

WONDER TO BEHOLD



WHEN IT OPENED IN 1926, MAUI'S HANA BELT ROAD WAS A WONDER TO BEHOLD. "Spectacularly chiseled out of abrupt cliffs and precipitous valleys," is how one early observer described it. Local newspapers credited "dare devil exploits" for its unlikely completion, the result a breathtaking vision of plunging canyons, tropical wilderness, narrow waterfalls, and mountains that dropped straight to the Pacific Ocean. THE NEW ROAD FREED East Maui from centuries of isolation. The village of Hana, perched between the Pacific and the rim of the giant Haleakala volcano, was separated from the rest of the island by impassable terrain. Travelers who wanted to go to the eastern side of the island had to take a week-long trek by steamer. THE HANA BELT ROAD WAS PART OF AN ISLANDS-WIDE EFFORT to build a new road system. It was a staggering engineering feat that inspires wonder even today. The hairpin turns, precipitous drops, and incredible vistas are one of Maui's main attractions. The Historic American Engineering Record of the National Park Service documented the Hana Belt Road in summer 2005, producing measured drawings, large-format photographs, and a written history. The road retains much of its historic character, and the HAER team captured its bridges, culverts, and retaining walls in great detail. The images and drawings will be part of the Library of Congress' collection, Built in America, online at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/. FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Todd Croteau, todd_croteau@nps.gov.