



Vanport

By Manly Maben

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Vanport City, Oregon was conceived in 1942 as a temporary housing project for the families of men and women who came to the Pacific Northwest to work in the Kaiser shipyards and further the war effort. Situated on a flood plain between Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, the Columbia river reclaimed the city for its own in a flood on Memorial day 1948. In its brief but vital lifetime, Vanport pushed the Portland area into a new era of change and development, leaving a legacy that is felt even today. During its time, Vanport was the largest housing project in the United States (perhaps the world) and the second largest city in Oregon. It provided twenty-four hour day-care for the children living there, laid the foundations for Portland State University through its Vanport Extension Center, and provided housing for the thousands of new workers attracted to the city of Portland by the shipyards. A planner's dream and at times a tenant's nightmare, Vanport affected much more than its immediate occupants during its limited lifetime. Manly Maben has written a comprehensive history of the project, combing through Housing Authority of Portland records and interviewing the people that made Vanport hum. He takes the reader through daily life and its hurdy-gurdy qualities, schools, race relations, the public image of Vanport, its political ups and downs, its final obliteration by floodwaters, and the aftermath of the project's destruction. Vanport encapsulated the changes that occurred in American society during World War II. As one of the government's most ambitious attempts at social planning, VANPORT is essential reading for students of urban planning, or for those who simply want to preserve the memory of a dynamic chapter in the history of the Pacific Northwest. Illustrated. Includes a bibliography and an index.

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