

Beaver Dam Road Bridge over Beaver Dam Creek 1910-1911; Brookhaven, New York *The Great Starke Flood*



Beaver Dam Creek (a.k.a. Fire Place Creek) after 1904 (when telephone poles installed) but probably before 1910. Click for enlarged view.

800 feet north of the bridge.

In 1910, [Augustus Starke](#), whose residence bordered the creek about ½ mile below the bridge, undertook a project to flush the creek (apparently on his own initiative) to make it useable for the dockage of pleasure craft coming into use, and for other small boats. He had a dam and flood gate erected at the bridge site (or perhaps added to the already existing dam/roadway). When the gate was subsequently opened, the great Starke flood ensued.

The rush of water was apparently somewhat effective in clearing the creek channel. But the flow had the unintended consequence of undermined the foundations of the bridge (some have said that the flood made the bridge unuseable).

The matter came before the Brookhaven Village Association*, who decided: "Until this is provided against [destroying the bridge], the use of the flood gate should be discontinued" — a rather genteel, understated expression of civic rebuke. It is said that Starke also had to pay to have the bridge rebuilt.

It was not until 1929 that [Tom Morrow](#), Starke and a few others who owned land along the creek, paid to have the creek dredged. They also paid to have a jetty built to protect the mouth of the creek from filling in.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, it is known from Brookhaven Town records that there was a "lower crossing" of [Beaver Dam creek](#) on the road now known as [Beaver Dam road](#). This crossing, or goin' over, initially was probably just a ford. Eventually, however, bridges were built. While Town of Brookhaven records are ambiguous, the early bridge(s) were likely of simple post and plank construction. However, by the late 19th or early 20th century, pictorial evidence and newspaper accounts indicate that it was a circular stone arch bridge.

The creek itself flows into the Great South Bay about 1 mile to the south. It was a shallow, meandering creek, and not suitable for anything but small boats. It is tidal to a point about



Beaver Dam creek bridge, about 1900 or earlier, looking west. Click for enlarged view.

* See [Brookhaven Village Association Minutes](#) (then known as the Brookhaven Improvement Association), Sept 10, 1910 and August 5, 1911.