

January 7-8, 1964

(Dam burst/flooding).

Source: *Victoria Daily Times*, January 8 and 9, 1964.

Details: On January 7, a "spectacular" landslide occurred at the water-filled Cowichan Copper Co. mine and threatened the small logging community of Jordan River with flooding. Following unusually heavy rains through most of December, increased flow of water from the Jordan River through the Cowichan Copper Co. mine site had carried enough debris with it to block the main portal about 1,500 ft. (450 m) inside. The water backed up, rising through 250 ft. (75 m) (of gravel?), finally breaking out and carried on down the mountainside. Where the water welled out of the earth, was a crater 100 ft. (30 m) wide and 60 ft. (18 m) deep. It cascaded down the side hill past the mine office, shops and laboratory. The slide took staging and loading equipment down into the river 100 ft. (30 m) below. Debris, trees, timber, three small mine diesel locomotives and a truck, supplies and the thousands of yards of gravel and rock raised the riverbed by about 40 ft. (12 m). Damage had not been assessed yet, except for the \$25,000 damage done to the mine earlier. Thousands of dollars worth of mine equipment with the diesels valued at about \$20,000 each was carried into the river.

On January 8, attempts were made to have this flow diverted about 300 ft. (90 m) to the riverbank where it could freely run to the sea. The slide caused heavy silting downstream. An estimated 100,000 yd.³ (76,460 m³) silt and gravel washed into the Jordan River. It was carried downstream and filled the Canadian Puget Sound Logging Co. booming ground. The silt, halting this operation 1 mi. (1.6 km) from the slide and restricting the river's path to the sea grounded the company's tug. As a result of the booming ground shutdown, some 70 men were left idle.

A Canadian Puget Sound bulldozer later cleared a channel to tidewater. On January 9, despite 0.5 in. (12.5 mm) of rain overnight, the threat of flooding river's north bank at Jordan River eased. Crews had succeeded in blasting and bulldozing a 300-ft. (90 m) diversion channel from the outflow to the riverbank. At the mine site, about 20 of the mine's 125 employees were involved in diverting the two streams of the Jordan River, which effectively had shut down the mine's operation.

Cowichan Copper president Oswald G. MacDonald expected the original job of stopping the river flow into the mine to be completed within a week or two and the mill operating by the end of January. The plan was to permanently divert the river for about 500 ft. (150 m) from where it suddenly poured into the mine. The original hole would be separated from the river by a dike until the levels in the mine could be sealed off with concrete plugs. Upon completion, the mine could be pumped dry and put back into production at the end of the month. After drying out the motors and switching gear, the copper ore refining mill located underground some 7,400 ft. (2,220 m) inside the portal could resume operation. Original efforts to reduce the river flow by half by dumping gravel and car bodies into the bed were abandoned in favour of diverting the river.