Selah Ridge sprawls eastward from the gap like a string of slain or reclining prehistoric animals. Its faun-colored sides bulge out on the south toward Yakima and the Terrace Heights community and toward Selah and East Selah on the north.

Close along the north base passes Highway 97 and the Yakima River, both unhurried this time of the year.

Basalt outcroppings jag out on the flanks, heaving up from the quartering deep gashes of weathering ravines. Tumbled masses of fractured basalt, called rock slides, add a patchwork darker tone in places.

Half-way up the north slope, scarcely out of hearing of motor traffic, one of the slides spews across several acres. Dug into the tons of basalt debris, pock-marking this one particular place, are a half dozen large holes, definitely of human origin. These hallmarks of the past vary from eight to 20 feet in width and five to 12 feet in depth. A series of terraces zig-zag up the slope like pathways or seats in a Roman coliseum. All are screened from below by the swelling knob of a bunch-grass covered hill, remarkably destitute of rock signs.

The stone pits could have been made by a homesteader searching for the source of a hidden spring, or experimenting with a dam for small patch irrigation on the flat bottom land below.
first ad.

But they are obviously older than the land settlement days.

They could have been made by soldiers in the Indian War. But there are no records of such works in journals of those years. Used as rifle pits they command the down-slope but are too vulnerable from east and west and especially from the hill above from where one man could dislodge a deluge of basalt pieces from fist 00 size to as large as a five-gallon keg and route a company of troops.

Miners would have had no use for such pits and they existed long before road workers sought rock quarries. Besides, there are more easily reached rock sources. Nor is it likely they were Indian pit house sites, used before the valleys of the Yakima were known to white men. They would have been uncomfortable because of the sharp rocks and infested with rattlesnakes.

Rock slide hunters, seeking Indian graves could not have made them unless there were many and they worked a long while. Many people, working a long time constructed the pits. And no piece of wood, bone or other material is noticeable in the slide and pits except a few berry bushes growing at the bottom of a pit which is also rimmed with wild rye and bunch grass.

It is possible and probable they were cache holes, used by the many Indians who fished for salmon along the Yakima River.
This historic area was known as the Selah fishery. It extended up the Yakima River Canyon for several miles, well past the mouths of Wenias and Selah creeks.

In caches like these the Yakimas stored tons of dried fish before they trailing up the Naches to pick huckleberries and hunt for game, deer and other game. Bitter root and camas and other food roots, wild potatoes and wild carrots dug from hillsides were cached and would keep one or two years. When the Indians left on food quests throughout all the valleys of the Yakima and up to where Ephrata and Waterville were later built, they stored lodge poles, fishing gear, rolled tulem mats and buckskin clothing.

Caches as large as these were used in which to hide foot and mats when the soldiers salied out of Ft. Dalles in the fall of 1855 and the Indians fled from the country, because the troops, especially the Volunteers, did not differentiate between friend and foe. Some of the Indians fled through the Moxee to Moses Lake and Spokane. Other bands went northward into the Kittitas Valley and Wenatchee. Some bands went across Snoqualmie and Naches passes, spreading out and losing themselves among relatives in a big new land. The troops took the Indian cattle and horses; the fisheries were occupied and the people were impoverished.
Only a comparative few of the numerous people rallied to war under and Kamiakin, his nephew, Qualchan, son of Owhi, who lived in the Wenah.

The next year, 1856, Fort Simcoe was built as a military outpost. In 1859 it was turned over to the Indian Department and became the Yakima Indian Agency.

These rock slide cache holes, known to a scientific expedition years ago, and to earlier and later-day hunters and hikers, came to light again when George Wood, who works at the Yakima Cement Products Co. Sand and Gravel Plant along the Yakima River, about three-fourths of a mile away, decided to investigate stories he had sometimes heard about the mysterious pits. He hiked up to them and contacted Homer E. Splawn, president of the Yakima Valley Museum. Splawn is always anxious to obtain such leads on matters of historic interest so they can be investigated and records brought up to date.

Alex Saluskin, whose old people have told him of the days before and when the soldiers came, also inspected the sites.

The Indians, learning the soldiers were coming, cached most of their things, and then scattered. Dogs were used to help haul what goods the Indians could carry. Some of them were unable to keep with the rest and dug in near Moxee.
Holes as wide and deep as those in the slide would have been necessary to cache fish, roots, dried meat, house mats and village equipment in quantities along the Selah fishery.

Col. George Wright of the 9th Infantry recognized the importance of the Selah fishery at the outset of the Indian war. He wrote that he could subdue the entire Yakima country through starvation by controlling the fishery.

This was not only the most important food gathering place along the Yakima River, and a center for the tribes of Eastern Washington, it was the natural hub of east-west and north-south trails, and then routes for troops and emigrants.

An Army reconnaissance made in 1855-56 placed the Selah Fishery at 25 to 30 miles from the mission on the Ahutan and noted: "The region about the fishery may be regarded as the heart of the Yakima Indian country... The Kettetas (Kittitas) is about 30 miles above. It is well to bear in mind that this important fishery is where the Military Road from Fort Steilacoom crosses the Yakima to Walla Walla..."

Fort Steilacoom was listed as 139 miles distant, Walla Walla 95 and 800 Ft. Dalles 100 miles.
It was 110 years ago last Nov. 1 that Maj. Gabriel James Rains set out with the Oregon Volunteers from Ft. Dalles. They were on a punitive expedition against the Yakimas. This resulted because the Yakimas resisted intrusion into their country of miners and cattlemen before the Treaty of June 9, 1855, had been ratified. The Yakimas, in defending their home land routed Maj. Granville O. Haller and 100 Army troops at the Battle of Toppenish Creek southeast of Fort Simcoe State Park, killing seven and wounding 18. Maj. Haller fled back to Ft. Dalles, caching a mountain howitzer on Toppenish Ridge to lighten his equipage.

Because of the defeat, Maj. Haller was not permitted to command the ensuing punitive expedition into the Yakima country. Lt. Phil Sheridan and his dragoons were along that time and spent the first part of the march in chasing Indians who ran off 15 horses and 40 mules.

Not too far from Ft. Dalles Maj. Rains found two caches which indicate the enormous amount collected in such places.

It required eight pack mules to haul some of the goods from one cache, and 12 from another. The animals carried 400 pounds each. But most of the dried salmon, matting, hatchets, tools etc. could not be removed and was burned.

Packer Donald McKay estimated that one cache could subsist 25 families four months, or through the most rigorous part of the winter.
It would have taken caches as wide and deep as those on the north slope of Selah Ridge to hide even a small portion of the food and equipment from the Selah fishery.

And if they were caches, the terrace-like foot ways connecting them indicate they were used year after year, long before the military expedition that culminated in the Battle of Two Bites at Union Gap, on Nov. 9 and 10, and then moved up the Ahtanum Valley to the Ahtanum Mission. This was burned by the Oregon Volunteers, some of them being Masons from Oregon who mistrusted the intentions of the Catholic Oblates, missionaries to the Indians there since 1847.

There is also definite information about the rock BOM pits left by Harlan Smith of the American Museum of Natural History, exploring for the Jessup Scientific Expedition. He carried on archaeological investigations in the Yakima Valley from May to August, 1903, covering the region between "Clealum and Kennewick."

Smith located prehistoric habitation evidence mixed with graves of modern Indians along the north side of Selah Ridge. In that specific area, he wrote:

"...On the other hand there was found no positive evidence of great antiquity."
Additionally Smith made extensive studies of collections gathered in the region, which made the area famous for Indian artifacts. These included the D.W. Owen collection of Kennewick; that of Frank N. McCandless, Tacoma; and the Louis O Janeck collection "at 415 North 2nd St." (That collection is now in the Yakima Valley Museum.)

Other collections included those of Austin Mires, Mrs. O. Hinman, W.H. Spalding, all of Ellensburg, which included much material taken from Priest Rapids; and Mrs. Jay Lynch of Fort Simcoe. She was the wife of the Indian agent at Simcoe. Smith wrote that many articles in Mrs. Lynch's collection were dug from grave sites near Fort Simcoe.

Other artifacts were studied in the W.Z. York collection at Old Yakima or Union Gap. York was a jailer in Old Town in the '70s at the time of the massacre of Alonzo Perkins and his wife near Barrel Springs, east of Moxee and when the Kwachkin chief, Moses of the so-called Columbia River Indians, kept Old Town residents alert, fearful of an uprising.

Smith wrote that the scattered graves in the rock slides along the north slope of Selah Ridge even then had been dug out and rifled by relic hunters. And he wrote of the remains on the north slope:

"...they remind one of rows of seats in a theatre, Each terrace begins at the edge of the slide and runs horizontally out around its convex surface..."
These terraces may have been entrenchments, though it would seem that they would be useless for such a purpose since one can easily reach the land above from either side. *Then* that they were made to facilitate the carrying of the dead to the rock-slide graves is possible but not probable. It seems unlikely that they could have been made for the seating of spectators to overlook games or ceremonies; for the sharpness of the rocks would make them very uncomfortable...Possibly some of them are old cache holes."

As an indication of the extent of pillaging Smith purchased some artifacts, including a skull, obtained from the north slope slide burials.

He found evidence of three types of burials, those in rock slides, cremation, and where the earth was easily dug. He wrote: "Some of the burials may have been removed by Indians when the government took over the land."

The cache holes are similar, though larger, than those the Wanapum Band used near Priest Rapids, and Wanapum Dam, and White Bluffs.

Puck Hyah Toot of the Wanapums, told before his death, how his people cached fishing gear, mortars and camp equipment, even a dugout canoe on Wahluke Slope east of White Bluffs when the Indians had to leave because of the advent of the Hanford Atomic Project.
Another Wanapum told of caching camp material in what is now the Atomic Energy Zone.

Rex Puck, son of the band's religious leader, who has taken his father's name of Puck Eyah 'toot', and other relatives have made it clear that when if the area is ever opened, they want the things belonging to the Wanapums.

The culture of that region is being recognized in the Wanapum Dam Tourist Center which will be opened next summer by the Grant County PUD, interpreting some of the history along the Columbia River.

Defending the land of the Yakimas against looting has been a tradition of the Saluskin family.

There was a time in early settlement days when the Saluskins followed some Yakima residents into town from a freshly dug-out burial place below Union Gap and demanded the returns of family remains taken from the grave. The Saluskins finally had to go to court and after a trial of a sort there was a conviction of a sort and the remains were returned for burial.

Now, to the north of the Yakima Reservation, Selah Ridge has been so thoroughly and systematically searched throughout the years there is seldom even a broken projectile point or flint chip found the arrowhead hunters.
But the old rifled grave sites remain of evidences of an numerous, human people who occupied the Selah fishery and left their caches on the hillside until they finally cleared them out and moved away.

A few service berry bushes, called hchch lyn, June berries, chi chi ah, and choke cherries grow deep in the ravines and sometimes at the bottom of the big cache holes. There, too, is iron wood, called cho mut, from this wood the Indians made split-end spears for fishing and also teepin, long, tough needles with which the women sewed tule or cattail mats, using sinew sometimes but mostly tahos or wool hemp.

Where the soil is richest the tall rye grass, called schwicht grows. The short, nutritious bunch grass, wasko, covers the hillslopes, feeding stock.

The time may come when view homes will be built along Selah Ridge.

The view across Selah Valley, toward the old tunnel in the uppergap is the same, but now set with farm land squares and buildings; the green expanse of the Elks Golf Club, and the lakes and ponds of Yakima River seepage.

In the distance is Selah. At the foot of the ridge, in the foreground, is the Precision Fruit Stand. Nearer the Selah overpass is the truck weighing scales and almost directly below, and across the highway, is the Yakima Qm Cement Products plant.

But the big holes of the rock slide caches show not a single sign of the treasurers of the earth the Indians once stored for winter use.
Re:

Valley

WAPATO—Apas Goudy, chosen chairman of the Yakima Group of Indians which met at Parker to consider which tribal councilmen they will support at the Nov. 26 General Council election, Tuesday announced another meeting will be held Thursday at 9:30 p.m. in the Wa ato Long House.

He said the Yakima Group meeting at Parker unanimously agreed to hold the meeting for the purpose of asking four tribal councilmen, whose terms are expiring, and three others to attend.

Said Goudy:

"If we do not get our minds together before going to the General Council meeting, Nov. 26, the well organized Third un-Named Group can dominate the meeting and muster enough votes to defeat the councilmen who have much experience in tribal affairs."

The following tribal councilmen have been invited to the meeting:

Harvey Adams, Robert B. Jim, Stanley Smartlowit and Antone Skahan.

The Yakima Group also extended an invitation to attend to Bill Yallup, Alex Saluskin and Wapt Basset. Yallup has served one four year term on the Tribal Council but did not seek reelection when he decided to go to school at Central Washington State College. (more)
Saluskin served many terms on the Yakima Tribal Council and has agreed to attend Thursday's meeting.

Basset, also a former tribal councilman, has served on several important committees such as land, irrigation, roads, tribal buildings, law and order and fish and wildlife.

"Any Yakima interested in good tribal government should attend the Thursday meeting," said Goudy. He continued:

"They (the Yakima Group) feel the four trained tribal councilman, Adams, Jim, Smartlowit and Skahan, have a lot of experience in tribal affairs. They feel these men are now working with top technical advisers in organizing the tribal resources for better development and employment of our people. If they are defeated and new men take their places it will take a full term or more for a new man to learn. While they are learning the opportunities now offered under the New War on Poverty program must be taken advantage of. These programs may benefit some of the grass roots Indians. It seems none of these good programs reach these poor people and they live in deplorable homes."

Goudy continued:
second ad...

"It was stated that all the good programs just seem like the rain from west of the mountains, it never reaches the Yakima Valley. They also said that the mutual housing might help some of the people who have poor housing, but they understand that the experts have decided the only place any houses will be built at White Swan in a group. We don't like any program when they tell us this is the material then we should choose the location for our home. It is our understanding that the old councilmen have worked hard to get an amendment to the FHA laws to make it possible for the FHA to make loans to build new homes on Indian allotments.

"They also said the Yakimas have rejected the Re-organization Act, or the self government, which required the tribes to adopt a constitution and secret ballot voting in 1934, and have continued to mistrust the idea they feel that many of the older people would be unable to understand and they would not vote. In this way the off reservation members would in the long run vote for termination of federal protection. They feel they will not be ready for that for a long time," Goudy concluded.
Re:

Fishermen

Yakima Indian fishermen upon whom Robert W. Schoning, director of the Oregon Fish Commission and the state of Oregon made war last week, came back with a barrage of arrows aimed at the state.

The fishermen came up with an executive order of the Yakima Indian Tribe’s General Council of the Yakima Indian Nation implementing the Columbia River General Council fish Commission of the Yakima Indian Nation.

The action, Clarence Tahkeal, chairman and Leo Alexander, secretary said, establishes a five member commission.

The executive committee, consisting of George Umtuch, chairman of the General Council or entire tribe; Kelly Tennewasser, vice chairman; Joe J. Pinkham, secretary and Walter Underwood, sergeant at arms, acting on a petition of a block of Columbia River fishermen, all enrolled Yakimas, signed the executive order.

Fishing regulations have been handled by a fish committee of the Yakima Tribal Council. The tribal Council is a 14-member body elected by the General Council, or tribe as a whole to attend to tribal business affairs.

(more)
first ad...

Victor George, Lawrence Goudy and Roger Jim, who with Tahkeal and Alexander make up the five-member Fish Commission, joined in declaring that the action is being done because the state of Oregon has "declared war" on the fishermen, and that the fishermen are going to stand on the Treaty of 1855 which guaranteed them fishing rights.

The Oregon Fish Commission director, Schoning opened the war, the Indians say, when last Friday he directed that Oregon's conservation laws would be enforced "equally on Indian and non-Indian alike," and that any dealer buying fish taken from closed waters would be subject to prosecution.

Waters above Bonneville Dam are the closed waters referred to.

The fishing season has not yet been set by the Indians but would normally come around April 15. The Indian Fish Commission members declined to say when fishing would begin.

Enforcement of the Oregon laws means arrest for the Indian fishermen, they said. They contend that the state has no right to supercede a treaty which, like the Constitution of the United States, is a "Supreme Law of the Land."
Schoning's order, the Indians say, is a direct challenge to the authority of tribes to regulate off-reservation fishing by tribal ordinance.

The re-establishment of an Indian Fish Commission, through the General Council executive body they say, is a different manner. The Commission's regulatory right, they contend, is different from that of the Tribal Council.

The petition addressed to the executive officers of the Yakima Indian Nation's General Council said in part:

"...Whereas there is not now in existence a duly organized body within the Yakima Indian Nation with authority to regulate Indian Treaty Fishing on the Columbia River and off the Yakima Indian Reservation...

"...Whereas to safeguard the perpetual fish run on the Columbia River for the benefit of members of the Yakima Indian Nation as well as to the other citizens of the United States of America...we petition...to safeguard, protect and secure rights, privileges and benefits guaranteed to members of the Yakima Indian Nation by the treaty of June 9, 1855, for all time..."
The Executive Order, notwithstanding Monday states in part:

"Now therefore, by authority of the Executive Board of the General Council of the Yakima Indian Nation, there is hereby established the Columbia River General Council Fish Commission of the Yakima Indian Nation, initially consisting of five members... the provisions of this executive order are intended to supersede any other actions taken by the Yakima Indian Agency or the Yakima Tribal Council and this order shall be a final determination of the right to regulate Columbia River fishing under treaty rights guaranteed to the Yakima Indian Nation by treaty of June 9, 1855... the existence of this executive order shall be perpetual..."

Tahkeal and Alexander said the Commission was intended because of the Columbia River situation only.

During earlier days, and until 1956 when The Dalles Dam was constructed and the Celilo Fishery was flooded, a Fish Commission existed which regulated Yakima, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Nez Perce fishing on the Columbia upstream from Bonneville Dam.