

History and Timetable of the St. Albans – Nitro Bridge (aka Sattes Bridge, Toll Bridge, Dick Henderson Bridge)

Construction was started on Feb. 16, 1934 and less than 9 months later, the grand opening was held on Nov. 12, 1934.

Built at a cost of \$320,000. A loan and grant of \$410,000 was approved, but the difference was not issued. The span had a 20 foot roadway and a 4 foot 3 inch walkway. It was built on 2 concrete piers with ~ 70 feet above pool stage of the Kanawha river.

Here is how it all happened:

1925 - The first agitation for the bridge was started in 1925 when a committee was appointed to investigate the project by the St. Albans business men's association.

1926 Rights-of-way for the bridge approaches were owned by the St. Albans- Nitro Bridge company, of which Nathan Poffenbarger is president. The company made the original application for a permit to construct the bridge, and permission was granted to it by the war department in 1926. Construction was delayed, however, by the slump in business and the permit was allowed to expire.

1927 - A movement was started to build four bridges across the Kanawha from Point Pleasant to the upper reaches of the river.

May 1928 - Construction of the bridge was authorized by the United States engineer in May, 1928.

1930 - General Contracting company was building the bridge across the Kanawha at Chelyan, one of the four projects originally planned. The company moved to St. Albans in 1930 and progress was interrupted by the depression.

1931 - the legislature passed the act creating the state bridge commission which continued the plan to build the four bridges.

1932 - The first span completed was the Shadle bridge at Point Pleasant in 1932. In the same year the legislature terminated the commission's existence and transferred its duties to the state road commission.

1933 A five-million dollar federal grant was made for roads and includes funds for the St. Albans span. The St. Albans bridge project was the first for which application was made to the public works administration at Washington under the loan gift plan of financing, according to D.N. Mohler, attorney for the town of St. Albans. Originally he said the application was for \$425,000, but \$15,000 was cut from the estimate by the administration. Revenue bonds, the

attorney declared, will be issued by the City of St. Albans and given to the government for the portion of the loan which must be repaid. In 20 years, he estimated, the bridge will have earned sufficient money to retire the bonds.

The expired permit to build the bridge, owned by the St. Albans – Nitro Bridge company, was renewed about three months ago. Under present plans, Mr. Mohler said, the company's rights-of-way will be purchased by the city from the federal fund.

Jan. 9, 1934 Charleston Daily Mail - Contracts totaling \$254,012 for both the substructure and superstructure across the Kanawha River were awarded Tuesday by the town of St. Albans. It was announced by D.N. Mohler, attorney for the town. The substructure contract went to E.R. Mills, of Charleston, for \$95,405. Superstructure work will be done by the McClintic – Marshall Company of Bethlehem, Pa., for \$158,607. Between 50 & 75 men will to be put to work later this week when the substructure works gets underway.

Jan. 11, 1934 Charleston Daily Mail – The appointment of six safety directors to conduct a safety campaign among civil works administration workers on Kanawha County projects had been announced Wednesday.

The inspectors are B.J. Smith, J.W. Mitchell, J.D. Overly and Max Mitchell, of Charleston; E.R. Webb, of Burnwell, and Robert Dickson of Reed. The campaign to instruct CWA workers in safety methods is now underway.

The names of eligible workmen to be employed on the new bridge over the Kanawha river at St. Albans are being compiled as the first step in the construction of the structure under funds provided by the civil works administration. So far as possible, the workers are to be residents of St. Albans.

Jan. 12, 1934 Charleston daily Mail – A number of St. Albans residents have registered with the federal re-employment service for work on the new bridge over the Kanawha River there when its construction begins. Between 50 and 75 skilled and unskilled workers will be employed on the project, which has been authorized under the civil works administration. The workers for the most part will be residents of St. Albans.

Feb. 16, 1934 Construction started

March 29, 1934 Charleston Gazette – In an article entitled “Grade Crossings” about the city of Charleston ... How St. Albans plans ahead is seen in the construction of its under-pass on Third street, that leads to the Kanawha river bridge. Those who were instrumental in getting the under-pass constructed had a further and finer objective. That was the St. Albans – Sattes bridge. The under-pass was started May 1, 1930 but it was planned long before that. The bridge came along nearly four years later, construction starting Feb. 16, 1934. The other St. Albans under-pass is at Washington street, the over-grade pass on Route 60.

April 19, 1934 Charleston Gazette – Mayor W.H. Miller and city Clerk O.M. Slater today signed the first PWA bonds, totaling \$105,000 for the construction of the St. Albans – Sattes bridge. The federal PWA grant totals \$328,000.

City Solicitor C.M. Moore is to deliver the bonds in person tomorrow to the federal reserve officials at Richmond, Va. The bonds are to be accredited to the Bank of St. Albans through which payments are to be made.

April 26, 1934 Charleston Gazette – C.D. Jarvis, 35, of Piedmont road, remained in a critical condition last night at the St. Francis hospital, where he is being treated for a fractured skull. Jarvis and John Thulis, 50 Truslow street, were struck by the apron of a steam shovel Tuesday at the St. Albans – Sattes bridge dam site.

Thulis suffered a fractured leg and body bruises. The men had gone to St. Albans to seek jobs. They were watching the construction operations at the time of the accident.

Nov. 4, 1934 Charleston Gazette - Citizens of St. Albans, Nitro, Dunbar, South Charleston, Winfield and surrounding sections will join November 12 to celebrate the formal opening of the new St. Albans-Nitro bridge, the first public works project to be started in the state and the first to be completed. Elaborate plans are being made for the celebration by a half dozen committees. They include a mammoth parade to the bridge spanning program featured by an address by Governor Kump. The bridge opening will mark the close of ten years' efforts on the part of leading citizens of the various towns

J.V.R. Skinner, secretary of the Coal River Mining company, is to be temporary chairman. He will present Maj. Francis W. Turner, director of the state department of public welfare, who is to be chairman of the meeting.

Major Turner will introduce Mayor W.H. Miller, of St. Albans, who in turn, will present the mayors of Nitro, Dunbar, South Charleston, Winfield and Charleston, who are to speak briefly. The public works administration is to be represented by M. L. O'Neale, engineer for West Virginia.

Addresses will also be heard from W. L. Lynch, member of the St. Albans city council and a business man who started the movement to build the bridge and who has been prominent in promotion of the work; J. E. Greiner, head of the Greiner company of Baltimore, which designed the bridge; J.K. Knorle, engineer; J. W. Richardson, federal engineer; Maj. John F. Conklin, United States engineer; W. P. Wilson, Col. J.H. Long, and Van A Bittner, members of the state PWA advisory committee; D.N. Mohler, St. Albans city attorney; Houston G. Young, early promoter of the bridge; J. Reynolds, construction engineer of the McClintic- Marshall company; O.M. Slater, city clerk; the Rev. A. E. O'Dell, Oak Hill Methodist minister.

The bridge is to be delivered by representatives of the McClintic- Marshall company and E. R. Mills, contractor, to the public works administration. Engineer O'Neale will, in turn, present the bridge to the gathering and Mayor Miller will accept it. Then will follow the governor's address. The bridge will be free all day November 12. At midnight it will become a toll bridge. **The toll charge will be 25 cents for an automobile and a driver. The charge for each additional person in the vehicle will be five cents. It is estimated that it will take 10 years to make the span a free bridge.** If the traffic justifies it, the rates will be reduced after the next two or three months.

The bridge is the only span across the Kanawha from Charleston to Point Pleasant and citizens of the territory served, say it is badly needed.

Some of the most prominent citizens of the territory are active members of the committee making plans for the celebration. They include C. E. Colcord, J. V. R. Skinner, J. W. Kiser. Riley Dawson, P. L. Brothers. Claude Smith. Shelby Sturm, J. O. Murray. Kelley Dyer, Roy C. White. Capt. R. C. May. Elwood Johnson, B. E. Liggett, Harry Crawford, Sr., Clyde D. Alford, Charles Week, Edward Beane, Wilber Bodie, J.M. MacCormick, W.J. Graham, the Rev. L.E. Meade, John Bassett, O.J. Bartlett, H.M. Gandee, D.B. Taylor and H.C. Bittenger.

The new bridge will benefit the entire Kanawha valley, its sponsors say. Persons will be enabled to visit the territory served from either Charleston or Point Pleasant in much less time than would be required by making a ferry trip across the river. Weather conditions often made it impossible to make the ferry trip. The bridge makes it possible to take an ideal Sunday afternoon drive from Charleston or Point Pleasant. One may travel to the bridge on one side of the river, cross the stream and return on the other side.

The first agitation for the bridge was started in 1925 when a committee was appointed to investigate the project by the St. Albans business men's association. Two years later, the entire county became interested and a movement was started to build four bridges across the Kanawha from Point Pleasant to the upper reaches of the river. The activities attracted the attention of the General Contracting company of Pittsburgh and B. B. Byers, president of the company, which was then building the Ohio river bridge at Point Pleasant, followed the business men's association by making surveys, engaging the designing company of Ford, Bacon and Davis. Plans were drawn by the Greiner company, which obtained rights of way.

Construction of the bridge was authorized by the United States engineer in May, 1928. At that time the General Contracting company was building the bridge across the Kanawha at Chelyan, one of the four projects originally planned. The company moved to St. Albans in 1930 and progress was interrupted by the depression. In 1931, the legislature passed the act creating the state bridge commission which continued the plan to build the four bridges. The first span completed was the Shadle bridge at Point Pleasant in 1932. In the same year the legislature terminated the commission's existence and transferred its duties to the state road commission. The commission continued the interest and when the public works administration was created, citizens of the section went ahead with their plans until finally the bridge was authorized and construction was started early this year.

The substructure was built by E.R. Mills, with B.G. Etchison as superintendent. The latter executed the contract according to schedule and his work was commended by J.W. Richardson, the federal engineer. J.J. Bullion, a representative of the McClintic-Marshall company, likewise came in for his share of praise. The bridge is regarded as one of the most modern in the country, having the latest improvements in engineering technique.

Nov. 12, 1934 Formal opening of bridge with ribbon cutting ceremony. Free all day today. Tolls start at midnight tonight & will be 25¢ per car, including driver + 5¢ per passenger.

July 20, 1939 Charleston Daily Mail – Evidence that business is looking up at the St. Albans toll bridge came Thursday in the announcement by O.N. Slater, St. Albans city clerk, that patronage is the best history of the bridge, which was constructed in 1934.

In 1935 the average daily income during June was \$43.74. In 1936 it was \$60.38; 1937, \$68.13; 1938, \$54.20, and 1939, \$72.11. Mr. Slater attributes the increase to the "reduced fare" which went into effect the first of the year.

Mr. Slater says that approximately \$25,000 has been paid on the bridge along with the 4 cent interest. There remains \$224,000 to be paid, he said.

The bridge will be "free" in 16 years, he said, when the entire cost has been repaid by motorists.

Jan. 15, 1939 Charleston Gazette – Announcing Reduction in Tolls on the St. Albans-Nitro Bridge. All Cars, Regardless of Number of Passengers, 25 CENTS EACH (By purchasing ticket books, this toll can be further reduced to 17 ½ cents, which figured on the basis of five passengers in each car, results in a toll charge of 8 ½ cents per person.) All Trucks, Regardless of Size or Tonnage, 35 CENTS EACH. CITY OF ST. ALBANS, W. VA.

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July 2, 1941 Charleston Daily Mail – Authorization to use motor busses from St. Albans to Nitro and Dunbar by way of the St. Albans bridge was granted the Charleston Transit company Wednesday by the public service commission.

The new service is to be effective for a 90-day trial period from July 1 to Sept. 30. The transit company must give a 15 day notice to the public if it plans to discontinue the route.

Bus service now is operated to St. Albans on the south side of the Kanawha river, and to Dunbar on the north side. The new line, operating independently of the St. Albans and Dunbar lines, will connect with both existing systems. This will enable Nitro, Sattes and Institute residents, Charleston-bound, to transfer at Dunbar, and vice versa.

The toll bridge connecting St. Albans with Sattes will be used in the bus service extension.

January 26, 1945 Charleston Gazette - The theft of \$24 in St. Albans bridge toll money in December of last year, yesterday brought Moses Johnson, 26, Negro, of Huntington, a five-year state penitentiary term. Johnson pleaded guilty in intermediate court to unarmed robbery of \$24 from W. L. Lynch, toll collector.

June 1, 1945 Charleston Daily Mail - Some relief for people living west of Charleston was promised in the announcement by the road commissioner that the St. Albans- Sattes bridge will be made toll free by next fall.

June 7, 1945 Charleston Gazette – The St. Albans - Sattes bridge, owned by the city of St. Albans, which will be freed by fall. This bridge is now paying its own way out and retirement of the final bonds will not require extra expenditures by the state, which will take it over for maintenance when it is free.

June 12, 1945 Charleston Gazette - The road commission announced yesterday that an origin-destination survey will be conducted by the planning division at the north end of Sattes bridge in St. Albans starting at 4 p. m. tomorrow and

continuing for 24 hours. The study will be made to determine the best location for another bridge in that area, the announcement said.

Nov. 19, 1945 Charleston Gazette – The state supreme court is to be asked to decide the St. Albans bridge “gift” issue it became known Saturday when Circuit Judge Julian F. Bouchelle certified to the higher tribunal the injunction proceedings brought by L.H. Baier, a resident and taxpayer of St. Albans, against the city government.

Judge Bouchelle at the same time allowed a temporary injunction which restrains Mayor R.F. Lipscomb from delivering to the state road commission a deed to the bridge over the Kanawha river conveying the structure to the commission without charge.

1. Whether a municipal corporation may declare a toll bridge owned by it to be free after all indebtedness against said bridge has been paid.
2. Whether a municipal corporation , being the owner of a toll bridge, may transfer the same as a free bridge without monetary consideration, to the state road commission after the commission has declared the bridge to be a connecting link between two state highways.
3. Whether the findings of the St. Albans city council that, in effect it could be of substantial benefit to the city and the public in general to have the bridge free as a connecting link between U.S. Rt. 60 and State Rt. 25 — on the Nitro side of the river — is binding upon the plaintiff and other taxpayers.

The city council at a meeting Nov. 5 authorized
