

VISTA HOUSE VIEWS

FRIENDS OF VISTA HOUSE NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2024



The Views will present articles on the Vista House (VH), Columbia Gorge, and surrounding scenic sites, with historical narratives and present-day events. This newsletter includes:

- Spotlight on FOVH Coordinator
- Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon
- Pika's Recovery
- VH Stone Mason
- Shepperd's Dell History
- Perfect storms of 1916
- Latourell Falls Update (OPRD)

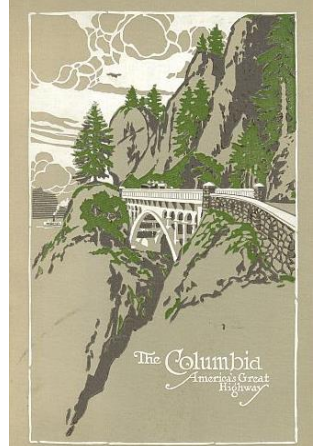
Spotlight:

Teacher to Vista House Coordinator

Katy Fontneau has been the **Interpretive Volunteer Coordinator** with Friends of Vista House (FOVH), since March 2023. After teaching children for many years, her focus shifted to outdoor education which led her to the Oregon State Parks (OPRD). In 2022, she began working with OPRD at state parks along the Columbia River Gorge and learned a lot about the history of the area. While working at Vista House (VH), the interpretive stories captivated her curiosity. Her background in education, along with her experience working in the parks, was a great combination.



Katy Fontneau/FOVH
Volunteer Coordinator



VISTA HOUSE HOURS

Hours can be flexible depending on various factors

For the most up-to-date information check:

Our Website:

VistaHouse.com

Our Facebook Page

[Friends of Vista House](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfVistaHouse)

Gift Shop/Café have same hours as VH.

She has contributed to FOVH in many ways as the Interpretive Volunteer Coordinator. In this role, she recruits, trains, schedules, and manages the FOVH volunteers in the following areas supporting the VH:

- Interpretive desk - staffing inside the VH rotunda
- Bi-annual 'Vista House Views' newsletter
- VH library - care and upkeep
- Dress in costume for different time periods to tell the stories of VH
- Holidays at VH – celebrate events and dress for the occasion.
- VH annual birthday on May 5th – celebrate events

Continued on page 8



The Friends of Vista House - Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

The Friends of Vista House (FOVH) invited volunteers (with 15+ yearly hrs.) to an Appreciation Luncheon to celebrate a successful 2023 season. The luncheon was on Saturday, October 21st at McMenamins Edgefield main lodge in Troutdale.

The FOVH celebrated the volunteers with t-shirts and black Basalt chips with 2023 in gold paint. Several volunteers wore vintage clothes. John Dibona, stone mason, educated us on his background and masonry work at Vista House and Columbia River Highway. Volunteers were encouraged to explore the beautiful grounds, the hotel lodge, and the gardens.

A former 'poor farm' the 74-acre property has a winery, distillery, and brewery. To complete the experience, Edgefield has restaurants, soaking pool, spa, golf, theater, and concert venue. From almost every wall and nook there are original paintings and historical photographs. A point of interest is the Lodge (1911) was built the same decade as the Vista House (1918). For more information, visit their website:

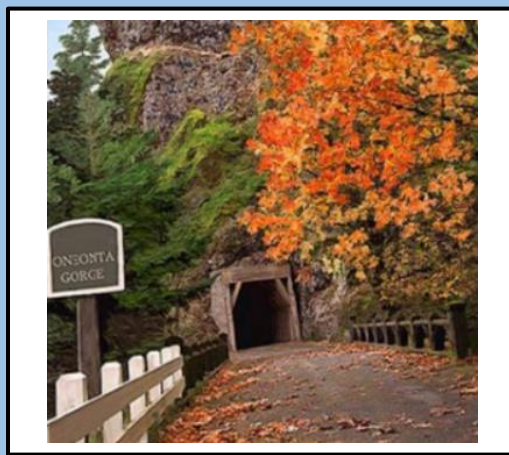
[Mcmenamins.com/Edgefield](https://mcmenamins.com/Edgefield)



McMenamins Edgefield Lodge



The Oneonta Tunnel – Restoration



The 125-foot Oneonta Tunnel was originally opened in 1914 as part of the Historic Columbia River Highway. In 1948, ODOT redirected traffic around the tunnel and filled it with rubble. In 2009, ODOT restored it for bicycle and pedestrian use. The Oneonta Tunnel was closed for almost four years after the tunnel wood lining was burned and badly damaged in the **2017 Eagle Creek fire**. In 2021, the tunnel was opened once again for biking and walking.

Pika recovery after 2017 Eagle Creek fire

from Oregon Zoo website, Nov 8, 2023



One of the mammals found in the Columbia River Gorge (CRG) is the American Pika. They typically live on mountain slopes above 6,000 feet, but a low-elevation population is living at the Columbia River Gorge. A pika is a small, mountain-dwelling [mammal](#) native to Asia and North America. With short limbs, a potato-sized body, an even coat of fur, and no external tail. They resemble their close relative, the [rabbit](#), but with short, rounded ears. They are about 6 to 9 inches in body length and weigh between 4 and 12 oz. Pikas adjust their body temperature by changing their posture. Two common body postures are “puff” and “loungue”. Pikas are known for a distinctive, squeak-toy-like call.



Squeak! The pika population in the CRG is making a strong comeback six years after the Eagle Creek Fire burned much of their habitat in 2017. The fire was started on September 2, 2017, lasted three months, and burned 50,000 acres. Over the past five years, biologists have been especially eager to track how pikas are faring in areas most affected by the Eagle Creek fire. Recently conservationists were relieved to learn the fluffy American Pika — is recovering.

Each summer, volunteers from Cascades Pika Watch — a collaboration of organizations and researchers convened by the Oregon Zoo — head into the field with binoculars and GPS units to stake out pika hot spots, record their locations, and listen for the telltale squeak. They upload their data to a website where it’s analyzed by biologists to better understand where pikas live and whether their range is shifting. Because they are small and blend in so well with their rocky habitat, they can be hard to find.” In 2023, volunteers reported pikas at **23 out of 31** sites surveyed, an increase of more than 50% since 2018. Visit Cascade Watch Facebook page for pictures:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CascadesPikaWatch/>

Advice from a Pika: Be alert, Voice your opinion, Save for the future, Sometimes we have to squeak by, Spend time in the mountains, Catch a few winks.
By: Your True Nature 2011



Spotlight: Vista House Stone Mason

John DiBona was born and raised in Rochester, NY and became fascinated with masonry at the age of 15. Stone masonry is the craft of shaping and arranging stones, often together with mortar, to wall or cover a formed structure. It is one of the oldest professions in human history. The following events led him to become a stone mason.

- A Sicilian stonemason asked him to be a laborer in the summers when he was 15. One day he let John chisel a stone, and he “thought opening the stone with the tools was so cool. There was something gratifying about it; the sound, the smell, and the textures.”
- In college, John worked with a landscape company in Lake Placid, NY, and helped install a beautiful set of steps at an Adirondack camp belonging to the Rockefeller’s.
- After college, he worked with two different companies in Baltimore MD - Dominic Petrucci, and Antony Buscemi. They put him on the back walls of several very large projects, and eventually let him cut architectural pieces for windows, archways, and columns. John learned “a lot from these guys, and they got a lot of work out of him. It was a good exchange.”

John DiBona, Stone Mason



By Katy Fontneau

Vista House Stone Mason Work



By Katy Fontneau

John moved to Portland in 2004 where he started his own business. He does general contracting work specializing in historic stone masonry restoration. They bid on public projects and have contracted with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), U.S. Forest Service, Oregon State Parks, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). They have done commercial and residential projects in the greater Portland area, and throughout Oregon.

He has worked at the Vista House and along the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) for about 6 years. Most of his work in the HCRH is restoring archways along the highway and these are his favorite projects. The HCRH “is such a breathtaking jobsite, and so amazing to restore all of the beautiful work our ancestors created. There are stonework style variations, so it is intriguing to dismantle and reassemble. They learn something new about how each craftsman “*dress the stone*” whether it be deep, pointed, flattened faces, or pitched, blocky, wild, or pillowy faces.”

Stone work along Italy bridges



The work done along Italy highways, i.e. arched bridges, and the patterning of their stonework, is very similar to what John does here in the gorge.



Example of a Bridge Abutment, near Corbett



Carol Highsmith Collection.

Readers: Filtered through the Views are articles on the impact 2017 Eagle Creek Wildfire had on the Columbia River Gorge wildlife (Pika) and scenic wonders (Shepperd Dell's and Oneonta Gorge Tunnel). Fortunately, 4 to 6 years later, we are seeing recovery or restoration, with little permanent damage other than lost trees.



In the HCRH, he has worked on the Vista House, various viewpoints, **Eagle Creek** trailhead, building **abutments** for new trail bridges, and **Oneonta Gorge tunnel**. At present, a team is working at Multnomah Falls restoring a 65-foot section of pedestrian arched railing. They will then plan for a project at Timothy Lake in the Mt Hood National Forest with the US Forest Service. In March, he will be do a restoration project on the Historic Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad near Garibaldi for ODOT.

Incredible Family History:

Later in John's career, he learned his father's family had deep-rooted stone masonry in their blood. His grandfather Carmine DiBona came from San Donato Val de Camino, Italy which was in the foothills of the Apennines Mtns. He fled from Fascism and arrived in Boston with his stone mason skills.

John learned his Italian ancestors were ranked as "master stonemasons in the Vatican stonecutter shops", and led the training of other stone carvers. In 2022, he travelled to Italy and documented all of his ancestors' projects. He actually was able to hold their tools stored in a local museum. For John it was an incredible experience to make those connections. John will continue this trade, and if his kids are interested, he will give them a great opportunity to carry on the trade.



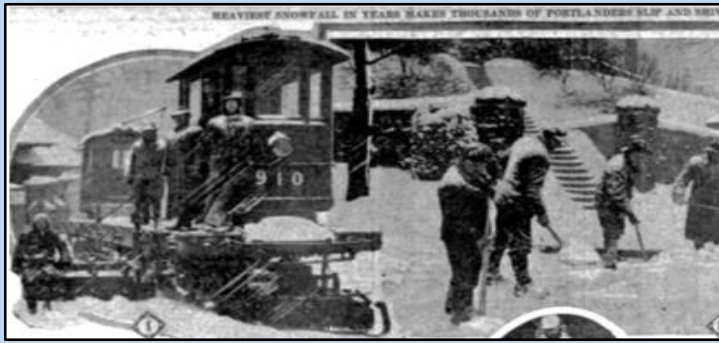
Apennines are a **mountain range** consisting of parallel smaller chains extending 750 mi down the length of the **peninsular** of Italy.

Stone Mason's - Tools of Their Trade





The Perfect Storms of 1916



The Oregonian, January 13, 1916 Source: Historic Oregon Newspapers

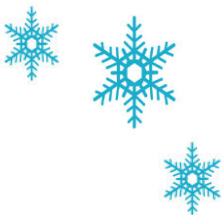
Multnomah County experienced three horrific snowstorms back-to-back in January 1916.

Snow began falling at 6 pm on New Year's Eve, the day before Oregon's Prohibition Law took effect. The storms lasted 37 days, temperatures reached 18 degrees below zero, and left over 63 inches of snow

- The first storm started on Dec 31 and was over by Jan 9. Few could imagine snow conditions would last for over a month.

The Jan 7 Oregon Journal printed wax poetic phrases: *"The ermine mantle bedecked alike mansion and lowly roof; unsightly gullies were transformed into places of beauty."*

- On Jan 11th, the second storm began, and brought temps down to 18 degrees, howling winds, and snow from 8 inch with drifts of 6 ft. No poetic phrases were printed with this storm. Throughout the days, men with mechanical snow brooms and scrapers were needed to keep the streetcars running.
- The third storm started on Jan 24, with four days of near blizzard conditions, leaving 33 ft of snow fallen since Jan 1.
- The night of Feb 1-2, warm rains falls on frozen surfaces, encasing everything in ice.



Crown Point Historical Articles – 1916

"(She) Walked over Drifts from Crown Poin

Snowbound at Crown Point Chalet on the Columbia River Highway for the last 10 days, Mrs. M.E. Henderson, proprietress, came to Portland because her supply of fuel had run out. Accompanied by a 5-year-old girl and Chalet caretaker, she left the Chalet at 11 o'clock am and walked to Corbett over snow drifts, some of them as much as 15 feet deep, arriving in Portland at 9 o'clock pm. Mrs. Henderson reports the highway was absolutely impassible."

The Oregon Journal 2/7/1916

In a follow-up news article Mrs. Henderson was quoted: "A emergency exists for families living in the vicinity of Crown Point. In the name of humanity something must be done. The opening of one road will relieve the situation, and permit provisions to get gotten to the people. You people in Portland know nothing of winter compared to what we experience. One man was blown off his feet when trying to get firewood" *The Oregonian 2/8/1916*



Mrs. M.E. Henderson



Shepperd's Dell – A Permanent Playground

Shepperd's Dell is a small canyon located in the [Columbia River Gorge](#) about one-third mile east of Rooster Rock State Park, and it has an interesting history. The Lewis and Clark expedition considered Shepperd's Dell to be the "Head of the Columbia valley". The men camped there for two days in 1806.

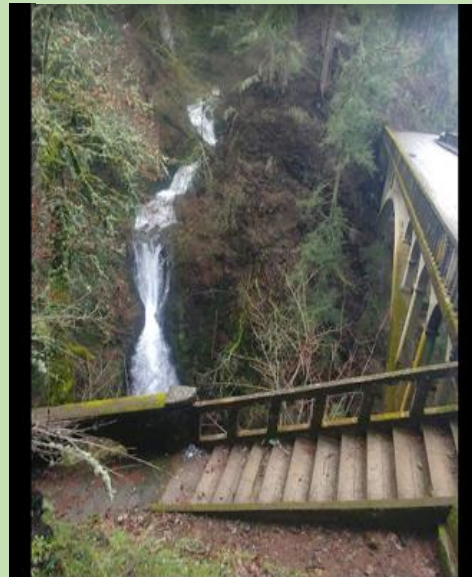


1910s view of the west approach to Shepperd's Dell with the big fir rising in front of Bishops Cap



George Shepperd acquired a quarter section of land (~11 acres of land) around 1912, which included the famous dell. The land had a wooded canyon, two waterfalls, and a series of rocky pinnacles rising to 600 feet above the Columbia River. "Dell" refers to a grassy hallow, partially covered with trees. Shepperd's Dell was carved by Young's Creek which included two fairly substantial cascading waterfalls.

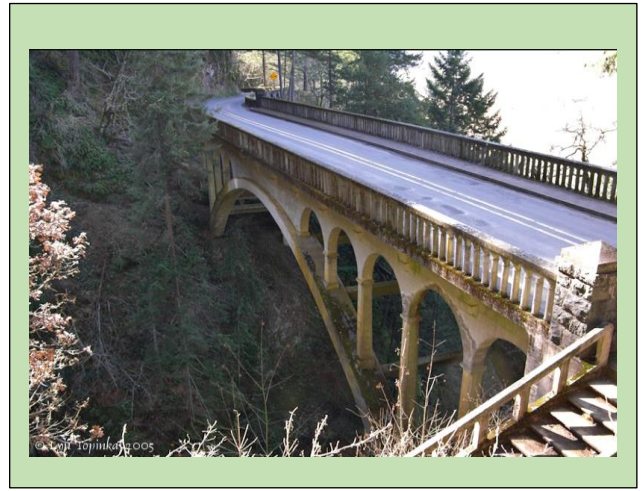
To Mr. Shepperd, the Dell had a sentimental as well as a scenic value and he donated it in memory to his wife. They lived in a little cottage not far from the dell and, would go to there on Sundays and sit, entranced at the awe-inspiring scenery. Through George Sheppard's generosity, "Shepperd's Dell was presented to the people of Portland, as a permanent playground" (*Sunday Oregonian*, 5/9/15), and the area's natural beauty has been protected and undisturbed. He was not a rich man, and his donation is considered the more noble. He could have sold the property for more than \$10,000.



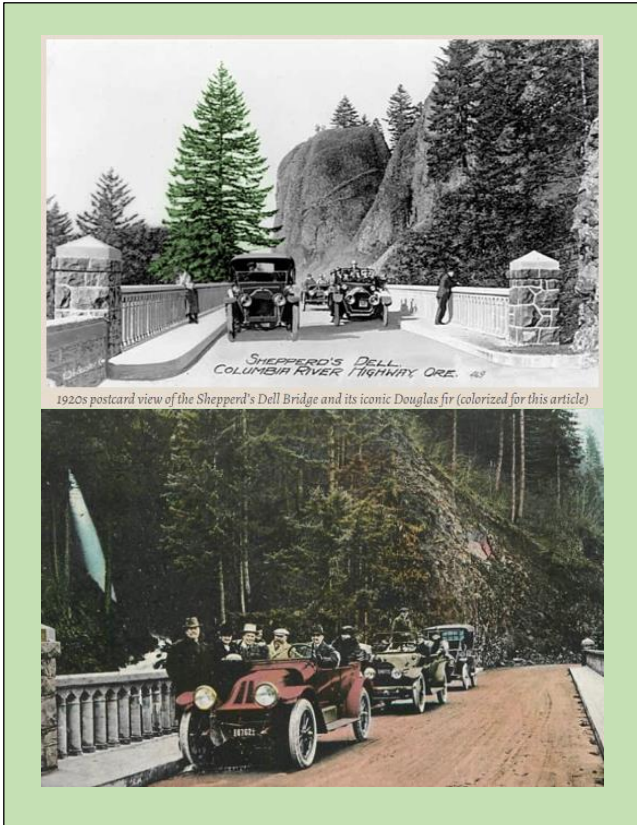
The short hike follows a trail downhill to an overlook of the waterfalls. On this hike you get an outstanding view of the old original bridge built over Young's Creek.

Shepperd's Dell Bridge: The [Historic Columbia River Highway](#) (HCRH) runs over the Dell on a bridge that was a challenge for the engineers constructing the highway. The Shepperd's Dell Bridge was built in 1914 and spans [Young Creek](#). The bridge has a graceful reinforced concrete deck with a main arch span of 100 feet and consists of two parabolic arch ribs with open spandrels. The Shepperd's Dell Bridge was built at a cost of \$10,800. It included a stairwell and trail to the Shepperd's Dell Falls at the east end of the bridge. It was designed by K.R. Billner under the supervision of Samuel C. Lancaster, an engineer and landscape architect, renowned for his work on the Columbia River Highway.

Due to the topography of the area, photographing the falls is difficult. As such, the bridge was normally pictured, and in the 1900's automobile were frequently seen, as people were proud to show off their cars. Shepperd's Dell Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

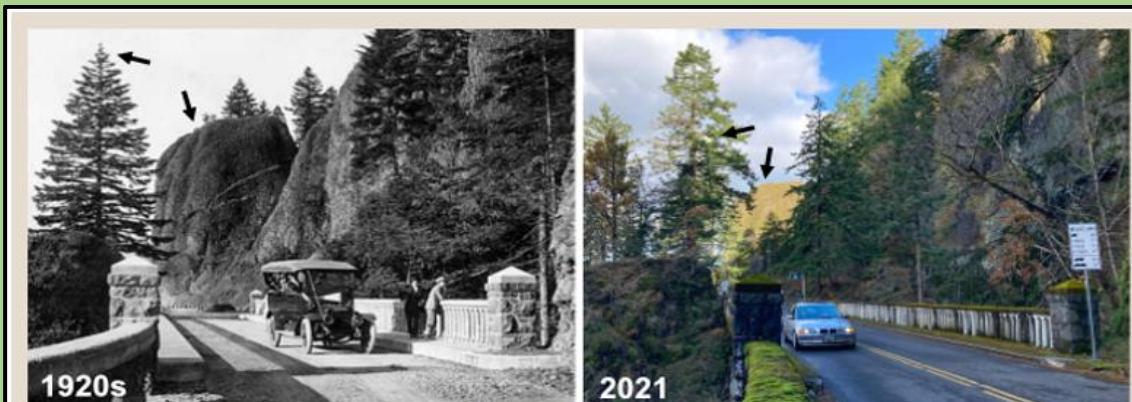
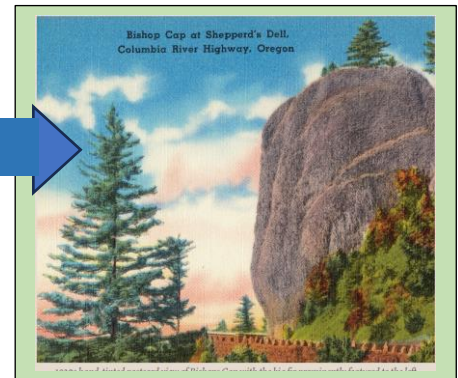


Bishop's Cap Upstream of the bridge lies Bishop's Cap, a spectacular basalt feature on the side of the Historic highway. The construction of the HCRH was famously designed to blend with nature and follow the contours of the land. This still required road engineer, Samuel Lancaster, to do some heavy blasting and grading to complete the scenic route. To enable the two-lane highway at Shepperd's Dell, he blasted portions of the Bishop's Cap, and clearly took care to protect the big fir trees from debris.



Big Douglas Fir: Since Samuel Lancaster built his iconic highway, the Big Fir at Shepperd's Dell has thrived for over a century and it is now 150+ years old. The two pictures below show the growth of the Big Fir, as compared to Bishop's Cap. The arrows provide reference points on Bishop's Cap and shows how much the old fir has grown over the century (1920 to 2021). The Big Fir survived the 2017 fire but just barely.

What does the future hold for the Big Fir? The old tree has less competition for water and nutrients from nearby trees that succumbed to the 2017 fire. It has an excellent location and is surrounded by cliffs to buffer it from the perpetual gorge winds. So it is up to us to give it respect and space to grow in the area Sam Lancaster provided, thus allowing many future generations to enjoy seeing the old survivor.



A century passed between these views, but the big fir remains and has grown noticeably larger — the 2021 view is somewhat wider than the 1920s view to fully capture the big fir!

Welcome to the Vista House:



Welcome Diane and Helen Ware, who are new volunteers at the VH Interpretive Desk on Crown Point. Their grins are infectious as they greet the many visitors from afar and close to home.

Spotlight: Continued from Page One

Further, Katy works with the Interpretive Ranger in the Gorge to provide programs and materials to help tell the VH stories to visitors. She communicates vital information with the public:

- Post alerts on VH closure due to adverse weather conditions
- Provide details on special events
- Tells the history of VH and answer questions
- Schedules groups with the OPRD rangers

When Katy is not hanging out with the amazing FOVH volunteers, she tends her flock of 'barnyard mix' chickens with the help of her big kids, or enjoying nature somewhere in the scenic Columbia River Gorge.



Vista House Views
Friends of the Vista House
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Board of Directors
Elections held in March

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Volunteer@vistahouse.com

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Vista House on
INSTAGRAM

[Vista House at Crown Point](https://www.instagram.com/vistahouse)

Interested in Volunteering?

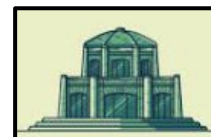


Do you want to meet lots of people, have special skills, or share in Oregon's history? If so, join our fantastic group - Friends of Vista House (FOVH) volunteers. This group makes Vista House a memorable place to visit and work. Think of joining us in 2024 and help support Oregon's most beloved and cherished icon.

Volunteer tasks include: Interpretive Desk, Board of Directors, costumes, newsletter, library, decorating and celebrating events during the year.

Volunteer update meetings are scheduled for March 21 and April 13 at 10 am at Corbett Community Firehall, 36930 East Historic Columbia River Hwy, Corbett, OR 97019. They will learn more about Interpretation from the Oregon Park Ranger friends.

For details or questions on volunteering, please email Volunteer@vistahouse.com or call (503) 344-1368.



OREGON STATE PARKS CORNER:

Friends of Vista House has worked in partnership with [Oregon Parks & Rec Department \(OPRD\)](#) since 1982. OPRD is proud to partner with Friends of Vista House to provide access to this unique treasure.



OPRD Update: by Miranda Mendoza. Interpretive Park Ranger

Just like that, winter is almost over.....or at least it is supposed to be. Despite the cold weather, park staff are working to get the parks cleaned up and ready for summer visitors.

OPRD is gearing up for Summer Programs, guided hikes, school groups, and other events both at Vista House and throughout the Columbia Gorge.

Starting Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, we anticipate interpretive OPRD rangers will be at Vista House a few hours on the weekends. We look to share stories and information about the Vista House and Crown Point with visitors.

On May 5th, the Vista House's will celebrate its 106th birthday and OPRD will join in the festivities.



Volunteers: Thank you for all you do to keep the doors open for our visitors; we couldn't do it without you!

We are look forward to seeing and connecting with **volunteers** at the upcoming orientations in March and April (see pg. 9), and "Save the Date" on September 8th when we will host the OPRD **Volunteer** Appreciation Picnic at the Cascade Locks Pavilion in Marine Park. Details and time will be forwarded closer to September.

OPRD looks forward to seeing everyone at the Vista House.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

vistahouse.com

New features are continually added.

- See spectacular pictures of the **Vista House (VH)** and gorge at each section.
- Log on and you will immediately see when and if the VH is open.
- Learn interesting historic information on the VH.
- Check Weather Watch for real time updates on temperature and wind at the VH.
- Learn about volunteer opportunities with Friends of VH.
- Make a secure donation.



Latourell is unique among the Columbia Gorge waterfalls, in the way it drops straight down from an overhanging basalt cliff.

HIKER NOTICE: On 11/13/2023 the Latourell trail and parking area was closed for the replacement of two bridges and the construction of steps to a viewpoint along the trail. The duration of the closure is weather-dependent, and OPRD does not have an expected reopening date. **2/17/24 Update:** The stairs to the viewpoint are being working on at this time.

Benefits to Friends of Vista House: Link your Fred Meyer Loyalty account to Friends of Vista House, and for every purchase, **Fred Meyer (FM)** will donate to the Friends of Vista House. If you don't have a FM account, you can create one at [Fred Meyer.com](http://FredMeyer.com). Then go to My Account -> Community Rewards -> search for "Friends of Vista House" -> Select.



Participants must swipe their FM rewards card or use the phone number related to their FM rewards card when shopping for each purchase to count. Note: Your FM rewards card or registered phone number is linked to the FM loyalty account. Thank you for supporting Friends of Vista House.

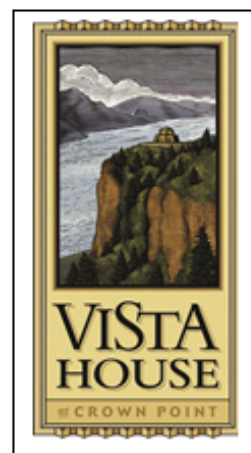
Help support Friends of Vista House (FOVH)

FOVH volunteers contribute thousands of hours annually welcoming visitors and telling the history of the Vista House and its place in Oregon history. FOVH works in partnership with Oregon Parks & Recreation Department to provide educational and interpretive services to the public, and help improve, restore, and maintain Vista House for all to enjoy for generations to come. FOVH is a private non-profit organization with tax exempt status 501(c)(3).

“Help support Oregon's most beloved and cherished icon”.

Your tax-deductible contributions support FOVH educational and volunteer services for Vista House.

Donations can be made by check, credit card, and/or to make a secure donation on-line go to: vistahouse.com.



For check or credit card complete the form below:

Today's Date: _____

____ One time Donation: _____

____ Annual Donation: _____

____ Monthly via credit card: \$ _____ (example \$15.00)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

VISA ~ Mastercard ~ Am Ex: Amount: \$ _____

Name on Card: _____

Card Number: _____ Exp Date: (mm/yy) _____

Security Code (xxx): _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Make out check to: **Friends of Vista House**

Mail form w/check or credit card information to: **Friends of Vista House,
PO Box 204,
Corbett, OR 97019**

Interested in Volunteering: Call (503) 344-1368 or email: volunteer@vistahouse.com

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