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PA History

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The Pittsburgh Flood of 1936

On March 18, 1936, over sixty people died and more than five-hundred were left hurt by the rushing waters of the three Pittsburgh Rivers. On that day, history was made by one very angry Mother Nature. For meteorologists, this had to be the worst flood ever recorded in western Pennsylvania. And this is their story, the story of the Great 1936, Pittsburgh Flood.

It was the day right after St. Patrick’s Day, and all was good and well in Pittsburgh. The Irish still excited over the day before, but all of that was about to change that very evening. Squirrel Hill’s faucets were dripping dry. But the water company just simply said, “It will be fixed in forty-eight hours.” This soon, turned into more than that. The South Pittsburgh Water Company, serving over 200,000 homes in the South Hill’s area waterless, got their water restored.

After all the problems with the water companies, the extra from one of the younger water companies burst. Flooding all of downtown Pittsburgh covering everything in a sea of water. When the water level hit forty-six feet, the rescuers sprang into action. By that time, there was about 10 people drowned, two twins were born, and another mother gave birth when isolated by the flood waters. Help needed to come. And fast. But the water kept coming. A total of eight rescue teams were in the flood waters though out the whole night and day. The teams including, Red Cross, Court 6010, the Boy Scouts, police and fire men, National Guard, religious volunteers, and citizen volunteers from all over the city.

The damage price for that day was over 25,000,000 dollars. Better yet, they still had to pay for the Waverly Oil Works’ oil spill of 300,000 gallons of oil that burned that day for more than 10 hours.

Most of the flood victims were saved that day expect for the sixty that weren’t. On March 18, 1936, history was made. And till this day, everyone still remembers that fateful day in downtown Pittsburgh.