

MOUNT VERNON ARGUS.

March 13, 1908

GOVERNMENT ENGINEER CONFERS WITH CITIZENS ON RIVER IMPROVEMENT

Largest Meeting of Representative Citizens Ever Held in County – Sentiment Unanimous in Favor of Work Hearing Conducted by Engineer Clapp

SIGNIFICANT RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE MEETING

A Convincing Array of Statistics Presented to Show Vital Need of Improvements of the River – Recommendation as to the Improvement Left to Major H. M. Chittenden.

Doubtless one of the largest and most representative public meetings ever held in this city assembled at the court house last Friday afternoon to consider the improvement of the Skagit river. Fully one hundred prominent citizens of the county had gathered in response to an official announcement submitted by Major H. M. Chittenden, of the U.S. Corps of Engineers, stationed at Seattle, that a bearing would be conducted in this city on Friday for the purpose of getting the views of the citizens of the county on the improvement of the Skagit river between Sedro-Woolley and the mouth of the river.

The hearing was conducted by Engineer J. M. Clapp in a most creditable and able manner. The maps and profiles of the survey of the river by the government engineers last year were exhibited by Mr. Clapp.

Mr. Clapp stated that he desired a frank, straight-forward expression of opinion, particularly from the gentlemen present who were familiar with the navigation of the river and needs of improvement.

Mr. H. L. Delvin, of Sedro-Woolley, stated that the citizens of that city were not wedded to the Sterling bend cut-off. What they desired was a deep, straight, navigable channel.

Capt. Frank Bradsberry stated that the improvement of the present channel of the river would prove to be the most practicable course to pursue. The present channel should be deepened and protected. Under present conditions it is possible to tow logs in the river during ninety days of the year. Experience had taught him that the depths of water varying from eight to fifteen feet were best for towing. Revetment ought to be built at once near Sedro-Woolley to protect the channel.

Capt. Pinkerton favors leaving river in present channel. Believes that if channel was changed it would develop bar. The present channel should be deepened and water confined.

Capt. McDonald is of the opinion that the river is all right as it is. It should be deepened and protected against floods. Cut-off would destroy river's channel. The fall of the river in the Sterling cut-off would be six and a half feet in one thousand yards,

which would be impracticable for navigation. The fall of the river between Avon and its mouth, a distance of thirteen miles, is only thirteen feet. Should improve present channel of river.

Mr. Devin stated that he did not believe that the government would encounter much difficulty in securing right-of-way of property owners through Sterling bend, as owners favor the improvement.

E. G. English emphasized need of improvement. Somewhat doubted practicability of revetment. Said that river was navigable between certain points eight months of the year, and only four and a half months at other points. Channel should be deepened and a navigable depth of water maintained throughout the entire year between Sedro-Woolley and its mouth.

J. M. Harrison expressed the opinion that the navigation of the river was out as good as it used to be fifteen or twenty years ago. Nature in its virgin state protected the river. The bends in the river were largely responsible for the reducing of the channel. No trouble resulted where channel was straight. The clearing of land and maintenance of dikes were also responsible for filling of channel. Believes channel should be straightened. Favors Sterling cut-off. Does not believe that straightening channel would interfere with navigation. If river is straightened washing of the banks would not be great and deposits of sediment would be reduced to a minimum. He had observed that river had lengthened at least one and half miles during the past eighteen years.

O. von Pressentin, of Sedro-Woolley, stated that boards had not experienced any difficulty in navigating river since the Rockport cut-off had been made. Believes that channel deepens if river is straight. Water on a rampage accomplished peculiar freaks. Had known

river to cut new channel through in one night.

Ex Senator Hammer doubted if a durable wall could be maintained at Sedro-Woolley. Current too great to maintain rip-rapping or revetment at that point.

Capt. Bradsberry believes that cut would result in removal of bars in river.

Captains McDonald and Pinkerton suggested that shear be established on right bank and not in river at Great Northern railway bridge, otherwise it would form a trap in which boats would be caught and wrecked. Piles should be driven at this point or solid rock piers to protect channel of river.

The suggestion of the government's engineers to cut off the north fork and reduce it to a 100 foot channel with a six-foot depth, aroused considerable opposition. The object is to divert the water of the north into the south fork, and widen and deepen its channel and increase the flow of water and avoid the re-accumulation of troublesome bar that now exists to impede navigation.

Peter Egtvet forcibly objected to cutting out the north fork, as he doubts the ability of the south fork to carry off the surplus water. Engineer Clapp pointed to the removal of the seven foot bar at the mouth of the river and the deepening of the south fork as being sufficient, in his judgment, to take care of the increased volume of water. These were engineering problems that were usually correctly figured out. The government is always solicitous in protecting the rights and interests of the people. The plan was also to provide an outlet for surplus water through Steamboat slough. The removal of the mouth bar would increase flow of river and materially increase its capacity to accommodate the surplus flow diverted from the north fork. The improved channel of the Swinomish slough had provided a permanent eight foot channel. Dredging the Skagit at its mouth

and concentrating its channel would result in deeper permanent channel.

Mr. Cass objected to narrowing the channel of the north fork. Is apprehensive that it would cause overflow, ruin and disaster to farms. Would not object if government would assure protection from overflow. The maintenance of a hundred foot channel with six foot depth, and outlet through slough might provide relief.

Mr. Egbert said the removal of mouth bar, outlet through Steamboat slough and the river widened and deepened with dredger, might provide for surplus water if north fork is confined.

Mr. E. O. Welts stated that the Skagit is the largest and most important navigable river of the west side. It flows through one of the richest agricultural regions of the state. The natural demands of trade and commerce were of sufficient magnitude to justify its improvement. Then all obstructions should be removed to provide it a natural channel, as it threatened untold destruction during the season of floods. The government should be impressed with the imperative need of the immediate improvement of the river.

I.E. Shrauger declared that the improvement of the river was one of the great commercial needs of the Northwest. Two million pounds were received and shipped at Mt. Vernon each month. Of this amount, 1,500,000 lbs. were shipped by rail and 500,000 lbs. by water. In 1903 the output of the English Company was thirty-four million feet of logs. The output of this company is now probably forty million feet. The output of the river camps will probably exceed twenty million feet annually. It is approximately that the output on the line of the Puget Sound & Baker River Railroad will be sixty million feet annually, the Clear Lake Lumber Company's output is estimated at forty million feet annually. The Pacific Coat Condensed Milk Co. ship out

one thousand tons of milk per month – two hundred tons by water and the balance by rail. One hundred and fifty tons of fresh milk are shipped into the city each month by water; twenty-five tons of supplies are shipped to the merchants each month by water and one hundred and eighty tons of oil arrive here each month by water. Water transportation is steadily increasing, and with the river improved and navigation assured at all hours of day or night, it would assume immense proportions.

Ex Senator Hammer introduced a motion which prevailed, that the various commercial organizations of the county collect and prepare statistics of the varied resources of the county and the extent to which their development is influenced by river transportation, and forward the same to Major Chittenden.

James Kean expressed the opinion that the improvement of the river should comprehend a depth of water at all tides of at least six feet, so that steamers the size of the Gleaner or Skagit City could sail in or out at any time of the day or night.

Senator Hammer introduced a motion which prevailed, that it was the sense of the meeting that the improvement of Skagit river be left entirely to the judgment of Major Chittenden, and that the county cooperate with him in urging that the plans he formulates and recommends be adopted by the government and that complies without unnecessary delay in carrying out fully the provisions therein contained.

A unanimous vote of thanks were extended to Engineer Clapp for the able and courteous manner in which he had conducted the hearing.