

was held in check by a dam 700 to 1000 feet wide. It was 90 feet in thickness at the base and its height was 110 feet. The top had a breadth of over 20 feet. Recognizing the menace which this lake presented to the region below South Fork, the club which owned the reservoir had the dam inspected by the Pennsylvania Railroad engineers once a month, and their investigation showed that nothing less than some convulsion of nature would tear the barrier away.

The late steady rains increased the volume of water in all the small mountain streams, which were already swelled by a lesser rain earlier in the week. It is evident that something in the nature of a cloud-burst must have been the culmination of the struggle of the water against the bank.

At about 5 p. m., May 31st, the lake burst the dam, and the waters rushed down upon the doomed village of Johnstown, literally wiping it out of existence. One dispatch stated that only two houses in the town escaped being swept away or submerged. Scores of dwellings were carried down with the torrent, and hundreds of people were drowned. Hundreds of others were seen clinging to floating objects which were borne on the bosom of the madly rushing waters.

The course of the torrent from the broken dam at the foot of the lake to Johnstown is almost eighteen miles, and with the exception of one point, the water passed through a narrow V-shaped valley. Four miles below the dam lay the town of Southfork, where the Southfork itself empties into Connemaugh River. The town contained about 200 inhabitants, and it is said four-fifths of it is swept away. Four miles further down on the Connemaugh River, which runs partly parallel with the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, was the town of Mineral Point. It had 1000 people, 90 per cent. of the houses being on a flat, or close to the river. It seems impossible at this time to hope that any have escaped. Six miles further down was the town of Connemaugh, and here alone there was a topographical possibility of the spreading of the flood. It contained 2500 inhabitants, and must be wholly devastated. Woodvale, with 2000 people, lay a mile below Connemaugh Flat, and one mile further down were Johnstown and its cluster of city towns, including Cambria City and Connemaugh which were built, with a total population of 30,000 on made ground and stretched along the right bank of the river. At its verge were the immense works of the Cambria Iron and Steel Company, who have \$5,000,000 invested in their plant. Besides this there were many other large industrial establishments on the bank of the river.

Almost the entire city of Johnstown was swimming about; dead bodies were floating around in every direction, and almost every piece of movable timber was carrying from the doomed city a corpse of humanity, drifting with the waters, God knows where. The disaster over-

took Johnstown about 6 o'clock in the evening. As the train bearing the Associated Press reporter moved eastward, the reports at each stop grew more appalling; more gathered who had come from the Bolivia end of the passable portion of the road westward. They had seen but a small portion of the flood, but enough to allow them to imagine the rest. Down through the pack-saddle came the rushing waters, and the heights of the wooded Alleghenies looked down in solemn wonder at the scene. It was the most terrible destruction that ever struck Monongahela valley. In the death battle from floating boards and timbers were agonized men, women and children, heart-rending shrieks for help striking horror to the breasts of on-lookers. Their cries were of no avail; carried away at railroad speed on the breast of the rushing torrent, no human ingenuity could devise means of rescue. With pallid cheek and hair clinging wet and damp to her cheek, a mother was seen grasping a floating timber while, with the other arm she held her babe.

Many towns on the banks of the Connemaugh were made to suffer by the terrible overplus of water which rushed down its bed. Some of them were damaged but little, others severely, and still others were almost entirely destroyed. Hundreds of people were drowned, and the sights witnessed by on-lookers were pathetic and horrible beyond description. The following is quoted from accounts contained in the dispatches:

Just before reaching Snughollow, end of the main line of the Pennsylvania road, is a signal tower, and the men in it told stories of what they saw so piteous that I could not listen to half of it; but here are some little odds and ends to the happenings they told me of. A beautiful girl came down on the roof of a house which was swung in near the town. She screamed to the operators to save her, and one brave fellow walked as far into the river as he could and shouted to her to guide herself into shore with the butt of a plank. She was a plucky girl and stood up on her frail support in evident obedience to the command of the operator. She made two or three bold strokes, and actually stopped the course of the raft for an instant; then it swerved from under her. She tried to swim ashore, but in a few seconds she was lost in the whirling waters; something hit her, for she lay quietly on her back with her face pallid and expressionless.

Men and women in dozens, in pairs and singly, children, boys, big and little, and wee babies were there among the awful confusion in the water; drowning, gasping, struggling and fighting desperately for life. Two men on a tiny raft shot into the swiftest part of the current; between them, dressed in white and kneeling with her face turned heavenward, was a girl six or seven years old. When she came opposite the town she turned her face to the operator. She was so close he could see the big tears on her

cheeks and the pallor of death on her face. Fearless men on the shore shouted to her to keep up her heart, and she resumed her devout attitude and disappeared under the trees of the projecting point a short distance below. "We could not see her come out again," said the operator, "and that was all of it. Do you see that fringe of trees?" pointing to the place where the little girl had gone out of sight, "well, we saw scores of children swept in there. I believe, that when the time comes they will find almost 100 bodies of children in there among those bushes."

Just above New Florence is the little town of Nineveh. It was here that I found the first charnel house; 100 dead were there, the larger portion of whom were women. Here it was that the awful work of havoc could be realized. What had been fertile farms looked like worn out brick yards. Great trees had been twisted and torn like weeds, and the broken household goods of hundreds of houses line the shores for miles. Thieves, those who steal from the dead and unfortunate, have been busy at work robbing trunks, boxes and articles of furniture, and there is nothing worth taking left, except lumber. Every now and then ghastly outlines could be seen in the water being swept down the stream.

On June 2nd, when the waters had subsided, Johnstown was described as the most complete wreck that the imagination can portray. Probably a hundred and fifty buildings had been swept away from the face of the earth, as though they had never existed. Main Street, from end to end, was piled from fifteen to twenty feet high with debris, and in some instances as high as the roofs of the houses. This great mass of wreckage filled the street from curb to curb. From the woolen mill above the island to the bridge, a distance probably of two miles, a strip of territory, nearly half a mile in width, had been swept clean out, not a stick of timber, or one brick on the top of another being left to tell the story.

All day long men, women and children were plodding about the desolate waste, trying in vain to locate the boundaries of their former homes. Nothing but a wide expanse of mud, ornamented here and there with heaps of driftwood, remained, however, for their contemplation. Still, these losses are as nothing compared to the frightful sacrifices of human life to be seen on every hand. During all the solemn Sunday following the flood, Johnstown was drenched with the tears of stricken mortals, and the air was filled with cries and sobs that came from breaking hearts. There were scenes enacted every hour and minute that affected all beholders profoundly.

An utterly wretched woman named Mrs. Fenn stood by a muddy pool trying to find some trace of her once happy home. She was half-crazed with grief and her eyes were swollen. As the writer stepped to her side she raised her pallid and languid face and re-