

# THE CONCRETE HERALD

Formerly the Hamilton Herald Established Nov. 23, 1901. Oldest Paper in the Upper Skagit.

May 20, 1965

## SLIDING DESTROYS BAKER POWER HOUSE

(MONTAGE OF SLIDE ACTIVITY ON LAST PAGE)

Earth slides from the unstable hill above the Lower Baker increased in activity due to the heavy weekend rains, and early on Tuesday morning started a series of movements that ended with complete destruction of the multi-million dollar installation. First warnings came about 3:00 a.m. and soon a gush of mud from the canyon south of the power house piled high against the building. Working according to a pre-arranged evacuation schedule, men on duty shut down the power operations and were removed to safety by boat. The last man left the building about 4:00 a.m.

As the Puget Power men anxiously watched, the hill above began to move like an awakening giant, rolling and slipping with increasing violence. Dirt began to pile up behind the original section of the power station and just before 8:30 the weight of the new slides suddenly broke through the top story walls and sheared off that floor, dropping the roof onto the floor beneath. A huge cloud of dust and the accompanying roar brought townspeople to the observation post high and out of danger south of the power house. From there they watched, fascinated by the force of nature, as the continual slides gradually ground the buildings into twisted girders and crumbling bits of concrete. The process took most of the day, although the old part of the building was completely gone except for the north wall, early in the afternoon. After that forces seemed to divert themselves to the remaining building and by

the cessation of slide activity about 2:30 a.m. Wednesday morning it, too, had been damaged beyond repair, though still standing.

### MEN TAKEN OUT EARLY

On duty at the power house at the time of the first slide were Keith Hicks, operator, and George Theodoratus, floorman. As soon as the big slide lodged against the south wall, they reported the condition and made preparations to close down all generators and the other equipment. While this was being completed they were joined by Ray Arnold, Clarence Kempkes and Stan Lynch, who came up the river by boat as all access to the station by land was blocked. Supt. Andy Miller also called out Jake Powell and Joe Ash to assist in the work.

To complete precautions gates on the main tunnels at the dam were closed. Only equipment left operating were the sump pumps which continued to work until the power was cut off.

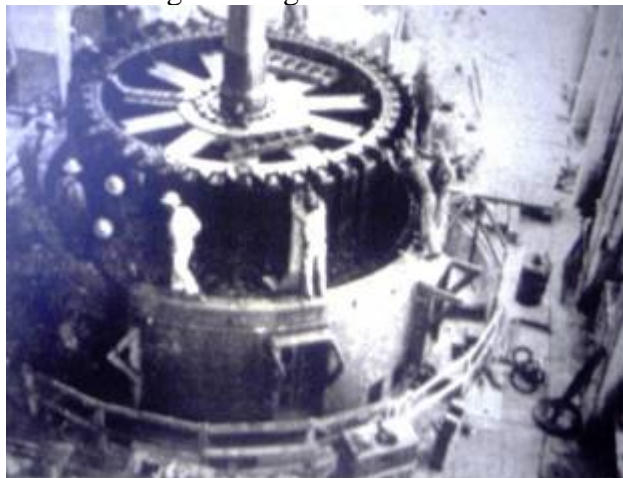
They completed the work of closing down the operation and took the men back down the river. At that time it appeared that the main trouble was the mud slide from the gully that has at several times filled the parking lot and broken into the power house through the big equipment doors.

Increased activity was noted on the rest of the slide area and small streams or dry earth began to come over the high bank just east of the old building. Watchmen reported

the entire slide section shaking and moving downward. This action became continuous and seemed as if the earth was flowing like a waterfall at times during the morning.

No huge slides came during the morning hours after the first push took the top floor. It was the continual building up of earth that poured onto and around the damaged building that slowly pushed it out of shape until, with screaming of stretching steel and the sharp cracking of cement walls, a section would topple into the river. Once the breakthrough had been made from the rear, earth poured into the building and out through the other side, taking with it equipment, windows, machinery and all moveable material.

About 10:00 a.m. the penstock of the new generator broke, releasing water backed up into the tunnel and in the surge tank atop the hill. The slide had already been breaking against the side of the water-filled tank so when the inside pressure was released the tank collapsed like a crushed tin can. The slides then smashed the tank flat against the north bank as it began filling the tunnel below it.



**NEW GENERATOR  
MAY BE A LOSS**

New turbine generator here at site is the large vertical-axis generator which was installed in the same position by the power house in city of 1925. Slides here in the last night, according to the power house, broke into pieces. This machine was moved by a crane from the Lake Shannon, drifted through solid rock beneath the hillside that completely destroyed the old generator house.

## TWO SLIDES WORKING

There were two different slides, of two different types. One was the ravine south of the power house which had its source just

below the old quarry road. This section is a mass of water-soaked clay and dirt and it gave way periodically with a rush to rip down the steep canyon and spew out over the parking lot area below. Each new slide pushed more muck into the flat area and this moved like gravy across and into the river.

At times the river was almost blocked by debris and mud, so the gates were opened on the dam to provide sufficient flow to keep the channel open.

## WEDNESDAY, WORK BEGINS

Yesterday morning work on the resumption of service from the upper Baker powerhouse was well under way. Transmission line crews began work Tuesday before the sliding had stopped to prepare to connect the high lines from the upper dam to the lines toward the Sedro-Woolley substation.

Tuesday a helicopter was used to get lines across the Baker near the shattered powerhouse, and it is expected that by this morning the lines will be in service.

All workmen at the power house will remain on jobs. The operators and assistants will work from the upper Baker powerhouse, as will much of the maintenance crew. It will be operated manually from the board there, which had been built to be used this way or by remote control from the lower station.

Watchmen will continue on the slide area to report start of any further movement. Heavy rain is expected to start action all over again.

Supt. Miller reports that Puget Power has called in the very best geologists and soil mechanics in the country to survey and assess the probable future movement of the hill.

# How It Happened--



1. FLOOD COLLAPSED BY 11 A.M.



2. PRESSURE INCREASES—WALLS CRUMBLING



3. WALL SHOWS FURTHER FLOODS FIVE H.W.



4. 2:05 P. M. DESTRUCTION OF OLD SECTION COMPLETE