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BEHIND THE ROAD: DOBY'S BRIDGE ROAD

From Waxhaw's History

Thousands of people travel Doby's Bridge Road today—but the road exists because a nineteenth-century businessman needed a way for farmers to reach his mill.

The man behind the name was John Miller Doby (1801–1878), a wealthy planter and businessman in the Indian Land section of Lancaster County. Beginning in 1824, Doby obtained leases totaling more than 1,600 acres of Catawba land along the Catawba River. The property included fertile farmland, known as King's Bottoms, near the place where Sugar Creek empties into the river. On this property, J. M. Doby & Company constructed a large water-powered mill that produced flour, cornmeal, and lumber for surrounding farms. The mill was a substantial operation. In 1850, it reportedly held 4,000 bushels of wheat, 12,000 bushels of corn, and 3,000 feet of logs.

However, there was a problem. Farmers needed a dependable way to reach it. Doby's workers cleared a wagon road through the countryside and built a bridge across Sugar Creek. The crossing became known as Doby's Bridge, while the route leading to it became Doby's Road—and eventually Doby's Bridge Road.

The bridge stood about six miles east of Fort Mill near the York/Lancaster County line. Its location made it an important connection between Fort Mill and communities in northern Lancaster County.

Floodwaters repeatedly damaged the wooden crossing. After a major flood carried it away in 1893, a replacement was commissioned the following year. The new bridge was to be 145 feet long and cost \$288, with Lancaster County paying half the expense.

Although the bridge was rebuilt over the years, the devastating flood of 1916 destroyed Doby's mill, then known as Ivy Mill.

By that time, John Doby had been gone for decades. In 1856, he sold his Carolina property and joined a large wagon migration to Arkansas. The families established a

community called Dobyville, where John Doby died in 1878.

The original mill disappeared. The wooden bridges disappeared. Even John Doby moved hundreds of miles away. But the wagon road his workers cleared to bring farmers to the mill remains with us—still carrying his name nearly two centuries later.

Doby's Bridge Road is a modern roadway with its beginning in a mill, a creek, and an old wooden bridge.