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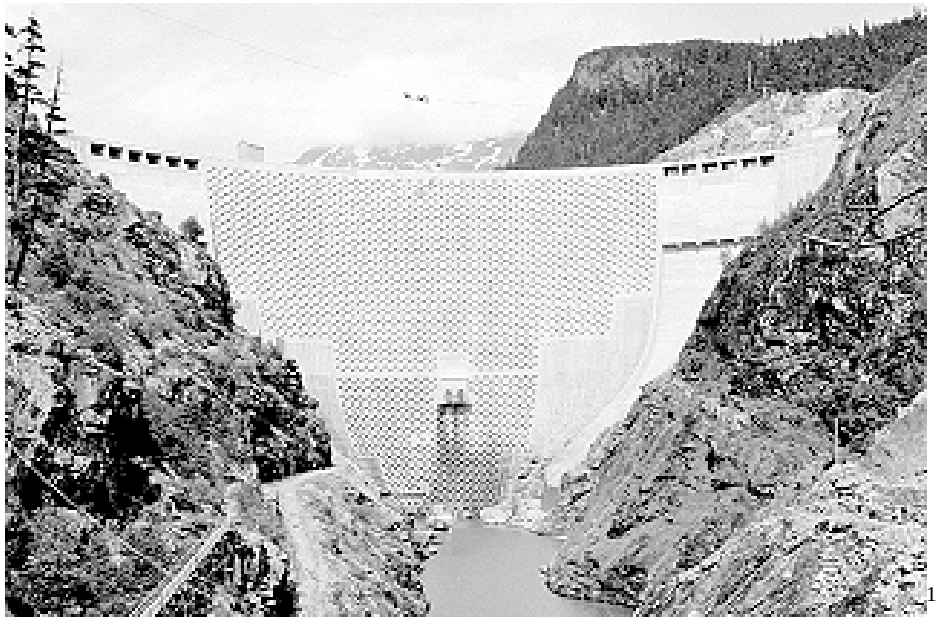
Twelve Year Construction Job Of Building Ross Dam Completed Last Week

 [1]

Seattle City Light's Ross Dam was accepted from the General-Shea-Morrison Company, contractors, last Thursday afternoon in an impressive ceremony on top of the dam itself. Towering snow capped peaks of the Cascade Mountains provided a background for the big dam, which is fourth tallest in the world. It stands 540 feet high, just ten feet less than Grand Coulee.

Because of the difficulty of reaching the dam, the general public was not able to attend the ceremonies, although the transcript was broadcast that evening. Newspaper and radio reporters, photographers and officials made up the dedication audience.

The construction of Ross Dam was one of the most difficult and spectacular jobs in the world. The granite cliffs rise for hundreds of feet from the river gorge. Every pathway, building site and toehold for man or machine had to be blasted from the rock.

Begun in 1937

Construction of the first step of the dam began in September 1937 and was completed March 11, 1940. Work was resumed in February of 1943 and carried through until completion on August 18th, 1949. Cost of building the dam was approximately $28,000,000.

Gravel, cement, steel and all the other hundreds of items used to build the dam were brought by rail to Newhalem at the lower end of the gorge, and then by electric railroad to Diablo, about midway in the gorge. The

[1] Picture is from Seattle Municipal Archives, http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/phot1.htm for quality control.

freight cars were taken one at a time up the almost vertical canyon wall below Diablo Dam on a platform lift. Then they were transferred to barges on Diablo Lake and ferried to the foot of Ross Dam.

Ross Dam is the keystone of the entire Skagit Project. It will impound a maximum of 1,400,000 acre feet, making a lake 24 miles long, extending across the border into Canada. This stored up water will produce about 500 million kilowatt hours in an average year from the generators already installed in the Gorge and Diablo powerhouses. This production is in addition to stream flow production.

Power production will be increased when Ross Power House is completed in 1956. Construction of the power house, of 360,000 kilowatts capacity and at a cost of about $30,000,000 will start very soon. Three 90,000 kilowatt generators have already been ordered, and the first one will be installed and operating by November 1952. Two more will be placed in operation in 1953, and the fourth by 1956.

Site of the power house is about a quarter of a mile downstream, at a location where the gorge widens a little and less hewing away of the cliffs will be necessary. Two 24½ foot diameter tunnels which will carry water to the power house have already been blasted out of the rock for about 1500 feet. These tunnels will soon be completed and lined with concrete.

A great deal of work must be done between now and 1956, and about 600 workmen and engineers are now busy on the project. First job to be completed is the installation of an additional 60,000 kilowatt generator in the Gorge Power House by 1951. Gorge Power House is located at Newhalem at the lower end of the gorge and receives water through a 20-foot tunnel 11,000 feet long. Water comes from a low diversion dam that is scheduled to be replaced with a high dam in 1956.

Construction of the Skagit project began in 1919 under the direction of J.D. Ross. The project will reach a capacity of 644,000 kilowatts by 1956.