

THE WANAPUMS AND PRIEST RAPIDS

A remnant band of a most unusual Northwest Indian band, the Wanapums, continue to live along an historic reach of the Mid-Columbia River, called Priest Rapids. The Indians are the River People, their name being derived from Wana, River; and pum, the locative for people.

The specific area of Priest Rapids is one of the oldest place names in the state of Washington.

The Public Utility District of Grant County has built two dams on the Mid-Columbia. The first of these was named Priest Rapids and by ordinary reckoning is 409.5 miles from the mouth of the Columbia River on the Pacific Ocean. Eighteen miles upstream from Priest Rapids Dam the PUD built Wanapum Dam. It was named for the River People. Their survivors remain, perpetuating an ancient culture into a generation of hydroelectric power, atomic force and space missiles. And the religion and ideology for which the Wanapums have always been known has been retained in the purest form of any Indian religion surviving.

They were religious and Creator fearing, these Wanapums who lived along the eleven mile furiously turbulent millrace alternating with stretches of deep-flowing tranquil water.

In earliest historic times the name, Priest's Rapids seems to have been used in reference to the last of seven rapids. Then the name, Priest Rapids was used for the eleven-mile stretch, as fur traders and voyageurs, missionaries, stockmen and land settlers traveled in their day. Yet while all this and more was transpiring, and also the Indian wars, the Wanapums were a peaceful people, living in isolation, sustained in their faith, and keeping alive their legends and other knowledges of ancient and historic customs. Some of these customs indicate a culture descending from paleo-Indian times.

The numerous forebearers in these first-known days could have sent many warriors against the intruders. The Wanapum nature, however, was to live alone and let alone.

The Wanapums were aloof and preferred isolation. Yet they were friendly and hospitable to those who found them. They were brought up to share food and all other necessities with their fellow man.

They have a special respect for water and it is a ritual to open and close every meal with a sip of water. Water was a part of the living body and without it nothing could live. The sun provided warmth to all people and also the land, and the sun's warmth was also needed. Food also was needed to sustain life. And these were all Creator given, to be shared by all. They respected the earth as not only their home but their mother, and being Greater given, their mother was not to be bartered or sold.

No other hydroelectric dam along the long run of the Columbia from the Canadian boundry to the mouth, 752 miles, bears the name of a people whose time extending far beyond the written record of man, subsisted upon salmon and eels and other food found in the stream and food roots dug from the hillsides, where higher up, berries grew.

Anthropologists and ethnologists employ the science of linguistics in attempting to classify tribes and bands of the original inhabitants of the Pacific Northwest. Many also attempt to set up boundaries between the people who erected no barriers, except self-imposed discipline, with their fellowman in ancient days. So the picture is not always clear and many do not attempt to clarify it. Nor can it now ever likely be proven accurate because there has been so much intermingling for so many years. The Wanapums, however, were naturally protected from much of this comingling by the isolation of the region in which they lived.

Even before the time of the explorers, Lewis and Clark, and before the first of the fur traders and voyageurs passed along the pathway of migration, unknown numbers of bands and tribes had become extinct. This was also true with some languages and dialects.

In later years, so rapidly has this changed, some who were the only ones who knew their tribe's or band's tongue have died.

Even this year, 1966, the last of the Cascades, Hood River or once-called Dog River Indian, who alone knows the language of her people, is too ill and infirm to provide interviews which would preserve the language.

Language is recognized as one cultural guidepost to a people.

Linguists can determine much of the age and culture of a race by the number of words in a vocabulary, for instance. By this one indicator the Wanapums are high on an intellectual scale and of an old culture. Their vocabulary contains more words than many high school and college graduates could normally list over a period of several days if given a pencil and notebook and asked to list all the words they know. And the older Wanapums who have died took with them to the grave many words and combinations of phrases of an older language, unknown to the younger generation. Some of these were so old that even the older persons did not know their meaning. These were words used in some of the songs and ceremonials.

The Wanapums were of the Sahaptin linguistic stock of which three stocks predominated in the Northwest in old Washington Territory.

Of the same stock were the Palouse and the Nez Perce to the south and east, and the Palouse bloodlines overflowed into Wanapum range. The fourteen tribes and bands which became the Confederated Yakima Indian Nation at the Treaty of Walla Walla in 1855 were of Sahaptin stock.

There existed a loosely called Palouse language, now virtually extinct and yet known by only two men, although portions of the language were known by the older Wanapums and have been recorded. There is the Nez Perce language which has been scientifically recorded; the old Klickitat or Whywaspum language was spoken extensively on the Yakima Reservation and has become extensively intermixed with other dialects of the Yakima tribes and bands. It is doubtful that a tribe named Yakima existed in the long ago. In this same manner the tribes and bands, confederated, for reasons of government expediency on the Umatilla and Colville Reservations are gradually losing their identity. And peoples making up those reserves as known as Umatillas or Colvilles;

Generally the peoples of this wide Central Washington region and fringes could understand one another.

A second linguistic stock existed and exists north of Vantage and into the Colville country. It was called the Salish and extends eastwardly to Spokane and beyond into Montana and the Flathead country. This was the Interior Salish. To the west and to the coast were the Coast Salish.

Downstream on the Columbia River from the Sahaptin speaking people was another linguistic stock called the Chinookan after a single tribe, the Chinooks. These people lived from just below The Dalles all the way to the Coast.

There was no trading post at Priest Rapids in the days of fur traders and voyageurs, using that section of the river as waterway travel by canoes and batteaux from Canada and Colville to old Fort Nez Perce at later-day Wallula, upstream a short distance from McNary Dam, and on to Fort Vancouver. There is indication a trading post was maintained by the Hudson's Bay Company in later years, for a short time, at White Bluffs, but nothing conclusive.

There was nothing at Priest Rapids to claim the attention of the fur hunters whose main interest was in safely running the rapids when they passed downstream and in portaging or lining around them on their way north.

Rivers, as great and mighty, and running through as many miles as the Columbia, have always been the pathways of migration, notably for primitive peoples, and the later opening of unknown lands. But the first people were not travellers. They had no definitely known destination, their course and direction being directed by weather, unfriendly bands of nomads, and the abundance of game and fish. The slow-moving migrations required years to creep into and settle other regions.

"a great flood could displace them and they would move on to unflooded regions. "a severe winter could exterminate the game and they would move again, in search of better grounds, Or sometimes an armed warrior-led tribe or band would move in and occupy a fishery or hunting grounds, and if there was not enough for all, some moved on.

These stories, written over a very long period of time and extending to 8,000 and sometimes more than 10,000 years in the past, are slowly being pieced together by archaeologists. But they are working against time and trying to reclaim bits of information before the modern culture overruns and "buries" traces they are hunting; or against an even greater disadvantage of the scarcity of money and trained persons to do this work.

The Indian migrations have been traced along the Columbia by the archaeologists and there are evidences the migrations "backlashed" or returned, piecemeal or through individual travels when trade routes developed or because of man's natural instinct to travel.

So while the apparently barren reaches of the Priest Rapids country offered no inducements for the traders, there were the swirling water passages, and the resting pools in between where fish congested in season, like Kettle Falls and the great Celilo Falls near The Dalles. These fisheries attracted the aboriginal people who sometimes settled and became sedentary. Archaeologists have found the greatest concentrations of people were where food was most easily obtained, and in greatest quantities. "riftwood was also brought down the stream by spring runoff floods, and left stranded at the foot of the small falls and rapids, and this was necessary for winter habitation.

In pre-settlement days salmon could be taken at nearly any place along the river but the rapids and falls were most productive.

This, then, was the situation when the pioneering explorers, Lewis and Clark, followed the natural pathway of migration in their 1805 travels.

Five years later David Thompson and Alexander Ross and Ross Cox passed along the Mid-Columbia in their explorations.

Lewis and Clark, entering the region along the down-flow of the Snake River, came no further north on the Columbia than a short distance above present Pasco to an island from which they could see the Yakima River debouch from the west into the Columbia.

The people of the interior and along the Mid-Columbia had some knowledge of white men before the time of Lewis and Clark, but no personal or direct contact.

The earliest explorations which touched the Northwest were sailing expeditions which touched the Coast. There was some trade with natives along the coast if they were friendly, and some trade goods worked their way into the interior. Trade influences were also felt radiating out from the great trading center at the Dalles, some of it from as far away as California. And as the Hudson's Bay traders worked southwest from Canada, and other traders, the seedplantings of trade were established. Priest Rapids, however was quite isolated from these early beginnings.

As early as 1579, the English captain, Sir Francis Drake was in the Pacific coastal waters. He also pillaged the Spanish possessions of Chili, Guatemala and Peru. For this he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. Drake explored as far north as the 43rd degree, or the Oregon Coast.

Three years later a Spaniard, Francis Gali, en route home from Manila, made a reconnoissance of the Coast as far north as the 57th degree of latitude or Queen Charlotte's Island.

Juan de Fuca sailed as far north as the 38th degree in 1592 and entered a straight which bears his name. He was compelled to flee to the open sea for safety when attacked by Indians.

Spain and other powers like Russia dominated most of the explorations. There were more explorations than is commonly realize or recounted in the incidental classroom study covering the period.

In 1779 Captain Cook, an English navigator, landed on the Oregon Coast near the 42nd degree of latitude. Storms however drove him southward.

Later, then they abated, Cook continued north again and reached the 48th degree where he discovered the entrance of the straight of Juan de Fuca which he named Cape Flattery. Proceeding northward beyond the 49th degree he anchored in a harbor later called Nootka Sound. The Indians there, he found, were familiar with non-Indians, even then. A British station was established at Nootka in 1780.

And there were others, Lieut John Meares, an Englishman in 1788; Don Bruno de Heceta, and Don Ignatius Astiago, both of Spain.

Two American ships, the Columbia and Washington, were in the Northwest in 1799 while English, the Spaniards and others were engaged in controversies over possession.

Capt. Gray, in 1790, sailed to China and then returned to the East Coast. He sailed out from Boston again on Sept. 27, 1790 and reached the North coast in May of 1791. He was proceeding north to Nootka when he discovered an opening at latitude 46 degrees, 16 minutes. This subsequently led him to return and eventually to the discovery of the mouth of the Columbia River.

It was not long after these times of indecisive possession that Lewis and Clark came overland, exploring downstream to the mouth of the Columbia, which, combined with the Louisiana Purchase, gave the United States a vast territory.

In 1801, when Thomas Jefferson had just assumed the office as President, he learned that Spain had ceded Louisiana to France and secretly went about acquisition of the territory. Jefferson also went to work to establish an Indian land policy to forestall British activities in the Northwest.

His private secretary during these times (1802) was Meriwether Lewis, who like Jefferson shared an interest in the West and a distrust of the British.

Jefferson's plans for the great exploration were made secretly.

The ceremony, transferring the vast territory embraced in the Louisiana Purchase, acquired for \$15,000,000, were held December 20, 1802. British traders were moving westward along the Missouri River with Union Jack flags and were distributing King George medals to Indians. Jefferson proceeded with plans for the exploring expedition, changing them so that the government could commence commerce with the Indians.

A Jefferson Peace Medal was cast in Philadelphia to be distributed to Indian chiefs and head men. Capt. Lewis went to Ohio to meet his old friend, Lieut. William Clark, who he insisted be named a co-captain and the two went to St. Louis. The expedition started in May, 1804.

The practice of giving peace medals to Indians originated in 1789. The first medal was struck the year Washington was inaugurated President. Others followed with each president excepting William Harrison. All of them were called Presidential Medals.

Lewis and Clark carried two types, the Jefferson Medal and the Washington Medal. The Jefferson Medal was made in three sizes. As originally made it consisted of two sides of silver, the obverse and reverse, with a ring fastening what was called the collage and by this ring the medal was suspended.

Some medals were made by fur companies and carried the likeness of a company officer.

After the long overland trip and wintering of 1804, Lewis and Clark descended the Snake River, reaching the Columbia on Oct. 16, 1805.

Their camp was barely made and cooking fires built when a chief from an Indian camp a quarter of a mile up the Columbia approached with a procession of 200 followers, beating drums and singing as they advanced. They were friendly.

Lewis and Clark distributed presents to these people from up the river who they called Sokulks. They gave the principal chief a large medal, a

shirt and handkerchief. A smaller medal was presented to the second chief, or man they called chief, and a third, who came down from some of the upper villages was given a small medal and a handkerchief.

On Oct. 17 Lewis wrote:

"The nation among which we now are called themselves Sokulks; and with them are united a few of another nation, who reside on a western branch emptying itself into the Columbia a few miles above the mouth of the latter river and whose name is Chinnapum. The language of both of these nations, of each of which we obtained a vocabulary, differs but little from each other, or from that of the Choppunish (Nez Perce...)

"The houses of the Sokulks are made of large mats of rushes and are generally of a square or oblong form, varying in length from fifteen to sixty feet, and supported in the inside by poles or forks about six feet high; the top is covered with mats, leaving a space of twelve or fifteen inches the whole length of the house for the purpose of admitting the light and suffering the smoke to pass through, the roof is nearly flat, which seems to indicate that rains are not common in this open country, and the house is not divided into apartments, the fire being in the middle of the large room, and immediately under the hole in the roof; the rooms are ornamented with their mats, and other fishing tackle as well as the bow for each inhabitant, and a large quiver of arrows, which are headed with flint stones. (Flat-roofed type mat lodges were built by the Wanapums at summer fishing locations, both on the shore and in the on the large islands).

"During the day Captain Clark, travelling by canoe, ascended the river, passing scaffolds hung full of split and drying fish. From an island he could see the entrance of a river from the west, joining the Columbia. He called this the Tapteal (Yakima), but as evening was approaching, he returned to camp. "

On Friday morning they obtained from "the principal chief of one of the Chinnapum nation (Channapum) a sketch of the Columbia and the tribes

of his nation living along its banks and those of the Tapteet. They drew it with a piece of coal on a robe, and as we afterwards transferred to paper, it exhibited a valuable specimen of Indian delineation."

The map shows the Sokulk nation of 3,000 persons. Upstream is pictured the Wah-na-achee river and at its entrance into the Columbia the "Cuts sah nim" nation.

The "Selarlar" river and "nochtoch" river are shown upstream on the Tapteet or Yakima River.

Capt. Clark described the Sokulk women as "being more inclined to corpulency than any we have yet seen; their stature is low, their faces broad, and their heads flattened in such a manner that the forehead is in a straight line from the nose to the crown of the head their eyes are a dirty sable, their hair, too is coarse and black, and braided as above without ornament of any kind...the Sokulk families have no other covering but a truss or piece of leather tied round the hips and then drawn tight between the legs. The ornaments usually worn by both sexes are large blue or white beads, either pendent from their ears, or round the necks, wrists and arms they have likewise bracelets of brass, copper and horn, and some trinkets of shells, fish bones, and curious feathers."

The men he described as being dressed much like the Chopunnish or Nez Perce..."the men wearing a robe of deer or antelope skin, under which a few of them have a short leathern shirt. The most striking difference is among the females. "

Thus was recorded an historic event, not only a portion of the most famous exploration of all time but the first contact directly made between the River People and another race who were to have such a great effect upon the lives of the Indians.

Then other contacts followed in the days a great nation was being advanced to young manhood.

Alexander Ross, in his *First Settlers on the Oregon*, wrote of the history of the Pacific Fur Company, the first commercial association established on the waters of the "Oregon or Columbia River."

Ross traced the history from its beginning in 1810, to the successor and rival, the Astor company in 1813, which in turn was replaced by the North West company and until that company was "overthrown" by the Hudson's Bay company in 1821.

Two partners in the North West Company crossed the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific but did not reach as far south as the Mid-Columbia.

The two were Simon Fraser and John Stuart.

Believing the Fraser River to be the Columbia they descended the Fraser to the seacoast in the spring of 1808. The chief depot of the company was Fort William on Lake Superior, then called the Northwest.

In those years of frantic explorations, and charting the unknown of the inland Pacific Northwest, the contest for possessory rights was strongly fought by explorers in the interior, and there were times the Northwest could have passed into hands of other nations but for the little events of history which in later years assumed great magnitude.

It was evident that during the few years succeeding the Lewis and Clark exploration, Priest Rapids remained isolated.

Not only that, but the knowledge of the interior was limited because of the difficulty of communication between Indians and non-Indians and it is remarkable that so much was obtained in such a short time and generally with such accuracy.

In the days of decision after the Lewis and Clark exploration, David Thompson, who was born in London and came to America in 1789 where he entered the employe of the Hudson's Bay Company, was destined to play a role in Priest Rapids history and American history.

Although he devoted 23 years to the Northwest fur trade, Thompson

had a greater interest in geographical matters. He became one of the greatest surveyors and geographers in America.

Six years after the Lewis and Clark party reached the Columbia, Thompson found his way down the river from Canada in 1811 and passed through Priest Rapids. He went on to Astoria. Then on July 22, 1811, he started back up the stream.

Alexander Ross, who had been a member of the Astoria Pacific Company until he joined the Northwest group at the time of the Astor sale to the Northwest in 1812, left Astoria with Thompson and for a time accompanied him up the river. Then Thompson hurried ahead, apparently to do what he could to bring the area under English domination. Ross followed at a slower pace.

On August 14, 1811, upon reaching the junction of the Snake with the Columbia, Ross wrote:

"...what did we see waving triumphantly in the air at the confluence of the two great branches (the Columbia and Snake) but a British flag hoisted in the middle of the Indian camp, planted there by Mr. Thompson as he passed, with a written paper laying claim to the country north of the forks as British territory. This edict interdicted the subjects of other states from trading north of the station."

The Indians tried to induce the Ross party, intent on establishing a trading post at Okanogan, from continuing north. They endeavored to persuade them to go up the Snake where they indicated Thompson had no objections to their trading. Of these actions, Ross wrote:

"...The opposition of the Indians on the present occasion suggested to our minds two things; that Mr. Thompson's motives for leaving us at the time he did was to turn the natives against us as we went along, with the view of preventing us from getting further to the north, where the North West Company had posts of their own; and secondly that the tribes about the forks would prefer our going to the South Branch (the Snake) because

then we would be in the midst of themselves..."

"The only European articles seen here with the Indians, and with which they seemed perfectly contented, were guns, and here and there a kettle or a knife..."

"...On the 16th (August) we left the forks and proceeded up the North Branch...About twelve miles up, a small river enters on the west side called Eyakema (The Yakima, 10 miles upstream from the Snake River) Ross' does not elaborate on the Chamnapum village which was located at the mouth of the Yakima, the people Lewis and Clark wrote about, These were a band closely affiliated with the Yakima, and there was strong blood relationships among the Chamnapum with the upstream Wanapums)

"...on the ~~seventeenth~~ we were paddling along at daylight...on the 18th we reached the end of the marl hills...Just at this place the river makes a bend right south for about ten miles when a high and rugged hill confines it on our left...

"...Here (encamped for the night) a large concourse of Indians met us and after several friendly harangues commenced the usual ceremony of smoking the pipe of peace, after which they passed the night in dancing and singing.

"The person who stood foremost in all these introductory ceremonies was a tall, meager, middle aged Indian who attached himself very closely to us from the first moment we saw him. He was called Haqui-laugh, which signifies doctor or rather priest, and as this personage will be frequently mentioned in the sequel of our describing him. We named the place Priest's Rapids, after him..."

(Some versions of the Ross Journal spells it PPriest Rapids.

(Edmond S. Meany, who used the original version, writes on p. 232 of Origin of Washington Geographic Names, University of Washington, 1932: "Alexander Ross of the Astoria Party, 1811 'we named the place Priest Rapids after him (referring to the doctor or priest)

Meany also wrote: "The name was charted by David Thompson and appears in writings of early travelers as well as on recent maps.")

Thus, the name of the historic Priest Rapids was given on August 18, 1811.

Ross' Journal continues:

"...From the Priest's Rapid in a direct line to the mouth of the Umataallow (Umatilla) the distance is very short, owing to the great bend of the river between the two places."

The journal also explains why the name was Priest's Rapid, when he refers to one rapid, a mile in length. Priest Rapids were a succession of seven rapids, eleven miles in length.)

"The Priest's Rapid is more than a mile in length, and is a dangerous and intricate part of the navigation. The south side, although full of rocks and small channels, through which the water rushes with great violence, is the best to ascend.

"On the nineteenth, early in the morning, we started, but found the channel so frequently obstructed with rocks, whirlpools, and eddies, that we had much difficulty in making any headway. Crossing two small portages, we at length, however, reached the head of it and there encamped for the night, after a very hard day's labor under a burning sun.

"The ground here is everywhere full, covered with flat stones, and wherever these stones lie, and indeed elsewhere, the rattlesnakes are very numerous. At times they may be heard hissing all around, so that we had to keep a sharp lookout to avoid treading on them, but the natives appear to have no dread of them. As soon as one appears, the Indians fix its head to the ground with a small forked stick round the neck, then extracting the fang or poisonous part, they take the reptile into their hands, put it into their bosoms, play with it, and let it go. When anyone is bitten by them the Indians tie a ligature above the wounded part, scarify it, and then apply a certain herb to the wound, which they say effectively cures it.

"On the twentieth we left the Priest's Rapids and proceeded, against a strong ripply current and some rapids for ten miles, when we reached two lofty and conspicuous bluffs, situated directly opposite to each other like the piers of a gigantic gate (Sentinel Buttes) . Here we stayed for the night on some rocks infested with innumerable rattlesnakes, which caused us not a little uneasiness during the night.

"From this place due east the distance in a direct line to the marl hills left on the eighteenth is very short. At the southern angle of this flat is situated the Priest's Rapids which we left this morning. Course, north.

"Early on the twenty-first we were again on the water. The country on the east side is one boundless, rough and barren plain, but on the west the rocks, after some distance, close in to the water's edge, steep and rugged, and the whole country behind is studded with towering heights and rocks, giving the whole face of the country, in that direction, a bleak, broken and mountainous appearance. We saw but few natives today, but those few were friendly to us."

Three days later, on the twenty-fourth, the Ross party reached the mouth of the "Pisscow's River" (the Wenatchee). On the 27th the party arrived at "Tsill-ane" (the Chelan River).

"The Indians told us it took its rise in a lake not far distant.

"...on the first of September, 1811, we embarked, and descending the Okinacken again landed on a level spot within half a mile of its mouth. There we unloaded, took our canoes out of the water, and pitched our tents, which operation concluded our long and irksome voyage of forty-two days..."

This describes the founding of Fort Okanogan, the chief interior post of the Pacific Fur Company.

The North West Company succeeded to the property and Okanogan became its principal post of depot for the entire region. The Hudson's Bay Company absorbed the North West Company in 1821 and maintained the post

until 1859. It was then sold to the Americans and the North West Company limited its trading north of the Canadian border.

There were beaver along the Middle Columbia and Snake rivers, which the Indians utilized more for food than furs. They had everything they needed for food at the fisheries, in the swamps along the river, the small streams and the hillsides. There were deer and elk and other game, and well worn trails to berrying grounds in the more distant Upper Naches, and northeast to root digging grounds at Waterville, where one of the dozen varieties of camas, called skokol matured the earliest in the season. The River People have been known among the neighboring tribes for holding the first foods feast of the early spring at which skokol was served ceremonously. Here may be an indication of the Lewis and Clark word written Sokulk on the old map in 1805.

With communication as difficult as it was, which was later proven many times, it may have been Lewis and Clark's inquiry was misinterpreted by the Indians as an inquiry where food could be obtained. Inquiries for food were routine as the explorers travelled from camp to camp.

The word, Sokulk, has always been unknown to Indians of the Wallula region, the Mid-Columbia dwellers and adjoining tribes, even 100 years ago at no great time from the exploration. Yet the word Sokulk occupies a large area on the map obtained by Lewis and Clark.

Even in 1855, at the Treaty Council of Walla Walla and with the benefit of several interpreters, white and Indian capable of translating several languages, Territorial Governor Isaac I. Stevens recorded some of the fourteen bands and tribes making up the Confederated Yakima Indian Nation by the names of their chiefs or leaders, instead of tribal or band name.

The old leaders among the Wanapums were entirely ignorant of the word, Sokulk, knowing of no old leader among the River People by that name, nor could they give any interpretation of a word sounding like Sokulk, but skokol, the food root.

Until about 1750 there was little travel, except slowly and by foot, among the Northwestern tribes. But sometime about that date the Northwest Indian acquired the horse which required some time to multiply to be of common use.

And Priest Rapids, in such an isolation, was virtually compelled to remain that way for lack of horses.

In later years however horses were abundant at Priest Rapids where the hillsides offered ideal grazing conditions.

This slow-unfolding period, forerunning the frontier opening by the traders and missionaries, was followed by the cattlemen, and afterwards by wagons and railroads, the latter laying steel pathways for homesteaders.

This was a period when men were more interested in securing land, developing villages from which towns grew, finding new rangeland for livestock, than they were in the linguistic stock of the original inhabitants of the land. And this was the time that a man grew into maturity to become a great power among Northwestern Indians. It was another time, as is so frequently said, when history was made.

The history maker was Smowhala the Prophet. His home became Priest Rapids and there lived his people. And he was the ancestor from whom many of the River People descended directly.

No one knows when Smowhala was born but it must have been sometime about the time David Thompson or Alexander Ross passed through the Mid-Columbia region.

There are no records to chronicle his birth at Wallula, eighty miles downstream where the inhabitants also were River People, who greeted Lewis and Clark and were friendly to them.

Smowhala was born at the time the strong religious influence of a little-known but greatly felt prophet called Shuwapsa was strong in influence and the blood lines of the River People.

It is known that Shuwapsa lived and preached before any non-Indians came into the land of the Indians, and that he was also a dreamer.

His was a name given to those who "died" and returned from the "land of the dead" with Creator-given songs which had their influence upon the people, instructing them how to live. And these songs are still heard at religious services, called the Washat.

It is also known by the last of the old Wanapums, that Shuwapsa lived at this historic place of Priest Rapids and there practiced his religion.

From the stories of the old men it would appear that Shuwapsa died and was buried at Priest Rapids long before David Thompson or Alexander Ross and their adventuring companions passed along the river. And from their stories it would appear that Shuwapsa had something to do with introducing the drum to the River People, which is unusual in its manufacturer and was used for a specific purpose and only by the religious men of great power.

Smowhala introduced other dream songs and innovations to the Indian, and he gave a special meaning to the drum, a dream meaning.

This has a similiarity to the introduction of the buffalo headdress among the Salish stock Piegan or northern, Blood, branch of the Blackfeet. This came about before the Blackfeet had any contact with fur traders or explorers, when one of the medicine men, caught out on the plains in a blizzard, took refuge in the skeleton of a buffalo. He dreamed and when he awoke the blizzard had abated. Returning to camp, and to show his thankfulness to God for guiding him to the buffalo skeleton and its protection, and for the dream, he made a headdress he had dreamed about. The headpiece was the head and horns of a buffalo, with a beaded head-band. Down the back was a strip of buffalo hide and from it were fastened a row of eagle feathers, representing the boss ribs of the buffalo. This headdress became the dance attire for the long non-existent Buffalo Secret Society of the Piegan, and was worn only by their medicine men or men with strong powers of strong guardian spirits, or great chiefs.