

HISTORY OF THE STRAIT OF JUAN DE FUCA HIGHWAY SR 112



PRIOR TO THE 1850s

Game trails beaten through the forest by deer and elk begin the evolution of the existing highway.

PRIOR TO THE 1850s

Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe www.elwha.org

Lower Elwha Klallam and Makah tribal members hunt along game trails. An extensive trail system is created to allow travel from the Strait-side villages to permanent upriver villages, temporary summer camps, and across the Olympic Mountains for social events. Lower Elwha Klallam tribal members ferry some settlers across the Elwha River in canoes.

Makah Tribe www.makah.org

For important information about the two tribes, visit their websites.

1850s

As settlers begin to arrive in the area, most traveling takes place on the water or along the shoreline. Slowly, trails are used to move between settlements on foot. For more information on the trading ships which serviced the communities along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, you are encouraged to visit the interpretive signs at Clallam Bay County Park.

1860s

Transporting goods and mail make it necessary to widen the trails into wagon roads from Port Angeles to the Elwha River. Clallam County hired "viewers" to decide a road's direction and petition for the road to be built. When possible, the viewers followed section lines while planning the roads.

1870s

A puncheon road is built between the Elwha River and Port Crescent. Many roads begin taking shape, but large gaps remain between communities. In the days of poll taxes, many early roads are built by citizens who pay their taxes by working with their picks, shovels and teams of horses.

FOLLOW THE ROAD →



1925

The final link of the Strait Coast Route between Twin River and Deep Creek is built, connecting the communities of Joyce and Pysht. A huge outpouring of support from throughout the County leads the push to complete this section of road.

Photo above: Merrill & Ring camp at Pysht in 1925



1915

The road is completed between Joyce and Gettysburg. Many improvements and route changes take place along the highway, up to the present time.

Photo above: First road grader in Clallam County



1914 - 1931

A railroad line is established from Port Angeles to Deep Creek by the Seattle, Port Angeles & Western Railroad; later sold in 1918 to Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad. Trains provide passenger service as well as hauling logs and cargo. During World War II, the railroad line picks up steam due to the need for spruce, used in airplane production. The railroad stops passenger service in 1931 and the line is completely abandoned in 1953.



1914

A new bridge is built and remains in place until Clallam County replaces it in 2009. The road has had many names: Coast Road, Neah Bay Road, Joyce Road, Pysht-Angeles Road and Strait Coast Route.



1913

The first bridge spanning the Elwha River is built in 1887, near the mouth of the river, but washes out in 1894. In 1900, a new bridge is built further upriver. In 1913, the concrete base of the Elwha Dam gives way and water blows out, destroying the bridge. Joe Sampson operates a ferry near the site of the destroyed bridge.



1931

A large celebration takes place in Neah Bay upon completion of the road from the Sekiu River. For the first time, residents are able to drive their cars to the outside world. As a result, steamer travel to Neah Bay comes to an end.

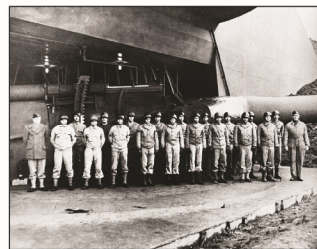
Photo above: Makah Tribe salmon bake in Neah Bay



WORLD WAR II

Armed guards patrol the Elwha Bridge and, in case of an invasion, explosives are placed on the supports should it be necessary to destroy it. The U.S. Army builds a road from the Strait Coast Route to access Camp Hayden, a Coastal Defense installation, the current location of Salt Creek Recreation Area.

Photos above: Camp Hayden



1955

In 1937, the road between Port Angeles and Sappho is added to the State Highway system as State Highway (SSH) 9A. The Burnt Mountain portion of SSH 9A (to Sappho) is dropped in 1955 and the road from Clallam Bay to Neah Bay is added.

Photo above: Aerial photo of Sekiu in 1950s.



1964

The new state highway numbering system is born and SSH 9A becomes State Route (SR) 112; the Burnt Mountain route is named SR 113. In 1967, SR 112 is designated a state scenic byway.

Photo credit: Dave Logan



1974

The eastern terminus of SR 112 moves from 8th and Lincoln Streets to its present intersection with Highway 101. The new bridge over the Elwha River is also completed at this time.

Photo credit: Dave Logan



2000

SR 112 is designated the National Scenic Byway Strait of Juan de Fuca Highway SR 112. For more information on the Byway and adjacent communities, check the website: www.highway112.org

Special thanks to the Joyce Depot Museum. Historical photos courtesy of the Clallam County Historical Society, the Bert Kellogg Collection of the North Olympic Library System, and the Juan de Fuca Scenic Byway Association.