

News Article

September 1973 Flood

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File Name: 88_197309_NewsArticle_1

Note: Pictures

The Greenville News

THE LEADING NEWSPAPER OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Thought

One must not always think that feeling is everything. Art is nothing without form. Gustave Flaubert

99th Year — No. 257

Greenville, S. C., Saturday, September 15, 1973



WORKERS REMOVE RUINED MERCHANDISE FROM SUPERMARKET AT LAURENS PLAZA
(Greenville News Photo by George W. Gardner Jr.)

Heavy Downpour Results In Floods Throughout Upstate S. C. Counties

From Staff, Wire Reports
Flooding of several rivers in the upper South Carolina area after up to nine inches of rain fell Thursday night and Friday morning, resulted in over 50 families being evacuated from their homes in Laurens and at least 15 in Anderson and four in Spartanburg County.

Worst hit in Laurens was a shopping center where the nearby Little River flooded the section with from six to eight feet of water.

There was heavy property damage in Anderson County. Some families were evacuated from their homes in the city and several highways and streets over the county were temporarily closed as streams overflowed their banks.

Although the floodgates were opened at Broadway Lake in Anderson County, the water reached the highest level in the recollection of the older residents.

In the city, the low-lying Booker and Susan Street areas were flooded and several families evacuated by the Anderson Rescue Squad.

Williamston Spring Park had some flooding, the first since the installation of the Big Creek watershed project.

S.C. 252 between Anderson and Honea Path was temporarily closed as the waters of Hen Coop Creek overflowed. The Shirley's Store Road was closed by flooding waters from Neals Creek.

The weather station at Anderson Airport reported 6.41 inches of rain, but other areas in Anderson County reported up to 6.9 inches.

Traffic was snarled in the cities of Anderson, Spartanburg and Greenville as numerous cars stalled and signal lights went out.

Greenville and Spartanburg reported almost as much rain as Anderson, but authorities said there was no serious damage and flood gates were receding rapidly.

Greenville County Supervisor John P. Ashmore Jr. said at least 50 roads were closed in Greenville County because of washouts. He said all bridges were intact, but that fill dirt on the ends of some bridges washed out.

He noted that in Taylors one bridge was more than 10 feet

above the normal water line Friday and that water rose more than five feet over the bridge.

County prisoners, guards and other supervisory personnel were busy until noon Friday putting up barricades, he said. The supervisor said that in some cases he had to wait until water

began receding before he could determine whether the bridges had washed out or not.

Ashmore said several roads will be closed until large culverts are removed and replaced with bridges. He said two 30-foot bridges will have to be replaced, and two 15-foot bridges will be replaced.

Most of the damage occurred in the eastern and southern portions of the county, he said.

In the city of Greenville, flooding was reported in Cleveland Park and some in the low-lying areas near Stone Avenue, Richland Creek and the Reedy River basin.

Portions of Cleveland Park were closed to traffic due to water covering the streets.

At Whitmire in Union County, where 6.3 inches of rain was recorded, officials reported only minor flooding.

M.C. Murphy, a weather service observer in Union County, said the 5.55 inches of rain he recorded between 5 p.m. Thursday and 7 a.m. Friday was more than for any comparable period in his 10 years as a weatherman.

Red Cross representatives from both Greenville and Charlotte, N.C., were assisting the Laurens County Red Cross chapter in providing shelter, food, clothing and medical needs for the flood victims in Laurens.

A Red Cross headquarters remained in operation Friday night at the Laurens Police station.

The National Weather Service said that the rainfall would produce flooding along the banks of the Saluda, Broad and Congaree Rivers.

The Broad was expected to crest at 15 to 16 feet Friday night, which was about two feet over flood stage.

The Saluda River was expected to crest at flood stage Friday night at Chappells while the Congaree River at Columbia was to crest Monday. Lowland flooding was expected below the Capital City.

Laurens Crippled By Flood Waters

By MARGARET WILLIAMS
LAURENS — Rain swollen Little River flowed over into areas of Laurens Friday causing damages estimated in the millions of dollars and sending an estimated 50 families fleeing from their homes in evacuation efforts.

Plaza Shopping Center at the intersection of U.S. 76 Bypass and Caroline Street was flooded and water climbed in store buildings near the river to five feet.

Police Chief James Barrett said he understood 18 cars were completely submerged in the area as waters rapidly rose before owners could move them.

At 9 a.m. the Laurens County Rescue squad was called in by police to help evacuate persons from their flooded homes on Gordon and Hampton Street areas. In some instances boats were required to rescue residents, trapped in their homes by the rapidly rising waters of the flash flood.

One resident, Mrs. Rosa Mae Jackson of 139 Gordon St. said that about 9 a.m. she went to the back room of her home and was surprised by water gushing through the windows and under the doors.

The water rose so rapidly, Mrs. Jackson said, that it was waist deep by the time she was able to carry her four children one by one from the house and hand them across a fence to a neighbor who carried them to higher ground.

Mrs. Estelle Madden of 137 Gordon St. said she and her son left their home when the

waters started rising, but that her husband who worked the third shift had gone to bed and refused to get up, believing the house would not be flooded. He had to be evacuated by boat.

Police Chief Barrett said he believed damages from the flood would exceed \$5 million. He said that to his knowledge no injuries resulted from the flooding.

By 10 a.m., Barrett said the flood waters were covering six bridges in the city. They were impassable, he said. Included were the U.S. 76 Bypass bridge, North Harper Street Bridge and also those on Gordon Street, Church Street, East Main Street and Caroline Street.

This caused a complete traffic snarl in the city, he said, and all available trained personnel including sheriff's deputies, rescue squad members and police were hard pressed in trying to reroute traffic.

Chief Barrett said that arrival of sightseers further complicated the situation.

The U.S. 76 Bypass bridge was blocked off about 12:30 p.m. Friday because of a washout of a section of the bridge. The busy four-lane highway will be closed until the Highway Department repairs the four-foot wide washout.

In the Plaza Shopping Center, where water was deepest in Winn-Dixie, a shoe store, clothing store and Edwards, city police made one arrest Friday and charged a person with petty larceny in connection with looting.

Weather

The upstate weather forecast calls for mostly sunny and warm Saturday.

Saturday night and Sunday will be partly cloudy and warm. Probability of precipitation will remain near zero through Saturday night.

The high for Saturday will be in the mid-80s and the low Saturday night will be in the low 60s. Other data is on Page 2.

Rains Hit Other S.C. Sections

LAURENS, S.C. (AP)—A shopping center was flooded, houses were evacuated, and cars were washed away in a midmorning Friday flash flood of the Little River, swollen by heavy upstate rains.

"It just jumped up," was the description given by J. W. Hamilton, operator of a boat shop on the banks of a tributary of the Little River.

No one was reported hurt in the flooding, but 30 National Guardsmen were brought in to patrol the roped-off shopping center, whose stocks were being evacuated late into the day.

A U. S. 76 Bypass bridge over the tributary of the Little River was closed because of a gaping hole 3 to 8 feet wide across three of its four lanes.

Tommy Young, manager of the Edwards 5 and 10, said he noticed the water was four to five inches deep in the parking lot as the flooding started, and "15 minutes later it was 4 to 5 feet deep in the store." James May and Lamar LeCroy of the Belk's Department Store adjoining the shopping center said they had to climb up on the roof of their one-story building to escape the flooding.

Hamilton said 13 of 14 boats on trailers at his shop on the tributary about 100 yards down from the shopping center, were saved, although they washed away, by mooring them and their trailers. He said the lines held.

However, he reported losing 2,000 to 3,000 tires that floated off.

Most cars that were washed into the stream were recovered, but some still were in the receding flood waters at nightfall.

Estimates were that water was up from five to seven feet in the low-lying shopping center. About a dozen cars in the parking lot were inundated, along with a soft drink truck making a delivery.

Some of the residents along the bank of the stream that winds through the town were taken to safety by boat, while others made it directly to nearby higher ground.

About 50 people were evacuated, with the Red Cross providing temporary shelter. The flood waters had abated by late afternoon.

There was no estimate of damage. A shopping center spokesman noted that insurance policies do not cover flooding in the area.

Flash Floods Cause Service Breaks, Damage, Rescues

By GLORIA FAIR
Staff Writer

The Farrs heard it raining outside, but they had heard the rain lots of times. They knew the rain seemed to go forever, not relenting for even 15 minutes in its downpour, but they did not become alarmed. They were safe and dry inside their home on Honeysuckle Road.

What they didn't know was that they were about to be flooded out of that home.

"I didn't know the water was that high," Mrs. Willie Edward Farr said Friday. "The rain woke me up a couple of times but it didn't worry me."

When it did worry the family was when someone knocked on their door between 5 and 6 Friday and told them that they should leave before the waters rose any higher.

"The water was up on the porch," she said. "It hadn't started coming in the house yet, but it looked like any minute it would spill over."

There were five people in the house: Mr. and Mrs. Farr and

their children Bruce, Willie Jr. and Randall. "The kids were scared," Mrs. Farr said, "but we got out all right."

The Farrs were moved by the North Spartanburg Area Fire Department, which had gotten calls saying residents of Honeysuckle Road might be in danger of rising waters.

"We were able to walk out of the house," Mrs. Farr said, "but we had to wade through knee-deep water to get to the truck. We were glad to get out."

Although the inside of the house was not damaged, the Farrs' car which was parked in the yard received considerable damage. "My husband says it will have to have a new motor," Mrs. Farr said. "The water drowned out the motor and got down in the carburetor."

The Farrs were able to return to their home later in the morning and Mrs. Farr remarked Friday that when it starts raining hard again, "We're gettint out."

THERE WERE three other families living in mobile homes in the same area who also had to be evacuated. They were the homes of Charles VanPatton,

Boyce Smith and Jerry Pack. The trailers were on higher ground than the Farr home and the water did not do as much damage. One of the trailers, closest to the creek which runs through the area, received some damage but the owners did not leave their home.

The rain which caused all the damage began as a light drizzle around 3:30 p. m. Thursday and reached its peak between 3 and 4 Friday morning.

The City Communications Department reported traffic lights out at the intersection of Briarwood Road and W. O. Ezell Boulevard shortly before 7 a. m. Friday and patrol units were on duty to direct traffic until Duke Power could restore power.

Two trucks were kept busy removing vehicles stalled by flood waters which created traffic jams around the city. One traffic lane on Pine Street was closed.

M. A. Fleming, State Highway Department engineer, reported that several state roads in the country were flooded at various times during the night. Rogers Bridge on S. C. 63 at the Tyger River was

closed Friday morning, Road 787 near Highway 221 was closed most of the night. Road 192 at Archer Road was flooded but passable, and Road 77 between Highway 29 and Duncan was flooded.

SOUTHERN BELL Telephone began experiencing cable damage as the rain continued. J. T. Cothran of that office reported widespread cable trouble in the northeastern section of the Spartanburg District that affected local service and long distance services in many areas. Long-distance circuits in the areas of Boiling Springs, Green Creek, Landrum, Columbus and Tryon were affected.

Cothran said repairmen worked all of Thursday night and throughout Friday to restore the service, and that he anticipated all troubles to be cleared by noon today.

The weatherman at the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport reported rainfall of 6.21 inches during the 24-hour period ending at 7 a. m. Friday. In Spartanburg, the official measurement for the period was 6.17 inches.

Union's Rain Was Biggest In 10 Years

UNION — The largest amount of rainfall recorded in the past 10 years in Union County occurred Thursday night.

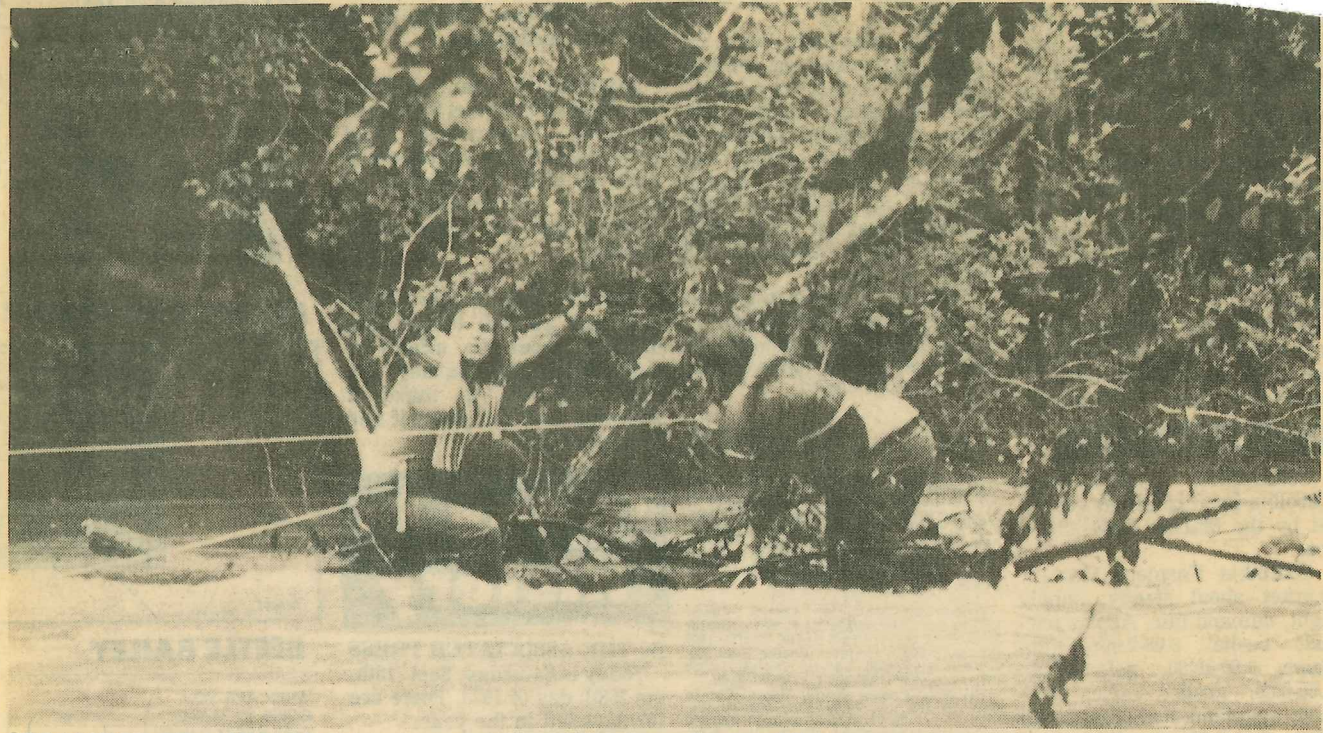
M. C. Murphy, who operates an official weather reporting station west of Union, says the 5.55 inches recorded between 7 a. m. Thursday and 7 a. m. Friday is the largest amount in that length of time during his service as a weather observer.

The hard rain began about 5 p. m. Thursday and continued throughout the night, causing a section of Pine Street to give way. The street was closed between Goss Avenue and Park Drive.

Police reported several wrecks associated with the rain. No injuries were reported.

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STRANDED AT MIDSTREAM in Lawson's Fork Creek Friday afternoon, Chuck Allen, 18, left, and Mike Metcalf, 19, await rescuers' attempts to bring them ashore. The young men and a companion, Mike Thrasher, 17, all of Spartanburg, were in a small boat which capsized in the rain-swelled water in Allen

Acres. Allen swam to shore to call for help, then returned to help Thrasher swim the short distance to shallower water. He later aided members of the Whitney Rescue Squad in bringing Metcalf to safety. (Photo by Leslie Duggins of B&B Studio)

Teenagers Safe And Dry After Incident On Creek

By SUSAN LANCASTER
Staff Writer

Three Spartanburg teenagers are home safe and dry today following a Friday afternoon outing on Lawson's Fork Creek that could have cost them their lives.

It began Friday when Mike Thrasher, 17, of 825 Hillwood Ave., Chuck Allen, 18, of 929 Barnwell Road, and Mike Metcalf, 19, of 1006 Mayview St., decided to try the waters of rain-engorged Lawson's Fork Creek. They launched their small, flat-bottomed boat into the river near Barnwell Road in Allen Acres and planned to float downstream to a flooded pasture.

About halfway to their destination, the boat missed a wide curve in the swiftly flowing water and capsized on a clump of trees and brush at midstream.

The young men tried shouting for help but their voices went unheard in the heavily wooded area. Allen jumped into the current and swam to shore. He went to a nearby house, asked the residents to call for a rescue unit and returned to the river.

The water at midstream was about six feet deep but it was only a short distance to shallower water. Allen swam back out to his friends and helped Thrasher swim ashore.

The Whitney Rescue Squad arrived at about 4 p.m.

and Captain Bill Kerns asked Allen to assist in the rescue of Metcalf, who was stranded on a single tree away from where the boat capsized.

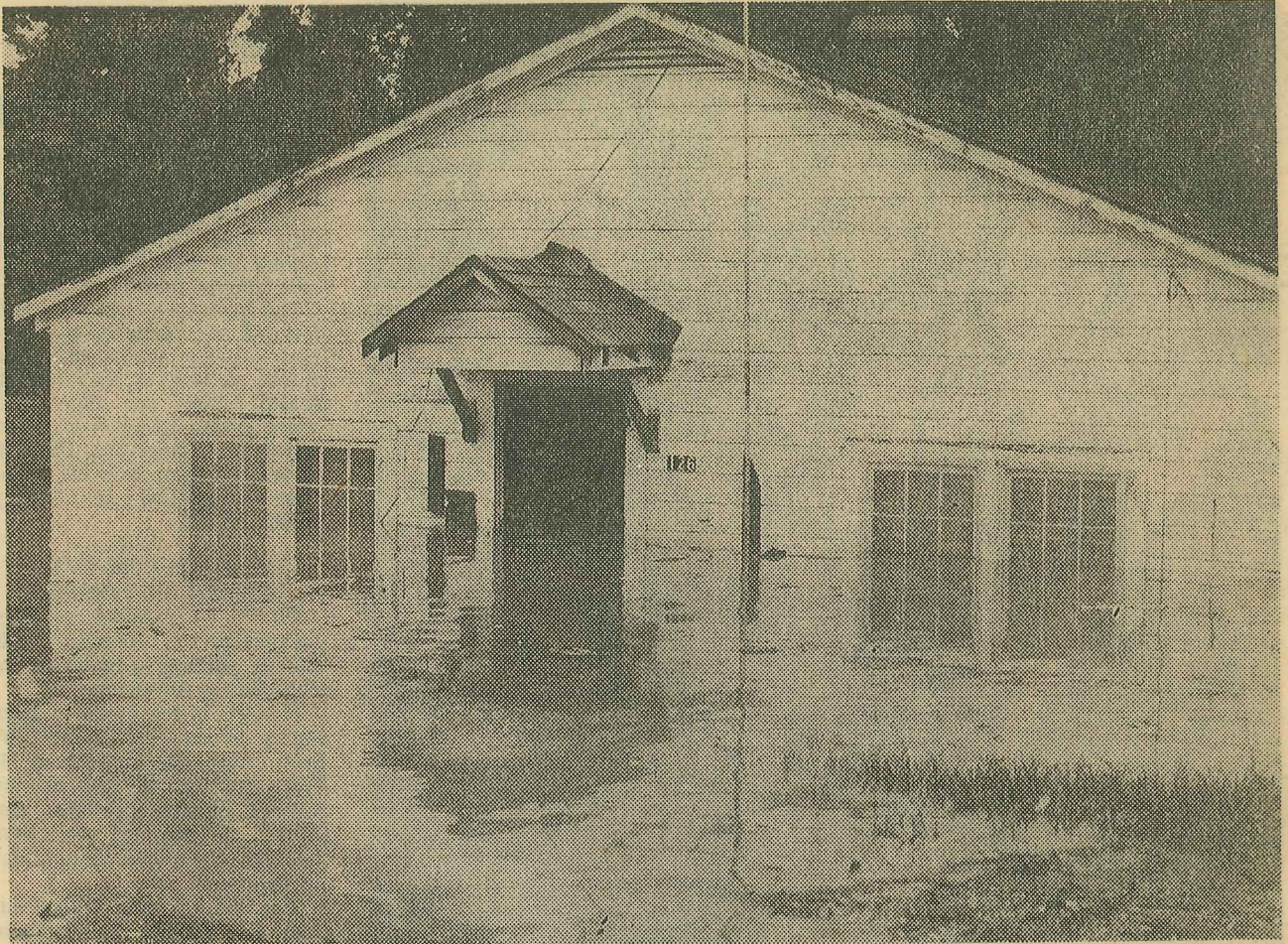
Allen returned to the larger clump of brush and helped rescue workers string nylon lifelines to the partially submerged trees.

In the meantime, neighborhood residents tried to notify the young men's parents of their situation. Edward Marshall Metcalf sped to the scene of the rescue on his son's motorcycle. About a block from the scene, the motorcycle slid in gravel while rounding a curve and overturned.

Metcalf ran the remaining distance to the river and was given emergency medical treatment for head and arm injuries.

The younger Metcalf's rescue took about an hour and a half because of difficulty in securing life jackets for him and the workers and because of the swiftness of the current. One of the workers finally had to jump into the water upstream and float down to Metcalf to help him into a life jacket. He was then pulled to the larger clump of brush and then ashore. Allen followed when Metcalf was safe.

Metcalf and his father were taken to General Hospital where they were treated and released.



NOBODY HOME — Some 10 to 15 families were left homeless by a flash flood that struck Laurens Friday morning shortly after 9 o'clock. This is the home of the Curtis Russ family where the water reaches halfway up the doorway and was waist deep in the living room. Water reaches

mailbox, with lower portion being reflection. Laurens Plaza Shopping Center was covered with some seven feet of water and although officials would not make an estimate, damage not covered by insurance may exceed \$1 million. (Photo for The Greenville News by Jim Kluttz)