On the morning of July 3, 1922, the citizens of Novinger, Missouri, were awakened by a loud explosion. The explosion was heard as far as Tipperary, almost three miles south of Novinger. The photograph to the right shows the results of the early morning blast which occurred in the downtown area.

John Sullivan, owner of the City Drug Store, was opening his business, around seven that morning, when the accident happened. As he opened the front door of the drug store, the building exploded. The far right photo, taken looking northwest on Frankford Avenue, shows how powerful the blast was.

Mr. Sullivan was found later in a patch of weeds across the street. He was taken to Laughlin Hospital in Kirksville. His injuries included a broken arm and a compound fracture of his leg. He also had multiple cuts and internal injuries. He never regained consciousness after the incident and died on July 7, 1922.

Most of the stores in the area had their windows shattered, including the Novinger School which was located one-half mile away. The lower photo shows the damage to the stores just north of the City Drug Store.

Many people in the northeast Missouri area traveled to Novinger to view the aftermath of the explosion. The lower far right photo shows a group of sightseers looking over the rubble.

Many residents had their own ideas as to what really caused the accident. As reported in the Kirksville Daily Express, one explanation was a 15-gallon, carbonated water tank located in the store caused the blast. Another was that it was caused by a gas leak in the back of the drug store. And still another which the papers reported, was that it was a trap set to detonate some kind of explosive by an unknown enemy. The actual cause of the explosion was never positively determined and still today remains a mystery.

Photos Courtesy of Adair County Historical Society.