

Missouri River Ferry Crossings CCHS Heritage Notes for 1-28-14

Missouri River Ferry Crossings

Due to the Missouri River current there was constant change in landing sites for river crossings. Lime Creek, Lunes Creek, Turkey Ravine, Brookey Bottom, Mulberry Point and Douglas Landing were all used at various times. Even in the very early days of Vermillion it was important to establish trade across the river with Nebraska neighbors.

In 1876 the ferry "North Bend", operated by Arch Douglas, made regular trips from Vermillion to Nebraska. When Douglas discontinued his business, a company owned by Andrew and Charles Prentis had two ferries in operation. Both were lost in the great flood of 1881.

Next came a man named Allister who ran a ferry in 1883 and 1884, when he wrecked his craft and had to quit. He then tried to use a flat bottom boat but was unable to make a go of it with such a vessel. W.G. and J.C. Bower operated a ferry that same year for a short time. Robert Brown and Henry Thompson established ferry operations in 1885 with a boat named "Cora Ryan".

In 1891, Peter Seiler established his ferry business with a vessel named after his wife "Mary L. Seiler". He operated on and off, but most of the time, for 23 years until 1914. During the year 1899 only, Theodore Whitehouse operated a gasoline powered ferry but service was unsatisfactory, and Vermillion businessmen considered going into the ferry business on their own.

In 1900, Herman Malby operated the "Vella Mae" at Mulberry Point, but remained only one year. In 1901, Louie Rustad operated a ferry named "Vermillion" for a few years. The last documented operator was Patrick McGoldrick, who ran a ferry at Lime Creek in 1930.