

THE CONCRETE HERALD

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NEW BAKER LAKE IS FORMING

There was no actual ceremony, no speeches or flag waving, but a large number of visitors crowded the observation points at the Upper Baker River Dam last Thursday to watch the workmen "drop the plug" to start the lake filling. Company officials from all parts of the district were on hand for the first big milestone in completion of the project. The 30 ton cement and steel gates were dropped shortly after 2:00 P.M. and by the time the visitors left the water had covered the Baker River outlet portals and was rising rapidly on the dam.

Visitors started coming during the morning, to look over the huge structure and watch preparations for the final blocking of the river. The dam is 300 feet high, over 1,200 across the top. It tapers from the 24-foot roadway across the top to a base approximately 200 feet thick.

To drop the gates, two welders, Erwin Iverson of Bellingham and Glenn Melcik of Burlington, were lowered over the side in a house-like wooden cage. This was positioned just above the brackets holding the gates suspended by steel straps. On signal at 2:00 the men started their cutting torches and begin cutting the straps. The gate on the northwest side dropped first, swirling the waters into the single opening. A few moments later the other gate dropped, sending up a high spray of water as it closed the river off completely.

In a very few minutes the water poured over the coffer dam at the base of the concrete wall and soon covered the diversion tunnels completely.

The intake gates for the generators are about 200 feet up. Water is expected to reach them in ten days or two weeks, after which the testing of generating equipment can begin. The two tunnels will lead water to two 60,000 h.p. turbines which will drive two 47,000 generators.

Controls will eventually be handled by electronics from the lower Baker River powerhouse and only one caretaker will be required on the installation.

Work began on the big project June 1, 1956. There are still a few things to be done and it will be December before the final clean-up is complete. During construction employment ran as high as 1,700 men. This dropped to about 450 the past month and will drop very fast in the next month to level off with less than 100 in the final "mopping up" process.

Fish Handling Interesting

An interesting sidelight on the dam will be the handling of the salmon run. A floating baffle has been built that will be placed in front of the intake gates to keep fish and debris from entering the turbines. The fish will be directed into a holding tank and then pumped by a large hose and a system of piping to the river below.

Going upstream, the fish will be trapped here in Concrete and transported by truck above the two dams. Special artificial spawning areas are now being completed on the river above Baker Lake for hatching purposes.