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PROMOTER IS FOUND GUILTY OF FRAUD IN SELLING TIDELANDS

CHARGE IS USING MAILS TO DEFRAUD - SOLD 12,000 ACRES OF TIDELAND IN EAST END OF COUNTY

Oliver M. Sparks, charged jointly with C. A. Sparks, Geo E. Dye and E. C. Hart with the use of the mails to defraud and conspiracy in connection with the sale of tidelands in the Skagit delta district, was found guilty on both charges by a jury in the federal court in Seattle Tuesday. His trial lasted for two weeks, many prominent Skagit county residents being called as witnesses as to the location and value of the lands sold by the promoters.

The defendants were alleged to have sold about 12,000 acres of land under tidewater lying between the north and south forks of the Skagit River, on their assertions that this land could be reclaimed at reasonable cost. The government contended that the land was worthless, and soil and drainage experts called as witnesses during the course of the trial testified that the cost of diking the lands would be prohibitive, and further that the land could not be used for agricultural purposes if drained, as it was practically all sand. It is claimed that the lands sold brought in \$30,000, nearly all from people who were anxious to secure a small tract of land for a home and a small farm.

The downfall of the promoters is largely due to the efforts of Thos. K. Chambers and M. J. Beaumont, former officers of the Mount Vernon Commercial club, who investigated the proposition and soon found that it was a "skin game," and started out to convince the government officials of the fact. Chambers and

Commissioner J. Z. Nelson were star witnesses from this county in the federal court last week.