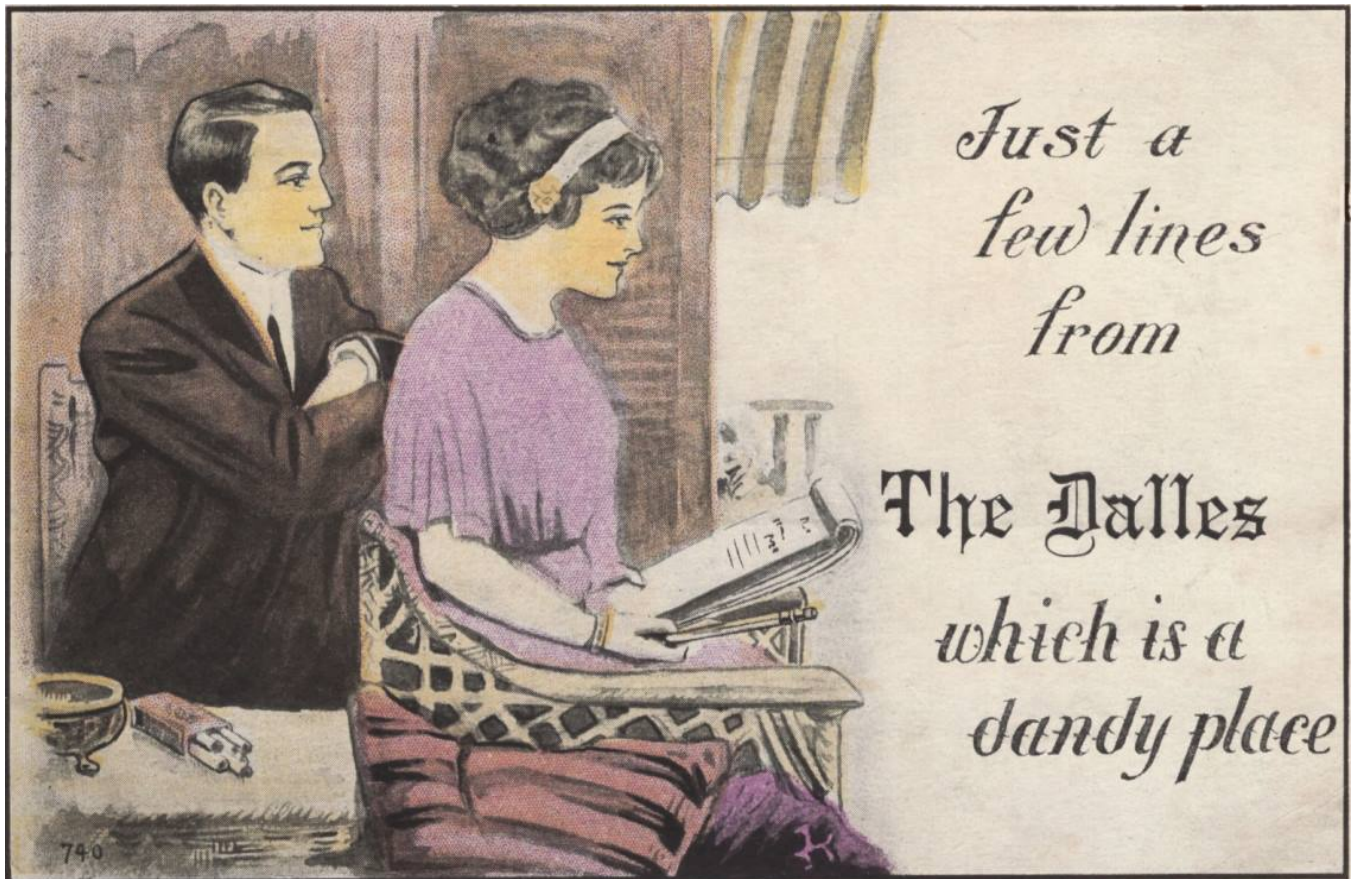




WEBFOOTER EXTRA

February 2022

A History of The Dalles, Oregon



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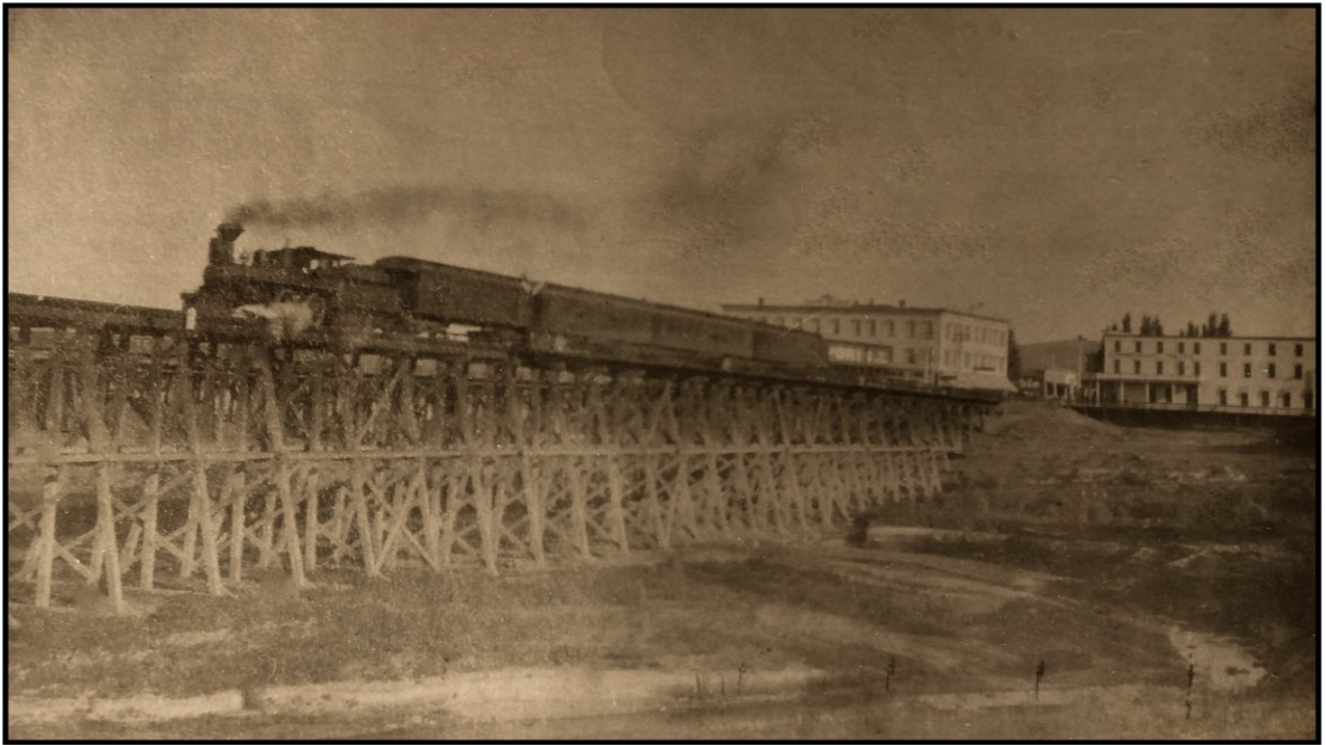


Real photo postcard view of The Arch on Second Street commemorating the opening of the Cascade Locks and Canal on November 5, 1896. The crossed cannon on the arch was used by Battery A of the Oregon National Guard. This image originated from a glass negative.

The Dalles, Oregon, located in Wasco County, is rich in history. The Dalles was incorporated as Dalles City by act of the Oregon Territorial Legislature on January 26, 1857. The Dalles is the fourth oldest incorporated city in Oregon. At the time, The Dalles was one of the largest population centers in the Pacific Northwest, and it played a major role in terms of commerce, politics, military presence and inland navigation. The city was the center of navigation on the middle Columbia River, between the Cascades rapids and Celilo Falls.

The area began as an Indian home thousands of years before the Euro-American fur traders and settlers came. The area was once known as Win-quatt, a Native American name meaning 'surrounded by rock cliffs'. One of the bands' original inhabitants were members of the Wasco-pam tribe, the descendants of whom are now part of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

Native American trade took place annually in the Mid-Columbia Basin as tribes from across the Northwest came together peacefully to fish, trade, and socialize. In the 1800s they were joined by the mountain men fur traders and French-Canadian boatmen of the Hudson's Bay Company.



Real photo postcard view of a train leaving The Dalles in the 1890s. The building on the left is The Umatilla House, a hotel built in 1879 after a fire. The first Umatilla House was built in 1857. This image originated from a glass negative.

Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark came to the Columbia Gorge in 1805 after descending the western slopes of the Rockies, then following the Snake River to its confluence with the Columbia. The Dalles served twice as campsite for the Lewis & Clark expedition – in October 1805 and April 1806 – before developing into a key regional center for the fur trade, supporting a Hudson’s Bay Company outpost in 1829. Fur traders came through in the 1810s and 1820s. The first use of the name Dalles for the town was in 1814. Trappers, explorers, other military expeditions and immigrants soon followed.

The Hudson’s Bay boatmen and the French Canadian fur traders called the greatest rapids on the Columbia River “Le Grand Dalles de la Columbia.” These rapids became known as the “Long Narrows,” and their companion, “les petites dalles” as the “Short Narrows.” The word *dalle* is French for flagstone or large tile, and was a reference to flagstones used to line gutters on ships. The “grande dalles” of the Columbia referred to the long gutter-like channel cut by the turbulent waters of the Columbia River.

Methodist Episcopal missionaries, Rev. Daniel Lee and Rev. Henry K.W. Perkins, arrived at the Dalles of the Columbia on March 21, 1838. They had traveled upriver in six canoes, accompanied by an Indian chief who acted as their guide. They were greeted by about 50 members of the area Wasco tribe.

They spent the next several months erecting the Wascopam Mission building, where they began their work to bring the word of God to the natives of the mid-Columbia.

Marking the area near where Rev. Daniel Lee, along with Rev. Henry K.W. Perkins, established the Wascopam Mission in 1838 is "Pulpit Rock." Pulpit Rock still stands in The Dalles, at East 12th and Court streets.

For three years, from 1843 to 1845, The Dalles was the end of the Oregon Trail as an overland route. The Dalles became a critical stop for pioneers following the Oregon Trail. Emigrants had to portage their freight one and a half miles around 'les dalles' over a rough, rocky trail. It was here, just past The Dalles, that the wagons were loaded on rafts or bateaux and floated west to Fort Vancouver and Oregon City. Many lives were lost on the rapids of the Columbia River, the relentless winds overturned many a raft, and there was a stretch of impassable rapids that had to be portaged.

The construction of a pioneer road over the Cascades in 1845 and the Donation Land Act of 1850 brought families to the area to settle. Wasco County became a major transportation hub for both river traffic and inland traffic. In 1846, an alternate route was opened, and pioneers were able to choose either the water route or the rugged Barlow Road route around Mt. Hood through Government Camp and Sandy to Oregon City.



Real photo postcard of the Wasco County Fair, circa 1911. This image originated from a glass negative.



Real photo postcard of a hot air balloon in The Dalles at the Wasco County Fair, circa 1911. This image originated from a glass negative.

The Dalles was incorporated in 1857, making it one of the oldest incorporated cities in Oregon. The military first referred to the location as Fort Drum, and eventually changed the name to Fort Dalles. The post office was established on November 5, 1851 under the name Dalles with William R. Gibson as first postmaster. On September 3, 1853, the town's name was changed to Wascopum. On March 22, 1860, the name was changed to The Dalles. In 1966, the name City of The Dalles was officially adopted by city ordinance.

Today, The Dalles has a population of 12,000, and it is the county seat of Wasco County. Primary agricultural crops are cereal grains, sweet cherries and apples. Ranching is also common. Wheat is the dominant field crop with 190,000 acres. Google located a facility in The Dalles in 2006, taking advantage of an abundance of hydro-electric power and the available advanced fiber-optic network.

Editor's Note: Postcards used in this issue of The Webfooter Extra are from the Stephen Kenney Collection. In the next issue, we will explore more of The Dalles history.



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