Emergency Aid Given

Flood Victims

Residents 'Mop Up'; Flood Loss Set at Two Million Dollars

By HAL ZIMMERMAN

Emergency assistance today was being given flood victims of Hamilton and the up-river district whose homes and household belongings were damaged or destroyed in one of the worst floods in Skagit county history. Hamilton residents were shoveling silt, mud and sand from their homes, and were trying to salvage damaged household goods and merchandise in their places of business.

The Red Cross, swamped with requests for aid, are helping only those in most urgent need, but all persons who have had losses are requested to come to the Mt. Vernon office and register or write the office their needs. Mrs. Clo Budridge, executive secretary, reported that the office was full all Wednesday trying to handle the requests.

The flood has now receded and left behind it the stories of heroic incidents which prevented loss of a single human life and saved thousands of dollars of property.

Rankled as the worst since 1921, this week’s flood caused an estimated $2 million loss in property, land, homes, household goods, clothing and food, the highest loss of any flood in Skagit county history.

Sedro-Woolley residents assert that the floods of 1932, 1921 and 1896 were worse for this city, but for up-river residents, this week’s ranked with the 1809 and 1921 disasters.

Hamilton, flood-swept community of 250 residents, is now cleaning up. Mud is everywhere. It may be weeks, and even months before some of the damaged buildings can be repaired, and the blanket of silt and debris cleared. Thirty-five houses sustained flood damage, the Red Cross said.

Some families lost all their possessions including their clothing. Two families in Rockport were luckily saved, one after standing in waist-high water all night and another woman and three-year-old son were clutching the rafters of their small frame house which had swung part way down stream.

There were heroes, such as Dewey Smith, the "Paul Revere" of Hamilton who from 2 a.m. Sunday until day break, roused residents of Hamilton and told them to pack up and leave because the flood was coming. Frank Jacobson awoke Smith. There were others, such as the man who braved swift waters in light boats and in amphibious ducks to rescue marooned families, even many hours after dark. The dike workers on the lower Skagit did a tremendous job.

There were humorous sidelights, such as the pig jumping out of the boat, and its owner grabbing it by the tail and dragging it and the boat through the water.

Two other boats, taking persons out of Hamilton, were chained together. Each passed on opposite sides of a post, and occupants of one of the boats were flipped into the water. Although humorous to those who watched the incident, the accident resulted in one man losing his outboard motor in the water and thoroughly soaking his rifle.

But there was tragedy to those who lost their household goods, whose places of business have been almost ruined.

Friends and neighbors have come to the aid of many and the Red Cross is meeting all emergency requests for those who need assistance. An initial allocation of $5,000 has been received, and after the immediate needs are met the Red Cross will begin its rehabilitation program, which means it will bring the families back to the standard of living they had before the flood.

Hamilton, Rockport and farmers in the Utopia and Lyman-Hamilton district suffered most loss and damage from the flood waters.

A total of ten head of livestock were lost near Hamilton and eight

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Flood

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The water rose along both sides of lower Third street (highway 1-A) and came to within a few feet of the Union Oil bulk station and drove farmers north of town from their homes.

Norman Hanson put his herd of about 30 head of cattle in the upper stock in his barn.

Local residents who have seen earlier floods, frequently contended that this one was not as bad as those of earlier days.

Seattle Civic Light asserted that Rose Dunn played an important role in preventing a more disastrous flood, by holding back water from Wednesday, Nov. 22, some four days before the flood.

Apparently the rumor that Civic Light opened 15 gates on one of the dams on Sunday was erroneous.

Sunday's and Monday's flood had remarkable similarity to the 1906 daster which occurred almost on the exactly the same days, and in the same way. This week's flood followed a heavy downpour of rain last weekend and a warm Chinook wind which needed some in the hills and brought down a dense dome over the main stream of the Skagit river.

The 1906 flood started after rains and a Chinook wind on Sunday and Monday, November 23 and 24, 1906. It was a copy of the Herald-Buzzard, Skagit County's official newspaper of that day, which was printed at Hamilton.

By contrast however, the earlier flood gave farmers and merchants very little notice. They moved their livestock to high ground and some of the livestock raised goods in their stores.

Except for the work of several Hamilton residents who woke their neighbours with a megaphone, the acute flood Sunday would have caught residents even more unprepared.

Most Hamilton residents who committed to town early Sunday morning before the main overpour came was watched while several farms families stayed at their homes to care for their cattle. Later several of them were rescued by boat or amphibious duck.

Adrian Youngman's house was in the Lyman-Hamilton tract, but all his cattle were on higher ground. His house was surrounded, but was saved by the house of a farmer who had a boat nearby. Several men were rescued by boat or amphibious duck.

A report that a local physician delivered a baby during the flood at Hamilton was confirmed.

Simon Koehn, who has a home near the Skagit river bridge north of the river, left much of his wood, and his planes in the barn, were torn up. His cow stood in water all night. Water flooded the Koehnke basement, as did the Johnson and Peterson basement and John Lenz basement in the same neighborhood.

Andrew Hanson had water on the floor and piles of his tie corn, a short distance north of Koehnke's, and he stayed in the house and moved belongings up as high as possible.

The 2x2 Peterson residence just east of Township street near the disposal grounds also had water in the basement.