

# Fourteen Believed Dead In Johnstown Flood Area

## Other Thousands, Isolated and Suffering Await In Cheerless Refuge Places, For City's Second Great Upheaval of Water In Half Century To Subside

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Johnstown, Pa., March 18. (AP)—Isolated and suffering thousands waited in cheerless refuge places today for Johnstown's second great flood in a half century to subside so outside help could come in.

The sons and daughters of those who perished when the Conemaugh poured millions of gallons of water through a narrow valley in 1889 were without light or gas, their food supply was threatened and thousands were still marooned in business buildings, unable to get out.

Early this morning, the waters began receding. From a top-level of 16 feet, they subsided to five in downtown streets.

Police Chief Harry Klink said he knew of but two deaths but there were reports of four other drownings in the Johnstown area.

The reports of deaths throughout the flood devastated western Pennsylvania area totaled 14.

Klink, who sent out a plea for all state agencies to help the city, said no damage estimate could be made but the total would be written in hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions.

The frigid waters, which reached a height of 16 feet, began falling quickly in the dark hours of the morning but Klink said it would be late today before the streets were cleared.

Announcing he had asked for details of state troopers, highway patrolmen and other officers to prevent looting, the police chief said: "At my own request we are under military rule this minute."

He also asked for CCC workers and other outside help to help clean up the debris left by the raging flood.

A total of 2,235 persons perished May 31, 1889, when the South Fork dam burst and a 50-foot wall of water raced down the valley. The damage reached \$10,000,000. Johnstown lies in the "Y" formed by the junction of the Conemaugh river and Stony Creek.

The valley is narrow and the city is largely built on the bottom lands with residences clustering about the surrounding high hills.

The business section close to the Conemaugh's banks suffered the most.

Those persons who heeded a warning to leave the business section before the flood waters poured in yesterday found safety in the upland homes, clubhouses, churches and other buildings. Thousands more spent a dark and miserable night on the second floors of houses and business structures.

Police and firemen rounded up the few available boats and spent the night taking refugees from buildings. The current was so swift that maneuvering of boats was impossible in some sections and the would-be rescuers themselves often were in danger of their lives.

A group of 36 state troopers came into the city early today and more were reported on the way. A special train carrying national guardsmen was enroute from Pittsburgh and another with telephone company workers and others was reported trying to get through the waters which surrounded Johnstown.

Klink said the only deaths, he knew about were those of Russell Belisda, swept from a bridge, and Danna Jallacher, found dead near an overturned canoe. A woman and a boy were reported lost when a boat capsized during an attempted rescue and a woman was reported drowned at nearby Hooversville.

The more fortunate dwellers on the highlands could look down and see muddy, debris-filled waters swirling in fury around every one of the city's big buildings.

Two houses perched crazily on the Hays bridge where they had been swept from above. Floors of two other main traveled bridges were gone.

State troopers said the Conemaugh railroad bridge was weakening and might soon be useless for trains.

Automobiles were strewn about the area, most of them with their tops just visible. Street cars were submerged.

Several houses in one section were loose from their foundations.

As dawn arrived, from most of the downtown structures, the marooned and hungry citizens put out their heads to watch rescuers going about and shouting advice to them.

The thermometer was below freezing. It was impossible to light furnaces in any flooded section.

More than 200 children, rescued from various points about the city, huddled in blankets in Lee Hospital. The building was entirely without heat.

Telephone communication was cut off except in a few cases. George Fullmer, manager of the Be Company, said some trunk lines were left but it would be late in the day before repairs could be made to local service.

For that reason the plight of many residents could not be learned.

Chief Klink as he directed rescue operations and surveyed the flooded city with his headquarters said:

"It will be at least a week before we can clean up after the flood goes away. The devastation is terrible."

Klink said he hoped enough CCC

workers could be brought in to get the cleanup work started by tonight. He said by dusk the river probably would be out of the streets.

Already, however, officials were worrying about another dark night and about the disease, exposure and misery which they said would be the certain aftermath of the catastrophe.

They hoped for food supplies from the outside shortly and to organize to get necessary aid to those suffering the most.

### Woman And Girl Drown

Johnstown, Pa., March 18. (AP)—The story of the death of a woman and girl as the Conemaugh river swirled through Johnstown was told today by George Fullmer, whose son-in-law almost met death in the same incident.

Fullmer, manager of the Bell Telephone company offices, said Ralph Herrod his son-in-law, and another man saw a group of persons stranded on a mound beside a gasoline station at the foot of steep Westmont hill.

"Ralph managed to get hold of a boat," Fullmer said, "and rigged a line from the bottom of the incline to the gas station. He managed to bring some 12 persons across safely."

"On his last trip, he had a boy, a girl, and an old lady. I don't know their names."

"Little by little he moved the boat across but the elderly woman apparently became frightened and stood up. The boat capsized."

The woman and the boy were drowned. Ralph and the girl managed to save themselves by hanging on the rope and were pulled in."