



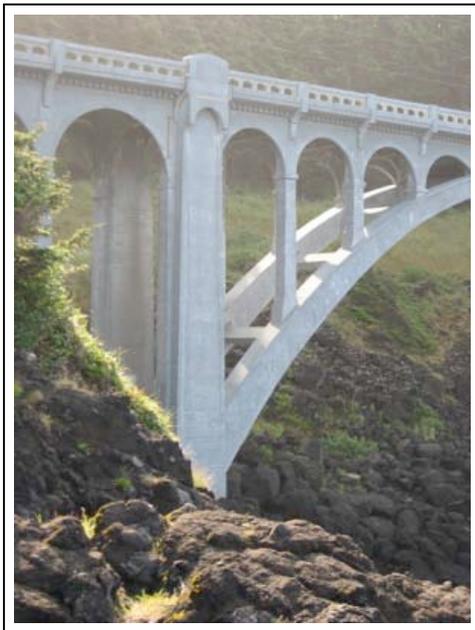
Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association

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The Making of “A History of U.S. Highway 101” Newsletter—by Onno Husing, Director, OCZMA (July 2008)

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Reconnecting People to U.S. Highway 101



Rocky Creek Bridge (later renamed Ben Jones Bridge—Photo by Onno Husing, OCZMA)

By telling the inspiring story of U.S. Highway 101, we want to introduce or reintroduce people to this remarkable infrastructure. It's inspiring to learn how other generations of Oregonians stepped up to improve transportation infrastructure. We are the beneficiaries of their vision and drive.

When I began this history project, I planned on taking two months or so to get it done. That was wishful thinking. First, I became smitten with the two individuals who made U.S. Highway 101 happen: (1) Ben Jones, and, (2) Conde McCullough. For historians, even amateur historians like me, that happens. Indeed, to do history well, you must immerse yourself in the life and times of the people. Second, I wanted to say something original about U.S. Highway 101.

My journey began by reading Robert (Bob) Hadlow's incredibly good book on Conde McCullough (*Elegant Arches, Soaring Spans C.B. McCullough, Oregon's Master Bridge Builder*). I contacted Bob Hadlow. He

was generous with his time and information. Hadlow's biography served as a key reference. Without it, because of my many other duties as Director of OCZMA, I could not have written, *A History of U.S. Highway 101*.

I told Bob that I loved his book. I also told him I wished he had provided more detail about the architectural influences that shaped the bridge designs. Bob told me if he were to re-write his book, he would include more information about architecture. That prompted me to delve into the architectural history.

I examined, in chronological order, bridge-by-bridge, the architectural progression of McCullough's work. The increasing sophistication of each new structure fascinated me. McCullough, as a professional, had an amazing capacity for growth. My major observation was McCullough turned to Gothic architecture in 1933. I wanted to know *why*. After much research and brooding I returned to ODOT's web site. I scrolled through photos of Oregon's historic bridges and came across a photo of the St. John's Bridge (located five miles west of Portland on the Willamette River). The photo reminded me that the St. John's Bridge is a remarkably beautiful Gothic structure. I glanced at the text under the photo and saw the completion date of that bridge was **1929**.

I grew excited. Maybe the St. John's Bridge was a part of this story. The timing sure fit. I dimly recalled that months earlier, I read a reference to the St. John's Bridge in the transcript of an interview with John McCullough (Conde McCullough's son). John McCullough was interviewed in 1980. John McCullough died in 1984. I pulled out the transcript of the interview and gave it another quick read.

Bingo! Like an episode of *History Detectives* on PBS (Public Broadcasting System), there it was, in black and white. On page 27, John McCullough told the interviewer the design of the St. John's Bridge had a profound influence on his father. John McCullough mistakenly referred to the St. John's Bridge as the St. Thomas Bridge. But, from the context, it's clear John McCullough meant the St. John's Bridge (the reason he confused the two names is Saint John and Saint Thomas are two islands in the Caribbean that are located very close to each other).

John McCullough also noted his father and David Steinman (the designer of the St. John's Bridge) became close friends because of the bridge design competition. So, for me, that was *the* missing link. Conde McCullough went Gothic in 1933 because he drew his deep inspiration from the St. John's Bridge (David Steinman's favorite structure).

I phoned Hadlow to explain my findings. He patiently listened and agreed I unearthed something significant (and original) about McCullough's work.

Probing the Origins of Gothic Architecture

I delved deeply into European history to understand the origins of the architectural traditions that influenced McCullough. I learned how Gothic Architecture burst upon the scene in Northern France in the early 12th century, immediately after the First Crusade. I had no clue what a turning point in human history this period turned out to be.

Here's what happened. In 1009, the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah destroyed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (a key holy site for Christians). Muslim leaders also began to deny Christian pilgrims access to the Holy Land. What prompted those actions by the Muslim leaders are not nearly as clear (I'm pretty sure there's an explanation, in other words, two sides of the story).

In response, Pope Innocent II called upon the faithful in Europe to "liberate Jerusalem." Thousands of people (especially from Northern France) heeded the Pope's call and joined the First Crusade (1095-1099). The fallout from the First Crusade (followed by later Crusades) remains with us today. Osama Bin Laden frequently refers to American forces in the Middle East as "Crusaders."

During the Crusades, the Crusaders (who generally led parochial lives in Europe) experienced strange new lands, cultures, and bold new forms of architecture. In the year 800, two hundred years *before* the First Crusade, the pointed arch first made its appearance in Sicily. Before long,

the pointed arch was a centerpiece of Arabic Architecture. When the Crusaders returned home to Europe they brought the pointed arch back home with them. In general, the First Crusade evoked a flowering of arts and commerce in Europe hundreds of years before the later, and, much better known, Renaissance.

The brilliant historian Henry Adams (1838—1918) took a strong interest in the Gothic Cathedrals of Northern France. Adams determined that a paradigm shift in church doctrine occurred during this period. Before the First Crusade, the Catholic Church focused on the Trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost/Spirit). Adams observed the central message of the Trinity was, no matter how you conducted yourself on Earth, you still faced eternal damnation.

Things changed dramatically after the First Crusade. Clerics placed a new emphasis on the worship of the Virgin Mary. The change was profound because the Virgin Mary promised forgiveness and eternal salvation. People embraced the shift in doctrine because, not surprisingly, they wanted to believe Mary would be at their sides to usher them into heaven. Today, some people claim that the worship of the Virgin Mary is a form of worship of the Divine Feminine. Henry Adams, I suspect, would agree. He repeatedly characterized early church doctrine and architecture (before the First Crusade & the Gothic era) as a more “masculine” expression.

The devotion of the Virgin Mary sparked a frenzy of cathedral building in Northern Europe. Cathedrals served as repositories of sacred relics connected to the Virgin Mary. Take, for instance, Chartres Cathedral. It contains a tunic reportedly worn by the Virgin Mary.

I was astonished to learn many of the great Gothic cathedrals—e.g., Saint Denis, Chartres, Reims, Notre Dame to name just a few—were built within a 50 year period! Chartres (Henry Adams’ favorite) was constructed in only 27 years (1194-1221). The erection of Gothic structures during this short period of time is an achievement (from an aesthetic and engineering perspective) that rivals any in human history.

For us today, it’s difficult to comprehend the deep impression Gothic Cathedrals left on people during the Middle Ages. The towering ceilings, the enormous stained glass windows, the imposing scale of the structures, the ethereal music, all combined to overwhelm visitors. The pointed arch enabled master stone masons to erect cathedrals of dizzying heights. Here’s why. The pointed arch, opposed to a round Roman arch, channels weight straight down into the earth. As a result, the walls of Gothic cathedrals didn’t need to be as solid and massive. That allowed builders of Gothic Cathedrals to achieve great heights *and* dedicate large amounts of wall space to huge windows of stained glass.

When pilgrims entered these Cathedrals, they believed they entered the gates of heaven. At a deep emotional level, maybe that’s why people today find Gothic Architecture so incredibly compelling. Here’s an irony. In modern jargon, “Gothic” often conveys something scary. When Gothic Architecture was created, it sent a message of profound hope and salvation.

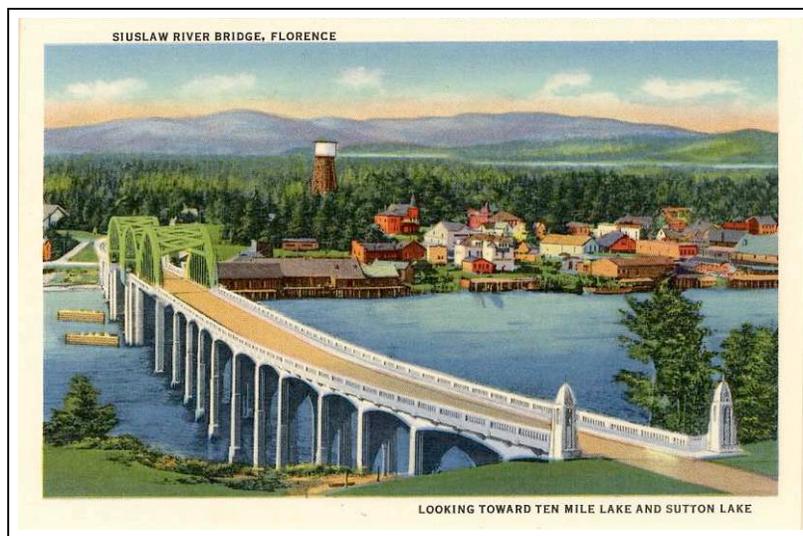
During a recent conversation with a transportation professional (after I wrote *A History of U.S. Highway 101*) I shared my hypothesis about the deep meanings of Gothic architecture. He laughed and said, “Well, I don’t know about that. I think the reason people find McCullough’s bridges so compelling is they just scream out excellence and passion!” You know, I think he’s right! Those bridges say something really important about the human potential.

Antique Postcards: Voices and Images From the Past

I developed a new hobby during this history project; the collecting of old postcards of the Oregon Coast. During my research, I began to encounter old postcards of the Oregon Coast. They provided incredible glimpses of the past. Indeed, many of the best images of the Oregon Coast were taken by professional photographers for the postcard trade during this period.

Today, because of the Internet (E-Bay and other web sites), many antique post cards of the Oregon Coast are finding their way back to Oregon.

I set out to collect all the post cards of the bridges. One postcard maker, Wesley Andrews, stands out from the rest. Charles Wesley Andrews (1875-1950) had a keen eye for composition. But, I have a small bone to pick with him. Andrews took black and white photographs. He then colorized them to make postcards. On several coastal bridge postcards, Andrews mistakenly uses light green color to colorize what are concrete arches above the roadway. Perhaps Andrews selected green color on purpose. Whatever, these post cards are still marvelous even if they give a false impression some concrete tied arches are made of steel.



Some of the old postcards, of course, have messages written on the back. On a post card of the Yaquina Bay Bridge (postmarked 1941) Louise & Bill write their friend in Berkeley, California, “Bridges here in Oregon are all beautiful. From a distance the arch looks like a rainbow.”

My favorite missive was penned by Mrs. Ivan C. Draper of Marshfield, Oregon (today, Coos Bay). On the back of a colorized postcard of the Isaac Lee Patterson Bridge in Gold

Beach over the Rogue River (post marked March 1937), Mrs. Draper writes to Miss Myna Lottman, residing in Moline, Illinois:

“Thanks very much for your pretty and interesting view. Hope you like this one. This bridge crossing the Rogue River is a short way from where the river enters the Pacific Ocean. Have been over it several times. We also have 5 larger bridges, 3 of them across bays, on our Coast H’way and all were built and completed and dedicated last summer. One is here over Coos Bay near Marshfield.”

There’s so much pride in Mrs. Draper’s message. Can we instill that same kind of pride in today’s Oregonians about infrastructure? In this age of entitlement and cynicism, it won’t be easy. During the 1930s, the government brought incredible benefits to society; things like electricity to Rural America, and, bridges and roads to regions where no infrastructure existed. So, in other words, back then, government made night and day differences in the lives of people. That’s a tough act to follow.

Today, when we do public works, let’s try, in the tradition of McCullough, to do something inspirational. That’s what great art and great public works accomplish. They inspire us and make us believe we’re part of something much bigger than ourselves.

Beyond Coincidence?

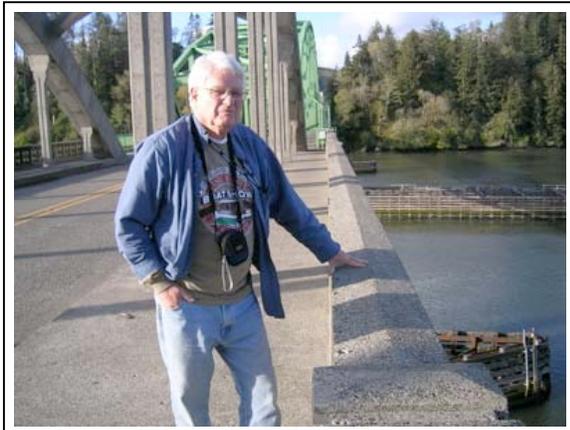
One day I drove south on U.S. Highway 101 through North Bend. I had just begun collecting antique postcards. I noticed an old bookstore at the side of the highway. I stopped and inquired of the proprietor, “Do you have any old postcards?” He looked up over his glasses, pointed to a shoebox and said, “Yep, but that’s all we got.”

I raced over to the shoebox. I saw, at the top of the stack, an old colorized postcard of what looked like a university building. I thought to myself, “Man, that’s Marston Hall, the engineering building at Iowa State University.” I thought I was hallucinating! I picked up the card and sure enough, ***it was Marston Hall!*** What are the chances of finding a mint-condition colorized postcard of Marston Hall, from the early 20th Century, in a used bookstore in North Bend, Oregon? I gladly paid \$.25 cents for the card. The card, of course, is featured in *A History of U.S. Highway 101*. I may sound a little crazy, but, there’s a part of me that senses that finding that card that way was beyond coincidence.



A Partner in History

Jack Brown, a Depoe Bay City Councilor, OCZMA Vice-Chair and good friend (see photo to the



left of Jack Brown on the Umpqua River Bridge at Reedsport), was driving with me to a meeting one day. As we talked, we stumbled on the fact that both of us were doing research on the history of U.S. Highway 101! Jack Brown, a retired nuclear engineer, is a graduate of the Iowa State University’s engineering program (where McCullough got his training). Jack told me he had an invitation to return to Marston Hall at Iowa State to share Conde McCullough’s story with the engineering students and faculty.

Together, Jack and I developed a photographic record of McCullough’s bridges, to share evidence of McCullough’s genius. When Jack returned from his trip to Iowa State, we had lunch and talked about his experience. Jack told me, “The faculty and the students were really interested in McCullough. I got the impression, though, that they didn’t really know about McCullough back there. That’s sad. It’s hard to imagine they would not know about the accomplishment of one of their most talented graduates. They were really, really enthused.”

I pressed Jack for more details. Being a modest man, Jack finally admitted to me that he received a standing ovation for the presentation. I hoped Jack Brown’s encounter at Iowa State

marks the beginning of a lasting appreciation for Conde McCullough at Iowa State University's Engineering Program.

Closing Thoughts About Conde McCullough

McCullough Bridge at Coos Bay Tourists (Photo Courtesy of Oregon Department of Transportation)



A lot of information about Conde McCullough wound up on the cutting room floor. For instance, McCullough was a fine musician. He played piano well and could also play fiddle (violin). McCullough could go to a movie, hear the theme music, and come home and sit down at the piano without sheet music and play the song by ear. There are reports McCullough also had a good voice. He enjoyed singing old time songs with people, especially after dinner and a couple of drinks. McCullough loved baseball. It's clear that his son, John, loved his father very much. John said his family didn't take

vacations and that his mother supported his Father and his workaholic tendencies.

Indeed, in every respect, McCullough was a life-affirming individual.

For me, it's sad that when McCullough returning from South America, he was converted into an administrator. That's like having Mozart on your payroll and asking him not to compose music. After that happened, the individual who took over the Bridge Engineer's job was asked by a reporter about McCullough's incredible bridge across Coos Bay. He replied, "Its just another bridge." Yeah, right. Like Michelangelo's David is just another sculpture.

I adore McCullough, as a person. But, I can't help but wonder, though, with all his success, did he get a little full of himself? It's only human to be impacted by the praise that was heaped upon him, especially by 1936. Did he begin to rub people wrong at the Highway Department and the Highway Commission? That would partially explain why they made McCullough an administrator against his will. I don't know. We may never know. Maybe it's not important. Here's one thing we do know. When McCullough passed away in 1946, the Highway Commission needed to hire two people to take over his administrative duties.

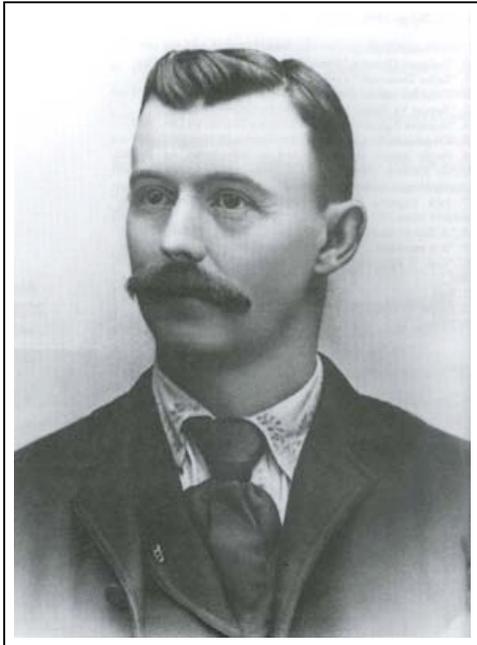
A Final Tribute to Ben Jones

In *A History U.S. Highway 101*, we only dedicated one page to Ben Jones, the father of U.S. Highway 101. I regret that. Ben Jones was a truly remarkable man who deserves far more recognition. A lot of fascinating information about Ben Jones did **not** end up in our history of U.S. Highway 101.

For instance, Ben Jones earned a law degree and while in private practice, he filed suit against the Southern Pacific Company. Jones compelled the railroad to return passenger service between Albany and Yaquina City. In addition, Jones filed suits against Wells Fargo Express Company

and the Pacific Express Company alleging their rates were unjust. Because of Jones' efforts, express rates were reduced 25% in Oregon.

Photo of a Young Ben Jones from Book "The Bayfront Book" by Steve Wyatt (1999)



Ben Jones also led the effort to have the federal government build the jetties at the harbor in Newport. Jones was the developer of the community Otter Rock. Some of the street names in Otter Rock still bear the names of his children. Ben Jones' summer cottage in Otter rock (built in 1908), just east of Devil's Punchbowl, still stands. The cottage was built from wood salvaged by a wrecked steamer the *Minnie Kelton*. That was a common occurrence on the Oregon Coast in those days. For instance, many of the early houses in Seal Rock were built from salvaged lumber that washed up on the beach.

Through the Lincoln County Historical Society (LCHS), I contacted Ben Jones' only surviving grandchild; Lorraine Jones. Lorraine lives in Portland. When we talked, Lorraine was so pleased someone contacted her to talk to her about her grandfather. She said, "I try to tell people all the time about my grandfather. No one knows who he was."

Lorraine does *not* remember Ben Jones because in 1925, when Jones died suddenly of a heart attack, she was just a toddler. One of Lorraine's earliest memories, though, was of the dedication ceremony of the Ben Jones Bridge at Rocky Creek in 1927. Lorraine was four at the time. She cut the ribbon that day to open the bridge. Years later, Lorraine donated the scissors used to cut the ribbon to the LCHS and other family artifacts. When you enter the LCHS museum, a large photo of a young Ben Jones graces the entrance.



Rocky Creek Bridge (later named Ben Jones Bridge) Dedication (Photo Courtesy of Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT))

I pressed Lorraine for any details she could share about Ben Jones' personality. Lorraine said, "Well, he was a passionate man. There's a story that's been passed down through the family. One time Ben Jones ordered shoes from a catalogue. When the shoes arrived, he saw they sent a pair of women's shoes to him by mistake. He was furious! By accident, he pulled the phone off the wall."

Lorraine Jones hopes to make a visit to Lincoln County in the near future. Together, we will visit the family gravesite at the cemetery in Toledo. There, Ben Jones and his wife Ella and a number of the children rest in peace along with other major figures in Central Oregon Coast history.

Thank you Ben Jones.

Why Do This History? There's A Looming Transportation Crisis

In 2005, I was asked by ODOT to serve on a thirteen-member Steering Committee to update the new Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP). It was an honor to be part of that process. The OTP is the 25-year framework to guide transportation investments in Oregon followed by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC).

During that process, I was introduced to the latest trends in transportation and developed an appreciation for the increasingly close connection between economic vitality and adequate transportation infrastructure (a result of the new “just in-time” global economy).

I also learned about the financial underpinnings of Oregon’s transportation system (across all modes, not just highways). ***It was scary!*** Because of the escalating costs of asphalt, steel and fuel, it has become more and more expensive to maintain and improve our highways and other forms of transportation. In Oregon, we have ***not*** raised the gas tax in over a decade. Today, cars get better mileage (which is a good thing). However, as a result, revenues coming in from the gas tax (at the state and federal level) are declining compared to the vehicle miles traveled (which reflects the demands we are placing on the system).

The funding crisis in transportation is national in scope. I regret to inform you the Federal Highway Trust Fund (funded by the federal gas tax) will reach a negative balance in 2009—***for the first time in history!***

In Oregon, we’ve reached the point that we simply don’t have the resources to do any further modernization of the transportation system. If Oregon population expands at the rate most demographers expect, before long, Oregonians will face crippling congestion.

Make no mistake. Congestion in the Willamette Valley will impact ***all*** Oregonians, ***not*** just people along the 1-5 Corridor. Why is that the case? To prosper, people in rural Oregon need ready access to the Portland Airport (PDX), the Port of Portland, and other destinations along the 1-5 Corridor. When truck traffic stalls on the 1-5 Corridor, it drives up shipping costs and makes many Oregon businesses less competitive. And, when people thinking about visiting the Oregon Coast choose to stay home because it takes too long to get here ***because of bottlenecks in the Willamette Valley***, that impacts us!

So, rural and urban Oregonians are in this together. That’s why rural Oregonians, not just folks in Portland or Vancouver, have an enormous stake in the fate of the Columbia River Crossing project.

Given these challenges, *A History of U.S. Highway 101* is entirely relevant to us today. It showcases how previous generations of Oregonians and Americans rose to meet their challenges. Are we ready to meet today’s challenges?

Keeping U.S. Highway 101 functional is not just about money. Communities along the U.S. Highway 101 Corridor need to work with ODOT to manage growth to protect the capacity of the highway. It’s a tough balancing act to make U.S. Highway 101 function as a main street and regional highway.