

# PGE and the Willamette Falls

Willamette Falls has been an important economic and cultural site in Oregon for thousands of years, since their creation during the time of the great Missoula Floods. This area was – and remains today – a significant fishing and gathering place for Native American tribes. It also marked the western end of the Oregon Trail and the Oregon Territory’s first capital city. In the decades that followed, the falls were the engine that drove Oregon’s early industrialization and economic growth; the first sawmill and flour mill were opened there in 1862-63. Portland General Electric played a key role in that early development at the falls, and today we’re actively promoting the area’s revitalization as a participant in several initiatives to improve public access and renewed economic opportunity.

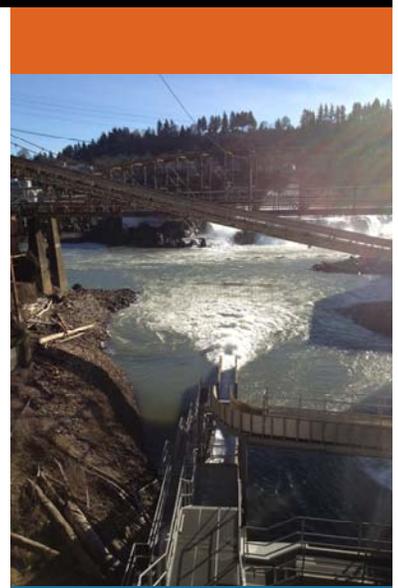
## PGE’s Birthplace

On June 3, 1889 the Willamette Falls Electric Company (later renamed Portland General Electric) made history by producing the world’s first long distance-transmission of electricity. PGE founders Parker Morey and Edward Eastham flipped a switch at Station A in Oregon City – on the east side of Willamette Falls – and lit up 55 street lamps 14 miles away in Portland. In the more than 125 years since that time, PGE has continued to generate renewable electric power at Willamette Falls.

## The Sullivan Plant: PGE’s Oldest Hydro Plant

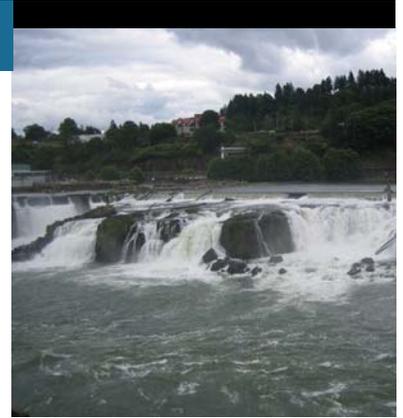
Station B opened on the West Linn side of the Willamette River in 1895, making it Oregon’s oldest hydro plant in current operation and the third oldest in the United States. In 1953 Station B was renamed after the PGE hydraulic engineer who originally designed the station, T.W. Sullivan.

Over time, technological advances have allowed PGE to modernize the plant. In 2008 the Low Impact Hydropower Institute certified Sullivan as low impact hydro based on recent improvements PGE made to help the migratory success of steelhead and salmon. This is a designation shared by only about five percent of the hydro plants in the United States (including PGE’s Pelton Round Butte facilities on the Deschutes River). The Sullivan Plant is also an original inductee into the Hydropower Hall of Fame. Today, the plant continues to generate an average of 122 million kilowatt-hours per year – enough to power about 11,000 homes.



## Facts about the Willamette Falls

- *Second largest waterfall by volume in North America*
- *Important fishing and cultural site for Native American tribes*
- *Located at the western end of the Oregon trail*
- *Site of Oregon’s first paper mill, part of the property that was most recently called the Blue Heron Paper Company*



### The Willamette Locks: Navigating the River

For over a decade, PGE has been part of the effort to keep the locks operational, as they remain the only way for river traffic to navigate between the upper and lower Willamette River. In 2005, the Governor accepted the Locks as an “Oregon Solutions” project. That project attracted a broad and diverse group of stakeholders, including PGE. The group’s advocacy resulted in a large federal grant to maintain locks operations for three years (2005-2008). In 2009, stakeholder advocacy helped secure \$1.8 million for repair and inspection of the locks. An additional \$900,000 was allocated later that year for additional repairs and operational costs. The locks reopened in January 2010 and were open through the summer of 2010.

Although the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers closed the locks in 2011, PGE, as part of the One Willamette River Coalition, continues to support on-going work to secure federal funding so that the locks can be reopened and maintained for public and commercial use. In 2014, PGE helped fund the 2014 Willamette Locks Economic Potential Report in order to further explore the region’s economic, historic and cultural opportunities.

### A Heritage Area: Celebrating Oregon’s History

As a member of the Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition, PGE is also a proud supporter of the Coalition’s efforts to establish the area around the falls as a heritage site worthy of national recognition. In February 2015 the Oregon Heritage Commission voted to approve state heritage area status – the first awarded in the state – to the Willamette Falls Heritage Area.

### Riverwalk: Willamette Falls Legacy Project

The Willamette Falls Legacy Project is an effort to redevelop the 23-acre industrial site along the falls in Oregon City to promote healthy habitat, historic and cultural interpretation, economic redevelopment and public access. PGE supports the development of public access along the east-side of the falls, through historic downtown Oregon City and ending within a stone’s throw of the site of PGE’s original Station A powerhouse. In 2014, PGE granted Metro an easement supporting public access on PGE property that is a key portion of the proposed Riverwalk, because it provides the best opportunity for public viewing of the falls.

The Willamette Falls have been an important feature of Oregon’s natural environment, culture and economy for generations, and the revitalization of this heritage area will help promote cultural and economic growth for the region. PGE and its employees have long been part of the communities around the falls. We want to help preserve and enhance the falls and the area around them because of their historical significance to the region and our company. PGE also supports preserving their “working” character for navigation and power generation. With the successful implementation of these initiatives the falls can become as important for Oregon’s future as they have been for Oregon’s past.

### Where the Future Began

This video, produced by PGE, reveals the dramatic story of cultures, risk-takers, and entrepreneurs tapping into “one of the great geologic secrets of North America”: The [Willamette Falls](#).

Visit [Youtube.com/PortlandGeneralElec](http://Youtube.com/PortlandGeneralElec) to watch the full video.



Find more information online:

[PortlandGeneral.com](http://PortlandGeneral.com)

Questions? Contact PGE Customer Service at  
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