Master Minds Of Hoover Dam Essay, Research Paper

Masterminds of the Hoover Dam

Imagine creating a dam 726 feet high and almost 1,244 feet long. Critics said it couldn’t be done that it was impossible. To many people it was a challenge of great magnitude. From Herbert Hoover the president of the United States in 1928, to a 69 year old guard, the Hoover dam was created. The only way to under stand the Hoover dam is to know its masterminds.

During the early 1920’s when the legislation was thinking of authorizing a building of a dam on the Colorado river, Herbert Hoover was just the Secretary of Commerce for President Warren Harding. Hoover, because of his interest in the field of engineering, attended a lot of the early meetings. These meetings looked at how the water would be distributed among seven states. The seven states involved in the project was Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. There was a lot of argument over what the states thought of a fair distribution of the water by the dam. After looking at all the states concerns, then the legislation made the Colorado River Compact. The purpose of the compact was to divide the water basin into two different parts. The upper basin would supply water to Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. Then the lower basin would supply water to Arizona, California, and Nevada. This way seemed to agree with all the other states, except for one, Arizona, who failed to sign the compact for disagreement reasons. Hoover was congratulated by many people on his skill and how he handled the matter. By this time Herbert Hoover was really making a name for himself.

Close to the age of forty, Hoover was already a millionaire. He was admired by many people for his talent in mining, engineering and his administrative skills. During World War One he was the director of the American Relief Committee. This was a London organization that was charged in helping American soldiers escape Europe. He then served as Commerce Secretary in 1928. He had a great relief when he found out that Calvin Cooldige decision not to run for reelection. Hoover then easily beat Alfred E. Smith to win the presidency. Hoover’s 1928 presidency proved to be one of the high points of his career. In his inaugural address, he confidently stated that “in no nation are the fruits of accomplishment more secure.” Then about seven months after that he was threatened by the Great Depression. The Depression proved to last a lot longer then what thought. Hoover had a lot of pressure to take more time into trying to get business and citizens out of troubles. As the Depression went on Hoover’s interest in the dam building got bigger. He was eager to lower the unemployment rolls Hoover then pushed for this project to start sooner. On September 17, 1930 Hoover’s Secretary of the Interior, Ray Layman Wilbur, took a trip out to the Nevada Desert to mark the “projects beginning.” He did this by driving a silver railroad spike into the ground. Wilbur then proclaimed, “I have the honor and privilege of giving a name to this new structure. In Black Canyon, Under the boulder Canyon Project Act, It shall be called the Hoover dam.” A lot of people disagreed by this, the reason for this is because the people felt as if Hoover brought them into the depression.

By starting the dam it opened up many new jobs which were needed. This was still not enough jobs to give all the people in the US. In 1932 Hoover had to go up for reelection. He was running against Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It was a close election but Hoover didn’t make it. The reason for this is because a lot of people hated him for the depression. About eight days after Hoovers loss. Hoover went back to the dam site that he did so much to make true. From there on there was a lot of argument over the name of the dam site. In 1933, the Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes changed the name of the dam. He returned it back to the Boulder dam. Harold Ickes was appointed the new Secretary of the Interior by Roosevelt. He replaced Hoovers last Secretary Ray Wilbur. When Ickes was appointed the new Secretary, the Six Companies became nervous. The Six companies was united to form one great company. A lot of different companies were weary of the five million dollar performance bond that the government was demanding by the winners of the bid. To see if they were stable enough to finish the dam. This was a huge financial risk for any of the construction companies. There were many ideas in forming companies to build the dam. But to Harry Morrison of the Morrison Knudsen construction firm of Boise, Idaho had a different idea. He wanted to form one company out of many different companies to create one large company. Morrison had a good working relationship with the Utah Construction. They decided that they should also help in the construction of the dam. Added to that was Charlie Shea, he was a builder of tunnels and sewers who had a bad reputation for bragging. To him this would be the perfect bragging right. Shea stated “I wouldn’t go near the banks unless I owed them at least half a million dollars–that way you get respect.” Half a million is all that he put forth to the performance bond. Shea had the right connections to further the project. He then brought along the Pacific Bridge Company and Felix Kahn of the San Francisco firm. Then came along Harry Kaiser, a young road builder from Oakland, California. Also with him came his partner Warren A. Bachtel a San Francisco Contractor who had his eyes on this project. To make the dam look more modern looking they appointed Gordon Kaufmann a southern Californian Architect of English descent. Kaufmann set out to create “a visual scheme that would complement rather than clash with the engineer’s design.” Kaufmann transformed the dam’s concrete surfaces into a modern art deco look. He also went for a monolithic appearance by keeping it from clattering. He also redesigned the powerhouse. He added shiny horizontal aluminum fins for windows. He also made the dams spillways flow freely. From the outside he made the Dam take on a space age look to this great structure. He and his recruit designed the two thirty two foot tall winged figures. His designs gave the dam a great look, and these people are the ones that made up the Six Companies.

Once they all were put into place, and the five million dollar bond was paid for, all there interest turned in to wining the bid. They heard from Washington that they were not going to give the bid out to a private firm to fill their pockets full of money. The six companies had averaged the dam price out to the very last dime. The bid Crowe gave to service was $48,890,995. This number fell short of the Reclamation Service’s bid. This was low enough to win the bid. Frank Crowe had a saying “Never my belly to a desk.” Crowe stated ” I was wild to build this dam.” He later recalled. “I had spent my life in the river bottoms, and this meant a wonderful climax– the biggest dam ever built by anyone, anywhere.” Author and engineer Donlad Wolf Describes him as “a commander, a field commander. Everybody knew he was good…

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