

Mount Vernon Herald

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SKAGIT RIVER THROWS MANTLE OF FLOOD WATERS OVER RANCHES AND HOMES

The dear old Skagit Valley, the one green spot in the northwest, has been given a drenching which wrought much damage and caused considerable inconvenience to all persons, ranchers and townspeople alike.

An almost unprecedented rainfall and a Chinook wind starting last Friday in the upper part of the county caused the old timers to open their weather eyes and soon the alarm was given that a "big river" was expected.

The river began raising last Saturday morning and continued to raise all day. Saturday night the stream was nearing the danger point. Dikes in all parts of the valley were being taxed to their capacity and in many places efforts were being made to strengthen them.

As early as 6 o'clock Saturday evening, the ranchers in the valley were notified to be on the lookout for high water.

Most of them took heed and made preparations for the raise. Few, however expected the flood water which came down during the night. But it came and everybody knows perfectly well what the result was. The Riverside section was badly hit, in some places as much as fifteen feet of water covered the ranch property.

Many reports have been given out as to the losses sustained but as most of them can not be verified at this time the Herald is reluctant about publishing alarmist reports.

Some losses resulted to almost everyone whose property was touched by the flood.

LaConner received a full blow of the rushing waters, but aside from the loss of the bridge, some bad washouts, the little town stood up under the blow very strongly.

Mount Vernon's business section and residence section was spared. Precautions were taken in various ways to withstand the flood in case it did break over the city. The lower part of town, or the "flats" was in danger during the high flow, but the constant watch of the dikes and the faithful work of the motor in the pumping station, saved the town from a real catastrophe.

Merchants were prepared for a flood. Stocks were placed up from the floor and in some instances; valuable stocks were removed to the high ground.

Comes Like Thief in the Night

The crisis came like a thief in the night. The danger signal was hung out at about midnight when the dikes began breaking. Reports were coming in from all sections that the flood waters were coming. When daylight came Sunday morning, the valley for miles showed the results of a vicious flood.

The work of rescuing persons and stock continued all day Sunday and it was not until late Sunday night that all seemed to be cared for. Monday more stock was brought in from the flood waters and cared for. In other cases, the stock was taken from one ranch to another.

Many losses are reported but the actual damage will not be available until the waters have returned to the banks of the Skagit River.

Railroads Bad Hit

The Great Northern and the Interurban roads are badly hit. For miles and miles, both north and south, the Great Northern tracks are hanging here and there like a great trestle. In some places the road bed is washed out to a depth of six and seven feet.

The interurban tracks are badly damaged and it is not believed that traffic will be resumed between Mount Vernon and Bellingham for a least a month. The Great Northern has a crew of men working south of Mount Vernon and as fast as men can be secured the work of rebuilding the road will be started.

The Traction company reports that they may be able to move some cars out of Burlington in a few days but actual service will not get under way for some time.

No Mail for Days

No mails were received from any source until Tuesday, when through the efforts of Deputy Postmaster James Slaughter (sic) the south mail was sent up from Seattle by the Harvester.

The mail situation will be demobilized for some time yet.

The telephone wires have been kept sparking between Mount Vernon and Seattle. Communication was almost entirely

cut off Sunday and Monday, but manager Burrell says that service is resumed as fast as possible in all directions.

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Reports From Burlington

The first intimation of danger was when advices up river were received to the effect that the water was higher on Saturday morning than it had been during the flood of 1909 and people began to prepare for a wet season. By midnight it had reached the high point at the hospital and was still rising. A small dike was thrown across the street with the hope of holding it, but under the strenuous protest of the property owners who would be submerged at the expense of the north end of the town the idea of keeping it back was abandoned and it was allowed to run down the main street to the Great Northern railway tracks where a breach was made and the waters allowed to spill out over the Olympia Marsh.

The breaking of the dike at the Higginbotham place near Riverside proved to be the salvation of Burlington, releasing as it did an immense volume of water and relieving the tension above. Here the waters held high level. The Great Northern and interurban tracks and trestles were torn out and carried away for hundreds of yards. Portions of track hundreds of feet in length were carried away and deposited on nearby ranches while the embankments were cut and washed out for rods.

During the progress of the flood rumors of drowning were to be heard wherever one cared to listen, but a careful investigation gives good grounds for the belief that there have been no fatalities. Mr. W.H. Walkley, who was reported dead by that old reliable, the Bellingham Herald, was discovered in his barn taking care of his stock

¹ . . . indicates that a small portion of the article was cut off at the bottom of the page.

and at no time was he in any particular danger.

The loss in stock also promises to be comparatively light for the reason that the valley is so flat that a sudden rise sufficient to endanger life is almost impossible. Chickens, pigs and calves that were penned up naturally went, but anything running free made good use of its freedom. One exception is a poor old white horse which in trying to swim to safety became entangled in a wire fence near the North Riverside station and was held there till it drowned.

The real loss falls on the railways, the county and the land owners. J.H. Higinbotham loses all except his cow and the clothing upstairs. The river dug a channel across his place to a depth of several feet and is still running strongly there, although the waters are rapidly subsiding. His house was undermined and collapsed, while the barn, which was full of hay, was carried off bodily when the dike broke and smashed to pieces against the Great Northern trestle.

The J.H. Lanphier place is also a wreck, the outbuildings all being carried bodily away and the house badly wrecked. Sand and driftwood to a depth of several feet in places are deposited all over the place and it will take years of cultivation and fertilizing to make it of any value. The place was occupied by Ed Carson and was directly in the path of the waters when the dike broke. Carson left his car and his household effects, narrowly escaping with what he was wearing.

The W.H. Musser place is also badly damaged, several hundred feet of the Great Northern track having been torn bodily from the right-of-way and carried over against the barn. The dwellings are not much damaged, but the land has been plowed and torn by the current and it too is covered with sand deposit.

The Howard Fredman place has suffered the most severely of any in the immediate neighborhood of the big break. Here the river ran mad, undermining the house and barns and plowing deep channels through the fields. Deep holes are to be seen everywhere and across the Varney road where once were stumps there are now excavations that look like cellars. The little station at Varney has been undermined and leans over on its sides in a decidedly disreputable manner. The damage in the Interurban lines at this point will take weeks in repair.

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Burlington has had no mail for five days and has also been badly crippled as to telephone connections with the south. The telegraph service has also been rather erratic to say the least, and business is in consequence at a standstill.

Sedro-Woolley has not suffered very severely except in the vicinity of the water plant. Here the waters have done considerable damage, but the principal suffering entailed has been the necessity of using the Cook road owing to the flooding of the highway. Anyone who thinks this is a joke should make the trip once by car and see where the laugh comes in.

At Sterling the damage will be considerable from the cutting up of the farms and the J.H. Hutchins place is said to be pretty badly wrecked. Dr. Cleveland's new home on which he has spent so much time and money is also much the worse for its experience as well as those of many others. The list will not be complete until the waters have subsided and communications once more established with the out of the way districts. In the meantime all sorts of dire rain reports are flying but those have so far, without exception, been proven groundless upon investigation.

Reports from the Nookachamps district are to the effect that much damage

was done there to Horn's pulp outfit, much of this being caused by a log jam. The Forest Home Academy was flooded and the ranchers in that vicinity have also suffered their share of the general inconvenience and loss of labor.

The loss to the wheat crop will be considerable, as many fields have been rooted out while root crops stored in pits and root houses have been flooded and scattered over the landscape. Almost anywhere are to be seen beets, spuds and other roots decorated the open spaces, while several straw and hay stacks went on unpremeditated journeys.