



### BEACON ROCK STATE PARK

Beacon Rock State Park is located in the gorge of the mighty Columbia River 35 miles east of Vancouver, Washington on Highway 830. This park is one of the large system of Washington State Parks. Beacon Rock is a recreation heritage site on the Columbia River that affords a multitude of interests to the camper, historian, explorer, photographer, boater and the picnicker.



## BEACON ROCK STATE PARK

On the highway at the foot of the 848 foot rock can be found a heritage marker telling of the famous explorers, Captains Lewis and Clark. The point of interest relates how the expedition camped here in November of 1805 on their route from St. Louis, Missouri to the Pacific Ocean.

Established as a state park in 1935, Beacon Rock now contains 4,051 acres of wilderness recreation area with modern campgrounds just a short distance from Highway 830. A boat moorage on the Columbia is located 1/2 mile west of the Rock.

There is no record of a successful ascent of Beacon Rock until 1901. Henry J. Biddle built the original trail over a two-year period from 1916-18 after purchasing the rock for this express purpose. The trail is 4500 feet long with a fifteen per cent grade and recent repair of its many hand-rail-protected bridges makes the climb to the top brisk but safe.

At one time some commercial interests attempted to purchase this huge rock for quarrying purposes. Most people who visit this fine state park agree it is now serving much better as a public recreational area.

## GEOLOGICAL ORIGIN OF BEACON ROCK

Beacon Rock is a remnant of either a northsouth trending andesite dike or it is the southernmost of a series of volcanic necks. If it is a volcanic neck, it is the core or rockfilled vent of a pre-existent volcano that was similar in origin to the Cascade Mountain Volcanoes.

Situated as it is, adjacent to the Columbia River, it was easily eroded leaving only the more resistant homogeneous rock, that had solidified in the core, standing as a solitary sentinel alongside the river. The age of the rock is difficult to determine but likely was emplaced

## GEOLOGICAL ORIGIN - continued

not much more than 1 million years ago during Pliocene time. It appears to have developed since the Columbia established its present course.

## THE INDIAN NAME FOR BEACON ROCK

The Indian name for the massive monolith, now known as Beacon Rock, was "Che-che-op-tin," but the meaning has been lost in the dim ages of time.

Indians descending the last of the Cascade Rapids in their dugouts (where Bonneville Dam now stands) knew there were no more obstructions in the river. They had reached tidewater with the Pacific Ocean only 150 miles to the west.

Thus it was a beacon to early explorers, to trappers and to the French voyageurs who came down the Columbia by canoe and bateaux...and to the Oregon Trail pioneers who built rafts at The Dalles, portaged around Celilo Falls (where The Dalles Dam now stands) and sought the end of their long journey to the great Pacific Northwest.

For many years the Rock was known as Castle Rock but the Board of National Geographic Names decided in favor of the name Lewis and Clark bestowed upon it in 1805... Beacon Rock. Even tugboat and barge men who traverse the Columbia in modern day commerce agree this famous landmark serves them as a beacon.

## INDIAN LEGEND

The legend of Beacon Rock still fascinates.... A long time ago, the story goes, Princess Wehatpolitan climbed to the crest of the rock with her infant son to save him from death at the hands of her angry father who had already caused the death of her husband because he had not approved of the marriage. Neither mother nor the



## INDIAN LEGEND - continued

baby were ever seen again although the pitiful crying of the tiny infant could be heard at the summit for days... says the legend.

Even now, if you listen closely, the Indians claim you can still hear the wailing of Wehatpolitan's papoose on top of Beacon Rock.

## LEWIS AND CLARK SLEPT HERE

The first white men to view this great pillar of stone were members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. They camped at its base in November of 1805.

Later in 1811, Alexander Ross, noted fur trader with the John Jacob Astor Expedition, called the rock Inshoach Castle....which may have led to its having been known as "Castle Rock" for the next one-hundred years, as mentioned elsewhere in this folder.

## YACOLT BURN

The Beacon Rock area has been struck by several disastrous fires but the most famous holocaust was the Yacolt Fire of September, 1902.

There had been the usual fires about the countryside that fateful autumn....loggers burning slash and brush... but no one thought them unusual. Then some caprice of the wind currents suddenly combined the fires into a vast hurricane of flame that swept up the ridges and down the valleys with a mad fury.

Countless numbers of wildlife, dozens of head of livestock and what was even more tragic, thirty-five human lives were lost during the next few days. Some 238,000 acres of forest land containing 12 billion board feet of timber burned over to darken Pacific Northwest skies

## YACOLT BURN - continued

for hundreds of square miles, raining ashes upon cities and towns, hindering navigation on inland waters and causing the chickens to go to roost at noon.

REHABILITATION of the Yacolt Burn has been almost as dramatic as its original devastation. Seven or eight times the area has been burned again to destroy the efforts of reforestation. Badly damaged soil, drying east winds, lack of fire control all combined to frustrate the foresters who sought to rehabilitate the area.

Now modern replanting methods and advances in fire control have produced a new green forest to blanket the area lying north of Beacon Rock.

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission played an important role in the rehabilitation and reforestation of the 2500 acres of the burn area which was located within the boundaries of Beacon Rock State Park. Their program started in 1951. Possibly in the future the ten miles of fire protection roads that were established will be used for horseback riding trails and nature study trips.

## TRAILS TO ADVENTURE

Beacon Rock is more than a big hunk of rock (second largest monolith in the world....Gibraltar is first) setting beside the Columbia River. It is trails, falls and Indian legends. It is spectacular viewpoints, camp grounds and boat moorages. A climb to the summit of Beacon Rock brings its own rewards - both to the rock-hound and to the camera buff. As a viewpoint it is unequalled. The Columbia Gorge spreads its panorama of river, islands, frowning basaltic bluffs and the \$28 million worth of Bonneville Dam...first to dam the Columbia for hydro-power...and The Cascade Mountains of both Oregon and Washington.



In geological study of the top of Beacon Rock the rockhound will find evidence that it was the cooling surface of the molten rock of the volcano with bubble-like holes. On the south and southwest sides of the rock the contact between andesite of the volcanic neck and the older sedimentary rocks of the Eagle Creek formation can be observed.

The Falls of Rodney and Hardy both add to the enjoyment of a visit to this state park. Rodney Falls is about one and one-half miles from the camping area, cascading down a rocky hillside in leaps and bounds. The upper cascade crashes into a chasm which has the romantic name "Pool of the Winds," and here the Indians used to bathe enmasse in the cool clear water.

Hardy Falls is more inaccessible but spectacular as it drops sheerly into the canyon below. Trails to Hamilton Mountain are easily traversed on footbridges recently constructed by State Parks Youth Corps.

Here again can be seen the reforested area of Beacon Rock State Park that was a part of the Yacolt Burn.

Hadley Grove which comprises much of the forested area in which the campground is located was named for the first superintendent of Beacon Rock State Park... Clyde B. Hadley. A plaque set in a petrified stump inside the overnight camping area is in memory of Mr. Hadley.

MAP OF AREA



WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
operates and maintains Beacon Rock State Park along with  
123 other parks in the State. For further information write:  
P. O. Box 1128, Olympia, Washington 98501  
PHONE: 206 753-5761



WAS OF 1966

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th day of March, 1966, regarding the proposed acquisition of the 100-acre tract located in the vicinity of the town of ...

The Commission has reviewed the information submitted and has determined that the proposed acquisition is in the public interest and that the acquisition should be approved. The Commission has also determined that the acquisition should be subject to the following conditions: ...

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WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
Secretary and Executive Director  
For further information write:

Revised 3/66  
Washington State Parks and  
Recreation Commission