

Former Chairman Continues Details

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the acres are in Oregon, thirty percent are in Idaho. There are ten individual irrigation districts subscribing for this water. If ever a desert was turned into a Garden of Eden, it is this Owyhee transformation. There is not another such prolific producer of the products of the soil to be found in the west. It is a revelation of the magic of reclamation. The tie of community endeavor, the death of communism. Where waters impounded in the cauldron of the devil are lead to the valley for the beautification of the Garden of

Eden. Truth prevailed over evil regardless of the "ism" that confronts it. The citadels of America are bulwarked in the soil of uncountable Owyhees.

The origin of the name "Owyhee" will be interesting to many readers. The natural thought would be of local origin, possibly some Indian tribe, but we went overseas to the Hawaiian Islands, for it. Quoting from Lewis A. McArthur's book, "Oregon Geographic Names"—"In 1826, Peter Skene Ogden's exploratory expedition went into the Snake River country, was attacked by Snake River Indians, and two members of the party were killed. They happened to be Hawaiians, hence the name Owyhee in their commemoration." McArthur makes one interesting notation, that a century ago, the Hawaiian Islands were known as the Owyhee Islands. What's in a name still remains remote in the majority of Oregonians' minds of the scenic mysteries of this watered volcanic canyon. The waters temporized the savageness of its ruggedness, and the musical lilt of the islands in my Owyhee softens the edges of a once rampant world.

On the canyon walls, Indian hieroglyphics of Aborigines' arts and facts await deciphering by the wisdom of present day technology. Maybe the key to the mysteries of the volcanic canyon is lost.

Half way up the lake is a naturally created landing field. Small ships fly in from Boise and intermediate points from Nyssa and Ontario. A few moments of passage, a creel fill-

ed and back home within the hour. Where is the inaccessible to be found today? The lake has been stocked with a variety of Iszaak Walton's choicest thrill tuggers, and wherever you cast, your efforts are rewarded.

There is one interesting thing noted in the present day attendance and that is that it comes from Idaho. Must the stranger have to unfold to our unseeing eyes the recreational treasure we possess?

What is the procedure to be taken in the development of this recreational area? There are two units of the government set up for this purpose, the U. S. Government through its National Park Service, the State of Oregon through its Highway Commission and Parks Division. All land necessary for this development is now owned by the U. S. Government, hence there is no need of a budget for acquisition purposes. It is purely one of development, and can be carried on in yearly stages. There are two precedents in the west comparable to the proposed development of the Owyhee recreational project, wherein the U. S. Government through its National Park Service is now developing for recreational purposes, one being at Coulee Dam in the state of Washington, the other, Lake Mead, created through the construction of Boulder Dam located in the state of Nevada.

The U. S. Reclamation Bureau is the administrator of the Owyhee project. In all of the state's investigation of the possibility of its recreational development, the Bureau has been interested and helpful in every way. The National Park Service has made several temporary investigations of the project and are fully aware of its recreational possibilities. Both departments are under the Department of the Interior which is significant of full co-operation. In 1949, Congress passed H. R. 4403 which reads as follows: "To facilitate the administration by the Secretary of the Interior, in co-operation with other Federal, State and local agencies, of the recreational uses of lands and water within reclamation, flood-control, power, and other Federal reservoir projects." The law reads that funds will be budgeted by Congress for development purposes. (It should be noted at this point that no expenditures for development purposes will be added to the water rights of the project settlers.) The law authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to transfer the recreational development to the state for administration purposes. With the Coulee Dam and Lake Mead projects as criterions of procedure, it seems a known directive for the state.

However, the intent and concern of the state in the development of the Owyhee recreational project should be noted. Upon the invitation of interested citizens of Nyssa in the development of the recreational resources of the lake, members of the T. H. Banfield Commission visited the lake on May 12, 1948. They were very much impressed with the scenic features of the area, but were hesitant in adding it to the park system due to the cost of development. The main contributing factor being the revamping of the road to the lake which is some thirty miles in length. Their actions in such matters are controlled by the park law passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor on February 25, 1925. The law empowers the Commission to secure recreational areas adjacent to, along or in close proximity to state highways. In a case of this type, meaning so much in general recreational development of the state, what latitude should be taken in the interpretation of "proximity?"

Until this clause is amended, a state wide park system is unobtainable. An odd condition confronts us; for the want of a wheel the Universe stood still for centuries. There was no rut to follow to the next parish. Now we have the wheels, but no surface to roll them on. Could it be we who are in the rut of isolation?

An invitation was sent to Governor Douglas McKay by organizations of Ontario and Nyssa to be their guest in a preview of Owyhee Lake and its many scenic attractions. The Governor responded to the invitation and spent two days in September 1951, in looking over the lake and the developed irrigated

lands brought into production through the waters of Owyhee Lake. Quoting from the Oregonian of September 25, 1951, "I am very much interested in this as a park site. The place has wonderful opportunities for recreation and it would also be good because of the natural beauty of the lakes." "Then too," he added, "there are no state parks in southeastern Oregon, and I feel one is needed." Governor McKay's statement shows a deep interest in the proposed project, and future plans to be worked out for its development I feel will have the full support of Governor Douglas McKay.

I would like to amplify one portion of the Governor's statement wherein he notes that southeastern Oregon has not state parks; that he feels one is needed. During a 25 year period, 184 recreational areas, small and large, have been acquired. Of this total, approximately 75 percent are west of the Cascades, 25 percent east of the Cascades. There is no park in the state park system that exceeds Owyhee Lake in recreational and scenic attributes. As formerly noted, I firmly believe that the recreational development of Owyhee Lake should be a co-ordinated project between government and state. However, if such a combination cannot be worked out, then the state should assume the responsibility of the development of the recreational resources of Owyhee Lake.

With a tourist business third in income in the state destined to become first, a capital outlay for the development of this recreational asset is good business. Give the Parks Division two percent of the yearly highway income that Owyhee, its counterparts, its overnight camping, its wayside luncheon stops may be hastened in their development. It should be remembered that the tourist trade is one of the keenest competitive businesses in the world, for you are competing with the world. Oregon has been bedecked with a varied beauty second to none. Showcase it, for if left in the dark, it returns no lustre. California's yearly tourist income is around 500 million dollars. Our Tourist Bureau shows one-million foreign licensed cars visiting Oregon in 1952. It further shows that 50 percent of that total carried California licenses. Why? Because we have superior scenery, air conditioned air, a side road to hear a sermon preached on Creation away from the clank and smog of the outside world. We have

so much to sell that is still in a dormant stage, unknown. It further shows that Californians are discerning, know where to look for the actual beauty along the wayside untarnished.

A comparison may be made in the tourist drawing power of a developed recreational Owyhee project, by citing the attendance at Lake Mead and Coulee Dam. In 1951, Lake Mead drew slightly over two million people. Coulee Dam slightly over three hundred thousand people.

If Oregon would build unto its unchallenged God-given scenic beauty for a world to see, it would bring Owyhee to the doorstep of the passing public. Treat the soul to soft music from a terrestrial world with an offertory on behalf of the state.

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Patrick Henry was the only man to decline appointment as Secretary of State.

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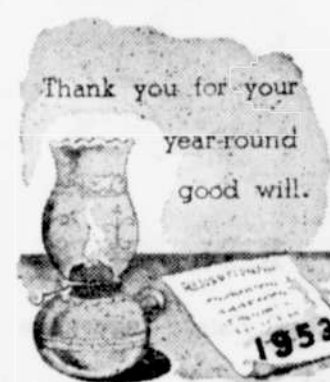
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