

1939  
ROWAN  
COUNTY  
FLOOD

AND OTHER  
MINOR FLOODS

**INFORMATION FROM THE  
ROWAN COUNTY NEWS  
AND DR. JACK ELLIS "MOREHEAD  
MEMORIES"  
AND VARIOUS OTHER SOURCES**

# Revisit The Flood Of 1939

## “50 Years Ago”

Complete Re-Printed Issues Of July, 1939  
Exactly As They Appeared In  
*The Morehead Independent*

### The Morehead Independent

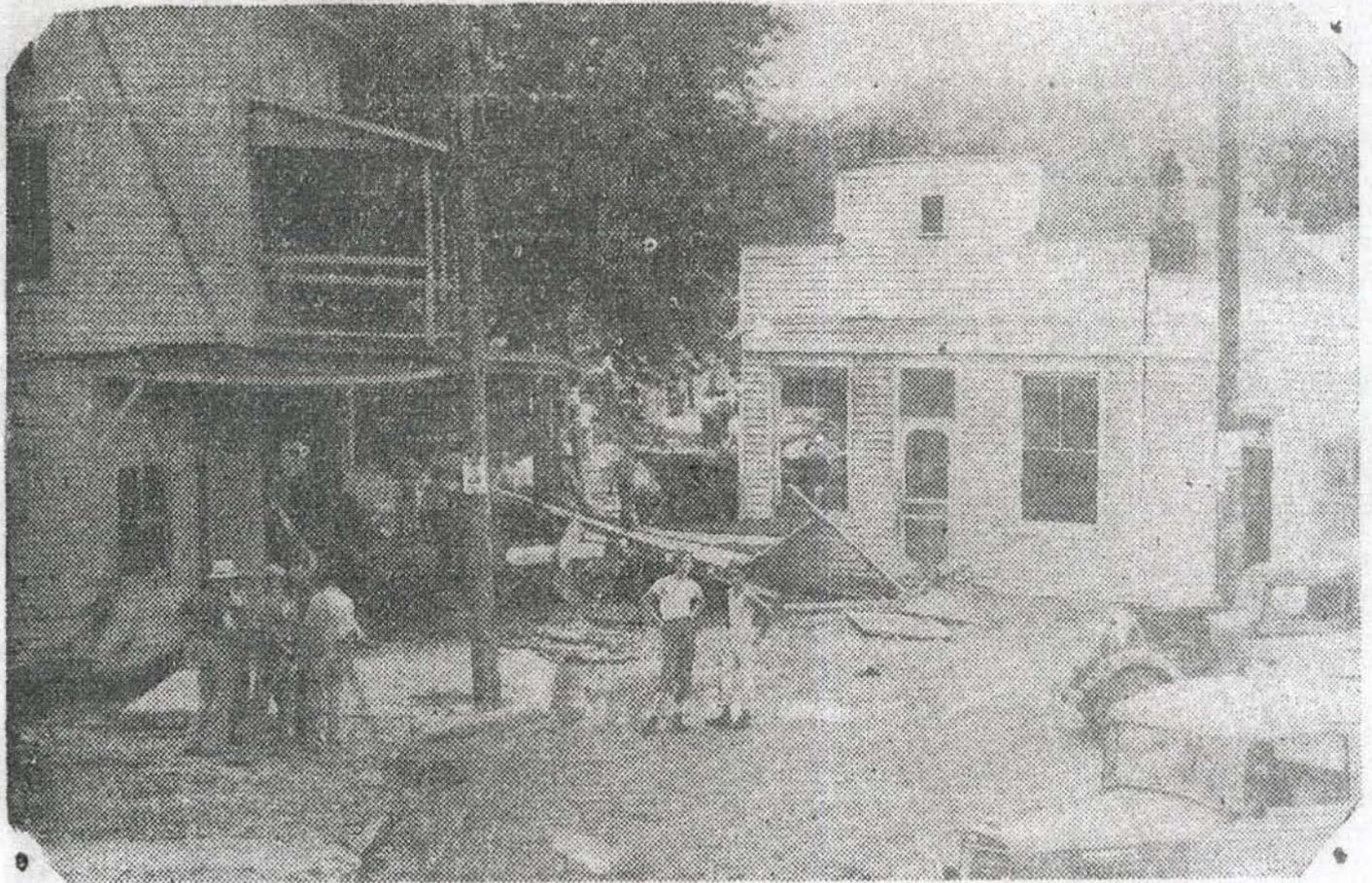
“ONE OF KENTUCKY'S GREATER WEEKLIES”

Volume VI.

MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY, THURSDAY, JULY 6, 1939

Number 27.

## 25 DIE IN FLOOD; \$2,000,000 DAMAGE



(Lexington Herald Photo by Alton Payne)

A scene on Fairbanks Street showing the Imperial Cleaners Building and the building adjacent to the Elam-Wheelers Wholesale Building. Some idea of the tremendous force of the flood may be gained by noticing that the Imperial building has been moved many feet from its former location.

# MASS FUNERAL SERVICES HELD

## HUNDREDS MADE HOMELESS BY CLOUDBURST WEDNESDAY MORN

Death and destruction came to Rowan county early Wednesday morning when a smashing, irresistible wall of water snuffed out the lives of 25 persons, made hundreds homeless and destroyed 2 million dollars worth of property.

Since no other persons have been reported as missing in the county, it is being assumed that the reported number of dead is complete.

In Breathitt county, which was flooded at the same time, scores were swept into the Kentucky river and the number drowned was still unknown Friday.

The flash flood, caused by a cloud burst near the Carter county line, came down the valley about 1:15 a. m. sweeping people, trees, livestock and human beings in its wake.

Many were caught in their crumbling houses like rats in a trap, others took to the trees. A few were able to swim to safety. Families were separated.

The roar of the torrent, the screams of the doomed and the terror stricken victims from the darkness will be forever remembered by those who witnessed the scene.

Wednesday morning Morehead was cut off from the outside world. The only road open was the Flemingsburg highway. A single telegraph wire to Ashland was the only means of communication.

But as soon as the news reached neighboring communities, help from Legionnaires, private citizens, Boy Scouts, Red Cross, funeral directors and many other organizations began to pour in.

### Searching Parties Sent Out

Searching parties were sent out for victims of the relentless waters. They were dug out of mud, trees and wrecked homes. The dead were taken to the funeral homes and identified by tearful relatives.

By the afternoon state troopers dispatched by Governor Chandler the CCC boys were policing the district and turning back the hundreds of sightseers.

Thursday, funeral services were held for the four Sparkman children. Merchants, home owners who still had homes, and farmers began the difficult work of cleaning up the ugly mess left by the flood.

### Funeral Services Held Friday

Friday the majority of the funeral were held and rehabilitation work was being started.

The Red Cross set up headquarters in the city hall with Mrs. Renee Wells, as head, until the arrival of national representatives from Washington who arrived Thursday.

Delivery of mail from the outside was resumed Thursday. The George Washington at six o'clock Thursday night was the first passenger train to get through after the flood.

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### Water Service Resumed

Water service was resumed Thursday afternoon and electric power Wednesday afternoon.

Refugees were taken to Morehead State Teachers College dormitories and the Morehead public school gymnasium. The college is also housing 25 highway patrol men and two doctors from the state board of health, W. H. Rice, college engineer, stayed up two nights getting the power plant ready to operate.

The flood swept away about two miles of C. and O. railway trackage, about a mile of it on each side of town, a small railway bridge and a highway bridge.

Morehead and other towns in the flood area were cut off by rail and highway after the cloudburst. Telephone and telegraph communication lines were out most of the day. Communication with the outside world was established at intervals from time to time, but was quickly broken.

The fire department, police and volunteers were recovering the bodies as the water receded.

The cloudburst struck shortly before midnight as residents of this community slept. Triplett creek soon was a seething torrent. It reached its peak by about 2 o'clock Tuesday morning.

At Cincinnati, W. C. Devereaux, United States meteorologist, reported heavy rains throughout Northern and Eastern Kentucky. The Licking river at Farmers, he said, rose 19.8 feet in the 24 hours ending at 8 a. m.

Heaviest rainfall reported was

(Cont. on Page 3)

## 25 DIE IN FLOOD; 2 MILLION DAMAGE

(Cont. from Page 1)

at Jackson, Ky., on the North Fork of the Kentucky river, where 3.75 inches fell.

Gov. A. B. Chandler at Frankfort, ordered state patrolmen and state highway emergency crews into the stricken county. The governor termed the flood "a terrible thing."

Tygart creek at Olive Hill flooded, covering 10 blocks of the residential section and all of the business section. Two to six feet of water was in the business section and damage was estimated at several thousands of dollars.

There was no loss of life at Olive Hill.

The Southern States Shows, a carnival appearing here July 4, had all concessions and rides flooded and firemen worked until 3 o'clock Tuesday morning moving their trailers and trucks. A school and church at nearby Gregoryville were reported washed away. Considerable water damage was reported at Grayson, the county seat of Carter county.

Farmers several miles west of here were completely cut off and Clearfield was feared to have suffered heavily. Rescuers were unable to cross the swift current to reach the community.

### Water 10 Feet Deep

Water on Railroad street varied head's main thoroughfare, varied in depth from four to ten feet at the peak of the flood. Bill McClain, fireman at the State Teachers' College, estimated the water rose 10 to 15 feet in less than 30 minutes.

As soon as it was possible employees of the Kentucky Power and Light Company came into Morehead to help in the flood disaster.

Joe Leeke with his construction crew, truck and equipment were here at 7:30 Wednesday morning. An immediate survey was made as to the necessary steps to take to restore electric service as quickly as possible which was shut off at 1:20 A. M. E. G. Laurie with his crew truck and equipment brought into Morehead substation transformers at 3:30 P. M. With the help of Bruce Irvin, Pat Patterson and other engineers these transformers were installed and service restored at 7 P. M.

Local employees were on continuous duty at all times. Frank Maxey and George Jamison left their flooded homes in the interest of maintaining electric service. James Markwell attempted to get to the power plant but the current was too strong and he was washed down the stream several hundred feet before he lodged against a building, narrowly escaping death.

Harry Hutchens of the Safety department was in Morehead on Thursday.

These officials, engineers and service men of the company did everything humanely possible working night and day to restore electricity which was so badly needed.

Ted Sparkman, who four children are missing, said the force of the rushing torrents swept his house from its foundation.

"I grabbed my wife," Sparkman related, "and we ran to the door. The force of the water swept us into the torrent and we were sucked into the street. A few seconds later our house swept by and we were unable to do anything for our children. We could hear their cries as our house went by."

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## **Disaster Loan Man Coming Here Monday**

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Congressman Joe Bates notified Postmaster W. E. Crutcher Friday that a representative from the Disaster Loan Corporation would be here Monday. Information is available at the post office, Crutcher said.

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## **This Issue Written For Saturday Morning**

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Although the date line on this newspaper reads Thursday morning, the news articles are written from the standpoint of Saturday morning. Since our newspaper plant was considerably damaged by the flood, this issue was printed by the Bath County News-Outlook, Owingsville, of which H. J. Lacy is the publisher.

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# MOREHEAD RUINED TO EXTENT OF MORE THAN 5 HUNDRED THOUSAND

An estimate of two million dollars has been placed on the damage done to Rowan county by the flash-flood.

Damage to Morehead alone is figured to exceed more than a half of a million dollars.

Biggest losses were sustained by the J. F. Sparks shows, \$38,000; Morehead and North Fork Railroad, \$20,000 (steel bridge and one and a half miles of track washed out); Union Grocery Company, \$30,000; The Big Store, \$15,000; The Big Store Furniture Company, \$15,000; C & O, unestimated; City of Morehead, \$10,000; Flam-Wheeler, \$15,000;

Morehead Lumber Company, \$10,000; The Economy Store, \$15,000; Lee Clay Products, unestimated.

Other firms less severely damaged include: W. S. Allen, bee distributor, \$1,500; Carr-Perry \$5,000; Morehead Independent \$5,000; J. A. Allen Grocery, \$3,500; Eagles Nest, \$1,500; IGA \$1,800; Woody's Service Stations \$1,000; Citizens Bank, \$250; Cottage Cafe, \$1,500; Standard Oil Co., \$5,000; Kennard Hardware \$4,000 and the following unestimated: Calvert's Garage, Mode Laundry, Myrtle's Tea Room, Imperial Cleaners, Peoples Hotel

(Cont. on Page 4)

**(rest of article not found)**

## REHABILITATION WORK STARTED; VARIOUS AGENCIES WILL HELP

Rehabilitation work in the flooded area here is going forward quickly.

The American National Red Cross was made the official relief agency in Morehead today by Mayor Warren Lappin's proclamation. Headquarters are temporarily at the city hall.

Miss Helen Moses, Miss Alice E. Richard and Maurice Reddy, representatives of the American National Red Cross at Washington, D. C., have been assigned to Kentucky to take charge. Two of the trio will very likely work out of Morehead.

At a conference of citizens call-

by Mayor Lappin Thursday, Joe Bates at Washington was called by telephone and requested that he obtain permission of the CCC authorities to let the CCC boys help erase the effects of the flood. Bates replied that he would see the "head man" and make this request immediately.

### Disaster Loan Man Coming

It is understood that a Disaster Loan Corporation representative will set up offices here shortly.

Miss Moses said today that the Red Cross is taking care of emergency needs and as soon as possible will start to do rehabilitation work in such families as are fi-

(Cont. on Page 4)

# REHABILITATION WORK STARTED

(Cont. from Page 1)

nancially unable to provide for themselves.

When Miss Moses arrived in Morehead she gave Mayor Lappin a message from Norman H. Davis, chairman of the American Red Cross. Davis said he sympathized with the community because of the calamity which it had experienced and that the Red Cross will remain in the vicinity until all relief work has been completed.

George H. Goodman, state WPA director, said in a newspaper dispatch that \$25,000 had been received "from Washington" to be applied on WPA labor in the flood area. More money will be requested he said. The amount asked for will be based on a report which is now being made by men investigating the situation.

W. F. Gardner, district manager, Standard Oil Company, Louisville, sent N. E. Kennard, his

local agent a check for \$250 to be used for food and clothing for the refugees. Kennard turned the check over to Mayor Lappin.

The citizens of Greenup, Greenup county, raised a fund of \$516.-47 which Mayor Zachem presented to Mayor Lappin yesterday.

Other donations may have been made of which a report was unable to be obtained.

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# MAYOR LAPPIN'S PROCLAMATION.

## Appeal to the People of Morehead

The flood of July 5th was the greatest tragedy ever experienced by this community. The losses sustained in both life and property have aroused the sympathy of all.

However, sympathy is not enough. We have a problem of relief to meet. A large number of people are being fed, clothed and sheltered temporarily, but much remains to be done.

We are fortunate in having on hand the American Red Cross, an experienced relief agency with a trained staff of workers who are in position to apply our individual contributions for relief to the best possible use.

Therefore, with the idea in mind of coordinating all relief work, I do hereby declare the American Red Cross to be the official relief agency to deal with the problems of the individual sufferer. I ask all agencies and individuals to give it their complete support.

Furthermore, I appeal to all citizens of the community to be liberal as possible with their donations to the relief fund which the Red Cross is authorized to raise. All funds so raised will be spent to alleviate suffering caused by this disaster and in restoring conditions to normal.

Signed:

Warren C. Lappin, Mayor

# FUNERAL SERVICES ARE HELD FOR 25

## Six From One Family Buried Friday

Last rites for the 25 persons drowned in the flood were held Thursday, Friday and Saturday at various points in Rowan, Morgan and Harrison counties.

Six from one family, Mrs. Mary Frances Salyers, and her three children, Ivan Eugene, Bobby Carl and Alberta Mae, and Mrs. Salyers' mother, Mrs. Mahala Mae Ratliff and son, Lorn, were buried at Open Fork Friday afternoon. Funeral services were held at Muses Mill.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Porter were taken to Redwine, Morgan county, for burial Friday.

Mrs. Lula Collins, and daughter,

(Cont. on Page 4)

# FUNERAL SERVICES ARE HELD FOR 25

(Cont. from Page 1)

Maggie Frances, and Mrs. Collins' sister, Miss Sylvia Lee Perry, were buried at Clearfield Friday morning. Funeral services took place at 10 o'clock.

Mrs. Minerva Boggess was taken to Harrison county after a short funeral service at the Lane funeral home. A more extended service will be held in her home county.

## **Mrs. Tolliver Buried Friday**

Last rites for Mrs. Emma Tolliver were held at the Saints church at 10 o'clock Friday morning. Burial took place at Caudill cemetery.

Funeral services for Mrs. Minnie Carter and son, Junior Bays, were held in Waltz Friday. Burial at Sardis cemetery.

Funeral services for Mrs. Minnie Roberts, her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Walter McRoberts and son, Harrison, were held at 2 p. m. Friday near Cranston.

Services for Mrs. Canna Amburgey and two daughters may be held Saturday, according to one report.

# PARTIAL LIST OF HOMELESS PERSONS IS COMPILED--PATRICK

About 350 homeless and distressed persons are being taken care of by the Red Cross, in the Morehead public school building, court house and the college. Approximately one thousand meals a day are being served to the refugees.

A partial list of homeless Rowan county persons, compiled by Miss Carol Patrick, has been made to acquaint their relatives and friends and the general public with their

dire needs. The list is incomplete because the records were not completely filled out.

Among the homeless are the following:

Charlie Rose, Lucy Littleton, Robert Hónker, Bud Royse, Boyd McClure, D. Johnson, Frank Eden, G. Crather, Chas. Holman, Rosie Holman, Ralph Holman, Velma Holman, Billy Holman, William Tackett, Howard Cisco, Roy Brown, Leonard Alfrey, Mary Al-

(Cont. on Page 3)

# MOREHEAD DAMAGE IS HALF MILLION

(Cont. from Page 1)

frey, James Alfrey.

Beecher Adkins, Walter Adkins, Jessie Adkins, A. J. Alderman, W. C. Banks, Armand Rose Banks, Junior Banks, Frank Banks, Peachie Bowling, Cecil Bowling, H. Boyd, Armanda G. Boyd, Billy Boyd, Junior Boyd, Lawrence Boyd, Milt Brown, Mary Lou Brown, Della Brown, Olive Brown.

Rube, Myrtle, Paul, Hobart and Billy Conley; Noah, Junior, Noah Mae, Helen Bays, Eugene and Hazel Carter; Mabel Croswaite, Margaret Cooper, Jason, Ethel, Brown Motor Co., restaurants, Roscoe Hutchinson, The Bargain Store, The Regal Store, The Golden Rule Store and Johnson's Barber Shop.

County Agent Goff estimated that 900 out of 1,100 Rowan county farm homes were wrecked or damaged. The biggest loss was from erosion, he said.

Forty per cent of the tobacco crop or 350 acres, valued at \$50,000 or more, was destroyed, according to Goff's estimate, and 200 head of livestock, five to seven thousand acres of corn, three or four thousand chickens, three thousand acres of hay crop, 40,000 rods of fence and other crops and equipment.

## PARTIAL LIST OF HOMELESS VICTIMS

(Cont. from Page 1)

Betty Lou and Ester Croger; Estel, Ann, Denver, Evan and Margaret Dalton.

Elizabeth, Sue Carrol, Sandra Ann and C. Day; James, Lucy, Stella Mae, Albert and Robert Dulin; Lena Earley, Frank Eden, Beatrice Gaustina, Ed Hall, Alice Hamm, Willie Hamm, Lee Hamm, Melvin Hamm, Bearl Hinton, Nettie Wall, Minnie Swinford, Clara Lancaster, Irene Hall, Hannah Hall and daughter, Oscar Hamm.

Emma, Margaret, Clifford, Jay,

Willie, Charles, and Torene Heaman; Charles and Jay Harman, Denny Howard, Halie Howard, Ciscoe Howard, Ruth Howard, Carrie Howard Johnson, Clyde Keeton, Nellie Keeton, Cleo Keeton and Chester Keeton, Wallace Keeton, Holly, Edna, Peggy Ann and Jimmy Kissinger, Newt and Martha Kissinger, W. B. Lee, Matt Lee, Ruth Rose Lee, A. J. Lewis, Opal Lewis, Ester Lewis,

O. A. Maxey, Lilly, Opal, John and Rex Mays, Orville, Lorene and Homer McClain, Hazel, Juanita and Pauline McKenzie; Heyward, Jewell, Shirley, Bobby and Billy McKenzie; Laura and Mildred McClurg; Grover, Martha and Clara Prather; Custer, Ola, Billy

Marie, Bobby and Mary Jane Ramey; Biddio Bo, Billy and Huey Ramey; William, Martha, Huey and Billy Ramey, Taylor, Maggie and Tressie Ramey; Paul Reynolds.

John Rose, Edith and Clarence Rose; Arthur Rose, Mary Stacy, Estelle, Grace, Albert, Mona Mae and John Stacy; Mary Story, Clara Swinn, Jack, Jack, Jr., Peggy Jean, Reva Fern, Harold and Mrs. Jack Tackett; David and Viola Trumbo, Walden, Viney and Paul Wages; Dora, John and Arlin Wright; Paul and Sam Black, E. B. Bogges,

Everett, Carie, Vernie, Nina, Katherine, Ernest and Ralph Kendall, Andrew Martin, Billie Hall, Pat Johnson and Junior Gee.



(Lexington Herald Photo by Tom Hall)

\$38,000 was the estimated loss to the J. F. Sparks Shows as the rampaging flood waters covered their tents where all had been gaily a few hours before.

### Water Service Resumed

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"I grabbed my wife," Sparkman related, "and we ran to the door. The force of the water swept us into the torrent and we were sucked into the street. A few seconds later our house swept by and we were unable to do anything for our children. We could hear their cries as our house went by."

Sparkman and his wife were rescued from a tree top at 6:30 a.m. by boatmen.

Rescuers said between 50 and 75 persons were taken from tree tops along the banks of the creek.

Reports from all sections of Eastern Kentucky indicated the heavy rainfall had been general and that streams throughout the section were flooded.

#### Red Cross Called

Mayor Warren C. Lappin wired Arthur Gamble, WPA district director at Paintsville, 70 miles from here, asking "all WPA help available." He said "sanitary conditions worst possible."

The American Red Cross ordered Mrs. Sheridan Connally, field representative, from Lexington, Ky., into the flooded town to set up relief offices.

#### Follows Fire

The flood was the second calamity to strike Morehead within 24 hours. Early Tuesday morning fire of undetermined origin swept the three-story City hotel. There was no loss of life but 27 guests, scantily clad, were forced to flee and damage ran into thousands of dollars.

On what is known as "show lot" at Morehead, a carnival was stationed when the flood came. J. S. Sparks, manager, was counting receipts at about 1 a.m., and other employes were finishing setting everything in order. A roar of approaching water startled someone who gave the alarm. Seeing the water literally bounding up-

ward, the personnel took to trees, Mr. Sparks climbing a large cedar tree which was nearby. The raging flood forced them to remain aloft for several hours, but meantime the carnival was literally flattened to earth, at a loss of some \$30,000.

Embalmers from neighboring towns who are assisting in taking care of the dead are:

Lewis Mitchell, Mt. Sterling; Shanklin Piper, Owingsville; E. M. ShROUT, Owingsville; J. W. Stewart, Flemingsburg; Malcolm Wright, Flemingsburg; Albert Knox, Maysville; Richard F. Cox, Grayson; Frank Malone, Grayson; Hunter Clark, Hillsboro; Owen Clark, Ashland; Joe Yelton, Crane and Breed Casket Company; Mr. Justice, Hydrol Chemical Company; Mr. Stafford, Wilbert Vault Company; Fred Neal, Mt. Sterling; Robert Hutton, Flemingsburg; J. S. Moxley, Flemingsburg; E. L. Barnes, Owingsville; Clay Reynolds, Owingsville; John Clark, Hillsboro.

## EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT RELATED OF FLOOD'S DESCENT BY REPORTER

By STANLEY K. IVERSON

Morehead Independent Reporter

"Wake up, Stanley, Railroad street's flooded and people are drowning. They're crying for help."

It was my landlady, Mrs. Sue Fugate, awaking me at 1:45 o'clock this morning, to a helpless, stricken Morehead.

I got up and quickly dressed in the dark. The lights were out. I thought it was raining but when I looked out the window I realized that the sound I heard was a raging torrent, rushing madly down the valley.

Running outside I could hear the screams of men and women crying for help, four and five

blocks away. It sounded like the end of the world.

Down the hill I rushed. I saw hundreds of persons at the bottom near the postoffice on Main street. If the water was that high, then my newspaper office was gone! The water stood waist high across the street and as far as I could see toward West Morehead.

At the water's edge men cried, "Get a boat. We need help!" I ran to the telephone but Dr. I. Garred's boat was gone, Professor Haggan had left his in Farmers, the Hudgins boy's boat was already on the way.

I asked the operator for Lexington. All lines out of town were down, Goldie Hayes said.

I went back down to the water-

front on Carey avenue. Jesse Johnson, the barber, said he had been awakened just a few minutes before by a loud noise. Looking out of the window he saw a big wave of water. Calling for his wife and children, he led them through knee-deep water to safety.

Cries for help across the creek could be heard plainly, again and again. Why weren't there more boats? Why was everybody standing around? Then I found out—the current was too swift.

One boat fought the onrush of the waters for 10 minutes trying to cross the street to save Mrs. L. Jayne and daughter, Nola, who were up to their necks in water.

In front of Bishop's drug store, Billie Caudill, wearing only a pair of shorts, dripping blood from mouth and thigh, cried, "Iverson, so you want some news, eh? Well, look at this, I just swam two miles from Clearfield to get here. And I'm going back to help."

# RED CROSS WORKER DESCRIBES DISTRESS OF FLOOD VICTIMS

By CAROL PATRICK,

Red Cross Worker

The Red Cross headquarters at the city hall has been as busy as a beehive since the rescue work started, outfitting the unfortunates, many with scarcely any clothes at all, and directing them where to sleep and eat.

Persons of every age and size have climbed the stairs to find at least a dress or a shirt to wear. Some came in borrowed clothing. One man crept in clothed only in overalls which he had found drifted onto a fence. Several have walked far in heavy coats clutched tightly around their bare bodies.

Barefeet are common, and stockings are definitely not on the list for "what the well-dressed refugee" wears. I know of several persons who had nothing to wear to creep out of their hiding place.

One woman had to hurry back to take clothes to her husband who was hiding in a tree until she returned. Even the necessary undergarments are worn by very few.

More men and children, especially boys, are in dire need of clothing. Even the first change of cloth-

ing could not be found for many. Children have had to wear their damp, mud-coated dresses for hours, and men shiver in soaked suits of mud and clothes.

The little Perry boy, who had miraculously escaped when his mother and sisters were washed away, was too young to answer the necessary questions when he appeared for a change to wear to the burial.

Few tears have been seen. There are only the dry-tears of real anguish. Some, who once had lived comfortably, hesitate to ask for help. Small is the number who ask for two changes of clothing. Only one or two cases are known who tried to get more than their share. The huge pile of clothing given us at ten o'clock Wednesday night had vanished by the time I got back at eight the next morning.

Everything, however, is needed, and clothing of every description has been distributed. About ten volunteer women, including a thirteen years old girl, are kept busy throughout the day, rendering aid to the distressed and homeless.

God, would it ever stop? Rain suddenly started to pour in sheets again—just like it had when I went to bed at 11 o'clock.

Back to the postoffice—the rest had been reached! The waters were receding. Slowly at first, then more rapidly.

It was now about 3:30 a. m. Somebody said the Boggess family was stranded in the second floor of their home across the tracks. An old lady was screaming in a house near the power plant. One of the workers was supposed to have stayed in there. He couldn't be found.

In the eddies.

Every few minutes a bystander would report someone as missing—first a Mr. Johnson in a hotel on Railroad street. Then a truck driver by the name of Gorman from Flemingsburg.

But the waters were receding—At least the rest of the town was saved. Last night it was a fire which routed us out of bed—tonight it was worse.

Daylight finally came and the waters receded from Main street. Wreckage could be seen in every direction toward Railroad street.

Then, about 6 o'clock reports of the missing began to come in. At Godburn, a woman and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Sparkman, were taken out of the trees. She was a pitiful sight. Her four young children had been swept away.

At the other end of Morehead, Clearfield was completely covered. Further down the road, water covered a wide expanse of the valley. There was no getting out of Morehead that way.

Farmers of course was sure to be flooded. The missing list was mounting. Would it ever end? Some said fifty—others a hundred. God only knows!

# FIRE DESTROYS CASKEY BUILDING; DAMAGE ESTIMATED \$75,000

Fire roared through the City hotel building, located in the heart of the business district, early Tuesday morning, leveling the three-story brick structure and causing property loss exceeding \$50,000.

Volunteer fire fighters of the Morehead and Olive Hill fire departments fought the blaze for two hours before finally bringing it under control.

During the height of the fire, the entire central section of the business district was threatened and Fire Chief Lionel Fanning said after the fire had been brought under control, that the absence of wind had materially aided firemen in confining the flames to the large hotel building.

### Guests Escape Building

A number of guests were forced to flee from the 32-room hostelry in night clothing after an alarm had been spread at 2 o'clock in the morning by Jim Wilson, a half-blind itinerant guitarist, who smelled smoke and awakened Alf Caskey, owner of the building, who was asleep in his room at the hotel.

Old residents of Morehead said that the fire was the largest in the city's history.

Several shops on the ground floor of the hotel structure were destroyed by the flames, which also consumed seven Rowan county school busses, owned by Caskey and stored in a garage at the rear of the building.

Shops destroyed included those of the Caskey Tire Company, the Caskey Taxicab Company, the S. and W. Liquor Dispensary and the Trail Barber Shop. A WPA pack-horse library, also housed in the

hotel building, was destroyed, as was a poolroom owned by Dan Parker.

### Caskey Estimates Losses

Caskey estimated that the loss to the building and its furnishings would exceed \$30,000. He said that the seven busses destroyed were worth \$10,000. Loss at the Caskey Tire Company was set at \$1,500. Equipment, stored in a garage at the rear of the building, also was destroyed. Caskey valued the garage equipment at \$3,000. He said that none of his losses was covered by insurance.

Dan Parker, owner of the poolroom which was burned, said that his loss would top \$4,500 and J. R. Wendell, proprietor of the S. and W. Liquor Dispensary, estimated that his loss would total \$2,500, fully protected by insurance.

W. E. Trayner, owner of the Morehead Real Estate Company, said that furnishings in his company's offices were valued at \$300.

### Restaurant Damaged

The Eagle's Nest, a restaurant located in an adjacent building, suffered a loss estimated at \$400 by Chinn Clayton, proprietor, as the result of heat and water damage.

Windows in many surrounding buildings were shattered by heat and firemen estimated that replacement of the panes would cost adjacent property owners approximately \$400.

No one was reported injured, but several Morehead firemen barely escaped being struck by flying debris when the front wall of the structure toppled to the ground.

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## Mayor Makes Statement

The citizens of Morehead have experienced the worst calamity in the history of this city. Practically every individual in town has been affected by the flood in either a direct or an indirect manner. Conditions seem to be improving slowly. The Red Cross, the W. P. A., the C. C. C., the Board of Health authorities and numerous volunteer agencies are rendering invaluable service. The citizens, on the whole, have cooperated wonderfully and have realized that they must be patient. The city administration asks for your continued cooperation and hopes that all citizens will realize that it will take time to bring about anything like complete restoration.

The attention fall is directed toward the danger of typhoid fever during a period such as this. The health authorities are innoculating everyone desiring it without charge. This work is being done at the public school building.

Mayor W. C. Lappin

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# CORONER RELEASES COMPLETE LIST OF BODIES FOUND IN FLOOD

County Coroner Lester Caskey reported the total list of casualties today as follows:

Mrs. Mary Frances Salyers, 25, and three children, Ivan Eugene, 8; Bobby Carl, 6, and Alberta Mae, 3.

Mrs. Mahala Mae Ratliff, 49, and son, Lorn, 8. Mrs. Ratliff was the mother of Mrs. Salyers.

James Elmer Sparkman, 9, and brothers and sister, Paul Edwin, 6; Bobby Everett, 7 months, and Thelma Lee, 4.

Mrs. Minerva Boggess, 77.

Albert Porter, 46, and wife, 45. Mrs. Minnie Carter, 38, and son, Junior Bays, 11.

Mrs. Canna Amburgey, 46, and two daughters, 8 and 14.

Mrs. Emma Tolliver, 77.

Mrs. Lula Mae Perry Collins, 32, and daughter, Maggie Frances, 12.

Miss Sylvia Lee Perry, 16, sister of Mrs. Collins.

Mrs. Walter McRoberts, 24, a widow, and daughter-in-law, Ruby McRoberts, 22, and son, Harrison McRoberts, Jr.

## City Water Safe For Human Consumption

Dr. T. A. E. Evans, county health doctor, issued a statement yesterday that the Morehead city water is now safe to drink. The cloudiness of the city water is due to rust and deposits in the mains and reservoir, he said.

All well, cistern and spring water in flooded area should, however, be boiled before drinking.

He advises everyone to take typhoid immunization. Local physicians or the health department, which is located temporarily in the public school building, are prepared to administer this preventative treatment.

# OPENING OF RURAL SCHOOLS DELAYED

## Three Schoolhouses Lost In Flood

The opening of the rural schools has been postponed until Monday, July 24, because of the effects of the flood, Supt. Roy Cornette said today. There will be a pre-school teachers' meeting for all rural teachers on Friday, July 21.

Three school buildings were totally destroyed by the flood waters. They were Bradley, Blue-stone and Pond Lick. Many others are flooded and it is necessary for the school houses to be cleaned and renovated before they will be sanitary. The NYA boys are busy at this work. It is hoped that all flooded school houses will be in a sanitary condition in time for the opening of the schools.

Supt. Cornete gave out the calendar for rural school year as follows:

### RURAL SCHOOL CALENDAR 1939-1940

July 21 — Pre-School Teachers' Conference.  
July 24 — — Rural School Open.  
August 18 — First Month Ends.  
(Teachers' Conference)  
August 21—Second Month Begins.  
September 15 — Second Month Ends. Teachers' Conference)  
September 18— Third Month Begins.  
October 13 — Third Month Ends.  
(Teachers Conference)  
October 16 — Fourth Month Begins.  
November 10 — Fourth Month Ends.  
November 13 — Fifth Month Begins.  
November 9 — — — E. K. E. A.  
November 10 — — — E. K. E. A.  
November 23 — Thanksgiving Holiday.

(Cont. on Page Two)

## Opening Of Rural Schools Postponed

(Cont. from Page 1)

November 24 — Thanksgiving  
Holiday.

December 8 — Fifth Month Ends.

December 11 — Sixth Month Be-  
gins.

December 22, 23, 24, 25 — Christ-  
mas Holidays.

January 5 — Sixth Month Ends.  
(Choose Spelling Bee Contestant  
in each school)

January 8 — Seventh Month Be-  
gins.

January 12 — County Spelling  
Bee and Teachers' Conference.

February 2 — Rural Schools End.

February 10 — Last day to check  
in Reports, Record Book and Free  
Text Books.

NOTE: Group Teachers' Meetings  
will be called by special notice.

# CRACKERBARREL COMMENTS . . .

By WOODY HINTON

No-one can say the people of Morehead and Rowan County can't take it on the chin.

After a brief survey today and after talking to several of the folks, I find them in much better spirits. They are all working like "towheads" and are talking a big fer and better Morehead. And the fact is we can't stop, we have to go ahead.

In some ways the flood might have helped us. Of course in a lot of ways it did not, but we know now how many friends and neighbors we have. When we go for a drive to some of our neighboring towns we will appreciate them much more.

It's truly remarkable how the folks are helping us, and don't think for a minute it is not appreciated. I'd like to thank you all personally and I am sure we all would. If at any time we here in Morehead can come to your aid do not in the least hesitate to call on us. But, "shucks," you won't have to. We will hear of it and come anyhow.

In any disaster there always is a bit of humor. I think the best one I have heard here is the drunk trying to borrow money to get him a quart with. He said that he was either going to get a quart or leave town because that big snake at the Carnival was one the loose and he was not taking any chances.

Claude Clayton ran to the highest knob in these parts and got in the top of the highest tree he could find. I asked one man if he saved his wife, and he said, "Yes b-?!?!?"

One local boy sat and drank beer while the porch washed away and water was up to his shoe-tops

I found the "Hairless Dog" from the carnival playing on a high place in a field half mile from where the carnival

(Cont. on Page 3)

# CRACKERBARREL COMMENTS . . . .

(Cont. from Page 1)

was. I wondered if he shook himself when he got wet like other dogs. I don't see why he should for he is absolutely hairless.

I have never heard a grumble from Walter Swift, Frank Havens or "Bill" Sample, and they were among the heaviest losers.

TO YOU FOLKS WHO HAVE LOST EVERYTHING: PERSONAL CLOTHING, HOMES, FURNITURE and etc., GO TO MISS MOSES AT THE CITY HALL, TELL HER YOUR TROUBLES, and she will solve them for you. You will find her pleasant, nice, and eager to help you. Do not hesitate to do this.

## CARD OF THANKS

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We wish to thank our kind neighbors and friends for their great help in so diligently searching for the body of my dear wife, baby and mother who drowned in the recent flood and for their love and kindness in our great hour of need. Also Brother Tussey for comforting sermon.

Walter McRoberts  
and McRoberts Family

# 1939 COUNTY FAIR WILL NOT BE HELD ANNOUNCES HINTON

## Board of Directors Vote To Dispense With Fair This Year

Woody Hinton, president of the Rowan County School and Agricultural Fair said in a signed statement today that the Board of directors had voted not to hold the 1939 fair because of the damaging effects of the flood. A large portion of the crops were destroyed by the flood.

Hinton's statement follows:  
To the Citizens of Morehead  
and Rowan County:

At a meeting of the board of Directors of The Rowan County School and Agricultural Fair on July 10th, it was voted that the Fair for this year be postponed until next year. This is due to the recent disaster that we have just been thru. Next year we plan to have one of the biggest and best fairs we have ever had. Let's look forward to a better Morehead and Rowan County.

Woody Hinton, President

# ELECTRIC SERVICE BACK TO NORMAL

## Power Being Supplied From Out Of Town

Electric service was restored in Morehead within twelve hours after the disastrous flood had submerged the local transformer substation and water twelve feet deep had drowned the fire under the boilers in the Kentucky Power & Light Company generating station at 2 A. M. Wednesday, July 5.

Before dusk the same day full service had been turned on and line crews were putting up special street lamps to light rescue and clean-up operations.

As the wall of water swept over the substation, instantly cutting off service, Frank Maxey, local manager, telephoned for help to the general offices of Kentucky Utilities Company at Lexington. In a few hours emergency workers from Lexington, Cynthiana, Maysville and Mt. Sterling were at the scene of disaster.

One crew ran a line from Morehead to a Kentucky Power & Light Company substation at Farmers, Ky., and got a limited amount of power into Morehead at 2:30 P. M. Meanwhile another crew hauled a five-ton transformer seventy miles from Cynthiana to Morehead and connected it, supplying normal service at 6:30 P. M.

Interconnected transmission lines, receiving current from several power stations, made it possible to restore service in Morehead in record time. With electricity available, rescue, clean-up and rebuilding operations went ahead at top speed night and day.

Emergency work was in charge of N. Powell Taylor, assistant to the vice-president in charge of operations, and S. L. Thurman, northern division superintendent of construction and maintenance, of Kentucky Utilities Company and Kentucky Power & Light Company.

Mr. Taylor said it would be impossible for several days to estimate the damage to the electrical equipment at Morehead. Powerhouse repairs would require at least two weeks, he explained, but normal service would be maintained with power supplied from Maysville and Lexington generating plants.

# COUNTY STILL IN DISEASE DANGER ZONE, SAYS EVANS

## Citizens Warned To Watch Eating And Drinking Habits

"We are still in the danger zone of disease for at least a month yet," was County Health Doctor T. A. E. Evans' statement today concerning health conditions in this county.

The possibilities of a typhoid epidemic are decreasing rapidly but there is still danger of dysentery unless everyone is careful of their eating and drinking habits, Doctor Evans said.

He reported that 1500 persons have been given typhoid inoculations. He recommended that all persons in the county who had had inoculations a year ago or longer should take them again.

Morehead was quarantined Sunday afternoon, the doctor said, because of the large influx of sightseers. The quarantine is designed to keep out curiosity seekers and loafers.

Samples of the city water are being tested every day. Evans said persons living in the flooded area or in the rural districts are advised to boil their drinking water.

# 700 Families To Get Assistance From Red Cross

## Drive For Funds In Rowan County Gets Under Way

Seven hundred Rowan County families, whose possessions were damaged by the flood, will receive aid from the American National Red Cross, said Miss Helen J. Moses, assistant state director in charge of this area, here today.

Preparations are being made for permanent rehabilitation for distressed families as the emergency period is coming to a close, Miss Moses said.

### 20,000 To Receive Aid

Twenty thousand persons in Eastern Kentucky will receive assistance from the Red Cross; 900 families in Breathitt, 350 in Fleming; 225 in Morgan and 200 in Elliott, besides 1400 in other counties.

Funds for the relief work have been coming in very nicely from the outside, Miss Moses said. Louisville reached its goal of \$13,000 by noon Wednesday. Lexington passed its goal of \$3,000 and Ashland is nearing its goal of \$2,500.

A complete list of donations will be published in a later issue.

### Breathitt Over The Top

Breathitt county oversubscribed their goal of \$800 by \$200 in one forenoon.

The drive for Rowan county's goal of \$1,000, Dave Caudill, chairman of the local chapter, said yesterday, is now on.

Miss Moses asked that all those who were not affected by the flood in the county to give generously to relieve the sufferings of friends and neighbors. Checks may be mailed to the National Red Cross Headquarters, Morehead, or delivered to the headquarters on the second floor of the Peoples Bank Building or given to the chairman of the local Red Cross chapter.

### Cooperating Agencies Thanked

Miss Moses went on to say that the help given by cooperating agencies has been very helpful and is much appreciated. She cited the work of the WPA, CCC, NYA, American Legion and the Auxiliary, Boy Scouts, County School Board, Mayor W. C. Lappin, Morehead State Teachers College, church members, Christian church for the use of the building, and many private citizens.

Miss Moses denied the daily newspaper report in Monday's dispatches that thirteen persons were still missing in Rowan county. All bodies have been found and identified.

Twenty-four full time, experienced Red Cross workers are in charge of the flood area in Eastern Kentucky besides hundreds of volunteer workers. All the Red Cross workers have assisted in disasters in this section of the state at some other time.

# OFFICE OF DISASTER LOAN CORPORATION IS OPENED HERE

## Distressed May Get Cash Assistance

The Disaster Loan Corporation, a Federal agency, authorized by an act of Congress in January, 1937, to make loans necessary and appropriate on account of floods, tornadoes or other disasters, has opened offices in Room 1 of the Morehead Consolidated School building, to accept applications for loans to assist in the rebuilding and replacing property damaged in the recent flood.

Loans will be made for repairs to buildings, rehabilitation of property and for replacement of household furniture, equipment, fixtures and for other purposes necessary in the reestablishment of homes, farm buildings industrial or commercial activities.

The following men have consented to serve and have been appointed members of the local advisory committee to assist in the activities of the organization: Mr. N. E. Kennard Chairman, Mr. John M. Palmer, Mr. C. P. Caudill, Mr. C. B. Daugherty, and Mr. Frank Havens. The office will be in charge of Mr. W. E. Taylor, who is from the regional office of the Disaster Loan Corporation at Cleveland. He will be assisted by a staff of competent examiners. A meeting was held with the local committee Tuesday afternoon. In attendance were Mr. Ray W. Berrett, administrative assistant in charge of Disaster Loans Corporation, Washington, D. C., Mr. W. E. Taylor, and Mr. L. S. Kastor of Cleveland.

Persons desiring to make applications for loans should call at the office for complete information.

# Flood Sufferers Asked To Buy Of Established Firms

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An appeal to the flood sufferers of Rowan County is being made in an advertisement on page three of this issue by the Morehead Merchants Association asking the victims of the flood to buy from their local merchants.

Consumers are advised not to trade with fly-by-night merchants who have only established temporarily in order to take advantage of the flood victims' misfortunes.

The Association asserts that merchandise in their stores is reasonably priced and of good quality.

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# FLOOD DIFFICULTIES BEING SURMOUNTED BY SCHOOL BOARD

## Lower Lick Fork Bridges Washed Out

By MABEL ALFREY,  
Attendance Officer

The bridges on Lower Lick Fork were washed out due to the high waters Monday afternoon, preventing the Craney teacher, Leo Ball, from reaching his school Tuesday. This creates an emergency, due to the fact, since the bridges are out, people cannot even get to a doctor in case of sickness. Something should be done immediately to relieve this situation.

The number of children in the census this year is 2,225. This is an increase of 104 over last year. We have every reason to believe the enrollment will be far greater than last year.

The NYA boys, under the supervision of Chas. E. Jennings, are making many needed repairs to the Rowan County School buildings and grounds. They have been cleaning flooded schoolhouses, wells, putting in windows and window lights, oiling floors, and in general getting the schoolhouses in a sanitary condition for the school children. They have also been salvaging lumber from the three schoolhouses that were washed away and wrecked by the flood July 5.

Without the aid of this program the Rowan County Schools, that have been so handicapped, would probably have been unable to open until a later date.

The three school buildings that were washed away and wrecked during the flood will probably not be replaced. It was impossible to replace any of these buildings before the opening of the rural schools. The Board of Education, in order to allow these children from these district to be taken care of, and desirous of staying within their budget for the school year of 1939-40, have decided to take the Bradley school children to Elliottville, the Bluestone children to Farmers, and the children of Pond Lick school to Cranston.

Three rural schools are being used as demonstration schools by the Morehead State Teachers College, namely, Clearfield, Seas Branch and Little Ferry. In these schools, the critic teachers of the College Training School will work in cooperation with the Rowan County teachers.

# CASE WORK FOR 140 FAMILIES FINISHED

## Red Cross Places All Homeless Persons

Case work for 140 flood-distressed families in Rowan County had been completed by the Red Cross Wednesday, according to Miss Helen J. Moses, area director.

Mass feeding was stopped last week and all of the homeless were either returned to their homes or placed with relatives and friends. Mrs. E. Fox Clinton, nurse attached to the national staff, returned to Washington, D. C., Monday.

D. A. Handy, national building advisor for the American Red Cross, is inspecting all buildings to determine the loss and the necessary repairs. Mr. Handy will write all the building contracts. Beneficiaries will be advised by headquarters when Mr. Handy will be able to confer with them. Expense of new building and repairs is expected to be double the amount to be spent for furniture for flood ravaged families.

Rehabilitation in Carter, Lewis and Menifee counties is expected to end next week. The case workers will be brought back to Rowan county to help complete the work here when the outlying counties are cared for.

Registration of families asking for aid in this county was not complete early this week. A total of 550 is being predicted at the headquarters.

# RED CROSS DRIVE GOES OVER TOP-- \$1,399.56 RECEIVED

## Rowan County Gives \$400 More Than Quota

Rowan County went over the top in the Red Cross drive last week when \$1,399.56, almost four hundred dollars more than the quota, was obtained by solicitors under the direction of Mrs. Ed Williams, county chairman.

In addition to the group donations reported last week, Mrs. Williams announces the following: Morehead Teachers College, total of \$252.80 collected under the leadership of President H. A. Babb. The donations listed by buildings: Fields Hall, \$46; Allie Young Hall, \$21; Men's Hall, \$10.80; Thompson Hall, \$5; Administration building, \$65; Breckinridge Training School, \$60.50; Science building, \$21.50; Library, total \$12; gymnasium, \$9 and P. W. A. campus workers, \$2.

Churches: Church of God and Lee Clay Products Co., \$155.10; Baptist church, \$13.15; Christian church, \$28.50; Methodist church, \$86.

Special contributions: Kentucky Power and Light Company, \$75; Trail Theatre, \$20.85; B. E. Waltz, \$10 and Andy Hoke's circus, \$2. Total, \$107.85.

# The StanByer

Stanley K Iverson

## SEVERAL PERSONS HAVE

asked the writer to appeal to the boys who have been playing with firecrackers in the streets to desist or else - - . Boys should have some place to play besides the streets and activities more worthwhile than that of shooting firecrackers, but if they must shoot them, let them play where no harm can come to women and children passing by.

## YOUNGSTERS OF THE COMMUNITY

are doing their share in raising funds for the flood refugees. A group of them, several not so young, held a circus performance in Mr. and Mrs. Rex Hoke's back yard Monday afternoon. They netted \$1.47, to which was added enough to make two dollars by several friends. A committee headed by Eleanor Gullett presented Miss Helen J. Moses of the Red Cross the total receipts with such pomp and ceremony. Miss Moses responded in like manner, expressing her eternal gratitude as a national representative of the American Red Cross, stationed in Lorehead.

## THE 7-RING CIRCUS BILLED

the following acts: Mrs. William Payne and Maxie, dog act; Eleanor Bruce, song and dance; Lyda Lou Clayton and Karene George, songs; Betty Jane Wolfford, acrobatic act; Charles Goff, strong man act; Billie Jean Caskey, songs; Betty Lane, dance; Eleanor Gullett and Nannette, acrobatic act; and Joyce Johnson, dance.

## BILLY AND LUCIAN RICE

sold the lemonade. Andy Hoke collected tickets which sold at the magnificent price of one cent.

# **DISASTER LOAN MEN WILL NOT REMAIN HERE INDEFINITELY**

## **Persons Needing Help Advised To Make Applications Quickly**

The Disaster Loan Corporation, with offices in Room 1 of the Morehead Consolidated School Building, has been receiving applications for loans to assist in the rebuilding and replacing of property damage in the recent flood.

Loans will be made, according to W. E. Taylor, Agent, for repairs to buildings, rehabilitation of property and for replacement of household furniture, equipment, fixtures, and for other purposes necessary in the reestablishment of home, farm buildings, industrial or commercial enterprises.

Persons desiring to make applications for loans are requested to call at the office as soon as possible as the office is temporary and will not remain open indefinitely.

## 63 FAMILIES ARE REHABILITATED BY RED CROSS AGENCY

### Seed Program Is Planned For Needy Families

Rehabilitating of flood-distressed families in Rowan County got under way this week by the American National Red Cross.

Miss Helen J. Moses, area director, reported that 63 families have been rehabilitated so far.

Approximately 550 Rowan County families have registered for aid from the Red Cross. Miss Moses said that all of them, however, will not be eligible for assistance because only those who are financially unable through cash or credit resources to take care of their own needs will be given assistance.

#### Case Workers To Investigate

Every family registering for aid will be visited by one of the case workers, she said. They will determine in accordance with their findings what the families will require to prevent unnecessary suffering.

All families will be expected to use self-help, that is, they will be expected to salvage furniture which can be repaired and cleaned and building material which can be used in reconstructing homes, Miss Moses stated.

#### Will Give Seed

The Red Cross is unable to assist owners of income property but will help the tenant who is unable to help himself to secure household furnishings.

Because of the great loss of gardens, a garden seed program will be started. Seed will be distributed on an individual family basis. Enough seed will be given to provide sufficient foodstuff for the balance of the summer and for canning purposes in the fall to assure possibilities of food during the winter. These seeds, she said, are for planting purposes, not for immediate consumption.

Families to receive seed will be notified of the time of distribution.

The refugee and feeding centers are rapidly decreasing in population. It is hoped that by the end of the week all those who have been homeless will have been found places where they can establish themselves.

Families being given help are cooperating very well, Miss Moses said.

She advised all those persons who have sufficient security to establish credit but insufficient to get it through the normal banking sources to make application of the Disaster Loan Corporation, which has offices in the Morehead Public School.

Morehead Memories:  
True Stories from Eastern  
Kentucky

Dr. Jack Ellis

Jesse Stuart Foundation, Ashland, KY 2001

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*"Thou carriest them away as with a flood."*  
(Ps. 90:5)

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## CHAPTER NINE

### *Flood and Fire: Deluge and Ashes*

#### THE FLOOD (JULY 4, 1939)

During the past year (1998), an MSU Oral History class interviewed 32 individuals who were survivors of the 1939 flood, or who had memories of that tragic event. They did a thorough job, and even transcribed the interviews. (This writer and his wife were among those interviewed.) After reviewing the transcripts of many that were interviewed, I searched for more information. Also, I personally talked to 10 that were not interviewed, as well as relying upon my own memory. This account, on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that tragic night is presented as a memorial to the 25 Rowan residents who drowned in The Flood of 1939.

Ask most Moreheadians, alive at that time, where they were the night of July 4, 1939, and they will readily remember. Just as they remember where they were when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and where they were the day President Kennedy was killed, old-time Morehead residents remember sadly July 4, 1939. It was a night that will remain firmly imbedded in their psyche as long as they live. That was the night of The Flood. No, not the Biblical flood that Noah (and family) survived in their ark, but the flash flood that devastated Morehead and much of

t Street.

Long

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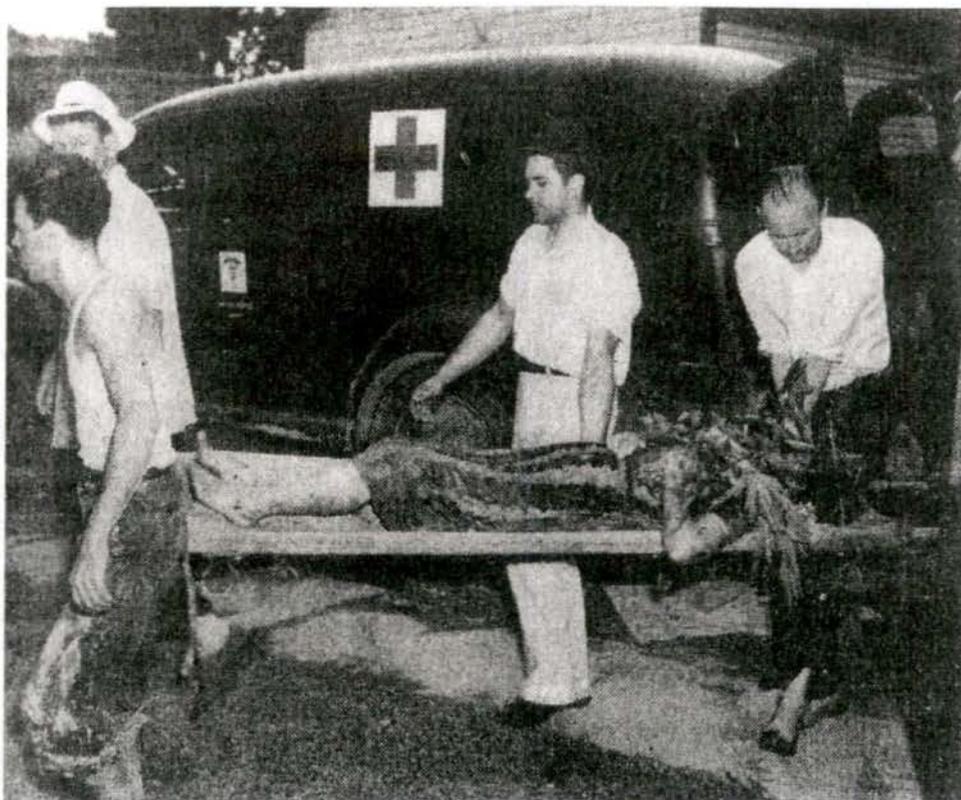
Rowan County. It resulted in 25 deaths, and \$2,000,000 in property damage. (Estimates ranged from \$2,000,000-\$5,000,000). That terrible tragedy ended a gala fourth of July celebration in Morehead that began July 2.

Morehead's new Trail Theater announced some very prophetic movie titles scheduled to be shown that week. Those titles included: Saturday: *Doomed at Sundown*, starring Bob Steele (25 citizens were doomed that night and never saw the dawn of another day); Thursday-Friday: *Water Rustlers*, Dorothy Page, (water not only "rustled" but roared down our valley that night); and Monday-Tuesday: *They Won't Forget*, starring Claude Rains (most Moreheadians "won't forget the rains that fell that fateful night). Those movie titles seemed to predate the approaching tragedy.

#### JULY 4TH CELEBRATION PLANNED

A gigantic gala celebration was planned the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1939 by the American Legion's Corbie Ellington Post 126. Dr. H.L. Nickell, local physician, Legion Post Commander, and WW I Veteran, said, "It would be the largest 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration that Morehead had ever seen". As Moreheadians struggled to overcome the depression, the planned celebration had the full support of the Morehead business community. That included: The Lee Clay Tile Company, L.P. Haldeman Company, Economy Store, Big Store, C&O Café, Imperial Cleaners, Consolidated Hardware Store, Nehi Bottling Company, Jack West, Perry Motor Company, and Midland Trail Garage.

The city was decorated with flags, bunting, and ribbons by professional decorators. The celebration officially got underway with a parade at 10 a.m. July 4<sup>th</sup>. The parade included an American Legion Honor Guard, two drum and bugle corps bands, floats, clowns, monkeys and other acts from the C.F. Sparks Carnival in town for the week-long celebration. The parade began at MSC's Jayne Sta-



*Searchers recover body of a flash flood victim. This young woman was one of 25 Rowan County victims of the July 4, 1939 flash flood.*

dium, and marched west down Main Street, then south on Trumbo Avenue, west on First Street (Railroad), then North on South Wilson (Fairbanks) Avenue. Then the parade marched east on Main Street and back to Jayne Stadium.

Following the parade there were many events and contests scheduled including a cracker eating contest, hog calling contest, ugly man and beautiful woman contests, and a greasy pig contest. Local resident Clifford Barker caught the greasy pig, and won that contest. (The winners of the other contests are unknown). At 3 p.m., a special "drawing" was held by the merchants as they gave \$50 to two individuals holding the lucky tickets. At 8 p.m., another drawing was held as the American Legion raffled off a new 1939 Chevrolet.



*Looking out over Triplett Valley in the 1939 flood.*

(Value \$700.00). The lucky winner of the new car was Bath County resident, Mr. Lacy Parks. He had bought two 25 cent tickets and drove the new car home. At 9:30 that night fireworks were scheduled at Jayne Stadium. Also scheduled to appear were the famous country singers, the Carter Family, and also Miss America was scheduled to appear. (Sponsored by Lee Clay Tile Company.)

### **CARNIVAL BROUGHT BRIGHT LIGHTS**

Small Town USA is a concept, an ideal, fondly revered and fondly remembered by most Americans who lived through at least half of the 20th century. In small town USA during the depression years, the arrival of a carnival in town was an exciting event. That was especially true in "small town" Morehead in the depression doldrums of the summer of 1939. However, on Sunday afternoon, July 2<sup>nd</sup> of that year, Morehead came alive with excitement as the trucks transporting the animals, rides, games, tents, and carnival people arrived in Morehead.

As they passed this writer's home on U.S. 60 west, I jumped on my bicycle and rode to my friend, Meredith Mynhier's home, and he, his younger sister, Janet, and I rode our bikes to what was known

as the "Show Lot". It was an open field located at the end of South Hargis Avenue adjacent to the railroad tracks. (It was a dead end street then). That was where the carnival and circus shows set up at that time. My friend and I hoped to get a job helping "set up" the carnival, and get free passes for the rides. However, we were too young and too small, so we just watched excitedly and walked around. As we wandered around, Janet, Meredith's sister, got too close to the monkeys, and one of them jumped on her back and bit her on the shoulder. Unconcerned about her monkey bite, we left, trying to figure out how we could come up with the cash needed to get into the carnival when it opened the next night

### EXCITEMENT BEGINS

The carnival that opened Monday, July 3, 1939, in Morehead was more than just a carnival. It was billed as the J.F. Sparks Shows, featuring six thrilling new rides, seven exciting shows, and band, free acts, concessions, and fireworks each night. Even a local couple was scheduled to be married in an open wedding on the midway July 5 (that never happened because the midway was no longer there on July 5).

The carnival, bright lights, rides and shows attracted not only local residents, but people streamed in from a five-county area. The rides included the tilt-a-whirl, loop-the loop, Ferris wheel, merry-go-round, and many others. Games included ring toss (toss a small wooden hoop over a pin about 16 feet away), baseball toss (knocking down wooden milk bottles with baseball from a distance of 30 feet), and target shooting with 22 caliber rifles. Also, there were games of strength, eg: hitting a spring on the ground with a giant wooden mallet hard enough to drive a ball to the top of a 12 feet pole and ring a bell. Winning at any of these games brought you a kewpie doll, or small furry panda bear. There were never very many winners.



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The carnival also offered stage shows, music, dancing girls, and animal acts, such as monkey's riding bicycles. Also for 5 cents you could get in to see what was billed as the world's largest snake, a 350 pound Python. It was no wonder that with the carnival in town, Morehead was ablaze with excitement during the July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1939 celebration.

### **BASEBALL GAME BEFORE RAIN**

On the afternoon of July 4, 1939, this writer returned home on west U.S. 60, about five houses west of the Freewill Baptist Church. The parade was over, and I planned to play baseball with my friends in the vacant lot near the abandoned ironing board factory. It was located behind my house adjacent to the railroad tracks. About 3 p.m., 10 or 12 of us got a pickup game going. One of the boys was new to the neighborhood. He was 11 year old Leon (I didn't know his last name). He lived across the railroad and came over to play with us that day. (There was no organized baseball then, only choose up games.) I had the bat so I got to be one of the captains. In order to determine who got the first pick, I tossed the bat to the other captain who caught it in one hand, and then we put each hand on top of the other's and the one with his hand on top of the bat got the first choice. We chose up sides and Leon was the last boy I selected.

We played until about 6 p.m. when our mothers called us to supper. I remember Leon walking slowly back across the railroad to his humble home right next to the tracks.

### **EARLY TO BED--EARLY TO RISE**

I could not go to the carnival that night because my grandmother and cousin had arrived from Florida for a visit. It was a hot muggy night, and my cousin, Buddy Thompson, and I made us a pallet on the floor of our screened in back porch. We went to sleep

around 10:30 p.m. (Central Standard Time). Rowan County was the eastern most county in Kentucky in the Central Time Zone. Also, there was no such thing then as daylight savings time.

I was awakened about 2 a.m. by the continuous sounds of the shrill whistle of a freight train. Looking out my back porch I could see the engine had stopped after rounding Brady Curve. It was stopped almost adjacent to Leon's house, and its light was shining up the track toward Morehead.

My mother and dad came out on the back porch with a kerosene lamp because there was no electric power. They said there was a terrible flood and people were drowning. But at that time it did not seem to be raining extremely hard however, the lightening was flashing continuously so that you could see clearly out over the valley toward Clearfield.

### SOUNDS, SIGHTS, AND SCREAMS OF TERROR

I remember clearly hearing the roar of the water, as it swept its deadly path down stream. I could also hear the pitiful anguished



*Household items deposited by the raging waters in Morehead's flash flood, 1939.*

cries of people in mortal terror. There were the high pitch sounds of women and the hoarse sounds of men as they screamed for help knowing they faced death at any moment. Some were in tree tops, some climbed on



*Cars, homes, and businesses washed away during the flash flood, 1939.*

top of box cars, some were on stacks of lumber and some had gotten on top of their roof before the house was swept away by the tremendous force of the strong current. Others were screaming for loved ones and children whom they could not locate. As the lightning flashed, I could see houses as they floated silently, smoothly and deadly, like giant ice burgs I have seen in the North Atlantic. As the lightning flashed, I saw one man on the roof top of a house floating downstream, holding on to the chimney that still protruded grotesquely above the roof top. Those who were on the housetops were fairly safe unless the house hit a bridge or tree and broke up. Many did and the people drowned unless they were fortunate enough to swim to safety.

The lightning continued flashing rapidly like you would experience when you turned your overhead light switch on and off as rapidly as you could. You could see the brown muddy water was from hill to hill, and was roaring like the rapids above Niagara Falls. During that night we knew something terrible had happened to our town, but we did not realize just how tragic it actually was. But the sounds, the sights, and the sadness remained with those who lived through The Flood throughout their lifetime.

## ONE SURVIVAL STORY

Throughout the night of the Flood, my family was in no danger and the water just barely reached in to our backyard. But throughout that night we were worried about my aunt and uncle and their family. (Julia, Buster and Don Day). Their home was just across Triplett Creek from Brady curve. The water reached up in the attic of their home. They survived by first getting in the attic, then chopping a hole in their roof and there they survived the ordeal. The house was saved because of a giant elm tree just up stream in their yard, that split the force of the current. It enabled their house to stand when the others around them washed away.

The afternoon following the flood, after the waters had receded, search parties began searching through the mud and driftwood for bodies of those listed as missing. I followed along behind a group of CCC boys as they searched the area below Brady Curve near the old City Sewage Disposal Plant. There, they discovered a body lodged in a barbed wire fence and covered with mud and driftwood. It was Leon, the 11 year old boy I had on my pickup baseball team less than 24 hours earlier. (Then I was glad I had chosen him on my team.)

## NEIGHBORS WARNED NEIGHBORS

There were many individual acts of heroism that night. Many unselfishly risked their own lives as they attempted to warn others of the rising waters. Maxie Arnett, his mother and brothers, Joe and Scott, lived across the railroad next door to the Jesse Boggess family on Raine Street. (Presently across the bypass from the Rowan Water Building). Maxie stated in his interview that "he was awakened by Jesse Boggess pounding on his door and yelling for them to get out of their house." He gave Mr. Boggess credit for saving their lives as they barely got out of their house before it washed away. He went on to say, "I've often wondered if Jesse Boggess's



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mother, who drowned, might have been saved if he had not taken the time to awaken us." Also, there were other people on that street who were awakened by Mr. Boggess, or they probably would have drowned.

### BOGCESS INTERVIEWED

This writer contacted James Boggess, the only living child of the Boggess family to hear his account of The Flood. Jimmy, who was eleven years old at the time of the flood, is now a successful Commercial Real Estate Broker, living in Miami Beach, Florida. Here is the Boggess story: Jesse Lee Boggess married Ethel (Cornette) Boggess. They had five children: Harry, Earl Lee, Mary Olive, Ella Mae, and James. In 1939, they lived in a two story stately white house on Raine Street. It was located directly across the railroad track from the end of South Hargis Avenue. Jesse's mother lived two houses downstream from his house in a modest one story house. Mr. Boggess looked after his 77 year old mother. Mr. J.L. Boggess was a prominent member of the community and he was chairman of the School Board as well as a building contractor in Morehead.

July 4<sup>th</sup>, being a holiday, the Boggess family worked to put the finishing touches on a major remodeling of their home. That day they finished painting, papering, installing new carpet, getting new furniture, and hanging new drapes. They finished mowing the lawn about dark. But the children managed to cross the railroad tracks to attend the carnival. But when it started raining they came home and went to bed about 11 p.m. The phone rang about 12 midnight. It was Clark Lane, one of the local funeral directors, (who also operated the ambulance service), asking Jesse to come to Mrs. Wood's Boarding House next door and help load one of the guests into the ambulance. It seems the guest had a heart attack.

Mr. Boggess dressed and helped Mr. Lane load the victim into the ambulance. By the time he returned home, it was raining

so hard he said you had to put your hand over your nose in order to breathe, and the air was literally saturated with water, leaving very little oxygen. Also, by the time he got home the water had risen to his front porch and the lightning was flashing continuously. Mr. Boggess ran into this house, and quickly he and Ethel got all the children out of bed. He told Ella Mae, his oldest daughter, to take their Packard touring car and drive it to higher ground. By the time they loaded in the car with a few belongings, the water was up to the running board of the car. Ella May drove the car to her Uncle Lindsay Caudill's house on Second Street where she woke them up saying there was a terrible flood, and they needed help.

#### UNABLE TO SAVE GRANDMOTHER

Soon after the car drove off, the water began rising rapidly and the electricity went off. Mr. Boggess sent his oldest son, eighteen-year-old Harry, to his mother's house two doors away to get her out, while he went around knocking on his neighbors doors screaming get up, get out, there's a flood coming! Before Harry could get to his grandmother's house, a four foot wall of water came roaring down the valley sweeping him off of his feet. He said one minute he was wading in water knee deep, and the next minute he was swimming for his life. Harry was an excellent swimmer, but because of the force of the current, he could never reach his grandmother's house. Soon another four foot wave came roaring down the valley. With Harry swimming for his life, he soon found refuge in the top of a tree where he spent the night. His grandmother's house was washed away like a row boat tossed about in a pounding surf. The house broke into small pieces and Mrs. Minerva Boggess became one of the 25 victims of The Flood. Harry Boggess survived the longest night of his life, and was rescued the next morning. The Boggess family home was washed about 25 feet from its foundation, but it survived. The water reached

to the ceiling on the first floor and the yellow muck and mud was two feet deep in the house. However, the family spent several days living with friends and relatives. Then they rented a house on West Main Street for several months, but they eventually cleaned the mud out, and restored the house to a livable condition. They remained in that house for another five years, before moving to Grayson, Kentucky. (But they always kept one eye on the weather most of the time.)

In 1939, the disastrous floor waters on First Street reached a depth of 6 to 8 feet. There is a tiny brass plate on the N.W. corner of the Passenger Depot (Tourism Center), marking the depth reached by the water in that flood. The next time you drive east on First Street, stop and look at that marker. It will give you an idea where the water level was in that flood.



*Calvert's Taxi washed away with houses and barns in the flash flood, 1939.*

## DEATH, DESTRUCTION, AND SURVIVAL

*"Let not the water overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up."  
(Ps. 65:15)*

As the sun arose brightly over Morehead the morning of July 5, 1939, many people were still walking around in a daze. There was a pall of sadness over the entire community as they began to realize the death and destruction that had struck their community. Entire families were trapped in their homes, and swept helplessly through the raging waters to their doom. Others had barely escaped the fingers of death and they knew it. The screams of the doomed still lingered in their ears. Cries of those separated - mother and child, husband and wife, young and old, all were drowned out by the noise of the roaring water.

Two fifteen year old boys, Wayne Amburgey and Norton Earley went to the carnival the night of July 4th. Norton planned to spend the night with his friend, Wayne. The two boys left the carnival around 11 p.m. when it first started to rain. They walked west one mile down the railroad track to Wayne's house, located between the railroad track and Triplett Creek near Brady Curve. The two boys slipped into the house and quietly went to bed so as not to awaken Wayne's mother and two sisters, ages 8 and 14.

The storm increased in intensity and because of the thunder and lightening, Norton could not go to sleep. He began to be concerned that his widowed mother would be worried about him. Therefore, he got up and dressed, and told Wayne he was going home to see about his mother. Norton said he walked the one-half mile across the valley to his home on Clearfield Hill, while the lightening flashed continuously. He said: "You could see as plain as day." The lightening illuminated his path home, and as soon as he arrived, he went to bed. But was awakened by the mournful shrill sound of the Clearfield Tile Plant whistle attempting to

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awaken the people in the flood's path. By that time the electricity was off, and Norton and his mother could hear the people screaming. He began to worry about his friend Wayne Amburgy.

### **SON SURVIVED--MOTHER AND TWO SISTERS DROWN**

Wayne Amburgy was awakened by the splashing water, as his house began floating downstream in the rushing current. His mother and sisters were screaming as he broke the window in his bedroom and was swept away by the powerful current as he climbed out of the house. He could not help his mother or sisters because of the swift current. All Wayne could do was go where the water took him. He said he was carried effortlessly as the current took him directly and deposited him in the top of a tree near Rockwall Hollow. It was just below there that his house was swept into a high bank and broke apart. His mother and sisters' bodies were recovered just below where the house broke apart.

Wayne clung frantically to the top of the tree until daylight. He was then rescued by a boat. Years later he told his friend: "Norton if you had stayed all night that night, we might have saved my mother and sisters." Norton said: "Yes, and maybe we all would have drowned, and five lives would have been lost instead of three."

### **CHILDREN DROWN--PARENTS SURVIVE**

Mr. and Mrs. Ted Sparkman and their four children, James Elmer (age 9), Paul Edwin (age 6), Thelma Lee (age 4), and Bobby Everett (age 7 months) lived in a one story white frame house across Triplett Creek behind the tobacco warehouse. It was near the point where Christy Creek empties into Triplett.

Nephew, Garrad Sparkman recalled that he had attended the carnival the night of July 4th and was spending the night with his grandfather, Tom Sparkman. Mr. Sparkman lived on East U.S. 60 near the present site of the Dairy Queen. Mr. Sparkman was awak-

ened by the storm, and, worried about Ted and his family, he went down to the water edge. There he could hear Ted and his wife screaming for help above the roar of the water. Ted and his wife were in voice contact with each other and with Mr. Sparkman at the water edge. Ted and his wife were in separate trees. They yelled to each other during that long and tragic night. Ted's wife kept screaming are the children OK and Ted answered yes. They had left the house so quickly just as the water washed the house away and the current swept them away. Ted could not return to the house to help the children because of the force of the water. He was helpless and the fate of the children was hopeless. But after Ted and his wife were separated and found refuge in two different trees, he could not let his wife know that the children had already been swept from his grasp as he tried to hold them together in the tree top. However, he did not want his wife to know that, and he wanted to keep her spirits up during that long tragic night. When the dawn arrived, Ted and his wife were both rescued, but sadly the four children were lost. Three of the bodies were recovered the next day, but the 7-month-old baby was not found. A large casket was made and the three children were to be buried in one casket. But a few hours before the funeral was scheduled, the body of the baby was found in a small barn two miles downstream from where they lived. Plans for the funeral were delayed and the four children were all buried in one casket. It would seem that their loss was more than most could bear, but the parents survived the flood, but never the trauma and grief.

#### DAVIS FAMILY SURVIVED

Bill "Jinks" Davis and his wife, Odie (Padgett) Davis and their five children, Ralph, James Earl, Lovena, Betty and Wilma lived directly across Triplett Creek from the present Freight Station. (below Triplett View Apartments.) In order to reach their house you

had to cross a high swinging bridge. Although there was the old bridge across the dam, there was no road down the south side of Triplett. Their next door neighbor was Mote Rose who owned three nearby rental houses. She had a telephone and someone called her and warned her to get out, but she would not leave her home. Although her house washed off of its foundation about 25 feet, she survived.

Ralph and his sister, Louvena recalled that terrible night of death and destruction. They had been to the carnival, Louvena recalled, she rode the then daring ride, "Loop-the-Loop." When the rain began around 11 p.m., they left and walked over the swinging bridge to their home, and went to bed. Ralph went to sleep on the porch, but was awakened by the continuous lightening, sheets of rain, and the roar of the water rushing through their front yard. Also, they heard people screaming for help as they were being swept away by the swiftly rising, muddy waters. By then, the family was awake and could see as the lightning flashed, that the swinging bridge was already washed away. Their only hope of survival was to reach the steep hill about 50 yards behind their house.

### LIGHTNING GUIDED THEM

They recalled Mr. Davis trying to get a gasoline lantern lit as each member of the family hastily put their clothes on and headed out the backdoor, grabbing a few items of clothing as they ran toward the door. By that time there was no electricity, and Mr. Davis never did get the lantern lit. But the family could see clearly as the lightening flashed, that the muddy water was swirling through their back yard between them and the hill. Holding hands tightly, they waded through water above their knees to the safety of the hill behind their house. There they survived the night, praying, singing hymns, and hearing the mortal cries for help by those in trees, on house tops, or being swept away by the water.

### LISTED AS MISSING

The Davis house washed downstream about 50 feet and lodged against a tree. It did not break up, and they later moved it back to its foundation. The Davis family was all listed as missing until late the next afternoon. It was then that Ralph and his dad scaled the side of the hill intending to cross into Morehead at the Clearfield Railroad Bridge (but it was washed out). However, they went on to the highway bridge (now 519 at Clearfield) and came back up U.S. 60 and reported their family safe.

### HOLBROOK SAGA OF SURVIVAL

John Will Holbrook, Sr., his wife, Dorothy (Miller) Holbrook, and their 3 children: John Jr., Tommy and Nancy lived with their grandmother in a large two story white house directly across the railroad from the C&O Passenger Depot. (Today's Tourism Office). John Jr. recalled his father calling his uncle Luther and Leona Fraley who lived directly behind them on the banks of Triplett Creek, and warned them of the flood. He then woke up tenant worker, Bill Coleman. He told Bill, who lived in a small cottage behind the main house, to get up and come upstairs because the water was rising quickly. John Will, Sr. then quickly moved Bill and all the family with some of the furniture to the second floor. He then opened the windows of the first floor to allow the water to flow through the house. That relieved some of the pressure of the current and saved the house, otherwise it surely would have been washed away. The water was 5 feet deep in their first floor.

During that night the family listened to the roar of the water and the mournful cries of people stranded on house tops, in tree tops, or on top of boxcars. They could hear the loud prayers of Noah Bowling lodged in a tree top near their home. He was praying loudly, "Lord save old Noah from this flood as you did the first Noah. I'm as good as anyone." John Jr. recalled seeing his Uncle

Lon Fannin's house float right down the railroad track with a table lamp sitting straight up on the front porch. (His uncle's family had already evacuated). It floated on down the track for about one-half mile and hit a box car and broke up into pieces.

### **MRS. RAMEY NEVER RECOVERED**

The eerie screams of Mrs. Custer Ramey (George Ann McBrayer's grandmother), could be heard all over Morehead. She lived in a small cottage near the present M.S.U. Power Plant. As the water rose quickly in her home she climbed into her attic, then the water got up in her attic, and she chopped a hole in the roof and climbed on top of her house. She remained on the roof all night long terror stricken, and screaming for help. A McKinney boy felt so sorry for her he risked his own life and swam to her house, and remained with her throughout that long and frightening night trying to comfort and calm her. Mrs. Ramey survived the flood but never did get over the post traumatic stress syndrome of that night. It remained with her as long as she lived.

### **HOUSES NEVER FOUND**

The day after the flood, and the water subsided, John Jr. and his brother, Tommy, were walking on the railroad west of Morehead and saw their Uncle Luther Fraley walking along the tracks. John Jr. said, "Uncle Luther what are you doing?" His Uncle Luther said, "Oh, I'm just out looking for my house." All he ever found of his house was just a few pieces. But the Holbrook house survived even if it was covered with sticky, stinking muck and mud one foot deep over the first floor. However, the family continued to live in the upstairs part of the house even as they slowly cleaned up the first floor making it habitable again. It took several weeks of hard, dirty work but the house of Holbrook all survived that long night of terror.

The following poem expresses dramatic insight into the tragedy of The Flood of 1939:

### ROWAN COUNTY FLOOD

By Edward Mabry

*It was in the hills of old Kentucky, in the year of thirty-nine.  
There was an awful flood, it was a distressful time.*

*You could see the lightning flashing, you could hear the thunder roar.  
While the water it was splashing, through many a home and store.*

*There were many people walking on the streets of Morehead,  
While others they were sleeping snugly in their beds.*

*It came all unexpected, many people had to die.  
That was a terrible flood, that fell on the fourth of July.*

*The storm could not be conquered, for hours it did last.  
Many people they were struggling, while the water was raising fast.*

*From the little town of Haldeman, through Morehead and Bluestone.  
Many people they were suffering, and left without a home.*

*The storm in all its fury swept across the mountain tops.  
It filled the valleys with water, and destroyed many crops.*

*It washed away many bodies, and covered them in the mud.  
I'm tellin' all you people, that was a terrible flood.*

## 25 DIE IN JULY 4TH FLASH FLOOD

The following names and ages were released by Rowan County Corner Lester Caskey as drowning victims in the Flash Flood that struck Morehead July 4-5, 1939:

Name	Age
1. Geneva Amburgey	47
2. Margie Amburgey	14
3. Oma Amburgey	5
4. Minerva Boggess	77
5. Junior Leon Bays	11
6. Minnie Carter	38
7. Lula Mae Collins	32
8. Maggie Frances Collins	12
9. Mrs. Walter McRoberts	24
10. Ruby Gladys McRoberts	26
11. Harrison McRoberts, Jr.	4
12. Sylvia Lee Perry	16
13. Albert Porter	5
14. Nora Belle Porter	43
15. Mabalá Mae Ratliff	49
16. Loren Ratliff	8
17. Mary Francis Salyers	25
18. Ivan Eugene Salyers	8
19. Bobbie Carl Salyers	6
20. Alberta Mae Salyers	3
21. James Elmer Sparkman	9
22. Bobbie Everette Sparkman	7 months
23. Paul Edwin Sparkman	6
24. Thelma Lee Sparkman	3
25. Emma Tolliver	77

## FLOOD AFTERMATH

*"The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and great was the fall of it." (Matt. 7:27)*

Following what was the worst disaster in Morehead's history, the number one priority was to recover the bodies of flood victims and account for all those listed as missing. After two days, all bodies were recovered and the missing had been accounted for. But tragically, 25 souls had been swept into eternity by the raging water of the usually placid Triplett Creek. In retrospect, many asked why did so many die, and why wasn't more done to rescue those who were stranded. The answer was given by one local citizen.

### EYE WITNESS EXPLANATION

Stanley Iverson, an eyewitness to the tragedy explained it very well when he said he was awakened at 1:45 a.m. by his landlady, Sue Fugate. He dressed quickly and ran down Wilson Avenue to the old Post Office steps. There he saw a helpless, stricken city. The rain was coming down so hard he could hardly see. But he could hear the screams for help four or five blocks away. He could also hear the raging torrent of water rushing down the valley. The water was waist deep in front of the Post Office.

They tried to locate boats to help in the rescue. Dr. Garrad's boat and Henry Haggin's boat were not here. The Hudgins brothers (Howard and Bill) soon arrived with their boat. But at first the current was so swift they could not even get across the street to rescue people on the other side of Main Street. However, by daylight, more boats were located and between 50 and 75 people were rescued from tree tops including Mr. & Mrs. Ted Sparkman, who lost their four children.

The fact that there was so much rain so fast (meteorologists estimated 3 inches in one hour) but it must have even been more

than that. Another reason for the loss of life was the rain came while everyone slept, and the water rose so fast, and the current was so swift. Also the creek channel was so narrow that it was unable to hold that amount of water. All of these factors contributed to the drowning of the 25 victims. Those 25 victims, as a percentage of the population in 1939, compared to 1999, would be about 100 people today. It would be like waking up in the morning with the news that 100 people drowned last night. That gives one an idea of the magnitude of the disaster that struck this community sixty years ago July 4-5.

### MASS FUNERALS CONDUCTED

The next tragic task was burying the dead. That resulted in many mass funeral services. (The City of Morehead should erect a modest plaque honoring those 25 souls drowned in the Flash Flood of 1939. It could be placed as you cross Triplett Creek in the park on the north side of the Wendell Ford Bridge.) Mass funeral services for six members of one family was conducted at Muses Mills in Fleming County on Friday, July 7, 1939, at 2 p.m. Those six from one family were Mrs. Mary Francis Salyers, and her three children, Ivan Eugene, Bobby Carl, and Alberta May. Also, Mrs. Salyers' mother, Mrs. Mahala Ratliff and son, Loren.

On Friday, Mr. & Mrs. Albert Porter were buried at Redwine, Morgan County. Also, Mrs. Lula Collins and daughter, Maggie Frances, and Mrs. Collins' sister, Miss Sylvia Lee Perry, were buried in Clearfield. Friday funerals also included Mrs. Minerva Boggess who was buried in Harrison County, and Mrs. Emma Tolliver, who was buried in Morehead's Caudill Cemetery. Friday funerals were also conducted at Waltz for Mrs. Minnie Carter, and her son, Junior Leon Bays. Funeral services were held Friday at 2 p.m. at Cranston for Mrs. Minnie McRoberts, her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Walter McRoberts, and son, Harrison. Funeral services were

conducted Saturday for Mrs. Geneva Amburgey and her two daughters, Margie and Oma.

### HEALTH AND SANITATION PROBLEMS

After burying the dead, the next task faced by the Health Department was to make sure the water supply was safe. The water was tested daily, and city water customers were urged to boil their water for several days. Those with wells were urged not to use their water until it had been tested, or pumped out. Dr. Evans, County Health Director, said that the county would be in a disease danger zone for a month and those who had not taken typhoid shots should do so. One refugee was heard to ask another, "Have you been embalmed for typhoid yet?"

Emergency electric power was restored by volunteer crews from Cynthiana and Mt. Sterling, working round the clock. Route 32 to Flemingsburg was the only road open to Morehead. Trains were all rerouted through Maysville and back to Ashland because one mile of track had been washed away on each side of Morehead. Also one small railroad bridge was swept away. Telephone service was restored within 24 hours, but lost again after a short time. However, the local Red Cross representative, Rene Wells, was able to contact the state headquarters and Red Cross representatives were here within 24 hours.

### RED CROSS ARRIVES

The American National Red Cross was made the official relief agency in Morehead by Mayor Warren C. Lappin. They set up their temporary headquarters in the City Hall. National representatives were Miss Helen Moses, Richard and Maurice Reddy, as well as dozens of other experienced workers. They were assigned to take charge of the disaster relief in Rowan County. The Red Cross began immediately by providing emergency help to refugee families

that had lost their homes and possessions. They set up temporary shelters in the Morehead High School Gym, local churches, courthouse, and college dormitories. Blankets, cots, and bedding were brought in. A field kitchen was established in the High School Gym to provide free meals for the homeless. Morehead College housed 25 state highway patrolmen to help with security, and two doctors from the State Health Department to help with medical care. They also housed homeless families in the dormitories.

Mail service was resumed on Friday, and the George Washington Train at 6 p.m. was the first train to get through the rebuilt tracks. With the dead buried, the homeless cared for, and water, electricity, phone service, mail service, and train service restored, the dirty, messy job of cleaning up began in earnest. It was difficult to get the clean up started because of "gawkers."

#### **SIGHTSEERS INTERFERE WITH CLEAN UP**

On Sunday, the sightseers streamed into Morehead. It was called "guess," not "guest" day. The idea was to guess how many sightseers were in town that day. Stan Iverson guessed 2,000 and was nearly laughed out of town. Bill Sample and Roy Cornette guessed 25,000. That was considered more likely, when Jim Clay said 596 cars and two motorcycles passed his house on Route 32 in one hour. Also, airplanes were flying overhead photographing and viewing the destruction. Best estimates of the Sunday sightseers ranged from 25,000 to 50,000. This writer has no idea how many people were here that day, but there were "several" because I could hardly ride a bicycle to deliver my papers.

Those flood victims with something left to salvage, began cleaning away the messy, dirty, stinking mud from their damaged businesses, homes, furniture, and yards. The valiant volunteer firemen, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) who had helped in searching for bodies, now began to assist in the clean up. Those

who had something left to restore were the fortunate ones. Many never even found one piece of their house, let alone furniture. There were some instances of people finding their property and animals they thought they had lost. Jesse Caudill's hog swam out of the pen and was carried downstream to the site of the carnival. There Jesse's hog tried to join the carnival. He finally found his pig in the cab of one of the carnival trucks. He also found his cow grazing in a field in Farmers.

### **PYTHON FOUND DEAD**

The carnival had a complete loss. They had a 350 lb. Python snake in its cage. When the water receded, the cage was turned over and the gigantic snake was not there. The company printed leaflets and distributed a warning all over town that the snake was loose. People panicked, but after turning the cage upright and cleaning out the driftwood, they found the snake downed in its cage. This writer did not see the dead snake, and I often wondered if that was told just to calm the people. But for the rest of that summer I watched for that snake whenever I was in the woods. However, the next year, I was not worried because I knew it could not survive our cold winters.

The Red Cross moved their headquarters to the second floor of the Peoples Bank on Railroad Street (First Street), and began the process of registering those people damaged by the flood. They announced that 700 people were eligible to receive Red Cross assistance. One young teenage girl came in for help. She was barefoot and needed some shoes, and she held up her mud caked foot to emphasize the need. There were five shiny bright red toenails showing through the caked mud on her foot. She got her shoes.

### **SEVERE FINANCIAL LOSSES**

In addition to the 200 homes lost and 800 damaged, many Morehead and Rowan County businesses were devastated. Big-

gest business losses sustained were: J.F. Sparks Carnival, \$38,000; Morehead and North Fork Railroad, \$20,000 (steel bridge and one half mile of track); Union Grocery, \$30,000; Big Store Company, \$15,000; Big Store Furniture Company, \$15,000; C&O Railroad, \$22,000; City of Morehead, \$10,000; Elam-Wheeler, \$15,000; Morehead Lumber Company, \$10,000; and the Economy Store, \$15,000. Businesses with major damage but un-estimated included: the Lee Clay Tile Plant, the Imperial Cleaners, and the Rowan County News (they missed publishing one issue, awaiting a new part to arrive from Chicago).

Other firms less severely damaged included: W.S. Allen Beer Distributors, \$1,500; Carr-Perry, \$5,000; Morehead Independent, \$5,000; J.A. Allen Grocery, \$3,500; Eagles Nest Restaurant, \$1,500; Standard Oil Company \$5,000; and Kennard Hardware, \$4,000.

Other businesses damaged but unestimated included: Calverts Garage, Model Laundry, Myrtle's Tea Room, Imperial Cleaners, People's Hotel, The Bargain Store, Brown Motor Company, The Regal Store, The Golden Rule Store, and Johnson Barber Shop. Of all those businesses damaged by The Flood, the only one still in business sixty-years later is The Big Store Furniture Company.

### FARM CROPS AND ANIMALS LOST

Rowan County Agent, Goff, estimated that 900 of the 1,100 Rowan County farm homes were wrecked or damaged. The biggest loss was from erosion. Agent Goff estimated that 40 percent of the tobacco crop was lost, valued at \$50,000. Also, destroyed according to his estimate were: 200 head of livestock; five to seven thousand acres of corn; three to four thousand chickens; three thousand acres of hay; 40,000 rods of fence; and many other farm crops and equipment. Agent Goff emphasized that it was still early enough to plant some crops eg. Buckwheat, millet and potatoes. The county qualified for special low interest loans to help rebuild.

Businessmen, companies, home owners, and farmers were determined to rebuild a bigger and better Morehead and Rowan County.

### WASHINGTON SENDS HELP

A special bill was introduced in Congress by Joe Bates (and passed) to appropriate federal funds to help the flood victims of Rowan County. Many federal agencies provided some valuable help following the flood. But in most instances, clean up and salvage was accomplished by the blood, sweat and tears of the property owners themselves.

Mr. W.E. Taylor of Washington, D.C. and Mr. L.S. Castor of Cleveland, Ohio, arrived in Morehead July 10, 1939. They represented the Disaster Loan Corporation, authorized by Congress in January, 1937, to make appropriate and necessary loans to victims of floods, tornadoes, and other disasters. As soon as that office opened for business in Room 1 of the Morehead High School, they began immediately accepting applications for loans to assist in rebuilding, and replacing property damaged by The Flood.

### REBUILDING BEGINS

Other federal agencies that assisted in the rebuilding included: WPA (Works Progress Administration); NYA (National Youth Authority), and the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). Also, volunteer firemen, electrical workers, construction workers, and equipment operators all rushed to Morehead to help in the flood aftermath. Also, embalmers from neighboring city funeral homes came in to assist with that necessary but unpleasant task.

Those that had homes and businesses covered by the water, but were salvageable, had the unpleasant task of cleaning away the one or two feet of sticky mud. Some buildings that washed to the middle of the street were torn down, others were moved back to their original site. One home owner "Ditty Bo" Ramey's house

was washed several hundred feet down stream across the railroad track and landed in a vacant lot next door to Mrs. Miller. Mrs. Miller then sold the lot to "Ditty Bo" and he moved in and cleaned up his home on its new site. But many just rebuilt completely because "They allowed as how it would be easier to build another one than to clean that one up."

### **REBUILD A BETTER SAFER TOWN**

Morehead citizens were determined to rebuild after THE FLOOD, even though very few of the losses were covered by insurance. Most people had to borrow money to start over again. But they did! Their recovery from the greatest disaster to ever strike Morehead was phenomenal. They rebuilt a bigger and better town and community. Many years later with the help of another federal agency, the Gateway Ad. District, grants were approved over the years to dredge and widen Triplett's channel. Also funds were received to build flood walls between the city and the creek. While those were under construction, many people questioned whether that was a wise expenditure of funds. But old time residents remembered and were thankful for those flood walls. Roger Russell, while working for the Gateway Ad. District, wrote several grants for those projects, amounting to millions of dollars. Those, along with other funds, received by Morehead and Rowan County, hopefully will prevent another tragedy like The Flood.

When heavy rains hit Morehead even today, there is still some flooding along First Street. But when residents drive along the new by-pass and look over at the high green flood wall or drive over to the Don Greenhill City Park, and look down stream at the wide Triplett Creek Channel, be thankful.

According to the Book of Genesis, God sent His rainbow to assure people he would never again destroy the world with water. Hopefully, the widening of the creek bed, and building of the flood

walls, will mean that Morehead will never again suffer the death and destruction they suffered during The Flood of 1939.

## FIRE AND FIREMEN

*"We went through fire and through water, but you brought us out."  
(Ps. 66:12)*

Every city and town across this great land of ours has had many major fires and valiant firefighters. Morehead is no exception, and throughout its history has had a record of disastrous fires, and courageous firemen. Morehead, just as in every community, has tried to make proper preparation to combat those fires when they occurred.

During the late 1800s, most of the city's firefighting was done by friends and neighbors as they formed bucket brigades. By the early 1900s, not much had changed in the city's ability to extinguish those fires as they occurred. However, practically every fire was a lesson in fire fighting futility, because by the time help arrived, it was too late, and, about all that could be saved was a few pieces of furniture, and a few personal items. The reasons for that was the buildings were made of highly combustionable wood and the slow response time, as well as the shortage of available water.

## FIRE PROMPTS PURCHASE

February 21, 1914, was a bitter cold night in Morehead. That was also the night that the new Morehead Power Plant was completely destroyed by fire. After connecting the city power lines to the Maggard and Bradley private power lines, the City Council decided more was needed to be done to improve the local firefighting capability. It was then the City Council voted to purchase a fire engine, and establish a fire department to be manned by volunteers.

The city immediately ordered its first fire engine from the American La France Fire Engine Company. (A company still in business

MOREHEAD FLOOD Database.wdb - Flood Contacts

Last Name	First Name	Address	City	State	Phone	source		
Allen	Merle				784.5332	Gary Lewis	survivor	
Ambergey	Canna		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	46
Archgold	George	WBTV-TV 7	Morehead	KY	606.784.7515			
Bailey	George					Louisville Courier-Journal July 6, 1939	Photographer for Courier-Journal who stumbled onto flood	
Baker	Cleo	438 Heritage Place	Morehead	KY	606.784.4406	Oneida Caudill		
Barker	Ollie		Farmers	KY		Neil Wheeler in AV		
Barker	Clifford		Morehead	KY		Neil Wheeler in AV at MSU		
Barker	Cliff				784.7684		survivor	
Bishop	Bob		Morehead	KY		Neil Wheeler in AV		
Bishop	Robert					Gary Lewis		?
Bogges	Minerva		Morehead			Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	77
Bradley	Pucky"		Morehead	KY	606.784.5417	called me on phone		
Brown	Pearl				784.4228	Gary Lewis	Survivor	
Brown	Rose	101 East Second S	Morehead			PR	susrvior	KY
Calvert	George				784.6515	Gary Lewis, Rowan Co. Historical Society	survivor	
Calvert	Oscar				784.6515	Gary Lewis, Rowan Co. Historical Society	survivor	
Carr	Walter				784.7145	Gary Lewis	rescuer	
Carter	Minnie		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	38
Caskey	Lester					Louisville Courier-Journal July 6, 1939	Coroner	
Clayton	Billie	429 Allen Ave.	Morehead	KY	784.5494	PR	Survivor	
Cline	Edith				784.6107	Gary Lewis, Rowan Co. Historical Society	survivor	
Collins	Lula Mae Perry		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	32
Collins	Maggie Frances		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	12
Cornette	Douglas					Louisville Courier-Journal July 6, 1939	reporter who accompanied photographer to Morehead	
Davis	William C.				784.4034	Gary Lewis, Rowan Co. Historical Society	survivor	
Dean	Lloyd	6770 US 60 E.	Morehead	KY	784.9145	PR	survivor	
Ellis	Jack	550 W. Sun St.	Morehead	KY	606.784.7473	called me on phone on Tues. Feb. 17		
Fannin	Minnie	317 Heritage Place	Morehead	KY	606.784.6190	Called me on phone	survivor	
Hamm	John "Pete"	1542 McBrayor Rd.	Clearfield	KY 40313		PR		
Harmon	Jay	75 Sharon Dr.	Clearfield	KY 40313	784.1340	PR	survivor	
Hutchinson	Alpha					Gary Lewis		?
Jayne	Mary Alice					Gary Lewis		?
Jones	Malcolm		Bluestone	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal		
Kautz	Julia				784.5893	Gary Lewis	Survivor	
Kline	Terry		Bath Co.		606.247.2210			
Lane	Bill				784.4458	Gary Lewis	survivor	
Mabry	Ed	P.O. Box 389	Morehead	KY	606.784.4475	his son Danny Mabry, of Mabry Carpets, called me	eyewitness	76
McRoberts	Mrs. Walter		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	24
Morehouse	Herb	959 Dry Creek Rd.	Clearfield	KY 40413		PR	survivor	

Rick Waltz - Aunt found dead in a tree - body stripped of all clothing  
 Lena Rae Brooks - Father attended the carnival that A.M.

*Rayn- Roberts* MOREHEAD FLOOD Database.wdb - Flood Contacts

Last Name	First Name	Address	City	State	Phone	source		
Nutter	Carol							Reference Librarian at MSU
Perry	Sylvia Lee		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	16
Porter	Albert		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	46
Porter	Mrs. Albert		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	45
Ramey	Pauline	MSU				Neil Wheeler in AV @ MSU		
Ratliff	Mahala Mae		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	49
Ratliff	Lorn		Morehead	KY		Louisville courier-Journal	Victim	8
Reynolds	PAul J.				784.9792	Gary Lewis	survivor	
Reynolds	Mabel				784.9792	Yvonne Baldwin		
Roberts	Millie					Louisville Courier-Journal		
Salyers	Mary		Morehead	KY		Louisville-Courier-Journal July 5, 1939		25
Salyers	Ivan Eugene		Morehead			Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	8
Salyers	Bobby Carl		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	6
Salyers	Alberta Mae		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	3
Salyers	Curtis		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal, July 5, 1939	survivor	29
Sparkman	James Elmer		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	9
Sparkman	Paul Edwin		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	6
Sparkman	Bobby Everett		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	7 months
Sparkman	Thelma Lee		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	4
Sparks	Hattie				784.7684	Gary Lewis, Rowan Co. Historical Society	survivor	
Toliver	Emma		Morehead	KY		Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	77
Trent	Omer	939 W. First St.	Morehead	KY	784.4617	PR	survivor	
Unidentified	Woman about 25"					Louisville Courier-Journal	Victim	about 25
Whittle	Geneova	4970 Big Perry Rd.	Morehead	KY	784.7929	From PR	Survivor	
Williams	Hobert				784.9777	Gary Lewis, Rowan Co. Historical Society	Survivor	

Reference Librarian at MSU  
sister of Lula Perry Collins

Lost one son, Lorn age 8  
son of Mahala Mae Ratliff  
Lived in town during flood.  
Goes to Yvonne's church.  
Paper lists her as missing, along with five members of her family  
Mrs. Salyers lost three children in the flood: Ivan Eugene, 8; Bobby Carl, 6

He lost six members of his family. He was a WPA worker. "I woke them."

Cliff Barker's mother-in-law. Helped clean and dress the bodies of flood victims

Was 20 years old. Had just gotten married. Retrieved bodies.

The woman with the boot story  
Was driving on Main St. an met a wall of water. Spent part of night in tree.

*Beulah Black Rayor*  
LOGAN, FLORA (MRS. EUGENE) 421 Bishop Ct.

# CORONER RELEASES COMPLETE LIST OF BODIES FOUND IN FLOOD

County Coroner Lester Caskey reported the total list of casualties today as follows:

Mrs. Mary Frances Salyers, 25, and three children, Ivan Eugene, 8; Bobby Carl, 6, and Alberta Mae, 3.

Mrs. Mahala Mae Ratliff, 49, and son, Lorn, 8. Mrs. Ratliff was the mother of Mrs. Salyers.

James Elmer Sparkman, 9, and brothers and sister, Paul Edwin, 6; Bobby Everett, 7 months, and Thelma Lee, 4.

Mrs. Minerva Boggess, 77.

Albert Porter, 46, and wife, 45. Mrs. Minnie Carter, 38, and son, Junior Bays, 11.

Mrs. Canna Amburgey, 46, and two daughters, 8 and 14.

Mrs. Emma Tolliver, 77.

Mrs. Lula Mae Perry Collins, 32, and daughter, Maggie Frances, 12.

Miss Sylvia Lee Perry, 16, sister of Mrs. Collins.

Mrs. Walter McRoberts, 24, a widow, and daughter-in-law, Ruby McRoberts, 22, and son, Harrison McRoberts, Jr.

## FUNERAL SERVICES ARE HELD FOR 25

### Six From One Family Buried Friday

Last rites for the 25 persons drowned in the flood were held Thursday, Friday and Saturday at various points in Rowan, Morgan and Harrison counties.

Six from one family, Mrs. Mary Frances Salyers, and her three children, Ivan Eugene, Bobby Carl and Alberta Mae, and Mrs. Salyers' mother, Mrs. Mahala Mae Ratliff and son, Lorn, were buried at Open Fork Friday afternoon. Funeral services were held at Muses Mill.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Porter were taken to Redwine, Morgan county, for burial Friday.

Mrs. Lula Collins, and daughter,

(Cont. on Page 4)

## FUNERAL SERVICES ARE HELD FOR 25

(Cont. from Page 1)

Maggie Frances, and Mrs. Collins' sister, Miss Sylvia Lee Perry, were buried at Clearfield Friday morning. Funeral services took place at 10 o'clock.

Mrs. Minerva Boggess was taken to Harrison county after a short funeral service at the Lane funeral home. A more extended service will be held in her home county.

### Mrs. Tolliver Buried Friday

Last rites for Mrs. Emma Tolliver were held at the Saints church at 10 o'clock Friday morning. Burial took place at Caudill cemetery.

Funeral services for Mrs. Minnie Carter and son, Junior Bays, were held in Waltz Friday. Burial at Sardis cemetery.

Funeral services for Mrs. Minnie Roberts, her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Walter McRoberts and son, Harrison, were held at 2 p. m. Friday near Cranston.

Services for Mrs. Canna Am-burgey and two daughters may be held Saturday, according to one report.



# **Other Floods in Rowan County: 1950**

**1960**

**2004**

June  
22,  
1950

# Flash Flood Makes Lake Of Morehead Business Section

Heavy Rains Monday Wash Out Many  
Bridges; Water Overflows Crop Land;  
Morehead Center Of Severe Storm

Another flash flood—not as disastrous as that of 1939, but of a more freakish nature—hit Morehead and Rowan County Monday afternoon.

A cloudburst that seemed to center in and near the city could have caused more property damage than the great 1939 flood if rain had continued falling 30 minutes longer.

As it was practically all of Morehead became a lake of water with rowboats being used on Railroad, Raine and connecting streets. Although there were reports of people losing their lives chief of police Ed Hall said these are entirely false and were caused by hysteria as many residents became panicky.

Storm sewers in Morehead virtually exploded which caused some homes to be flooded in the higher parts of the town. An example was at the home of George Cline on Bays Avenue, possibly 20 or 30 feet higher elevation than Main Street. The house was flooded as well as several other dwellings in that section.

Practically every basement in Morehead was flooded.

## Storm Sewers Explode

Overloaded storm sewers threw water from second street into the rear of several Main Street business places. The Martindale Furniture Company, Main and College Boulevard, suffered perhaps the heaviest loss as water poured through the rear and out the front, making a river out of this large establishment. The same situation resulted at the Southern Belle and the Jayne Electric Company, a block west.

Although Railroad Street was covered with water, only two business places in that neighborhood had extensive damage. This was at the Big Store Furniture Company and the Home Cash Grocery.

Unlike the 1939 storm which centered on Christy Creek tributaries, east and south of Morehead, this storm had its apex at Morehead. If as much rain had fallen on Christy Creek, which flows through Morehead via Triplett Creek, Monday's flood would probably have eclipsed that of 1939.

## Farmers Hard Hit

Hundreds of homes throughout the county were inundated. Farmers, which always gets the worst of floods in this section, was covered by water and most homes there were flooded. The water also entered homes in west Morehead and along Triplett Creek from Morehead to Farmers.

Heaviest damage seems to have been to crops and livestock. Reports are continuing to come in of horses and cattle lost, while practically every farmer who lives along a stream in the county lost chickens and other poultry.

So heavy and so general was the rain that it has been estimated three-fourths of all land

in the county under cultivation was covered by the water.

### Two Floods Same Day

Monday afternoon's flood, followed one of lesser, but nevertheless severe proportions that morning. Rain which started falling around 10 o'clock Sunday night and continued until daylight sent creeks out of their banks and flooded some homes in the county. Just as this was receding the second and heavier cloudburst hit.

Ballast was washed from the tracks of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company at three places west of Morehead, near the Brady curve. Railroad repair crews were dispatched here from all sections of the Lexington division. Train 22, the George Washington, was held up an hour and 22 minutes Monday evening until workmen repaired the roadbed.

The railroad was clear four hours later for passenger train 24 but it was forced to proceed at a snail's pace.

### Bridges Are Lost

The northern part of Rowan County had a worse flood than in 1939. Old-timers said it was the highest the water had ever been in the North Fork section.

At least eight sizeable highway bridges were washed out by the deluge. County Judge Sam Green said that bridges were washed out on Lower Lick Fork, Dry Creek, Oxley Branch, Thomas Addition, McBrayer and Easterling bridges on the Flemingsburg road, Big Brushy, Wagner and Craney.

Farmers from the Holly Fork section were in Morehead Tuesday protesting a road construction project there. They claimed the entire section of the county was flooded . . . that practically all crops had been lost . . . and damage was the heaviest in history. They blamed most of the trouble there on the replacement of bridges with the new army type culverts, claiming that trees and debris quickly stopped up the series of culverts and threw the water back on their farms and homes.

Judge Green said that the flood caught the county and the highway department in a precarious position. Most of the county's equipment had been dispatched to the Lower Licking section and could not be obtained because of bridge washouts. Likewise, much equipment from the state highway garage in Morehead had been sent to other counties.

### Aid Promised

Rural highway commissioner Emerson Beauchamp said at Frankfort that men from his department would be in Morehead Wednesday morning to consult with county officials and pledged that bridge and other repair work would be speeded up because an emergency existed. Similar cooperation was promised by highway commissioner John Keck.

### Recedes Rapidly

As in previous flash floods the water in Morehead left almost as fast as it came . . . but it poured down Triplett Creek to farmers, giving that section a double dose.

Business in Morehead ceased after 3:30 Monday afternoon, most places locking their doors. There was reason for most people to believe . . . as most of them did . . . that this was a repeat of the 1939 flood which claimed 25 lives and did millions of dollars worth of damage. If Triplett Creek had come up two more feet practically every business place and home south of Main Street would have been inundated . . . as it was the water just reached the floor in most places.

Police roped off everything south of Main Street during the flood. One driver sustained cuts about the face when he ran into one of these blockades.

Traffic was at a standstill and hundreds of car motors were flooded.

Fortunately schools in the county are on vacation, else most of them would have been forced to close.

The flood cut Morehead off from Clearfield, a mile southwest. Murvel Crosley, president of the Morehead and North Fork Railroad, said that considerable damage was done to their company, principally at the Clearfield round house. Heavy sustaining cables saved the M. and N. F. bridges on Dry Creek but Crosley said that damage in that vicinity of the county was extremely heavy.

1960



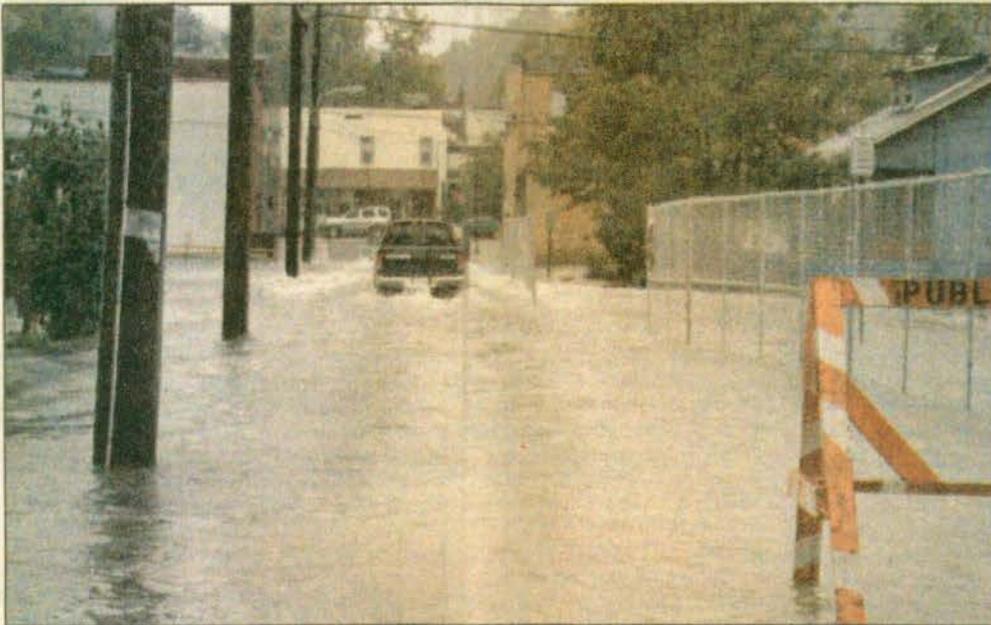
JULY 3 1960

—Photos by Clyde Cooley  
NOT AS BAD AS '39—The photographer stood on Morehead's Main Street Sunday afternoon and snapped this picture looking down Fairbanks Avenue to Railroad Street. This flash flood lacked about 3½ feet reaching the crest of the July 4, 1939 stage when 27 people drowned.



RAILROAD TRACKS NOT DAMAGED—The waters were receding Sunday when this picture was made. Most stores in this vicinity and the railroad station, at left, were flooded, but train service resumed Sunday evening. (Other pictures of Sunday's flood and the 1939 cloudburst appear on

# IVAN terrible for Rowan



Kim Hamilton photo  
A pickup tries to navigate the flooded intersection of First Street and Hargis Avenue on Friday at noon.

BY TONIA SEXTON

Staff Writer

tsexton@moreheadnewsgroup.com

Hurricane Ivan decided Friday to spread his wrath further north into Kentucky and West Virginia, causing major flooding in Rowan, Menifee and surrounding counties in the region.

The rain began during the early hours of Friday morning and continued into Friday night causing schools to close and roads to be shut down for hours. Several accidents occurred in the area.

Downtown streets of Morehead had to be blocked off by noon and several state and county roads were shut down due to water across the roadways such as KY 519; U.S. 60 west and U.S. 60 east near Caskey's Jewelry.

Schools in Rowan County were in session Friday morning, but the students were sent home before noon due to flooding.

See IVAN on A-2

## Clearfield bus students delayed by flood water

By KIM HAMILTON  
News Editor  
kimhamilton@alltel.net

Some Clearfield students who rely on the bus to take them home were temporarily delayed

at the school due to flood water Friday.

Flood water from Hurricane Ivan hit Morehead and Rowan County Friday morning and doused Triplett Creek in Morehead with an extra 5.6

inches of rain and in Farmers with an extra 5.2 inches of rain, according to emergency management in Rowan County.

Water began rising at around 10 a.m., but school bus drivers could still access Clearfield

Elementary at that time, according to assistant schools superintendent Judy Cain.

The decision was made to dismiss Rowan County Schools at

See DELAY on A-2

## Delay From A-1

noon.

By that time, creeks had overflowed in the Dry Creek, KY 519 and Clearfield areas and water had risen as much as four to five feet in some areas.

"One bus that makes two runs out of Clearfield left successfully, then we were left in for a while with no buses able to get in," Cain said. "But by that time, many parents had picked up their children."

By 1:30-2 p.m., Cain said, there were only 68 students left in the building.

"Everybody was safe, but it just wasn't safe for us to take the buses in for a while," she said.

By about 3:15-3:30 p.m., the water began receding enough so buses could resume student pickup. At that time, there were only about 30 students left, Cain said.

Ted Trent, Rowan Schools director of transportation, said that the situation at Clearfield occurs when water comes quickly down KY 519 from the Save-A-Lot area and from McBrayer Road on the other side from the SealMaster area.

When KY 519 floods, it cuts off access to Dry Creek, which cuts off access to East Clack Mountain. When McBrayer floods, it cuts off access to a large residential area.

At one point, buses were sent through town and up Christy Creek to CCC Trail to deliver students who could reach their homes the back way. But it took longer to get students to Dry Creek itself, as it was flooded in various places.

"There was never any danger, and faculty and staff was there with the students," Trent said. "It ended up just taking longer to get students home."

The last child was delivered at 4:30 p.m., about the same time it would have taken during a normal 3:30 day, he said.

"But it was a hectic afternoon," Cain said.

No boats were necessary to extract students, Trent said.

How deep was the water?

One example of water depth was the parking lot at Save-A-Lot on KY 519. Areas there were measured between four and five feet deep, according to Ronnie Day, emergency management director for Morehead and Rowan County.

At the True Value store on First Street, there was 18 inches of water, Day said, and at South Wilson, water depth there was more like two feet.

In town, it was noon lunch break for many and a driver's nightmare for those trying to access restaurants or to

navigate town.

Vehicles could not gain access to a dry Main Street from the bypass or First Street because access streets were inundated with water. Those streets were the long intersection that connects Main to the U.S. 60 bypass, the intersection of First and Hargis Avenue and South Wilson.

At one point, water started covering the bypass, too, when a tributary overflowed near Abner Construction.

Later on, U.S. 60 west was temporarily closed from about 4:30 to 6 p.m. Dry Creek was the first to be closed, at around 10 a.m. KY 519 was closed at around 11:30 a.m., and McBrayer Road near SealMaster was also closed from around 1-4:30 p.m., according to emergency reports.

Some drivers, though, plowed through the water in town in an attempt to reach their destinations.

By 5 p.m., or time for people to go home from work, most of the flood water in the city had receded.

Farther west on U.S. 60 west, residents of Salt Lick had a much worse time with flood waters. Flood water entered about 25 homes and forced evacuation of other houses and mobile homes.

Ivan:

Schools in Menifee County were called off early Friday morning, and due to torrential rains, Menifee County Judge-Executive James Trimble declared a state of emergency before 9 a.m. Friday for the county.

Assistant Menifee County Judge-Executive Kelly Adams said several of their roads were impassible, including State Route 1274.

In Rowan County, KY 519 at the U.S. 60 intersection was shut down before noon when water covered the road and rose into the Citgo parking lot and into the Papaw's Fruit Market lot, said William Fisher, administration specialist with the Kentucky State Highway Department in Rowan County.

"Right now, out by Save A Lot the water is over the

road," Fisher said. "It got pretty bad for a while there. I think the rain is over now and hopefully things will get better soon."

According to the National Weather Service, KY 7, between Morgan County and Morehead had to be shut down about 2 p.m. Friday due to a mudslide.

## Remnants of Hurricane Ivan September 2004



HWY 519 looking towards Clearfield



Trying to get out of Clearfield via McBrayer Road and Tile Storage Road

(photos by  
Barb Hunter)



Views from the By-Pass



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RESOURCES DIVISION

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NOTABLE LOCAL FLOODS OF 1939

Part 2. FLOOD OF JULY 5, 1939

IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WATER SUPPLY PAPER 967-B

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REPORTS SECTION**

**Water-Supply Paper 967-B**

**NOTABLE LOCAL FLOODS OF 1939**

**PART 2. FLOOD OF JULY 5, 1939**

**IN EASTERN KENTUCKY**

by

**FLOYD F. SCHRADER**



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## CONTENTS

---

	Page
Abstract .....	41
Introduction .....	42
Acknowledgments .....	43
Description of storm .....	44
Rainfall .....	45
Flood discharge .....	51
General features .....	51
Peak discharge measurements .....	52
Summary .....	53
Measurements by Geological Survey .....	53
Measurements by Corps of Engineers .....	54
Estimates of maximum rate of flood flow .....	55
Gaging-station records .....	55
Index .....	59

## ILLUSTRATIONS

---

	Page
Plate 7. Damage to buildings in Morehead by floodwaters of Triplett Creek: <i>A</i> , Home overturned by force of flood flow; <i>B</i> , Store forced from foundation .....	Facing p. 58
8. Damage to bridges on Triplett Creek and Cope Fork: <i>A</i> , Wash-out of railroad bridge on Triplett Creek near Morehead; <i>B</i> , Remains of Cockrell Bridge over Cope Fork on State Highway 15 .....	Facing p. 58
9. Map of eastern Kentucky showing location of observations of rain- fall and isohyets for total precipitation July 4-5, 1939, and loca- tion of stream-gaging stations and miscellaneous measurements of flood flow .....	Facing p. 58
10. <i>A</i> , Receding floodwaters of Triplett Creek; <i>B</i> , View of Frozen Creek at mouth showing sand deposits and stripped vegetation Facing p. 58	Facing p. 58
11. <i>A</i> , Boone Fork, in Frozen Creek Basin, showing thick deposit of mud; <i>B</i> , Erosion on hillside in Wolfe County .....	Facing p. 58
Figure 6. Discharge hydrographs at gaging stations in Kentucky and Licking River Basins .....	58
7. Stage hydrographs at gaging stations in Kentucky and Licking River Basins .....	58

## NOTABLE LOCAL FLOODS OF 1939

### Part 2. FLOOD OF JULY 5, 1939, IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

By FLOYD F. SCHRADER

#### ABSTRACT

In a period of a few hours during the night of July 4-5, 1939, there occurred in eastern Kentucky an exceptionally severe storm attended by precipitation reaching cloudburst proportions. The storm was somewhat limited in areal extent and principally affected the counties of Lewis, Fleming, Carter, Rowan, Elliott, Menifee, Morgan, Wolfe, Magoffin, and Breathitt in the upper reaches of the Kentucky, Licking, and Little Sandy River Basins and Tygarts Creek Basin. The resultant runoff from the storm produced flood stages and discharges on the small streams of this region exceeding any previously witnessed, and the computed unit discharges for headwater and small tributary streams were higher than any heretofore obtained in Kentucky. Although the runoff was intense at many locations, it was apparently greatest in the Triplett and Frozen Creek areas in Rowan and Breathitt Counties.

Descriptions of the rainfall, including such phrases as "continuous sheets of water" and "creating a complete lack of visibility," indicate that the intensity was exceptionally high for short periods and that in some localities this intense rate of rainfall was maintained for a period of almost an hour.

The conditions of stream channels and overflow sections was considered evidence of the unusually high rates of flow. These indications of exceptional runoff were verified by measurements of discharge, principally by the slope-area method. The field data for the computations were obtained shortly after the flood at a number of places in the Triplett and Frozen Creek Basins. The drainage areas at the various locations ranged from less than 5 square miles to 75 square miles, and the results computed by the slope-area method showed a peak discharge exceeding 2,000 second-feet per square mile on one or more small streams draining areas of less than 10 square miles.

There were no stream-gaging stations in the area of high runoff, and accordingly no record was available showing the rapid rise and recession of the flood on any of the small streams. Except for one station with a drainage area of 140 square miles, none of the drainage areas for the half dozen or more gaging stations in the general region were less than 350 square miles.

According to a survey by the Corps of Engineers, United States Army, the damage resulting from the storm and flood was caused principally by the high velocities and extreme flows in overflow channels and by the heavy deposits of debris. The greatest damage occurred in the vicinity of Jackson in Breathitt County, of Morehead in Rowan County, and in parts of Lewis and Carter Counties. The damage in these four counties was estimated at nearly \$2,000,000. A total of 78 persons lost their lives over the entire storm area.

### INTRODUCTION

The storm of July 4-5, 1939, in eastern Kentucky was of brief duration but extreme intensity, and it produced unusual flood flows in the streams of Carter, Rowan, Elliott, Morgan, Wolfe and Breathitt Counties over parts of the Kentucky and Licking River Basins and Tygarts Creek Basin. The storm commenced late in the evening of July 4, reached maximum intensity during the early morning hours of July 5, and had passed before daybreak. The unusual occurrence is described as a series of violent thunderstorms accompanied by continuous and brilliant lightning and extremely hard rains. The exceptionally heavy downpours resulted in rainfall depths for the brief storm period probably exceeding any previously known for a similar period in Kentucky. Although reliable measurements of rainfall depths at or near the center of the storm were not available, it was estimated on the basis of descriptions by local residents and reliable information in adjacent areas that depths of rainfall exceeding 12 inches and possibly approaching 20 inches occurred at the center of the storm. The rainfall was so intense that it was described as creating a complete lack of visibility.

The area that produced high flood runoff was irregular in shape, roughly 10 to 20 miles wide and 60 miles long, and extended northward from the vicinity of Jackson in Breathitt County, east-central Kentucky, nearly to the center of Lewis County, adjacent to the Ohio River. Frozen and Triplett Creeks, tributaries of North Fork Kentucky River and Licking River, respectively, probably produced the greatest rates of flow, although there were indications on many other small streams that exceptionally high discharges occurred there also.

Stream-flow records were obtained from a few gaging stations on the main streams or large tributary streams of the Kentucky and Licking Rivers. The smallest drainage area of any of these gaging stations was 140 square miles and the next smallest 363 square miles. Several of the stations were on the edge of the area of high runoff. Only small parts of the several drainage areas for these stations were affected by the storm; most of the stream flows at the gaging stations came from those parts of the basins where the runoff was relatively light. Accordingly, no continuous stream-flow record directly reflected the unusual flood conditions on the small tributary streams. Information for these gaging stations is provided in other sections of the report.

The damage and loss of life from the storm and flood, considering the small size of area affected and the relatively sparse population, were exceptionally large. Although rural property and crops suffered the greatest damage, transportation facilities were disrupted, communication lines were torn down, and stores, merchandise, homes and schools were destroyed or damaged. (See pls. 7, 8.) Most of the damage was caused by the high velocity and large flow in overflow channels and by deposits of debris. Some damage to crops and soil was caused by surface and gully erosion. The greatest damage occurred in the vicinity of Jackson in Breathitt County, of Morehead in Rowan County, in the southeastern part of Lewis County, and in the southwestern part of Carter County. Over the entire storm area 78 persons lost their lives. The greatest loss of life occurred near Jackson, Ky., the greatest property damage in

Morehead, Ky., and the greatest crop damage in Lewis and Carter Counties. A survey of the damage in Breathitt, Rowan, Lewis, and Carter Counties indicated that the total loss in those four counties was approximately \$2,000,000. The smaller losses in Bath, Johnson, Wolfe, Mason, and Clark Counties were not estimated. The information on flood losses and damages contained herein is based on a survey conducted by field parties of the Cincinnati District Office, Corps of Engineers, United States Army.

In view of the outstanding characteristics of this flood it was considered desirable to prepare a report containing all information available on both the storm and the flood. Before undertaking such a report, thorough consideration was given to the uncertainties regarding the exact amount of the extraordinary rainfall and runoff that were associated with this storm and flood. The data for the slope-area measurements of discharge indicate a degree of uncertainty regarding the interpretation of some of the essential base data that subjects the results to a margin of error that seems unusually high. Perhaps the principal reason for this uncertainty was caused by the inability to obtain adequate base data.

The opportunities for securing data during the storm and flood were extremely limited, owing to the short duration and to the fact that they occurred at night and were confined to so small an area. Consequently, the data presented are the result of subsequent surveys. Within the region of intense precipitation there were no trained or experienced observers to report on the storm, but many inhabitants provided vivid descriptions and furnished information on the rainfall, such as the depth of water found in uncovered pails, tubs, jars, and other containers.

In view of the uncertainties concerning the interpretation and reliability of the base data this report has been prepared to show by description and quantitative generalities, rather than by statistics and specific quantities, the magnitude of the storm and flood.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Cincinnati District Office, Corps of Engineers, United States Army, has furnished a substantial part of the information for this report, including descriptions on which much of the written material is based. Practically all of the data on precipitation was collected and compiled in that office. Most of the data on rainfall collected by trained observers was furnished by the United States Weather Bureau.

Base data obtained by the Geological Survey were collected under the direction of F. M. Veatch, district engineer until March 12, 1940, and the report was prepared under the direction of J. V. B. Wells, district engineer since March 13, 1940. This work was performed in connection with the program of stream-gaging carried on in the State of Kentucky in cooperation with the Kentucky Department of Highways, J. L. Donaldson, commissioner, and with financial assistance by the Corps of Engineers, United States Army.

R. W. Davenport, chief of the Division of Water Utilization, and Hollister Johnson, engineer, Albany district, provided valuable advice and assistance in directing the general outline and final preparation of the

report and in collecting the field data and computing the results. The personnel of the Louisville district assisted in the collection and compilation of data.

### DESCRIPTION OF STORM

The characteristics of the storm are well defined because its unusual aspects attracted the attention of many people. Although generally considered as a single storm, it actually consisted of a series of thunderstorms accompanied by almost continuous lightning and thunder, which were noticeable for a considerable time before the storm. The lightning was described as continuous lightning and sheet lightning and by several observers as the most persistent they had ever witnessed. The thunder preceding the storm was a low rumble and at the height of the storm is reported to have shaken the earth. The lightning was so continuous that, despite the fact that the storm occurred at night in most localities, the cloud formations could be viewed without difficulty in what is described as a purplish hue. Although in a turbulent state, these cloud formations had a distinct outline and could be seen approaching from the north at a rapid rate.

On the edge of the storm area winds reached gale proportions such that buildings were damaged and in several places were entirely destroyed. Reports indicate that there was relatively little wind outside of the storm area, and observers at the storm centers reported that little or no wind accompanied the rainfall. According to information obtained from weather stations, the prevailing direction of the wind was to the southwest on the northeast side of the storm area, to the northeast on the southwest side, and variable on the northwest and southeast sides.

The meteorology of the storm has been described as follows:<sup>1</sup>

On July 2 a widespread stagnant anticyclone circulation was associated with typical warm dry weather over eastern United States. \* \* \*

The synoptic data for the period July 3-5, inclusive, show a slow eastward progression of a weak cold front. This front did not produce sharp wind shifts at the surface, but scanty radiosonde data suggest that aloft the front was followed by a narrow tongue of cold air. On the night of July 4-5, this tongue was being displaced southeastward across Ohio and Indiana. \* \* \* The cold air was being rotated cyclonically around a center in southern Michigan, while to the southeast the warm air was undergoing an anticyclonic rotation. The net result of the two circulations was to produce a field of strong convergence over eastern Kentucky, which in turn caused the vertical motions necessary to set off the convective energy and to produce the rainfall. \* \* \*

The displacements of the centers of convergence and rainfall coincide. Over small areas the average rate of radial inflow from the surface to 8,000 feet for a period of 12 hours was approximately 5 miles per hour. Such inflow velocities are sufficient to explain the rates of precipitation for the 6-hour period over the storm area as a whole, but the intense rainfall near the center of the storm would require either higher rates of inflow or the transport into the area of suspended liquid water. Either one or both of these could be possible in such a circumstance.

Analysis of the mean motion in the layer from 8,000 to 12,000 feet above the storm area showed weak outflow velocities before and weak inflow velocities after 10 p.m. Velocity profiles computed from the above data indicate that the upper limit

<sup>1</sup>"Maximum possible precipitation over the Ohio River Basin above Pittsburgh, Pa.," prepared by the Hydrometeorological Section of the Weather Bureau in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, June 16, 1941; Hydrometeorological Report No 2, pp. 56-62, Vicksburg, Miss. [1942].

of the convergence layer had risen approximately 1,000 feet to a height somewhat in excess of 10,000 feet.

The outstanding features of this storm were:

- a. A large supply of convectively unstable tropical maritime air, retaining its original characteristics and transported into the region by a widespread stagnant circulation previously accompanied by dry weather.
- b. A flow of relatively colder air into the area from the north or northwest.
- c. The interaction of these currents to produce a center of intense convergence.
- d. The explosive release of energy in the tropical air after saturation.

### RAINFALL

The rates of precipitation produced by this storm were extremely high and exceeded any known to have occurred previously in the region affected. The rainfall is described by observers as having been so intense that it was impossible to see objects only a few feet away. People caught out in the storm were compelled to stop before reaching shelter because of the lack of visibility. Numerous accounts were given of runoff that covered the sloping ground in sheets. Although the rain did not fall at a continuous high rate throughout the storm, high rates apparently were maintained in some localities for periods as long as an hour. These periods of sustained intensity occurred near the end of the storm. During such periods the rainfall was alternately in the form of large drops and of continuous sheets of water similar to those coming from the eaves of a roof.

A great deal of information was obtained from inhabitants of the storm area on the nature and extent of precipitation. From this information the average length of the period of rainfall in the storm area was determined to be about 3 hours. In some localities the rain commenced as early as 9 a.m. on July 4 and in other localities ended as late as 6 a.m. on July 5. However, the consensus of reports shows that the rainfall was principally concentrated in a 3-hour period from 1 a.m. to 4 a.m. on July 5.

As the storm occurred at night, much of the information on the duration of rainfall is somewhat inexact, and several observations at the center of the storm area (showing extremely brief periods of rainfall during the early morning hours) are probably of questionable accuracy. Data on the beginning and ending of rainfall on the night of July 4, 1939, as compiled from statements of local residents, are listed below:

<i>Location</i>	<i>Duration of rainfall</i>
Portsmouth, Greenup County.....	1:30 a.m. to 4:30 a.m. July 5
Vanceburg, Lewis County.....	6:15 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. July 4
Mount Sterling, Montgomery County .....	3 a.m. to 6 a.m. July 5
Olive Hill, Carter County, 11 miles west of .....	10:30 p.m. July 4 to 12:30 a.m. July 5
Grayson, Carter County.....	9 p.m. to 11 p.m. July 4
Morehead, Rowan County.....	11 p.m. July 4 to 12:30 a.m. July 5
Frenchburg, Menifee County.....	1:30 a.m. to 3:45 a.m. July 5
Wellington, Menifee County.....	10 p.m. July 4 to 2 a.m. July 5
Maytown, Morgan County.....	2 a.m. to 3 a.m. July 5
Index, Morgan County.....	11 p.m. July 4 to 3 a.m. July 5
Bowen, Powell County, (Pecker- wood CCC camp).....	2 a.m. to 5:30 a.m. July 5
Hazel Green, Wolfe County.....	1 a.m. to 3 a.m. July 5

<i>Location</i>	<i>Duration of rainfall</i>
Daysboro, Wolfe County.....	1 a.m. to 4 a.m. July 5
Trent, Wolfe County.....	1 a.m. to 4 a.m. July 5
Stillwater, Wolfe County ½ mile south of .....	12 p.m. July 4 to 5 a.m. July 5
Salyersville, Magoffin County.....	1 a.m. to 5 a.m. July 5
Town Flat, Magoffin County.....	12 p.m. July 4 to 3 a.m. July 5
Wilhurst, Breathitt County.....	11:30 p.m. July 4 to 3:30 a.m. July 5
Near Taulbee, Breathitt County, 9½ miles above Blanton Bridge..	1:30 a.m. to 3:30 a.m. July 5
Near Taulbee, Breathitt County, 5 miles above Blanton Bridge....	1 a.m. to 4 a.m. July 5
Near Taulbee, Breathitt County, 1½ miles above Blanton Bridge....	1 a.m. to 4 a.m. July 5
Near Frozen Creek, Breathitt County, on Strong Fork.....	2 a.m. to 4 a.m. July 5
Near Frozen Creek, Breathitt County, ¼ miles from Strong Fork School .....	1:30 a.m. to 4 a.m. July 5
Jackson, Breathitt County.....	3 a.m. to 6 a.m. July 5
Jackson, Breathitt County.....	3:30 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. July 5
Quicksand, Breathitt County.....	3 a.m. to 6 a.m. July 5
Near Rousseau, Breathitt County, on Quicksand Creek.....	2:30 a.m. to 4 a.m. July 5
Near Stevenson, Breathitt County, on Meatscaffold Creek.....	1 a.m. to 4 a.m. July 5
Near Quicksand, Breathitt County, on South Fork of Quicksand Creek..	2:30 a.m. to 5 a.m. July 5

As there were no rainfall stations within the region of most intense precipitation, field parties were assigned to obtain from local residents all available information on rainfall depth. The greater number of the measurements represent the depth of water collected in pails, tubs, jars, and other containers, which were generally near the residence or other buildings on the property. As most of these containers were in daily use by their owners, they had been emptied of their contents before the field parties could obtain first-hand information. Consequently, very few direct measurements of the depth of water were obtained, and most of the data collected consisted of statements and estimates by residents concerning the depth of water, conditions of exposure, and other factors. Much of this information is of little value if each observation is considered separately, but it is valuable in the aggregate for study of the storm as a whole.

It would appear that with plentiful observations of the rainfall, reliable determination of the maximum depth would be relatively simple. However, there was a wide range in the quality of the observations, many of which were obtained by untrained persons and were undoubtedly affected to such an extent by local conditions or other factors that it was necessary to reject them as unreliable. This was particularly true of a few observations indicating extraordinary depths near the center of the storm area. Nevertheless, the data unquestionably indicate that the rainfall was extraordinarily deep over relatively large central areas during the brief storm period.

As the available information was not sufficient to establish definitely the maximum rainfall depths it was believed desirable to indicate the possible extent of the maximum. An analysis showed that the rainfall probably exceeded 12 inches and that it may have been as much as 20 inches at the center of the storm. A few observations greatly exceeded

12 inches but were not accepted as reliable because of unfavorable conditions under which they were obtained and their poor correlation with adjacent data. However, these observations were considered in estimating the possible maximum depths at the center of the storm. Other factors that were considered in estimating the possible extent of the maximum depth are the very unusual runoff and the fact that such a storm usually has near its center one or more relatively small areas in which the rainfall depth greatly exceeds the depth in the surrounding area.

In order to classify the rainfall data on a uniform basis it was necessary to establish certain criteria that could be applied to any of the observations, irrespective of the depth of rainfall reported. Accordingly, all observations were first separated into two classifications — (1) those acceptable for use in the report and (2) those to be rejected and omitted from the report.

The comparatively small number of observations rejected included all those obtained under one or more of the following unfavorable conditions: Receptacle under tree, on porch or porch step, or near building; receptacle leaked or was not empty prior to storm; receptacle not seen, and not of standard shape, or dimensions not known; rough approximation of depth of water reported where receptacle and its location were not seen by field party; and poor correlation with adjacent data, that is, the reported depth of rainfall differed too widely from several acceptable observations in the immediate vicinity.

The large group of accepted observations was subdivided into four smaller groups, A–D, with each observation classified either as of acceptable reliability or uncertain reliability and, also, according to the method of ascertaining depth of water in receptacle. In general, observations were considered of acceptable reliability if the depth was measured (group A) or if the receptacle overflowed and if the receptacle and its location were observed by the field party (group B). Observations considered to be of uncertain reliability included all those obtained under the following conditions: Depth an estimate or approximation, or reported measurement of doubtful accuracy (group C); receptacle overflowed, but receptacle and its location not observed by field party (group D). All measurements of rainfall reported by Weather Bureau stations were automatically classified in group A.

The table of rainfall data that follows includes all observations accepted, classified in the four groups, A to D, according to the procedure outlined in the preceding paragraph. For each observation listed, information is given on the location, depth of rainfall, and method of measurement. The location of each point of observation is shown by a solid circle on plate 9, with the reference number given in the first column of the table. Where more than one observation was made at the same location only one number appears on the map, but each observation is listed separately in the table with an added reference letter as "26a, 26b." For all observations the depth of rainfall in inches was computed by taking into account the depth of water in the container, the shape and dimensions of the container, and the area of the top opening. Where the container was of standard shape and size but was not seen by the field party, a similar container was measured.

Rainfall during night of July 4-5, 1939, in eastern Kentucky, as compiled from statements of local residents and from U. S. Weather Bureau records<sup>1</sup>

Group A.—Acceptable reliability: Measured depth

No. on pl. 9	Location		Rainfall (inches)	Method of measurement
	County	Drainage basin		
1	Lewis	Ohio River	1.5	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Vanceburg, Ky.
2	Greenup	do	.2	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Greenup, Ky.
3	Carter	Little Sandy River	2.8	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Grayson, Ky.
4	do	Tygart's Creek	4.4	Measured in lard can by editor of local paper.
5	do	do	9.8	Measured in stone crock by field party.
6	Fleming	Licking River	1.2	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Flemingsburg, Ky.
7	Rowan	Triplett Creek	7.3	Measured in No. 3 washtub by sawmill owner. <sup>2</sup>
8	do	do	6.7	Measured in No. 2 washtub by local resident.
9	do	do	7.4	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at CCC camp near Morehead, Ky.
10	do	do	5.3	Measured in bucket by local resident.
11	do	Licking River	2.6	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Farmers, Ky.
12	Bath	do	3.1	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Yale, Ky.
13	Menifee	do	4.1	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at CCC camp near Frenchburg, Ky.
14	Morgan	do	3.0	Measured in pail by local resident.
15	Magoffin	do	3.8	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Salyersville, Ky.
16	Wolfe	North Fork Kentucky River	6.9	Measured in No. 2 washtub by local resident.
17	do	do	4.2	Measured in pail by local resident.
18	Powell	Red River	2.8	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at CCC camp at Bowen, Ky.
19	Clark	Kentucky River	1.4	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Winchester, Ky.
20	Estill	do	2.9	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Ravenna, Ky.
21	Lee	do	1.0	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Willow, Ky.
22	do	do	1.1	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Heidelberg, Ky.
23	Breathitt	North Fork Kentucky River	3.8	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Jackson, Ky.
24	do	do	4.3	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Quicksand, Ky.
25	Perry	do	1.1	U. S. Weather Bureau gage at Hazard, Ky.

Group B.—Acceptable reliability: Overflowed receptacle

26a	Elliott	Little Sandy River	7.0+	Wooden box reported overflowed.
26b	do	do	14.5+	50-lb. lard can reported overflowed.
27a	do	do	9.4	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed.
27b	do	do	9.8	Steel barrel reported overflowed.
28a	Rowan	Triplett Creek	9.8	No. 3 washtub reported overflowed.
28b	do	do	7.2	Stove kettle reported overflowed.
29	do	do	6.8	Rain gage at forest fire tower found full.
30	do	do	5.8	Oil measure reported rained full.
31	do	do	6.9	8-lb. lard pail reported about full.
32	do	do	5.0	Aluminum cooker reported overflowed.
33	do	do	9.4	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed.
34a	do	Craney Creek	8.9	Square washtub reported rained full.
34b	do	do	8.4	Well bucket reported rained full.
35	do	do	9.4	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed.
36a	do	do	9.4	Do.
36b	do	do	14.0	50-lb. lard can reported overflowed.
37	Morgan	do	8.8	Iron kettle reported overflowed.
38	do	do	9.0	Garbage pail reported overflowed.
39	do	Licking River	7.8	Iron kettle reported overflowed.
40	do	do	10.6	Do.
41	do	do	8.0	Do.
42	Wolfe	Red River	8.5	Do.
43	do	do	9.0	Gravel pan reported rained full.
44	do	do	8.6	Iron kettle reported rained full.
45a	do	do	7.1	Iron kettle reported overflowed.

## Rainfall during night of July 4-5, 1939, in eastern Kentucky—Continued

## Group B.—Acceptable reliability: Overflowed receptacle—Continued

No. on pl. 9	Location		Rainfall (inches)	Method of measurement
	County	Drainage basin		
45b	Wolfe	Red River	11.0+	Wooden tub reported overflowed.
46a	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
46b	do	do	7.3+	10-qt. pail reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
46c	do	do	12.0+	Rise in water tank measured by local resident. <sup>2</sup>
47	do	do	7.2+	8-lb. lard pail reported overflowed.
48	Breathitt	Frozen Creek	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
49	do	do	9.8+	Indications that No. 3 washtub rained full.
50	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported rained full.
51	do	do	6.9+	10-qt. bucket reported rained full.
52	do	do	7.0+	No. 10 bucket reported rained full.
53	do	Quicksand Creek	5.9+	Iron kettle reported overflowed.
54	do	do	3.2+	Stone bowl reported overflowed.

## Group C.—Uncertain reliability: Depth estimated, or measurement of doubtful accuracy

55	Lewis	Kinniconick Creek	6.5	Garbage pail approximately ½ full.
56	do	do	7.9	Iron kettle filled to 2 in. from top.
57	Carter	Tygarts Creek	5.5	Estimated 7 inches deep in No. 3 washtub. <sup>2</sup>
58	Elliott	Little Sandy River	.8	About 3 inches in round iron kettle.
59	do	do	6.9	Measured in No. 2 washtub by local resident. <sup>2</sup>
60	do	do	9.2	Do. <sup>2</sup>
61	do	do	10.0	50-lb. lard can filled to about 4 in. from top. <sup>2</sup>
62a	Lawrence	Blaine Creek	5.0	Measured in No. 2 washtub by local resident.
62b	do	do	4.4	Oval iron kettle about ¾ full.
63	Rowan	Triplett Creek	4.6	Estimated No. 3 washtub ½ full.
64	do	do	5.6	Indicated mark in No. 1 washtub by maid.
65	do	do	7.2	Small tub almost full.
66	do	do	5.7	Estimated depth in well bucket.
67	do	do	7.4	Measured to doubtful water mark in stone jar.
68	do	do	8.0	Measured in No. 2 washtub by local resident. <sup>2</sup>
69	do	do	6.7	Indicated depth in No. 3 washtub. <sup>2</sup>
70	do	do	5.1	Indicated depth to water mark in tub.
71	do	do	13.9	Indicated depth in 12 gallon stone churn.
72	do	do	11.5	Garbage pail filled to about 2 inches from top.
73	do	Crane Creek	6.4	Indicated depth in No. 3 washtub. <sup>2</sup>
74	do	Licking River	3.8	Estimated iron kettle about ½ full.
75	Menifee	do	9.3	No. 3 washtub filled to about ½ inch from top. <sup>2</sup>
76	Morgan	do	6.2	No. 2 washtub filled to rings in tub. <sup>2</sup>
77	do	do	6.9	No. 3 washtub filled to about 3 inches from top. <sup>2</sup>
78	do	do	7.4	No. 2 washtub filled to about 2 inches from top. <sup>2</sup>
79	do	do	8.1	Indicated depth in 2 qt. fruit jar.
80	do	do	6.4	No. 3 washtub about ¾ full. <sup>2</sup>
81	do	do	1.6	Estimated 2 inches in No. 2 washtub. <sup>2</sup>
82	do	do	2.2	Estimated 3 inches in No. 2 washtub. <sup>2</sup>
83	Wolfe	Red River	5.1	No. 2 washtub filled to about 4½ inches from top. <sup>2</sup>
84	do	do	8.4	No. 2 washtub filled to about 1 inch from top. <sup>2</sup>
85	do	North Fork Kentucky River	6.0	Measured in bathtub by local resident. <sup>2</sup>
86	do	do	3.4	4-lb. lard pail about ¾ full. <sup>2</sup>
87	do	Red River	5.0	Measured in No. 2 washtub by local resident. <sup>2</sup>
88	Powell	do	1.2	Estimated 2 inches in No. 10 bucket. <sup>2</sup>
89	Clark	Kentucky River	4.4	Estimated 6 inches in No. 10 bucket.
90	Breathitt	North Fork Kentucky River	4.8	Indicated depth in iron kettle by local resident.
91	do	do	11.9	Indicated 2 inches from top of 20-gal. iron kettle.
92	do	do	8.9	No. 2 washtub filled to about ½ inch from top. <sup>2</sup>
93	do	do	3.3	Estimated 4½ inches in No. 2 washtub.

## Rainfall during night of July 4-5, 1939, in eastern Kentucky—Continued

## Group D.—Uncertain reliability: Overflowed receptacle but not observed by field party

No. on pl. 9	Location		Rainfall (inches)	Method of measurement
	County	Drainage basin		
94	Carter	Tygarts Creek	7.5+	No. 10 bucket reported rained full. <sup>1</sup>
95	Elliott	Little Sandy River	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
96	Fleming	Licking River	7.3+	10-qt. pail reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
97	Rowan	Triplett Creek	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
98	do	do	5.6+	Bucket reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
99	do	do	5.9+	Do. <sup>2</sup>
100	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
101	do	do	7.5+	No. 10 bucket reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
102	do	do	9.8+	No. 3 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
103	do	Craney Creek	9.8+	Do. <sup>2</sup>
104	Menifee	Licking River	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
105	Morgan	do	9.8+	No. 3 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
106	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
107	do	do	9.4+	Do. <sup>2</sup>
108	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
109	do	do	9.8+	No. 3 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
110	do	do	9.0+	Half bushel measure reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
111	Wolfe	Red River	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
112	do	do	9.4+	Do. <sup>2</sup>
113	do	do	12.5+	5-gallon bucket reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
114	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
115	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
116	do	do	9.4+	Do. <sup>2</sup>
117	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
118	do	do	6.0+	Stone jar reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
119	Breathitt	Frozen Creek	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported rained full. <sup>2</sup>
120	do	do	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
121	do	do	9.8+	No. 3 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
122	do	do	7.3+	10-qt. pail reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>
123	do	Quicksand Creek	9.4+	No. 2 washtub reported overflowed. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Except as indicated by footnote reference, location of receptacle during storm was observed by field party of Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, and receptacle was seen and measured, or its dimensions were reliably determined.

<sup>2</sup> Receptacle and location during storm not observed by field party.

<sup>3</sup> No. 46c, at same location as 46a, b, can also be classified in group A.

The accompanying map (pl. 9) shows by small black circles the location of all observations of rainfall listed in the preceding table of rainfall data, with the corresponding reference number. Lines of equal depth of rainfall (isohyets) were constructed on the basis of all information on rainfall depths and show equal depth for each inch of rainfall up to 8 inches. In view of the uncertainty concerning the exact amount of rainfall in the central areas of the storm no attempt was made to define the isohyets for depths above 8 inches. To indicate the probable range in depth in the general area between the 8-inch isohyet and the center of the storm, the figures 8"-12" are shown in that area. For the maximum depth at the center of the storm area the designation *over 12"* has been used to indicate that depths exceeding 12 inches probably occurred in the general central area.

The areas contained within the isohyets showing rainfall depths of 4, 6, and 8 inches have been planimetered and the results are set forth below:

Isohyetal (inches)	Area contained within isohyetal (square miles)
4	1,838
6	1,160
8	443

Two separate 8-inch isohyets are shown on the map (pl. 9), enclosing a total area of 443 square miles, of which approximately half is contained in each area.

According to Hydrometeorological Report No. 2:<sup>2</sup>

Isohyets, covering a rather large area, could be drawn with reasonable reliability for values as high as 7 and 8 inches. When the storm type is taken into consideration it can be inferred that intense centers occurred within those isohyets. This inference seems to be justified by slope discharge measurements, especially those made in the Frozen Creek watershed.

## FLOOD DISCHARGE

### GENERAL FEATURES

The runoff resulting from the concentration of heavy rainfall was very unusual with respect to the extremely high rates of flow that occurred from small areas at the center of the storm. Flood stages and discharges on the smaller streams exceeded any previously witnessed, and the rates of flow in headwater and small tributary streams were greater than any heretofore recorded for similar-sized streams in Kentucky. Abundant evidence of the passage of extremely large flood flows was provided by the condition of stream channels and overflow sections and the large deposition of debris. (See pls. 10, 11.) As the flood was of short duration in the night and early morning and was limited to a comparatively small area, it was impossible to obtain first-hand information on the flood runoff. As a result, all data on rates of flow and most of the information on the behaviour and effects of the floodwaters, were obtained from field observations and measurements made subsequent to the event.

The region affected by the unusual flood covered an area of almost 1,000 square miles, principally in Lewis, Carter, Rowan, Elliott, Morgan, Wolfe, and Breathitt Counties. As the greatest rates of flow apparently were experienced in the Frozen and Triplett Creek areas, principal attention was devoted to the flood discharges in those areas.

Frozen Creek drains an area of 55 square miles entirely in Breathitt County and flows in a southwesterly direction to enter North Fork Kentucky River about 4 miles northwest of Jackson, Ky. Triplett Creek drains an area of 188 square miles entirely in Rowan County and also flows in a southwesterly direction to enter Licking River near the town of Farmers, Ky. However, the drainage area of Triplett Creek above the mouth of North Fork Triplett Creek is only 74 square miles, and all investigations of peak flow were made at locations above the mouth of North Fork.

The Frozen and Triplett Creek areas have a similar rugged topography, with hillsides ranging up to foothill mountains such that a drop in elevation of 500 feet in half a mile from ridge tops to stream beds is not uncommon. The steep hillside slopes, the lack of appreciable topsoil, and vegetation consisting chiefly of second-growth timber are all conducive to rapid runoff. Although the topography and stream patterns in the two areas are similar, the flood-flow characteristics of the two streams are somewhat different. There is a noticeable difference in the width of flood plains, Triplett Creek having a flood plain several times wider than that of Frozen Creek for corresponding drainage areas.

<sup>2</sup> Maximum possible precipitation over the Ohio River Basin above Pittsburgh, Pa., prepared by the Hydrometeorological Section of the Weather Bureau in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, June 16, 1941: Hydrometeorological Report No. 2, p. 69, fig. 6.07, Vicksburg, Miss. [1942].

At Morehead on Triplett Creek the storm commenced with unusual force about 11 p.m. on July 4. Shortly thereafter the normal stream channel overflowed, and the stream rose at an even rate the next 2 hours. The rate of rise began to accelerate about 1 a.m. on July 5, and from that time until the crest was reached 1 hour later the rise was very rapid. The rapid rise shortly before cresting was estimated by one observer as "a rise of 7 feet in 11 minutes." Another observer estimated that "the stream rose 10 to 15 feet in less than half an hour."

The sudden rise of Frozen Creek was described as even more abrupt than that of Triplett Creek and was said to have been almost immediate and in the form of a flood wave. Local residents vividly described the rapid rise as "an approaching wall of water which billowed up like clouds"; "a 15-foot wall of water crashing down the valley"; and "like thunder with livestock, pieces of houses, and countless other things all being whirled together on the breast of the torrent as if in a great mixing pot." It was estimated that in one place the water rose 20 feet in 10 minutes. The depths of water at the many sections investigated with field measurements ranged from 12 to 28 feet. The tributaries of Frozen Creek crested between 3:30 a.m. and 3:45 a.m. on July 5 while main Frozen Creek crested at the mouth about 1 hour later.

#### PEAK DISCHARGE MEASUREMENTS

As it was impossible to obtain direct measurements of the flood flow in the areas of high runoff, the next best method for obtaining this information was by the slope-area method. Accordingly, field parties were sent out, all possible information was collected, and computations and interpretations of the data were made. Field conditions on these particular streams were extremely unfavorable for use of the slope-area method and made it impossible to secure adequate base data. As a result the discharges obtained were inconsistent. The measurements must be regarded as approximations and their use restricted accordingly. The divergence between resultant discharges for comparable drainage areas was such that differences in discharges ranging from 50 to 100 percent were obtained from separate measurements having comparable drainage areas on the same stream or adjacent areas. Because of doubt of their accuracy, the specific results were omitted from this report.

Various factors influence the accuracy of these measurements. Unfavorable conditions were encountered in the selection of satisfactory channel reaches and the determination of accurate water-surface profiles. The best reaches were selected, but almost all of them were only approximately straight, were nonuniform in area, and were joined by bends within relatively short distances. Because of the varying physical conditions within each reach, such as kind and amount of vegetation, meandering and non-uniform channels, and great amounts of debris, a wide range in opinion was possible as to the proper roughness coefficients to be used.

The flood waters rose and fell so rapidly that the flood crest did not leave a clearly defined profile. As the force of the flood flows so radically changed the character of the vegetation, it is possible that the high-water profile may have resulted from the highly obstructed channel prior to the peak flow rather than from peak flow through a fairly well cleared

channel. Although there was tributary inflow into the reaches, it is assumed that the peak of such flow had passed before the occurrence of the peak in the main stream. Such tributary inflow, however, may have affected the main-stream water-surface profile, especially as determined for very small drainage areas.

Measurements of peak flow were made at 16 locations in the Triplett and Frozen Creek Basins, of which 10 were made by the Geological Survey and 6 by the engineering staff of the Cincinnati office, Corps of Engineers, United States Army. The "Summary" that follows presents general descriptive material pertaining to the flood-discharge measurements made by the Geological Survey. Following these descriptions is a table showing probable maximum rates of flow for drainage areas of different sizes in the flood area, based on the results of the flood-flow determinations. The location of all 16 measuring points is shown on plate 9 by means of open circles to differentiate them from the solid circles used to designate the location of gaging stations.

### SUMMARY

#### MEASUREMENTS BY GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

The brief descriptions given herein provide pertinent information on the location of flood-flow measurements made by the Geological Survey, and the nature of the field data. Each description includes name of stream, drainage area, location of point of measurement, method of measurement, nature of channel and adjoining terrain, floodmarks, and a statement concerning the accuracy of base data.

*Triplett Creek.*—Drainage area 3.5 square miles; at Hayes, Rowan County, Ky., at mouth of Buffalo Branch; contracted-opening method; discharge through Chesapeake & Ohio Railway culvert, stream approaches at right angles to culvert, Buffalo Creek enters directly at culvert, poor definition of drop through culvert and approach slopes of water surface; base data poor.

*Johnson Fork.*—Drainage area 5.3 square miles, tributary to Boone Fork; at Wilhurst, Breathitt County, Ky.,  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile upstream from mouth; slope-area method; reach of channel fairly straight but joined by bend a short distance downstream, reach contracting, wide overflow, both banks clean and smooth; few high-water marks, slope poorly defined; base data poor.

*Johnson Fork.*—Drainage area 5.3 square miles, tributary to Boone Fork; at Wilhurst, Breathitt County, Ky.,  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile upstream from mouth; slope-area method; reach of channel adjacent to that of preceding location but includes bend at each end, other channel characteristics and water-surface profile data same as preceding location; base data poor.

*Christy Creek.*—Drainage area 11.5 square miles, tributary to Triplett Creek; 1 mile upstream from Christy, Rowan County, Ky.,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile downstream from Seas Branch; slope-area method; reach of channel straight but curved a short distance beyond each end, cornfields on both banks, slight overflow on right bank and wide overflow on left bank, cross section reasonably uniform; several high-water marks, slope fairly well defined; base data fair.

*Cope Fork*.—Drainage area 11.8 square miles, tributary to Frozen Creek; 1 mile downstream from Keck, Breathitt County, Ky., about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile upstream from mouth; slope-area method; reach of channel fairly straight but sharp bend located short distance downstream, cross section slightly expanding, wide overflow on right bank and field badly eroded, little overflow on steep left bank; high-water marks scattered, slope uncertain; base data poor.

*Frozen Creek*.—Drainage area 22.9 square miles; in Breathitt County, Ky.,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile upstream from Blanton Bridge and mouth of Cope Fork; slope-area method; reach of channel fairly straight but joined by sharp bends a short distance from each end, bridge just upstream from reach, cross section contracting, wide overflow on right bank and cornfield partly eroded, no overflow on left bank; few high-water marks, slope poorly defined; base data poor.

*Frozen Creek*.—Drainage area 23.3 square miles; in Breathitt County, Ky.,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile upstream from Blanton Bridge and mouth of Cope Fork; slope-area method; reach of channel fairly straight but sharp bend just upstream from reach, cross section slightly expanding, wide overflow in smooth field on left bank; no overflow on steep right bank; many high-water marks, slope fairly well defined; base data fair or better.

*Frozen Creek*.—Drainage area 23.3 square miles; in Breathitt County, Ky.,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile upstream from Blanton Bridge and mouth of Cope Fork; slope-area method; reach of channel adjacent to that of previous location and channel characteristics similar; base data fair or better.

*Frozen Creek*.—Drainage area 55.1 square miles; at Frozen Creek, Breathitt County, Ky.,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile upstream from mouth; slope-area method; reach of channel straight, cross section uniform, reach 500 feet downstream from highway bridge and 1,500 feet upstream from railroad bridge, no overflow on steep left bank, slight overflow on clean right bank; many high-water marks somewhat scattered, slope fairly well defined; base data good.

*Triplet Creek*.—Drainage area 74.4 square miles; at Bluestone, Rowan County, Ky.,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles upstream from North Fork; slope-area method; reach of channel straight but joined by curved channel at ends, cross section expanding, wide overflow, brush, and cornfield on left bank, no overflow on right bank, railroad embankment; a few high-water marks, slope only fairly defined; base data fair or better.

#### MEASUREMENTS BY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

The flood flow measurements by the Corps of Engineers were made at five locations in Frozen Creek Basin and at one location in Triplet Creek Basin, as follows:

*Triplet Creek*.—Drainage area 3.5 square miles; at Hayes, Rowan County, at mouth of Buffalo Branch; contracted-opening method.

*Boone Fork*.—Drainage area 7.4 square miles;  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile upstream from Johnson Fork, Breathitt County; slope-area method.

*Cope Fork*.—Drainage area 9.4 square miles;  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from mouth, Breathitt County; slope-area method.

*Frozen Creek*.—Drainage area 19.0 square miles; 3.3 miles upstream from Blanton Bridge, Breathitt County; slope-area method.

*Frozen Creek.*—Drainage area 23.4 square miles;  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile upstream from Blanton Bridge, Breathitt County; slope-area method.

*Frozen Creek.*—Drainage area 55.2 square miles; at mouth of Frozen Creek, Breathitt County; slope-area method.

#### ESTIMATES OF MAXIMUM RATE OF FLOOD FLOW

In summarizing the information on flood flows an analysis was made of the relation of peak flows to drainage areas, due consideration being given to the qualifying descriptions, and probable maximum rates of discharge for the flood were derived. On this basis, probable maximum rates of flood flow were estimated for drainage areas ranging from 5 to 75 square miles for the area of high runoff on July 4-5, 1939, and this information is presented as follows:

<i>Drainage area (square miles)</i>	<i>Probable maximum rates of flow (second-feet per square mile)</i>
5-10 .....	2,000 or more
10-25 .....	1,500 or more
25-50 .....	1,000-1,500
50-75 .....	1,000 or less

#### GAGING-STATION RECORDS

Stream-gaging stations in the main drainage basins were affected by the storm. Several of these were at the very edge of the storm area, and unfortunately none was so situated that flow at the station directly reflected the exceptional runoff. This fact is evidenced from an inspection of plate 9. The main storm area producing the unusual depth of rainfall was long, narrow, and irregular in shape and was so located with respect to the main drainage basins that the divides between basins were straddled or only segments across the narrow part of the basin were affected. Consequently, crest stages and peak discharges at these gaging stations, although of unusual magnitude, were not outstanding and nowhere exceeded the previous maximum. Gaging-station records were obtained at the following locations on main streams or principal tributary streams in Kentucky affected by the storm:

Little Sandy River near Grayson.  
Licking River near Salyersville.  
Licking River at Yale.  
Licking River at Farmers.  
Licking River at Blue Lick Springs.  
North Fork Kentucky River at Jackson.  
Kentucky River at Lock 14 at Heidelberg.  
Kentucky River at Lock 10 near Winchester.  
Red River at Clay City.

Information on crest stages and peak discharges at the various gaging stations is given in the table that follows. Reference numbers in the first column of this table correspond to the numbers designating large solid circles (as opposed to small solid circles designating the location of rainfall observations) plotted on plate 9 to indicate the location of stream-gaging stations.

Descriptions of the gaging stations and related information, including extremes of stage and discharge and records of daily discharge are given in the annual reports on the surface water supply of the United States, part 3, Ohio River Basin, published by the Geological Survey.

Flood discharges in eastern Kentucky for the flood of July 5, 1939

No.	Stream and place of determination	Drainage area (square miles)	Period of record	Maximum flood previously known				Maximum during present flood			
				Date	Gage height (feet)	Discharge		Time	Gage height (feet)	Discharge	
						Second-feet	Second-feet per square mile			Second-feet	Second-feet per square mile
	<i>Little Sandy River Basin</i>										
1	Little Sandy River near Grayson, Ky.....	1398	1938-39	Feb. 4, 1939	26.25	18,400	46.2	July 6, 9 a.m. <sup>1</sup>	16.7	5,500	13.8
	<i>Licking River Basin</i>										
2	Licking River near Salyersville, Ky.....	1140	1938-39	Feb. 3, 1939	25.4	14,300	102	July 5, 12 m. to 7 p.m.	19.2	3,710	26.5
3	Licking River at Yale, Ky.....	1709	1938-39	Feb. 3, 1939	31.11	19,300	27.2	July 5, 8 p.m.	29.0	15,000	21.2
4	Licking River at Farmers, Ky.....	1826	1928-31, 1938-39	Feb. 3, 1939	24.8	22,200	26.9	July 5, 8 a.m.	*25.4	*20,000	24.2
5	Licking River at Blue Lick Springs, Ky..	1,740	1938-39	Feb. 3, 1939 <sup>2</sup>	36.37	24,800	14.3	July 9, 9 a.m.	33.3	22,000	12.6
	<i>Kentucky River Basin</i>										
6	North Fork Kentucky River at Jackson, Ky.....	11,105	1928-31, 1936-39	Feb. 4, 1939	42.10	46,800	42.3	July 5, 5 p.m.	20.3	14,800	13.4
7	Kentucky River at lock 14, at Heidelberg, Ky.....	12,648	1925-31, 1938-39	Feb. 4, 1939	35.6	110,000	41.5	July 5, 9 p.m. to July 6, 2 a.m.	18.4	32,400	12.2
8	Kentucky River at lock 10, near Winchester, Ky.....	3,960	1909-39	Feb. 6, 1939	34.7	85,200	21.5	July 7, 1 a.m.	21.1	45,200	11.4
9	Red River at Clay City, Ky.....	363	1930-32, 1938-39	July 15, 1938	22.8	21,100	58.1	July 6, 4 a.m.	22.3	19,800	54.5

<sup>1</sup> Supersedes figure published in Water-Supply Paper 873.  
<sup>2</sup> Secondary crest occurred at 5 a.m. July 5 (gage height, 15.6 feet; discharge, 4,880 second-feet).  
<sup>3</sup> Occurred at 12 m.  
<sup>4</sup> Approximate; stage-discharge relation affected by backwater.  
<sup>5</sup> Greater flood occurred in January 1937.

In the Little Sandy River Basin only the extreme headwater area was affected by the intense storm, and the rise at the gaging station near Grayson was not of unusual magnitude.

In the Licking River Basin the drainage area above Salyersville had unusual precipitation only in the extreme western part, and the mean rainfall over the entire area was not of unusual proportions. Between Salyersville and Yale over half the intervening drainage area produced a high runoff, and the area between Yale and Farmers, although relatively small, also gave a high runoff. In the large area between Farmers and Blue Lick Springs only Triplett Creek and a small adjacent area contributed to flood flow and most of the area was relatively noncontributing.

North Fork Kentucky River had relatively little flood runoff from the drainage area above Jackson, except from a small area in the immediate vicinity of Jackson, chiefly Quicksand Creek. Most of the drainage area between Jackson and the mouth of North Fork Kentucky River contributed high runoff, but the effect of this flood flow was not directly reflected at the gaging station on Kentucky River at lock 14 at Heidelberg because of the large noncontributing areas on Middle Fork and South Fork Kentucky River.

Likewise on Red River, which is tributary to Kentucky River, the drainage area in the headwaters produced high flood flows, but with a major portion of the area above the gaging station at Clay City producing only minor runoff, the headwater flood flows were dissipated, with the result that the flood rise at Clay City was not of unusual proportions.

The hydrographs, figures 6 and 7, show the flood rise and recession at several of the gaging stations. Graphs of stage (fig. 7) for the gaging stations at Yale, Farmers, Blue Lick Springs, Jackson, Heidelberg, and Clay City were constructed on the basis of twice-daily gage readings by the gage observer and numerous readings by engineers. The discharge graphs (fig. 6) were constructed on the basis of the stage graphs and the stage-discharge relation, except for the station at Salyersville, which was reproduced from the recording-gage record obtained at that station.

The rapid concentration of flood flows on tributary streams and thence to main streams resulted in backwater on the main streams for considerable distances. This effect was evident to a great extent at the gaging station on Licking River at Farmers, where the effect of Triplett Creek entering only a short distance downstream from the gage was felt, and to a lesser extent on Licking River at Yale, which was also apparently affected by the abrupt rise on Triplett Creek, as there are no major tributary streams entering Licking River between Yale and Farmers. As this backwater effect created some doubt as to the correct discharge hydrographs for the gaging stations at Yale and Farmers, these hydrographs have not been reproduced.

The abrupt rise on several small tributaries of North Fork Kentucky River caused backwater on that stream for considerable distances. Frozen Creek, which enters North Fork Kentucky River a few miles downstream from Jackson and which was estimated to have attained a mean velocity of 13 feet per second at the mouth, caused considerable backwater on the main stream. Quicksand Creek, which enters a short distance upstream from Jackson, caused backwater on North Fork Kentucky River as far as Haddix, 7 miles upstream.

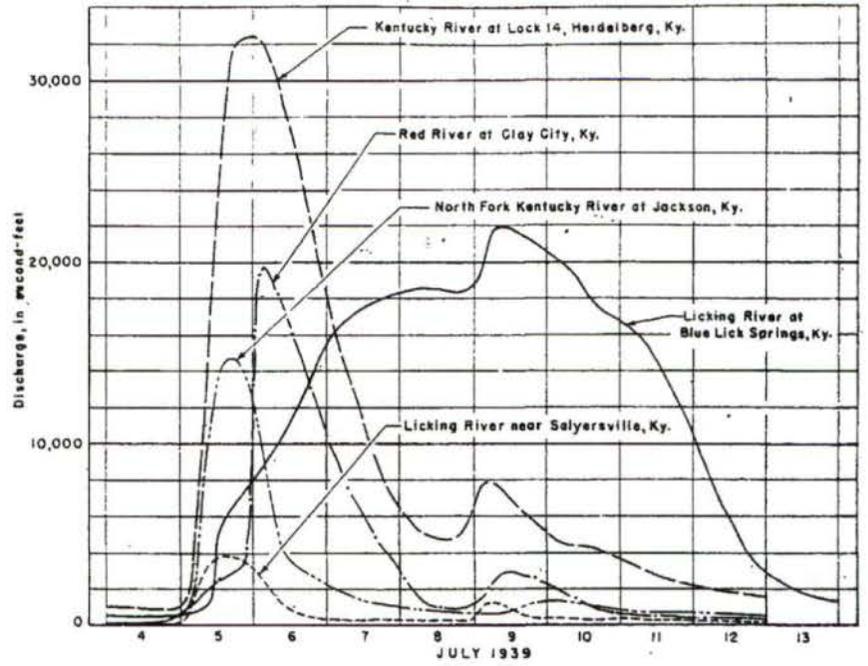


Figure 6.—Discharge hydrographs at gaging stations in Kentucky and Licking River Basins.

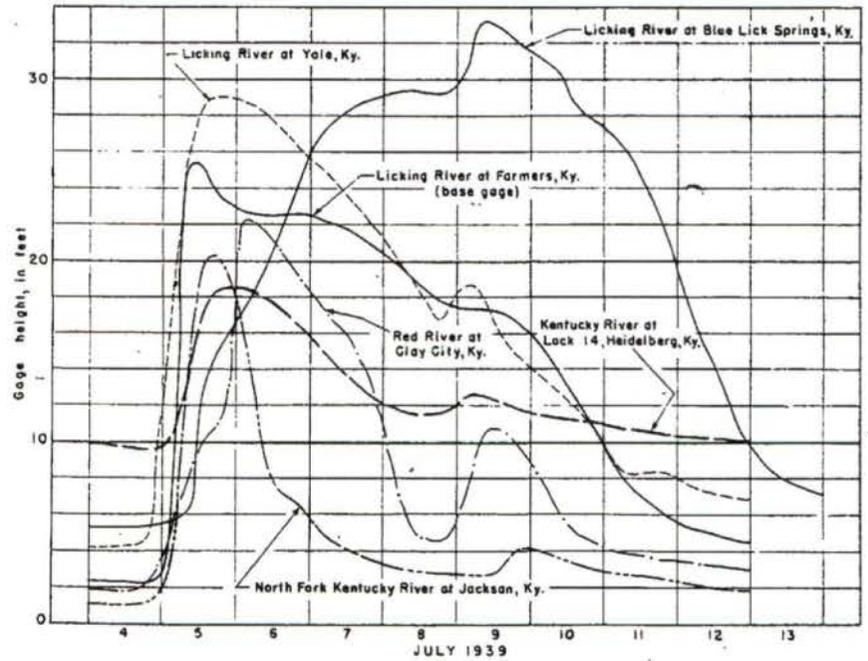
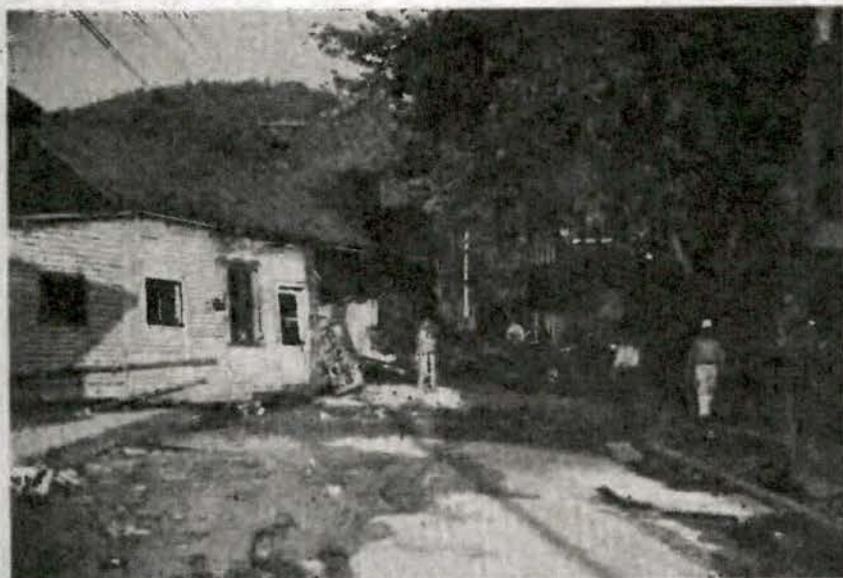


Figure 7.—Stage hydrographs at gaging stations in Kentucky and Licking River Basins.



A. HOME OVERTURNED BY FORCE OF FLOOD FLOW.  
Triplett Creek at base of hill in background.

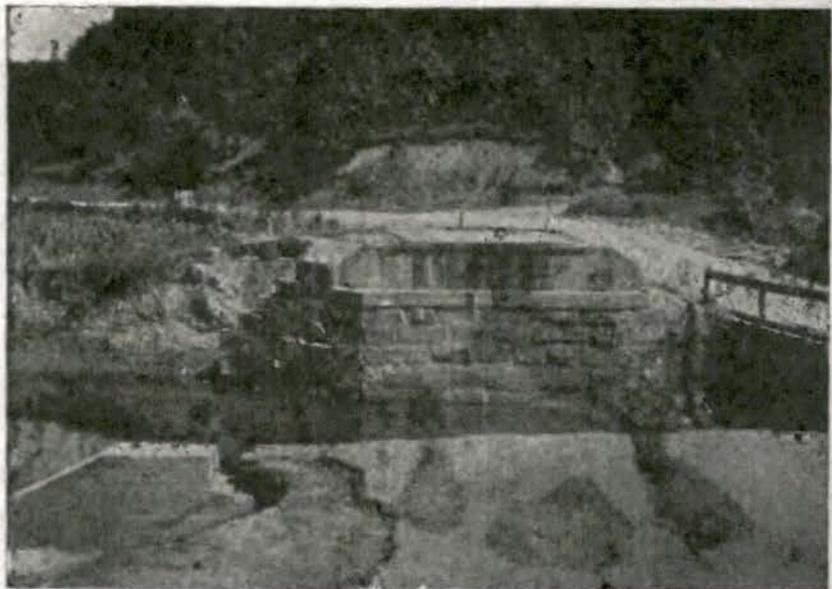


B. STORE FRONTING ON RAILROAD STREET FORCED FROM FOUNDATION  
AND MOVED TO FAIRBANKS AVENUE.  
DAMAGE TO BUILDINGS IN MOREHEAD BY FLOODWATERS OF  
TRIPLETT CREEK.

Photographs taken between 11:30 a.m. and 12 m. on July 5, 1939.  
Courtesy Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.

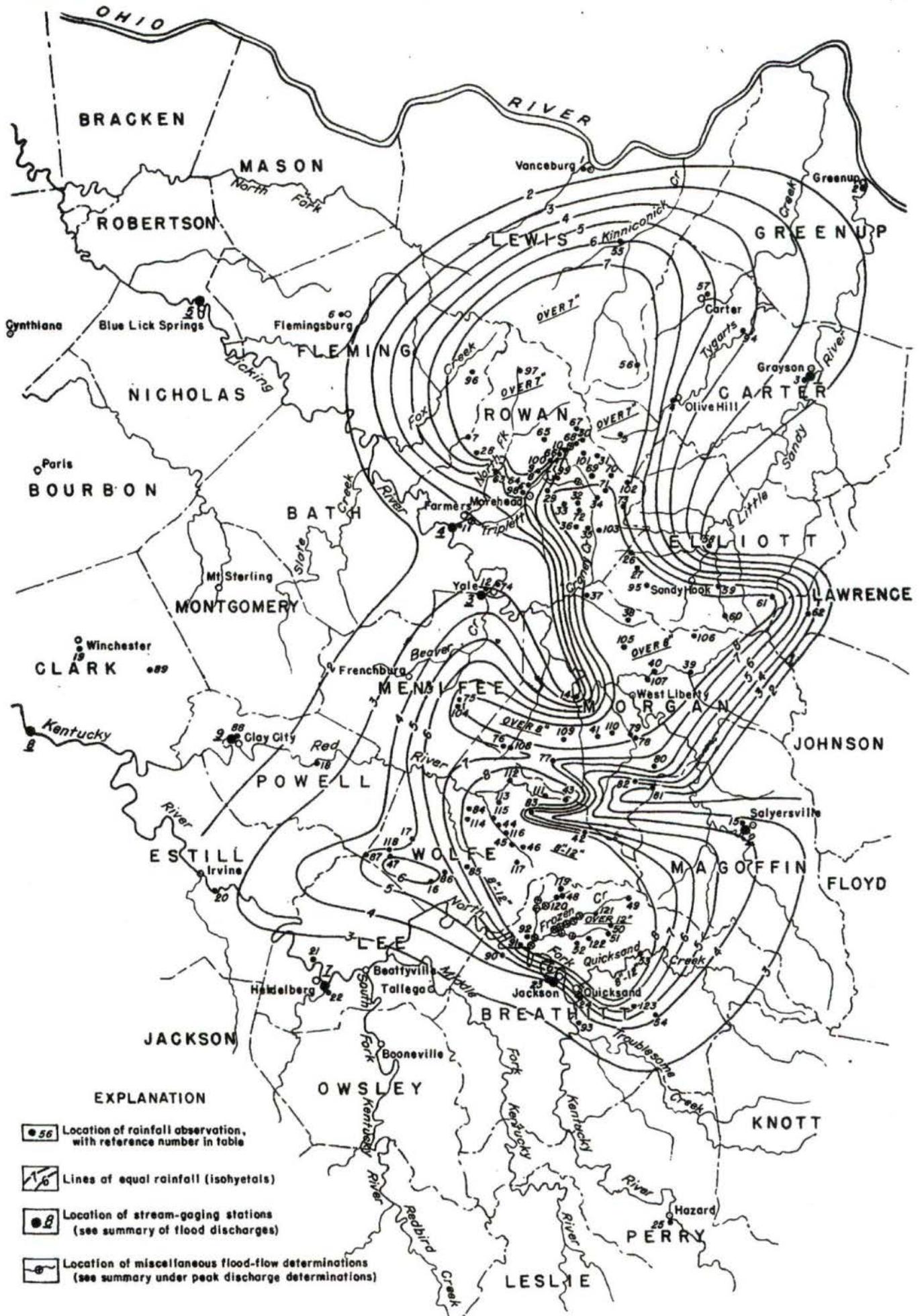


**A. WASH-OUT OF RAILROAD BRIDGE ON TRIPLETT CREEK NEAR MOREHEAD.**  
Bridge on spur line of Chesapeake & Ohio Railway was forced from foundations by floating house. Courtesy Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.



**B. VIEW OF COPE FORK IN FROZEN CREEK BASIN SHOWING REMAINS OF COCKRELL BRIDGE ON STATE HIGHWAY 15.**  
Steel truss bridge was carried several hundred feet downstream.  
Courtesy Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.

**DAMAGE TO BRIDGES ON TRIPLETT CREEK AND COPE FORK.**



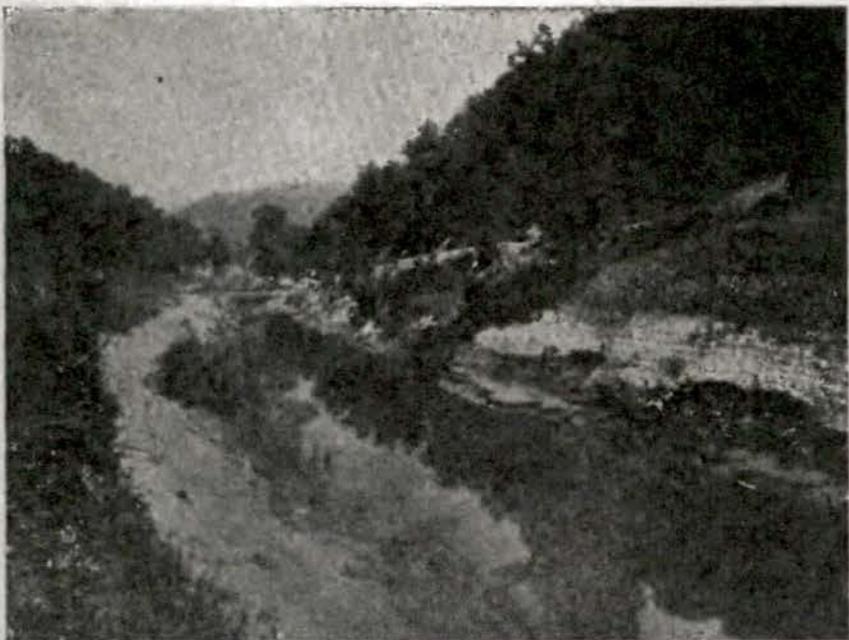
EXPLANATION

-  Location of rainfall observation, with reference number in table
-  Lines of equal rainfall (isohyets)
-  Location of stream-gaging stations (see summary of flood discharges)
-  Location of miscellaneous flood-flow determinations (see summary under peak discharge determinations)



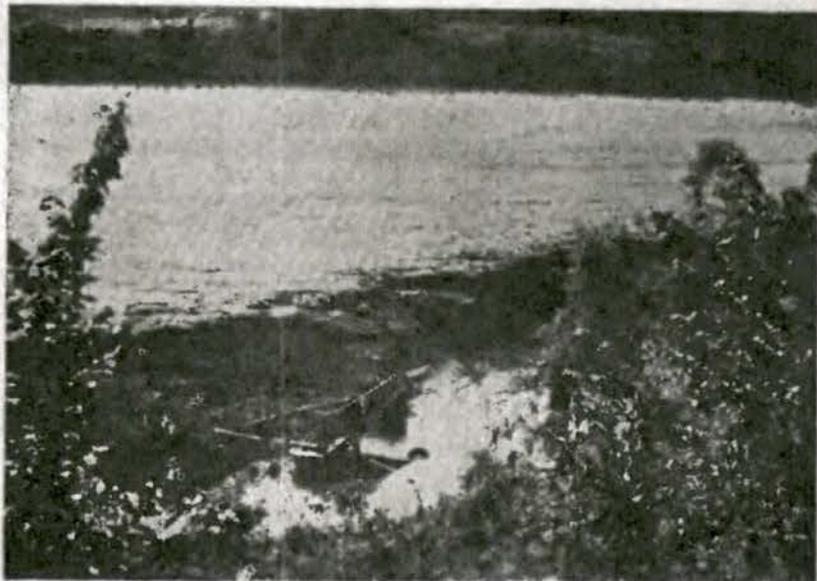
**A. RECEDING FLOODWATERS OF TRIPLETT CREEK.**

View downstream showing North Fork entering at right. Photograph taken between 11:30 a.m. and 12 m. on July 5, 1939. Courtesy Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.



**B. FROZEN CREEK AT THE MOUTH.**

View upstream from railroad bridge near North Fork Kentucky River showing sand deposits and stripped vegetation along banks. Photograph taken July 20, 1939. Courtesy Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.



**A. BOONE FORK IN FROZEN CREEK BASIN.**

View from State Highway 15 about 0.1 mile upstream from mouth showing thick deposit of mud on cornfield and automobile lying overturned in stream. Photograph taken July 9, 1939.

Courtesy Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.



**B. EROSION ON HILLSIDE IN WOLFE COUNTY.**

View from State Highway 15 about 2 miles from Breathitt County Line. Photograph taken July 19, 1939. Courtesy Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.

## INDEX

	Page		Page
Acknowledgments .....	43-44	Jackson, Ky., North Fork Kentucky River	
Blue Lick Springs, Ky., Licking River at	56,	at .....	56, 57, 58
	57, 58	Johnson Fork, discharge measurements on	53
Boone Fork, discharge measurements on..	54	Kentucky River, at Heidelberg, Ky...	56, 57, 58
view of .....	pl. 11, <i>A</i>	near Winchester, Ky. ....	56
Christy Creek, discharge measurements on	53	Licking River, at Blue Lick Springs, Ky.	56,
Clay City, Ky., Red River at.....	56, 57, 58	57, 58	
Cope Fork, damage caused by.....	pl. 8, <i>B</i>	at Farmers, Ky. ....	56, 57, 58
discharge measurements on .....	54	at Yale, Ky. ....	56, 57, 58
Corps of Engineers, discharge measure-		near Salyersville, Ky. ....	56, 57, 58
ments by .....	54-55	Little Sandy River, near Grayson, Ky...	56, 57
Discharge, gaging station records of.....	55-58	Meteorologic conditions in the area.....	44-45
general features of .....	51-52	Morehead, Ky., damage at.....	pls. 7, 8, <i>A</i>
peaks of, measurement of .....	52-55	North Fork Kentucky River, at Jackson,	
Farmers, Ky., Licking River at.....	56, 57, 58	Ky. ....	56, 57, 58
Flood, area affected by .....	42, 51	Rainfall, depth of .....	46-51, pl. 9
damage caused by.....	42-43, pls. 7, 8, 11	duration and extent of.....	45-46
Frozen Creek, discharge measurements on..	54-55	Red River, at Clay City, Ky. ....	56, 57, 58
drainage area of .....	51	Salyersville, Ky., Licking River near	56,
rise of water in .....	52	57, 58	
view of .....	pl. 10, <i>B</i>	Storm, description of .....	42, 44-51
Gaging stations, location of .....	pl. 9	Triplet Creek, damage caused by..	pls. 7, 8, <i>A</i>
records of .....	55-58	discharge measurements on .....	53, 54
Geological Survey, discharge measurements		drainage area of .....	51
by .....	53-54	rise of water in .....	52
Grayson, Ky., Little Sandy River near..	56, 57	view of .....	pl. 10, <i>A</i>
Heidelberg, Ky., Kentucky River at..	56, 57, 58	Winchester, Ky., Kentucky River near...	56
		Yale, Ky., Licking River at.....	56, 57, 58