



Crossing the Gorge

Take a look back at 100 years of the Crooked River Bridge. See page 2

Meaningful Moments

Explore DHM's newest exhibit. See page 4



The Homesteader

Deschutes County Historical Society Newsletter—JULY 2026

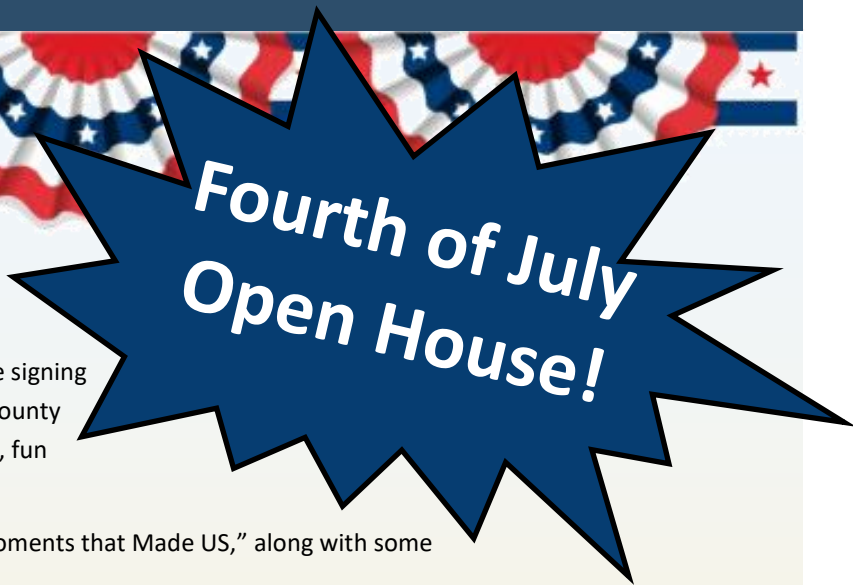


IT'S A BIRTHDAY EXTRAVAGANZA!!

Celebrate the 46th anniversary of the Deschutes Historical Museum as well as the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence with the Deschutes County Historical Society! There will be birthday cake, cold treats, fun games, and free admission all day.

Bring the whole family to explore the newest exhibit, "Moments that Made US," along with some of the museum's archival newspapers.

And, new this year, see the entries in the debut of ...



HISTORY BRICKS!

There's a lot of buzz around the newest creative contest at the Deschutes Historical Museum! Builders young and young-at-heart are encouraged to submit their LEGO or similar building block creation based on historic landmarks of Deschutes County.

Entries in the categories of "Ages 12 and Younger" and "13 and Older" can be delivered to DHM on July 3, and will be on display July 4-11, 2026.

Judging will be a community vote during the week in which they are displayed at the museum. Votes will be tallied and results announced on July 11. Complete rules, suggestions, and details: deschuteshistory.org



One Hundred Years Spanning the Crooked River Gorge

By Mike Berry

The Impenetrable Crooked River Gorge

The Crooked River Gorge has presented a formidable barrier to north-south travel paralleling the Deschutes River since time immemorial. From its mouth at the Deschutes River Canyon at current-day Cove Palisades State Park to a point about five river miles east of Smith Rock, the river meanders through a deep rocky chasm with near-vertical basalt walls up to hundreds of feet tall. General Land Office surveys from the 1800s indicate that no indigenous routes ventured down into and across the gorge.

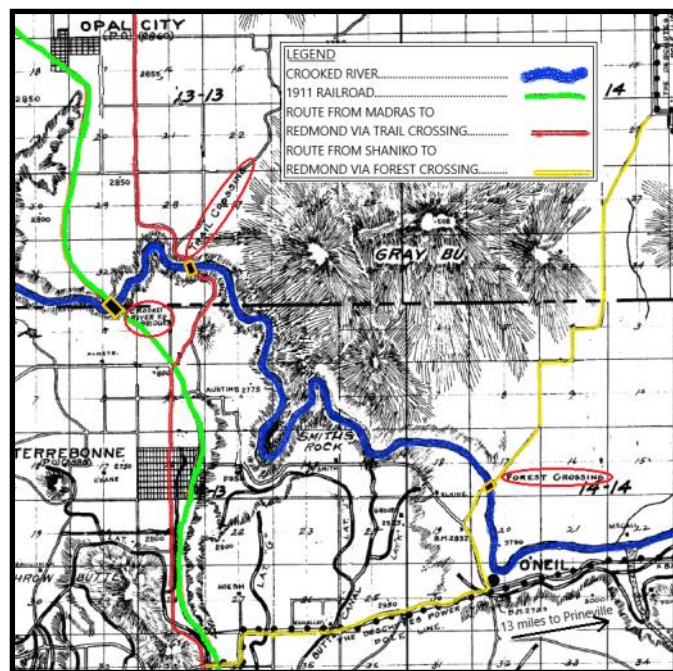
Because of the difficulty of crossing the Crooked River, travel to the Deschutes County area from the north was primarily from the Prineville/O'Neil area via a route through Shaniko, to Antelope to Hay Creek Ranch to Grizzly to Prineville and then westerly into the Deschutes River basin. The other route into Deschutes County was from the west along the Santiam Wagon Road. This arduous mountain pass was basically a two season road, choked by deep snows for half the year.

With the development of large irrigation projects starting in 1903, homesteaders began to stream into the Deschutes River basin. Travelers from the north had three places to cross the Crooked River. Farthest to the east was the bridge over the Crooked River at Prineville, which was the major hub of Central Oregon at the time. Stagecoaches and freighters from the railhead at Shaniko trundled down to Prineville, crossed the 1877 bridge over the Crooked River, and then wended their way west into the towns springing up along the Deschutes River and points south.

Thirteen miles northwest of Prineville the Crooked River could be crossed at Forest Crossing, named after Frank Forest who built a mercantile business and stables on his land to accommodate travelers and freighters.



Shaniko stage at Trail Crossing, photo credit: Library of Congress



1915 map of Crooked River Gorge crossings

This site is a mile north of O'Neil, where the Crooked River enters the gorge. Prior to 1904 the crossing was merely a ford across the river, subject to periodic flooding, meandering, and sand bars. With the completion of the bridge in 1904, Forest Crossing became a desirable route for freighters from Shaniko. The businessmen in Prineville were not very enthusiastic about this new bridge since it siphoned off a lot of the Shaniko-to-Redmond/Tumalo/Bend/La Pine freight traffic.

The third crossing of the Crooked River was the notorious Trail Crossing about six miles northwest of Forest Crossing. Trail Crossing was located deep in the gorge west of Smith Rock and approximately one mile northeast of the current Highway 97 Rex T. Barber Veterans Memorial Bridge over the Crooked River. Trail Crossing was originally a cattle driving ford across the river. From the table lands in the north, the trail switch-backed down the north face of the gorge to the ford 200 feet below. It then side-hilled up the south side, surmounting the top of the canyon though a gap in the rimrock. In 1892 this route became part of the D.W. Barnett County Road, which ran southwest seven miles to the Santiam Wagon road at Tetherow Crossing on the

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Deschutes Historical Museum

129 NW Idaho Avenue
Bend, OR 97703
Open Tuesdays-Saturdays
10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
541.389.1813

www.deschuteshistory.org
info@deschuteshistory.org

Museum Staff:

Kelly Cannon-Miller, Executive Director
Vanessa Ivey, Museum Manager
Rebekah Averette-Zaback, Collections Manager
Donna Burklo, Development Director
Tracy Alexander, Membership Officer
Rashelle Maplethorpe, Support Staff



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Complete minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors are on file with the Museum office.
Tax ID# 51-0186079

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Deschutes River. Barnett Road connected the settlements north of the Crooked River to the Santiam Pass. In the late 1890s a wooden bridge was built at Trail Crossing which was later replaced with a steel span.



Wagons descending grade at Trail Crossing

Bridging the Gorge

In 1911 a modern bridge was finally built spanning the Crooked River Gorge. This was the Oregon Trunk Railway's famous Crooked River Railroad Bridge. The location was chosen where the

gorge was at its narrowest, the span is 340 feet long and 320 feet above the river. The bridge was built simultaneously from both sides of the canyon. All the steel for the bridge was lowered to the bottom of the canyon and then hoisted back up to either side as needed. Workers would descend a rope ladder to the river to attach cables to the steel beams being winched up into position on the bridge.

The arrival of the railroad heralded a period of unequalled growth and change in Central Oregon. Jefferson County was created out of northwest Crook County in 1914 and Deschutes County was carved out of western Crook County in 1916. Between 1910 and 1920 the City of Bend's population exploded from 536 to 5415, a 910% increase. Between 1920 and 1930 Deschutes County's population increased over 50%, from 9,620 to 14,750.

Along with the growth of our population, the new-fangled horseless carriage was changing American life. In 1910 the State of Oregon had 5,310 registered vehicles. By 1920 that number had ballooned to 115,390. Old wagon roads and cattle trails were grossly inadequate to accommodate the number of speedy, high-tech tin lizzies.

By the mid-1920s the Oregon State Highway Department (OSHD) was rushing to modernize the state's road system and "get Oregon out of the mud." In Central Oregon a multitude of county roads and state highways were being modernized. They were widened to two lanes, straightened and surfaced with a durable surface like crushed gravel or oiled macadam. The Dalles-California Highway, a key route bisecting the center of the state, had many pinch points along its 318 miles. One of the most troublesome was the Crooked River Gorge.

Trail Crossing was a narrow, steep, and dangerous stretch of road, with grades that approached 20% in some places. Numerous accidents occurred there, with both horse-drawn wagons and motor cars. In 1916, Redmond businessman Neil Southwick was killed when the car he was riding in swerved on ice at the top of the south grade and rolled 200 feet down the cliffs to the river. In 1923, when investigating another fatality at the bridge, officials found the wreckage of yet another car and a wagon at the bottom of the cliff.

By 1925 the highway had been modernized on either side of Trail Crossing, but not down into the gorge. It must have felt like a time machine for motorists to be cruising at top speed along the modern, two-lane roadway and then suddenly have to crawl down into the narrow, rocky, rutted, and bumpy one-lane wagon road, cross the rickety bridge, and low-gear it up the other side.



1926 OSHD Map

Initial thoughts for The Dalles-California Highway were to improve the road down to Trail Crossing and build a modern highway bridge at or near that location. Then by 1923 the State decided the best method to cross the Crooked River was to build a "High Bridge" across the top of the gorge similar to the 1911 railroad bridge rather than constructing a winding switch-back road down to the bottom and then back up. In June 1925 it was announced that the High Bridge would be built 800 feet east of the 1911 Railroad Bridge. One month later the contract to build the bridge was awarded to the Kuckenberg & Whitman construction company of Portland for \$106,400.

Conde McCullough's High Bridge

The designer of the Crooked River High Bridge was nationally acclaimed OSHD bridge engineer Conde B. McCullough. A native of South Dakota, he came to Oregon in 1916 as a structural engineering professor at Oregon Agricultural College, now Oregon State University. Three years later he was hired by OSHD as a bridge engineer. He worked on large, staggeringly complicated projects throughout Oregon, with his most renowned designs being several bridges along the Oregon Coast on US Highway 101—breathtaking designs that equal if not surpass the beauty of the natural features they span, including the Siuslaw River Bridge at Florence, the Yaquina Bay Bridge at Newport, the Depoe Bay Bridge, and the North Bend Bridge spanning Coos Bay (posthumously renamed the Conde B. McCullough Memorial Bridge). His designs were practical and elegant, combining function and especially form. He designed single arch bridges that frame wild, harsh river canyons and intricate multiple-arch bridges - a mesmerizing fillagree of concrete and steel stretching across vast stretches of rivers or bays.

According to ODOT historian Robert B. Hadlow's book *Elegant Arches, Soaring Spans – C.B. McCullough, Oregon's Master Bridge Builder*, McCullough chose to design a "330-foot two-hinged steel braced-spandrel deck arch with reinforced-concrete girder span approaches" across the Crooked River. The bridge deck is 295 feet above the river. This economical design provided the required load-carrying capacities and greatly reduced construction costs. It was a brilliant design that offered easier and faster construction than alternative designs. Hadlow recounts that McCullough stated his Crooked River High Bridge was "the most spectacular [structure]

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DCHS NEWS: NEW EXHIBIT

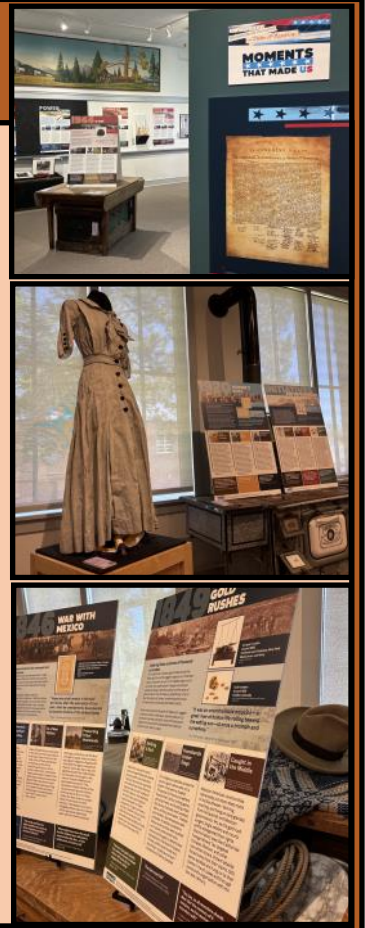
America 250: Moments That Made Us

Moments That Made Us, an exhibit commemorating the United States Semiquincentennial is now on display through November 14.

The exhibit was developed in part by the America 250 Commission, which is tasked with coordinating, providing guidance, and ensuring that Oregon's official observance of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States is inclusive and shares the histories of Oregon's diverse populations.

Developed through a multi-state collaboration, the exhibit explores the ideals of the Declaration of Independence through defining moments in American history. Moments of national significance are highlighted, as well as those of particular significance to Pacific Northwest states, including Oregon. Visitors are inspired to understand that we have the power to chart our own course toward a more perfect union where equality, security, freedom, and happiness are available to all. *Moments That Made Us* challenges us to look critically at how generations of Americans gave meaning to the ideals set out in the Declaration of Independence and how those interpretations have affected generations of citizens and non-citizens alike, both positively and negatively.

The exhibit introduction, in both Spanish and English, is located in the museum lobby with the remainder of the exhibit on the second floor. Admission is free on July 4th. Come help us celebrate!



Recipes of the Month: Johnny Cakes and Apple Pandowdy

July 4, 2026 marks 250 years since the Declaration of Independence was signed and much has changed, including what we eat! In 1776, Taco Bell, McDonalds, and Dairy Queen weren't even a twinkle in Benjamin Franklin's eye. Costco? Safeway? Door Dash? What's that?

So, what were newly minted United States citizens (and non-citizens, but that is another story) eating? Food was made entirely from scratch and there was no refrigeration to keep food cool during warm weather. Pickling and salting would have been the most common way to preserve food and sustain families through long winters. For the average family, meals revolved around what was available, what they could grow, what was in-season, and what was affordable. Popular foods blended the traditional cookery of Native American, English, Dutch, and other cultures represented in North America at the time.

Try these common Revolutionary Era recipes. You might find they are more familiar than you imagine!

Johnnycakes (Cornmeal Flatbreads)

Johnnycakes are one of the oldest known colonial recipes, dating back to the 1600s. Corn was one of the most easily grown or acquired pantry staples and was a mainstay of the Revolutionary War era diet.

Ingredients:

1 cup cornmeal
1 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar (optional)
1 cup boiling water
1/4 cup milk
Butter or oil for frying

Instructions:

1. Mix dry ingredients in a bowl.
2. Stir in boiling water and mix until thickened.
3. Add milk to loosen the texture.
4. Heat butter or oil in a skillet.
5. Spoon batter into rounds and cook 2–3 minutes per side. Serve hot with butter, maple syrup, or even beside grilled meats.

Apple Pandowdy

Apple pandowdy was a popular colonial dessert with a fun name! Apples were common and relatively inexpensive and could easily be thrown together with pantry staples.

Ingredients:

6 apples, peeled and sliced
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
2 tablespoons molasses
1 tablespoon butter
Pie crust or biscuit dough

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
 2. Combine apples, brown sugar, spices, and molasses in a bowl.
 3. Spread mixture into a greased baking dish and dot with butter.
 4. Cover with dough and bake 45–50 minutes until golden. Half-way through, slice into the crust ("dowdy" it) to let the juices soak in.
- Serve warm with whipped cream

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on the state highway system."

Construction on the bridge began in late 1925, with steel being delivered in December of that year. Crews cut twenty-foot-deep notches into the basalt walls to anchor each side of the bridge arch and then towers were erected on either side to support a cableway highline for hoisting and moving the steel members along the length of the bridge. As with the 1911 railroad bridge, the two sides of the bridge were built simultaneously. The bridge construction site became a local tourist attraction, with hundreds of cars visiting the site on weekends. On Thursday, April 8, 1926, the steel was joined between the opposing bridge sections. The Central Oregon Press reported that Redmond was deserted, and schools were dismissed early so students could witness the momentous occasion.

By the end of May the concrete deck of the bridge was completed and on July 27, 1926 the first automobile crossed the span. OSHD division engineer C.W. Wanzer piloted the automobile, carrying esteemed passengers including County Judge Robert Sawyer and Bend Bulletin reporter Phil Brogan. When the car completed the transit, it was discovered that a stowaway, 14 year-old Art Kuckenber (brother of the contractor), had perched on the spare tire at the rear of the auto.

Meanwhile, work needed to be done on the bridge approaches to make them traffic-worthy. On August 16 the road was unceremoniously opened to traffic. Hundreds of Deschutes County residents streamed up to the Jefferson County site for the thrill of driving 300 feet above the Crooked River. An official dedication was planned for October which would also celebrate the completion of The Dalles-California highway. After the High Bridge was opened to traffic the Trail Crossing bridge was razed.

After delays elsewhere along Highway 97, the ceremony took place on July 15, 1927, officiated by Governor Isaac Patterson. The dedication was dual-purpose, acknowledging the highway and bridge accomplishments together with the creation of the Peter Scene Ogden Wayside Park. The State of Oregon created the park in accordance with a 1925 legislative mandate that directed OSHD to acquire land for waysides and parks. Named after Hudson Bay trapper Peter Skene Ogden who explored Central Oregon in the mid-1820s, the park had extensive parking and walls for viewing the river below.



1927 Dedication; photo courtesy of ODOT

By the mid-1990s traffic volume on Highway 97 had outgrown the two-lane span. In 1998 construction was started on a third bridge over the gorge a couple of hundred feet farther east of the High Bridge. In September of 2000 the new five-lane bridge was opened and three years later it was named the Rex T. Barber Veterans Memorial Bridge. There's a sweet irony in this new bridge being named after Barber. At the age of nine the Culver resident loaded into a horsedrawn wagon with his family to attend the opening dedication of the High Bridge. In 1947 World War II fighter ace Captain Rex Barber, who had downed Japanese Navy Commander in Chief Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's plane in the Pacific, returned to the high bridge in a much more modern means of conveyance. By then he was an Air Force test pilot and received permission to fly a P-80 Shooting Star fighter jet to Oregon to visit his family. His family and friends gathered near the High Bridge as Rex and his wingman approached from the west and then dived their jets down into the canyon and under the 1911 and 1926 bridges.

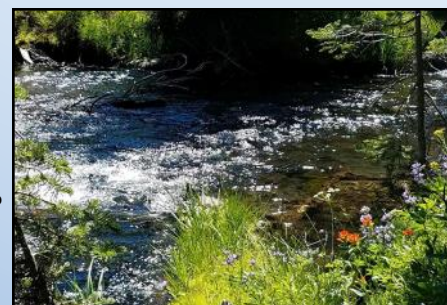
After the 2000 bridge was built, the High Bridge was closed to traffic and is now a pedestrian walkway.

July History Pub: Tuesday, July 28, 2026

Stink Water or Mountain Spring Water: A Century of Bend's Water System

In 1923, Bend's source for drinking water, the Deschutes River, was condemned by the state of Oregon as "unfit for human consumption." What were the citizens of Bend to do? Would they filter it or look for a new supply? What would it cost, and who would pay for it? Patrick Griffiths, retired water resources manager for the City of Bend, answers these questions and more as he presents one hundred years of history that evolved into the clean municipal water supply that we cherish today.

Patrick Griffiths is an award-winning water resource administrator and water policy expert with over 22 years of leadership in municipal water rights management, water conservation, and regional water governance. Within the Deschutes River Basin, Griffiths is widely recognized for designing innovative, data-driven public conservation campaigns and orchestrating complex multi-party water management agreements to meet all identified new water needs.



*Doors open at 6:00 p.m.,
Presentation at 7:00 p.m.*

*Reservations required;
\$5 per person*

www.mcmenamins.com/events/

DESCHUTES HISTORICAL MUSEUM
ANTIQUÉ FAIR
FIND YOUR TREASURE

AUGUST 8

9:00 – 4:00 p.m.

EVENT AND MUSEUM
ADMISSION IS FREE!



- Vendors from all over Oregon with a variety of treasures
- Research family histories with the Bend Genealogical Society
- Enjoy Live Music by Loren Irving and Jay Bowerman

Vendor spaces still available!

Guerrilla Shakespeare is Proud to Present
William Shakespeare's
Cymbeline
Directed by Raechel Gilland
July 22 - Aug 1

7/22 Suttle Lake Lodge - 7/23 Craft Kitchen & Brewery
7/24 Desch. Historic Museum - 7/25 Pioneer Park
7/26 Pioneer Park (3pm) - 7/30 Petersen Rock Garden
7/31 Maragas Winery - 8/1 Alpenglow Park

All Shows at 7pm
except 3pm matinee 7/26

Tix

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JULY

- 4 **FOURTH OF JULY OPEN HOUSE**
HISTORY BRICKS ENTRIES ON DISPLAY
- 11 & 25 **HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Early Days of Bend**
10:30 a.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- 18 **HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Architectural Tour**
10:30 a.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- 24 **SHAKESPEARE ON THE LAWN: Cymbeline**
7:00 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
[Tickets: 3common.com](http://Tickets:3common.com) \$20 general, \$16 senior/student
- 25 **BEND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL MULTI-CLASS REUNION**
12-3:00 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- 28 **HISTORY PUB: STINK WATER OR MOUNTAIN SPRING WATER:**
A Century of Bend's Water System
Presented by Patrick Griffiths
McMenamins Old St. Francis; 700 NW Bond St., Bend
Father Luke Room, 7:00 p.m., doors open at 6:00 p.m.
[Reservations required, \\$5 per person](#)



McMENAMINS AND DESCHUTES HISTORICAL MUSEUM PRESENT
HISTORY PUB
Stink Water or Mountain Spring Water
A CENTURY OF BEND'S WATER SYSTEM

PRESENTED BY
PATRICK GRIFFITHS
McMENAMINS OLD ST. FRANCIS SCHOOL
FATHER LUKE'S ROOM
TUESDAY, JULY 28, 2026
7PM/DOORS 6PM • \$5 • ALL AGES WELCOME
Former water resource manager Patrick Griffiths explains how Bend evolved from an unclear water source in 1923 to the modern, safe water system we use today.

Deschutes Historical Museum 700 NW Bond St. • Bend, OR
mcmenamins.com/history



SAVE THE DATE!

August 8: 4th Annual Antique Fair

August 29: The Last Little Woody Barrel Aged Beer Festival

