



Rufus Woods, the Columbia River, and the Building of Modern Washington

Robert E Ficken

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Rufus Woods, for more than forty years the publisher of the Wenatchee Daily World, has often been called the "High Priest of the Columbia River." No person deserves the title more. From the editorial platform of the World, Woods tirelessly promoted Wenatchee and north central Washington. For decades he pegged his brightest hopes for the region's future on a huge Columbia River dam in the isolated Grand Coulee region. From 1918 through Grand Coulee's completion in 1941, Woods enthusiastically promoted the largest dam-building project in American history. Woods got his dam, but not the Wenatchee boom he desired. The project was possible only because of federal financing. With that financing came federal control of the system, including a vast maze of power lines emanating from Grand Coulee's hydroelectric plant that sends electricity to larger cities such as Portland and Seattle. Even so, Woods's beloved home grew during his lifetime, and much of that economic development can be attributed to his single-minded effort to boost the region.

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