

In 1938, the State Roads Commission, under Chairman J. Glenn Beall, gained the approval of the Federal government to begin work on the first two crossings and, even more important, gained Federal funds to finance 45 percent of the Potomac and Susquehanna Bridge costs. Both projects were begun in 1938 by the Nice administration and opened to traffic in 1940 by the O'Connor administration.

The Potomac River Bridge more than fulfilled the confidence of its advocates. The span immediately exceeded traffic use estimates, giving service to Maryland's citizens and impetus to economic growth in Southern Maryland. During the war it proved a vital strategic artery — as Potomac crossings had been in the times of Washington, of Lincoln and Lee.

For over two decades the Potomac River Bridge provided the only crossing of the Potomac between the District of Columbia and the Chesapeake Bay. Its popularity, sustained for many years, was diminished only when demand dictated additional facilities crossing the Potomac and these were free.

In renaming the Potomac River Bridge the Governor Harry W. Nice Bridge, we are honoring the man who led Maryland during this period. We pay tribute to a man who dedicated many years of his life to the service of his community and State. Governor Nice was a successful lawyer and a warm and vibrant personality. Above all it was Governor Nice who piloted Maryland through and out of the dark years of depression with good sense and a good heart.

While the bridge can only bear one name, there are others who should not be forgotten today. B. Howell Griswold, Jr., a Baltimore investment banker, directed the first blue ribbon committee to study the feasibility of State toll facilities and energetically led the citizens' lobby to enact this program. Dr. Abel Wolman, nationally renowned engineer, led the seven-member Bridge Supervising Committee which the 1937 Act empowered to approve the State Roads Commission's plans. The 1937 General Assembly authorized this far-reaching program, a program which was to become a model for subsequent highway construction and toll facilities development programs. Certainly as we focus upon the Potomac River span we must remember the special role of the Southern Maryland delegation. For these men argued cogently and fought tirelessly for this bridge to be the first bridge built in the four facilities program.

Today, while we name the bridge for one, we recall with respect the **role of the many.**