

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:
Shelley Johansson, Marketing Manager
Johnstown Area Heritage Association
P. O. Box 1889
Johnstown, PA 15907-1889
814-539-1889 x308
sjohansson@jaha.org
www.jaha.org

Anniversary of 1889 Great Johnstown Flood approaches

*Commemorative events to include luminaria,
opening of Wagner-Ritter House & Garden*

The 1889 Johnstown Flood was a defining event in the history of this region – and for our entire nation. Once again, the Johnstown Area Heritage Association (JAHA) and the National Park Service are preparing a full slate of events to mark the anniversary of this disaster, which occurred on May 31, 1889. In chronological order, events include:

Saturday, May 27 and Sunday, May 28

Into the Lakebed and Through The Breach Hikes

Start location: South Abutment of the South Fork Dam, at the Johnstown Flood National Memorial

Start time: 2:00 p.m. (both days)

Sponsor: National Park Service

Reservations requested: Call (814) 495-4643

FREE and open to the public

A National Park Service ranger will lead a hike into the historic lakebed of the South Fork Dam, the dam that failed on May 31, 1889. The walk will begin at the south abutment of the dam, and last about an hour. Visitors are encouraged to wear sturdy shoes, as the walk includes wooden stairs and an uphill walk back to the parking area of the visitors center. The group will also visit the clubhouse that belonged to the South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club. Reservations are encouraged for this program.

Wednesday, May 31

Special Interpretive Programs at the Dam

Start times: 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Place: Johnstown Flood National Memorial

Sponsor: The National Park Service

For more information: Call (814) 495-4643

FREE and open to the public

These special interpretive programs will take place at the South Abutment of the remains of the South Fork Dam, and will be presented by costumed park staff members.

The program at 11:00 a.m. will focus on the doomed efforts of Colonel Unger, the president of the South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club, and his crew to relieve the pressure on the dam before it ultimately broke on May 31, 1889. The drama of the repeated attempts to warn Johnstown by telegraph will also be featured.

The 3:00 p.m. program will be similar, but will also commemorate the exact time the dam broke and will feature readings of first-person accounts from people who were there.

Wednesday, May 31

Grand Opening of the Wagner-Ritter House & Garden

Time: 4:07 p.m., the exact time the flood wave struck Johnstown

Place: The Wagner-Ritter House & Garden, 418 Broad Street in Johnstown

Sponsor: JAHA

JAHA members and special guests will be invited to an opening ceremony at the house at 4:07 p.m. on Wednesday, May 31, the exact moment the 1889 flood struck Johnstown. Invited guests will include city officials, donors, and descendants of the Wagner and Ritter families. A short ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held, followed by a reception.

Wednesday, May 31

The Luminaria

Time: 8:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m.

Place: The Johnstown Flood National Memorial

Sponsor: The National Park Service

FREE and open to the public

Call (814) 495-4643

Every year, the luminaria serves as a moving tribute to the victims of the flood. More than 2,209 candles are lit on the ruins of the South Fork Dam. The candles will be lit at 6:30 p.m. and will burn for several hours, with the peak time estimated to be about 9:30 p.m. In addition, the visitors center will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 31
Open House at Flood Sites

To mark this highly significant date in Johnstown's history, three flood-related sites host open houses.

- **Johnstown Flood Museum**
Downtown Johnstown, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
No admission fee charged on May 31
- **Johnstown Flood National Memorial**
St. Michael, Pennsylvania, 9:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.
No admission fee charged on May 31
- **South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club – Clubhouse**
St. Michael, Pennsylvania, 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 3, and Sunday, June 4
Open House at Wagner-Ritter House & Garden, 428 Broad Street in Johnstown

Admission to the Wagner-Ritter House & Garden will be free on June 3-4, the Saturday and Sunday of the Cambria County/Johnstown Convention & Visitors Bureau's Friendly City Polka Fest, which is being held in the Cambria City neighborhood for the first time. Opening hours will be 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily (see enclosed release for more information about the Wagner-Ritter House & Garden).

###