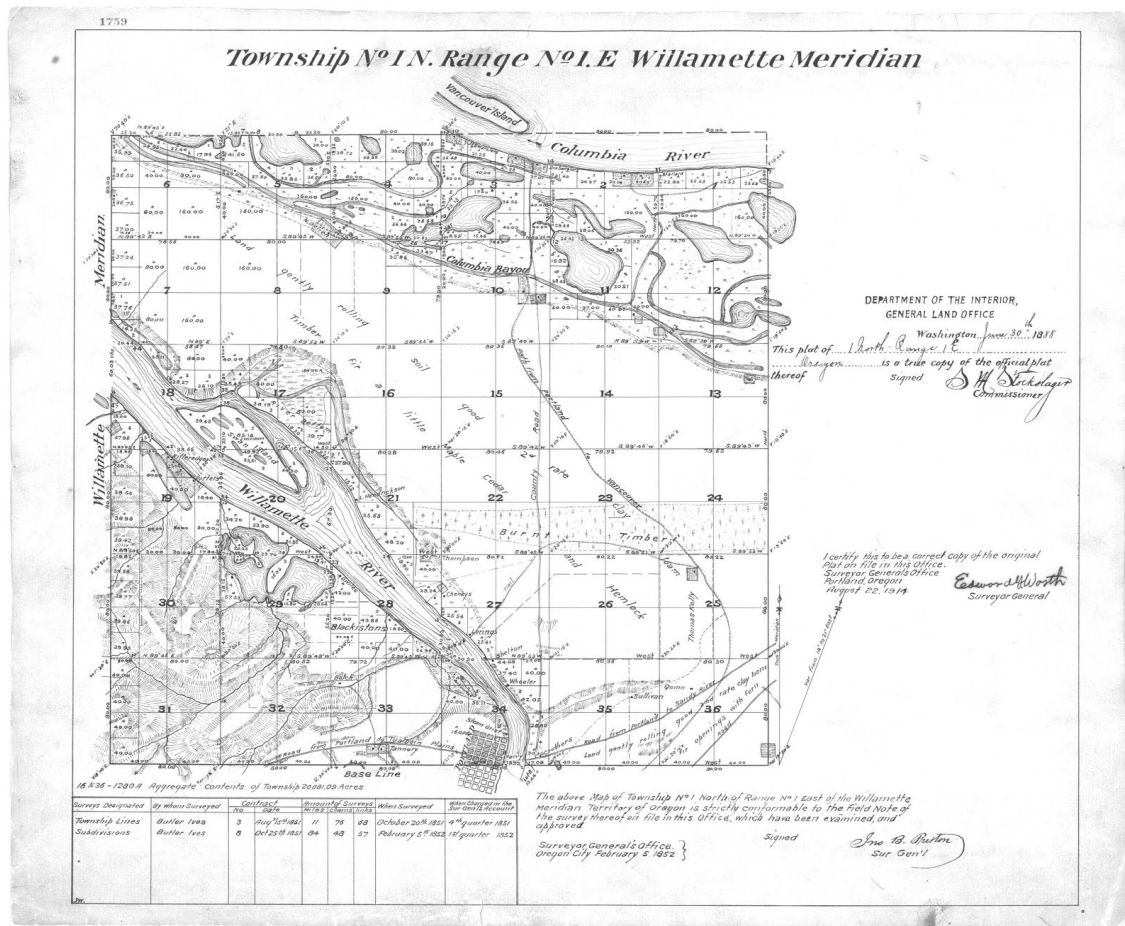


The author of this article lives and works on unceded territory of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

Streets: The Road to Vancouver

Jan de Leeuw

Version 02-20-201



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[Before Portland](#)

Before Portland

Let's start by looking at the Oregon City surveyor general's map from 1852. Portland just consisted of about 30 city blocks in what is now the South West, at the time in Washington County. On the east side of the Willamette, in what was then Clackamas County, there was basically nothing. No East Portland and no Albina. There were some developed portions of farm land, with some isolated farm houses. On the Columbia Bayou (now Columbia Slough), for example, we see two structures in some agricultural land. One of them is certainly Lewis Love's house, the other may be his mill. I need some more time to figure those out, because there is very little documentation that goes back all the way to 1852.

There are two roads or paths that go north-south. The first one is the historic "*County Road*", that starts at the eastern end point of Stephen's Ferry, which was in operation since 1848.

This vessel operated from the foot of Stark Street and was powered by a mule on a treadmill applying power to a paddlewheel. Pebbles thrown by its owner, James Stephens, urged on the mule.

The County Road goes all the way north to the slough and the Columbia River. As we indicated before, the "county: at that point in time refers to Clackamas County. Multnomah did not exist until 1854, when it was put together from pieces of Clackamas and Washington.

The second north-south road is the historic "*Path from Portland to Vancouver*", which was smaller and less developed, and takes a more circuitous route going north. It eventually winds up in pretty much the same place, crosses the Slough, and continues to the ferry that John Switzer or Switzler operated since 1846 across the Columbia River.

As for crossing the Columbia Bayou, on the map it almost looks as if the County Road has a bridge by 1852, while the smaller path could be using the ferry that Lewis Love ran between 1851 and 1856 (Query, 2008, p. 54). Again, further research will hopefully make this more clear in later versions of this chapter.

This a good place, however, to provide a link to a wonderful maptool provided by ESRI and Metro. It merges the 1852 map with a current map of Portland. By moving a spyglass over the current map you see the same section of the 1852 map, which makes it easy to match the old and the new.

<https://story.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=7cea8958740b4986905f5debf93e0c77>

This show pretty clearly that the County Road is now basically Martin Luther King Boulevard, and the Piedmont part of the Path from Portland to Vancouver is roughly where now Vancouver Boulevard is.

I have some further results on the County Road. To understand the following clipping from the *Laws of the Territory of Oregon*, 7th and 10th sessions, here are some introductory explanations. Clackamas Bridge was a wooden toll bridge over the Clackamas River in Oregon City, somewhat west of where now Interstate 205 crosses the river. It was ready in 1853, but washed away in 1856, to be replaced by steel truss bridge. Territorial roads, crossing county lines, were approved by the territorial legislature. They had to be platted, outlined, and mapped in detail, and they had to be sixty feet wide. After completion of the Clackamas Bridge it made sense to extend the territorial road north, to the Clackamas end of Stephen's Ferry opposite Portland. The law to make this extension was H. B. 48, and it was passed by the House of Representatives on January 31, 1855. For our purposes H.B. 111, passed on January 15, 1856, is more interesting. The legislature decides to extend the territorial road north along the Willamette until it merges with the County Road all the way to Switzler's Ferry on the Columbia River. That is basically the trajectory of modern Martin Luther King Boulevard, now also required to be sixty feet wide.

AN ACT to extend the Territorial Road from Clackamas Bridge by way of Milwaukie, to a point opposite the City of Portland, in Multnomah County.

- SEC. 1. Said road declared to be extended.
 2. Extension to of same width as said territorial road.
 3. Owners of land damaged by extension, to have same remedy as in case of location of territorial roads.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the*

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SPECIAL LAWS.

Territory of Oregon, That the territorial road heretofore located from Clackamas bridge, in the county of Clackamas, by way of Milwaukie, to a point on the east bank of the Willamette river, opposite the city of Portland, in the county of Multnomah, be and the same is hereby declared to be extended from the northern terminus thereof, northerly along the said east bank of said Willamette river, until the same shall intersect the county road, and thence on said county road to Switzler's ferry, opposite Vancouver.

SEC. 2. Said extension of territorial road shall be of the same width as the territorial road hereinafter mentioned, and shall include the present located county road to said ferry; and shall be kept open and in repair in the same manner as county roads are kept open and in repair.

SEC. 3. The owner or owners of the land traversed by the road extension declared by this act, shall have the same remedies for damages suffered by reason of said extension, as is provided in case of this location of other territorial roads.

SEC. 4. This act to take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Passed Jan. 15, 1856.

A. P. DENNISON,
President of the Council.

DELAZON SMITH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Two things to note. First, the president of the Legislative Council in 1856 was A. P. Dennison, the same Ami Prince Dennison who would in 1870 buy, together with H.F. Bloch, the land that later became the Piedmont subdivision from George and Elizabeth Smith. There is a great deal of information on Dennison in Snyder (1989, p. 49-71), and he may actually get a later chapter in this book as well. Second, the title of the act does not adequately summarize its contents. The northern extension from the Stark Street Ferry to Switzler's ferry is not mentioned in the title. This is probably because it was an amendment to the law, which was added later. Finally, the upgrading of the county road to a territorial road does not immediately imply paving, widening, or other improvements. I have no actual record of work being done around that time, although I'll keep looking. Remember that large administrative changes were going on at the time. Portland started to grow quickly. Oregon was upgraded from a

territory to a state. Multnomah County was formed out of Clackamas and Washington. The area east of the Willamette River was still unincorporated. East Portland did not become a city until 1871, and Albina was only incorporated in 1887. The confusing network of subdivisions and streets could not really be sorted out until Portland, East Portland and Albina were consolidated into the City of Portland in 1891.

CITY NOTICES.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT OF UNION AVENUE.

Notice is hereby given that at the meeting of the Council of the City of Portland, Oregon, held on the 1st day of July, 1903, the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, That the Council of the City of Portland, Oregon, deems it expedient and proposes to improve Union avenue from the south line of Alberta street to 100 feet south of the south line of the Lewis Love Donation Land Claim, in the following manner, to-wit:

First—By grading the street full width with full intersections to the proper sub-grade.

Second—By bringing the surface of the street full width with full intersections to proper grade with upland bank gravel.

Third—By constructing gravel sidewalks with wooden curbs.

Fourth—By constructing wooden crosswalks six feet in width.

Fifth—By constructing box gutters.

Said improvement to be made in accordance with the charter and ordinances of the City of Portland and the plans, specifications and estimates of the City Engineer filed in the office of the Auditor of the City of Portland on the 1st day of July, 1903, indorsed: "City Engineer's plans and specifications for the improvement of Union avenue from the south line of Alberta street to 100 feet south of the south line of Lewis Love Donation Land Claim, and the estimates of the work to be done and the probable total cost thereof."

The cost of said improvement to be assessed as provided by the city charter upon the property specially benefited thereby and which is hereby declared to be all the lots, parts of lots and parcels of land lying between a line 100 feet south of and parallel with the south line of the Lewis Love Donation Land Claim and a line 100 feet south of and parallel with the south line of Alberta street and between a line of 100 feet west of and parallel with the west line of Union avenue and a line 100 feet east of and parallel with the east line of Union avenue.

The Engineer's estimate of the probable total cost of the improvement of said Union avenue is \$25,390.00.

The above improvement is to be classed as a gravel improvement and shall be maintained by the city for a period of 4 years, provided that the owners of a majority of the property benefited by said improvement or any portion thereof shall not petition for a new or different improvement before the expiration of such period.

The plans, specifications and estimates of the City Engineer for the improvement of said Union avenue are hereby adopted.

Resolved, That the Auditor of the City of Portland and he is hereby directed to give notice of the proposed improvement of said avenue as provided by the city charter.

Remonstrance against the above improvement may be filed in writing with the undersigned within 20 days from the date of the first publication of this notice.

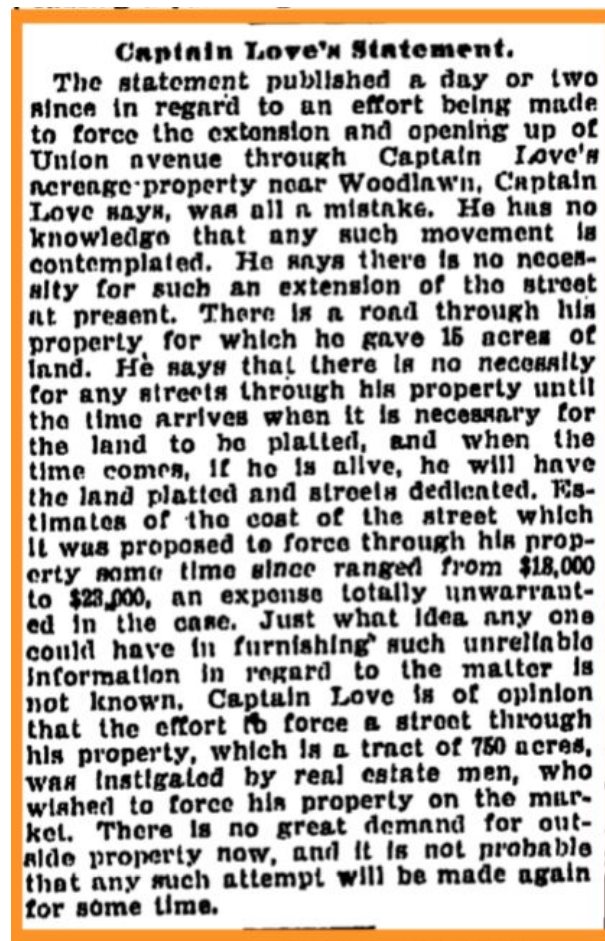
By order of the Council.

THOS. C. DEVLIN,

Auditor of the City of Portland.

July 6, 1903.

Second: from 30 feet south of Lewis Love DLC to Columbia Slough Road.



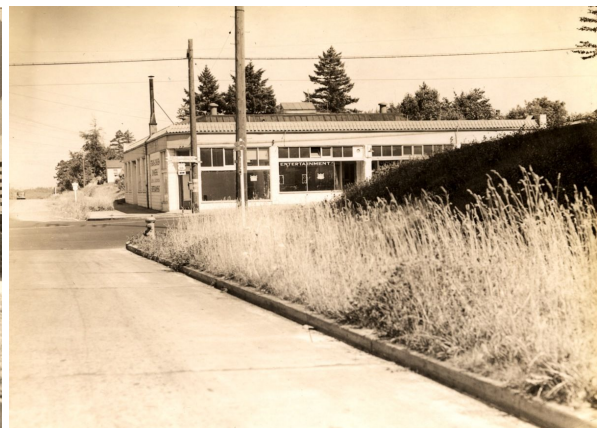
The Viaduct

Intersections

There are four major intersections of MLK in Piedmont: with Columbia Boulevard, with Lombard Street, with Rosa Parks Way, and with Ainsworth Street.



Intersection Union Avenue and Columbia Boulevard 1937
Clockwise: Looking North, West, East, South



Intersection Union Avenue and Lombard Street 1937
Clockwise: Looking West, North, South and East



Intersection Union Avenue and Ainsworth Street 1937
Clockwise: looking South, North, East, and West

Street Cars

Renaming 1989

Trader Joe

Prosper Portland

References

Roy E. Roos (2008): *The History of Albina. Including Eliot, Boise, King, Humboldt, and Piedmont Neighborhoods*. Self published, Portland, Oregon.

Eugene E. Snyder (1989): *We Claimed this Land. Portland's Pioneer Settlers*. Binfort & Mort Publishing, Portland, Oregon.

Oregon Territory (1859): *Laws of the Territory of Oregon Enacted During the Tenth Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly, Begun December 6, 1858, Concluded January 22, 1859*. Asahel Bush, Territorial Printer, Salem, Oregon.

Oregon Territory (1856): *Laws of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oregon Enacted During the Seventh Regular Session; Begun December 3, 1855, and Concluded January 31, 1856*. Asahel Bush, Territorial Printer, Salem, Oregon.