

SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER

Saskatchewan Landing is a name known to everyone in both the Kyle and White Bear districts. The coming of the bridge was second to the railway in importance. Sask. Landing dated back to when it was just a portage for the Indians and real early settlers, at this time, it was known as the South Branch Crossing.

It is thought that a man by the name of Palliser was one of the first to cross the river at the Landing and he was head of an exploration party who were making Dominion Land Maps which weren't completed until 1878.

In 1882, a Courier saw some 60 lodges of Cree Indians at the Landing. Then in 1883, Marchand went from Battleford to Swift Current to link up these two centers. Later that year, he took a small scow, nine by 18 feet pulled by 35 horses from Swift Current to the Landing.

The same year, Sandy MacDonald brought a ferry from Battleford to the Landing which took 10 days to reach the river. This ferry was launched in the very spot an Indian woman had forded the river while walking from Swift Current to Battleford, the Battleford Trail.

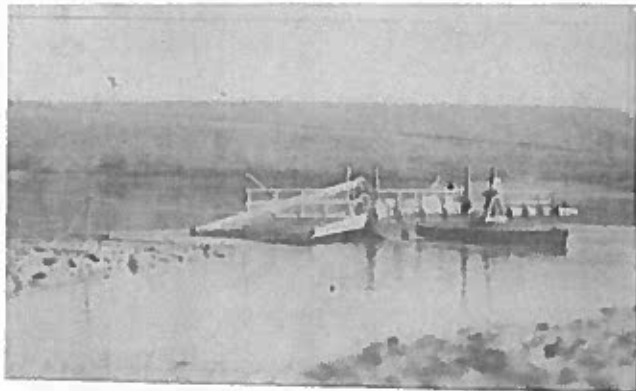
The first ferries were privately owned and operated by



local men and ranchers who charged a small sum to cross. William Sanders, James Smart, August Huntley and Isodore Laplante were some of the early ferrymen.

It was in 1885 that the Royal North West Mounted Police recorded an official crossing at Sask. Landing and this ferry played such an important part in the opening of this territory.

There is reference that from 1891-1901 there was no



public ferry being used by the ranchers, but I am sure there was some way people could cross at this time. Isodore Laplante was operator from 1902-1905. 1905 the new provincial grant was inaugurated and financial assistance was granted to the ferries. A.G. Mackie was the operator and he operated it until 1918 with the help of many more ferrymen.

In 1910, the first high towers and the hair-raising cable car or basket was installed. It is said that Mrs. Elderton, was the first lady to cross the river on which, at this time, was just the ferry carriers and she had to



change carriers in the middle of the river. Only anyone who ever crossed this way can even imagine the excitement and horror.

Ferrymen who followed were Dick Clarke, 1921-1932; Frank Goodwin 1933-1953, except for years 1942-1946 when he was in the R.C.A.F. and Bob Mitchell, was the operator. Frank returned in 1946 and operated it until the 1st bridge was completed in 1951.

So many will remember both Spring and Fall at the Landing. It usually saw either Art Hunter or Bill Knox of Kyle with their trucks in the river. A tanker truck loaded with hot asphalt tipped the ferry one day and quick work had to be done to pump it out before it sat up in the cold water. Car and trucks would periodically break the chain and end up in the river. Another time, a cable snapped with eight cars on the ferry, it drifted down stream the



Ferrymen's houses.

length of the cable with people waist deep in their cars. Some would discover they had no brakes and end up in the river. I am sure everyone could tell some experience of their own.

The long awaited bridge with the contractors arriving and starting construction in 1949, with the 1st bridge being completed in 1950, but not until June 20, 1951



was it officially opened.

Then the spring of 1952, the great catastrophe occur-



ed when the ice started to back up against the bridge due to high water. In three days and nights hundreds of people stood and watched the water and ice rise. Everything that could be done was done but finally the pressure became too great and the steel structure floated off the foundation and toppled into the river.



Construction was started at once on the second bridge and the ferry was forced back into operation. The bridge was 10 feet higher and longer approaches with

provisions being made to still make it higher and longer when needed. It was finished in 1953.



Then with the coming of the Gardiner Dam and Diefenbaker Lake, this meant a much higher and longer bridge was going to be needed so they started to dismantle and start again. The South end of the bridge was raised 34 feet and 41 feet more added on the North end. Also a new deck on the six existing piers with 22 feet above water level in the centre.

So in 1964-1965, we were back to three ferries, float-



ing bridges and dams in the winter. This being completed in the winter of 1965-66 the towers and cables were dismantled and the ferries moved to other locations. The official opening of this present day bridge was in June 1966.

Today Sask. Landing is still a very interesting and beautiful place with the new park having been made with fine camping facilities for the public. I am sure Sask. Landing will always remain the same historic spot.



Present bridge.

CABRI AND PENNANT FERRIES

When the ferry system was taken over from the North-West Territorial Government by the Provincial Government in 1905, there were no "free" ferries, all ferries were "toll" ferries.

The policy of free ferriage between the hours of 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. was inaugurated in the season of 1912. The direct employment of the ferrymen at a fixed wage of \$3.00 per day brought these men directly under the control of the Department and as a result a more reliable service at all hours of the ferry season was secured.

New and stronger ferry-boats were put into use measuring about eighteen feet by fifty-two feet with twelve foot aprons. The new boats could take care of four heavy tanks of wheat at a load, traction engines, separators, etc. The cables were now suspended on specially constructed towers, which enables the cables to be raised free from danger during the ice-runs in the spring and July floods. Life-buoys were supplied to all ferry boats and row boats provided for each scow, with life-belts. Strong guard chains were installed at the ends of the ferries to safeguard the traffic while on the ferry.

The Cabri ferry operated from Sec. 19 and 20, T. 20, R. 17, W. 3 from October 11, 1912 until the end of the 1951 season.



Cabri Ferry approach, 1933.

Ferry Operators

J.A. Cummings
George Leslie
O.N. Fjeldberg
N.E. Kelgour
F.H. Hendrickson

Andrew W. Sawyer
G.W. Goldie
H. MacEachern
John D. Gravel
F.A. Goodwin

Stanley S. Sawyer

The fourth season of low water by 1922-23 necessitated the construction of additional wing-dams to crowd the water into one channel or consolidate the existing sand-bar and banks which were being used as low water approaches for the ferry traffic. The wing-dams were composed of materials gathered from the river bottoms, poplar and willow brush and scrub, loose rack interlaced with pieces of worn out cable.

The next season at the Cabri crossing a considerable portion of the large island in the centre of the river was



Neil Anderson, Nick Scheelhaase, Bill Cates and others pulling a car from the river.

carried away, together with one of the main towers and a considerable portion of the traffic road built across this island connecting the landings of the two channels. The traffic was dislocated for some time but a new location was quickly selected and the ferry put in operation again. New landings were constructed. The ferry eventually handled a large volume of the wheat traffic from the north side of the river as it had in previous seasons.

In the early thirties, during the winter season, the south channel was closed off. Local men worked with the construction crews hauling earth and rock with horses, wagons and trucks across the ice.

On May 15, 1942, when the river was high an accident occurred at the Cabri ferry – one end of the wire rope connecting line, between the scow and the traveller on the suspended cable, became free and allowed the scow to become out of control. As a result the suspended cable and one tower were pulled down and the scow



Cabri Ferry, 1933.

swept to shore. Fortunately, no passengers were on at the time and no one was seriously hurt.

The unfortunate loss of the Saskatchewan Landing Bridge on April 6, 1952 caused the Cabri ferry to be released from the ice jam, repaired, launched and floated to the "Landing" and put into service April 24 by ferrying 810 cattle and 24 vehicles.

The Pennant Ferry operated from Sec. 4, T. 20, R. 16, W. 3, from August 1912 until the end of the 1953 season.

The opening of ferry service across the South Saskat-

chewan River, north of Pennant was a great help to the farmers when going for supplies and hauling grain. Time and distance were an improvement over the trip to Swift Current by way of the "Landing". The crossing here was much better than Cabri due to no sandbars and a faster current. There were times when traffic had to be diverted from either "Landing" or Cabri ferry.

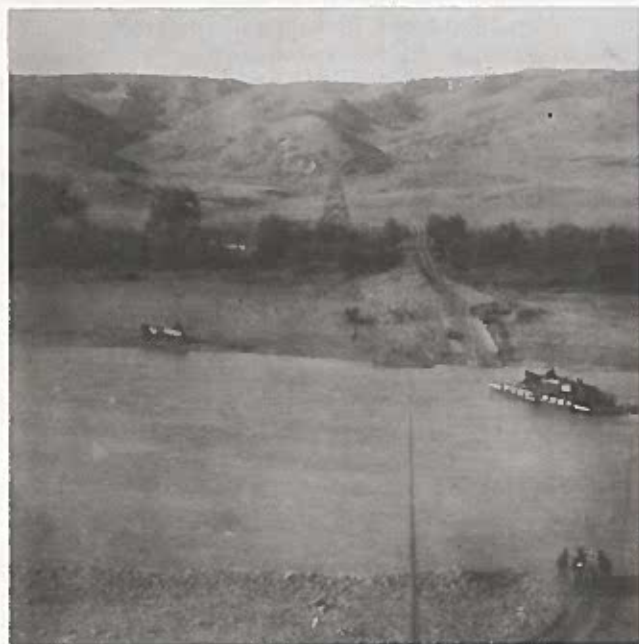
The ferry season of 1915 opened with more sustained high water than usual, and throughout the season there were four distinct periods of excessive high water. An accident at the Pennant ferry when the river was in full flood and a passenger was very insistent upon being crossed on a matter of urgent business. The ferryman pointed out the danger, and it was only at the insistent solicitation of the passenger that the ferryman attempted the passage. During the crossing, some driftwood struck the ferry, causing it to swing on the cable and during the efforts of the ferryman to keep the scow in its course, the apparatus broke, the flying fragments of which struck the passenger upon the head, inflicting serious injury.

Ferry Operators

Joshua Turner
A.G. Gatz
A.O. Fraser

Eugen View
Fred Weiner
Harry Olson

R.L. Hamilton
Lester Bishop
G.W. Goldie



Pennant Ferry, looking north, 1918.

The farmers using the Pennant Ferry were very solicitous for an improvement of the approaches to the ferry and co-operated with the Government in laying a large supply of field rocks, preparatory for the construction of a permanent approach at this crossing, which was done in 1918-19. A large volume of grain was hauled over this ferry until the railroads came in north of the river.

A newspaper clipping from the 1940's reads as follows:

160 Give Horse Laugh, Ride Ferry
"SWIFT CURRENT, Oct. 14 (Staff Special) -- About

160 head of horses gave the equivalent of the "horse laugh" to 525 other weary nags when they refused to join them in a swim across the South Saskatchewan river and instead got a ride over on the ferry at Pennant, 36 miles north of here.

"The incident gave half a dozen cowboys a spot of bother at the river as the 685 horses moved southward on their long trek from Youngstown, Alta., to the Horse Co-operative marketing plant at Swift Current.

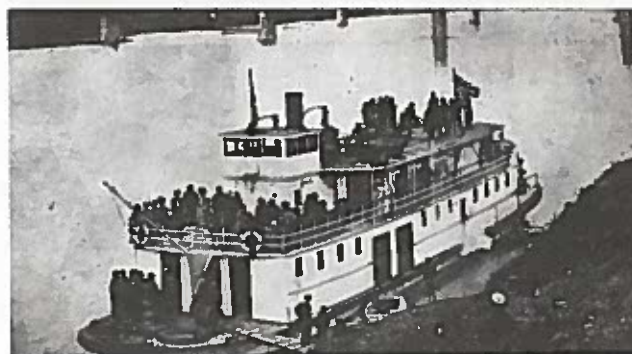
"The movement, one of the biggest for years, is accompanied by a chuck wagon. The animals and men, under direction of W. Davies of Alsask, Sask., on Wednesday night were camped somewhere between Swift Current and Pennant.

"G.W. Goldie, operator of the ferry at Pennant, reported the drive had crossed the river at that point.

"Mr. Goldie said the cowboys were successful in swimming about 525 horses across the river but that 160 head balked and gave the men some trouble. They were finally rounded up and moved across the river on the ferry."

Following the re-opening of the Saskatchewan Landing Bridge the Pennant Ferry was closed in 1953.

RIVERBOAT



During the winter of 1906 and 07 a man by the name of Horatio Hamilton Ross son of Sir Charles and Lady Ross of Scotland decided he would build a 130 foot stern wheeler. It was built on the South Saskatchewan at Medicine Hat, and when it was finished it was christened "The City of Medicine Hat".

It was mainly a pleasure boat although at times it did haul other goods, it was manned by Captain Ross as he was fondly called.

Captain Ross came down to the Saskatchewan Landing Ferry when Frank (Chub) Goodwin manned the Ferry.

June 7, 1908 Captain Ross went up the river to Saskatoon. During this time the river was in flood, the bridges at Saskatoon were a problem, the Canadian Northern bridge especially, Captain Ross had to remove the smokestacks in order to go under. The C.N.R. telegraph wires were strung alongside the bridge and the rudder of the sternwheeler got entangled in the wires, causing Captain Ross to lose control and the City of Medicine Hat was wrecked.



The stone house, 1923.



Art Noble in the basket.



Looking across at Brunyee (Fortman) ranch.



Sask. Landing Ferry retired, 1966.



Spring break up, Goodwin's house.



Harry Lowe and Archie Turner with goldeye catch.



Going up river to Lancer, 1966.



Ball game at the river, 1917.



Swimming cattle across the river.



Sunday outing on the river flats.



Cowards, west of the ferry.



Cattle coming from Texas to the Matador Ranch.



Nils Egeland home, 1963.

