

MOUNT VERNON DAILY HERALD

Wednesday Evening, November 26, 1924.

CURB OF FLOOD WATERS URGED BY LOCAL COMMITTEE; DAMAGE ESTIMATES ARE HIGH

Data gathered by several Skagit county committees over a period of several years was today presented to M. W. J. Barden, Seattle, who was here for the river hearing. All the data asked for is included in a lengthy report submitted by H. L. Ellis, chairman of the river improvement committee and which was turned over to Col. Barden.

The complete report follows:

Mount Vernon, Washington,
Nov. 24, 1924.

M. W. J. Barden,
Seattle, Washington,
Dear Sir:

In answer to your call for a public hearing in Mount Vernon, on November 24, 1924, to secure information concerning the floods in Skagit river, we submit the following:

Frequency, Duration and Height.

As to the frequency, duration and height of floods in the Skagit river, we refer you for greater details to the comprehensive report submitted to the Skagit County Commissioners by E. J. E. Stewart, in 1922. A copy of this report was also filed with the U. S. Biological Survey.

Mr. Robert E. L. Knapp, County Engineer, of Skagit County, will submit a report giving a briefer outline of the information you desire on this point together with such other related facts as he may have been able to assemble.

Leaving, for the moment, your second object of inquiry, estimate of damages caused by the various floods, I will take up briefly the remaining three inquiries. The cost of dikes already constructed, together with repairs and enlargements has, up to date, exceeded one and a quarter million dollars. This has been covered in detail by Mr. Pease's study and report to you recently.

Your request for suggestions as to the methods considered most desirable for flood protection or prevention, call for more expert knowledge than the ordinary citizen possesses. This is not saying that every man in the valley has no remedy, for we all have our ideas of how to prevent floods. Many of these plans of ours are impractical, either from the standpoint of cost or from the standpoint of the science of hydraulics, of which we know little.

The era of power development for electrical purposes into which we are now entering seems to give hope along a practical line for flood relief. There is at present one large dam on Baker river in process of construction. Another one is projected on the Skagit river at Ruby creek. Still another on the Sauk river has been discussed. If arrangements could be made with any or all the holders of these dams to hold always available the upper ten feet of the dam for flood storage, the greater part of our flood menace would seem to be gone. Such storage for 48 hours would hold back the crest of the flood and give time for run off. It is the crest of the flood that breaks the dykes and does the damage. A preliminary investigation has already been started along this line by the Citizens' River Committee. County Engineer Knapp will also cover this point and I will leave any further suggestion or more detailed discussion of this one to his report.

Your last inquiry concerning the amount of cooperation to be expected on the part of local interests in carrying out any comprehensive scheme for flood relief is perhaps the most difficult to answer; since it depends wholly upon the mental attitude and financial ability of the people in the Skagit valley tomorrow, next year, and twenty years hence. From the fact that we are now spending money in collecting flood data, that we have already spent more than a million and a quarter on our dykes and from the

further fact that we have suffered millions in flood damages and will lose further millions if so much is left to us to lose, unless some measure of protection is taken, it would seem that the people of this valley could be depended upon to give their full measure of support to any practical scheme which would require cooperation. Either the county engineer or a member of his staff will give a report on the most recent activities of the county in the line of securing flood data.

Damage Caused By Various Floods

To return now to the second heading of your inquiry—detailed estimates of damage caused to various interests. In answering this, I will quote in considerable detail from a report made two years ago by Mr. J. W. Collins, secretary of the Mount Vernon Commercial club.

Mr. Collins says, "The spring flood of 1894, although it did not cause as much destruction by washing and breakage as some of the fall freshets, probably cost as much as any of the others. The complete destruction of the year's crops caused a loss of approximately \$1,500,000. This flood impressed upon the settlers the necessity of protection against the spring freshets, and from this time on the system of dikes was greatly increased and extended in its scope.

"The flood of 1897 washed out the Great Northern Railway embankment at Sterling Bend between Burlington and Pedro-Woolley, and cost the company a large sum in replacements and repairs. The southern part of Mount Vernon also was flooded and the county court house was converted into a refuge for the flood sufferers. The district above Concrete suffered more severely in this flood than in any since that date. Several hundred head of cattle were lost and a number of horses, barns and out buildings were washed away in this vicinity alone.

"The flood of 1906, while not as disastrous as that of 1897, caused a loss in stock and property of \$250,000.