

# THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

81st Year No. 3

PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE COUNTY SEAT AT M

THURSDAY, January 21, 1982

15c Per Copy

## Second Winter Storm Puts County On Hold

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK swept almost the entire county and hit Western North Carolina during the night. Local residents awoke Monday morning to bottomed-out thermometers and cancelled school classes.

A winter storm warning was issued by the National Weather Service for Tuesday night and Wednesday, and while Asheville and Buncombe County received four to five inches of snow, Madison County escaped the brunt of the storm with one-half to one inch accumulation Wednesday.

A second storm which hit

the county early Thursday morning proved to be the one which reminded residents that winter is still here and can be severe in the mountains. Snow began falling at 7 a.m. and continued, moderately to heavily at times, through most of the day and into the night. By noon, approximately five inches had accumulated in the Marshall area.

Automobile and pedestrian traffic was almost nonexistent in Marshall, and several offices and downtown businesses closed their doors early so employees could go

home.

Frank Moore, manager of Wachovia Bank, closed all three branch offices — Marshall, Mars Hill and Hot Springs — at noon, saying it was the first time since he came to the bank in 1957 that it had been closed because of the weather.

First Union National Bank in Marshall closed its doors at 3 p.m., according to Manager Bryce Hall, in order to make sure employees could get home safely.

However, Northwestern Bank at the shopping center on the Marshall Bypass remained open until its regular closing hour, and "had a good afternoon of business," according to Hal Johnson, manager.

While most of the county was hampered by nature's wintry clutch, Wolf Laurel Ski Resort was enjoying unusually brisk business for the month. Resort spokesmen, who gauge their success in numbers of ski days, said Saturday that they were three to four days ahead of business as compared to the same time last year.

The resort's parking lots were filled Saturday afternoon and skiers waited in long lines at ski lifts as a second Arctic cold front swept frigid winds and more snow onto the mountain.

On another positive note, Sheriff E.Y. Ponder reported that no major traffic accidents or weather related deaths occurred in the county during the week. Statewide, 20 deaths have been attributed to the week's weather.

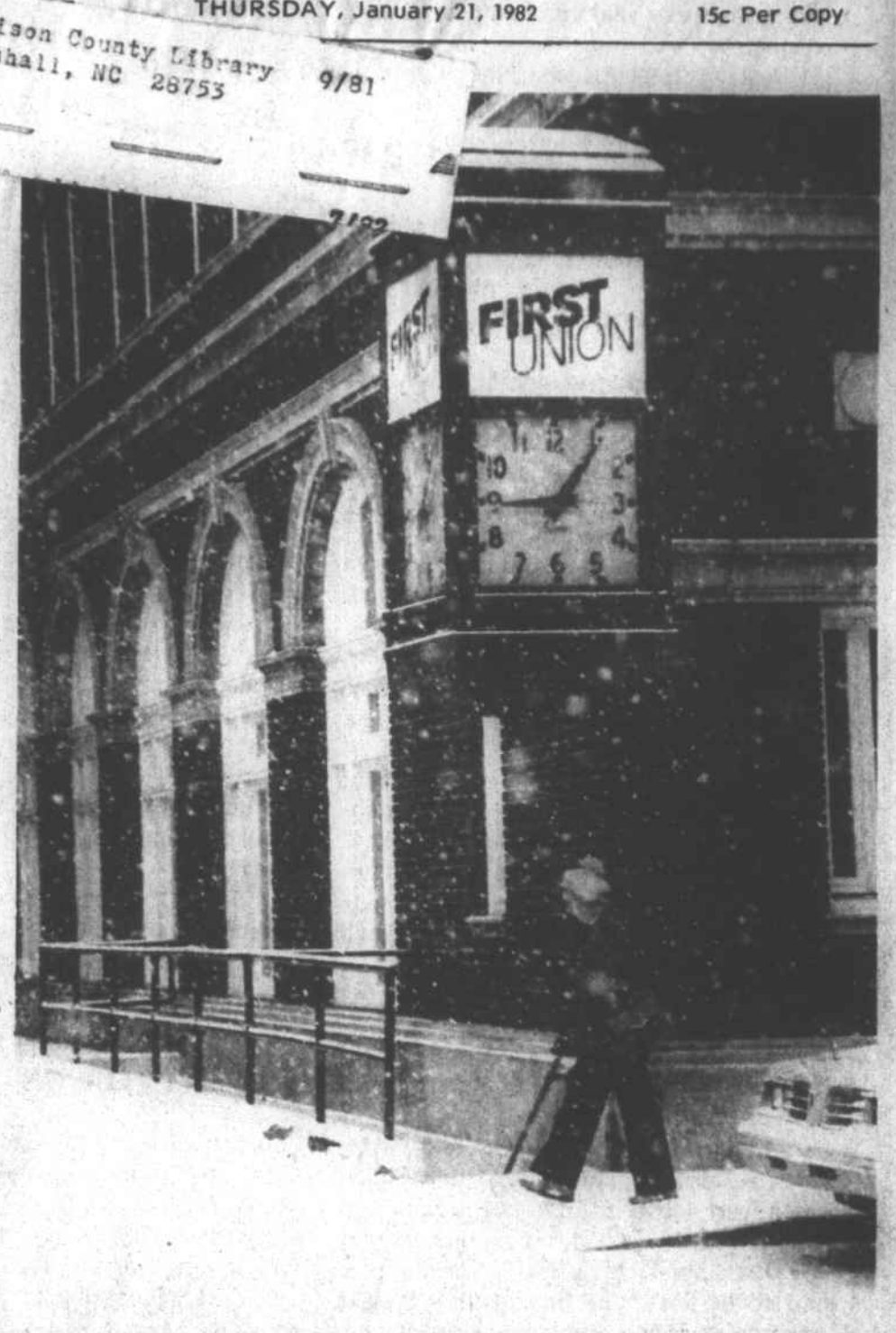


Photo by N. Hancock

**SECOND WINTER STORM** — Western North Carolina's second major winter storm hit Madison County Thursday morning with moderate to heavy snow beginning at 7 o'clock. By 9 a.m. approximately one inch had ac-

cumulated in Marshall where few people were out conducting business. Ruby Roberts makes her way through the big flakes from the First Union Bank to the courthouse.

## Easter Holidays On Tap

Madison school students can still look forward to five Easter vacation days in April, that is unless schools are closed for several more days because of snow or inclement weather.

School Superintendent Robert L. Edwards said Monday that the April 12-16 Easter holidays are still scheduled on the school system calendar in spite of the six days missed last week and Monday. He said should the system be closed during February and March, he would meet with principal and supervisors to discuss alternative plans for making up the lost school days.

Students were out Dec. 16 for ice and Jan. 11-18 because of a combination of sub-zero temperatures and snow for a total of seven days thus far this year.

Edwards noted that students had only attended school for a total of seven days since Dec. 16, but 10 of those days were scheduled Christmas holidays.

"Teachers and principals have said they prefer to have teachers' workdays on all snow days unless it is so bad they can't get there,"

he said. "Then they'll get into their holidays and annual leave days for snow days."

The current school calendar provides 12½ annual leave days, 8 holidays and 16½ teacher workdays. Edwards said, thus far, school personnel have used 9½ annual leave days, 6 holidays and 9½ teacher workdays.

The county's seven school buildings suffered little or no damage during the extreme cold on Monday and Tuesday of last week. Spring Creek Elementary reported a frozen and ruptured water pipe, and an air conditioning unit atop Madison High School froze and became inoperable.

Edwards said his chief concern has been the expense of maintaining heat in the buildings to prevent damage to water pipes. "In a weeks time, I've ordered six truck loads of oil. That's over \$6,000 everytime one of them rolls up," he said.

As for any future school closings, the superintendent said announcements would be made on the mornings in question over WMMH and WWNC radio stations and on WLOS-TV.

Bill Zink, of the Agriculture Stabilization and Control Service, closed his office at 3 p.m. Other governmental offices in the county seat closed early, and the courthouse — normally a hub of activity — looked deserted most of the day.

O.A. Gregory of Gregory Oil Company reported that delivery trucks were running two days behind in schedule because of the abnormally low temperatures and an increase in orders for heating oil. But the trucks, equipped with chains, remained on the road during the snow.

Road conditions were "pretty rough" according to a spokesman at the local office of the N.C. Department of Transportation. Maintenance crews manned scrapers and salt trucks almost continuous-

## Investigation Slow SBI Officials Say

Investigation into a fire which destroyed the Hot Springs home of Franklin S. (Hank) Holmes two weeks ago is progressing slowly, according to State Bureau of Investigation officials in Asheville.

"It's going pretty slow, and we haven't turned up any leads yet," SBI Agent J.N. Minter said Monday.

The fire, of undetermined origin, leveled the six room log house on Spring Creek Road early Sunday morning, Jan. 3. Holmes and his wife were vacationing in Florida when the blaze was discovered by a neighbor at 1 a.m.

Holmes and his mother, Mrs. Alberta Stroud, owner of the property, say they suspect arson and cite threatening phone calls received in December as a basis for their suspicions.

Mrs. Stroud says she received a call Dec. 8 in which the caller told her, "Keep your a-- out of Hot Springs if you don't want everything you've got burned."

Holmes and six other residents who have received

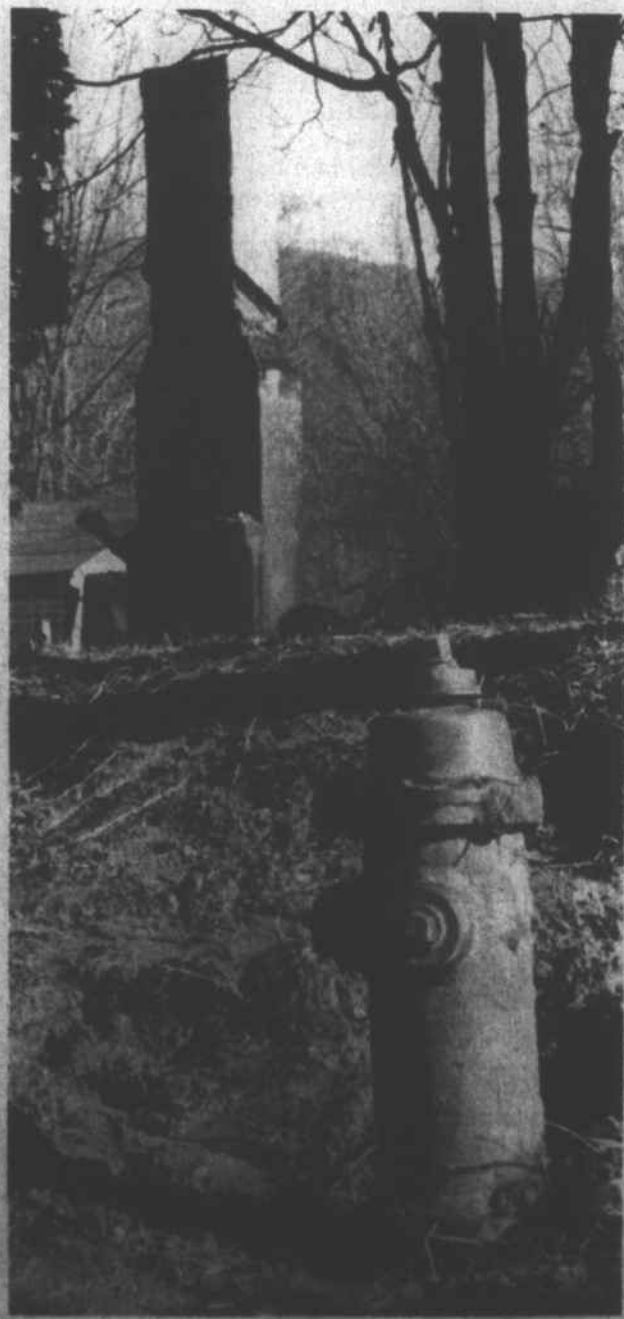


Photo by N. Hancock

### Controversial Hydrant

A FIRE HYDRANT stands only a few years from the ruins of the Hank Holmes residence, which was levelled by fire Jan. 3.

## Confusion Hampered Firemen

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK Editor

Confusion over a newly installed water line and fire hydrant apparently was a major factor in preventing Hot Springs Firemen from extinguishing the blaze which leveled the Hank Holmes house on Spring Creek Road earlier this month.

The State Bureau of Investigation is trying to determine if the fire was an accident or if arson was involved.

R.Z. (Bobby) Ponder, a volunteer fireman, said in a recent interview that the hydrant had not been turned on when the fire truck arrived at the scene. Ponder said no water came out of the hydrant when it's valve was open, so he sent Wesley Staude and Robert Ponder Jr. back to town to get a wrench to open the valve in the main water line leading to the hydrant.

Staude said the fire department didn't know that the newly installed water line had not been connected to the town's main system. Opening the valve in the water line only provided firemen with what Staude called backwash, "drainage from the hydrant up above on the line," he said.

"We turned it (the water line valve) wide open. We went back and checked it again. We tried everything we knew to

try, but we weren't getting anything but what was leaking out," Staude said.

As a result refilling the 500 gallon fire truck required nearly 30 minutes when, under ordinary conditions, the operation would have required less than four minutes, according to Staude.

"We had the option of going to another hydrant down the street, but it's my understanding that it wasn't operational either," he said.

Ponder said there was no other source of water to fight the blaze and explained that the town's fire truck was not equipped to pump water out of Spring Creek, which flowed near the house. He declined further comment on the fire saying he would prefer to wait until the SBI investigation of the incident is completed.

SBI Supervisor J.N. Minter said Monday the investigation "is going slow."

Statements concerning the hydrant and the water line conflict. Police Chief Leroy Johnson, who is also supervisor of the town's water system, said the hydrant had been tested. But William Stilwell, contractor who is currently installing the town's new water system, told The News Record that neither the hydrant nor the line had been checked.

Johnson said the water line had been installed about two months ago and the hydrant had been installed on Friday

before the early Sunday morning fire. "The hydrant was tested when it was turned on to get air out of the line," he said.

But Stilwell said his company poured a concrete thrust block behind the hydrant, and at least 48 hours are required for the concrete to set up before any testing is done. He said his men would not have checked the hydrant before Monday or Tuesday.

Johnson said he inspected the water line valve sometime after the fire and found it to be three turns short of being fully open. He said it was a "14 round" valve, and he attributed the unusually low water pressure to the three shy turns.

Stilwell said he's not sure what happened that caused the difficulty for the firemen. "It's the fire chief's decision whether to use that line. But I don't know if anybody else would have done anything different," he said.

The contractor added that work on the water system would probably be completed by mid or late February, and he pointed out there are at least five newly installed fire hydrants which are currently not operating in the town — One on Paint Rock Road, one on Spring Street and three on Berry Ridge Road.

## Ramsey Announces

Representative Liston B. Ramsey of Marshall, Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives, announced Thursday as a candidate for re-election to the House.

"I am running on my record of service to the people of Western North Carolina," Ramsey said as he entered the 1982 Democratic primary. "The well-being of the people I represent in the House has always been of prime consideration to me, and I aim to keep it up."

Ramsey, who was elected Speaker of the House in January 1981, said he will be a candidate to succeed himself in that position if the voters of his district renominate and re-elect him to the House.

Ramsey said he has commitments from enough members of the House Democratic majority to win re-election as Speaker in January, 1983.

Ramsey, who presently represents Haywood, Jackson, Madison and Swain



Continued on Page 2

Liston Ramsey

## On The Inside

Marilyn McMinn-McCredie is a noted folklorist, teacher and storyteller. See her story on Page 3.