

Opening of the Cascade Locks

By Morning Oregonian

On December 19, 1896, the *Morning Oregonian* in Portland heralded the opening of the Cascade Canal and Locks with a special edition celebrating the project as an important step toward “an open river to the sea.” The project cost the U.S. government more than \$4 million and took nearly twenty years to complete. By the time it was finished, railroad lines had been constructed throughout the region, and they were being used instead of steamboats to transport wheat from upriver to markets in Portland, Seattle, and Tacoma. Despite this change in fortune, the *Oregonian* declared that engineering the Columbia River would make Portland the “home port of 1,759 miles of navigable water.” An easily navigated Columbia River, the paper claimed, would be an arterial between Portland and an “abundance of raw material” from as far away as British Columbia and Lewiston, Idaho. The paper recommended that Portland business interests build a manufacturing base to transform materials, such as lumber, wool, and ore, into products to be sold around the world. To further this goal, the *Oregonian* urged the U.S. government to begin work on a canal and locks around Celilo Falls. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed work on The Dalles-Celilo Canal, with five locks, in 1915.

Further Reading: White, Richard. *The Organic Machine*. New York, N.Y., 1995.

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