

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

BLACKFOOT FERRY

(Also Known as Central and Danilson's Ferry)

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In the mid 1860's, Tilford Kutch settled near present day Blackfoot and began a ferry operation. In November 1866, his reported gross ferry receipts were \$6,200. [This sum probably represented his seasons's earnings.] (Internal Revenue Assessment Lists for the Territory of Idaho, Records of the Internal Revenue Service, Record Group 58, Microcopy 763, National Archives.)

By 1878, Theodore T. Danilson had settled in the vicinity. He opened a store in anticipation of a settlement growing in the area as the advancing Utah and Northern Railway would soon be passing by his business. He also operated the ferry and on October 10, 1878, was appointed Postmaster for the new post office known as Central Ferry. The post office was renamed Blackfoot on March 20, 1879. Danilson's store carried groceries, provisions, hats, caps, boots, shoes, saddles, bridles, halters, and dry goods. He also offered a choice line of standard wines and liquors. (Yankee Fork Herald [Bonanza], September 25, 1879, p. 3, c. 4.)

In February 1880, Danilson moved his ferry about one hundred yards downstream and reported it would be ready for heavy freight business in the spring. (Ibid., February 21, 1880, p. 3, c. 3.)

As he was preparing his ferry for the spring trade, Danilson added new features to insure the safety of those using his boat.

A new feature in rope ferries will be introduced this season. It will run on two cables instead of one.

The second cable has already been stretched across the

river, and the boat will run directly between the two.

Mr. Danilson claims that by attaching the stern of the boat to the lower cable by means of 'travelers' the ferryman has absolute control of the boat and can place it at any angle or position regardless of wind or current. As 4/5 of the accidents in rope ferries are caused by the boat getting square in the current or by blowing up under the rope, this danger will be averted. (Ibid., March 13, 1880, p. 2, c. 1)

In February 1881, a new iron bridge was completed across the river near the ferry site, but in June high water washed out two of the spans. Soon after the bridge was put out of order, a new ferry boat was launched. (Blackfoot Register, June 25, 1881, p. 4, c. 1; Davis Bitton, "Blackfoot: The Making of a Community, 1878-1910," Idaho Yesterdays, Spring 1975, 19/1:2-15.)

The bridge was rebuilt and opened for travel in January 1882. Once again, the Blackfoot Ferry was phased out. Tolls were charged to cross the new bridge:

25¢ for a pedestrian
50¢ for a horse and rider
\$1.50 for a team and wagon

In 1891 the Bingham County Commissioners purchased the bridge and did away with the tolls. (Bitton, p. 8.)

By Larry R. Jones