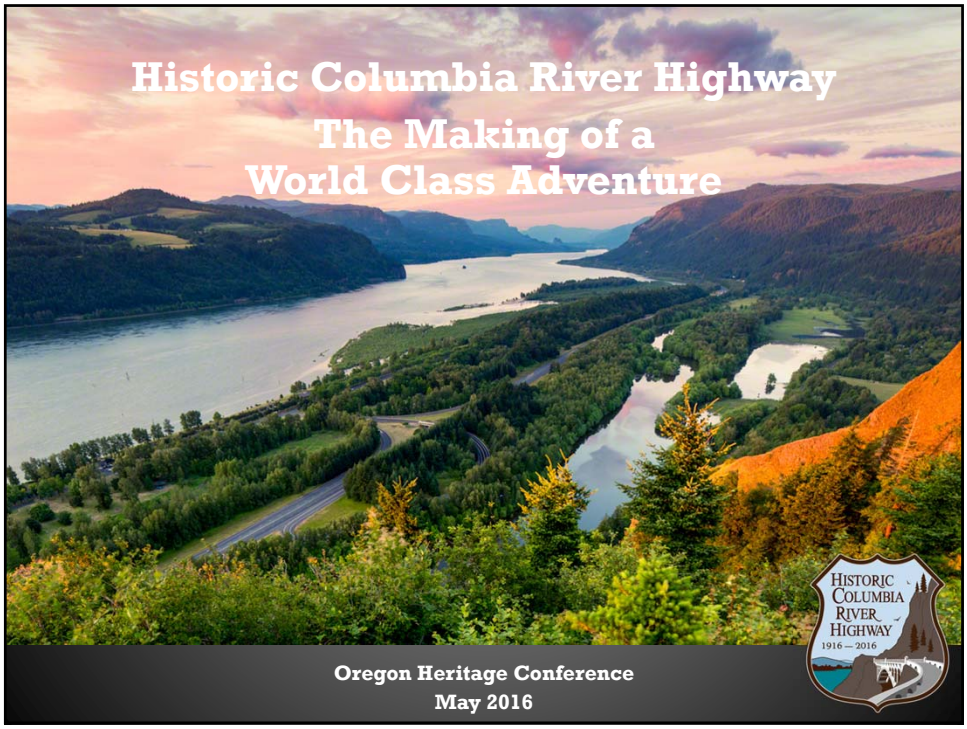
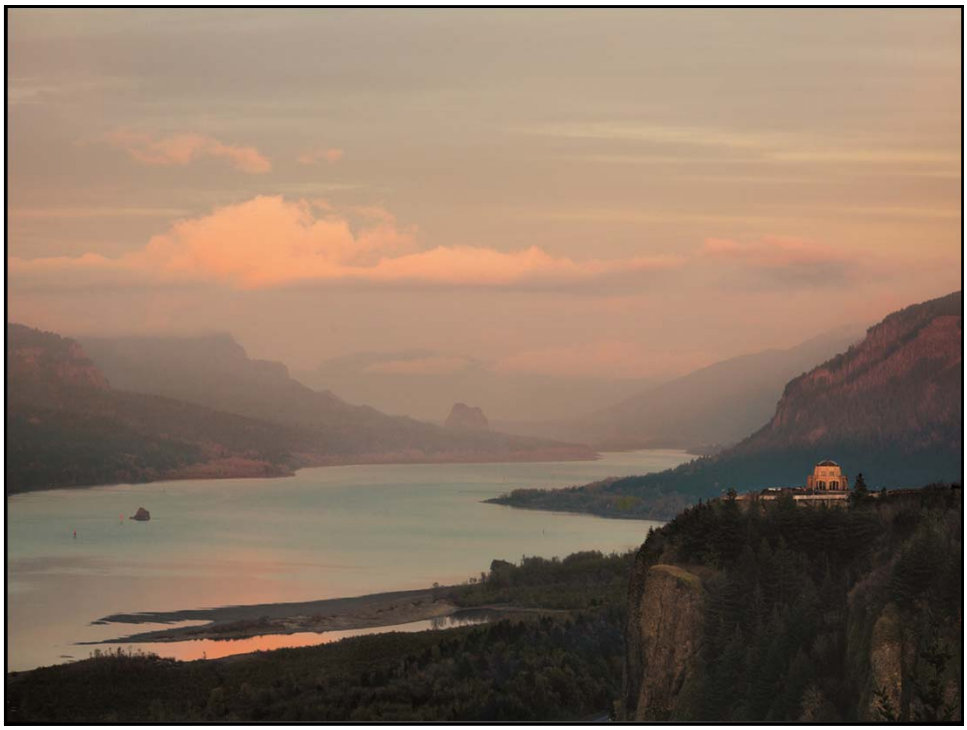

Historic Columbia River Highway
The Making of a
World Class Adventure
Oregon Heritage Conference
May 2016
HISTORIC
COLUMBIA
RIVER
HIGHWAY
1916 — 2016



Remember, Restore, Reconnect

1st International Road Congress, Paris, October 1908

23E CONGRÈS MONDIAL DE LA ROUTE PARIS 2007

23rd World Road Congress, Paris, September 2007

R. H. Thomson, Samuel Hill, S. C. Lancaster London, October 1908

Arc de Triomphe
Paris, 1908
photo by Sam Hill

E. Purnell Hooley, England, 1908,
photo by Sam Hill

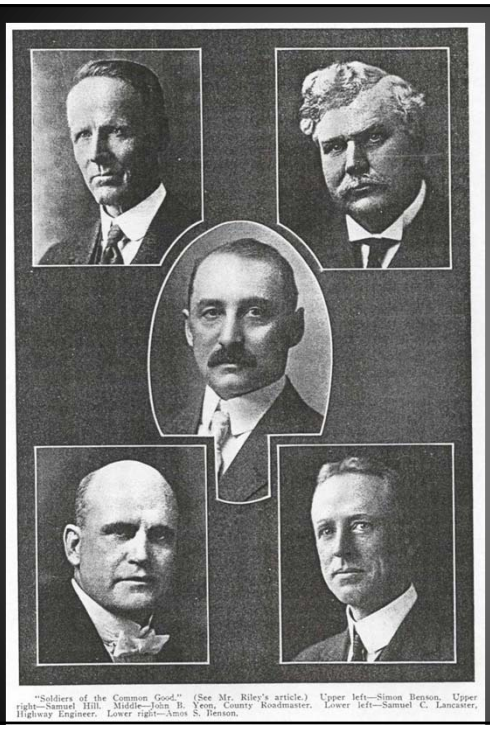
Axenstrasse in Switzerland, 1865

Columbia River Gorge, east of Portland, Oregon

Maryhill Loops Road, Maryhill Ranch

Oregon Legislature traveling to Maryhill, February 1913

Important meeting at Chanticleer Inn August 1913



"Soldiers of the Common Good." (See Mr. Riley's article.) Upper left—Simon Benson. Upper right—Samuel Hill. Middle—John B. Yeon, County Roadmaster. Lower left—Samuel C. Lancaster, Highway Engineer. Lower right—Amos S. Benson.

"Soldiers of the Common Good"

Simon Benson

Samuel Hill

Amos S. Benson

Samuel C. Lancaster

&

John B. Yeon

John B. Yeon

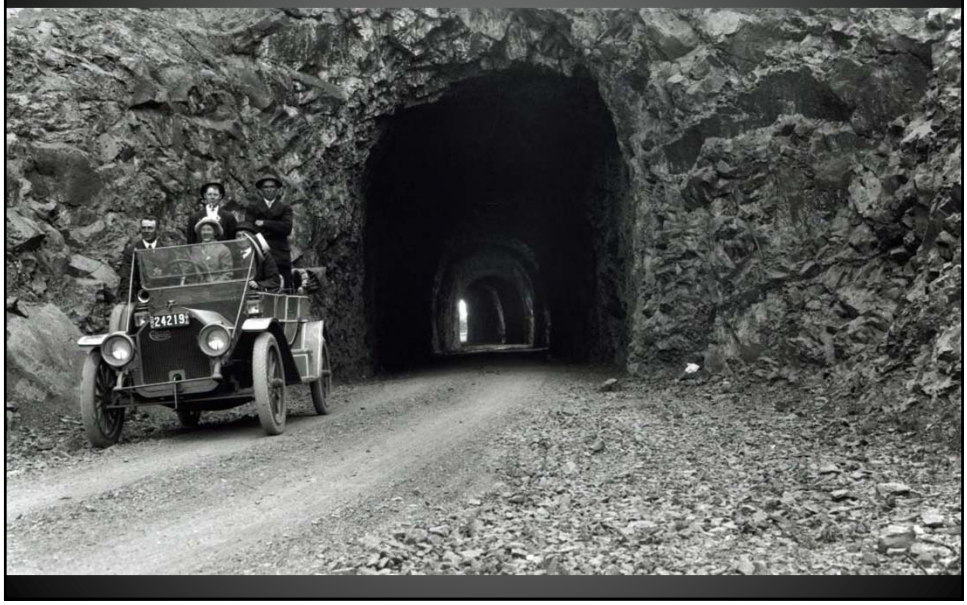
(1865-1928)

Lumberman

Multnomah County Roadmaster

State Highway Commissioner

Mitchell Point Tunnel, 1915



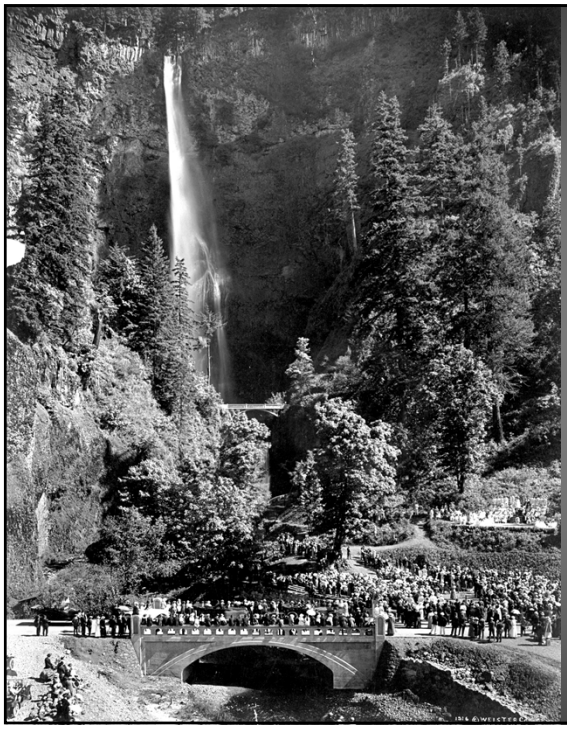
June 7, 1916

June 7, 1916

June 7th brings the formal dedication of the Columbia River Highway, the scenic roadway through the Columbia River Gorge that is attracting worldwide attention for the colossal grandeur of its scenery and the marvelous feat in engineering to provide a modern boulevard through the mountainous slopes of the Cascades.

The Highway dedication has been heralded far and wide the last six months and every effort to put forth to bring the ceremonies as the opening day feature of Portland's 10th annual Rose Festival to the attention of the world.

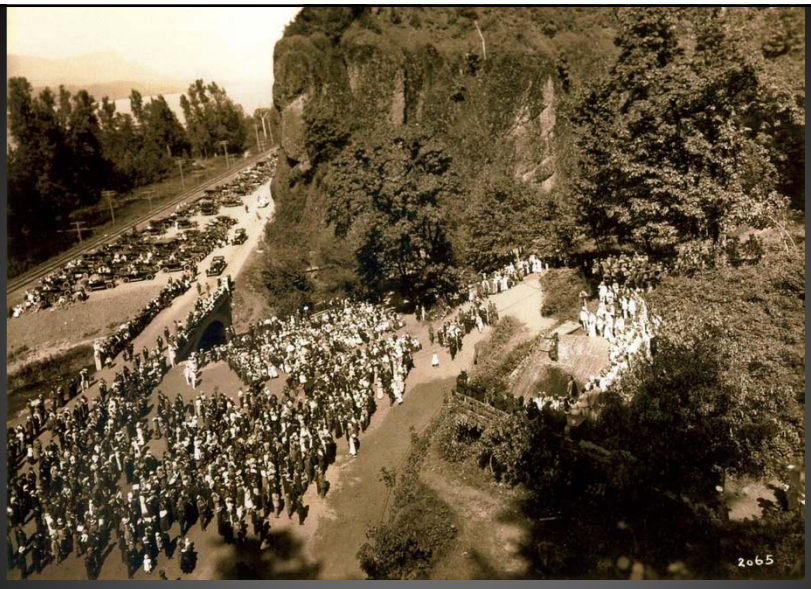
Arrangements made for special trains leaving Union Station at 1:00 pm, 75 cent round-trip fare. Dedication will end at 3:30 and trains will return then to Union Station. Queen Muriel and official party will go by train and return by automobile. She and party will drive to Crown Point for ceremonial start of construction of Vista House.



Ceremony at Multnomah Falls will "provide one of the most picturesque scenes offered in the state."

"The scene opens with a blast of trumpets coming from the picturesque mountain trail above the observation bridge which spans the chasm between the upper and lower falls of Multnomah. "

Miss Columbia will inform Queen Muriel that her dancing girls are present and fairy dances will be presented. While dancing the fairies will scatter rose petals about the court scene.



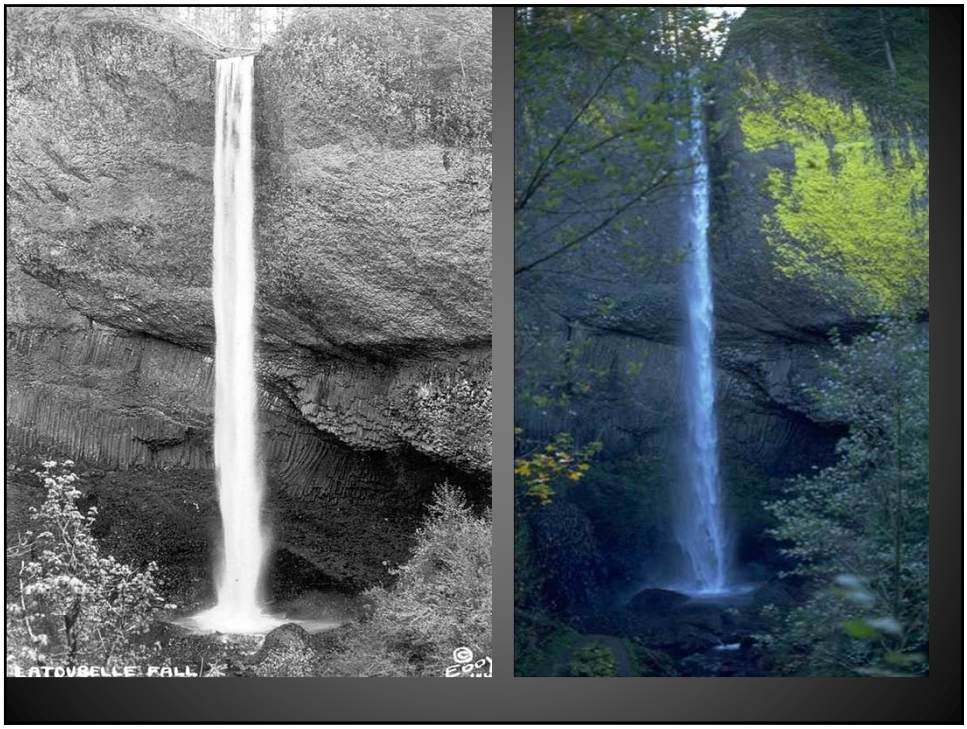
As the dancers fade away the queen will step forward and, touching a silken cord, a mammoth American flag will be unfurled in front of the falls to complete the ceremony." Then comes the dedication of the scenic roadway making passable the river gorge for the first time in history for automobiles and vehicles of all kinds."

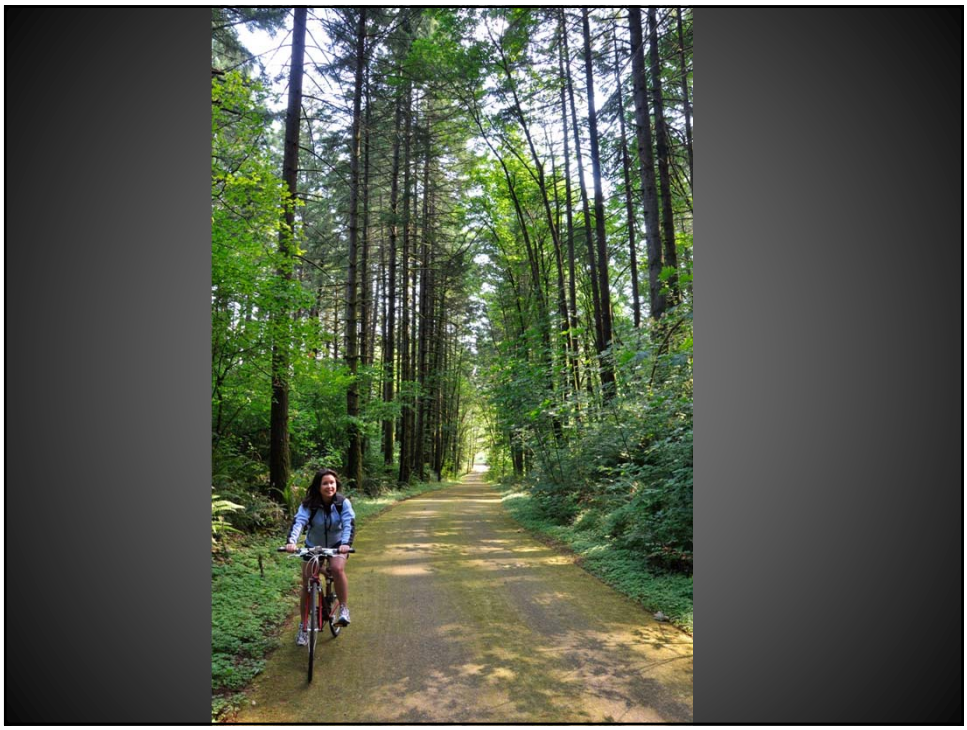
Crown Point, 1916

President Wilson will press a button that will unfurl a huge American flag over Crown Point. Sent electrical signal to guillotine used to launch the USS Oregon in 1893 in San Francisco.

National salute of 48 guns by Battery A, under direction of Captain W. C. Helme, and playing of “Star-Spangled Banner” by band.

TOURISTS ON COLUMBIA RIVER ROAD
3794-11
R.D.CHARLTON - MRS. AMOS T. FRENCH - H.J.TITUS - LAVELLE CHARLTON - A.T.FRENCH - JOHN YEON &
MRS. FRENCH VANDERBILT IN FIRST CAR
8762
WEISTEA





100 YEARS WORTH CELEBRATING

HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

A Prodigious Northwestern Milepost is at Hand!

1916 2016

MilePost 2016

JUNE 7, 2016 marks the centennial of the Historic Columbia River Highway. This means everyone likely to bear an interest is hereby invited to take part in the historic celebration. It is not only as we recall past accomplishments and appreciate what has been preserved, but to encourage the best possible future for our beloved "King of Roads." Together, we will do it.

On June 7, 1916 the Columbia River Highway, hailed "America's great highway," was dedicated with a dazzling affair that drew the attention of the nation and the world. Our goal here is to recreate that day with another historic event to draw the attention of the nation and the world. On the memorable occasion in 1916, thousands headed east from Portland by special train, or arrived in personal automobiles just to be a part of it. The speeches, chorale songs, and an operatic aria sung to a parade of cars included an American Flag unfurled with an "electronic signal" by President Wilson at the White House, and was combined with Portland's Rose Festival so Queen Muriel and her court, along with all the officials, could participate.

Mitchell Point Tunnels

"Such a view is beyond description," Governor Withycombe declared in 1916 at the future site of Vista House. He directed the attention of the celebrants to the beautiful panorama spreading for many miles beyond and up and down the river. "It is inspiring" he said. "It will do more than anything else to impress men and to inspire them to do helpful, constructive things."

Now, we are inspired, and we might expect to ignite a season of celebratory events taking in the beauty of the Gorge, its world-class amenities, premier trails, parks, towns, rails, and the fabulous, life-giving river that draws the commerce of nations between two great states. Let us celebrate the living monument to the achievements of Samuel Lancaster, our iconic Highway's chief engineer, his team, and their standard of excellence.

Clearly, we foresee nothing less than a united adventure undertaken in the spirit and enduring vision of the builders. Please join with us as we plan, engineer, and build our celebration.

The Historic Columbia River Highway & State Trail

Morning Oregonian.

VOL. LVI.—NO. 17,331. EXCERPTS FROM PORTLAND, OREGON, THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1916

HIGHWAY DEDICATED WITH POETIC DRAMA

Grandeur of Columbia Offered to World.

CEREMONY MOST SPECTACULAR

Queen Muriel Relieves Chief Multnomah of Rule.

PRESIDENT UNFURLS FLAG

Thousands of Persons From All Parts of Northwest Present and Motion Pictures Will Carry Event to Civilization.

The whole world knows that the Columbia River Highway is open. If it doesn't, it ought to, for the formal opening was proclaimed to the universe yesterday. Anyway, everybody soon will know it, for they took enough pictures — motion and otherwise — to supply information to every civilized section of the globe. It was a great day for the photographers. They were out in force amateur and professional alike. Photographically and in every other way the dedication was a great success.

Falls Picturesque Background.

The weather was just right for picture taking and the camera men had a background to their liking. What could be more picturesque than the majestic altitude of Multnomah Falls?

The dedicatory ceremonies took place on a platform erected in the natural amphitheater just below and a little to one side of the falls. The photographic batteries were arranged in a series of "trenches" beyond the platform so that the cameras could tilt the figures on the stage and the falls all in the same shot.

Light Good for Cameras.

The "trenches" were reserved exclusively for the movie men, the newspaper and commercial photographers. The amateur camera fan had to content himself with "sniping" his pictures from any old angle. But the light was good all around, and the platform presented a constantly changing kaleidoscopic array of attractive views, so plain and fancy picture taking was in order all day long. Consequently, scores and scores of plates were exposed, hundreds of dry films were unrolled, and who knows how many thousand feet of motion-picture reels were unwound?

Ceremony Is Beautiful.

All of which will add to the fame of the highway and attract tourists from near and distant parts to Portland.

Which, indeed is one of the prime objectives of the highway's existence, that and the enjoyment that it will furnish to the people of Portland themselves.

The ceremony in connection with the dedication was beautiful and spectacular. It was conceived in poetry and executed in artistry and grandeur. The event had been widely heralded and it attracted people from all over the Northwest. In fact, it took on a National significance, inasmuch as the final act in the more or less elaborate ceremony was performed by President Wilson himself, when, at his desk in Washington, D. C. … released a large American flag at the pinnacle of Crown Point, which marks the highest elevation on the route.

Thousands Visit Falls.

But the main event was the ceremony at Multnomah Falls (see right). There it was that the great crowd had gathered to do honor to the highway builders. A special train brought thousands of people from Portland, and long lines of automobiles carried other thousands from the city, as well as from neighboring towns in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. More than 109 machines came from The Dalles alone. Scores came from Pendleton and other Eastern Oregon points.

Queen Muriel and her party went from Portland on the special train in the private car of J. D. Farrell, president of the O.-W. R. & N. Company. On arriving at the falls the queen and her attendants attired themselves in their festival garb. The first that the public saw of the queen was when she appeared escorted by a company of Royal Rosarians on the little bridge above the lower falls, that had been erected there through the philanthropy of S. Benson.

Trumpets Announce Queen.

A blast of trumpets proclaimed the presence of the queen. The party then proceeded slowly down the sylvan paths leading from the chasm between upper and lower falls to the platform below. The Rosarian band, concealed among the evergreens, played soft music for the march. Seated below the platform as guests of honor were Governor Withycombe, A. F. Flegel, the personal representative of President Wilson; S. Benson, Samuel C. Lancaster, the engineer who built the highway; Julius L. Meier, president of the Columbia River Highway Association; W. L. Lightner, Rufus C. Holman and Philo Holbrook, County Commissioners; Frank S. Myers, postmaster of Portland; Calvin Stewart, postmaster of Tacoma; John B. Yeon County Roadmaster who supervised construction of the highway; Mayor Albee and others.

Queen Unfurls Flag.

At the conclusion of their dances the girls strewed rose petals over the platform. The Queen then stepped forward and, touching a silken cord, released a large American flag suspended from a cable in front of the waterfall. At this inspiring moment Miss Harriet Leach appeared and sang "The Star Spangled Banner." The great audience arose and stood at attention. When she concluded, her song everyone joined in rendering "America." President Dundore of the Festival Association then presented the King and Queen with a silver urn containing water taken from the pool below Multnomah Falls. Amid the plaudits of the crowd the King and Queen entered their automobile and speeded onward toward Crown Point. As they passed along they baptized the highway with waters from the silver urn. A whirring procession of automobiles followed. The highway was formally open for public travel.

GUILLOTINE THAT LAUNCHED BATTLESHIP OREGON WILL DEDICATE HIGHWAY.

VISTA HOUSE BEGUN

First Earth Turned for Memorial to Pioneers.

QUEEN CHRISTENS GROUND

Roses and Loganberry Juice Dedicate Site to Memory of Oregon's Earliest Settlers, as Guns Roar Salute.

Promptly at 5 P. M. Pacific time as President Wilson touched an electric button at Washington, a large American flag was unfurled on Crown Point, the site of the proposed Vista House, and the great Columbia River Highway became a project of National significance. Immediately 48 salutes, one for each of the states, were fired by Battery A, Oregon National Guard, and the thousands of celebrants joined in a vigorous demonstration. It was a fitting climax to the formal opening of the highway and marked the beginning of the construction of Vista House, a monument to be erected and dedicated to the memory of the pioneers of the Pacific Northwest. Following the dedicatory exercises at Multnomah Falls, Queen Muriel and her retinue were escorted to Crown Point, arriving in time to participate in a short formal programme before the hour set for the unfurling of the flag. With the arrival of the royal party, short addresses were made, and then H. L. Pittock, president of the Vista House Association, turned over the first spadeful of earth and started preparatory construction on the project.

Site Is Christened.

On the freshly turned earth Queen Muriel showered petals of roses and King Joy (Till D. Taylor) poured a bottle of Loganberry Juice, the distinctive Oregon temperance beverage. Then followed by the unfurling of the flag. It was a brief but impressive ceremony. The perfect weather and the spirit of the celebrants were in full accord. Unobstructed views for 30 miles up and down the Columbia Gorge from the Vista House site added to the success of the occasion. In a sense, it broadened the vision of the visitors as to the importance of the day; it seemed to give them an opportunity to look afar and back and to recall many incidents of pioneer days. That was the motif of the … early settlers. That was the text of each of the speakers. Frederick V. Holman, one of Portland's oldest practicing attorneys, paid a high tribute to the pioneers. He briefly reviewed incidents of the Oregon country from the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition up to the period before the coming of the railroads. "We cannot realize what the early pioneers had to endure," said Mr. Holman. "It is because of their sufferings and hardships that the foundation of a strong citizenship here was laid. We cannot do them too much honor. It is fitting that we today are creating a monument that will perpetuate their memory."

Governor Praises Builder.

Governor Withycombe directed the attention of the celebrants to the beautiful panorama spreading for many miles beyond and up and down the river. "Such a view is beyond description," said the Governor. "It is inspiring. It will do more than anything else to impress men and to inspire them to do helpful, constructive things. All hail to Samuel C. Lancaster, to whose guiding genius the Columbia River Highway was made passable."

Other addresses were made by Adolphe Wolfe, Marshall Dana, Mayor Albee and Raymond D. Hill. Each emphasized the importance of the Vista House and praised the purposes for which it was to be built. For unfurling the flag, the same guillotine was used to cut the cord that was in service when the battleship Oregon was launched. A direct wire from Crown Point to the Capitol at Washington, D. C was in operation when President Wilson pushed the button that released the guillotine.

Over this same wire Governor Withycombe dispatched a message to President Wilson, conveying the thanks of the citizens of Oregon for the President's participation in the dedication. The message was as follows: "The people of the Oregon country greet you and thank you for unfurling the flag of freedom on Crown Point, Columbia River Highway, as we dedicate to the world the greatest highway ever built."

Oregon Battery Fires Salute.

Participation of Battery A, Oregon National Guard lent interest to the occasion. As the loud salutes resounded through the gorge a patriotic touch was felt, and the celebrants joined in the salute-giving by waving their hats and clapping their hands, and the din was increased by the shrill sounds of automobile sirens.

Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee
Overall goals of the project:

- Celebrate the history of the Historic Columbia River Highway.
- Promote use of the State Trail.
- Promote funding needs for the remaining Trail segments.
- Acknowledge the Historic Highway's future potential.
- Create links to, and inclusiveness with, the five Gorge communities – Troutdale, Cascade Locks, Hood River, Mosier and The Dalles

What will success look like?

What would success look like?

- Great media coverage that builds pride and awareness of the Historic Columbia River Highway's significance and sheds light on efforts to reconnect the abandoned sections of the Highway with a trail.

Wyden, Merkley Resolution Honors Historic Columbia River Highway's 100th Anniversary

Washington – U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley today introduced a resolution congratulating the Historic Columbia River Highway on the upcoming 100th anniversary of America's first scenic highway, known both for its remarkable scenery and innovative engineering.

"Whether you're a first-time visitor or a long-time admirer, the views of Multnomah Falls and the Columbia Gorge from this landmark byway are unmatched," Wyden said. **"Congress must work to preserve and restore this highway both to protect that experience for future generations and to continue creating jobs that build on Oregon's growing outdoor recreation and tourism economy."**

"The Columbia River Gorge is one of the most beautiful and breathtaking landscapes in our country," said Merkley. **"The restoration of the Historic Columbia River Highway is a testament to the vision and determination of many Oregonians, and I've been proud to partner with the local community and Senator Wyden to help bring federal support to this deserving project. It's terrific to celebrate 100 years of the Columbia River Highway, and to look forward to many more years ahead of sharing this amazing place with Oregonians and visitors alike."**

A National Historic Landmark, the 75-mile long scenic highway designed by Samuel C. Lancaster, runs through the Gorge between Troutdale and The Dalles. It is the first scenic highway in the United States and the first modern highway in the Pacific Northwest. It is also a popular tourist destination in the Columbia River Gorge, each year bringing thousands of visitors to hike and bike its trails and connecting travelers from one Oregon treasure to the next.

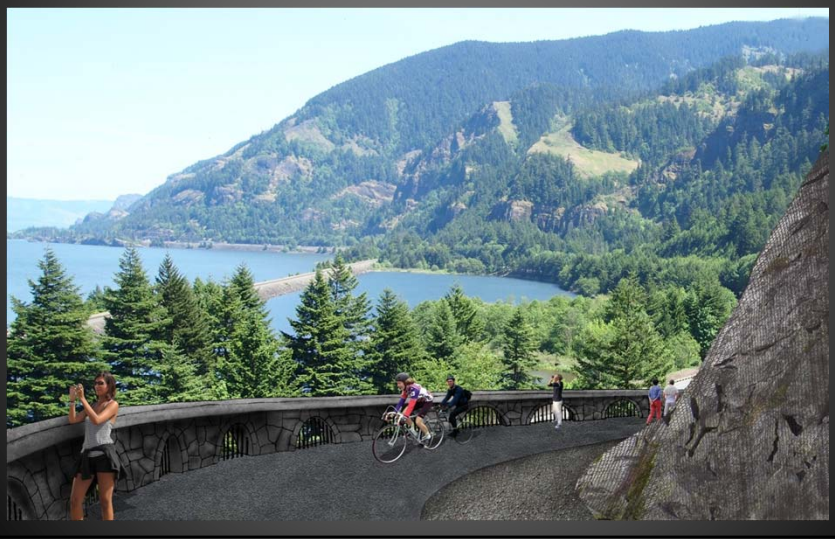
The Oregon Department of Transportation is working to connect existing highway segments with recreation trails to establish a continuous historic route through the Columbia River Gorge. Ten miles await reconnection to the main trail, which will open access to the Gorge for hikers and bikers.

Kevin Gorman, Executive Director of Friends of the Gorge, called the centennial-year resolution by Wyden and Merkley a "clarion call" to finish reconnecting this national gem.

"Ten miles remain to restore the glory of yesteryear," Gorman said. **"The Historic Columbia River Highway is worthy of national recognition and the Senate continues to demonstrate its support of the Columbia Gorge with this amazing resolution. It was the U.S. Senate 30 years ago that led efforts to create the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and with this resolution the Senate again steps up to support a national treasure."**

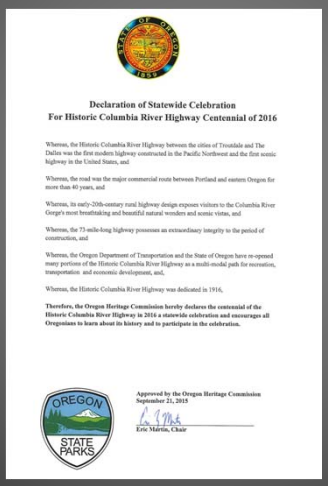
What would success look like?

- Built excitement around the possibility of a reconnected Historic Highway.



What would success look like?

- Creation of a memorable event for Oregonians, on par with what was done 100 years ago.



Declaration of Statewide Celebration
For Historic Columbia River Highway Centennial of 2016

Whereas, the Historic Columbia River Highway between the cities of Troutdale and The Dalles was the first modern highway constructed in the Pacific Northwest and the first scenic highway in the United States, and

Whereas, the road was the major commercial route between Portland and eastern Oregon for more than 40 years, and

Whereas, its early-20th-century rural highway design exposes visitors to the Columbia River Gorge's most breathtaking and beautiful natural wonders and scenic vistas, and

Whereas, the 73-mile-long highway possesses an extraordinary integrity to the period of construction, and

Whereas, the Oregon Department of Transportation and the State of Oregon have re-opened many portions of the Historic Columbia River Highway as a multi-modal path for recreation, transportation and economic development, and,

Whereas, the Historic Columbia River Highway was dedicated in 1916,

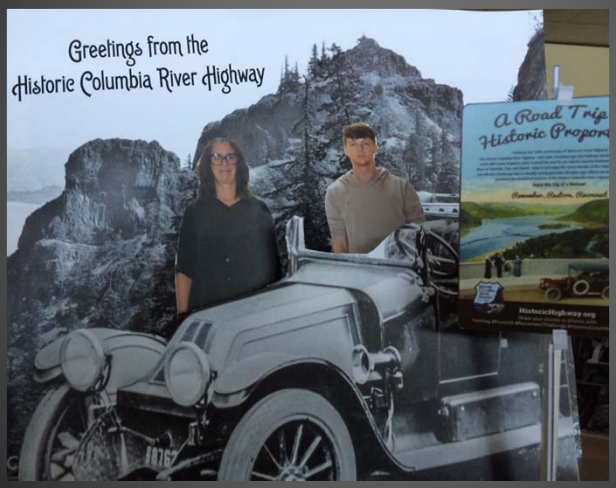
Therefore, the Oregon Heritage Commission hereby declares the centennial of the Historic Columbia River Highway in 2016 a statewide celebration and encourages all Oregonians to learn about its history and to participate in the celebration.

Approved by the Oregon Heritage Commission
September 21, 2015

Eric Martin, Chair

What would success look like?

- Creation of a memorable event for Oregonians, on par with what was done 100 years ago.



What would success look like?

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