

The Dalles

I am very thankful to Cheri who was the prior coordinator.

History

[Link to The Dalles in Wikipedia](#)

Some of this information is courtesy the State of Oregon

Lying on a great crescent bend of the mighty Columbia River, The Dalles is said to have been an outgrowth of it's own location. The river, prior to the massive dams that now tame its waters, once spilled over a series of rapids, which the French voyageurs christened "les dalles," -- the trough. The falls had been named Le Grand Dalles de la Columbia (The Great Falls of the Columbia) by French Canadian fur traders.

Later, the area became the hub of the Pacific Northwest due to its location amidst the final leg of the Oregon Trail. The Trail might have ended at The Dalles if not for the tenacity of the Native population, which fought to preserve its prime fishing and hunting lands. After the Indian wars subsided and settlement had begun in earnest in Wasco County, The Dalles was selected as the site of the new U.S. Mint (below). It would be the second Mint on the west coast. Land was acquired and the Mint constructed of durable brick between 1864 and 1870 to support the needs of early settlers in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, but it was closed down before the first coin was ever struck. The Mint building still stands today, a ghost of early Wasco County that has always been used as a warehouse.



The Dalles Mint built in 1870 ~ Photographer citation: Gary Halvorson, Oregon State Archives

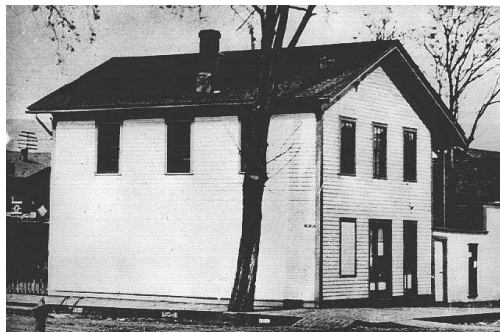
Long before Lewis and Clark or other pioneers arrived, this was an

important gathering place for Native Americans, the original pioneers. With the influx of the white pioneers came a loss for the Native Americans. For several years after the arrival of the early settlers, there were Indian wars. As the area's hub, Wasco County was also central to those conflicts. Oregon Trail lore abounds in unique murals and historic buildings that remain throughout The Dalles, the Fort Dalles Surgeon's Quarters (below).



~ Photographer citation: Gary Halvorson, Oregon State Archives

Much of the town's past lingers in its present. The area is filled with many 19th century homes and its history is celebrated in local museums. The dams that were built in the 20th century have effectively left the remaining Native American population unable to live even a vaguely subsistence lifestyle. This was a decidedly negative impact. And yet, those same dams have combined with the natural elements inherent in a rocky gorge setting, to create a world-class recreation area. The Columbia River Gorge is internationally known for its wind-surfing opportunities. It is rated the world's best place for this sport.



The Dalles was known as the (original) end of the Oregon Trail, although the reality of the Indian hostilities made it necessary for the pioneers to continue on until they reached the more protected areas on the west side of the Cascade Mountain range. Therefore, The Dalles also marks the fork in the trail for Oregon Trail emigrants. Those who chose the overland Barlow Road segment around Mount Hood turned south here, while the rest continued down the Columbia River. For many a weary pioneer, the end of the Oregon Trail marked an end also to a hundred or more years

worth of family generations moving "west" to find and secure a better lifestyle. These families had crossed the seas once to reach the promised land of America, but for these brave pioneers' families, the quest for that most perfect of lifestyles had brought them thousands more miles yet, until they reached the sea that would, if crossed, return them from whence they came. Thus, what is today known as The Dalles, Oregon, truly marked the final leg of a very, very long journey. (Above, the first courthouse, The Dalles)

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