

A F F I D A V I T

STATE OF WASHINGTON)
 : SS
 COUNTY OF SKAGIT)

J. O. RUDENE being first duly sworn on oath says: That, I am a citizen of the United States, a resident and free holder in the County of Skagit, State of Washington and own four hundred acres of land on the LaConner flats, three hundred of which is bottom land, cleared and in a high state of cultivation and subject to overflow and freshets by the Skagit River, the same being in Sections 29 and 32, Township 34, North Range 3 E. W.M., the same being in Diking District No. 1 and also Diking District No. 9, and Drainage District No. 15, said County; that said land is about seven miles West of Mount Vernon, in Skagit County, Washington and about four miles on a direct line with the Skagit River and about three miles on a direct line from the North Fork of the Skagit River; that I have lived in Skagit County forty-nine years and am familiar with the flood conditions, experienced in the Skagit Valley and particularly the LaConner flats, so called, during that period of time; that the first freshet and flood from the Skagit River that I recall, occurred the last of May in 1882. At that time there were no dikes on the Skagit River, but the land bordering on the same extending upward to the foothills and the foothills themselves were all covered with a heavy growth of fir, cedar and spruce. The water at that time covered the LaConner flats and stood on my farm three feet deep for a period of about two weeks, the depth of the water varying during that period of time. No injury was done by this freshet to the salt water dikes. At that time a voluntary organization among the land owners on the flats and bordering on the River was perfected and I served as a Commissioner from then until 1895. This freshet killed all of the growing crop. In 1883 I commenced to build dikes along the North Fork of the Skagit River. These dikes were gradually increased and work was done on them continuously until 1895, when I retired as Commissioner, and at that time it appeared to me and I thought the dikes were sufficiently high to protect the land against extreme high water at all seasons and during all flood conditions. Up to that time we had spent a good many thousand dollars, the exact amount of which I cannot state, as probably five or six thousand dollars or more was paid in, in cash, and a great deal of the work done over those years was contributed by the land owners in lieu of assessments. In the meantime the timber was being cut along the River and particularly from then on to the present time the timber has been largely cut away on both the bottom land and on the foothills. At the same time there had been an increase in flood water, particularly with rapidity with which the snow melts and surface waters find their way into the river, the result being that there is a rush of water from the uplands to the outlets, rather than a gradual and more continuous flow as in former years. As this condition has increased the size of the dikes have also been greatly increased, until at the present time the dikes are at least three times as large as they were in 1895, when they were considered sufficient for all possible purposes. There were other freshets of lesser consequences during the intervening years, but the next time at which the entire country was covered with water, as I recall it, was in 1909. At that time the dikes broke at various points on the Skagit River and North fork flooding the entire country between Mount Vernon and LaConner and between Burlington and the mouth of the Samish River at Edison, being territory about ten miles square, to

a depth of from two to eight feet of water. There was water in the vicinity of my place, about six feet deep, for a period of two weeks or longer, the water standing on the land for a period of a month or more. The next large freshet was in 1917, occurring in December and the entire country above referred to was again covered with water to a depth of from two to six feet, the water remaining on the land until after Christmas time. The next large freshet was in 1921 on New Years day. The entire country was again covered to a depth of from two to six feet and the water remaining on the land over a period of two weeks.

The damage caused by these floods was tremendous. Hundreds of head of stock were drowned, crops stored in warehouses and barns were in each instance destroyed, buildings were washed away, fences were destroyed and the land at points was covered with sand and gravel, in some instances ruining it entirely and rendering it unproductive for a period of from three to six years or longer. At some points the land itself was cut up by the action of the current and large sloughs cut in the same and the total damages at each flood would run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. That, the action of the water from the river caused the breaking of the salt water dikes in almost all instances and the result was that with the next influx of the tide the land over a large area would be flooded and covered with salt water and tide water. This condition continued over a period of weeks and in some instances months until dredgers could re-build the salt water dikes.

That the action of the two main currents of water coming into the Skagit Bay, which is known as Saratoga Passage and the other being the current coming through the Deception pass, the same meeting at a point off Whidby Island between Utsalady and LaGorner has been such as to cause the South fork of the Skagit River and the various channels serving as natural outlets of the water between the North fork and the South fork of said river to become almost entirely filled up with sediment making it necessary for a corresponding elevation of the dikes on either side of the streams.

I respectively present for the consideration of a Government Engineer the following idea on the matter of desirable methods to be employed for flood relief. The United States Government has spent a great deal of money in building a jetty at the mouth of the North fork of the Skagit River, extending from the end of Fidalgo Island at a point known as the Hole In The Wall, southwesterly toward Whidby Island, that the effect of the current coming from Deception Pass before it meets the current coming through Saratoga passage is to deposit behind this jetty and barrier, high banks and deposits of silt and sand and the action of the water flowing out of the North fork of the Skagit River past this jetty is to maintain and keep a definite, well defined and extensive channel of deep water; that, the condition of the North fork of the Skagit River is such that the bed or bottom is not being built up, but instead the silt and mud is carried by the rapid current of the water out of the river and beyond its mouth; that to deepen by dredging the channel of the North fork and to widen the same from the mouth of the North fork up to the point where it joins the main river would give an outlet for the water sufficient to carry a great deal more than is now being carried and at the same time a straightening of the course of the North fork would enable the larger flow of water to pass

and permit the silt, sand and deposits to be washed out of the river, rather than to cause the river to be filled up. At the same time that such dredging is done the mud and sand removed could be used to build dikes on either side of the stream at such a height and width as to hold the waters within the channel of the stream at all times of the year and under all conditions.

J. O. Rudene

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 25th day of November, 1924.

R. V. Welts

Notary Public in and for the State of
Washington, residing at Mount Vernon.