



ByGone Times

Quarterly Newsletter of the Troutdale Historical Society

Office: (503) 661-2164 Email: TroutdaleHistory@gmail.com

The Fish King of the Columbia: Erick Enquist and a Vanished Way of Life



There was a time when the Columbia River thundered with salmon, and towering wooden fish wheels turned endlessly along its banks, harvesting the river's bounty day and night. At the center of that world stood one man who would come to dominate it: Erick Rolf Enquist, better known as "The Fish King." Born in Finland in 1884, Enquist arrived in the United States in 1902 at just seventeen years old. Like many immigrants, he came with little more than determination, and a willingness to learn. He taught himself English in a way that feels almost poetic today: reading a verse in his Swedish Bible, then finding the same verse in an English one. Word by word, line by line, he built the foundation for a life in a new country. That determination would soon carry him to the banks of the Columbia River, and into one of the most demanding industries in the Pacific Northwest. Enquist's early work with the Warren Packing Company introduced him to fish wheels, massive wooden machines anchored in swift water, designed to scoop salmon from the river as they migrated upstream. But where others simply worked the job, Enquist studied it. He recognized what many overlooked: success wasn't just about the wheel itself, but its placement, maintenance, and an almost intuitive understanding of salmon behavior. Poorly positioned wheels caught little. Well-placed ones could produce staggering results. By 1914, Enquist struck out on his own. Within a decade, he owned eight fish wheels, making him the largest independent fish wheel operator on the Columbia River. On a strong day, his operation could pull in as much as four tons of

salmon. His wheels outperformed others so consistently that some were turned over to him rent-free, simply because he could make them more productive. It was a level of dominance that earned him a title that stuck: The Fish King. Life as a fish wheel operator was anything but easy. Enquist lived in a small, rough cabin wedged between a transcontinental railroad and the rushing Columbia River. Trains shook the structure at all hours, and the sound of salmon sliding down the fish wheel chutes could wake him in the night. Meals were simple, sometimes cooked outdoors over iron plates balanced on rocks. His bed was little more than boards and straw. And yet, by his own account, he had never slept better. There was a rhythm to the life: early mornings, long days, and stretches of quiet independence. It was during these quieter hours that Enquist continued to educate himself, refine his thinking, and deepen his understanding of the river.

Continued on Page 5

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Rain or Shine, Always Showing Up: The Heart of Jamie LaCour



If you have spent time at a Troutdale Historical Society event, chances are you have seen Jamie LaCour in action. She is the friendly face welcoming guests at programs like Yarn at the Barn, the steady hand helping behind the scenes, and the person who quietly steps in wherever she is needed most. Jamie brings a calm, positive energy that makes every event feel warm, organized, and inviting, and her presence helps both visitors and volunteers feel right at home. Jamie's dedication to service began early in life, from helping in school libraries and cafeterias to serving as a reading buddy and teaching assistant, and she has always found joy in supporting others and building connections. As an adult, that passion only grew, leading her to work as a family advocate, classroom assistant, and library assistant, while also supporting field trips, literacy programs, fundraisers, and community events of all kinds. Her professional experience is just as diverse, including advocacy roles supporting families, event operations such as scheduling and payroll, work in fine dining kitchens, and even serving as a glaze master in a ceramics studio, all of which have shaped her into someone who is adaptable, dependable, and ready for anything. Jamie is also deeply committed to preserving history as the Oregon Trail Chapter Historian with OSDAR, and as a lifelong local who loves crochet, art, cooking, nature, and family, we are truly grateful for everything she brings to THS.



Yarn at the Barn

~Barn Exhibit Hall Museum~

732 E. Historic Columbia River Highway
Troutdale, OR 97060

Program starts at 10:00 am until Noon/FREE

Presented by **Jamie LaCour**

Get creative with us! Our free fiber arts program returns on the first Wednesday of every month from 10:00 am to noon at the Barn Exhibit Hall. Come build new skills, exchange techniques, and enjoy the joy of crafting together. Open to ages 14 and up, with beginner supplies provided. Best of all, it's completely free, join us and start creating!

April 1st - May 6th - June 3rd

Friends & Family Half Night

Tuesday, April 7th

5:00 pm - Close

McMenamins Edgefield's Power Station Pub

Join us for an evening of good food, good company, while supporting local history! Your meal helps preserve Troutdale's stories, artifacts, and museums. Half of the night's sales are graciously donated to THS! Thank you McMenamins!!! Bring your friends. Bring your family. Make history while you make memories.



**History Pub
at
McMenamins**



~Blackberry Hall at McMenamins Edgefield~
2126 SW Halsey St, Troutdale, OR 97060
Doors at 6:00pm / Program at 7:00pm/\$5

Monday, Apr 13th

Pies, Ponies, and Pig Races...oh MY!!!

Presented by **Len Otto & Anne Endicott**

Join Anne Endicott and Len Otto of the Troutdale Historical Society for a lively look at the early Multnomah County Fair in Gresham—pies, horse racing, pig races, and more! Learn how it began in 1906 at the Shattuck home, grew with support from the Gresham Grange, and moved locations as it expanded. In the late 1960s, it relocated to Portland's Expo Center. Bring your stories and souvenirs to share!

THS Presents

~Sam Cox Building~

Glenn Otto Community Park
1102 E. Historic Columbia River Hwy, Troutdale, OR 97060

Sunday, April 19th

Doors at 1:00pm / Program at 2:00 pm / FREE

Preserving Oregon's History: An Afternoon with Kerry Tymchuk

Presented by **Kerry Tymchuk**

The Executive Director of the Oregon Historical Society shares how OHS was founded, how it preserves Oregon's history, and how the Multnomah County Museum Levy Fund supports local museums. A four-time Jeopardy! champion, the presentation wraps up with fun Oregon history trivia. An engaging program you won't want to miss.



Author Book Signing Saturday, May 2nd

Barn Exhibit Hall Museum

732 E. Historic Columbia River Highway, Troutdale, OR,
97060

Between the Lines: Local Authors Live

Join us for an exciting afternoon filled with stories, signatures, and local talent! On Saturday, May 2, 2026, from noon to 3 pm at the Barn Exhibit Hall Museum, come meet talented local authors, have your books signed, and explore a variety of great reads. Whether you're a devoted history enthusiast or simply enjoy a good book, this event offers something for everyone. Chat with authors, discover new favorites, and connect with fellow readers in a welcoming setting. As a special bonus, all books will be available at 10% off during the event—don't miss it!

JUST THE OTHER DAY



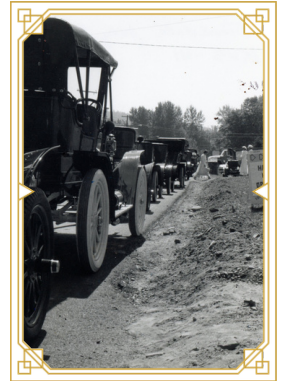
1946 – A Town Adjusts to Peace

After World War II ended, Troutdale and East Multnomah County saw returning veterans settle back into civilian life. Federal programs such as the GI Bill supported housing and education, contributing to steady population growth in the area.



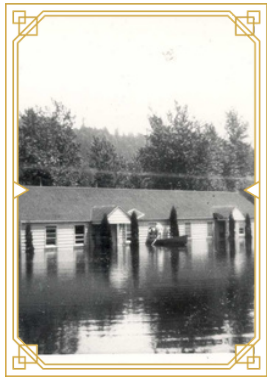
1947 – More Cars, More Congestion

By 1947, automobile traffic along the Historic Columbia River Highway through Troutdale continued to increase. State and regional officials began discussing the need for improved routes to address congestion and safety concerns.



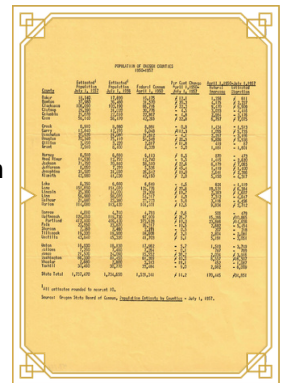
1948 – High Water Hits Home

From May through July, the lower Columbia River basin flooded with snowmelt. By May 30, when the Vanport Flood worsened conditions, Troutdale and nearby low-lying areas were already underwater, with fields and roads covered. The prolonged high water disrupted daily life across East County for weeks.



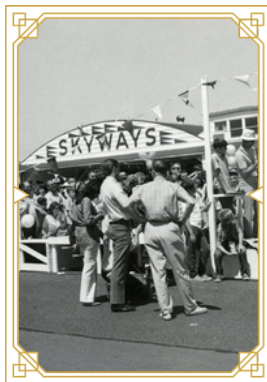
1950 – Counted and Recorded

The 1950 U.S. Census recorded Troutdale as a small incorporated community within Multnomah County. The data reflects steady, moderate growth consistent with its role as a regional gateway.



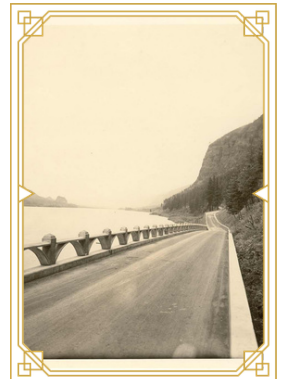
1953 – Airfield in Use

The Troutdale Airport remained active in 1953, supporting private aviation and regional transportation. The facility continued serving East County as part of its existing infrastructure.



1956 – A New Highway Era Begins

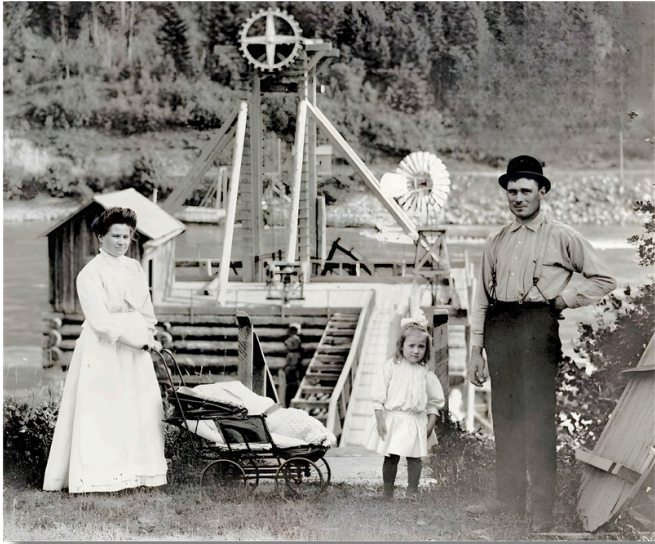
The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 established the Interstate Highway System. This legislation would later lead to Interstate 84 being routed through Troutdale, influencing future development and travel.



A Note of Thanks: We're thrilled to bring back a beloved local favorite, our community column inspired by longtime Troutdale historian and THS founder, Sharon Nesbit. Sharon's original column was a staple of our local paper, filled with wit, heart, and deep love for this town. It's an honor to carry on that tradition. Thank you, Sharon, for the inspiration, and to our readers for the warm welcome back!

The Fish King of the Columbia, continued from page 1

At one point, Enquist's ambitions nearly stalled. Financial backing promised by Warren Packing Company President Frank H. Warren was cut short by tragedy—Warren's life was lost aboard the Titanic in 1912. Rather than abandon his plans, Enquist adapted. With support from other sources, he secured land near Warrendale and continued building his operation, proof of a resilience that defined his entire life. For decades, fish wheels were one of the most visible symbols of the Columbia River's fishing industry. But change was coming. In 1926, fish wheels were officially banned in Oregon marking the end of an era. For many, it was the end of a livelihood. For Enquist, it was simply a transition. After the ban, Enquist shifted his focus to construction, land ownership, and civic life. He became a builder, helping shape the infrastructure of the region he had come to call home. In 1944, Erick Enquist served as Mayor of Troutdale, a remarkable chapter for a man who had arrived decades earlier as a young immigrant with limited English. He also remained active in community organizations, including the Masons, and contributed to projects preserving the history of early settlers in eastern Multnomah County. Through his writings in *Memories & Reflections*, Enquist left behind more than facts, he left stories. Stories of narrow cabins perched above the river. Of salmon runs so thick they defined entire livelihoods. Of quiet evenings, hard work, and unexpected humor, like the tale of a man unknowingly trapping the same persistent riverbank rat over and over again. These glimpses bring humanity to a time often remembered only for its industry. In his later years, Enquist even built a detailed model fish wheel, crafted from aluminum rather than wood, which was displayed throughout the region as a tribute to a vanished technology. He passed away in 1976, but his story remains deeply tied to the identity of the Columbia River Gorge. Today, the fish wheels are gone. The river has changed. The industry has evolved. But Erick Enquist's legacy endures, as an innovator, a self-made success, a community leader, and a man who understood the Columbia River better than most. The Fish King may be gone, but his story still turns, like the wheels he once mastered, through the history of Troutdale.



Help Support Our Mission



Round #2 of our Hammers for History Fundraiser is officially underway, and this one is something special. One lucky winner will enjoy an unforgettable experience for up to five guests, including a private walking tour of Troutdale, guided access through all three THS museums, a behind the scenes tour of our collections, and a delicious lunch to top it all off. It is history, community, and a little bit of magic all wrapped into one incredible day. The winner will be drawn during our April 19th THS Presents program at the Sam Cox Building in Glenn Otto Park. Tickets are available at the Barn Exhibit Hall Museum or at any THS event. Every ticket helps preserve the stories, places, and people that make Troutdale unique, join us and be part of keeping history alive.

For more information go to www.TroutdaleHistory.org
email Director@troutdalehistory.org or call (503)661-2164

Harlow House

Thurs - Sun / Noon - 3pm

Barn Exhibit Hall

Thurs - Sun / Noon - 3pm

Rail Depot

Mon - Sun / 9am - 3pm



Guess This Item from the Collection! Take a close look... any guesses? This small silver gadget measures just 2½ inches long and dates back to the late 1800s. Stamped with the word "WIZARD" and patented on February 5, 1889, it's a clever little tool from a time when everyday items often had a bit more mechanical flair. Was it used in the kitchen? A tool for crafting? Or something a bit more... personal?

Make your guess and see if you're right in the next issue!
(Hint: It helped make something many people carried in their pockets.)



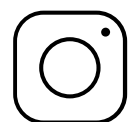
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This Month on the King of Roads: Spring Work & Scenic Surprises

As spring arrives in the Gorge, activity along the Historic Columbia River Highway is picking up once again. Seasonal maintenance crews are addressing winter wear, including minor rockfall cleanup and drainage improvements along several stretches of the highway and adjacent trail segments. Travelers may encounter brief delays as crews work to keep this historic route safe and accessible. Recent monitoring has also identified small landslide activity in known areas, particularly between Bridal Veil and Ainsworth. These are typical for this time of year, as saturated soils begin to shift with changing weather. Crews continue to assess and stabilize these zones to prevent larger impacts during peak travel season.

Trail Connections Continue to Grow

Work continues on long-term efforts to complete gaps in the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail. Planning and engineering remain underway for future connections deeper into the Gorge, bringing the vision of a continuous trail closer to reality.

A Road That Keeps Moving Forward

From ongoing preservation to future trail expansion, the King of Roads continues to evolve. Whether you're driving, biking, or walking, every visit offers something new—proof that even a century-old highway is still very much alive.

Did You Know?

Did you know the Historic Columbia River Highway was designed not just for travel—but for experience? Engineers intentionally aligned the road to reveal dramatic views gradually, creating what they called a “sequence of surprise.” Each curve was meant to unveil a new vista, from waterfalls to sweeping river views, making the journey just as important as the destination.



A Message from the President of THS



Dave Ripma

THS is off to a strong start in 2026. Three well attended **History Pubs** at Blackberry Hall on the McMenamins Edgefield campus featured Bruce Haney on bootlegging in Boring, Zachary Stocks of Oregon Black Pioneers presenting "A Man Called York," and THS Executive Director Chris Garza with "Old Glory Unfolded." Upcoming programs include an April 13 History Pub on the Multnomah County Fair with Len Otto and Anne Endicott, and an April 19 **THS Presents** program at Sam Cox Building featuring Kerry Tymchuk of Oregon Historical Society, preceded by a brief THS Annual Business Meeting. We also invite you to explore new exhibits in the Mershon Legacy Wing of the Barn Museum this spring. With best wishes, sincerely,
 THS Board President
 David Ripma

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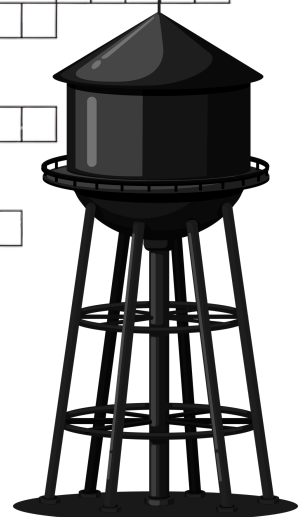
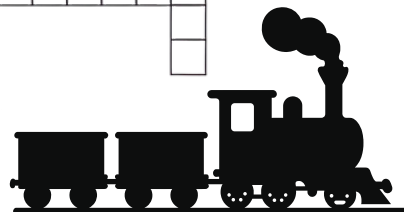
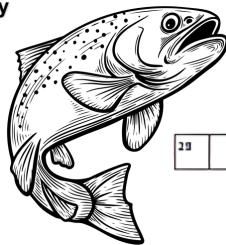
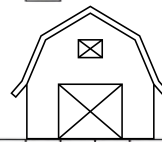
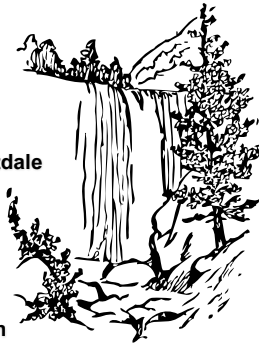
Down

1. Natural features along the highway
2. Historic train station building
3. Reading room opened in Troutdale
4. Early industry in Troutdale
5. What Troutdale has always been
7. Early businesses in Troutdale
9. Important natural resource
13. Early transportation system in Troutdale
14. River that meets the Columbia
17. First female Mayor of Troutdale
18. Place where history is preserved
21. Place travelers stayed
22. Historic property and hotel
23. Exhibit Hall Museum building design
27. Important community building

Across

6. Missoula event that shaped the land
8. Early transportation of the Columbia
10. River that runs by Troutdale
11. Structure crossing the Sandy River
12. State where Troutdale is located
15. Common early travel method
16. City known as Gateway to the Gorge
17. Engineer who helped design the highway
18. Leader of a city
19. Depot ___ is in Troutdale
20. Historic Columbia River _____
24. Troutdale is called _____ to the Gorge
25. Activity that helped form the region
26. Mail service building in town
28. Family tied to a historic Troutdale house

Answers in the July-Sept 2026 Issue
 or Online at www.TroutdaleHistory.org



Thank you

New Members in 2026

Jennifer O'Donnell - Lauren Shaw - Elizabeth Kelley - Lana Luke



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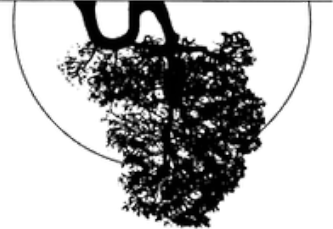


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TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Troutdale, OR 97060



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Troutdale, OR, 97060

Office Location:
732 E Historic Columbia River Hwy
Troutdale, OR, 97060

Phone: 503-661-2164
Email: Troutdalehistory@gmail.com
Website: www.TroutdaleHistory.org

The Troutdale Historical Society is organized and shall be operated exclusively to gather, preserve and make available museum, record, and other material relating to the history of the community of Troutdale, the northern portion of the Sandy River, and nearby areas to stimulate an interest in, and knowledge of the locality's past.

TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



WWW.TROUTDALEHISTORY.ORG

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