

Somerset Herald.

SOMERSET, PA., MONDAY, JUNE 3, 1889.

AWFUL CALAMITY.

Johnstown Wiped Out!

THE CAMBRIA IRON WORKS A COMPLETE WRECK!

The "Old Feeder" Dam Gives Way Carrying Death and Destruction Through the Conemaugh Valley.

FROM 3000 TO 5000 PEOPLE REPORTED DROWNED

Saturday's Daily Herald—Extra.
The most awful calamity that has visited on the country for years, occurred at Johnstown about 6 o'clock yesterday evening, resulting in the complete destruction of that thriving city, and the death of hundreds of men, women and children. The old feeder dam, built in the days of the old State canal and used to supply the canal, for more than 30 years people of Johnstown have been regarding the breaking of this dam, long familiarity with the danger robbed it of its terrors, so that deluge came upon the doomed city as unexpectedly as it was unbidden. This dam was more than 100 feet in length and 75 feet in height. The immense body of water rushing with awful force down the narrow ravine in which runs South Fork Creek into the Conemaugh. Almost in a flash the space between the hills was filled with a boiling, seething flood, and a solid wall of water many feet high moved with appalling rapidity on the fated city. Houses in the course of the flood were cracked like eggshells, and their fragments in an instant floated as driftwood on the bosom of the waters. When the flood struck East Conemaugh the dwellings and business houses along its banks were picked up like chips and dashed downward; house after house tumbled down in the grip of the giant, each one as it fell acted as a spring-ram to drive down its neighbors; the bridges at East Conemaugh and the station were shot from their foundations, and the vast mass of drift, to which clung men, women and children, dashed on all they encountered the solid arch of the P. R. R. bridge; the bridge served as a barrier for the drift, and the ruins of house after house were dashed against it until they were piled in a mass a mile in length; over the obstruction, and to Cambria City and Morrellville, carrying death and destruction everywhere, sped the mad wa-

view of the affrighted people along the banks. Telegraphic advices were received from Johnstown from Miss Hortele, a lady operator there. At 6 o'clock she wired:
"Must leave, the water is coming in. Good bye."
This was the last word received from the doomed city.
A later report from Lockport says that the residents succeeded in rescuing five people from the flood—two women and three men. One man succeeded in getting out of the water. They were kindly taken care of by the people of the town.
A little girl passed under the bridge just before dark. She was kneeling on a part of a floor and had her hands clasped as if in prayer. Every effort was made to save her but they all proved futile. A railroader who was standing by remarked that the piteous appearance of the little waif brought tears to his eyes.
Mr. Robert Pitcairn, Supt. of the Pittsburgh Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad, telegraphed to Pittsburgh, as follows:
New Florence, May 31, 10:56 P. M.—In going to the trouble with water west of Lilly's, I could not get further than Sang Hollow. Our tracks west of this point are also obstructed. While at Sang Hollow over 100 people, men women and children, passed there on debris; seven were recovered at Sang Hollow, two at Conemaugh Furnace and two here. Only forty-seven of the 100 and over passed here. From my supervisor, who was at Johnstown, I learn that Johnstown is literally wiped out. Our track between Johnstown and Conemaugh is filled with buildings and drift 40 feet high or more, which is on fire. All our tracks, as I have said, are badly blocked between Sang Hollow and Johnstown. I fear there will be terrible suffering among those saved, which should be relieved as soon as possible. In the interest of humanity I think a public meeting should be called early to-morrow to send food, clothing, etc., to these poor people, which we will be glad to forward to Johnstown and neighborhood as soon as we get a clear track there.
ROBERT PITCAIRN.
Special to the Daily Herald.
PITTSBURGH, June 1.—All hotels and telegraph offices at Johnstown are still inundated. No names of missing persons yet received; Cambria Iron Works complete wreck, estimated fully two thousands lives lost.
DISPATCH.
Special to the Daily Herald.
PITTSBURGH, June 1.—The disaster at Johnstown is appalling beyond description; our reports are so meagre than we can give you nothing definite before morning.
J. H.

FRIENDS IN THE FLOOD.

The feeling of suspense that took hold of the community on receipt of the first rumors of the awful calamity at Johnstown, has grown and spread, until the whole town seems under a pall. Scarcely a family here but had one or more of its members living in Johnstown. All day long the streets have been filled with ashen-faced people asking for news from friends. Burgess Wetley consulted a number of the most prominent citizens in regard to calling a public meeting to see what it was possible for our people to do to relieve the suffering and destitution. It was thought best not issue the call until more definite news was received. Learning that the DAILY HERALD was sending a reporter to the scene, the burgess sent a request with him to have any responsible person he could find in Johnstown send word as to what was best to be done. The Somerset and Cambria Railroad is blocked and all telegraphic communication is cut off. All day long telegrams have been pouring in on people here from all parts of the country asking after friends known to have been in Johnstown.

Postmaster J. K. Coffroth, came in on the 4 p. m. train from Johnstown. He says that he was standing on the old Bedford Pike near where the S. & C. R. crosses; saw the mighty rush of water coming and ran up the abrupt "Green Hill" as fast as his legs would carry him. From here he had a full view of the awful scene. The great volume of water came rushing twenty feet high, sweeping everything before it. Buildings toppled over like paper boxes and were carried by the current with frightful speed. Thousand of men, women and children were running for the hill on which he was standing, to escape from the terrible death that was bearing down on them with lightning speed. Handbells were overtaken by the angry waters, and were swept away when within a few feet of safety. The few men on the hill with Mr. Coffroth used every effort at their command to assist the terror-stricken people. Dozens were helped out of the water just as they were about to be carried away by the resistless current. In the course of a half hour the hundreds of frame buildings that had been swept by came floating up the Stonycreek, their downward course having been checked by the massive stone bridge of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, which acted as a dam, and forced the water back up the Stonycreek for a distance of several miles.
Not a building in the new town of Moxham was left standing on its foundation; all were floating about in the swollen river. Almost every house contained from two to a dozen people and their shrieks for help were agonizing to hear. On the side of one upturned building were a man and four small children, all on their knees praying for deliverance from the terrible death before them. Their appealing prayers could be distinctly heard by those on the hill top, who were powerless to assist them.
All night long men, women and children, by the thousands, were running up and down the river banks, carrying lanterns and lamps, searching for their friends.
Mrs. Benford, her daughter and son, Lou, of the Hulbert House, are thought to be certainly drowned. Out of the forty-two people in their hotel only eight were saved. Among these are Postmaster Coffroth and Frank Benford, the manager of the house. A daughter of John H. Huston, of Somerset, was a domestic in this hotel; nothing has been heard of her.
Col. John P. Linton, the most prominent attorney in Cambria county, and his entire family, excepting "Rabe," who is in Somerset, are reported missing.
Clark Benford and wife were carried from one building to another by the water; both were saved.
A passenger train on the P. R. R. from the east came dashing around the curve just a few rods from the Johnstown station, and ran into the sea ahead. Nothing has yet been learned of the train or its passengers. All are supposed to have perished. Freight cars from the S. & C. were carried down into the heart of the town, and are still standing there.
Will Endsley and Foster Walter sought shelter on the roof of the Hulbert House when that building was swept from under them. They swam across the street to the Louthier building and were saved.
Nothing has been learned of Ferg Parker or Russell Chl.
A young son of John Kifer, of Somerset, who is employed in a Johnstown livery stable, saved his life by holding

on to a horse, which swam to a place of safety.
Milt Young, another Somerset man, escaped.
Jack Coffroth went over to the Hulbert House this morning, and assisted in removing seven bodies. He saw two women taken from a lot of wreckage, still alive.
Telegrams received from Hooversville at 7 o'clock this evening, announce the escape of Frank McDonald, "Tip" Parks and Charley Ridinger. M. H. Hartzell, of Rockwood, when last seen, was with McDonald, in Johnstown. He has not yet been heard from.
Mr. W. W. Knable the postal agent on the S. & C. R. R., gives a graphic description of the flood and attendant horrors. He says: The waters were higher in Johnstown yesterday morning than ever known before; the filling up of the banks of the river make a spring flood an annual occurrence; skills were going about the streets and extemporized rafts and floats were to be seen on every side; every one took it good naturedly and made sport of it. Finding that the railroad was blocked and that there was no chance of my getting out that day I started up toward my rooms on upper Main street. Stopping at Curt Campbell's drug store, I stepped in for a few minutes chat. At dinner time Friday the water had risen so that I could not go to my hotel without a soaking so I concluded to spend the afternoon with Mr. Campbell. Shortly before 4 o'clock I was at the door and saw the water come down the cross street in an almost perpendicular wall twenty feet in height; buildings were crushed like egg shells; frame and brick alike going down in the mad rush of the torrent. The building in which Charles Griffith's Drug Store, the old Frazier stand, was one of the first on Main street to go down; building after building on that side of Main street went down until the ones left standing were the front part of the Merchants Hotel, Ben's saloon and John Stenger's dry goods store on the other side of the street, the upper end of the Fenn Block was knocked out; from there to, and including, John Thomas' store building everything, with the exception of a part of the building is still standing; from Thomas to Alma Hall not a building is standing, and from Alma Hall to the river the only buildings standing are the Club House, and the Morrell house and Dr. Lowman's. On Clinton Street the Hulbert House, Geis, Foster & Quinn's, and nearly every other building went down. The B. & O. station is left stand as a lone monument on Washington Street.
The Post Office is still standing but is badly wrecked; nearly all houses on the river in Kernville were washed away; it was said that not a house was left standing in Woodvale, and hardly a sign of one in Conemaugh; South Fork, Conemaugh, and Mineral Point, towns on the bank of the stream between the dam and Johnstown have not been heard from and are thought to be totally destroyed; the destruction of human life was terrible, there being probably several thousand people lost; the streets were full of dead this morning; I saw seven at one point. Among the people known here at home who are supposed to be lost are Mrs. H. M. Ogle and daughter, Mrs. M. E. Hurst and grand-children; Cyrus Elder's family, Virg. Elder, John Shaffer, Charles Griffith, the Recks, John Dibert and family, Scott Dibert, Jacob Swank, Abel Young, Mrs. James Benford, her daughters Maria and May, and son Lou, Mrs. DeFrantz, Ed. Hefley, from Stonycreek, Messrs. Eldridge & Young, Harry Rosensteel, Henry Worden and family.
The residence of Mr. F. W. Hay is down, and his family unheard of. Only five people escaped from the Hulbert House. I did not hear anything of Ferg Parker, but suppose he escaped, together with Capt. Kuhn and wife, as they all boarded at the Club House. Forty-two persons were saved at Gen. Campbell's residence, but I did not hear their names. The Mansion House was picked up and carried by the back water out to the Sandysvale Cemetery.
The Catholic church and parsonage and Mr. Foster's house took fire last night, and fire either was started or occurred by accident in the debris gathered at the railroad bridge lighting up the heavens and adding additional ghastliness to the horrible scene. Hundreds of people were compelled to stay on the honsetops all night.
[We are unable, owing to the lateness of the hour, to publish the entire interview. En.]
Mr. Jacob Zeigler, who came from Johnstown this afternoon, says that it is beyond the power of man to describe the awful devastation. Whole sections of the town are totally obliterated. The streets in the upper part of the city are filled with frantic people searching for loved ones; strong men weep and are utterly prostrated by the gigantic calamity. It was impossible at the time he left to get into the lower part of the city.

HUNDREDS OF LIVES SWEEPED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH. A DAM GIVES WAY. Carrying Death and Destruction With It. JOHNSTOWN, PA., WIPED OUT. People Floating Down the River Shrieking for Help.

Some of the Scenes Indescribable—The Work of Rescue Going On—No Train Able to Reach the Scene and All Other Direct Communication Cut Off—Assistance Asked for by Superintendent Pitcairn.

HARRISBURG, June 1.—An extensive land slide is reported at Lilly station. The water is said to be ten feet over the Pennsylvania railroad tracks.
BRADDOCK, Pa., June 1.—Telegraph wires are down or unworkable twelve miles from Johnstown. News received here by the Pennsylvania railroad officials corroborates the statements that Johnstown is nearly wiped out. The signal tower people at Sang Hollow state that up to 8 o'clock they had counted 119 persons floating past on wreckage, some alive and some dead. They rescued a boy, name unknown, who said he and his father, mother, brother and two sisters were swept away with their house. He was washed off from the building, but the others were in it when it was carried over the new stone railroad bridge at Johnstown. The house went to pieces then, and he thinks all were drowned.
The First Alarm.
The alarm of danger seems to have reached Johnstown about 1 p. m. The railroad officials at once began carrying people out of town, some on regular trains, others on hastily improvised specials. Superintendent Pitcairn happened to be in the vicinity and took charge of the work. The water finally came down like a tidal wave, sweeping everything before it.
As Scene from Bolivar.
BOLIVAR, PA., June 1.—The water is higher here than was ever known, and two-story houses, barns, stables, whole forests of trees, outhouses, smokehouses, railroad bridges, rafts, inverted skiffs and driftwood by the acre are rushing past, from all of which imploring hands were held out to those on the banks willing but impotent to help, and the instability of tracks east of this place renders the only information to be got of a fugitive nature, but for the most part very accurate.
At Lockport, two miles east, the conditions for saving the people are more favorable, and more than twenty persons have been taken from the flood.
The First Great Rush of Water
was observed last evening at 7 o'clock, and this came from the burst dam, just above Johnstown. It came like a frenzied whirlpool, and before the people could realize it they were in its grasp. Fortunately, cool heads and resolute hands were on the alert to save, and before any of the people living on the low-lying ground were caught, all were taken out in skiffs and in the arms of gum-boated and coated men to the high ground. Their furniture was also largely saved, so that the loss will fall upon houses alone, and such live stock as was carried out of the stream.
So terrible was the force of the current that the county bridge over the Conemaugh, apparently a most substantial structure, withstood the rush of waters and the battering of logs for a few minutes, but finally it let go and its parts were cast out into the river, and part of the debris already choked the waters. As early as 7:30 o'clock a great pile of driftwood that the whirl of waters themselves imported into the drift was swept along, and from it
Shriek Upon Shriek
for "help, help for God's sake!" came. The horrified spectators on the shore saw three women, to one of whom were clinging two children, neither of whom was apparently more than an infant. The rapidity of the current and the position of the raft, together with the lack of facilities for rescuing, precluded the possibility of even thinking of the matter, and the raft passed out of sight. The screams of the women and children, blending in their pleadings for aid, were heard long after their craft was around the bend. The stream then became thickly strewn with men, women and children, clinging to all sorts of temporary means of salvation, and two men and a woman clung madly to the tops of

huge trees, the men emulating the females in their shrieks for help that it was not possible to give.

AN AWFUL SIGHT.

People Warned of Its Possibility of Bursting, but Too Late.

PITTSBURGH, June 1.—It was stated at the office of the Pennsylvania railroad, at an early hour this morning, that the deaths would run up into the thousands rather than the hundreds, as was at first supposed. From private dispatches received, it is said that the stream of human beings that was swept before the angry floods was something most pitiful to behold. Men, women and children were carried along frantically shrieking for help, but their cries availed them nothing. Rescue was impossible. Husbands were swept past their wives and children were borne rapidly along going at a terrible speed to certain death before the eyes of their terrorized and frantic parents. It was said at the depot that it was impossible to estimate the number whose lives were lost in the flood. It will simply be a matter of conjecture for several days as to who were lost or who escaped.
Dispatcher Culp received several telegrams last night, detailing the flood at Johnstown. The recent heavy rains had swollen the old canal reservoir at South Fork, on the Conemaugh river, and fear were entertained for its safety.
Warned to No Purpose.
The basin contained water measuring two miles across by five miles in length and was seventy feet deep in the deepest place. The people of Johnstown were warned of its possibility of bursting during the morning, but very few, if any of the inhabitants, took the warning seriously. Shortly after noon the dam gave way about five miles above Johnstown and sweeping everything before it burst upon the town with terrible force. Everything was carried before it, and not an instant's time was given to seek safety. Houses were demolished, swept from their foundations and carried in the flood to a culvert near the town. Here a mass of all manner of debris snot lodged, and by evening it had dammed the water
Back Into the City.
over the tops of many of the still remaining chimneys. A dispatch to Dispatches Culp, received about 11 o'clock last night, said the lockade at the Johnstown bridge was three-fourths of a mile long and forty feet high, and was all on fire. The extent of the damage could not possibly be estimated.
At Blairsville.
BLAIRSVILLE, Pa., June 1.—The flood in the Conemaugh river at this point is the heaviest ever known here. At this hour the railroad bridge between here and Blairsville intersection has been swept away, also the new iron bridge at Cocketon, half a mile below. It is now feared the iron bridge at the lower end of this town will go. About 7 o'clock a living woman and dead man, supposed to be her husband, were seen going under the railroad bridge. They were seen to come from under the bridge safely, but shortly disappeared and were seen no more.
A great many families lose their household goods. The river is running full of lumber, houses, goods, etc. The loss will be heavy. The excitement here is very great. The river is still rising. There are some families below town in the second-story of their houses and can't get out. It is feared if the water goes much higher the loss of life will be very great. The railroad company had fourteen cars on coal on their bridge when it went down, and all was swept down the river.
The Town of South Fork Wiped Out.
DEERY, Pa., June 1.—The town of South Fork, which contained about 2,000 inhabitants, lay in the course of the flood which swept down from the broken dam to Johnstown, and it is believed that four-fifths of the town was carried away. Four miles lower down is the village of Mineral Point, with 800 inhabitants. It seems difficult to hope that any of them escaped. Six miles further down was Conemaugh, with 2,900 people, but in this case the formation of the country afforded some chance for escape. The town itself was devastated. Woodvale, with 2,000 people, lay still further down. It suffered greatly.
From Williamsport.
WILLIAMSPORT, Pa., June 1.—The biggest flood since the memorial one of 1885 is now in progress on the west branch of the Susquehanna river. Much damage is reported from points north of here, but communication of all kinds is interfered with. Land slides are reported all along the Pennsylvania roads north of here. At Clearfield the water is rising at the rate of one and one-half feet per hour. A half dozen bridges have been swept away and the streets of the town are overflowed. The people are going about in boats.
Silk Sun Umbrellas, from \$1.25 up.
Mrs. A. E. Uhl.