

Looking Back, tornado batters Camp Nelson warehouses

Staff Report

Nearly five decades ago, a powerful tornado tore through the Camp Nelson area, leaving behind an estimated \$200,000 in damage to distillery warehouses and tens of thousands more in losses to nearby farms.

The March 1976 storm carved a path through property owned by Old Fitzgerald Distillery and leased at the time by Austin Nichols Company, five miles south of Nicholasville off U.S. 27. Of six massive whiskey storage warehouses perched on a grassy rise overlooking the Kentucky River valley, four sustained heavy damage.

Portions of the roof were ripped from two of the seven-story rick-houses. On two others, wood siding was peeled away and flung across the property. In the days that followed, long splintered boards — some stretching 10 feet — lay scattered across the knoll. In places, two-inch-thick planks had been driven straight into the ground by the force of the wind.

Through a gaping hole near the roofline of one towering red warehouse, row after row of bourbon barrels were exposed to view — an image that underscored both the scale of the destruction and the fragility of what lay inside.

Miraculously, none of



FILE PHOTO

A gaping hole is visible in a whiskey warehouse at Camp Nelson after a 1976 tornado tore through the area. High winds ripped open the seven-story storage facility used by Austin Nichols Distillery, exposing rows of aging bourbon barrels that, remarkably, remained undamaged despite the destruction.

the estimated 26,000 barrels stored in the damaged buildings were thrown from the warehouses.

James Canter, warehouse supervisor at the time, said the storm struck around 8:30 p.m., triggering burglar alarms as debris struck the buildings. The Jessamine County Fire Department responded quickly, standing by to guard against fires that could have been sparked by lightning.

Two of the six warehouses escaped unscathed. The two

structures in the middle of the property remained intact, while the four on either side bore the brunt of the high winds.

The rickhouses, then about 25 years old, had originally been owned by Canada Dry Distilling Company. Austin Nichols had leased them from Old Fitzgerald just a year earlier.

Repairs began almost immediately. Canter estimated at the time that restoration would take two to three months. In the meantime, the four-man warehouse staff faced the painstaking task

of clearing hundreds of pieces of wood and twisted metal from the landscape.

The storm's impact extended beyond the distillery property.

Not far away, Kenneth and his wife, longtime tenants on the D.C. Anderson farm on RFD 3 Nicholasville, confronted a different kind of devastation. Two barns were destroyed and another badly damaged.

All that remained of a nine-bent hay barn and a six-bent barn were planks scattered across pastureland. A tobacco barn



FILE PHOTO

Damage is seen at Don Gray Grocery near Spears after lightning sparked a fire during a violent storm in 1976. The blaze, believed to have been triggered by electrical disturbances associated with tornado-force winds, destroyed the store and caused an estimated \$45,000 in losses east of Nicholasville.

along Poortown Road was ripped from its foundation, torn apart and hurled down a hillside into a farm pond roughly 50 feet below. The pond filled with the remains of the structure.

A hay barn several hundred feet away collapsed into a heap, yet the silo beside it stood untouched — a stark reminder of the erratic nature of tornado winds.

Willoughby, then 21, said the winds intensified between 8:30 and 10 p.m. His family remained inside their one-story concrete block farmhouse, which somehow emerged without damage.

A 1960 model hay baler

stored in one of the barns was damaged but still operable. Other farm equipment was spared.

In addition to the barns, a corn crib was blown apart, scattering corn stalks across fields. A large barn near the house sustained only minor damage.

Willoughby estimated farm losses at between \$25,000 and \$30,000 — a significant sum at the time — and said it could take a year to fully recover and rebuild.

Residents in the Camp Nelson area also reported damage to additional barns and outbuildings.

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Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

CASE NUMBER 26 P 37

NOTICE is hereby given that Candace Gaines has qualified as Administrator of the estate of Sally Ann Hellyer, deceased of Jessamine County, Kentucky on February 19, 2026. All persons having claims against the said estate are requested to present the same properly proven as required by law to the aforesaid Candace Gaines, 716 Pinoak Drive, Nicholasville, KY 40356 no later than August 19, 2026.

Doug Fain
Jessamine County Circuit Clerk

Jessamine Journal:
Mar. 5, 2026
EST/Hellyer, S.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Jessamine County Board of Elections will inspect all the voting machines on Tuesday, March 10th, 2026, for the 2026 Primary Election pursuant to KRS 117.165 (1). The inspection will take place at 9:00 A.M. at 2400 Merchant Street in Lexington, Ky.

Johnny M. Collier, CJC
Clerk of Jessamine County

Jessamine Journal:
Mar. 5, 2026
INSPECTION 3.10.26

PUBLIC NOTICE

DAVID'S TOWING & RECOVERY, LLC, 150 WILSON CT., NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40356. IS SEEKING CLEAR TITLES FOR THE FOLLOWING VEHICLES:
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2012 TOYOTA RAV 4:
2 T 3 B K 4 D V D C W 0 7 1 3 5 8,
KATHY FARRELL, 970 MANOR DR, #76, NEEMAH, WI 54956,
BAYPORT MOTORS LLC, 1557 CTY RD F, LUXEMBURG, WI 54217
2004 HONDA ACCORD:
1 H G C M 5 6 3 7 4 A 1 7 6 7 0 7,
DANIEL VIOLETTE, 1981 FAIR OAKS DR., NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40356
2018 CHEVROLET CRUZE:
ROBERTO RAMIREZ, 213 T H A M E S CIRCLE, NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40356
2013 KIA OPTIMA:
5XXGM4A74DG123648, TUR-RENT LANEY RODRIGUEZ, 8213 PENNSYLVANIA RUN RD., LOUISVILLE, KY 40228,
EAGLE FINANCIAL SERVICES, 3411 BARDSTOWN RD. STE 6, LOUISVILLE, KY 40218

Jessamine Journal:
Feb. 19, 26 and Mar. 5, 2026
AV/06 JEEP

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Jessamine County-City of Wilmore Joint Board of Adjustment will meet in regular session at 6:30pm, Thursday, March 19, 2026 in the second-floor courtroom of the Jessamine County Courthouse located at 101 North Main Street, Nicholasville, Kentucky. The agenda will be as follows:

Old Business
Case #11189 – Application for a Conditional Use permit to operate a special event venue submitted by Kevin and Chrissy Udd for property zoned A-1 at 175 Cassidy Way, Jessamine County, KY.
Case CE2096 – Public Hearing pursuant to County Ordinance, Chapter 151 (Unfit Buildings), Forrest Ham and Wilbur Ham, for 120 Pekin Lane, Jessamine County, Kentucky.

New Business
Case #11244 – Application for Dimensional Variance to reduce the required front-yard setback along Crawford Creek Drive from 50' to 35' for construction of a home submitted by Jeff and Allison Hurst for property zoned R-1 at Lot #15 Wild Turkey Court, Jessamine County, Kentucky. PVA Parcel: 071-00-00-046.15.
Case #11248 – Application for Dimensional Variance to increase the maximum sign square-footage from 50' to 91' for construction of a sign submitted by Worthington Signs LTD for property zoned B-3 at 5991 Tates Creek Road, Jessamine County, Kentucky.
Case #11252 – Application for a Conditional Use permit to operate a home occupation submitted by Jeanette Harrington for property zoned A-1 at 1554 Groggins Ferry Road, Jess-

Public Notices

samine County, KY.
Other Business
Case CE2076 – Public Hearing pursuant to County Ordinance, Chapter 151 (Unfit Buildings), BJT Properties, LLC for 1701 River Road, Jessamine County, Kentucky.

Jessamine Journal:
Mar. 5, 2026
MEETING 3.19.26

PUBLIC NOTICE

This notice is intended to inform the residents of Wilmore, Kentucky that the City of Wilmore is in the process of closing out the Wilmore Granary Restoration Phase II Project. The project was funded in part by the HUD Community Development Block Grant Program. A public hearing will be held at Wilmore City Hall (210 S. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390) on March 13, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. The purpose of this hearing is to review past use of funds and program performance. If there are any questions or comments about the project, please direct them to the following:

Harold Rainwater, Mayor
210 S. Lexington Ave.
Wilmore, KY 40390
(859) 858-4411
TDD #: 1-800-648-6056 (for the hearing impaired)

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The City of Wilmore does not discriminate on the basis of race, color national origin, sex, age religion or disability, and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodations including auxiliary aids and services, to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in all services, programs and activities. Any persons requiring special needs assistance should contact the office of the Judge/Executive at the aforementioned address, at least five days prior to the meeting.

Written comments will be received until time of the public hearing.

Jessamine Journal:
Mar. 5, 2026
HEARING 3.13.26

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