

RANCHERS' LAND ALONG MORMON SLOUGH RUINED

Owners Appeal to Federal Government to Prevent Flood From Canal

Artificial Waterway Prevents Overflow in Stockton, but Needs Dam for East

Conditions intolerable to the owners of property on the east of the new canal constructed by the federal government to divert the waters from Mormon slough as a protection to the city of Stockton have been brought to the attention of government authorities through the medium of a complaint filed with Lieutenant John E. Biddle, commanding the United States army engineering corps at San Francisco. The letter is from a committee representing property owners in the district which, it is said, has been ruined by the opening of the drainage canal.

While the new diverting canal, about two miles east of Stockton and extending for about five miles, has accomplished its purpose in saving the latter city from floods, it is alleged that it has caused the flooding of a great area to the eastward which never before suffered any serious damage from floods. The canal, according to the complaint of property owners in the affected district, simply has served to remove the flood area from the city of Stockton to a district lying east of the canal.

DIVERTING CANAL INADEQUATE

The diverting canal, intended to conduct the waters of Mormon slough through an artificial waterway five miles long to the main channel of the Calaveras river, was built by the government with the idea of preventing disastrous floods in Stockton and the deposit of silt and sand in the Stockton channel. It is said that while this purpose has been accomplished in some degree, the dam on Mormon slough has not been constructed to turn back into the original Mormon channel such waters as the new canal can not take care of. In a word, the canal is said to be inadequate to take care of flood waters, but has drawn them away from the old channel and spilled them over an entirely new territory occupied by farmers and ranchers.

The letter to Colonel Biddle recites that the lands east of the new canal have been flooded six times this year and covered with an eight foot deposit of water and sand for a distance of 1,000 or more feet from the canal. The ordinary rainfall of not more than three inches is said to be sufficient to cause the waterway to overflow and carry destruction to the crops, lands and homes of adjacent property owners.

RANCHERS' LIVES MENACED

During the last rainy season sand was deposited to a depth of several feet, while fences and buildings have been buried and farm implements lost. Even the lives of residents are said to have been seriously endangered.

In part the letter reads:

"The situation should appeal to you as one deserving of immediate attention. These misfortunes and losses were visited upon us in an effort to save the federal government the annual expense of dredging the Stockton channel, and to save the good people of Stockton from the danger of flood. The sand is now deposited on our land, and we suffer the danger of flood in its most aggravated form.

"From a legal point of view we claim that the government should not divert more water out of the natural and usual channel of Mormon slough than the canal can carry within the boundaries of the rights of way secured by the government, and that the dam in Mormon channel should be so built that it will by pass into the natural and usual channel all the surplus water that the canal can not carry.

REQUEST FOR RELIEF

"The only definite form of request, therefore, for immediate relief that we can at this time make of you, is that steps be taken before another rainy season sets in to so repair the dam in Mormon slough that it will accomplish this purpose and put the canal upon a legal, just and equitable basis. We are advised that there are ample funds in the appropriation for this purpose. The water so overflowing should then be taken care of in some way to be subsequently devised, and not to the injury of parties not placed within its natural course.

"With all due respect we claim we are entitled to some particular form of consideration, as this disastrous condition has been brought upon us involuntarily to save expense to the government and flood dangers to others who are located within the natural pathway of the waters.

NATURAL DRAINAGE DESTROYED

"Now are the losses confined to those living immediately adjoining the canal. The country for miles thereabouts therefore enjoyed a natural drainage of flood waters westward, and had never theretofore known any serious flood. Under the conditions created by the canal, the flood waters are not only backed up many feet deep, but the heretofore natural drainage of the country has been destroyed. For long periods of time the roads during this last winter were submerged for miles, bridges to Stockton made inaccessible, our live stock drowned or driven to exist in water, movement made possible only by boat, all crops in a certain large area destroyed, and our very lives placed in constant jeopardy.

"We secure no sympathy from the city of Stockton, whose good people appear to be too busy congratulating themselves upon their miraculous escape; consequently we must look to the federal government to hear our almost frantic appeal for action in the premises without delay."

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