

"Reclamation A Sound National Policy...as Demonstrated in the Yakima Valley and other Irrigated Areas in Washington. Washington State Planning Council , 1936

preface: The policy of federal reclamation of arid lands of the western states sponsored by Theodore Roosevelt and heretofore generally accepted as sound national policy began to be questioned...(East alarmed by movement of industries because of power, population...witness California's remarkable growth).

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The Yakima Valley is essentially a region of prosperous, happy farm homes.

To the average Yakima Valley farmer, farming is a mode of living, rather than a business.. (this picture changing with population increase, development of power, growth of industries)...

p 18--(BB 1938)..The remaining irrigation projects of the West are for the most part too large for state financing and in most cases they involve the use of water interstate and sometimes international in character. Hence they can be built only by a strong federal agency.)...

p 27--The Yakima Valley

Extent: Embracing the three counties of Kittitas, Yakima and Benton in south Central Washington, as considered extends from the Cascade Mountains on the west to the Columbia River on the east. ...More than ninety per cent of the population, wealth, agricultural and industrial production is found within the watershed of the Yakima River and its tributaries, all of these developments being essentially due to irrigation...

Topography---From the higher levels of the summit of the Cascades, ranging in elevation from 3,000 to 9,000 feet the valley slopes eastward to the town of Kennewick on the Columbia River where the elevation is 300 feet. Irrigated areas in the main tributary valleys lie at elevations between 350 and 2,000 feet. High

ridges and foothills, rising on either side, protect the fields and orchards.

Climate. Precipitation varies from as little as 4 inches annually along the Columbia, increasing westward to 70 inches and more at the summit of the cascades. On the arable lands the range is from 4 to 15 inches annually with most of the precipitation occurring during the winter months and with very little in the growing season. Climatic factors favorable to large yields and high quality of farm crops are the long, sunny days with minimum rainfall during the growing season. These factors also facilitate harvest operations and minimize crop losses.

Temperature, no extremes as in some regions.

Local History: p 30

From 1847 to 1853 settlement confined to Catholic missions located in Parker Bottom and Ahtanum, Timpico and Naneum Creek. The first immigration was by wagon train in 1853. But it was not until 1862 the first permanent settlement took place when Thorp (Fielding M) brought 250 head of Durham cattle to the Moxee Valley (Correct date is 1862) The Splawn, Longmire, Clemens (correct Cleman) and other families followed. In 1862 first school was established and four years thereafter the first irrigation canal was built.

Most of the territory included in the three present counties was organized in 1863 as Ferguson County, but two years later the name was changed to Yakima. While the population then was about 100 persons by 1875 it was estimated that 2,000 were settled in the valley. Grazing of livestock continued to be the principal occupation until the construction of the railroad over the cascades in 1887 (correct completion date 1887) gave better access to Puget Sound. Therefore irrigation developed rapidly, first by community ditches, then local stock companies and finally during the decade from 1890 to 1900 by large commercial corporations, with the railroads

taking an active part in their promotion and financing. From 1870 to 1900 alfalfa and timothy hay with some small grain were the principal

crops, but increasing demands from attractive markets in the Coast cities and from lumbering and ~~the~~ mining centers caused thereafter a change to higher value crops. Orchards were planted, truck gardening was undertaken and dairy herds established.

By 1900 all of the low water flow of the streams had been appropriated and diverted until, in 1905, serious water shortage was suffered under some of the later canals. Dams were torn out and dynamited by rival irrigation companies, armed guards posted at canal intakes to prevent hostile diversions. It was at this time that the Bureau of Reclamation became interested in the Yakima Valley, brought about an adjustment of the existing water rights. Comprehensive plans were made for the maximum possible development, including storage at the headwaters to regulate stream flow not only for the projects to be constructed by the Bureau but also for the benefit of existing projects which had insufficient supply.

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Aside from the purely engineering phase of irrigation development which extended from about 1855 to 1870, the reclamation of the 350,000 acres of land in the Yakima Valley has taken place over a period of approximately 65 years.

p 32..following the early efforts of individual ranchers came development by communities and partnerships, then by cooperative stock companies and finally for profit by private corporations, financed locally or by eastern capital. The latter phase reached its climax in the early nineties when the Kennewick and Sunnyside projects, sponsored by the Northern Pacific Railway Company, were undertaken. Settlement of the 12,000 acres in the Kennewick and 64,000 acres in the Sunnyside projects started briskly, but was curtailed by the panic of 1893. The long carrying period elapsing

between construction and paying development, which had drained the finances of most large private irrigation companies, forced the promoters of these two projects into receivership. This procedure occurred several times before final success was achieved.

In 1905 when the Reclamation Service was looking for an undertaking in Washington, the Sunnyside project held the largest and most valuable water rights on the Yakia River and was the key to the valley situation. The legislature had refused to authorize construction of private storage reservoirs, and water filings for more or less legitimate projects aggregated several times the available water supply. The Secretary of the Interior announced that a project to utilize the full available flow of the stream would be undertaken by the United States provided claimants to water rights would enter into agreements limiting their priorities to lands actually under constructed ditches. This was consummated and coincident with the commencement of construction on the Tieton Division and the enlargement and extension of the Sunnyside Canal, the first storage reservoir was built at Bumping Lake.

The Tieton Division, embracing at first 32,000 acres, was opened for settlement in two units. The first unit under the Sunnyside Division was opened in 1909, following annually thereafter for several years by units of from 5,000 to 10,000 acres.

This plan of progressive development had many advantages. Under it at no time was there any considerable surplus of undeveloped lands. In these two units, together with the Wapato built by the U.S. Indian Service and furnished with water from the storage reservoirs built by the Reclamation Service, it was demonstrated that approximately 10,000 acres of new land per year could be satisfactorily absorbed. This rate continued for about twenty years. Followed by a lapse, so far as the Reclamation Bureau was concerned, it was not until 1930 that the first land was brought

in under the Kittitas Division. Notwithstanding existing financial depression, this division was very rapidly peopled, about 60 per cent of the better lands being put under ~~some~~ cultivation in the first two years after water was ~~also~~ available. Some of the more difficult lands at the upper end obeing cut over-pine timber, came in more slowly, but on the ~~whole~~ whole, rate of settlement of this Division has been most satisfactory.

p. 31...(previous to Aside from the purely pioneering phase...

~~Undoubtedly~~ Initially, the broad plans laid by the federal reclamation engineers for the best use of the available water sup lyon the better irrigable lands contemplated inclusion of o er 100,000 acres north of the Rattlesnake Hills in the C olumbia River drainage. Chiefly because further investigation brought ut the poor characer of these lands, this feature was abandoned about 1918, and the rogram now c mpleted was adopted. It embraced six reservoirs with a total capacity of about 1,100,000 acre feet, the storage from which is pooled with the natural flow of the streams and used impartially for service of the various diversions entitled to it. The cost of impounding the waters was spread over all the lands benefited, and contracts entered into for repayment which, in the aggregate, will reimburse the Government.

What is known as the Yakima Project is divided into six principal units. Brief data concerning these

Sunnyside--106,000 acres, first constructed by private capital , was purchased by the government in 1906 and development completed in 1920.

Wapato\* Also known as the Yakima Indian Reservation Unit, 120,000 acres. Developed between 1905 and 1920.

Tieton--26,000, completed in 1912.



Kittitas--70,000, completed in 1932.

Kennewick , 24,000, 4,000 acres under wa er in 1932;

Roza. ~~Costed~~ 68,000. Construction contracts entered into in January 1936.

(Economic tables in back, plenty of them, population etc.