

Tunnel Dedicated To Randolph Collier

By PEG HUTCHINSON
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Lake county, Oregon, has its "Chief Winnemucca." Del Norte and Siskiyou county, California, have their "Father of the California Freeways."

Two bronze plaques—311 miles apart and in two states—have been erected to these men. The one on Doherty Slide 80 miles east of Lakeview at 6,200 feet elevation, was dedicated Sept. 22, 1962, to former Lake County Judge C. H. Langslet.

Saturday, July 20, a plaque on the south portal of a tunnel through Oregon mountain in northwest California at 2,082 feet elevation, was dedicated to California State Sen. Randolph Collier, for whom the tunnel is named.

The two plaques are on the Winnemucca-to-the-Sea highway which stretches from Winnemucca, Nev., through Oregon and into California to the "sea" at Crescent City, about 490 miles away.

Battles Are Different

Judge Langslet's "fight" for the highway through Lake county east to Harney county and Nevada was entirely different from Senator Collier's "battle" for the tunnel through 2,515-foot high Oregon mountain, about 3 miles south of the Oregon state line.

There was no road across Oregon's sage brush country and the "road to nowhere" had elevations of 6,121 and 6,200 to cross.

Highway construction is generally based on travel statistics. Without a highway there were no figures to use in the request for construction funds.

Senator Collier had the statistics he needed and the "dreams" of men for more than 35 years when he started the fight for the tunnel through Oregon mountain.

Curves Are Eliminated

With the opening of the \$7½ million tunnel July 20, motorists do not have to drive over Hazelview summit with its 148 curves including numerous switchbacks. Eliminated are 124 curves, five hairpin switchbacks and a steep grade that climbs 950 feet in slightly more than four miles. It cuts the distance between Crescent City and Grants Pass by 2.8 miles.

The Winnemucca-to-the-Sea name is only a slogan and the "highway" is a collection of existing numbered state and federal roads. Due to this there is no common number along its entire length.

The three state project has been financed with every conceivable class of road funds legally available, 10 in all. Six counties, three states, and the federal government have contributed money and effort.

Police Judge Elected

In 1939 only a few years after the Redwood highway (Highway 199) was completed in its present location, residents of Del Norte and Siskiyou counties elected

the Yreka police judge to represent them in the California Senate.

With a two-county district larger than many states, the new Senator spent many hours traveling to see his constituents. From his home in Yreka to Crescent City was a day-long journey, first north from Yreka into Oregon, then southwest toward the coast and over Hazelview.

Streets and highways became Collier's major interest as a legislator. Since that time he has authored numerous highway acts which have established California's highway and freeway systems.

An official study of the proposed tunnel was ordered in 1955 by the director of the California public works department, but it was not until July 8, 1960, that Collier turned the first shovel of earth at groundbreaking ceremonies at the tunnel site.

Ask Name of Tunnel

Meanwhile the Illinois Valley, Ore., News, in an editorial, asked that the tunnel be named in honor of Collier and in 1959 the California Senate and Assembly by concurrent resolution voted to name it the Randolph Collier tunnel.

The average motorist today will not stop to recall that it was only 135 years ago that Jedediah Smith led the first white men over the rocky precipices into Del Norte county in search of beaver pelts.

Gold seekers followed Smith by a quarter of a century and established the first white man's settlements in the county. By 1854 the first efforts for a road began when the Crescent City and Yreka Plank and Turnpike Road company was formed with 850 shares of stock at \$100 per share. The mountains were too great for the men, however, and the company failed.

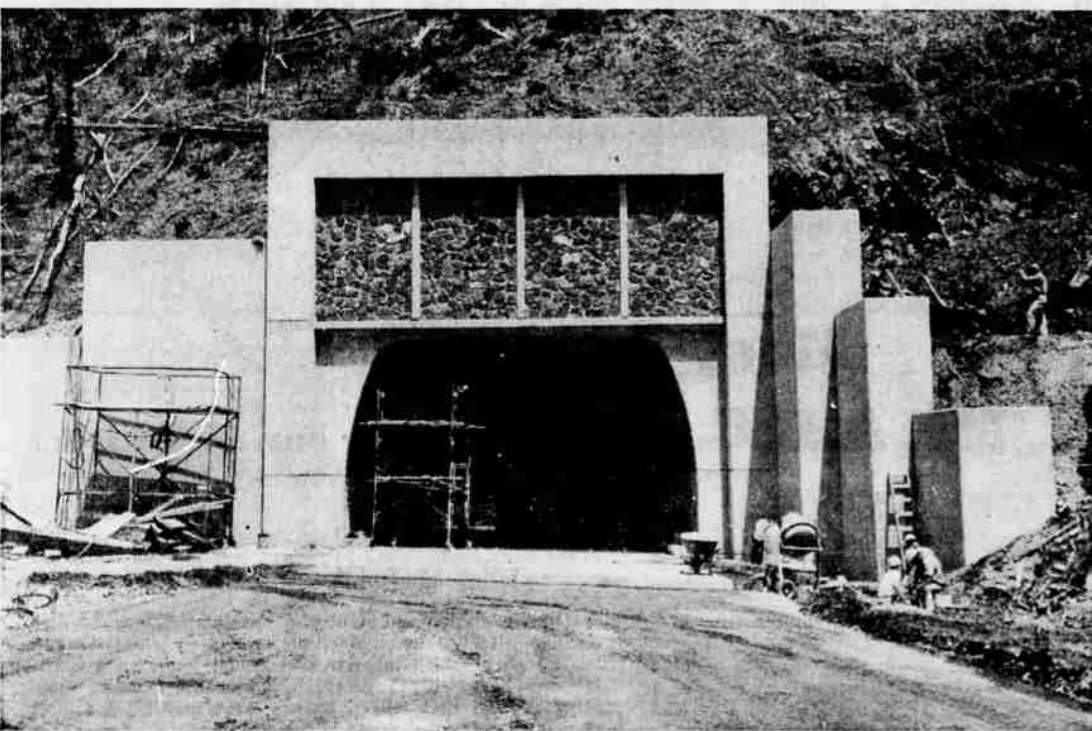
The following year Ben Kelsey, backed by subscriptions and labor from Crescent City, hacked a trail from the coast toward Yreka along the banks of the Klamath and Scott rivers. Portions of the trail, which never did reach its inland destination, can still be found in the coastal mountains.

Other Efforts Followed

Other efforts followed, and in 1886, Horace Gasquet, a French rancher from Smith River, hired Chinese contract laborers and punched a 23-mile toll road through to inland Oregon along the high ridges of the mountains, where heavy winter snows forced travelers to resort to skis to get through.

As the mining industry subsided, logging and an occasional trailblazing tourist, increased the demand for highways into the area. More than 35 years ago a road was finally blasted through the rocky Smith river canyon and replaced the high-level Gasquet road with a new low-level route.

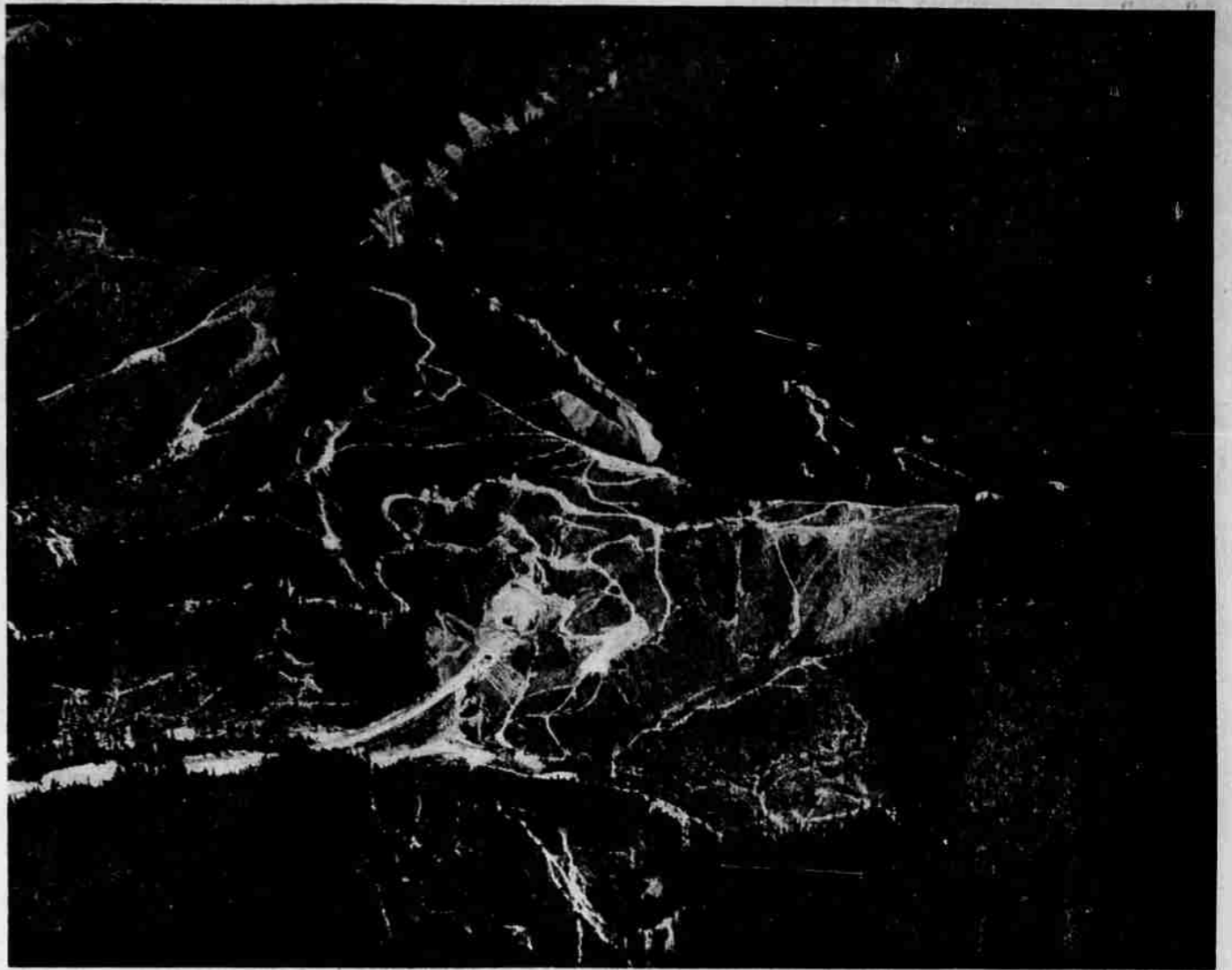
While a tremendous improvement, the Hazelview



The southern portal of the Randolph Collier tunnel on Highway 199 under Oregon Mountain is shown in this picture. The tunnel goes under Hazelview summit ridge, and was dedicated in ceremonies last week.



Traffic often was in this condition on the highway over Hazelview summit until the tunnel project was completed and opened recently. The combined highway and tunnel project cost more than \$7½ million.



General view of the area of the new tunnel under Oregon Mountain is shown here, looking south on Hazelview summit ridge. The north portal of the new Randolph Collier tunnel is shown near the center of the picture. The southern approach roadway to the tunnel is shown at the top center. The old winding highway appears at the left of the north portal, and at right on the southern side of the ridge.

summit—where a mountain ridge crossed the route—forced road builders to resort to a series of severe switchbacks up one side and down the other. Each winter, men who regularly battled the drifting snow, slippery curves, and steep grade, talked of a tunnel through the ridge.

With the opening of the tunnel, under construction for three years, the 7.1 miles of Highway 199 were replaced by the new 4.3 mile route including a realigned highway and the 1,835 foot tunnel, 340 feet below the present highway.

Unlike Old Highway

Unlike the old, narrow highway section, on which the slow speed imposed by sharp curves and steep grades were further reduced by a high percentage of trucks, the two-lane realigned highway has an additional lane for slow vehicles on upgrades. The maximum grade is 6 per cent. Rights of way have been acquired for an ultimate four-lane highway and an additional tunnel when traffic volumes warrant.

Several contracts were included in the overall project. Grate-Callahan company, Los Angeles, constructed the tunnel; Gibbons and Reed, Salt Lake City, the grading of the northern approach, and Morrison-Knudsen, Seattle, grading of the southern approach and paving throughout the project. Myers Industrial Electric company, Oroville, Calif., installed the lighting and ventilation.

Since the tunnel has a 3 per cent northerly downgrade, boring under the summit was begun from the northern side to take advantage of gravity in water seepage. Crews boring into the mountain from the south "joining hands" with those coming from the north in the spring of 1962. The slight downgrade also will ease drainage problems.

The rock formations of Oregon mountain presented many challenges to engineers. The mountain consists of highly folded and partly metamorphosed rock. The bore had to cut through thinly bedded shale, siltstone and interbedded fine sandstone that generally was crushed and shattered.

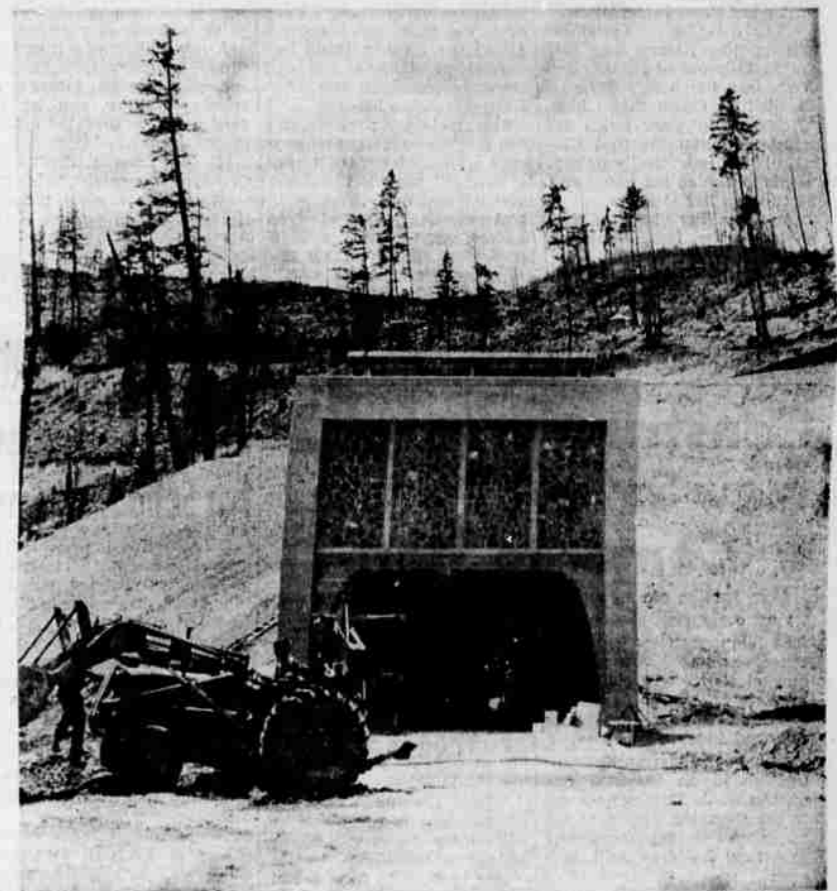
Two 13-Foot Lanes

The tunnel provides two 13-foot wide traffic lanes with 2-foot 4-inch sidewalks on each side. The vertical clearance is 15 feet, the concrete liner is 32 feet high. The interior is coated with a white gloss paint.

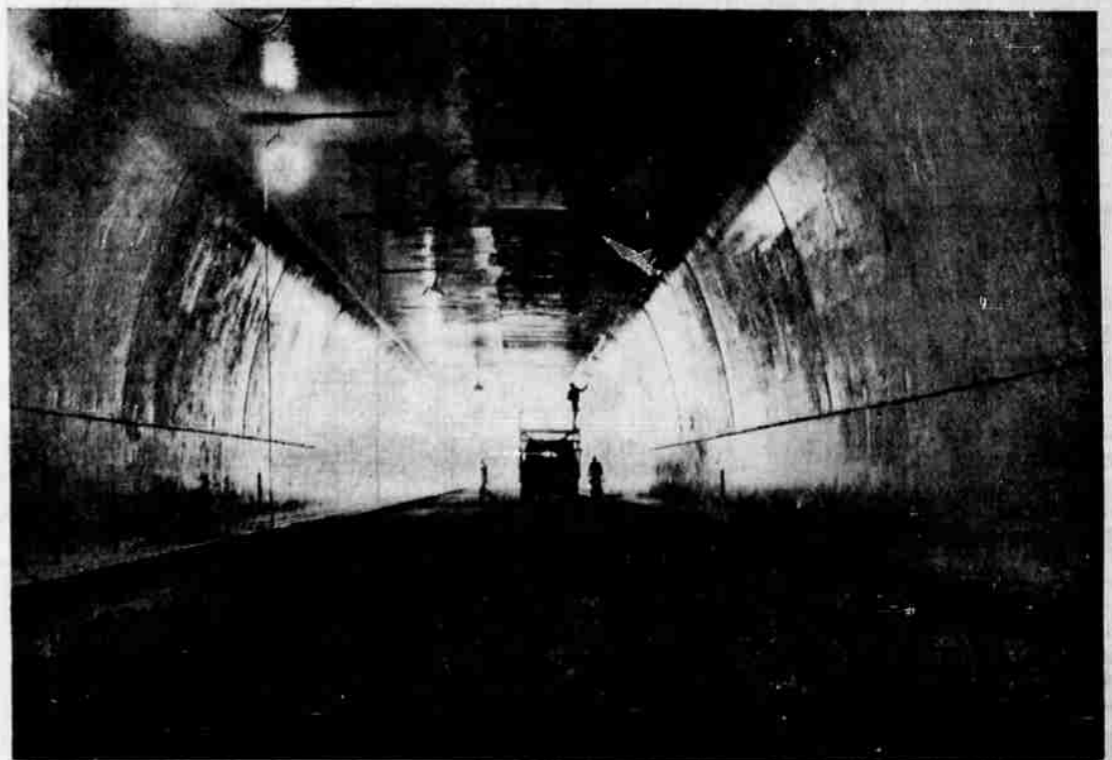
The ventilation building, located at the northern portal, will operate the automatic system. Fresh air will be admitted through the portals and the air to be exhausted will be drawn through ceiling ports into a longitudinal duct above the roadway. The exhaust fans are capable of expelling 180,000 cubic feet of air per minute.

The story of Judge Langslet's determination to build a road is history now—Senator Collier's project has been added to it.

On the plaque at the Collier tunnel it refers to the Senator's "untiring interests and devotion to the development of transportation." In southeast Oregon the highway is dedicated to Langslet "whose singleness of purpose and determination forced it into being."



The ventilation building over the north portal of the new Oregon Mountain tunnel is shown here. The tunnel was dedicated last Saturday.



A coat of white epoxy paint is applied to the walls and ceilings of the new Randolph Collier tunnel on Highway 199 near the Oregon state line. The glossy surface reflects light and aids in washing.