

Oregon Historic Site Record

| LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| address: | Hwy 99 and Hwy 43 Oregon City, Clackamas County | historic name: | McLoughlin Promenade |
| assoc addresses: | | current/other names: | |
| location descr: | Runs along the top of the bluff between Tumwater Drive and the Oregon City Elevator. | block/lot/tax lot: | |
| | | township/rng/sect/qtr sect: | |
| PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS | | | |
| resource type: | site | height (stories): | |
| elig evaluation: | eligible/significant | total elig resources: | 4 |
| prim constr date: | 1938 | NR Status: | Individually Listed |
| | second date: | date indiv listed: | 05/15/2014 |
| primary orig use: | Pedestrian Related | orig use comments: | |
| second orig use: | Outdoor Recreation | prim style comments: | |
| primary style: | | sec style comments: | |
| secondary style: | | siding comments: | |
| primary siding: | Stone:Other/Undefined | architect: | John L. Franzen |
| secondary siding: | | builder: | Works Progress Administration |
| plan type: | | | |
| comments/notes: | | | |
| 106 case | | | |
| GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS | | | |
| Survey/Grouping Included In: | Type of Grouping | Date Listed | Date Compiled |
| WPA Structures (Works Progress Administration) | Thematic Grouping | | |
| SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY | | | |
| NR date listed: | 05/15/2014 | 106 Project(s): | None |
| ILS survey date: | | Special Assess Project(s): | None |
| RLS survey date: | | Federal Tax Project(s): | None |
| Gen file date: | 10/31/1994 | | |
| ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION | | | |
| <i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i> | | | |
| <p>The McLoughlin Promenade is a historic park site along the edge of Oregon City's prominent bluff which was donated to the people of Oregon City by Dr. John McLoughlin in 1851. Between 1936 and 1939, the contributing park site was improved by three distinct but connected contributing structures constructed of locally quarried basalt and concrete. These structures are locally significant, as examples of Oregon City's direct response to trends in local, state and national history. The first element is a 2,300-foot-long, multi-use, stone and concrete pathway that runs along the bluff approximately 100-feet above historic downtown Oregon City. The path includes approximately 1,400 linear feet of stone parapet wall. The second element is known as the Grand Staircase. It consists of a stone and concrete stairway at the north end of the multi-use path that leads down the bluff and curves south to meet the Municipal Elevator tunnel north of 7th Street in downtown Oregon City. A second leg of the Grand Staircase, known as the Singer Hill Road underpass, crosses below Singer Hill to the east of the Promenade, and rises through two short flights of stairs to the grassy lawns surrounding the McLoughlin House. The third structure is a man-made waterfall consisting of five concrete shelves over which Singer Creek flows from the bluff to downtown. It sits just north of the Grand Staircase and the two intertwine on the steep descent. The waterfall terminates above 8th Street in downtown Oregon City. By the end of 1939, all three elements had been constructed on the site of features that predate Euro-American settlement, including paths used by Native Clowewalla, Cashhok and Molalla tribes for hundreds of years. The promenade's current features were constructed of local basalt and concrete with the help of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The park has been well maintained by the City of Oregon City, as well as by local residents who take pride in caring for its landscaping. The Promenade was recently restored by stone masons who were able to repair degraded stone and concrete elements while retaining the rustic character of the original materials. The landscape features and the three contributing structures retain excellent integrity.</p> | | | |
| HISTORY | | | |
| <i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i> | | | |
| <p>The McLoughlin Promenade is defined as the walkway, Singer Creek Falls, and the Grand Staircase, along with the Singer Creek underpass, which are all set within historic park lands. Locally significant, the Promenade is eligible under two criteria with three Areas of Significance. As a WPA project, it is significant under Criterion A: Politics/Government for its association with Oregon City's local response to the Great Depression and the resulting New Deal programs that kept Oregonians working through the turbulent 1930s. Also under Criterion A, the Promenade is eligible under the theme of Recreation and Culture for its longtime use as a public park. The Promenade is also significant under Criterion C: Engineering as an excellent example of materials and methods of construction used in rustic stone masonry along transportation routes and on city park sites throughout Oregon in the early 20th Century. The McLoughlin Promenade was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office on October 31, 1994. A Request for a Determination of Eligibility, prepared by the Oregon Department of Transportation, documented the connection between the Promenade and the work of the WPA, noting that construction of the basalt wall along the Promenade was one of three WPA projects from 1938 to encourage city-wide growth, development, and beautification. The stone masonry wall and railing structure are also significant for their style and means of construction. Park architecture of the Great Depression often followed principles of rustic design developed by the National Park Service during the early decades of the 20th century. The McLoughlin Promenade is an excellent, regional example of the rustic style. It expresses its character through natural materials, rough-hewn surfaces, and subtle ornament that blends into the landscape to enhance the natural beauty of the site. The Promenade structures are significant park enhancements built by WPA workers to highlight the beauty of Oregon City's dramatic bluff, to enhance a historic park enjoyed by Oregon City residents since it was donated in 1851 by Dr. John McLoughlin, and to put Oregonians to work during the nation's most severe economic crisis to date. The McLoughlin Promenade has received in-kind repairs over the years, and a small number of non-contributing improvements, including light standards, have been added to the park land. The stairway was altered near its termination at the foot of the bluff to accommodate a new municipal elevation in 1955, but the pathway, the stairs and the waterfall otherwise retain their original design, materials and workmanship. They remain in their original locations and retain integrity of site and setting, continuing to enhance the natural assets of the park. The Promenade also retains significant integrity of feeling and association. Criterion A: Politics/Government The McLoughlin Promenade is significant under Criterion A: Politics/Government for its associations with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Great Depression. The WPA was a nationwide, federal program that helped states and local communities respond to the Great Depression with a combination of construction and service projects designed to provide work relief for men and women of various skill levels. Federal programs like the WPA, and the Public Works Administration (PWA), had a tremendous effect on Oregon, building the Bonneville Dam (1933-38), Timberline Lodge (1937), and Oregon's state capitol building (1938). The WPA also employed researchers, writers and artists through programs like the Oregon Federal Theater Project and the Oregon Federal Writers Project. In Oregon City, the urban</p> | | | |

landscape was permanently altered by WPA and PWA construction projects, including road work on Oregon 99E, including the construction of an underpass through Singer Hill (1937), the construction of the Clackamas County Courthouse downtown (1937), and the construction of the McLoughlin Promenade (1939). The Promenade project was managed by Oregon City's City Manager, J.L. Franzen, and constructed using public funds over a period of three years in one of the most significant parks in Oregon City. The park's improvements met a number of the WPA's primary goals: it put people to work near their homes; it employed skilled and unskilled craftsmen; and it improved a city park with compatible structures that highlight the city's natural assets, including the Willamette River, the bluff, and Singer Creek. Projects like the Promenade were also thought to have a positive psychological impact on both workers and park visitors. The Promenade features views of the city's industrial district, providing residents with an opportunity to reflect on the historic downtown and its patterns of commercial and industrial growth. Added viewpoints look over the Willamette Falls, the historic inspiration for the early settlement site. The project also provides opportunities for visitors to engage with the natural landscape of the bluff, enjoying unique views from the walkway and from the Grand Staircase. The Promenade is a unique park site and a unique amenity in Oregon City. The WPA project highlighted the park's assets and provided a lasting legacy for residents and visitors. Criterion A: Recreation and Culture The Promenade structures are eligible as improvements to a significant historic park. The walkways, stairs and waterfall improved public access and safety along a city park donated by Dr. John McLoughlin to the people of Oregon City in 1851. The Promenade appears in local newspaper as early as 1866, when the Oregon City Enterprise noted that "all the open or vacant space fronting on lots and blocks west of High Street have been donated for the use of a public promenade. This was truly a wise provision. The principal portion of residences in Oregon City will eventually be upon the bluff, and the view is most commanding for miles up and down the river. Even now, in its primitive state, a grand sight is presented to the public from this promenade." The site has been used as a public park continually since the city's platting. The site retains unparalleled views of downtown and the Willamette River, and provides places to walk, run, or ride a bike. Because of McLoughlin's donation, development was restricted along the bluff. McLoughlin's foresight allowed Oregon City to retain public ownership of one of its greatest scenic assets, and to preserve the public's access to this dramatic location. The park not only provides views of the city and the river, but it allows the bluff to retain its distinctly rustic qualities, providing some continuity between the paths walked by Native tribes and the park's contemporary users, who walk a similar path today. Criterion C: Engineering The Promenade is also significant under Criterion C: Engineering. Constructed of locally quarried basalt, the Promenade walls, stairs and waterfall are excellent examples of rustic design as it was developing in Oregon in the early 20th-century. Made to blend into the landscape, to make use of local and natural materials, and to enhance views and public recreation opportunities in natural settings, rustic park architecture was maturing in the years before the Great Depression. Under President Herbert Hoover, the National Park Service began devoting resources to landscape design and to the development of a sympathetic architectural style that fit naturally within wild western lands. The federal government thereafter built roads, picnic shelters, park administration buildings, and paths in scenic national parks throughout the west, using natural materials like stone and wood to help these structures blend into the beauty of their surroundings. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933, he continued this effort, establishing federal programs like the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), which employed young men to plant trees, cut trails, fight fires and build roads, picnic shelters, and other park enhancements including bridges and ranger stations on federal lands in Oregon. These federal projects helped refine the principles of rustic design, which became a popular choice for WPA projects. It was against this background that the Promenade project was conceived and constructed. It followed on the heels of similar projects, including the Columbia River Highway and Rocky Butte, two Oregon projects that also made use of local basalt to beautify pedestrian and vehicular corridors with stone parapets and viewpoints. The Promenade is an excellent example of rustic architectural principles used to beautify and blend naturally into a scenic city park.

RESEARCH INFORMATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Title Records ✓ Sanborn Maps Obituaries ✓ City Directories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Census Records Biographical Sources ✓ Newspapers Building Permits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Tax Records ✓ SHPO Files State Archives State Library | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Local Histories ✓ Interviews ✓ Historic Photographs |
| Local Library: | Oregon City | University Library: | |
| Historical Society: | | Other Repository: | |

Bibliography:

Books: Butcher, Karyle. The Works Progress Administration in Oregon: An Administrative Overview, A Thesis Submitted to Oregon State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, July 9, 1990. Fuller, Tom and Art Ayre. Oregon at Work: 1859 – 2009, Portland: Ooligan Press, 2009. Lynch, Vera Martin. Free Land for Free Men: A Story of Clackamas County, Portland: Artline Printing, Inc., 1973. Maulden, Frank. Sweet Mountain Water: The Story of Salem, Oregon's Struggle to Tap Mt. Jefferson Water and Protect the North Santiam River, Salem: Oak Savanna Publishing, 2004. McClellan, Linda Flint. Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942, Washington DC: National Park Service, 1993. State Relief Committee of Oregon. 26,000 Manpower Plus: A History of the Work Program of the State and County Relief Committees of Oregon. County Relief Committees of Oregon, 1937. Tweed, William C., Soulliere, Laura E., and Law, Henry G. National Park Service Rustic Architecture: 1916- 1942, San Francisco: National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1977. Webber, Bert and Margie Webber. Oregon City (By Way of the Barlow Road) at the end of the National Historic Oregon Trail, Medford: Webb Research Group, 1993. Newspapers and Magazines: Baker, Neil. "Portland's Works Progress Administration," Oregon Historical Quarterly, Winter 2000, Vol. 101, No. 4. Oregon City Enterprise, various editions, as cited in text. Portland Oregonian, various editions, as cited in text. Public Documents: Beckner, Chrisanne, Diana Painter. Oregon City Historic Preservation Program Update, Phase 2: Nominations. August 2011, held by the City of Oregon City. City of Oregon City. Works Progress Administration Project Proposal, McLoughlin Promenade, November 5 1937, held by the City of Oregon City. City of Oregon City. Report for 1938: Engineering and Street Department, of Oregon City, 1938, internal documents held by the City. City of Oregon City. "1939-Projects," undated, held by the City of Oregon City. Curran, Christine A. Determination of Eligibility for the Oregon City Municipal Elevator and McLoughlin Promenade, Oregon Department of Transportation, October, 1994, accessible through the Oregon Historic Sites Database. Dennis, Michelle L. Historic Resource Survey Form for The Bluff at 8th Street, May 2000. Inventory forms are available through the Oregon Historic Sites Database. Fish Commission of the State of Oregon. Biennial Report of the Fish Commission of the State of Oregon for 1933 and 1934, 1935, held by the City of Oregon City. Lewis, David and Kathy Schutt. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Rocky Butte Scenic Drive Historic District, Portland, Oregon, February 25, 1991. Available through the Oregon Historic Sites Database. Oregon State Highway Commission. Twelfth Biennial Report of the Oregon State Highway Commission for the Period July 1, 1934 to June 30, 1936, Salem: State Printing Dept., 1936. Oregon State Highway Commission. Fourteenth Biennial Report of the Oregon State Highway Commission for the Period July 1, 1938 to June 30, 1940, Salem: State Printing Dept., 1940. Historic ODOT Region 1 Headquarters Building. Internal documents, held by the City of Oregon City, undated. Kadas, Marianne. Historic Resource Survey Form, South End Road Wall, July 1997. Inventory forms are available through the City of Oregon City. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Oregon City, various dates as noted in text. Held by the City of Oregon City. Smith, Dwight A. National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for the Columbia River Highway Historic District, October 3, 1983. Nominations are available through the Oregon Historic Sites Database.