

Upper Bridge
River Street, spanning the AuSable River
Keeseville
Essex County (Clinton County)
New York

HAER No. NY-169

HAER
NY,
16-KEVI,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

UPPER BRIDGE
HAER NO. NY-169

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NY,
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2-

Location: River Street spanning the AuSable River on River Street connecting the Village of Keeseville, Town of Chesterfield, Essex County, and the Town of AuSable, Clinton County, New York. Bridge is 900 feet west of the intersection of Mill Hill Road and U. S. Route 9.

UTM: N 4928380
E 620390
New York State Quad: Keeseville

Date of Construction: 1878.

Engineer/
Builder: Murray, Dougal and Company of Milton, Pennsylvania.

Present Owners: Essex and Clinton Counties.

Present Use: One lane vehicular bridge.

Significance: The Upper Bridge is one of three nineteenth century bridges within the Village of Keeseville. A two-span, pin connected, high Pratt, iron truss bridge, it is one of the oldest wrought iron truss bridges in the Adirondack/Champlain Region. It was fabricated and erected by Murray, Dougal and Company of Milton, Pennsylvania. Although primarily a railroad car manufacturer, the company built bridges from the early 1870's to 1880. Today, bridges known to be built by Murray, Dougal and Company are extremely rare. This bridge is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and has been designated an American Society of Civil Engineers National Civil Engineering Landmark along with two other Keeseville bridges.

Project Information: The documentation of the Upper Bridge was prepared by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), National Park Service, during the Summer of 1987 for the New York State Historic Bridges Recording Project. This project was sponsored by the New York State Department of Transportation and under the supervision of Eric DeLony, Chief & Principal Architect, HAER. This report was written by Andrew Cole and Charles Scott. When citing this report, please credit the Historic American Engineering Record and the authors.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The Village of Keeseville is situated in the northeastern part of New York's Adirondack Park, about five miles west of Lake Champlain. The site for this community was specifically chosen to take advantage of the water power afforded by the falls and rapids on this particular stretch of the AuSable River. The AuSable River is formed by the confluence of its East and West Branches at the Village of AuSable Forks some fifteen miles to the southwest of Keeseville. These two rivers have their headwaters situated further into the park and are fed by the many tributaries that originate on the slopes of New York's highest mountains.

HISTORY OF RIVER CROSSINGS AT THE UPPER BRIDGE SITE

The first bridge crossing the AuSable River at the site of the present iron truss bridge was erected during the early 1840's. This first bridge had four queen post truss spans, each approximately 50 feet in length, carried on stone-filled timber crib piers. This bridge was washed away in a flood on September 30, 1856. The second structure erected at this site was a 215 foot timber Howe truss covered bridge which, when completed, was reputed to be the longest single-span bridge over the AuSable River. This bridge lasted for nineteen years until the "Winter of 1875," when, as local newspapers reported, a combination of heavy snows and strong winds caused it to collapse.

A NEW IRON BRIDGE FOR THE UPPER KEESEVILLE CROSSING

After two years had passed without a crossing at the upper bridge location, some of the residents of Keeseville showed open discouragement that a new bridge had not been erected after the collapse of the covered bridge. On March 14, 1877, over a year after the loss of the covered bridge, a columnist for the Keeseville section of the Plattsburgh Republican remarked cynically that "the time was when there were two [highway] bridges across the river [at Keeseville]." Seven months later on October 6, 1877, another article in the same newspaper commented that a bridge builder had been in the village proposing to erect a wrought iron bridge and that "it is to be hoped the [town] commissioners [of Chesterfield and AuSable] will not let this chance go by nor let any selfish interests stand in the way of the public good." It seems reasonable to assume that some type of controversy had kept a new bridge from being erected. By October 20, however, progress towards replacing the upper bridge had finally been made. Perhaps aroused or stung by the public criticism, the highway commissioners of the two towns bordering the AuSable River met, decided to rebuild the upper bridge, and announced that proposals for the bridge and pier should be sent to George C. Wilkinson, a highway commissioner for the Town of AuSable, on or before October 27 when a contract would be let.

William H. Law, an engineer and agent of Murray, Dougal and Company, delivered his company's proposal on October 26. The proposal read:

We propose to furnish all the materials and labor and erect, ready for travel, the super-structure of a wrought iron bridge, according to the following specifications: the specifications for the pier now in the hands of the commissioners, for the sum of three thousand, nine hundred and twenty dollars.

Location of bridge across the AuSable River between the towns of Keeseville and AuSable: Extreme length of super-structure, about 214 feet. Width of roadway (16) sixteen feet. No. of panels in each truss (8) eight. Height of truss from center of chord pins (16 ft.) sixteen feet.

The longitudinal stringers to be of white pine twelve inches deep by three inches thick and spaced about two feet apart on top of floor beams. The floor plank to be of hemlock, three inches thick and securely spiked to the stringers.

The wheel guards to be five inches square, of hemlock and bolted to the floor with half inch bolts.

The iron work to receive one coat of metallic paint before leaving the workshop and two coats after the bridge is erected.

All of the material is to be of the best quality and the whole superstructure completed in a good, substantial and workmanlike manner.

Murray, Dougal and Company of Milton, Pennsylvania, was awarded the contract for erecting the new Upper Bridge and promptly sent a team of their own workmen to Keeseville where, by early December of 1877, they were at work selecting the stones needed to build the center pier. These men probably supervised two local masons, A. and J. Dowling, who had been awarded the contract to construct the abutments and stone pier. By the beginning of January, 1878, water had been released from behind the dam just downstream from the bridge site so that the construction of the piers could begin. Erection of the bridge did not begin before June 8, 1878, when the local newspaper reported that the engineer representing Murray, Dougal and Company was expected to arrive in Keeseville to begin erection of the bridge.

Murray, Dougal and Company erected a bridge that was ornamental as well as practical. Although the bridge was designed as a simple Pratt truss bridge, it was adorned with iron finials and intricate cast iron lattice portal bracing, with elaborate builder's plates mounted at each portal. One of the most distinctive features of the bridge is the inclined end post cover plate. Instead of using a standard flat plate, the Murray, Dougal and Company engineer chose to install a cover plate with a single raised corrugation running longitudinally through the center. Other truss members, such as the upper lateral struts, are imprinted with "Phoenix, Phila.," and were probably supplied by the Phoenix Iron Company.

The Upper Bridge is 218 feet in length, and sits atop a 30-foot high pier. The bridge has an out-to-out width of 16 feet, 2 inches, a center line of trusses width of 17 feet, 2 inches, and a curb-to-curb width of 15 feet, 4 inches. Each of the two 108-foot long spans has eight truss panels, with inclined end posts. Individual panels are 16 feet high and 13 feet, 5 inches wide. The depth of the tapered plate floor beams is 8.5 inches at the ends and 16.5 inches at the center. The original wooden stringers and deck have been replaced by steel stringers and an open grate steel deck. A low chain link fence is attached to the pipe handrails. The roadway through the bridge has a vertical clearance of 13 feet 9 inches at the centerline and 11 feet 6 inches at the edges of the portal bracing. The bridge has a rated load capacity of six tons. The most recent survey of traffic using the bridge, conducted in 1983, counted a daily average of 1,980 vehicles. The bridge has begun to show serious signs of wear. According to a 1983 inspection report prepared by the New York State Department of Transportation, the top chord members are "overstressed" which has caused "rippling" in the top plates. Also, the pier footing displays some spalling at the waterline.

MURRAY, DOUGAL AND COMPANY

The firm of Murray, Dougal and Company of Milton, Pennsylvania was established in 1864 by Samuel W. Murray, William P. Dougal, Charles C. McCormick, and John McCleery for the purpose of building all types of railroad freight cars. Also known as the Milton Car Works, Murray, Dougal and Company was recognized as a leading producer of tank cars for the fledgling petroleum industry concentrated in western Pennsylvania. Samuel Murray was a pioneer in tank car building, having received the first United States patent for a railroad tank car in the 1860's.

Changes in management occurred in the middle of the 1870's. John McCleery, who was a lawyer and had served in the Union Army during the Civil War, withdrew from the company in 1875, for unknown reasons. In 1878, Charles McCormick left and a few months later so did William Dougal. Despite the changes in management, the name of the firm remained Murray, Dougal and Company.

During the 1870's Murray, Dougal and Company began fabricating and erecting iron bridges. It is not known exactly when or why the company began this type of work or how successful they were in competing for contracts. Bridge contract announcements in engineering periodicals during the late 1870's mention bridges being erected by Murray, Dougal and Company in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Connecticut. During the late 1870's when the company was both erecting bridges and building railroad cars, the Milton plant employed as many as 400 people, but no records delineate how many worked in the bridge shops and how many built railroad cars.

Today bridges erected by Murray, Dougal and Company are very rare in comparison to the more familiar names of the King Iron, Wrought Iron or Berlin Iron Bridge companies. One of the reasons for the paucity of surviving Murray, Dougal and Company bridges is because a fire destroyed the bridge shop, the car

shop, and a large part of Milton, Pennsylvania on May 14, 1880 and the company did not rebuild the bridge shops. Again, no records survive to indicate why the company did not resume building bridges. Perhaps this line of business was smaller, less profitable, and more competitive than railroad car manufacturing. The Milton, Pennsylvania car works plant was rebuilt and the company continued to operate between 1880 and 1899 under the name Murray, Dougal, and Company, Limited. In March of the latter year, Murray, Dougal and Company was one of thirteen railroad car manufacturers joined together to form the American Car and Foundry Company. With headquarters in Earth City, Missouri, this company continues to operate the Milton plant for the production of railroad cars.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

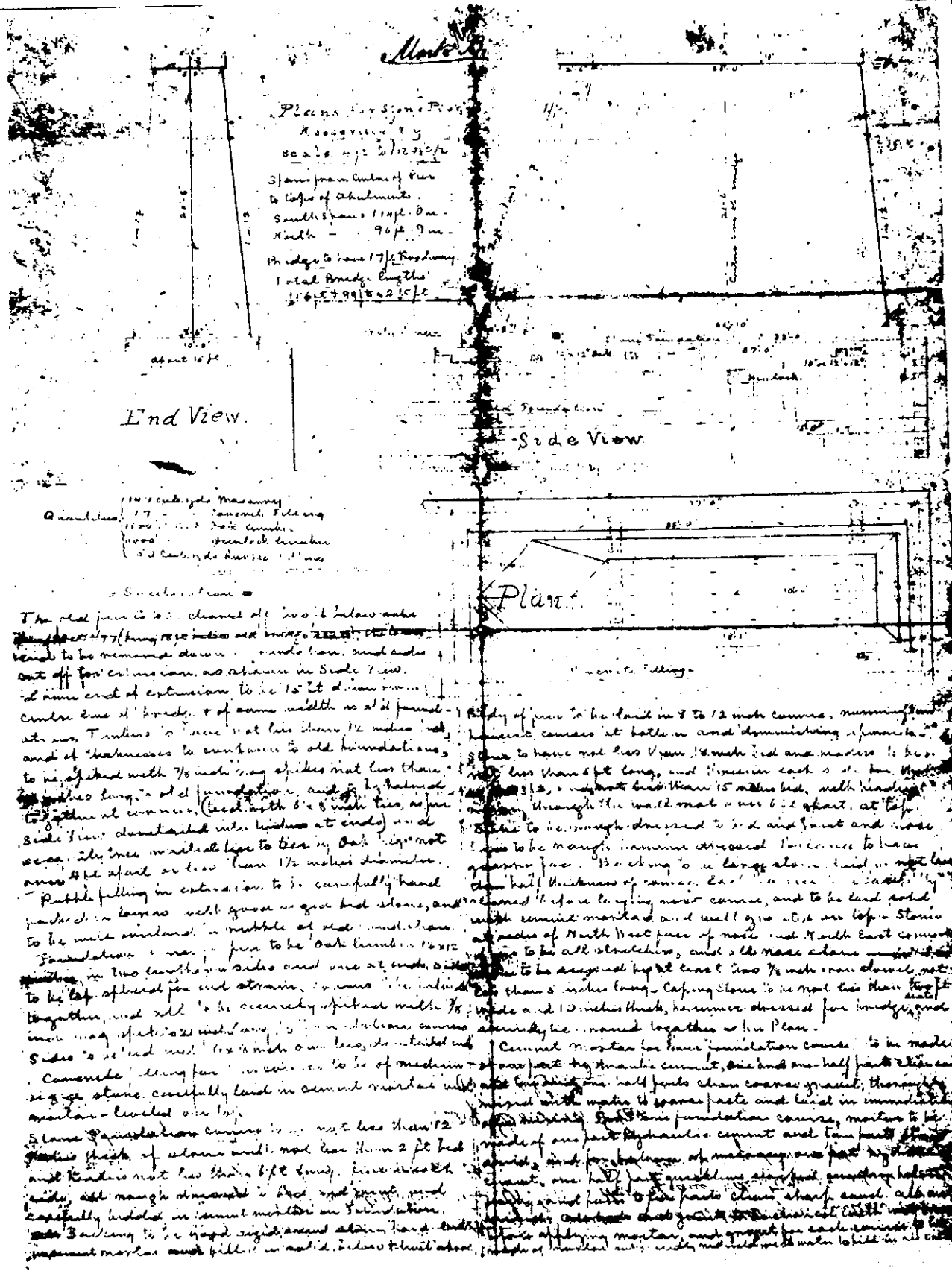
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APPENDIX

The following documents pertaining to the Upper Bridge were made available for photocopying by Mr. Arthur Cumber of Clintonville, New York. The documents were bound by a wrapper with "Upper Bridge Papers" written on one side.

Plans and specifications for stone pier, undated.	Appendix pp.1-2
Proposal from M.C. McKenzie for pier work, Oct. 10, 1877.	" p.3
Proposal from Hughes Brothers for pier work, undated.	" p.4
Specifications and strain sheet, Oct. 26, 1877.	" pp.5-6
Signed contract, Oct. 29, 1877.	" p.7
Bill for payment, Sept. 25, 1878.	" pp.8-9
Letter accepting counter offer for payment, Oct. 11, 1878.	" p.10
Letter acknowledging payment in full, Oct. 18, 1878.	" p.11
Wrapper for "Upper Bridge Papers."	" p.12

from the
ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York



from the
ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York

It is distinctly understood in this agreement that if any addition is made to this specification that the work shall be paid for at its actual cost. It further states that if any reduction should be made in the amount of work mentioned in these specifications the value of such work shall be deducted from the contract.

Murray Douglas & Co.
per [Signature]

C
B
A
A
B
C

From the
ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York

Greenville Oct 23 1899

James of Richmond
Greenville S. C.

Recd a stone pin at upper bridge site
according to plan & specifications submitted
by Mr. Long on condition that foundation
is as represented to that the same
have called drawn off & made work
to be done for the same of sufficient
foundational substance.

~~W. B. Moore~~
W. B. Moore

Amable Clintonville
N.Y.

To the Commissioners of the
Towns of Amable and Westport

We will do the work and furnish
the material to build and erect
a pier in the River as shown
in plans and according to specifications
for the sum of twelve hundred and
no/100 ⁰⁰

yours respectfully
Hughes Brothers

Having had a large experience in
such building we feel confident
that we could give satisfaction
if awarded the job. we think that
could be done at less cost made
to specifications and state of work that
would enable us to lower our proposal
and not materially injure the strength
or safety of the work.

hoping that you will excuse
us for offering our opinion in
the matter we remain yours
Hughes Brothers

From the
ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York

Contract, made and concluded this *twenty ninth* day of *October*,

A. D. one thousand eight hundred and *77* between *the Board of Commissioners of Ausable & Chesterfield State of New York.*

of the first part, and *S. W. MURRAY, WM. P. DOUGAL, & W. MCCORMACK*, partners, doing business in the firm name of *MURRAY, DOUGAL & CO.*, of Milton, County of Northumberland, and State of Pennsylvania, U. S., of the second part, is as follows:

The said party of the second part hereby agree to furnish the material and do all the work necessary in the construction and erection of a *substructure and superstructure of a wrought Iron Truss Bridge* to be built between the above mentioned Towns,

in accordance with Specifications hereto attached, marked *B*, which is made a part of this contract.

In consideration of which said *Board of Commissioners of Ausable and Chesterfield* agree to pay to said *MURRAY, DOUGAL & CO.*, for said *substructure and superstructure \$9200* for *the wrought Iron bridge.*

The consideration money aforesaid to be paid after the work herein contemplated is completed and accepted by *the Board of Commissioners of said Towns of Ausable and Chesterfield, State of N. Y.*

The said bridge to be completed on or before the *1st Day of March 1878*

Witness the hands and seals of the parties hereto, the day and year first aforesaid.

Geo. B. Wilkinson
L. J. Warner
Curry Arnold
Richard Hoag
David Emerson
Patrick Davery

The above contract approved.

from the
ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York

from the
ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York

The vertical posts to be made of iron bars of square cross, lattice with $1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ flat bars
pinned at each intersection, and riveted, and bolted at each end,
and prepared in the same manner as described by Gordon's Journal.

The diagonal web members to be made of round iron, and secured to the chords by suitable eyes, spaced on
the ends, and of the following dimensions, viz:

First Panel (center) Main Span 2nd 1/2 inch diameter; Center, length, diam.	
Second Panel	2 - 2 1/2 x 1/2
Third Panel	2 - 2 1/2 x 1/2
Fourth Panel	2 - 2 1/2 x 1/2
Fifth Panel	2 - 2 1/2 x 1/2
Sixth Panel	2 - 2 1/2 x 1/2

The Floor Beams to be of 12 bars of angle of Web for strength in extension. Each bar to be spaced
web, secured to the bottom chords and braced by means of 3/4 inch rods. Carrying capacity 70 tons.

The overhead bracing to consist of one I beam at each panel point and braced
diagonally with 5/8 inch rods, adjustable by nuts at each end.

All adjoining joints to be placed or otherwise fitted to a true bearing surface. All rivet holes to be accurately gauged and to
come fair with each other; the rivets to be Burke's, or of equal quality, and of proper size to leave the best work; the rivets to
be driven to fill the holes and have full bearing on heads.

All exposed plates and turned surfaces to be coated with white lead and tallow before shipping.

The iron employed in tension to be soft and strong, made by rolling and re-rolling refined bars, and manufactured with
equal refinement to the case in which it is required.

The longitudinal stringers to be of White Pine. Timber is to be made up by three
inch thick and spaced about 12 1/2 inch apart on top of the floor beams.

The Floor plates to be of Ash Grove 3/4 inch thick and
securely spiked to the stringers.

The Wind Girders to be 6 inch square. of Hemlock and bolted to the floor with half
inch bolts.

The iron used to receive the end of metallic joints before leaving the workshop, and used on the
bridge to avoid.

All the material to be of the best quality and the whole superstructure completed in a good, substantial and workmanlike
manner.

Respectfully Yours,
MURRAY, DOUGAL & CO.,
Civil & Mechanical Engineers of Steel



Wilton Car and Bridge Works.
Murray, Dougal & Co.,
ENGINEERS OF
WROUGHT IRON BRIDGES.
MILTON, PENNA.

Plan 16, Specifications for an Improved Wrought Iron 2 1/2' 1/4' Bridge.

To the Honorable, Board of Highway Commissioners of Ohio and Charles Lee, Esq.,
Cincinnati, Ohio, October 26th 1877.

We propose to furnish all the material and labor and erect, ready for travel, the superstructure of a Wrought Iron
Bridge, according to the following specifications, measurements and the specifications for your use in the same
of your measures, for the sum of Five Thousand five hundred thirty dollars, 530
Twenty of Bridge across Lake Erie, between the towns of Riverside and
Extreme length of bridge structure about 210 paces or less
Number of spans 12
Extreme length of each span about 107 feet, 10 inches or less
Width of roadway in the clear 16 feet 10 inches

Width of roadway in the clear 16 feet 10 inches
Number of Panels 7 1/2. Each 2 1/2 feet. Eight 1/2
Height of a Panel from center of Chord Iron 16 feet
Depth to carry 2500 pounds per lineal foot with safety factor of four, U.S.I.
The 2 1/2' 6' 1/2' rods to be made of long, straight, hard, and one plate 1 1/2' x 3/8'
with 3/8' eye bars to be made of the same quality, having a vertical curve in each chord
of 10 1/2' square inches at the center, reducing towards each end in proportion to
the strand tension, (See plan attached)

The same chord, riveted to the ends of the flat bars in such manner, three of three quarters
3/4' rods with 3/8' eye bars, together of one inch thick at the center, and tapering
towards the ends to 1/2' eye bars, riveted to the strand tension.
The vertical curve at the joints to be 8 1/2' per cent, greater than the body of the bars. All the holes to be bored perfectly true
and all the pins to be turned to fit the holes.

~~Wm. H. Laro, Engineer.~~ S. W. Murray; R. M. Langmore, Sec. and Treas.; Wm. H. Laro, Engineer.

*Ed. since writing the foregoing
my name is now Ed. Laro
and my name, which is now
Ed. Laro, will be changed
to Ed. Laro, Esq. and
my name will be
Ed. Laro, Esq.*

Office of the *Milton Car Works.*
Murray, Douglas & Co. Limited
Proprietors.

Milton, Pa. Sept 25th 1878.

Commissioners of the Towns of Ansville & Hunterfield N.Y.
Kennerly N.Y.

Gent. Enclosed please find Bill for Iron
Bridge and Substructure. And also extra work on Pier amount-
ing to \$4631.25 which we hope will be found correct.

You will observe that we have made no charge for work
done on abutments, although we think we are fairly entitled
to extra compensation by the terms of the contract, as for
the iron railing which we also consider an extra.

As we ~~now~~ have recently taken a large order for Cars
(payable wholly in stock) we are needing money badly
and will be very glad indeed to receive a remittance in
part or in whole at your earliest convenience.

As you are aware (owing to the unavoidable delay in com-
pleting the work) it is almost a year since the greater
part of the money was received, and our present impression
is that at best we will come out behindhand on the entire
job. We state this however, not as a matter of complaint
but merely as an apology for requesting a prompt
remittance. Hoping that our work and business inter-
-course will commend us to your further patronage
we remain,

Respectfully Yours
Murray, Douglas & Co.

ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York
From the

Milton, Va., Sept 25th 1878
 The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Seattle &
 the Citizens Committee of Clintonville, New York,
J. MURRAY, DOUGAL & Co. Jr.
 Milton Car and Bridge Works,
 MANUFACTURERS OF
 ALL KINDS OF RAIL ROAD FREIGHT and WINE CARS, RAIL ROAD and Car FURTINGS and CASTINGS,
 IRON BRIDGES, STEAM BOILERS AND OIL TANKS.

*Of One Iron Truss Bridge and
 Substructure erected across the Susquehanna River
 under Contract and Specifications dated
 the 29th day of October 1874*

		13920.00	
<i>Of extra work on foundation of Pier as per report rendered by E. McLean Esq. as follows.</i>			
16,000 ft of Lumber Ball.	\$220.00	120.00	
Iron for Bolts	9.60	6.40	
Labor framing crib	92.88	61.92	
removing old pier, &c.	319.00		
Of extra trip to and from Knoxville	20.92		
Of extra Seattle &c.	10.38	12.34	
Removing old crib and putting in new one	300.00	200.00	
Engine time and board 3 mos.	300.00	78.40	
			11275.98
<i>Let the estimated cost of putting in extension as follows.</i>			
5500 ft Lumber Ball.	1100.00		
Iron for Bolts	3.20		
Labor framing	30.96		
Removing old crib to a point 2 ft below low water	300.00		
Put putting in extension	300.00		
Engine time & Board 1 month	100.00	56.16	711.62
Total			14631.62

From the
ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
 CLINTONVILLE, NEW YORK

S. W. Murray
Office of the *Milton Car Works.*

Murray, Dougal & Co.
Proprietors.

Milton, Pa. Oct 1st 1878

George C. Wilkinson Esq. Commissioner
Kennettville N. Y.

Dear Sir, Your favor of the 8th inst. to
Mr. H. Law is duly at hand. I soley would say
that we will accept ~~from~~ forty four hundred
(*4400.⁰⁰*) dollars in full of all demands from
the towns of Ausable and Chesterfield.

Several days ago we sent you a check for thirty
one *100* (*31.⁰⁰*) dollars, in full for your bill, which
we presume you have already received.

Mr. Lean was supplied with money to pay all bills
contracted by him for work on bridge and masonry
and we would like to know whether all his bills have
been settled. Please inform us when you next write.

We settled with him up to the first of this month
and paid him in full and he is no longer in our
employ. He made no return to us of the time you
say he took to make survey &c. of village. It is some-
ly necessary for us to add that his services were not
satisfactory, and we consequently dispensed with them as
soon as possible. We hope our future business intercourse
with you people will result more satisfactorily all around.

Respectfully *Murray, Dougal & Co.*

ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York
from the

J. W. Murray

~~_____~~
Office of the *Milton Car Works.*

Murray, Douglas & Co. Limited
Proprietors

Milton, Pa. Oct 18th 1878

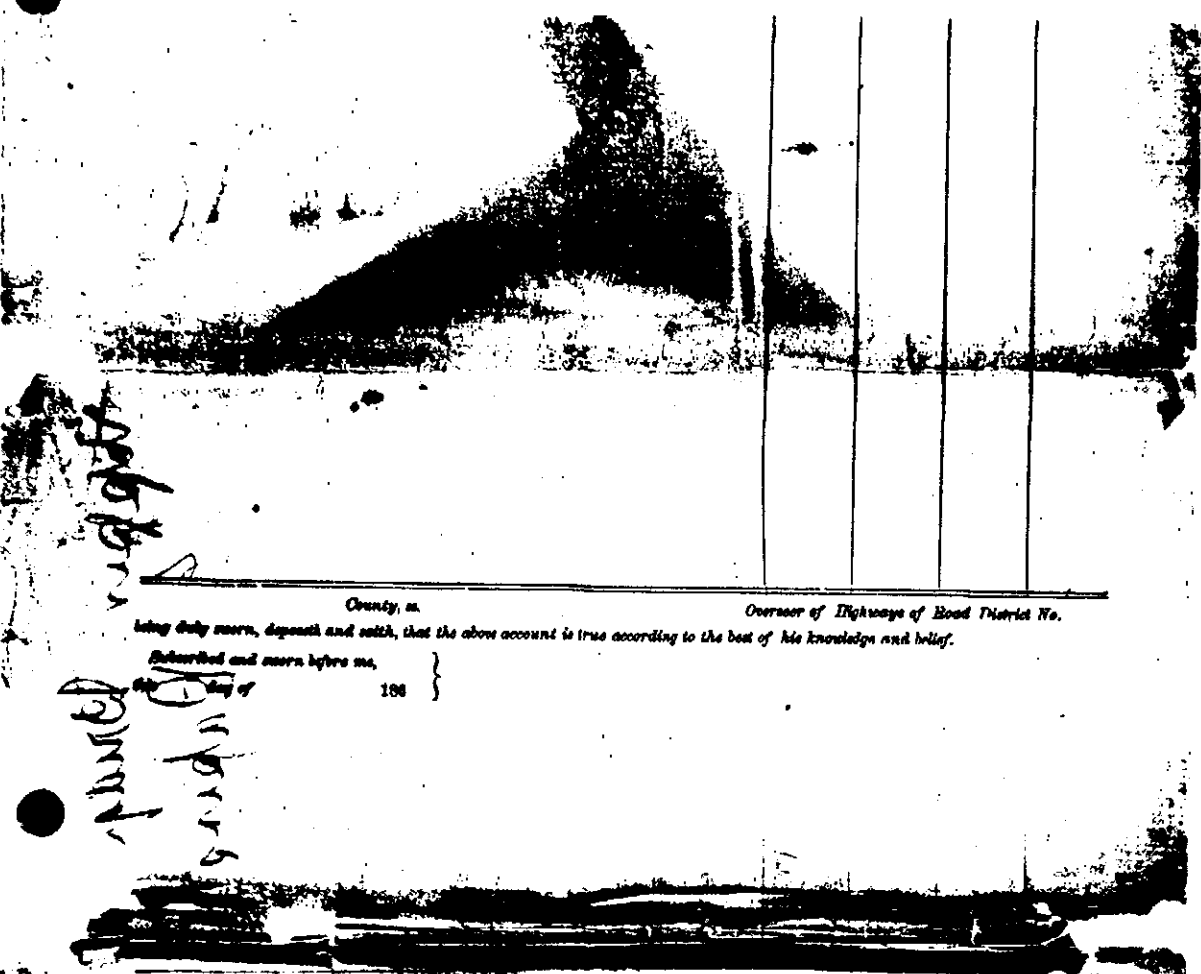
Mr. George C. McKim

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 16th inst is
duly at hand, also the draft for \$2200.⁰⁰ to which
you refer in your letter. This draft together with
one for same amount received from Mr. Hervey
we accept in payment in full for the Newville
Bridge and work done on substructure. And
have receipted for same accordingly. We
tender our thanks to all the parties for the interest
they have taken in the matter and for promptness
in payment and hope that we may have further
dealings with you people, when we shall try to
make up the losses we have sustained on this job.

Respectfully Yours
Murray, Douglas & Co.

From the
ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Clintonville, New York



County, of _____ Overseer of Highways of Road District No. _____

being duly sworn, depose and testify, that the above account is true according to the best of his knowledge and belief.

Subscribed and sworn before me,

1908

Handwritten notes:
 10/5/08
 10/15/08
 10/20/08

Handwritten notes:
 If shown
 10/15/08
 10/20/08

Grand Jurors.

Vertical text:
 District of Columbia
 Form of

Vertical text:
 Overseer of Highways

Handwritten signature:
 [Signature]

**From the
 ARTHUR CUMBER HISTORICAL COLLECTION
 Clintonville, New York**