

Staple Bend Tunnel is the oldest railroad tunnel in the U.S. and is a National Historic Landmark. It is part of the trail, maintained by the National Park Service.

The Path of the Flood is a cooperative effort of the following organizations:



- **The National Park Service**, managing Johnstown Flood National Memorial, and Allegheny-Portage Railroad National Historic site, which includes Staple Bend Tunnel, through which the trail passes. www.nps.gov/jofl or www.nps.gov/alpo
- **Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority**, developing and managing the trail except for two miles managed by the NPS. www.co.cambria.pa.us/
- **Johnstown Area Heritage Association**, managing the Johnstown Flood Museum and other historic venues in the Johnstown Discovery Network. www.jaha.org

Trail construction was funded by the Federal Highway Administration through Congressman John Murtha and the state Department of



Conservation & Natural Resources. The Path of the Flood is part of the Pittsburgh-Harrisburg Pennsylvania Mainline Canal Greenway.

www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org

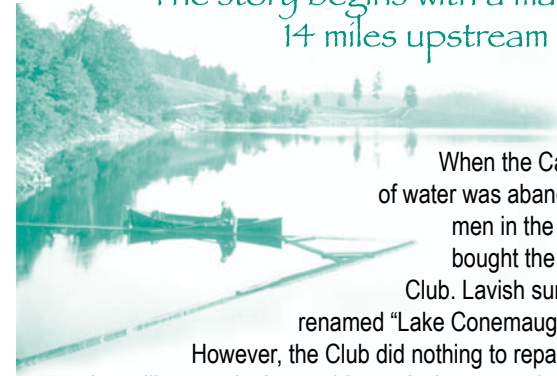
Support provided by Pennsylvania Environmental Council - www.pecpa.org - and the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program - www.nps.gov/rtca

The Path of the Flood Trail



Following the route of the Johnstown Flood of May 31, 1889

The story begins with a man-made lake in the mountains, 14 miles upstream from a busy industrial town.



The lake was originally called the South Fork Reservoir, built for the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal system in 1853.

When the Canal became obsolete a few years later, the 3-mile long body of water was abandoned for over 20 years. In 1879, a group of the wealthiest men in the country were looking for a private mountain retreat - they bought the land under the name of the South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club. Lavish summer homes were built, and the old South Fork dam was

renamed "Lake Conemaugh."

However, the Club did nothing to repair the spillway and other problems. A phenomenal storm on May 31st, 1889, destroyed the dam and released 20 million tons of water into the steep valley, crushing everything in its 14-mile path to Johnstown. 2,209 people died that day, and the Johnstown Flood would soon enter history books as the worst man-made disaster in 19th Century America.



Remnants of South Fork Dam today

The tour begins at the site of the former dam, which is now **The Johnstown Flood National Memorial.**



Operated by the National Park Service, the Johnstown Flood National Memorial includes nearly 165 acres and preserves:

- The remains of the South Fork Dam
- Portions of the former Conemaugh Lake bed
- The Elias Unger House

A visitors center features interpretive models and exhibits, and a movie that recreates the events of that fateful day. Ranger presentations, tours and hikes are available during the summer season.

For more information, visit www.nps.gov/jofl

Nearby, the NPS also preserves **The South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club Historic District.**

The South Fork Fishing & Hunting Club's clubhouse and three of the original summer homes are now owned by the Park Service and are undergoing stabilization.

The trail is not yet completed near the Flood Memorial. To reach the nearest trailhead, follow Rt. 219 to the South Fork exit and look for Trailhead signs. Use the map on the next page to continue the tour.



Trail section near South Fork

The Path of the Flood Trail

The Path of the Flood is a non – motorized, hiking, biking limestone surfaced trail that is generally flat with a few gentle grades. The trail user is directed with green and white “Bike” signs where the route follows local streets.

Orienting kiosks with a trail map, regulations and other information are located at Ehrenfeld Park Trailhead and Staple Bend Tunnel Parking lot. Along the walk you will find six interpretive wayside exhibits with historic photographs that explain what took place on that fateful day of May 31, 1889.

A 4-mile section of the trail extends from Ehrenfeld Park to the Staple Bend Tunnel Parking lot. The trail then shares the right of way for an additional 2 miles with the Staple Bend Tunnel Trail, a National Park Service site, through the tunnel. From the end of the trail at the south portal of the tunnel, a 3,900-foot gap presently exists to the next segment of the Path of the Flood.

From the Flood Museum in Johnstown, trail users will find the path on streets for 2.8 miles to Pershing Avenue in Franklin. The marked trail then proceeds past the Franklin Ballfield 1 mile to a steel gate located on the wooded hillside. This is presently the end of the trail. Although plans are in the works to extend the trail to the Staple Bend Tunnel, this segment is not accessible to the public.

For Further Information Please Contact: Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority @ 814-472-2110



At 4:07 pm the flood struck Johnstown. Millions of tons of water and debris devastated the business district and backwashed into the residential areas. Acres of wreckage piled up against a massive railroad bridge, which caught fire and burned for days. To learn the rest of the story, please visit the [Johnstown Flood Museum](#) at 304 Washington Street. There is also a walking tour of flood related sites in the downtown available.

Note: There are wayside exhibits and kiosks along the route which provide a more detailed history for each site

East Conemaugh was the site of a large railroad yard where two passenger trains were stalled by the storm. A work train engineer, John Hess, sped into the yard with a warning only a few seconds ahead of the flood wave. Passengers fled for the hillside, but 37 were lost.



Mineral Point was a village of 32 homes: half of them were destroyed and 16 people died as the flood tore through at about 3:40 pm

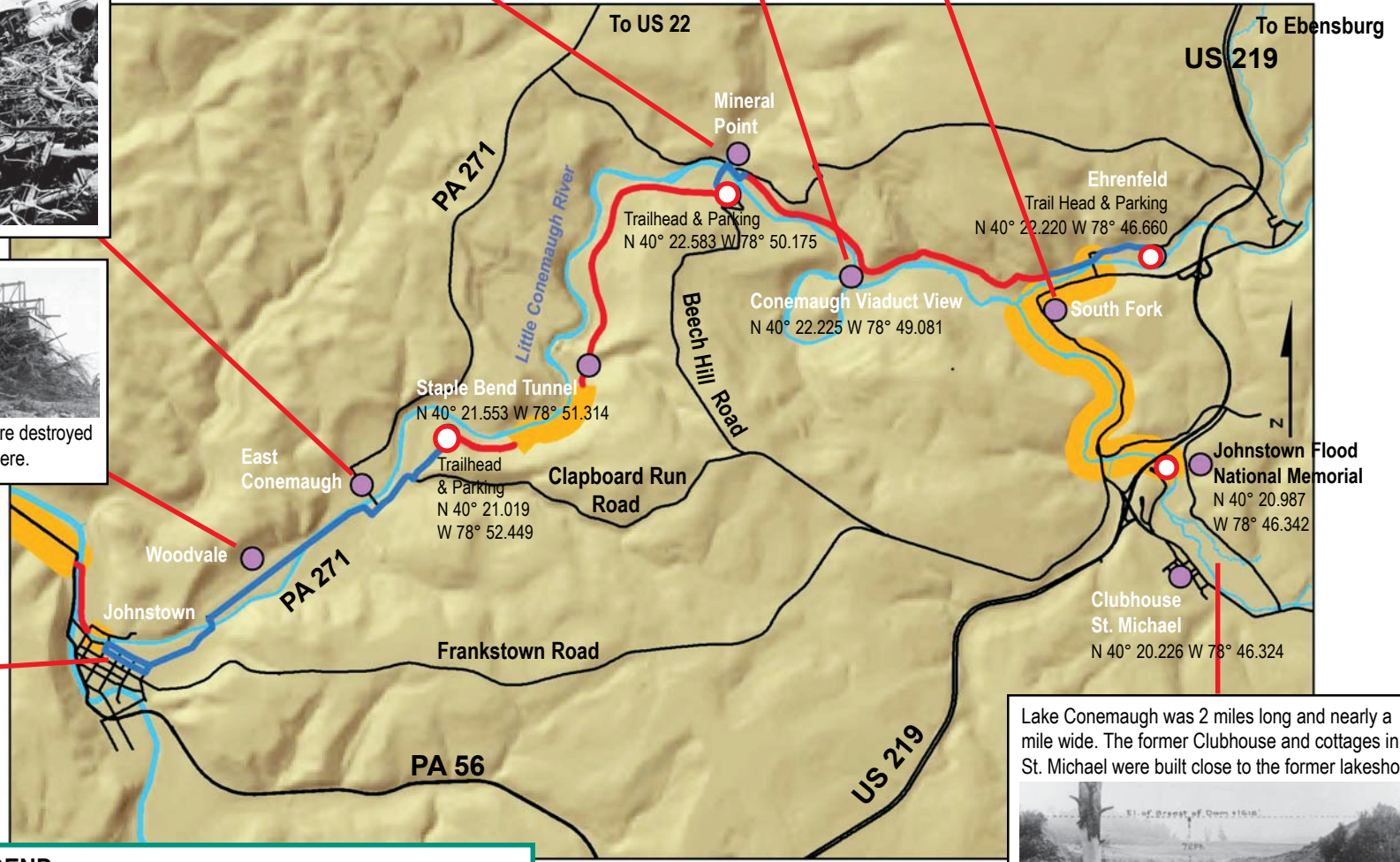
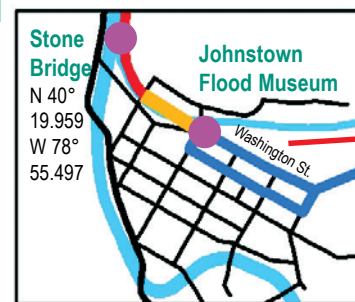


The first viaduct on this site was built in 1832 for the Allegheny Portage R.R.

South Fork, a small town of 1,500 people, was the first casualty of the flood. Residents had been warned to evacuate, so only 4 people were killed but nearly 30 homes were destroyed. Ehrenfeld was not in the direct path of the wave, but the village sustained some damage from a backwash of water.



250 houses in Woodvale were destroyed and over 300 people died here.



LEGEND

- Off-street Trail
- On-road Route
- Parking Area
- Concept Extension

Lake Conemaugh was 2 miles long and nearly a mile wide. The former Clubhouse and cottages in St. Michael were built close to the former lakeshore.



To Rt. 220

To Somerset and PA Turnpike