

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anniversary of The 1889 Great Johnstown Flood approaches

*Commemorative events to include
luminaria, discussion of new play*

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), the National Park Service and the 1889 South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club Historic Preservation Society are preparing a full slate of events to mark the anniversary of this disaster, which occurred on May 31, 1889.

In chronological order, scheduled events include:

Friday, May 28
South Fork Fishing & Hunting Clubhouse
Open for visitation
Time: 11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.

The South Fork Fishing & Hunting Clubhouse will be open for visitors, featuring costumed guides and showings of a 22-minute film about life on Lake Conemaugh, “A Victorian Summer.”

Friday, May 28
The Luminaria
Time: 6:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m.
Place: The Johnstown Flood National Memorial
**Sponsors: The National Park Service and the 1889 South Fork
Fishing and Hunting Club Historic Preservation Society**
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 and on the farm of Elias Unger, president of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. The candles will be lit at 6:30 p.m. and will burn for several hours, with the peak time estimated to be about 8:30 p.m.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES: About 1,100 Forest Hills Elementary schoolchildren in grades K-6 will help prepare for the luminaria by filling paper bags with sand and candles. This will take place on Thursday, May 27, from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at Forest Hills Elementary, 547 Locust Street in Sidman.

On Friday, May 28 from 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., 100 fourth-graders from Northern Bedford Elementary will place the candles on the ruins of the dam in preparation for the evening event. This marks the sixth year Northern Bedford Elementary students have participated. For more information on these photo opportunities, call Greg Zaborowski at 814-886-6140.

Friday, May 28

“My Hero,” an original theatrical presentation

Start times: 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. both days

Place: The Johnstown Flood National Memorial

Sponsor: The National Park Service

Reservations requested: Call (814) 495-4643

FREE and open to the public

These indoor performances of “My Hero” are based on the memoirs of flood survivor Gertrude Quinn, who was six years old at the time of the flood and was swept away by the waters before being rescued by Maxwell McAchren. This original production will feature about 20 actors and last about an hour. Seating is limited to 80 people per performance, and reservations are strongly encouraged.

Saturday, May 29

That Dam Race

Start location: Forest Hills High School, Route 869

Start time: 9:00 a.m.

Sponsor: The 1889 South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club Historic Preservation Society

To register or for more info: Tom Hunter, (814) 487-5423

These challenging 10-kilometer and 5-kilometer races are held annually by the 1889 South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club Historic Preservation Society. The courses wind through the Johnstown Flood National Memorial and the St. Michael Historic District.

Saturday, May 29

Carriage Road Hike

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

Start time: 10:30 a.m.

Sponsor: National Park Service

Reservations requested: Call (814) 495-4643

FREE and open to the public

A ranger will lead a hike along the trace of the old carriage road that led to the South Fork Fishing Hunting Club, the same road that Andrew Carnegie, Henry Frick and others traveled during their visits to the Club in the 1880s. The walk will begin at the South Abutment of the South Fork Dam, and lasts about two hours. Much of the walk is level, but there are a few slight inclines -- hikers should wear sturdy shoes and bring water.. The group will also visit the 1889 Clubhouse and view the film "A Victorian Summer," about life at the Fishing and Hunting Club. Reservations are encouraged for this program.

Sunday, May 30

Lantern Walking Tours

7:00 p.m.-about 9:00 p.m.

Start location: The Johnstown Flood Museum

Sponsors: The Johnstown Area Heritage Association and the National Park Service

Reservations required: Call JAHA at (814) 539-1889

FREE and open to the public

JAHA and the National Park Service are cooperating to produce an evening of lantern tours through downtown Johnstown at twilight. Costumed volunteers will provide interpretation through the guided tours, which will depart about every half-hour starting at 7:00 p.m. until about 9:00 p.m. All tour participants must meet at the Johnstown Flood Museum, where the tour will begin.

Monday, 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.-5:00 p.m.
No admission fee charged on May 31
- **South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club – Clubhouse**
St. Michael, Pennsylvania, 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Open House on May 31 with costumed guides

Monday, 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.

Monday, May 31

7:00 p.m.

Discussion of new play, 5/31/89: The Flood, and reception

Sponsor: The Johnstown Area Heritage Association

Start location: St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 335 Locust Street

Tickets: \$15.00 – may be purchased by calling 539-1889

The Johnstown Area Heritage Association's flood commemorative event will begin at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Teresa Stoughton Marafino, producer, and Scott Baron, resident director, of the Mountain Playhouse will provide a sneak preview of a new play, 5/31/89: The Flood. The finished play, which is by Rob Barron, is currently under development but will be presented as a part of the playhouse's regular season in September. Following the presentation, a reception with hors d'oeuvres and complimentary beverages will be held at the Johnstown Flood Museum, which is within close walking distance of the church. Tickets are \$15 and may be purchased by calling JAHA at 539-1889.

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