

## Silver Falls History: A Chronological Story *(Draft, July 2011)*

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| <p><b>circa 1811:</b> Donald McKenzie and other members of the Pacific Fur Company were probably the first white men to see the Silverton area. They are believed to have followed the beaver up the creeks and eventually discovered Silver Falls.</p> <p><b>1865:</b> The Silverton Fire, the largest known in Oregon's history, burned a million acres including the Silver Falls area.</p> <p><b>1882:</b> April 20: Patent issued to W.T. Eaton, one of the first settlers on record in the Falls area, for 160 acres near South Falls.</p> <p><b>1886:</b> A forest fire destroyed a large part of the forest on lands that would become Silver Falls State Park.</p> <p><b>1888:</b> March 16: The plat map for Silver Falls City was filed with Marion County for the Eaton land, which had been purchased by T.C. Smith. Herbert Hoover is believed to have been on the surveying crew.</p> <p><b>1899:</b> A church was built in Silver Falls City and became the center of community activities.</p> <p><b>1900:</b> Silverton photographer, June Drake, began advocating for the establishment of Silver Falls as a national park.</p> <p><b>1925:</b> September: A destructive forest fire raged near and at House Mountain.</p> <p><b>1926:</b> August 7: The 2,746 acres of Silver Creek Falls was proposed to the National Park Service by Senator McNary for establishment as a National Park. The proposal was rejected and the area was recommended as a state park.</p> <p><b>1928:</b> July 1: Al Faussett rode a 12-foot homemade canvas-covered canoe filled with 36 inflated inner tubes over the 177-foot South Falls and survived to tell the tale.</p> <p><b>1928:</b> Summer: South Burn, a forest fire, damaged the Silver Falls area.</p> <p><b>1931:</b> April 3: First park acquisition was 90 acres from George and Anna Parkhurst at the cost of \$2,000.</p> <p><b>1931:</b> April 30: North Falls became park property.</p> <p><b>1931:</b> October 19: South Falls became park property.</p> <p><b>1931:</b> December 3: The Highway Commission named the area "Silver Creek Falls State Park".</p> <p><b>1933:</b> July 23: Silver Falls State Park was dedicated. More than 5,000 people attended. At this time, the park was comprised of 1,268 acres.</p> <p><b>1934:</b> December 15: Emergency Conservation Work Organization crew commenced work at Silver Falls.</p> | <p><b>1934:</b> December 31: Federal government established a Recreational Demonstration Area near Silver Falls.</p> <p><b>1935:</b> March: The Oregon State Highway Commission signed an agreement with the National Park Service and the US Army to create a master plan with designs and construction drawings for Silver Creek Falls State Park. They also agreed to establish a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program at the park.</p> <p><b>1935:</b> March 30: CCC Camp was established near North Falls.</p> <p><b>1935:</b> Silver Creek Falls State Park was again reviewed and rejected as a National Park.</p> <p><b>1935:</b> March: Oregon State Highway Commission signed agreement with NPS and the US Army to create a master plan for Silver Creek Falls State Park and to establish a CCC program at the park.</p> <p><b>1936:</b> Latrine constructed behind Log Cabin. (Fulton, 1998)</p> <p><b>1937:</b> CCC Combination Building completed.</p> <p><b>1938:</b> September 17: Parks purchased 50 acres on which Silver Falls City was located.</p> <p><b>1938:</b> Silver Creek Youth Camp, a boys' camp, was created.</p> <p><b>1938:</b> Log Cabin built. (This building is now occupied by the Friends of Silver Falls Nature Store.)</p> <p><b>1939 – 40:</b> South Falls Lodge was constructed.</p> <p><b>1940:</b> Smith Creek Camp, for girls, was completed.</p> <p><b>1940:</b> Myrtlewood furniture of Concession Building (now called the South Falls Lodge) designed by Margery Hoffman Smith, director of Oregon Art Project under the Federal Works Agency. Smith also designed furniture for Timberline Lodge at Mount Hood, Oregon.</p> <p><b>1942:</b> April: CCC Camp closed.</p> <p><b>1942:</b> December 5: CCC Camp buildings at North Falls were transferred to the State and remodeled for use as a Youth Camp.</p> <p><b>1944:</b> Myrtlewood furniture installed in Lodge. This furniture remains.</p> <p><b>1946:</b> The Salem YMCA was granted an ongoing cooperative agreement to operate Silver Creek Youth Camp by the National Park Service. This agreement continues to the present time. (Armstrong, 1965)</p> <p><b>1946:</b> May 27: Nohgren's Restaurant opened in the Concession Building (the South Falls Lodge.)</p> |
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- 1947 – 49:** National Park Service deeded 5,989.58 (6,305?) acres to the State restricted to Park and Recreational use only. The Highway Commission paid \$1 an acre.
- 1951:** Overnight camp was constructed. Samuel Boardman succeeded as State Park Superintendent by Chester Armstrong. (Langille, 1953)
- 1952:** Attendance totaled 242,742 day visitors.
- 1953:** Davidsons' barn was altered to "The Ranch."
- 1955:** Conservative Baptist Association agreed to construct a pool at North Falls. (Armstrong, 1965)
- 1956:** Recreation hall built at North Falls. (Armstrong, 1965)
- 1956:** South Falls Lodge closed.
- 1956:** Salem YMCA agreed to build a swimming pool at the Silver Creek Youth Camp. (Armstrong, 1965)
- 1963:** Attendance totaled 305,560 day visitors and 12,797 overnight stays. (Armstrong, 1965)
- 1972:** A swimming area and other day use area improvements were added. (Proposed in original NPS master plan of 1940.)
- 1972:** New Ranch built.
- 1973:** Four-mile bicycle trail constructed.
- 1977:** Mother's Day: Park volunteer Blanche Sweger founds the first annual Mother's Day Wildflower Show.
- 1977 – 80:** Conference Center was constructed at the site of the declining Smith Creek Camp.
- 1978:** South Falls Lodge reopened after being restored as a visitor and nature center.
- 1978:** December: The first Christmas Festival held in the South Falls Lodge.
- 1982:** Updated Silver Falls Master Plan completed.
- 1983:** 9 acre area including the historic Silver Falls Lodge and South Falls viewpoint listed by the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1984:** The late Leo Cieslak bequeathed 160 acres.
- 1985:** The 1249th Engineer Battalion of the Oregon National Guard completed several projects including the construction a new vehicle bridge and camp loop road (B-Loop), new jogging trail, two playgrounds, and several new buildings in the shop maintenance complex.
- 1986:** The Friends of Silver Falls State Park founded as a non-profit organization with the mission to support the park.
- 1988:** Campground B-Loop completed.
- 1990:** January 1: Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department became independent agency; separate from Oregon State Highway Department—later to become Oregon Department of Transportation.
- 1992:** Updated Silver Falls Master Plan completed.
- 1992:** Mother's Day: Friends of Silver Falls State Park opens the Nature Store in the South Falls Lodge.
- 1994:** Silver Creek Canyon Trail listed on the Register of National Recreation Trail in perpetuity. (Letter from Secretary of the Interior, July 15, 1994)
- 1996:** A one hundred-year flood early in the year takes out two bridges on the "Trail of Ten Falls."
- 1998:** Paver path project in South Falls Day use began.
- 1998 – 99:** Cabin Loop cabins constructed.
- 1998 – 99:** Lodge restoration.
- 1999:** Picnic Shelters rebuilt.
- 2000:** July: Covered bridge connecting Campground and Cabin Loop completed.
- 2001:** South Falls View Point reconfigured.
- 2003:** New playground installed in Campground B Loop.
- 2003:** Restoration of the Lodge garage complete.
- 2005:** Restoration of the CCC Combination Building begun.
- 2006:** Oregon Parks and Recreation Department purchased 2 parcels of land totaling 365 acres from the DeSantis family, bringing the total acreage to 9,064.
- 2008:** CCC Combination Building rededicated.
- 2008:** In January 2008, Fred Girod of the Oregon House of Representatives sought federal designation of Silver Falls State Park as a national park via a house joint memorial to the United States Congress. The bill died in committee.
- 2009:** Updated Silver Falls Master Plan completed.
- 2009:** July 13: Grand opening of the Nature Store in the retrofitted CCC Log Cabin.
- 2010:** Cell tower erected in the Silver Falls forest.
- 2010:** Natural Play Area at North Falls Group Camp begun.
- 2010:** Phase 1 of the Interpretive Plan begun. Includes panels at the Combination Building; kiosks at North Falls, South Falls, and South View Point; and panels at access points of the South Falls Historic District.

**NOTE:** *This document is a work in progress and is currently in draft form. Footnotes need to be added and dates cross-referenced. Construction and building dates may reflect the beginning, middle, or end of a project—most projects span more than one year.*