

# The Skagit News-Herald

NOVEMBER 22, 1897

## DISASTROUS FLOOD

### MT. VERNON IS A HEAVY SUFFERER

#### **Levees Overflowed and Sidewalks Washed Out. A Torrent of Water Pours Through The City. Several Houses Wrecked and One or Two Narrow Escapes.**

On Wednesday morning a very warm Chinook wind commenced to blow which increased in force until evening, when it was almost a gale. This hot wind blowing directly on the snow which had been creeping down the hills for the last few weeks, cut it away with the rapidity of fire, and resulted in a raging torrent rushing down the valley of the Skagit on its way to the sea.

The rise did not commence until Wednesday evening, as it usually takes from twelve to fourteen hours for the effects of a Chinook to make their appearance, and the same time to cease.

By Thursday the river was still raising but still within the banks. During the night, however the water came with increased force, and early on Friday morning the alarm was whistled from the electric light plant which called for help only to find the water pouring over the levees in all directions. Some efforts were made to raise the levees and keep ahead of the water, but it came so fast that they were useless.

Then there was a grand hustle to secure goods and get household goods, from

the lower part of the city, into safe places, but the water came with such force that some were unable to save all their belongings.

In the southern part of the city, the very lowest quarter, a great break occurred in the levee, caused by the water pouring over the top, which swept everything before it with irresistible force.

The house owned by T.F. Costello, and occupied by Mr. Winkler was turned around during Friday night broken into, Mt. Winkler being nearly drowned. He was in the house when the break occurred directly in front of the building and had not time even to get outside but crawled up and stood on the door knob with the icy water up to his chin. While in this position, the knob broke off, and Winkler swam to the window, and broke in the top sash crawling up and sitting astride the lower sash. In this position he remained for hours with water to his waist, until a boat could be snubbed down through the crevasses with a long line, and he was rescued from his perilous position, almost dead from exposure.

On another house was perched a man named O'Leary, while on a nearby stump

above the water were Foreman, Graham and Price. These men were rescued in the same manner as Winkler, but though badly chilled, were in much better condition than the latter. Fortunately the woman and children, who occupied the houses, had been removed to places of safety before the break occurred.

All the business houses of the city which were built level with the sidewalks were flooded, and there was a hasty scramble to get goods above the danger line. All the sidewalks and crossings were washed out, and many of them swept away to southern part of the city.

After the flood Kincaid Street presented a sight that was dismal in the extreme, being washed out and lined with debris from one end to the other. All other parts of the city were in nearly as bad condition.

At the Wilbur place, the wash of the river caved in the levee, and a torrent poured through carrying with it old logs, driftwood, roots and stumps. One monster tree struck the corner of the shed attached to the barn, and wrecked that building.

From Conway to salt water, the flood poured over the top of the levee the entire distance on the east side of the river.

On the west side of the river several small breaks occurred letting through large volumes of water. But little damage was caused however. Quite a loss of hay and oats was caused in several sections where they were not placed high enough to be above the water, but nothing nearly so great as occurred a year ago.

At one time the bridge across the river at this point was in real danger. A jam had formed on one of the piers which gradually increased in size until it reached almost across the river. By good work and the liberal use of giant powder, the jam was finally broken, and the bridge cleared. It is badly damaged however, and cannot be used

by teams until repaired. The protection pier on the next span east of the draw was knocked completely out, and the full force of the jam came against the main pier, springing it fully 18 inches out of plumb. A big snag struck the draw and swung it completely around the wrong way twisting and springing the west end out of line. Only for the fact that the structure was put in very strong and substantial, it would have never stood the tremendous strain. The damage can be repaired in a few days so that the bridge will be open for traffic.

At the mouth of the river, steamboat slough, the only channel that can be used by steamboats, is completely blockaded. In coming up the last time the Champaign had to use a small draw in which there was scarcely enough water at the present high stage, in order to get around the jam. Prompt work will be required here in order to keep the river open to navigation.

The Great Northern coast line was overflowed as usual, but not so badly damaged as it was last year. The first train from the south came in today. A jam formed against the bridge at the Davis place, and came near taking it out. As it was the protection piers were knocked out, and the rails on the bridge were sprung fully 18 inches.