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## **Columbia Basin Irrigation Project Grand Coulee Dam / Panoramic Perspective of the Spokane Region including the Geological and Scenic Wonderland Embracing the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project and Grand Coulee Dam**

**Stock#:** 58519  
**Map Maker:** Spokane Chamber of Commerce  
**Date:** 1948 circa  
**Place:** Spokane  
**Color:** Color  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 24 x 19 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### **Description:**

#### ***A Birdseye View of the Grand Coulee Dam Project***

Detailed birdseye view style map of the region bounded by Banff, Pullman Washington and the Pacific Ocean, centered on Lake Roosevelt and Grand Coulee Dam.

The map is marvelous graphical depiction of the region around the Dam, one of the largest Federal Projects coming out of the Great Depression.

This is a later state of the map, illustrated significant progress in construction, which is now nearly complete.

In 1918, Rufus Woods, publisher of the Wenatchee World newspaper, began advocating for a dam that would provide irrigation water to the Columbia Plateau. Attorneys Billy Clapp and James O'Sullivan of Ephrata, were also among its earliest promoters. Clapp is credited with suggesting, in 1917, that if nature once blocked the Columbia with an ice dam that forced water into the now-dry Grand Coulee, man could do the same with concrete. O'Sullivan liked the idea and soon began writing articles about such a dam, and Woods published them in his newspaper.

Soon, two different concepts developed. O'Sullivan, Woods, Clapp and other locals favored pumping water from behind a dam, while influential business leaders in Spokane, home of the privately owned Washington Water Power Company, which owned its own hydroelectric dams, favored canals that would



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divert water from the Pend Oreille River in northeastern Washington. Soon, the battle was joined between the "pumpers" and the "ditchers."

Pumpers like O'Sullivan saw potential benefits in hydropower. "The revenue from the sale of electric energy alone would surely pay all the upkeep, interest on the investment; and provide a sinking fund for the liquidation of the cost of the project itself," he wrote in a 1918 article in the World. The pumpers distrusted the ditchers, whose backers were the big business and power interests in Spokane. The ditchers wanted to irrigate the Columbia Basin with water from the Pend Oreille River. The canal would begin at Albeni Falls and run downhill, through tunnels where necessary, to the Ritzville area. The pumpers saw this as another attempt by arrogant Spokanites to control all of eastern Washington

Washington Water Power tried to kill the pumping project by proposing to build its own dam at Kettle Falls. In 1922, the Federal Power Commission granted a preliminary permit. If the dam had been built, it would have limited the size of the dam at Grand Coulee 110 miles downriver, effectively killing the pumping proposal. The dam at Coulee had to be high enough to make pumping feasible. In response to Water Power's ploy, Woods editorialized that the Spokane utility was a "soulless corporation."

The Bureau of Reclamation, envisioning success with Hoover Dam, was partial to big irrigation projects. O'Sullivan personally lobbied Arthur Powell Davis, the Commissioner of Reclamation, to support the dam. Senators Wesley Jones and Clarence Dill of Washington persuaded President Hoover in 1929 to support a \$600,000 study of Columbia River by the Corps of Engineers. The study by Major John S. Butler of the Seattle district of the Corps, completed in 1932, recommended a series of 10 dams on the river, including one at Grand Coulee and others in British Columbia. Called the "308 Report" for the number assigned to it by the House of Representatives, it supported a dam over a canal to provide irrigation water.

With the nation in the throws of the Depression, dams on the Columbia offered promise of employment as well as hydropower and irrigation. President Roosevelt initially balked at the \$450 million cost estimate for Grand Coulee. But Roosevelt had promised Dill before the election that he would build the dam if he won. So Roosevelt responded that he would support a lower dam, that could be raised later. By 1935, the plans were upgraded and the high dam was under construction.

Roosevelt, a master politician, had found a way to mollify critics who said the dam would be too big and too expensive by beginning construction with a modest amount of money on a comparatively modest structure. The power generated by a high dam, eight times more than the low dam, would be used, he believed. Importantly, net revenues from power sales also would repay the cost of the project, and thus the



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\$63 million was an allotment for a federal project, and it was understood the amount would be repaid. Roosevelt's New Deal policies supported the concept of multiple purposes dams, which could generate power and also provide water for irrigation, recreation and flood control. A low dam for power only did not fit the paradigm, but the high dam at Grand Coulee did.

Washington Governor Clarence Martin supported the high dam, and he reluctantly agreed that it should be a federal project. The federal project not only conformed with New Deal principles, it also conformed with Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes's intentions that public relief projects should help the national recovery and create a valuable product able to pay for itself. Grand Coulee met all of the tests.

Construction lasted 7 years. The dam began operation on March 22, 1941, when its first large generator began producing power. Its completion at the beginning of World War II quieted its many critics, who had derided it as a colossal dam in the near-wilderness of a remote state, and whose only customers, according to one detractor in Congress, would be "sage brush and jackrabbits." By the end of the War, the hyperbole was running the opposite direction. In 1948, for example, Vice Presidential candidate Earl Warren remarked: *Probably Hitler would have beaten us in atom bomb development if it had not been for the hydroelectric development of the Columbia, making possible the big Hanford project which brought forth the bomb.* Pitzer comments in his book, *Grand Coulee: Harnessing a Dream: Grand Coulee Dam's contribution augmented those of Hoover Dam, the Tennessee Valley Authority dams and other hydro and non-hydroelectric projects nationally.... Grand Coulee allowed the government to produce aluminum and run Hanford while not disturbing the day-to-day lives of most Americans. The government could have diverted power from domestic uses but Grand Coulee, among other projects, made this unnecessary. Except for inconveniencing the civilian population, little would have changed had Grand Coulee not existed during World War II.*

#### **Detailed Condition:**