

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

LITTLE LOST RIVER

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A mining rush from Leesburg, June 15-16, 1867, created interest in Little Lost River more than a decade before T. C. Blackburn made a major lead-silver discovery there in September of 1882. By the following spring he had organized a mining district there, recognizing a lode that could be traced for six miles but which outcropped in only a few places. An experienced prospector from Deadwood, South Dakota, he had followed up an interesting lode find that his brother, Charles F. Blackburn, had located across Diamond Peak on adjacent Birch Creek. An initial twenty-five foot shaft provided access to a drift on a twelve-foot vein that furnished assays ranging from six to 1,580 ounces a ton. Early production came from ore hauled to the Viola smelter on Birch Creek at Hahn from 1886 to 1889. With closure of that smelter in the fall of 1889, Blackburn's mine had to suspend operations.

By 1906, work resumed on another property along Blackburn's lode. Only a small crew was employed for a time, although a hundred ton concentrator stepped up production for a decade after 1908. After loss of a hoist, concentrator, and other equipment by fire in 1918, production ceased while a new plant was built. Work resumed in 1922, and a new mill produced continuously from 1924 to 1931. More than two million dollars worth of lead-silver finally came from Blackburn's district.