

Construction Chronology Columbia River Highway, 1913-22

February 9, 1913

Samuel Hill takes much of the Oregon Legislature to his Maryhill Ranch by special train, from Portland, to show them good roads. The fifty-three men included Washington Governor Ernest Lister, members of the Senate and House of the Oregon Legislature, a representative of Oregon Governor Oswald West, and various other interested individuals.

February 28, 1913

An act of the Oregon Legislature creates the Oregon State Highway Commission and state highway department. The original commission was Governor Oswald West, Secretary of State Ben W. Olcott, and State Treasurer Thomas B. Kay. The commission first met on June 19. The commission can advise counties on road matters, when requested.

July 3, 1913

Jackson County petitions the state highway commission to aid the county in planning, locating, and constructing permanent roads. Work begins almost immediately on the Pacific Highway north of the state line.

July 26, 1913

As the recently appointed Multnomah County Commission chair, Rufus Holman introduced a resolution creating an advisory board on roads and highways. Commissioner D. V. Hart supported the resolution; Commissioner W. L. Lightner did not. The new advisory board included W. W. Cotton (chair), Samuel Hill, W. B. Fechheimer (later known as Fletcher), C. S. Jackson, and Amos S. Benson.

August 27, 1913

Multnomah County commissioners, their advisory board on roads and highways, and others met at Chanticleer Inn to discuss building the Columbia River Highway. Those attending in addition to the commission and the board included: County Surveyor Philo Holbrook; County Road Supervisor J. B. Small; others: Henry L. Pittock, Julius L. Meier, John S. Beall, C. A. Morden, E. E. Coovert, E. B. Piper, H. G. Sibray, J. B. Middleton, J. C. Potter, and Samuel C. Lancaster.

Late September 1913

Samuel C. Lancaster made assistant state highway engineer with the highway department. In this role, he is nominally in charge of the Columbia River Highway in Multnomah County to take the road's construction out of local politics. In reality, he is in the employ of the county and working on the road's design. From September to

January, Lancaster and his crews projected a roadway alignment for some 21 miles east of Chanticleer Inn to the county line.

October 1913

Construction begins on the Columbia River Highway in Multnomah County east of Portland, following Lancaster's projected line.

November 13, 1913

John B. Yeon appointed Multnomah County "Roadmaster" He is the construction project manager for the Columbia River Highway, east and west of Portland, and on other road building projects in the county. Amos S. Benson (Simon Benson's son) is Yeon's assistant.

September 5, 1914

State highway commission approves the state's first highway plan prepared by State Highway Engineer Henry L. Bowlby. It includes the Columbia River Highway, the Pacific Highway, and the other main routes that are still part of the statewide highway plan.

January 11, 1915

James Withycombe, Oregon's new governor, assumes role as chair of the state highway commission.

April 1, 1915

Deputy State Engineer E. I. Cantine takes on role of state highway engineer, replacing Bowlby. He reports to John L. Lewis, state engineer, who oversees highways and water resources.

July 6, 1915

The Columbia River Highway officially opened between Portland and Hood River.

June 7, 1916

The Columbia River Highway is formally dedicated with a Rose Festival ceremony at Multnomah Falls. A second Rose Festival ceremony inaugurates construction of the Vista House at Crown Point.

February 19, 1917

Lawmakers create a three-member citizen state highway commission and dissolve the old commission. They also pass a \$6 million road bond measure and refer it to the voters, who affirm the measure in a June election.

February 27, 1917

Governor James Withycombe appoints the new commission: Simon Benson of Portland (chair), W. L. Thompson of Pendleton, and E. J. Adams of Eugene—one from each Congressional district. They held their first meeting on March 6.

April 10, 1917

The commission appoints Herbert Nunn as state highway engineer. Nunn undertakes a successful and aggressive statewide highway building plan. He leaves the agency in 1923. Nunn sees completion of the Columbia River Highway, the Pacific Highway, and many other "trunk" roads under his watch.

May 5, 1918

The Vista House is dedicated. Oregon pioneers and Royal Rosarians participate. Scores of people attend.

February 26, 1919

Oregon's motor vehicle fuel tax goes into effect. It is the first in the United States and is limited, initially, to one-cent per gallon. This fuel tax predates the federal "gas" tax, which appeared in 1932.

June 27, 1922

Columbia River Highway officially completed. Simon Benson, who was an ardent supporter and benefactor of the project since the beginning, ceremoniously spread pavement mixture on the final segment at Rowena Point, near The Dalles.