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Seeing the Forest for the Roads: Auto-Tourism and Wilderness Preservation in Mount Hood National Forest, 1913-64

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Seeing the Forest for the Roads:
Auto-Tourism and Wilderness Preservation in Mount Hood National Forest, 1913–64

by
Taylor Elliott Rose

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

Thesis Committee:
Catherine McNeur, Chair
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Portland State University
2016

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Abstract

Between 1913 and 1964, automobile roads appeared throughout the Cascade Mountains around Mount Hood, just east of Portland, Oregon. From elaborate scenic highways to primitive dirt trails, each had its own story. Many of them are gone today, decommissioned and decomposing with the rotting understory soil of the forest. However, some remain as the most utilized spaces in Mount Hood National Forest, one of the most popular public land units for recreation in the country, owned and managed by the United States Forest Service. “Seeing the Forest for the Roads” uncovers the history of why roads were built, who planned them, and how they were used. At the same time, it seeks to answer the question, how do roads shape the way that people view wild nature? As places that are simultaneously easily accessible and “untrammelled,” wilderness has much to do with roads. But it has even more to do with the people that envisioned, constructed, and used the roads. The story that follows is divided into four sections, from the Progressive Era, through the Roaring Twenties, New Deal years, and into the mid-twentieth century. It concludes with the Wilderness Act of 1964, a profound, important statement about the relationship between technology, nature, and human beings, which singled out roads as the most visible, damaging threat to the existence of wilderness as modern Americans know it. I argue that in order to understand wilderness as both a legal term and a social construct, scholars must look at the roads themselves, particularly from a local, on-the-ground perspective. In the end, what results is a more nuanced understanding of the twentieth-century history of technology and nature, as well

as the social, cultural, and intellectual context that produced both sides of the same coin
in wilderness.

Dedication

To my mom and dad, who fostered the nerd in me from a young age; who still love and support me, even ten years after I told them I was switching majors from business administration to anthropology; and who wholeheartedly approved of my decision to pursue graduate school. Thank you.

Acknowledgments

The pages that follow are the product of two years of intensive researching and writing. At times, it was an incredibly lonesome experience. But all along the way, I had friends and allies providing me with the strength and confidence to move forward with the project. Without their support, I never would have completed this monstrous endeavor.

First and foremost, I want to thank my family. My grandmother, who passed away in 2013, instilled in me a respect for my elders and a zest for life. In her will, she left me the means to turn those passions into a career. I owe the most to her. My mother and father saw how much I loved to read as a kid and always seemed to know that I would continue my studies well past the point when any logical person figures they have had enough of school. Like my grandma, they encouraged me to pursue non-traditional life goals and a livelihood at the same time. Their continued financial and emotional assistance has been vital to my success. In a similar vein, the antagonism that comes with having an incredibly intelligent sister played a large part in my insistence on finishing on time, just like she did a year ago in her own Master's program. Thanks for that, Joanna.

During my time at Portland State, faculty members in the history department have come to my rescue on a daily basis. My advisor, Catherine McNeur, was a fountainhead of inspiration and a constant source of encouragement. She maintained positive energy throughout this daunting process and always knew how to put it all into perspective. Her flourish for creative writing and knack for providing constructive, open-ended feedback, undergirded everything that I did at PSU. Likewise, I was very fortunate to have David

Johnson—whom I describe to friends as the “godfather of the department” due to the fact that he seems to know just about everyone who has written anything good about U.S. history in the past thirty-five years—lead my first grad school seminar. I remember sitting at the table on the first day of History 500 thinking this guy was smiling too much for how frightened he was making me. I now know that the fear I was feeling was simply the weight of healthy expectations, which David was placing on us with love. D.J. showed me in the span of ten weeks that it was quite alright to experience ambivalence (and even doubt) and that, in fact, a good work of historical scholarship showcases both sadness and hope at the same time. (He also tried to teach me the value of short sentences, but clearly I was not paying enough attention.) Finally, but to no lesser extent, Katy Barber appeared frequently during my journey, always with mind-blowing nuggets of wisdom. Katy kept me honest about the blind spots in my narrative, particularly in regard to gender, race, and Native history. In conversations with incoming students, I encourage everyone to seek out Dr. Barber’s expertise and to not be discouraged by how full her schedule tends to be—it is for good reason that she is so busy.

My PSU history student cohort gave the process of attaining a Master’s degree a friendly dimension. Despite our diversity of backgrounds, schedules, and expectations, we found ample time to collaborate, commiserate, and drink beers. A few of us created a writing group in the fall of 2015; meeting on a consistent basis provided a rhythm to my writing. Special thanks go to members of that rotating crew: Dave Hedberg, Katie Nelson, Melissa Lang, Ryan Wisnor, and Jenna Barganski. I appreciated their collegiality, as well as their frank advice. Conversations with other students—Kevin

McCormick, Taylor Bailey, Justin Vipperman, Cathy Valentine, Joshua Ross, Kira Lesley, Alecia Giombolini, Joshua Justice, Forrest Holden, Cory Harris, and others—sparked ideas that eventually found their way into my work. I hope to keep in touch with all of them as we part ways.

Outside of the history department, scholars generously found time to listen to my sometimes-rambling questions and give me feedback. I wish that I had made more time to meet with Sarah Ensor, the fourth member of my thesis committee and a professor in the PSU English department. Her research is so different from mine, yet so similar. Going forward, I hope to learn more about the lessons historians might take from eco-criticism and queer theory. I had the pleasure of getting lunch with Bill Robbins twice in Corvallis. His wealth of knowledge is astounding, and he helped me hone in on what it was I found so fascinating about the history of Oregon's forests. Larry Lipin and I drank beverages and discussed wilderness on two separate occasions, many months apart. Especially at our second meeting, Larry read my writing with a critical eye and treated me like a peer in ways that were both encouraging and challenging. Thanks also go to Ryan Dearing, Jake Hamblin, Marsha Weisiger, Tom Lockett, Tim Garrison, and others who served as sounding boards along the way.

More practically, I would like to thank the institutions that supported my work with their resources and materials. The Oregon State University Special Collections Archives and Research Center awarded me with its 2015–16 Resident Scholarship. Most of the primary sources that I use here come from the four weeks that I spent in Corvallis last September, digging through OSU's impressive collection of maps, postcards, and

textual documents. The Oregon Heritage Commission in Salem provided me with generous funding through the Oregon Heritage Fellowship and allowed me the opportunity to present my work at the Oregon Heritage Conference this past May. Giving talks about my thesis topic in other venues, including the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, the Phi Alpha Theta Regional Conference, and the Richard Robinson Business History Workshop, helped me to work through the amorphous concepts that were stewing in my brain. Equally importantly, my year as an editorial fellow at the *Pacific Historical Review* strengthened my writing skills and showed me that all works of historical scholarship, no matter how influential, begin as messy manuscripts. In each place, at every institution, patient people assisted me. At OSU SCARC, it was Chris Petersen, Larry Landis, Trevor Sandgathe, Ruth Vondracek, and the students who graciously retrieved materials and told me how not to ruin precious documents; at Oregon Heritage, Kuri Gill and Eliza Canty-Jones; and at the *PHR*, Marc Rodriguez, Brenda Frink, and Jessica Moore.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to two very important people in my personal life: one, an old friend from college, and the other, a recent but vital companion. After meeting through a study abroad program in Brussels, Matt Wagshol and I became good friends. We both graduated from the University of Florida in 2010 and moved out to disparate cities along the West Coast—he, to Seattle, and I, to San Francisco. Still, we kept in touch and pushed one another to grow through independent reading and conversation. He has been there for me during grad school to an even greater extent. I love the way he challenges me to rethink everything constantly. I met Monica Grasty

over a year into my studies at Portland State. On a hike in the Columbia River Gorge one overcast day in March, we both recognized just how much we needed one another. She studies plant ecology at PSU; so, I think it was exceptionally appropriate that our love for one another bloomed in the early spring. Even as my thesis writing came down to the wire as summer became fall, she tolerated my tap-tapping on the keyboard into the morning hours while she slept in the same room—this all, despite the fact that she “never understood what historians do,” as she admitted to me a couple months after we started dating.

In many ways, I too am still figuring out “what historians do.” I know that the art of presenting the past to others plays a vital role in the maintenance of a healthy, productive, and tolerant society. But the craft is delicate and difficult to learn. I am looking forward to the years to come, when hopefully I will continue to improve my skills as a historian, surrounded by loved ones, colleagues, and kindred spirits.

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Introduction

So Close, yet So Far Fifty-One Years of Roadbuilding in Mount Hood National Forest

On a clear day in Portland, Oregon, looking directly east at the rolling, evergreen Cascade Mountain Range, Mount Hood stands out as a singular, snow-white beacon. Rising 7,000 feet above the highlands that surround it, the glaciated cone-shaped stratovolcano commands views from throughout the city. To many of the region's residents today, it is a symbol of the place where they live, a natural indication of the Pacific Northwest wilderness out their back door. Snow-packed and nearly inaccessible during the coldest months of the year, overwhelming and unforgiving during the warmest, Mount Hood and the mountains that surround it have always seemed so close, yet so far.

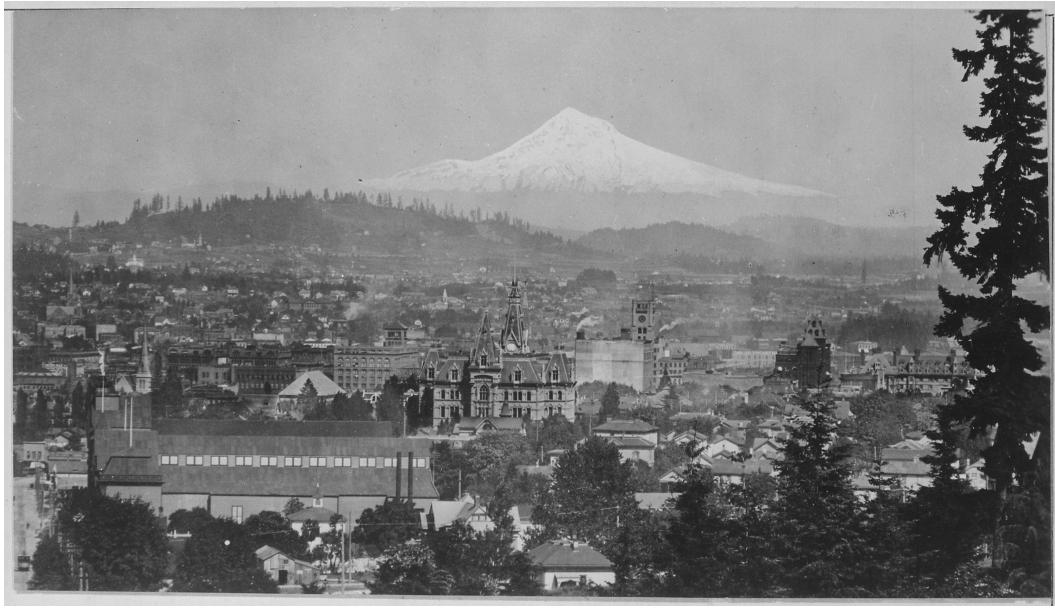


Figure 1 Mount Hood from the West Hills of Portland, 1890.
111-SC-85698, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Digital Collection.

Over the years, the mountain has meant many things to many people. For centuries, it has been a sacred symbol for Native peoples, as well as a point of orientation and a seasonal home.¹ Until the turn of the twentieth century, it was a barrier to American settlers: a place of danger and likely death. And it was, and in many ways still is, a reserve of timber, water, and minerals to enterprising capitalists, municipal officials, and federal land managers, as well as private citizens locally and throughout the world. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, however, it has garnered an increasingly popular, undeniably modern reputation as a public playground, within a morning's drive of the biggest city in Oregon and covered with picnic areas, campgrounds, swimming holes, and ski slopes. By the end of the 1920s, private interest groups and government agencies—primarily the United States Forest Service—had developed two large recreation areas in the mountain's vicinity and had completed construction on a scenic loop highway that gave visitors safe and reliable access to nearly all of its scenic beauty.²

¹ Eugene S. Hunn, *Nch'i-Wana "The Big River": Mid-Columbia Indians and Their Land* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990). For a more complicated scholarly take on *Wy-east*—"the assumed Native name for Mount Hood"—from the perspective of a member of the Grand Ronde tribe, see David G. Lewis, "Four Deaths: The Near Destruction of Western Oregon Tribes and Native Lifeways, Removal to the Reservation, and Erasure from History," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 115.3 (2014): 414–37, quote from 416.

² The story of the Mount Hood region, which includes the Columbia River Gorge and the Clackamas River drainage south of the mountain, has been told in many local published works, but it has never received a thorough scholarly treatment, except in bits and pieces. For examples of popular histories, see Cheryl Hall, *Images of America: Mount Hood National Forest* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2014); Workers of the Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration, *Mount Hood: A Guide*, (New York: J.J. Little and Ives Company, 1940); Fred H. McNeil, *McNeil's Mount Hood* (Zig Zag, Ore.: The Zig Zag Papers, 1937 [1990]); Don and Roberta Lowe, *Mount Hood: Portrait of a Magnificent Mountain* (Caldwell, Ida.: Caxton Printers, 1975); Jack Grauer, *Mount Hood: A Complete History* (Portland, Ore.: Self-published, 1975). For examples of scholarly histories, see Rick Harmon, "The Bull Run Watershed: Portland's Enduring Jewel," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 96.2 (1995): 242–270; Ward C. Williams, "Public Relations in Winter Sports at Mount Hood," (MA thesis, Oregon State University, 1948); Sarah Baker Munro, *Timberline Lodge: The History, Art and Craft of an American Icon* (Portland, Ore.: Timber Press, 2009);

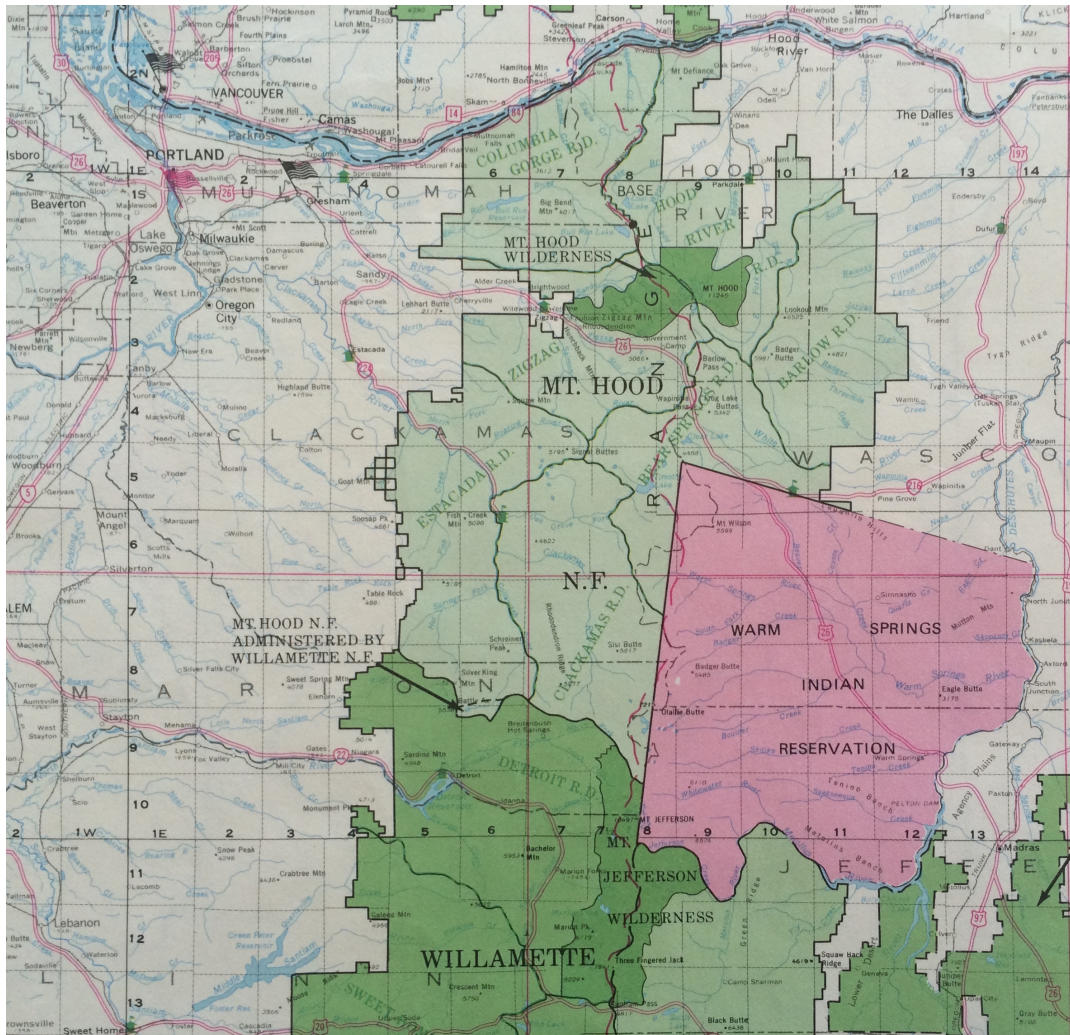


Figure 2 Mount Hood National Forest with Mount Hood Wilderness highlighted after an expansion in the mid-1970s, 1982.

National Forest Maps Collection, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center (OSU SCARC).

Mount Hood sits just east and north of geographic center in Mount Hood National Forest. Stretching from Oregon’s border with Washington at the Columbia River, south to the divide between the Clackamas and Santiam River watersheds, and including both

Alison T. Otis et al., “The Forest Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps,” U.S. Forest Service, 1986, 117–53.

the western and eastern slopes of the Cascades, the federally owned land unit has encompassed over 1 million acres since it took its current form in 1908. On most of it, up to 5,500 feet above sea level, Douglas-fir trees grow in remarkable abundance.³

The federal government first became a landholder in the area in 1892 to protect Portland's water supply in the Bull Run River watershed. After an enormous enlargement in 1894—part of a greater expansion of federal land ownership throughout the U.S. West—this first iteration of Mount Hood National Forest, called the Cascade Range Forest Reserve, came to include billions of board-feet of valuable standing timber, as well as undiscovered mineral deposits and alpine pasturelands for cattle and sheep. The U.S. Forest Service, created in 1905 by President Theodore Roosevelt and Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot to administer the forest reserves (called national forests after 1908), has since watched over the region around Mount Hood, controlling access to and extraction of its resources, mitigating and suppressing forest fires, monitoring and maintaining tree health, and, most notably, slowly developing the region for regulated, sustainable logging. For the entirety of its existence, preservation of the land's scenery and development of its recreational potential—the primary objectives of the agency's adversarial sister organization, the National Park Service (NPS)—have been only

³ “Vacation Land: The National Forests in Oregon,” U.S. Forest Service, 1919, 33, in Box 63, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald Williams Collection, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center (hereafter, OSU SCARC), Otis et al., 117. For more about the Douglas-fir ecosystem that dominates the western slopes of the Cascades, see W. Scott Prudham, *Knock on Wood: Nature as Commodity in Douglas-Fir Country* (New York: Routledge, 2005), especially 1–4.

marginal or coincidental goals for the Forest Service and, more often, have conflicted directly with its mission.⁴

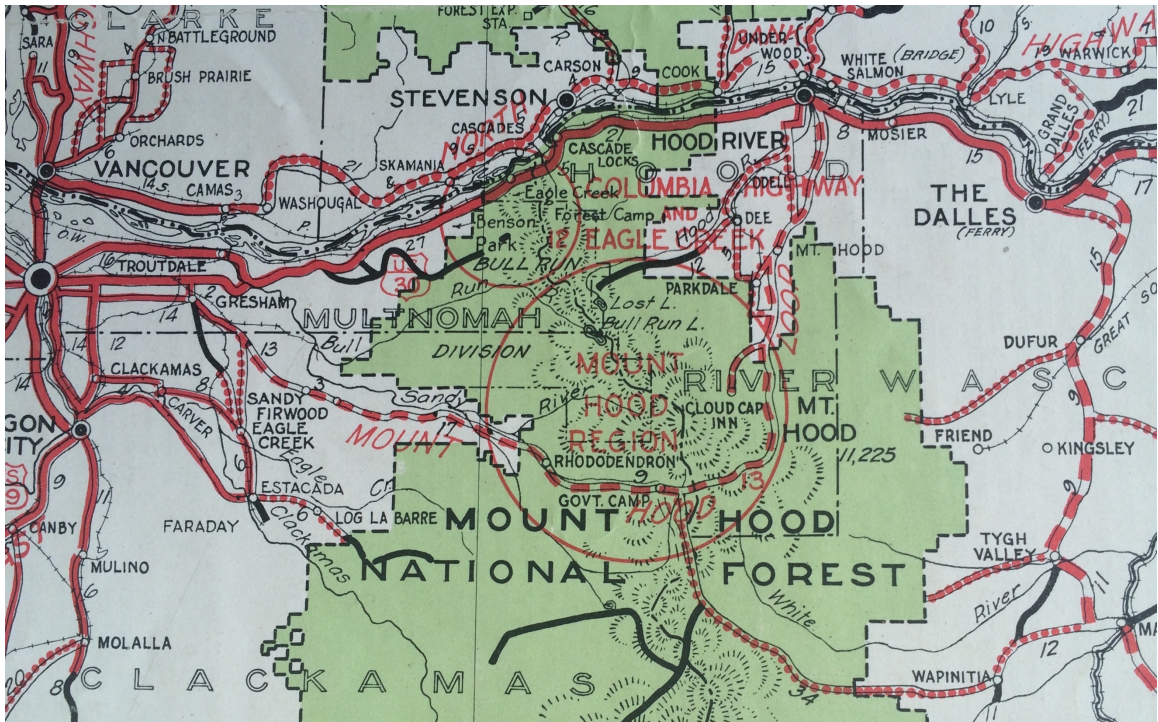


Figure 3 Detail from "Roads and Recreation Map of the State of Oregon," United States Forest Service, 1930.

Oregon State Highway Maps Collection, OSU SCARC.

But to most people who visit Mount Hood National Forest today from Portland and elsewhere, the region seems less like a reserve and more like a park. In fact, the twenty-first-century experiences of hikers, campers, and other recreational users of national forests throughout the West are only subtly different from those in the region's less-numerous national parks—especially if, like most visitors, they stick within a mile or two of where their cars are parked. The most easily discernible distinction between forest

⁴ Harmon, "Bull Run;" Otis et al., 117.

and park is in the way visitors are greeted. On most entrance roads into national parks, fee stations are staffed with park rangers, granting admission, providing directions, and collecting payments for entry; national forest boundaries are marked by nothing more than stylized brown road signs.

Despite initial reluctance to welcome unproductive users into productive landscapes, the Forest Service now participates fully in the culture and economy of outdoor leisure, though to a lesser degree than the Park Service. Mount Hood National Forest represents one particularly noteworthy example of the dozens of national forests throughout the western United States that receive thousands of visitors every year, who have no intention of harvesting timber, mining for minerals, developing water resources, or grazing cattle.⁵

This transition, from inaccessible reserve to familiar park, has had much to do with the construction and maintenance of a vast network of forest roads for use by administrative personnel, commercial vehicle operators, and, most frequently, private motorists. As with most of the United States's automobile infrastructure, the development of a national forest highway and road system occurred over a period of a half century between the late Progressive Era and the early 1960s. Development happened gradually throughout the West but took place most acutely, visibly, and sometimes contentiously on national forest land near big cities like Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Denver, where

⁵ For general overviews of Forest Service administration, see William C. Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation Development in National Forests, 1891–1942," U.S. Forest Service (1989); Harold K. Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004 [1976]); Gerald W. Williams, *The U.S. Forest Service in the Pacific Northwest* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2009).

local, urban interests placed great pressure on the Forest Service to grow and adapt to the needs of the pleasure-seeking public during the agency's fledgling years.⁶



Figure 4 “Main western entrance to Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon, on Zigzag,” 1938.

Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

As the pace of road development picked up—first with private, municipal, and federally subsidized state funding; then New Deal resources; and finally with the demand for logging access roads in the postwar era—so too did the recreational use of national forests. National forest roads, from luxurious, manicured scenic highways to rough,

⁶ On the development of the road and highway system in the United States, see Christopher W. Wells, *Car Country: An Environmental History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012); Bruce E. Seely, *Building the American Highway System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Frederic L. Paxson, “The Highway Movement: 1916–1935,” *The American Historical Review* 51.2 (1946): 236–253; Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910–1945* (Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1979); James J. Flink, *The Car Culture* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1976). For a broad overview of the history of roads on public lands, see David G. Havlick, “Behind the Wheel: A Look Back at Public Land Roads,” *Forest History Today* (Spring 2012): 10–20; David G. Havlick, *No Place Distant: Roads and Motorized Recreation on America's Public Lands* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2002).

primitive dirt paths, appeared at the same time as similar roadbuilding projects in national parks, though in a less concerted, more inconsistent fashion. While historians have paid great attention to auto-tourism's impact on the birth and direction of the National Park Service, the automobile's influence on the U.S. Forest Service has been addressed only indirectly, despite great popular and scientific interest in the ecological effects of roadbuilding through what are typically conceived of as pristine pockets of untouched wilderness within national forest boundaries.⁷

To be sure, scholars have invested large quantities of time and spilled a lot of ink over the past half-century unpacking the historical significance of the 1964 Wilderness Act, which created the National Wilderness Preservation System out of the Forest Service's loosely protected, shrinking network of roadless primitive areas. Historian Roderick Nash's influential study, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967), dissected the intellectual history of "wilderness" as a modern construct in the United States,

⁷ For overviews of the development of auto-tourism in the United States, see Belasco, *Americans on the Road*; Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 19–53; Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 2001), 130–68; Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 143–67. For studies of the National Park Service's relationship with auto-tourism, see Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1998); Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997); Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2010). For more recent takes on the effects of roads on forests, Havlick, *No Place Distant*; Hermann Gucinski et al., "Forest Roads: A Synthesis of Scientific Information," U.S. Forest Service, (Portland, Oreg.: Pacific Northwest Research Station, 2001); Billy Goodman, "U.S. Forest Service Proposes Ban on Road Construction," *BioScience* 50.9 (2000): 744; "Removing and Rewilding Old Roads," BARK (watchdog for Mount Hood National Forest), accessed Sept. 18, 2016, <http://bark-out.org/project/removing-and-rewilding-old-roads>.

highlighting its fundamental tension with civilization (i.e., technological development).⁸ More recently, Paul Sutter has detailed “how the fight against automobiles launched the modern wilderness movement,” focusing on the establishment of the Wilderness Society in 1935 and the multi-faceted ideas of its founders.⁹ For instance, Howard Zahniser, the architect of the bill and main spokesperson for the Wilderness Society in the 1950s, famously defined such “untrammelled” wilderness areas in opposition to the types of well-developed, easily accessible playgrounds that already existed in places like Mount Hood, Yosemite Valley, the San Gabriel Mountains east of Los Angeles, and the Front Range of Colorado.¹⁰

Historians have been reluctant, however, to center their narratives on the materiality of national forest roadbuilding, against which wilderness preservationists defined their political and spiritual philosophy during the build-up to the Wilderness Act. This scholarly omission is due, perhaps, to the incoherence of Forest Service development at the national level, especially in relation to that of the National Park Service, which has been the subject of numerous NPS-sponsored administrative histories of roadbuilding, recreation development, and wilderness preservation.¹¹ The dearth of

⁸ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001 [1967]).

⁹ Sutter, *Driven Wild*.

¹⁰ On Howard Zahniser and the Wilderness Act, see Mark Harvey, *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); Mark Harvey, ed., *The Wilderness Writings of Howard Zahniser* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014); James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 17–140; Donald N. Baldwin, *The Quiet Revolution: The Grassroots of Today's Wilderness Preservation Movement* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing, 1972).

¹¹ For example, McClelland, *Building the National Parks* began as an administrative history commissioned by the National Park Service.

scholarship is also likely the result of the Forest Service's own reluctance to account for recreational interests from both a historical and contemporary perspective.¹²

That being said, it is now time to see the forest for the roads. The story that follows, of the interplay between auto-tourism and wilderness preservation in Mount Hood National Forest during the early and mid-twentieth century, serves to close some of the historiographical gaps between disparate fields concerned broadly with the relationship between cars and nature. It begins with the assumption that a thorough understanding of the historical significance of national forest roadbuilding and recreation development requires a zoomed-in case study that captures local nuance, set against a backdrop of regional and national administrative, political, and environmental history.¹³

More abstractly, the narrative suggests that in order to understand wilderness's importance as a cultural and intellectual construct, it first must be understood as a common and shared, yet deeply personal experience—both on wheels and on foot. Though visitors and historians largely have failed to see the forest *for* the roads, they nevertheless have seen the forest *from* the roads, whether or not they recognized it (or

¹² One of the few comprehensive treatments of recreation in national forests is a short pamphlet from the late 1980s by Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation." Also, see E. Gail Throop, "National Forests: Use and Development for Recreation in the West," U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region (1980s n.d.), in Box 44, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald Williams Collection, OSU SCARC; William G. Robbins, "Review: The United States Forest Service and the Problem of History," *The Public Historian* 15.3 (1993): 41–8; Hal K. Rothman, "'A Regular Ding-Dong Fight': Agency Culture and Evolution in the NPS-USFS Dispute, 1916–1937," *Western Historical Quarterly* 20.2 (1989): 141–61.

¹³ By looking at the greater Portland-Mount Hood region, I am borrowing from the frameworks of William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991); and more recently, Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), see 6–11 for an explanation of the regional approach.

condoned it). Roads, either as extant, physical entities that provide safe passage to remote locations or as abstract or proposed ideas, have been essential to the wilderness experience in that they have allowed for it and defined it; wilderness would not be possible without roads. Recently, this notion has been demonstrated most clearly by NPS historian David Louter in his study of Washington state's national parks, appropriately entitled *Windshield Wilderness* (2006). With the evolution of roadbuilding in Mount Rainier, Olympic, and North Cascades National Parks to meet the changing ideas of landscape architecture, recreation development, and ecology, Louter argues, came the evolution of "wilderness" into its modern form.¹⁴



Figure 5 A motorist goes off-road, c. 1927.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

¹⁴ Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*.

Thus, to understand nature in the early and mid-twentieth century was to understand technology, and vice versa. After initial enthusiasm during the Progressive Era and rapid growth in the interwar years, an undercurrent of techno-skepticism gained momentum, bookending World War II with escalating protests and culminating in the passage of Zahniser's Wilderness Act. The result in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century—in a post-Wilderness Act United States—has been an assumption among environmentalists and many casual outdoor recreationists that roads and highways represent the antithesis of wilderness and, moreover, that they “threaten to undermine many of the fundamental features that Americans have valued in their public lands for more than a century.”¹⁵ However, the road to the Wilderness Act was far from straight and narrow. Looking back from the early twenty-first century, the tale of wilderness is hardly a simple progressive narrative from no roads to too many roads, in which the American public gradually came to recognize the damaging aesthetic and ecological effects of development.

Instead, it is a tale that ebbs and flows in four distinct but slightly overlapping tides, corresponding with successive periods of roadbuilding nationwide. Part of a larger spirit of optimism shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, the late Progressive Era—the first period—was marked by idealism regarding the potential of scenic highways to display nature as simultaneously wild and accessible. Local interests in the early 1910s considered the merits of the burgeoning auto-tourism economy with high

¹⁵ Quote from Havlick, *No Place Distant*, 2; Turner, *Promise of Wilderness*.

hopes. In the 1920s, state highway planners entered their first era of rapid growth, building up the United States's network of arterial highways. As federal land managers began to take more seriously the need to manage the masses in the Great Outdoors, a few dissenting voices arose to claim and defend the country's vanishing roadless wildernesses.

The pace of roadbuilding only picked up after the Great Depression. Emergency New Deal funding provided for the development of a vast network of administrative dirt roads, or truck trails, during the 1930s. Later in the decade, the influx of federal support also helped the agency develop heavily trafficked areas for recreation. But in the background, prominent wilderness preservationists were banding together to form a concerted national voice for the protection of roadless areas throughout the country. After the Second World War, roadbuilding increased dramatically to aid logging at the same time that the popularity of outdoor recreation exploded. Finally, with growing cultural and political disillusionment across the country, wilderness preservationists burst into the mainstream of U.S. environmental politics, demonizing logging and roadbuilding and convincing federal legislators to pass the most radical land management bill since the forest reserves were first set aside in the 1890s. In effect, the creation of the National Wilderness Preservation System changed the very way Americans understood nature.

However, such a sweeping national narrative fails to capture the complex mosaic of actors, events, and intentions involved in forest roadbuilding, recreation development, and wilderness preservationism at the local level. For Mount Hood National Forest, the ad hoc meaning of wilderness was the subject of a dynamic discussion centered in

Portland. Between 1913, when construction began on “America’s First Scenic Highway,” the Columbia River Highway, and 1964, when a flood nearly destroyed Mount Hood National Forest’s extensive road network just three months after the passage of the Wilderness Act, a changing cast of characters each tried to impose their own definitions of wilderness on the mountains just east of the city.¹⁶ At times, developers, recreational users, and preservationists agreed with one another on the proper form and scale of roadbuilding and recreation planning. But more often as the years progressed and development became more pervasive, preservationists echoed the sentiments of prominent members of the Wilderness Society, such as Aldo Leopold, Robert “Bob” Marshall, and Zahniser, as well as the earlier ideas of explorer-naturalist John Muir, who all argued that nature is best experienced in its most primitive, undeveloped state.¹⁷

The narrative begins in chapter one with the building of the Columbia River Highway through the Columbia River Gorge, approximately fifteen miles north of Mount Hood and directly east of Portland. As one of a number of locally sponsored scenic highway projects during the waning years of the Progressive Era, the effort to build a road that was both reliable and elegant resulted primarily from private, regional auto-tourism interests and municipal support. The man who was hired to direct the project, an

¹⁶ The claim that the Columbia River Highway was “America’s first scenic highway” is often featured prominently in promotional materials for the historic highway today, but I have never seen any professional research that shows it to be true (and I imagine it still would be subject to debate). The superlative appeared at many of the centennial celebration events in June and July 2016. See, for example, “America’s First Scenic Highway Celebrates Hundredth Birthday,” media advisory, Historic Columbia River Highway and State Trail Centennial, 2016, accessed Sept. 19, 2016, https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRRH/docs/RededicationMediaAdvisory2_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁷ For introductions to Aldo Leopold and Robert “Bob” Marshall, see Havlick, *No Place Distant*, 22–3; Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 54–99, 194–238. For a recent biography of John Muir, see Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir* (New York: Oxford Press, 2008).

engineer by the name of Samuel C. Lancaster, designed the highway as a visual tribute to the landscape. Lancaster's ideas were syntheses of Romantic wilderness imagination and advanced engineering expertise, and in this way shed light on a brief but important period in U.S. environmental history, during which professional highway planners and federal land managers looked to adapt Muir's nineteenth-century brand of preservationism to the promise of twentieth-century automobility.

The Columbia River Highway crossed not only private land but federally owned public land as well; it penetrated the northern boundary of what was called Oregon National Forest in 1915. Lancaster's vision therefore required the approval of the U.S. Forest Service for 22 of its nearly 50 miles of right-of-way. The Forest Service—still beholden to Gifford Pinchot's original dictates of conservative, custodial management, but evolving with the development of the U.S. West—had never before faced such a complex, involved proposal for recreation development. Chief Forester Henry S. Graves, seeing an opportunity to improve relations with local constituents, entertained the idea of a developed recreation area along the highway corridor and committed to preserving the natural beauty of the road's immediate surroundings. The result was the Forest Service's first attempt at recreation planning anywhere in the country.

Chapter two brings the story into the 1920s. It also moves the focus to the base of Mount Hood, where a parallel scenic highway project was taking shape at a much slower pace than the more famous route to its north. Indicative of the changing times, the Mount Hood highway project ground to a halt at the end of World War I after a modest attempt by a private developer to improve the old wagon road that existed on the southern slope

of the mountain. It took the consolidation of the Oregon State Highway Commission (OSHC) and its executive wing, the Oregon State Highway Department (OSHD), between 1917 and 1920 to bring it back to life. Now with funding provided by taxpayer dollars, including the first trickles of federal support, the project took off in 1921 and was complete by 1926.

Unlike the Columbia River Highway, the Mount Hood Highway—now a full loop that included a connector on the east side of the mountain to Hood River—penetrated directly into the heart of Oregon National Forest, opening up a much larger area of public land to the motoring masses. During these years, the newly renamed Mount Hood National Forest became an experiment in recreation development for the Forest Service. The agency was experiencing increasing public pressure in Portland and elsewhere, to operate more like the nascent National Park Service, established in 1916 under the charismatic direction of Stephen T. Mather. Yet, foresters in the USFS North Pacific District continued to receive little direction from Washington, D.C.. So, their approaches to recreation on Mount Hood, like in the Columbia River Gorge, were the result of localized planning and trial and error.

Private interests continued to exert a significant influence in the Roaring Twenties. One proposal in particular, by a conglomeration of Portland-based businessmen called the Cascade Development Company, to build an electric tramway to the summit of the mountain, drove a wedge into Portland's auto-tourism and outdoor recreation community. The discussion that followed about the proper form and scale of recreation development was the first indication that wilderness might not be compatible

with technology for all nature-lovers. Members of the influential local mountaineering club, the Mazamas, served as primary voices of dissent. During a lengthy debate, the Mount Hood summit tramway proposal was denied twice by the Forest Service, then reconsidered, then studied by renowned landscape architects, and finally approved, only to be withdrawn quietly as the economy collapsed and funding disappeared.

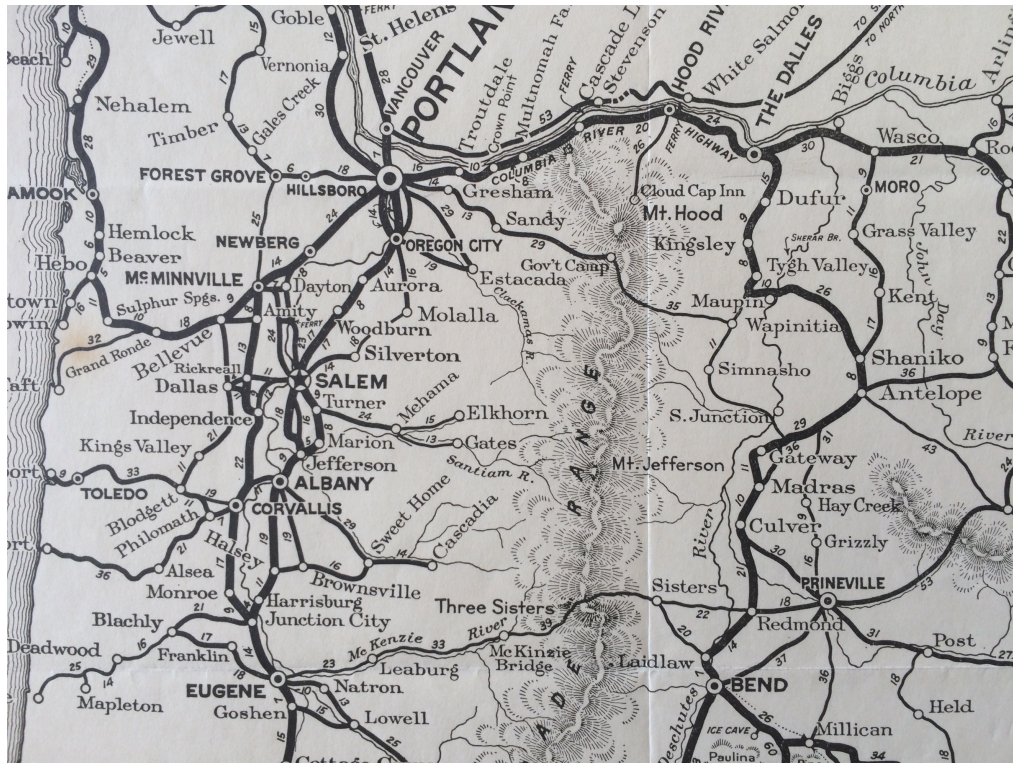


Figure 6 Detail from “State Highway Department’s Official Road Map of the State of Oregon Showing All Through Trunk Highways and Main Traveled Roads, with Mileages,” Oregon State Highway Commission, 1918. Oregon State Highway Maps Collection, OSU SCARC.

Following the national narrative, the Great Depression serves as the segue into chapter three. Ironically, the economic downturn signaled a boom in construction for Mount Hood National Forest and national forests across the country, with labor and funding provided by President Roosevelt’s New Deal public works programs, most

notably the Civilian Conservation Corps. The thousands of miles of truck trails that CCC crews built primarily for administrative purposes between 1933 and 1935 became extensions of the narrow corridors of travel from years prior. The new network of roads further complicated recreational motorists' understanding of and relationship to national forests by allowing deeper and more convenient penetration of the wilderness around places like Mount Hood.

A few years before the United States entered World War II, USFS directors at the national level finally began to show signs that they were coming to see recreation as an important part of their mission. Mount Hood National Forest previously had been an exception to the Forest Service's Progressive Era conservationism, which held natural resource value—water, minerals, grazing range, and, most importantly, timber—as the highest priority in the agency's approach to land management. However, the rise of the automobile and subsequent establishment of a national system of rural roads and highways forced foresters to reckon with non-productive users of national forests.

The influx of New Deal monies in the mid-1930s allowed the Forest Service to experiment with more sophisticated public accommodations across the country. As a result, by late 1941 and the start of the war, the Forest Service had begun to operate much like the National Park Service. Mount Hood National Forest by then had come to exemplify the Forest Service's new, albeit tenuous, approach toward recreation. After the construction of Timberline Lodge, a massive flagship recreation development project at the center of the new and improved Mount Hood Recreation Area, Portland-based preservation interests, still represented most notably by the Mazamas, recalibrated their

relationship with federal land managers as they started to accept the fact that Mount Hood would never again feel like theirs alone.

The postwar era—the topic of the fourth and final chapter—witnessed a qualitatively different battle for wilderness preservationists at both the local and national level. After a brief return to custodial forest management during wartime, the Forest Service again ramped up roadbuilding in the late 1940s, this time to meet growing demand for lumber. During the interwar period, development in Mount Hood National Forest had occurred primarily in the Columbia River Gorge and around Mount Hood, which were located in the northern half of the unit. However, the rise of postwar logging precipitated another shift in focus, now to the forest's vast, undeveloped southern region, where 9 billion board feet of standing timber awaited loggers' chainsaws along the Clackamas River and its tributaries.

The construction of the Clackamas River Road and associated logging spur roads took place between 1943 and 1964. By 1950, development had opened up an entirely new wilderness region for both loggers and recreational users—an area that, until then, had been inaccessible to everyone except those who had the time and money to spend a week or more deep in the woods. Now, with conflicts growing between log truckers and recreational motorists along the same narrow forest roads, the Forest Service was forced to assume a more active role in reconciling and managing the multiplicity of uses in national forests, especially Mount Hood. In 1960, Congress passed the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act with the backing of the agency. The bill expressed the USFS officials' optimism about their ability to resolve such conflicts through increased

oversight and scientific management—in other words, an updated restatement of their original Pinchotian philosophy. The Clackamas River Road became a battleground over the proper use of forest roads and provoked debates among Oregonians about the value of public forests more generally.



Figure 7 Detail from Highway Map of Oregon, Richfield Oil Co., 1963. Oregon State Highway Maps Collection, OSU SCARC.

The story comes to a close in 1964 for two unrelated but similarly momentous reasons. In September of that year, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, which signaled a new age in public lands management. Over the span of less than a half-century, wilderness preservationism had blossomed from an obscure fringe movement in the wake of auto-tourism’s rise to dominance, into a powerful lobby with growing popular support. Finally, Congress put in place a legal system to protect the forests from the Forest Service.

Even so, on the ground the abstract dissent of critics like Zahniser reflected only a marginal decrease in enthusiasm for the joys and virtues of auto-tourism. In Oregon, the Clackamas River Road—or Clackamas Highway 224, as it became known in 1962—continued to see record visitation, while roadless areas throughout West faced the threat of encroaching logging operations and roadbuilding.¹⁸ To a certain extent, this was due to the ambivalence of a population largely disinterested in primitive recreation and disconnected from the battle for wilderness, but it was also due to the fact that most Oregonians recognized and appreciated the economic rewards that logging brought to the state.

Such nuances became irrelevant in December, however, when a massive flood, lasting weeks, destroyed much of the road network that crisscrossed Mount Hood National Forest, from significant sections of the recently built Interstate 80-N in the Columbia River Gorge, to bridges across the White River, Zig Zag River, Sandy River, and Clackamas River, to derelict, infrequently used, dirt backroads down deep tributary drainages and along remote, crumbling ridges. The Christmas Flood of 1964–5 wreaked havoc on the road infrastructure of the Pacific Northwest. Debates over proper development and use of forest roads in Oregon quieted down until the 1970s while the state recovered from one of the most devastating natural disasters in its recorded history. It must have been as frustrating to contemporary motorists looking to have fun (or just do their job) as it is to historians trying to draw neat conclusions and lessons half a century

¹⁸ For one example, on the battle over Three Sisters Primitive Area in the central Oregon Cascades, see Kevin Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest: Creating Wilderness Areas in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 19–37.

later. At least for the time being, the potential for a harmonious agreement between auto-tourists, wilderness preservationists, and now logging interests, had been washed away with the steel bridges and asphalt pavement of Mount Hood's forest roads.

In 1915, watching the development of the Columbia River Highway and considering the possibility of an entire playground in Portland's backyard, Multnomah County Commissioner Rufus Holman declared, "Portlanders have no idea how near old Mount Hood is."¹⁹ Within ten years, many Portlanders would be well aware of how near it really was. Some even would start to reconsider whether or not it should have remained a distant beacon. Today, a full century later, Mount Hood and all the awe-inspiring, mysterious, delicate forested mountains that surround it, seem closer than ever.

In the summertime especially, the effects of development are difficult to ignore. Parking spaces at Multnomah Falls in the Columbia River Gorge typically fill up by 10:00am on weekends. Road work often brings traffic to a grinding halt near Government Camp at the crest of the Mount Hood Highway, now more popularly known as Highway 26. And accidents are not uncommon along narrow stretches of Clackamas County Highway 224. In these ways and others, the modern experience of Mount Hood National Forest is defined by the automobile. When visitors set out for trailheads deep in the wilderness, these are the sets of circumstances that they are trying to avoid. But, of course in order to get to where they might be able to escape the influences of the automobile,

¹⁹ "Belt Road Round Mt. Hood Is Plan," *The Oregonian*, June 27, 1915.

they most likely will need to drive for quite a while. And therein lies the irony of wilderness.



Figure 8 Cars parked in front of Multnomah Falls, with Benson Footbridge, c. 1916.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

The most well-known comment on this essential irony—what some might describe as one of the biggest hypocrisies of modern U.S. environmentalism—is the

seminal 1994 essay, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” by historian William Cronon. Cronon argued convincingly that the late twentieth-century notion of wilderness as a pristine landscape seemingly untouched by human history is in fact a modern construct steeped in nineteenth-century Romanticism and postindustrial anxiety. In the twenty-two years since his critique, historians like Paul Sutter and David Louter have built upon Cronon’s work, demonstrating how such a conception of wilderness formed during the twentieth century out of a disdain for mass automobility and, by association, the average working- and middle-class motor-bound recreationist.²⁰ In the wake of these and other groundbreaking studies, many have dismissed the history of wilderness preservation as an elitist exercise in wrongheaded idealism.

But if the story of Mount Hood National Forest is any indication, there remains much to be said about wilderness. Forests, like all spaces inhabited by humans—permanently or only “as a visitor who does not remain”—are social places. And the history of forest roads as liminal spaces that connect and grant access—at the same time that they disrupt and “trammel”—provides valuable insights into the construction of such places.²¹ By looking specifically at the local material and cultural context within which one porous, evolving, multi-faceted community in the U.S. West came to know the wilderness in its own backyard, historians may better understand the apparent tension

²⁰ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995): 69–90.

²¹ Quotes from Wilderness Act language. *Wilderness Act*, 88–577, 88th U.S. Congress (1964).

between technology and nature that has propelled and complicated private resource development, public land management, and environmental politics in the United States through the twentieth century.

Chapter One

“A Frame to the Beautiful Picture” The Columbia River Highway and Columbia Gorge Park

In the western United States at the turn of the twentieth century, the word was development: natural resource development, transportation development, rural development, civic development. After fifty years of settlement and rapid growth, fledgling cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, and Portland, required robust public works systems to provide their residents with water, food, timber, and coal, as well as safe passage from one town to the next. As dams, canals, railroads, and automobile highways began to materialize in the canyons, plateaus, forests, and mountains of the West, recent American emigrants became familiar—through both labor and leisure—with the utility, as well as the beauty, of the wilderness that surrounded their newly claimed homeland. More than ever before (and perhaps ever since), private developers had the means and the leeway to craft nature in the way that they saw fit. It was both a physical and a philosophical transition. And undergirding the developers’ power was the flowery, Romantic rhetoric of numerous Western boosters, each with their own vision of how to best make use of wilderness.¹

¹ Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*; Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2008). On Oregon specifically, see Carl Abbott, “From Urban Frontier to Metropolitan Region: Oregon’s Cities from 1870 to 2008,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 110.1 (2009): 74–95; William G. Robbins, “Town and Country in Oregon: A Conflict Legacy,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 110.1 (2009): 52–73; William G. Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1880–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); William G. Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict: The Oregon Story, 1940–2000* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

Like any good developer, Samuel C. Lancaster wore many hats. He was a master engineer who had pioneered the construction of hard-surfaced roads in Tennessee. He was a City Beautiful planner who had consulted on Seattle's network of boulevards and parks. He was a wealthy, well-connected man with close ties to the Pacific Northwest's foremost good roads advocate, Sam Hill. And he was an eloquent orator with a talent for description and persuasion. But above all, he was a man of God and a nature-lover; his two biggest passions, intricately intertwined and growing stronger with age. Especially later in life, Lancaster professed his deep appreciation for divine landscapes and spoke about forests and mountains with the conviction and romance of a preservationist, much like the more famous "prophet of wilderness," John Muir.² Unlike Muir, however, Lancaster saw room for improvement in God's Creation.³

² Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 8.

³ On Samuel Lancaster, see Ronald J. Fahl, "S.C. Lancaster and the Columbia River Highway: Engineer as Conservationist," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 74.2 (1973): 101–44; Oral Bullard, *Lancaster's Road: The Historic Columbia River Scenic Highway* (Beaverton, Ore.: T.M.S. Book Service, 1982); William H. Wilson, "'Names Joined Together as Our Hearts Are': The Friendship of Samuel Hill and Reginald H. Thomson," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 94.4 (2003): 183–96; C. Lester Horn, "Oregon's Columbia River Highway," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 66.3 (1965): 249–71; "Columbia River Highway Historic District: A Nomination of the Old Columbia River Highway in the Columbia River Gorge to the National Register of Historic Places," Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), 1983, in Box 3, Acc. 2010: 084, Gerald Williams Collection, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives Research Center (OSU SCARC); Donald P. Abbott, "Lancaster's Lodge," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 75.3 (1974): 277–81. For examples of Lancaster's writing, see Samuel C. Lancaster, *The Columbia: America's Great Highway through the Cascade Mountains to the Sea* (Portland, Ore.: Press of Kilham Stationary and Printing Company, 1915); Samuel C. Lancaster, *Romance of the Gateway through the Cascade Range* (Portland, Ore.: Press of Kilham Stationary and Printing Company, 1929); Samuel C. Lancaster, "From Portland to the Sea," *Mazama* 10 (1928): 74–81. John Muir is perhaps the most well-studied figure in United States environmental history. See Worster, *A Passion for Nature*; Stephen Fox, *John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1981); Sally M. Miller, ed., *John Muir: Life and Work* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); Sally M. Miller, ed., *John Muir in Historical Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Frederick Turner, *Rediscovering America: John Muir in His Time and Ours* (New York: Viking, 1985). For his thoughts on the national parks, see John Muir, *Our National Parks* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916 [1901]). For more critical takes on Muir's life and ideas, see J.S. Holliday, "The Politics of John Muir," *California History* 63.2 (1984): 135–9; David Hickman, "John Muir's Orchard Home," *Pacific Historical Review* 82.3 (2013):

The building of the Columbia River Highway just east of Portland, Oregon, between 1913 and 1915, was Lancaster's ultimate achievement, a project that presented him with the opportunity to wear all his hats at once.⁴ Scenic rural automobile highways like the Columbia, he believed, should follow the sublime aesthetic of the land. "There is a time and a place for every man to... build according to his ideals," he wrote after its completion. The Columbia River Gorge, through which the road passed and of which Lancaster considered his work a pre-ordained component, was his inspiration:

God shaped these mountains round about us... He fashioned the Gorge of the Columbia... Then He planted a garden, men came and built a beautiful city close by this wonderland... and when the time had come for men to break down the mountain barriers, construct a great highway of commerce, and utilize the beautiful..., He set them to the task and gave to each his place.⁵

Much like Muir felt about Yosemite Valley, Lancaster thought it his God-given duty to protect the Columbia River Gorge for posterity and present its beauty to humanity.

Yet, despite a unity of purpose, the two outspoken advocates undoubtedly would have disagreed when it came to the means of preserving and displaying their blessed landscapes. Whereas Muir looked skeptically upon the development of California's

335–61. Muir is featured prominently in Schama, *Landscape and Memory*; Aaron Sachs, *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism* (New York: Penguin, 2006); Susan Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005).

⁴ On the building of the Columbia River Highway, see "Columbia River Highway Historic District: A Nomination," ODOT; Horn, "Oregon's Columbia River Highway;" Fahl, "S.C. Lancaster;" Bullard, *Lancaster's Road*; Lancaster, *The Columbia*, 98–121; Lawrence M. Lipin, *Workers and the Wild: Conservation, Consumerism, and Labor in Oregon, 1910–30* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), especially 37–47; Lawrence M. Lipin, "'Cast Aside the Automobile Enthusiast': Class Conflict, Tax Policy, and the Preservation of Nature in Progressive-Era Portland," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107.2 (2006), 183–6; Alice Benson Allen, *Simon Benson: Northwest Lumber King* (Portland, Ore.: Binford & Mort, 1971), 110–31.

⁵ Lancaster, *The Columbia*, title page.

Sierra Nevada Mountains for tourism, Lancaster considered such public accommodations as lodging facilities, well-maintained hiking trails, and especially good automobile roads, not only necessary for the enjoyment of the similarly rugged Columbia River Gorge, but a visual tribute to the land itself. The Columbia River Highway was Lancaster's tribute to the wild Cascade Mountains: a fusion of the romantic sensibilities of preservationism and the high ideals of Progressive Era road planning.



Figure 9 Crown Point on the recently paved Columbia River Highway, c. 1916.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

Lancaster and the Northwest businessmen and politicians who commissioned his work believed sincerely in the power of reliable, well-planned automobile roads to provide access to and even enhance the wilderness at Portland's doorstep. Their bourgeois vision of nature as a collection of picturesque landscapes was borne out of the

rise of scenic rail tourism in the late nineteenth century and reflected a modern, urban preference for bounded space.⁶ Auto-tourism, at first a fringe hobby for intrepid travelers content to rough it on unpredictable wagon roads, became a much more sophisticated enterprise during the 1910s when private developers sought to capitalize on growing consumer interest in motorized recreation, particularly amongst affluent city-dwellers who could afford the expensive machinery and extended vacations.⁷ Scenic highways like the Columbia River Highway, as syntheses of both impulses, came to look much like the tree-lined City Beautiful boulevards being constructed throughout the country and embodied similarly urban, class-based values regarding aesthetic, social, and natural order.⁸

Historians have shown how, at the federal level, land managers overseeing the disjointed system of national parks—in many ways, a legacy of Muir’s vision—

⁶ The best treatment of nineteenth-century landscape traditions and their accommodation of technology is Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America* (New York: Oxford Press, 1964). Also, see Schama, *Landscape and Memory*; Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*; David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1994); John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Anne Farrar Hyde, *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820–1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1990). On scenic railroads more specifically, see Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 29–112; Shaffer, *See America First*, 7–92; Gabrielle Barnett, “Drive-by Viewing: Visual Consciousness and Forest Preservation in the Automobile Age,” *Technology and Culture* 45.1 (2004): 30–54; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014 [1977]), especially 52–69.

⁷ Lipin, *Workers and the Wild*; Barnett, “Drive-by Viewing;” Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 143–67; Shaffer, *See America First*, 130–68; Wells, *Car Country*; Belasco, *Americans on the Road*; Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*, 3–67; Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 19–53; Paxson, “The Highway Movement;” Flink, *The Car Culture*; John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 120–70.

⁸ William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement: Creating the North American Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999).

recognized the need to acknowledge the rise of auto-tourism and looked to incorporate the demands of recreational motorists into their development plans. The standardization of the park system that came with the creation of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1916 was in part a result of the automobile's influence. The NPS's first director, Stephen T. Mather, lobbied for an interconnected network of park-to-park highways and hired "landscape engineers" to design internal park roads meant to harmonize with their natural surroundings.⁹ But popular scenic areas outside of national parks sometimes suffered from a lack of central authority.

The narrative of local scenic highway development is a much messier story than that of the "windshield wildernesses" created by national park authorities in the 1910s and 20s.¹⁰ The unrestrained mobility of the automobile and the rapidly changing car culture of the late 1910s complicated Lancaster's singular vision of proper land use—and proper decorum—as motorists tested the limits of the evolving technology and landowners, both private and public, debated the value and aesthetic of scenic highways. Thus, the story of the Columbia River Highway complements and builds upon that of early National Park scenic highways like Paradise Valley Road on Mount Rainier and

⁹ The best book on National Park Service landscape design, particularly from 1916–27 is McClelland, *Building the National Parks*. See also Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*; Carr, *Wilderness by Design*. On "landscape engineers," see Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 50; McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 4.

¹⁰ David Louter coined the pithy term "windshield wilderness" in his book by the same name. Louter argues that, "When the automobile first appeared in national parks one hundred years ago, it changed the way most Americans would encounter these protected areas. Throughout the twentieth century, people would interpret parks from a road and through a windshield... For Americans of the Progressive Era, this new way of knowing national parks did not necessarily signal the destruction of nature, but the beginning of something promising... [It] embodied the hope that nature and technology could be blended into a new kind of aesthetic, one that would solve the social dilemma brought forth by our ambiguous relationship with the natural world." Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*, 4.

Tioga Pass in Yosemite, shedding greater light on the contested nature of preservationism at a time when automobiles were giving private American citizens the ability to amend Muir's definition of wilderness as a landscape free from technology. It demonstrates the difference of opinion, and sometimes outright skepticism, that Americans held regarding the role that automobile roads would play in opening up remote scenic areas for recreation. The form the Columbia River Highway eventually took in the immediate years after its construction, represented a coming-together (or rather, collision) of varying visions.

One of the most complicated of those visions was that of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the adversarial sister agency of the Park Service, which owned land along the section of highway that passed through Oregon National Forest (what would later become Mount Hood National Forest)—nearly half the route.¹¹ Elsewhere, the project's orchestrators—Lancaster and Hill, as well as Portland-based private investors Simon Benson, John Yeon, and other members of the Portland Chamber of Commerce—had negotiated with small, private landowners to draft tenuous deals dictating the proper form and scale of roadside development. But things worked differently on public forest land, which the Forest Service managed for conservative natural resource extraction, rather than scenic preservation. Lancaster's preservationist vision, like Muir's, tended to clash

¹¹ "Oregon National Forest," map, U.S. Forest Service, 1913, in Box 6, National Forest Maps Collection, OSU SCARC. Oregon National Forest became Mount Hood National Forest in 1924. Writers' Program of the WPA, *Mount Hood: A Guide*, 45.

with the legacy of Gifford Pinchot, the Forest Service's founder and a key figure in U.S. forestry.¹²

After initial reluctance, the agency designated its first recreational corridor: the Columbia Gorge Park division, a 22-mile long, 4-mile wide border of preserved timber along the highway. In this way, the planners of the Columbia River Highway bent federal bureaucracy to meet local demands and, without intending to do so, set a precedent for national forest administration throughout the Pacific Northwest. The highway forced Forest Service officials to think seriously about their role in accommodating outdoor recreation in a way that would echo through the rest of the twentieth century.¹³

More abstractly, the construction and use of the Columbia River Highway hinted at the tension that underlay the relationship between automobiles, roads, and nature, especially as road management became more complex and burdensome. The early years of auto-centric outdoor recreation development indicated the youthful idealism that defined late Progressive Era conceptions of automotive technology. In ways that would perplex nature-lovers today, the Columbia River Highway's architects articulated a revolutionary brand of preservation that embraced the serpentine aesthetic of winding

¹² The history of land management in the United States in the early twentieth century is typically told through this dichotomy of preservation and conservation. For popular examples of the story, see Ken Burns, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, documentary video, Public Broadcasting Service (2009); *The Greatest Good: A Forest Service Centennial Film*, documentary video, U.S. Forest Service (2006). For a more scholarly take, see Hal K. Rothman, "'A Regular Ding-Dong Fight': Agency Culture and Evolution in the NPS-USFS Dispute, 1916–1937," *Western Historical Quarterly* 20.2 (1989): 141–61. On the history of the U.S. Forest Service and Gifford Pinchot in particular, see Harold K. Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004 [1976]).

¹³ Not much has been written about the Columbia Gorge Park. One of the few scholarly sources is Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 3–5.

forest roads and the visceral joy of driving. Thus, years before wilderness preservationists like Aldo Leopold and Robert Marshall would align themselves in opposition to roadbuilding on aesthetic and ecological grounds, the construction of the Columbia River Highway represented progress for both technological optimists and natural resource preservationists. And in many cases, including most notably that of Samuel Lancaster, those seemingly disparate interest groups in reality were one and the same.

Engineering “America’s First Scenic Highway”

For eighty miles along the border between Oregon and Washington, the Columbia River slices through the Cascade Mountains. The chasm that has been created after millennia of volcanic uplift, the Columbia River Gorge serves as the only low-elevation pass between the Pacific Northwest’s arid interior plateau and its fertile valleys to the west. Barges and, later, steamships provided somewhat dangerous forms of passage for American settlers throughout much of the nineteenth century. Travel by land remained difficult into the twentieth century. Homesteaders carved ramshackle wagon trails out of the cliffs along the southern shore in the 1850s, and the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company completed a railroad through the gorge in 1882. Such corridors of travel—by river, by wagon, and by rail—connected isolated Willamette Valley cities like Portland and Oregon City with the inland West and the rest of the United States.¹⁴

¹⁴ Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 110–25, 179–204; Allen, *Simon Benson*, 112; Abbott, “From Urban Frontier to Metropolitan Region;” Robbins, “Town and Country in Oregon;” Carl Abbott and Sam Lowry, “A Brief Portrait of Multimodal Transportation in Oregon and the Path to Achieving It, 1890–1974,” (Portland, Oreg.: Urban Studies and Planning Faculty Publications and Presentations, Portland State University), 19–20, accessed March 4, 2016, http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/usp_fac/79.

The same geologic and hydrologic forces that made the Columbia River Gorge an expedient route also made it a natural wonder to behold. With precipitous cliffs and plunging creeks on both sides, the gorge has always been both beautiful and busy. The rise of rail travel in the late nineteenth century coincided with an expansion of interest in scenic tourism for affluent pleasure-seekers looking to explore such places like the gorge, as well as Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, and the U.S. West more generally.



Figure 10 The Columbia River Gorge, with Crown Point on the left and Rooster Rock in the foreground, c. 1918.

Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

But, just as railroads were beginning to monopolize commercial and private travel, a novel mode of transportation arrived on the scene, promising to liberate leisure travelers from the rigid straight lines, strict schedules, and iron tones of rail infrastructure. To an emerging contingent of Pacific Northwest auto-tourists in the 1900s and 1910s, the rugged banks of the Columbia River seemed the perfect place to demonstrate the potential of modern automobile roads to provide both a means of travel through the wilderness and access to its scenery. Wealthy Portlanders began lobbying for just such a

highway in 1909. And in July 1915, years of wishful thinking and political dealing came to fruition when the Columbia River Highway opened to traffic.¹⁵

Two years prior to its completion, the project's chief proponents, Washington good roads advocate Sam Hill and Portland lumber magnate Simon Benson, built upon several years of failed starts and imagined a sophisticated highway that would blend in with the rugged topography by utilizing recent advances in civil engineering.¹⁶ Hill hired his friend, Samuel Lancaster, to design the road. Lancaster had arrived in the Pacific Northwest in 1906 as a result of his growing professional relationship with Hill. Previously, the engineer had made a name for himself experimenting with different techniques of road-paving in Tennessee and came to the attention of Hill, who was an avid supporter of good roads for automobiles.¹⁷ Hill eventually lured Lancaster away from a position with the Bureau of Public Roads in southern California, promising him six months of paid expenses. That year, at Hill's behest, Lancaster made the decision to move up to Seattle to consult on the design and construction of the city's boulevards. It would be the first of several collaborative projects with Hill the financier and Lancaster the engineer.

Hill was an unabashedly wealthy man with a capacity for civic benevolence (though his gifts often happened to benefit him privately as well). He had acquired his

¹⁵ Fahl, "S.C. Lancaster," 108; "Columbia River Highway Historic District: A Nomination," item 8.

¹⁶ The narrative that follows is derived primarily from Fahl, "S.C. Lancaster;" Bullard, *Lancaster's Road*; Wilson, "Names Joined Together," 183–7; Lipin, "Cast Aside" 183; "Columbia River Highway Historic District: A Nomination," item 8.

¹⁷ Much has been written on the good roads movement. For concise treatments, see Havlick, *No Place Distant*, 15–7; Wells, *Car Country*, 25–32, 62–3, 65–84; Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 11–23.

estate in the 1890s as an attorney for the Great Northern Railway, which was owned by his father-in-law, James J. Hill. The younger Hill became known more widely throughout Washington state after 1899 when he began lobbying for good roads. Where many in the movement saw good rural roads primarily as a means to bring agricultural goods to market, Hill saw possibilities for middle-class tourism. He envisioned the burgeoning culture of auto-touring as compatible with, and even complementary to, the well-established system of scenic tourism by rail. And as automobiles became more reliable and powerful, Hill followed the market.¹⁸

Hill had big plans for his new professional associate. Soon after Lancaster relocated to Seattle, Hill paid for him and fellow engineer, Reginald H. Thomson, to travel to Paris to attend the First International Road Congress of 1908, a gathering of good roads enthusiasts and engineers that represented worldwide interest in automobile infrastructure development. Hill's intention was to prepare Lancaster and Thomson for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition to be held in Seattle the following year, where he planned to have a booth dedicated to the promotion of Washington's roads. Thomson, best-remembered as the man who re-graded Seattle's hills, had been Hill's ally in building a good roads contingent since the beginning of the movement. After the Paris conference, Hill, Thomson, and Lancaster went on a whirlwind tour of France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy to observe the famous scenic roads of the region. Along the way,

¹⁸ On Samuel Hill, see John E. Tuhy, *Sam Hill, the Prince of Castle Nowhere* (Portland, Oreg.: Timber Press, 1983). For more on urban-rural divisions and collaboration within the good roads movement, see Wells, *Car Country*, 65–84; Christopher W. Wells, "The Changing Nature of Country Roads: Farmers, Reformers, and the Shifting Uses of Rural Space, 1880–1905," *Agricultural History* 80.2 (2006): 143–66.

they learned cutting-edge engineering techniques and gained inspiration. On one excursion along Germany's Rhine River Valley road, Hill suggested a wild idea: Why not build a highway of comparable grandeur through the Columbia River Gorge? Lancaster later stated he thought the idea foolish when Hill proposed it, but Hill was convinced of its feasibility and pressed the issue back home.

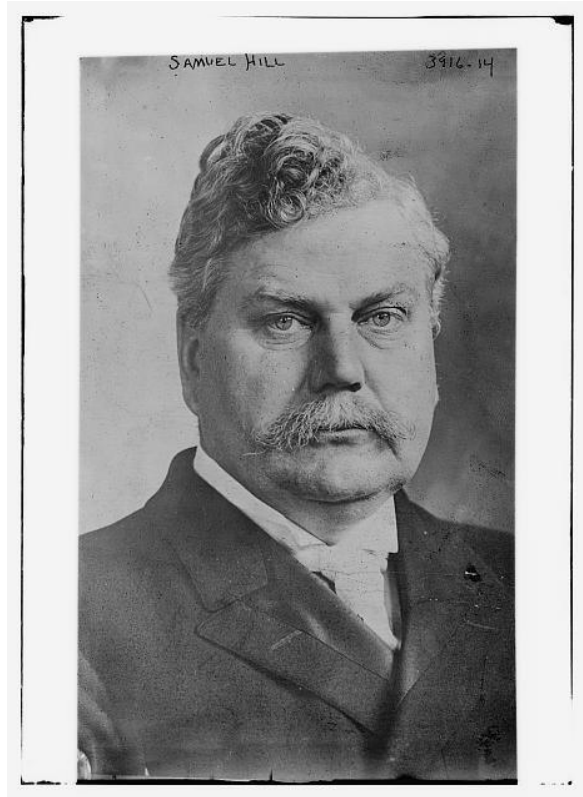


Figure 11 Samuel Hill, c. 1915.
LC-DIG-ggbain-22254, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

The trio returned to Washington with renewed enthusiasm for the aesthetic and technological potential of roadbuilding. The World's Fair in 1909 succeeded in displaying the engineers' talents and, at the very least, suggested that they had the technical ability to take on the challenge of constructing a road through the Columbia

River Gorge. In his designs for the Columbia River Highway four years later, Lancaster would utilize a number of the lessons he had learned in Europe. By his own account, the engineer modeled the highway's most picturesque tunnel, at Mitchell Point, on one he had observed along Switzerland's Axenstrasse at Lake Lucerne.¹⁹ Both tunnels displayed grand views through windows punched out of solid rock. Both also proved susceptible to rock-falls and collapsing walls in later years, perhaps demonstrating the limits of such idealistic engineering.

While Hill worked with Thomson in 1910 on an unsuccessful central Oregon road development project, he commissioned Lancaster, now a Professor of Highway Engineering at the University of Washington, to design a series of experimental roads on Hill's estate at Maryhill, Washington, just east of the Columbia River Gorge. The property consisted of a plateau abutted by steep, rocky slopes—the perfect laboratory for the types of topographical features they would face downriver. Lancaster's plan for the Maryhill Loops included gentle grades of no more than 5 percent, 25 generous curves, and an even, paved surface all the way down to the shore, 850 feet below. The road was complete by 1911.

Hill tried leveraging the successful pet project to sell his idea of a Columbia River Highway along the northern shore of the river to state legislators in Olympia. However, they balked at the significant expense, which Hill estimated in six figures.

Unsurprisingly, Washingtonian politicians also took issue with the prohibitive distance

¹⁹ Lancaster, *The Columbia*, 118.

between the isolated scenic road and Washington's only major metropolitan area at the time, Seattle. So, naturally, Hill crossed the river and turned his attention to Oregon.²⁰



Figure 12 Mitchell Point Tunnel, c. 1915.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

Oregon's movers and shakers were much more receptive to the idea than were their neighbors to the north. In Portland—a more populous city than Seattle until just after the turn of the century—Hill found a thriving good roads movement spearheaded by wealthy businessmen like himself. With the backing of Multnomah County, two of these civic boosters, E. Henry Wemme and Lewis Russell, nearly succeeded in carrying out

²⁰ Wilson, "Names Joined Together," 189; Fahl, "S.C. Lancaster," 106–10; Abbott and Lowry, "A Brief History of Multimodal Transportation," 19; "Maryhill Loops Road," Maryhill Museum of Art, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.maryhillmuseum.org/visit/historic-maryhill-loops-road>.

their own plans for a Columbia River road in 1910, but they faced problems securing a feasible right-of-way from the Union Pacific Railroad, which owned much of the narrow southern shoreline, and abandoned the project the following year.²¹

Efforts continued despite Wemme and Russell's failure. In 1912, another prominent Portlander, Simon Benson, took up the idea. With the approval of Governor Oswald West, Benson bequeathed \$10,000 to Hood River County to build a test road along the base of Shellrock Mountain, a steep, crumbly slope near the eastern end of the gorge that even Lancaster once referred to as "an impassable barrier."²² Unfortunately, the primitive dirt road that resulted from Benson's investments suffered from poor planning and execution and deteriorated just as quickly as it was built.²³ Still, Benson had succeeded in reinvigorating interest in the idea, and Hill joined forces with Benson when he arrived in Portland in 1913.

Like Hill, Benson had a clear private interest in the Columbia River Highway project. Both men were transitional figures during a dynamic period in Pacific Northwest history when tourism was becoming a significant part of the region's economy. An enterprising Norwegian immigrant, Benson had earned millions of dollars at the turn of the century operating a profitable timber business, cutting and hauling Douglas-fir logs in Clatskanie County, eighty miles down the Columbia River from the mouth of the gorge. In the early 1910s, the tycoon began making well-publicized

²¹ Fahl, 108–9.

²² Lancaster, *The Columbia*, 109.

²³ Allen, *Simon Benson*, 114.

philanthropic gestures, donating money to the City of Portland and Multnomah County for everything from water fountains to polytechnic schools. Benson took a particular interest in road construction, since he was familiar with the barriers to transportation posed by northwest Oregon's rugged forests. Benson also recognized the potential profitability of auto-tourism. He consulted with towns and landowners along the proposed route of the Columbia River Highway and planned hotels, parks, and lodges between Portland and Hood River.²⁴

Finally, in the fall of 1913, the interwoven technological and economic visions of the proposed Columbia River Highway crystallized into a concerted effort.²⁵ During September, Lancaster surveyed the route to Multnomah Falls. In October, workers broke ground. A year later, the road had been graded past Multnomah Falls to Eagle Creek, nearly halfway to its terminus at Hood River. Simultaneously, grading commenced from Hood River back the opposite direction, while the numerous concrete bridges and viaducts—fifteen total—began to take shape. Finally, less than two years after Lancaster took the job, the still-rough road opened to the public in July 1915. Crews began paving the road that summer, and the Columbia River Highway was officially dedicated in June of 1916.²⁶

²⁴ Allen, *Simon Benson*, 105–35; Lipin, *Workers and the Wild*, 37–43.

²⁵ In addition to the influence of Simon Benson, the project commenced in 1913 partly due to the rise of Chairman of the Multnomah County Commission, Rufus C. Holman, who was sympathetic to the good roads cause. Holman created the Advisory Board on Roads and Highways on July 26, 1913 and appointed Hill and Benson's son, Amos, as members. Fahl, "S.C. Lancaster," 109–10.

²⁶ "Columbia River Highway Historic District: A Nomination," ODOT, items 7, 8.

Preservationism and Automobility

In addition to the technical expertise of a trained road engineer, Lancaster designed the Columbia River Highway with the aesthetic idealism of a natural resource preservationist. “When I made my preliminary survey... and found myself standing waist-deep in ferns,” he reminisced after the road’s completion, “I remembered my mother,” who had a particular fondness for Boston ferns. “I then pledged myself that none of this wild beauty should be marred where it could be prevented. The highway was so built that not one tree was felled, not one fern crushed, unnecessarily.²⁷ In so many words, Lancaster carved out an unobtrusive place for roads in the wilderness. His goals as a developer reflected his goals as a preservationist, and vice versa.

Though earnest in his desire to preserve nature to the greatest extent possible, the engineer clearly had a penchant for hyperbole, not unlike that of nineteenth-century transcendentalist writers like Muir and Henry David Thoreau. His own life, even, seemed to contain an element of romanticism. He was born in the Civil War South and overcame a debilitating case of malaria growing up. He developed a reputation for being stubbornly adherent to his values, sometimes to the detriment of his professional relationships. And he toured endlessly in support of the Columbia River Highway long after it was built, despite leaving the project in a huff when Portland city commissioners encroached on his creative autonomy.²⁸

²⁷ Lancaster quoted in Bullard, *Lancaster's Road*, 19.

²⁸ Lancaster resigned out of frustration when oppositional Multnomah County Commissioners William L. Lightner and Philo Holbrook “refused to allow his vouchers for salary,” according to historian Ronald J. Fahl. Lightner and Holbrook were punishing Lancaster for the high cost of paving the road. Fahl, “S.C.

To coincide with the road's dedication, Lancaster released a self-published treatise on the Columbia River Gorge's natural history, culminating in the building of his majestic highway. In *The Columbia: America's Great Highway through the Cascade Mountains to the Sea* (1916), Lancaster waxed poetic about the "wild beauty of nature's art gallery."²⁹ Though much of *America's Great Highway* was devoted to such topics as the geologic formation of the Cascades and the early fur trade in the Oregon Country, Lancaster's most extensive, flowery passages heaped praise upon his modern highway, detailing the road's purpose and aesthetic. In a caption for one photo, Lancaster noted, "The smooth surface of the finished pavement is delightful to drive over. The roadway forms a suitable frame to the beautiful picture and adds a charm to the landscape."³⁰ The notion that the Columbia River Highway framed the natural scenery appeared multiple times throughout the book. On the title page appeared a verse in which Lancaster thanked God for "permitting [him] to have a part in building this broad thoroughfare as a frame to the beautiful picture which He created."³¹ In this way, Lancaster saw his work as a way of highlighting God's work by way of accentuating its picturesque quality.

However, Lancaster's notion of the scenic highway as a frame transcended the purely visual experience of nature, which was popularly associated with railroad travel in the late nineteenth century. The novel experience of driving allowed tourists to feel as if

Lancaster," 104, 110–1, 117–8; Bullard, *Lancaster's Road*, 18. "Columbia River Highway Historic District: A Nomination," ODOT, 8-7. For an example of Lancaster's continued promotion of the highway, see Lancaster, *Romance of the Gateway*.

²⁹ Lancaster, *The Columbia*, 118.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

³¹ *Ibid.*, title page.

they actually were entering the wilderness rather than observing it through a glass window from a moving train. Thus, the frame was much more fluid and presented a multi-sensory scene. Since cars in the first two decades of the twentieth century were still open-body, motorists in fact tended to experience the outdoors (and the elements) more fully, for better or for worse.³² More importantly, auto-tourists were unbound from the strictures of punctuality; without the clockwork schedules of rail travel, motorists could take their time. One might slow down if he or she desired, listening for the delicate Wah-kee-nah Falls, previously hidden from view of the OR&NC train, or turn off the car completely and smell the earthy fragrance of dank, rotting understory soil (after the gasoline fumes subsided). The perceived freedom of individualized mobility on roads like the Columbia River Highway created an illusion of idyllic pre-industrialism alongside the power and speed of modern technology.³³

Still, scenic highways were highly crafted spaces, built with a particular visitor in mind. They were meant to attract recreational motorists from cities and were intentionally designed to shape space in a way that made them intelligible for their urban users, who were used to the rational street patterns and orderly parks of growing Western metropolises like Portland, Seattle, and San Francisco. One roadbuilding project in northern California, known as the Redwood Highway, meandered between named groves

³² Wells, *Car Country*, 51–4.

³³ Barnett, “Drive-by Viewing.” Motorists often referred to car-camping as “gypsying,” because of its perceived primitivism. Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 7–17.

of large and distinct Sequoias. Though unbounded and ambiguously defined, the labeled units were meant to disrupt the continuity of the seemingly endless wilderness.³⁴

To plan such a compartmentalized yet fluid experience, the Save-the-Redwoods League—a group much like the conglomeration of local businessmen and politicians in Portland—hired landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., son of the innovative park planner by the same name, who designed New York City’s Central Park. By assigning names to groupings of redwoods and maintaining a manageable distance between “groves” along the paved continuum, Olmsted hoped to provide both a physical and mental roadmap for auto-tourists. As one historian puts it, the landscape architect “reconfigured” the vast, incomprehensible redwood forest of northern California’s lower Eel River into “an aggregate of discrete places linked by road.”³⁵ In this way, the road framed perception of the landscape.

In his designs for the Columbia River Highway, Lancaster utilized such Olmstedian techniques to assign value to particular places. Whereas the Redwood Highway demarcated space by parceling out groves, Lancaster planned his road to highlight scenic vistas and waterfalls. At Crown Point, the most prominent exposed location on the route, the highway followed a delicate viaduct that hugged the edge of the curved cliff, displaying a magnificent panoramic view of the gorge below. After rounding

³⁴ Barnett, “Drive-by Viewing.”

³⁵ Ibid., quote from 44. For more on the Olmsteds, see Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*; Anne Whiston Spirn, “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995): 91–113; Irving D. Fisher, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the City Planning Movement in the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986); Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 175–223.

the bend, drivers gradually descended a series of gentle switchbacks that Lancaster called the Figure Eight Loops. The hairpin turns ushered motorists 600 feet down into the dense forest. At the floor of the gorge, the highway then passed by a series of waterfalls, including the most impressive of all at 620 feet high, Multnomah Falls.

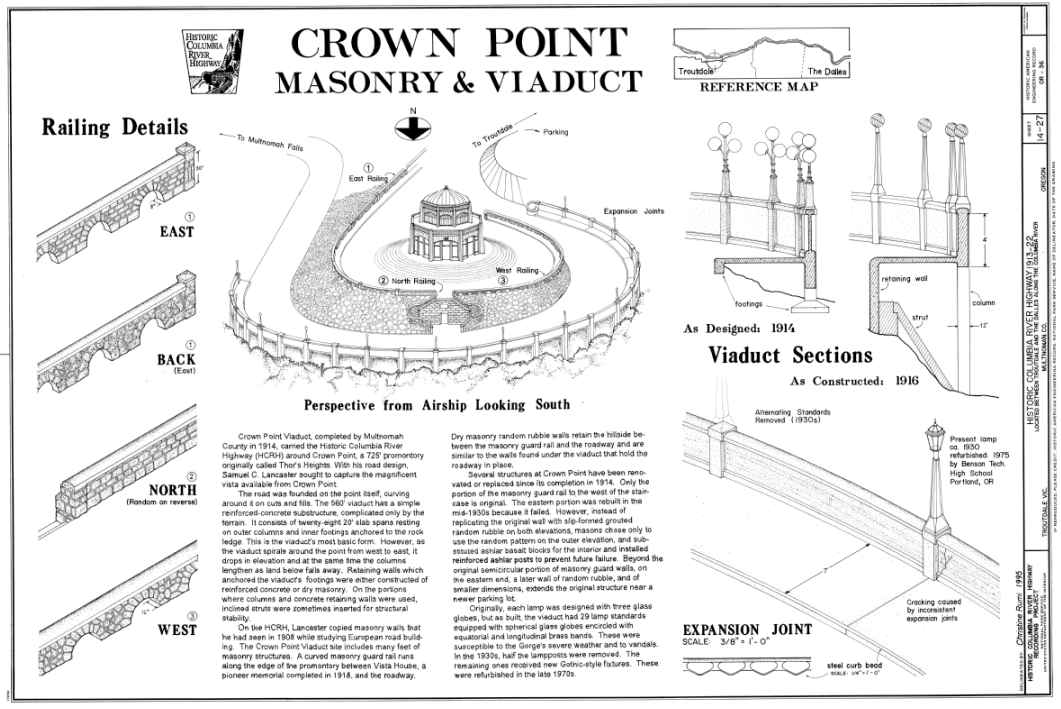


Figure 13 Study of Columbia River Highway from Historic American Engineering Record survey, 1995.

OR-36, Sheet 14 of 27, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Lancaster's earlier experience as a consultant with the Seattle Parks Department likely catalyzed his interest in the aesthetics of roads. During his tenure, the engineer took direct inspiration from the works of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.'s half-brother, John Charles Olmsted, who initially proposed the master plan for Seattle's City Beautiful re-design in 1903. John Olmsted had a tremendous influence on urban planning in many

growing U.S. cities during the Progressive Era—even more so than his brother. Booming metropolises from Portland to Denver to Atlanta hired the Olmsteds and their Brookline, Massachusetts-based consulting firm to plan sophisticated boulevards and parks, making room for verdure, grandeur, and curvilinear forms amongst the street grids of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Olmsted’s luxurious designs for the Pacific Northwest’s Emerald City, which included a winding, meticulously landscaped, 20-mile-long boulevard connecting the parks to one another, the roots of Lancaster’s later ideas—and, indeed, those of many modern landscape architects and civil engineers—are clearly visible.³⁶

During the early twentieth century, the line between landscape architect and civil engineer was still indistinct. Professionals like Lancaster and the Olmsteds exhibited qualities of both. The two fields of design were relatively young and, as such, had somewhat fluid job descriptions. Both involved the restructuring of space to suit the needs of modern living but with an interest in conforming to the natural topography. The result, particularly during the first three decades of the century, was an evolving mode of development laden with meaning about nature and artifice. Both professions exhibited a certain optimism about the ability of humans to tame nature and harmonize with the landscape at the same time.³⁷

³⁶ Fahl, “S.C. Lancaster,” 105; Klinge, *Emerald City*, 119–53; Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 147–67; “Park History,” Seattle Parks and Recreation, accessed September 19, 2016, <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/park-history>.

³⁷ Klinge, *Emerald City*, 86–118; Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 34–69.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this idea can be seen not in the development of cities, but in the development of national parks in the 1910s and 20s. During this time, the Department of the Interior, and later the National Park Service, began hiring what they called “landscape engineers” to plan for roads and tourist facilities.³⁸ Although places like Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, and Mount Rainier were (as they still are) perceived to be the purest examples of pristine wilderness, they were by the early twentieth century highly, if incompletely, managed spaces.³⁹ As early as 1865, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. issued a report warning California legislators of the potential problems posed by unchecked development in Yosemite Valley, the first public “park” of its type in world history. By the mid-1880s, there seemed to be an acknowledgement amongst park managers and visitors of the need to regulate development—private, commercial, or otherwise—in and around the national parks. Near the end of the nineteenth century, the movement to preserve scenic locations throughout the United States, including the Columbia River Gorge, began to gain steam.⁴⁰

The most outspoken advocate of strict anti-development wilderness preservation was John Muir, whose long walks through the mountains and romantic tales of self-reliance promoted the idea that the modern impulses of commercial and technological

³⁸ Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 50.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7–27; Karl Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* The movement to preserve the landscape of the Columbia River Gorge began with a rich tradition of landscape photography in the nineteenth century. Terry Toedtmeier, *Wild Beauty: Photography of the Columbia River Gorge, 1865–1915* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2008 [1984]); Terry Toedtmeier, “Oregon Photography: The First Fifty Years,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 94.1 (1993): 36–76.

progress were antithetical to the spirit and aesthetic of primitive nature. But even Muir had to admit that the national park idea was intricately connected to tourism, and by the turn of the century, he reluctantly accepted the moderate development of Yosemite Valley as a more palatable alternative to its exploitation for natural resource extraction. In 1912, he encouraged the Department of the Interior to hire engineers and landscape architects to advise on such development.⁴¹

Within just a few years of Muir's change of heart, as the popularity of national parks continued to climb with the completion of associated railroad lines, rudimentary automobile roads, and lodging facilities, it was becoming clear that the parks needed a dedicated bureau to standardize planning and management. With growing importance in American culture, as well as the burgeoning auto-tourism economy, national parks were the United States's laboratory for preservationist ideas. An industrialist from Chicago by the name of Stephen T. Mather joined the campaign to establish an organization to manage the parks in 1915, a year after Muir's death. Mather infused Muir's preservationist idealism with the marketing and organizational sensibilities of a businessman. Like Sam Hill and Simon Benson, Mather turned to conservation after a career in natural resource extraction, running the Thorkildsen-Mather Borax Company.

Upon the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, Mather became the bureau's first director and Assistant Secretary of the Interior under his old college friend, Franklin K. Lane. One of Mather's earliest initiatives was to hire more landscape

⁴¹ Ibid., 15–16, 34.

engineers to oversee the development of automobile roads within the parks, including a high country route through Yosemite. Had Muir still been alive to see the construction of Tioga Pass Road, it is uncertain whether or not he would have approved of the direction that preservationism had taken since his first journeys into California's formerly forbidding wilderness.⁴²



*Figure 14 Bridge across Eagle Creek on the Columbia River Highway, c. 1916.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.*

Though he never worked directly with Mather, Lancaster participated in the nascent movement to bring automobile infrastructure into accord with scenic preservation in the Pacific Northwest's first national park, Mount Rainier. Just prior to his work on the

⁴² Ibid., 31.

Columbia River Highway in 1913, Lancaster was hired by the Rainier National Park Committee (RNPC), an association of Seattle, Tacoma, and North Yakima boosters and businessmen, to promote the development of the park to federal politicians in Washington, D.C.. Before Mather's consolidation of authority in the National Park Service three years later, the RNPC hoped Lancaster's rhetorical abilities would help convince members of Congress to appropriate funds for the construction of roads and auto-tourist facilities on the mountain in southwest Washington state. Lancaster presented the park as an expression of civic, regional, and national pride as well as a symbol of nature's perfection, similar to the Columbia River Gorge. The engineer's work with the RNPC, while brief and only marginally successful, affirmed his status as one of the premier voices for scenic highway development and natural resource preservation in the Pacific Northwest. Later that year, he joined forces once again with his old pal, Sam Hill, and began work on the Columbia River Highway.⁴³

So, while Lancaster's romantic expression of faith in the potential of cars and roadways to bring humans closer to nature, stated most passionately in *America's Great Highway*, may seem peculiar and singularly overconfident in retrospect, in reality it was but one indication of the preservationist sentiment of the late Progressive Era. The Olmsted brothers had articulated a similar idea in their comprehensive urban plans for Seattle, Portland, and elsewhere. John Muir came around to the notion of auto-tourist development, albeit reluctantly, late in his life. And Stephen Mather directed the

⁴³ Fahl, "S.C. Lancaster," 106–7; Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*, 3–11.

establishment of the National Park Service around the guiding principle of the automobile as a vehicle in both the literal and metaphorical sense, with landscape architects and engineers hired to organize space and assign scenic value. However, the circumstances of the Columbia River Highway's construction, particularly the fact that it was developed outside of the national park system, gave the project an added dimension of complexity. On its way to Hood River, the road passed through a checkerboard of private and public land, which subjected its direction to a much more varied set of interests, a few of which were hostile to the basic premise of scenic preservation and opposed the principles that undergirded the road's construction.

Roadside Aesthetics and the Eagle Creek Recreation Area

In July 1915, just two weeks after the Columbia River Highway had opened to the public, Sam Hill and the President of the Portland Chamber of Commerce, C.C. Colt, walked a portion of the muddy road with a diminutive figure from Washington, D.C.. The man, Chief Forester of the United States Forest Service, Henry S. Graves, was a newcomer to the project but would soon decide the aesthetic direction of nearly half the highway with a handshake. Just coincidentally, Graves was in the Pacific Northwest at the time, on his way to Alaska. He was supposed to stop briefly in Portland to respond personally to an inquiry from the local Chamber of Commerce, which had assumed

responsibility for guiding the direction of the highway as construction neared completion. His visit was short but serendipitous.⁴⁴

Two weeks prior to Graves's arrival, one member of the Portland Chamber of Commerce, an attorney by the name of Jacob Kanzler, "first brought the attention of the Chamber to the fact that the highway extended through the Oregon National forest [sic] and the responsibility of having this land withdrawn for recreation purposes."⁴⁵

Apparently, the boosters had overlooked (or chosen to ignore) the possibility that federal officials had other plans for the road where it crossed publicly owned land. Dismayed by the significant oversight, President Colt immediately contacted Forester Graves to propose that the Forest Service preserve the natural beauty along both sides of the new road for the 22 miles that it penetrated federal land holdings, 14,000 acres in total. Graves said he could make no promises.⁴⁶

In fact, the Chief Forester had no precedent by which to make his decision. He had taken over the lead position of Head Forester for the U.S. Forest Service from the agency's founder, Gifford Pinchot, in 1910 and was still ambivalent about his stance

⁴⁴ "Obstacles to Park Few, Says Chief," *The Oregonian*, July 17, 1915; "Park Promised by Forester Graves," *The Oregonian*, July 18, 1915. On Henry S. Graves, see Steen, *The USFS: A History*, 103–72; Jerry Williams, "Henry S. Graves: Second Chief of the Forest Service, 1910–20," *History Line: A Newsletter of the Forest Service History Program* (Summer 2004) 16–8, in Box 45, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC; "FS Chiefs: Henry S. Graves – Second Chief, 1910–1920," untitled manuscript, 3, in Box 43, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁴⁵ "Park Promised."

⁴⁶ Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 4; "Obstacles to Park Few;" Fred Lockley, *History of the Columbia River Valley, From The Dalles to the Sea* (Portland, Oreg.: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1928), 810, from Oregon Bios Project, accessed September 19, 2016, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jtenlen/ORBios/jkkanzler.html>.

toward public recreation on national forest land.⁴⁷ Pinchot established the land management bureau in 1905 under President Theodore Roosevelt to administer the growing system of forest reserves across the U.S. West. Still a close associate and student of Pinchot, Graves largely adhered to his original dictates, which called for conservative, but still productive, use of the land's natural resources. Whereas the national parks, with their exceptional beauty in scattered, isolated locations, were to be preserved for their scenic, spiritual, and recreational value, the newly renamed national forests, vast and numerous, were only to be "conserved" for official use on behalf of the public.⁴⁸

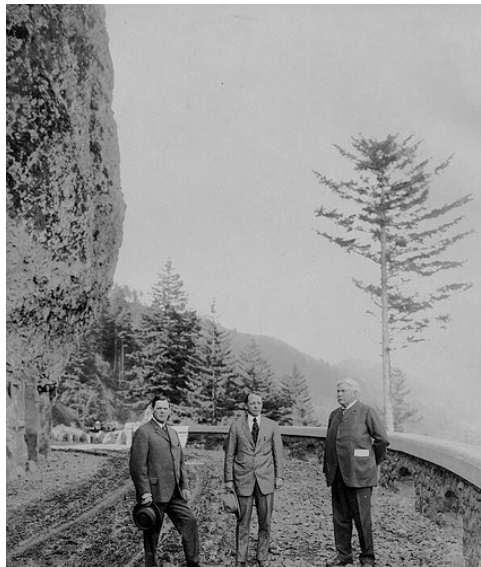


Figure 15 C.C. Colt, Henry Graves, and Samuel Hill on a muddy stretch of the Columbia River Highway, 1915.

Henry Solon Graves Papers, Yale University Manuscripts and Archives Digital Images Database, from Wikimedia Commons.

⁴⁷ Somewhat like Lancaster, Gifford Pinchot was dismissed from his position by Theodore Roosevelt's successor, President William Howard Taft, after a hot-headed personal disagreement with the Secretary of the Interior, Richard Ballinger. However, the Forest Service remained beholden to Pinchot's philosophy during the interwar years and throughout the twentieth century. Steen, *The USFS: A History*, 69–102.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 69–172.

At the time of its creation, the Forest Service distinguished itself from the nebulous mission of the incoherent national park system—articulated most clearly by Muir—by allowing limited mining, sheep- and cattle-grazing, watershed development, and logging. Typically, when local interest groups looked to protect such public land from productive use, they would lobby Congress to remove the area from the national forest (or, prior to 1905, forest reserve) system and draw national park boundaries around it. Mount Rainier National Park in 1899 and Crater Lake National Park in 1902 had been created this way. With the gradual development of a functioning bureaucracy under Pinchot, forest administrators began to defend their holdings. Between 1905, when the Transfer Act created the U.S. Forest Service, and 1916, when the Organic Act established the National Park Service, the division between Muir’s preservationism and Pinchot’s conservationism was stark.⁴⁹

However, the automobile complicated such a neat ideological separation between park and forest. Motorists, unaware or unconcerned with the finer points of the two sides, gravitated toward nearby scenic areas with or without the approval of the Forest Service. National forests within driving distance of big Western cities like Los Angeles, Denver, and Portland, saw increasing recreational visitation in the early 1910s as roads crept into the wilderness. In 1912, after only two years in charge, Graves explicitly noted the rise of auto-tourism and its impact in his annual *Report of the Forester*. But rather than a cause

⁴⁹ This dichotomy is classically told through the 1908–13 battle over Hetch Hetchy Dam. Worster, *A Passion for Nature*, 426–9, 492; Robert W. Righter, *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

for alarm, Forester Graves saw in small-scale recreation an opportunity to stop the transformation of national forest land into national parks. By allowing minimal private development, including 30-year leases for summer homes and lodges, Graves hoped to persuade locals that the Forest Service was not entirely hostile to the idea of non-productive public use.⁵⁰ But the Portland Chamber of Commerce was asking for much more than a permit to build a cabin in Oregon National Forest.



Figure 16 Henry S. Graves, c. 1915.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

What elite Portlanders wanted directly conflicted with Pinchot's model of conservation: a prohibition on logging for two miles on both sides of the Columbia River

⁵⁰ Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 2-4.

Highway. Officially known as a timber border, the preservation of roadside trees was a hallmark of scenic highway design, meant to maintain a rustic, sylvan aesthetic. Along with limiting the number of commercial billboards, promoting the preservation of timber borders was a common goal for recently established automobile clubs like the American Automobile Association and Oregon State Motorist Association.⁵¹ Later in the decade, roadside beautification would become a major point of contention for the Oregon State Highway Commission (OSHC) after its consolidation in 1917. Timber borders took center stage in 1920 when Governor Ben Olcott proposed legislation to “spare from devastation the forests along the coast highway from Seaside to Cannon Beach,” a scenic drive that would grow in popularity to rival that of the Columbia River Highway.⁵²

Maintaining roadside aesthetics was easiest when abutting landowners were small, private homesteaders who could be convinced that the highway added to their legacy or might enhance their property value. One farmer by the name of George G. Shepperd owned a parcel of land along the Columbia River Highway that included a steep chasm over which Lancaster planned one of his most elegant concrete bridges. As a tribute to his deceased wife, Shepperd donated 10.3 acres of his property to the City of Portland in 1915. The section became known as Shepperd’s Dell. A decade later, the

⁵¹ Lancaster also expressed frustration with commercial billboards. Fahl, “S.C. Lancaster,” 118–9; Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 89–90, 146–8. *The Oregon Motorist* was the official publication of the Oregon State Motorist Association. For a later take on timber borders and their place in the national forests, see “Highway Timber Borders,” *The Oregon Motorist* 11.4 (1931): 8–10. On commercial billboards in the same issue, see “Highway Billboards,” *The Oregon Motorist* 11.4 (1931): 3.

⁵² “Governor Decries Cutting of Forest,” *The Oregonian*, August 22, 1920; ODOT History Committee, *Oregon on the Move: A History of Oregon's Transportation Systems* (Salem: Oregon Department of Transportation, 2009), 16–8.

original gifted parcel became part of a new, larger state park, owned and managed by the OSHC, which came to serve a key role in managing most of the highway during the 1920s.⁵³

With less beneficent landowners, highway planners leveraged private resources to buy land outright in order to maintain complete autonomy over the form and scale of roadside development. Simon Benson had been planning for a tourist corridor between Portland and Hood River since at least 1912. By 1913, the Benson Hotel in Portland was complete, and, by 1921, the Columbia Gorge Hotel in Hood River greeted visitors at the other end of the highway. Benson's most pressing concern, however, was with the road's scenic climax and primary destination for many: Multnomah Falls, about which Lancaster once wrote, "There are higher waterfalls and falls of greater volume, but there are none more beautiful than Multnomah Falls." Fearful of "the usual accessories of hot-dog stands," Benson acquired the property a few days after the highway opened to traffic (and not long before Graves's visit). He then developed the area modestly as a complement to the highway. With hiking trails, viewing areas, and footbridges, Benson Park, as he called it, also included a portion of the plateau above the falls and an adjacent parcel that contained Wah-kee-nah Falls, both of which the well-connected businessman also had secured through private negotiation.⁵⁴

Like Shepperd, Benson donated his namesake park to Multnomah County a few months after the highway opened. However, unlike Shepperd's bequest, which was a

⁵³ "Columbia River Highway Historic District: A Nomination," 7-7.

⁵⁴ Allen, *Simon Benson*, 124.

small homestead that likely had been acquired in the mid-nineteenth century as a donation land claim, Benson's ownership of Multnomah Falls had been achieved through coercive legal tactics. In fact, he was only able to obtain the deed to the property after lengthy litigation that contested the clouded title to the land, which appeared to belong to a woman who was "an inmate of a state institution in Connecticut," according to Benson's daughter, Alice Benson Allen. After locating the woman, by the name of Jennie Griswold, "it was necessary to have a guardian appointed for her to complete the sale" remotely.⁵⁵ In other words, the lumber tycoon pulled some strings and got what he wanted.

Highway planners knew that the Forest Service, on the other hand, would not be swayed to participate in the scenic preservation project by benevolence or intimidation. Moreover, the federal agency could not transfer land without an act of Congress. Columbia River Highway planners therefore would have to work *with* the Forest Service, who would still own and manage the land. They seized the opportunity when Forester Graves made his visit. The evening he arrived in Portland, Graves attended an informal dinner with members of the Chamber of Commerce. He remained noncommittal but reassured local businessmen and politicians, in purposefully ambiguous terms, that "Practically no obstacle lies in the way of the development of the national forest reserve along the Columbia River Highway as a national scenic park." Furthermore, "The establishment of such a park is right in line with the policy of the Forestry Department,...

⁵⁵ Ibid.

and the department has the authority necessary to take such steps.”⁵⁶ But, of course, this was only a half-truth; the establishment of such a park was, in fact, far outside of the policies of the U.S. Forest Service, and the means of funding the park’s development for public use was, as of that evening, still up in the air.

Had Graves left for Seattle the following morning as planned, his lip service possibly would have been the end of that conversation, resulting in no more than a tenuous agreement and the seeds of future conflict. But the steamship he was to board was delayed due to an accident, and the forester remained in Portland. While he waited, Hill convinced the visitor to join him and Colt on a trip up the Columbia River Highway. The three left Portland at 6:00am that morning, along with a motorcade of 44 others, leaving plenty of time to motor leisurely along the winding, still somewhat bumpy road. Graves marveled at the engineering, stating later that he was “greatly impressed with the bigness of the whole thing.” The party lunched alongside Eagle Creek, a turbulent, waterfall-studded tributary that sat at the center of Oregon National Forest’s northern border.

There, Graves announced that the Chamber’s proposal for a timber border would be met. His tone of austerity, which had threatened to derail the project the previous night, suddenly became great enthusiasm for the idea. Surprisingly, he also declared that he had spoken with District Forester George H. Cecil of the USFS Portland office, and they had found funding to carry out plans for a Columbia Gorge park to enhance the

⁵⁶ “Obstacles to Park Few.”

preserved swath of forest. They even had the means to plan and survey a connecting highway from Hood River around the east side of Mount Hood, eventually completing a full loop of the mountain.⁵⁷

Though the Mount Hood Loop project took years to materialize, the Columbia Gorge Park division of the Oregon National Forest was borne that day, and Eagle Creek became its centerpiece. Graves seemed to echo Lancaster when he proclaimed,

I don't know of anywhere in the world where so many wonderful things are crowded into such a short distance as along the Columbia River Highway. The roadway, as it winds along the river on its easy grade, at times hanging from the great heights, past numerous waterfalls, through valleys and wood slopes, to my mind is the grandest trip to be found. With this great highway fully hard-surfaced I feel sure that every visitor to Portland who makes the trip will go away highly enthusiastic over its beauties.⁵⁸

Perhaps Graves overstated his case so as to convince local investors that the Chief Forester of the U.S. Forest Service had the ability to appreciate public recreation and scenic preservation (and, thus, dissuade them from seeking national park designation). But he was sincere in his commitment to the project, as the development of Eagle Creek over the next decade would show.

The Eagle Creek Recreation Area was the Forest Service's first attempt at planned recreation development on any national forest. Unlike at national parks, national forest administrators had made no effort to hire landscape architects or engineers in the early 1910s, and the Forest Service did not conduct its first national survey of recreation until

⁵⁷ Ibid.; "Park Promised."

⁵⁸ "Park Promised."

early 1917, six months after work began on Eagle Creek. Thus, foresters were largely on their own to dictate plans for the Columbia Gorge Park and approached recreation development from a purely pragmatic standpoint.

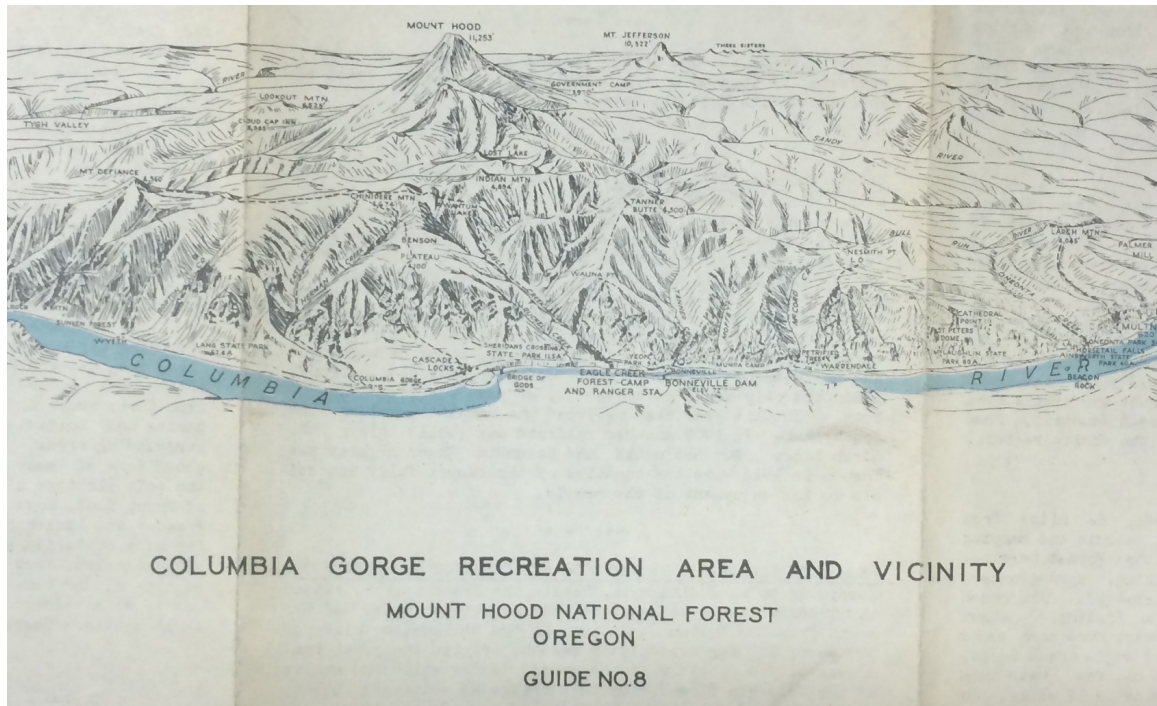


Figure 17 Detail of Columbia Gorge Recreation Area Map, U.S. Forest Service, c. 1925. Region 6 Historical Collection, RG 95, NARA Regional Collection, Seattle.

Initially, sanitation and fire mitigation were the primary goals. Installation of a water and sewage system, complete with public comfort stations (i.e., restrooms), commenced in June 1916.⁵⁹ Campgrounds were developed shortly thereafter with metal fire rings to prevent the spread of wildfires. “All the private individual has to do is to move in, set up his tent and camp as long as he pleases,” Assistant District Forester

⁵⁹ The U.S. Forest Service called restrooms “comfort stations” at the time. Hall, *Images of America*, 50.

Charles H. Flory stated proudly. “There is no red tape to be gone through, for the park is the property of the American public,” Flory continued. “About the only rules are... to be careful about fires and to keep the camping places in a sanitary condition.”⁶⁰

However, many of the urban motorists who visited Eagle Creek were unfamiliar with even those most basic precautions of forest recreation. Forest Service administrators felt compelled to establish a personal presence along the highway to educate campers about rules, regulations, and manners. On June 23, 1916, a young ranger by the name of Albert K. Weisendanger was promoted to supervise the Eagle Creek Ranger Station, the first public relations facility of its kind for the agency.



Figure 18 Woman (probably Albert Weisendanger's wife) dumping refuse at Eagle Creek Recreation Area, lantern slide, c. 1920.

Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁶⁰ Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 4–7; “Eagle Creek Trip is Plan,” *The Oregonian*, June 8, 1916, 11; “Guide Maps Offered,” *The Oregonian*, June 13, 1916, 18.

Weisendanger lived at Eagle Creek for the next fifteen years with his wife and two children, spearheading Oregon National Forest's inaugural public relations campaigns. During the summer, Weisendanger enforced rules at the campground, put out small fires, and distributed some of the 10 thousand Columbia Gorge Park guide maps published by the Forest Service to coincide with the opening of Eagle Creek. During the winter, he travelled to local schools, displaying lantern slides and speaking about the dangers of unattended campfires and careless disposal of cigarette butts. After a brief detail in Washington state as a Senior Forest Ranger for Mount Baker National Forest, he returned to Oregon to continue his work in the Columbia River Gorge before and during World War II. Weisendanger's passion for public education continued after his departure from the Forest Service. In 1948, he became Forester and Executive Secretary of the Keep Oregon Green Association, a non-profit fire prevention corporation founded eight years prior, where he worked until his full retirement in 1980.⁶¹

In addition to his executive duties, Weisendanger also helped direct and construct Eagle Creek's 13.5-mile-long scenic hiking trail from the mouth of the drainage to Wahtum Lake on the high plateau above. Like the rest of the Eagle Creek Recreation

⁶¹ "Guide Maps Offered." In 1983, the Historian for the Pacific Northwest Region of the U.S. Forest Service, Gerald W. Williams, did extensive research into Albert Weisendanger, amassing a valuable collection of primary and secondary sources, including an oral history. Albert K. Weisendanger, oral history interview by Gerald W. Williams, Salem, Oreg., Nov. 10, 1983, in Folder Albert K. Weisendanger, Box 40, Acc. 2007: 0100, OSU SCARC; "Mr. Keep Oregon Green: Wiesendanger [sic] Retires from Second Career," Oregon State Department of Forestry, *Forest Log* (June, 1980): 4-5, 7, in Folder Albert K. Weisendanger, Box 40, Acc. 2007: 0100, Keep Oregon Green Collection OSU SCARC; "Who's Behind the Keep Oregon Green Movement?," brochure, Oregon State Department of Forestry, 1978, reprint from *Northwest Magazine*, in *The Oregonian*, in Folder Albert K. Weisendanger, Box 40, Acc. 2007: 0100, Keep Oregon Green Collection, OSU SCARC.

Area, it was an unprecedented project for the Forest Service, which typically built trails only for administrative purposes. Along the steep walls of the canyon, Weisendanger's crews used dynamite to blast sections of trail out of sheer rock in order to reach the most rewarding viewpoints. The route passed by nearly a dozen prominent waterfalls along the way, including one, appropriately named Tunnel Falls, behind which builders bored a hole for hikers to pass through. It remains one of the most popular hiking trails in Portland's recreational hinterland.⁶²

By 1919, nearly 150,000 motorists annually were making use of the facilities at Eagle Creek.⁶³ Graves's fortuitous visit four years prior had resulted in not only an exceptional space for the national forests, but hints of an entirely new direction for the Forest Service. Still, at the federal level, the agency remained reluctant to accept the rising tide of auto-tourism. Indeed, it would take nearly a generation for Graves's collaboration with Benson, Hill, and the Portland Chamber of Commerce to have a serious systemic effect on the administration of national forests more generally. But they made small inroads nonetheless. In early 1917, the Forest Service appointed a landscape architect by the name of Frank A. Waugh to a temporary consulting position. His job was to study the state of recreation in the United States's former forest reserves like Oregon National Forest. Eagle Creek featured prominently in his report. Waugh concluded that in order to satisfy the increasing demands of recreational users, it would behoove the Forest

⁶² Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 4–5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Service to hire “landscape engineers” like the recently established National Park Service.⁶⁴

For a year and a half, while Europe exploded in conflict and Congress redirected funding abroad, federal foresters debated Waugh’s report. When World War I ended in November 1918, USFS Assistant Forester of Lands—the division of the Forest Service that informally kept tabs on recreation—Edward A. Sherman decided to act on Waugh’s recommendations. In March of the following year, the agency hired its first “landscape engineer,” Arthur H. Carhart. A young, inexperienced landscape architect from Iowa, Carhart was assigned to the Rocky Mountain District. There, he oversaw the development of recreation facilities in Colorado’s San Isabel National Forest and served as liaison between the Forest Service and the San Isabel Public Recreation Association, a local civic organization in the city of Pueblo that resembled the association of Portland-based interests that guided the development of the Columbia River Highway.⁶⁵

Carhart was an idealist. In addition to individual campgrounds and private summer cabins, he suggested that the Forest Service would need to engage in more comprehensive planning. In their management framework, furthermore, foresters should take into consideration and provide resources for not just auto-touring, but all the different forms of recreation: picnics, day trips, and short-term camping; sport hunting

⁶⁴ Ibid., 6–7.

⁶⁵ Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 8–25; Glenn Titus, “Arthur Carhart: A Champion for Our Wild Lands,” 1990s n.d., photocopy in Folder Carhart, Box 42, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC; “Arthur Carhart, America’s Wilderness Planner,” U.S. Forest Service, 1973, photocopy in Folder Carhart, Box 42, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

and sport fishing; and backcountry pack trips through areas devoid of roads, unaided by modern technological conveniences. The final and most primitive of these was only a minor component of his set of recommendations, but it would become the one for which Carhart is most remembered today: the idea of the roadless wilderness area.⁶⁶ Over the next century in Oregon, Colorado, and across the country, the Forest Service would struggle to balance the sometimes-conflicting visions of recreation planners and interested parties, from Lancaster to Hill, Graves to Benson, Waugh to Carhart, and all the nature-lovers in between.

Conclusion

In its abandonment of technology and skepticism toward development, Carhart's recommendation for roadless wilderness areas was a nod to the ideas of John Muir. But it was also a product of a qualitatively different time—a time in which automobiles were just beginning to shape the forested mountains of the U.S. West in a fundamentally twentieth-century way. Neither Muir's nor Carhart's conceptualization of wilderness was anachronistic. Whereas Muir hoped to soften or perhaps disavow the impact of American settlers' presence in nature, broadly conceived in a nineteenth-century romanticist sense, Carhart was suggesting simply that certain, particularly inaccessible scenic areas, especially near big cities, would benefit from a prohibition on recreational road

⁶⁶ Carhart's impact continued to resonate long after he retired in 1922. *Ibid.*

construction. In his own small way, Carhart was driving a wedge between the preservationist ghost of Muir and modern highway engineers like Samuel Lancaster.

A decade after Carhart's quiet proposal, Lancaster completed work on his second ode to the Columbia River: *Romance of the Gateway through the Cascade Range* (1929). It was an updated take on his most beloved waterway, and he opened with a quote from Muir, who compared "The Columbia, viewed from the sea to the mountains" to "a rugged, broad-topped picturesque old oak about six hundred miles long and nearly two thousand miles wide measured across the spread of its upper boughs, the main limbs gnarled and swollen with lakes and lake-like expansions, while innumerable smaller lakes shine like fruit among the smaller branches."⁶⁷ Of course, the mighty, arboresque river in the years before Muir's 1914 death was by no means devoid of the alterations envisioned and executed by inspired, confident, self-righteous humans like Lancaster. But, until the 1920s, only its main trunk through the gorge was beginning to see the types of paved, grafted limbs that Lancaster had pioneered. Following Muir's lead in *Romance of the Gateway*, Lancaster made less reference to the works of Man than he had in *America's Great Highway* nearly 15 years earlier. He abandoned the metaphor of the road as a "frame" altogether.

Instead, buried beneath pages of "romantic [Native] legends" and tales of the Lewis and Clark expedition, Lancaster humbly referred to the Columbia River Highway

⁶⁷ Lancaster, *Romance of the Gateway*, 1.

as “a poem in stone.”⁶⁸ It was an apt characterization in both its praise for the road’s aesthetic grace and its acknowledgement of the road’s peculiar, antiquated singularity. Less than a generation after its construction, the highway, with quaint disregard for utility, was beginning to slide into obsolescence. In fact, by 1922, when the fully paved Columbia River Highway stretched from the Oregon coast to Rowena, past Hood River and The Dalles, visitors were calling for more roads to be opened through the Cascades to relieve “congestion” in the gorge.⁶⁹

The previous year, the road had become a part of the national highway system with the passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1921, and in 1926, it received a new designation: U.S. Route 30. With each passing year, the manmade “trunk” of the Columbia River Highway was growing to look much like the ancient “oak” of the Columbia River itself, with spindly limbs radiating in all directions to meet the needs of a society that was becoming increasingly reliant on automobiles for transportation in the countryside.⁷⁰ The effects were cultural as well as physical and social. As one nostalgic

⁶⁸ Ibid., 14–5, 23. “A Poem in Stone” was also the title of a recent centennial celebration event for the Historic Columbia River Highway. In fact, most of the road was not made of stone. Though sections of the road’s foundation were set in traditional Italian dry masonry, most of it was graded dirt, paved with Warrenite bituminous asphalt or, in the case of bridges and viaducts, set in concrete. Fahl, “S.C. Lancaster,” 118.

⁶⁹ Quote from John A. Lee, “Paradise Park and the West Side of Mount Hood,” *Mazama* 6 (1921), 40.

⁷⁰ “Columbia River Highway Historic District: A Nomination,” 8-11; “State Highway Department’s Map of the State of Oregon Showing Main Traveled Automobile Roads,” 1926, in Box 3, Series 2, Oregon State Highway Maps Collection, OSU SCARC. In this way, the Columbia River Highway and, by extension, the federal highway system could be described using William Cronon’s theoretical lens of transportation networks as “second nature,” simultaneously following and disregarding the contours of “first nature.” However, as we can see in Lancaster’s writing, Progressive Era road designers did not necessarily think of their work as falling into a purely “natural” camp, on one hand, or “artificial” camp, on the other, but rather a harmonious fusion of the two: a hybrid first-second nature. Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, especially xv–xxv.

member of the Portland Rotary Club put it in their dedication to the engineer at the end of the book, “Few who speed over the beautiful Columbia River Highway can now appreciate the wonderful work you have wrought, but in succeeding years your children will be made proud because of the well earned fame given to the name of Samuel C. Lancaster.”⁷¹ Like Muir, Lancaster had become something of a tragic figure.

Nevertheless, enthusiasm for scenic highway construction and recreation development continued into the 1920s. Developing the snow-clad slopes of Western mountain peaks for both summer and winter recreation was the frontier for recreational users of national forests and a hesitant next step for federal foresters. The creation of the Columbia Gorge Park and Eagle Creek Recreation Area had been a surprisingly easy first leap for the Forest Service, but the region around Government Camp on the south side of Mount Hood, which would slowly be developed for automobile access between 1912 and 1931, presented new challenges for USFS public relations officials as well as engineers and landscape architects.

As roads and developed recreation areas slowly crept up the flanks of Mount Hood, some would start to question the place of modern technology in wilderness. At both the local and federal level, critical planners, scientists, campers, and mountain-climbers began to rethink the definition of preservation in light of the first wave of scenic highway construction in the 1910s. Was there room to accommodate the increasingly complex auto-tourist demands for comfort and convenience in the woodlands of

⁷¹ Lancaster, *Romance of the Gateway*, 32.

northwest Oregon, and the western United States more generally? Would it be possible for the fracturing visions of people like Muir, Lancaster, and Carhart to coalesce around a coherent philosophy of scenic preservation? And how would it be practiced on the ground?

Across the country, recreationists and preservationists questioned their loyalties at the same time that they realigned their priorities. In Washington, D.C., as Carhart's ideas began to seep into conversations at the highest levels of Forest Service administration, the roots of modern wilderness preservationism were beginning to take hold. And back down in the Columbia River Gorge, what was once "a frame to the beautiful picture" started to look more like an incursion upon that very blessing.

Chapter Two

“The Most Accessible Mountain in the World” The Mount Hood Loop Highway and Summit Tramway Proposal

It had been only seven years since William Gladstone Steel founded the Oregon Alpine Club in September of 1887, but he was already dissatisfied with the direction the group was taking. Recently, membership for the elite Portland-based mountain-climbing organization “had been expanded to include all Oregon Camera Club members, boating enthusiasts, civic booster types and promoters of tourism.” By March of 1894, many of the original members felt they had been, as one club historian put it, “outvoted by ‘elevator riding’ mountaineers bent on submerging the original character of the organization.” Steel and his “*real* mountain climber” friends drafted a new constitution, selected a name based on “the many appellations of the Mountain Goat in the various Indian languages of the Northwest,” and climbed to the top of their favorite peak, Mount Hood. “To *insure* appropriate membership,” the splinter club, the Mazamas, held its first vote after a strenuous, all-day climb in the remote Cascade wilderness east of Portland. On Thursday, July 18, 1894, the group of 155 men and 38 women—roughly half the number of those who had started the ascent—formed one of the premier outdoor groups in the U.S. West. For the next century, the Mazamas would represent the preeminent voice for wilderness in northwest Oregon.¹

¹ Quotes from John D. Scott, *We Climb High: A Thumbnail Chronology of the Mazamas, 1894–1964* (Portland, Oreg.: Mazamas, 1969), 1; *Mazama History*, (Portland, Oreg.: Moltzner-Bartholomew Letter Shop, 1932), 5, reprint of *Mazama* 1 (1896). For more on the Mazamas, see Scott, *We Climb High*; Schrepfer, *Nature’s Altars*; McNeil, *McNeil’s Mount Hood*. Also, see the *Mazama* journals, which were published annually and are now available in bound volumes. On the formation of Victorian-era

Twenty years after the club's founding, as construction crews began clearing, grading, and paving the Columbia River Highway, the Mazamas watched from their Portland offices. Members were already familiar with the mysteries of their backyard wilderness, as well as far-flung scenic locations throughout Washington, Oregon, and northern California. They had clambered to see above the clouds, trekking through mud, rock, and ice to get to Mount Hood, Mount Rainier, Mount Shasta, and Mount Saint Helens. So, the comfortable joyride through the gorge hardly appealed to their intrepid sensibilities. Their relationship with nature, as they saw it, was of a purer, more primitive sort.



Figure 19 Mazamas climbing a mountain, c. 1900.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC, from Flickr Commons.

mountaineering clubs more generally, see Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*; James P. Gilligan, "The Development of Policy and Administration of Forest Service Primitive and Wilderness Areas in the Western United States," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1953), 55–6.

Even so, some club members saw possibilities in the development of their beloved mountain, Mount Hood. Roads would make the trip to base camp quicker, which meant more time to enjoy the alpine scenery. In 1912, one private developer had already begun improving the route between Portland and the town of Government Camp, on the south slope of the mountain. As the project moved forward a few years after the Columbia River Highway opened to the public, recreation advocates—auto-tourists and primitivists alike—publicly envisioned an entire network of highways and trails, which together would provide access to all of Mount Hood’s scenic and recreational resources.²

After the high Romantic imagining of the Progressive Era, scenic road construction during the Roaring Twenties took a pragmatic turn. Recreational motorists in Oregon and across the West, tired of the increasing congestion and suffocatingly narrow experiences of roads like the Columbia River Highway, sought new options for adventure. Private developers and a growing cadre of state- and federally funded highway planners looked to meet the demand, working in the early 1920s to connect cities to one another and all the landscapes in between. By the end of the decade, the western United States was crisscrossed by reliable roads, many of them paved. And the base of Mount Hood, previously an entire day’s journey away, was now within a few hours’ drive of Portland.³ In many ways, the Mazamas greatly benefited from the development, as they

² See, for example, Lee, “Paradise Park;” “Mazamas Desire 2 Roads On Hood,” *The Oregonian*, September 26, 1928, 1, 2.

³ For early auto trips up the slopes of Mount Hood, see Ivan M. Woolley, *Off to Mount Hood: An Auto Biography of the Old Road* (Portland, Oreg.: Oregon Historical Society, 1959); Judge A.H. Tanner, “A Trip Up Mount Hood,” *The Pacific Monthly* 3.2 (1899): 51–8, in Box 4, Acc. 2010: 022, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC. For times and distances in 1919, see “Vacation Land,” 1919.

had imagined they would; the club now had a more expeditious route halfway up the peak that, despite having traveled to mountains throughout the Pacific Northwest, was “still foremost in their thoughts.”⁴

But new roads, coupled with rising working- and middle-class affluence and the increasing affordability of mass-produced cars like the Model T, also meant that the Mazamas would be sharing their wilderness birthplace with hundreds, and eventually thousands, of unaccustomed new visitors. As historians have shown, the decade and a half between the Great War and the Great Depression was a time of popular consumerism, and it was during these years that recreation areas in national parks and national forests came to be reimagined as the Great Outdoors—a place where the old, bourgeois class of automobile enthusiasts mixed in campgrounds and lodges with urban wage-workers, recently turned on to the rewards of outdoor recreation.⁵ Though the Mazamas apparently had made amends with the “elevator-riders” of the forsaken Oregon Alpine Club—which was primarily composed of affluent Victorian-era pleasure-seekers like themselves—the populism of auto-touring in the 1920s would complicate club

⁴ Quote from Lee, “Paradise Park,” 29. On this time period of rapid highway construction, see Paxson, “The Highway Movement;” Wells, *Car Country*, 82–5, 129–32; Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 46–131.

⁵ The foremost historian of mass consumerism in the early and mid-twentieth century is Lizabeth Cohen. On the interwar years, see Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1990]); Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 18–61. For more on mass consumerism’s effects on outdoor recreation, see Lipin, *Workers and the Wild*; Belasco, *Americans on the Road*; Shaffer, *See America First*, 130–310; Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 19–53; Jesse Frederick Steiner, *Americans at Play: Recent Trends in Recreation and Outdoor Leisure Activities* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1933), especially 34–60; Andrew G. Truxal, *Outdoor Recreation Legislation and Its Effectiveness: A Summary of American Legislation for Public Outdoor Recreation, 1915–1927* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 19–114.

members' acquiescence on both philosophical and social grounds. Many wondered whether Mount Hood could be a mysterious, alluring wild place and a crowded public playground at the same time.

The Mount Hood highway project began in earnest at the same time that Simon Benson committed funding to his failed Columbia River Gorge test road in 1912 and initially reflected the same Progressive Era spirit of private beneficence for public good. Over the next three years, while Samuel Lancaster directed construction of the Columbia River Highway, an automobile enthusiast by the name of E. Henry Wemme used personal resources to develop an old wagon road on the southern slope of Mount Hood into a modern highway. Fresh from his own failure to build a Columbia Gorge road with fellow Portland good roads booster Lewis Russell, Wemme proposed a modest Mount Hood highway with the main purpose of getting people to the mountain. Unlike Lancaster's luxurious, circuitous "poem in stone," Wemme hoped (and only had enough time and money) for nothing grander than a relatively gentle, uniform dirt road, which would give drivers as few problems as possible while they ascended 3,500 feet from the town of Sandy, east of Portland, to Bennett Pass and the crest of the Cascade divide.⁶

After the first wave of development and Wemme's death in 1914, progress on the Mount Hood highway stagnated until the Oregon State Highway Department (OSHD), under the direction of the Oregon State Highway Commission (OSHC), took control of

⁶ On this early history of the Mount Hood Barlow Road corridor, see Woolley, *Off to Mount Hood*; Hall, *Images of America*; "The Route over the Cascade Mountains," *Pacific Monthly* 4 (1880): 169–70, in Box 4, Acc. 2010: 022, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC; "Government Agent Goes over Old Barlow Tollgate Road," *The Oregonian*, August 10, 1913.

the project in 1919. Over the next six years, crews standardized the road and completed a connector down the east side of the mountain to the town of Hood River. The Mount Hood Loop Highway was complete by 1925, to the delight of boosters and elite recreational proponents alike. Though the project shared much in common with the construction of the Columbia River Highway, the effort to build a road around Mount Hood represented a new era in rural highway planning. Whereas the earlier project resulted almost exclusively from private and, later, municipal funding and direction, state and federal agencies took the lead in coordinating the completion of Mount Hood's scenic highway just a few years later.⁷

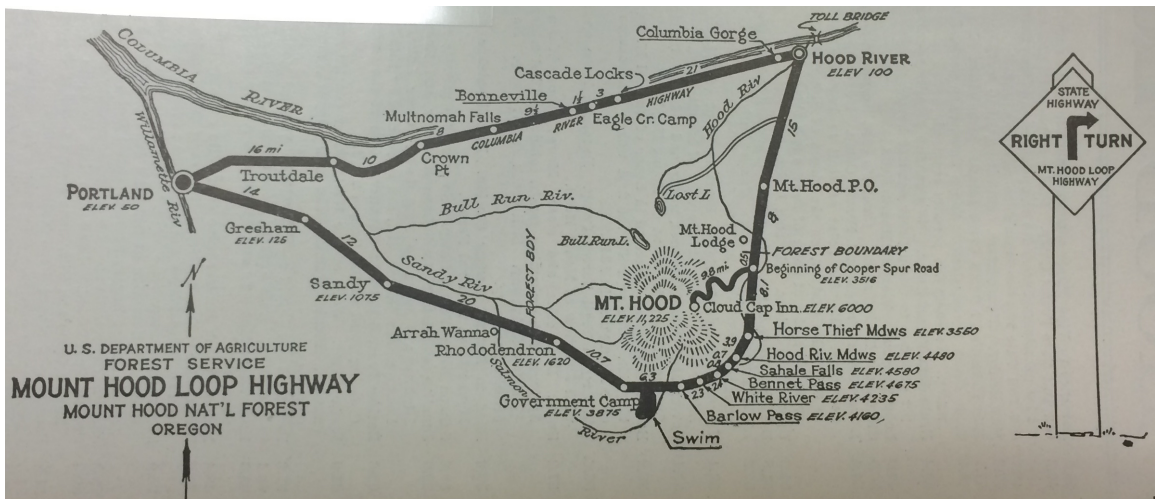


Figure 20 Mount Hood Loop Highway, 1930.
Region 6 Historical Collection, RG 95, NARA Regional Collection, Seattle.

The U.S. Forest Service, which owned nearly all of the land that surrounded the new highway, played a key role in developing the corridor for recreational use—much

⁷ On the creation of the Oregon State Highway Commission and Oregon State Highway Department, see ODOT History Committee, "Oregon on the Move;" Lipin, *Workers and the Wild*, 2, 37–43.

more so than they had in the building of the Columbia River Highway. Chief Forester Henry Graves, during his 1915 visit to Portland, had foreseen the likelihood of a full loop road around Mount Hood and approved of its development as a complement to the gorge highway. Despite success locally at Eagle Creek Recreation Area, however, the Forest Service moved only incrementally toward recognizing recreation on a national scale in the time that it took the OSHD to prepare the Mount Hood highway for mass use.⁸

Thus, the Mount Hood Recreation Area, developed by the Forest Service after 1926, represented yet another ad hoc experiment in recreation development for federal foresters. But, this time, the agency hired a dedicated district recreation planner—a young, enthusiastic forester with little experience in landscape architecture, named Fred Cleator—and worked with a longer route that passed through a wider variety of scenic locations and environments along the way. The product was a more elaborate and dispersed network of campgrounds, ranger stations, picnic areas, hiking trails, and even a downhill ski area. While the experience of driving had become a streamlined, utilitarian affair, the playground at road's end expanded and diversified.

Yet, even with the increased involvement of state and federal agencies, private interests remained the primary drivers of development. With little financial support from Congress and a workforce still largely beholden to Gifford Pinchot's original conservationist mission, the Forest Service was as out of touch with public demand in the late 1920s as it had been fifteen years earlier. The agency always seemed several years

⁸ "Park Promised." Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 5–15.

behind the needs of recreational users. Local developers picked up the slack, capitalizing on private inholdings—that is, lodges and businesses that existed prior to the designation of the Cascade Range Forest Reserve in 1893—along the Mount Hood Loop Highway. Most were small-scale enterprises: cabins, taverns, and inns that originally catered to wagon teams. But one development proposal, by a conglomeration of Portland-based tourism interests called the Cascade Development Company (CDC), commanded public attention above all else.

What the CDC proposed was a bold redesign of the mountain’s oldest private vacation lodge from the 1880s, Cloud Cap Inn, on the northeast slope above Hood River. Plans included accommodations for hundreds of visitors, a substantial spur road off the highway, and the main attraction, a modern tramway that would usher sightseers to the summit of Mount Hood. Though the Mazamas had remained ambivalent about, and even supportive of, the tide of humanity rushing to play on the now-easily accessible slopes of their beloved mountain, many club members saw the tram proposal as an affront to their relationship with nature, as well as a breach of trust with the Forest Service. Once again, the purist mountain-climbers found themselves reconsidering their feelings toward “elevator-riders” in light of the possibility that a piece of technology very similar to an elevator might soon service their most cherished of landscapes. For four years, the Mazamas fought the CDC’s proposal, and the Forest Service mediated the debate.⁹

⁹ *The Daily Oregonian* newspaper in Portland extensively covered the debate. See, for example, “Tramway Appeal Made to Jardine,” *The Oregonian*, August 21, 1927, 16.

What resulted was a discussion not of the value of recreation in general, but of the values of distinct types of recreation in relation to one another—namely, auto-tourism versus traditional “primitive” pursuits that required only walking or horseback-riding. The debate over the Mount Hood tramway proposal echoed landscape architect Arthur Carhart’s advice a decade prior that recreational use should be categorized according to its reliance on modern technologies like cars and cable lifts, with equal accommodations for each category. Most, if not all, interested parties around Mount Hood National Forest, including the Mazamas, agreed that a scenic highway belonged on the slopes of the mountain. But in regards to the tram idea, a few outspoken individuals followed Carhart’s line of reasoning, suggesting that such a special, unique place as the top of a mountain necessitated an appropriately spartan experience to appreciate its true value as a scenic and recreational resource. Technological development in this instance diminished, rather than improved, the authenticity of the wilderness experience. It was a reformulated statement of John Muir’s original definition of preservationism as essentially techno-skeptical.

More broadly, the 1920s was a time of reckoning for U.S. nature-lovers—motorist and mountain-climber alike. Between the end of World War I in late 1918 and the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932, Muir’s preservationism, as well as Gifford Pinchot’s conservationism, underwent drastic restructuring as a result of auto-tourism’s rise to dominance within scenic public land management and outdoor recreation development. Across the country, but particularly in the West, the tension between nineteenth-century Romantic preservationists like Muir and twentieth-century

“landscape engineers” like Samuel Lancaster, reached a breaking point. Widespread acceptance of the automobile as a tool for accessing nature precipitated a need to manage the motoring masses in the wilderness. In Washington, D.C., at the same time that Oregonians debated what to do on Mount Hood, the Forest Service independently engaged in its first study of the remaining roadless areas that existed throughout the United States’s national forests. Head of the Division of Lands, Assistant Chief Forester L.F. Kneipp, initiated the survey in 1928 after a young forester named Aldo Leopold picked up Carhart’s refrain.¹⁰



Figure 21 Automobile on Mount Hood Highway, c. 1925.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

¹⁰ The early years of wilderness preservation in the Forest Service is a surprisingly understudied topic for historians. The best narrative and interpretation can be found in James P. Gilligan's 1953 PhD dissertation about the “Development of Policy and Administration of Forest Service Primitive and Wilderness Areas in the Western United States.” Despite its being over a half-century old, the dissertation remains the most widely cited scholarly work about Kneipp's survey and the initial creation of roadless areas after 1928. Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 82–173. Also, see Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 54–99.

Perhaps ironically, however, the only so-called “primitive area” in Mount Hood National Forest that resulted from Forester Kneipp’s survey, received little attention from the Mazamas.¹¹ This was due to the fact that the Mount Hood Primitive Area, designated in 1929 in the middle of the debate over the Cascade Development Company’s proposal, set aside only a portion of the summit on the rarely climbed northwest side and carried few actual protections against recreation development or roadbuilding, amongst other things. So, the Mazamas fought the tramway by other means, distinct from the Forest Service’s effort to recognize areas that federal foresters like Leopold considered to be primitive. In this way, development and preservation moved in opposite directions during the 1920s as Lancaster’s vision fractured. Yet, both picked up in intensity. Mount Hood, at least a day away at the beginning of the decade, was a smooth two hours from Portland by 1930. For most observers, the opening of the Mount Hood area to popular recreation was as great an achievement as the building of the Columbia River Highway. But for some, wilderness was getting to be too close for comfort.

“Get[ting] Oregon out of the mud”

While giddy motorists were enjoying their winding joyrides along the Columbia River, a parallel scenic highway project was slowly taking shape on the southwest flank

¹¹ Mount Hood National Forest officials also were responsible for managing a chunk of the Mount Jefferson Primitive Area, which was located mostly within Santiam (after 1933, Willamette) National Forest. Approximately 250,000 acres of roadless land also existed in the Clackamas River drainage in the southern half of Mount Hood National Forest, which is lower in elevation than the two designated alpine regions. But, as we will see in chapter four, the Clackamas never received official designation because of the expectation that its valuable Douglas-fir timber one day would serve as a vital resource base. Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 116.

of Mount Hood, separated from the gorge by fifteen miles of inaccessible canyons and forested highlands. Ascending gradually from the former trading-post town of Sandy, southeast of Portland, to an elevation of nearly 4,500 feet at Government Camp, the west leg of what would become the Mount Hood Loop Highway was still quite rough, even as late as 1919. An article in the Portland *Daily Oregonian*, Oregon's most widely distributed newspaper, from July of that year described a primitive two-track road with deep wheel ruts in places. The motoring reporter found the first stretch above Sandy "in pretty fair condition, most of it planked [i.e., covered with wooden boards to prevent erosion], some sand and dust to Rhododendron and Toll Gate." From there, conditions deteriorated quickly as the trail began to climb. "Road becomes very steep, narrow, rocky up Laurel Hill" to Government Camp, the reporter added.¹² It was still, as one motorist had described it a few years earlier, "a trip not for amateurs," requiring "a driver of transcontinental class and experience."¹³

Despite its generally poor condition, the route the newspaperman took on that long summer day already had an extensive history of modern usage. Prior to 1914, most of the path—which, after cresting at Government Camp, descended along the White River drainage, east of Mount Hood, before crossing over to The Dalles on the Columbia River—was a private toll road. Hacked out of the thick forest by an enterprising American settler named Samuel K. Barlow in the winter of 1845–6, the Barlow Road served as an alternative overland route for Oregon Trail emigrants looking to avoid the

¹² Lair H. Gregory, "Around Mount Hood Loop in a Chalmers Hotspot Six," *The Oregonian*, July 6, 1919.

¹³ "Auto Goes around Mount Hood in Day," *The Oregonian*, July 12, 1915; Chester A. Moore, "Wonders of First Auto Trip around Mount Hood Many," *The Oregonian*, July 18, 1915.

treacherous waters of the Columbia River Gorge on their westward journey to the Willamette Valley. For two generations (though only during summers), travelers could pay a fee to take the unreliable, frequently muddy road up over Barlow Pass and down to Portland or Oregon City.¹⁴

When railroads reached the Willamette Valley from the east in the 1880s, business on the slopes of Mount Hood tapered off as travelers chose to take the new, all-weather overland route along the Columbia River. For a generation, even the lowest stretch of the Barlow Road nearest Portland, between Sandy and Rhododendron, saw infrequent usage, and typically only by locals or wealthy Portlanders looking to escape into the secluded woodlands. A few homesteaders along the route built modest resorts in hopes of attracting more visitors, as well as provide an impetus for road improvement. But, with minimal public enthusiasm for good rural roads through the early 1910s, the corridor continued to decline in quality as it remained in disinterested private hands, generating little profit. The underfunded toll road languished in disrepair. As a result, more than a decade into the twentieth century, it still took an entire day to reach the Welches Resort or Tawney's Mountain Home on the Zig Zag River, forty miles east of downtown Portland.¹⁵ But one man had plans for the old Barlow Road.

In 1912, a headstrong, automobile-loving philanthropist from Portland, E. Henry Wemme, bought the rights to the toll road for just over \$5,000. His intention was to develop the heavily eroded trail into a more reliable route for motorists. Over the

¹⁴ Omar C. Spencer, *E. Henry Wemme Endowment Fund* (Portland, Oreg.: Sweeney, Krist. & Dimm, 1960), 6.

¹⁵ Woolley, *Off to Mount Hood*; "The Route over the Cascade Mountains."

previous thirteen years, Wemme had made a name for himself as the foremost promoter of automobile culture in Oregon. In 1899, he had claimed the title of first automobile owner in the state when he imported a Stanley Steamer horseless carriage to Portland. In the years that followed, Wemme championed roadbuilding, making acquaintances in the Pacific Northwest good roads movement with the likes of Simon Benson and Sam Hill.¹⁶ In 1910, three years before Benson and Hill's efforts in the Columbia River Gorge, Wemme spearheaded the first attempt at building a modern Columbia River automobile highway. However, his plan failed to get off the ground when he and his investment partner, Lewis Russell, ran into difficulty securing an appropriate right-of-way from existing landowners.



*Figure 22 Barlow Road near Rhododendron, 1885.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.*

¹⁶ Spencer, *E. Henry Wemme*, 1–8.

Like Benson and Hill, Wemme was a savvy businessman who knew how to meet burgeoning demands. A struggling lower-middle-class German immigrant who had relocated to the American Midwest on his own as a teenager, he moved to Portland in the 1880s and found work mending sails on ships. In the 1890s, he started his own business, selling tents made out of that same canvas sail material to prospectors headed for the Yukon Gold Rush and, later, to the U.S. military during the Spanish-American War. When he began to develop the Mount Hood corridor after amassing a decent fortune, his motivation was borne out of the same Progressive Era mixture of civic virtue and capitalistic innovation that also compelled Benson and Hill to participate in the fledgling auto-tourism economy.

Over the next two years, between 1912 and 1914, Wemme pumped a total of \$25,000 into improvements on the old Barlow Road—a substantial sum for an individual financier but a modest amount compared to the total for the Columbia River Highway, which ran into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Under Wemme’s direction, construction crews rebuilt some of the worst sections of the 75-year-old wagon road but attempted to avoid the complex engineering problems that Samuel Lancaster sought out intentionally.¹⁷ In contrast with the Columbia River Highway, Wemme envisioned a relatively modest scenic highway on Mount Hood.¹⁸ The road travelled through some of Oregon’s most beautiful scenery, but it also took the most expeditious route to its high-country destination, with fewer turnouts, overlooks, and attractions along the way. For

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “First Automobile Here,” *The Oregonian*, November 8, 1899, 5.

Wemme, the road's primary purpose was utility; the road itself was no longer the *destination* that it was to Lancaster, but rather merely a *conduit* for tourist travel.¹⁹

At least in part, this preference for austerity was due simply to a lack of funds from outside sources. However, knowing Wemme, this was likely a purposeful choice. After his troubles in the Columbia River Gorge, Wemme probably pursued the Mount Hood project because he could buy the corridor outright, thereby foregoing the need to compromise or negotiate with abutting landowners, private or otherwise. Perhaps, besides financial constraints, Wemme also made the decision based on personal aesthetics; he was well-known to be a humble man in dress and demeanor. According to one local historian, "he worked like a horse and lived like a hermit."²⁰ Bells and whistles were not in his nature.

In all likelihood, though, Wemme chose to forego costly, extensive reengineering tasks mostly because he knew he only had a short time to live. In 1911, he had retired from the canvas tent business when his health began deteriorating rapidly due to diabetes. After purchasing the road on Mount Hood, his poor condition persisted. Foreseeing the end, Wemme likely hoped to accomplish as much as he could before he was physically unable to do anything more. And indeed in December 1914, Wemme passed away after a cold worsened his symptoms. Given his limitations of time and money, Wemme did a considerable amount to improve the road to Mount Hood. However, it would take another

¹⁹ There were similarities between the two roads. Both had luxurious bridges, scenic road turn-outs, and other stopping points along the way. But, whereas those amenities were considered by many to be the focal point of the Columbia River Highway, the Mount Hood road was more known for the access it gave to the high country.

²⁰ Spencer, *E. Henry Wemme*, 7.

decade before it was ready to handle mass usage. In retrospect, Henry Wemme's greatest contribution to the larger Mount Hood highway project was lifting the Barlow Road's toll before his death, effectively reclassifying the route as a public thoroughfare.²¹

Wemme directed the project almost entirely by himself, but to a large degree he still embodied the Progressive-era spirit of private development for public benefit. In fact, when he died at the age of 53, he wrote private-public partnerships into his will. Therein, Wemme left the road to his attorney, who, after a period of five years at the behest of his former client, deeded the right-of-way "to have and to hold unto the said State of Oregon, with all its mountains and hills, its forests and vines,... its trails and paths, and the beauties and grandeur of Mount Hood; for the use, benefit and pleasure of all forever."²²

As a result, on September 8, 1919, the nascent Oregon State Highway Commission took charge of the Mount Hood highway project.²³ The OSHC was only six years old at the time and still in the process of deciding what role it would play in "get[ting] Oregon out of the mud."²⁴ When it was established in 1913 after the wave of regional support for rural highway-building, the Commission served only as a loose advisory body, initially comprised of the Governor, Secretary of State, and Treasurer. These three officials oversaw the direction of the Oregon State Highway Department, also created in 1913 by an act of the state legislature.

²¹ "E. Henry Wemme Dies of Diabetes," *The Oregonian*, December 18, 1914, 9.

²² Spencer, *E. Henry Wemme*, 6–7.

²³ "E. Henry Wemme Dies."

²⁴ This was the motto of the OSHC until the mid-1950s. ODOT History Committee, "Oregon on the Move," 12.

During their first four years of operation, with rural roadbuilding still the primary responsibility of each individual county, the OSHC and OSHD sat on their hands and observed. While the OSHC appropriated supplemental funds and “supervise[d] all matters related to building roads, letting contracts and selecting construction materials,” the OSHD coordinated projects between counties and supplied engineering expertise. In 1914, the OSHC approved its first State Highway Plan, with its crowning jewel the nearly complete Columbia River Highway and the ambitious goal to connect eastern and southern Oregon with the more populous northwestern part of the state. Two years later in 1916, the Commission published Oregon’s first official state highway map.²⁵ And by the end of that year, it was also tracking and managing tens of thousands of automobile registrations.²⁶ But, with little means or authority to accomplish any actual physical work on the public road system, many of Oregon’s “highways” still looked as they did a decade prior: like Wemme’s road, the products of localized growth and irregular, tenuous improvements. The first four years of existence for the OSHC and OSHD thus were marked by fits and starts.

It was not until 1917 that the agencies gained any real power beyond accounting for the state’s haphazard development. That year, Oregon legislators shifted roadbuilding responsibilities from the county level to the state; approved the sale of bonds specifically for road improvement; authorized the OSHC to expand the State Highway System by adopting derelict secondary roads, including the old Barlow Road; and redesigned the

²⁵ One of the best resources for understanding the growth of the Oregon State Highway System is the Oregon State Highway Maps Collection at OSU SCARC.

²⁶ ODOT History Committee, “Oregon on the Move,” 12–5.

Commission to be a body of voluntary, appointed citizens, with none other than Simon Benson as its first Chairman. Suddenly, the reorganized OSHC had the ability to dictate projects rather than just consult on them; raise substantial, renewable funds with a clear, intended purpose; grow to meet the needs of a dynamic jurisdiction; and finally, provide the appropriate channels for the expert opinions of those most familiar with the auto-tourism industry.

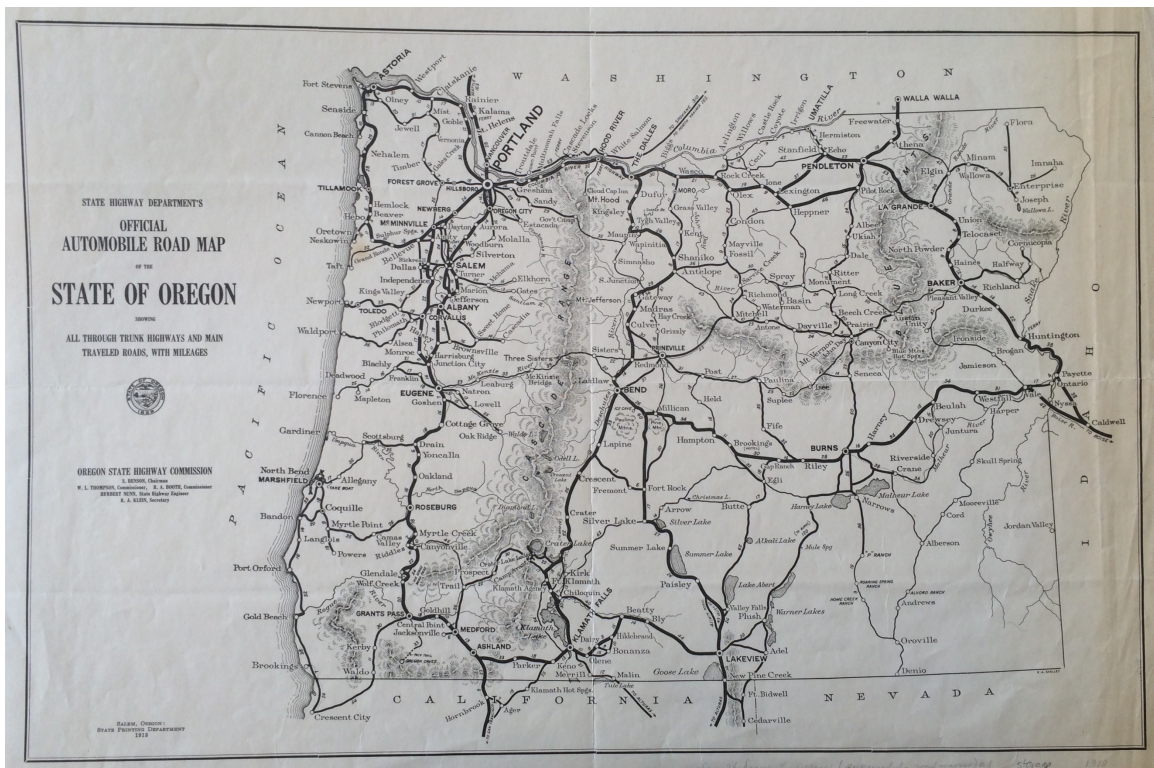


Figure 23 First official Oregon State Highway Map available to the public, Oregon State Highway Commission, 1918.
Oregon State Highway Maps Collection, OSU SCARC.

The consolidation of power in the OSHC and its executive body, the OSHD, in 1917 was a direct response to the Federal-Aid Road (FAR) Act, passed by U.S. Congress the previous year. The groundbreaking legislation indicated that, for the first time in U.S.

history, the federal government would be willing to provide funding for local roadbuilding projects. The bill only required that states establish highway departments in order to receive financial support.²⁷ Already with a functioning, but mostly ineffectual, bureaucracy in place, Oregon eagerly awaited the subsidies.

Yet, high hopes gave way to disillusionment, as the consensus amongst federal administrators, and between federal and state officials, that produced the FAR Act collapsed over disagreements as to the proper use of funds. Furthermore, the United States's 1917 entrance into World War I prompted the rerouting of most federal tax dollars toward military expenditures. So, with only a fraction of the funding they had anticipated, state highway departments across the country continued to stagnate through the end of the decade, and the Mount Hood road project remained in shambles.²⁸

That all changed between 1919 and 1921 when three significant events at the state, local, and federal levels, respectively, coalesced to breathe new life into Wemme's dream. In 1919, Oregon Congressmen passed a bill that created the first gasoline tax in the nation, making the OSHD one of the only highway departments in the country with a consistent revenue stream. As long as Oregonians drove, the OSHD would have a strong, reliable resource base. That first year alone, taxes brought in \$342,000 earmarked for highway-building—a significant amount more than the \$206,000 the federal government had granted Oregon in the first year after the FAR Act. And in the following years, that number only grew bigger as hordes of Americans took to the highways, consuming more

²⁷ Paxson, "The Highway Movement," 243.

²⁸ Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 4–55.

gasoline than ever. As other states looked to Oregon and adopted gas taxes as well, it set the foundation for highway departments across the country to thrive during the 1920s. Indeed, historian Christopher Wells has argued that at the time, “many regarded the gas tax as a deus ex machina that saved state treasuries from bankruptcy and state legislators from having to say no to a growing motorized constituency clamoring for more, better, and faster road improvements.”²⁹

Even with an increased budget, however, Oregon legislators hesitated to slate funds for anything but main arteries and connector highways. Though Wemme’s road was spartan and utilitarian compared to the Columbia River Highway, it still served primarily recreational users. With a route already established through the Cascades, the idea of a Mount Hood highway seemed redundant to state highway planners. In response, the movers and shakers of Oregon’s most populous and influential city flexed their municipal muscles just as they had during the Progressive Era, reasserting claims to dominance through new channels.

In 1920, with State Highway Commissioners dragging their feet over what to do with the road they had inherited the previous year, Multnomah County Commissioners and a few powerful Portlanders stepped into the discussion. Hoping to appeal to the OSHC’s pragmatic goals, northwest Oregon’s scenic highway proponents talked around auto-tourism, arguing that the road would serve multiple functions: it would be an important thoroughfare and a vital local route in addition to its use as a road for

²⁹ ODOT History Committee, “Oregon on the Move,” 15, 19; Wells, *Car Country*, 185–93, quote from 188. For more on other forms of taxes as they related to the regulation of automobiles and financing of roads in 1920s Oregon, see Lipin, *Workers and the Wild*.

recreationists. Some made the case that it would “open up a large area of tillable land,” increasing agricultural production for Multnomah, Clackamas, Wasco, and Hood River Counties. Others suggested that a Mount Hood highway would be of vital use to the Portland Water Bureau for making repairs to the Bull Run River pipeline, which provided drinking water for a good portion of the state’s residents.

But, the line of reasoning that ultimately convinced state officials to move forward with developing the road to Mount Hood was less an appeal to pragmatism and more an appeal to economic and political power. “This is the first time,” lobbyists reminded members of the OSHC, that “Portland and Multnomah county have asked the commission for any specific things and, as the city pays a large part of the taxes of the state, the petition should be considered.”³⁰ Fearful that it might upset Oregon’s most powerful group of constituents within just a few years of its being established, the State Highway Commission acquiesced, committing funds toward the gradual improvement of the Mount Hood Highway. It was one of the first battles between state and local governments after the realignment of roadbuilding responsibilities in 1917, and local interests had emerged the victor.³¹

³⁰ “Mount Hood Loop Proposed,” *The Oregonian*, May 3, 1920.

³¹ A similar course of events led up to the construction of the east leg of the loop as well. Citizens from Hood River made sure the connecting route would follow the main drainage on Mount Hood’s eastern slope down into their verdant valley of fruit orchards. There, the Mount Hood Highway would link up with the Columbia River Highway. Again, State Highway Commissioners hesitated to approve the plan despite an existing, though spartan, recreational infrastructure at Lost Lake, Parkdale, and Cloud Cap Inn. So, Hood River’s interested parties adopted the tactics used by Portlanders, warning bureaucrats that federal funding earmarked for the project would go to the state of Washington if not used for its intended purpose in Oregon. The ploy worked. “Commission Will Meet,” *The Oregonian*, October 14, 1920.

Still, with little federal funding in reality and an overwhelming backlog of work to do on Oregon's arterial roads, the OSHC saw the Mount Hood Highway as a low-priority job with a long timeline. What pushed it through to completion relatively quickly between 1921 and 1926 was an event of much greater magnitude than a small agreement amongst state and local politicians or a decision to tax fuel. The road's rebuilding for mass use was, rather, just one indication of a sea change taking place in American roadbuilding at the national level, which commenced with the Federal Highway (FH) Act of 1921. Unlike in the age of the Columbia River Highway, when major roadbuilding projects were carried out entirely by local means in a number of isolated sets of circumstances, state and federal support aligned after 1921 to provide sudden, startling momentum to the pace of construction across the country. Had it not been for the funding and professional guidance that the Federal Highway Act made available to state highway departments like the OSHD, the Mount Hood Highway likely would have taken much longer to be built. The FHA was a re-statement of the FAR Act, but to better effect; this time, the feds truly meant it.³²

For the next fifteen years, the Federal Highway Act “launched a basically unending engineering project” to connect city to city and city to countryside. The bill kicked off what one historian has called the “golden age of American highway building.”³³ And during the first five years of that roadbuilding boom, the Mount Hood *Loop* Highway—now serving to connect Portland with both central Oregon and the Hood

³² For more on the difference between the two bills and why the Federal Highway Act succeeded, whereas the Federal-Aid Road Act failed, see Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 46–69.

³³ *Ibid.*, 67.

River Valley via a connector down the eastern side of the mountain—materialized. By 1926, when the OSHD, now with the backing of FH Act grants, had graded and oiled the road for all seventy miles, OSHC maps showed a network of nearly 4,500 miles of highways throughout the state, supporting a growing population of motorists ready to explore the wilderness in their backyards.³⁴

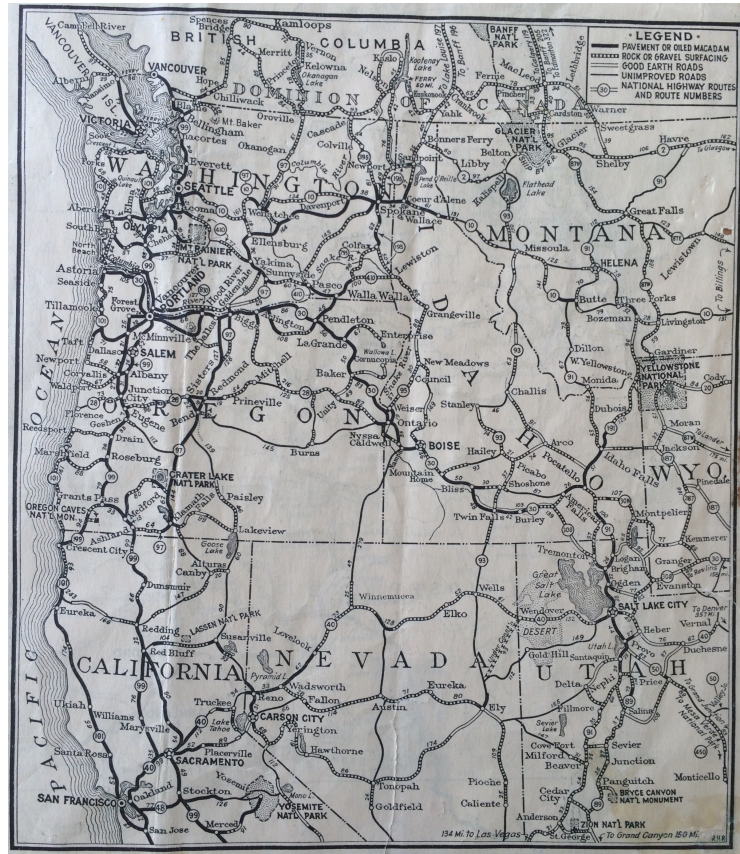


Figure 24 Pacific Northwest crisscrossed by highways. Detail from the backside of “State Highway Department’s Map of the State of Oregon Showing Main Traveled Automobile Roads,” Oregon State Highway Commission, 1929. Oregon State Highway Maps Collection, OSU SCARC.

³⁴ “State Highway Department’s Map for the State of Oregon Showing Main Traveled Automobile Roads,” map, Oregon State Highway Commission, 1926, in Series 2, Box 3, Oregon State Highway Maps, OSU SCARC.

Above all else, the Federal Highway Act of 1921 indicated that the U.S. government was committed to the idea of a mass, motorized society. The Roaring Twenties—in the most literal sense of the name—had arrived. As assembly-line vehicles like Henry Ford’s Model T flooded the streets, state and federal officials consolidated roadbuilding power in bureaus like the Oregon State Highway Department in order to accommodate the surge of working- and middle-class motorists, primarily from the cities, on their trips through the countryside.

While the automobile gained utilitarian value, however, it still served primarily as a tool for leisure. The *New York Times* in 1922 estimated that nearly half of the 10.8 million registered vehicles in the United States “would be used for camping.”³⁵ Municipal auto-camps and, later, motels became fixtures of the built landscape in the United States during this period. In this way, the 1920s were the decade in which, as one historian puts it, auto-tourism transitioned from “fad to institution.”³⁶ The countryside was becoming the Great Outdoors as it is known today, filled with an abundance of places to rest and things to see. Yet, one federal agency associated with the Great Outdoors, and intimately connected to Mount Hood specifically, clung to its original pre-automobile mandate. Despite great public pressure to follow the trend that had catalyzed the passage of the FAR Act and the FH Act and was taking the National Park Service by

³⁵ Havlick, *No Place Distant*, 20.

³⁶ Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 71–104.

storm, the United States Forest Service balked at auto-tourism. Mount Hood would prove an exception to the rule.³⁷

“Vacation Land” and the Mount Hood Recreation Area

Wemme may have benefited from the road’s status as private property, but, for nearly the entire length of it—from Rhododendron to the head of the Hood River Valley and for miles in every direction—the Mount Hood Highway was surrounded by public land. By the 1920s, the region had been managed by the federal government for over a generation. During that time, it had remained largely inaccessible by default. Other than Barlow’s narrow corridor, the slopes of Mount Hood were visited by only the hardest explorers and recreationists such as the Mazamas. But the rise of roadbuilding changed all that. Whereas the Columbia River Highway only skirted Oregon National Forest, the old Barlow Trail penetrated deep into the heart of it. The long-term success of the Mount Hood Loop Highway thus depended on the Forest Service’s participation.

At the national level, the agency had made little progress planning for recreation since Chief Forester Henry S. Graves’s momentous trip to the Pacific Northwest in 1915. Though during his visit Graves had shown support for the limited recreational use of Oregon National Forest by approving the creation of the Columbia Gorge Park, he and other federal foresters remained reluctant to commit resources to concerted planning besides a few exceptional instances. The minimal strides the agency had made, including

³⁷ Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 19–53.

the brief appointments of landscape architects Frank Waugh and Arthur Carhart, had resulted in nothing more than inconsequential reports and ignored suggestions.

But now, with the end of his ten-year tenure as the Forest Service's director quickly approaching just as national roadbuilding gained steam, Graves saw the need to come to terms with the demands of auto-tourists. Still, he remained cautious. In the 1920 issue of the *American Forestry* journal, Graves attempted to both acknowledge the inevitability of roads and highways in national forests and at the same time deny that it meant the agency would be forced to participate in comprehensive recreation planning. The Forest Service would accept federal funding for roadbuilding, he stated, but only for "forest development" roads—that is, roads that would aid in administration and fire control. Recreationists might benefit from the roads, but only incidentally. Foresters would continue to practice traditional conservationist forestry.³⁸

Graves approached the issue from the standpoint of a cash-strapped agency for which Congress repeatedly denied recreation funding. When his successor, William B. Greeley, took over as Chief Forester in 1921, he proposed a bill requesting a relatively meager \$50,000 for recreation nationwide; legislators promptly axed it.³⁹ However, Greeley was more honest than Graves about the need to meet motorists' demands. He knew that the two recent federal-aid acts presented foresters with backdoor channels to fund what he saw as the Forest Service's unavoidable responsibility to accommodate automobiles, for foresters or otherwise. The 1916 legislation had granted \$10 million to

³⁸ Havlick, *No Place Distant*, 21.

³⁹ Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 11.

the agency for roadbuilding, which officials mostly slanted toward forest development projects to provide access to guard stations and fire lookout towers. The 1921 bill provided an additional \$5.5 million for such roads.



Figure 25 Chief Forester "Colonel" William B. Greeley, c. 1924.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

Importantly, the Federal Highway Act also included funds for “forest highways,” or roads managed by state highway departments that crossed national forest land. This was the most important part of the bill, as far as Greeley was concerned: \$9.5 million for major arterial thoroughfares.⁴⁰ As just such a road, the Mount Hood Loop Highway stood to receive a substantial portion of those funds. It was the final piece of the puzzle for the completion of Wemme’s vision and one of the more prominent examples of the

⁴⁰ Havlick, *No Place Distant*, 21–2.

increasing ties between federal land managers and state highway departments. With federal funding through the OSHC, as well as an additional \$500,000 from the U.S. Forest Service, the Mount Hood Highway project gained steam in 1921. Just four years later, state highway maps showed a complete loop around the mountain.⁴¹

Regional foresters knew that they needed a plan to accommodate the auto-tourists who soon would be streaming into Oregon National Forest. Using what little resources they had, USFS North Pacific District officials had been slowly erecting a bureaucratic apparatus to manage visitors throughout the Pacific Northwest, beyond the limited boundaries of the Columbia Gorge Park. In 1919, they created a recreation office in Portland and put a young, enthusiastic forest supervisor named Frank W. Cleator in charge of what they called the district “lands” division.⁴² Cleator had little experience with recreation development but took to the assignment with zeal.

Continuing the public relations work that Albert Weisendanger had begun at Eagle Creek, Cleator convinced District Forester George H. Cecil that it was worth the agency’s resources to issue a brochure touting the recreational values of Oregon’s national forests. They titled it, “Vacation Land: The National Forests in Oregon” (1919). On its opening pages, the Forest Service welcomed recreational users into the mountains with few caveats:

When, tired of the daily grind, you say to yourself, “I need a vacation,” your first thought is to get away from civilization and its trammels. Your next is to find interesting and health-giving recreation. In the National

⁴¹ “Mount Hood National Forest, Oregon: Its Purposes and Resources,” map and brochure, U.S. Forest Service, 1931, in Folder Mount Hood National Forest, Box 49, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle.

⁴² Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 5.

Forests in Oregon you may find both, and much besides... You will encounter no “Keep Out” signs on the Forests. They are not fenced against the public, but invite your presence and use. The only signs you will find are those which point you on your way or ask your cooperation in preserving the beauty and value of these free recreation grounds and their resources.

The main goal of the brochure was to inform visitors as to their responsibilities in the forest: put out campfires, keep resource use to a minimum, and prepare to be self-reliant. Even so, the hospitable tone of the text was a remarkable departure from the conservative official stance toward recreation held by most USFS foresters.⁴³

“Vacation Land” was just one of the ways in which Forest Service officials in Portland collaborated with local and regional interests to promote national forest recreation. In 1920, they teamed up with the OSHC to issue a state highway map, highlighting points of interest for motorists. Most of the locations on the map could be found just east of Portland, despite the fact that much of the Mount Hood Loop Highway was still shown as a dashed line, meaning “proposed road.”⁴⁴ As crews worked toward completing the loop, organizations both private and public ramped up their marketing of Mount Hood and the greater Cascades. Between the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce, the Bend Chamber of Commerce, the Mount Hood Lodge near Hood River, the Portland *Daily Oregonian* newspaper, and other sources, Oregonians in the 1920s were bombarded on all sides by invitations to play in the their backyard wilderness.⁴⁵

⁴³ “Vacation Land,” 1919.

⁴⁴ “Map of Automobile Roads, State of Oregon,” map with recreation areas highlighted, U.S. Forest Service, 1920, in Series 1, Box 1, Oregon State Highway Maps Collection, OSU SCARC. The Forest Service issued updated copies every three years.

⁴⁵ See, for example, “The Oregon Cascades: Vacation and Scenic Attraction,” map and brochure, Bend Chamber of Commerce, 1928 n.d., in Box 63, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU

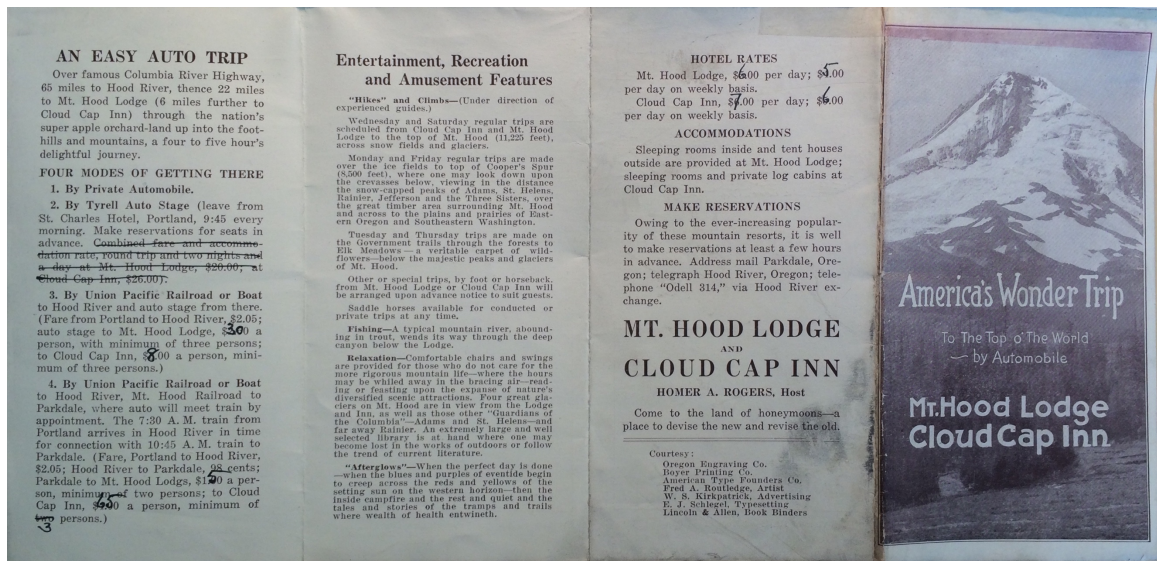


Figure 26 One of the many brochures inviting Portlanders to visit Mount Hood, c. 1920. Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

Familiar with the provisions for sanitation and fire mitigation at the immensely popular Eagle Creek Recreation Area, Cleator began to study the Mount Hood Highway corridor in 1919 with the intent of developing a similar recreation area on the more accessible slopes of the mountain. The Forest Service's only landscape architect at the national level, Frank Waugh, visited Portland in the summer of 1920 to observe Cleator for six weeks. Disenchanted from his four years of work with foresters, Waugh argued that "the vast utilities of recreation and health" around Mount Hood "cannot be developed by the forest service. The beneficiaries in the form of private persons, campers, tourists, clubs, corporations and municipalities must plan the actual

SCARC; "An Ideal Vacation Land: National Forests in Oregon," map and brochure, U.S. Forest Service, 1923, in Box 63, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC; "Mount Hood Loop," map, *The Oregonian*, 1932, in Folder Mount Hood National Forest Newspaper Clippings, Box 49, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle; "USFS Issues Recreation Map," *The Gresham Outlook*, December 14, 1923.

development.”⁴⁶ His advice to Cleator was not to rely on the support of the federal bureau to get things done. But, fortunately for the young forester-turned-recreation-planner, the circumstances that compelled Waugh to take such a pessimistic position changed drastically after the passage of the Federal Highway Act the following year.

Between 1921 and 1926, Mount Hood received a dramatic makeover. As construction crews worked on the highway and Cleator made plans for recreation development, the Forest Service in 1924 rebranded Oregon National Forest, Mount Hood National Forest. At the end of that year, the still-rough road opened to the public. In early 1926, District Forester Cecil assigned an assistant to Cleator by the name of Francis “Scotty” Williamson, Jr., who divided duties with the lone, overworked recreation director, increasing his capacity to move forward with planning. Not long after, Cleator and Williamson submitted a proposal to the Secretary of Agriculture, William M. Jardine. Jardine approved of what he was given, and on April 28, 1926, the Mount Hood Recreation Area was created.⁴⁷

In the Mount Hood Recreation Area, the Forest Service set aside an astounding 83,731 acres along the southern, eastern, and lower southwestern slopes of the mountain. The boundaries of the designated area, which straddled the highway along its entire length within the Mount Hood National Forest, contained lush Mountain Hemlock and Douglas-fir forests and idyllic alpine meadows, as well as the rocky, glaciated slopes above timberline. Initial developments were rudimentary and included signage, basic

⁴⁶ Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 23. Quote from “Development is urged,” *The Oregonian*, August 1, 1920, 30.

⁴⁷ Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 13–4; Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 113, Otis et al., “The USFS and the CCC,” 117; Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 23.

campgrounds, and sanitation facilities. Hiking trails extended from the highway in all directions, and plans were made for two spur roads that climbed to the snowy slopes below the summit.⁴⁸

Despite reluctance in Washington, D.C., district foresters based in Portland made great strides toward developing Oregon's national forests for recreation during the 1920s. Oregonians, and especially Portlanders, finally had a convenient, easily accessible playground in their backyard. On any given day with clear skies and reasonably warm temperatures, they could watch the sun rise over Mount Hood from the comfort of their city homes, visit the mountain's slopes for an afternoon of fun and relaxation, and return to Portland that same night—all with little effort or stress. Indeed, most if not all who looked on, delighted in the progress on the mountain. But, if 1926 was the year that all parties seemed to unite around the Mount Hood Recreation Area, 1927 would be the year that consensus crumbled. After a generation of gently nudging Forest Service administrators to accept the demands of recreationists, a few purists began to wonder if they had spawned a beast that would destroy their idea of wilderness.

“Public Values” and the Cascade Development Company

For the Mount Hood region, the decade between 1921 and 1931 was defined by increasing involvement by public agencies. However, private interests still played a key role in determining the future of the forest. Though Frank Waugh ultimately was proven

⁴⁸ Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 23.

wrong in labeling the Forest Service as a barrier to recreation development (at least in the Pacific Northwest), he was right in the sense that private “beneficiaries” would continue to direct planning initiatives and steer the agency toward localized goals.

Between Sam Barlow, Henry Wemme, and the dozens of small business-owners that dotted the approach to Government Camp from both sides, private developers always had big dreams for Mount Hood.⁴⁹ In both literal and figurative terms, they drove development to new heights. Homer Rodgers, the proprietor of the Mount Hood Lodge above Hood River, stated in 1915 that “in time he expected... a magnificent highway would traverse this district, with small taverns and resting places strewn along the wayside similar to the highways that traverse the Alps in Switzerland.”⁵⁰ Swept up in the excitement of Wemme’s improvements, as well as the fanfare around the opening of the Columbia River Highway to the north, Rodgers envisioned a world-class auto-tourist corridor to rival Europe’s finest mountain passes.

With inholdings like the Mount Hood Lodge clustered along the loop highway, parts of Mount Hood National Forest looked much like the mosaic of land ownership that characterized the Columbia River Highway. However, unlike the homesteaders on the older scenic route, tavern- and lodge-owners like Rodgers were already invested in the tourism economy by the time outside developers arrived. Moreover, by observing the proceedings in the gorge, landholders understood that they had the power to negotiate

⁴⁹ These include the Battle Axe Inn and Government Camp Inn at Government Camp, as well as taverns clustered around Rhododendron and Sandy. On these, see Hall, *Images of America*, especially “Places” chapter.

⁵⁰ “Belt Road Round Mt. Hood Is Plan.”

with the newcomers. The development of the Mount Hood Loop Highway after 1926 thus was a dynamic battle for auto-tourist dollars, marked by a cacophony of interests.



Figure 27 Battle Axe Inn near Government Camp, 1927.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

Given limited funding and a need to foster healthy relationships with local constituents, the Forest Service served as an advisory body, approving or denying proposals based on criteria tied to the agency's shifting goals of forest protection and development. Distancing itself from the unilateral decisionmaking that determined the direction of the Columbia River Highway corridor, the Forest Service took a much more laissez-faire stance toward private development. But, an ultra-modern proposal at one of Mount Hood's most rustic resorts would test the limits of the agency's tolerance.

Cloud Cap Inn, perched at an elevation of 5,900 feet on the northeast slope of Mount Hood just below the second-most popular route to the summit, was the oldest lodge on the east side of the mountain. Built in 1889 with the financial backing of two of Portland's most prominent figures, banker William M. Ladd and attorney Charles Erskine Scott (C.E.S.) Wood, Cloud Cap was well-known in northwest Oregon's affluent adventurer circles. It was much harder to reach than the smaller inns facing Portland on the western slope, but "none enjoyed Cloud Cap's unique reputation as a destination resort" at the turn of the twentieth century, according to one local historian. Even so, the resort was plagued by mismanagement and deteriorating road conditions as it traded hands between 1907 and 1925.⁵¹

In early 1924, a conglomeration of business interests, including William Ladd's son, Thornton, took notice of the property. The Cascade Development Company, as the businessmen called their investment group, looked to turn Cloud Cap into the premier destination on the mountain. In addition to Ladd, the group was comprised of prominent construction contractors Henry and Philip Buehner as well as an engineer by the name of L.L. Tyler, who took the lead role in surveying the aging building.⁵² Over a span of two years, Tyler assessed the viability of the group's plans, which called for not only a redesign of the lodge, but also a spectacular cable tramway to the very summit of the mountain. By the end of 1925, after spending \$10,000 determining the logistics of the

⁵¹ Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 23–33, Hall, "Images of America," 104–5; McNeil, *McNeil's Mount Hood*, 44–8.

⁵² "Tramway Appeal Made to Jardine."

idea, the CDC had purchased the property and was ready to submit its proposal to the Forest Service.⁵³

When Chief Forester Greeley received the company's permit application in the summer of 1926, he was taken aback by its scale, which, at an estimated cost of \$350,000, was by far the most audacious development proposal he had seen on Mount Hood.⁵⁴ Tyler in his surveys was convinced that "A surface tram $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles long could be built from the Cloud Cap Inn... to a prominence on Cooper spur, rising in that distance to an elevation of 8500 feet, and an aerial tram connecting with the surface tram could be constructed in one span from this point... to the summit of Mount Hood, the span having a length of 6300 feet and a vertical lift of 2725 feet." For the CDC, it was a natural extension of the highway and reflected the wishes of other business-owners like Homer Rodgers to make Mount Hood into "a great popular recreation center, as the Alps have proved to be in Europe."⁵⁵

Most plans Greeley simply appraised and approved. However, the CDC proposal presented a qualitatively different set of circumstances in that the tramway had the potential to infringe upon the experiences of visitors outside of the resort's immediate vicinity. So, Greeley asked for input from Portlanders. According to *The Daily Oregonian*, which closely followed the tramway proposal saga, "Many Portland organizations and individuals wrote letters favoring and condemning the plan to Colonel

⁵³ "Hood Tram Hearing Granted By Jardine," *The Oregonian*, September 11, 1927.

⁵⁴ Scott, *We Climb High*, 31; "Tramway Appeal Made to Jardine."

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Greeley [as the Chief Forester liked to be called due to his service in the military].⁵⁶ The vast majority of the business and recreation community approved of the plan. To “all the chambers of commerce, tourist agencies, hotels and automobile service shops, etc. in the state,” it was “a project which—like the Jungfrau railroad, the Columbia highway or the Axen Strasse—in making the more stupendous beauties of nature available to the average man, becomes ‘a household word’ in the country and brings the rewards of favorable publicity to a region which profits by rendering a substantial spiritual benefit.”⁵⁷



Figure 28 Hikers at Cloud Cap Inn, c. 1905.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁵⁶ “Chief Forester Coming,” *The Oregonian*, April 3, 1927.

⁵⁷ Scott, *We Climb High*, 34; Quote from “Charm of Isolation Saved,” *The Oregonian*, July 26, 1927.

One interest group struggled to come to a consensus in regards to the ambitious plans: the mountain-climbing Mazamas. Even before Greeley asked for Portlanders' input, members of the Mazamas formed their own committee to study the proposal. As most of them viewed it, the idea of a tramway represented a "menace" to the mountain and an affront to their primitivist sensibilities.⁵⁸ Not all agreed, however. One particularly influential member, former President John A. Lee, thought highly of the mountain's development overall. Having explored Mount Hood's rugged northwest slope for the first time several years earlier in 1921, Lee proposed an access road across the mountain's north face, to complement the incomplete highway on the south side, stating,

the tourist could motor entirely around the mountain on a road of easy grade and be in close proximity to the mountain at all points of the circuit. Its scenic possibilities would be unsurpassed. There would be no other road like it anywhere in the United States, for no other of our snow-peaks has a road completely encircling it.⁵⁹

Lee's feelings about road development translated into support for the CDC's tram idea. And, as the head of the committee appointed to investigate the proposal, he "turned in a unanimous and glowing endorsement of the project." But, Lee's endorsement "was promptly slapped down by the Executive Council," and the conflict began.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Scott, *We Climb High*, 37.

⁵⁹ This is a little surprising given that Lee cut his teeth in the club during their golden years just after the turn of the century. He served as President in 1910–1. The road he proposed is known today as Lolo Pass Road. It was not built until the 1950s out of concerns that it would threaten the Bull Run watershed. *Ibid.*, 22. Quote from Lee, "Paradise Park," 39–40. Another member repeated Lee's proposal the following year after another trip to Mount Hood's north slope. Jamieson Parker, "Mazamas in Paradise Park, Mount Hood, July Fourth, 1922," *Mazama* 6 (1922): 46–50. He and other of the Mazamas continued to support road construction at least through the 1920s. "Mazamas Desire 2 Roads on Hood."

⁶⁰ Scott, *We Climb High*, 31.

Despite the persistence of the Lee faction, the Mazamas in 1927 came out against the tramway proposal—one of only two civic organizations to oppose it.⁶¹ Remarkably, Greeley sided with the minority recreation clubs and vetoed the CDC’s plans in April “on the grounds that sentiment connected with climbing a mountain was much more valuable than the commercial benefits gained through greater accessibility of the mountain.”⁶² The Portland business community again petitioned Greeley on behalf of the CDC later that month, and again Greeley struck down the proposal.⁶³ Following the second denial, things began to get ugly in Oregon as supporters mobilized.

In July, the Portland Presidents’ Council, a coalition of twenty-two civic clubs including the Mazamas and Oregon Trails Club, opened a new appeal to Forest Service officials without the approval of the two dissenting member organizations. This time, however, they went above Chief Forester Greeley, directly requesting the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture, William M. Jardine.⁶⁴ For added support, the Council and the CDC called in Mount Rainier booster groups from Tacoma and Seattle. The clubs from Washington state joined forces just as they proposed a plan to the National Park Service for a similar tramway on their own mountain, albeit one that ended well below the summit.⁶⁵ Members of the organizations, as well as private citizens throughout the

⁶¹ The other group that opposed the proposal was the Oregon Trails Club, which worked closely with the Mazamas through the years and represented members with similar primitivist ideas about recreation. Gregory, “Around Mount Hood Loop in a Chalmers Hotspot Six.”

⁶² “Chief Forester Coming.”

⁶³ “Hood ‘Lift’ Denied on Second Appeal,” *The Oregonian*, April 22, 1927.

⁶⁴ Gregory, “Around Mount Hood Loop in a Chalmers Hotspot Six.”

⁶⁵ “Mt. Hood Tram Sought,” *The Oregonian*, June 21, 1927.

region, sent “a veritable barrage of letters... to Washington, in support of a tramway to the top of Mount Hood.”⁶⁶

The Daily Oregonian began to take sides as well later that summer, printing letters to the editor with few mentions of dissent. One argued that

the error consists in still trying to classify the north side of Hood as an “isolated area.”... The automobile tourist with his tin can and paper napkin has already stormed this redoubt, and those who talk of keeping the Cooper’s spur district in its pristine charm are simply uninformed on the situation... It is just as wrong to cut off these thousands of average people from their opportunity to enjoy the thrill of a real (though comparatively safe) mountain ascent as it is to go to the other extreme and needlessly destroy the attraction of all areas whose chief charm consists in their unspoiled remoteness from all visible signs of civilization.⁶⁷

In other words, the Forest Service would be pandering to elitists if they were to deny provisions for greater accessibility.

The newspaper also printed the letter from the Cascade Development Company to Secretary Jardine, which followed a similar line of reasoning:

The reasons [that Greeley gave for denying the permit]... were not because of... the ground that such a development would not lead to a tremendous patronage by the public who might desire to ascend to the summit of our loftiest nearby peak and secure there the inspiration and benefit that come from the unparalleled view.... His view in the case of Mount Hood is not based on facts, but on an assumption when he says there would be some spiritual, esthetic or sentimental loss and that the opportunity afforded the many people to visit the summit is not sufficient to compensate for this loss.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ “Tramway Barrage Fired,” *The Oregonian*, October 2, 1927.

⁶⁷ “Charm of Isolation Saved.”

⁶⁸ L.L. Tyler quoted in “Tramway Appeal Made to Jardine.”

Likewise one writer, who had just recently visited tramways in the Europe, backed up the CDC when he wrote, “[The Swiss] love their mountains as much as any mountaineer of this region possibly could, and yet they are working on a tremendously strong program of developing trams. To be perfectly frank, they do not desecrate or violate the beauty of the mountains in any way.”⁶⁹ Even so, Secretary Jardine in November “announced that he probably will not make a decision within the year.”⁷⁰

Much to the chagrin of the Cascade Development Company and Portland Presidents’ Council, after a year of deliberating, Jardine decided to appoint a body of “nationally known landscape engineers” to study the plans on the ground in Oregon.⁷¹ In June—now nearly three years since the CDC initially submitted its proposal—the trio arrived. The special committee consisted of Frank Waugh, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and John C. Merriam. While Waugh and Olmsted were world-renowned landscape architects by 1929, Merriam added an outsider’s perspective as a paleontologist, prominent member of the Carnegie Institute, and one of the principle figures in California’s preservationist Save-the-Redwoods League. Collectively they brought years of experience to the issue and studied the proposal systematically and thoroughly.

The report they produced, entitled “Public Values of the Mount Hood Area” (1930), looked at the region from a number of different angles and was “designed to identify and interpret the features... of major public importance” in Mount Hood

⁶⁹ George Lawrence quoted in *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ “Tram Permission Urged,” *The Oregonian*, November 17, 1927.

⁷¹ “Action on Tramway for Mt. Hood Urged,” *The Oregonian*, October 26, 1928.

National Forest. Their job, as assigned by Secretary Jardine—who had now retired and been replaced by Arthur M. Hyde—was “to determine whether certain pending or proposed projects, as for example, the cableway to the summit..., the use of lakes for water storage, the proposed road and trail system, etc., are compatible... with the highest... permanent realization of the potential public values of the areas.”⁷² They divided the report into sections based on “Types of Use,” which they categorized according to the Forest Service’s traditional conservationist mission of natural resource protection and “Certain other types of use of major public importance, especially including those of a recreational, inspirational and education sort.”⁷³ In the latter category, they placed the loop highway, which they noted had “emphatically popularized this circumscribed area and possibly justif[ies] the local claim for Mount Hood as ‘the most accessible mountain in the world.’”⁷⁴

Their conclusions were ambivalent. Though they argued that the redesign of Cloud Cap proposed by architect Carl Linde—a monstrous, five-story Art Deco hotel—would be “excessively and unpleasantly conspicuous,” they saw no reason to side with the “aristocracy” that wished to prohibit the tramway for “sentimental” reasons. Still, “these particular marks or scratches [on the landscape (i.e., development)] would have definite significance as insistent visible reminders that in reaching the vicinity of timber

⁷² Frank Waugh et al., “Public Values of the Mount Hood Area: Report of a Special Committee Appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to Make a Study of the Features or Qualities of Major Public Importance...,” U.S. Forest Service, 1930, v, in Folder Mt Hood NF History, Box 49, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle.

⁷³ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

line one had not escaped for a time beyond the sophisticated and man-dominated region of everyday life into the borders of an ultimate and essentially untamed alpine wilderness....”⁷⁵

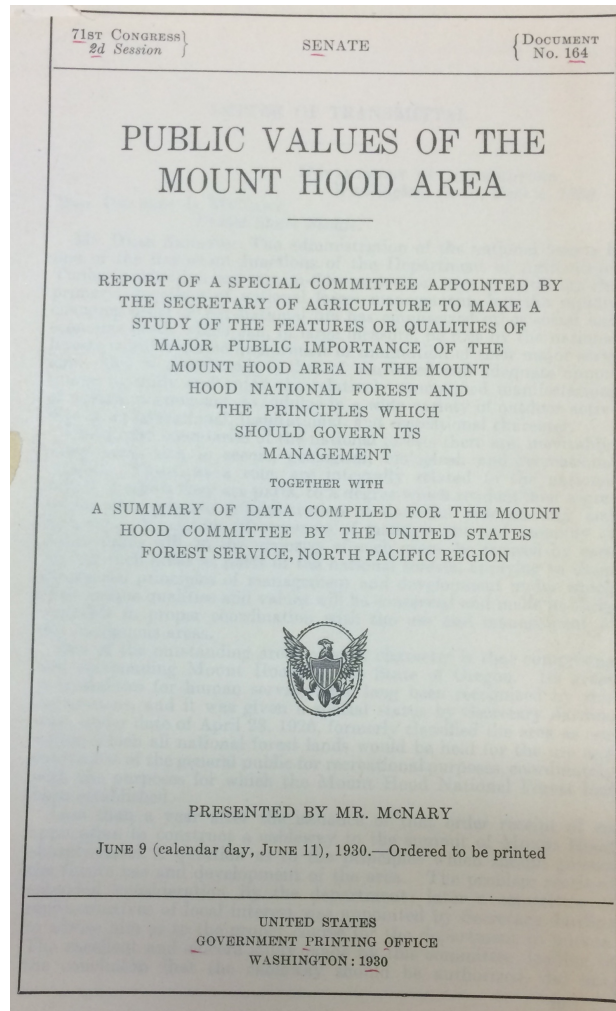


Figure 29 Public Values of the Mount Hood Area, 1930. Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, NARA Regional Collection, Seattle.

In the end, like the Mazamas, they handed in a split decision, opposed two-to-one. While Waugh, the Chairman of the committee, approved of the proposal if only for the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 26–7; Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 29; Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 112–4.

sake of appeasing the local constituency, Olmsted and Merriam could “not bring themselves to ignore or to obscure the critical and fundamental importance of the conclusion... that greater direct values from the area and greater fame for it could in the long run be secured without a tram and cableway to the summit than with it.”⁷⁶

Regardless Secretary Hyde sided with Waugh and approved the tramway, fearful of upsetting a powerful part of the Forest Service’s constituency within the first year of his appointment.⁷⁷

Even with the green light from the Forest Service, the tramway was never built. After nearly five years of bitter letter-writing, name-calling, and infighting, economic forces ultimately defeated the proposal. The stock-market crash of 1929 effectively pulled out the rug from under the Cascade Development Company, and the Cloud Cap Inn’s owners called it quits. Still, the memory of the Mount Hood tramway proposal carried on with Portland civic leaders and outdoor recreation enthusiasts through the end of the Great Depression, and the idea of building above timberline became a common refrain in the 1930s.⁷⁸

Conclusion

Looking back on the controversy surrounding the Mount Hood tramway proposal, one member of the Mazamas, John D. Scott, described 1927 as “a grim and fateful year

⁷⁶ Waugh et al., “Public Values”, 32–3.

⁷⁷ Scott, *We Climb High*, 37; “Portland Pleased by Tramway Ruling,” *The Oregonian*, May 10, 1930.

⁷⁸ Scott, *We Climb High*, 37; Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 14.

for Oregon mountaineering.”⁷⁹ Scott served as club President in 1928–9 during the height of the debate and remembered that in the background, a horrifying streak of mountain-climbing deaths devastated the Pacific Northwest recreation community at the same time that the Cascade Development Company threatened their core belief system.⁸⁰ 1927 was the year that the Mazamas faced their first major test of unity as auto-tourist culture threatened to usurp their privileged position at the top of Mount Hood. Scott later recalled how the division between followers of Lee and the Executive Council (with which Scott sided) almost tore the club apart. In 1894, a generation before the tramway proposal, the Mazamas had been founded on primitivist principles. Now at the end of the 1920s, those principles had been reevaluated and, for most members, reaffirmed.

The report produced by Waugh, Olmsted, and Merriam reflected the restated credo of the Mazamas, but only in part. Significant public demand for the tramway was convincing enough for just one of the three landscape professionals to give their approval to the proposal. For the other two, the tramway would indeed desecrate the sacred space at the top of the mountain. But with the perceived threat of destruction, there was no room for the ambivalence that their meticulous report conveyed. The individualized experience of wilderness suddenly boiled down to a “yes or no” question, with profound effects for the rest of the twentieth century.

“To build or not to build” was a question that was reverberating through Forest Service administration around the same time as well. In 1921, the same year the Federal

⁷⁹ Scott, *We Climb High*, 30.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

Highways Act passed, a young forester by the name of Aldo Leopold began voicing concerns about the surge of roadbuilding in the West and its impact on wildlife. Working at Gila National Forest in western New Mexico, he called for the designation of a protected roadless space that would stretch for nearly 700,000 miles, preserving the region for nature and primitive recreation only, if at all. In 1924, Chief Forester Greeley approved his plan, creating the first designated wilderness of its kind.⁸¹

The idea of protected roadless areas simmered among a tiny minority of foresters until 1926. While Leopold continued to lobby the Forest Service internally and through outside sources, writing in publications like the *Journal of Forestry*, Greeley entertained the idea with more seriousness. His decision to consider the finer points of recreation was partly out of renewed fear that the National Park Service would increase its annexation of national forest land under Stephen Mather's expansionist tendencies. Greeley outlined a loose set of objectives by which districts would survey and evaluate their remaining roadless forests, deserts, and mountains.⁸² In retrospect, it is clear that Leopold also likely influenced Greeley's decision to veto the Cascade Development Company's proposal.

However, these early manifestations of modern wilderness preservationism at the beginning of the 1930s still existed each in their own spheres with little direct connection. Even Greeley's mandate for a national roadless area survey filtered through regional interpretations as district supervisors carried out the plan. What resulted was a number of

⁸¹ For more on Aldo Leopold, see Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 54–99; Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 82–131; “Aldo Leopold: A Brief Chronology,” printed page from AldoLeopold.org, 1999 n.d., in Box 46, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC; Susan Flader, “Aldo Leopold,” 1983, in Box 46, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁸² Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 86–91.

separate proposals, from inside and outside the agency, regarding which roadless areas to recognize and how to manage them. In 1928, the Assistant Forester in charge of the Lands Division, L.F. Kneipp, traveled through the West, observing the survey's progress in different districts. Greeley's goal for his assistant was to come up with a unifying principle that could be outlined in official regulations. The product of Kneipp's tour was the L-20 rule, which gave foresters at the district level the power to designate what they called "primitive areas," reserved for minimal development.⁸³ Over the following two years, primitive areas appeared haphazardly on maps from the Rockies to the Sierras to the Cascades. But to developers and local foresters alike, they hardly appeared at all in reality.⁸⁴

At the regional level, on the other hand, battles over public lands galvanized recreation clubs to band together. In November, 1931, the Mazamas spearheaded a movement to unite the clubs under one umbrella, building the foundation for a more unified voice and voting bloc. The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, as they called it, brought together the Sierra Club of San Francisco, the Mountaineers of Seattle, and the Obsidians of Eugene, amongst others, and set a precedent for grassroots organization in public lands lobbying. At the Federation's first meeting, members established the group's bylaws. They called for both the "Advancement of all projects tending to... promote the interest of the general public in the outdoors," and "Common action towards...

⁸³ "The National Forest Manual: Regulations and Instructions", U.S. Forest Service, 1929-33, 61-L(5)-61-L(6), in Box 5, Acc. 2010: 022, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁸⁴ Gilligan, "Development of Policy," 82-173. For an explanation of the difference between the terms "wilderness" and the watered-down "primitive," see *ibid.*, 126-30.

preserv[ing] areas of great natural beauty against private encroachment and exploitation.”⁸⁵

The Federation failed to acknowledge the Forest Service’s own channels for protecting wilderness, however. The Mazamas, for one, took scant interest in the most noteworthy protected roadless area in their own backyard. Despite being one of the first designations in the country, the Mount Hood Primitive Area on the north side of the mountain received little attention from some of the most ardent opponents of the summit tramway proposal. In fact, the trip eight years earlier that had prompted John Lee to call for a road to the undeveloped side of the mountain, was a hike into the heart of the region that would eventually be protected—albeit weakly—by Kneipp’s new rule.⁸⁶

Though they developed independently of one another, the preservationism of Leopold and Greeley, like the preservationism of the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs and individual recreation club members like John D. Scott, reflected not only fundamental beliefs about nature, but also fundamental beliefs about people. In both contexts, their concern was less with wilderness than with society. One writer for *American Forests and Forest Life* put it succinctly when he wondered, “Perhaps if one closely analyzes the arguments of the true ‘wilderness’ advocate, it will become apparent

⁸⁵ Scott, *We Climb High*, 37–8; Margaret Lynch Payton, “The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs,” *Mazama* 14 (1932), 40.

⁸⁶ A survey of the *Mazama* journals from the interwar period yields no mention of the Mount Hood Primitive Area at all.

that it is not roads but people he objects to. Perhaps he wants ‘wilderness’ to himself and the elect few, and objects to roads because they inevitably bring other people.”⁸⁷

The prospect of avoiding other people in the wilderness would become even more difficult after the Great Depression started to loosen its grip midway through the 1930s. Americans would return to the Great Outdoors in surging numbers during the administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. With a redoubled stream of federal funding, and now supplemented by the eager, youthful labor of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Forest Service would direct a great transformation of the national forests, including Mount Hood. While the memory of the Cascade Development Company’s failed tramway proposal faded with time, the sentiments that compelled both sides—development and preservation—only grew stronger. And, less than a decade later, the federal government would be building its own lodge on the slopes of Mount Hood, with the Mazamas in the background quietly dealing with their new place on the mountain.

⁸⁷ Howard R. Flint, “Wasted Wilderness,” *American Forests and Forest Life* (July 1926), 407, in Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 91.

Chapter Three

“Preeminently a ‘People’s Forest’” Civilian Conservation Corps Truck Trails and Timberline Lodge

By his own account, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had always wanted to visit Mount Hood.¹ When it finally happened on a clear autumn day in 1937, the President likely saw the event as auspicious for both personal and political reasons. Early that morning, he arrived by train on the southern bank of the Columbia River Gorge. After breakfast, with a little assistance, he took the passenger seat in an open-body automobile headed for Hood River. Accompanied by Oregon Governor Charles H. Martin and Portland Mayor Joseph K. Carson, as well as his daughter and a few of his grandchildren, Roosevelt joined a motorcade 26 cars long. Together, they marveled at the signage, comfort stations, and campgrounds that lined the Columbia River Highway, now 20 years old. Roosevelt stopped at Eagle Creek Ranger Station to shake hands with forest officials. He passed under a banner that read, “The U.S. Forest Service Welcomes You.” And when he rounded the bend and headed up the mountain’s northeast flank on the Mount Hood Loop Highway, young men from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)—one of many New Deal public works programs that Roosevelt had authorized in 1933—stood at attention along the roadside, saluting their Commander-in-Chief. As one newspaper put it, “Mount Hood National Forest was appropriately ‘dressed’ for the occasion.”²

¹ From Franklin Delano Roosevelt's dedication speech at Timberline Lodge: “Here I am on the slopes of Mount Hood, where I have always wanted to come.” “Timberline Lodge, Mount Hood, September 28,” untitled speech transcript, 1937, in Folder Operator's Prospectus, Box 92, Acc. 2007: 0100, OSU SCARC.

² “The President arrived at Bonneville...,” untitled report, 1937, in Folder Operator's Prospectus, Box 92, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

President Roosevelt was in the Pacific Northwest on a national tour celebrating the first four years of New Deal reforms. His drive through Mount Hood National Forest, where CCC crews had conducted some of their finest conservation work, held special significance. Much of the Corps' activities in national forests consisted of forestry projects: planting trees, fighting fires, and cutting primitive administrative trails through the woods. But the President's ultimate destination that day was the site of one of their most sophisticated (and visible) efforts at recreation development, an elaborate, rustic hotel called Timberline Lodge, built in partnership with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and perched on the mountain's southern slope, 6,000 feet above Portland. When he finally reached the hotel grounds, Roosevelt could not help but marvel at the view, gazing out over hundreds of square miles of endless wilderness. Following a brief tour of the lodge, the President stood behind a podium on the deck of the unfinished structure and, paying great attention to his choice of words, declared, "The people of the United States are singularly fortunate in having such great areas... permanently available for many different forms of use." The speech marked the zenith of Roosevelt's day and a significant moment in his legacy as a conservationist.³

The construction of Timberline Lodge between 1936 and 1938 was a flagship project for the Forest Service under FDR's New Deal planning initiatives, which funneled emergency federal dollars into conservation and infrastructure improvement to

³ "Timberline Lodge," untitled speech transcript; "The President arrived at Bonneville..." untitled report; "President Enters State At Ontario By Auto From Boise; Two Speeches Will Dedicate Dam, Lodge Today," *The Oregonian*, September 28, 1937, 1, 8; "Chalet On Mountain Given To People," *The Oregonian*, September 29, 1937, 1, 8; Katy Muldoon, "Presidential Pomp," *The Oregonian*, September 23, 2012, L, L4.

boost the U.S. economy during the Great Depression. New Deal initiatives had a particularly strong impact on public lands. The influx of funding and labor ushered in a decade of unprecedented development in national forests across the country. For an agency that had battled to maintain autonomy and define its role in conserving the United States's vast western forest reserves since its creation in 1905, the years between Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933 and the end of New Deal spending in 1942 were truly exceptional times for the Forest Service.⁴

As it had in the 1910s and 1920s, Mount Hood National Forest remained at the forefront of USFS administration in regards to recreation development. But, whereas private, local interest and investment drove development in the previous two decades, federal administrators took the reins during the 1930s and early 40s. With two scenic highways and a growing network of public facilities already in place, Mount Hood foresters hit the ground running with CCC labor and funding. On the mountain's southern and eastern slopes, and in the Columbia River Gorge, officials directed the construction of primitive tributary roads, or truck trails, primarily for administrative use, and later,

⁴ Scholars have approached the history of the New Deal, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and their effects on the U.S. Forest Service from a number of different perspectives. From a federal, administrative perspective, see Otis et al., "The USFS and the CCC"; Steen, *The USFS: A History*, 16–26. From a regional Pacific Northwest perspective, see Williams, *The USFS in the PNW*, 113–65; Elizabeth Gail Throop, "Utterly Visionary and Chimerical: A Federal Response to the Depression: An Examination of Civilian Conservation Corps Construction on National Forest System Lands in the Pacific Northwest," (MA thesis, Portland State University, 1979). From a personal perspective, see Robert Allen Ermentrout, *Forgotten Men: The Civilian Conservation Corps* (Smithtown, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1982); Ernest A. Hayden, *The Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s* (Self-published: Callahan, Calif., 1985). Through the narrative of Timberline Lodge: Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 34–7. From an environmental history perspective, see Wells, *Car Country*, 201–27; Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2005). Also, from a contemporary perspective, see Robert Fechner, "Two Years of Emergency Conservation Work (Civilian Conservation Corps): April 5, 1933–March 31, 1935," U.S. Forest Service, 1935, 99076-F; Ray Hoyt, *"We Can Take It": A Short Story of the CCC* (New York, N.Y.: American Book Company, 1935).

used CCC crews to improve picnic areas, campgrounds, hiking trails, ranger stations, and downhill ski facilities. After 1937, when development reached its climax and work neared completion on Timberline Lodge, USFS publications were selling Mount Hood National Forest as “preeminently a ‘people’s forest,’ making important contributions to human welfare and happiness.”⁵ During the New Deal, the Forest Service came to see Mount Hood as an opportunity to showcase its nationwide commitment to the use of national forests by the recreating public.



Figure 30 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressing the crowd at Timberline Lodge, 1937.

U.S. Forest Service, from Wikimedia Commons.

The changes taking place in Oregon’s most popular forest also reflected broader shifts in Forest Service administration as federal foresters took steps at the national level

⁵ “*Your* Mount Hood National Forest,” map, U.S. Forest Service, 1939, in Folder Mount Hood National Forest Maps and Recreation Guides, Box 49, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle.

toward acknowledging the rise of auto-tourism, which continued to grow in popularity despite the deepening economic depression.⁶ Forest Service officials, for the first time, established a division to coordinate recreation development at the national level, even hiring landscape architects to oversee CCC projects—something they had been unwilling to do during the 1910s and 1920s. Suddenly, national forests across the country were beginning to look like the Mount Hood Recreation Area and Columbia Gorge Park, with lodging, sanitation, and public relations facilities to meet the demands of tourists, who were arriving almost exclusively by automobile. National forest visitation skyrocketed after a brief lull during the Great Depression’s early years. This time, when visitors arrived, the Forest Service was there to greet them. These were the years in which national forests came to look the way they do to picnickers, campers, and motorists today: as hospitable to recreational users as the national parks.⁷

Beyond its indication of shifting economic, national, and administrative history, the story of Timberline Lodge and the CCC in Mount Hood National Forest illustrates most importantly the complicated social and intellectual changes that were taking place within U.S. environmental politics during the interwar years. For the first time in U.S. history, it was possible to speak of a popular movement concerned with the

⁶ Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 19–53; Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 46–81; Steen, *USFS: A History*, 103–67; Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 1–15; Williams, *The USFS in the PNW*, 59–112; Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*, 43–76.

⁷ William Tweed argues that “the level of development of some of the more popular National Forest areas in the Northwest even surpassed that of the National Parks of the Region.” Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 22.

environment.⁸ No longer just a disparate collection of elite preservationists, conservation scientists, and regional auto-tourists, the citizen base of public land users widened across the nation during the 1930s to include a larger portion of the population. The work of the CCC—to use the words of historian Neil Maher—helped “democratize” public lands conservation.⁹ Young, predominantly white, working- and middle-class men suddenly found themselves in national forests, working with hatchets and cross-saws, planting seedlings, building cabins, and cutting roads. When their work was done, Corps enrollees brought home those skills and experiences to share with families and friends, who undoubtedly had seen film reels or read news stories conveying the value of such New Deal conservation.¹⁰ Before blossoming in the postwar years, the modern American environmental movement established its roots during the New Deal era.

But divisions still ran deeply through discussions about the proper way to develop public lands. In fact, the line between technological optimist and wilderness preservationist grew starker during the 1930s. The rise of a popular, national

⁸ Many scholars would argue, however, that the modern environmental movement per se did not begin until after World War II. See, for example, Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2005 [1993]); Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁹ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 9.

¹⁰ Neil Maher argues that the CCC played a major role in the birth of mid-century U.S. environmental politics. Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 3–16. Overall, both scholarly and popular narratives of the CCC tend to champion this legacy of the CCC, sometimes uncritically. See, for example, Priscilla Wegars, *As Rugged as the Terrain: CCC “Boys,” Federal Convicts, and World War II Alien Internees Wrestle with a Mountain Wilderness* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press, 2013); Robert Pasquill, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, 1933–1942: A Great and Lasting Good* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009); *American Experience: The Civilian Conservation Corps*, television documentary, American Public Broadcasting Service, 2009; *Oregon Experience: Civilian Conservation Corps*, television documentary, Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2009; *The Greatest Good: A Forest Service Centennial Film*, documentary video, U.S. Forest Service, 2006.

environmental consciousness precipitated drastic changes in how recreational users and developers viewed nature and its relationship with the roads that provided access to it. As the decade wore on, federal conservation projects began to receive criticism from a small but influential contingent of John Muir-style preservationists, who argued that the work of the CCC spoiled the seemingly pristine, natural character of the land, thus negating the scenic value the Forest Service had hoped to preserve.¹¹ Such protests against road and recreation development began at the end of the previous decade and grew in volume during the New Deal. With the construction of massive forest road networks and tourist facilities like Timberline Lodge, it appeared that the agency had effectively ignored the need for spaces devoted to primitive recreation.

As a result, the changes wrought by New Deal public works projects galvanized an evolving cohort of wilderness preservationists to take action against the automobile, which they rightly saw as the primary catalyst for change. At the national level, recreation planners and ecologically minded foresters such as Aldo Leopold and Robert “Bob” Marshall protested development in abstract terms. In 1935, a select group of these men formed the Wilderness Society, publishing influential essays in journals across the country and leveraging their positions within the federal government to advocate for the protection of roadless areas from further development.¹² But unlike the popularization of

¹¹ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 165–80.

¹² Paul Sutter argues that “New Deal conservation work projects, particularly by emphasizing road building and recreational development, threatened wilderness as these activists [Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, etc.] defined it... These New Deal developments precipitated the founding of the Wilderness Society.” Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 3–4, 95. For a nuanced understanding of the ecological turn in forestry during the New Deal, see, Emily K. Brock, *Money Trees: The Douglas Fir and American Forestry, 1900–1944* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015), 100–131.

traditional conservation and recreation concerns, the Wilderness Society's message failed to trickle down to the public. At the local level, battles over development were more selective and reflected ambivalence toward and, to a certain extent, ignorance of roadless wilderness preservation.

As it had during the Cascade Development Company's campaign to build a Mount Hood summit tramway, Portland's Mazamas mountaineering club represented a key dissenting voice in the discussion of Mount Hood National Forest's development during the New Deal. Though the Mazamas very much enjoyed the fruits of public development projects on Mount Hood since they began in the early 1920s, the completion of Timberline Lodge in 1938 capped a tumultuous decade in the relationship between the Forest Service and club members, who still seemed disinclined to share their playground with the masses. A year after the lodge opened, one of the more outspoken members, Fred McNeil, lamented, "The primitiveness of the forested south slope of Mount Hood, cherished so solicitously [sic] by the Forest Service for years, is gone. Well, let's hope the Mazamas are through trying to get above the influx of civilization on the mountain."¹³ For McNeil, the encroaching public trampled upon the very things that made the wilderness around Mount Hood so special to club members: its lack of technology and humans (except for themselves). However, as in the previous debate, the group's voice was far from singular, with many members choosing to support the Forest Service over the alternative of national park designation.

¹³ Fred H. McNeil, "Leading the Snow Army," *Mazama* 21 (1939), 67.

The mid-1930s thus marked a critical turning point in the history of natural resource preservation. The tone that was set during the late interwar years would carry over into postwar decades and culminate in the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964. In this way, scholars like Paul Sutter and Neil Maher are right to argue that the New Deal, and particularly the CCC, had a tremendous impact on modern U.S. environmental politics.¹⁴ Mount Hood and national forests across the country were becoming more accessible than ever. The tension that underlay forest road construction and recreation development—apparent in the Columbia River Highway and Mount Hood Loop Highway projects—was reaching a breaking point.

Despite the founding of the Wilderness Society, with its unwavering fight against motorized recreation, local clubs like the Mazamas, which were becoming increasingly involved in conservation politics, asserted their own colloquial definitions of wilderness that sometimes conflicted with that of Marshall and Leopold. Members of the Mazamas drew upon their previous experiences with the Forest Service and came to pragmatic conclusions about developments like Timberline Lodge that made room for both primitive recreational pursuits and the convenience of twentieth-century living. By focusing only on prominent national expressions of radical land management proposals, historians have passed over an opportunity to understand more moderate perspectives from a time when environmental politics was only beginning to take on its current,

¹⁴ In his take on the CCC, Neil Maher does well to fill a blind spot in U.S. environmental history by asking how “the United States [got] from Hetch Hetchy to Echo Park,” but he addresses the New Deal transition from a wide-lens angle that sometimes fails to capture local nuances. Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, quote from 5. Sutter, *Driven Wild*.

fundamentally polarized form in the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹⁵ Prior to World War II, the impetus that both united and divided the preservation community was Roosevelt's "forest army": the Civilian Conservation Corps.¹⁶

"Tying together Oregon's mountains"

Franklin Roosevelt was a lifelong supporter of public lands conservation. A distant cousin of former President Theodore Roosevelt and an heir to his progressive politics, FDR saw state-sponsored natural resource management as critical to the social, economic, and moral health of the nation.¹⁷ Ascending to the presidency during the Great Depression presented an opportunity to showcase his ideals. When he entered office on March 4, 1933, Roosevelt put conservation at the forefront of early New Deal planning. Announced less than three weeks after inauguration, the new President's plan called for \$200 million toward the "enrollment of 50,000 [eventually over 250,000] idle men in camps in national and state forests for employment at \$30 a month on reforestation and conservation work."¹⁸ Compared to his other, more vaguely outlined plans for fiscal restructuring and public works subsidies, Roosevelt clearly articulated the role that

¹⁵ For a theoretical take on this late-twentieth-century divide, see, Richard White, "Are You an Environmentalist, or Do You Work for a Living?: Work and Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995): 171–85.

¹⁶ News reports often referred to the CCC as FDR's "forest army." Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 48–49. See, for example, "2000 Men Set as Oregon's Quota in U.S. Forest Conservation Corps," *The Oregonian*, April 15, 1933, 1, 12.

¹⁷ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 17–42; Otis et al., "The USFS and the CCC," 5–6. For the most recent comprehensive biography of Franklin Roosevelt up to World War II, see, Roger Daniels, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Road to the New Deal, 1882–1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

¹⁸ These numbers would change as the program developed. "Jobs in Prospect for 250,000 Men," *The Oregonian*, March 22, 1933, 1, 3.

conservation would play in the nation's economic recovery. On April 5, he issued Executive Order 6101, officially creating the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program. ECW would come to be known by the name of its labor force, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Within a month, the first CCC enrollees arrived at camp in the forests of northern Virginia.¹⁹

The first CCC camps opened in the Pacific Northwest just a few weeks later.²⁰ With 13 national forests, located primarily in the western half of the state, Oregon looked to “benefit largely” from ECW projects under the direction of the Forest Service.²¹ As early as June, the state's vast Douglas-fir forests pulsed with activity. Thousands of young men streamed into 45 camps sprinkled throughout western and southern Oregon. In Mount Hood National Forest, the Forest Service established 10 camps during the first enrollment period.²²

The majority of CCC projects during that summer on Mount Hood—and throughout the rest of the country—reflected the Forest Service's emphasis on custodial forest protection, particularly fire mitigation.²³ Forest fire prevention and suppression had

¹⁹ Ermentrout, *Forgotten Men*, 14; Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 16; Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 3; Otis et al., “The USFS and the CCC,” 6–8.

²⁰ “Zero Hour Waited for Camp Opening,” *The Oregonian*, May 7, 1933, 8.

²¹ “Oregon Will Benefit Largely Under Roosevelt's Reforestation Program,” *The Oregonian*, March 24, 1933, 1, 2. For a detailed breakdown of the CCC's administrative structure, see Otis, “The USFS and the CCC,” 6–13; Fechner, “Two Years of ECW,” 1935.

²² “Zero Hour,” “65 Forest Camps Placed in Oregon,” *The Oregonian*, April 21, 1933, 14.

²³ “65 Forest Camps,” Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 45–57; Otis et al., “The USFS and the CCC,” 46; Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 16; Hoyt, “*We Can Take It*,” 66–68; “Tree Troops Put Forests In Shape,” *The Oregonian*, August 12, 1933, 1, 10.

been a major concern for the agency since its establishment.²⁴ CCC labor helped to lower the chances of fire through preventative measures and by developing Mount Hood National Forest's limited surveillance and communications network.²⁵ Tasks ranged from simple and tedious, like clearing brush and establishing trails, to complex and dangerous, like felling trees and constructing lookout towers. For their first project on the south slope of Mount Hood, CCC crews cut snags, or dead standing trees, near Government Camp and at the headwaters of the Clackamas River.²⁶ They also cleared wind-felled timber.

More often, CCC teams built roads.²⁷ These primitive dirt roads, or "truck trails," as the Forest Service called them, increased access to remote locations for fire suppression and surveillance and were intended primarily for light, administrative use.²⁸ During the first summer alone, enrollees from one camp at the base of Mount Hood built 48 miles of truck trails.²⁹ Roadbuilding projects became especially important for the public image of the Forest Service after a dry spell in 1933 led to several major summer wildfires in Oregon and elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest.

²⁴ Steen, *The USFS: A History*, 173–175. Even before Gifford Pinchot established the Forest Service in 1905, fire suppression on forest reserves was a high priority. "Forest Reserve Manual, for the Information and Use of Forest Officers," General Land Office, 1902, 27–30, in Box 41, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

²⁵ A good explanation of the connection between forest development and fire prevention can be found in, "Forestry in the Pacific Northwest: A Reference Handbook for CCC Forestry Classes," The U.S. Forest Service North Pacific Region, 1935, 47–48, in Box 32, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle.

²⁶ "65 Forest Camps."

²⁷ One story from *The Oregonian* during the summer of 1933 carried the sub-headline, "Little Planting of Trees Actually Done; Road Building Leads," and noted, "Unlike early plans announced from Washington, D.C., this work program is not a matter of tree planting, but instead one of timber conservation. It includes the construction of 48 miles of truck trails." "Camps to Produce Better Young Men," *The Oregonian*, June 11, 1933, 14.

²⁸ Forest roads are addressed in, "National Forest Manual," 25-E–59-E, truck trails specifically on 36-E.

²⁹ "Camps to Produce Better Young Men."

One of the most infamous of these fires occurred in the Coast Range mountains, west of Portland. The Wilson River Fire—popularly known as the first Tillamook Burn—began at the height of the fire season and simmered for 10 days before blowing up on August 24. The inferno filled the skies over Portland with smoke and endangered the coastal town of Tillamook.³⁰ Although the blaze occurred on private timberland nearly 100 miles away, USFS directors sent CCC crews from Mount Hood National Forest to help with suppression.³¹ Despite their best efforts, the fire burned for several more weeks, torching over 500 square miles of valuable timber. The experience left a lasting impression on the minds (and lungs) of Oregonians for years to come. The Tillamook Burn was a public relations nightmare for the timber industry as well as state and federal foresters, who the public saw as ineffectual in the face of catastrophe. Fire brigades blamed their inability to quickly extinguish the flames on a lack of access to the densely forested mountains, which at the time were served only by logging railroads. Hoping to

³⁰Brock, *Money Trees*, 100–103; J. Larry Kemp, *Epitaph for the Giants: The Story of the Tillamook Burn* (Portland, Oreg.: The Touchstone Press, 1967); “Desperate Fight Waged on Fires,” *The Oregonian*, August 28, 1933, 1, 4; “History of the Tillamook State Forest,” Oregon Department of Forestry, Tillamook State Forest, accessed May 29, 2015, <http://www.oregon.gov/odf/tillamookstateforest/pages/history.aspx>; John D. Guthrie, “Great Forest Fires of America,” *The U.S. Forest Service*, 1936, 9–10, in Box 46, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

³¹This was one of the first instances where CCC enrollees engaged in fire suppression, rather than mitigation. Alison Otis et al claim that “300 men from 6 Mount Hood camps helped fight the large Wilson River fire.” Otis et al., “The USFS and the CCC,” 46, quote from 118. After the Wilson River fire, CCC enrollees were quickly dispatched to wildfires throughout the Pacific Northwest. See, for example, “Hood River Blaze Halted,” *The Oregonian*, August 28, 1933, 4; “Olympic Forest Ablaze,” *The Oregonian*, August 28, 1933, 4.

prevent the same sort of disaster from occurring on national forest lands, USFS officials redoubled their commitment to the construction of fire roads.³²

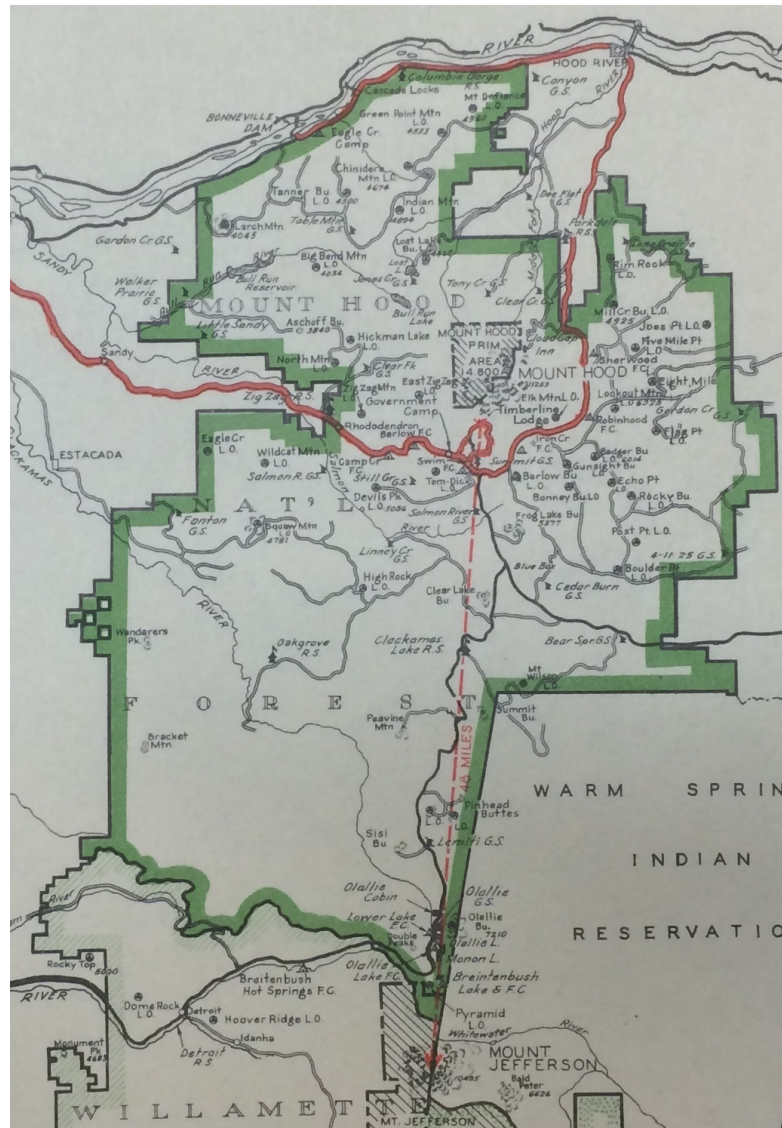


Figure 31 Highways, truck trails and lookout towers in Mount Hood National Forest. Detail from map in “A Few Forest Facts,” U.S. Forest Service, 1937. Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, NARA Regional Collection, Seattle.

³² For a discussion of the severity of the 1933 fire season in the Pacific Northwest and the ways the CCC helped with fire mitigation and suppression on national forests, see, “Report of the Forester,” U.S. Forest Service, 1934, 18–21, in Box 5, Acc. 2010: 084, Gerald Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

Over the next two years, roadbuilding comprised over half of all CCC projects in Oregon.³³ Nationwide, USFS-sponsored road construction and improvement totaled 100,000 miles.³⁴ Networks of truck trails quickly expanded into formerly remote sections of forest. Teams built truck trails up “to commanding ridges and along the crests of these ridges,” connecting ranger stations to lookout towers and increasing visibility over the flammable forest.³⁵ As roads began to penetrate deeper, USFS officials observed happily that the access they provided had major benefits for forest management.

The structure of CCC administration came to rely on truck trails to transport officials and crews between centralized locations and remote outposts, called side camps or spikes.³⁶ North Pacific Regional Forester Clarence J. Buck estimated that the side camp system helped to double the CCC’s productivity in the Pacific Northwest.³⁷ Truck trails and side camps greatly improved the speed and efficiency of forest development between 1933 and 1935. The Oregon State Forestry Department, which worked in

³³ Otis et al, “The USFS and the CCC,” 46.

³⁴ Hoyt, “*We Can Take It*”, 77.

³⁵ “Camps to Produce Better Young Men.”

³⁶ The structure of the CCC resembled that of the military, partly because the Department of War supervised its operations. Oregon was part of the IX Corps Area. The IX Corps Area contained the largest number of camps in the country, including all of California, as well as Oregon and Washington. Directives came from the Army's regional headquarters in San Francisco. Enrollees' first stop was Fort Vancouver in southwest Washington; this was the central conditioning and distribution center for Region Six of the U.S. Forest Service. The Army fort, just across the Columbia River from Portland, served as the hub for all CCC activity in Oregon and Washington. From Fort Vancouver, enrollees were sent to forest camps in more remote locations. Army officials supervised camps in western Oregon and Washington from stations at Fort Stevens and Fort Lewis. They made regular visits to the camps driving government-issued trucks on roads the CCC constructed themselves. Otis et al., “The USFS and the CCC,” 45; “Vancouver Barracks, Ninth Corps Area: Official Annual, 1937,” *Civilian Conservation Corps, 1938*, in Gerald Williams Collection, OSU SCARC; “Forest Recruits Go to Barracks,” *The Oregonian*, April 29, 1933, 1, 8; Donald B. Chapman, “Conservation Corps Boys Sore-Armed but Happy,” *The Oregonian*, April 30, 1933, 14.

³⁷ Otis et al, “The USFS and the CCC,” 45–46.

partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, applauded the CCC's efforts, noting that "10–15 years of work" had been accomplished in just two short years since the President's first executive order.³⁸ Truck trails played a major role in that success.

In an unintended, though perhaps not unexpected way, the expanding road network also served the interests of recreational motorists. Except for a few restricted routes through the Bull Run River watershed, newly developed forest roads were open for non-official use, weather permitting. And people used them; forester Buck stated frankly in a 1934 interview, "Where there are roads, you'll find the public."³⁹ Though less frequented than the main thoroughfares, truck trails represented novel, relatively rugged ways of exploring the "playground" in Portland's "front yard."⁴⁰ Articles in popular newspapers and magazines, such as the *Daily Oregonian* and *Oregon Motorist*, celebrated what they saw as the democratizing effects of CCC roadbuilding on the state's public forests.⁴¹ Scenic locations hidden deep in the mountains, formerly accessible only to those who could afford the luxury of extended excursions, suddenly became extensions of more centralized recreation areas, just a bumpy drive away.

Like recreation more generally, non-official use of truck trails presented a conundrum for the Forest Service. Though CCC initiatives had succeeded in reducing the occurrence of forest fires overall, they simultaneously increased the risk of human-caused

³⁸ "State Forester Annual Report," Oregon Department of Forestry, 1935, 32, in Box 9, Acc. 2005: 090, Royal G. Jackson Papers, OSU SCARC.

³⁹ Lawrence Barber, "Tying together Oregon's mountains," *The Oregon Motorist* (July 1934): 7, in Otis et al., "The USFS and the CCC," 46.

⁴⁰ "Playground in a City's Front Yard: Mount Hood Forest," *The Oregonian*, June 9, 1935, 23.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; Barber, "Tying together," *The Oregon Motorist*, in Otis et al., *The USFS and the CCC*; Neal Jones, "The Humble Picnic Entices 1,000,000 Customers," *The Oregonian*, June 2, 1940, 4–5.

fires in areas that previously had seen little visitation.⁴² USFS officials acknowledged the problem and attempted to solve it by increasing the agency's focus on public relations and education. In maps, at ranger stations, and on official signage throughout Mount Hood National Forest appeared warnings with instructions on how to properly extinguish campfires and dispose of cigarette butts.⁴³ Materials stressed the obligation users had to prevent forest fires at the individual level. In this way, the well-known public safety announcements of the postwar years, like Smokey Bear's famous "Only You" tagline, can trace their roots to the 1930s, when mass recreation began to spread throughout national forests along CCC-built truck trails.

At the same time, the Forest Service also saw the presence of new visitors as an opportunity to improve their public image and connect with a wider section of the voting public. The CCC itself became a significant component of the Forest Service's public relations campaigns. In local newspapers across the country—but particularly in Oregon, where the economy relied heavily on forest products and recreational auto-tourism—CCC "boys" became the face of America's national forests.⁴⁴ Articles encouraged campers and picnickers to observe ongoing CCC projects and conveyed the purposes of

⁴² The CCC forestry reference handbook noted that, due to the danger of fires caused by recreational users, foresters sometimes restricted or "discouraged" the use of truck trails during fire season. "Forestry in the PNW: A Reference Handbook," 47.

⁴³ Such public safety messages appeared earlier in the 1920s but proliferated in the 1930s. See, for example, C.M. Granger, "Foreword," in "Public Relations Handbook," The U.S. Forest Service North Pacific District, 1927, in Box 34, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle. Also, see "Your Mount Hood," map, 1939; "The Humble Picnic," *The Oregonian*; Guthrie, "Great Forest Fires;" "Mount Hood National Forest: Its Purposes and Resources," map, U.S. Forest Service, 1927, in Box 63, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald Williams Collection, OSU SCARC; Various fire prevention postcards, U.S. Forest Service, c. 1920s–1940s, in Box 44, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁴⁴ "Camps to Produce Better Young Men;" Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 77–150.

such activities. In the Northwest, regional foresters positioned Camp Zigzag, just off the highway to Mount Hood's most popular recreation area near Government Camp, to be a flagship CCC camp. "Owing to its easy accessibility to the populous northwestern portion of Oregon," one *Oregonian* reporter explained, "this camp is expected by forest service officers to become the show place of all of the forest army camps in the Pacific northwest."⁴⁵ The Section of Education and Information, a division of the USFS North Pacific Region, prepared the young men to greet visitors, supplying camps with reference handbooks that presented facts, figures, and talking points on everything from tree identification to forestry economics to Forest Service history. When referring to national forests, for example, the handbook advised, "never refer to them as 'forest reserves.'" This was done in order to standardize administrative language but also to portray the forests as welcoming to recreational users.⁴⁶

By 1935, the national forest visitor experience had changed dramatically from just a few years prior as a result of Civilian Conservation Corps labor and funding. Under Roosevelt's New Deal, new roads opened up formerly remote areas; new rhetoric championed non-productive resource use; and new faces gave the former forest reserves a more youthful, healthy, and dynamic appearance. As a result, many Americans looked to enjoy their new and improved "vacation lands," often choosing national forests over more distant national parks.⁴⁷ Between 1934 and 1935, nationwide national forest

⁴⁵ "Camps to Produce Better Young Men." In addition to its easy accessibility, Camp Zigzag was also the longest-running and one of the largest camps in the Pacific Northwest. Otis et al, "The USFS and the CCC," 125-136.

⁴⁶ "Forestry in the PNW: A Reference Handbook," quote from 50.

⁴⁷ Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 3-4.

visitation nearly doubled.⁴⁸ Such successes, however, also created new challenges for the Forest Service. Over the next three years, federal foresters would come to terms with the skyrocketing demand for recreation development, finally adapting to the times and capitalizing on national forests' growing popularity. But in doing so, the agency would complicate its mission even further and enter a new era of discussion about the appropriate form and scale of development on America's public lands.



Figure 32 CCC Camp Zigzag float in Portland Rose Parade, 1939.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁴⁸ "Report of the Forester," 1935, 34. It is worth noting that auto-tourists likely also chose to visit local national forests due to the cost of taking longer trips to more distant national parks.

Timberline Lodge and the USFS Division of Recreation and Lands

In early 1936, the Roosevelt Administration was mulling over the possibility of reducing the number of CCC camps across the country.⁴⁹ Oregon Governor Charles Martin wrote the President, asking that he recognize the degree to which rural timber economies and state forestry bureaus had come to rely on the Corps's conservation work and reconsider the reductions, at least in Oregon.⁵⁰ Though Roosevelt did wind up scaling back the number of camps nationwide that year, he still granted Governor Martin's wish; the CCC remained a strong presence in Oregon for several more years.⁵¹ But what Martin originally wanted and what Martin ultimately got over the next seven years ended up being two qualitatively different things for reasons beyond the Governor's (and the President's) control. The Emergency Conservation Work of years prior and the tasks performed by CCC crews after 1935 diverged in a number of fundamental ways.

For the Forest Service, the concerns of traditional forest conservation—i.e., the natural resource protection and development Governor Martin desired—were giving way to popular demand for outdoor recreation facilities such as developed campgrounds, picnic areas, and lodges. ECW projects followed the trend. 1935 and 1936 were watershed years in the direction of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the history of conservationism more broadly. By 1937, when Governor Martin rode up the Mount Hood Highway to Timberline Lodge with President Roosevelt, both politicians had reoriented

⁴⁹ The ECW bill was subject to review every six months, so it was under constant threat of elimination. Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 45.

⁵⁰ Otis et al, "The USFS and the CCC," 118.

⁵¹ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 38.

their understanding of the CCC's purpose to include recreation development as essential to the conservation of America's national forests. In effect, the CCC—still under the direction of the Forest Service, but now borrowing ideas from the National Park Service (NPS) and sometimes in partnership with the newly created Works Progress Administration (WPA)—came to exemplify conservation's evolving ideals, completing projects that until recently seemed well outside of the program's scope.⁵²

During the first two years of Emergency Conservation Work, when CCC crews only took on projects with clear benefits to forest protection, recreation development was usually coincidental, as was the case with truck trails. Sometimes, the Forest Service tacked on basic, value-added projects, like roadside beautification, to utilitarian jobs.

Without a working knowledge of landscape architecture, foresters used what they knew.

As one contemporary writer described it, scenic resource development was

not a matter of “gilding the lily,” but of “dressing to best display one's charms.”... Roadsides need to be cleared of the debris that mars the beauties that surround them. Foot and horse trails need to be made passable and located so as to afford the hiker and the rider the most advantageous views of scenery or the most impressive retreats into nature's seclusion... Trees and plants must be guarded against disease, banks of streams and rivers must be maintained, and foot bridges and benches and guard rails must be provided.⁵³

For the most part, projects concerned with the purely aesthetic, non-productive dimensions of forest use tended to be minimal or serve multiple purposes. Mount Hood

⁵² Neil Maher, echoing a National Park Service survey from the time, argues that in the mid-1930s, “Americans from all walks of life were in the midst of an outdoor recreation renaissance.” Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 43–76, quote from 67.

⁵³ Hoyt, “*We Can Take It*,” 69; Buck, “Highway Timber Borders;” T.W. Norcross, “Roadside Attractiveness for Highways, Roads, and Truck Trails in the National Forests,” U.S. Forest Service Division of Engineering, 1939.

National Forest, with two highways and a relatively substantial recreation infrastructure already in place, presented USFS officials with an opportunity to practice more involved public accommodation projects. By 1928, Forest Service officials were already counting nearly 2 million people annually visiting the mountains just west of Portland, primarily by automobile.⁵⁴ Though that number bottomed out as the Depression deepened, it picked up again in the mid-1930s.⁵⁵

Before Mount Hood foresters could fully respond to the influx of visitors, however, significant bureaucratic changes first needed to take place at the federal level. In July 1933, with regional foresters inquiring about the appropriate use of CCC labor and funds, Leon F. Kneipp, Assistant Forester in the USFS Lands Division, declared that only simple recreation developments would be permissible; even flush toilets the forester considered too extravagant.⁵⁶ Indeed, the Forest Service Manual explicitly defined recreation as outside of the agency's purview: "It is not the purpose of the Forest Service to duplicate within the national forests the functions, methods, or activities of national, State [sic], or municipal park services, nor to compete with such parks for public patronage or support."⁵⁷ But recreation was beginning to command the attention of

⁵⁴ "Supervisor's Annual Report to District Forester: Estimated Number Recreational Visitations" Mount Hood National Forest, U.S. Forest Service North Pacific District, 1928, in Folder L-Rec Mt. Hood (1925-), Box 67, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle.

⁵⁵ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 67, 70; "Supervisor's Annual Report to District Forester: Estimated Number Recreational Visitations" Mount Hood National Forest, U.S. Forest Service North Pacific District, 1931, in Folder L-Rec Mt. Hood (1925-), Box 67, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle.

⁵⁶ Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 16.

⁵⁷ "National Forest Manual," 1929-33, 98-L.

district foresters throughout the country, with or without official recognition—and no longer just in isolated instances like Mount Hood.

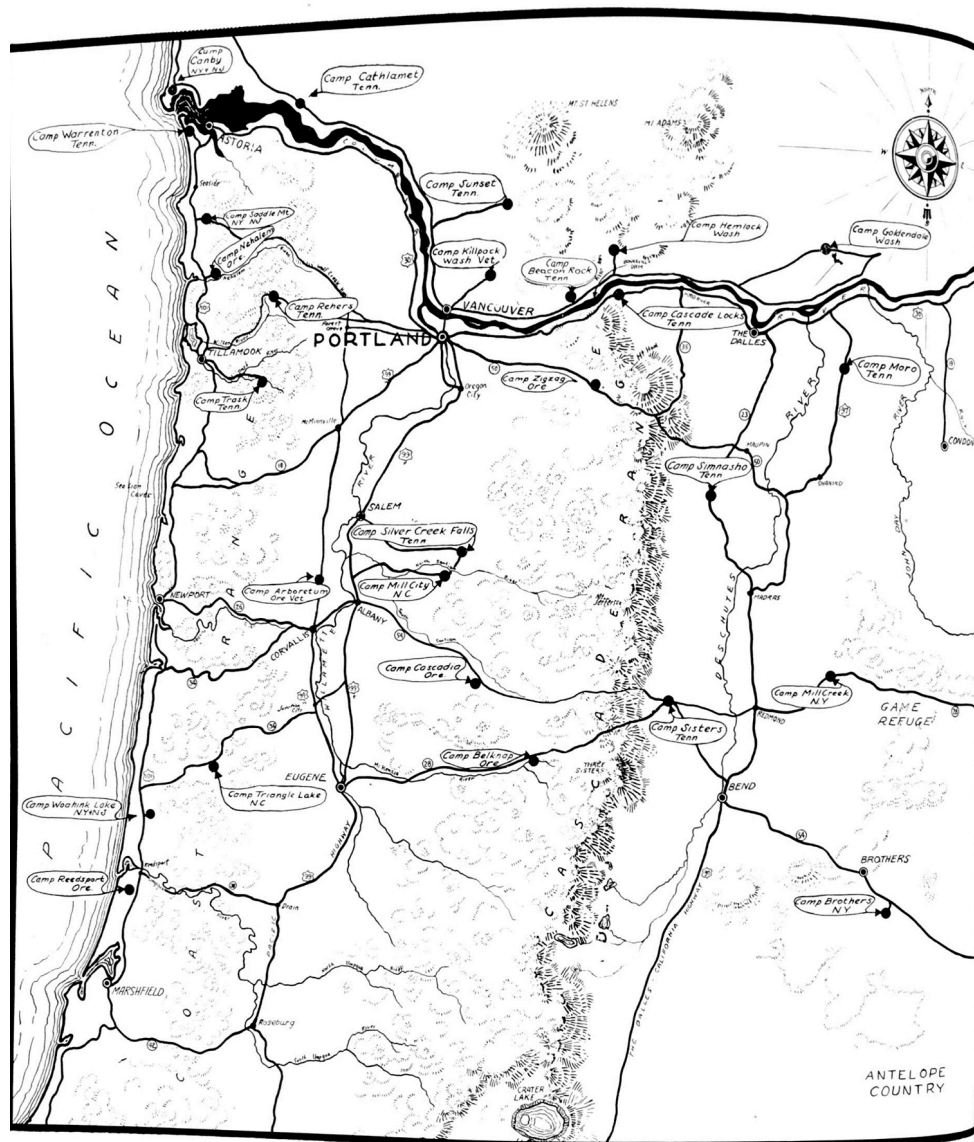
As it turned out, it was, in fact, inter-agency competition that compelled federal foresters to reconsider their position not long after Kneipp's remark.⁵⁸ In June 1934, after a year on the job as a general camp inspector for the CCC, John D. Guthrie wrote to Chief Forester Ferdinand A. Silcox, extolling the high quality of recreation development projects he had observed at camps in state and national parks throughout the country.⁵⁹ Though the national parks initially received far fewer CCC camps than the national forests, amounting to just two camps in all of Oregon in 1933, NPS supervisors were making the most of CCC labor.⁶⁰ Under the direction of NPS landscape architects, crews built entire complexes of recreation facilities, such as Rim Village at Crater Lake. In his letter to Forester Silcox, Guthrie criticized the Forest Service's reluctance to utilize CCC labor for recreation development. "We [the USFS] have followed no such policy and moreover had been using plans made for the earlier regime of scanty funds. When the CCC show is over, I fear our public campgrounds are going to suffer by comparison with those on State Parks and National Parks, and the public may well ask why didn't we do as

⁵⁸ For more on inter-agency competition, see Rothman, "A Real Ding-Dong Fight." On the late 1930s in particular, see Richard Polenberg, "Conservation and Reorganization: The Forest Service Lobby, 1937–1938," *Agricultural History* 39 (1965): 230–9.

⁵⁹ Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 17.

⁶⁰ The number of crews under NPS supervision steadily increased until 1937. Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 67–71; John C. Paige, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and The National Park Service, 1933–1942: An Administrative History," National Park Service, 1985, 38–32. The NPS supervised CCC camps on both national and state park land. See, for example, Zeb Larson, "Silver Falls State Park and the Early Environmental Movement," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 112.1 (2011): 34–57, especially 42–52.

well with the same means at our command.”⁶¹ Silcox forwarded the letter to regional foresters across the country, asking for their input.



MAP OF VANCOUVER BARRACKS, CCC DISTRICT

Figure 33 CCC camps consolidated in the late 1930s. Map from “Civilian Conservation Corps Vancouver Barracks Ninth Corps Area Official Annual,” 1937. Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁶¹ John D. Guthrie quoted in Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 17.

When Guthrie's letter reached the desk of C.J. Buck, the District Forester for the North Pacific Region responded by stating that camp supervisors in Oregon and Washington already were taking on projects not unlike those in national parks.⁶² For example, when CCC crews built the multi-purpose Timberline Trail around Mount Hood in 1934, they built a series of one-room shelters out of native stone along the route to protect rangers and hikers alike from the elements.⁶³ They also made improvements to existing campgrounds and picnic areas.⁶⁴ Still, Buck knew foresters' hands were tied if they wanted to plan anything more substantial. So, when Silcox hired Alfred D. Taylor, President of the American Society of Landscape Architects, to conduct a nationwide study of the problems of recreation in national forests, USFS directors at Mount Hood looked forward to the standardization and increased attention they hoped would result. In November 1935, after reviewing Taylor's recommendations, Chief Forester Silcox re-titled Kneipp's unit the Division of Recreation and Lands. For the first time in the agency's history, recreation received formal recognition.⁶⁵

Forest Service officials in charge of CCC projects immediately implemented the changes suggested in Taylor's report, as well as those of two more recreation studies in 1936. Across the country, enrollees began to build more elaborate structures like amphitheaters, bathhouses, and playgrounds.⁶⁶ The administrative shift had a particularly

⁶² Ibid., 16.

⁶³ Otis et al, "The USFS and the CCC," 135.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 118–141.

⁶⁵ Tweed, "A History of Outdoor Recreation," 18–19.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18–23.

strong impact on the structure and goals of CCC camps in Mount Hood National Forest. The formerly dispersed camps consolidated into two main locations, at Cascade Locks, just east of Eagle Creek, and at Zigzag. Enrollees completely rebuilt the 20-year-old picnic area at Eagle Creek in 1936 and expanded it in 1937 to include a community kitchen. They also made improvements to guard stations, ranger stations, and comfort stations across the forest.⁶⁷ Observing the changes taking place in national forests, national parks, and state parks throughout Oregon, *The Oregonian* called it “a new era in forest recreation.”⁶⁸

The project that represented the climax of this new era was borne out of the changes that took place along Mount Hood’s southern slope a decade prior. With the highway complete past Government Camp in 1924, the recreation director Fred Cleator looked for a way to utilize the timberline region, where tree growth is limited by the high elevation and extreme climate. The gentle, unobstructed incline, Cleator suggested, presented outstanding opportunities for downhill ski runs and facilities to meet growing demand for winter recreation.⁶⁹ Skiing had increased in popularity after beginning as a bourgeois European fad in the late nineteenth century. In the 1920s, winter recreation was beginning to leave its mark on the mountains of the western United States. Wealthy

⁶⁷ Otis et al, “The USFS and the CCC,” 118–141.

⁶⁸ “Portland and Vicinity Provide Scores of Ideal Settings for Enjoyable Picnics,” *The Oregonian*, June 29, 1937, Section Three (Picnic Section).

⁶⁹ Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 23–33; Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 14; Thomas H. Sherrard, Christopher M. Granger, and Clarence J. Buck, “Mt. Hood Timberline Road,” memoranda, Mount Hood National Forest, 1927–28, in Folder L-Rec Mt. Hood (1925–), Box 67, Region Six Historical Collection, The National Archives at Seattle.

Oregon skiers had been visiting Cloud Cap Inn on Mount Hood's northeast slope—site of the failed Mount Hood Tramway proposal—since just after the turn of the century.⁷⁰

With improved access to the southwestern slope closer to Portland, the new developers—both private and public—hoped to capitalize on the winter recreation boom. The Forest Service had built a primitive development road above Government Camp in the mid-1920s, which allowed summer auto access and winter ski access to timberline. Several private ski clubs formed in the late 1920s, later organizing into the Pacific Northwest Ski Association, one of the premier groups of its type in the United States. But, while private interests began to mobilize, even directing an annual winter sports carnival, the Forest Service in the early 1930s could only pay lip service to the idea of a full-fledged ski resort. The agency carved out a few runs and built modest structures at Camp Blossom, just west of the eventual lodge site. However, not until the establishment of the CCC in 1933 and the Forest Service's acknowledgement of recreation in 1935 would resources be available to construct a ski resort at timberline.⁷¹

The result was Timberline Lodge. When construction got under way in the spring of 1936, CCC enrollees were the ones to break ground. Crews cleared the site, landscaped the grounds, and built a second spur road up from the highway in order to complete a one-way loop with the earlier timberline road from 1927. WPA masons,

⁷⁰ The history of downhill skiing in the U.S. west is intertwined with the history of outdoor recreation development and scenic highway construction. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 168–226; William Philpott, *Vacationland: Tourism and Environment in the Colorado High Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013). On the European roots of downhill skiing, see, Andrew Denning, *Skiing into Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

⁷¹ Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 23–33; Tweed, “A History of Outdoor Recreation,” 14; McNeil, “Leading the Snow Army.”

carpenters, and artists then built the rustic-style structure itself using locally sourced materials. The project received funding through both the WPA Oregon offices and the U.S. Forest Service and received supplemental funds from a local booster organization called the Mount Hood Development Company.⁷² It was a showpiece of public and private cooperation, much like the Columbia River Highway and Mount Hood Loop. But this time, the actors traded places, as federal agencies spearheaded and guided the project.



Figure 34 Timberline Lodge in late winter, c. 1940.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

After just over a year of construction on the massive 360-foot-long, three-story building, Timberline Lodge neared completion as Franklin Roosevelt made his momentous visit on September 28, 1937. Observing the changes that had taken place

⁷² Munro, *Timberline Lodge*, 48; Otis et al, “The USFS and the CCC,” 136.

throughout Mount Hood National Forest—much of which over the previous two years—Roosevelt commented on America’s growing love affair with the great outdoors, proclaiming, “Our national forests will provide constantly increasing opportunity for recreational use. This Timberline lodge marks a venture made possible by emergency relief work, in order that we may test the workability of recreational facilities installed by the Government itself and operated under its complete control. Here, to Mount Hood, will come thousands of visitors in the coming years.”⁷³ For FDR, it was an experiment that had worked brilliantly. But, when Timberline Lodge opened to the public in February 1938, some national forest users and administrators were less sure about the direction the Forest Service had taken and began to question the value of specific developments like roads and hotels, as well as the idea of development more abstractly.

Mazama Lodge and the Wilderness Society

Besides the new Timberline Lodge and the aging Cloud Cap Inn, another, much smaller recreational cabin existed on the south slope of Mount Hood in 1938. The Mazamas, the influential Portland-based mountaineering club who had opposed the tram ten years earlier, had built their own lodge at the bottom of Laurel Hill in 1923. It was the first of two. Eight years later, when the newly paved Mount Hood Loop Highway started bringing in too much automobile traffic for the members’ liking, they built a new cabin farther up, and farther *off*, Wemme’s old road.⁷⁴

⁷³ “Timberline Lodge,” untitled speech transcript, 2.

⁷⁴ The earlier property the club sold to the Boy Scouts. Scott, *We Climb High*, 25, 37–8; McNeil, *McNeil’s Mount Hood*, 145–50; McNeil, “Leading the Snow Army,” *Mazama*; Margaret A. Griffin, “Lodges—Old

Though the Mazama lodges catered to recreationists much like the other two establishments on Mount Hood, they reflected a qualitatively different approach to recreation development that privileged solitude and individualized experience, in line with the club's original mandate. Looking back on the process of selecting a location for the first cabin, prominent member Fred McNeil reminisced,

Cascade Locks and Herman Creek, on the Columbia River highway, [were] given consideration. Sentiment leaned to Mount Hood, however. It was where the club had been founded and was the Mazamas' first field of exploration... Winter activities... had become a chief consideration. There was no promise at that time that roads ever would be opened deep into the snow country. Indeed, it was believed that the head of winter travel never would be far above the Tollgate. A 12-mile hike... in winter was considered too great to be of practical good to the greater number of members. Yet no one wanted a cabin where cars could deposit crowds at the very door of the building.⁷⁵

They settled on a site called Twin Bridges, just beyond what they thought would be the last stop for motorists most of the year, at the base of forbidding Laurel Hill. McNeil had been a Mazama since 1914 and had watched the region he loved so dearly develop in ways he never could have imagined when he joined the club.⁷⁶ Like many of the Mazamas, McNeil remembered back when it took a full day to reach Government Camp, even in the dry summer season.⁷⁷ Also like many of them, McNeil felt a deep sense of ambivalence about the growing road and recreation infrastructure, which was encroaching on some of the club's real and unofficial private claims to Mount Hood.

and New," *Mazama* 9 (1927): 93–100; Roscoe A. Johnson, "The New Mazama Lodge," *Mazama* 13 (1931): 46–9.

⁷⁵ McNeil, "Leading the Snow Army," 65–6.

⁷⁶ Joe Stein, "Publisher's Note," in McNeil, *McNeil's Mount Hood*; Tom McAllister, "Preface" in McNeil, *McNeil's Mount Hood*.

⁷⁷ McNeil, *McNeil's Mount Hood*, 55–8; Tanner, "A Trip to Mount Hood."

The recreation boom of the mid-1930s and the opening of Timberline Lodge forced the Mazamas to come to terms with their place on the mountain. Formerly privileged to enjoy the primitive wilderness in solitude, members in the 1930s found themselves jockeying for space as development along the Mount Hood Loop corridor precipitated an increase in active land use around them—even more so than in the late 1920s, when the highway first opened. Serving sometimes as a partner, more frequently as an antagonist, the Forest Service maintained strong ties with the Mazamas through the years. The developments of the 1920s had established a strong rapport between foresters and club members, and the federal agency regularly published informational essays in their official annual publication, *Mazama*.⁷⁸ Despite periodic disagreements, the Mazamas and the Forest Service stayed on mostly good terms through the interwar years.

When construction began on Timberline Lodge, USFS public relations officials recognized that they could lose many of their most important constituents in the process, especially since the only road to the new hotel passed directly by the 1931 Mazama Lodge. Unsurprisingly, the 1936 and 1937 issues of *Mazama* contained multiple publicity pieces by Forest Service representatives trumpeting the development project's importance for both the club and the wider population, as well as the role the agency hoped to play in planning the future of recreation for Mount Hood National Forest.⁷⁹ But if the 1938 and 1939 issues were any indication of the Mazamas' response, members

⁷⁸ R.H. Bunnage, "Mazamas As Trail Builders," *Mazama* 9 (1927): 101–3; C.J. Buck, "Mt. Hood Timberline Lodge," *Mazama* 18 (1936): 68; U.S. Forest Service, "How Primitive Do You Like It?," *Mazama* 19 (1937): 21–3; U.S. Forest Service, "Mt. Hood Timberline Lodge," *Mazama* 19 (1937): 39–41.

⁷⁹ Buck, "Mt. Hood Timberline Lodge;" U.S. Forest Service, "Mt. Hood Timberline Lodge."

appeared skeptical of the Forest Service's new direction, instead expressing a desire to maintain separation between their own exceptional legacy and the recent mass public experience of the mountain. In a telling bulletin from December 1938, the Mazamas Lodge Committee declared their intention to close the lodge to non-members.⁸⁰

The following year, McNeil published a brief, timely history of the Mazama Lodge in the journal. Entitled, "Leading the Snow Army," the essay told a triumphalist tale of the Mazamas' efforts to establish downhill ski culture and infrastructure on Mount Hood. McNeil drew a sharp distinction between the actions of the club and the actions of the Forest Service. "As the movement grew, club sanction and encouragement gave impetus in a larger way. From Mazamas sprung the germ of creation of the Portland, later the Oregon, Winter Sports association... Until Uncle Sam moved in with unbeatable competition a few years ago, Mazama lodges stood at the apex of habitable penetration into the winter wilds of the peak."⁸¹ McNeil continued on, bemoaning how, nowadays, the "Caterpillars [tractors] drone noisily far up into the barrens, their exhausts echoing, no less, off the very rocks of the summit ridges. There is talk even of improving the tractor road to the ski lift head-house into one that passenger cars may travel."⁸² To McNeil, the presence of such offensive technology in a place of sacred serenity called into question the decision-making of the federal agency with whom the Mazamas had enjoyed amicable relations for so long. Most importantly, it brought back memories of

⁸⁰ "Mazama Monthly Bulletin Section: Lodge Open," *Mazama* 20 (1938): 87.

⁸¹ McNeil, "Leading the Snow Army," 63.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 67.

the battle over the summit tramway, uncovering emotions still raw from those tumultuous four years.



Figure 35 Overflow parking on the road to Timberline Lodge, c. 1940.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

In many ways, the anti-development sentiment that McNeil expressed in 1939 reflected more abstract criticisms of the U.S. Forest Service being voiced at the same time by members of the small but growing national contingent of wilderness preservationists. Like the Mazamas, this group of concerned foresters and recreation planners, which included most famously Aldo Leopold and a rambunctious young forester named Robert “Bob” Marshall, had watched the national forests develop through the 1920s and 1930s and frowned upon recent trends in forest management. Also like the Mazamas, such wilderness preservationists, who often were or had been Forest Service employees themselves, saw mass recreation development as detrimental to the scenic and

experiential qualities of the forests.⁸³ They singled out CCC projects as a primary offender.⁸⁴ In 1935, after surveying the route of a proposed scenic road through the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee, Marshall called the disparate group of critics together to form the Wilderness Society.⁸⁵

Marshall, their foremost member, had been a rising figure in the Forest Service since the mid-1920s and was an articulate defender of primitive recreation. Along with Leopold, he would remain the organization's most important voice until his untimely death from heart failure in 1939.⁸⁶ In his well-known essay from 1930, "The Problem of the Wilderness," he defined wilderness as,

a region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by any mechanical means and is sufficiently spacious that a person in crossing it must have the experience of sleeping out. The dominant attributes of such an area are... that it preserves as nearly as possible the primitive environment. This means that all roads, power transportation and settlements are barred. But trails and temporary shelters, which were common long before the advent of the white race, are entirely permissible.⁸⁷

A trained forester and hiking enthusiast, Marshall saw technology and wilderness as mutually exclusive. In this way, both he and Fred McNeil leveled critiques at the Forest

⁸³ Gilligan, "Development of Policy," 82–225.

⁸⁴ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 165–80; James M. Glover, *A Wilderness Original: The Life of Bob Marshall* (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1986), 194–5.

⁸⁵ Glover, *A Wilderness Original*, 159–95; Gilligan, "Development of Policy," 182–3; Sutter, *Driven Wild*; James M. Glover, "Romance, Recreation, and Wilderness: Influences on the Life and Work of Bob Marshall," *Environmental History Review* 14.4 (1990), 34–5.

⁸⁶ Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 54–99, 194–238; Gilligan, "Development of Policy," 82–92, 125, 174–203; Steen, *The USFS: A History*, 154–5; Glover, *A Wilderness Original*; Glover, "Romance, Recreation, and Wilderness;" "Aldo Leopold: A Brief Chronology."

⁸⁷ Robert Marshall, "The Problem of the Wilderness," *Mazama* 12 (1930), 76.

Service's brand of development from a place of aesthetic and philosophical essentialism regarding the relationship between humans and nature.⁸⁸

Yet, despite following a similar line of reasoning as Marshall and other Wilderness Society members, the Mazamas tended to reach more moderate conclusions about matters of land use on Mount Hood. The organization championed road construction well into the 1930s and saw the winter sports boom as beneficial on the whole.⁸⁹ Though McNeil clearly expressed reservations about the encroaching masses inundating the mountain and its facilities, he also recognized the need for compromise in the organization's relationship with the Forest Service. From the perspective of a distant observer, it was simple for Leopold or Marshall to condemn the abstract notion of development. But for a local recreation club like the Mazamas, battles had to be selected carefully. Private interests had certainly held sway in the early twentieth century, when the federal agency was underfunded and understaffed, but the power dynamic had shifted since New Deal funding and labor gave Forest Service officials the autonomy to develop and manage their vast land holdings. It was the end of one era and the beginning of another, and stakeholders were handling the change in divergent ways.

The disparity between local and federal preservation priorities can be seen most clearly in the Mazamas' continued lack of interest in the undeveloped north slope of

⁸⁸ Leopold would later come to represent an ecological protest against development, but in the 1930s he was still largely associated with Marshall's aesthetic/recreational approach. Amy McCoy, "The Transformation of Aldo Leopold," 1999, in Box 46, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁸⁹ Lee, "Paradise Park," 39–40; Parker, "Mazamas in Paradise Park," 50; "Mazamas Desire 2 Roads On Hood;" McNeil, *McNeil's Mount Hood*, 98–100; McNeil, "Leading the Snow Army."

Mount Hood, which had been quietly set aside as the Mount Hood Primitive Area in 1929 at the height of the summit tramway controversy without the involvement of the club. Ten years later, such roadless areas all across the U.S. West were facing new threats from the development initiatives of the 1930s. The Forest Service's L-20 regulations, which protected primitive areas, radical though they were, had been vaguely outlined and wielded little executive authority. At the national level, the Wilderness Society worked to strengthen the laws through the New Deal years, arguing that CCC projects seriously endangered the tenuous land designation in several locations.⁹⁰ Still, the Mazamas largely stayed out of the debate, choosing instead to focus only on issues that directly affected their own personal experiences of the Pacific Northwest wilderness, particularly on the southern side of Mount Hood, their traditional point of access. Though issues of *Mazama* periodically printed articles dealing with wilderness preservation in abstract terms, the club failed to take part in the growing movement to protect primitive areas like Mount Hood's north slope, despite its being the smallest and one of the most vulnerable places of its kind in the country.⁹¹

The Mazamas, notwithstanding their intimate relationship with the Forest Service's local offices, only began participating actively in national conservation debates after 1939, according to one club historian.⁹² Prior to that year, most members saw no

⁹⁰ Sutter, *Driven Wild*.

⁹¹ The Mazamas even reprinted Bob Marshall's essay on wilderness in 1930—which club historian and prominent member in the 1920s, John D. Scott, noted was “the first great wilderness conservation essay that had appeared in any western mountaineering publication”—and included several stories on visits to other primitive areas, like that of Mount Jefferson to the south. Marshall, “The Problem of Wilderness;” Scott, *We Climb High*, 37; USFS, “How Primitive?”

⁹² Scott, “We Climb High,” 50–1.

problem with development in and of itself and thus picked their battles on Mount Hood according to shifting, subjective criteria that varied from member to member. McNeil, for one, thought poorly of developments around timberline. But on the whole, the Mazamas supported the work being done by the Forest Service, even opposing calls to transfer Timberline Lodge and the Mount Hood Recreation Area to the National Park Service, stating officially,

Whereas, It appears that the National Forest Service is competent to administer satisfactorily areas of the latter character [i.e., of outstanding scenic value], therefore be it Resolved, That the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs [which the Mazamas spearheaded, and of which they constituted an influential component] oppose in principle the transfer of recreational areas to the National Park Service, provided that the wilderness character of certain of those regions can be adequately safeguarded under National Forest Administration.⁹³

The Mazamas preferred the bureaucratic malleability of the Forest Service to the centralized authority of the Park Service. So, like other national park proposals in the 1910s and 1920s, grassroots efforts to establish a park on Mount Hood died without the support of the most powerful recreation club in Portland.

However, maps of Mount Hood National Forest did register a small but important change in 1940 as a result of the preservationist efforts that the Mazamas were largely ignoring. Marshall and his cohort in the Wilderness Society, working diligently to promote wilderness preservation both in theory and administration, accomplished a major goal for the young club in 1939 when they convinced the Forest Service to reevaluate and strengthen primitive area protections, resulting in the new U-1 and U-2 rules. The re-

⁹³ “The 1939 Federation Convention: A Review of Official Acts of the Western Federation of Outdoor Clubs and an Appraisal of the Federation's Work,” *Mazama* 21 (1939): 75.

drafted regulations specifically prohibited development that would accommodate automobiles and other forms of motorized transportation in designated areas, reflecting the Wilderness Society’s rationale that roads and technology were the single most detrimental thing to the wilderness experience on principle. Though still lacking in many ways, the new rules indicated the progress that wilderness preservationists had made in defining what they meant by wilderness and advancing their cause within the framework of Forest Service bureaucracy.⁹⁴

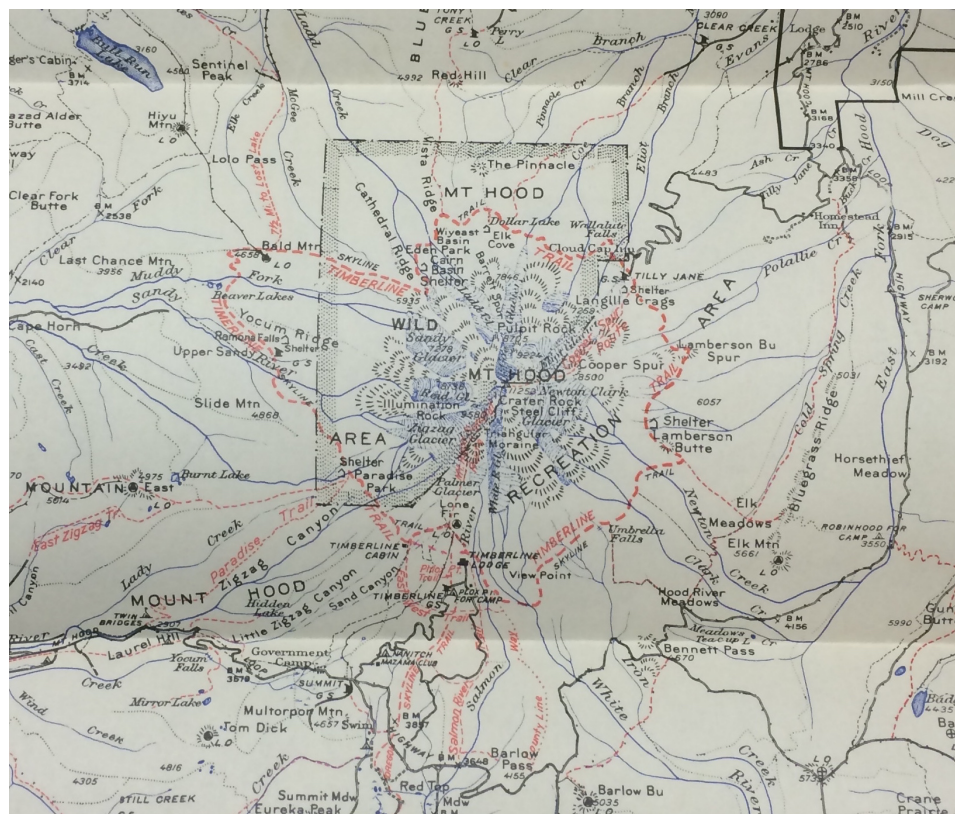


Figure 36 Mt. Hood Wild Area and Mt. Hood Recreation Area. Detail from “Mount Hood National Forest Trails” map, 1939. Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, NARA Regional Collection, Seattle.

⁹⁴ Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 122–203.

But, despite cementing protections in more explicit language, the improved regulations also had the ironic effect of reducing the size of many former primitive areas, particularly where road construction or logging seemed imminent after inroads made by New Deal construction. The U rules established new criteria for naming and codifying roadless areas based on size, differentiating between Marshall's definition of a "true" primitive area—large enough to avoid roads for a week or more—and smaller roadless areas or "wild" areas. It was two steps forward and one step back. The north side of Mount Hood, being much smaller than the primitive area threshold of 100,000 acres, became the Mount Hood Wild Area. As a result, it lost 640 of its 16,000 acres where USFS surveyors saw conflict between the wilderness idea and the goals of traditional Progressive Era conservation.⁹⁵ Still, even as the national wilderness preservation campaign increased in urgency and the only protected roadless area within 100 miles of Portland lost ground, the Mazamas, like they had ten years prior with Mount Hood Primitive Area, hardly took notice.⁹⁶

Conclusion

The development of Mount Hood National Forest during the New Deal years provided motorists with access to nature in ways that previous generations of visitors, boosters, and forest managers would have had a hard time imagining. After the 1938 opening of Timberline Lodge, Mount Hood truly had become a "people's forest," with

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁹⁶ *Mazama* journals from the late 1930s and early 1940s failed to mention the change in regulations, despite its importance to their brand of conservation.

recreational users roaming the growing network of backroads and making use of amenities only recently established or improved. But now, USFS recreation development was also becoming more than just a localized phenomenon. In the 1910s and 20s, the forested slopes of Mount Hood and the scenic Columbia River Gorge, with their narrow corridors of recreation facilities and reliable highways, had been exceptions to the rule for the Forest Service, which maintained vast holdings of purposefully inaccessible land across the U.S. West. However, the influx of funding and labor that came with Franklin Roosevelt's Emergency Conservation Work program nudged the agency toward a new understanding of its role in conserving the country's public timberlands—one that included recreation development. By the end of the 1930s, Mount Hood National Forest was simply one of the more elaborate examples of the ways in which national forests were beginning to look much like the national parks.

President Roosevelt, Fred McNeil, and Bob Marshall each represented wildly different reactions to such changes in the character and conception of wilderness in Oregon and the United States more broadly. Roosevelt welcomed tourists into the forest. McNeil disapproved of particular types of development. But Marshall, looking to the future of public land management from the twin perspectives of conservationist forester and preservationist recreation promoter, attempted to satisfy both camps. In 1933, before the changes that would come with the Civilian Conservation Corps's development efforts, Marshall published a work appropriately entitled *The People's Forests*, in which he attempted to clarify what he meant by wilderness and fend off accusations of elitism,

emanating from the timber industry and other USFS foresters.⁹⁷ On the final page, he summed up his philosophy that wilderness was ultimately a social space, stating, “The time has come when we must discard the unsocial view that our woods are the lumbermen’s and substitute the broader ideal that every acre of woodland in the country is rightly a part of the people’s forests.”⁹⁸ In some ways, this echoed the Forest Service’s official credo. The old forest reserves were, in fact, originally established to protect the United States’s natural resource base from the greedy short-sightedness of private exploitation.



Figure 37 Robert “Bob” Marshall, c. 1935.
Wilderness.net.

⁹⁷ See, for example, “Editorial: The Cult of the Wilderness,” *Journal of Forestry* 33 (1935): 955–7.

⁹⁸ Gilligan, “Development of Policy,” 175–6; Robert Marshall, *The People's Forests* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002 [1933]).

However, Marshall was doing much more than simply restating Gifford Pinchot's famous Progressive Era position that, "Where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question shall always be answered from the standpoint of the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run."⁹⁹ What Marshall called for, in addition to protecting natural resources from over-harvest, was a concerted nationwide approach to the rising demand for outdoor recreation development—particularly, one that dealt with the complexities of refusing national park designation. In his acknowledgements for *The People's Forests*, he congratulated the Forest Service for taking its first steps: "I would like to venture the prediction that when the history of American forestry is written, 1933 will stand out not as the year of the Civilian Conservation Corps, or of huge public works appropriations, or of a nationwide lumber code, but as the year when the United States Forest Service published *A National Plan for American Forestry*."¹⁰⁰

The publication to which Marshall referred, more popularly known as the Copeland Report, was the bureau's first serious attempt to grapple with a statistic that foresters had always suspected but never fully accounted for: of the 35 million people who visited federal public lands (including national parks) for recreation in 1931, approximately 32 million headed for national forests. But Marshall, who had played a major role in drafting the Copeland Report, called on the Forest Service to do even more to come to terms with the flood of visitors:

⁹⁹ This quote is widely cited throughout USFS literature and history. For a brief explanation, see "Pinchot and Utilitarianism," from *The Greatest Good: A Forest Service Centennial Film* website, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.fs.fed.us/greatestgood/press/mediakit/facts/pinchot.shtml>.

¹⁰⁰ Marshall, *The People's Forests*, 9.

Here one sees swarms of tourists who not only destroy, by their mere numbers, the very isolation which was one reason for their journey to the forest, but also kill the ground vegetation around the camp site and tramp down the soil so compactly that even the trees often die. This type of destruction has its remedy, like the destruction resulting from commercial exploitation; but unless the remedies are applied these factors will definitely tend to decrease recreational use of the forests.¹⁰¹

The threat, as he saw it, was no longer the lumberman's axe, but the haphazard way in which the organization of professional foresters had been dealing with the demand for recreation development.

In the years after the publication of *The People's Forest* and the Copeland Report, the Forest Service did make great strides toward recreation planning in a comprehensive manner, and the CCC helped the agency accomplish its agenda. Indeed, the mid-1930s marked a decisive turning point in national forest administration when the goal of natural resource protection was nearly eclipsed by the goal of developing the forests for both official and public access. But, rather than solve the problem of balancing scenic preservation with conservative commercial use, the agency's approach instead created a new debate over the proper form and scale of recreation development, a question that had been simmering among USFS professionals since Arthur Carhart's first call for roadless recreation development in 1919.

The polarization of recreational users into primitivist and technological-optimist camps, which had occurred on a much smaller scale in the debate over the Mount Hood Tramway proposal, suddenly burst onto the national scene. President Roosevelt, for one,

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 63.

saw no limits to the potential of engineers, landscape architects, and foresters, to solve any problem that presented itself. But skeptics like McNeil, who already had a checkered relationship with the Forest Service stretching back to a time when automobiles struggled through the mud to reach places that were now only an hour-long drive away, were not so sure.

Regional interests like the Mazamas, as well as more prominent recreation organizations such as the Sierra Club in California, continued to bend federal principles and bureaucracy toward localized goals, asserting their own notion of wilderness as a unique mix of technology and undeveloped nature. Whereas prior to the Roosevelt presidency the stakes of development remained low due to a lack of public capital and resources, suddenly the Forest Service's official acceptance of popular outdoor recreation threatened to destroy the foundation upon which, for many, the allure of wilderness was based: the feeling of authenticity that came with individualized experience and the absence (or seeming absence) of industrial technology. In the mid-1930s, nature-lovers like McNeil thus began to question their commitment to forest road and recreation development for the sake of preserving the scenic resources that initially prompted their desire for such development. Samuel Lancaster's vision of a techno-natural landscape continued to fracture.

Chapter Four

“Torture Highway”

The Clackamas River Road and Multiple Use

When Clyde Lee Rose awoke the morning of August 23, 1962, it must have seemed just another working Thursday. After breakfast, he hopped in his empty 20-ton log truck and began the ascent up the Clackamas River Road, headed deep into the timberlands of Mount Hood National Forest. After two hours of slow, tedious driving, he reached the job site: a clearing in the woods, chainsaws buzzing, fallen timber ready to move. A little before noon, his truck now loaded with two or three massive Douglas-fir logs, Rose started back downhill, west to Oregon City where he began the day. His cargo nearly doubled the weight of the truck.¹

The road was busy for a Thursday. (It was summer, after all.) A mile or two in front of Rose, Joseph Cripps searched for an elusive vacant campsite. With his wife, Martha, riding shotgun, and their four daughters in the back of the station wagon, Cripps drove cautiously down the narrow, winding road, mindful of the camper trailer attached to their rear hitch. It was the fourth day of the Cripps’ family vacation. Joseph had taken time off from his job at the Modern Heating Service in Portland. On Monday, he left town with his wife and kids, looking to enjoy a warm summer week along the Clackamas River.

¹ The weight of the log truck is approximate. Log trucks with one trailer typically had tare weights of 20 tons; the maximum allowable weight on Oregon public roads in 1950 was 36 tons. “Engineers Worried by Problem of Big Trucks on Secondary Roads,” *The Oregonian*, September 17, 1950, 6.

Distracted by the campsite search, and with dusty understory light streaming through his windshield, Cripps made an unfortunate decision; he slowed to turn left into the Sun Strip Campground just as Rose's log truck barreled down behind him. Assuming Cripps was pulling over to let the monstrous vehicle pass, Rose moved into the left lane with speed. But to his surprise, the station wagon cut across the road. The truck hit it broadside, killing Cripps and injuring his passengers. Rose slammed on his brakes as the truck skidded to a stop, 263 feet down the road.²

The collision between Joseph Cripps's station wagon and Clyde Lee Rose's log truck was one of dozens that occurred on the Clackamas River Road in the southern half of Mount Hood National Forest during the mid-twentieth century.³ Between 1943, when the Clackamas drainage saw its first significant development, and 1964, when floods nearly destroyed the entire road system, there must have been hundreds of near-misses and tense exchanges on what many referred to as the "Torture Highway."⁴ Throughout the Pacific Northwest—known in the logging industry as the Douglas-fir region for its profitable softwood trees—similar incidents took place all along the backroads and highways that led to logging operations and campgrounds. Not all were so gruesome. More often, casual encounters occurred without incident. Most were benign; some, even pleasant.⁵

² "Man Killed, Five Hurt in Truck-Car Collision," *The Oregonian*, August 24, 1962, 1.

³ As early as 1950, 650 or more log truck accidents occurred annually throughout Oregon; fortunately, only about 3% were fatal. "Check Due Log Trucks for Safety," *The Oregonian*, July 25, 1952.

⁴ Stan Federman, "Big Clackamas River Highway Project Well Under Way," *The Oregonian*, July 13, 1967, 12.

⁵ "Log Transport Firm Aids Troubled Driver," *The Oregonian*, May 25, 1958, 34.

But whatever form they took, chance meetings between auto-tourists and log-truckers happened frequently. In 1959, Mount Hood National Forest Supervisor Paul E. Neff estimated that “logging trucks are roaring down the Clackamas River road at a rate of one a minute.”⁶ That same year, private motorists made 2.7 million separate recreational visits into the mountains just east of Portland, primarily for “general enjoyment and sightseeing.”⁷ During the busy summer months, the thoroughfare, which had to be rebuilt repeatedly due to heavy usage and frequent landslides, became a traffic jam. Yet, when the U.S. Forest Service looked at the Clackamas region, they called it “one of the nation’s finest examples of multiple use of federal forest lands.”⁸

The encounters between commercial log truckers and private auto-tourists were indicative of a drastic shift in federal forest management in the wake of World War II. Whereas during its first generation of administration, the Forest Service served only a custodial role in managing the nation’s timber supplies, in the mid-1940s the agency began taking a more proactive stance toward leasing land and facilitating road development for logging. The shift occurred during the war when demand for raw lumber skyrocketed. In Oregon, where some of the most valuable stands of old-growth timber

⁶ The same claim was made in the summer of 1964. “Forest’s Many Uses,” *The Oregonian*, August 6, 1959, 18; “Foster Road Project Due,” *The Oregonian*, July 5, 1964, 21.

⁷ This count is for all of Mount Hood National Forest. Though many of these tourists stuck to older recreation areas on Mount Hood and in the Columbia River Gorge, a substantial portion went up the Clackamas River Road. Of these 2.7 million total, 400,000 were picnickers, 200,000 anglers, 85,000 campers, 28,000 huckleberry-pickers, 22,000 hunters, and 31,000 hikers and horseback-riders. In 1956, when 1 million people visited the forest, about 15% of those drove on the Clackamas River Road. This percentage increased each year as the Forest Service improved the road and built recreation sites. “Forest’s Many Uses;” “Opening of the Clackamas,” *The Timberman*, 58.10 (1956), 7, in Mount Hood National Forest History, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle.

⁸ “Forest’s Many Uses.”

still stood, foresters saw an urgent need to provide access to the state's reserves. When the conflict ended and American soldiers returned home, often to start families, the subsequent boom in suburban housing construction resulted in continued growth for the Pacific Northwest timber economy into the 1950s and early 1960s. The demand for lumber singlehandedly changed the administration and appearance of national forests in the mid-twentieth century.⁹

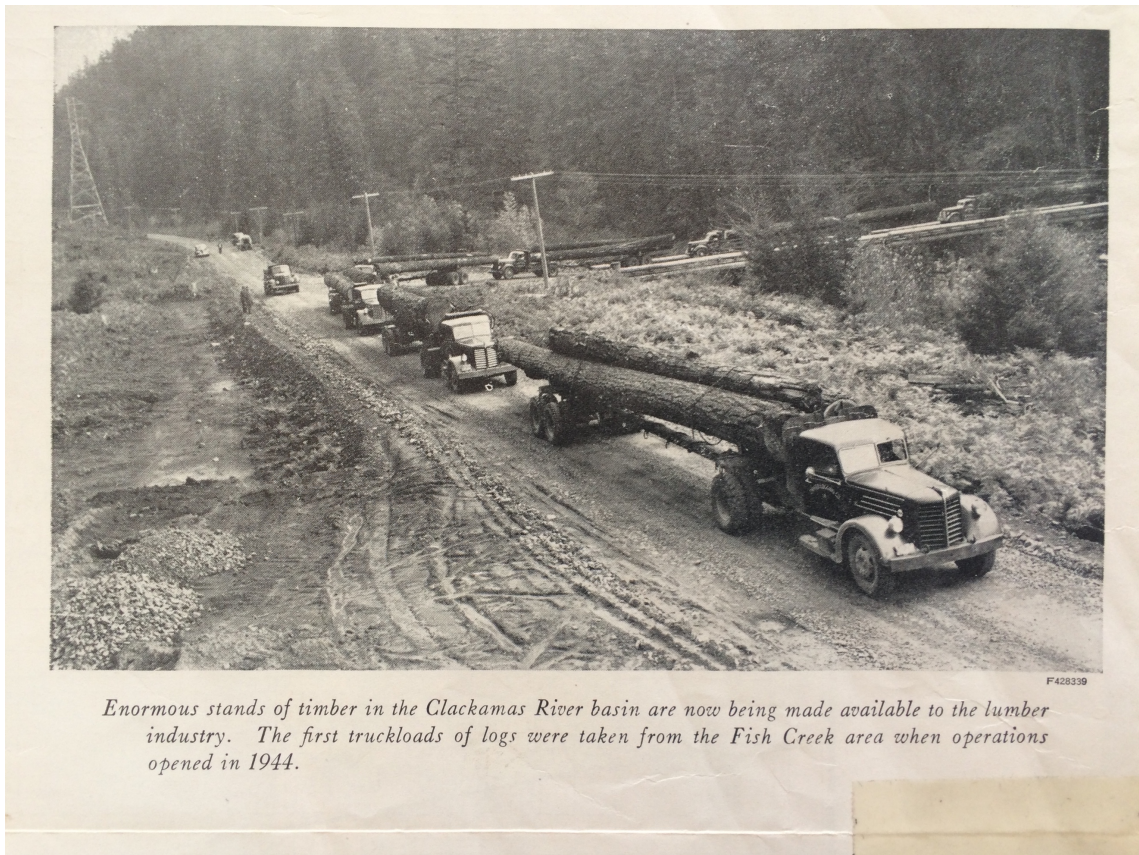


Figure 38 Log trucks on the Clackamas River Road. Detail from backside of "Mount Hood National Forest" map, 1946.
National Forest Maps Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁹ For overviews of midcentury USFS history, see Steen, *The USFS: A History*; Williams, *The USFS in the PNW*, Paul W. Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of National Forests since World War Two* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

At the same time, popular interest in outdoor recreation reached a fever pitch—a continuation of interwar cultural trends and an indication of the widespread affluence that came with the end of the war. After two generations of development in the Columbia River Gorge and on Mount Hood, regional foresters were familiar with the needs of recreational users. But now, with neither the private outside funding of the Progressive Era nor the emergency federal funding of the New Deal era, Forest Service officials once again found themselves unable to manage users while logging roads opened up new playgrounds in the woods. As historians have demonstrated, the postwar recreation boom presented many challenges for public land managers at national and state parks as well as national forests throughout the country.¹⁰ In Oregon during the 1950s, problems with traffic and overcrowding were particularly troublesome on the Clackamas River Road, where productive and recreational uses were at direct odds in very real, everyday ways.

Responding to growing public pressure in Oregon and elsewhere to negotiate a balanced, comprehensive land use policy, Congress passed the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield (MUSY) Act in 1960. The bill expressed resolutely and optimistically that intensive management—scientific oversight, strategic planning, education, and public relations campaigns—would solve all problems of conflicting interests on national forests. In a properly managed multiple-use forest (so the logic went), loggers, motorists, hikers, miners, anglers, and hunters, would work and play side by side. After the MUSY Act, the Forest Service considered all uses of equal value, at least on paper. It was a

¹⁰ Susan Sessions Rugh, *Are We There Yet?: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008).

remarkable concession for an agency that took decades to formally recognize recreation as a legitimate use of national forest land. And though, to recreational users of Mount Hood National Forest and other forests like it, the legislation was nothing more than “a belated endorsement of an expansion that had occurred long before,” it was nevertheless the culmination of years of progress at Eagle Creek, Timberline Lodge, and similar locations around the country.¹¹

However, the confidence and optimism expressed in the MUSY Act hardly reflected the experiences of recreational users on the ground before or after it was passed. Critics in the early 1960s continued to take issue with the management objectives and methods of the Forest Service, which had begun to operate like an extension of the private timber industry. Indeed, historian Paul Hirt has referred to the agency’s sugarcoated rhetoric between 1945 and 1960 as “a conspiracy of optimism,” in which foresters sought to expand timber production above all else, cloaking their profit motive in scientific language and willfully ignoring the demands of other forest users.¹²

Some of the most vocal critics of multiple use policy were wilderness preservationists, who hoped to defend primitive and wild areas from encroaching logging operations. By the end of the 1950s, such advocates of roadlessness and primitive recreation found themselves fighting federal foresters not over scenic highways, mountain tramways, and truck trails, but over timber sales and logging roads. Now working under the direction of prominent nature writer, Howard Zahniser, the Wilderness

¹¹ Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, 187–190; Steen, *USFS: A History*, 303–307; quote from Robert C. Lucas in Baldwin, *The Quiet Revolution*, 234.

¹² Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*.

Society faced an increasingly powerful timber lobby, which clearly held favor with the Forest Service. As a result, wilderness preservationists at the national level sought legislation that would usurp control of primitive and wild areas from the Forest Service and create an entirely new system of wilderness management. In 1964, they accomplished their goal when Congress passed the Wilderness Act, which created the National Wilderness Preservation System.¹³

At the local level, where such comprehensive solutions were not an option in the short-term, private recreational interest groups like the Mazamas picked battles selectively. The Clackamas watershed, a 640-square-mile region of “almost unbroken Douglas-fir forest,” in retrospect may seem like it would have been a major point of contention in the wilderness discussion.¹⁴ But the historical record tells a different story. As they had been in the 1930s, the Mazamas—who still represented the primary voice in recreation and conservation in Portland—were pragmatic about their relationship with the Forest Service. They knew that the agency had too much stock in the billions of board feet of lumber ready to fall and be trucked out of Mount Hood National Forest. So, club members looked to more distant—but winnable—battles in their fight for wilderness preservation, ignoring the rapid disappearance of undeveloped wilderness in their backyard.

¹³ On the rise of popular environmentalism in the 1950s and 60s and its association with the development of suburbs, see Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside*. On the genesis of the Wilderness Society in 1935, see Sutter, *Driven Wild*. On local battles over the protection and establishment of wilderness areas in the Pacific Northwest during the 1950s–1980s, see Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest*.

¹⁴ “Opening of the Clackamas,” 1.

In lieu of protests, Oregonians embraced the “opening of the Clackamas,” as one timber trade journal referred to it.¹⁵ Many of those who observed the development from Portland looked forward to the possibilities presented by new forest roads.¹⁶ Oregonians welcomed construction, in part out of self-interest for the increased recreational access, and in part out of recognition of logging’s enormous economic rewards for the state. Whereas elite preservation organizations demonized natural resource extraction, the public took a more moderate line of reasoning. In this way, the Clackamas was, indeed, an exceptionally “fine... example” of multiple use.

This is not to say, however, that Oregon motorists had no reservations about the roads. While they appreciated the jobs, the federal funding, and the new avenues for fun, Oregonians took issue with the most visible (and dangerous) indication of the change: log trucks. In newspaper articles and editorials, private motorists expressed concern over the physical burden that log trucks placed on public highways and the hazard that truckers posed to other drivers.¹⁷ Though Oregonians continued to champion road construction (even when the primary beneficiaries were private logging companies), they argued that the roads should be safer and more convenient for people like Joseph and Martha Cripps and their young, middle-class family.

Yet, at both the local and federal level, successive moderate reforms failed to result in any harmonious conclusion, as Cripps’s death in 1962 demonstrated.

¹⁵ Ibid.,

¹⁶ See, for example, “Close Clackamas County Wilderness A Paradise of Parks,” *The Oregonian*, August 26, 1963.

¹⁷ See, for example, “Oregon Highways Crumble Under Truckloads Deemed Excessive,” *The Oregonian*, August 9, 1950, 14.

Disagreements between log truck drivers and recreational motorists continued even after Oregon state Congressmen passed legislation at the beginning and end of the 1950s, penalizing overweight trucks and placing safety restrictions on truck operators. More broadly, neither the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act nor the Wilderness Act resolved the issue of multiple use, as later battles between loggers and environmentalists have demonstrated.¹⁸ On the Clackamas River Road, conflict was resolved—or rather, delayed for half a decade—by a massive flood on Christmas Day, 1964, coincidentally just three months after the Wilderness Act was passed. The region became largely inaccessible during the late 1960s as crews repaired miles of road and replaced culverts and bridges.¹⁹ When the Clackamas fully re-opened in the 1970s, wilderness preservation had become a more popular movement, and clearcutting, rather than log-trucking, became the primary focus of protest.²⁰

The development of the Clackamas River drainage in the two decades prior, despite its ambivalent tone and hanging conclusion, nevertheless represented a significant episode during a critical moment in the history of U.S. environmental politics. In a way that was characteristic of the narrative of development in Mount Hood National Forest but unique within the national narrative of modern environmentalism, it was a moment that involved attempts at compromise and mutual understanding. Before the polarization of environmental issues into hardline, opposed positions in the late twentieth century, the

¹⁸ White, “Are You an Environmentalist...?”

¹⁹ “Big Clackamas River Highway Project Well Under Way.”

²⁰ Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest*; Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*.

rise of log-trucking in Oregon and the construction of the Clackamas River Road in fact united loggers and recreationists behind an enthusiasm for new, reliable access roads.

“Opening of the Clackamas”

Rising on the northern shoulder of Mount Jefferson, approximately 30 miles southwest of Mount Hood, the Clackamas River winds its way through Oregon’s rugged Cascades to the town of Oregon City. A tributary of the Willamette, the waters of the Clackamas eventually become part of the Columbia, flowing through Portland along the way. The upper reaches of the drainage, above the rural, working-class town of Estacada, lie within Mount Hood National Forest. The Clackamas Ranger District in the 1950s encompassed most of the region’s 400,000 acres, which are isolated from the developed northern recreation corridors—the Columbia River Highway and Mount Hood Loop—by miles of crumpled, densely forested mountains.²¹ Along the river’s banks and flanking hillsides grow vast stands of Douglas-fir, some of the most valuable softwood lumber trees in the world.²²

Lumber companies eyed the Clackamas timberlands in the early twentieth century, but the region had been off limits to extraction since 1893, when President Grover Cleveland set it aside within the Cascade Range Forest Reserve. On July 1, 1908, three years after the reserve was renamed Cascade National Forest, the Forest Service broke up the unwieldy unit into manageable chunks, and the Clackamas River drainage

²¹ “Opening of the Clackamas,” 1.

²² Prudham, *Knock on Wood*, 1–4.

became part of Oregon National Forest. Sixteen years later, after being rebranded Mount Hood National Forest, the Clackamas took a backseat to the region's more distinctive natural feature to the north.



Figure 39 The Clackamas River region at the end of World War II. Detail from “State Highway Department’s Map of the State of Oregon,” 1945. Oregon State Highway Maps Collection, OSU SCARC.

While the Columbia River Gorge and south slope of Mount Hood saw exceptional development for recreation during these early years, the Clackamas remained largely untouched with only minimal development, mostly for custodial purposes. Even during the intense wave of conservation and construction projects under the Civilian Conservation Corps, foresters focused efforts on the northern half of Mount Hood National Forest, leaving the Clackamas forbidding to all but the hardest (and wealthiest) adventurer. Moreover, before the 1950s, traveling into the backcountry required a good deal of time and money. Recreational users had to assemble a team of pack mules, possibly hire a guide, and take off from work for a week or more—a luxury few could afford. With little road access, the region essentially remained closed to all users—loggers and auto-tourists alike. It would take a war to change that.²³

The Second World War profoundly altered the function of the Forest Service and provided an impetus for the construction of the Clackamas River Road. Record demand for wooden war supplies from shipping crates to coffins precipitated the release of Gifford Pinchot's supply-side safety valve of resources in reserve. Custodianship gave way to proactive forms of land management, including leasing parcels for logging. Nationally, timber sales on national forests more than doubled from 1.3 billion board feet

²³ Custodial tasks in the Clackamas Ranger District included: protecting the forest from fire; monitoring for trespassing sheep-grazers and cattle-herders; and surveying, mapping, and setting boundaries. These tasks required central ranger stations, remote guard stations, primitive pack trails, fire lookout towers and later, telegraph or telephone lines. It is worth noting, however, that the Forest Service did develop the Clackamas in a few ways prior to World War II. In the 1920s, they allowed Portland General Electric to build the Three Lynx dam and power station twenty miles upstream from Estacada. They also stocked the high lakes with trout and managed two hot springs areas: Austin and Bagby Hot Springs, each about a two-day pack trip from Estacada. "Opening of the Clackamas," 1; Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, 27–43; Steen, *USFS: A History*, 3–102.

in 1939 to over 3 billion in 1945.²⁴ When the war ended and soldiers returned, demand for timber continued to rise. Catalyzed by a boom in suburban housing construction, the lumber market exploded in the 1950s. The Pacific Northwest Douglas-fir region played a pivotal role in the rapidly expanding economy. By 1959, 60 percent of national forest timber came from the North Pacific Region, which included just Oregon and Washington.²⁵ Though Oregon had garnered the reputation of a timber powerhouse as early as the 1890s, the economic aftermath of World War II pushed the state into the forefront of softwood lumber production. Postwar affluence translated into an insatiable hunger for the produce of the Clackamas.²⁶

Timber extraction required a reliable means of access and removal. Logging companies hesitated to move into areas where difficult terrain prevented easy hauling. In the early twentieth century, timber transportation involved narrow-gauge railroads and navigable waterways. Typically, loggers lived in remote company camps, rode short rail lines to cutting sites, and sent logs down flumes to central landing areas, called splash dams. There, the logs were bundled and hauled to market behind steamships or on railroads.²⁷ With the rise of the automobile and increasing sophistication of rural road

²⁴ “Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service,” 2–3; Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, 44–50.

²⁵ “Clackamas Timber Tied to Road Building Task.”

²⁶ Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, 50–3.

²⁷ This technique, pioneered by Simon Benson, was used to greatest effect along the lower Columbia River. The Clackamas and nearby Molalla River drainages were too rugged for railroads, and the rivers were not conducive to floating logs. Allen, *Simon Benson*, 17–60; “Engineers Worried by Problem of Big Trucks on Secondary Roads;” Thomas R. Cox, *The Lumberman's Frontier: Three Centuries of Land Use, Society, and Change in America's Forests*, (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2010), 263–330.

infrastructure, however, trucks arose as the preferred transportation method for logging operations. In the 1940s, logging became synonymous with log trucking.²⁸



Figure 40 Euclid "Logger" log truck, lantern slide, 1955.
Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

Log trucks needed a particular type of road, one that was purpose-built to withstand punishing loads of 20 tons or more. The truck trails that were built during the interwar years generally took the form of rough, narrow dirt paths. They were built to sustain only light, periodic usage by administrative personnel and were not intended to be used frequently by private or commercial traffic. They also tended to climb ridge lines to fire lookout towers, away from the biggest trees along creek beds.²⁹ Forest highways like

²⁸ "Some 70 per cent of the 7,000,000,000 board feet of timber hauled out of Oregon forests last year went on rubber tires, with 30 per cent handled by railroads. A few years ago the percentages were just the reverse... the mighty logging truck is here to stay," from "Oregon Highways Crumble Under Truckloads Alleged Excessive."

²⁹ "Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service," 1955, 6, in Folder Mount Hood National Forest History, Box 49, Region Six Historical Collection, RG 95, The National Archives at Seattle.

the Mount Hood Loop served local recreational traffic and connected with state highway systems. Compared to truck trails, they were less numerous, less extensive, and often carried restrictions against logging to preserve their scenic value. In this way, neither truck trails nor forest highways were able to meet the demands of log-trucking. During and after the war, then, constructing logging access roads became a top priority.³⁰

However, the strong, smooth highway that Clyde Lee Rose took for granted on his routine trips up the Clackamas valley, would take years to materialize. At first, the Clackamas River Road was a primitive work of engineering. Mount Hood foresters spent wartime funds to develop a main artery into the drainage. The road utilized a previous railroad grade, built in 1921 by Portland General Electric (PGE) to serve the Three Lynx hydroelectric power station, twenty miles above Estacada. In 1938, PGE removed the rails, and the narrow dirt path became an unmaintained truck trail, open to the public but rarely used.³¹ Four years later, with the outbreak of war, Congress passed emergency funding for the Forest Service to build the grade into a more substantial access route: “17 miles of single-lane road with turnouts and temporary log bridge.” By November 1943, the Dwyer Lumber Co. of Portland began hauling its first truckloads of a 23-million

³⁰ “Opening of the Clackamas,” 1; “Mount Hood National Forest,” 1952, 3–4, in Box 49, Region Six Historical Collection, The National Archives at Seattle; L.S. Gross, *Timber Management Plans on the National Forests*, 1950, 6–7, in Box 46, Acc. 2007: 0100, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC. For detailed descriptions of each category of forest road, see *National Forest Service Manual*, 25-E–59-E.

³¹ The first mention of the road that can be found in *The Oregonian* is “Weather Causes Road Closures,” *The Oregonian*, November 14, 1938, 4. The article notes that the road has closed due to landslides. “Opening of the Clackamas,” 1; “Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service,” 2.

board-feet sale down the ad hoc road—humble beginnings for what would be two decades of continuously increasing production.³²

When the war ended, federal funding dried up. In a move indicative of broader shifts toward public-private partnerships in the management of national forests, the Forest Service instituted a new system to fund and carry out roadbuilding by relying on a wider variety of sources.³³ The Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), which oversaw all road projects on federal land, contracted private construction companies to improve the main Clackamas River Road with oiling and paving, as well as building more substantial steel bridges.³⁴ The BPR had advised on matters regarding roads through public lands since the 1910s, but it took a more hands-on role as access-road construction took off in the 1950s.³⁵

In addition to overseeing main thoroughfares, the BPR also surveyed and designed spur roads to individual timber sale sites. Logging unit lessees, however, were expected to foot the bill and build the roads themselves; the burden of construction was written into their contracts.³⁶ Typically, the companies stuck with this responsibility were small logging outfits that could ill afford to build extensive networks of roads by

³² “Opening of the Clackamas,” 2.

³³ Funding statistics for the building of the Clackamas River Road can be found in “Access Roads Will Be Built,” *The Oregonian*, July 4, 1951, 7. Also, see “Clackamas Timber Tied to Road Building Task,” 23; “Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service,” 4; “Opening of the Clackamas,” 2.

³⁴ “Engineers Worried by Problem of Big Trucks on Secondary Road;” “Mount Hood National Forest History,” 1952, 3; “Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service,” 7; “Opening of the Clackamas,” 2–6.

³⁵ On the history of the Bureau of Public Roads, see Seely, *Building the American Highway System*; Wells, *Car Country*.

³⁶ “Access Roads Will Be Built.”

themselves. So, payment for the spur roads came out of their sales receipts.³⁷ In this way, the Forest Service both subsidized and extended credit to private timber operations. Logging companies in general were happy about the arrangement. But, as the cost of maintenance mounted late in the decade and the Forest Service suggested that loggers contribute to the main Clackamas River Road's rebuilding as well, logging company owners voiced concern over their role as roadbuilding contractors and financiers.³⁸

Overall, timber extraction resulted in tremendous profits for both the companies and surrounding communities. Logging interests enjoyed a strong, productive relationship with the U.S. Forest Service through the 1950s. During fiscal year 1954, timber sales in Mount Hood National Forest amounted to nearly \$2.4 million, of which almost half came from Clackamas County. A large portion of these proceeds were returned to the county government, earmarked for roads and schools. By the end of the decade, those numbers had doubled.³⁹ Each year to boost profits, the Forest Service raised the forest's allowable cut: a mystifying, convoluted calculation based on the predicted long-term sustained yield of the forest—that is, “the timber [that] can be cut in approximately equal annual amounts at a rate that can be sustained by the forest soil in the commercial timber area.”⁴⁰ Of the 9 billion board feet of potential standing timber

³⁷ On this process more generally, see Hirt *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, xxxiii–xxxiv. On the specifics of contracts between Clackamas-area loggers and the Forest Service, see “Opening of the Clackamas,” 3.

³⁸ “Clackamas Timber Tied to Road Building Task.”

³⁹ On the importance of timber to surrounding communities, see Gross, “Timber Management Plans,” ii; “Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service,” 3–4, 12; “Forest Tours Idea Survives: Business Briefs,” *The Oregonian*, January 9, 1956, 7; “Flood-Damaged Roads May Cost Counties One-Third of Receipts,” *The Oregonian*, February 28, 1965, 20.

⁴⁰ “Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service,” 4. For more on sustained yield, see Ira Mason in Gross, “Timber Management Plans,” i.

estimated within the entirety of the Clackamas River drainage, almost 1 billion had been cut by 1955. Later in the 1950s, loggers were cutting a staggering 300 million board feet per year.⁴¹

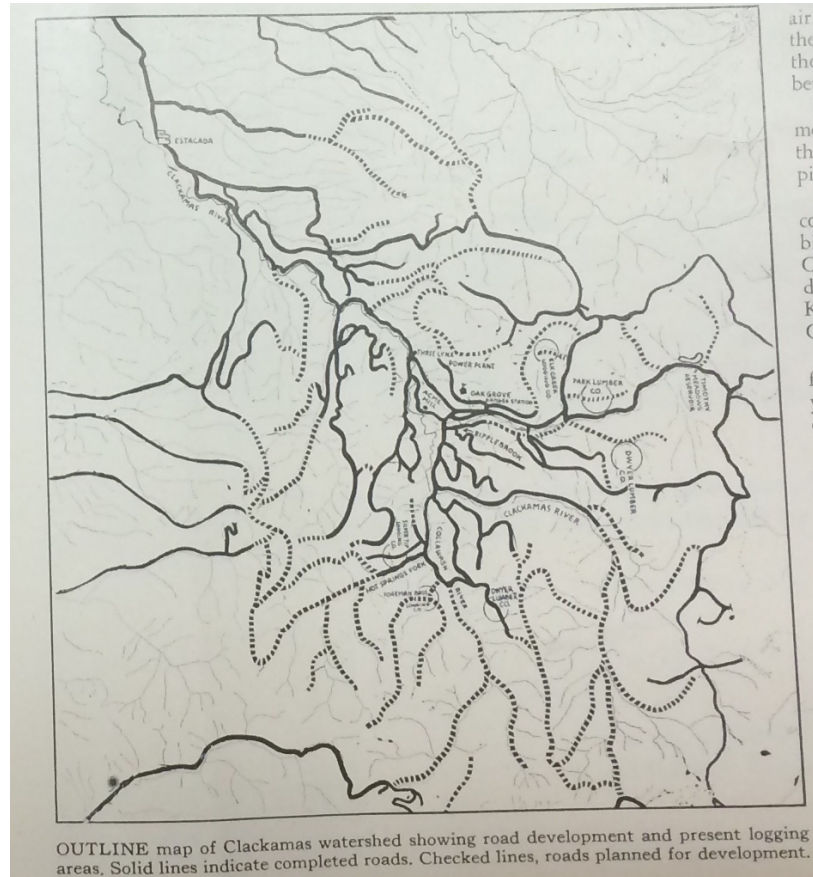


Figure 41 Roads built (solid lines) and planned (dotted lines). Map from “The Opening of the Clackamas,” 1956. The Timberman.

The only thing that prevented loggers from cutting more timber was a lack of accessibility, which became less of a concern each year. As front-country trees just off the main route fell quickly to loggers’ chainsaws, roads crept like tendrils into the deep

⁴¹ “Opening of the Clackamas,” 1; “Forest’s Many Uses;” “Clackamas Timber Tied to Road Building Task.”

tributaries of the Clackamas River to reach more remote stands of timber.⁴² Between the mid-1940s and mid-1950s, timber operators along the Clackamas River Road built nearly a quarter of the total 1,133 miles of roads that existed in Mount Hood National Forest in 1954. During 1955 alone, they added 66 miles to that total.⁴³

At the national level, continued demand for access roads ran prominently through nearly everything the Forest Service published in the mid-1950s; it was an urgent, pressing matter to “get the cut out.”⁴⁴ Pacific Northwest Regional Forester J. Herbert Stone remarked unambiguously on the connection between timber access roads and logging in 1956: “The Clackamas is one of those tremendously large drainages in the Northwest with the road system the key to its development. By keeping our roads on with our timber sales, we can carry through until we get the whole drainage opened.” Still, Mount Hood National Forest Supervisor Lloyd Olson estimated it would take an additional fifteen to twenty years to “complete the opening of... the Clackamas River watershed... one of the West’s largest timber producing areas.”⁴⁵ By the end of the 1950s, they were well on their way.

⁴² “Opening of the Clackamas,” 3, 6; Gross, “Timber Management Plans,” 7; “Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service,” 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁴ Gross, “Timber Management Plans,” 6–7; “Opening of the Clackamas,” 1; “Clackamas Timber Tied to Road Building Task.”

⁴⁵ “Opening of the Clackamas,” 1, 7.

Station Wagons and Multiple Use

The widespread affluence that propelled growth in postwar timber markets also granted working- and middle-class Americans ample leisure time, which they often chose to enjoy in the great outdoors. Historian Susan Sessions Rugh has referred to the 1950s and early 1960s as the “golden age of American family vacations.”⁴⁶ Bolstered by skyrocketing birthrates, large, predominantly white families descended upon the United States’s postwar landscape of leisure in record numbers. Across the country, families like that of Joseph and Martha Cripps piled into shiny new station wagons and wide-body sedans, headed for amusement parks, ski resorts, and campgrounds.⁴⁷

Recreation on national forest land in particular continued to increase in popularity. In the ten years between 1941 and 1951, recreational use of national forests grew 66 percent from 18 to 30 million annual visits nationwide.⁴⁸ Ten years later, in 1961, visitation topped 100 million annual visits, an astounding increase of over 300 percent.⁴⁹ Mount Hood National Forest, as the most popular recreational forest in the country, welcomed a substantial portion of those tourists. Already by the mid-1950s, over 1.5 million people were taking to the mountains just east of Portland each year.⁵⁰ By the end of the decade, visitation doubled once more.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Rugh, *Are We There Yet?*.

⁴⁷ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*; Philpott, *Vacationland*.

⁴⁸ “Report of the Chief of the Forest Service,” U.S. Forest Service, 1952, 26–27, in Box 5, Acc. 2010: 084, Gerald Williams W. Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1964, 24–25, in Box 5, Acc. 2010: 084, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁵⁰ “Golden Anniversary of the Forest Service,” 8.

⁵¹ “Forest's Many Uses.”

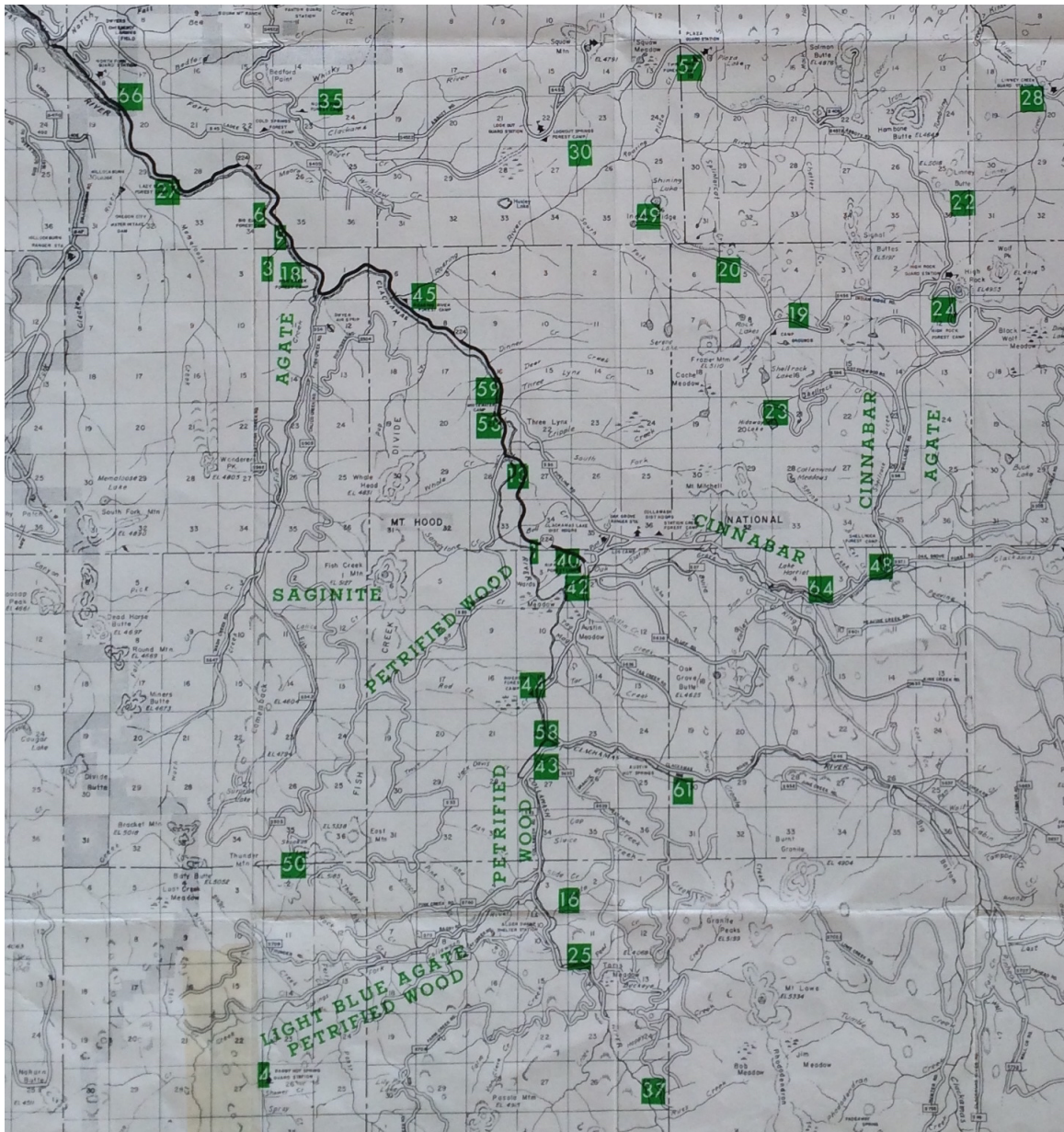


Figure 42 Recreational facilities clustered along the Clackamas River Road. Detail from “Clackamas County Parks” map, 1964. State of Oregon Maps Collection, OSU SCARC.

The Forest Service struggled to keep up with demand. The technological optimism that underlay the agency’s faith in chainsaws, bulldozers, and log trucks, also guided its approach toward recreation, which catered mainly to visitors arriving by (and

remaining near their) car. But developed campgrounds, boating facilities, and picnic areas were expensive to build and maintain. And, while recreational use increased, recreation funding stagnated. As it had in the 1910s and 1920s, Congress hesitated, or flat-out refused, to slate monies for the development of non-productive resources on potentially productive land.⁵² Where they existed, prewar recreation developments languished in disrepair. An official statement by Mount Hood foresters in 1952 presented the problem matter-of-factly:

Ninety developed forest camps and picnic areas constructed at public expense mostly during the 1930s are depended upon to accommodate [recreational visitors]. They vary in size from small trailside camps to areas such as the Eagle Creek Forest Camp which can serve approximately 1000 people at one time. Very often on weekends and holidays as many as three to four times the capacity of any given developed area or of the forest total is used by forest recreationists. Age of structures plus the extreme degree of use naturally results in need for much maintenance and expansion.⁵³

Along the Clackamas River Road, where prewar facilities did not exist, the problem was amplified. In 1956, twelve recently-built campgrounds, designed to accommodate a maximum of 800 campers, lined the road. During busy summer holidays, Forest Service officials counted over six thousand cars (usually carrying multiple people) vying for those campsites.⁵⁴

While the need for timber access roads seemed the most pressing concern for national forests in the Forest Service's Washington, D.C. offices, the overuse of

⁵² Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, 85.

⁵³ "Mount Hood National Forest History," 1952, 6.

⁵⁴ "Opening of the Clackamas, 7. The problems continued through at least 1959. "Forest's Many Uses."

recreation facilities in reality did more to occupy foresters and administrators on the ground, especially in places like northwest Oregon. Yet, as the Clackamas became more crowded with both pleasure-seekers and wage-workers, foresters (who made up 90 percent of the USFS workforce at the time) dug in their boot heels and attempted to tackle the problem with redoubled emphasis on technology and intensive management.⁵⁵ No single use had to give way, they argued, if all uses could be balanced through proper planning. They called it “multiple use.”

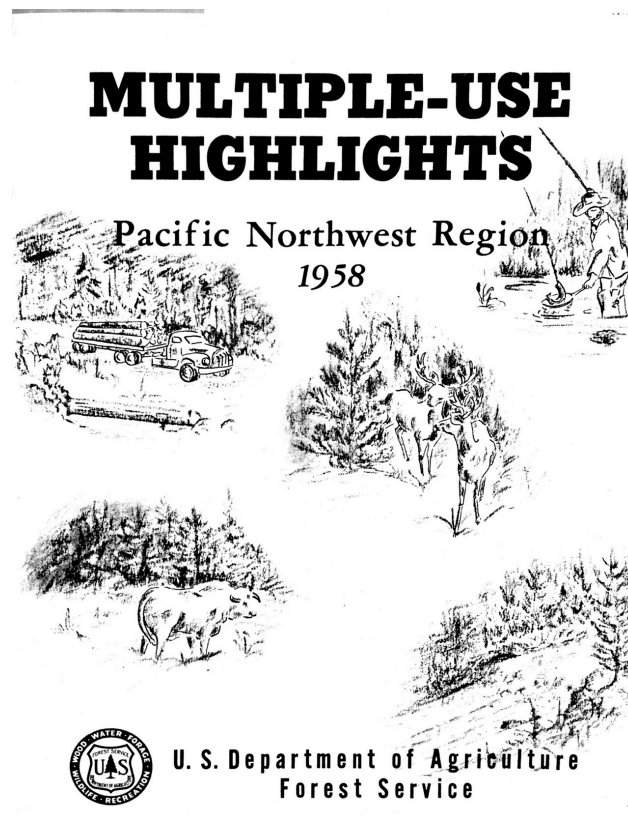


Figure 43 Cover of U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region annual report, "Multiple-Use Highlights," 1958.

Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁵⁵ Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, 59. Note also that road engineers made up most of the other 10 percent of USFS employees.

Lacking the fiscal means to show what multiple use looked like in practice, the Forest Service could only make their case rhetorically at first. Marketing efforts centered on the highly crafted official language of multiple use, which began to appear in USFS reports as early as the 1940s.⁵⁶ By the late 1950s, the term seeped into all manner of publication. Foresters used the term deliberately and optimistically in newspapers, magazines, and trade journals. For example, the Pacific Northwest Region's annual report was renamed "Multiple Use Highlights" in 1958.⁵⁷ In the summer of 1959, the *Oregonian* ran an article entitled "Forest's Many Uses," in which Mount Hood's Forest Supervisor Paul E. Neff took "a small group of newspaper and timber industry representatives up the Clackamas River," to tour "what is described as the busiest forest road in the United States." The journalist seemed entirely convinced that "the development of one use makes other uses more feasible" when he wrote,

As the main road is shoved back into the forest and logging operators build connecting roads to get out the timber purchased from the Forest Service, the Mount Hood forest is being opened up to campers, picnickers and other users. The patches of logged timber, averaging about 40 acres, which are clear cut and immediately replanted, give deer and other game new browsing and breathing space.

The author took on a critical yet hopeful tone when he noted that "Forest camps are being built along the river as the new country opens, though inadequacy of funds makes this a slower process than the heavy use of camping spaces demands."⁵⁸ The following year,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 57–60.

⁵⁷ "Multiple Use Highlights: Pacific Northwest Region," U.S. Forest Service, 1958, in Box 5, Acc. 2010: 084, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC. It kept this name until at least 1963.

⁵⁸ "Forest's Many Uses."

the Forest Service would codify the hopeful, seemingly mutually beneficial system of management with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960.

Despite such attempts to leverage the idea of multiple use as an answer to critical questions regarding proper forest management, the Forest Service's bias for timber production dominated policymaking. Historically, the MUSY Act can be interpreted most accurately as the way in which USFS foresters came to understand the demands of recreational users while, at the same time, subsuming them under their own silvicultural goals.⁵⁹ Slippages were readily apparent in official publications and publicity pieces, like the newspaper article quoted above, which tended to place discussions of recreation at the bottom after lengthy explanations of the benefits of timber and roads. Such sections typically would be followed by a heavy-handed and simplistic conclusion that the agency had succeeded in reconciling disagreements between all sets of interests. The rhetorical strategies that the Forest Service followed in promoting multiple use were emblematic of broader trends toward increasingly self-conscious, defensive marketing campaigns by the timber industry. These were meant to assuage the growing number of environmentalists in the Pacific Northwest and nationally. Tree farms, cut-your-own Christmas tree lots, and the continuous stream of publicity pieces presented tree-harvesting as rational, benevolent, and even patriotic to counter claims that loggers were destructive and self-interested.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, 58–60.

⁶⁰ Emily K. Brock, "Tree Farms on Display: Presenting Industrial Forests to the Public in the Pacific Northwest, 1941–1960," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 113.4 (2012): 526–559; "Area Set Aside for Yule Trees," *The Oregonian*, December 11, 1955, 28.

However, as the slippages became harder to ignore with the intensification of logging alongside heavy recreational use in the mid- and late 1950s, it seemed clear that the Forest Service could not achieve the harmony of multiple use through rhetoric alone. It would require relationships with outside agencies, foresters concluded. In the Clackamas Ranger District, the USFS officials built partnerships with Clackamas County, PGE, the Oregon State Game Commission (OSGC), and the Oregon State Highway Department (OSHD) to supplement the meager funding provided by Congress. Below Estacada and away from the main stem of the river, the Clackamas County Parks Department built campgrounds and picnic facilities that dispersed recreational users outside of national forest boundaries. In a half-dozen locations on Forest Service land, PGE and OSGC maintained boating and swimming facilities on reservoirs like Timothy Lake and Lake Harriet, both of which were created by dam projects in the 1950s.⁶¹ The most substantial change came, however, when 25 miles of the Clackamas River Road became a state highway in 1961. By transferring the road—now called the Clackamas River Highway or State Highway 224—to the OSHD, Forest Service officials passed along the cost of maintenance to external sources just as they had with road construction years earlier. In effect, they sidestepped the growing problem of conflicting uses by distributing the burden to other agencies that could keep up with the demand.⁶²

⁶¹ “Opening of the Clackamas,” 7; “Forest’s Many Uses;” “Close Clackamas County Wilderness A Paradise of Parks;” Joe Bianco, “Short Hops No. 24: Clackamas River,” *The Oregonian*, June 11, 1963, 17.

⁶² “State Gets Upkeep Job,” *The Oregonian*, July 25, 1961, 9. Calls for the road to become a Forest Highway can be found in “Clackamas Timber Tied to Road Building Task.” Earlier lobbying to create a transmontane Clackamas River Highway can be found in “Clackamas Watershed Road Urged,” *The Oregonian*, August 21, 1956, 10; “Road Posed Near Hood,” *The Oregonian*, September 30, 1956, 31.

Underlying the development of the Clackamas River Road/Highway was the fact that the automobile continued to dictate the terms of recreational use in Mount Hood National Forest during the 1940s, 50s, and early 60s. Like in previous decades, newly built roads played a major role in the way that Oregonians—and Americans more generally—viewed the wilderness out their backdoor. Nevertheless, the postwar years were, as one *Oregonian* article put it, a “new era in recreation.”⁶³ Logging roads in particular were transforming forests in ways that differed qualitatively and quantitatively from early twentieth-century patterns of development, opening up areas that the Forest Service formerly deemed closed by default. Suddenly, the shift from corridors of highway tourism to vast networks of dirt roads and dispersed recreational facilities, which had begun during the CCC years, picked up in intensity, heightening the tension that already existed between technology and nature. Inaccessible roadless areas, it seemed, would be a thing of the past, for better or for worse. Logging interests, of course, were delighted. Increased accessibility meant more productivity. Recreational users, on the other hand, voiced a wider range of opinions, from genuine enthusiasm to outright skepticism.

Log Trucks and Wilderness Preservation

The development of multiple use (i.e., logging) road networks prompted debates over the proper form and function of forest roads across the U.S. West. This was

⁶³ “Close Clackamas County Wilderness A Paradise of Parks.”

especially the case along the Clackamas, and in the Cascade mountains more broadly, where log trucks flooded the scene in incredible numbers. With their critical tone, reflective of a rising popular environmental consciousness, local debates responded to the more abstract discussions at the national level that had blossomed with the formation of the Wilderness Society in 1935. Though elite preservationists in Portland and elsewhere seemed to come to somewhat amicable terms with the Forest Service after the wave of New Deal development in the mid- and late 1930s, the scale of postwar logging and roadbuilding rubbed salt in their nearly healed wounds.

A new generation of wilderness preservationists emerged after the war. Bolstered by increasing popular interest in the ecological sciences and strengthened by an emerging contingent of suburban environmentalists, postwar wilderness preservationists broke from the tenuous, unofficial prewar armistice. Despite losing their most vocal and eloquent spokesperson with the 1939 death of Bob Marshall, the Wilderness Society continued to promote roadlessness and primitive recreation, now with the concerted involvement of regional recreation clubs like the Mazamas and the Sierra Club, whose members now played a more active role in conservation issues.⁶⁴ Behind the eloquence and charismatic leadership of Howard Zahniser, the focus of protests in the late 1950s shifted from unsightly recreation developments and the abstract threat of piecemeal roadbuilding, to the horrifyingly real problem of heavily logged forests, crisscrossed by thousands of miles of access roads.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Scott, *We Climb High*, 50.

⁶⁵ Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*; Harvey, ed., *The Wilderness Writings of Howard Zahniser*.

Zahniser's cohort took aim at the USFS policy of multiple use. Wilderness preservationists called into question the Forest Service's faith in technology and sparred with the agency over its definition of multiple use, suggesting that federal bureaucrats were in the pockets of the timber industry. The Forest Service countered these claims by charging that anti-roadbuilding, anti-logging preservationists wished to reserve vast swathes of forest for a selfish *single* use. The back-and-forth continued through the 1950s.⁶⁶ The passage of the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act in 1960 was, thus, in many ways a rebuttal to wilderness preservationists, as historians have noted.⁶⁷ In the bill, USFS officials, backed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, argued that land use should be determined by the "highest value" present in any particular location, which allowed them to favor timber on most forested land and still claim that "all... resources *in general* are of equal priority."⁶⁸

As a result of the MUSY Act, Zahniser and the Wilderness Society fundamentally altered their goals and methods. They recognized at that moment that protecting roadless, unlogged areas from development required wrestling away control from narrowly focused Forest Service bureaucrats by lobbying Congress for a separate system of preservation. Essentially, at the beginning of the 1960s, wilderness preservationists stopped working *with* the Forest Service and began working *against* them.⁶⁹ In the

⁶⁶ "Multiple Use Highlights: Pacific Northwest Region," U.S. Forest Service, 1959, 3 in Box 5, Acc. 2010: 084, Gerald W. Williams Collection, OSU SCARC.

⁶⁷ Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism*, 151–192.

⁶⁸ Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Ervin L. Peterson, in *ibid.*, 182, emphasis mine.

⁶⁹ An example of this more sophisticated and effective legally focused approach can be found in "Speaker Urges Passage of Wilderness Bill," *The Oregonian*, January 17, 1961, 7.

meantime, with battles taking place throughout the U.S. West over logging and roadbuilding in places like the Sierra Nevada's Deadman Summit, as well as the Three Sisters Primitive Area in the southern Cascades, local supporters of wilderness preservation were forced to pick battles selectively, often choosing small, discrete units to protect from immanent development.⁷⁰

To the Mazamas, who still represented the primary voice in conservation in Portland, the logging of the Clackamas River basin seemed like a battle that could not be won. Club members had learned in their previous disputes with the Forest Service that slowing what Fred McNeil once called "the influx of civilization" required a pragmatic approach that sometimes necessitated compromise.⁷¹ In the case of the Clackamas, where timber clearly represented the highest value and the recreating public seemed generally enthusiastic about development, the Mazamas averted their eyes, despite an intense, growing interest in wilderness preservation. The *Mazama* monthly periodicals closely followed the efforts of the Friends of Three Sisters in Eugene, as well as more distant wilderness conflicts, such as that over Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument, which galvanized popular support for wilderness preservation.⁷² And in 1959, the club began publishing an insert entitled *Conservation NOW*, which included speeches by Zahniser and calls to arms for local initiatives.

⁷⁰ Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest*, 19–37; Tom Turner, *David Brower: The Making of the Environmental Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 87–8.

⁷¹ "Leading the Snow Army."

⁷² Turner, *David Brower*.

But, the extensive old-growth forest of the Clackamas hardly made the pages. Only a brief mention in 1953, just as logging and roadbuilding were really taking off, of the popular Bagby Hot Springs area alluded to any greater concern. The tone of the article was somber but realistic: “The area’s recreational value as a wilderness, while high, does not outweigh the value of merchantable timber, and, therefore, it is not possible to avoid the sustained-yield cutting.”⁷³ Following this line of reasoning, wilderness preservationists steered clear of the Clackamas.

In their stead, a decidedly pro-automobile class of recreational users voiced concerns of a different nature over the multiple uses of the Clackamas River Road. Rather than take issue with roadbuilding or logging on scientific, aesthetic, or philosophical grounds, recreational motorists argued that public forest roads were treated unfairly and that the roads suffered disproportionately under particular users, namely log trucks. Throughout western Oregon, public ire was directed largely at these highly visible trucks, which logging companies utilized to haul their goods from the mountains to sawmills in Oregon City, Portland, and elsewhere. Besides clearcut patches of forest, which foresters attempted to hide behind highway “timber borders,” log trucks certainly were the most noticeable representation of logging’s dramatic increase throughout the state. While clearcuts became the target of public protests only in the 1970s, such loud,

⁷³ *Mazama*, 33–46 (1950–1964); *Conservation NOW*, Mazamas, 1–4 (1959–1962). See in particular, Mary Lou Moore, “Bagby Hot Springs,” *Mazama* 34.13 (December 1952): 49–50; Margery E. Moore, “Collawash River Pack Trip,” *Mazama* 35.13 (December 1953): 23–24. Quote from V.L.F. Conservation Committee, “Bagby Hot Springs to Be Spared,” *Mazama* 35.12 (December 1953): 4.

oversized commercial vehicles barreling down narrow, two-lane roads proved much more difficult to disguise as postwar logging reached new levels of intensity.⁷⁴

As early as the 1940s, Oregonians expressed concern regarding the deleterious effects of overweight log trucks and the regular, alarming occurrence of accidents between trucks and private automobiles. Private motorists hoped to keep log trucks in check through statewide legislation, but they faced a powerful trucking lobby. In 1949 and 1951, the Oregon House and Senate passed bills that increased the amount truck operators paid to offset their heavy wear and tear on public roads. House bills 465 and 665 required that commercial vehicle tax dollars fund one-third of public highway costs. The legislation was met with serious opposition on both occasions from industry lobbyists.⁷⁵ In an additional bill from 1951, Legislators singled out overweight log trucks to be penalized. Until that year, log trucks—which, weighing upwards of 40 tons, tended to be some of the heaviest vehicles on the road—had received special privileges that allowed them to be up to 10 percent over the legal weight limit of 36 tons without penalty. But as road engineers and the public began to take account of the trucks' effects, the state revoked such preferential treatment.⁷⁶ State legislators continued to debate weight restrictions for the next decade.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Hirt, *Conspiracy of Optimism*, xxx–xxxii, 245–51, 260–63.

⁷⁵ “Truck Operators to Pay Third of Highway Costs,” *The Oregonian*, April 24, 1951, 10.

⁷⁶ “Log Truckers Oppose Legislative Plan to End 10 Per Cent Weight Tolerance,” *The Oregonian*, February 15, 1951, 13.

⁷⁷ “County Truck Weight Tax Prohibited in Senate Bill,” *The Oregonian*, April 7, 1953, 9; “Pounds vs. Board Feet,” *The Oregonian*, July 22, 1954, 3M; “Truck Fees Hassle Aired,” *The Oregonian*, February 18, 1959, 6.

The problem of log truck accidents, however, proved more difficult to solve. Prompted by a string of fatal accidents involving log trucks during the summer of 1952, the *Oregonian* ran a series “on the problem of highway safety... as it relates to log trucks,” in which they claimed that “members of the logging industry, state enforcement agencies and many average motorists, few of whom haven’t experienced a fearful sensation as they have passed, or been passed, by a loaded log truck on a state or county highway,” all agreed that “something has to be done.”⁷⁸ Sometimes, local governments attempted to ameliorate conditions by placing special restrictions on particular stretches of road in order to separate log truck traffic from private traffic, as Clackamas County officials did in 1952 along the lower Clackamas River Road. In that instance, log truckers were forced to use a less congested, but less expeditious, route on the opposite side of the river.⁷⁹ Other times, state legislators sought more comprehensive solutions, Oregon state Senator Richard Neuberger (Democrat Multnomah County) did in 1953 when he proposed a flat speed limit for log trucks of 30 miles-per-hour and stronger vehicular manslaughter laws for truck operators.⁸⁰ However, again facing strong opposition from the trucking industry, both bills were defeated and redrafted as weaker restrictions, such as requiring mud flaps for trailers and sturdier bindings to keep loads of logs together.⁸¹

⁷⁸ “Oregon Highways Crumble Under Truckloads Deemed Excessive;” “Engineers Worried by Problem of Big Trucks on Secondary Roads;” “Check Due Log Trucks for Safety;” “Man Killed, Five Hurt in Truck-Car Collision;” “Industry, Officials, and Public Demand Safety in Log Trucking,” *The Oregonian*, September 21, 1952, 40.

⁷⁹ “Order Puts Curb on Log Trucking,” *The Oregonian*, July 28, 1952.

⁸⁰ “Industry, Officials and Public Demand Safety in Log Trucking.”

⁸¹ “Log Trucks, Mud Issue,” *The Oregonian*, January 18, 1955, 8; “Tough Highway Problems,” *The Oregonian*, August 5, 1955, 6M.

Though it was hardly confined to the Clackamas region and less about the future of forests than about the future of the roads that ran through them, the mid-century Oregon log truck debate was one manifestation of the Forest Service's multiple use policy in action. As the postwar years wore on, Oregonians struggled to strike a balance between logging's importance to the state's economy and the need for safe, sturdy roads for all motorists. Legislators and citizen activists, confronted by a resolute trucking industry lobby, focused their attention on training for drivers and stricter loading laws when more substantial legislation failed to pass. Horrific accidents, publicized in local newspapers, continued to command the attention of the motoring public.

So, by the time the MUSY Act had passed through Congress and wilderness preservationists had moved on to bigger fights, log trucks had become a normalized part of the experience of driving through and recreating in Oregon's national forests. Fatal accidents, like that of Joseph Cripps on the Clackamas River Road in 1962, seemed just an unfortunate price to pay for a robust economy. Though critics talked of reducing log-trucking's impact in more radical ways, on the whole Oregonians responded in moderate terms. One opinion piece from 1955 stated the situation succinctly:

The basic problem, of course, is joint use of the public highways by trucks and passenger vehicles. But no one seriously suggests ruling logging or other trucks off the state highways, for the destruction of these industries cannot be supported... Still, these accidents happen. Pictures and stories of truck accidents in which fatalities occur usually are more spectacular than accidents of pleasure vehicles. They go out across the nation, and certainly are no encouragement to tourists to drive to Oregon. Gradual improvement of the highways—widening and straightening—is helping to make them safer for joint occupancy. But Oregon and the state's leading industry cannot afford to build roads exclusively for trucks. Perhaps that time will come, but it would not be practical in the foreseeable future.

The author concluded by presenting a conciliatory solution to “one of Oregon’s most perplexing problems”: “In the meantime, all drivers should slow down when they encounter ‘Watch Out for Log Truck’ signs, and invariably should restrain their impatience and give big trucks of all types all the road they require.”⁸² In other words, “the mighty logging truck is here to stay.”⁸³

Conclusion

In 1964, the year that President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law, Mount Hood National Forest was both the most-visited national forest in the country and one of the most profitable for commercial timber outfits. The Clackamas River Road, as the main route for log trucks and a major thoroughfare for recreational users, was much more than just an abstract symbol against which environmentalists defined their cause. For most, it represented money, progress, and, ultimately, a semblance of compromise between disparately self-interested users of public forest land. Despite inherent tension in the multiple use concept, then, the Forest Service’s statement that the Clackamas River Road was such a “fine... example” of multiple-use success was neither insincere nor entirely untrue. Along that formerly rough forest road—which, by 1961 (the year it became a state highway), had come to look much like the Columbia River Highway and Mount Hood Loop—multiple uses converged and jockeyed for space, sometimes violently.

⁸² “Tough Highway Problems.”

⁸³ “Oregon Highways Crumble Under Truckloads Deemed Excessive.” A similar statement can be found in the concluding paragraphs of “Engineers Worried by Problem of Big Trucks on Secondary Roads.”

Despite recent memories of bitter controversies, a rising tide of anti-development sentiment, and frequent reminders of the dangers of automobile usage, Oregonians in the mid-twentieth century still demonstrated profound optimism about the power of technology, under the direction of the state, to provide convenient access to and properly utilize nature. They understood the value of the road's continued existence, including its use by both commercial and private vehicles, and argued for ongoing maintenance and increased regulation rather than a complete structural overhaul or elimination of the road altogether. In this way, debates regarding the future of the Clackamas River Road reflected the public's, as well as the Forest Service's, faith in forest development and intensive management.

In retrospect, however, the management of the Clackamas River Road at the local, state, and federal levels, consisted of a generation of temporary fixes and conservative solutions to increasingly pressing demands—demands that, in one form or another, had perplexed Mount Hood National Forest administrators, and USFS officials more generally, since at least 1915. The Forest Service's halfhearted attempts to manifest multiple-use harmony through rhetoric and inter-agency partnership only accomplished so much. State and local bureaus could no more keep up with the demands of recreational users than the Forest Service could. In addition, the sincere efforts of private citizens to strike deals with log-truckers failed to result in a better driving experience for the general public. The result was an overall air of distrust and disenchantment, an unwillingness to work together, and the polarization of interest groups into hardline, mutually exclusive

camps during the tumultuous cultural shifts of the 1960s.⁸⁴ Unfortunately for all parties, the inability to reach a comprehensive solution took a toll on the road itself. Worsened by the damp, rainy climate of the Cascades, the road's cracked pavement and crumbling shoulders were in desperate need of repair by the summer of 1964.⁸⁵ While the public waffled, Mother Nature made other plans for the road.

The floods came just three months after the Wilderness Act was passed in September. December 1964 had been a bitterly cold month in Oregon. Plummeting temperatures froze high-country streams, and a thick layer of snow accumulated along the banks of the Clackamas River. When a warm front pushed through the state the week of Christmas, raising temperatures in some places by forty degrees and dumping eight and a half inches of rain over five days, all the frozen water that had been locked up in the mountains, melted. The rain and run-off all rushed downstream at once, precipitating one of the most destructive floods in the history of the Pacific Northwest. Creeks and rivers from California to British Columbia rose to record levels. Some, including the Clackamas River, even re-routed course, taking bridges, buildings, and asphalt along with them. As the floodwaters receded, rains picked up again in January, slowing rebuilding efforts. The Clackamas River Road saw the worst of it. Of the 400 million board feet of standing timber under contract in Mount Hood National Forest, officials estimated over

⁸⁴ Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness*.

⁸⁵ "Foster Road Project Due."

half had been rendered inaccessible due to washouts and landslides along the network of roads that had been built over the previous two decades.⁸⁶

The flooding inflicted the most damage on the Clackamas Ranger District, but roads and trails throughout other parts of the forest, including the main arteries of the Columbia River Highway and Mount Hood Loop, experienced its wrath. In effect, the entire state's transportation network, especially through the rugged Cascade mountains, was out of commission as the year 1965 dawned. So, a little over a half-century after it gained its modern boundaries, having witnessed fifty-two years of innovative roadbuilding and recreation development, Oregon's flagship national forest suddenly appeared to visitors like it had seemed at the turn of the twentieth century: forbidding, dangerous, and inconvenient; so close, yet so far away.

⁸⁶ "Flood-Damaged Roads May Cost Counties One-Third of Receipts;" ODOT History Committee, *Oregon on the Move*, 59; "Oregon Department of Transportation History Center: 1964 Christmas Flood," ODOT, http://web.archive.org/web/20120102213332/http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/CS/BSS/historycenter.shtml#1964_Christmas_Flood, retrieved February 9, 2016.

Epilogue

Seeing the Forest for the People Fifty-Two Years after the Wilderness Act

It was the middle of the summer just this past year, and I was on a car-camping trip by myself on one of the narrow, nameless logging roads alongside a tributary of a tributary of the Clackamas River. It was a hot day during one of the hottest months on record in Oregon, and I was looking for a swimming hole. I found one, ironically, just off the side of the road, catching water that splashed into it from a culvert above. I noticed the pond was manmade as I jumped in. The sides were lined with surprisingly beautiful, though crumbling, stone masonry in a curving U shape—a fire plug, I later discovered.¹

When I got out to dry myself in the sun, I looked down to my right and saw an iPhone lying on the bank of the creek that flowed from the pond. Curious, I took a look at the screen, which was a photo of a father and son fishing. I also noticed the phone was in airplane mode—meaning the camper knew how to conserve battery life in an area that had poor cell service—and fully charged. In other words, the owner of this phone, whom I assumed was the man on the screen smiling with his young angler, probably had left the swimming hole recently.

Sure enough, fifteen minutes later, a beat-up old Chevy Silverado rolled up to my lunch spot, two middle-aged but youthful-looking men in the cab and an old, lethargic,

¹ Fire plugs were small manmade lagoons off of logging roads, built to supply fire trucks with reliable sources of water. The trucks would pump water from the fire plugs into tanks in their trucks. The two men that I met that day explained this to me. They hypothesized that it was built in the 1930s. It is more likely that it was built in the early 60s.

happy Golden Labrador in the bed. The two men jumped out of the truck. The dog followed slowly, sniffing my bag for the peanut butter and jelly sandwich I had packed the previous morning. I noticed that both men seemed drunk. The drunker of the two—fortunately, the passenger—looked at me, looked at the phone on the ground, and perked up. I knew then that this was the man in the photo, clearly not with his son.

He had left his phone after a morning of swimming and was delighted that no one had stolen it. His buddy had driven him halfway back home before he realized it. The two men thanked me, gave me a nip of whiskey from their nearly empty bottle of Crown Royal, and got to rambling. “Man, I love this area, but each year, there are more and more people cramping our spot.” I nodded my head, knowing that I was one of the newcomers to which he was referring, having moved to Oregon less than a year before. I learned that they were from the small logging town of Molalla, just to the south and west of Estacada and with a similar history. The driver of the pick-up went on, becoming more frank as he talked (and as he sipped the beer that he pulled out of the driver’s-side cup-holder). “If it weren’t for loggers,” he continued, “none of these roads would exist so all those environmentalists in Portland can come up here and hike around looking at the trees. They think it’s all old-growth up here!” He looked at me out the sides of his eyes. Again, I nodded, but this time struck by the earnest truth of what he said.

The man’s comment came at a critical point in my thesis research, just as I prepared for a brief move to Corvallis to dig through Oregon State University’s special collections for primary source materials on roads, trees, and the Forest Service. I had yet to pin down my topic, and this guy got me thinking about relationships between strangers

in the woods. That night, after the two locals left, over a fire next to my truck, I remembered the essay I had just read at the end of my first year as a history graduate student. In the article, historian Richard White pondered a bumper sticker he had seen in Forks, Washington, which he described as “a logging town badly crippled by both over-cutting and the spotted owl controversy.” The essay has become famous amongst environmental historians for its frank discussion of the stark dividing line between labor and leisure, especially in the forests of the Pacific Northwest. “Are you an environmentalist, or do you work for a living?,” the man seemed to be asking me.²

But, they too were in the mountains relaxing, doing the same thing I was: starting campfires, casually looking for flecks of gold along riverbanks, aiming guns at trees and road signs, and swinging dull hatchets into an oozing Doug-fir, already dead from the swings of previous visitors. We all were pretending to work while we played. “How is it that environmentalism seems opposed to work?,” White asked. Should I be ashamed, I wondered, that these men were no longer allowed to work in the woods with the same vigor and self-confidence that their fathers and grandfathers had? Did I owe them anything?

White’s essay had changed the way I thought about the relationship between one of my favorite leisure activities—recreational camping—and the very real work that made such leisure possible. So, in a way, the man was right about the intricately interconnected relationship between loggers and environmentalists. I at least owed him

² White, “Are You an Environmentalist...?,” quote from 171.

the recognition of his community's productive history of logging and roadbuilding—as repelling as it had seemed to me when I first moved to the Pacific Northwest. I owed him and his forgetful buddy the acknowledgment that, despite our very real economic, social, and philosophical differences, we shared the same space and would do well to get along.

In the popular imagination, roads do not lend themselves well to telling stories about one particular place. Typically, they are seen as transitional non-places, connective tissue that holds places together, rather than places in and of themselves. But, roads are still singular products of historical actions and thus reflect dreams of technological progress, conceptions of natural beauty, and reservations about humanity's place on earth, from a particular place and moment in time. In this way, the history of roadbuilding and road use in Mount Hood National Forest speaks to ideas people have had about one another and where they belong. For many environmentalists, humans—especially loggers—do not belong in the wilderness, except for brief recreational visits.

When the roads of western Oregon and Washington reopened years after the Christmas Floods of 1964–5, the forest was a different place, characterized by the stark divisions Richard White pondered in the mid-1990s.³ Growing through the 1980s, the divisions exploded in conflict as both sides dug trenches based on floating principles—of tradition, of perfection, and of quality of life—that have blinded them to the essential humanity of nature. This is not to say that prior to the 1960s, all Oregonians agreed about

³ Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness*.

the proper form and scale of development; this is clearly visible in the preceding narrative. Still, it seems that residents of the Pacific Northwest saw themselves as building a future together, whether through conservatively harvesting natural resources or providing for the enjoyment of nature by automobile or on foot.

So, it is now time to see the forest for the people who inhabit it, if only for a short time. They might be sons of loggers drinking Rainiers in pick-up trucks, whose grandfathers were gainfully employed and built these roads (but whose fathers believed they lost their jobs because of a bird). Or, they might be affluent recreationists wearing Patagonia hats and driving Range Rovers, who drive their rigs two hours into the mountains for three hours of mountain-biking, only to return to Portland that night. Or, they might be bearded wilderness nuts sitting on the hoods of their Subarus, eating peaches after hiking the Pacific Crest Trail for a month. Or, they might be residents of Warm Springs Indian Reservation, who have enjoyed the bounty and the beauty of the Cascades' forests for thousands of years. Regardless, we must recognize the important human history that prefaced, and indeed allowed for, our being in the wilderness and how we think about nature today.

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