

THE COURIER-TIMES

JANUARY 30, 1936

Local Expert Says Not Much Chance of Bad Skagit Flood

In a recent article in the Seattle Star, James A. Stewart, hydraulic expert with the government, who worked for Skagit county after the big flood in 1932, states that ten inches of precipitation in 34 hours on the Skagit would cause a major catastrophe. The 1932 flood had 11 inches of rainfall but was spread over four days.

Experts say this section is due for another major flood catastrophe like the flood of 1815, and that it should come within a century, which makes it 21 years overdue. The Star article says:

"Today a condition known as a 'trough' exists on the Skagit—a section of the country which is as much be-dyked as Holland ever thought of being. The trough, say City Light engineers, has resulted from a three-months deficiency in precipitation with a corresponding level in water run-off for the period.

"The condition is such that should an extremely heavy precipitation come, a flood would be almost inevitable. And if a flood should come, Stewart's report indicates that the communities of Hamilton, Lyman and Burlington would have to be vacated and the lower parts of Concrete, Sedro - Woolley and Mount Vernon likewise.

Scan Possibilities

"Now that we have the flood all figured out, all we have to do is discover what the possibilities are of getting 10 inches of rainfall in 34 hours.

"How can I tell? How can any-

body tell?" demands Lawrence P. Fisher, head of Seattle's U.S. weather bureau. 'Experts are continually studying weather conditions and causes, but to say exactly what will happen in the future, is going a bit too far.'

Harry Devin, Sedro-Woolley official government weather observer for some 40 years, had the following comments to make on the prospects for the weather said to be necessary for this disastrous flood: "As ten inches of rainfall is nearly double the average per month for the wet months at Sedro-Woolley for the last 40 years, the probability of having that amount in 34 hours, instead of two months, seems rather remote; unless our climate is to become tropical. Such downpours occur in the Philippines and other tropical islands, and while the folks along the river are preparing their arks for the flood, they should also lay in a supply of sun helmets and other tropical clothing.

"There never has been a major flood in the Skagit river caused by rain. It has always required heavy snowfall in the mountains and a hot wind to melt it. Skagit Jim asked the preacher who delivered a sermon on the flood, 'All rain? No Chinook?' The preacher replied, 'Yes, it does not say there was any chinook.' 'Heap lie,' said Jim, and walked off.

"Some data as to the floods of 1615 and 1715 would also be of interest in relation to the hundred-year flood cycles."