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Of The Print

Editor's Note: Information for this story was taken from the Historic Section from "Timberline Lodge, the Final Environmental Statement" and the Timberline Lodge section from "Mt. Hood: Portrait of a Magnificent Mountain" by Don and Roberta Lowe.

1977 marks an important year. Timberline Lodge—one of the Northwest's most scenic monuments—celebrates its fortieth anniversary.

Built originally with the help of the Works Progress Administration set up by President Franklin Roosevelt, the lodge has attracted tourists and visitors to the south side of Mt. Hood since it was completed in 1937.

In the early 1930's, a large project such as Timberline Lodge had been suggested by a Portland Architect for the south side near its present site. At the same time, the state administrator of the WPA (in Portland) had also been thinking of a hotel development for the Government Camp area.

This was envisioned as a picturesque, steep-roofed, French-Norman style structure and it was felt that the hotel should be located at the upper edge of the trees, embracing two worlds of the mountain.

The project was proposed to Congress, approved and \$275,513 was appropriated for construction. An additional \$10,000 was appropriated for furnishings.

However, the final cost of the lodge was more than twice the original estimate. Ultimately, over \$1 million was spent in constructing the lodge complex. Timberline, exclusive of furnishings, cost \$675,000 and the road to it \$150,000.

Following negotiated bids for required materials, snow was ready to be cleared by early March 1935 in Summit Meadows. By the end of May, snow ranging 9 to 12 feet in depth had been cleared as far as Phlox Point.

The cornerstone was laid in mid-June, and by September 443 men were working on the lodge, the road and the quarry.

The West wing was constructed first, then the central portion and East wing. The heavy timbers for the main lobby were placed in mid-September, and all exterior work was finished by the end of October.

The crews were quartered at the lodge throughout the winter while the interior work was begun.

Following the lodge's dedication in September 1937 by President Roosevelt, some major problems which had been waiting in the wings made their appearance.

All bids for permits to operate the lodge had been refused by the Forest Service because they did not conform to set expectations.

The Forest Service entered into the picture here because the original plan called for the WPA, with Forest Service cooperation

and assistance, to build the lodge. Upon completion of the lodge, operation would be at the direction of the Forest Service.

The Forest Service's expectations were, that in addition to the annual payment of \$1,000 and 50 percent of net profits, the concessionaire would be responsible for providing a horse-wrangler, furnishing ski instruction, and keeping the road clear of snow.

The bidder finally showed in the form of the Timberline Lodge Cooperation, which issued a 10-year special use permit at \$250 annual fee plus a percentage of the profits.

Following the official opening on Feb. 5, 1938, many were unable to leave the ceremony because a 14-hour snowstorm dumped 72 inches of snow. Nearly 200 people were trapped for the weekend.

The building was closed throughout most of World War II and was reopened in August, 1945.

The money lost during this time and the time and effort needed to run the lodge was not justified by the overall profits and in 1952 the Timberline Cooperation decided to relinquish their concession.

Two Portland men took over in 1952 and were soon \$80,000 dollars in debt as a result of costly improvements that even a good skiing season could not make up for.

In 1953 another Portland man took over and by January 1955 conditions had deteriorated considerably.

The electricity had been shut off because of non-payment hand-woven draperies had been stuffed into windows to replace missing panes of glass, hand-carved furniture had been used for firewood, and outside, the chair lift and rope tow were inoperable.

This mismanagement was terminated by the Forest Service in January of 1955, and two months later Richard Kohnstamm undertook the task of putting the lodge back into operation.

In addition to the five-month task of repairing the building, he immediately put in a \$100,000 double chair lift below the lodge and later installed an outdoor swimming pool at the end of the west wing.

Because of Kohnstamm's work at improving the lodge, year round use has grown dramatically since the late 1950's, and a Northwest wing, included in the original plans for the lodge but not built in the 1930's, was started in 1972.

The lodge was placed on the National Register of historic places on Nov. 12, 1973 as an example of Cascadian Architecture. This granted the lodge the recognition it had been gradually getting for its setting, architecture and historic and cultural values.

The special permit that Kohnstamm and his associates used to restore the lodge was rewritten with a new termination date of May 31, 1974 and was subsequently extended to May 31, 1975.

A new special use permit that had been prepared for a 30-year lease went into effect June 1, 1975.

Forty years on the mountain

