

Richland Booms as Atom City

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP)—Spawed by the atom and nurtured by a frantic nuclear weapons race between East and West, this once sleepy little farm village is today a bustling, booming city.

To neighboring communities, which a scant 11 years ago knew Richland as a dusty little hamlet of only 240 people, the boom seems fantastic. The town now boasts a population of 28,000 and it's still climbing. Its streets and shops are jammed with construction workers, scientists, soldiers and their families.

BIG CHANGE
The big change took shape when the government first eyed this patch of desert, inhabited only by jackrabbits and coyotes, as the site for a new kind of factory—the first of its kind in the world.

In 1943, with World War II approaching climactic stage, the government bought the land on which Richland stood and started construction of an atomic energy plant. More land was added later until it eventually took in a 600-square-mile tract, more than half the size of Rhode Island. Within

its boundaries was the village of Hanford, 30 miles north of Richland.

Hanford at first was the focal point of the entire atomic reservation. As the giant atomic plant grew out of the desert, Hanford became a king-size construction camp.

TOWN BOOMS

Abruptly, as the factory neared completion, Hanford was abandoned and the center of operations shifted to Richland.

The little town was expanded. New houses went up for 16,000 atom plant employees and their families. A few businessmen came on the scene.

The government constructed the new houses and backed the businessmen.

Other, more skeptical, businessmen called Richland a "flash in the pan." They turned down government offers of buildings and financial backing to open up in Richland.

They argued that Richland, at war's end, would fizzle and so would the big atomic plant at Hanford.

But, when the war ended, Americans quickly discovered the smile on Stalin's face did not necessarily reflect his thoughts. The United States was in the atomic energy business for keeps.

FEVERISH GROWTH

Richland continued to grow at a feverish pace. The Atomic Energy Commission decided to pump new life into the town's business community. There was a need not only to meet the normal de-

mand for goods, but for competition to make shopping more attractive.

The government promptly offered to sell the business buildings it owned to the operators along with fixtures and inventories.

Businessmen in government-owned buildings were given the green light to improve and enlarge the properties they were leasing.

A whole new business district was a sagebrush-jammed field a half mile north of the town. A creek lined with willows ran through it.

SHOPPING AREA

Men and bulldozers quickly transformed the plot into a modern shopping area. Storm sewers, water lines and utility poles replaced the sage and willows. Concrete sidewalks appeared where the banks of the creek had been.

Still, outside business interests balked.

"It's taking a chance on a city that can turn into a ghost town overnight," one complained.

The General Electric Co., the prime contractor operating both the atomic energy plant and the town of Richland, sent two experts, R. J. Pederson and M. L. Blum, on a coast-to-coast trip to drum up businessmen willing to invest in Richland's future.

Their biggest trouble was describing the place to potential investors.

"How were we going to talk up a new town in the desert as a boom town, with tremendous potential for growth and expansion," Pederson recalls. "It might seem to have advantages to one prospect, but look like a complete waste of time for another."

TALKING POINTS

They finally settled on these talking points:

Richland had ideal location for municipal facilities.

There was certainly plenty of parking space.

There were good streets, excellent fire and police protection.

There was a large and steady payroll at the atomic energy plant.

There was plenty of room for competition since Richland had only about 45 businesses.

Businessmen gradually came

to see the great possibilities cradled in the rapidly growing town.

New businesses moved in and grew with the city. Today there are more than 200 in the town.

School construction also jumped. Before the government moved in, Richland had a total school enrollment of around 333. Last year the enrollment was 7,721 and growing.

There are bright new apartment buildings, handsome homes for rent, entertainment facilities and landscaped streets—and very few jackrabbits—in the thriving town of Richland today.

An offshoot of the atom, Richland doesn't anticipate any trouble in selling itself to potential investors from now on.

Discuss Indochina

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Eisenhower conferred for more than an hour Saturday on the Indochina situation with Secretary of State Dulles and defense chiefs. No announcement was forthcoming after the meeting. The President held a similar discussion with Gen. Douglas MacArthur on Thursday.

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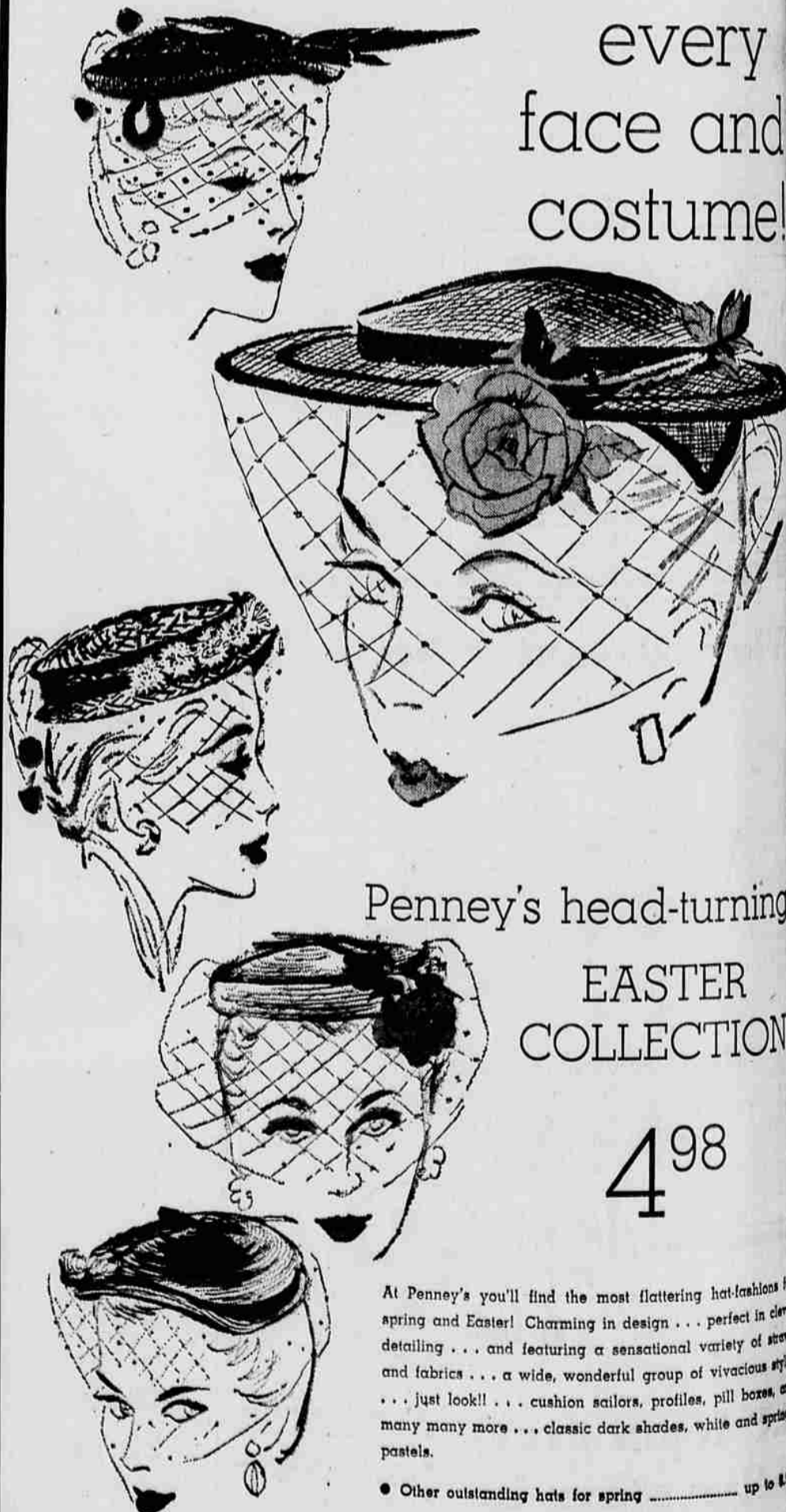
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