



# PASSAIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Museum and Headquarters  
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## CLINTON BRIDGE

The first bridge across the Chasm of the Passaic Falls was placed there by Timothy B. Crane, owner of the property around the Passaic Falls, on September 30, 1827. Crane named it the "Clinton Bridge", after De Witt Clinton of New York.

On this same day Sam Patch made a leap from the rocks nearly 70 feet high into the basin below. Sam received considerable publicity for his high jumping and later tried Niagara Falls and Genesee Falls. On November 6, 1829 he jumped from Genesee Falls from a height of over one hundred feet and on November 13, 1829 made a jump of 120 feet which turned out to be his last, for Sam was dead when he rose to the surface of the water.

# PASSAIC FALLS BRIDGES

by  
E.M.Graf

No part of Paterson holds a more interesting past then does the section around the Passaic Falls. A complete record of events near the Falls would fill many books.

The first record known of white men to visit the Falls is given in an account of two Labadist missionaries in March 1680, who with an Indian guide came up the Passaic River to the present city of Passaic and then on foot to the Falls. It is quite possible that others had seen the Falls before this, for the Acquackanonk tract was secured from the Indians in April 1678, and probably some of the patentees were over the ground which extended up to the Falls.

The basin was the happy hunting grounds for the Indians who came here to fish, for at times the basin was thick with fish of all kinds. During the spawning season large numbers of Shad and the Sturgeon, up to 200 pounds have been recorded, would leave the ocean to spawn in fresh water, and not being able to pass up above the Falls would mass together in great numbers in the basin. Early accounts say that the Indians could pick all they wanted out of the water from their canoes.

The wonders of the Falls was advertised by Abraham Godwin in the New York newspapers as early as 1770 in which he stated that he ran a stage from Pawles Hook to the Falls and also maintained a good Inn nearby. It was considered quite a wonderful spot to visit until the Niagara Falls was made available to visitors by easier modes of transportation.

In this short report of the Falls it is intended to give a short record of the bridges thrown across the Chasm.

By deed of August 14, 1827 the property around the Falls came into the hands of Timothy B. Crane, who immediately set to work of placing a bridge across the Chasm and improveing the grounds for visitors. He also built a building for refreshments which for many years was known as the "Cottage on the Cliff."

The bridge was placed across the Chasm on September 30, 1827, but was not completed and opened to the public for some months later.

He named this first bridge over the Chasm the "Clinton Bridge", being a great admirer of De Witt Clinton of New York. Crane held the Falls grounds until 1839, when it was sold to Peter Archdeacon.

Archdeacon greatly improved the property and placed the second bridge over the Chasm in 1844. This bridge somewhat similar to the first but did not have the arch shape at the bottom.

The property next came into the hands of John Ryle who placed the third bridge. This was a paneled bridge, open at the top, the first two bridges being covered over. All three bridges were built of wood.

This bridge remained until it was declared unsafe by Mr Ryle in March 1868. Mr Ryle stated that the bridge would be replaced by an iron bridge and open so that not to hide a view to the Falls.

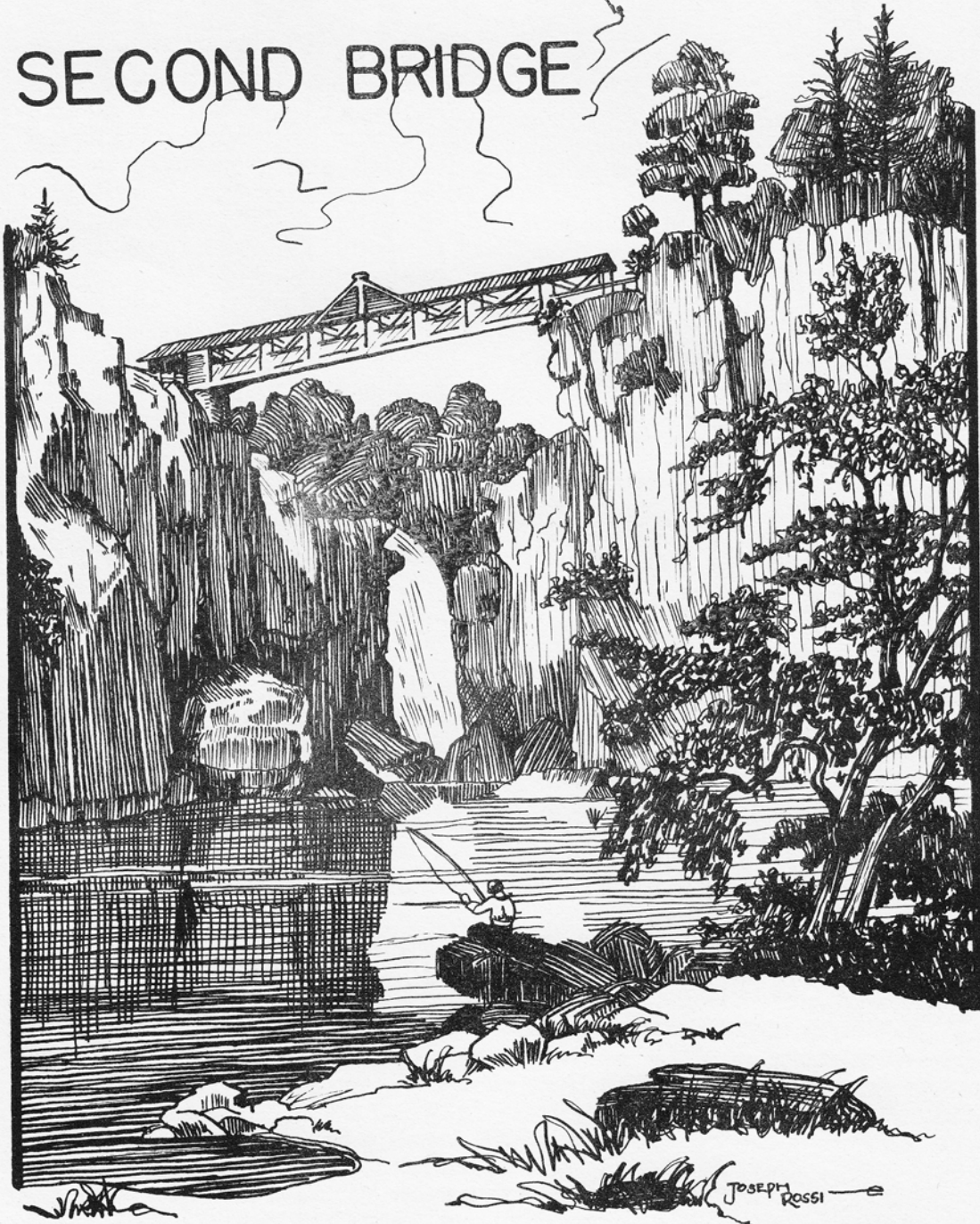
The first iron, and fourth bridge to cross the Chasm was placed there July 2, 1868, and was eighty-five feet long, and was built by the Watson Machine Company, builders of the Post patent bridges.

This bridge remained until the present or fifth bridge was set in place during 1888 and was opened to the public in December 1888. This bridge is 125 feet long.

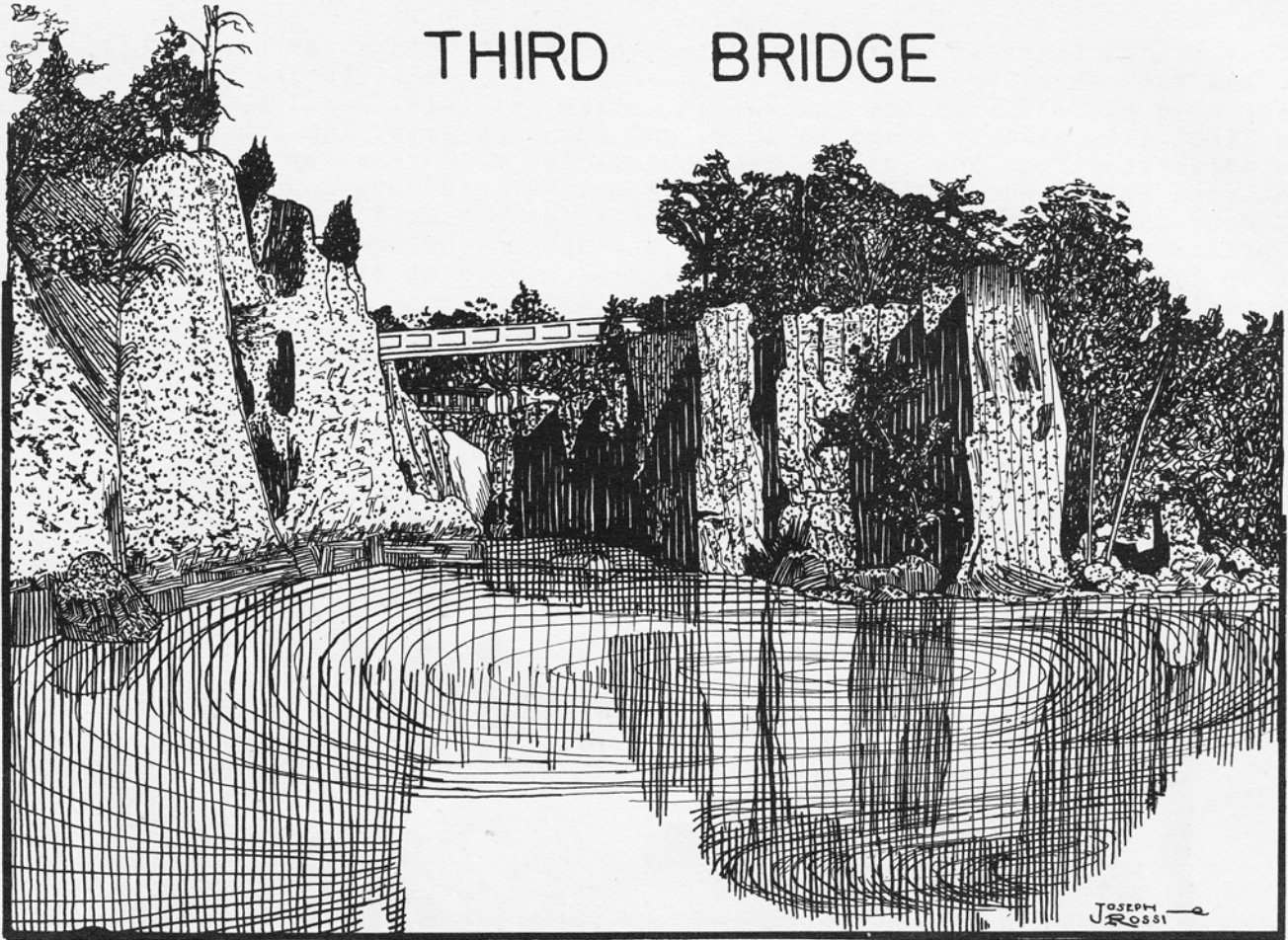
For many years it was the amusement center of this section. Here fireworks were first displayed by Crane in 1829, and for many years the 4th of July displays were celebrated from the Falls. Many thousands came from far to witness many a tight rope walker who would walk from the bridge to Morris mountain over the basin with over one hundred feet of air below them. Many risked their lives jumping from the bridge and a few were killed in the attempt. The balloon "Queen of the Air" was sent up from the Falls and landed near Eighth avenue at Sixtythird street, New York on August 6, 1858.

It was a fine place, summer or winter, for many years, but today-- WELL possibly someone with a little civic pride will again turn this interesting spot back in a condition it deserves.

## SECOND BRIDGE



# THIRD BRIDGE



# FOURTH BRIDGE

