

The Great Columbia River Highway

Description of Northwest's Most Scenic Roadway by S. C. Lancaster, Consulting Engineer Multnomah County.

When Major General George W. Goethals, builder of the Panama canal, passed over the Columbia river highway between Portland and Cascade Docks on Wednesday, September 1, 1915, he said:

"The Columbia river highway is a splendid job of engineering and is absolutely without equal in America for scenic interest." For more than a century men have dreamed of a road that should enter the Oregon country from the east. Several attempts have been made to surmount the barriers which have so long existed, but the forces of nature were greater than man and the fight always has been an unequal one until the task was undertaken by a group

timber region to Astoria and the sea shore. It was officially opened from Hood River to Portland July 6, 1915, and on August 11, 1915, a large number of representative citizens, led by Governor Withycombe, drove over the newly-constructed highway from Portland to the sea.

That part of the Columbia River Highway which lies within the boundaries of Multnomah county is being paved for a width of 18 feet, with a two foot rock shoulder on each side, a total width of surfacing of 22 feet, and for a distance of 42 1/2 miles from the city of Portland east to the Hood River county line. Fully through the Gorge of the Columbia one-half of the hard surfacing is now

great rivers of earth to pass through almost at the level of the sea. The tides ebb and flow to within a few miles of the divide in the range. Hair-seals from the ocean often are seen feeding on salmon. In the very heart of the range eagles are seen to disport themselves about their nests on the mountain tops. Here is where the sparkling waterfalls leap down the crags. Here the beauties of sea, mountain and sky charm all who come by steamer, rail or pass along the great highway from which the best views are always obtained. The city of Portland is situated at the junction of the Columbia and Willamette rivers, in the center of a rich agricultural region. The broad

Every Sheep Now Represents a Small Fortune



of strong business men who thought the time had arrived for the construction of a great highway suited to the traffic of the times and place. It was therefore determined to construct a road 24 feet in width with a maximum grade of 5 per cent and no curve to have a radius less than 100 feet.

It was necessary to construct a number of large bridges, some of them spanning deep chasms. All of the bridges are of reinforced concrete

completed and it is as smooth and even as the finest residential street. In designing the road much care was given to the study of alignment in order to make the road safe and provide an unobstructed view ahead. There are no sharp reverses from one curve to another. This feature was kept in mind in order to permit the outer side of all curves to be elevated, and thus add materially to the comfort of the road.

Willamette valley stretches away more than 100 miles to the south, and to the east the Columbia river highway passes through a rich farming section which ascends to a point 22 miles east of the city at Chanticleer, where the first and, perhaps, finest view of the Gorge of the Columbia is obtained. The elevation at this point is 925 feet above the sea. Rooster Rock, almost 300 feet in height, rises out of the water just below Crown Point, which is 725 feet in

A Farmer's Home in Pendleton



and each was designed to meet the particular condition which existed at each point. Some of the bridges are of an entirely new design, yet all of them are pleasing in appearance and constitute one of the principal attractions of the highway.

The road extends from the wheat fields of eastern Oregon through the Cascade range, enters the city of Portland and passes on the west through a splendid agricultural and

Natural Beauties Preserved. In fixing the location the first consideration was always to preserve the natural God-made beauty, for it would have been a crime to mutilate the lovely landscape which was made for a divine purpose, to influence the lives of men and women and impress them with the all-powerful hand of the Creator of the Universe, for here He parted a mountain range like a curtain to permit one of the

elevation. From a point just east of Chanticleer the road descends on a 5 per cent grade and is blasted out of the side of the mountain for more than three-quarters of a mile. This is the Corniche of the Pacific coast, and it is fully equal to the great European road which is known to all continental travelers. Although the road is hung around the face of the cliff like the cornice on a towering building, it is everywhere 24 feet in width, is paved like a city street and at all dangerous points the traveler is protected by a heavy rock wall on which there is a concrete coping that is heavily reinforced with bars of steel. It is more than 300 feet from the roadway to the floor of the valley below.

Descending to Crown Point the road encircles the top of the rock, which it fits like a crown, the radius being 110 feet. Two hundred and twenty-five degrees of curvature are turned. The road has an extra width and is 35 feet wide in the middle of the curve. A heavy concrete railing four feet in height and a seven foot concrete sidewalk and curb form the outer protection around Crown Point. There is a reinforced concrete lamp post, with a frosted electric globe 14 inches in diameter, at every 20 feet that adds a charm to the scene. The tides ebb and flow at the base of the rock and it is more than a mile to the opposite shore. Here the Columbia river may be seen stretching away toward the sea to the west, and to the east one can look through the Cascade range for a distance of more than 35 miles. The mountains to the north lift their heads for more than a mile in height. The white snow on their summits, the green fir, hemlock and spruce of the timbered area lower down forms a beautiful background for the rectangular plots where fertile fields, orchards and lawns are seen on the heights above the mighty river.

The road continues to descend

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