

THE MOUNT VERNON ARGUS

JANUARY 4, 1918

Dikes Break in a Number of Places and Let Water in Over a Large Area of Low Lands — Some Stock Is Lost.

DAMAGE MUCH LESS THAN ANTICIPATED

Water Reaches High Mark at Mount Vernon Wharf Saturday Night at Twenty-three and One-half Feet — No Rail Communication With Outside World for Several Days — Boat Does Big Business.

Four weeks of rains and chinooks finally resulted in a freshet Saturday night that for a time threatened to inundate the entire valley. The warm winds from the south melted the snows, it is said, up to the 6000-foot level and brought the combined waters of the Upper Skagit, the Sauk, Baker and numerous smaller tributary streams down to the lower valley in greater and more continuous volume than has ever been recorded in the history of the country.

Beginning Friday the reports that came from up-river points were very disquieting; but not until Saturday did the people who had stock in the lower lands begin to heed the warnings. It is claimed that no stock would have been lost had everybody taken sufficient precautions and driven it to high ground. Saturday afternoon Jim Hulbert and Frank Conner and others in the neighborhood drove all their stock to the hill in La Conner. Other farmers used Pleasant Ridge and Bay View Ridge, while many had their barn floors beyond the reach of the water. The losses reported from this section are some thirty head belonging to Linus Abbott in the Riverside bend and about 150 sheep belonging to John Peth. Aside from these only minor losses are reported.

Loss Not Great As Expected.

The heaviest individual losers are those individuals that were in the path of the dike breaks. The break at Sterling Bend and that at Stevens slough immediately north of the Great Northern bridge wrought the greatest damage. At Stevens slough a home belonging to M. Freeman was tilted over into a hole. Dikes, county roads and railroads probably suffered the most from the recent freshet.

Saved the Country.

At Avon there was a sudden dramatic moment Sunday morning when a portion of the dike went out carrying into the swirl six men who were at work with dozens of others reinforcing the dike at this point. Had it not been for an old secondary dike the Skagit would have gone through here

and every foot of the flats would have been under water. By quick work the secondary dike was reinforced with bags of dirt and the water was held. A great stretch of country from here to beyond the McLean road owes its deliverance to the men of Avon who fought the flood there with might and main.

When the dike gave way the six men who were swept under were compelled to wade through mud and water to safety; but two of them, Ed Olson and John Middlestate, were literally lifted to nearby trees, from which they were rescued by boats. The others who received a plunge were C. E. Wightman, W. H. Pockock, Frank Jewett and S. S. Guiler. A weak spot developed at A. J. Young's place. This was strengthened by several hundred sacks full of earth.

The delta was fortunate in escaping a cold shower. And here, too, there was a narrow margin to work on. Early in the fight against the approaching flood a weak section of the dike on the North Fork showed signs of succumbing. But prompt and careful attention soon made this point safe. It is reported that it took 700 sacks of earth to keep the water from breaking through here. A break at Magnus Anderson's farm let the water in over a section of country about Conway.

Burlington and La Conner and Edison reported water in the streets; Sedro-Woolley reported water in the neighborhood of Jamison avenue, which is some distance from the business section. The Nookachamps low lands also were visited by the water. Mount Vernon, on both sides of the river, was dry throughout the freshet. The water from Sterling bend went over the Olympia marsh and the Samish. Edison also reported a couple of feet of water.

Along the Swinomish it was found necessary to make openings in the salt water dikes to let the river water out. These breaks will be repaired as soon as the fresh water has all drained off.