

Home Blown

The history of the homes of Richland



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Commemorating
the 35th anniversary of the
City of Richland
and the 50th anniversary
of Hanford.

Published by the City of Richland

Thank You

Thank you to the following for their contributions to this booklet:

Milo & Donna Bauder

Paul Beardsley

East Benton County Historical
Society

Phil & Faith Cooke

Hanford Science Center

Floyd Harrow

Eugene Johnson

Jack Nelson

Dan Ostergaard

Don Perry

The family of Dick Donnell

Written and compiled by Barb Carter of the Housing Resource Division of the City of Richland.

Funds provided by Community Development Block Grant.

Design and editing services courtesy of the Washington Public Power Supply System, operator of Plant 2, which has provided electricity to Tri-City homes and the Pacific Northwest since 1984.



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On behalf of the City of Richland, I am pleased to introduce this chronicle of Richland housing. From the time the Hanford project began construction 50 years ago, the provision of housing for personnel employed here has been a primary concern to the City of Richland. The activity in the housing industry has mirrored the activity at the project—growing at a tremendous pace to keep up with the influx of people during the peak times and slowing to a standstill during the lulls. The City has managed this growth by establishing a series of comprehensive planning strategies and making a concerted effort to adhere to them.

When the Hanford project began, the town of Richland was a farming community of less than 240 people. Within two years, 3,740 new homes had been constructed to house the employees brought in to work on the site. The government provided everything with the houses—utilities, furniture, even light bulbs! Between 1957 and 1959, the federal government sold the houses to local residents and Richland was chartered as a First Class City by the State of Washington. Richland and Hanford have continued to grow and prosper, and while Hanford celebrates its 50th anniversary in 1993, the City of Richland celebrates its 35th.

Expansion of new residential areas has not been at the expense of the original government-built housing. The City has strived to maintain this core area of housing through establishment of various rehabilitation programs and Local Improvement District (LID) street improvements. The influence of a highly skilled citizen base whose work involves consideration of environmental issues has enhanced the City's ability to plan its growth with an eye to the future and a respect for the past. Richland is proud of its housing heritage!

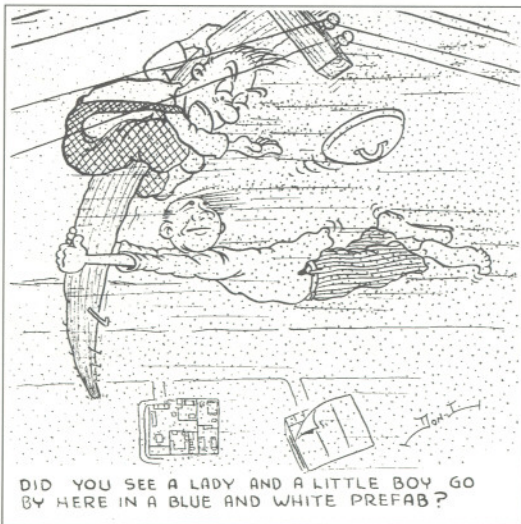
Craig Buchanan

Craig Buchanan, Mayor

Dupus Boomer

A history of Richland's housing would not be complete without the presence of Dupus Boomer. Dupus and his commentary on life in a Richland prefab first appeared in *The Richland Villager* newspaper in 1945 and was so widely appreciated that he appeared in each issue until *The Villager* ceased publication in 1950.

He was created by Dick Donnell, who came to Richland with DuPont in 1943. He named the character by taking the DUP from DuPont, the US from United



States and using a last name of BOOMER - a wandering worker following the boom towns.

Although he had no cartooning experience prior to creating this character, Donnell was able to give his simply sketched figures character and dimension while lending a humorous outlook to demoralizing living conditions. Many longtime residents feel that Dupus' humor enabled them to endure the "termination winds" and other pitfalls of early Richland life. It would be interesting to hear what Dupus would have to say about Richland today!

Planning Richland

In 1943 the Manhattan District of the U.S. Corps of Engineers selected Richland as the site of the World War II plutonium production plant. Maj. Gen. Leslie R. Groves was assigned the task of constructing the project. The towns of Richland, Hanford and White Bluffs were soon “acquired” to serve as headquarters for the 625-square-mile facility. DuPont Corporation was hired to construct both the plant and a new town to house the employees.

Albin Pherson from Spokane, Wash., was the architect hired to design the new town of Richland. He was given less than 48 hours to decide whether to accept the project, and less than 90 days to completely design the entire community including streets, utilities, and commercial and residential building plans. He was given few guidelines other than the number of families to be accommodated and budgetary constraints. Although an



Built in 1907, this is one of only 19 pre-1943 homes saved during construction, this house still stands at 413 George Washington Way.

attempt was made to retain the existing houses in the area, many were too remote or in too poor condition to include and only 19 were ultimately saved. The town was to be planned for the long term, even though many thought it was to be temporary—the government had plans for a continuing mission at Hanford and wanted the town designed for a permanent population of 16,000.

Pherson intended to design the town to give employees a respite from the strict military atmosphere encountered during the workday at Hanford. High morale was a necessity that could not be achieved by crowding employees, especially those with families, into inadequate living quarters. He used traditional housing

designs to give personnel a sense of normalcy upon returning home from work.

Neighborhood streets were designed with curves, cul-de-sacs and an abundance of green areas to reduce the military look. Neighborhoods and main streets were systematically designed to easily accommodate bus travel to and from Hanford,



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The City of Richland, as it appeared shortly before the start of the Manhattan project. [The two large structures in the center are the original High School (left) and the original Lewis and Clark Elementary School (right).]

as well as to shopping and services within Richland. Higher cost houses were given more favorable locations, such as near the Columbia River. The majority of the houses were duplexes, but many styles and sizes of single family homes were also included. The intent was to achieve an even mixture of properties to avoid the appearance of richer or poorer districts.

Each housing plan was assigned a letter of the alphabet for ease in identification. In grouping the houses the block was the basic design element. Variety was used in placement of individual units—angling the houses, placing the taller houses in the middle of the block and the lower units at the ends of the block, setting houses back from the street to give an “open” feeling at intersections. Houses were situated on lots to assure maximum protection from the wind and sun, and were designed with many windows for cross ventilation.



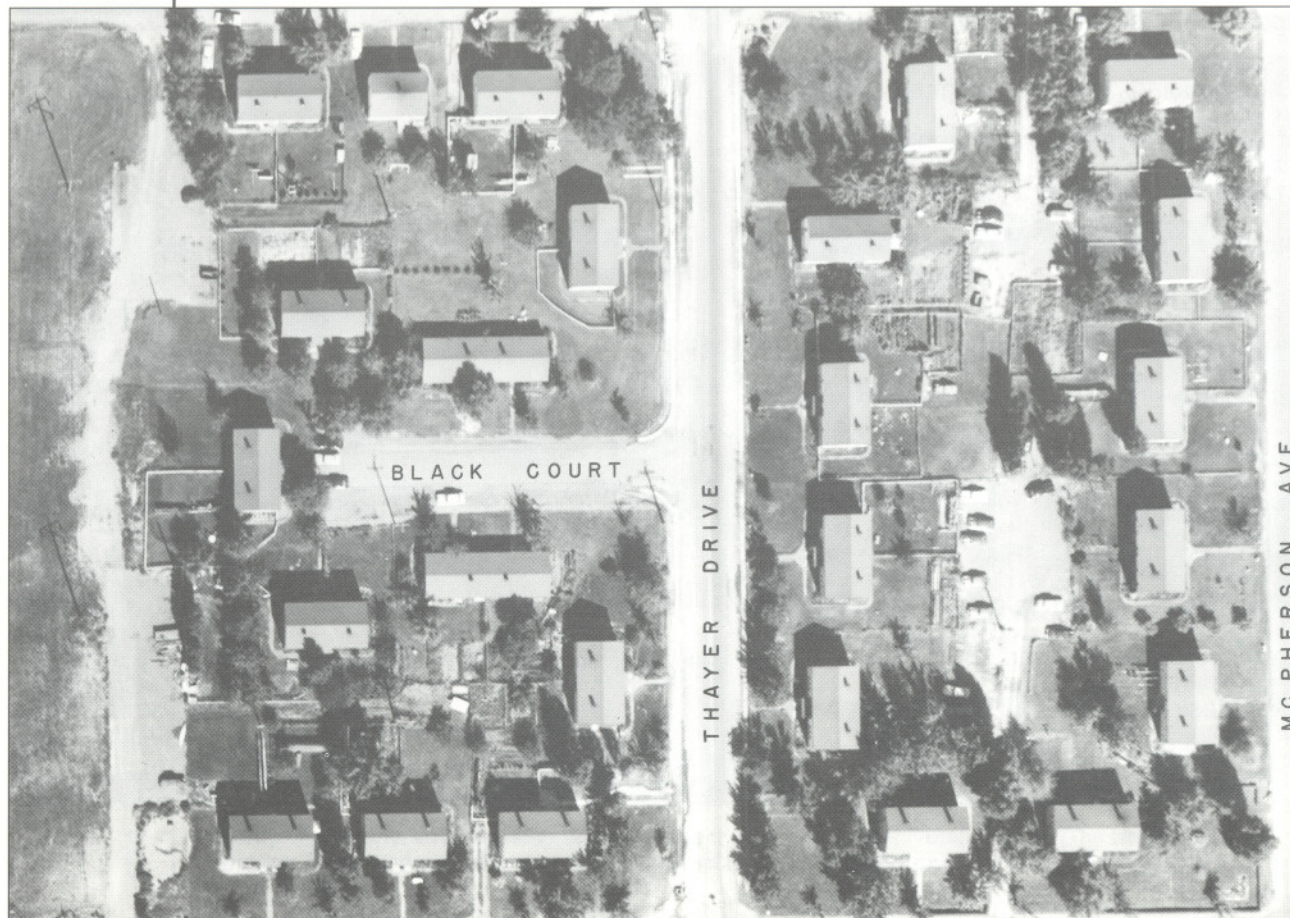
"A" duplex



"B" duplex. There was also a "C" duplex that was very similar in design to the "B".

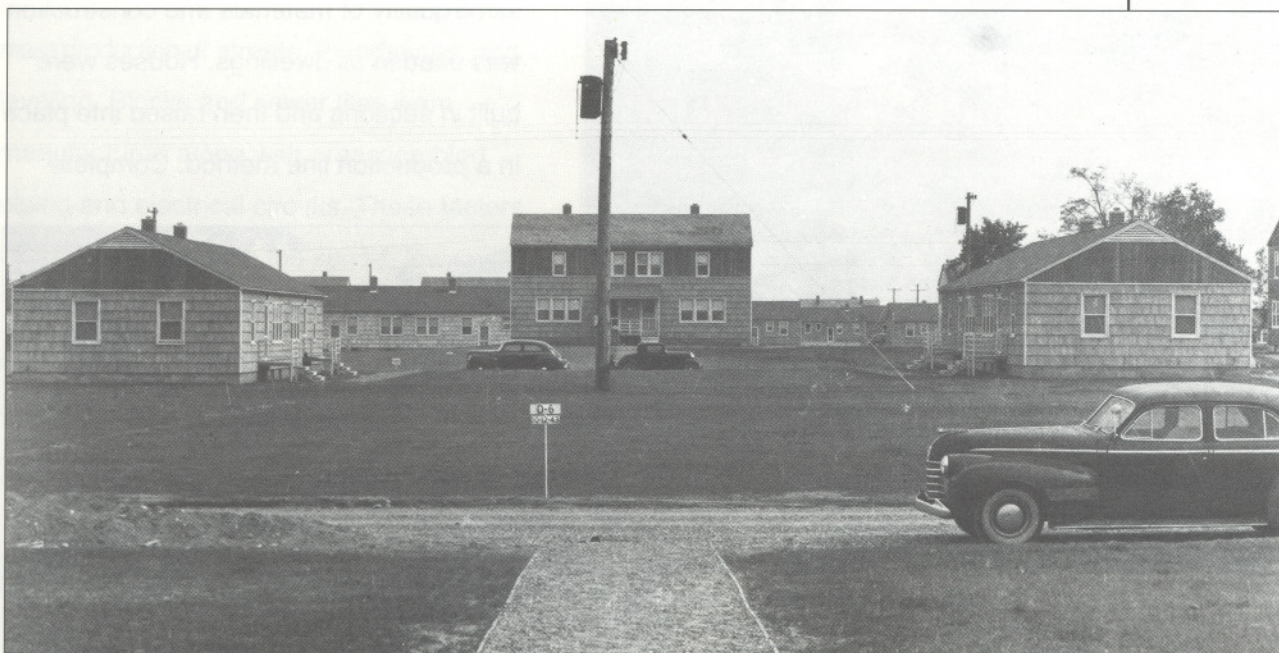
Another one of the 19 pre-1943 homes saved during construction, this house was converted to Patrol Headquarters and later to Ernie's Typewriters before being demolished. It was located north of Lee Blvd. on George Washington Way, in what is now the Hanford House parking lot.

Below: An aerial view of Richland taken during early construction.





Originally there were eight dormitories for men and 17 for women. Rent ranged from \$15 to \$22.50 per room. They were located west of Jadwin between Lee and Williams. One such structure still being used is the Uptown Apartments, which was moved from Lee Blvd. to 1300 Van Giesen and remodeled by John Thompson.



The blocks were designed with the taller units in the middle and the lower units on the end. Common areas were located within the interior of the blocks.



Only eight each of the "D" houses (above) and similarly designed "G" houses were built.

Yards were as large and uniform in size as possible with several open, common areas. Car compounds were located within the interior of the block which reduced walking distance to the bus stop and connected the back doors of each residence by a network of interior walks. These rear alleyways also provided access for service and delivery.

The planners had intensely democratic attitudes in designing the housing: the same quality of materials and construction was used in all dwellings. Houses were built in sections and then raised into place in a production line method. Complete



Three-bedroom "E" house

Pictured at right is one of 250 three-bedroom "H" houses which rented for \$50 unfurnished and \$62.50 furnished.





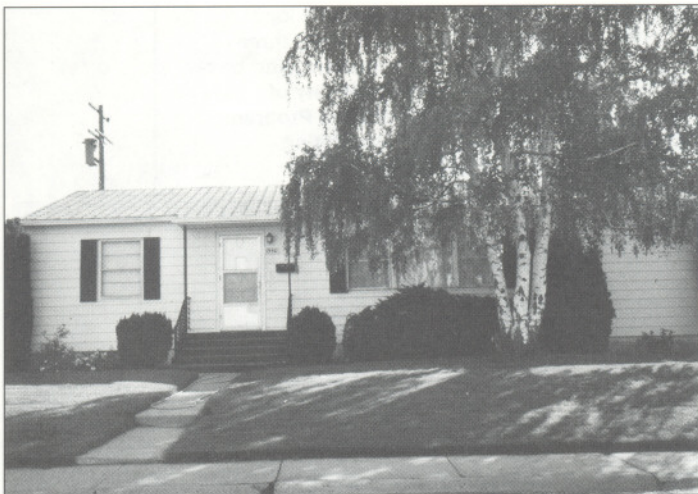
At left, an "F" house as it looked in 1945 (250 of them built, three bedrooms, full basement) and below as modernized under City of Richland Rehabilitation Program and Energy Weatherization program in 1991.



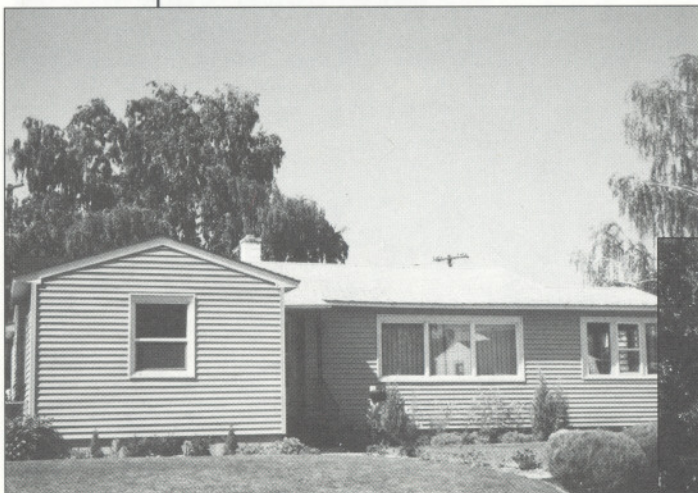
mills, shops and cement plants were set up on site. Heavy equipment was used for mass production of streets, foundations, and leveling. Blocks and sewer tiles were manufactured along with preassembled piping and electrical circuits. These factors contributed greatly to the speed, low cost and uniform quality of construction. Proof of the effectiveness of these construction methods lies in this timetable: construction of the streets began on March 20, 1943; housing began April 28, 1943; and the first house (a B-House) was occupied by July 30, 1943, with 1,600 "alphabet" houses completed by early 1944.



The "L" house was the only model with four bedrooms. There were 44 built.



Two-bedroom "M" house



Three-bedroom "Q" house



Three-bedroom "R" house

J.P. (Phil) Cooke moved to Richland in 1943 to work as the Material Control Engineer for the entire housing project. He recalls, "the lumber that went into the houses came from the old 1929 Tillamook burn about 50 miles west of Portland. The fire burned out of control for six weeks 'crowning' into the tops of some of the finest Douglas Fir trees in the west. The trunks were left standing until this demand for wartime lumber. Floors were placed over paper laid on the joists to prevent dust. The duplexes had hemlock floors, but the single-family homes had the finest Tennessee Bruce three-quarter-

inch oak flooring." Siding chosen for the homes was cedar shakes because of low cost, ready availability, durability and weathering characteristics.

Electric stoves, refrigerators and hot water heaters were included in every house. Refrigerators were Frigidaire models insulated with peat moss hermetically sealed in the shell. Some are still in service today. Coal for the furnaces, electricity, water and garbage service were provided at no charge. Monthly rents ranged from \$33 for a B-house to \$70 for the largest homes. Cooke also recalls that furniture was provided for a slightly higher rent. The furniture was Heywood Wakefield rock maple, the finest grade from North Carolina, procured through Frederick & Nelson on a priority contract that took the entire allotment from all other dealers nationwide. Carpet, not considered a priority, was not provided.



"S" House

The 1949 housing program of Atkinson-Jones homes—M, Q, R, and S—represented a step-up in quality over earlier programs. These homes were located north of Van Giesen and east of George Washington Way along streets such as Davison, Howell, Horn, Hetrick and Harris, and up to Newcomer.

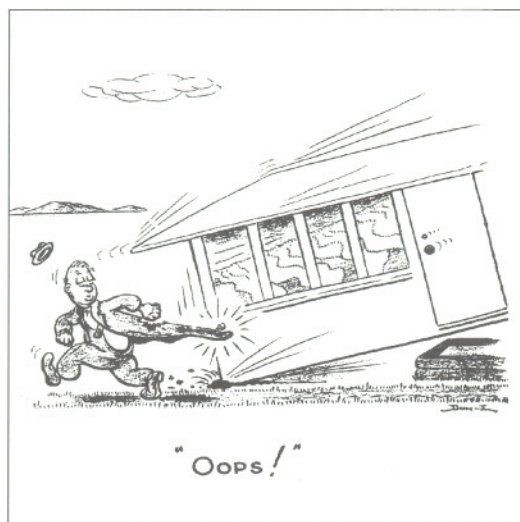


"T" House - a duplex

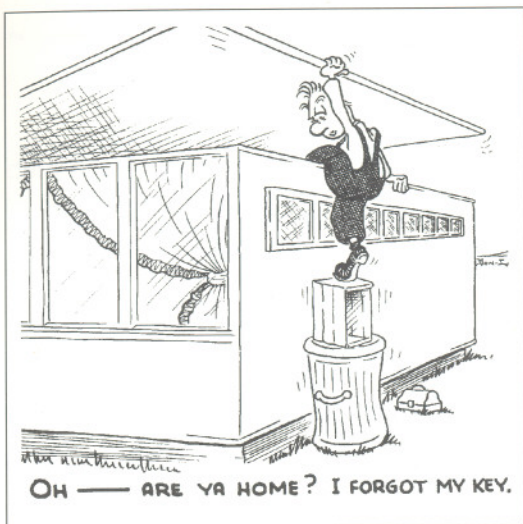
Family Planning

Many more of the employees had families than was originally anticipated, so a housing waiting list grew to about 2,000 families. Single-room apartments scheduled to be built were cancelled and replaced with prefabricated (prefab) single family units. In February 1944, 1,800 prefab units began arriving by truck and railroad.

"The prefabs were assembled in Newport, Oregon—according to TVA designs—brought in sections eight feet wide on



railroad flat cars and truck-trailer units, and placed on posts and frame bases on the west and south edges of town," Cooke said. "They had two-inch walls, plywood facings inside and out, flat canvas roofs and were fully outfitted with furniture and appliances at John's Furniture in Portland along the way." In 1947, J. L. Hudson and Associates built 450 precut houses and placed them on lots previously occupied by prefabs which were sold and moved elsewhere. In 1948,

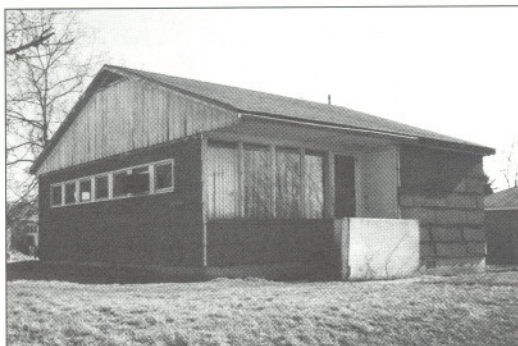


1,000 ranch houses (also known as "Y" and "Z" houses) were constructed on the west side of town skirting the village.

In 1949, the need for maintaining the prefabs was recognized and the remaining original prefabs were rewired. This was followed with a general remodeling program begun in 1951 which included the installation of a gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles (over the original flat roof which had a tendency to come off in wind storms). Additional work included the installation of red cedar tongue and groove boards on the gable ends; heavy asphalt shingles to cover the plywood siding;



Original, two-bedroom prefab, 1945.



As updated in 1951.



The same home, as rehabilitated in 1991 through the City of Richland's Housing Rehabilitation Program.

Here today...here tomorrow...



asbestos board skirting around the formerly open foundation area; and additional creosote posts installed to supplement the cribbing in the foundation.

When the Hanford project began, it was anticipated that the traditional alphabet homes would provide housing for the operations personnel—then estimated to be 7,750. Plans indicated that after completion of the plant, the construction workers would leave and only the opera-

tions personnel would remain. The prefab units were to be removed at that time.

The maintenance, recreation and community facilities were also constructed for a population of less than 16,000. Because of time and cost constraints, these commercial structures were constructed below normal standards with little emphasis on permanency, low upkeep or convenience to the public or the employees who used them. But, as with the prefabs, many of these structures

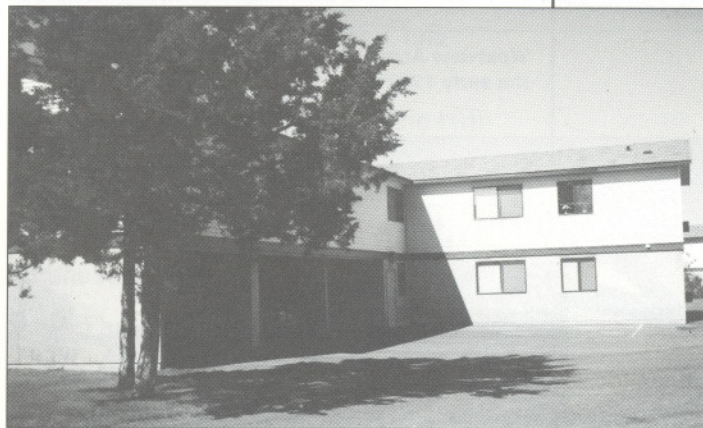


"Richland Village" home

are still in use today, and after 50 years, have not been remodeled.

By 1950, Richland's population had increased to 21,800 and although the original village was not planned for the growth it experienced, the layout was such that it provided a good basis for expansion. The streets were easily extended and the land use pattern was so well defined that when the need arose for additional housing, residential areas were immediately available.

In 1952, under the Wherry Act Federal Housing Program, additional housing was constructed to the north and south-west of the village. These units consisted of what is now known as the Richland Village, Bauer Day homes and the Columbia Park Apartment Complex. These were the first privately owned dwellings prior to Richland becoming a First Class City in 1958.



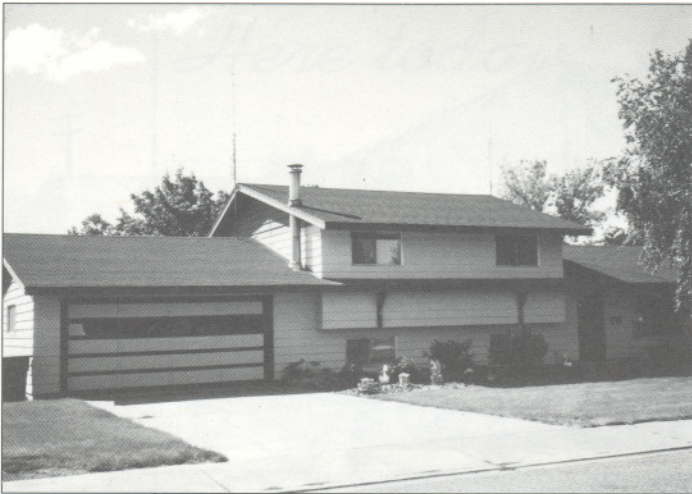
These photos illustrate the dramatic revitalization of the Wherry Act Apartments, commonly known as the "stilts". Built in 1951, the apartments were featured in *Architectural Digest* for their innovative design.

Allowed to deteriorate over time many of the buildings were uninhabitable until the City of Richland Housing Authority joined forces with Columbia Park Associates to purchase and completely renovate the complex, providing modern, affordable housing for 138 families.

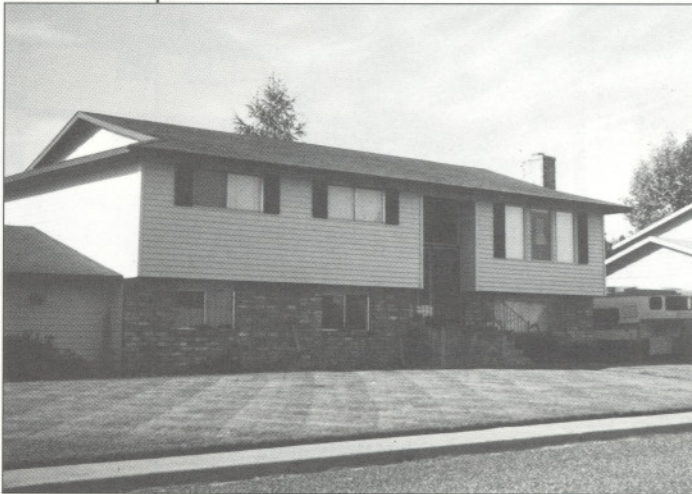
Growing with the times

Between 1957 and 1960, the entire government-owned housing inventory was sold to local residents in what was then the largest single-package real estate transaction in United States history. Once the houses were sold, vacant residential land was made available for sale. Jack Nelson, a local builder, and several of his friends combined their resources to bid on land to build new homes for their families and were awarded a large section between Thayer Drive and Wright Avenue.

Since the amount of land was larger than they wanted, they were soon in the “subdividing business”. They drew up a plan, got approval from the City to proceed and formed one of the first subdivisions in the city—Westwood Acres. The group grew to 11 owners who rented a backhoe, trenched their own sewer and water lines,



Westview Acres was developed by Jack Nelson in the early 1960's.



North Richland

arranged their own street improvements and built their houses. Many of the homes are still occupied by the second generation of these families.

Lots in the north end of Richland began to be developed in the early 1960s due to their proximity to the Hanford Site. These new neighborhoods showed a marked departure from the town's government-built houses; the houses were primarily larger, single-story ramblers or split-levels, built in the style of western architecture.

Richland continued to grow and develop in every direction. In 1965 the Richland Wye/Island View area was incorporated due to the commercial potential of the property. In 1967 the City annexed 6,000 acres to the northwest—the Horn Rapids Triangle—with the potential of commercially developing that area as well.

Richland then spread to the southwest, annexing 1,500 acres of land including the Meadow Springs Development in 1970.

Meadow Springs was the first planned



The first Meadow Springs Club House, 1972

unit development in Richland. The birth of this premier housing community occurred in 1959 when Milo Bauder purchased 240 acres of raw sagebrush land at an auction. He farmed this land until 1969 when he decided to build a golf course and began looking into the possibility of combining the course with a residential development. Learning that he needed at least 320 acres for a decent 18-hole course, he proceeded to expand into adjoining property owned by Max Burrup. Soon Dennis Davin and Russ Carrier also became active in the



The first Meadow Springs townhouses, 1972.



Above, one of the new developments in 1993, Sagewood Meadows is located near Badger Mountain Elementary.

At right: HillsWest, which Milo Bauder began to develop in 1975, continues to expand today.

project, and the group acquired another 320 acres of land from the state. Ground was broken for Meadow Springs in July 1970. This was one of the first golf course communities in eastern Washington. A new concept in homeownership—the townhouse—was also introduced to the area with its unveiling as the first residential property to be constructed in Meadow Springs.

The resurgence of activity at Hanford combined with the diversification efforts by the City have revitalized Richland's housing industry. The previously incomplete developments of Country Ridge, Keene Village and Willowbrook have expanded with many additional developments now under construction.



Richland has planned its developments so that residential areas can be located adjacent to parks and recreation, shopping and office or industrial areas, increasing resident convenience and reducing traffic flow. The City has contracted with Prows-wood Management, Inc. to develop Columbia Point and with Columbia Triangle Ventures to develop the Horn Rapids property.

Columbia Point's Master Plan includes condominiums and apartments, while the Horn Rapids Master Planned Community includes the potential for approximately 3,000 residential units of all types and price ranges to be completed over a 20-year period. Both developments will be centered around professional quality golf courses.

Planning has been an integral part of the City's development from the time the Army Corp of Engineers first drafted the town of Richland. Richland's Comprehensive Plan directs the City to ensure that a maximum choice of living environments is

provided for the housing needs for people of all economic levels. The preservation of the original government housing coupled with controlled development of new housing fulfills that goal.



Country Ridge



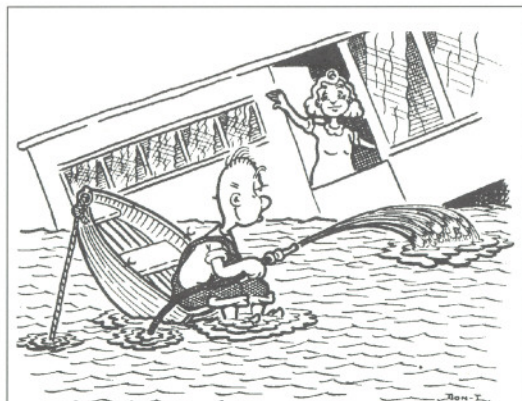
Preliminary golf course construction for the planned community at Horn Rapids, 1993.

Stories of early Hanford days

Eugene Johnson of Kennewick, employed by Morrison Knutson to do some of the initial excavation for the Hanford project, recounts the story of a local resident's protest to the government takeover of his property. Told to vacate his property, but not having received any payment for it and certainly not pleased with the prospect, the farmer refused to leave. The workers had no choice but to move the excavation equipment onto the property and start construction. When they left for the night, the farmer went out to the equipment left in the field, including a caterpillar tractor, turned on all the water supply that he could muster and proceeded to "drown the cat!" Because of the soft, sandy soil, the caterpillar soon sank out of sight!



Paul Beardsley served on the Richland police force during the early construction period. He recalls that there was very little crime—most of his calls were responses to kids turning on hoses and flooding basements. The patrol had two vehicles with public address systems mounted in them. Since there was no telephone service to the homes, one of his main duties was to drive around town when a dirt storm was coming and warn the



"WHEN YOU FINISH WATERING THE LAWN
I WISH YOU'D HELP ME STRAIGHTEN
UP THE HOUSE, DEAR."

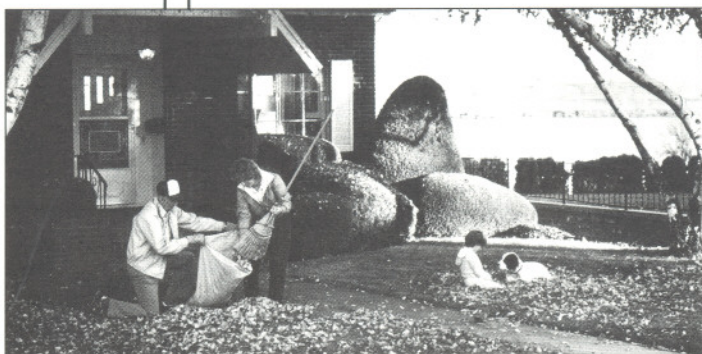


women to take down their umbrella clothes lines! Every house had a clothes line that was built in a similar fashion to today's patio umbrellas. If the umbrella wasn't collapsed after removing the clothes, or if it was still up with clothes drying on it, the strong winds would lift the "umbrella" from its stand and send it sailing, clothes and all, into the air.



Some things just don't change! This photo of dust blowing over the Horse Heaven Hills was taken Sept. 26, 1992.

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How has the energy efficiency of homes changed?

During the past 50 years, the insulation levels of homes has changed dramatically. Due to the lack of an energy code, government-built houses in Richland were not designed or constructed to conserve energy. And prior to 1986, codes did not exist to regulate minimum insulation requirements. Since 1986, the mandatory energy code has gradually increased the attention given to energy conservation.

Beyond enforcing the energy code, the City offers home owners' energy conservation services. The Weatherwise service is available to existing electrically heated homes built prior to Jan. 1, 1988; Super Good Cents is for new electrically heated homes; and the Energy Smart service is available for commercial and industrial building owners. Rebates are available through these services for the installation of energy conservation improvements beyond the energy code. Call 943-7431 for more information.

The City of Richland's energy conservation services are cosponsored by the Bonneville Power Administration.



Home Rehabilitation Loans and technical assistance available

City of Richland

Home Rehabilitation Program

The City of Richland has long been recognized for its commitment toward improving the existing housing stock and making decent, safe and sanitary housing available for all its citizens. In keeping with that goal, a variety of housing rehabilitation loans have been developed to assist owners in making needed repairs to their property. As a general rule, assisted properties must be in need of repairs to correct health, safety, structural or energy code violations. The program is designed to assist those occupants whose incomes are within HUD guidelines. The program has assisted with repairs to more than 390 homes. For more information about the program, please call 943-7595.

