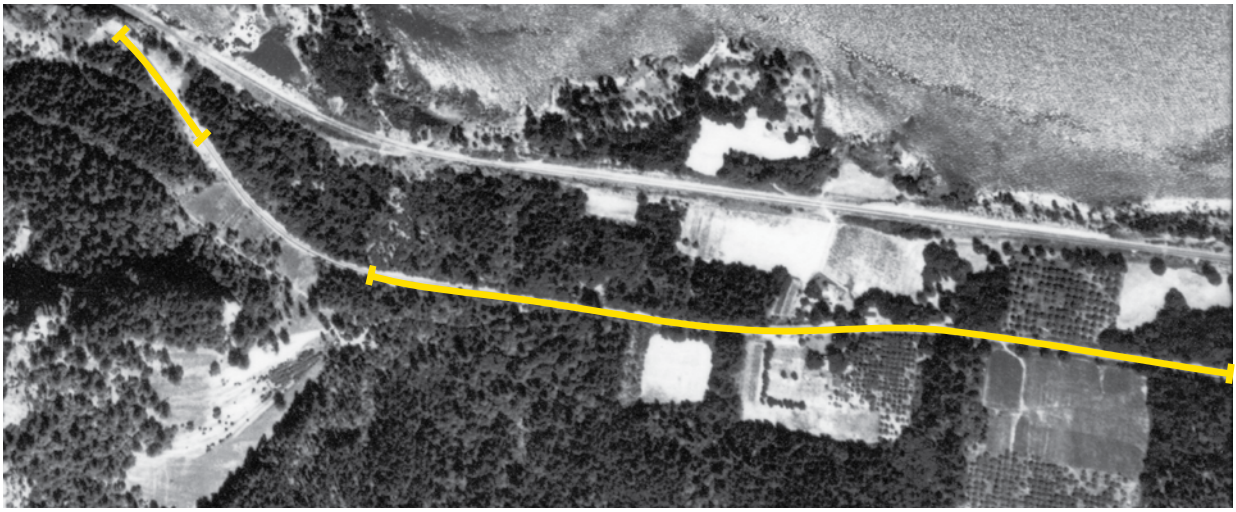

Figure 25. Mitchell Point East, 1939 aerial photograph. Extant HCRH shown in yellow.

Mitchell Point East

Location (Lat.,Long.)

Start: 45.7042, -121.643
End: 45.7043, -121.569

Summary

This section is found on the east side of Mitchell Point, and includes about half a mile of Mitchell Point Drive, which follows the alignment of the HCRH and provides access to residential properties. On this side of Mitchell Point, the climate transition of the gorge becomes apparent. The vegetation here changes from Douglas fir forest to drier oak and pine.

The HCRH alignment has its west endpoint at the approximate site of the destroyed Mitchell Point Tunnel, and runs through a disused quarry. The 1870s military wagon road went through this quarry area as well, winding down from the saddle between Mitchell Point and little Mitchell Point to meet the HCRH once more. The HCRH again followed its course from this point toward Ruthton Hill (Elliot 1914). This quarry was expanded during the construction of the water-level highway and used subsequently, creating a large, disturbed open space.

In the 1930s, this land was still primarily orchard and agricultural, surrounded by forested slopes. Some of the historic field pattern is still traceable in the present landscape, and the 1908 Locke (now Galligan) family house still fronts the road as it once did the military wagon road in the same location (Hadlow *et al.* 2009). I84 now cuts the property off from the river and replaces some of the orchards.

Topography

This short section of the HCRH has a relatively gentle profile, descending along the broad toe slope between the steep basalt cliffs to the south and the flooded bottom lands of the Columbia River. The site of the disused quarry at the high point of this section is bounded to the southwest by the dramatic silhouette and cliffs of Mitchell Point. What appears to be a small cut through in the vicinity of the 1908 Locke house may be an artifact of more recent alterations to the road. The cut on the south side of the road is in poor condition. It is overgrown with vegetation and undercut at the top. The apparent cut on the north side of the road is a dirt berm that separates the current road from a road fragment of

Figure 26. Mitchell Point East, west end, 2003 aerial photograph.

Figure 27. Mitchell Point East, east end, 2003 aerial photograph

Key

HCRH Fragment

Linear Feature Location

Feature Location

Possible HCRH alignment

what may be the original alignment of the HCRH. This overgrown and partly buried fragment parallels the current Mitchell point drive. Patches of old asphalt can be found along it.

Buildings and Structures

The Locke family settled here in the 1880s, building a house along the old military wagon road in 1908. This 1908 house still stands and is occupied by members of the original family. A barn of even earlier construction has been moved from its original location (Hadlow *et al.* 2009). There are several newer residences and outbuildings that also front the roadway.

There are few structures remaining that are associated with the roadway. A 12" culvert with concrete head and wing walls in fair condition carries a small seasonal creek under the road.

Circulation

A portion of the alignment of the HCRH is now Mitchell Point Drive, a short well-maintained road providing access to residential property. Private, unpaved access roads intersecting the HCRH alignment lead to fields and old orchard sites.

Above the Galligan residence, a short segment of the HCRH appears to run parallel to the current road. This segment is separated from Mitchell Point Drive by a low, overgrown berm. It has patches of pavement, and what appear to be old driveways or access road connecting to it. Further research may clarify what this road fragment is. It can be traced toward Mitchell Point on the current aerial photograph.

The disused rock quarry is at the west end of the segment. This is a large, disturbed open space. The alignment of the HCRH in this area is uncertain. The military wagon road once came through this area as well, and the end of it can still be found on the southwest slopes above the quarry. At the top of the quarry fragments of pavement show where the HCRH came down from Mitchell Point Tunnel.

Views and Vistas

There is a panoramic view in both directions of the Columbia River Gorge from below Mitchell Point at the top of this segment, and a dramatic framed vista from the disused quarry site up to Mitchell Peak.

View east from west end of Mitchell Point East.

Asphalt heap, roadbed and disused quarry site, Mitchell Point East.

Possible abandoned alignment HCRH.

Vista of Mitchell Peak from quarry.

Concrete culvert headwall., Mitchell Point East.

Figure 28. Ruthton Point, 1939 aerial photograph. Extant HCRH shown in yellow.

Ruthton Point

Location (Lat.,Long.)
Start: 45.7066, -1215821
End: 45.7085. -121.5641

Ruthton Park

Location: (Lat.,Long.)
Start: 45.7085, -121.5641
End: 45.7087, -121. 5635

Summary

These two short fragments lie between Mitchell Point and the city of Hood River - "Seventy thrilling miles of pavement from the city of Portland" (Williams 1923, pg. 117). The 1920s Columbia Gorge Hotel, mentioned in most period guides as the culmination of tours of the highway, is a short way east of Ruthton Park. From here, tours would explore the Hood River Valley, a landform created by the gradual flattening out of lava flows. These lava flows form a series of terraces above the river rising to the valley. The historic highway followed the edge of one of these terraces to connect Mitchell Point with Hood River.

Both the climate and the landscape context change east of Mitchell Point. Here it is drier and more open, with more oak and pine mixed into Douglas fir forest. Land use in this area is primarily agricultural and suburban private development, in contrast to the recreational public lands to the west. The 1939 aerial photograph reveals field outlines that are still present in the current landscape, creating a greater historical continuity of context for these sections than for the others included in this report.

Ruthton Point, once mostly orchards, has been converted to vineyard. Elliot (1914) noted dramatic views from Ruthton Hill, the site of the extant fragment. These views remain one of its attractions. The west end of this fragment is being used as a junk storage area for an adjacent landowner.

The Ruthton Park segment consists of less than 100 feet of pavement west of Ruthton Park, where the roadbed is replaced by the small parking lot of the park. The area is notable for a spectacular view

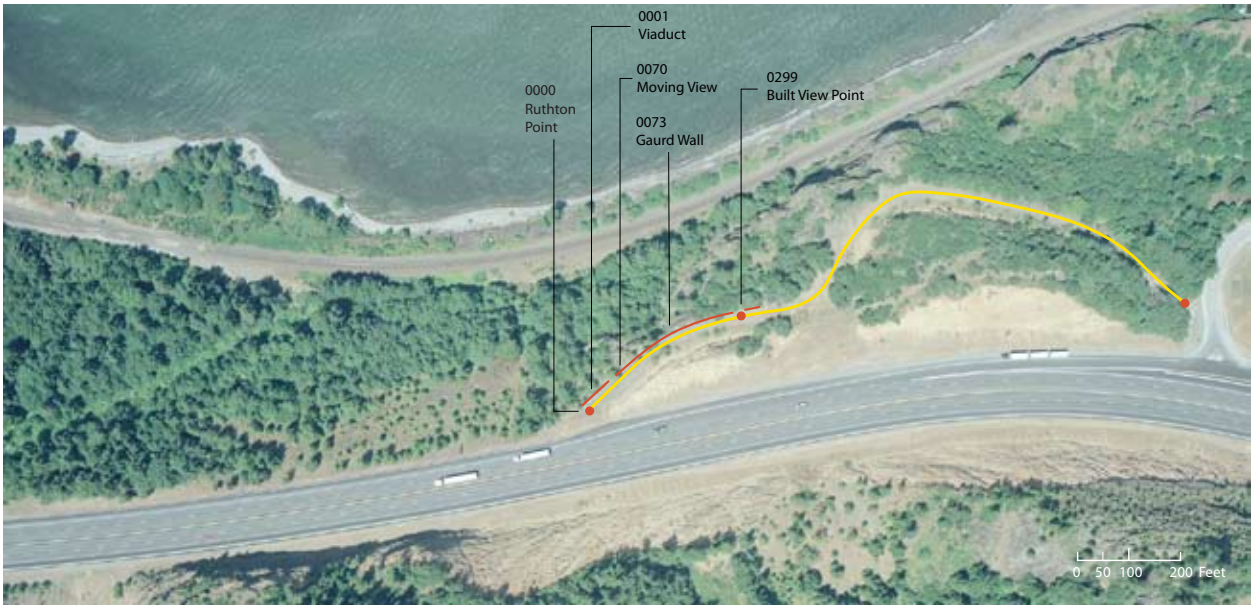

Figure 29. Ruthton Point, mapped onto 2003 aerial photograph

Figure 30. Ruthton Park, Ruthton Segment 2, mapped on 2003 aerial photograph

Key

HCRH Fragment

Linear Feature Location

Feature Location

Figure 31. Ruthton Park, Ruthton Segment 2, 1939 aerial photograph. Extant HCRH shown in yellow.

of Ruthton Point from the edge of the cliff above the river.

Topography

The historic topography of both fragments in this section is obscured by I-84. The current topography of the Ruthton Point fragment consists of a large soil and rock mound or cut through dividing the segment from the freeway. The Ruthton Park fragment lies immediately below and to the north of the frontage road. Its edge is now buried under the embankment of the road above.

Buildings and Structures

The Ruthton Point fragment begins abruptly at Interstate 84. Originally, this was a rocky point. The 1939 aerial indicates rock cuts around the point, now gone. Elliot created a viaduct to carry the Highway around this point, part of which has been restored along with the associated concrete guardrail and arched rubble masonry guard wall. An "eagles nest" built viewpoint and mile markers were added during the restoration. It is not clear if there was a built viewpoint here historically. A widening of the road visible on the 1939 aerial photograph corresponds to the reconstructed view point.

The short Ruthton Park segment has a low, battered stone retaining wall along its entire length, that is now completely hidden by fern and moss. A number of medium to large, squared boulders, which show scaling or blasting marks, are placed at more or less regular intervals along its south edge. Their provenance and date are not known. The parking lot at Ruthton Park also has a few of these boulders along its south edge, along with four concrete bollards of the style used in the 1940s (R. Hadlow, personal communication, December 2009). The stone drinking fountain in Ruthton Park is of unknown date.

Circulation

The Ruthton Point segment has only a short piece of intact pavement at its west end. The pavement for the rest of the segment is in poor condition. It is covered in dirt and gravel, patchy, or missing. The west end of the segment terminates abruptly on the shoulder of Interstate 84. The east end intersects Morton Road, which leads north to the agricultural area at Ruthton Point. This

intersection can be seen on the 1939 aerial.

The Ruthton Park segment pavement is in poor condition. It is overgrown with moss, shrubs and trees. The edges of the roadbed are buried or have been lost to the construction of the frontage road immediately above it. This segment ends in trees and rock at just before a small seasonal drainage cuts across it, at the fenced boundary of Ruthton Park itself.

Views and Vistas

There is a distant panoramic view of the Gorge to the west from the first section of Ruthton Point. This is a moving view, seen while travelling along the road. The 1939 aerial photograph shows a series of lens-shaped turnouts along the cliff edge in this area. The built viewpoint is a recent reconstruction or addition. It corresponds to a lens-shaped shoulder widening on the 1939 aerial, partly obscured by tree canopy. The historic aerial also shows a large space, perhaps for parking, opposite this area across the road. The built viewpoint is in fair condition, with one of its benches broken off. The oaks surrounding it partially block the view. There is an informal view point equipped with a garden bench on the east end of the Ruthton Point fragment. It is a panoramic distant view of the gorge, obscured by the power line.

The cliff top area south of the Ruthton Park fragment provides a lovely panoramic view of Ruthton Point and the Columbia Gorge – perhaps one of the single most historically intact views on the highway.

Archaeology

The cliff top adjacent to the Ruthton Park fragment has a rectilinear space and stone remnants that may reflect a previous development. The 1939 aerial shows a building to the east, so this may have been parking or a garden area. There is a stone structure in the drainage between Ruthton Park and the road fragment that may have been a structure associated with the highway, or with the development in the area.

Reconstructed viewpoint, Ruthton Point

Reconstructed and repaired rubble masonry parapet, damaged and partially buried roadbed, Ruthton Point

Viewpoint, with powerlines in foreground. Ruthton Point

Archaeology, former building site, Ruthton Park, Ruthton Segment 2

Retaining wall, Ruthton Segment 2.

Edge stone, roadbed, Ruthton Park, Ruthton Segment 2

Stonework, drainage area, Ruthton Park

Drinking fountain, Ruthton Park

View, Ruthton Point from Ruthton Park

Inventory Summary

This Cultural Landscape Inventory has provided the first detailed study of the important features and construction of the Wyeth – Hood River section of the HCRH. It spot-lights the history and character of a section of the highway that has not been included in most previous inventories. It also investigates essential features, such as elements that define the topography of the highway and its views and vistas, that have never been systematically described in detail for any part of the HCRH.

The most common cause of deterioration of the highway is overgrown vegetation and buried, clogged or damaged drainage structures. Vegetation damages the road surface, topography, and drainage features, as well as blocking views and vistas. There was also catastrophic damage to the road from washouts, and debris and damage remaining from the construction of I84.

The data base provided by this inventory will be important to planning, design, interpretation and maintenance of this portion of the State Trail. It has also established a solid basis for an expanded CLI for the entire highway. If implemented on a larger scale, such a data system can streamline maintenance planning and record keeping, inform future design decisions, and assist with interpretation.

Further Research Needs

Milepost 2016 Reconnection Strategy Area

This inventory focuses only on remaining features evident along these fragments of the historic highway, and does not investigate buried or missing features. Future inventory work in this area should focus on identifying and recovering such features, especially drainage elements such as gutters, drainage ditches, catch basins, and culverts. In the future, the historic road log could be used to relocate some of these features. This work will help to stabilize the condition of the road and restore its function, as well as reveal historic features that may contribute to its significance.

Additional work is also needed to identify views lost to vegetation. Historical photographs and aerial photography, as well as more in depth fieldwork, may reveal where some of these views may have been and how they related to each other. Current views on proposed trail projects should be investigated in relation to these historical views.

The development of the road through time, and the history of some of the features, could not be researched for this inventory. For example, the view point on Ruthton Point needs further investigation, as do changes and repairs made to culverts. A closer examination of pavement now concealed in moss and duff would inform decisions about repaving the trail.

Research should include investigation of historic land uses adjacent to the highway and historic archeology associated with the road that reflect its social history. These would inform interpretation and design of the trail, by contributing to understanding the historic highway's function and development as part of the larger landscape.

It is difficult to analyze the overall design of the road, understand Elliot's and Lancaster's intent for this section, or compare it to other sections, because so little of the highway in this area is left. There is also no comparable data for other sections. This analysis does suggest that, because of its differences in climate, geology, topography, cultural context, and design, this area had a distinct character setting it apart from other sections. More work is needed to elucidate how these elements fit together to inform this historic character. The differences between this segment of the highway and the other sections also need further research.

An Expanded Inventory for the Historic Highway

This report illustrates the value of a more detailed CLI for the entire highway. From the two or three miles of the original highway surveyed, we noted 72 features grouped into six characteristics. This is a large number of features to be found in one

of the most fragmented, deteriorated segments of the highway, and as the result of only a brief survey. Inventorying the remaining 61 miles may well reveal a thousand or more historic features, many of which have never been completely, systematically described. A more complete description of the highway would provide the kind of detailed information needed, for example, to define character areas, manage views, recognize important relationships to the land that should be preserved, and to guide restoration of structures.

Understanding how one part of the road differs from another is important to managing the road as a whole. A number of factors influence the overall feeling of the highway and its role in the landscape history of the area. These factors change over the length of the gorge, creating distinct zones along it typified by their particular combinations of natural and cultural features, and differing development through time. The delineation of these character areas can simplify and organize management decisions and planning, while reflecting as accurately as possible the variation and historic significance of the landscape.

The information in a more complete CLI would also inform a preservation philosophy, guide restoration or rehabilitation projects, and inspire the design of new elements. Finally, it would help clarify the significance of the HCRH, by providing a thoughtful basis for comparing its features and understanding its overall design in relationship to other scenic and historic roads.

If we are to manage this National Historic District to the best of our ability, we should take it upon ourselves to complete this study. It will ensure we continue to retain the character that makes it one of the most important historic roads in the country and inform guidelines that will enhance and safeguard a national treasure. This CLI sets up the database and procedures necessary to continue to the next stage.