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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**  
**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension**

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**File No. 445**

**1931 October 24**

**New York City, NY -**  
**Dedication of George Washington Bridge**

At the Dedication of the George Washington Bridge, New York  
City, October 24, 1931

In every patriotic sanctuary, is at least one figure so serenely certain of enduring honor that the scrutiny of centuries can never shake its permanence. The character of our first President, immortalized by truths that live, is still deeply rooted in our American consciousness.

In dedicating this, the George Washington Bridge, we pay tribute, not so much to the military triumphs of a great general nor to the attainments of a great executive, but to a more precious heritage. We offer homage to great ideals, exemplified in Washington's career and stamped indelibly upon our national thought. Out of the wealth of vital principles demonstrated by his deeds, I feel that three are peculiarly significant and especially appropriate to this occasion; they are: the worth of integrity, the need for intelligence and the fact of our interdependence.

I am aware that the name of Washington is more popularly associated with the cause of liberty than with that of cooperation. A study of his career, however, reveals the fact that, while he led his countrymen on the front to independence, behind the lines he waged a difficult if less spectacular fight for solidarity. No monuments mark the battles fought in 1776 to teach the Virginia planter that his interests were one with the Massachusetts blacksmith. But it was perhaps as critical a lesson as any taught by bloodshed and one that the nation was long in learning. In 1931 we may still regard as a peace-time triumph, evidence that our nation is aware that both individual prosperity and civic well-being depend on mutual aid. As an example of constructive cooperation between two great states this bridge is worthy of its name.

In acknowledging their interdependence the people of the port district have made possible not only this magnificent structure but all the other essential enterprises which figure in the comprehensive plan of The Port of New York Authority. Coordinated action has brought about the unified administration of all interstate arteries in the metropolitan district with the resulting elimination of wasteful planning methods or toll competition. Cooperation will give me, as Governor of New York, the privilege of witnessing during a single year the opening not only of the world's largest suspension bridge, but also of the largest building yet constructed—Union Inland Terminal Number One. The people of New York and New Jersey will reap the benefits of these projects in the form of improved traffic conditions and of transportation methods greatly heightened in efficiency.

These are very concrete gains that will have real meaning—in time saving and in dollars and cents—for every resident of the port district. For the serviceability of this bridge we may thank the second Washingtonian virtue I have named—intelligence. There was little danger, in the tense days of the revolution, of undervaluing personal ability. Every ounce of human acumen

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available had to be mustered for a desperate cause. Today, faced with critical problems in every field, we are inclined to put our faith in mechanical panaceas, underestimating that most powerful of all machines, the human mind. These steel spans, these fine-spun cables are a vivid reminder that skill and scientific planning must be the keynote of all great achievements. Behind this mighty structure, that seems almost superhuman in its perfection is an inspiring background of high intelligence. It is only fitting that we pause to congratulate Mr. O. H. Ammann, chief engineer and the entire staff of The Port of New York Authority, who are responsible, not only for the design of this bridge but for its speedy and successful execution.

Completed six months ahead of schedule at a cost well below the original estimate this bridge is a testimonial to the high caliber of its builders. For its planning, execution and sound financing, the Commissioners of The Port of New York Authority must be credited with a high and unselfish devotion to the public good. To my mind, this type of disinterested and capable group is a model of governmental agencies. Its methods are charting the course toward the more able and honorable administration of our nation's affairs—a course they have proved can be safely steered through political waters with intelligence and integrity at the helm.

And while we are discussing commissioners, I should like to mention that this bridge was originally planned when a very famous New Yorker was an incumbent of that post, that the work was inaugurated during his governorship of New York State and that the honesty and efficiency which have marked this enterprise are characteristic of all projects with which he has been associated. I allude to former Governor Alfred E. Smith.

This bridge will be a highly successful enterprise. The great prosperity of the Holland Tunnel, the financial success of other bridges recently opened in this region have proved that not even the hardest of times can lessen the tremendous volume of trade and traffic in the greatest of port districts.

It should be an inspiration to us to recall that here, at Fort Washington in 1776 our forbears made one of the most valiant stands against insurmountable obstacles of the entire Revolutionary War. Here, at Jeffry's Hook, Washington and his generals once struggled to block this channel against a hostile fleet, with the sunken hulls of ships. Here, in a defense unmatched for heroism, three thousand Americans lost life or liberty in a great cause. We may rejoice that this great bridge marks a site so sacred in patriotic memories.

Throughout the nation, during the coming year, memorials will be dedicated and celebrations will commemorate the two hundredth birthday of George Washington. It is fitting that two great states should contribute to this anniversary, not any carved pillar nor makeshift ceremony, but a monument peculiarly expressive of their own destinies. And we may rejoice that a spot hallowed by bloodshed in bitter struggle is crowned with a symbol of peacetime victory, born of goodwill, designed with intelligence, and executed with integrity. May it endure through many generations, serving well these communities, and reminding them of the unselfish patriotism of our first President.

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*  
*Albany 1931*

# George Washington Bridge

OVER THE HUDSON RIVER

BETWEEN NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

*Addresses*  
*Delivered at Dedication*  
*October 24, 1931*

THE PORT OF NEW YORK AUTHORITY  
80-90 EIGHTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

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## FOREWORD

*I*nterest in the dedication of the GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE was shown by the acceptance of nearly five thousand invitations sent out by the Commissioners of The Port of New York Authority, and in addition the attendance of many thousands at the ceremonies held on either plaza. This interest was continued on the following day when the bridge was opened to traffic and in the nineteen hours from 5 A.M. to midnight the traffic exceeded 56,000 automobiles and 33,000 pedestrians.

Aside from their aptness, the remarks of the distinguished speakers at the ceremonies will take on significance with the passage of time; the occasion of their utterance will become historical because the bridge is the largest of its kind in the world and because it has made possible what was long a dream—passing dry-shod over the lower reaches of the Hudson River.

It seems appropriate, therefore, that these remarks be published in pamphlet form.

The volume not only supplements the program but corrects the record, as there were necessarily some last-minute changes in speakers. It also recounts parenthetically some interesting events in the carrying out of the program, such as the parade, the review of troops by the Governors, the cutting of the ribbon, etc.

J. E. RAMSEY,  
General Manager

NEW YORK  
DECEMBER 1, 1931

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PROGRAM

*Presiding*

HON. JOHN F. GALVIN, *Chairman*  
THE PORT OF NEW YORK AUTHORITY

*Speakers*

HON. CHARLES F. ADAMS  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

HON. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

HON. MORGAN F. LARSON  
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

HON. SAMUEL LEVY  
PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

HON. LOUIS F. HOEBEL  
MAYOR OF THE BOROUGH OF FORT LEE

MAJOR JOHN VERNOU BOUVIER, Jr.  
GENERAL PRESIDENT, THE GENERAL SOCIETY SONS OF THE REVOLUTION



PRECEDING THE SPEECH-MAKING, THERE PASSED IN REVIEW BEFORE THE GRANDSTANDS AT THE CENTER OF THE SPAN A PARADE CONSISTING OF A BAND AND THREE COMPANIES OF SIX SQUADS EACH OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY; TWO COMPANIES OF SAILORS FROM THE U. S. S. LOUISVILLE (ANCHORED IN THE HUDSON RIVER ALONGSIDE OF THE BRIDGE DURING THE CEREMONIES); ONE COMPANY OF MARINES AND ONE BAND FROM THE BROOKLYN NAVY YARD; THREE COMPANIES OF THE NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD, AND THREE COMPANIES OF THE NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD. DURING THE PARADE MANY ARMY AIRPLANES FLEW IN VARIOUS FORMATIONS OVER THE BRIDGE UP AND DOWN THE HUDSON.

#### ADDRESS OF WELCOME

HON. JOHN F. GALVIN, *Chairman*

THE PORT OF NEW YORK AUTHORITY

*Ladies and Gentlemen:* On behalf of my fellow commissioners of the Port Authority, I welcome you here today to the opening ceremony of the George Washington Bridge. Today we dedicate it to the public service and the millions of people who will use its facilities. Tomorrow will start an endless traffic that will flow ceaselessly for generations to come. It will stand forever as a monument to the friendship and cooperation of the States of New York and New Jersey.

Erected in such a magnificent setting, this massive structure is as beautiful as it is graceful. It is a dream of seventy-five years come true. It is the first over-water connection spanning this great river between Manhattan and the rest of the North American continent. It is truly one of the world's wonders and a marvel of engineering skill.

It is the longest suspension bridge in the world. The commis-

sioners of the Port Authority take pride in informing you that this bridge has been constructed for less than the estimated cost and is being turned over to public use eight months ahead of time. This could not have been brought about but for the hearty cooperation of the staff and the various contractors engaged in this great work. We also take pride in stating that there have been fewer casualties in its construction than with any other bridge. While it is of immediate importance as an interstate transit unit, it belongs to the nation and today becomes a part of the National Highway System. It will prove to be a gateway between the South and New England points.

The Port Authority has initiated a new method of financing public facilities. This bridge has been financed through the sale of Port Authority bonds and without any tax being paid by the public. The moneys loaned by the two states to start the project will, in time, be repaid with interest.

Our chief engineer was given a free hand as to design, and this naked steel structure reflects his genius and engineering skill. This facility will make available to motor tourists the hills and valleys of northern New Jersey and in turn the bridge will bring to New York citizens of other states who come to enjoy our hospitality, our theaters, our museums, our art galleries and add to our commercial prosperity. The remarkable transformation brought about by the automobile is reflected in the constantly increasing use of automobile trucks for transporting freight and automobile buses for transporting passengers. This added facility, in combination with the other bridges and tunnels of the Port Authority, makes possible rapid inter-communication between all parts of the Port. The capacity of this bridge

is 30,000,000 vehicles annually and the tolls will be sufficient to redeem all bonds issued for its construction, by the year 1950.

The commissioners of the Port Authority make public acknowledgment of the loyal and devoted work done by the numerous men who either as heads of departments or as subordinates, make this achievement possible. To list everyone who should be mentioned would be impossible, but we commissioners know the infinite amount of detail work which has gone into this work—engineering, financial, legal and administrative—without which this structure could not have been brought to a successful conclusion. We make public acknowledgment to the contractors who have cooperated so loyally with our staff. They too can point with pride to this visible evidence of their craftsmanship.

In conclusion, let me say that to all who by hand or brain contributed to the erection of this public utility, this great structure is forever dedicated.

The commissioners of the Port Authority decided that the invitation to the President of the United States should be carried in person by one of our commissioners. Commissioner Keim was delegated to the performance of that duty. The first reaction of the President was that he would be here, but later he found that he could not. We fully appreciate his very many engagements during the present time. When we finally learned, to our regret, that he could not come we were all pleased to learn that he was to be represented here today by a member of his staff, the Secretary of the Navy.

It is appropriate that this should be Secretary Adams, because some of his ancestors were closely associated with Wash-

ington in his struggle for independence. In addition, he has the distinguished record of having no less than two Presidents of the United States in his ancestry, John Adams and John Quincy Adams.

Since we could not have the President here today, gentlemen, it is with the greatest pleasure that I present to you his representative, the Secretary of the Navy, Charles Francis Adams.

ADDRESS OF  
HON. CHARLES F. ADAMS

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

*Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, The Governors of New Jersey and New York, Ladies and Gentlemen:* The honor has been entrusted to me of representing on this significant occasion the Government of the United States. In a sense, that is, I may be said to represent as best I may both the States whose good understanding has produced this magnificent example of co-operation, as well as their fellow members of our Union. In saying so I do not mean to borrow for the Federal Government the glory of the George Washington Bridge. It merely happens that, under a clause of our Constitution, any compact between individual States requires the consent of Congress; and that navigable waterways flow within the jurisdiction of the States United. To these circumstances alone I owe the honor of being here. I shall therefore take as little time as possible from Their Excellencies of New York and New Jersey, and from Major Bouvier, speaking of this new bond of union in certain of its general aspects.

No one would have taken greater interest in the ceremonies of today than General Washington himself. Man of the Potomac though he was, it became his lot to know the Hudson better than many a New Yorker or Jerseyman. The names of Washington Heights and Fort Washington preserve the memory of his campaigns in this neighborhood during the most discouraging period of the Revolutionary War. After Yorktown he

camped long months on the Hudson. It was in New York that he bade farewell to his officers; and he lived there as President for over a year. Often he crossed these wide waters, by oar or by sail, by day and by night, at a time when no one dreamed of the possibility of walking dry-shod, still less of driving without horses, from Fort Washington to Fort Lee. For many reasons besides the fact that we are about to celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of his birth, it is most fitting that the bridge should bear his name.

We shall no doubt agree, furthermore, that the bridge is worthy of its name. General Washington was, as we know from many indications, a man of excellent taste. One such indication is peculiarly revealing. After he had crossed the Hudson for the last time, in 1790, his diligent New England secretary wrote him from Philadelphia, of a coach not turned in for a newer model but sent to the shop for repairs, that it had emerged "rich and elegant." The General wrote back from Mount Vernon: "I had rather have heard that my repaired coach was plain and elegant, than rich and elegant." His adjectives are among many that rise to our lips at the sight of this bridge. One which I prefer not to use is the slippery epithet "modern," which holds so brief a meaning. It is enough to note that the George Washington Bridge represents, very appropriately, a certain break from tradition. It is none the less monumental. And there is great elegance in the arcs of its cables, in the proportion of its airy towers, in the seeming lightness of their lattices. There is also a happy freedom from the applied "richness" which spread like an eruption over too many of the works of a day we have outlived. This bridge, making no pretenses, hiding nothing, using simply,

competently, audaciously, yet artistically its plain and honest steel, may well turn out to be a classic of the twentieth century.

Of the technical genius that went into the creation of this classic, of the astonishing economies of time, effort and expenditure effected in its creation, it is not for me to speak. As a practical man, however, experienced in large affairs and always in search of mechanical or scientific improvements, General Washington might have admired this bridge in particular as a masterpiece of engineering. It is hardly too much to say that in his day, that indeed until the second quarter of the Nineteenth Century, such a being as an American engineer did not exist. In 1775, the General confided to Governor Trumbull of Connecticut "how exceedingly deficient the army is of gentlemen skilled in that branch of business." That deficiency was later made good by foreign volunteers. Our first Engineers' Corps was officered chiefly by Frenchmen. One of the older members was the famous Polish patriot, Kosciuszko, and one of the youngest, that Major L'Enfant who afterwards designed the city of Washington. When at the close of the war General Washington returned to the affairs of the Potomac Company, he called in French and English engineers with regard to the canal and locks at the Great Falls. In 1793 no competent civil engineer was to be found in the city of Boston. For the survey of the Middlesex Canal route, not thirty miles long, the directors had to borrow from Philadelphia an Englishman who was at work on Pennsylvania canals. In 1794 coast fortifications were commenced, largely under the supervision of Frenchmen. The corps of artillerymen and engineers then established at West Point was commanded by a Frenchman. Not until West Point was reor-

ganized, toward the close of President Madison's second term, did engineering begin seriously to be taught there; and West Point became the cradle of American engineering. Yet it was one of Napoleon's engineers who completed the Fort Washington on the Potomac, which L'Enfant began, who constructed Fortress Monroe, who was consulted with regard to the Delaware Breakwater, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and other public works of the time.

For these reasons General Washington would have felt a profound satisfaction could he have known that a day would come when so noble a bridge, bearing his own name, was to be conceived, designed, and executed by American engineers and architects. But I think his profoundest satisfaction would have been felt in the existence and nature of the agency which has brought this bridge into being. He loved as few men do his own home and the historic State within which it lay; but from the hour he took command of the army at Cambridge in 1775 until the hour in 1797 when at last he retired to private life, it could never have been said of him that he was a Virginian first and an American second. More clearly than any of his contemporaries save Franklin he saw, more efficaciously than any he attempted to overcome, the differences of section and party which made the Union so much more difficult to achieve in fact than in name. We have innumerable proofs of how deeply he felt on this crucial subject. Nowhere, however, was he more explicit than in his famous letter of June 8, 1783, to the Governors of the thirteen States. Enumerating the four things which he considered essential to the well being, even to the existence of the United States, he set down as the fourth:

"The prevalence of that pacific and friendly disposition among the people of the United States, which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and policies; to make those mutual concessions, which are requisite to the general prosperity; and, in some instances, to sacrifice their individual advantages to the interest of the community."

The Port of New York Authority, under whose enlightened auspices the George Washington Bridge was built, is an impressive example of the possibilities that lie in this direction. It is a direction in which more and more we begin to look, and not only in matters local or national. Is there in fact a more promising direction in which to look for escape from the uncertainties, the anxieties, the selfishnesses that thwart the ends of reason? Let it be added in passing that this pathway through the air from State to State was erected without a penny of taxation, save that represented by a modest annual grant from each of the States concerned. How that was done has been set forth in print and no doubt will be set forth again this afternoon. Suffice it to say now that such agencies as the Port Authority are among the most interesting and hopeful developments of our national life. In this case the agency is a non-sovereign, non-partisan, non-profit making corporation, created by compact between the States of New Jersey and New York. The first Article of that compact declares of the two States:

"They agree to and pledge, each to the other, faithful cooperation in the future planning and development of the port of New York, holding in high trust for the benefit of the nation the special blessings and natural advantages thereof."

Those words, I think, would not have displeased General Washington. The great George Washington Bridge is their most visible symbol and monument.

HON. JOHN F. GALVIN: If it were not for the hearty cooperation between the two States and the representatives in the Legislature of each State, this bridge would still be a dream.

The first act, authorizing the construction of the bridge and also the laws relating to the financing of it, were passed during the administration of former Governor Alfred E. Smith. His service as a Port Authority Commissioner made him familiar with its possibilities for service as a public agency. The financial assistance extended to us by the State helped us to establish a credit basis. The Port Authority considers Governor Smith one of its best friends, because of his understanding of our problems.

His successor, Governor Roosevelt, has continued that help and encouragement. Only last year, recognizing the wisdom of placing all interstate crossings under one control, he initiated the legislation consolidating the former Holland Tunnel Commission with the Port Authority. He also initiated legislation in New York, pooling the revenues and permitting us to create a reserve fund. Of his contribution towards the realization of this structure we are dedicating today the Port Authority desires to make public acknowledgment. It is, therefore, with great pleasure that I present to you the Governor of the State of New York—Franklin D. Roosevelt.

ADDRESS OF  
HON. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

*Mr. Chairman, Honorable Secretary, Governor Larson, Governor Smith, Members of the Commission and My Friends of New York and New Jersey:* I am very glad that the great grandson of George Washington's Vice-President should have spoken to us today about the Father of Our Country. And I believe that in every patriotic shrine throughout the nation there is at least one figure so serenely certain of enduring honor that the scrutiny of centuries can never shake its permanence, for the character of our first president, immortalized by truths that will ever live, is still deeply rooted in our American consciousness.

And so, in dedicating this, the George Washington Bridge, we pay tribute not so much to the military triumphs of a great general nor to the attainments of a great executive but rather to a more precious heritage. We offer homage to great ideals, exemplified in Washington's career and stamped indelibly throughout all these generations upon our national thought. Out of the wealth of vital principles demonstrated by his deeds, I feel that three are peculiarly significant and especially appropriate to this occasion—the worth of integrity, the need for intelligence and the fact of our interdependence.

I am aware that the name of Washington is more popularly associated with the cause of liberty than it is with the cause of cooperation. A study of his career reveals the fact that while he led his countrymen on the front to independence, behind the

lines he waged an equally difficult if less spectacular fight in the cause of national solidarity. It is true that no monuments mark the battles fought in 1776 and the following eight years to teach the Virginia planter that his interests were one with the Massachusetts blacksmith. But it was perhaps as critical a lesson as any taught by bloodshed and one that in some way the nation has been a long time in learning. In 1931 we may still regard as a peace-time triumph, evidence that our nation is aware that both individual prosperity and civic well-being depend on mutual aid. As an example of constructive cooperation between two great states, this bridge is worthy of the name of Washington.

In acknowledging that interdependence, the people of this great port district have made possible not only this magnificent structure but all the other essential enterprises that figure in the Comprehensive Plan of The Port of New York Authority. This coordinated action has brought about the unified administration of all the interstate arteries within the metropolitan district with the resulting elimination of wasteful planning and toll competition. Cooperation will enable me, as Governor of New York State, in one year to witness the opening not only of the world's largest suspension bridge, but also the opening next summer of the largest building yet constructed—Inland Terminal Number 1. The people of New York and New Jersey will reap the benefits of these projects in the form of improved traffic conditions and of transportation methods greatly heightened in facilities.

These are the very concrete gains that will have real meaning—in time saving and in dollars and cents—for every resident of the port district. For the serviceability of this bridge, we may

thank that second Washingtonian virtue I have spoken of—intelligence. There was little danger in the tense days of the revolution of undervaluing personal ability. Every ounce of human acumen available had to be mustered for a desperate cause. But today, faced with critical problems in every field, we are inclined perhaps to put our faith too much in mere mechanical panaceas, underestimating that most powerful of all machines, the human mind. These steel spans, these fine-spun cables are a vivid reminder that skill and scientific planning by individual men and women must be the keynote of all great achievements. And behind this mighty structure, that seems almost superhuman in its perfection, there is an inspiring background of that high intelligence. It is only fitting that we should for a moment today pause to congratulate Mr. O. H. Ammann, the Chief Engineer and indeed the entire staff of The Port of New York Authority who are responsible not only for the design of this bridge but for its speedy and successful execution.

Completed six months ahead of schedule and at a cost well below the original estimate, this bridge is a testimonial to the high calibre of its builders. For its planning, its execution and its sound financing, Commissioner Galvin, the Chairman, and the other Commissioners of The Port of New York Authority must be credited with a high and unselfish devotion to the public good. To my mind, this type of disinterested and capable service is a model for government agencies throughout the land. Their methods are charting the course toward the more able and honorable administration of affairs of government—a course they have proved can be safely steered through political waters with intelligence and integrity at the helm.

And while we are discussing Commissioners, I should like to mention that this bridge was originally planned when a very famous New Yorker was an incumbent of the post of Commissioner; that the work was inaugurated during his term as Governor of the State of New York, and that the honesty and efficiency which have marked this enterprise are characteristic of all projects with which Governor Alfred E. Smith has been associated.

It should be an inspiration to us to recall that here, at Fort Washington in 1776, our forbears made one of the most valiant stands against insurmountable obstacles of the entire Revolutionary War. Here, at Jeffry's Hook, Washington and his generals once struggled to block this channel against a hostile fleet. Here, in a defense unmatched for heroism, three thousand Americans lost life or liberty in a great cause. We may rejoice that this great bridge marks a site so sacred in patriotic memories.

Throughout the nation, during the coming year, memorials will be dedicated and celebrations will commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of George Washington. It is fitting that these two great States should contribute to this anniversary, not any carved pillar nor any makeshift ceremony, but a monument peculiarly expressive of their own destinies. And we may rejoice that a spot hallowed by blood shed in bitter struggle is crowned with a symbol of peacetime victory, born of good will, designed with intelligence and executed with integrity. May it endure through many generations serving well these communities and the nation and reminding them of the unselfish patriotism of our first President.

HON. JOHN F. GALVIN: The present Governor of the State of New Jersey had his first participation in the construction of this bridge while a member of the Senate of New Jersey. That was during the administration of Governor Harry Moore. During his term as Senator the construction of the bridge was authorized and the contribution of the State of New Jersey toward its building was consummated.

During the present Governor's term he has taken a great personal interest in the passage of the necessary legislation to advance further the interests of the Port Authority. It is due to his initiative that early this year legislation was passed which placed the Port Authority finances on a firmer basis than ever.

As another evidence of his interest, the influence he brought to bear on his State Department of Highways has made possible the construction of the finest system of road connections with the George Washington Bridge. For miles after you leave the New Jersey end of this bridge not a single grade crossing is to be found. Of this you will have splendid evidence in your personal use of the bridge.

I take great pleasure in presenting to you Governor Morgan F. Larson of New Jersey.



ADDRESS OF  
HON. MORGAN F. LARSON  
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

*Chairman Galvin, Secretary Adams, Governor Roosevelt, Other Distinguished Visitors, Ladies and Gentlemen:* In the dedication of this bridge we have another example of one of the things that many people predicted could not be done. I remember when this bridge was talked about seriously in the Senate of the State of New Jersey and we were informed, those of us who were in favor of its construction, that this bridge could not be built:

- (1) Because no agency could be formulated that could handle so great a project;
- (2) That if an agency could be formed, the span would be so great that there were no engineers at that time who could plan a structure over the Hudson River;
- (3) If the first two could be surmounted, that the cost would be so great that it could not be financed, and
- (4) That if the first three could be surmounted, that it would not be possible through tolls exacted on the bridge to pay for the money invested in its structure.

So today I am happy to say that we have surmounted three of those insurmountable objections, and that the bridge has been constructed, has been designed, is finished many months ahead of schedule, and we know that the tolls exacted on this bridge will be sufficient to carry the interest charges and to pay

for the bridge, as stated by the Chairman of the Port Authority, by 1950.

As George Washington has been an inspiration to the people of this country and to the people of the world to do the right and just thing, so this bridge, the George Washington Bridge, is a monument to the engineers who designed it; is a monument to the members of the Port Authority who financed it; is a monument to the two States who entered into this agreement—and to my mind should also be an inspiration to the people of all of the sovereign States of this nation, and shall be an example to other sovereign States of what can be accomplished for the common good when two States enter into a common agreement for the mutual benefit of the two sovereign States.

HON. JOHN F. GALVIN: The Chair is compelled to admit a very great disappointment in the program this afternoon. The next speaker was to be the Mayor of New York. I saw him last at two o'clock yesterday when he was still undecided as to whether he could get here or not. The obstacle was that a year ago he made an engagement to be at a certain football game taking place this afternoon. That game, ladies and gentlemen, is in a very worthy cause, and I told him that if they managed to put the football game ahead a little, you would stay here until four o'clock anyway. I heard from him last night at seven o'clock, and much to his regret, he could not come. Personally this is disappointing, and I want to make personal approbation of the assistance that the Mayor has been in erecting this bridge, and to various departments of the City Government,

especially the Dock Department and the Borough President's office. We have taken over their streets; we have taken over ten million dollars in ratables.

Since the Mayor could not come here today, he has sent his representative, the President of the Borough of Manhattan, Samuel Levy, and I take great pleasure in introducing him.

#### ADDRESS OF

HON. SAMUEL LEVY

PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

*Mr. Chairman, His Excellency, Governor Larson, His Excellency, Governor Roosevelt, Distinguished Guests, My Neighbors of Manhattan and New Jersey:* Representing as I do His Honor, the Mayor of the City of New York, Honorable James J. Walker, I am gratified to have an opportunity to participate in these auspicious exercises. When we stop to realize that after a short space of four years we are assembled to open George Washington Bridge over the Hudson River between Fort Lee in the State of New Jersey and Washington Heights in the Borough of Manhattan in the State of New York, we have to acknowledge with keen gratitude the splendid spirit of cooperation between the officials of the State of New Jersey and the officials of the State of New York. But not alone must gratefulness be expressed to these State officials. We must too recognize that this bridge will forever remain a living testimonial to the merit of the engineers who conceived it and will forever be and remain a living testimonial to American labor.

The opening of George Washington Bridge marks an epoch in the growth and development of New York and New Jersey. It is an inseparable link binding together in closer relationship the people of the State of New York and the people of the State of New Jersey. Great areas in New Jersey which previously were not readily accessible to the great population on the New York side of the Hudson are now but a few moments away.

Likewise, Manhattan and its surrounding boroughs become close neighbors to this part of New Jersey.

Prior to the advent of the city rapid transit lines and the construction of the numerous great bridges spanning the East and Harlem Rivers, each part of what is now Greater New York, developed independently. Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, would individually have become great cities, but knitted together in one whole by those great travel lines they make up the greatest city in all the world. So too will this great span which honorably bears the name of the Father of our Country knit together the welfare of these two States.

In the early negotiation between the Port Authority and the New York City officials regarding provision for handling traffic, the office of the President of the Borough of Manhattan called attention to the fact that some method must be provided for the handling of traffic at the bridge terminal in Manhattan, to avoid concentrating great volumes of bridge traffic on Manhattan streets, which were already overcrowded—in which event Broadway as well as other local streets would be tremendously congested. In this connection, a unique method for traffic distribution was developed by the engineers whereby, instead of the usual common outlet and inlet to the bridge by which traffic is concentrated in one spot, there would be several distinct connections between the bridge terminal leading to widely separated streets in Manhattan.

Two connections are thus provided to Riverside Drive—one for entering and one for traffic leaving the bridge. Both of these connections lead directly from the bridge plaza to Riverside Drive, avoiding all through traffic arteries and eliminating

grade crossing on the Drive. A vehicular tunnel connection is also provided leading from the bridge plaza under 178th Street to Amsterdam Avenue, where a connection will be made with this latter avenue near 175th Street.

In addition, when traffic increases beyond the point where these approaches can properly handle it, there will be constructed an additional tunnel under 179th Street. Both 178th Street and 179th Street tunnels will terminate at Amsterdam Avenue in a common plaza from which roadways have been tentatively planned leading to Washington Bridge at 181st Street and to the speedway along the Harlem River. By this means the George Washington Bridge traffic will be distributed over all the main streets and avenues in this section of Manhattan, thus facilitating the movement of local traffic as well as that to and from the bridge.

This great bridge, the Holland Tunnel, the Tri-Borough Bridge, the new roadways on the East River bridges, the proposed 38th Street Tunnel to Queens and Brooklyn, and the proposed Midtown Hudson Tunnel are some of the outstanding public works which already have or which will bring to Manhattan's congested streets more and more traffic. To meet this situation it has been necessary to plan comprehensively and with vision for a series of major public improvements exceeding in their scope anything being done in the other great cities of the world.

On the West Side of Manhattan, there is now under construction an Elevated Express Highway for vehicles which will ultimately extend along the Hudson River shorefront of Manhattan from Canal Street to the Harlem River and the Bronx. The

section from Canal Street to 22nd Street is already completed; the section from 22nd to 38th Streets is now in progress, as is the section over the Railroad Yard from 60th Street to 72nd Street. While the construction of the intervening sections has been retarded by the West Side Improvement and the long pier and dock work north of 48th Street, I expect to have them all under contract in 1932 so that the entire Highway from 72nd Street to Canal Street can be opened to the public early in 1933. It is estimated that this Express Highway will have a capacity of over 5,000 vehicles an hour, or almost 50 per cent. of the total amount of traffic now carried by all the north and south-bound streets in Manhattan.

While this work is under way along the Hudson River, I have planned an equally important improvement on the East River shorefront. Here it is proposed to lay out a Drive directly on the River bank. This Drive will be 120 feet in width, adjacent to which will be a marginal street at least 50 feet wide, making an open Drive for the most part 200 feet in width, or twice the width of Fifth Avenue. The commercial activities will be confined along the bulkhead while the Drive will be treated as a parkway with a 60-ft. roadway, bordered on either side with stately trees to serve as ornamentation and to screen the commercial activities from the residential buildings which it is anticipated will line the private land facing this fine Drive and Riverfront.

The building of the George Washington Bridge of unprecedented magnitude developed unusual problems. The solution of these problems, it is clear, has required no small amount of teamwork all along the line. The George Washington Bridge is

indeed a great memorial to the enthusiasm and progressive spirit of the people of New York and the people of New Jersey, for without this inspiring aid the public officials would have found it impossible to proceed.

The confidence manifested resulted in the construction of the George Washington Bridge without any necessity for assessment on the taxpaying public.

So, my friends, we have cause to rejoice at the opening today of this great structure. Both New York and New Jersey will benefit immeasurably. The people of New Jersey and the people of New York will be brought closer together in their pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. Thank you.

HON. JOHN F. GALVIN: We have with us His Honor, the Mayor of Fort Lee, New Jersey, and I have the pleasure of presenting to you Honorable Louis F. Hoebel of the Borough of Fort Lee, New Jersey.

ADDRESS OF  
HON. LOUIS F. HOEBEL  
MAYOR OF THE BOROUGH OF FORT LEE

*Mr. Chairman, Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:* This is indeed a "red letter" day in the history of Bergen County and her new gateway, the Borough of Fort Lee, which community it is my great privilege to represent on this most auspicious occasion.

I want first of all to utter a word of welcome to you gathered here who will this afternoon visit Fort Lee. I want you to feel that you are most welcome and it is my fond hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity to inspect what is without a doubt the finest bridge plaza plan in the world, where transient cars can speed through in safety and without the inconvenience of cross-road traffic or left-hand turns. Unhappily, the roadways are not complete at this date, but work has progressed far enough to permit you to carry home a very definite picture of what is to be in the immediate future.

I call to mind the story of a man from a small town who visited New York. A Manhattanite engaged him in a conversation and asked, "Where do you come from?" "Oh," replied the visitor, "I'm from Pumpkin Center." "Well," inquired the New Yorker, "is it a very big place?" "About as big as this," the man from Pumpkin Center snapped. "Do you mean to say it's as large as New York City?" he asked, much puzzled. "Sure," was the retort, "but, of course, it ain't all built up."

While I stand before you as a representative of a town of under 10,000, while my neighbor, Mayor Walker, represents

some 5,000,000 population, I think of future possibilities rather than the present, and I recall Alexander Hamilton's prophetic declaration that "the great city of the future will be on the west bank of the Hudson." Some day in the not too distant future you are very likely to find a city of importance at the west end of this bridge, made up of the smaller municipalities that now have individual governments, with Fort Lee as its center.

There is another mental picture you will carry home equal to that of this span. It is of the Palisades of the Hudson, known all over the civilized world for their rare beauty. This beauty is here today for you to enjoy, not by accident, but because public-spirited men made possible the preservation of the Palisades against the quarrymen and others who would have commercialized and destroyed them. From this very spot we are privileged to get an inspiring view of God's handiwork now brought closer to the site of man's most successful venture—the City of New York—by the crowning masterpiece of man's engineering genius—this bridge.

I ask your attention while I conclude by reading what appeals to me as being a very beautiful poem, inspired by this great bridge and written by a Fort Lee resident, the Reverend Vincent G. Burns. It is entitled,

"THE RAINBOW BRIDGE"

*The spirit of George Washington is marching in the van  
Of the countless human army that will cross this glorious span  
In the next one hundred centuries of this marvelous age of man.*

*The spirit of George Washington has come back from the dead,  
He is challenging his children in this day of dark and dread,  
He is calling for new courage where his faithful soldiers bled.*

*The spirit of George Washington has come back to lead the way,  
He is marching with his people to another, modern fray  
Where the poor and weak are praying for a new and brighter day.*

*For this bridge is just a symbol of a faith that cannot die,  
The faith that man can conquer earth and air and sea and sky,  
That man can build above the clouds or know the reason why.*

*This wonderful achievement is a bright prophetic gleam  
Of the world that man will enter when he builds the social scheme  
As nobly and as wisely as he spanned this mighty stream.*

*When man conquers unemployment as he conquers gravity,  
When he scales the cliffs of hunger with his comrade Industry,  
When he builds a bridge of hope above the depths of poverty,*

*That will be a bridge of rainbows fit for any God's elation,  
That will be a great achievement fit for any modern nation,  
It will be the greatest victory of man since his creation.*

*O, spirit of George Washington! your people hear the call,  
As wove these shining cables, as we reared these towers tall  
We will build a mighty nation as a freedom home for all.*

I thank you.

HON. JOHN F. GALVIN: Before presenting the next and last speaker of the day, I want to make an announcement. Immedi-

ately following the conclusion of this address, I want the guests in the grandstand to stay seated until the cars conveying the prominent guests pass over the bridge. They will be immediately followed by the buses that brought you here, and those buses will take you back to the Armory. I hope you will observe this until the main cars pass.

I want to present to you now the orator of the day. In selecting him, we felt that the name compelled us to select some one of a patriotic standing to make this address, and I have the pleasure of presenting to you the President of the General Society Sons of the Revolution, Major John Vernou Bouvier.

ADDRESS OF  
MAJOR JOHN VERNOU BOUVIER, JR.  
*General President*  
THE GENERAL SOCIETY SONS OF THE REVOLUTION

*Mr. Chairman, The Honorable The Secretary of the Navy, Their Excellencies, The Governor of New York and The Governor of New Jersey, and Governor Smith, Ladies and Gentlemen:* Exactly what the distinguished Chairman meant by characterizing me as the "orator of the day," I am not quite prepared to understand. Indeed, my eyes are looking left and right, as one of the officers suggested his Company should do as they passed along here, and I expect at any moment to drop the scabbard too.

Byron tells us that "History with all its volumes hath but a single page," yet upon it is, and hereafter will remain inscribed, the birth of this noble structure and the genius of the soil which it adorns.

The uniting of New Jersey and the Empire State, in its translation of a sentiment into an actuality, welds a link of amity in the chain of commerce, while it is given us further to rejoice in the happy circumstance that transportation convenience and topographical advantage are themselves united in a site rich in the history of the Revolution.

The genesis of the Port Authority is discovered in the wise and discerning decision a decade and a half ago of the Interstate Commerce Commission, which put forth a concept of harbor unity, for the complete and harmonious development

whereof there is implicit the unreserved cooperation of the sister States. The Commission's determination merely applied the doctrine of union and strength that upon a mightier scale the immortal Webster preached.

In its unchallenged exercise of wide and exclusive powers, this important body may properly be viewed as an effective instrumentality of State, charged with the duty of providing a decade in advance, for the progressive requirements of the citizenry it serves. Hence to forecast, to fashion and to fulfil is its definite corporate aim and constitutes its trinity of high objectives.

Barely had there run four years of its life when in furtherance of its "Comprehensive Plan" the legislatures of New York and New Jersey with the consent of the Congress, authorized the construction and operation of four great bridges across the waters that divide the States: two thereof, at variant points, erected to span the Arthur Kill, the third the Kill van Kull, while the fourth and monumental structure is the bridge upon which we now stand and whose opening to the public we are foregathered to celebrate.

About one hundred years ago, a famous English engineer, Thomas Telford, completed a bridge of the suspension type designed to cross the Straits of Menai in Wales and which was then announced to be the greatest structure of its kind ever erected by the hand of man, while proudly heralded as the eighth wonder of the world.

The George Washington Bridge reaching from Washington Heights on the East to Fort Lee on the West, arches the majestic Hudson in a single span two-thirds of a mile between its

Titanic towers, with a center height of 250 feet above the water's surface. Than Telford's colossal creation, its unbroken reach is six times longer, its suspended mass 105 times heavier, its total cost 150 times greater, yet its completion was effected within half the time.

Figures are not ordinarily heart-reaching symbols, but they may, nevertheless, in certain instances be regarded as at once significant and illuminating. Of these time-defying towers one is located on the rocky point of Fort Washington Park, the other close to the New Jersey shore, founded on rock 40 to 80 feet below the water's depth. Each is constituted of 16 columns rising to a height of 635 feet, yet so delicate, despite their massiveness, was the fabrication thereof, that none deviates more than one-sixteenth of an inch from base to summit.

The floor is suspended at a mean elevation of 200 feet above the water from four cables, each thereof having a diameter of three feet composed of over 26,000 wires with a tensile strength of 220,000 pounds to the square inch that passing over the sustaining towers are anchored on the New Jersey side to the immutable cliffs of the Palisades and upon the New York side to a mountain of masonry in a catacomb of concrete. Finally, there are employed over 105,000 miles of wires which would reach half way 'twixt the vibrant earth and the mordant moon.

The site selected was, as early as the Eighteenth Century, discovered by the Army's engineers to be the best adapted to military purposes, while in the evolution of our imperial city and in the vast number of adjacent municipalities that in the past have grown and prospered, it would seem that the scarred terrain of Revolutionary conflict has now become the pacific

territory of civic expansion, whereon commerce has intermarried with romance.

At that time Forts Washington and Lee were essential instruments of defense that bulk large in the arrestive history of Washington's New York campaign of 1776. Nor does there exist in our broad land a shrine more sacred to the memory of the patriots of the Revolution and to their Commander-in-Chief than are the shores this structure binds and the waters that it covers.

The Forts primarily were erected for the purpose of preventing the British fleet from sailing the upper reaches of the Hudson. When Washington, however, decided that his position on Manhattan Island was no longer tenable, owing to the large and increasing force of the enemy under the command of Lord Howe and to the presence of the British warships riding at anchor upon the waters of the Hudson, he withdrew his main army to the New Jersey side, encamping near Hackensack, but left a garrison of about 3,000 men to hold Fort Washington on the New York shore, where Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia riflemen were stationed under the command of Colonel Magraw.

Aware that Howe was making formidable preparations to destroy the remaining American defenses on and about Manhattan, Magraw, under the general direction of the Commander-in-Chief, vigorously addressed himself to the throwing up of earth-works and to the emplacement of cannon in hastily built redoubts. The danger, albeit threatening, was not imminent until the night of November 2, 1776, when Adjutant William Demont of the American garrison deserted to the



enemy bearing with him a plan of the Fort and the disposition of the troops around it.

With this fortuitous advantage suddenly placed at his command, Howe promptly decided upon concerted action. The British infantry, artillery and frigates were disposed in effective positions and a complete cordon was drawn around the Fort. Thereupon Howe demanded that the Americans surrender: "The Fort will be held to the end," returned its gallant commandant.

It was on the 12th of November that the British began to close in with an army of more than 9,000 against barely one-third of that number who were engaged not only in covering the Fort itself, but in manning the outlying redoubts. The while, however, Washington was able to keep in close and constant touch with Magraw and to direct the defense. Indeed on one occasion the Commander-in-Chief crossed in a small row-boat to the New York side under the very guns of the British fleet.

The courageous and determined defense of Fort Washington by its heroic garrison is justly accounted one of the glories of Revolutionary arms. At last only 600 Americans remained within the defenses as the balance of their forces, not effectively out of action from wounds or death, were struggling in the crude redoubts or fighting among the surrounding hills. Then on the 16th of November the final attack was launched.

Over 4,000 Hessians charged against this Spartan band of 600 holding the Fort on the heights. Three times they were driven back by the American riflemen. In the meantime Captain Gooch of Washington's staff was crossing the Hudson in a small

skiff under shell fire from the British vessels, bearing a message from Washington, who was watching the action from Fort Lee. Gooch gained the fort, but too late. Its valorous defenders had at last been overwhelmed by sheer force of numbers. Gooch, leaping from the parapet, escaped to his boat and reported the news of the surrender to Washington. Of course, it must be recognized as an American defeat, but one of the most glorious defeats in the annals of warfare.

Thus runs one of the epics of George Washington's career. He is the outstanding figure of all time. Monumental were his labors, not merely in the precarious days that marked the War for Independence, but in the trying period of construction, following Yorktown's surrender and the Peace of '83, when he addressed himself, with his co-patriots, to the erection of a governmental structure that "converted the American Nation from a hope into a reality."

His penetrating personality is virtue's imperishable symbol: the intangible is envisualized in the man. He illumines and adorns life's printed page, explains and illustrates the text, ekes out our understanding of the theme and helps us thus to know what virtue means. Destroy him and there is lost a mighty instrument for human betterment; conserve him and there abides with us a deathless inspiration.

As Washington is virtue's spiritual symbol, so is the Flag its concrete emblem. Each stands for patriotism, valor, loyalty, sacrifice and service, the noblest attributes vouchsafed by God to man. Hence let both forever in your thoughts remain one and inseparable.

The Flag has its Gospel as Washington has his inspiration.

Its lesson should each day be preached throughout our gifted land. As it is the transcendent glory of our Nation so is this bridge the triumphant expression of our Age.

#### CUTTING THE RIBBON

HON. JOHN F. GALVIN: Ladies and Gentlemen, keep you seats now a moment. The next ceremony will be the cutting of the cord between the States by Governor Roosevelt and Governor Larson.

AT THIS POINT GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT OF NEW YORK AND GOVERNOR LARSON OF NEW JERSEY DESCENDED FROM THE GRANDSTAND TO THE BRIDGE PAVEMENT. THEY EACH GRASPED AN END OF THE WHITE SILK RIBBON STRETCHED ACROSS THE ROADWAY, DIVIDING THE NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY SIDES OF THE BRIDGE.

GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT: GET ON YOUR MARK! GET SET! GO!

WHILE AEROPLANES SOARED OVERHEAD AND BOAT WHISTLES SOUNDED, GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT AND GOVERNOR LARSON SEVERED THE RIBBON, SYMBOLICALLY OPENING THE BRIDGE TO TRAFFIC. THE SPECTATORS STOOD AT ATTENTION AS THE BAND PLAYED "THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER."



