

The most common questions asked at our local Historical Museum are, "Is there actually a Granite Falls?" (meaning a waterfall, not the town), or "Where are the Falls?". As the weather clears, and we approach the tourist season, we expect to hear those questions dozens of times.

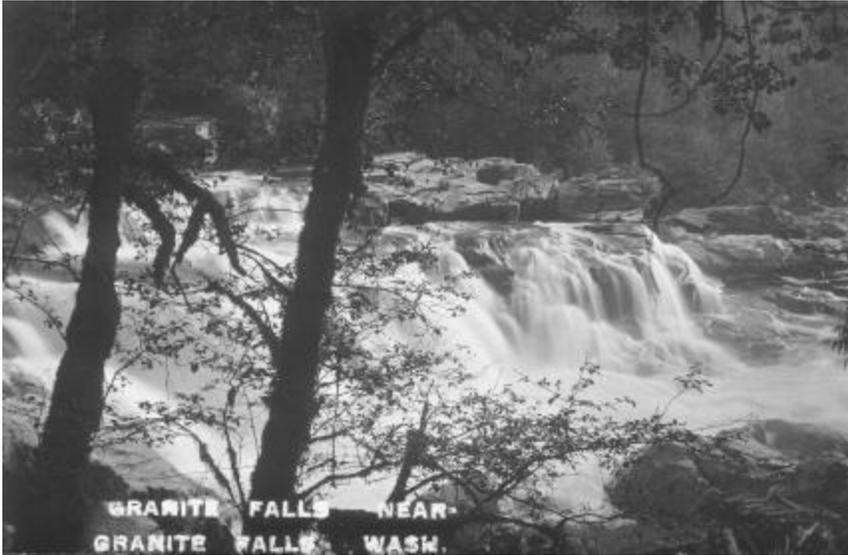
We have very few pictures of the Falls displayed in the Museum, although we have many great shots in our collection. Most local folks now take the Falls for granted, but in the late 1800s and early 1900s the location was a very popular social gathering place, since it was close to town but deep in nature. Within easy hiking or horseback distance, picnic outings were common and those with cameras attempted to catch the Falls from all angles. In the early 1950s, a fish ladder and tunnel were constructed to provide fish access to spawning areas upstream. When opened in 1954, the combined structure was the longest of its kind in the world, and made the site more interesting to visit (even if somewhat less scenic). "Before" and "after" pictures show some rocks on the far side of the river that can be used as reference when comparing the development and changes.

My favorite "natural" shot is:



There's a rock near the upper right, on the far side of the river, that has a small "peak" on it (see arrow). That rock can be spotted in many pictures, even those taken after the fish ladders were created, which altered virtually all the rock formations on the near side of the river.

There were rock shelves at some of the higher levels on the near side of the river. When water was fairly low, those shelves were places for the adventurous to stand. When water was high, those shelves became parts of the waterfall itself, as shown in the following pictures.



Taken from the far side of the river (getting there was a trick in itself), this picture shows how broad the Falls could get during high water. Note water flowing from the “shelves”.



Hat, coats, and ties were the dress code of the period. This shot taken early 1900s.



Even on picnics, the women were dressed in long skirts and broad hats.

Of course, the “scale” of the Falls is hard to imagine when looking at pictures. One of the features of the spot is the almost vertical rock wall on the far side of the river, used on occasion by intrepid rock climbers to practice rappelling – used almost as often by intrepid rescue teams right after the rock climbers realize they started with too little rope. Notice the people in the center of the picture, and the rock with the “peak” (see arrows).

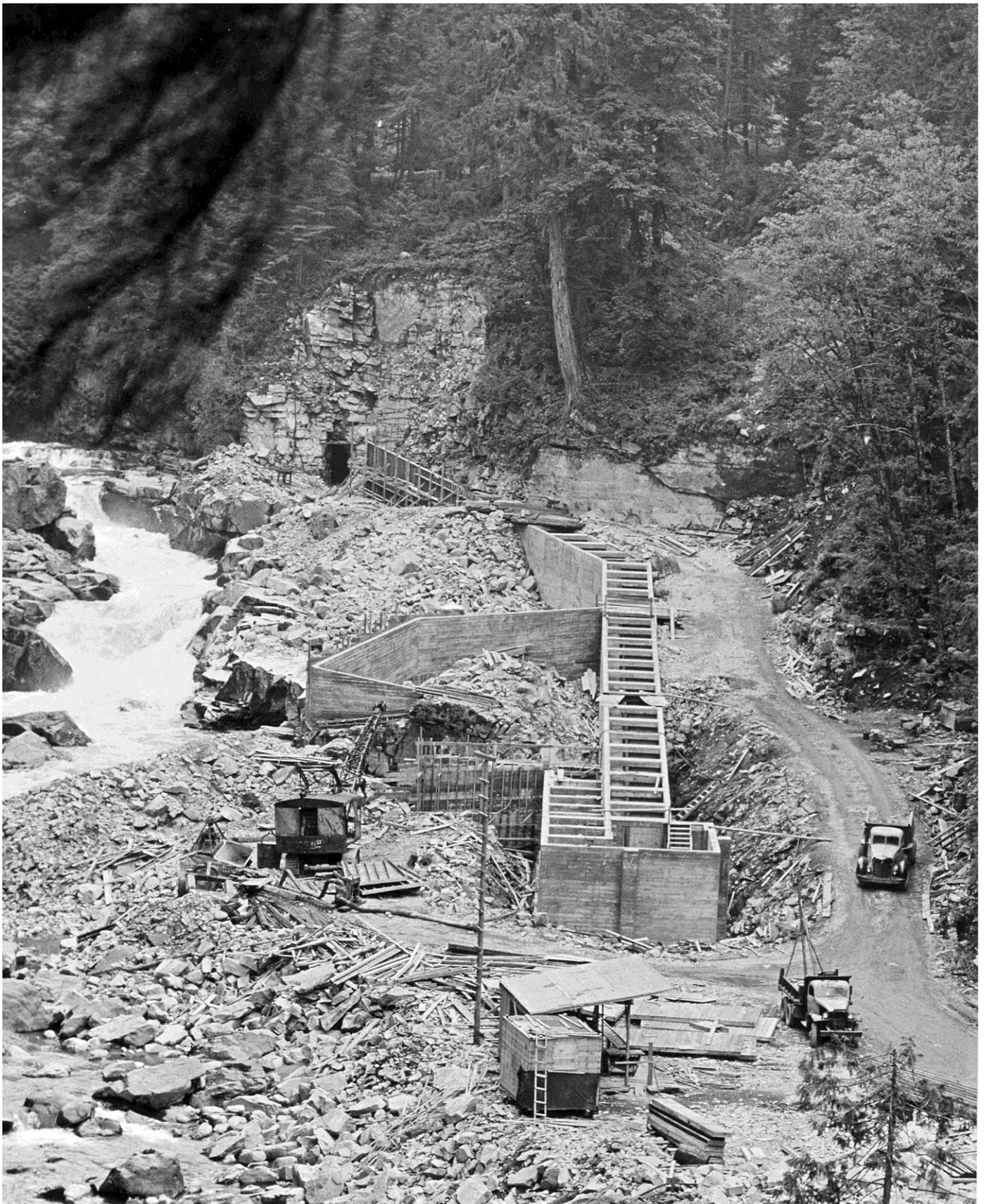


Rock

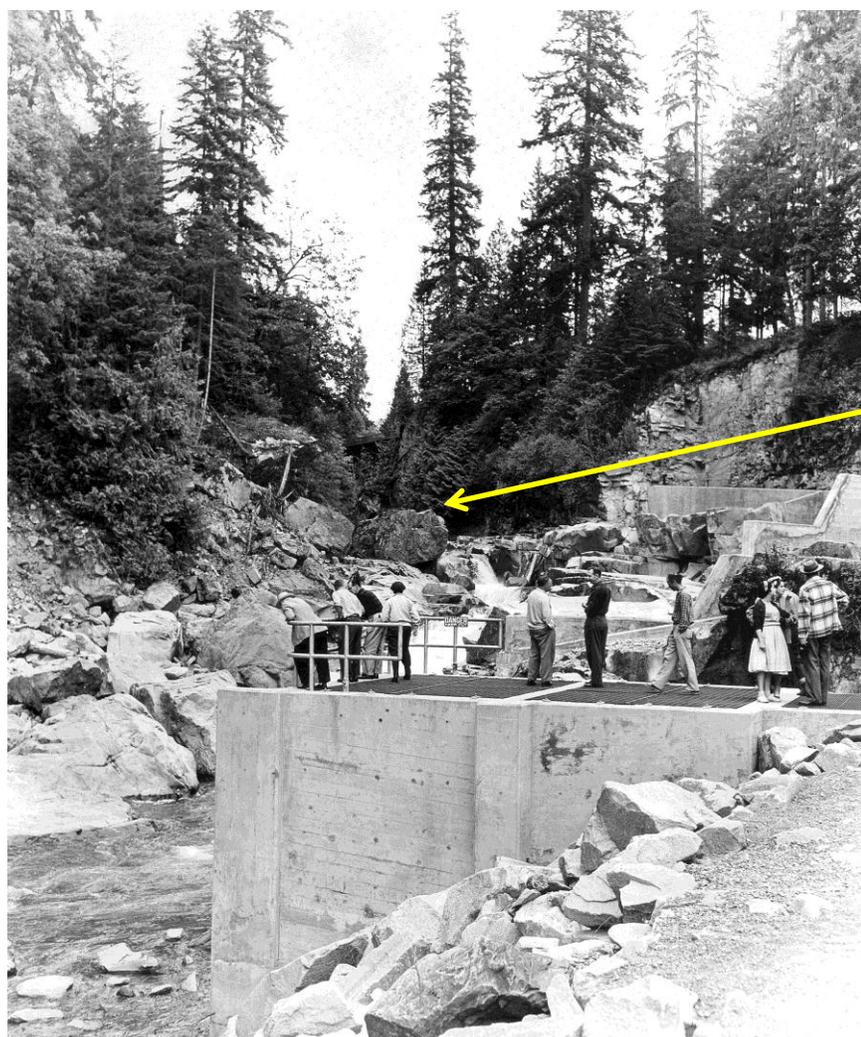
People

CYANITE FALLS CES 1904

Fish ladder construction was a huge project, resulting in a vertical slot fish ladder 580 ft long, combined with a tunnel 240 ft long. You can see the interest reflected in the spot, indicated by the cars, restaurant, etc.



You can still park on either side of the Mountain Loop Highway to visit the Falls, but the old restaurant is gone now. Walk down the path until you reach the stairway that takes you to the fish ladder. If you pick the right day, in the afternoon after a heavy rainfall, with the sun shining into the river gorge, you might even catch your own rainbow!



Rock