

THE MORGANTOWN BRIDGE OPENING

December 14, 1940

Morgantown

TODAY in these ceremonies marking the opening to traffic of this splendid new structure that will bind Maryland and Virginia closer than ever in ties of friendship, we see exemplification of the old truth that history moves in cycles.

As we contemplate with unbounded satisfaction the completion of this modern aid to transportation, it is significant to recall that it was at Ludlow's Ferry, close by the Maryland end of the bridge, that the first ferry established in early colonial days constituted one of the first links in the North-South sea-board road connecting the colonies. This ferry was used by George Washington and the Revolutionary troops, and helped to expedite the transportation of soldiers to Yorktown, preceding the surrender of Cornwallis. I believe I am expressing the feelings of everyone present in voicing the hope that there will never be the occasion to make use of this new bridge across the Potomac to rush troops for the defense of our Country.

Many rivers and streams in our Country have greater length and greater present-day use than the Potomac, but few of them are richer in background of association with the development of this Country during the pioneer days. In all the 300 or more years that Marylanders have crossed and recrossed the river to our sister-state of Virginia, there has never been a bridge of any sort from the river's mouth to the City of Washington, a distance of nearly one hundred miles. Certainly, therefore, today will go down in the history of these two great states as a truly memorable day.

This bridge will be the only one crossing on the Potomac River between the District of Columbia and the mouth of the river at the Chesapeake Bay, and will provide access and uninterrupted communication between the two states now separated by the river. It will provide an alternate route for tourists traveling from Baltimore and the North to Richmond, Norfolk, and the South. It will provide easier and cheaper access for marketing of produce in the section of Virginia known as the Northern Neck and points South to the Markets of Washington, Baltimore, and the North. It will connect Baltimore, Washington, and the North with the historic points of Virginia, such as Williamsburg, Yorktown, Jamestown, Wakefield, and Stratford by a shorter route than the existing route via Fredericksburg.

It will constitute an important link in the Nation's North-South Coastal highway, with easy grades and straight alignment from New England to Florida.

The economic and social values of this bridge are at once apparent. The advantages to the people of the adjacent Maryland and Virginia counties in expediting the natural interchange of social and commercial relations are easily realized, and since the advent of the automobile, the need for a physical connection of the highways has become pressing. Prior to the advent of the automobile, the river itself formed the connection by furnishing means for transportation by boat, but since the advent of the automobile, transportation by boat is considered too slow as compared with the speed of motor traffic.

The idea of constructing a bridge across the Potomac has been agitated