

JANUARY 26, 1935

Danger Of Serious Flood Is Lessened As River Starts Receding

Danger Not Yet Over, But Hundreds Breathe Easier; River At Highest Point Since 1917; Dropping Rapidly In Eastern Section Of County; Scores Labor To Stop Dike Breaks

Hundreds of residents in many sections of lower Skagit county breathed a little easier this afternoon when it became apparent that the threat of the worst flood in years was gradually passing. The danger was not yet over, however, and scores of men continued their labors in strengthening weak points in the entire network of dikes which protect this section.

It was believed the high point in the river had been reached early this afternoon, and the Skagit was expected to start receding later today. At 2 o'clock, river watchers said the Skagit was no longer rising. The county gauge was out of sight, but it was estimated the river had reached a height of 28 feet, which is within a very few inches of the high in 1917 when sections of the county were visited by disastrous floods.

The river was at least a foot higher than three years ago when dikes broke at various places causing the inundation of hundreds of acres of farm lands. All that saved a recurrence of the flood of late February in 1932 was the strengthening of the dikes under the CWA program, many declared.

Reports from the eastern part of the county were to the effect that the river had dropped three or four feet at Concrete and that the Skagit had receded 18 inches between Hamilton and Lyman from 6 a. m. until noon.

This news was joyfully received in Mount Vernon and other sections of the lower valley where the river had risen steadily all night. The water continued to rise here until this afternoon. Although gauges were out of sight, those using markers estimated the river had risen seven or eight inches from 8 o'clock this morning until 2 o'clock this afternoon.

Meanwhile, the fight to save the collapse of dikes at various places was continuing. Although rumors kept the city in a state of excitement throughout the day, there was only one actual dike break. It occurred on the south bank of Freshwater slough, south of Fir. It was flooding approximately 250 acres of land near the Island Gun club. The farms of Ole Thompson,

At that place, water bubbled up in the field a few hundred feet west of the dike itself. Workers piled sand bags onto the spot so that the rushing water would not undermine the dike as it did in 1932.

Residents of Mount Vernon and Burlington had scares this morning, but prompt work kept the dikes from washing out and flooding the two cities. In Mount Vernon the fire department called out volunteer workers at 5 o'clock this morning to pile sandbags on two weak spots in the dike near the Federal condensery. The water was starting to seep under the dike when the alarm was sounded. Hundreds of residents were around and, fearing a serious break, rushed to the scene to watch the operations.

At Burlington, two or three weak spots in the dike were bolstered and the danger was believed past. A break at any of the places would have flooded the town of Burlington.

Two more emergency calls for workers were sounded here today. At 12:30 more men were called to the Archie Young farm on the river bend in South Mount Vernon. The water was bubbling up in the field, but sand bags were piled over the spot to eliminate the danger for the time being.

An hour or so later, an appeal was sent to the fire station here for more men near the H. L. Willis farm, west of this city on the McLean road. Workers were also rushed to that scene.

At 2:30, a total of 4,000 sacks of sand had been used to prevent the Varney slough break. Thirty men were still on duty and they thought the situation was well under control unless the high water lasts.

Many homes in West Mount Vernon were inundated. They are located between the river and the west side dike. Water was covering the floor at the West Side Confectionery store operated by Miss Florence Siegle.

MOUNT VERNON DAILY HERALD

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Due to constant reports reaching here this afternoon which stated that the river was not dropping in the eastern part of the county, L. B. Judy, manager of the Skagit Valley Rural Telephone company, called three points at 2:30 this afternoon. The results were as follows:

At Cochrehans, west of Hamilton, the river has dropped 2 feet since 3 o'clock this morning.

At E. B. Atterburys, west of Lyman, near Utopia, the river had dropped 12 inches since 7 o'clock this morning.

At the Sedro-Woolley bridge, the Skagit had receded 2 1-2 inches since 11 o'clock this morning.

This would indicate that the river will start dropping in Mount Vernon at any moment.

Dikes along the entire river were patrolled all night. Not a foot of the dike system was overlooked as anxious farmers took every precaution to prevent a break.

On both the northfork and southfork of the Skagit, south of Mount Vernon, the roads along the dikes were closed to general traffic, but milk trucks and mail carriers were going through. The roads were ordered closed because of their spongy condition. It was feared traffic would increase the danger of a break.

On the east side of the southfork, between Mount Vernon and Conway, the most precarious places were near the Hazelton farm, the A. B. Dexter farm, the Emil Swanson farm and the Lee Brothers farm.

This morning the water was running one foot over the dike at the Franklin Good farm on Dry Slough, west of Fir. Twenty men were able to pile sacks of sand and stop the overflow.

Twenty-nine head of cattle were moved from the lower farm of Alger Moberg to the Franklin Good ranch at 3:30 this morning. Many other farmers moved livestock as a precaution.

Elmer Axelson, well known farmer, stated that the water was higher in Dry slough than it had been for 31 years.

The river dike on Skagit island

side from Conway to the northfork bridge was holding well, but was being constantly patrolled and seepage leaks were being taken care of immediately.

A threatened break at the Wm. Larson farm near the northfork was averted by a hastily summoned crew which used several hundred sacks of sand.

About 1,500 sacks of sand were used to stop a leak in the dike about one-fourth mile south of the A. McKeon farm.

The Nookachamps district, north-east of Mount Vernon, was again under water today. In many sections of the district, the water was 12 feet deep. All homes in the district were inundated. The water extended from the river to as far south as the Clear Lake highway near the Schultz tavern. No water was over the Clear Lake highway but roads into the Nookachamps district were all under water.

L. B. Judy stated that rural telephone service is being maintained to all points on its line. A couple of poles were washed out in the Nookachamps area, but workmen used boats to get to the scene and speedily made repairs. Two poles were also washed out in the Edison vicinity where the Samish river overflowed, but these have been repaired also.

Marblemount Isolated 5 Days

MARBLEMOUNT, Jan. 26.—(Special)—Marblemount, situated ten miles east of Rockport, with its population of approximately 40 people, was completely isolated from the remainder of the world for five days during the severe weather of the last week. No mail service, no radio reports, no news of any sort from the great outside world—with the strongest wind up-river residents had experienced in many years, and the thermometer at zero—all reminded the residents of a genuine eastern blizzard.

The Skagit river was almost solid with ice in many places. Snow, which had fallen a few days previously, was blown into high drifts Friday and Saturday. Sunday the weather moderated, and an additional two feet of snow fell, rendering travel impossible.

Men, packing mail on their backs, reached Marblemount on Tuesday. An eight-foot snow drift at Rocky Creek had made it impossible for the CCC workers to grade out the road, and this was the only way to reach Marblemount.

School has been closed for an indefinite period.

Newhalem has reported six feet of snow and is entirely isolated.

COUNTY CITIES RECOVER FROM FLOOD SCARE

DIKE BREAKS NORTHEAST OF BURLINGTON, BUT FLOOD IS AVERTED; MUCH DAMAGE IS DONE TO ROADS, BRIDGES

Mount Vernon and other Skagit county communities were almost back to normal today after experiencing the worst flood scare in years. Although a great deal of inconvenience was caused, there was apparently little damage done to private property by the high water that at times threatened both Mount Vernon and Burlington. Roads and bridges were damaged to the extent of several thousand dollars, but the exact amount cannot be determined until a survey is completed.

County commissioners and their engineer were making a survey today. They planned to go as far as Rockport, having been informed that a huge slide east of Rockport blocked the highway. It was feared that a large expenditure would be necessary to clear the debris from the road at that point.

Excitement during the high water reached its peak at about 3:30 Saturday afternoon when Burlington residents prepared to "move out" when it was learned that the dike had collapsed near the Cleveland ranch, northeast of Burlington. Hundreds gathered at Varney slough, a short distance east of the Burlington hospital, to watch the water as it roared down the passage.

It was feared that the water would run down the Burlington main street from that point, but the receding of the river saved Burlington from inundation. The water reached within a few hundred feet of the hospital, but most of it raced down the slough, flooding a small section in the southern part of the town. It continued down Varney slough,

DANGER OF BAD FLOOD LESSENS; RIVER RECEDES

(Continued from Page One)

Pat Sullivan and Mrs. Gilbert Hanson were affected by this break. Ole Olson is farming the Island Gun club property.

The dike at Varney slough, north of Riverside, which collapsed three years ago, was still holding this afternoon, although scores of men were still on duty. They battled all night to keep the dike from going out. At that place, water bubbled up in the field a few hundred feet west of the dike itself. Workers piled sand bags onto the spot so that the rushing water would not undermine the dike as it did in 1932.

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WHAT RIVER DID

- The Skagit river, on its
- rampage last week, rose ap-
- proximately 18 feet to one of
- the highest points in years.
- Gauges were out of sight, but
- it was estimated that the
- river had reached the 28-foot
- mark.
- This morning at 8 o'clock,
- the Skagit had dropped about
- 7 feet from its high of Sat-
- urday.
- Here's how the river acted
- last week, readings being
- taken at the county gauge
- each morning at 8 o'clock:
- Jan. 21—10 feet 10 inches.
- Jan. 22—11 feet 8 inches.
- Jan. 23—16 feet.
- Jan. 24—17 feet 8 inches.
- Jan. 25—23 feet 2 inches.
- Jan. 26—28 feet (estimated).
- Jan. 27—25 feet 2 inches.
- Jan. 28—(Today)—21 feet.