

The Historic Columbia River

HIGHWAY

A selection of historic images and restored 1920s hand-painted glass slides depicting scenes of the original construction of the now Historic Columbia River Highway

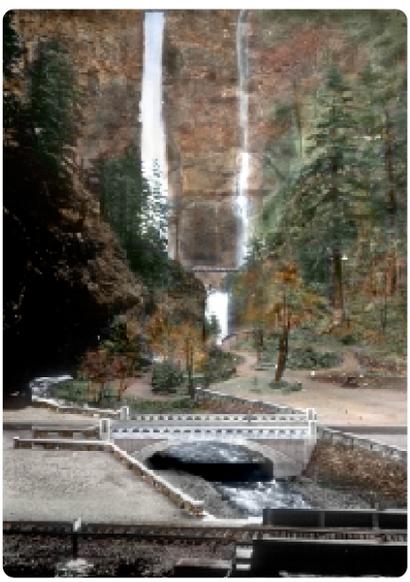


Standing here I realized the magnitude of my task and the splendid opportunity presented. Instinctively there came a prayer for strong men and that we might have sense enough to do the thing in the right way... so as not to mar what God had put there...In that (Gorge) to the east were hidden waterfalls and mountain crags, dark wooded, fern clad caves, and all else that a wise creator (sic) chose to make for the pleasure and enjoyment of the children of men."

- Samuel C. Lancaster
-1913, from Portland Women's Forum



The Historic Columbia River Highway was constructed between 1913 and 1922 with maximum 5% grades and two-rail wooden guardrail that became a national standard for guardrail.



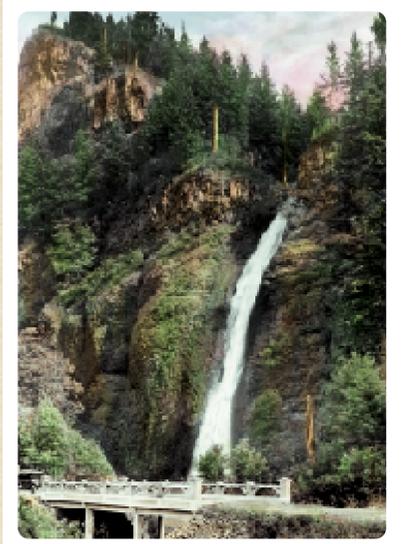
Multnomah Falls is the most visited natural site in Oregon, with Benson Footbridge spanning the lower falls.



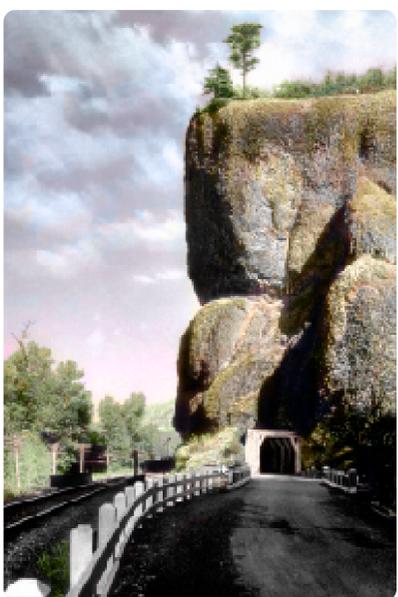
The Toothrock Viaduct was one of eight "bridges over land" that were constructed to skirt hillsides.



Simon Benson-timber baron- provided funding for construction of the Historic Columbia River Highway in Hood River County and purchased and donated the area that is now Multnomah Falls, Wahkeena Falls and Benson State Park. In 1912 he provided funds to construct a road around Shellrock Mountain with "honor men" (prison work release). These men were not masons and the rock walls they constructed soon failed, but this beginning convinced many that a highway could be built through the Columbia River Gorge.



Horsetail Bridge is so close to Horsetail Falls that spray often crosses the road.



Constructed in 1914, Oneonta Tunnel was the shortest of the four tunnels on the Historic Columbia River Highway and has been closed since the 1950s.



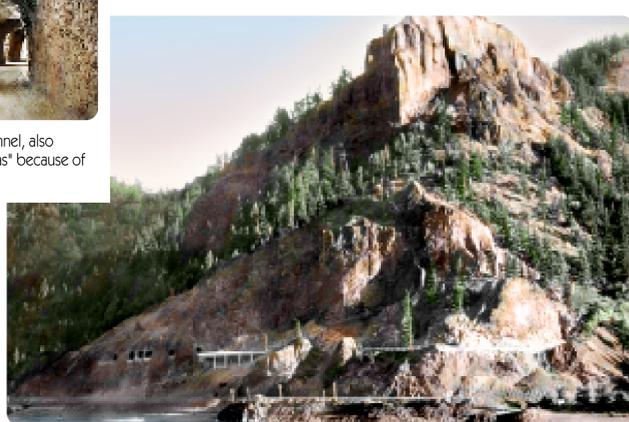
Just east of the city of Hood River, the Hood River Bridge was the longest bridge on the highway, leading to the Hood River Loops. The bridge was demolished in 1982.



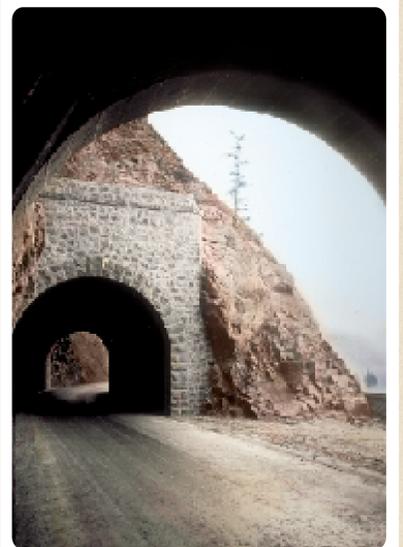
Construction of the highway included recreational trails, including this bridge over Wahkeena Falls.



Historic photo of Mitchell Point Tunnel, also known as "the Tunnel of Many Vistas" because of its five "windows".



A view from the Columbia River of Mitchell Point Tunnel. The tunnel was destroyed when Interstate 84 was widened to 4 lanes in 1966.



A hand painted glass slide from ODOT's collection showing the Mosier Twin Tunnels in the 1920's. The tunnels were widened in 1938 and the rock key ring was replaced with with a concrete key ring on both of the mid-tunnel portals.



This 1920s hand-painted glass slide was taken looking towards Crown Point and Vista House, with the rubble masonry parapet wall in the foreground. Vista House was constructed beginning in 1916 as an observatory, a "comfort station" (restrooms) and memorial to the Oregon pioneers.

The design and execution of the oldest scenic highway in the United States were the product of two visionaries, the engineer and landscape architect Samuel C. Lancaster and the lawyer, entrepreneur and good roads promoter, Samuel Hill.

"Tourists want three things; a good road to drive on, something worthwhile to see, and something worthwhile to eat...We cash in, year after year, on our crop of scenic beauty, without depleting it in any way."

- Samuel Hill

