

IVY MILL PLACE & RODDEY BRIDGE

Beside Indian Land High School in upper Lancaster County there is a road called River Road that, as its name suggests, takes one in the direction of the Catawba River (though not to the river banks). The name is a recent one applied to what was once a wagon road.

In earlier days the road might have been appropriately named "Turkey Point Road," "Ivy Mill Road, " or "Roddey Bridge Road".

Turkey Point was the name used by early settlers to designate a Catawba Indian village in the Kings Bottoms that was near a very high bluff on the river. The name shows on some early lease plats.

In the early 1850s, four Indian Land planters - Adam Ivy, John M. Doby, Benjamin S. Massey and James Stewart - erected the Turkey Point Merchant Mills, a large grist mill. The grist mill would operate until 1916 when it was swept away by the Great Flood of 1916.

In 1910 the mayor of Rock Hill, John T. Roddey began planning for the building of an iron bridge over the Catawba river. He felt sure Rock Hill would support him. There had never been a bridge over the river that would connect Rock Hill with Charlotte, NC. Only ferries and a railroad trestle. Roddey and State Senator J. H. Stewart visited the closing of the Pleasant Valley school to try to whip up enthusiasm for the project.

Roddey went so far as to tell the crowd (school closings always had big crowds in those days) that Rock Hill was soon to have an electric car (trolley) system and he saw no reason that such couldn't be extended "to the Panhandle via the New Iron Bridge, Belair, Pleasant Valley, Fort Mill and back to Rock Hill." That never happened but the state legislature did appropriate \$5,000 if Rock Hill would raise \$4,000. Roddey got some pledges for several hundred dollars and wrote a personal check for the remainder. In 1912, Roddey proposed that Lancaster County contribute \$3,500 to the project and York County, \$15,000 or more.

The Rock Hill Record commented that the project would "naturally rebound to Rock Hill's benefit. It will open up to Rock Hill a splendid section of Lancaster County, whose trade is valuable. It is also predicted that the Pleasant Valley section of Indian Land would become a part of the proposed "Catawba County" with the court house in Rock Hill." (The proposed new county would have contained Rock Hill, Fort Mill and the upper part of Lancaster County's Indian Land community. The state legislature voted against the creation of a new county.)

The distance from the Roddey Bridge to the "National Road" (now Highway 521) was 1 1/2 miles. Lancaster County people seem to have been much more interested in a bridge across Sugar Creek closer to the North Carolina line (now #160) than they were in a bridge to take them to "the Good Town" of Rock Hill.

The Roanoke Bridge Company, with C. K. Chreitzberg the contracting engineer, was hired to construct Roddey Bridge. A part of their report read, "The piers are founded on the living rock, and cannot sink until bottom drops out of the river." The bridge was located 6/10 of a mile below the mouth of Sugar Creek.

On Sept 9, 1913 it was reported that York County had spent \$17,000 and Lancaster County nothing on the river bridge at "Ivy Hill." The bank on the Lancaster side was so steep that when it was wet "no one can climb it." Lancaster suggested that Rock Hill fix the steep bank itself because the bridge was built to divert trade from Lancaster to Rock Hill. Actually, Lancaster later spent the promised \$3,500 drilling out rock in an attempt to make a passable road.

The Fort Mill Times, Jan 13, 1916, reported that there was talk of moving the Roddey bridge at the Ivy Mill site to Cureton's ferry, below Catawba (below present-day Highway 5 bridge near Van Wyck). The Fort Mill editor hoped that Lancaster would come through and "not hand York another deal like she did with the River Bend (Roddey) bridge." Engineers said it would cost around \$6,000 to move the one-lane bridge to the new site.

On July 17, 1916, the most powerful flood of modern times swept down the Catawba River washing away every bridge on the river, every railway trestle, every water-powered cotton mill situated on the river bank, and all the grist mills were destroyed. Eye-witnesses reported that the two-story wooden Ivy Mill floated out into the current, turned upside down and disintegrated.

Indian Land neighbors went out to the river to watch bales of cotton, watermelons, and all sorts of farm crops float down the river in the turbulent waters. Some daring souls, fearing that it would be a long time before they could again cross the river, gambled and drove over Roddey Bridge's one-lane just before its collapse.