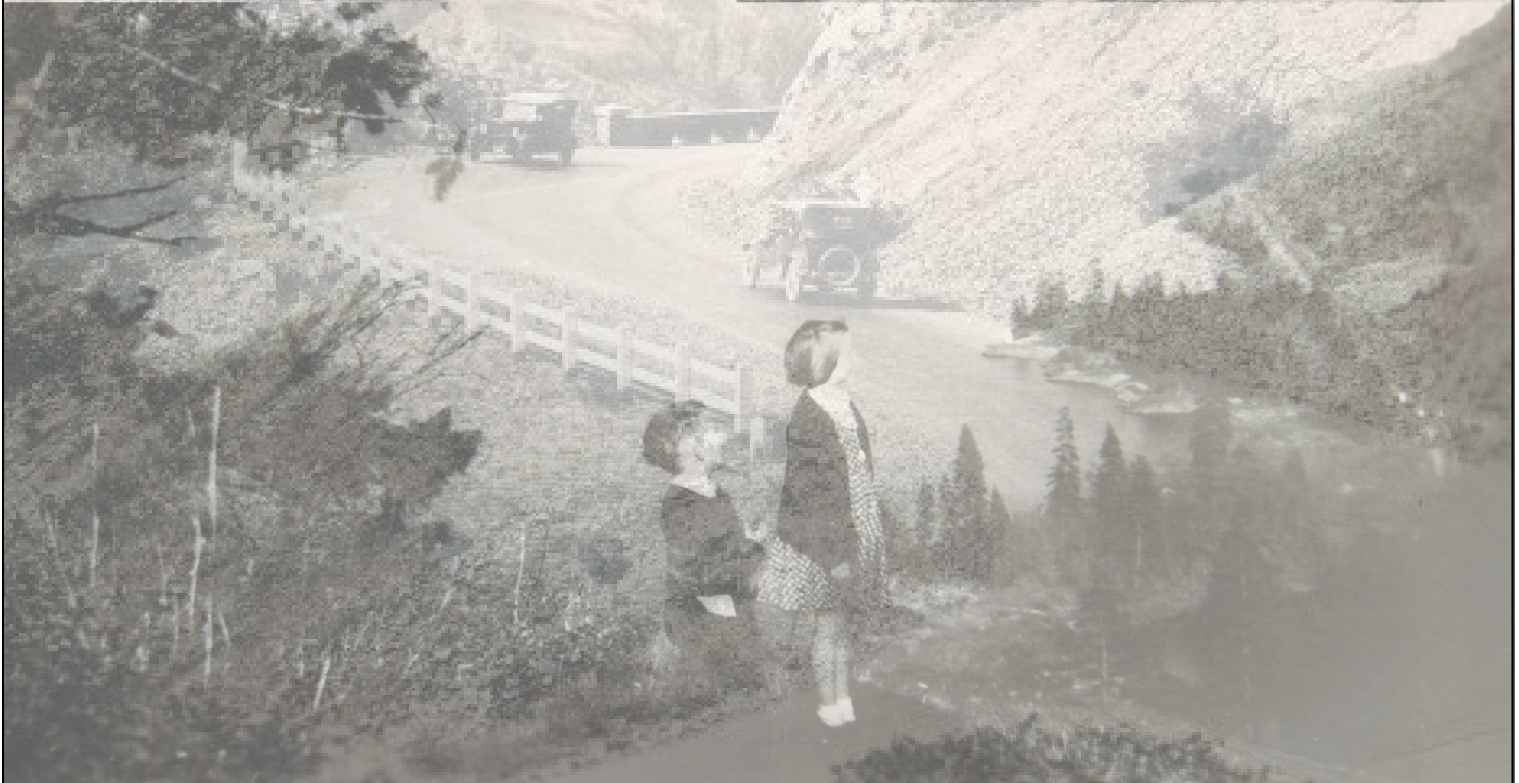
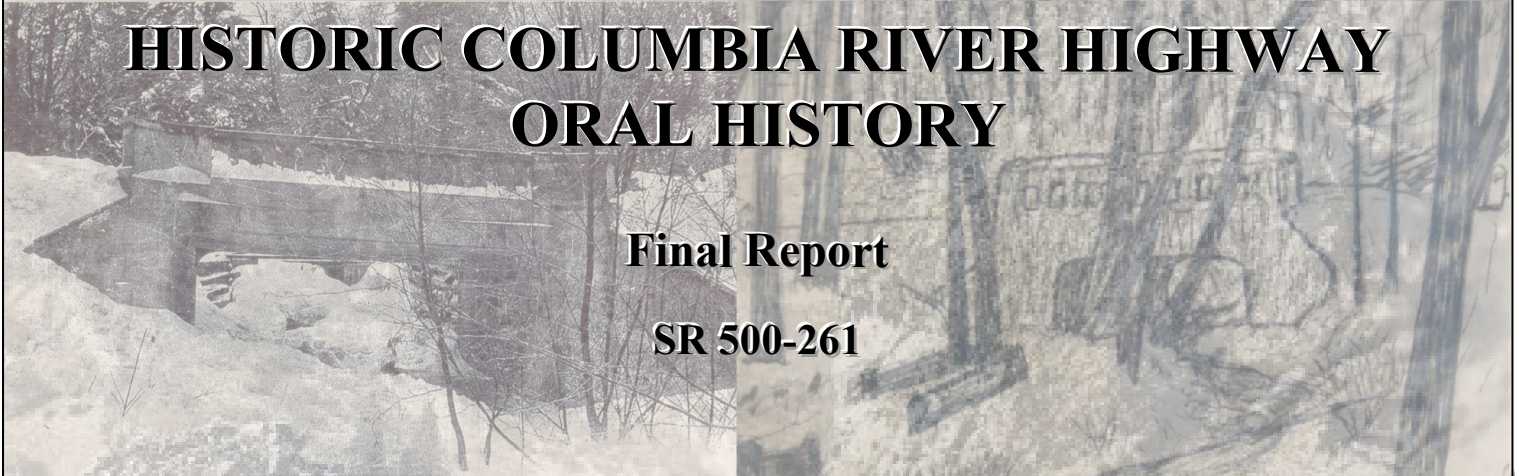




HISTORIC COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY ORAL HISTORY

Final Report

SR 500-261



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by

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16. Abstract The Historic Columbia River Highway: Oral History Project compliments a larger effort in Oregon to reconnect abandoned sections of the Historic Columbia River Highway. The goals of the larger reconnection project, "Milepost 2016 Reconnection Project" (http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/), are to 'remember,' 'restore,' and 'reconnect' sections of the old historic highway. One of these sections includes the area between Cascade Locks and Hood River, which was abandoned or destroyed as part of construction of Interstate 84 (I-84). The objective of the Oral History Project was to capture oral histories surrounding the areas of Cascade Locks to Hood River. As part of the project, 19 people were interviewed who had either lived in the area, helped to build sections of highway or interstate, or who have helped to preserve the historic area. Much of the cultural history of this section of highway has been lost since its abandonment over 50 years ago. This research project was aimed at culturally reconnecting the highway and providing information useful to the overall restoration of the highway as a trail. Included in this final report are recollections of the towns of Dodson, Bonneville, Cascade Locks, Viento, Sonny and Hood River, as well as memories of destinations along the Historic Columbia River Highway such as Crown Point, Multnomah Falls Lodge, Mitchell Point Tunnel, and others. Experiences from the highway builders and preservationists are also shared.					
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SI* (MODERN METRIC) CONVERSION FACTORS

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*SI is the symbol for the International System of Measurement

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Sincere gratitude is expressed towards the interview participants, who volunteered their time to share their recollections and experiences. Their contributions greatly enhance the cultural understanding of the Historic Columbia River Highway and Gorge.

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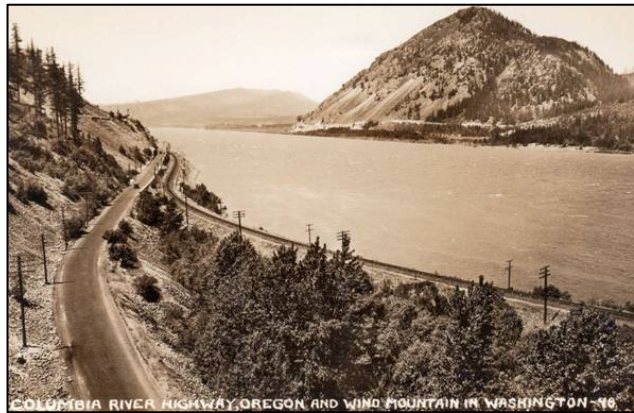


Image courtesy of David Sell

**The Historic Columbia River Highway near
Shell Rock Mountain**

Marie Malatak
W. Reid Meritt
Lewis L. McArthur
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Clarence Mershon
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William Pattison
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HISTORIC COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY: ORAL HISTORY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT.....	1
2.0	HISTORICAL CONTEXT	3
2.1	THE COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY	3
2.1.1	<i>John Arthur Elliott and Hood River County.....</i>	<i>3</i>
2.1.2	<i>Mitchell Point Tunnel and Viaduct.....</i>	<i>4</i>
2.2	CHANGES IN TRAFFIC.....	6
2.3	PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORIC COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY.....	7
3.0	THE PLACES AND PEOPLE.....	9
3.1	DODSON.....	10
3.2	CASCADE LOCKS.....	14
3.3	VIENTO	22
3.4	MITCHELL POINT AND SONNY	28
3.5	HOOD RIVER	40
4.0	THE BUILDERS.....	47
5.0	THE PRESERVATIONISTS.....	57
6.0	FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	71
6.1	FINDINGS	71
6.2	CONCLUSIONS.....	73
7.0	REFERENCES.....	75

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Historic Columbia River Highway Timeline.....	8
--	---

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Mitchell Point Tunnel	5
Figure 2.2: Alex Besoloff, contractor, standing on finished grade of the water-level Columbia River Highway, in Cascade Locks, 1938. The original highway and the Bridge of the Gods are on the left side of the photo.....	6

Figure 3.1: Hollywood Dairy at Dodson	10
Figure 3.2: Hollywood Dairy, 1938.	11
Figure 3.3: Bonneville Auditorium. Location of JoAnne’s Sunday School where Samuel Lancaster taught.....	13
Figure 3.4: Cascade Locks shown on the 1927 Metsker Map.....	14
Figure 3.5: Cascade Locks Portage Road and Block House, 1850s.....	14
Figure 3.6: Cascade Locks Main Street, circa 1905	14
Figure 3.7: Bonneville School, late 1930s.....	15
Figure 3.8: WaNaPa Street, Cascade Locks, about 1940.	18
Figure 3.9: Mitchell Point Tunnel.	19
Figure 3.10: Bridge of the Gods in Cascade Locks, Oregon.....	21
Figure 3.11: 1927 Metsker Map showing Viento.....	22
Figure 3.12: Family picnic at Viento State Park, 1969.....	22
Figure 3.13: Valda’s grandparents, great aunts and cousins.	23
Figure 3.14: Valda’s father, Jack Jones, standing in front of J.O. Jones Grocery and Service Station, 1930s.	23
Figure 3.15: Jones family gathering.	24
Figure 3.16: Drawing of Viento Bridge, by Valda Jones Dryden at age 16.....	24
Figure 3.17: Fountain at Viento.....	26
Figure 3.18: J. O. Jones Property at Viento.....	27
Figure 3.19: 1927 Metsker Map showing Sonny and Mitchell Point.....	28
Figure 3.20: East portal of Mitchell Point Tunnel.....	28
Figure 3.21: Mitchell Point Tunnel, about 1920.	29
Figure 3.22: Buildings at Mitchell Point, about 1950.	29
Figure 3.23: Little Boy Ranch 1916 Christmas card. Pictured are Charles and Joan Parker.	30
Figure 3.24: William and Elsie Tenney.....	31
Figure 3.25: Buildings at Mitchell Point in 1943. The building shown in the upper right corner is the original “Little Boy Ranch” house and “Road House Joint.”	32
Figure 3.26: An early photo of the second Locke home (built in 1908)	37
Figure 3.27: Mitchell Point.....	38
Figure 3.28: Locke/Galligan property prior to the construction of the water-level route.....	39
Figure 3.29: 1927 Metsker Map showing Hood River.....	40
Figure 3.30: Hood River, Oregon, 1949.....	41
Figure 3.31: Oak Street, Hood River, Oregon, ca. 1900.	41
Figure 3.32: Main Street, Hood River, Oregon, ca. 1900.....	41
Figure 3.33: Crag Rats Club House Chimney	43
Figure 3.34: President Franklin D. Roosevelt in lead car, right rear seat. FDR had just dedicated Bonneville Dam and was heading to Timberline Lodge to participate in its dedication. East of Toothrock Tunnel, on the realigned Columbia River Highway, September 28, 1937.....	44
Figure 4.1: Aerial view of the Columbia River Highway from Herman Creek to Gorton Creek, 1957.....	49
Figure 4.2: Roadbed for New Alignment of Columbia River Highway near Mitchell Point.....	52
Figure 4.3: Moffett Creek Bridge, 1949. Pictured is the original bridge, which had been replaced by the time John was conducting inspections.....	54
Figure 4.4: Female flagger during World War II, 1940s.....	55
Figure 4.5: West side of Tooth Rock, west portal of railroad tunnel and approximate location of west portal of proposed highway tunnel.....	55
Figure 5.1: Restoration of Oneonta Tunnel.....	57
Figure 5.2: Standard wooden guard fence along the historic highway.....	59
Figure 5.3: Eagle Creek-to-Cascade Locks section of the HCRH State Trail.....	66
Figure 5.4: Historic Columbia River Highway Bicycle and Pedestrian Map.....	67

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH): Oral History Project was initiated in an effort to capture first-hand accounts of the historic highway, construction of Interstate 84 (originally designated I-80), and of the surrounding Columbia River Gorge area. Constructed between 1913 and 1922, the Historic Columbia River Highway was America's first scenic highway. It served thousands of travelers and took full advantage of the Columbia River Gorge's natural beauty, to become known as the "King of Roads". By the late 1940s, and early 1950s many sections of the old highway were bypassed, leaving some remaining segments disconnected and abandoned.

By the mid- to late- 1980s initiatives were developed to preserve and enhance remaining sections of the HCRH and reconnect others as a trail. Since that time, 62 of the original 73 miles of the highway have been opened to travel, either by motor vehicle (historic highway or connecting county roads) or by foot and bicycle (State Trail). Today 11 miles of State Trail have been constructed, while an additional 12 miles await reconnection. The Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee and the Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway have joined together to develop the "Milepost 2016 Reconnection Strategy," which advocates for the completion of the State Trail by 2016, the 100th anniversary of the dedication of Samuel Lancaster's and John Arthur Elliott's masterpiece.



In compliment to the reconnection effort, the Historic Columbia River Highway: Oral History Project provides data on the memories of individuals who had either lived in the area, helped to build sections of the highway or interstate, or who have helped to preserve the historic area. This understanding can be used to help guide the future development of the State Trail alignment and interpretive opportunities, especially between the Cascade Locks and Hood River sections.

1.1 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report summarizes findings from the ODOT Historic Columbia River Highway: Oral History Project. As part of the project, a total of 19 people were interviewed from May 2009 to June 2009. Highlights from the interviews are provided in the body of the report. A second phase effort was initiated to complete appendices for this project, which include: full transcriptions (Appendix A); digital voice recordings of each interview (Appendix B); copies of the Oral History Donor Forms and Photo Donor Forms; and profiles and transcriptions for two supplemental interviews that were completed in the second phase of this effort (Appendix D). All appendices are published on a DVD, which is available upon request.

In the body of the report, Section 2.0 summarizes the historical context for the Historic Columbia River Highway and surrounding area and includes a historical timeline. The mid

sections highlight information attained from the oral history interviews, as well as include historical background information where appropriate. These sections are organized as follows:

- Section 3.0: *The Places and People* – highlights stories and recollections from individuals who lived along the Historic Columbia River Highway prior to and/or during the development of Interstate 84.
- Section 4.0: *The Builders* – includes highlights from narrators (interviewees) who were involved in the construction and maintenance of Interstate 84 and the Historic Columbia River Highway.
- Section 5.0: *The Preservationists* –highlights recollections of individuals working to preserve the Historic Columbia River Highway for future generations and who were involved in early preservation efforts.

The final section of the report synthesizes some of the unique information that was discovered as part of this research effort and summarizes how the results can be used.

2.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Columbia River Gorge has long been a transportation corridor. The ancient river, shaped by the volcanic outpourings of the Columbia River Basalts, was stripped clean of soil and vegetation by the last Bretz Flood, about 13,000 years ago. In time, however, the Gorge restocked and fish runs drew tribes from all over the Pacific Northwest.

In May 1792, an American sea trader, Robert Gray, entered the ‘River of the West’ and named it for his ship, Columbia. Lewis and Clark later traveled down this river in 1805. And in the 1840s, westward-bound pioneers could travel by wagon as far as The Dalles, but had to take to the river in log rafts to make it past the Cascades. It proved a perilous journey, if not an impossible one.

In 1845, Samuel Barlow and Joel Palmer founded the Barlow Road around Mount Hood and the first wagons came through the following year. By the 1850s, steamboats were running on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers and reached The Dalles in 1851. A wagon road portage on the Oregon side followed that same year. Remnants of this old road remain today near Shell Rock Mountain.

In 1862, the first locomotive, the Oregon Pony, appeared in the Gorge courtesy of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. The railroad expanded rapidly and by the 1880s, the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company ran along the Columbia’s south shore bank from Portland to The Dalles. The wagon road was eliminated and the river traffic drastically reduced.

2.1 THE COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY

By the turn of the century, modern highway development had advanced significantly, with pioneering advances in road design. A testament to this new development was the Columbia River Highway. Opened to the public in 1915, and by 1922 the first paved road to connect Portland to The Dalles, the Columbia River Highway was an exemplar of American landscape architecture, specifically as the first scenic highway in the United States. The highway’s adherence to grade and curve standards, the use of comprehensive drainage systems, dry and mortared masonry walls, reinforced concrete bridges, and asphaltic concrete pavement on a rural, mountain road during the formative years of modern highway building reflect vast engineering achievements.

The highway skirted the southern wall of the Gorge and heralded the end of the railroad’s 30-year reign.

2.1.1 John Arthur Elliott and Hood River County

From 1913 to 1915, the Hood River and Wasco county courts arranged for John Arthur Elliott, an Oregon State Highway Department (OSHD) locating engineer, to prepare a plan and profile

for the Columbia River Highway (CRH) through their counties. Many voters in both jurisdictions were reluctant to spend the money on constructing the route, let alone employ a locating engineer to survey it. Some were completely satisfied with the present county road system, which included grades of up to 18 percent on routes between Hood River and The Dalles.

Elliott began his survey of Hood River County in late 1913. By early February 1914, OSHD crews had located much of the 22 miles of the new highway from the Multnomah County line to the city of Hood River. The route would reuse parts of the 1872 The Dalles-to-Sandy Wagon Road. However, Elliott's crews surveyed new alignments in the sections where construction of the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company mainline had destroyed the old road.

Elliott was a 1909 University of Washington graduate who studied civil engineering under Samuel Lancaster, the designer of the Multnomah County segment of the CRH. Elliott brought with him the skills of a top engineer, combined with the belief in locating a route that took in the many scenic wonders along the Columbia River in Hood River County. His work complemented greatly his mentor's abilities and eye for aesthetic qualities in roadway engineering.

By July 1914, Hood River County citizens voted nearly three-to-one for a bond issue to begin constructing the connector segments of the CRH between the Multnomah County line and the city of Hood River. This construction marked the beginning of a full-scale improvement of the entire section west of Hood River.

2.1.2 Mitchell Point Tunnel and Viaduct

Elliott's greatest challenge in Hood River County was Mitchell Point, a large basalt headland about four miles west of Hood River. There, the old wagon road passed a saddle between the 400-foot Little Mitchell Point and the 1,100-foot Big Mitchell Point at an elevation of 250 feet. The route included grades between 10 and 23 percent to bring it up and over the natural passage in the formation. Elliott feared that to carry the CRH over the same saddle he needed to "develop distance" as Lancaster had done in Multnomah County, to keep the grade at something less than five percent. One outing of highway enthusiasts illustrated the difficulties in driving over Mitchell Point on the existing wagon road. Elliott wrote that: "some machines refused to climb the hill because the oil [gasoline] would settle back in the tank beyond reach of the motors, others had brakes the driver would not trust, but a great many machines were turned back when the man at the wheel took a look at the narrow, winding and rocky path with a wall of rock and gravel on one side and a death dealing abyss on the other" (*Elliott 1929*).

Elliott chose instead to take a shorter, more direct alignment, but it required finding a location "which would not endanger the railroad and at the same time would not cost excessively" (*Elliott 1929*). He eventually located his route by cutting a ledge into a cliff, building a viaduct, and tunneling through Lower Mitchell Point. Elliott saw his plan for a cliff-hugging road, viaduct, and tunnel as the practical solution for ending hair-raising and dangerous traveling in this part of the Columbia River Gorge.

Elliott had learned of the three-windowed tunnel on Switzerland's *Axenstrasse* while studying with Lancaster in Seattle. In surveying the CRH in the Mitchell Point section, he picked the

Lower Mitchell Point for a similar design. He hoped to improve upon the *Axenstrasse* tunnel, which had pillars between windows built up from masonry, by creating a tunnel on the highway that had no artificial construction. The natural columns, though, could not be too thick, for Elliott feared the windows might take on the appearance of side tunnels. He also chose a curved alignment rather than a straight bore, because he believed “the light effect would be lost” (*Elliott 1929*). The adits (windows) would admit a continuous glow during daylight hours, for which the motorists would not know the source. It was also the most economical construction alternative. The natural portals and window, along with the unlined bore, visually connected the tunnel with its surrounding landscape, by taking on the appearance of a cave—nature’s handiwork—and help make this portion of the CRH visually subordinate to its surroundings.

In his reconnaissance of the tunnel site, Elliott noted indentations in the cliff wall that he believed were “cheap window locations,” and with some testing, he pinpointed the five that he thought would best illuminate the bore. In addition, the bore’s curvature was such that drivers approaching the tunnel from either end had a head-on view of the central three windows and the rock columns that separated them. To insure that the firm awarded the excavation contract used care in boring the tunnel and in cutting the adits, the Highway Department contract provided a premium for “close work.” So while the tunnel was designed with project costs as the first concern, aesthetics and an incentive for accuracy in cutting followed closely behind.

Construction began on the Mitchell Point section in March 1915. At the western end, the highway’s alignment left the wagon road’s route, and there the first obstacle was to round a cliff that was too high and too expensive to take out as an open cut. Elliott found that he could hold a line out as far as possible, undercutting the narrowest possible ledge from the cliff for the roadbed (essentially a half-tunnel) and constructing masonry retaining walls to gain width. From there he built a 192-foot reinforced-concrete slab viaduct over a shell rock talus slope, before cutting a 390-foot windowed tunnel through Lower Mitchell Point. From the east portal, the route continued on to rejoin the wagon road’s alignment. The total distance of the Mitchell Point section was .84 miles.

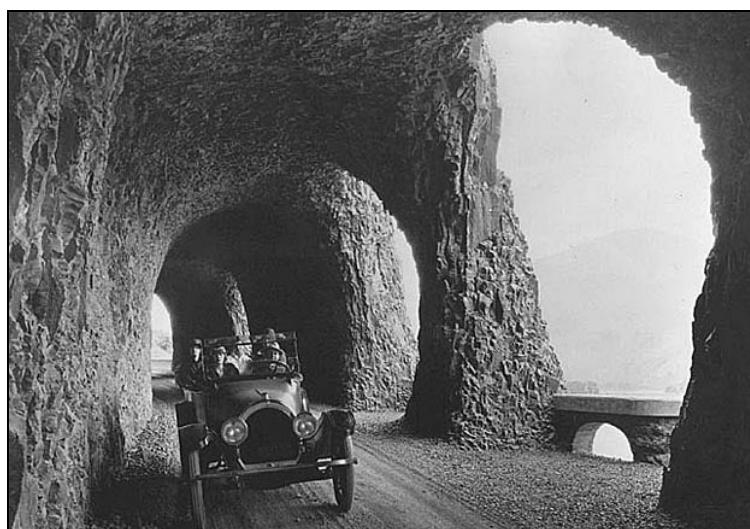


Photo courtesy of David Sell

Figure 2.1: Mitchell Point Tunnel.

Elliott defended the tunnel's construction from detractors who declared it impracticable, expensive, and dangerous. Many contractors even declared the tunnel's construction impossible, but the Mitchell Point Tunnel and Viaduct opened for traffic in early September 1915. Total costs were about \$47,000, which was \$3,000 less than the state appropriation.

Mitchell Point Tunnel became known as the "Tunnel of Many Vistas," and Samuel Lancaster believed that it was "among the most wonderful pieces of highway construction in the civilized world." He saw it as "fully equal to the famous 'Auxenstrasse' [*sic*] of Switzerland and one of the great features of the Highway." Indeed, while the *Axenstrasse*'s tunnel had three windows, the Mitchell Point Tunnel had five. This tunnel's style was used again on the CRH on the Mosier Twin Tunnels. The portals and windows at both locations were "cave-like" elements that simulated nature's handiwork. They were later seen in the 1920s on early national park roads. The Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel, created in Zion National Park in 1930, continued the theme of viewing bays, or adits, for visitors to take in the surrounding natural beauty.

2.2 CHANGES IN TRAFFIC

As traffic increased in the 1920s and 1930s, it was evident that the tunnels on the CRH were narrow and dangerous. The Highway Department installed one-way traffic signals at the portals by the early 1940s. Construction on the new two-lane water level alignment of CRH began in earnest after World War II. It had opened to Bridal Veil by 1948 and to The Dalles by 1954.



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 2.2: Alex Besoloff, contractor, standing on finished grade of the water-level Columbia River Highway, in Cascade Locks, 1938. The original highway and the Bridge of the Gods are on the left side of the photo.

The new route bypassed Mitchell Point Tunnel and closed what many considered a narrow, hazardous piece of the CRH. In 1966, the tunnel and viaduct were removed with explosives and machinery during widening of the water-level route to a four-lane freeway configuration. A resource important to Oregon and American transportation history was lost forever.

By the early 1950s, the OSHD had diverted most of the CRH's traffic to the new two-lane water-level route. The Department saved the segment of the old highway through the falls section in Multnomah County for a tourist route. The segment from Mosier to The Dalles remained a farm-to-market road. Much of the road in far eastern Multnomah County and in Hood River County was abandoned or destroyed.

By the late 1950s, the OSHD began widening the two-lane water-level route to four lanes and upgrading it to interstate highway standards. This work was completed between Portland and The Dalles by 1969. The route wore the Interstate 80N shield until 1980, when it became Interstate 84. The renaming was part of a nationwide effort to eliminate split and suffixed routes.

A synopsis of the information provided above is shown in the Historic Columbia River Highway Timeline on the following page (Table 2.1).

2.3 PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORIC COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY

The construction of the freeway through the Columbia River Gorge (now Interstate 84) severed the original route in a number of locations. The Oregon Legislature recognized this loss in 1987 and directed the Oregon Department of Transportation to preserve and enhance existing portions of the historic highway and plan for reconnection of this scenic route as a State Trail.

Since 1987, the Oregon Legislature has identified a strong desire to maintain, enhance and restore the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH). ODOT has worked with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the State Historic Preservation Office and Travel Oregon to preserve, enhance and reconnect the Historic Columbia River Highway. Much work has been accomplished since that date and 62 of the original 73 miles of the HCRH are now open to travel either by motor vehicle (Historic Highway or connecting county roads) or by foot and bicycle (State Trail). Today, the drivable sections of the Historic Columbia River Highway have been restored to their 1920s appearance, and 11 miles of the State Trail are complete. ODOT and its partners have set a target of 2016 for reconnecting and reopening the remaining 12 miles of trail.

Table 2.1: Historic Columbia River Highway Timeline

Date	Event
Aug. 1913	Samuel C. Lancaster appointed as consulting engineer in Multnomah County and assistant state highway engineer.
Sept. 1913	Lancaster completed survey in Multnomah County from Chanticleer Point (now Portland Women's Forum State Scenic Viewpoint) to Multnomah Falls and later to Eagle Creek.
Oct. 1913- Nov. 1914	Grading from Chanticleer Point to Eagle Creek.
Oct. 1913- Feb. 1914	John A. Elliott, locating engineer for the Oregon State Highway Commission (OSHC), surveyed from Multnomah/Hood River county line to the City of Hood River; including the location of Mitchell Point Tunnel.
1914	Grading of three segments in Hood River County totaled 5.3 miles. (Multnomah/Hood River County line to ½ mile west of Cascade locks—1.5 miles; east of Wyeth to Shellrock Mountain—1.7 miles; and Shellrock Mountain to Viento Hill—2.1 miles.)
1914-15	Twenty-two miles graded from 2 ½ miles west of Cascade Locks to city of Hood River.
1914	Construction of bridges, viaducts, and Oneonta Tunnel, from Crown Point to Horsetail Falls.
1915	Construction of Bridges and viaducts from McCord Creek to Eagle Creek.
Mar.-Nov. 1915	Construction of the Mitchell Point Tunnel.
Jul. 1915	Official opening of highway from Chanticleer Point to the city of Hood River.
Feb. 1916	Elliott conducted a preliminary survey from Hood River/ Wasco County line to The Dalles.
Jun. 1916	Dedication of highway (June 7, 1916) with ceremonies at Crown Point and Multnomah Falls. (Paving with Warrenite completed to Multnomah Falls at time of dedication.)
1916-18	Construction of bridges and viaducts from Ruckel Creek to Rock Creek, west of Mosier, including the Hood River Bridge.
1917	Wasco County road built over Seven-Mile Hill between Mosier and The Dalles.
1917-18	Viento and Cascade Locks segments graded and surfaced.
1917-18	Grading and macadamizing from Multnomah/Hood River county line to City of Hood River.
1918	Completion of Crown Point Vista House (Dedicated May 5, 1918).
1919	Final location of the M-Rowena route made by J. H. Scott, Locating engineering (OSHD).
1919-20	Grading and macadamizing from city of Hood River to Rowena. Paving from Cascade Locks to City of Hood River. This portion macadamized in 1918. Open to traffic in August 1920. Paving from Cascade Locks to City of Hood River. This portion macadamized in 1918. Open to traffic in August 1920.
1919-21	Construction of bridges, viaducts and Mosier Twin Tunnels in Hood River and Wasco Counties. (Mosier Twin Tunnels completed in April 1921). Grading and macadamizing from Mosier to Rowena (open to traffic in June 1920.)
1921-22	Paving from City of Hood River to The Dalles officially opened to traffic in June 1922.
Jul. 1922	Formal dedication at The Dalles of the eastern paved portion of the highway (July 2, 1922)
1933	Surveys for the new highway ordered between Troutdale and Cascade locks.
1935	Oregon State Highway Commission and US Army Corps of Engineers built a cut through just east of Eagle Creek on new water-level alignment to provide passage for railroad and highway towards Cascade Locks around anticipated pool behind Bonneville Dam.
1936	Highway Bridge across Eagle Creek under construction on new water-level alignment.
1937	Toothrock Tunnel on new water-level alignment opened as part of Bonneville Dam project.
Jan. 1953	Rock fall blocked highway between Mosier and Hood River at mouth of Twin Tunnels. Traffic routed to Washington side until new highway (water route) opened later that month. New highway opened to traffic between Hood River and The Dalles.
1954	Mitchell Point Tunnel, Mosier Twin Tunnels and Oneonta Gorge Tunnel barricaded and closed to the public due to safety concerns.
Dec. 1954	Portland attorney Frank Branch Riley writes a letter deploring the maintenance of the old highway as being "shabbily neglected" which caused debate and discussion of the decisions behind the recent closing of the Mosier Twin Tunnels, Mitchell Point Tunnel and Oneonta Tunnel.

3.0 THE PLACES AND PEOPLE

The Columbia River Highway was once the only road connecting Portland to The Dalles. Construction of the interstate changed the physical and cultural landscape of the area. Sections of the old highway were abandoned; others became local routes. The location of the new highway, eventually known as Interstate 84, and service that it provided changed the dynamics of towns in the Columbia Gorge.

Some of these towns are discussed in the following section, which highlights stories and recollections from the people who lived along the Columbia River Highway prior to and/or during the development of Interstate 84. Places such as Mitchell Point, Sonny, Viento, Wyeth, Lindsey Creek, Bonneville, Dodson and Cascade Locks are discussed. Many of the accounts described in this section provide information that is not well documented elsewhere and help to reconnect the cultural history of the area.

In this section, oral history summaries are provided for the following places:

- Dodson
 - Joanne Bucher Moore
- Cascade Locks
 - Don Haight (including some information about Dodson and Bonneville)
 - Jean McLean
 - Ralph Hesgard
- Viento
 - Darlene Stiles
 - Valda Jones Dryden
- Mitchell Point and Sonny
 - Marie Malatak
 - Michael William Tenney and Barbara Hosford
 - Ray Galligan
- Hood River
 - William D. Pattison

3.1 DODSON

Dodson, Oregon is located on the south side of Interstate 84, 35 miles east of Portland and 21 miles west of Cascade Locks. Present-day Dodson consists mostly of residences. The town is thought to be named after Ira Dodson, a land claimant and early settler in the area. Dodson was originally a railway station. The Dodson station was moved several times during its history, including being located near the town of Warrendale. Warrendale, which lies north of Dodson, was named for Frank M. Warren, Sr., a pioneer fish packer of Oregon, and a prominent citizen of Portland. He was drowned in the wreck of the Titanic in April 1912 (*McArthur 1992*).

Dodson was a blue-collar town. Many of its residents worked at the nearby Bonneville Dam or at factories. Other industries in Dodson included fishing and farming. One of the larger farms in the area was a dairy known as Hollywood Dairy (Figure 3.1).



Photo Courtesy of JoAnne Bucher Mohr

Figure 3.1: Hollywood Dairy at Dodson.

JoAnne Bucher Mohr

Long-time resident of Dodson

JoAnne Bucher Mohr was interviewed by Linda Dodds on May 26, 2009 at her home in Oregon City, where she has lived since 2000. Her residence features the work of various artists of the Columbia River Gorge and, in her back yard, she enjoys raised bed gardening. The beds are constructed in basalt brought in from the Bucher farm in Dodson.

Family

JoAnne's family settled in Bridal Veil, Oregon in 1919, on property rented from Fred Luscher. JoAnne's father, Joseph Arnold Bucher, and her mother, Elma Bertha Wyss, farmed on the Luscher place until they moved to Dodson in 1929. JoAnne recalls that her father came to Oregon from Switzerland in 1919, assisted by a Catholic priest from Mt. Angel. He left Switzerland because his father (JoAnne's grandfather) had died, and it was necessary to sell the property. He found employment in the logging camps, but during a hard winter found a job in the dairy business.

In the early 1920s, JoAnne's parents met and married. They became acquainted when they lived on adjoining farms – she on land at 162nd Ave. and Halsey St., and he on a farm at 181st Ave. and Halsey St., east of Portland. Her mother, Elma, had attended Girls Polytechnic High School in Portland. The young couple had a little dairy in the area, but then moved to Bridal Veil for a few years where JoAnne's oldest sister was born. In 1929, the family relocated to Dodson and five more children joined the family, including JoAnne.

The Bucher farm was known as "Hollywood on the Columbia" when Joseph Bucher purchased the property. Under Bucher's ownership, the 750-acre spread became the site of the Hollywood Dairy (Figure 3.2).

"It's the farm in Dodson – the only one there, with the big barn. We lived in the house just east of the barn.... The farm went clear to Horsetail Creek;

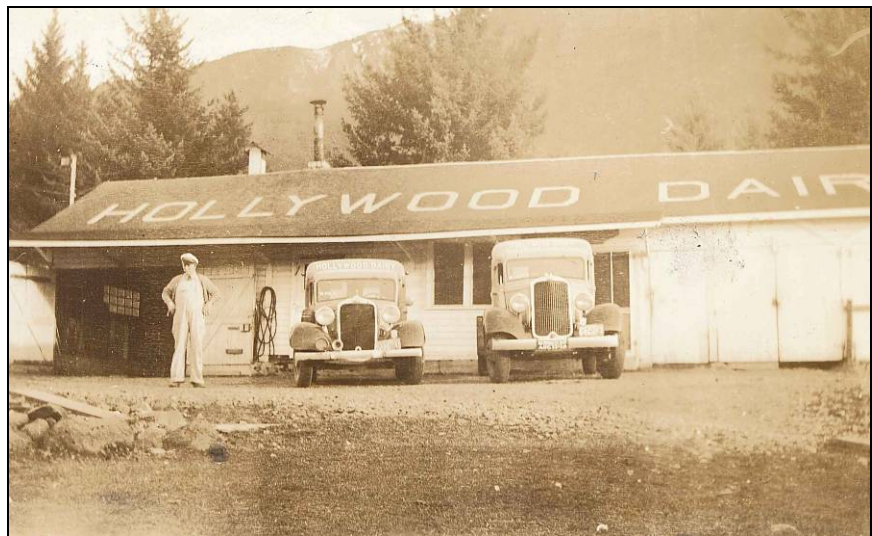


Photo courtesy of JoAnne Bucher Mohr

Figure 3.2: Hollywood Dairy, 1938.

Ainsworth Park was part of [it]...I think the barn was built in the early 1900s – a great barn, but it’s about to fall down now. [The barn was for] the cows and then after [Dad] sold the cows, he had sheep, basically to keep the grass down in the pastures... So I took care of my dad’s sheep for about 12 years, when he got to where he couldn’t do it.”

“There were work horses [and] all the hay had to be done by hand – pitched on and off. [Dad] had equipment to cut the hay, but he was really good with scythe – he could mow down more grass with scythe than anybody I ever saw – just so rhythmic. [Dad] had Holsteins, Guernsey and every once in a while he’d have Jerseys, but they were a little cantankerous – he didn’t like Jerseys... There was the milk house and the water came from a spring at the foot of the mountain and ran through here and eventually under the road. He had a pond and out across the pasture, that’s where we dammed it up, but the water was really cold. As soon as he’d milk the cows, he ... would carry a ten gallon can – one in each hand – from the barn up to the milk house... After the milk was collected, he cooled it, then pasteurized and bottled it. He had a bottler and the whole thing to separate the cream – it was a full fledged little dairy. Above the barn was a bunk house. I think that’s where three or four guys would sleep. And then he had a couple of little places in back, too, where different ones stayed.”

JoAnne says that the processed milk was sealed with a bottle cap that said,

“Bonneville Dam, Good Grade A Milk.”

The delivery area “was basically from Dodson to Wyeth on the Oregon side and Skamania to Home Valley on the Washington side. He pastured the cows – there were a lot of big pastures [before] the freeway went through and took two of the big ones out – but he pastured clear down to Horsetail Creek in the summer. [The clients were] both stores and schools. At the [Bonneville] dam project, if they thought it looked tacky for the milk to be delivered in the front, [the deliveryman] had to go around to the back, and some of them had to take the milk and put it in the refrigerator. Then when the war [World War II] started and dad lost all of his young help, he started leaving [the milk] in boxes out on the front porch... because he didn’t have time, he didn’t have enough help, and he was pretty much doing it by himself then.”

JoAnne grew up on the farm, went to Bonneville School and graduated from Cascade Locks High School. She married Richard Dale Mohr, of Hood River, and raised four children while the family lived in various locations. In 1965, in time for the birth of her youngest son, JoAnne and her husband moved to a house on the Dodson farm.

Dodson

“Dodson was probably the greatest little community you could ever live in. It was like having family and all the kids played together – it didn’t matter what age you were, you were all out terrorizing the woods and a couple of the men, when they would get home from work at the [Bonneville] Dam, would have ball games out in the pasture... Kids that grew up there say that was the happiest year of their lives – in Dodson. I still hear people say that.”

Besides working at the dam, JoAnne recalls that fishing and a box factory provided work for local families. Some people worked in Portland, too. For cultural life, she says the theatre in

Cascade Locks provided entertainment, and there was a Sunday school in the auditorium at the Bonneville reservation (Figure 3.3). JoAnne’s Sunday school teacher was Samuel Lancaster.

Samuel Lancaster

“I remember he [Lancaster] was a big man, but always very, very loving – just a terrific guy. I was just a little kid and I remember he never yelled at us kids for doing stuff we shouldn’t be doing. He was just a great guy and he knew someone in town – I don’t know who – but he was a florist. So when he came out – he used to come out on the Greyhound bus. Bonneville had a hotel at the time – that’s where the bus stopped – and then he’d come with these boxes of flowers; gardenias or whatever the guy had leftover that he didn’t sell. He’d pass them around to everybody. I remember he gave us a big box of gardenias one time and my mom had allergies, so she didn’t want them in the house. We had a Great Dane, so he had gardenias around the door of his doghouse. Just stuff like that. He was a great guy. ...I remember going with my mother on Easter Sunday for the sunrise service at Overlook Park, which is just above the dam by Eagle Creek, and standing up there in the cold. I’ve always loved the sunrise service because of that, and he was just a good man.”



Photo Courtesy of Jean McLean

Figure 3.3: Bonneville Auditorium. Location of JoAnne’s Sunday School where Samuel Lancaster taught.

“...One time he [Samuel Lancaster] said the most important road he ever built was the one from Bonneville Sunday School to heaven...”

Historic Columbia River Highway

JoAnne recalls restaurants along the now historic highway. She says, “There was a place to eat – it seemed like every two miles. They were on the side of the road between Chanticleer and the Vista House where the road goes up Larch Mountain. Right in there was a restaurant on that bluff, and then there was Latourell with a place to eat, and a place near Shepherd’s Dell. I think it was called the White Elephant or something like that. There was just a place every so often, where you could stop and get something to eat.” JoAnne adds that the family favorite was the hamburger.

In Dodson, JoAnne remembers a motel and Sherman’s Inn, too. It had a restaurant and a gas station. The big barn that belonged to JoAnne’s family was always a prominent landmark along the highway at Dodson. She says the barn used to have slogans painted on it, but people drove into the ditch while reading the signs. Worn out from assisting these errant motorists, her dad finally painted over the slogans.

JoAnne’s family still resides on the property. Her nephew lives in the old Bucher farmhouse, and one sister has ownership of the [non-working] barn. JoAnne’s older sister lives downhill from a house that was destroyed in a 1996 landslide on the farm plot. The extended family continues to gather on the property for Christmas.

3.2 CASCADE LOCKS

Cascade Locks, Oregon is located along Interstate 84, 56 miles east of Portland and 19 miles west of Hood River. According to the Portland State University Population Research Center, the population of Cascade Locks in 2008 was 1,050 (*Proehl 2009*).

The federal government adopted a plan for permanent improvements of the area in 1875, and began work in 1878. The name Cascade Locks comes from the adjacent locks of the Columbia River, once termed “the cascades of the Columbia.” The locks were submerged early in 1938 as a result of the construction of Bonneville Dam (*McArthur 1992*). The town was incorporated in 1935 (*Oregon State Archives 2009*).

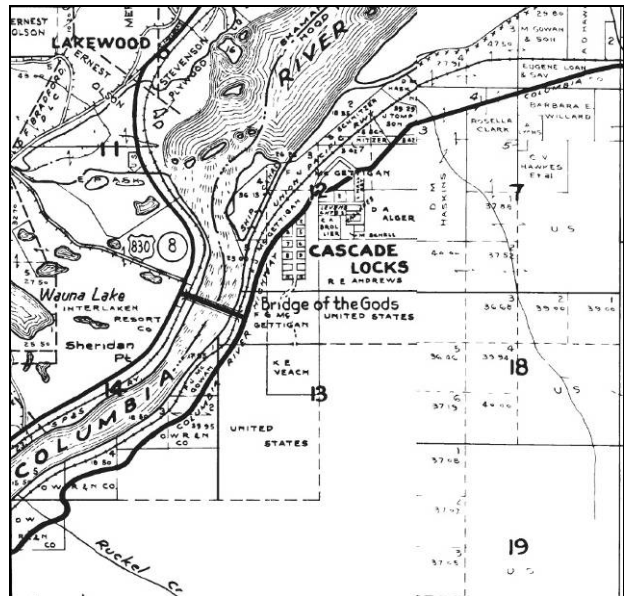


Figure 3.4: Cascade Locks shown on the 1927 Metsker Map.

Published in 1927, the Metsker’s map (see Figure 3.4) shows the layout of Cascade Locks, and adjacent land claims. Early photos of the town are shown in Figures 3.5 and 3.6.

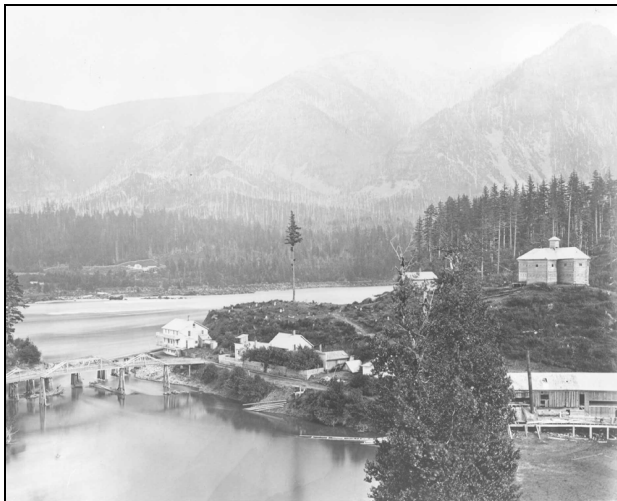


Photo courtesy David Sell

Figure 3.5: Cascade Locks Portage Road and Block House, 1850s



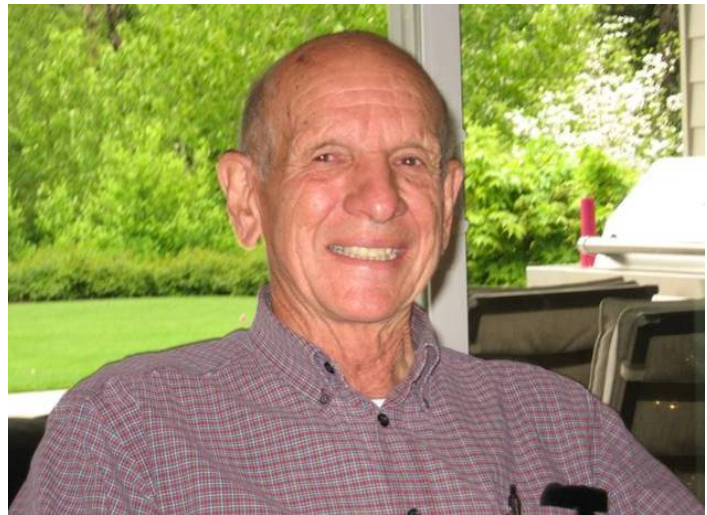
Photo courtesy of Jean McLean

Figure 3.6: Cascade Locks Main Street, circa 1905

Don Haight

Grew-up in Cascade Locks and is active in the community

Don Haight was interviewed by Amanda Pietz on May 14, 2009 at his home in Cascade Locks. The artwork in the Haight residence reflects a collection of items gathered from many years spent overseas. Don and his wife, Gyda, knew they wanted to someday return to Oregon and be close to the Columbia River Gorge.



Background

Don Haight grew-up in the Cascade Locks area, as did his wife. The couple met at Cascade Locks High School. Don joined the service right after high school and married his high school sweetheart two years later. After four years in the military, Don worked on various dam projects in California and Oregon before going to Greece and Israel to work abroad. Don and his wife lived overseas for over 30 years in places such as Venezuela, the Philippines, and Hong Kong. Later in his career Don was involved in starting an equipment rental company for General Electric in China, and by the end of his career he was working for himself as a consultant. During the last several years overseas the couple kept a home in Portland, Oregon.

“I know every time we would come home [to Portland] on vacation, we would get off the airplane and we would get our car. The first thing we would do is drive up the Gorge. We’ve been pretty much all over the world and there’s not too many places as pretty as the Columbia River Gorge, that’s for sure. It’s a beautiful area, that’s why we came back. We love the Gorge.”

Life before the Interstate

When Don was in the sixth grade his family moved from the town of Cascade Locks to Dodson. Don’s family purchased property north of the railroad tracks, just across from the former Dodson store. At the time, the town was fairly well inhabited, mostly by people working at the Bonneville Dam and at near-by mills. Don recalls that Dodson was smaller than the town of Cascade

Locks, which had “three grocery stores, a movie theater, a men’s and women’s clothing store, a drug store, and several gas stations.” Prior the construction of the freeway, the businesses of Cascade Locks helped to serve the local community because in those days “it was a lot harder to get to Portland.”

At the time Don and his family moved to Dodson, there was no grade school. Students traveled from Dodson and the surrounding area to Bonneville (Figure 3.7).



Photo Courtesy of Jean McLean

Figure 3.7: Bonneville School, late 1930s.

Don remembers the school being located beyond the entrance to Bonneville just where the freeway climbs the hill. He recalls that when he went to school there the town included “a grocery store, a small hotel, a restaurant, and a post office.”

“There was a fairly large settlement in the Bonneville area at that time because there were a lot of people living on the reservation. There were a lot of homes and apartments that were later torn down. There was quite a bit of business. It was quite a settlement.”

Further west from Bonneville and on the hill, Don recalled another settlement called Bonnie Villa. To his recollection the town included at least one restaurant, a barbershop, and a small grocery store, and catered towards those building and later working at the dam.

In his youth, Don often worked at the concessions at Multnomah Falls and Crown Point. He worked for the parents of a close childhood friend (later the best man in his wedding). Don remembers that the area around the Vista House was more commercial; it included a restaurant and other services for passing motorists. On other sections of the highway, Don recalls the traffic being fairly light.

“In my younger years I walked from Cascade Locks to Dodson in the early evening. In those years you could hitchhike safely. There would only be about 8-10 cars in that 10 mile walk. The traffic is a lot different than it was then.”

Don frequently traveled between Dodson and Cascade Locks on his way to and from high school. One of the big events that Don recalls during his high school years was when a movie star arrived in Wyeth and everybody went down to greet him. Lew Ayres, who at the time had recently starred in the World War I drama, All Quiet on the Western Front, arrived by train to be placed in the conscientious objector camp at Wyeth. Don recalled that Lew later served in the war because he agreed to “drive an ambulance but would not carry a gun.”

Construction of the Interstate

Shortly after moving to Dodson, Don recalls that his family’s land was surveyed by the highway department

Bonneville, Oregon

“For many decades Bonneville was a popular picnic grounds for people living along the Columbia River between Portland and The Dalles. The railroad company maintained an ‘eating house’ at Bonneville, where tired travelers paid a modest sum for all they could eat” (McArthur 1992, 84 -85).



“The station was named for Captain (later Brigadier General) Benjamin L.E. Bonneville, the hero of Washington Irving’s ‘The Adventures of Captain Bonneville’. Born in France in 1795, he later graduated from West Point and fought with gallantry through the Mexican War. He explored the west from 1832-5, and visited many parts of Oregon and may have been the first white man to go into the Willowa country. He died in 1878.

The locality of Bonneville became nationally known as the site of the Bonneville Dam, construction of which started in Sept. 1933 by the US [Army Corps of Engineers], and completed in July 1938 at a cost of \$83 million. The impounded water forms Lake Bonneville” (McArthur 1992, 84 -85).

and about half-an-acre on the corner of their property was purchased for the freeway. In other areas, Don recalls the freeway splitting farms in half (such as the large dairy farm in Dodson) and towns (such as Cascade Locks). Construction of the interstate did not begin until Don was in high school.

Don recalls riding the school bus from Dodson to Cascade Locks and being delayed because of the construction of the interstate. He remembers that a large amount of blasting was done on old US 30 around Bonneville Dam in order to widen the road. In areas that were below grade, Don recalls massive amounts of fill being dredged from the Columbia River.

“...the area from Dodson all the way beyond Rooster Rock was all filled with material dredged from the Columbia. If you notice, it is kind of a swampy area.”

After high school and during breaks in his service career Don worked on sections of the highway (from Cascade Locks and Wyeth up to Boardman). He started out running heavy equipment and worked his way up to foreman and superintendent.

Life after the Interstate

At the time the interstate was being built, Don recalls that it was hard on the town of Cascade Locks, which was divided in two. The freeway provided better access to the larger cities but also impacted the community. Many structures were demolished as part of the freeway alignment. With the decreasing amount of traffic, and with the automation of the dam at Cascade Locks (which meant the loss of many blue collar jobs), many of the businesses went under.

“The new freeway took out a lot of old things, which I kind of liked, but I realize it had to be done. We could not exist now if we did not have a freeway.”

In recent years, Don, his wife and others have been working to revitalize the community of Cascade Locks. Don and his wife are very active in the community and are working to promote sailing and other activities that bring tourists into the town. Don believes the freeway gives good access to the community and has allowed younger people to move to Cascade Locks and have the option of commuting to Portland or Hood River.

One of the largest changes Don has seen since the freeway has been built is the number of tourists who now visit the Columbia River Gorge.

“When I was growing up, when Highway 30 went right in front of the [Multnomah Falls] Lodge, that parking lot, if we ever got that parking lot full on a holiday, that was a huge crowd of people. Now I drive by and I see that filled on both sides and all the way down the freeway, completely full of cars, and people waiting to get in. The number of people, how that has increased is just unbelievable.”

Don expressed his fascination with the Columbia River Gorge area and how he is excited about the Historic Columbia River Highway Reconnection Project.

“[The Historic Columbia River Highway Reconnection Project] ...will give [people] the opportunity to use some of the beauty we have here and more access to seeing it, which is good.”

Jean McLean

Port of Cascade Locks commissioner

Jean McLean was interviewed by Myra Sperley on June 10, 2009 at her home in Cascade Locks.

Jean McLean's family came to settle in Cascade Locks when her grandfather decided to start The Dalles Freight Line. He hired her father as the company representative in Cascade Locks and when she was about three years old they moved into town. "This was when the Bonneville Dam was being built and there were no houses available and we lived in a tar paper shack out in the woods. It was a two room shack and it had an outhouse and we had a water pump on the back porch."



They didn't live in their first house long, because soon after her father bought the Standard Station, which had living quarters behind it. At this time Cascade Locks was booming and because it was so isolated, they had everything that people needed to survive. Jean recalls that there were four grocery stores, two meat markets, about seven service stations, a shoe cobbler shop, dry goods store, and a variety store (Figure 3.8). There was also a saw mill and a couple of lumber yards.

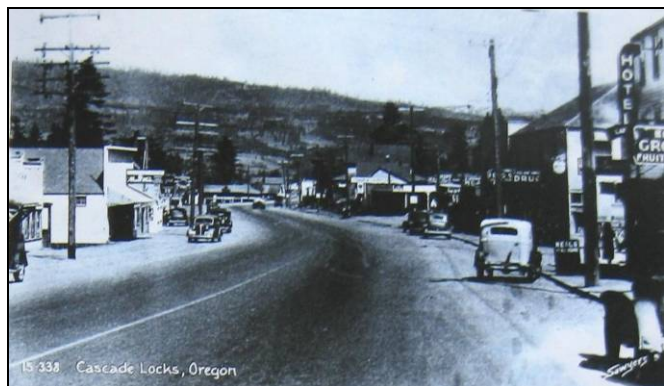


Photo Courtesy of Jean McLean.

Figure 3.8: WaNaPa Street, Cascade Locks, about 1940.

"These were very small businesses generally speaking. The people who owned them would have the store and two or three rooms in the back where they lived. In those days people could get along with very little money."

Jean remembers Cascade Locks being a very social town where people were involved with the PTA, fraternal organizations, the Odd Fellows, the Rebekahs and the Theta Rho girls. The volunteer fire department had about 30 volunteers. Going to the town theatre was also a very popular activity. "These were the things people did before TV."

Jean attended school in Cascade Locks from first grade until the time she graduated high school. During the summers Jean would stay in town and help with the motel that her parents had acquired or work at Multnomah Falls Lodge. After high school she went away for college, got married, and lived in the Gresham area until 1985, when she moved back to Cascade Locks.

Life along the Highway

“There were little business all along the highway; mostly little taverns, restaurants. You couldn’t go five miles without finding a gas station or restaurant.”

Despite carsickness from the winding, crooked highway, Jean said she often wanted to go to Portland, because the drive was interesting and going was exciting. “To go to Portland was a real ordeal and we didn’t go very often. We went twice a year to buy shoes because my mother was very particular. I have narrow feet and she wanted Buster Brown shoes. I remember standing in the x-ray machine to see if the shoes fit.” Jean also remembers feeling scared on the drive saying, “you never knew what was coming around one of the bends in the road. I was petrified sometimes when we would get behind a big truck going up a steep hill.” During World War II, the drive became even more challenging as the entire family would have to save up their 3-gallon per-week gas ration to make the trip.

Jean’s family was lucky to have a car, but her family and the community frequently depended on the Greyhound buses that came through town every two hours.

“The buses were absolutely essential for people to survive”

When asked about her favorite places on the historic highway, Jean spoke of Shepperd’s Dell, a waterfall that is situated behind rocks and takes some effort to get to. She remembers the CCC Camp whose residents built parks such as Eagle Creek Park, which, in Jean’s words, “was a marvelous park with lots of buildings in it and today it is just a ghost of what it used to be”. She also recalls Mitchell Point Tunnel, a place destroyed when the new highway was built (Figure 3.9).

“It [Mitchell Point Tunnel] had rock windows; the one between Hood River and The Dalles had windows too, but Mitchell Point’s were blasted out of the rock, it was really special”



Photo courtesy of Ray & Patricia Galligan

Figure 3.9: Mitchell Point Tunnel.

When the new Interstate was opened, the drive from Cascade Locks to Portland became about 50 minutes and approximately 20 minutes to Hood River. This opened up new work opportunities, but also meant that many people started moving away. According to Jean, “It just devastated the town and that wasn’t unusual. It happened everywhere all over the country when a city would be bypassed. It took years to recover from that.”

“It was like another world opening upnow we go up there [Hood River] all the time, like you go to the grocery store practically.”

Since moving back Jean has become one of the town’s Port Commissioners and is a strong advocate for the Cascade Locks gaining a full interchange along I-84.

Ralph Hesgard

Former mayor of Cascade Locks

Ralph Hesgard was interviewed by Myra Sperley on June 10, 2009 at his home in Cascade Locks.

Ralph and his wife Patricia now live together in Cascade Locks on the plot of land where Patricia grew up. Their home is a half a mile from where Ralph lived as a child, around the corner from the school that they attended together.

The story of the Hesgard family in Cascade Locks started in 1934, when Ralph's grandfather moved from Portland to build homes for families working on the construction of the Bonneville Dam.



“As a kid, we used to go down to the locks before school and catch our two Chinook”

When Ralph was growing up in Cascade Locks he loved to fish and hike. “We used to hike clear up to the top of the Bull Run, [and] camp overnight”. He can recall going to Wyeth, Herman Creek, Eagle Creek, and Tanner Creek. He also spent a lot of time finishing at Lindsey Creek. His father logged this area. His logging team built a road up to the top which they used to truck out logs. One of his favorite times was when they logged up towards Lost Lake. Ralph reminisces, “I spent two summers up there doing a lot of fishing.”

Ralph went to school in Cascade Locks from grades 1-12 with a graduating class of 12 students. He remembers an earthquake that cracked the newly built school's wall, “The face of the mountain fell off and we thought the earth was coming to an end. There was a big cloud of dust; that was our inauguration.”

On Friday nights Ralph's parents would have parties in which people from the town would come over. Ralph, who raised chickens and rabbits, would often find after the parties, that some of his “menagerie” had disappeared. Ralph also remembers evenings spent playing Rummy and Canasta and telling stories with his friends.

Eventually, in pursuit of work, Ralph moved to Portland where he worked for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for 35 years, retiring in 1993. After retirement, he and his wife moved back to Cascade Locks and have been there ever since. Ralph has been very involved in his community, serving in city government for nine years, with four years as Mayor of Cascade Locks.

Change Comes to Cascade Locks

“Sometimes when it snowed we didn't have any supplies brought in other by than boat, and when the Columbia froze, we didn't even have that.”

Ralph remembers the interstate being built, the heavy equipment being brought in, and how the town boomed for a while. When the interstate opened, people were excited because the drive to Portland and Hood River became shorter and many of the previous town's previous challenges related to its isolation were solved.

“Today, I think a lot of people wish that the old highway would have been preserved more than it was.”

However, the opening of the interstate became bittersweet for Ralph. “They went in with a straight line, and that was it, and the heck with anything else that was there. The town here was cut right in half and our entrance and exits aren't what they should be.” The worst thing he remembers is “them taking out Mitchell Point tunnel. I was sad. The tunnel and three portals was solid rock. They went around it with the freeway, and they didn't want it jutting out over the freeway, so they blasted it.”

“It was kind of sad in a sense. All of the old haunts that we used to have are long gone.”

With the combined effects of economic change and the destruction of homes and communities, Ralph's experience of Cascade Locks and the Gorge has changed greatly since he was a kid. For one, Ralph remembers there used to be more employment opportunities in the area. “We used to have a lumber mill here and it probably employed about 75 people at one time. We used to have several loggers; they called them gypo loggers back then, that would take out little stands here and there across the county and take them across the river to other mills. The bigger logs would go over to the ply, which was another source of employment for people here.”

“I'd say we are a third of what we used to be...It was a lot bigger town back then, a lot more going on.”

The Cascade Locks of Ralph's youth was very different place than it its current state. He recalls there being six service stations, a theater, two taverns, two hotels, a car repair shop, a hardware store and five or six different types of restaurants. Most of these businesses and buildings are no longer part of Cascade Locks. The hotel burnt down around the late 1960s, Scott's Motel was taken out because of urban renewal, and many of the other businesses simply died out as the town became smaller.

One place on the highway, the tolled Bridge of the Gods (Figure 3.10), has helped sustain Cascade Locks. Ralph's grandfather was instrumental in helping the Port Commission buy the bridge, his father helped raise the bridge [to accommodate the pool behind Bonneville Dam], and Ralph helped silence the bridge's noisy wooden planks by replacing them with metal ones. So while much along the historic highway has changed, there is still a place bursting with Hesgard family history that thrives.

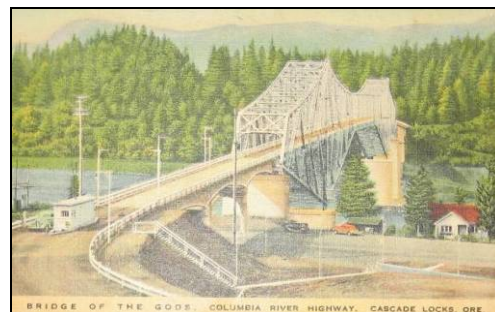


Photo courtesy of Jean McLean

Figure 3.10: Bridge of the Gods in Cascade Locks, Oregon.

3.3 VIENTO

Viento was the site of a railroad station on the Union Pacific line west of Hood River. The railroad line and Interstate 84 bisect Viento State Park. The area lies 12 miles east of Cascade Locks and eight miles west of Hood River.

The site received its title from the railroad station, which was supposedly named by taking the first two letters of the names Villard, Endicott and Tolman (Vi-En-To). All three individuals were involved with the railroad; “William Endicott of Boston was a capitalist who was heavily interested in Henry Villard’s railroad enterprise. Tolman was a railroad contractor” (McArthur 1992, 869). It is thought to be a coincidence that the word viento also means ‘wind’ in Spanish.

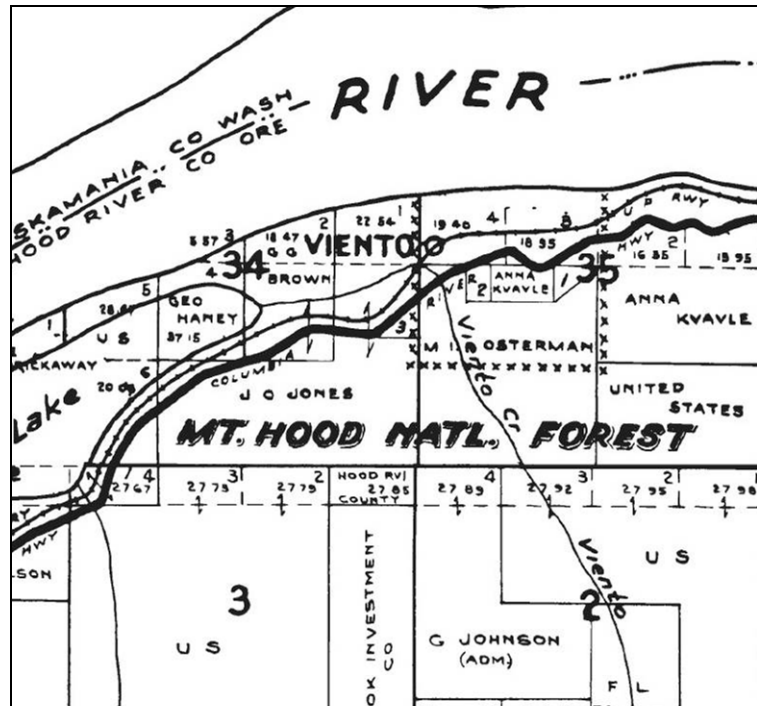


Figure 3.11: 1927 Metsker Map showing Viento.

Viento State Park consists of nearly 250 acres of land that was acquired between 1925 and 1967. The Civilian Conservation Corps worked on the initial development of the park in the 1930s, and facilities for camping were added in the 1950s (McArthur 1992). Located along the old Columbia River Highway, the park provides a rest area for travelers and a picnic area (Figure 3.12).



Photo courtesy of Darlene Stiles

Figure 3.12: Family picnic at Viento State Park, 1969.

Darlene Stiles & Valda Jones Dryden

Cousins Darlene Stiles and Valda Jones Dryden are the grandchildren of Joseph Oliver Jones and Teresa Wirth. They were interviewed on separate days in May by Kristen Stallman and Sara Morrissey. They were born in Viento and spent much of their childhood in the area.

“It [Viento] was special to all of us grandkids. We cherished that place to this day.” - Darlene



Photo Courtesy of Valda Jones Dryden and Darlene Stiles

Figure 3.13: Valda’s grandparents, great aunts and cousins.

Darlene and Valda’s grandparents, Joseph Oliver Jones and Teresa Wirth, came west by train in September of 1901 from Missouri and Arkansas respectively. They arrived in The Dalles and took a boat across the Columbia River to White Salmon, Washington. The family then traveled by wagon to Troutlake, Washington, where they lived for eight years. In September 1910, the Jones family moved to Portland, but never quite settled down. A decade later, the family finally found their home in Viento, a small settlement west of Hood River along the Columbia River.



Photo Courtesy of Valda Jones Dryden

Figure 3.14: Valda’s father, Jack Jones, standing in front of J.O. Jones Grocery and Service Station, 1930s.

When the Jones family arrived in the Viento area, Grandpa Jones (also known as J.O. Jones) and his boys built a service station (Figure 3.14) and acquired several homes on the property. J.O. Jones’ service station provided gasoline for travelers and truck drivers as well as treats for the children. When travelers with children stopped at the station for gas J.O. would ask the parents if the kids could have a bit of candy and would then distribute little black licorice candy pipes. His own grandchildren, Darlene and Valda, knew he had a soft spot for children and would stop by the station to help J.O. in order to get some treats. The grocery store provided food and basic staples for the Jones family as well as the railroad workers that lived with their families at Viento.

Underneath the service station J.O. Jones had a large generator to provide the station and the family’s homes with electricity. While the lights could be dull, they were a vast improvement over candles. The service station functioned as J.O. and Teresa’s home. Their kitchen and living quarters were located in the back of the station’s grocery store. It was “just one huge big building, but there were partitions” remembers Darlene. Behind the service station were the “little house” and the “big house” where many of J.O. and Teresa’s eight children would come to

live. Other buildings, including a one-room school house and a barn, lay scattered around the property, hidden in the trees and surrounded by wildflowers.

Both Darlene and Valda were born in Viento in the spring of 1933 as Teresa Jones, J.O.'s wife, wanted to have her children come back to Viento to have their children.

“All the kids came home to have the babies”- Darlene

While Darlene and Valda's families did not always live at Viento year round, they were sure to spend their summers and Christmases at large family gatherings in Viento (Figure 3.15).



Photo Courtesy of Valda Jones Dryden

Figure 3.15: Jones family gathering.

“We'd all get together”-Valda

In addition to his service station, J.O. Jones was also the caretaker for Viento State Park. Starting in 1925, the State of Oregon acquired parts of the Viento property to open a state park. The park was beautiful, full of wildflowers, large trees, and a creek that ran through the woods to a small waterfall.



Drawing Courtesy of Valda Jones Dryden

Figure 3.16: Drawing of Viento Bridge, by Valda Jones Dryden at age 16.

The highway crossed the creek on a scenic bridge, which can be seen in the drawing to the left, done by Valda at age 16 (Figure 3.16).

Darlene, Valda and all of their cousins fished in the creek, catching minnows and trout and playing with water dogs, also known as salamanders. They built rafts and huts to play with in the water and made their own little ponds on the side of the creek.

“To me, [Viento] was the most gorgeous park in the Gorge, bar none.” - Darlene

The creek ran through the wooded area of the park which also opened up to a large field where there were horseshoe pits and an area to play baseball. Picnic benches sat near the edge of the field, tucked back in the woods in the shade. Many large family gatherings took place here for the Jones family and others who lived in nearby towns.

Bluebell Hill, part of which was destroyed during the construction of the interstate, was one of the most fondly and clearly remembered areas of the park for both Darlene and Valda. Covered by a thick blanket of bluebells, the hilltop served as a perch for the children to watch the trains whistling and rolling by. Valda would venture up on the hill to find a licorice fern to snack on and try and catch the small lizards that would dart around.

Wildflowers covered the hills and forest floor at Viento. Wild currants, pussywillows, trilliums, lady slippers, irises, poppies and lilacs were just some of the flowers found in the park.

Down near the Columbia River was a large bay and a peninsula made up of large sand dunes. The peninsula reached around the bay and came to a stop in front a large rock island. Valda recalled swimming in the bay formed between the peninsula and rock island and jumping off the rocks into the deep water. On the beach, Darlene would build bonfires and Valda would work on constructing rafts to float out on the river. J.O. Jones had a boat and dock down at the bay and family members could go out on the boat to enjoy the water and try their hand at catching a salmon.

Darlene recalls the tough economic times during her early childhood, in the 1930s. During that time many of J.O.'s children moved back to Viento when unemployment struck or if they found jobs in the area. While staying at Viento they would help J.O. maintain the park and grow vegetables for their own needs. Both Darlene and Valda's fathers supported their families by taking traditional jobs such as railroad or logging work, while also beginning entrepreneurial ventures on the side.

“I can remember the hard times. You know, trying to get a job. There were no jobs.” - Darlene

Valda's parents, Jack and Irene Jones, lived in Viento intermittently throughout Valda's childhood. Jack was a skilled man, working in various industries, who also had an entrepreneurial spirit. Her family moved multiple times following the logging industry, and found themselves in Malin, The Dalles, and Klamath Falls in Oregon, and Husum and BZ Corner in Washington. Her father also acquired a job working in the ship yards in Portland and the family resided in the city various times. Yet they would always return to Viento.

Valda recalls her father riding his motorcycle to work in White Salmon as a logger and then picking her up in Hood River after school to head home to Viento. While living in Viento, Valda remembers her father selling the piano for foxes to begin a fox farm. As fox fur was going out of fashion, the venture didn't go too well; however, many family members received fox stoles as gifts. Jack Jones continued to raise animals as business ventures as Valda recalls, “Another time my dad raised parakeets. That wasn't at Viento, but in The Dalles [...] The whole basement had these great big cages for them...these little parakeets.”

Darlene's father worked for Willamette Iron and Steel as well as the railroad company while living at Viento. He also raised pigs. The pigs were fed with pig slop and left-over food from the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) camp in Wyeth. Darlene explains, “We laugh about it to this day because mother and dad, they'd get home and there would be forks and there would be spoons and knives [in the pig slop]. You know, when they [the CCC people] were cleaning off plates, they just threw everything. So dad, mom, they'd laugh to this day...they'd take them [the forks, knives and spoons] out and wash them. They used them. They used them there at the house because...they didn't have the money.”

The most vivid memories that both Darlene and Valda have regarding the Historic Columbia River Highway are when they were traveling down the highway by car with their grandfather, J.O. Jones. Darlene remembers riding with him. “He'd want to ride down the middle of the road.

And if somebody would honk at him he'd say, 'Jeez, that person must know me!' So we'd say 'Grandpa! Why you do that?' and he says, 'Well I want to make sure that my tires stay even.' He was so funny." On the other hand, Valda remembers J.O. Jones always wanting to save on gas; putting the car in neutral when going down the hill and just cruising, going as fast as possible around all of the curves to avoid using any fuel. Another family member who liked to drive fast around the curves was Valda's dad.

"My dad could drive around those curves, 60 miles an hour, you know, 65. He could get around those curves really good. It was quite an experience." - Valda

Near the highway, where cars, trucks and buses would pull over to stop at one of the service stations or use the bathroom, was a large water fountain, only 10 feet off the road (Figure 3.17). The fountain resembled a demon or devil and was about five feet tall and made of rock. Cold spring water flowed out of the mouth and two small faucets were on each side with stepping stones so adults and children alike could drink the refreshing mountain water. Even Greyhound buses coming from Portland would stop at Viento to let their passengers get a drink at the famed fountain.

"[The fountain at Viento] had the coldest spring water, if people wanted to drink." – Darlene



Photo Courtesy of Darlene Stiles

Figure 3.17: Fountain at Viento.

Valda remembers riding the Greyhound line to cheer at the Hood River High School football and basketball games. "We always looked forward to getting [to Mitchell Point] to look through the windows as you went through." Darlene recalls taking the school bus with her friend Jimmy, the son of Japanese asparagus farmers, who lived in near the river at Viento. The children rode the bus together from Viento to Frankton Grade School, along with the other children living in settlements along the highway between Wyeth and Hood River. Darlene still has a little ceramic dog that Jimmy made for her. Jimmy's family, like many Japanese families in the area, were forced either to go to internment camps or back to Japan during World War II; Jimmy and his parents returned to Japan.

A large portion of the families that lived at Viento had fathers who worked on the railroad. The section crews would work on the railroad and live in Viento. Valda also remembers that there were quite a few homeless people in the area who would hitch a ride on the trains and stop over in Viento to get some food. Grandma Teresa would always feed them if they would do chores for her, like work in her garden on Garden Hill.

When construction began on the interstate, the State of Oregon approached J.O. Jones with a proposition in regards to his land at Viento (Figure 3.18). He would have to sell the land at market value or it would be condemned and taken from him. Darlene recalls, "My grandfather would have liked to have kept some of the land. He had quite a bit of acreage. But they would

not allow it. The state [...] let him know that they could condemn it.” The only land that was not affected was near the river.



Photo Courtesy of Darlene Stiles

Figure 3.18: J. O. Jones Property at Viento.

J.O. and Teresa Jones sold their land to the state and moved to northeast Portland near Freemont Street. In 1964 a large flood occurred in Viento and much of the park was destroyed from the trees, to the fountain, to the sand dunes. With the flood, the Jones family lost some of their remaining sections of land near the river, and the railroad took the rest. As Valda remembers it, “They just demolished Viento and then the floods came.”

“I’m sorry that my children could not get to be able to have this joy that we had with the park and my grandparents...” - Darlene

3.4 MITCHELL POINT AND SONNY

Mitchell Point is a large basalt headland. It was the location of Mitchell Point tunnel along the Columbia River Highway. While the name Mitchell Point only refers to this geologic formation, the development at Sonny is sometimes referred to as Mitchell Point. The locations of Mitchell Point and Sonny are shown on the 1927 Metsker's map below (Figure 3.19)

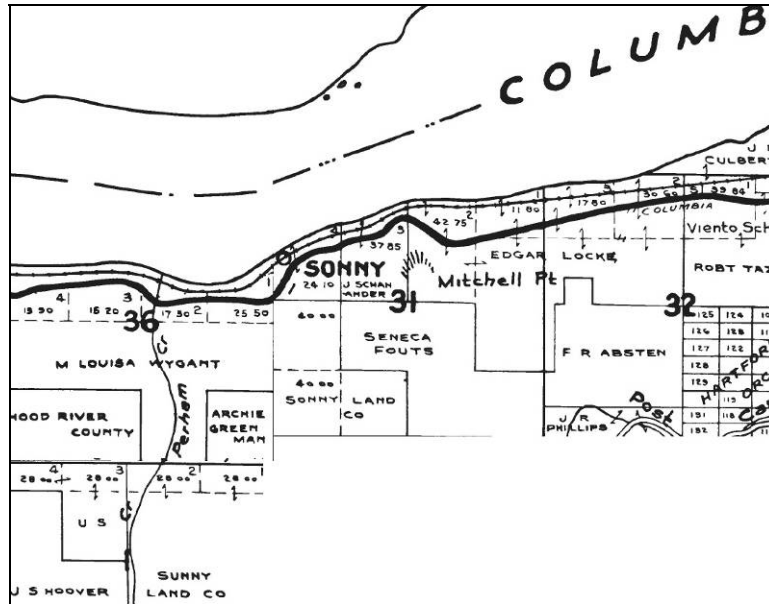


Figure 3.19: 1927 Metsker Map showing Sonny and Mitchell Point.

Mitchell Point

Mitchell Point is about 15 miles east of Cascade Locks and four miles west of Hood River. Little is known about the name, beyond the fact that a trapper named Mitchell lived and died near this location (McArthur 1992).

The tunnel at Mitchell Point was a prominent feature of the Columbia River Highway (Figure 3.20). It was designed by John Arthur Elliott and opened for traffic in early September 1915. The Mitchell Point Tunnel included five windows and became known as the “Tunnel of Many Vistas” (Figure 3.21).



Photo Courtesy of David Sell

Figure 3.20: East portal of Mitchell Point Tunnel.



Photo Courtesy of David Sell

Figure 3.21: Mitchell Point Tunnel, about 1920.

Sonny

“Sonny” was the name given to the railroad station. “It was formerly called Mitchell, but owing to confusion with another place in the state of the same name, it was decided by railroad officials to be changed. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Parker, owners of the Little Boy Ranch, just west of Mitchell Point, tried to have the station renamed Little Boy, but this wasn’t adopted by the railroad because it was awkward in telegraphy. Mrs. Parker’s nickname for Little Boy, ‘Sonny,’ was finally selected as the next best thing” (McArthur 1992, 784). Additional information on the Parker family and their role at Sonny is provided in the Marie Malatak interview summary on the following page.



Photo courtesy of Michael Tenney

Figure 3.22: Buildings at Mitchell Point, about 1950.



Marie Malatak – About the Parker Family

Marie Malatak was interviewed over the phone by Sara Morrissey on May 19, 2009. Marie is the great-grandchild of Mr. Charles W. and Mrs. Helena Parker, one of the first families at Mitchell Point. The story of the Parker Family is told through recollections of Marie Malatak.

The Parker home at Mitchell Point, was located near the Sonny train station. Mr. Charles W. Parker and Mrs. Helena Parker's house was constructed by local boat builder in 1915-1916. The home was later referred to as the "Little Boy Ranch" (Figure 3.23).

The Parkers mostly divided their time between Canada and New York City, but they chose to spend their summers at Mitchell Point. Their adopted children, Joan and Charles, accompanied them and spent many of their childhood summers playing in the Columbia Gorge.

The Parker family would travel by train to their home at Mitchell Point on the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation (OWRN) Company line (part of the Union Pacific System). The OWRN Company built the Sonny train station, primarily for the family's use. In addition to the Little Boy Ranch, the Parkers owned two other properties on the west side of Mitchell Point.

Landscaping consisted of orchards and roses which were planted on the property for Mrs. Helena Parker. This vegetation could be enjoyed by the many guests that frequented the property as Mrs. Helena Parker was theatrical and enjoyed entertaining and would hold festivals and parties at the Little Boy Ranch.

Charles W. Parker, fondly remembered as "Daddy Parker," passed away in December of 1921 and the family remained in the East. Helena had remarried later in life and passed away in March 1963. Joan Parker, Marie Malatak's grandmother, passed away in 1996, but always remembered her time at the Little Boy Ranch at Mitchell Point.

In 1921, all three properties were transferred to other owners, most likely sold, as the Parker family moved east. Elsie Tenney later bought the property and added a roadhouse (read more about Elsie Tenney on following page).



Image courtesy of Marie Malatak

Figure 3.23: Little Boy Ranch 1916 Christmas card. Pictured are Charles and Joan Parker.

Michael Tenney & Barbara Hosford

Relatives of the Tenney
Family that Lived at
Sonny/Mitchell Point

*Siblings Michael Tenney and
Barbara Hosford were
interviewed on June 11, 2009,
by Sara Morrissey at Barbara's
home in Hood River.*



The Tenney Family and Mitchell Point

According to family photos and stories William Tenney, Barbara and Michael's grandfather, was quite an astute gentleman. He grew up with his family in May, Oklahoma, near the center of the panhandle. His father, Franklin Pierce Tenney, was a farmer but William chose a different path for himself. In family photos, even those taken on the farm, William Tenney was never dressed in farm attire. He would wear town "dude suits," three piece numbers with nice hats. He lived the life of a high roller, as Michael Tenney described, "platinum stick pins one week and shooting craps for beer money the next week."



Photo courtesy of Michael Tenney & Barbara Hosford

Figure 3.24: William and Elsie Tenney.

William lived in May, Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl days and married a young girl named Elsie, also known as "Babe" (Figure 3.24). William had a few jobs including the oil industry and as a lumber broker for the Panhandle Lumber Company in Amarillo, Texas. He also enjoyed a life of entertainment and was known as a bit of a party animal. Elsie, who also came from a farm family from Oklahoma was the worker bee in the family. While she enjoyed the life of entertainment with William, Elsie eventually tired of it, and left the Amarillo area, heading up to Oregon around 1935 with their two sons: Joe Bill and Jack.

***"I just can't imagine coming out here with two
boys, alone" - Barbara***

While neither Michael nor Barbara knew how Elsie and her sons traveled up to Oregon, Michael suspects that it was by bus.

Elsie and the boys ended up at Mitchell Point where she opened a roadhouse, including a service station, a sandwich shop, and a “tourist court” where travelers could stop to rest (Figure 3.25). Elsie “Babe” was a hard worker and ran the full business, while raising two young boys.



Photo courtesy of Michael Tenney

Figure 3.25: Buildings at Mitchell Point in 1943. The building shown in the upper right corner is the original “Little Boy Ranch” house and “Road House Joint.”

“I’d been there [Mitchell Point house] a few times as a kid, say when my dad was fishing, we’d stop in and look around and head on out.” – Michael

According to Barbara’s aunt and uncle, the Mitchell Point house was known for throwing some large social gatherings. The house was well suited for entertaining and resembled Timberline lodge with a staircase made up of 12-inch split logs. A large cobblestone foyer led to a fireplace that was large enough for a grown man to stand inside. The first floor also consisted of a kitchen and a large dining room with glass French doors. Babe would clear these rooms for dances when bands from Portland would come up to play. People from Portland and the Gorge would come to have a good time at the house at Mitchell Point.

Michael recalls meeting one gentleman, a long haul trucker, who had passed through Mitchell Point in the 1930s and remembered the hospitality that ‘Babe’ had showed him. Even though it was during prohibition, Babe always had a little alcohol available and she was always ready with food, no matter what time it was. ‘Social services’ were also provided for visitors upon request in the tourist court and men could receive nightly “tuck-ins.” The long haul trucker had appreciated the hospitality at such great lengths he had gotten a tattoo on his arm that read “Babe 1935,” which he showed Michael. Inspired by the man’s story, Michael wrote a song about trucker’s experience, he titled it “**Mitchell Point in a Teamster’s Eyes.**”

Mitchell Point in a Teamster's Eyes

A song written by Michael Tenney

"Let me tell you a little something about your grandma," the old man said.
His voice was a Pall Mall whisper and his eyes were Old Crow red.
"I used to drive a freight rig out of Portland to points away out east,
And your grandma Babe ran a roadhouse where the teamsters used to feast.

It never seemed to matter about the hour or the weather,
When Babe would hear the brakes come on she'd start gettin' it together.

I never saw a night so late the coffee wasn't on
And she had bacon fryin' before the sun was breakin' dawn.



When the pills ran out and a teamster knew there was five hundred miles to go,
She had a room where a man could bunk til he was ready for the road.
She had a cast-iron safe where your wallet would always be found
In the same shape you locked it in there with your money safe and sound.

She ran a straight-up joint in days when times was hard enough.
Without havin' some sleazy landlord go pawin' through your stuff.
And if she seen the lonely road was wearin' your soul kinda thin
She'd often as not send a waitress out to kindly tuck you in.

It wasn't nothin' evil son, no matter what you hear,
And if your stash was low on cash you could straighten it out without fear
When you rolled back through in a month or two,
She kept her accounts real clear.

And your grandma was a magician in the days of Prohibition,
She must have been acquainted with a recipe or two,
For she always had a snort if you wanted a sip or a quart,
And the sheriff never seemed to hear the news.

She raised your daddy up healthy and strong and kept the family fed,
And did every day with a great big smile no matter what local folks said.
A hundred of us would have died for her if she'd only said where and when,
For she gave of herself in a saint-like way that's seldom been seen since then.

So when you hear the bluenoses talk down on her roadhouse joint,
Remember those hardscrabble truckers saved by the angel of Mitchell Point."
His Pall Mall went out in the ashtray and the faraway look in his eyes
Grew faded like the blue tattoo on his arm that said "BABE 1935."

Another fellow by the name of Vince Orcutt, who worked for many years at the Hood River distillery, told Michael of how he got his first experience working with distilled spirits at Mitchell Point. When he was in high school he would work at Mitchell Point as a “swamper” and would bus tables, wash dishes and make runs into Cascade Locks to get supplies. While working at Mitchell Point he learned how Elsie distilled spirits.

“Mitchell Point, Mitchell Point, my god, what a place.” – unknown man relating a story to Michael

Mitchell Point was also known as a hunting ground. People hunted the elk and the large herds of goats that lived in the area. Michael recalls the story of a politically well connected Hood River man, Mr. Sche, who was rumored to have hosted a hunting party for President Theodore Roosevelt. The party went to hunt elk in the area behind and to the west of Mitchell Point, up through a draw that leads into the hills.

Joe Bill and Jack grew up at Mitchell Point and were known for racing. Joe Bill had a red Ford convertible and Jack rode an Indian motorcycle. They raced their car and motorcycle on the old highway and held unofficial land speed records.

In 1944 Elsie Tenney passed away due to heart conditions while her sons, Joe Bill and Jack were serving in the South Pacific. As the boys were in a heavy casualty area, the family lawyer, Teunis Wyers, Sr., sold the estate and escrowed the money into a trust fund to wait for the boys when they got home. Both Joe Bill and Jack came back safely and divided the money; Jack joined the police force in Spokane, Washington and Joe Bill opened a local home appliance store. When the service station changed hands it became a Shell and the tourist court developed into a four unit motel that was located below the house and to the west of the sandwich stop. By the early 1960s the property, which had been under the ownership of the Lausmann family, was donated to Oregon State Parks.

Michael has commemorated his grandmother’s memory and that of Mitchell Point in a song he wrote titled, **“The Roadhouse Joint at Mitchell Point.”**

The Roadhouse Joint at Mitchell Point

A song written by Michael Tenney – 2002

Jack was ten and my Dad was nine when Grandpa hit the road
To be an oilfield roughneck, leaving Grandma Babe with the load
Of raising up two hellion boys and bringing home the cash
In dustbowl Amarillo just after the Wall Street crash.

So Grandma Babe hit the road herself and hauled the boys along
And landed up in Oregon where the Columbia rolls on.
The river flowed past Hood River a couple of miles to Mitchell Point
Where Babe took what little she had and bought her a roadside joint.

It wasn’t much to look at, just a gas pump and a grill,

But at least it was a thousand miles from any oilfield drill.
She built a dozen cabins up in the woods behind the store,
A tourist court she called it but it soon turned into more.

For soon the weary truckers would come in off the road
And a couple of girls moved out from town to help out with the load.
The times were hard in Depression Days, and folks did what they could,
And a twenty-dollar gold piece got to looking pretty good.

After a while Babe toned things up and put in a place to dance
And folks would travel up the Gorge to listen to the bands.
Then Prohibition went away and Babe put in a bar
And served from bonded bottles instead of Mason jars.

Dad had a ragtop flathead Ford in fire engine red,
And Jack held the land speed record on his Indian it was said
Down U.S. Highway 30, Mitchell Point to Multnomah Falls
With the throttle twisted open, flat-out balls to the wall.

And then Pearl Harbor came along and the boys went off to fight,
And the roadhouse joint at Mitchell Point got quieter each night.
The girls moved back on into town and the truck trade grew real thin
As ration stamps for gasoline caused fewer wheels to spin.

Jack and Dad sent letters home from South Pacific shores,
And Grandma answered every one till 1944.
It was her heart the doctor said, and those goddam cigarettes,
And the war went on and the boys stayed gone, and the lawyer sent regrets.

I sold the place, his letter said, and the money's been put aside
If either one of you heroes comes home; and by the way a lot of folks cried
The day we laid your mother away and shuttered that roadhouse joint,
The end of an era was what they called it when we closed up Mitchell Point.

Jack came back and joined the cops, and Dad took his G.I. loan
And married Mom and opened a store after buying an older home.
The Interstate came through and they blew the old tunnel in,
And Highway 30 disappeared as though it had never been.

But back in the brush that covers the land a stone foundation lies,
Where once stood the roadhouse joint, now gone from mortal eyes.
And Mitchell Point is a rest stop now, just a turn-out on the road,
And only a few remember how the roadhouse lights once glowed.

But some will say if you listen real close by the light of a summer moon
You can hear the voice of a woman as she sings a Glenn Miller tune.
And it could just be the sound of the trees as the wind up the river rolls,
But the voice has a sweet Oklahoma twang from the heart of the old dust bowl.

Recollections of the Highway

Barbara and Michael both remember the old highway as it was. When Michael was young he and his parents would travel to Portland very often, many times on the old highway. They both remember the highway being full of switchbacks and quite conducive to getting carsick, especially when they rode in the backseat. In fact, Michael got carsick almost every time he rode the old highway until he was around 10 years old.

“When we went to Portland, when I was 3 or 4 years old, it was carsick express because of all the switchbacks.” – Michael

As a reprieve from the motion sickness, Michael recalls that his family would often stop at the fountain in Viento. He remembers the gargoyle faced fountain that had a basin out in front of the face and was perched on a rock basalt pedestal (see Figure 3.15). He recalled the water being very cold, perhaps spring fed.

Another frequent stop along the old highway was the Wyeth Dunn Café where Joe Bill would stop to buy a big jar of beef jerky. They also stopped at other roadside cafés. In Cascade Locks, Barbara remembers that the Char Burger was a popular destination for the high school athletic teams on their way from Portland back to Hood River. At that time, the restaurant was a little box building, white and tiny, with the same grill and counter that are there today.

A routine that Michael recalls from his childhood is when he would travel to a place known as Ruthton, where a fellow named Helms owned an apiary. When Michael was around five years old he would go down to Ruthton and get big jars of honey for his grandmother and his own family who lived on Cascade Street in Hood River.

One of the most memorable experiences in Michael and Barbara’s youth was when, in the late 1950s, Joe Bill took them to play at the flume. The wooden flume was located around milepost 54, right across from the current Wyeth weigh station. The flume had a galvanized tin bottom. It extended back, almost back up to a hole the hole in the hill where the water poured out, and ran under the highway before giving out into a log pond. When they got to the flume they climbed all the way up the hill and then rode the flume down like a waterslide. Unfortunately, like all good times, this one had to come to an end. Barbara and Michael discovered that there were fresh water leeches in the flume; it was their first and last time to ride it.

“Yeah there were leeches. Fresh water leeches. You'd get out of it and have to be picked clean.” - Michael

To both Michael and Barbara the highway holds important memories about their family and their childhood. Mitchell Point holds a special place in their hearts and they are both excited for the Mitchell Point Tunnel to be reconstructed so Mitchell Point can thrive again.

Ray Galligan

Decendent of the Locke Family, and current resident of the 1908 Locke Home, once referred to as ***“Locke’s Highway Place”***

Ray Galligan was interviewed on June 16, 2009 in his family home located along the Historic Highway. The Galligan Home was built in 1908 by Ray’s great-grandfather, Edgar Locke. The house provided a perfect setting as Kristen Stallman, Sara Morrissey and Ray’s wife, Patricia, sifted through old family pictures and talked about the family history and history of the area. The interview was followed by a tour in which the Galligans showed off pieces of history that are on display throughout their home.



The Locke Family and Early Settlement at Mitchell Point

In 1884 Ray Galligan’s great-grandfather, Edgar Locke (born 1855) moved from Bariboo, Michigan to Hood River, Oregon with his wife Nellie Bayles (born 1858), and his young daughter, Margaret (born 1879). The family purchased over 300 acres on the south shore of the Columbia River west of Hood River, at the foot of Mitchell Point. Edgar soon became known as a skilled orchardist and according to his obituary, his fruit trees often attracted the attention of the passengers of the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Company trains.

The first thing that Edgar did upon arriving at the new homestead was to build a small wood frame house to shelter his family through the harsh Gorge winters to come. The original house stood until 1908, when much of the wood was disassembled and used to build the prominent house (Figure 3.26) that remains today.



Photo courtesy of Ray & Patricia Galligan

Figure 3.26: An early photo of the second Locke home (built in 1908)

While the 1908 house still stands (see photo of Ray Galligan above), the surrounding property has changed dramatically over the years. At the time the house was constructed it sat along The Dalles-to-Sandy Military Road, an old wagon road. In 1914 the Columbia River Highway was constructed. This new road, designed expressly for cars, generally followed the alignment of the old Military Road until it got to Mitchell Point. Here, rather than going over Mitchell Point as the Military Road did, the Columbia River Highway engineers decided to go through it, building the famed, five windowed, Mitchell Point Tunnel.

Edgar Locke played a prominent role in preserving the name Mitchell Point for the tunnel and area (Figure 3.27). According to a newspaper clipping from Edgar's obituary in 1920, "When Mitchell Point Tunnel was completed the suggestion was made that the great rock promontory pierced by the noted bore be called Storm King. It was said the Indians had so called the point, declaring that storms coming up the Columbia were split at this point, a part of the storm clouds going off to the north and the rest being shunted off into the brakes west of the Hood River Valley. Mr. Locke, however, was successful in a protest against changing the name. He declared that the name of Mitchell, the pioneer, who settled first in the region, should be maintained in honor of the early settler."

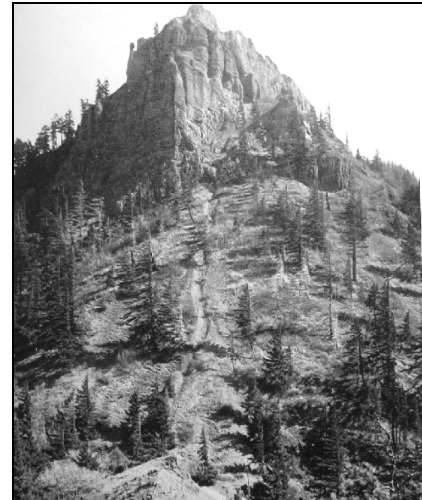


Photo courtesy of Ray & Patricia Galligan

Figure 3.27: Mitchell Point.

The Highway Place, the Galligans and Recollections of the Highway

The Locke's daughter, Margaret, and Ray's grandmother grew up in the original Locke home. Pictures from her wedding to Wilbur "Dick" Henry Galligan in 1900 show her standing in front of the original Locke house. Margaret and Wilber Galligan moved to the north shore of the Columbia River, and lived directly across from the Locke homestead. They would travel back and forth on a ferry that connected the two properties. When Edgar Locke died in the 1920s, the Galligans' moved back to the Locke's Highway Place (as it was referred to in Edgar Locke's obituary).

An old newspaper clipping pulled from the Galligan's family bible tells a sad story of when Wilbur's and Margaret's three-year-old son died of rheumatic fever in 1904. In 1910, Margaret gave birth to another son, Meredith, Ray's dad. Meredith's brothers, James and Wilbur Jr., and sister, Loretta, followed. To support his family, Wilbur Galligan maintained a productive fruit orchard that stretched all the way down to the banks of the Columbia River.

Meredith Galligan grew up in the old house working on the farm along with his dad and brothers. He moved out when he married Phyllis Bird, Ray's mother, in the late 1920s. Ray's older sister, Myrtle, was born in 1930. Ray followed four years later. Ray spent part of his childhood in Hood River. However, his dad was an electrician and often traveled to where there was work. For a time the family lived in Prineville and Reedsport. When Ray was 16 the family returned home to the house at Mitchell Point.

Ray attended Hood River High School while working with his dad building homes in Hood River and The Dalles. It was during this time that Ray met his wife, Patricia. Ray and Patricia were married in 1953. They moved to Portland where Ray worked as a builder for Timber Structures and Emmert International. In Portland they raised their two sons, Ray Jr. and Ron.

During the 1950s, while Ray was living in Portland, his dad operated the farm. During that time the Oregon State Highway Department purchased part of the property, the orchard, for the construction of the freeway. The property included a barn-like structure, which was moved to

avoid destruction. In later years, the same structure was moved by Ray in order to place it on a strong foundation. It is the only building remaining from the first homestead.

Ray's dad also owned a rock pit located at the base of Mitchell Point. He sold the Oregon State Highway Department and the county his gravel. ODOT eventually purchased the pit from him as well.

The landscape of the Galligan's property changed following the construction of the freeway. Before the freeway, the house and farm had a direct connection to the river (Figure 3.28). Today, that connection is severed by Interstate 84 and the views have been blocked by trees. Patricia recalls fishing at Sturgeon Rock, a large rock located along the shore in front of the Galligan's place. Today, nobody fishes there because it is difficult to get to.



Photo courtesy of Ray & Patricia Galligan.

Figure 3.28: Locke/Galligan property prior to the construction of the water-level route.

When asked about trips to Portland on the old highway, both Ray and his wife, Patricia, recalled how long it used to take -- "four hours to get from here to Montgomery Wards." Ray remembered traffic jams and the general slow-moving highway. There was sure to be solid traffic on the weekends. Ray could see how "it was getting to when they needed a freeway fast then..." As Patricia puts it, the new highway builders "were not history oriented, they were moving forward."

Upon Ray's retirement in 1996, fulfilling a life long dream, they returned to the family farm at Mitchell Point. It is at this location where they live today amongst the memories and artifacts from earlier generations, preserving a way of life for their sons and their six grandsons.

3.5 HOOD RIVER

Hood River, Oregon is located along Interstate 84, 62 miles east of Portland. In 2007, the population size of Hood River was estimated at 6,736 (*U.S. Census Bureau 2007*). The city is the county seat for Hood River County.

Hood River was named for a nearby stream (Figure 3.29). Lewis and Clark discovered the stream in 1805 and called it Lebeasche River. Early pioneers ate dog meat near the stream, resulting in the name Dog River. Later objections to the name resulted in changing the local usage to Hood River, after the name of the nearby mountain and source waters (*McArthur 1992*). The town of Hood River was incorporated in 1895 (*Oregon Business Development Department 2009; City of Hood River 2009*).

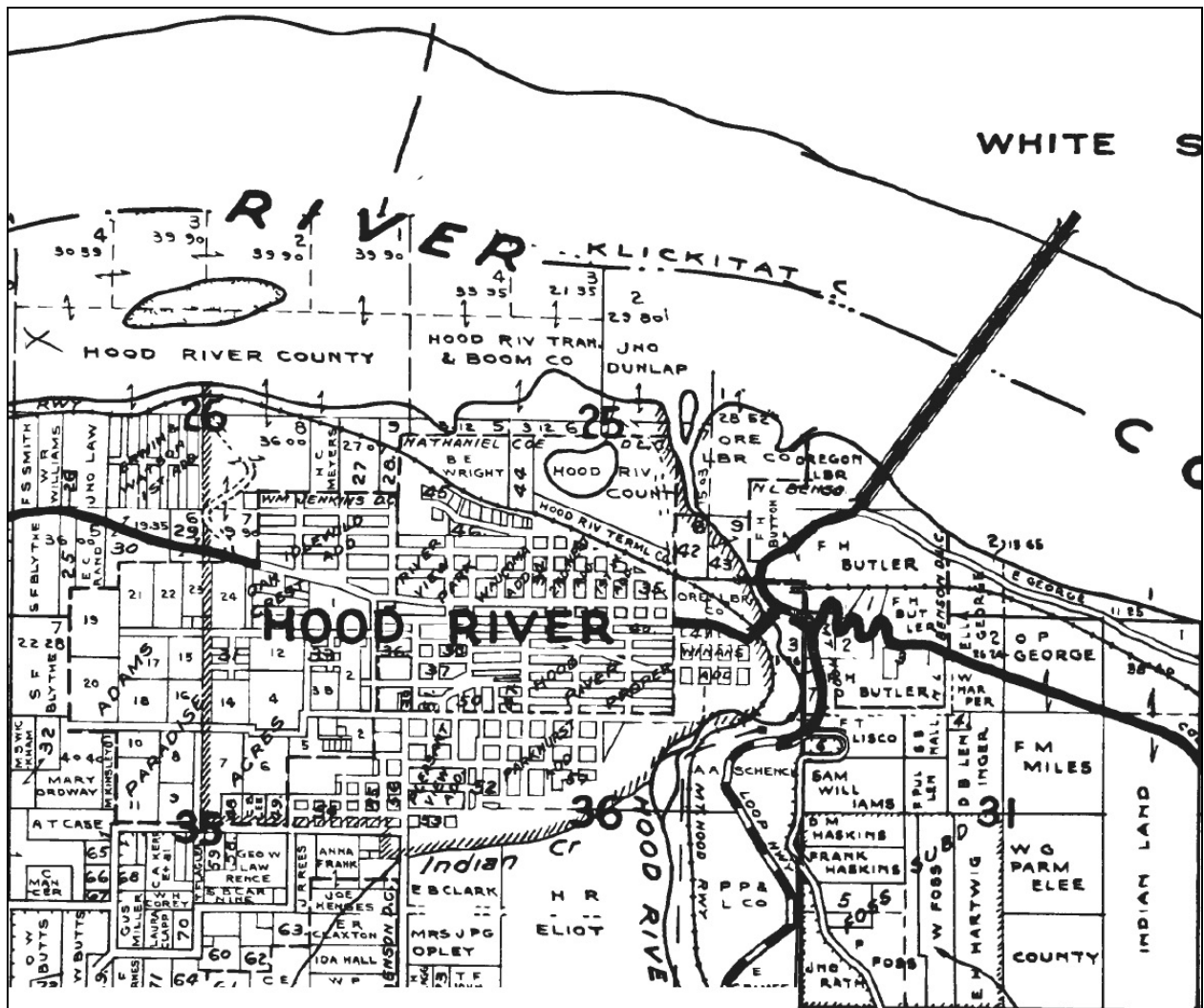
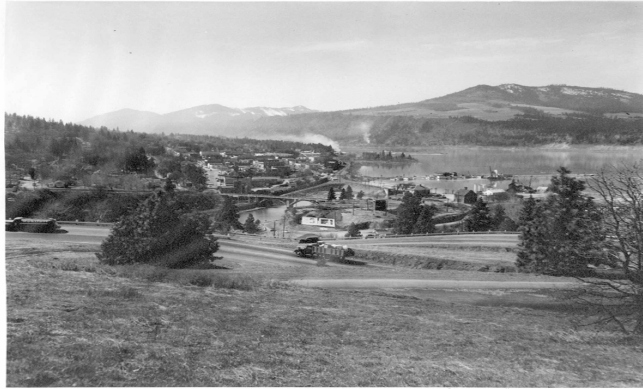


Figure 3.29: 1927 Metsker Map showing Hood River.

Early images of Hood River are shown in Figures 3.30, 3.31, and 3.32.



Columbia River View Hood River Oregon W.D. Conant, D.C. April 1949
Photo Courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 3.30: Hood River, Oregon, 1949.



Photo Courtesy of Ray Galligan

Figure 3.31: Oak Street, Hood River, Oregon, ca. 1900.



Photo Courtesy of Ray Galligan

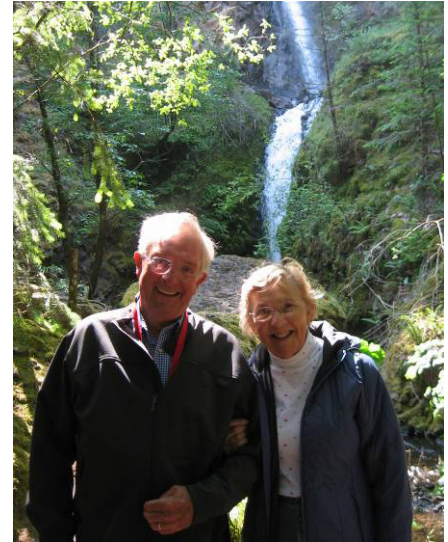
Figure 3.32: Main Street, Hood River, Oregon, ca. 1900.

William Donald Pattison

Chair of the Historic Columbia River Highway Committee

Bill Pattison is one of the historic highway's biggest supporters. As a youth he spent countless hours on the "Highway" and today is chair of the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee. In this role, Bill works effortlessly to preserve the highway for future generations along with the other members of the Advisory Committee. Pictured to the right are Bill and his wife, Patricia, at Starvation Creek Falls.

Bill was interviewed on May 12, 2009 at his home in Hood River by Kristen Stallman and Sara Morrissey.



Family

Bill's great grandfather, Donald Mackay, and family moved to Portland from Scotland by way of Nova Scotia around 1880. Once in Portland, he started the North Pacific Lumber Company. His wife, Jane Steen, was the first of his family to venture out to Hood River. She went there in pursuit of property for a summer home. With the wealth acquired through her husband's lumber business she purchased a large track of land perched above the Columbia River. This land now includes the site of the famed Columbia Gorge Hotel.

Jane Mackay enjoyed buying properties, regardless that at this time it was quite unusual for women to do so. In 1896 she constructed a summer house just west of Hood River. The house was completed in 1904. Today the house, now a restaurant called Stonehedge Gardens (named for the rock walls encircling the house), is considered a Hood River landmark. According to Bill, the house looks very much the same as it did when he was a kid.

Bill's maternal grandfather, William Henry Skene, grew up to become a prominent Portland gynecologist. He worked at the old St. Vincent's Hospital on Westover Street in Portland. Bill's mom often joked that her dad gave her a great room rate at the hospital when she delivered her first son. William Henry Skene's grandson, William Pattison was born in Portland on March 9, 1929. His younger sister, Jean, was born three years later.

Bill's father, Fredrick R. Pattison, came to Portland from St. Paul, Minnesota with his father and mother. His grandfather, William B. Pattison had a hardware store in North Portland. Prior to moving to Portland, Bill's father worked for a safe company in Minnesota. As it turned out, "safe cracking" was a valuable skill as he was often called upon by the neighbors to help them open their safes.

Bill described his dad as a military career man. Badly wounded in World War I, his health was not the greatest. According to family lore, he drank from a poisoned well and suffered from being hit by shrapnel. Returning from the war, Bill's dad worked at his father's hardware store in North Portland. In 1920, after marrying Bill's mother, Jean Mackay Skene, the family headed east to Hood River to take residence in the summer home along the recently completed Columbia River Highway.

In Hood River, Bill’s dad opened a hardware store with two partners. The store was called Weber Hardware and was located where the South Bank Kitchen is today (404 Oak Street). Unfortunately, the hardware store went bankrupt in 1939 and Bill’s dad retired soon thereafter.

Bill’s childhood home was located three-tenths of mile south of the highway. As children, Bill and his younger sister Jean would spend countless hours playing in the nearby woods and along the highway. During the 1930s there was very little traffic. It was a great neighborhood with lots of kids and dogs. His mother referred to Bill and his friends as the “rat pack”.

Bill recalled that the kids in the summertime would chew the asphalt softened by the summer’s sun, pretending it was chewing gum. His mother would often scold them, saying:

“I told you not to eat the road”

Bill attended Frankton School; he and his “rat pack” friends considered themselves Frankton boys, differentiating themselves from the Hood River “city” kids.

Bill would often walk to school, as it was much faster than taking the school bus which picked up students as far west as Wyeth. This school bus was different than ones today, as the seats faced the center of the bus. Bill and his friends, along with a posse of dogs, often used the Frankton (road) Trail to get to school.

One of Bill’s neighbors was Art Kolstad, who owned the theaters in Hood River. The Kolstad’s had three dogs; two Great Danes named Major and Judy, and an English Bulldog named Sammy. Major and Judy loved Bill and would follow him everywhere, but Sammy was glued to his owner. Everyday in the late morning, Sammy would go out and sit along the highway waiting for a ride downtown to the theater where Mr. Kolstad worked. Bill’s dad would often pick up “Sammy, the hitchhiking dog,” and give him a ride downtown.



Figure 3.33: Crag Rats Club House Chimney

When Bill took the school bus he caught it next to the Crag Rats Club house. The Hood River Crag Rats are the oldest Mountain Rescue organization in the United States (Bill is a life member). The Crag Rats were formed as a result of two successful searches for young men that were lost in the Government Camp area. The father of one of the two boys put on a banquet to thank the rescuers who saved his son. In 1932, the group purchased property near Exit 62 and built a meeting house. The building was destroyed with the construction of the Interstate. However, today you can still see its large rock fire place (Figure 3.33), which stands on a knoll north of the local

Frankton School

At the turn of the century, the Frankton School was a small, house-sized structure. There was only one teacher for all the schools in the area. She would travel to other schools including Oak Grove and Barnett. In 1912 a new school house, was constructed. This building remained until 1941, when a new school was built. The newer building remains today and is leased to a local charter school.



A detailed history of the Frankton School has been compiled by Bill Pattison and can be found at the Hood River County Historical Museum.

gas station.

According to Bill, it is still possible to see the remnants of other buildings as well in this area. Across the highway was a farm house, where a family who raised cattle lived. The family also had a donkey that Bill and his friends would ride. The rock wall on the south side of the highway is a remnant of the home that belonged to Mr. Balley. Where the Red Carpet Inn (northeast corner of Country Club and the HCRH) is located today, Mr. Balley had a service station with a big lawn to the side. In 1937, on this very lawn, Bill and his Frankton School classmates watched Franklin Roosevelt’s motorcade go by after he dedicated the Bonneville Dam and proceeded onto Timberline Lodge (Figure 3.34).



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 3.34: President Franklin D. Roosevelt in lead car, right rear seat. FDR had just dedicated Bonneville Dam and was heading to Timberline Lodge to participate in its dedication. East of Toothrock Tunnel, on the realigned Columbia River Highway, September 28, 1937.

A classmate that Bill clearly recalls from his time at Frankton School was Jimmy Harris. Jimmy was two years younger than Bill and was a member of one of the very few African American families in the area at that time. Bill believed that Mrs. Harris worked for Mrs. Peters (a member of the Baumann family), at what he referred to as the “Peter’s Place” and also called the “Tazwell Place.” According to Bill, the building where the Harris family lived is referred to as the Baumann Property in the Reconnection Strategy.

The Highway

Bill describes the old highway as the “social corridor.” The Pattisons lived two miles outside of Hood River and would often ride their bikes or walk into town along the highway. They knew all the people who lived in the houses scattered along the highway. Bill described them as a gregarious group.

“The highway probably contributed a lot to the social welfare of the community”

The geography of the area allowed the houses to be tucked into the terrain. There were lots of benches, low spots and even sink holes with water throughout the area. These ponds were popular with the kids and many of them still exist to this day.

Bill’s family was fortunate because they owned a car which was rather uncommon at the time. The Pattisons would often take trips to visit his parents’ friends in Portland and would stay at the Portland Hotel. To this day the smell of cigars reminds Bill of the lobby of the hotel. While in Portland, Bill’s family would often visit his paternal grandparents in North Portland. His maternal grandmother died the year before he was born, but Bill remembers visiting his maternal grandfather, William Henry Skene, at his home away from home, the Arlington Club, in downtown Portland.

Bill’s most vivid memory of driving the old highway to Portland was that his sister always got carsick. He recalls how his dad was a really slow driver but his mother had a lead foot. For breaks, the family would stop at the drinking fountains located along the highway. Bill remembers that there were probably four or five fountains along the way. Bill theorizes that the landslide, known as Fountain Slide, just east of Cascade Locks, was caused by the water from the wonderful fountain there. Recently, while working with Sam Wilkins (ODOT District 9 Manager), the two men came across an old roadside fountain. The old fountain had been pushed over the edge, and its original location had been lost. Bill and Sam dragged the big fountain up to the HCRH State Trail between Hood River and Mosier. Where the fountain has been placed today there is no water source and therefore it is no longer functional.

Another fountain that Bill remembers stopping at with his family was the one at Viento, where Bill recalls a “huge and very ornate” fountain that had a lot of intricate rock work. It had a step on it so that little children could get a drink.

Besides the water fountain at Viento, Bill recalls spending time at the nearby park. As a kid, the Pattisons would often go to Viento on a Saturday night with a group of family friends. As Bill recalled, the adults would drink whiskey and eat hamburger sandwiches with thick slices of Walla Walla sweet onions as the kids would collect pollywogs and minnows in Viento Creek. The Pattisons were good friends with the Carusos who lived at Viento. The kids were all about the same age and all liked to climb the big rock west of the park.

When driving on the old highway, Bill recalled the days when the Mitchell Point Tunnel was open to two-way traffic.

“You had to go slow [in Mitchell Point Tunnel] because it was pretty narrow, even for those 1930 cars, and then the next evolution was the one way red and green lights. They had the same thing at the Mosier Twin Tunnels too.”

In the Mitchell Point area, Bill remembers that his mother would often stop at the gas station and to see or give something to Mrs. Tenney, who ran the station.

Bill recalled several other places along the highway, including an old gas station east of Cascade Locks. The people who owned the gas station had a monkey in a cage behind the station. Bill and his sister always wanted to stop and see the monkeys. The family nicknamed this gas station the “Monkey Station.”

Bill also shared fond memories of the Ranger Station at Herman Creek, where his dad would often stop. Bill recalls nice green lawns and rock retaining walls and that it looked very much like it does today. Bill’s dad would often stop and visit his friend, the district ranger at the time, Albert Wiesendanger. During the summers, while Bill was in High School (1945), he and many Hood River County kids worked for the US Forest Service. When he 16 he was head of the fire lookout at Larch Mountain.

While Shellrock Mountain was never a place that Bill or his family stopped, he remembers hearing stories that said that if you dug down in the mountain you would find ice under the rock.

Preservation of the Historic Highway

Bill became involved with the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee through his good friend Dave Jensen, who asked him to serve on the committee. Bill and Dave marched down to the county courthouse and Bill was then nominated to serve on the Committee as the Hood River County representative. Bill credits Jeanette Kloos and Lewis A. McArthur with bringing him up to speed on the history of the highway. Upon Lewis A. McArthur’s resignation, Bill was elected to chair the committee.

Bill, along with his good friend and fellow HCRH Advisory Committee member, Art Carroll, were instrumental in the development of the Milepost 2016 Reconnection Strategy.

4.0 THE BUILDERS

The Columbia River Highway opened to the public in 1915, and by 1922 was the first paved road to connect Portland to The Dalles. To accommodate larger vehicles and higher volumes of traffic, a two-lane water-level route was constructed and opened to Bridal Veil by 1948 and to The Dalles by 1953. Its gentle curves and gradual hills, mostly located on fill material dredged from the Columbia, made this a road that differed greatly in character from the Historic Columbia River Highway. However, its designers also envisioned this route as a scenic highway through the Gorge.

Construction of the water-level route—the “new” Columbia River Highway—kept major portions of the “old” Columbia River Highway in place. The segment from the Sandy River to Ainsworth remained as a tour route for those seeking a close-up view of the waterfalls. The segment from Mosier to The Dalles remained primarily as a farm-to-market road. However, much of the old highway between Cascade Locks and Hood River was removed during the water-level route’s original construction. Nevertheless, its designers were able to maintain many of the same scenic views in this section that motorists saw from the old highway. Additional abandoned segments disappeared during the widening of the water-level route to a four-lane freeway configuration in the late 1950s and 1960s. With the Eagle Creek Viaduct completed in 1969, the limited-access road was complete between Portland and The Dalles. It was known initially as Interstate 80N, but by 1980 it was renumbered as Interstate 84.

In this section, oral history summaries are provided for the following people:

- Bob Bothman
- Reid Meritt
- Al Hardwood and John Howard

Bob Bothman

Former ODOT Director

Bob Bothman was interviewed by Kristen Stallman on June 1, 2009 at his southwest Portland home. He served as the Director of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) from 1987 to 1991.



Career

Bob started working for the Oregon State Highway Department (OSHD) in June of 1951, when he was in college. Bob explains that, “I had just finished my first year at Oregon State and had a job at Safeway where I had been working through high school and the summer between high school and college. I wanted to do something different, so I went to the ODOT resident engineer office in Albany, and asked for a job.” Bob recounts that the engineer hired him, telling him to immediately go home, get his lunch, and go with him to the job site. Bob did work on various jobs for the OSHD. After a stint in Sweet Home as a seasonal laborer, Bob became an engineering aide in 1951, carrying a bag of stakes and following the survey crew. “While I was in college, I worked summers on [what would become] I-5, and in the winters I would do traffic counts on weekends to earn a little extra spending money for college,” said Bob. He graduated from Oregon State College in 1954 with a degree in Highway Engineering.

Bob worked in various positions across the state, including Resident Engineer, State Maintenance Engineer, Portland Metro Engineer and Director of ODOT. He worked during the transition of the Highway Department to the Department of Transportation. Bob looks back and laughs because of all the changes in the Department and different ways of doing business.

When Bob retired in 1991, he had held about 23 positions in the 40 years he worked for OSHD/ODOT.

Interstate 84 Experience

Bob’s work in the Columbia Gorge included a stint as Resident Engineer in Hood River, from 1962 through 1963. Bob did the location work for the Cascade Locks to Mitchell Point section of I-84. “I also oversaw the construction of the Y, which is in Hood River to Whiskey Creek Project on the Mt. Hood Highway at the top of the canyon.”

“[For Interstate 84,] I did a lot of design work...[and] all the surveying.”

Bob recalls that people were excited about getting the freeway built, except in Cascade Locks, which was bypassed. He recalls growing up in Bend in the early 1940s and visiting his relatives in Washington County. They would typically travel north from Bend to The Dalles, and then take the old Columbia River Highway. He remembers that the trips were long and that they would often not get into Portland until midnight; it was an all-day trip from Bend to Portland.

During his survey work of the interstate Bob remembers what a challenge it was to triangulate around the water. Given the geography of the area, some of the sections had to be built over inundated areas (Figure 4.1).

“A lot of...[the freeway was built] out in the water.”

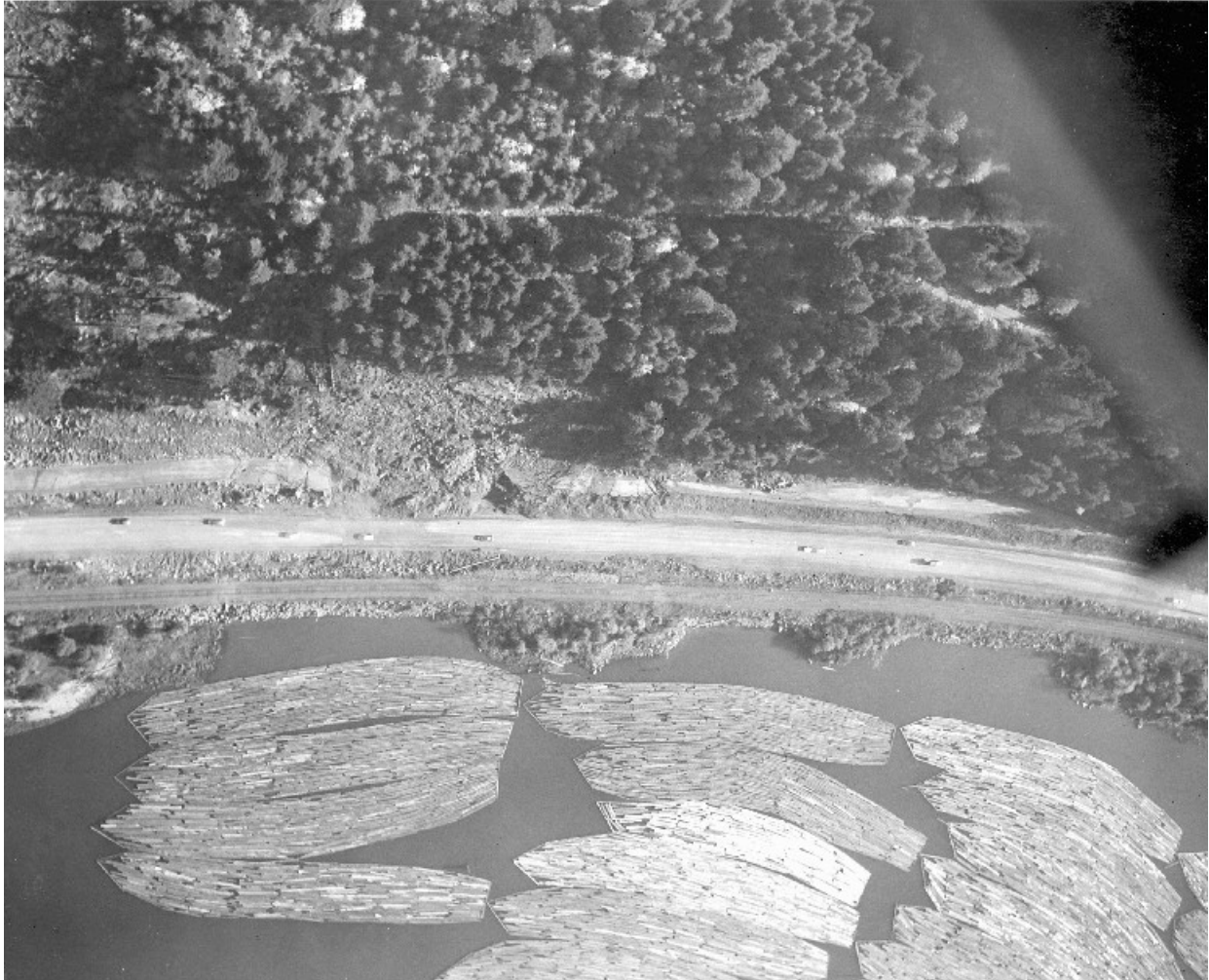


Photo courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 4.1: Aerial view of the Columbia River Highway from Herman Creek to Gorton Creek, 1957.

It was a massive undertaking. “I had my office in Hood River, but spent most of my time in the car. Every morning when you would go out [to] Viento, it was the break between east and west; east of Viento would be solid ice on the pavement and west would be wet, that's where you would hit the weather. Wind was so bad it would scare me even sitting in the car, trying to make calculations.”

Bob explains that the route of the interstate was “...fascinating to survey because we didn't have all the computers there are now. It would have been great to have a laptop you could use, but we literally used hand cranks. The old Monroe hand cranks in the car and I did a lot of the

calculations while the crews were out doing the work, we triangulated around the water and then had an imaginary line on paper that went out into the Columbia River.”

Many sections of the railroad had to be moved out into the river to make room for the highway. Fill material was brought in to bring the area above water. When asked about where the fill came from, Bob recounted, “you know, in the 1950s we didn't have any of those kinds of constraints you have now. It was 1969 when the environmental laws came into effect. The regulations really hit us here in early 1970s.”

Bob recalls some of the engineering difficulties, such as problems encountered at Fountain Slide. Bob explained that Fountain Slide is “the big slide, the slide between Herman Creek and Wyeth. [The freeway was cut into the hillside and built level to the slide area]. Once they cut into it to build a freeway they had major problems, like we always do. Over the years, it has made for a monster slide. It slid year after year and they kept building the highway up higher and higher over the slide. Water was piped out of it and they did everything you could think of trying to stabilize that slide.” He thinks that it is has been relatively stable for the past decade.

Experiences with the Oregon State Highway Department and ODOT

In the 1960s Bob recalls being contacted by the Assistant State Highway Engineer and given instructions to purchase property. He would travel to the property with the right-of-way agent and negotiate the purchase. He stated that they would “offer whatever money they [(the property owner)] needed.” While some owners may have been hesitant, Bob does not recall ever having to threaten people to sell.

“We were willing to pay what it cost”

Bob recalls that the attitude of the Department was to get things done quickly. Bob explains that the policy was, “the sun never sets on a pothole in Oregon.” “That was the way it was and if you couldn't produce that, you could take your plate off the table – that means you were fired,” according to Bob, “that was the attitude.” He used to drive around in those years with a tape recorder, “I would record everything I saw all along and I would go sit down with the regional engineer, lay out the things [that needed to be done] and he would correct them immediately. We just had an attitude of ‘just do it,’ before Nike came along.”

“We were just ‘build a road’ people”

While the attitude of the department was to “just do it,” some of the projects that Bob remembers working on encountered some challenges that had to be worked through. One such project was the section of Interstate 205 through the City of Portland. Bob remembers attending some of the first hearings: “We had five hearings, and we had over [a] thousand [people] at each of those hearings and they just booed at [us] something terrible. It was just awful because lots of folks didn't want to build I-205... So we had to work through all that to get a consensus between the city and the county and the state and the feds.” Eventually consensus was reached and the section of I-205 was constructed.

Bob shared his amazement over the amount of traffic that immediately appeared on I-205 when it was opened from Sunnyside, in the south, to the Glenn Jackson Bridge, in the north. “It was just mind-boggling how quick people ran to it, to use it. It has been a great success,” said Bob.

Another success story that Bob recalls, was the installation of bike paths along I-205. “Everyone opposed them, all the neighbors. But it was a matter of literally sitting down and listening to people and letting people help [with] the design, be part of [it] and have ownership in it. [Now] the neighbors like the... trails on I-205 [and] the bike lanes.”

“That’s my trail experience coming in, we just had to convince people that trails are good and not bad and I think we’ve done that in the last 30 years.”

One of Bob’s proudest career achievements was his involvement with the light rail line on the T.H. Banfield Expressway (Interstate 84 between Interstate 5 and Interstate 205). Bob remembers that the project was ahead of its time. ODOT worked with people from TriMet, as well as city and county officials, to garner support for the project. Elected officials were taken on a tour of light rail in cities including: Cleveland, Philadelphia, Calgary, and Edmonton. Many of the ideas for the light rail MAX (Metropolitan Area Express) project were generated from that tour. Bob recalls that it was “a huge project.”

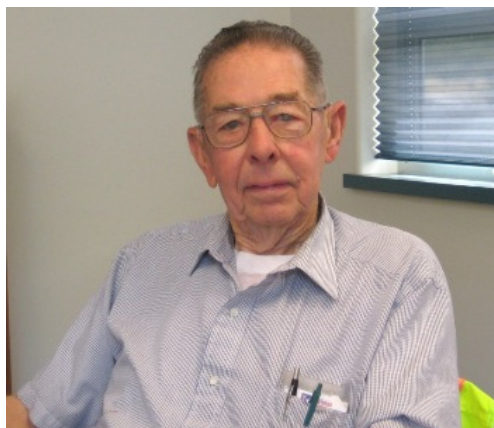
When Bob retired from ODOT, he was on about 15 national transportation committees and chaired about half of them. While at ODOT, Bob served on the Joint Policy Advisory Committee (JPAC), representing the state of Oregon. When he retired he continued to serve on JPAC, as a citizen member, and has served on chaired many other committees in the Portland area. Bob also became chair of his neighborhood association and served for seven years, he also served on the board of trustees for Willamette University, representing the Methodist church. He has been active on the Metro Trails Advisory Committee. Bob also spends many of his hours volunteering at his church.

In his retirement Bob Bothman has found the perfect blend of his vocation, engineering, and his avocation, international travel. While traveling abroad, Bob and his wife help build homes with Habitat for Humanity.

W. Reid Meritt

Retired ODOT Employee

Robert W. Hadlow interviewed W. Reid Meritt on June 9, 2009, at the ODOT Project Manager's office in The Dalles. Reid retired after 57 years with the Oregon Department of Transportation. Since then, Reid has worked for ODOT on a part-time basis on special projects. At present, he has 62 years with the agency.



Reid Meritt was born in Scio, Oregon, in 1925. He was in the US Navy in World War II. He attended college at the Montana School of Mines (Montana Tech), Notre Dame, and Oregon State University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1947. On June 4, 1947, shortly after graduating from college, Reid began his long career with the Oregon State Highway Department (later known as ODOT). He started work as a draftsman for A. V. Benedict, the Resident Engineer in Albany. As part of this crew he worked on construction of the first two lanes of what became Interstate 5 between Jefferson and Salem. Mr. Benedict was an influential mentor who was instrumental in Reid's career with ODOT. Reid moved around quite a bit with this crew. They transferred from Albany to Rainier and finally to The Dalles where Reid was promoted to Resident Engineer in 1951. In 1955, Reid was transferred to Salem, to Prineville, and to Klamath Falls. After moving to Klamath Falls, he had the opportunity to transfer back to The Dalles, which he declined. However he was finally transferred back to The Dalles in 1970.



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 4.2: Roadbed for New Alignment of Columbia River Highway near Mitchell Point.

A memorable project for Reid was the construction of the first two lanes of what became Interstate 84 between Hood River and Mosier (construction of the Mitchell Point section is shown in Figure 4.1). He had first driven the highway in 1949, when Mitchell Point Tunnel and Mosier Twin Tunnels were signalized for one-way traffic.

Reid recalled that they had to create buildable land for the new alignment. They relied on "hydraulic embankment construction." This involved dredging sand out the river and depositing the material at the location for the new highway. The state had used this technique before on the water-level route from

the Sandy River east. A dredge would pump the material from the river bottom to the new location. Then, the river carried the sand downstream along the embankment where it would settle out and build up the highway's foundations.

Reid recalls that at the time he was working on the water-level route, he had a near miss while surveying. He was carrying a transit over his shoulder along the steep bluffs overlooking Viento State Park when he lost his balance and nearly fell onto the road below. It was the most scared he had ever been.

During the time he was on the water-level projects, Reid also worked with Wasco County on approach roads and the relocation of local roads relative to the new The Columbia River (The Dalles) Bridge. This included the relocation and design of the current The Dalles-California Highway No. 197, between the bridge and Eightmile Creek to the south. He was transferred to Klamath Falls before construction began on the water-level route east of The Dalles. Because it was connected with dam construction on the Columbia River, the US Army Corp of Engineers administered most of the work, which was overseen by ODOT personnel.

Reid recalled that Koberg Beach, between Hood River and Mosier, was a very popular recreation area. It had an old barn that you drove through and paid your fee for entry to park. There was also a very nice beach and rock bathhouse. In the earlier days they had danced in the top of the barn.

Reid and his wife, Vlasta, married in 1948 and had two sons. He enjoys hunting, sports, coin collecting, stamp collecting, woodworking, and working for ODOT.

Al Harwood & John Howard

Retired ODOT Employees

Allan (Al) Harwood and John Howard were interviewed by Sara Morrissey on May 29, 2009 at Al's home in Portland, Oregon. Both men graduated from Oregon State University as civil engineers and worked many years for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). Much of their careers were spent working on the construction and structural integrity of bridges.



John Howard started working for the Oregon State Highway Department (OSHD) in the summer of 1949, while attending Oregon State University. He worked as an engineering aid on the first bridge on the water-level route across the Sandy River at Troutdale, Oregon. During his first years at OSHD, he spent much of his time in the western part of the Columbia Gorge. John was



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 4.3: Moffett Creek Bridge, 1949. Pictured is the original bridge, which had been replaced by the time John was conducting inspections.

the bridge inspector on several bridges on the highway, including those over McCord Creek and Moffett Creek (Figure 4.2). He did not work directly on the construction of the water-level highway and remembers not having much contact with the design office. He recalls that “it was...[only] the resident [engineer] and a very small crew [that did] the whole thing. [There was] one inspector per bridge [at] the most.” Later in his career, John worked in Astoria and then in Portland, where he worked on high visibility projects, such as the construction of the Glenn Jackson Bridge on Interstate 205 and the Fremont Bridge on Interstate 405.

Al Harwood, like John, studied civil engineering at Oregon State University. He graduated in 1954 and earned his structural engineering license in 1958. While still in school he went to work for the Oregon State Highway Department (OSHD) in 1952.

One of Al's first experiences with road construction was in 1944 (during World War II), when he was 12 years old. He went to Cascade Locks to spend the summer with his grandfather, Charles “Charlie” Harwood. They lived in a small trailer near the asphalt plant above Bonneville Dam. Al recalls that he could look down on Bonneville and across the highway to the Coast Guard station.

Al's grandfather had worked for the Oregon State Highway Department for a number of years and retired as a roller operator. However, during the war, OSHD asked Charles to come out of

retirement and work along the highway. At that time, OSHD was understaffed due to employees fighting in the war. Charles accepted and was put to work with the patching and maintenance crews in the Columbia Gorge. In the 1940s, ODOT had maintenance crews all over the state of Oregon.

During the war, much of the maintenance crew that Charles worked with was female. There were female truck drivers and flaggers (Figure 4.3) that mainly worked on paving projects around Bonneville Dam.

While staying with Charles, Al remembers going with his grandfather and the crew's time keeper, who also lived in a trailer nearby, to Cascade Locks for dinner. Al remembers that there was a mink farm in town and an abundance of slot machines. Al would run around and check all the slot machines for forgotten nickels.



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 4.4: Female flagger during World War II, 1940s.

Constructing the Highway and Interstate



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 4.5: West side of Tooth Rock, west portal of railroad tunnel and approximate location of west portal of proposed highway tunnel.

One of the challenges encountered while working in the Columbia Gorge was the partnership with the railroad. This challenge was primarily due to the limited space between the railroad and the highway (Figure 4.4). John remembers that when he was working on the Moffett Creek Bridge, there were issues between the railroad and the grading crews. The crew that was working on the highway was using dynamite on the rock cliffs near Eagle Creek and the rocks would fall down on the railroad, an unfavorable landing spot.

“The grading crew had a [conflict] going with the railroad.” - John

According to Al, the two-lane water level route was mostly completed before construction of the interstate began. After World War II, President Eisenhower placed an emphasis on the interstate programs as part of his national security plan. Al remembers some men in the army requesting early discharge to go back to highway work. Since Al only had a few months left in the service, he decided to fulfill his full term and returned to Oregon in 1956.

When Al returned to Oregon, after his time in the service, he went back to work at the Oregon State Highway Department and worked on the Interstate 5 Bridge across the Columbia River. He later worked on developing better clearance for Tooth Rock Tunnel and was involved in the Eagle Creek Viaduct.

He remembers that in one section, in Corbett, there were two cafes at the water-level route elevation. When the highway contractor began construction near one of the cafes, Al recalls that the property owners and their family became very opposed to the project. He recounted that on one occasion a senior person from the family actually chased the OSHD crews off of the property with a shotgun.

Restoration Work on the Columbia River Highway

Al became involved with the restoration of the Historic Columbia River Highway when the contractor he worked for, RA Hatch, was hired to open the Mosier Tunnels between Hood River and Mosier. Al was the project engineer and directed the opening of the tunnel, securing the rock inside with anchor bolts and concrete lining, and working on the railings. Al did not support the construction of the rock catchment structure and attended several HCRH Advisory Committee meetings to give his opinion on the matter. His preferred alternative was to hang netting on the cliff and construct a concrete barrier to stop the rock, rather than build the more extensive catchment structure. John also expressed that he was also not pleased with the rock catchment, stating that it detracted from the tunnels.

“[In the Mosier Tunnels, it used to be] pleasant walking along [and] having the view out to the river, but [now with the addition of the rock catchment] you feel completely shut in with that monster that was built to protect you from the rocks.”- John

Another disappointment to Al was that the new tunnel was lined with timber, opposed to its original design, which had not used wood. According to Al, the timber lining was put in several years after the original tunnel had been built because of rock fall issues. Because of new technology, Al felt that rock falls are no longer a problem in the tunnel and that the timber did not need to be added.

Al also recalled working on the Eagle Creek bike path restoration project. The alignment of the trail traversed over some petrified trees. Al requested that the alignment be shifted so the forest would not be paved over and so that riders could view the trees. However, Al was unsuccessful in convincing anyone to change the alignment and the trees now lay buried under pavement.

Al and John worked together several times throughout their ODOT careers and continue their friendship to this day. When Al was asked to be part of the Oral History Project, he suggested that John join him.

5.0 THE PRESERVATIONISTS

Several sections of the original route of the Columbia River Highway were severed by the construction of Interstate 84. This loss was recognized by the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act of 1986 and by the Oregon Legislature in 1987, who directed the Oregon Department of Transportation to preserve and enhance existing portions of the historic highway and plan for reconnection of this scenic route as a State Trail.

ODOT has worked with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the State Historic Preservation Office and Travel Oregon to preserve, enhance and reconnect the Historic Columbia River Highway. Much work has been accomplished since that date and 62 of the original 73 miles of the HCRH are now open to travel either by motor vehicle (Historic Highway or connecting county roads) or by foot and bicycle (State Trail). Today, the drivable sections of the Historic Columbia River Highway have been restored to their 1920s appearance (Figure 5.1), and 11 miles of the State Trail are complete.

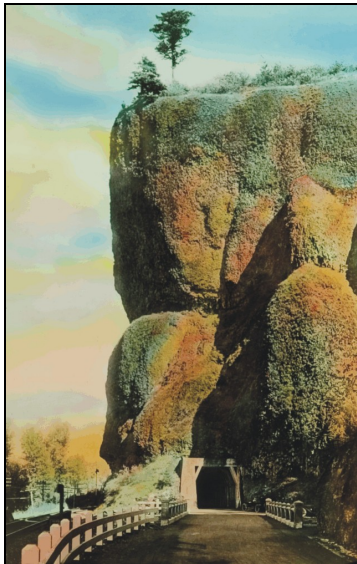


Photo courtesy of David Sell



Photo courtesy of ODOT

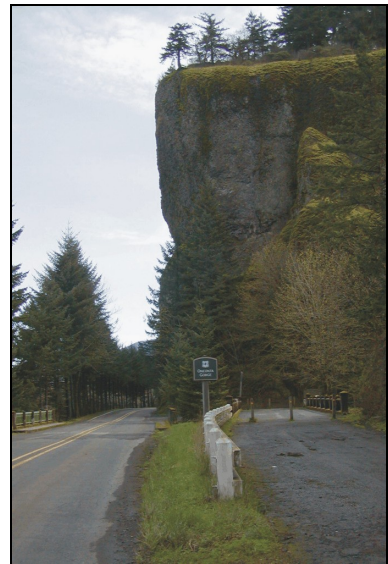


Photo courtesy of ODOT

Figure 5.1: Restoration of Oneonta Tunnel.

Some of the early preservation efforts of the Columbia River Highway are discussed in the following section. Oral history summaries are provided for the following people:

- Lewis McArthur
- Jack Mills
- Jeanette Kloos
- Clarence Mershon

Lewis L. McArthur

Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory
Committee Founding Member and Former Chair

Robert W. Hadlow interviewed Lewis L. McArthur on June 22, 2009, at Lew's apartment in Portland. Lew grew up in Portland and has early recollections of the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH). Years later, he was an early leader in the movement to restore and rehabilitate the HCRH. He served as the first chair of HCRH Advisory Committee.



Family

Lewis (Lew) Linn McArthur was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1917. He is the son of the late Lewis Ankeny McArthur, who was the original author of the landmark volume, *Oregon Geographic Names*, which is in its seventh edition. Lew has roots in Oregon. One of his great-grandfathers, James W. Nesmith, came to Oregon in the emigration of 1843. He had a long political career, ultimately serving terms as US Senator and Congressman from Oregon. Another great-grandfather was William P. McArthur. He was a naval officer who surveyed the Pacific Coast in 1850 for the US Coast and Geodetic Survey. The McArthurs have been in Oregon ever since then. On his mother's side, the Hewitt family came from the North of England. His Grandfather Hewitt was the second son who left the North of England for America and landed in Portland, Oregon. He went into the marine insurance business.

Lew graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1938 with an A.B. in Political Science and Economics. He returned to Portland, where he worked for US Steel for three years. He then served in the US Army for four years during the Second World War, where he was stationed in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. Upon his return to Portland after the war, Lew began a forty-year career with Ray F. Becker Company, which made metal buildings. He married Joyce A. Clark, who was the daughter of Dr. Dan Clark, head of the history department at the University of Oregon. They had four children.

Recollections of the Historic Columbia River Highway

Lew's first recollection about the Historic Columbia River Highway is from the 1920s, when he was in grammar school. As vice-president and general manager of Pacific Power and Light, his father traveled around the state and made regular trips to Hood River. Lew recalled riding with him in their 1923 Buick touring car.

“The highway was wide open,” he recalled, “you could see everything, there were no trees, with the exception of coming down the hill into the “S-loops” [figure-eight loops], and that [area] had the maple trees and the deciduous trees, just the way it looks now. . . .”

He also remembered riding through the Mitchell Point Tunnel. He had heard reports that the wind sometimes blew so hard at the approaches to the tunnel that it would rip the fabric tops off of the automobiles.

Lew recalls staying in the Columbia Gorge Hotel in Hood River. His mother did not approve of hot cakes. “She thought they were bad for you.” So he and his sister would sneak down to the dining room while his mother and father were still asleep and have hot cakes for breakfast. Lew also recalls having picnic lunches with his father. They usually consisted of a bottle of ginger ale that they cooled in a stream, a box of soda crackers, and a can of Underwood Deviled Ham.

Lew has always been interested in the historic highway. He traveled the state helping his father establish level lines and setting bench marks. He also cultivated an appreciation for heavy building and bridges.

Preservation

In the early 1970s, Oregon Governor Tom McCall appointed Lew to the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation. He met others on the committee with similar interests. Eventually, he wrote the industrial building section of Thomas Vaughan and Virginia Ferriday’s book, *Space, Style, and Structure*. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, he helped ODOT Historian Dwight Smith complete an inventory of Oregon bridges.

By the 1980s, everything seemed to line up for the historic highway. The National Park Service completed a comprehensive study and made many recommendations regarding short-term and long-term preservation and restoration goals. Dave Talbot, Oregon State Parks superintendent, expressed interest in the highway. He appointed an ad hoc committee with Lew as the chair to study the highway and see what could be done with the abandoned parts. Shortly thereafter, in 1987, the state legislature passed a bill creating the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee. Lew was an original member and the first chair.

One of the first questions that came up for the committee was whether it was possible to recreate the historic-style 1920s standard white wooden guard fence along the highway (Figure 5.2). One could do it, but the railing would not provide the crash protection that was required. ODOT engineers designed a similar railing with larger dimension lumber, steel backing plates and larger hardware. It met a Texas Transportation Institute crash rating and is used now throughout the drivable portions of the restored highway.



Photo courtesy of the Oregon DOT

Figure 5.2: Standard wooden guard fence along the historic highway.

Another project the Advisory Committee took on was to reopen the abandoned segment from Tanner Creek to Eagle Creek, near Bonneville Dam. It went together pretty well. Lew believes that a key part of this project was a precast beam bridge that would be dropped in above the east portal of Toothrock Tunnel with little disruption to Interstate 84 traffic. An ODOT engineer designed this span to bridge a gap that the tunnel’s construction in 1937 created in the original

highway alignment. However, Lew has always been disappointed with the concrete staircase at the east end of this segment. He still believes that it was possible to create a ramp with a gentle enough grade to traverse the 30-foot change in elevation and avoid a staircase that creates a barrier for some trail users.

Lew believes that the segment from Eagle Creek to Cascade Locks came together very well. Especially ingenious was the cut-and-cover tunnel under Interstate 84 that the Federal Highway Administration used to carry the trail from one side of the road to the other. It really made this trail segment possible.

The Hood River-to-Mosier segment of the HCRH State Trail opened in 2000. The Mosier Twin Tunnels presented some real challenges. Lew firmly believes that the 700-foot rock catch structure west of the west tunnel was an overkill solution to address a rock fall issue at this location. He believes that there were other, more appropriate and less expensive alternatives. Lew wonders what one could have done with the money used to build the catchment structure.

All in all, regardless of some disagreements over particular components of the highway' rehabilitation, Lew is very pleased that folks have shown an interest in the highway and the Gorge and are making sure that Historic Columbia River Highway and Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail are looked after for future generations to enjoy.

“I compliment...[the] people who have been concerned about the environment and the history [of the Columbia River Gorge], it's just wonderful to know that that part of the system is being cared for.”

John “Jack” A. Mills

Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory
Committee Founding Member

*Jack Mills was interviewed by Kristen Stallman on
May 26, 2009, at the Mark O. Hatfield West
Trailhead Visitor Center in Hood River.*

The Ainsworth Family

Jack Mills’ family has had a long history of involvement with the Columbia River Gorge. It began with his great-grandfather, the notorious Captain John C. Ainsworth of sternwheeler fame and founder of the Ainsworth Bank. Since establishing themselves in Portland, the Ainsworth Family has had a tradition of preservation and environmentalism. Jack Mill’s grandfather, Jack Ainsworth, purchased the property which is now known as Ainsworth State Park and later donated it to the State. Jack Ainsworth became the first State Parks Commissioner in Oregon and was an early “environmentalist,” often advocating for preservation of the forests. He was one of the first people to publicly denounce the clear cutting of forests in Oregon and Washington.



While Jack Mills does not have too many recollections about driving on the old Columbia River Highway, he remembers that his mother would often tell him about her trips to the Columbia Gorge with her father, Jack Ainsworth. According to family lore, Jack Ainsworth was the second person to own a car in Oregon, a Packard. On their trips through the Gorge, the family would go as far as Hood River and spend the night at what is today known as the Stonehedge Gardens.

Jack Mills remembers that his grandfather had a love for engineering. He had attended an engineering school in California but was called to follow in his father’s footsteps to work at the Ainsworth Bank, the largest bank in Oregon at the time; it later merged with US Bank. However, being an engineer at heart, Jack Ainsworth would take apart every piece of his beloved Packard. He would meticulously lay the pieces out on the floor of the family’s carriage house. He would then put them back together scrupulously noting any improvements or suggestions that could be made. Once complete, he would send his report back to the Packard Motor Car Company in Detroit. In response, the Packard Motor Car Company, pleased with his recommendations, offered him a free Packard for each year he provided them with this report.

Jack Mills

As a child, Jack attended what is now the Catlin Gabel School. He headed to the east coast to attend a prep school and then attended Cornell University prior to launching his career at US Bank as a commercial loan officer. Jack was fortunate enough to work at the bank in the mornings, devoting his afternoons and evenings to civic work.

Jack and his wife were married in 1952, the same year Jack’s father, Abbot Mills, was nominated by President Truman to the Federal Reserve System’s Board of Governors. Subsequently, Jack’s

father spent 16 years back east in this prestigious post. Abbot Mills, a great believer in walking and hiking, would walk from their home in the Portland West Hills downtown to the US Bank where he worked.

After working 20 years for US Bank and serving on countless boards and commissions, Jack bought a ranch in Parkdale, Oregon. He, his wife and their four teenage sons moved to the Hood River Valley in 1975. Around that time, Jack became involved with the preservation efforts at Timberline Lodge and worked to set up the Friends of Timberline. Over the years he served on the Hood River County Commission, raised cattle on his ranch and later helped to purchase the Mt. Hood Railroad. The railroad was purchased in an effort to save the last miles of track from being removed. “[The railroad company told me] well if you want to save that track, the top end of it, you're going to have to buy the whole... thing.” The Mt. Hood Railroad Company purchased the line for \$650,000 about 20 years ago. Jack served as president of the Mt. Hood Railroad Company.

Preservation

Encouraged by his childhood friend, Nancy Russell, Jack was appointed to serve on the original Advisory Committee for the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) in 1980. Jack recalls that Nancy was always enthusiastic about exploring the George.

“Nancy Russell used to drag us out and make us hike all the trails.”

Jack’s appointment to the Committee coincided well with his love of the Gorge, appreciation of historic preservation, and with his connections to the Oregon Legislature in Salem. Jack first became involved in preservation as a founding member of the Friends of Timberline. He also served as an Oregon Advisor to the National Trust for Historic Preservation prior to joining the HCRH Advisory Committee.

In the beginning, Jack recalls that there was a lot of enthusiasm and support for the preservation of the historic highway. The Committee received many volunteers as well as financial donations for their work projects. After six years of conservation work, financial support from the government finally came when the Gorge was designated as a National Scenic Area in 1986. Jack credits this act with the preservation of the highway.

“There would be no Historic Columbia River Highway without the National Scenic Area.”

As with the building of any project, it was difficult to imagine all of the challenges. Jack recalled the white wooden guardrails as an early challenge. As the highway was designed for cars going 25 miles per hour, present-day speeds required stronger guardrails. The committee did not anticipate the high costs associated with bringing the guardrails up to ODOT safety requirements by retrofitting them with steel reinforcement.

Jack served on the HCRH Advisory Committee with his friend, Lewis McArthur (see the summary on Lew McArthur on page 58). According to Jack, Lewis McArthur “ran the whole show” when it came to the preservation of the HCRH. Lew was passionate about the preservation and restoration of the highway. He wanted to keep the highway untouched. Jack recounted one incident when a group of volunteers cleared the picturesque moss that had come

to cover the stone walls and concrete. The volunteers didn't get very far, because McArthur soon noticed and halted the "clean up."

The rock catchment structure at Mosier Twin Tunnels was particularly controversial and Jack and others were disappointed with the decision to install such a large feature along the trail. Jack personally thought that the tremendous expenditure of funds associated with the structure could have been better spent elsewhere along the highway.

Looking out the windows at the cyclists and hikers walking by the visitor center, Jack commented that the trail project is wonderful, that is everything except for the rock catchment structure. He is now looking forward to the reconstruction of the Mitchell Point Tunnel and believes that this segment should be the number one priority.

Jeanette B. Kloos

Retired Oregon Department of Transportation
Scenic Area Coordinator and Founder and
President of the Friends of the Historic Columbia
River Highway

Jeanette Kloos was interviewed by Linda Dodds on June 17, 2009, in a conference room at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Region Headquarters in Portland. Typically well-organized, she arrived for the interview prepared with notes and scrapbook in hand.



Background

Jeanette received her B.A. in Environmental Studies in 1972 from the University of California at Santa Barbara. In 1977, she received her M.S. in Urban and Environmental Studies from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and in 1984 completed a B.S. in Math and Computer Science at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Early in her career she was employed as an Environmental Specialist for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (1973-1981), and later became a Community Planner for the same agency (1980-1981). Jeanette became a member of the ODOT staff in 1985, retiring in 2006.

ODOT

“After several years at FHWA headquarters, both my husband [William C. Kloos] and I decided we wanted to leave FHWA and get west of the Mississippi, so he took a job in San Antonio. We were there three years and during that time, I was not able to find a job in my environmental/transportation career. And it was also too hot for me. So when [Bill] had the opportunity of taking a job in Portland, I said, ‘sure,’ sight unseen. When I looked for work here, I ended up getting an environmental position here at ODOT... That was in late 1985. I was hired by ODOT to write environment documents for the agency. I wrote Environmental Impact Statements for big highway projects, including finishing up the McLoughlin Boulevard project, the Terwilliger Interchange; [and] I-84 from 181st to Sandy. I also worked on the Greeley-North Banfield project that never got out of design. I wrote a lot of negative declarations, categorical exclusions, and ended up doing quite a few stand alone Section 4(f) for Parks where there were minor impacts from highway projects.”

During her early years at ODOT, Jeanette worked as an Environmental Specialist, managing environmental aspects of project development. Later, from 1988 to 2006, as Scenic Area Coordinator for the agency, she represented the agency within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. She also coordinated the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee, and led eight Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail projects. She wrote the Master Plan in 1996 and revised it in 2006. She also wrote and the National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Columbia River Highway, and developed a brochure and bike map for the historic highway.

ODOT and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act of 1986

Jeanette worked on some of the early plans for reconnecting the highway. “I was asked to do a six-month special assignment in 1987 and I was chosen by the Director of State Parks [Dave Talbot], and to this day, I don’t know how he ever learned about me, but he decided that I was the correct person to work on this project. It was to write the 1987 study of the Historic Columbia River Highway, with the plans for the reconnection of the highway, so I was the coauthor for that. The overall goals were to restore and reconnect the highway back to its original condition. There was also a lot [of] work during the development of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Plan to make sure that future projects were all included in the plan and that the management plan allowed ODOT to do all necessary construction and maintenance operations that needed to be done. So there was a lot of work with the Gorge Commission and the [USDA] Forest Service reviewing the different drafts of the Management Plan.”

The study that Jeanette worked on was required by the National Scenic Area Act.

“The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act was passed in late 1986. It took quite a while to get the Columbia River Gorge Commission set up because they had to have a bi-state compact passed by the two legislatures [Oregon and Washington], creating the Gorge Commission and to get the new office of the Forest Service created and staffed. So during that time period was when I was doing the 1987 study. Rather than waiting for all of the requirements to come down from the Scenic Area Forest Service and the Gorge Commission, Dave Talbot wanted ODOT to get that plan together first, from our perspective. The study was developed by an ad hoc committee, which some of the people eventually became members of the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee. There was a push by Richard Ross of HPLO [Historic Preservation League of Oregon] to make sure the 1987 study was not just something to sit on the shelf, so he proposed a bill in the legislature and it passed unanimously.”

ODOT Coordinator for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

In her work as ODOT’s coordinator for the Scenic Area, Jeanette helped to identify the highest priority project on what became the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail. The segment was from Hood River to Mosier. She recounts that it was chosen because much of the historic highway was left intact, “but,” she says, “there was ...one big problem with the Mosier Twin Tunnels being filled full of rock and not accessible,” in addition to an adjacent rock fall. It was not until 2000 that the project was completed, due to a lag in funding attributable to local approval and adoption of ordinances for the Scenic Area Act. In the meanwhile, restoration focused on small rockwork restoration, guard rail, and interpretive signs. In the early days, Jeanette recalls that they had a knowledgeable mason, Richard Fix, working on the project. The first funded HCRH State Trail project was the segment from Tanner Creek to Eagle Creek. This project was approved in January 1993 and it took three years to complete.

“It [the Tanner Creek to Eagle Creek project] was a little over a mile, so it didn’t attract a lot of long distance bicyclers, but it attracted a lot of families and people out looking for the view.”

The Tanner Creek to Eagle Creek project included restoration of the Toothrock Viaduct, the Eagle Creek Viaduct, and construction of the new Toothrock Tunnel Bridge, along with the stairway. The work included a new family of railings, designed by Rob Dortignacq, that were based on historic precedent.



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 5.3: Eagle Creek-to-Cascade Locks section of the HCRH State Trail.

The next major project, Eagle Creek to Cascade Locks was completed by the Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration as a Forest Highway enhancement project. Sections of the historic highway on both sides of I-84 were connected by a new undercrossing. This project led to a transportation enhancement-funded project to the west, connecting Moffett Creek to Tanner Creek. The work involved installation of a vegetated retaining wall. Eleven miles of trail have been built, with 12 miles remaining.

The most challenging “missing link,” according to Jeanette, is Warrendale to Moffett Creek, estimated sometime ago to cost \$9 million. Other parts to be completed are at Wyeth and Starvation Creek, and between Viento and Hood River. However, times and design proposals have shifted since they were studied in 2000.

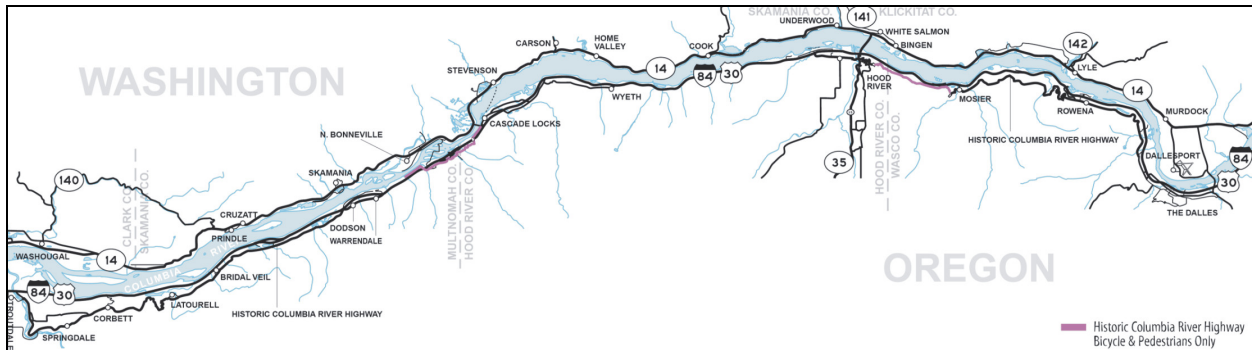
Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway

Jeanette retired in 2005 and soon founded the support group, the Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway. The organization, says Jeanette, raises funds, “to try to help ODOT and State Parks do some of the projects.” She points to the money raised to hire GRI, a consultant, to complete a feasibility study for boring a new tunnel through Mitchell Point. A considerable amount of work is necessary for the project to go forward, although ODOT has requested funds for the replacement tunnel, as well as for Lindsey Creek to Starvation Creek. According to Jeanette, Representative Peter DeFazio has been apprised of the projects and is in support of them.

Jeanette believes that it is helpful, for projects such as these, to have the support and advocacy of the Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway. Along with existing fundraisers such as the Rooster Rock star parties, the Edgefield concerts, the Gorge Cycle (Figure 5.4), and having a presence at local festivals, the Friends hope to land some *pro bono* engineering services and to have this kind of donated work accepted by ODOT. Jeanette feels that the historic highway project has been a project for all people from the very start.

“From the very beginning there was a lot of local use [of the highway], a lot of people walking their dogs, and quite a wide variety of users of there – walkers, and people with strollers, and bicyclists, and people on in-line skates, and people bird watching, and people looking at the wildflowers.”

She is pleased that, except for the stairway, “all of it [the highway/trail] is ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] accessible.



Map courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

Figure 5.4: Historic Columbia River Highway Bicycle and Pedestrian Map.

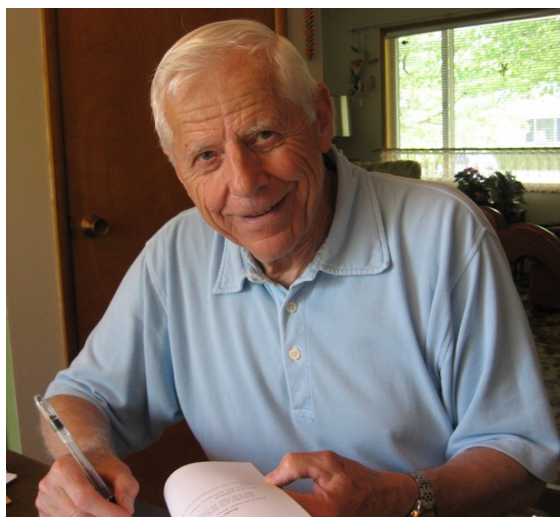
But with all of these varied uses, Jeanette says she is most looking forward to the reopening of the tunnel, and “having it completed so that you can get a bike from Troutdale to The Dalles without going on I-84.” She adds that the historic highway is already an All-American Road, a National Scenic Byway, and a National Historic Landmark. The trail is a national Recreational Trail and was the Millennium Legacy Trail for Oregon. While she worked on these for ODOT, Jeanette says:

“It definitely became more than a job, but a passion. That’s why I am still working on it, even though I am no longer getting paid.”

Clarence E. Mershon

A Native of Corbett, Oregon, Clarence is an author, presenter, retired educator, volunteer and newsletter editor for Crown Point Country Historical Society, and keeper of Columbia River Gorge history.

Clarence Mershon was interviewed by Linda Dodds on June 12, 2009 at the Gresham home where he and his wife Colleen have lived for 50 years.



Background

Clarence received his Bachelor's of Science degree from Portland State University, and his Master's of Education from the University of Oregon. He also did graduate work at Portland State University and at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He worked as a math teacher and administrator at Parkrose School District. Clarence is an avid researcher and has delved into such topics as women in World War II, and the history of East Multnomah County and the Columbia River Gorge. In the past decade, Clarence has produced numerous volumes on these topics. In addition to local history, Clarence has an interest in mycology – the study of mushrooms – and he has taught classes on this topic at Mt. Hood Community College. He is also a member of the Mazamas, a nonprofit mountaineering education organization in Oregon.

Clarence and his wife Colleen have traveled to Europe and trailered to the American South and Southwest, in addition to following the journey of Lewis and Clark. The couple has four children.

Family

Clarence recalls, “My grandfather had a farm that was about a mile from the Columbia River. It’s situated on what is now Mershon Road. That’s where I grew up. My grandparents came there in 1889 and settled in the area.”

“My grandfather purchased parts of the Taylor and Dunn holdings and had 40-some acres – which was plenty for farming with horses. He was known as “the Onion King,” because he raised and shipped onions and cabbage to California and the East. He also shipped cauliflower, lettuce, cabbage, and dried prunes from Troutdale east, south and some to the north, by rail. There was quite an extensive prune industry in the area, up until 1922.” The dried prunes were shipped to England where they were known for their fine quality. “But an ice storm took out the prune orchards and they were not replanted.”

Clarence’s father (George “Jum” Mershon) was two years old when the family came. His mother’s family settled in the area in 1882. Clarence recalls that his father farmed and worked in the shipyards during the Depression.

Researching and Writing Local History on the Columbia River Gorge

“My mother, Laura Anna Wilson Mershon, was interested in history, and I think I got my interest from her.”

In addition to inheriting his mother’s interest in history, Clarence attributes some of his motivation to record and write local history to several others. Clarence recalls his father, George, talking a lot about working on the historic highway, although back then, he didn’t pay too much attention. Another individual who inspired Clarence was Bea Graf, a local resident. Bea was an early interviewer, who in the late 1920s, started writing about the early settlers in the area. She compiled their stories by making mimeograph or typewritten “booklets.” In the 1970s, Bea asked Clarence to research and write about his mother’s family because they were early settlers there. It took Clarence some time to research his mother’s 10 brothers and sisters (in the Wilson family) and by the time Clarence had completed his project, Bea had died. But he had started learning about the people and the land, and this was Clarence’s introduction to researching and writing about local history.

Clarence began writing his first book after he compiled the family history for Bea. “[Colleen and I] were attending Crown Point Historical Society meetings...[and] we had the old timers come in and tell stories about what life was like and what they were doing. One evening, Alice Wand [a member of the Society] said we should be writing these down. So I thought about it for a while and came home and talked it over with Colleen.” Enthused at the prospect of capturing these stories, Clarence “went to the school first to find out what people knew there.” That research became the booklet, *Corbett Now and Columbian Then*. And after that, Clarence continued interviewing people and wrote the first booklet on the Columbia River Highway.

Childhood Recollections of the Columbia River Gorge

Clarence’s family lived on his grandfather’s farm until 1945. The place was right on what was called “the wire trail,” which was where the telegraph line was strung. The trail, originally an old Indian path, connected the fishing grounds at Celilo with the fishing grounds at Willamette Falls.

“We had no automobile, so we walked everywhere.” He walked to visit relatives and friends, walked two miles to church in Corbett every Sunday (and two miles back), walked to the store in Springdale for groceries and walked to catch the Union Pacific stage in Springdale to get to Portland. He attended Corbett Grade School, but didn’t have to walk. Clarence remarked, “we kids rode the school bus.” Then, in 1945, his parents moved to a new home in Corbett, right on the Columbia River Highway. Since he played on the high school basketball and baseball teams, he knew the old highway well because he traveled to Cascade Locks, Hood River, Mosier, and The Dalles to play games.

“The highway was an integral part of our lives.”

In addition to his father, both of Clarence’s grandfathers worked on the historic highway. His grandfather had a team with a fresno scraper, and his dad’s father also had a team with a wagon. Clarence recalls a family story about his grandfather and the construction of the Vista House.

“According to family lore he [grandfather] took the first load of lumber up for the Vista House when they were putting in the foundation for the Vista House. It was in November or December and the wind caught it and took it over the bluff... how the wind blows up there.”

Clarence’s father worked on the historic highway as a laborer. It was while taking a load of gravel from the Baker Pit across the Nielsen Bridge (Sandy River), the 23-year old wooden structure collapsed with the load. That was on Good Roads Day, on April 25, 1914. According to the *Gresham Outlook*, the five workers in and on the truck, including Clarence’s father, “Got a cold dip in the Sandy River.” (The broken structure was quickly replaced by the present Stark Street Bridge.)

More information is contained in Clarence’s books: *Living East of the Sandy*, volume 1 (1999), *Living East of the Sandy*, volume 2 (2003), *East of the Sandy*, *The Columbia River Highway* (2001), *The Columbia River Highway, From the Sea to the Wheatfields of Eastern Oregon* (2006) and *Along the Sandy, Our Nikkei Neighbors* (2006), and others.

6.0 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Columbia River Highway was the first scenic highway in the United States, attracting visitors to the beauty of the surrounding landscape, and to the highway's unique features, such as Mitchell Point Tunnel. Mitchell Point Tunnel, among others along the highway, was designed for vehicle sizes and traffic volumes of the 1910s. With increased traffic in the 1920s and 1930s, many of the tunnels and other sections of the highway were considered too narrow and hazardous. A new two-lane water level alignment was constructed, and opened to Bridal Veil by 1948 and to The Dalles by 1954. Most sections of the old highway were bypassed and the segment from eastern Multnomah County through Hood River County was abandoned and parts were destroyed. The two-lane water-level route was later widened to four lanes and upgraded to interstate highway standards.

Construction of the interstate allowed for quicker travel through the Gorge and better accommodation of freight traffic. While the interstate serves as the quickest route, the historic highway attracts tourists and those wishing to take a scenic, leisurely drive. The drivable sections have been restored to their original 1920s appearance. Several other sections have been reconnected as pedestrian and bicycle trails. Additional preservation and restoration efforts are ongoing.

As part of those efforts, there are plans to reconnect the historic highway as a segment of the HCRH State Trail between the communities of Cascade Locks and Hood River. The stated goals of the reconnection effort are to remember, restore and reconnect. While the restoration effort will follow the alignment of the historic highway, the remembrance and reconnection effort will seek to understand the historic and cultural landscape of the area. Information pertaining to towns and people along the route is crucial, as is information on how construction of the water-level route and interstate affected the historic highway. Information on current and ongoing preservation efforts is also important.

The Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH): Oral History Project captured first-hand recollections of the Columbia River Gorge from the people who lived or worked on the Columbia River Highway, worked on construction of the interstate, or later helped to preserve and restore historic sections. The project focused on the area from Cascade Locks to Hood River. In total, 19 people were interviewed.

6.1 FINDINGS

The Columbia River Highway served several cities and towns, and many businesses and farms in the Columbia River Gorge. Construction of the water-level route and its upgrade to an interstate highway created great change in the area. Many of the locations discussed in this report still appear on maps. Several are thriving, but others, such as the town of Bonneville, Oregon, no longer exist.

Prior to construction of the interstate, several narrators recalled the importance of the bus, providing service between towns. For trips in the family car, many commented on the curves of the old highway, and how fast their parents would drive. Most reported getting carsick as a result. One of the most frequent stops as a reprieve from carsickness was the fountain at Viento, remembered for its ornate carvings and figurines.

Those who lived along the highway traveled the route for recreational trips, shopping, and commuting to work and school. They rarely commuted long distances. In the larger towns, businesses and services were structured to provide for a mostly self-sufficient community.

As surveying for the interstate began in the Gorge, there were mixed feelings about the freeway. Widening of the water-level route to an interstate configuration meant purchasing of additional properties and infilling of inundated areas. Some of the people who were interviewed, who lived along the highway, remember when the Oregon State Highway Department came to their families to purchase portions of their land. In some cases, the location or amount of property purchased drastically reduced or altered the family's land holdings, and caused some to move or stop farming.

Some of the land purchased for the highway expansion, along with other land, was prone to floods or was constantly inundated. Individuals involved in the surveying and construction of the route recalled that it was challenging to work around the water. For the inundated sections, sediment and materials were dredged from the Columbia and used to infill the area. In addition to the difficulty of building out in the water, the near-by railroad also proved challenging. It limited the location of expansion and prompted careful blasting of rock and sediment so as not to fall on or disturb the mainline. By 1969, the interstate was open from Portland to The Dalles.

With the construction of the interstate, and even earlier (in the late 1940s) with the completion of the water-level route, trips between Cascade Locks and Portland, for example, no longer required travel on the winding highway. The people who lived in the area could travel between towns quicker. While many of the towns remained self-sufficient, it was no longer imperative, because of the loss of their relative isolation. The majority of the people interviewed who lived along the highway viewed the interstate as necessary but were nostalgic about changes in their community, such as the disappearance of roadside cafés, restaurants, gas stations and other attractions that were found along the older route. They also bemoaned the loss of bus service between their communities.

For the people who lived along the highway, the Gorge was an important place. Several of the people interviewed left the area for work but have returned, drawn to the place they grew up. The sentiment for the Gorge area is so strong that it has generated remembrance in song. In addition to the "Columbia River Highway Waltz," written by Edward Thornton and published in 1916, one of the project narrators, Michael Tenney, wrote two songs about the Gorge area: "Mitchell Point in a Teamsters Eye" and "The Roadhouse Joint at Mitchell Point."

Several of the people who lived along the highway and who were involved with the construction of the interstate have since become advocates for preservation and restoration. Several committees, and organizations, as well as the Oregon Legislature and Oregon Department of Transportation have become involved with the preservation and restoration of the Columbia

River Highway. These groups have worked to restore the drivable sections of the highway to their 1920s appearance, restore other sections as State Trail and have additional work planned.

Those interviewed represented a hand full of people involved in the preservation effort. While some components of restoration have been controversial, such as the rock catchment at the Mosier-Twin Tunnels, each of the preservationists interviewed expressed their approval with the body of restoration work completed.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

The Historic Columbia River Highway is an important physical and cultural resource in Oregon. The highway has been recognized as significant by the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act of 1986, the Oregon Legislature in 1987, and by continuing reconnection efforts, such as the “Milepost 2016 Reconnection Project.” As work is completed on restoration, findings from this Oral History Project help to enhance the cultural understanding of the area and fulfill the remembrance and reconnection goals. Data gathered from the study will be used in interpretive signs along the restored trail.



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