

By Clark Relander
Republic City Editor

Priest Rapids is the name of the longest stretch of the roughest water on a thousand mile run of the Columbia River between ^{that} ~~the~~ stream's trickling fountainhead in Canada and the Pacific Ocean. Yet the most peaceful red men anywhere along that river lived there. ^{Long before the white men came} The ^{easy-going} people, ~~the~~ Wanapums or Priest Rapids Indians, ^{were} happy with their religion ^{They were} and content that the River brought many food salmon to their villages. ~~Then the white men came.~~

The rapids hurry 11 miles through a ^{channel} ~~channel~~ of desolation such as is found at no other place along the ^{lower} Columbia. ^{But now this} ~~Eventually the remnant Indian~~ ^{has become almost a} band dwelling there became a forgotten people.

So when Congress completed action this week on a bill that Hal Holmes (R-Wash.) promulgated with the aid of others also looking toward a greater Northwest, it not only implemented \$364 million worth of hydroelectric construction but it wrote new history and turned attention toward a little known region. ^{Because} For the Priest Rapids country is a veritable no man's land separating the Yakima Valley and the Columbia Basin that ^{Project} ~~is going to~~ the impetus of irrigation is bringing to life. That \$740 million project, now 63 per cent ~~under the impetus of irrigation~~ completed, will bring 52,500 more acres under irrigation within ~~the next 12 months alone.~~ Some people call the Priest Rapids Bill the bell-wether of the Republica: generated Partnership Power Plan. On evidence alone the yet adolescent plan is tightening the reins on a long unbridled era of ideological political experimentation.

Some contend that the trend toward nationalization of hydroelectric power is being effectually checked for the first time in a quarter of a century. In reality nonpartisan legislation is bringing a new period into existence.

Under the Partnership Plan, local agencies would ^{help} ~~reclaim~~ the government ^{its} for ~~the~~ people, giving them the American opportunity of paying for the cost of developing power by private enterprise, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay has said that the government would lend a helping hand where needed.

Just who should shoulder the cost of navigation and other features of the newly-born project, charges that would eventually be repaid by the old -fashioned but still expedient system of industry and free enterprise, has not yet been made clear. Consequently the easily provoked currents and whirlpits of politics in which the cloudy aspects of the plan have been caught by frantic efforts to stem the trend are almost as deep as the channel of the Whale Chute. That is 80 feet deep and from it the Columbia pours out most of its contents to release them ^{into} ~~in~~ the lower rapids. When the plan is unfolded it is not too much to expect that it will be sound and to the liking of the majority of the people, to whom government is being returned.

The rapids head near Beverly Gap, the northern boundary of the unusual Wanapums. There ~~the~~ the strong force of the river has ~~not~~ shorn through 1,800-foot-high Saddle Mountain creating the ~~place~~ place commonly called Sentinel Buttes. The fall is 70 feet before the water ~~is~~ churns ~~and~~ ~~flows~~ through the Whale Chute, ~~finally~~ emerging calm and satisfied. Then it swings eastwardly in a great arc to encircle White Bluffs and there too the Wapapums had ~~have their~~ villages.

Seven separate rapids made up the section of madly racing water known as Priest Rapids from which hydroelectric ~~the~~ turbines will drain vital power and keep it from wasting seaward. Now the stream hurries along ~~through~~ ~~that region~~ as though ashamed to be caught in such a forlorn place. Close to the white capped surface jagged rocks are studded ~~set~~ without pattern across the 3,000-foot-wide stream. Early-day boatmen found the first two rapids grim reminders of worse ones ahead. The third and fourth are separated by five miles of comparatively placid water that slinks along quietly, as it were ~~resting after a~~ ~~difficult descent~~.

Few places in Washington have retained the name originally given by white men as long as Priest Rapids. None have a longer unbroken period of ethnic ~~Indian~~ culture.

Alexander Ross of the Astoria Pacific Fur Company chronicled that

(cq)
the rapids were named Priest's Rapids in 1811-- or 44 years before
the Yakima Indian Reservation was created upon the insistency of Gov.

He ~~was~~ set out to extinguish Indian title to vast

territories, to prepare for the ~~arrival~~ of settlers, but he wrote treaties
that have been ~~beaten~~ ^{beleaguered} by dissension, ~~much~~ litigation and sorrow. ^{for the}
original occupants.

[The Ross party, travelling upstream, was met ~~by a large~~ at the rapids
by a large ^{group} of Indians, ^{was} among them one whose name they interpreted
as doctor or priest. So they called the place Priest's Rapids.

David Thompson, of those ~~epochal~~ epochal days, also included the
name in his ^{journals} ~~accounts~~, ~~concerning the early travelers.~~

Ross journeyed northward, ~~he~~ through the country ~~which~~ occupied
by ~~Chief Moses~~ ^{OF Chief Moses,} ancestors, and reached the Chelan River. He explored

the Okanogan and completed a 42 -day voyage up the Columbia by

founding Fort Okanogan at the confluence of that stream with the

Columbia. The post was eventually occupied by the North ~~West~~ ^W Company

and in 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company gained possession and maintained
it until 1859. That year it was sold to the Americans and the

English retired across the Canadian border, 752 river miles from the

Pacific, to carry on their trading. Thus American commerce ~~came to~~ ^{came to stay.}

~~the region.~~

[Vantage, at the crossing of the Ellensburg-Spokane Highway and where
 Tom Stockdale, one of the best of the modern-day rivermen has built
 a community of which he is the virtual mayor, is 28 miles upstream
 from Priest Rapids and 80 miles from Pasco, ^{Pasco} near ~~there~~ the turbid
 Snake River ~~merges with the colder, glacial green water of the~~
 Columbia. Eleven miles up the Snake River is the site of the authorized
 Ice Harbor Dam, idly ^{waiting} ~~marking time~~ until the way is cleared for it
 to emerge and take its role in the new age.

[The ~~presented~~ ^{First} ~~original~~ occupants of Priest Rapids called the Columbia
~~river~~ the Chiawana, the Big River. One of their ~~occupied~~ principal
 winter villages was along the rapids where salmon were plentiful, ~~there~~
 deer were numerous in the hills, food roots grew in abundance and there
 was ^{much} ~~plenty~~ of bunch grass for the herds of Indian ponies. The Wanapums
 refused to sign a treaty with the United States government in 1855
 because they had not made war against the United States. ~~and~~ It was
 expedient for Gov. Stevens to ignore them, ~~when other chiefs claimed~~
 the Wanapum territory, although the Wanapums recognized no chief.

[The handful of survivors continue to live along the Priest Rapids
 where their old religion still lives and their more ~~and~~ ancient
 culture is buried. Most of their relatives drifted onto reservations

and the easier life of government subsidies, ~~and~~ They intermarried with
 scores of the tribes that had been gathered ~~from~~ from Eastern Washington and Oregon
 as well as Idaho. ~~have been~~ both
 [The Last Wanapums were displaced from village sites upstream and down

~~stream~~ until now their last village is squarely on the location of the
 site chosen by the Army Corps of Engineers and approved as a dam site
 in 1948.

[The Engineers were authorized to construct a \$326 million dam as a
 source of hydroelectric power with storage facilities. The reservoir
 would have provided for barge navigation in slackwater up the river
 to Foster Creek, site of the nearly completed Chief Joseph Dam through
 coordination with such downstream dams as McNary (completed), The
 Dalles (under construction), and the John Day (proposed).

[The Priest Rapids Dam would have created a lake extending 56
 miles ~~northerly~~ northerly to the tailwater of Rock Island Dam, and
 easterly up Crab Creek at the north base of Saddle Mountain, Penetrating
 Far ~~deep~~ into the agricultural storehouse called the Columbia Basin.

The Engineers proposed a dam 13,500 feet in length containing 23
~~generator~~ generator units with a rated capacity of 53,000 kilowatts
 each and a power output total of 1,219,000 kilowatts. It was estimated
 that the dam would have yielded power benefits of \$18,520,000 to
 the area, saved \$2,763,000 in flood damages annually and provided

recreational benefits. ~~It~~ It is reasonable to expect that any construction there ^{NOW} would have equal or ^{EVEN} greater benefits.

When the Partnership Plan was introduced, Republican Hal Holmes was ~~and~~ already atop the problem with legislation, ready to help gain new industries and other benefits for his district, the entire state and consequently many areas throughout the nation where products from which dams ^{and} ~~are~~ their works are made, are manufactured.

The Federal Power Commission disclosed on January 1, 1953, that application had been made by the Grant County Public Utility District No. 2 (headquarters Ephrata) for a preliminary permit at a spot 397 river miles from the mouth of the Columbia. That placed the site at the foot of Priest Rapids.

On April 28 of that year Congressman Holmes introduced House of Representatives Bill 4898, a non-partisan proposal designed to provide for development of the Priest Rapids site under license of the Federal Power Act. That act, ^{providing} ~~providing~~ protection against abuse of ~~the~~ public welfare, should of itself ^{assure} ~~be~~ ~~assured~~ of the dubious.

Amendments dealing with power preference were sought by Sens. Warren G. Magnuson and Henry M. Jackson but were defeated. However the two Washington senators, as representatives of the people, gave their

strong support to enactment of the Priest Rapids Bill.

In reality the ^{CONGRESSIONAL} action ~~approved by Congress~~ suspends the authorization held by the Army Engineers for ~~two~~ ^{two} years ~~period~~. During that time the Grant County group and other ~~units~~ ^{UNITS} making up the Operating Agency, have the opportunity of arranging for financing and ~~gaining~~ ^{OBTAINING} approval of their plans. ~~and~~ No time is being lost. The details remain to be disclosed, not because of imposed secrecy but frankly because they have not yet evolved.

At the time the Grant County proposal was ventured, the Atomic Energy Commission opposed a high level dam because of the previous danger to the atomic installations 40 miles downstream at White Bluffs, in event of sabotage or enemy bombing. Then the AEC agreed to string along ~~it~~ with two ~~low~~ low level dams. One of these was suggested for the general vicinity of Beverly, a few miles upstream from Saddle Mountain, ^{called Wasotas by the Wanapums.} The other was proposed at the original site selected by the Engineers.

There are those who believe that the Operating Agency created by the Grant County PUD will not qualify for a construction permit, and that the authorization bill will revert to the Engineers. There are others who suspect that when a hearing is held before the Commission,

it will set off a public vs. private power fight more bitter than the Hells Canyon controversy. Some say the state of Washington will step into the picture to do some dam building ~~itself~~. And there are still others who say "let's wait and see." But surely something as gigantic involving a new policy for hydroelectricity, cannot be born without ~~such~~ strong ~~convulsions~~ convulsions.

Most certainly, too, the matter ~~and~~ of navigation presents ~~practical~~ problems ~~to be solved~~. With one high dam, which appears out of the question, it would have been easy. ^{Two} low dams, while eliminating more costly ~~acquisition~~ acquisition of land along both sides of the river do not solve the navigation problem. But the rapids have long been ~~an~~ an effective bar to river traffic.

before the dawn of modern electricity
 Seventy five years ago ^a railway was being considered to transport boats around the rapids. The type ^s of boat then ~~was~~ regarded most practical for navigation along the ~~at~~ stream ~~was~~ were the Annie ~~Rapids~~ Faxon, the Spokane and Almota, then ~~built~~ on the Snake River. The Annie Faxon was the largest, being 165 feet long, with a 37 foot beam, five feet of hold and a measured ~~weight~~ ^{weight} of 709 tons. Second consideration to circumventing the river barrier was a canal. But in spite of recommendations that Priest Rapids was

the most convenient place from which to reach the Yakima and Kittitas valleys which then were linked to the lower country by a wagon road over the Simcoe Mountains to the Dalles, ~~no ^{nothing happened.} purpose was made.~~

Even then the prediction was made that "at this point on the Columbia at the lower end of Priest Rapids must surely be located a town of considerable importance, as it will for a long time be the head of navigation in the river. "

It was also predicted that the rapids would furnish water power and that there ~~would~~ would be located a flour ~~and~~ and saw mill, warehouses and stores.

Priest Rapids, the home of the Last Wanapums ^{is} ~~is~~ known to them as P'na or Fish Weir Place and there the Dreamer prophet, Smowhala, had his long lodge made of tule mats, and his flagpole atop of which perched a sacred messenger bird. Such a flagpole and messenger bird ~~existed~~ existed far downstream at the old Wyampum village called Wyam that will be flooded by the Dalles Dam. It disappeared long ago and only a few old-timers like Chief Kuni (Tommy Thompson) lament its passing.

It was Smowhala who dreamed with the faith of a prophet and ^{established} ~~founded~~ a religion ~~over~~ over 100 years ago. His influence and religion, the

Washat, in which the salmon ~~is~~ ^{and water are} sacred like Mass to ~~the~~ ^{Catholic} and Holy ^{Communion} to ~~the~~ ^{Protestant}, spread throughout the territory and into Oregon and adjoining territories that became Idaho and Montana. The religion is yet retained by many Indians, ~~living~~ although in a modified form ~~and it was long ago~~ ^{It} recommended by the late L.V. McWhorter that the birthplace of the religion be suitably marked, ~~in history~~. McWhorter, who lived at Yakima, pressed the case for the Wanapums, aided by H. Dean Guie, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs steadfastly refused to recognize the Wanapums who were non-treaty people and were subsisting them, in the manner the government is now trying to encourage ~~the~~ all reservation people to do. McWhorter eventually pursued his research into Northwest Indian lore by concentrating on the Nez Perces and the Yakimas. He wrote enduring books about Chiefs Yellow Wolf and Young Joseph ^{He} ~~and~~ stood up with the Yakimas to resist attempts of settlers to invade the ~~land~~ reservation and appropriate timber and water rights that ~~the people~~ the confederated nation ~~are~~ now converting into resources for a meager livelihood. Guie wrote about the Yakimas and turned his attention to the intriguing study of the old military post, Fort Simcoe.

Later when destruction of the Wanapum graveyard was threatened by indiscriminate probing for relics, the Wanapum lost cause was

renewed by the ~~disappointed~~ worried people and they gave the Wanapum name, Now Tow Look, to the man who attempted to carry out their few desires. ^LRecently the Wanapums, seeking legislation or a Presidential Proclamation in their behalf have gained the moral support of Congressman Holmes and Sens. Magnuson and Jackson, and now are waiting for the dam sites to be selected before renewing their pleas.

~~And although~~ ^{fireless} In their ~~petition~~ ^{quest} for a home in the once farspreading landholdings of their forebears, the River People have asked no especial compensation for the land they could not homestead and thus possess ~~want instead. Land, and the government has much of that~~ because of their religion. They seek a home close to their old village

~~And~~ although they have occupied the dam site for untold centuries, they interposed no objections to construction of a dam other than ~~it~~ ^{it} not desecrate their family graveyard. ^LIn fact they believed that a project would provide work for many people. As the years rolled ahead they realized this more keenly ~~as the~~ ^{their} men went out into the Yakima Valley each harvest season. Jobs were growing more difficult to find because of ~~the~~ competition ~~and~~ and newly invented machinery.

^LSome of the competition in the harvest fields, they and other tribesmen found, came from the illegal Mexican "Wetbacks" who crept across the border and roamed at will over the whole West Coast until

it became necessary for the Immigration Department to chase them home. But every job, even for a few days more work counted.

The moral pleas of the ~~Wanapum~~ ^{Wanapum}s strengthened when the government indicated a change in policy that the land be returned to the people in order that ~~the~~ free enterprise ~~could~~ ^{now} would have room ~~on~~ ⁱⁿ which to ~~grow~~ ^{grow}. Land holdings ~~were~~ ^{had been} removed from tax rolls to such an extent that some counties found ~~as much as~~ ^{with} 70 per cent of their acreage impounded by various agencies of a bureaucracy that was running its course.

Priest Rapids, however, has older ties with the Northwest's past than the influences of political eras.

A townsite was laid out there in the summer of 1863, ~~some~~ Some boats, by "lining", could ascend the rapids, ~~but only~~ after three days of laborious work.

One of the early settlers was William Filey. He had a small patch of an orchard at the Rapids and raised horses which he branded FS. A road used by Army Jeeps during Exercise Hill Top, the old Filey wagon road, zig-zagged up the terraced mountain, from the ~~river~~ river bottom, across sagebrush dotted swales and outcroppings of scabland to the Hog Ranch, and thence to East Selah.

Another road wound along the right bank toward Vantage and then climbed over the ~~basaltic~~ confining basaltic backbone into the Kittitas Valley. The ferry crossing at the foot of the rapids connected

with a wagon road that headed northerly and then branched off to the Colville, Spokane and Coeur d'Alene regions, ~~at~~ ^{at} a time that mining fever was running high.

In the '80s, the Chinese who followed the reckless trail of the Fraser River gold rush, lingered along the Columbia. They ~~then~~ painstakingly shoveled sand into ~~wash~~ rockers ~~and~~ ^{wash} to ~~find~~ flecks of the coveted mineral from the ~~siddhant~~ river bars. At times they sent as much as \$600 in dust into old Yakima by Levi Ives who purchased supplies and whiskey for them.

^{Generation}
This was followed by the dusty ~~era~~ of the stockmen whose cattle and horse herds grazed on the bunch grass hill slopes.

One of the old settlers, Frank Terrell who homesteaded at Juniper Springs in 1882 and died 13 years later, was once a printer on the ~~and~~ Louisville, Ky., Journal. During the Civil War he was a trooper with Morgan's band of Confederate raiders who penetrated north into ~~and~~ Central Indiana. Terrell was a friend of Col. L.S. Howlett, old-day Yakima publisher who had operated the Louisville Commercial. Howlett and C.C. Goodwin, a captain with Morgan's raiders, were named administrators of Terrell's estate which consisted of the Juniper Springs ranch and several hundred dollars in the First National Bank ~~and~~ at North Yakima.

The old-timers had the initiative for free enterprise, and faith in the Yakima Valley and Priest Rapids, but they were born too ~~early~~ early to reap the first harvest from a golden age. ~~Many~~ Harvest seasons have come and gone since then and the building of Priest Rapids Dam will bring another.

One of the first developments there was the Priest Rapids Co., capitalized at ~~estimated~~ \$300,000 in 1895 with headquarters at North Yakima. Its objective ~~was~~ to divert water and utilize it for irrigation purposes.

The surviving attitude of "wait and let's see" retained by a few pioneers could no doubt be traced to the early day setbacks, and they were numerous.

One undertaking was the plan ^{of} ~~by~~ Henry J. Pierce and associates, ^{who had} ~~with~~ the backing of a subsidiary of General Electric Company, later the operator of the Hanford Plutonium works. It was proposed to develop 750,000 horsepower ^{and} ~~to~~ build an industrial city at Priest Rapids by so doing.

Pierce and the others commenced their investigations in 1907. Then 18 years later it was announced that the Priest Rapids plant would produce ~~and~~ magnesium, aluminum, phosphoric acid and nitrates. The

Wall Street crash of 1929 scuttled the project after \$6 million had been spent in planning and preliminary work. The ~~Washington~~ ^{Washington} Irrigation and Development ~~Company~~ ^{Company} which Pierce headed and of which Henry Plummer of Old Town was secretary treasurer, built barges at Priest Rapids and sunk test ~~and~~ holes along the shore in the midst of a sprawling ancient village of the Wanapums.

The ~~setback~~ ^{Collapse} was severe enough to exterminate all but the ~~taproots~~ ^{Plans} of the ~~plans~~ so other areas, up and down the river, seized upon the ~~is~~ opportunity and put dams into operation. Now the taproots are sprouting with a vigor not to be killed.

The Milwaukee Railroad entered the country, crossing the Columbia opposite the windswept and sandblasted hamlet of Beverly. It dug deep into the Wanapum land and a region freshly homesteaded.

~~One of the last homestaking rushes~~ One of the last homestaking rushes swirled down upon Priest Rapids like the inevitable sand and dust clouds that torture the area. Jackson P. Richmond of Yakima, retired operator of Richmond's Ferry at the foot of Priest Rapids, is a survivor of that time. He was the son of Alvin A. Richmond, ~~was~~ killed in the rugged days of Yakima. Young Jackson helped his mother establish a homestead on a desert claim land in 1904. The talk of the

development and the depletion of other ~~land~~ and available for settlement drew the attention of the land hungry.

[The first post office at Priest Rapids was ~~on~~ Mitchell, the maiden name of Richmond's mother. It was on the ~~the~~ left bank of the river, about half a mile downstream from the ferry crossing ~~and~~ ^{and} was wired down to keep from being flattened by the wind. Lumber for the building was hauled from a mill at Fort Simcoe and then rafted across the river. Later Richmond built a log cabin for his mother, using wayward logs ^(snaked from) ~~he found in~~ the river. The railroad selected Vernita for a construction camp and the post office was shifted to that place.

[Filey and Jimmy Spahr operated underwater cable ferries there before Richmond had a sweep and cable ferry. William Craig's ferry was above the head of the rapids and occasionally one of the boats would break loose and could not be retrieved for ~~days.~~ ^{days.} Another ferry, the Montgomery, was a short distance upstream from the Sentinel Buttes.

[The old Richmond ferry was on the main route from Sunnyside to the Wenatchee country. ~~There were two roads leading to the Wenatchee country and another road led from Cold Creek, connecting with the Yakima. Now there are strong indications that the road across the rich Wahluke Slope and the mid-state Highway, when built, will link~~

Yakima, its industry and industrial sites to the Columbia Basin.

A ferry ~~was~~ ^{would} may be revived at the crossing. And why ~~was~~ ^{would} ~~it~~ not ~~be~~ ^{some} a bridge will be built there? ^{time?}

The state is already planning to straighten out the kinks in the Yakima-Moxee Highway. Across the river, on the ~~steep~~ Slope, another highway is being ripped through rocks and built across sand dunes and sagebrush knolls. And where men of vision go, progress follows.

In 1950 when the Army Engineers brought out plans for Priest Rapids Dam, the Yakima and Kittitas valleys foresaw great benefits to the inland cities. L.W. Markham, now of Spokane but then manager of the Yakima Chamber of Commerce predicted that construction of the dam would bring over 4,000 workers here to benefit the area through their trade. He believed that many of them would become Valley residents and that much of the supplies for the dam would be channeled through Yakima business ~~business~~ ^{PS}. Supplies of the magnitude required ~~was~~ mean ~~on the part of the~~ producing steel mills in the east and full employment for many branches of labor.

Recent developments, with Ellensburg seeking to ~~secure~~ ^{secure} the headquarters for the Operating Agency that intends ~~to~~ to construct the dam include a survey contemplating ~~the~~ the rebuilding of the old right bank road from Vantage, southward.

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Few places in Washington have retained the name originally bestowed by white men as long as Priest Rapids. None, not even the reservations, has a longer unbroken period of Indian culture.

Alexander Ross of the Astoria Pacific Fur Company chronicled that the rapids were named Priest's (cq) Rapids in 1811--or 44 years before the Yakima Indian Reservation was created upon the insistency of Gov. Isaac I. Stevens. The Ross party, travelling upstream ~~eddied~~ ~~eddied~~ were met ~~eddied~~ there by a large party of Indians, among them one whose name ~~eddied~~ they interpreted as doctor or priest. So they called the place Priest's Rapids.

Already the Ellensburg-Vantage Highway, near the river, is being

widened to four lanes. *Realization of the ultimate goal is a long way ahead.*

Meanwhile the Wanapums patiently press their moral and quasi-legal claims to a home along the river before it becomes too valuable in the eyes of budget-balancing government agencies to set aside as a ~~sanctuary~~ sanctuary for a nearly extinct and historic people.

So far their only heritage from a government against which they would not war has been hope. *For more than a century,* That has persisted, as undying as their religion. ~~For more than a century.~~