

opened much faster and could provide larger horizontal clearance for boats. The other remaining swing span highway bridge is the Umpqua River Bridge on US 101 in Reedsport, built in 1936.

The Van Buren Street Bridge is the only moveable pin connected bridge in Oregon. There are no historic bridges similar to the Van Buren Street Bridge currently listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The bridge is unique within the Oregon context, and was determined eligible for the National Register in 1993.

## Historic Van Buren Street Bridge (circa 1913)

### Early History

The Van Buren Street Bridge was built in 1913. It replaced an earlier ferry service at the same location that connected Marysville (now Corvallis) to Orleans as early as 1851. The ferry was operated by Isaac Moore, who platted Orleans in 1851 on the east bank of the Willamette. Orleans was destroyed by the largest Willamette River flood in recorded history in 1861.

Marysville, on the west bank of the river, incorporated portions of the J.C. Avery (1845) and William F. Dixon (1846) Donation Land Claims. The settlement



*Van Buren Street Bridge following Columbus Day Storm (1962), view to east.*



was known as Marysville by 1851 and Corvallis by 1853, the year it became the county seat.

A permit to construct a bridge at this location was issued in 1911, and construction was completed in 1913. The ferry service across the Willamette at this location was discontinued when the bridge opened to traffic.

The bridge was designed by Portland engineer Andrew J. Porter of the Coast Bridge Company, a prolific bridge building company in the years 1910 to 1917.

The bridge was funded mostly by Benton County, with smaller contributions from Linn County, private citizens of both counties, the City of Corvallis, and even one contractor. Because Benton County contributed the largest amount of money for construction, it was the first official owner of the bridge.

The State of Oregon took possession of the bridge on November 18, 1938 with the establishment of the road as a State Highway.

## **A Unique Structure**

The Van Buren Street Bridge was the first bridge over the Willamette in Corvallis, and is the third oldest bridge remaining over the river, after the Hawthorne (1910) and Steel (1912) Bridges in Portland.

The Van Buren Street Bridge swing span is a 249-foot long Pratt through truss, with a 171-foot long Parker through truss to the west and a 57-foot long Warren pony truss to the east. The approaches are currently timber spans, with three timber spans on the west that

replaced the original Warren pony truss, and nine timber spans to the east. The total length of the bridge is currently 708 feet.

The Van Buren Street Bridge is a pin-connected steel through truss. Pin connected trusses are a rare and obsolete technology, with only 20 examples of pin connected trusses in Oregon. The Van Buren Street Bridge is the only pin connected moveable bridge in Oregon. Pins connecting each truss joint allowed the bridge to be easily assembled on the site after fabrication.

The bridge is one of only two swing span highway bridges remaining in the state. Swing span technology became obsolete with development of the bascule and vertical lift types of moveable bridges, which



*Van Buren Bridge, contemporary view to north.*