

THE MOUNT VERNON ARGUS

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FIRE FIRST GUN IN FLOOD FIGHT

Permanent Organization To Be Formed "To Improve Skagit River."

The first gun in the fight against flood waters in the Skagit valley was fired Tuesday evening at a mass meeting of Skagit county citizens held in the court house at Mount Vernon. More than 250 gathered within the court room, the doors were locked and as many more were turned away. (This court room can hold just so many, otherwise the building might collapse.) After an hour and half of interesting talks by Skagit ranchers and business men on various theories and ideas on what should be done to curb the irate Skagit river, Henry A. McLean moved that the chairman of the meeting, J. Zig Nelson, appoint a committee who would take upon themselves the forming of an organization "for the improvement of the Skagit river."

At the opening of the meeting Mr. Nelson was elected chairman. J. W. Collins, secretary of the Mount Vernon Commercial club, then read a letter from Senator Miles Poindexter who was unable to be present at the meeting. The senator's letter follows in part:

"I deeply sympathize with the people of the county in their loss. I will be glad to have any resolution which may be adopted at the meeting and to know of any remedies which may be suggested for the prevention of such losses in the future; and will take pleasure in seeing that thorough consideration is given them by the proper departments of the government at Washington."

Charles Nelson, pioneer and strong dike worker, was the first to be called on by the chairman for his views on what course should be taken for flood prevention. He stated it would be useless to build more dikes but that to build jetties at the mouth of the river, dredge the outlets and straighten the channel would be his solution of the problem.

Peter Samuelson urged the consolidation of the diking districts, stating that to do so would save enough money to buy a dredge for the county and to keep it in use.

John Kill also urged that the diking districts be put under one head for more efficient work and to save the taxpayers more money. It was shown that there are now seventeen such districts in the county. He also said efforts should be made to secure the assistance of the federal government.

That the people of the county could take the burden of providing adequate protection on their own shoulders, was the opinion of H. L. Willis, who cited the accomplishment of the city of Galveston which built a mammoth sea wall by bonding its own citizens without any outside assistance. He urged the adoption of organized effort as soon as possible and concluded with, "Let's do the job ourselves."

Alfred Polson spoke briefly in favor of dredging the channel of the river. He was followed by Captain Egel who said he had no solution but offered the information that in the twenty odd years the river bed had risen eighteen feet.

A tangible plan was shown by W. Franklin, who proposed that the channel should be straightened from Dro-Woolley to its mouth. He had plans and drawings of this project and figures as to its probable cost. He declared that the Skagit would edge itself if straightened. His estimated cost of the project was more than three and a half million.

J. Whitmarsh voiced his approval of going after federal aid as the Skagit was a navigable stream. Its channel should be straightened, he said.

A. McLean was finally prevailed upon to give his opinion and stated to the outset that he was first in favor of securing a practical engineer to handle the proposition. He did not have much hope for government aid but declared that a permanent organization should be formed to look after flood protection.

O. Rudene spoke at some length saying that the county should procure a dredger and clean out the channel. Wain Dillon also spoke in favor of straightening the river and also suggested that the height of the dikes be reduced. He said it was better to have a little water over the land more frequently than a whole lot at one time.

W. E. Jennings also spoke in favor of the permanent organization. A motion was put and carried but one or two dissenting votes. Chairman Nelson said he would try to get the committee as soon as possible, but he wanted to give them careful deliberation. Another meeting probably will be held in the future, at the call of the committee.