

Early History of the Mill Creek Bridge
Excerpts from Clarksville, Indiana Town Council Minutes
1789 to 1885

As early as October 24, 1789 a bridge was planned across Mill Creek. The Town Council appointed Andrew Heth & William Clark (probably George Rogers Clarks's cousin, William, rather than his brother, William) to find some person to build a bridge across Mill Creek. There is no indication that a bridge was actually built at this time, but the action shows that the need was there.

In July 1802 the Clarksville Town Council agreed to donate two acres of the public square (on the riverfront between Mill Creek and the beginning of Emery Crossing Road) "to serve as the permanent seat of justice of the county of Clark". The Council also agreed to offer money toward the building of the county seat. It was not, of course, to come to pass.

On December 7, 1802, William Clark, brother of George Rogers Clark and the William of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, was appointed surveyor of the Town. In March of that year he was asked to "make out a plan of the bridge across Mill Creek and to draw up the manner in which the road is to be opened and completed." William prepared a drawing of the bridge (see attached). Later that month, Edmund Clark, brother to William and George, contracted with the Town as low bidder to build the bridge according to William's plan. The cost was \$590.

The next mention of a bridge across Mill Creek is in August of 1860, when the Council decided that "it would be of great utility to the citizens of Clarksville and public convenience generally, to have a permanent bridge build over Mill Run." A committee reported that, "after the examining the premises they found that it would be very expensive to build a permanent stone bridge over Mill Run, and they recommended the building of a wooden structure to rise and fall with the river, at less expense and which would answer the purpose."

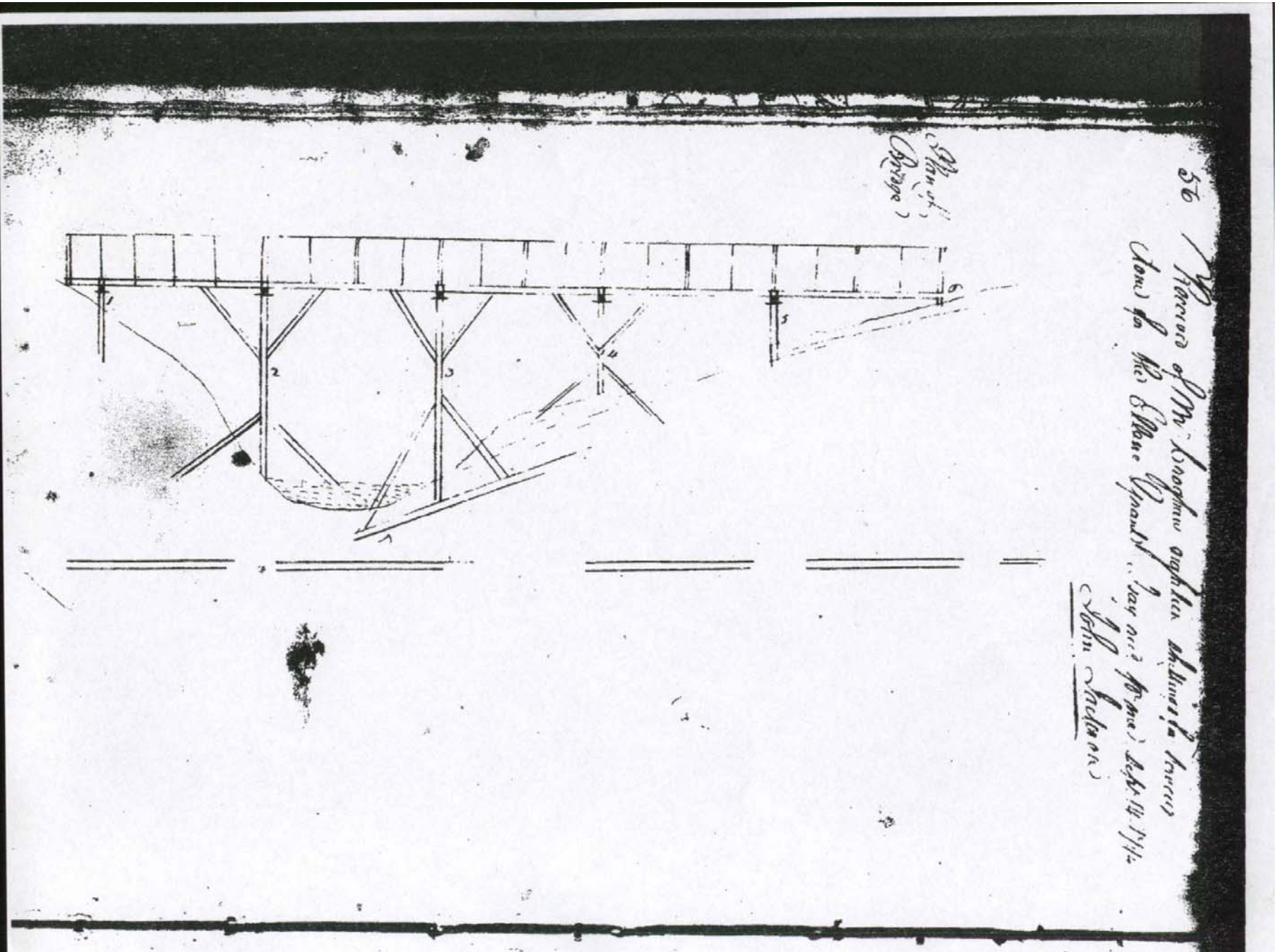
The Council must have had second thoughts, however, since in 1861 it was reported that a committee had superintended the building of a bridge of rock across Mill Run. The Council had approved \$150, but the bridge cost more than \$200.

In July 1868 a committee was formed to examine the Mill Creek Bridge and reported a recommendation to lengthen the arch and raise it 4 or 5 feet higher. They hired Mr. W. F. Beach to make the repairs. The work was done by November of that year. Repairs were necessary again in 1869, when a Mr. Stites was hired to repair the bridge again. That bridge was to last only until 1872, when the Council was called to take immediate action for the repair of the bridge, which was washed away "during the last freshet."

Whether things moved slowly and the bridge was not repaired for several years, or whether the 1872 bridge was repaired and in bad shape again is not known, but further action to rebuild the bridge was completed in April of 1882. It cost \$1,609.

The Minute Book ends in 1885 with no further mention of a bridge. The 1886-1935 minute book is missing.

As compiled by Jane Sarles – Clarksville Historical Society
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Plan of
(Bridge)

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Received of Mr. Josephus Ogden
 Jones for the above quantity
 of material for the bridge
 at the rate of \$1.00 per
 cubic foot
 April 14 1844
 John Jackson