

Further History Of Highway Work In State Related

(This is another in a series of articles on Oregon highway history prepared by the state highway commission.)

By Ralph Watson Highway Department Writer

HIGHWAY HISTORY GLIMPSES—IV.

Just at what point Oregon's highway system first started well might be the subject of debate. Like Topsy it seems to have "just grown" at widely separated points in the state and at about the same times.

Samuel Lancaster recalls in the first annual report of the commission that road viewers had been appointed in Multnomah county May 25, 1910 at the insistence of E. Henry Wemme and other original highway enthusiasts, to map out the Columbia highway through Multnomah county to the Hood River county line. The survey was made, the road formally declared a public highway on April 29, 1911, and a county work force built 1.8 miles of steep and crooked roadway. The county ran afoul of the Union Pacific right of way and work stopped.

Use "Honor Camp"
In the fall of 1912, Simon Benson advanced \$10,000 to Gov. Oswald West with which to finance his "honor camp" where convicts were employed to build the roadway around the base of Shell Rock mountain in Hood River, which had been assumed to be an impassible barrier. In 1913 construction was undertaken all along the line.

The influence of Samuel Hill, railroad builder and highway enthusiast, in the mapping of the first highway routes ought not to be lightly considered. Prior to 1913 he had been actively fostering the construction of an "international highway," to reach from Canada south through Washington, Oregon, California to the Mexican border. He built a road from Goldendale to his "castle" at Maryhill, established a ferry across the Columbia from there to Biggs, toward which he contributed largely of his own funds, and was voted money by the Washington legislature to build along the north bank of the Columbia. When his construction there ran into reaches costing \$30,000 a mile, the Washingtonians developed cold feet, failed to vote more money, and Sam Hill came across into Oregon, bringing Maj. Henry L. Bowlby, Samuel Lancaster and Charles H. Purcell with him.

First Department
The 1913 legislature established the first highway department under the command of the state board, Gov. Oswald West, Secretary Ben W. Olcott and Treasurer T. B. Kay, and they took over the job by hiring Bowlby as the first state highway engineer, who in turn made Lancaster his assistant and put Purcell at the head of the bridge engineering division.

Lancaster was assigned the task of laying out the Columbia highway through Multnomah to Hood River county, aided by \$75,000 appropriated by Multnomah county to help finance the work.

Jackson County First
Jackson county was the first county to take advantage of the county bonding amendment by voting \$500,000 bonds in November 1913 to start at the California line and build north over the Siskiyou "as far as the money will go."

Clatsop county followed suit with \$400,000 to start at the Tillamook line, north through Seaside and Astoria and on east to the Columbia boundary.

Columbia county added \$300,000 in bonds and a \$95,000 special tax to finance its section of the highway, about which a recall election swept one set of county officers out and put a new set in before the funds were applied as intended.

Hood River voted \$75,000 in bonds in July 1914. Wasco surveyed a route across the county and scheduled to construct in 1916.

In Two Years
Bowlby assumed office June 3, 1913 and went out March 31, 1915. State Engineer John H. Lewis was given the dual role including that of state engineer by the 1915 legislature. He delegated the job to his assistant, E. L. Cantine, who served until Jan. 19, 1916, when the supreme court dumped the job back into Lewis' lap where it rested until the reorganization of the department by the 1917 legislature when Herbert Nunn became the first state highway engineer, as the commission now is set up.

Rapid strides were made in construction in the period between June, 1913 and the close of 1916. Major Bowlby, in summing up results to Oct. 1, 1914, shows that from 1903 to Oct. 1, 1914 a total of \$2,087,869 had been spent in bridge construction while \$19,833,239 had gone into highway construction, a large part of this having come from county bonds and county road levies. The state really took over the highway construction program commencing with the administration of the first appointed highway commission, consisting of Simon Benson, Portland, chairman; W. L. Thompson of Pendleton, E. J. Adams, Eugene, appointed Mar. 6, 1917 by Gov. James Withycombe.

65 Farm Units To Be Opened For Homesteading By Veterans This Year

Salem, Ore., Mar. 16—(UPI)—Sixty-five farm units totaling 7,273 acres will be opened to homestead entry in the northwest this year, with World War II veterans having priority, the Oregon department of veterans' affairs was informed today.

Eleven of the farms covering 723 acres are in the Roza division of the Yakima project in Washington.

Some in Wyoming

Fifty-four units totaling 7,000 are in the Riverton, Wyo., project, according to a brochure received here from the federal bureau of reclamation, which administers public openings on irrigated lands.

An additional 974 acres in 50 farms units will be sold by the reclamation bureau this year in the Burbank unit of the Columbia basin irrigation project. These are lands bought from private owners and irrigated by the government. Veterans of World War II will have priority on these acres, also.

None in Klamath

No homestead openings are slated this year in the Klamath project at Tule lake or in the Boise project in Idaho, but the reclamation bureau said future projects in the 17 western states "now under construction or to be constructed will create an additional 100,000 family-sized farms."

The reclamation bureau said a total of 802 public land farm units amounting to 74,133 acres have been opened to homesteading since World War II.

The bureau said snow covering and freezing temperatures shut off the usual winter grazing and heavy supplemental feeding was necessary in practically all areas. Losses, however, appear to be lighter this year than last year.

The weather since the first week of February has generally been favorable to lambing. With a normal spring season, lambs are expected to be ready for market at nearly the usual time, the bureau reported.

Jump-of-Joe creek is the name of a southern Oregon stream into which a pioneer, Joe McLaughlin, is said to have jumped in 1839, apparently for the joy of it.

University Women Set Reading Of Wilde Play

Ashland, Mar. 15—Members of the local chapter of the American Association of University Women will present a play reading of the Oscar Wilde play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," in Churchill hall auditorium, Friday at 8 p.m.

The reading will be similar to a radio dramatic production. It is a rapid-fire presentation of the play without scenery, costumes, or the usual pauses between acts.

Admission will be charged and proceeds will be used for the A. U. W. fellowship fund which includes the donation of scholarships to qualified college students.

CHAIRMAN NAMED

La Grande, Mar. 16—Lee Rasdale, of Medford, has been named Jackson county chairman of the Eastern Oregon College Alumni association, Association President Hugh Bunten, Baker, also named Henry Anderson, of Grants Pass, chairman of the Josephine county chapter.

Dead line Sunday Classified as a Noon Saturdays.

Oregon Weather Poor For Early Lambing

Weather conditions during January and the first part of February were generally unfavorable for lambing in all parts of Oregon, particularly in the main early lamb areas in the western part of the state, according to the bureau of agricultural economics of the United States department of agriculture.

The bureau said snow covering and freezing temperatures shut off the usual winter grazing and heavy supplemental feeding was necessary in practically all areas. Losses, however, appear to be lighter this year than last year.

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9 cooked prunes or apricots, pitted
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