

# THE CONCRETE HERALD

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Following our custom of getting old landmarks and bits of history down in black and white so that some record will be made for future years, a recent trip to Diablo found the old water wheel powerhouse of the old Davis ranch still standing and awaiting to be covered up by water of the new Gorge high dam.

The water wheel started as a pipe dream of Frank and Glee Davis back in the 1900's and was first conceived as a method of powering a saw mill for cutting lumber in the inaccessible upper Skagit area. Over the years the idea took shape and form, but it was not until 1921 that the project was completed. Then it was found that the wheel failed to create enough power for cutting much timber,

so in 1925 the men installed a 1½ h.p. generator and the mill wheel went into the power business as the upper Skagit's first permanent hydro-electric installation. The water powered generator furnished lights for the Davis homestead for several years until the place was sold to make way for City Light.

Frank built the mill house. Glee aided on the flume and water wheel. Water to operate the wheel came from Stetattle Creek where a dam was built about four feet high and upstream about nine hundred feet from the junction with the Skagit River.

The flume was made from split cedar taken from the woods, the boards being about seven feet long with a minimum width of eleven inches. These were hand-planed on the

inside to make close fitting. About two-thirds of the distance the flume was carried on stringers twenty feet long and from ten to sixteen feet from the ground. This was especially difficult carrying it around the rock ledge below Stetattle Creek where for some four hundred feet the stringers were secured to the rock by small cables.

The flume was twelve inches wide in the bottom with side boards flaring out to carry a depth of water about seven inches, or approximately six second-feet in volume. The grade was four-tenths of a foot to one hundred feet in length. The flume was two thousand feet long from dam to powerhouse and arrived at the wheel high enough to provide an overshot delivery. The shaft from the water wheel spun a pulley on the inside of the building from which a bell drive operated the saw and later the generator.

In addition to powering the mill, water from the flume could be diverted at two points to furnish water for irrigation of the Davis crops.

Again it was the story of man's ingenuity to provide a better way of life. In this case it took a lot of hard work and planning. And this monument of two men's dream of power is soon to be drowned in a power project of a million times greater magnitude.

But you can never say the big engineers were first with the idea.