

Official web site of Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

Introduction: Lasting Beauty Rises from Economic Crisis

Oregon's economy was already in a slump when the stock market crashed in 1929. The state experienced unprecedented levels of unemployment, bankruptcy, unpaid mortgages, and delinquent taxes. Overwhelmed state officials looked to the federal government for assistance in dealing with the economic crisis. Modest attempts to stimulate the economy and address unemployment began at the state and federal levels in the early 1930s but their impact was limited. Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1932 with the promise to bring the country out of the economic morass through a more activist approach. The administration's New Deal programs produced Social Security; the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, labor reforms, housing and agricultural subsidies, and most significantly direct relief and work projects to combat the massive unemployment. While the success of these programs varied their impact on the country and our state is apparent even today.



This is a detail from a mural depicting agricultural workers that was painted by Carl Morris in 1942 after he won a WPA Federal Arts Project mural competition in 1941. It was installed in the lobby of the Eugene Post Office in 1943.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was created in March of 1933 to develop projects in states like Oregon with large amounts of public lands. Camps were established in national forests throughout Oregon and work began on series of ambitious construction programs. The "CCC boys" cut trails, built roads, constructed bridges, built campgrounds, laid telephone wires, created reservoirs, built drift fences to manage cattle on public lands, and constructed lookout towers and ranger stations. Silver Creek Falls Park is an example of the efforts of the CCC program in cooperation with the state's parks program.

Another New Deal agency, the Public Works Administration was created in 1933. The PWA differed from the later Works Progress Administration, in that it awarded contracts to private firms who then hired workers. The Oregon State Capitol building, completed in 1938 and the five bridges along the coast highway are examples of major projects in Oregon funded by the PWA. The bridges were completed at a cost of 5.4 million dollars. These graceful spans linked the bays along the coast and combined with grading and paving along the highway improved the transportation links up and down the coast. The improved access helped stimulate the local economy. More significantly the employment of large numbers of workers on each project multiplied the economic impact statewide. Numerous public structures; such as city halls, county courthouses, and schools were completed

through out the state using PWA funds.



The 1939 Art Deco style auditorium on the campus of Marshfield High School in Coos Bay.

In 1935 Congress granted funding for the construction of Bonneville Dam. This project employed 4,000 laborers at a cost of 81 million dollars and began the process of hydroelectric development all along the Columbia River.

In 1934 the Treasury Department created the Section of Painting and Sculpture (later know as the Section of Fine Arts). The program commissioned murals in post office buildings across the country. Unlike the later WPA program, artists did not have to be on relief to participate in the program. They submitted a proposal to a national juried competition and if awarded the commission they

were paid directly from funds set aside for “embellishment” in the post office. Artists were often provided with guidelines and themes for the murals, most of these were based on scenes or events of local interest. Many of the murals created in Oregon are still extant and are accessible to the public in posts offices in Ontario “Trail to Oregon,” Burns “Cattle Round Up,” Salem “Builders of Salem,” Grants Pass “Rogue River Indians,” Tillamook “Captain Gray Entering Tillamook Bay” and elsewhere.

In 1935 Congress passed the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act, which authorized 4.88 billion dollars to help the unemployed. Several new agencies were created including the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Under the WPA the notion of work was expanded beyond labor-intensive construction projects, it contained unique programs that targeted unemployed artists, writers, musicians, and actors. The service projects included art, music, theater and writing programs along with social welfare programs.

While their numbers varied, between 20 and 54 people worked on the writers projects in Oregon. They produced a monthly magazine, several studies, books and pamphlets. The Oregon Guide produced by the writers project is still available in libraries and commands a relatively hefty price in used bookstores. It provided a concise history of the state and local areas along with a comprehensive travel guide. Information about historical records were compiled as part of the Historical Records Survey and measured architectural drawings were produced for nearly a hundred significant historical structures in the state as part of the Historical American Building Survey (HABS). These resources are still consulted by researchers today.



WPA workers construct the Wilson River Highway through the Coast Range in 1937.

Portland had a band and orchestra comprised of musicians being paid through the WPA. They performed concerts throughout the city. Artists were hired to create hundreds of mosaics, murals, paintings, sculptures, prints, posters, engravings and watercolors. Many of these art works became part of public buildings and are still being enjoyed today. Artists were provided with all the materials

and supplies, but no other requirements or restricts were placed upon them. One exhibit featuring works by WPA artists was displayed at the Portland Art Museum and emphasized a theme of Oregon history and landscapes. Many prominent Oregon artists some of whom would eventually gain national reputations worked on the WPA art projects. Included in on the relief rolls were Clayton (CS) Price, Louis Bunce, Edward Quigley, Aimee Gorham, Florence Thomas, Maud Kerns, David McKosh, Carl Morris, William Givler, Lloyd Reynolds, Luci Wiley, and Arthur Albert.



World War I era soldiers stand guard over the corners of the 1935 Art Deco style armory in Klamath Falls. The building houses the Klamath County Museum.

The WPA played a prominent role in the relief effort throughout Oregon from 1935 until 1942. During those years it employed 25,000 people in Portland alone. Unlike the PWA, the WPA hired people on relief and put them on the federal payroll. The average monthly wage for a WPA worker in Portland was \$56.54 (\$808.40 in today's dollars) The WPA generally emphasized projects that were labor intensive, employed large numbers of unskilled laborers and required minimal expenditures on materials and equipment. The program was organized into two major categories, engineering and construction projects and service projects.

The construction projects included building roads, bridges, dams, public buildings and airports as well as developing and improving parks and school playgrounds. One well know construction project was the Rocky Butte Scenic Drive. The road winds up to the top of the butte and includes a viewpoint with panoramic views of Portland. Built in the rustic architectural style that the depression era public works projects frequently adopted, it relied heavily on native building materials. Basalt from a quarry on Rocky Butte itself was used for retaining walls, and the Rocky Butte Jail. Basalt was also used in the construction of tunnels on Cornell Road and Burnside, a comfort station at Overlook Park and at Timberline Lodge. One project with far reaching impact was the construction of the

Portland municipal airport. It replaced an inadequate facility on Swan Island. The new site along the Columbia River required massive earth moving and the construction of dikes. The project employed over 1,000 men and when completed provided the region with a facility that served the growing demand for air transportation. The Wolf Creek and Wilson River highways were designed to provide a more direct route from Portland to the Oregon Coast, as well as work relief for 1,500 men. Improved access also helped bolster the tourist economy in Tillamook, Seaside and Cannon Beach.

Although women suffered during the Depression they made up a very small portion of the workers hired for relief jobs. This was due in part because most of the available jobs were involved in construction and demanded arduous physical labor. In addition, only one member of each family was eligible for relief work. Despite their small numbers women made significant contributions to Timberline Lodge. They were involved in weaving tapestries, sewing upholstery and creating hooked rugs to furnish the interior of the lodge. One of the few women awarded a federal mural commission was Tillamook native, Luci Wiley, whose work adorns the post office building in Tillamook.

More than 65 years after the programs were dismantled their legacy can be seen in the buildings, structures, and roads built by WPA laborers and hundreds of works of art created by WPA artists and craftspeople.

Text source: Layne Sawyer, Oregon State Archives.

Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Timberline Lodge

The front of Timberline Lodge facing the parking lot. President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated the building in 1937 and it opened to the public the next year.

Slide 1 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Timberline Lodge Mosaic

A mosaic frames a drinking fountain near the ground floor entrance of Timberline Lodge. The view highlights local stone laid by Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers.

Slide 2 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Timberline Lodge Timbers

A view of the ground floor lobby of Timberline Lodge showing the extensive use of large timbers integrated with the stonework.

Slide 3 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Timberline Lodge Mural

A linoleum relief mural by Douglas Lynch in the Barlow Room of Timberline Lodge showing two people in conversation.

Slide 4 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Timberline Lodge Mural

A linoleum relief mural in the Barlow Room of Timberline Lodge showing skiers on the slopes of Mount Hood. Other murals display camping and other activities.

Slide 5 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Timberline Lodge Light

A carved wood light fixture in the Barlow Room of Timberline Lodge.

Slide 6 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Timberline Lodge Newell Post and Entrance

From left to right: a carved wood newell post on the ground floor of Timberline Lodge; a 1941 view of the entrance of Timberline Lodge. (OHD1440)

Slide 7 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Eugene Post Office

The Eugene Post Office was built in 1938 as a Public Works Administration project.

Slide 8 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Eugene Post Office Mural

This mural depicting agricultural workers was painted by Carl Morris in 1942 after he won a WPA Federal Arts Project mural competition in 1941. It was installed in the lobby of the Eugene Post Office in 1943.

Slide 9 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Eugene Post Office Mural

This companion mural by Carl Morris in the Eugene Post Office shows lumber workers.

Slide 10 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

[\(https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book/\)](https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book/)

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Ontario Post Office

The United States Post Office in Ontario was constructed in 1934.

Slide 11 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Ontario Post Office Mural

This lobby mural in the Ontario Post Office is entitled "Trail to Oregon." It was painted in 1938 by Edmond J. Fitzgerald.

Slide 12 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Bend Post Office

The United States Post Office Building in Bend was constructed in 1933.

Slide 13 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Oregon State Library Building

The Oregon State Library Building was dedicated in 1939.

Slide 14 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Oregon State Library Art

Oregon State Library art includes bronze medallions, publisher marks, and a bronze plaque of Oregon's first state librarian, Cornelia Marvin Pierce.

Slide 15 / of 44



Official web site of Oregon Secretary of State

(<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>)

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Oregon State Library Decorative Map

A State Library wall map of Oregon showing images of indigenous plants around the state.

Slide 16 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Oregon State Library Carvings

State Library carvings: a pioneer mother reads (left); a meadowlark, the state bird (right).

Slide 17 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Oregon State Library Lobby

The lobby of the State Library showing the marble walls and Lavare lights.

Slide 18 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Klamath Falls Armory Building

World War I era soldiers stand guard over the corners of the 1935 Art Deco style armory in Klamath Falls. The building now houses the Klamath County Museum.

Slide 19 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Linn County Courthouse

The Linn County Courthouse in Albany was constructed in 1940.

Slide 20 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Linn County Courthouse Stairs

The interior of the Linn County Courthouse features extensive use of marble.

Slide 21 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Linn County Courthouse Floor

The decorative floor in the lobby of the Linn County Courthouse.

Slide 22 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Marshfield High School

The Art Deco style auditorium on the campus of Marshfield High School in Coos Bay was constructed in 1939.

Slide 23 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Tillamook County Courthouse

The Tillamook County Courthouse in Tillamook was constructed in 1933.

Slide 24 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Toledo City Hall

The Toledo City Hall Building was constructed in 1938.

Slide 25 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Salem Post Office Mural

This oil on canvas mural, entitled “Builders of Salem,” was completed by artist Andrew McDuffie Vincent in 1942 in the lobby of the Salem Post Office, which now serves as the state Executive Building.

Slide 26 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Clackamas County Courthouse

A detail of the Clackamas County Courthouse in Oregon City. The courthouse was constructed in 1937.

Slide 27 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Crater Lake Administration Building

The Administration Building in the Munson Valley Historical District of Crater Lake National Park was constructed in 1932 in the “rustic” park service architectural style.

Slide 28 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Crater Lake Stone Wall

Stone walls were added at Rim Village in Crater Lake National Park in the early 1930s.

Slide 29 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Crater Lake Superintendent's Residence

The Superintendent's Residence at Crater Lake National Park was built in 1932.

Slide 30 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Silver Falls Lodge

The interior of the Silver Falls Lodge in Silver Falls State Park showing myrtlewood tables. The lodge was built in 1937. (OHD1875)

Slide 31 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

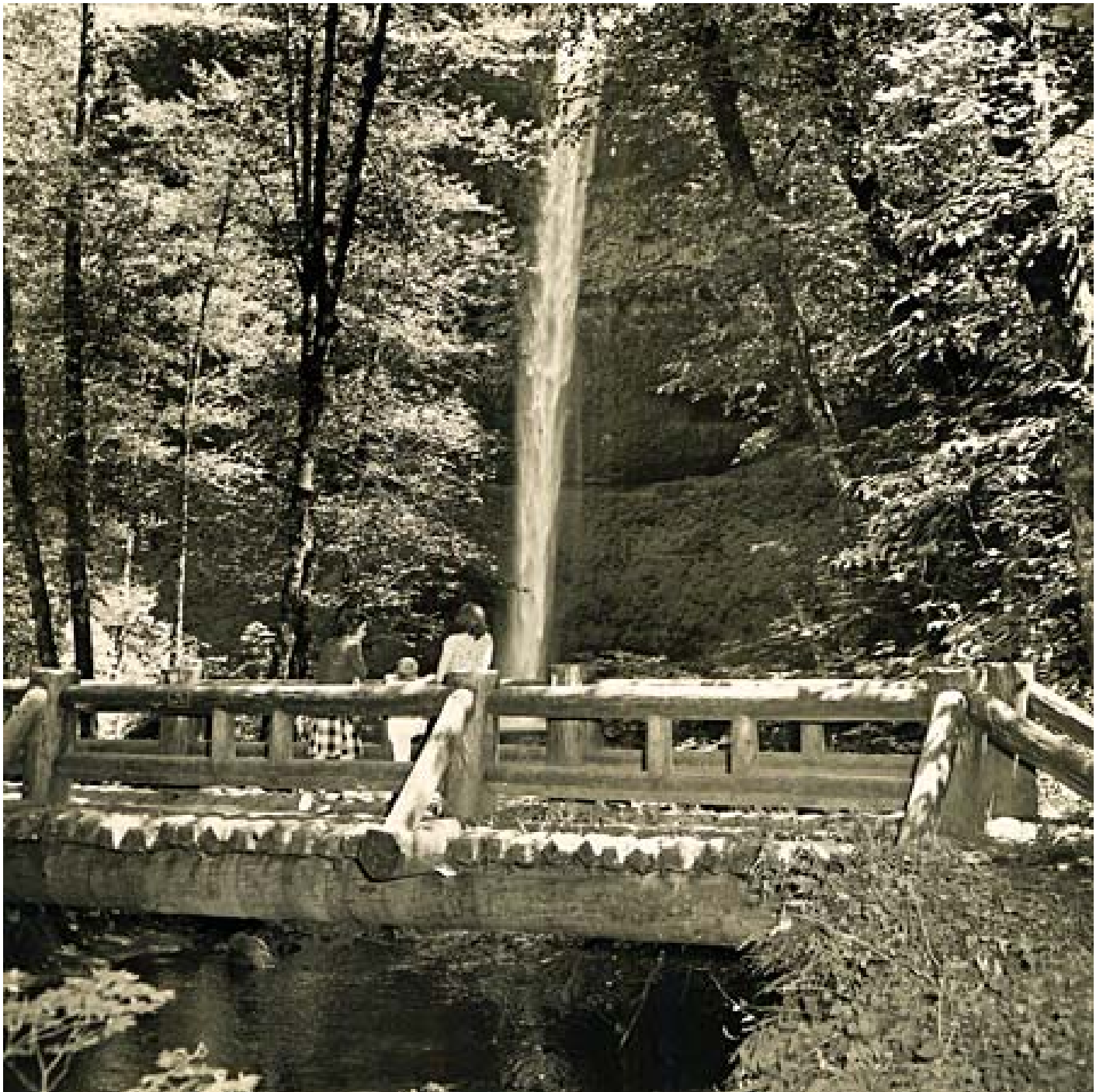
Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Silver Falls Footbridge

A timber footbridge built by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers near the South Falls at Silver Falls State Park. (OHD2569)

Slide 32 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Wilson River Highway

WPA workers construct the Wilson River Highway through the Coast Range in 1937.

Slide 33 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Wilson River Highway Shoveling

Much of the work on the Wilson River Highway was done by men with shovels.

Slide 34 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Wilson River Highway Bulldozer

A man operates a bulldozer into the night while working on the Wilson River Highway.

Slide 35 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Lake Owyhee

Lake Owyhee is formed by Owyhee Dam, which rises 413 feet high and spans 833 feet. The 52-mile-long reservoir stores water for irrigating about 16,000 acres of land.

Slide 36 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Owyhee Dam

Owyhee Dam in Malheur County is one of the larger concrete arch gravity dams in the world. It was completed by the federal Bureau of Reclamation in 1932.

Slide 37 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Bonneville Dam

Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River began supplying power in 1938. It was constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

(OHDO696)

Slide 38 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

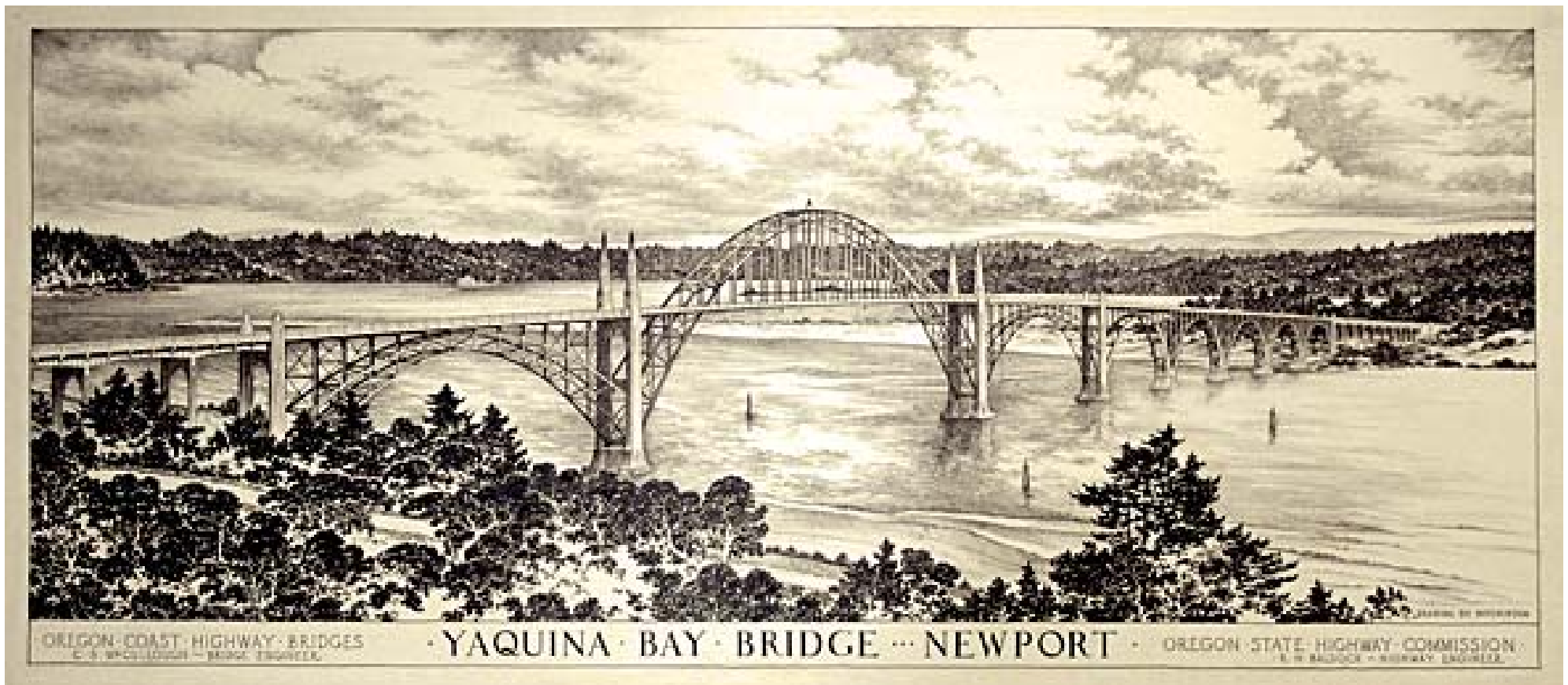
Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Yaquina Bay Bridge

A drawing of the 3,260-foot-long Yaquina Bay Bridge by Highway Department graphic artist Frank Hutchinson. Highway Department engineer Conde McCullough designed the bridge, which opened to traffic in 1936.

Slide 39 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

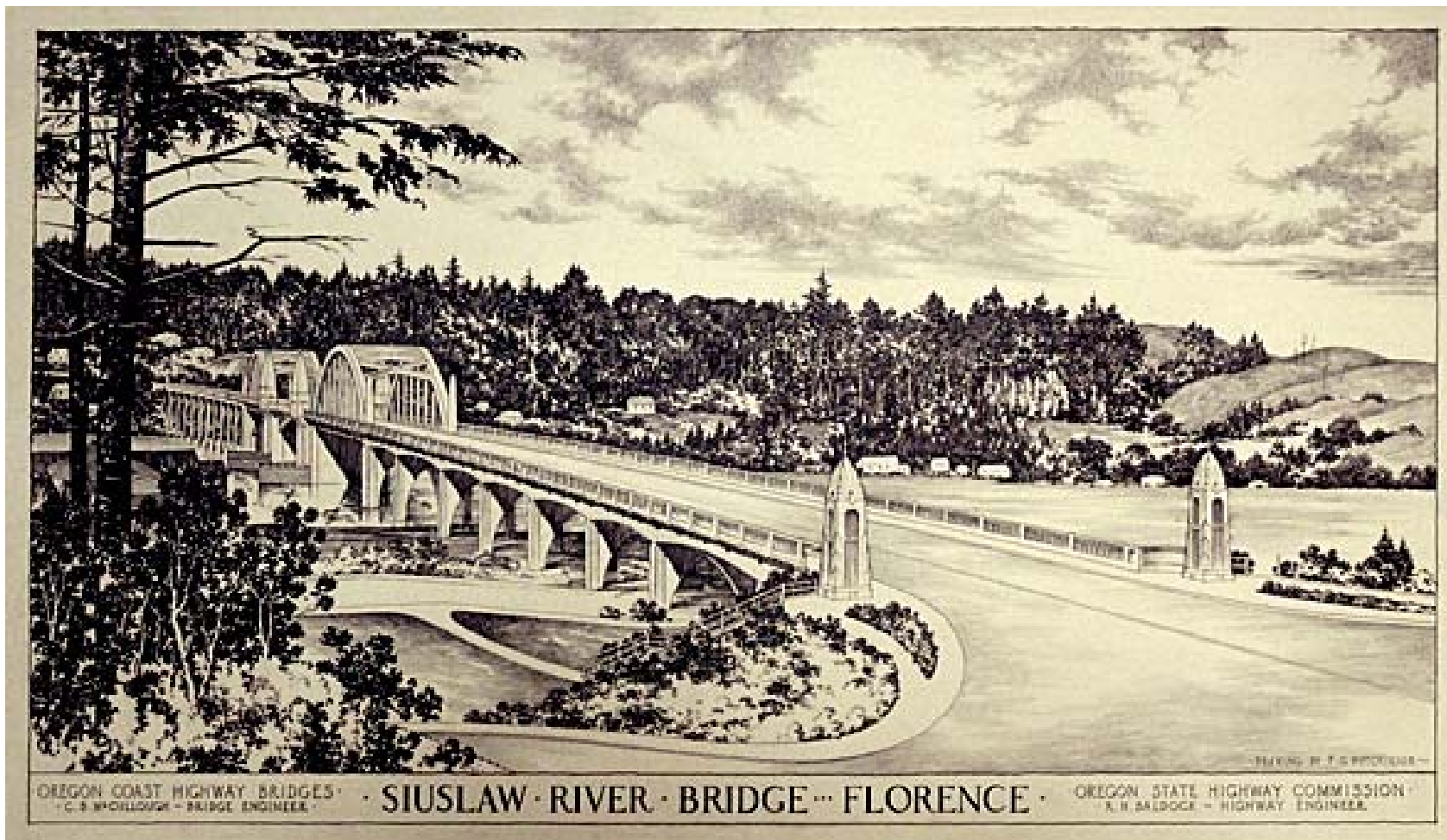
Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Siuslaw River Bridge

A Frank Hutchinson drawing of an approach to the 1,568-foot-long Siuslaw River Bridge, which opened in 1936. The bridge features some of the design details favored by Conde McCullough, which included classical, Gothic, and Art Deco/Moderne elements.

Slide 40 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

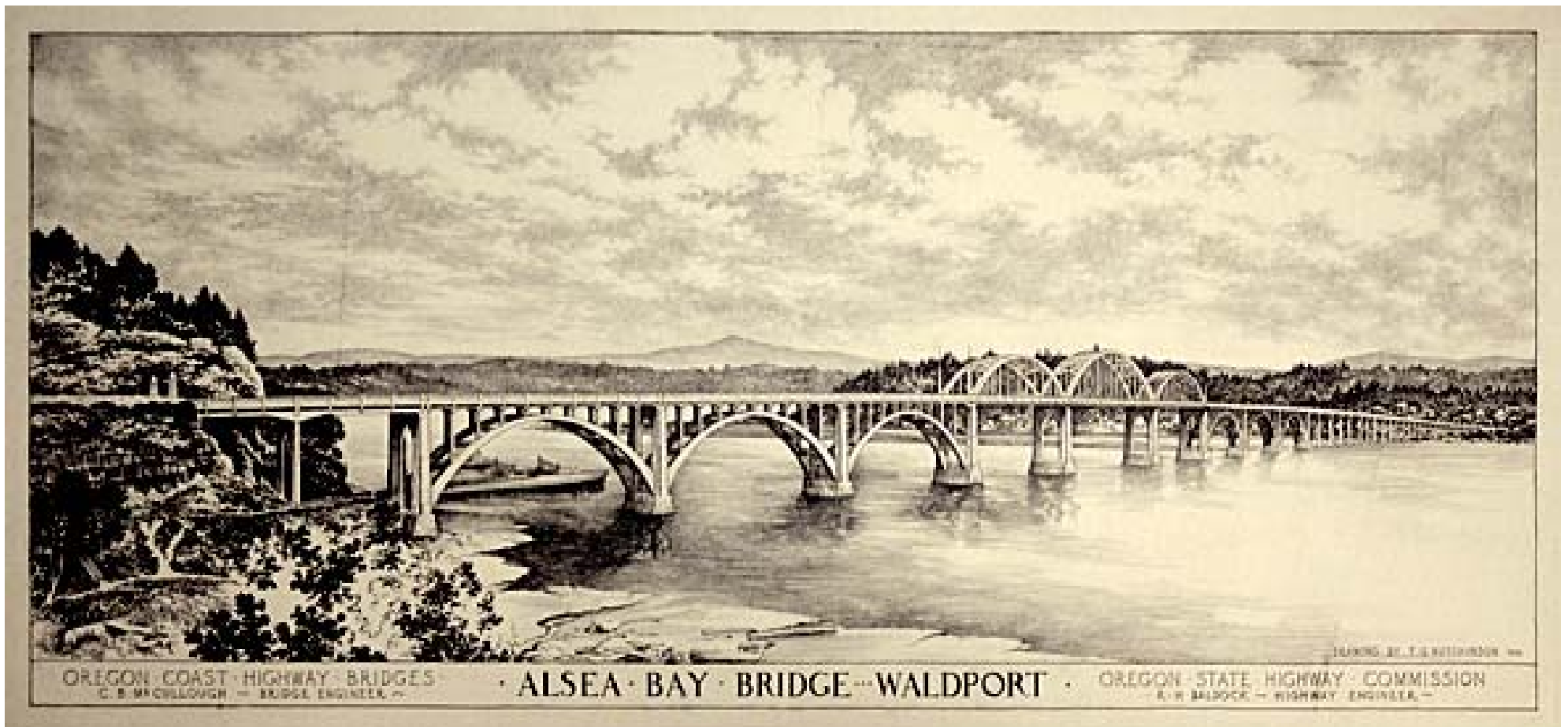
Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Alsea Bay Bridge

A Frank Hutchinson drawing of the 3,028-foot-long Alsea Bay Bridge. The McCullough designed bridge opened in 1936 and was replaced in 1991.

Slide 41 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Patterson Memorial Bridge

The Isaac Lee Patterson Memorial Bridge over the Rogue River at Gold Beach features decorative towers. It was designed by Conde McCullough and completed in 1932.

Slide 42 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Coos Bay Bridge

The Coos Bay Bridge at North Bend spans 5,305 feet, over one mile. Another McCullough design, the bridge opened to traffic in 1936. (OHD149)

Slide 43 / of 44



Official web site of
Oregon Secretary of State

<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>

Depression Era Public Works Web Exhibit

This exhibit shows many of the Depression era public works throughout Oregon.

Siuslaw River Bridge

The Siuslaw River Bridge shown from the Florence waterfront. The bridge replaced a ferry as did other coastal bridges built during the Depression, thus speeding travel.

Slide 44 / of 44

