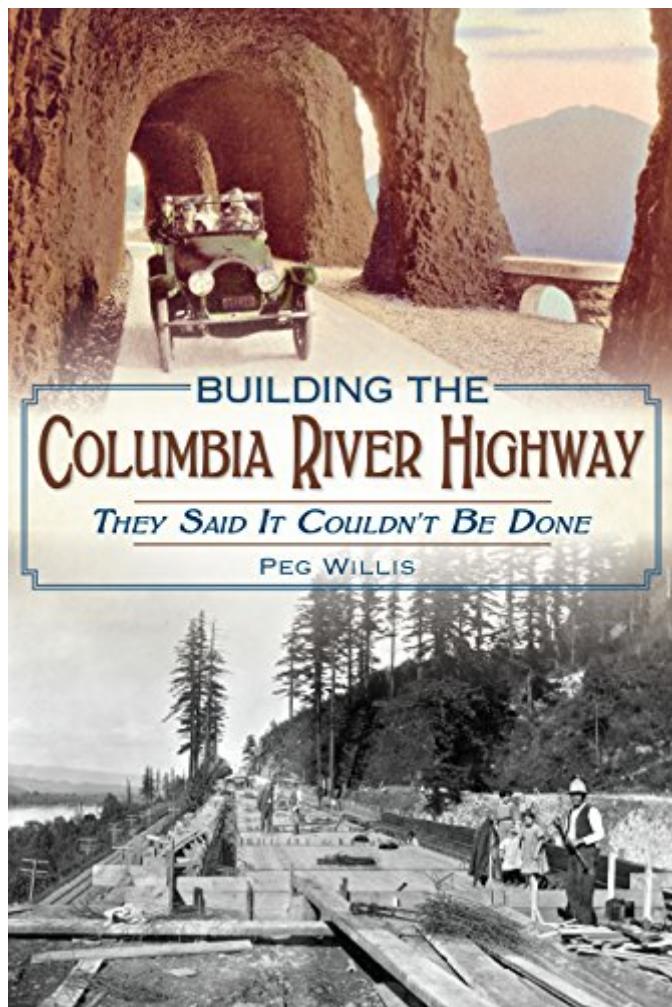


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# Building The Columbia River Highway: They Said It Couldn't Be Done



## **Synopsis**

When nine-hundred-foot ice age floods carved the Columbia River Gorge through the Cascade Mountains to the sea, little space was left for man to form a highway of his own. It took an artist-poet-engineer extraordinaire to conquer this reluctant piece of real estate and produce the nation's first scenic highway. Meet Sam Hill, the mover and shaker, and Samuel Lancaster, the polio survivor, who turned modern engineering on its ear to create a "poem in stone." Today, Oregon's historic Columbia River Highway is hidden among the trees, where it meanders past spectacular waterfalls and dramatic views. Ride along with Peg Willis as she explores the beginnings of this miracle highway and the men who created it.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I have been interested in the Old Columbia Gorge Highway, the subject of this book, for a long time. Today, a drive on the Old Highway (as compared to the "new" I-84 which also follows the Gorge) is probably the best scenic drive in Oregon - and that is saying a lot. Wildflowers in spring, lush forest

and ferns and waterfalls everywhere, Vista House, Multnomah Falls, and much more. There is a lot of history that is represented by this highway, created by a unique fusion of visionary movers and shakers of early Oregon and artistic engineering. This creative book introduces you to people like Sam Hill, Simon Benson, and the engineer/designer/artist who brought all of this together, Samuel Lancaster. There are others, of course, who play a vital role in the creation of this, one of the earliest paved roads in Oregon, a road that was widely considered impossible to build due to the steep slopes of the Gorge. But build it they did! This book honors those pavement pioneers as much as it informs the modern reader and driver. "Building the Columbia River Highway" greatly adds to the enjoyment and appreciation of an already incredible road. (\*Bad pun, but I couldn't resist it any more than I can resist a drive on the Old Columbia Gorge Highway.) Peg Willis, thank you for bringing this book to life!

As a history buff I really enjoyed this book. The author delves into the lives and influences that drove the movers and shakers behind the Columbia River Highway project. My life has involved many trips through the Columbia Gorge, and knowing more about the history of this beautiful area will make my next trip even more enjoyable. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the challenges and the approaches taken to build this wonderful highway.

Wonderful book, but probably because my parents and I used to drive it from Portland to Bonneville, our home. This was the only highway available. It was (is) crooked but very scenic, never tired of it even though the trip was at least three times as long as it is today. I have been a fan of the "old highway" all my life. My mother worked in the gift shop at Crown Point and also at Multnomah Falls. I was a busboy for a few months in the dining room. My parents knew Mr. Lancaster. He wrote a very nice message to them after he was hosted in their (before I was born) home. He had beautiful handwriting, so you can imagine how surprised I was to read in this book about his early Polio attack which left him unable to walk or write. But he overcame this and went on to be the lead engineer on the Columbia River Highway.

I bought this book because I saw the author on tv and she made it all sound so interesting that I knew my dad would really enjoy it. Being a smart person I ordered it well ahead of my dad's birthday so I could read it myself first. I am so glad I did, I am enjoying it thoroughly! The author really makes the subject and the people come alive on the pages, and there are many intriguing photographs as well. Being from this area I am having fun looking at the photos and matching them up to the familiar

places they are today, as well as matching up the names of the significant people to streets and buildings here. I highly recommend this book, it makes what could be a dry subject a joy to read.

This is a well-written book that tells the story of and behind the individuals who were responsible for getting the Columbia River Highway built. It was the first highway in the USA to cross a major mountain range and required enormous care to lay it out with sufficiently gradual grades that the low horsepower cars of the 19-teens could navigate it. Special care was also taken in its layout to provide travelers with spectacular views, including tunnels with openings in their sides so that travelers could look out on the wonderful scenery. The men and women who made it happen were visionaries and deserve our thanks today as segments of this historic highway can still be traveled. Highly recommended!

I love local history, wherever I may be, and even if I didn't happen to live in Oregon and travel along the great Columbia on fairly frequent occasion, I'd sure want to even more after reading this book. The author writes in a very refreshing way, not as someone feeling accomplished and simply proud of the extensive research required for this degree of output, but as someone on my level, clearly excited to share the news she's learned of a fabulous treasure discovered. I can't imagine someone finding this great nugget any bit dull, and look forward to my next trips down through the Gorge, hoping to block extra time for touring these finds in greater detail!! Thanks to Peg Willis!

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the history of the construction of one of the most beautiful highways in the country. The historic photographs add so much to understanding the difficulty in building the highway, especially with the tools that were in common usage at the time. As a native of the Pacific Northwest I have traveled the Columbia River Highway and have heard the names of men such as Sam Hill, Henry Pittock and Simon Benson and this book tells the story of these men and others who were instrumental in bringing the beautiful Columbia River Highway to the people.

Loved! Loved! Loved! Picked it for a book club book, bought one for my sister. I traveled this "old highway" as we call it now, many times as a child from The Dalles to Portland. My mother talked a lot about the builders of the highway (although she came to Oregon in the early 1930s and the road was already built) and how they respected the land.

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