toward the front. Much later in his narrative he matter-of-factly describes the shelling his company experiences on the road to Fismes. "The enemy started gunning for the woods in dead earnest. A large number of shells passed right over our heads and burst immediately beyond. Everybody at first lay flat."

In the calmer moments Allen writes about the appearance of the countryside they marched through, a landscape which was "a mosaic of grain and garden patches," the look of the towns that have been shelled and are now deserted, and the way that the stars appear to be particularly bright on certain kinds of nights.

In the reprint of Toward the Flame the University of Pittsburgh Press has not altered Allen's wording or style. A preface by Richard Francis Allen illuminates the circumstances which led the author to write the war diary. Illustrations by Lyle Justis, another participant in the war, add a flavor to the book that photographs might not have. There is an understated impact to the diary that lingers after the book has been laid aside.

University of Pittsburgh

RUTH SALISBURY


Although a great many books on the Johnstown flood have been written, it was not until the recent publication of the book by David G. McCullough that many important details of this incredible story came to light.

Johnstown was built on a nearly level flood plain at the confluence of two streams in a deep valley, the Little Conemaugh River and Stony Creek in Cambria County, Pennsylvania. In the valley were nearly thirty thousand people, ten thousand of whom lived in Johnstown itself.

Rain on Memorial (Decoration) Day 1889 was gentle, but by night it had started pouring down. The dam on the South Fork Creek was filling up rapidly to its seventy-two foot height. Crevices were forming in the dirt dam which was situated about a mile above the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. The dam formed Lake Conemaugh and in the spring the lake covered about 450 acres, nearly seventy feet in depth. The top of the dam was about 450 feet above the city at the Stone Bridge, fifteen miles below the dam. The dam, the lake and 160 surrounding acres of land were owned by the
Fishing and Hunting Club, which was supported largely by the prominent Carnegie, Frick, Pitcairn, Phipps, Mellon and many other prominent Pittsburgh families.

By May 31 the water was running over the dam at a great depth, and it was becoming evident that a break in the dam was near at hand. But most citizens had become accustomed to warnings of a possible break so often that the threat was not considered seriously by the majority of the people of the Johnstown region. But by 3 p.m. of May 31 it was evident that a break was in the making; water in the valley was reaching flood level. When the dam gave way, water rushed into the valley "like a Niagara Falls." Trees were snapped off or uprooted, bridges were washed away, and the water reached a height of sixty feet. Roads and streets and houses disappeared. In the narrow parts of the South Fork the mass of water reached a height of seventy to seventy-five feet, gathering before it heavy timber, rocks and mud that went down the valley at an estimated forty to ninety miles an hour in alternating checks and rushes, like a monstrous surf crushing almost everything in its path. Railroad lines into the town were obstructed, stations, hotels, post offices, stores were destroyed. Freight cars, locomotives and passenger cars, as well as human bodies and horses were washed down the valley with the tidal waves. Woodvale, a suburb of Johnstown, lost practically all of its 255 houses and its 314 inhabitants. Blocks of houses disappeared in minutes; landmarks vanished. Telegraph poles, dead horses, cows and hundreds of human beings, dead and alive, were driven against the stone railroad bridge, where later the debris caught fire, forming a funeral pyre with many persons trapped in the mass.

Even for some of the people who managed to reach high ground or were uninjured there was indescribable agony from what they had seen and the suspense of not knowing what had become of their families and friends.

In a supplement the author listed by name 2209 who were involved in the catastrophe, of which 663 bodies were listed as unknown; 99 whole families were wiped out. In all, the flood killed about ten per cent of the people involved.

Credit is given to the physicians and nurses, Clara Barton, and the Red Cross for their care of the survivors and for helping in the fever epidemic that followed the disaster.

The author of the book is a member of a prominent Pittsburgh family, and is on the editorial staff of American Heritage.

Pittsburgh

C. W. W. ELKIN, M.D.