminds us of floods in our area. On April 20, 1945, Fort Leonard Wood soldiers aided Waynesville residents when the Roubidoux River went on a rampage. The soldiers helped in the clean-up efforts there and during the disastrous flood only two months later in Newburg.

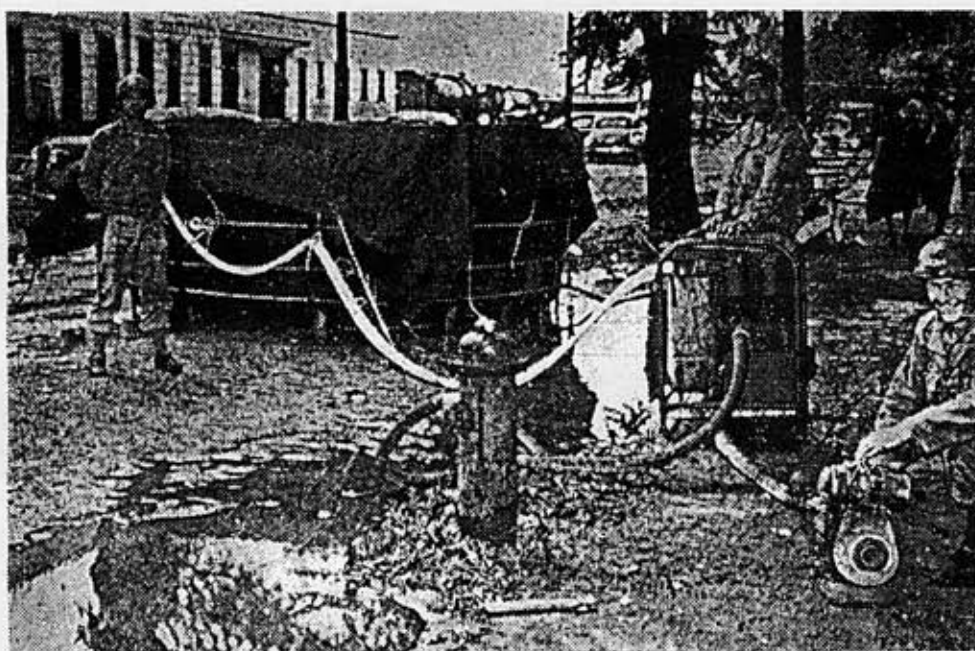
An Ozark flash flood of unprecedented proportions struck the town of Newburg taking five lives and causing \$700,000 property damage.

At 3 p.m. rains caused the small creek which meanders through Newburg to erupt from its bank on Friday, June 8, 1945, a ten foot wall of water ripped at least 30 houses from their foundations and carried autos downstream like pieces of driftwood. The home of Mayor S.L. Baker was cut in half by the powerful torrent. The mayor's wife and daughter, Bernadine, drowned before they could escape to higher ground. Darlene Courson and her six year old daughter were drowned at the same place and the body of still another small girl, Jo Ann Williams, was found Saturday after the flood waters had receded. Warren Henson was severely burned on his shoulders and arms when a gasoline stove exploded during the flood. Railway cars on sidings at the Frisco yards were swept from the rails, and all utility service in the community was disrupted. At least 50 homes suffered mud damage to their foundations, basements and lower floors. Many homes were twisted from their footings. The Frisco division roundhouse suffered much damage, paralyzing its servicing of the many trains that normally stopped in Newburg. Parts of the tracks were washed out and several small houses and buildings were deposited on the tracks. A Frisco bus was overturned and 30 to 40 motor cars and trucks washed away, some of them torn to pieces.

Ruth Williams was the only survivor of a group of six who were together when the waters twisted down the valleys which converged at the viaduct near the Baker house on the main street entering Newburg from the north. At the Rolla Hospital she described what happened. "The water rushed into the house so Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Courson put the small children (Darlene and Jo Ann) onto the piano. Then it seemed that the water would fill the lower rooms so we decided to go upstairs. About that time the house seemed to split in two and started moving from its foundations. I didn't see any more of Mrs. Baker, Bernadine Baker, Mr. Courson or Darlene. I clutched at sister Jo Ann's arm and we were partly tossed, partly



Typical of the havoc wrought by the Newburg flood is this scene along the Frisco railway tracks, where the raging torrents carried an auto downstream and piled it against a railroad coach on a siding. Several other coaches were derailed by the surging flood waters, and damage to Frisco property was estimated at \$200,000.



With this 3,000-gal. collapsible storage tank and portable water purification unit, ASFTC engineers established a water point in Newburg's main street and supplied safe drinking water to the residents of the flood-stricken community. Rushed into service Friday night, the emergency water supply was maintained until all danger of disease had passed. Photographed at the water point Saturday were (left to right) Maj. Fred K. Vogt, Capt. David F. Gross, Cpl. John Johnson and Pfc. Louis W. Crockett. The water purification unit was connected directly to the city hydrant.

waded and swam to the viaduct guard rail. I held on to it with one hand and to Jo Ann with the other for a moment. Suddenly the current or something floating pulled Jo Ann away and under the water. I did not see her again. I somehow swam along the current for some distance, finally grabbing the branches of a tree." From that point, Louis DeShurley helped her to safety. DeShurley, a World War I veteran and Frisco engineer, swam out to rescue Ruth when she became lodged in a tree.

Fort Leonard Wood immediately joined in relief work by sending a detachment of MPs to the scene to direct traffic and protect property, and by furnishing equipment and manpower needed to restore the town's water supply and electric service. The Post Supply Division sent 36 sets of bedding to a Newburg school where temporary quarters were established for persons made homeless by the flood. The Post Engineers dispatched a high line crew which aided in restoration of electric service, and a crew of plumbers and waterworks employees who soon restored water service to two-thirds of the community. The engineers also rushed an emergency chlorinator to the deep wells from which Newburg draws its water supply. This equipment was later supplemented by portable water purifying plants furnished by the ASFTC. The washout of Frisco tracks at Newburg and a later flood near St. Louis the same week combined to deprive the post of rail connection with the outside world for a time, but troops leaving the post were sent by bus to St. Louis, while contingents on route to the post were sent to Jefferson Barracks at St. Louis until they could be picked up and brought to their destination. Following a serious train tie-up Friday night and Saturday in Rolla, Frisco service was stopped when seven Frisco trains (including a hospital train loaded with injured soldiers and a troop train) were delayed hours in Rolla by a washout on Beaver Creek and delays from the division point in Newburg where the flood waters sent piles of debris onto the tracks. Service on the Frisco was resumed by Tuesday, June 12, 1945.

Temporary American Red Cross headquarters were established in the Newburg Grade School building. On Sunday, June 10, meals were served to approximately four hundred Newburg residents who were without facilities for preparing their own meals. Donations of food stuffs were received from citizens of Newburg and Rolla, and it was planned to continue until local merchants could have their food supplies replenished.