

CORNING MUSEUM OF GLASS

1972 FLOOD



Museum Underwater

On June 23, 1972, Corning and the surrounding communities were devastated by a major flood, as a result of the tropical storm Agnes. At the Museum, hundreds of objects were broken, more than half of the Library's materials were saturated with flood water, and the facility was covered with a thick layer of slime and mud.

In June 1972, tropical storm Agnes brought torrential rainfall to the area and raised the Chemung River water level to 15 feet by June 22. Overnight, an additional 12 feet of water accumulated, causing the river to break through the dikes and flood into the Crystal City, submerging homes and businesses, including The Corning Museum of Glass and its Library.

The Museum was situated in the middle of the disaster area where water had surged 15 to 20 feet above the lower level on the west side of the Glass Center. By the morning of June 24, the river was back within its banks but the damage remained for much longer. Inside the Museum, the water line was 5'4" high on the walls and cases, and two inches of mud covered the floor and many of the objects and Library books. Residents and businesses had to face initial cleanup without electricity and running water, some for up to three weeks.

After the waters receded, many of the 13,000 glass objects in the Museum were covered with mud; remarkably, though, only four percent suffered damage and were in need of restoration. Books and paper materials housed within the Museum's Library, however, were not as fortunate. The entire rare and special collection was flooded, as well as many of the browseable books, periodicals, documents, archives, images, slides, films, and audio tapes. The moisture and silt caused severe damage to the Library materials and made them vulnerable to mold and insects.

In the community, more than 6,000 people were displaced from their homes and property damage exceeded \$230 million. Tragically, 18 individuals lost their lives.

The City of Corning was extremely fortunate to have visionary leadership, as well as an outpouring of volunteers who made the rebuilding of the community and restoration of the Museum and Library collections possible.

You can read more about, see images, and watch video interviews about the 1972 flood at cmog.org/1972flood.