

# THE CONCRETE HERALD

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## ROCKPORT BRIDGE DEDICATION AT 2:00 SATURDAY

All roads will lead to Rockport this coming Saturday, as that little community plays host to the entire county, and as many from outside as want to come, at the dedication of the new Rockport bridge.

When the ribbon is cut following the ceremonies at 2:00 P.M., the Rockport ferry, which has provided transportation across the river since 1903, will no longer be needed. The people at Rockport feel this calls for a celebration and they intend to provide one.

Invitations have gone out to all valley residents, as well as dignitaries from about the state. All will be treated to a free dinner from 11:00 A.M. on with the feature being a 400 lb. steer donated by one of the South Skagit's longest users of the ferry – Fred Martin. He has lived all his life on his present ranch.

Food to make up the entire meal has been donated by valley residents and supplies. Contributions have also been received to take care of other expenses of the big party.

Following the dinner in the grade school gym, the bridge dedication ceremonies will be held on the north end of the bridge itself. A.B. (Brown) Wiseman will act as the master of ceremonies for the short program. No formal speaker will be secured and the speaking done will be by various men whose interest in the bridge will call for their introduction to the crowd.

Durward Sobek and his Concrete high school band will be on hand to open the program and will play several numbers.

After the dedication the bridge will be opened for travel, and the townfolks of

Rockport will continue as hosts for those who wish to spend the rest of the day.

### End of an Era

The opening of traffic across the bridge ends an era that once saw eighteen current-operated ferries in operation on the Skagit River. There were crossings at Skagit City, Burlington, Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, Skiyou, Lyman, Day Creek, Hamilton, Birdsvew, Pressentin, ... Concrete, East Concrete, Van Horn, Faber, Sauk City, Rockport, O'Brien's and Marblemount. County Engineer Frank Gilkey once estimated that to maintain those same ferries today would cost the county at least a quarter of a million dollars a year. The new Rockport bridge contract was let for \$258,433.00 to Croy Construction Co., just a little above what could be a year's ferry costs.

Actually the first ferry in operation at Rockport was built in 1903 by Ed Carniele, valley carpenter. It was first used to bring children across the river to school and was operated by Skagit Bill Pressentin. After the ferry had proved it's value, the county aided in the operation by paying the magnificent salary of \$12 a month to the operator.

Over the years the ferry was replaced many times with larger... and more efficient means of handling the cables that swung the ferry one way or the other to give ... the "tack" sufficient to drive it across the current. For a long time huge hand wheels were needed to wind the cable drums, but in later

years a gas engine was installed for this purpose. Only on low water was power used to pull the ferry across.

One well-known ferryman was Skagit Indian Frank Tom, who ran the ferry for some forty years, on and off. Latest operators are Hobe Clark and Joe Holbrook, who have both become veterans on the job. Holbrook has worked 12 years, Clark about 2½.

A count shows that the ferry has averaged about 5,000 crossings a month in the winter, with considerably more in the summer months and especially since the completion of the Marblemount and Sauk roads on the south side.

All this nostalgic memoranda will be history after Saturday. The new bridge has been in phases of hot and cold promotion for many years but actually began to show up on the planning board in 1949. After a wait for the red tape to unwind as a state and federal aid project, the commissioners threw out the idea of outside help and decided to build it entirely from county funds.

The contract was let in September of 1960. Work started in October and was well under way by the first of the year.

All that remained to be done this week was the painting, which is now contingent on good weather.