

# ROADBUILDERS THEATRE

## **CONSTRUCTING THE MARYHILL LOOPS**

### SCRIPTED PRESENTATION

*[Sam Hill] Welcome everyone to the conference and to today's presentation of early road building in Washington. More specifically we will look at some techniques that were first used on the first experimental road known as the Maryhill Loops. I'm Sam Hill and I was born May of 1857 in Deep River, North Carolina. In 1865, my family moved to Minneapolis.....*

-----*(brief history in WA - 10 min.)*-----



*... Now I wish to introduce our esteemed Design Engineer and expert Road Builder, Samuel C. Lancaster. He appreciates the pristine beauty found in the Columbia Gorge and creating road designs that fit into the surrounding terrain. Mr. Lancaster is noted for laying out Seattle's Lake Washington Boulevard in the early 1900s as a component of the city's Olmsted-designed park system. Samuel accompanied me to Paris in 1908 for the First International Road Congress. We toured Western Europe to learn about the techniques of continental roadbuilding that inspired us to begin our experimental roads at Maryhill near the Columbia south of Goldendale. Samuel, from an engineering standpoint, what things did we gather from Europe that we wish to incorporate in America?*

*[Lancaster]*

*We discovered new surfacing techniques beginning with the macadamized subgrades. In 1908 only 93 percent of the nation's roads were ungraded and unsurfaced. But*

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*Sam, people are saying you're promoting this new roadbuilding for car clubs and bicycles – that you're a hobbyist.*

*[Hill]*

*Good roads are more than my hobby, they're my religion. And now that we have better construction techniques we can lay down miles of paved roadway with the new bituminuous mixture that utilizes a petroleum binder for better constructability.*

*[Audience Member – possible female like Lauren or Tina]*

*Wait a minute... You're going to do what? Put OIL down ... On the ground??*

*[Hill]*

*Yes, it's being used in parts of Europe. What are the engineers across the ocean telling us Samuel?*

*[Lancaster]*

*The tar aggregate remains very inert and simply becomes part of the binder. I overheard someone saying here at the Conference that nowadays it is hazardous material to dispose & they have to contend with Federal & State regulations on the subject of ECOLOGY! But Sam, building the road is one thing, however Eastern Washington farmers are suspicious and wary because of your connection to the railroads. They blame Eastern Capitalists for all their woes and high taxes.*

*[Hill]*

*They should not be dismayed - I have spent time and money to dutifully advocate for their prosperity. I believe in man on the land. If farmers can get their commodities and*



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*products to the towns and rail connections efficiently, they will prosper. We cannot keep the ambitious boy or girl on the farm unless we make life attractive and comfortable. To do this we need roads to transport goods & services. Now with motorized means of transportation growing at a rapid pace, properly built roads are vital to America's trade and commerce. It's essential to our economic vitality to reach farms and natural resources; to criss-cross this magnificent state of ours from the top of Seattle's Queen Anne all the way to Spokane; from Matawa to Cheesaw...*

*[Lancaster]*

*That sounds good Sam, but what in the world is a 'Cheesaw'?*

*[Hill]*

*It's an old time establishment up near the Canadian Border east of Oroville. The place had a brief gold rush period and then became somewhat of a ghost town. An old Chinese settler lived there who married a native American woman. His name was Chee Saw.*

*[Lancaster]*

*Well alright, but when you talk about transportation of goods and commodities what about a road corridor from Seattle to Portland?*

*[Hill]*

*The Good Roads Association proposed a vision for a grand Pacific Highway, not just between Seattle and Portland but from the Canadian border to the Mexican Border. It was more of a challenge to get the Washington Legislators convinced that we needed the money to build it.*

*[Audience Member – Any or John Carpita]*

*Mr. Hill, that brings up a good question. I was certainly wondering along with many Public Works professionals – how did you go about getting the funding in the early 1900s for major highways?*

*[Hill]*

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*Well I knew from my railroad days at the Great Northern working with my father-in-law James Hill, known by many as the empire builder, that you had to have good connections and lobby them to the best of your ability. To help sell the new road techniques, the experimental highway at Maryhill was built by investing my own personal capital. In February of 1913, members of the Oregon Legislature accepted my personal invitation as guests to Maryhill. After inspecting the roadway and listening to an illustrated lecture of the roadbuilding process, Oregon established a State Highway Commission and set up a budget for new Columbia River Highway.*

*[Audience Member – Any or John Carpita]*

*Can you tell us who designed it?*

*[Hill]*

*It was the recommendation from others as well as myself, to secure the services of an experienced engineer and expert roadbuilder. That is how our own Mr. Samuel Lancaster was appointed as the design/ supervisor of the Columbia River Highway. Please Samuel can you provide some of your insights on this amazing endeavor...*

*[Lancaster]*

*During our tour of Europe I was amazed and inspired by the Rhine River valley and how the surrounding beauty was preserved and utilized in the highway design. I wanted to the Columbia River Highway to fit the topography and to showcase the pristine waterfalls and the grandeur of the basalt cliffs.*

*[At this time, Sam Hill steps out of character to offer concluding remarks to the presentation]*

*[Brodin] Both Washington and Oregon benefitted from Sam Hill's promotional talents and his efforts through the Good Roads Association is how Washington DOT was started. The site of the experimental roads south of Goldendale was where it all started; truly the Maryhill Loops provided a significant springboard to all transportation projects involving the latest pavement standards. Certainly beyond the wildest dreams*

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*and expectations of either of the two Sams, the Columbia River Highway was hugely important to bringing Agricultural goods to market. As a result the scenic road began to suffer from the heavy truck and rubber-tired freight. Newer alignments needed around the Dalles and various other spots preserved the original conception and vision of Designer Samuel Christopher Lancaster. The Highway was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places and is now called the Historic Columbia River Highway.*

*[Final Comments/questions]*