

A POLITICAL HISTORY OF  
THE MACKINAC BRIDGE

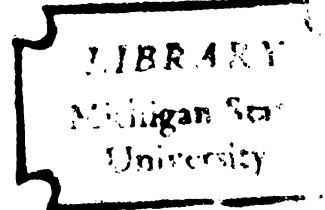
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## ABSTRACT

### A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE MACKINAC BRIDGE

The Mackinac Straits Bridge, which links Michigan's two peninsulas is an imposing structure. Five miles long, it curves gracefully across the waters of the Great Lakes. Traffic moves swiftly and smoothly across its great length twelve months of the year.

With a price tag of \$100 million it is the product of man's imagination and a monument to man's persistence. The first proposals to bridge the Straits are found in Indian legends. Ever since the task of conquering the travel barrier has colored man's thoughts.

The concept of connecting the two peninsulas traces thread-like down through the past eighty years of Michigan's history. This is the story of the political loops and turns, knots and tangles in that thread. It is the story of the role and effect of the bridge in the political campaigns of the twentieth century, which is pinpointed through analysis of election statistics.

It is the story of Horatio Earle, Prentiss Marsh Brown, Murray Van Wagoner, W.S. Woodfill, and G. Mennen Williams.

Although the bridge did not change the direction of Michigan political history, it probably swayed its

course simply because it was seized upon as an issue by candidates of every ilk and stripe. Many sensible, practical politicians thought the bridge would or did affect the outcome of their campaigns and thus the structure influenced their emotions and ideas.

Perhaps more than anything else the bridge has served as a political football. It has been trade bait for legislators, who wheeled and dealt with the bridge proposals and who were still making political mileage out of toll removal proposals in the late 1960's. However, the real fights in the state capitol occurred in the 1950's during the successful push for bridge approval by a coalition of Republicans and Democrats. More recent battles seem dim by comparison to those hectic days, which indicates that in the game of political football the first hundred years are the hardest.

A POLITICAL HISTORY OF  
THE MACKINAC BRIDGE

By

BENJAMIN J. BURNS

A THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLE DAYS

In the beginning the dream of a Mackinac Bridge belonged to the Indians who peopled the shores of Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas. It was only with the coming of the white man that the bridge became a political issue which stirred the fires of oratory in men throughout the state.

One of the early legends, repeated during bridge dedication ceremonies in 1958, utilized the famous literary figure of Hiawatha to achieve its point. Hiawatha, as the story goes, confided to his feminine companion Minehaha a plan to bridge the Straits with canoes tied side by side. With typical female logic she rejected the scheme and explained to the crestfallen warrior that a whole tribe could paddle across in the canoes while a single brave stumbled from shore to shore in the makeshift bridge. Hiawatha wisely dropped the scheme.<sup>1</sup>

A second legend told how the demi-God Na-na-bo-jo built a bridge out of rocks he found along the shore. The structure was later upset by a high wind creating

<sup>1</sup>The Story of the Mackinac Bridge, pamphlet, The Straits Publishing Co., 1957.

the islands in the Straits.<sup>2</sup>

A third tale called for a Chippewa brave to cut down a giant pine tree which would bridge the Straits. Failing to find a tree five miles high, the Indians never accomplished the feat.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps if the Indians could have conceived how long it would take their white brothers to stop arguing and get around to building the bridge, the tribal council would have ordered the immediate intensive cultivation of a promising pine sapling. For the long campaign for a Mackinac Bridge was fraught with trouble, misstatement and superstition and colored by a succession of individuals, who in their own way rivaled the Indians of legend.

The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883 inspired the northern Michigan residents to hash over the possibility of a permanent crossing at the Straits. A St. Ignace merchant by the name of Paulson, booming his department store wares, ran pictures of the Brooklyn Bridge in advertisements in local newspapers captioned "The proposed Mackinac Bridge." Admittedly, the bottom of the bridge engraving was filled with buildings, which

<sup>2</sup>John C. Wright, The Crooked Tree Indian Legends and a Short History of the Little Traverse Bay Region, Harbor Springs, Mich., 1917, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>The Lansing State Journal, June 5, 1960.

of course could not have existed in northern Michigan, but that did not particularly matter to Paulson, who apparently felt the eye stopping impact of the advertising campaign for his department store was most important.<sup>4</sup>

On a cold winter day in 1884, Traverse City editor and publisher Thomas T. Bates sat down and penned an editorial which was to summarize the bridge situation for the next sixty years. Bates deemed a Straits crossing practical, but raised the question of its economic feasibility.

Couched in the personal journalistic style of the times, Bates' editorial is generally considered the first real consideration of the problem.

The latest from the Straits of Mackinac is that the steamer Algomah has been abandoned for the winter, the crew discharged and all transferring across the Straits will be done by teams, until spring. And thus ends the experiment of a winter ferry across the Straits.

What will be done remains to be seen. If there is to be a great through route from east to west through Michigan, there must be a sure and permanent crossing at the Straits. A steam ferry was never dreamed practical by many. The Algomah has already made a hard fight for existence and is finally abandoned. Now shall it be a bridge or a tunnel? Either will mean enormous expense but both are practicable. It is the only solution of the question as the Herald claimed when the Algomah was put on. The important question is will the business to be done warrant the expenditure of the

<sup>4</sup>The Story of the Mackinac Bridge, pamphlet, The Straits Publishing Co., St. Ignace, 1957.

large amount of money required in the building of such a bridge or the construction of a tunnel under the Straits?<sup>5</sup>

However, Bates' visionary dream of a permanent crossing failed to stir the imagination of the Michigan populace, although several newspapers around the state reprinted it. It was more than two decade later that the first of a long series of politicians turned the idea over in his mind and decided it was a good one.

Horatio S. Earle, Michigan's first highway commissioner, was the first of the colorful politicians who became involved with the Mackinac Bridge proposal. A cross-eyed, inventive little egotist from Hallowell, Vermont, Earle gained fame by stumping the state for good roads. Filled with homespun humor and witty little tidbits he termed "Earlisms," he yearned for political fame.

He won election as a Republican to the state senate in 1901 and was appointed to the newly created post of State Highway Commissioner in 1903. When the State Attorney General found the bill creating the position unconstitutional, he served for two years without pay. He was then appointed constitutional State Highway Commissioner in 1905 and served until 1909.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The Grand Traverse Herald, January 31, 1884, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>Detroit News, Dec. 26, 1935.

Earle's term as highway commissioner was a period of road promotion, for convincing the public good roads were important was as big a job as building them.

Although the diminutive politician won the title "Good Roads," he never managed to promote himself into the positions he desired as governor and mayor of Detroit. An eternal optimist, his diaries indicated he was sure he had the Republican nomination for governor sewed up several times, only to be badly beaten at the polls.<sup>7</sup>

Earle first got the idea for a bridge-tunnel across the Straits in 1907. A brief entry in his diary of that year indicated the thought of a permanent crossing appealed to his creative senses.<sup>8</sup>

Earle went on to form mental sketches of his bridge-tunnel. His scheme called for a reinforced concrete tunnel which, buoyed up by reinforcing cables and the water, would hang forty feet beneath the surface of the Straits. He explained the plan to a friend and was pleased when the friend liked the idea.<sup>9</sup>

After that tentative start the bridge idea dropped out of sight until 1920. There was no mention of the

<sup>7</sup>Horatio S. Earle diaries, Michigan Historical Collections, The University of Michigan, entries during 1908, 1912, 1916, 1920.

<sup>8</sup>Earle diary, Nov. 30, 1907.

<sup>9</sup>Earle diaries, Dec. 2 and Dec. 14, 1907.

scheme in Earle's diaries throughout the period, although he later claimed to have developed several ideas during this time. Similarly, there was no emphasis or interest expressed in the bridge during political campaigns.

In 1920, Earle again spoke out publicly on the subject. By then automobile traffic had grown considerably. The railroad lines responded to public demand and provided limited facilities for carrying cars across, but in winter it was sometimes a difficult or impossible trip.<sup>10</sup>

Earle's article in American Highways in 1920 is credited as "creating more than passing interest" by at least one politician familiar with the history of the effort. In essence the article projected the earlier floating tunnel scheme and Earle invited his colleagues to comment on it.<sup>11</sup>

That invitation brought a New York engineer, Charles Evan Fowler, into the Mackinac Bridge story. Fowler offered a counter-proposal. He suggested a series of causeways and bridges starting north of Cheboygan and island hopping across the Straits. Earle

<sup>10</sup> Frank B. Woodford, "Introduction," in Lawrence A. Rubin, Mighty Mac, Detroit, 1958, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Prentiss M. Brown, The Mackinac Bridge Story, Detroit, 1956, p. 4.

liked the idea and invited Fowler to Michigan at his expense.<sup>12</sup>

The pair of men and their schemes for a bridge crossing dropped out of the public's sight for several years, although a 1922 entry in the Earle diaries indicated he was still writing articles favoring the permanent crossing first visualized by Fowler. It was a brief entry in the Earle style: "Have written articles on bridge across the Straits of Mackinaw (sic) and on the gasoline tax, in favor of the first and against the last."<sup>13</sup> There is no record of either being published although, presumably, they were.

Although there were hardly any public outcries in favor of the crossing outside of the north country, politicians began to sense the trend of the times. One of the first to become aware of the need for better transportation across the water barrier was Governor Alex J. Groesbeck. Groesbeck, who had always found strong political support in the Upper Peninsula, proposed a passenger ferry service replace the railroad ferries at his second inauguration on January 4, 1923. Advocating a public car ferry service represented a chance for Groesbeck to show that he was aware of the Upper Peninsula's needs.

<sup>12</sup>Detroit News, Sept. 16, 1928.

<sup>13</sup>Earle diary, Aug. 14, 1922.



with the start of a ferry system the roads would no longer end at the water, according to Groesbeck.<sup>14</sup>

The beginning of passenger ferry service at the Straits did not halt the hopes for a bridge link. It was only a step toward the final entity.

While Earle had apparently toyed with the idea of a privately financed structure at the Straits which would eventually provide profits through tolls, he had dropped the thought by early 1927. The Detroit News, noting an increased interest in a bridge crossing and aware of Earle's work, asked for a copy of his final plan.

Earle confessed in his diary, "I threw away the drawing that Mr. C. E. Fowler made for me back in 1921, just a few weeks ago, but I have found by hunting until midnight a little about it."<sup>15</sup>

The same year the Republican attorney general of the state, William W. Potter, contemplated drafting a resolution for the legislature to have the Department of Conservation make a survey on the bridge and report to the 1927 regular session.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Frank B. Woodford, Alex J. Groesbeck: Portrait of a Man, Detroit, 1962, pps. 210-211.

<sup>15</sup>Earle diary, March 18, 1927.

<sup>16</sup>Detroit News, March 27, 1927.

Nothing came of Potter's proposal. Early in 1928 he resigned his post to accept a Michigan Supreme Court appointment.<sup>17</sup>

However, in 1928 Governor Fred W. Green, also a Republican, took up the bridge cause. Green was a sportsman, especially a hunter. He apparently sympathized with other hunters who experienced difficulty crossing the Straits on the ferries during peak traffic days. Green's support led the highway department to make a study of the private toll facility proposal during 1928 and find the Fowler plan feasible.<sup>18</sup>

The Highway Department at this time was headed by Frank F. Rogers of Port Huron. Notably there was a close bond between Earle and Rogers. Earle had named Rogers the first engineer of the Michigan Highway Department shortly after his first appointment as head of the agency.

Earle's feelings for Rogers were evidenced in his diary and later in a letter quoted in his autobiography:

My Dear Sir,

By the authority vested in me, by the unanimous vote of the members of the State Highway Commission, I do hereby appoint you as State Road Engineer, without salary or even your expenses, but with an untold amount

<sup>17</sup> Michigan Manual, 1963-1964, Lansing, Mich., 1964, p. 137.

<sup>18</sup> Brown, p. 4.

of work to do. And I believe it will be just as well done, as though there were a salary attached, and in after years you will get great satisfaction from the fact that you were the first engineer, and that you had something to do with the great highways that will checker our state.<sup>19</sup>

Roger's department estimated the cost of the facility at \$30,000,000, which included accomodations for a railroad crossing underneath the passenger car bridge. The Fowler-Earle proposal eventually came to a standstill because of an inability to finance it on a private basis.<sup>20</sup>

Earle's statements during the latter half of 1928 and his published word in 1929 have a tendency to confuse the situation unless considered in light of two factors: Earle was in his seventies and might not be expected to recall all details accurately, and Earle was forever promoting himself into a place in history.

Earle, in a letter to the Detroit News political writer John Fitzgibbon, provided this account in September 1928:

Directly after retiring as highway commissioner in 1909 I went into the subject and at my own expense engaged Charles Fowler, a noted bridge engineer to make a survey. First we considered a tunnel and decided it was impractical because of the

<sup>19</sup>Horatio S. Earle, The Autobiography of "By Gum" Earle, Lansing, Michigan, 1929, p. 94.

<sup>20</sup>Detroit News, March 27, 1928.

great length, hence prohibitive cost. Then I proposed a floating tunnel sunk forty feet below the surface of the water and people laughed at me. No such tunnel had ever been built, but of its practicality I was convinced. Evans also decided that a bridge from Mackinaw City to St. Ignace was also impractical for the reason that the piers would have to be the top of the suspension and the ice flows would probably destroy them. Next he submitted what he and I<sup>21</sup> agreed was the only feasible plan. . . .

It was the island hopping route. However, the account raises the unanswered question, if all this transpired shortly after Earle left office, why the 1920 article? Two solutions present themselves. Either Earle got mixed up in his dates or the 1920 article was a promotional gambit designed to give the effort publicity. The former choice seems more logical considering Earle's diary entries during the 1920's.

Reported in the same column from Lansing was another statement by Earle; "Now that Governor Fred W. Green is taking up the project for a bridge I am in hearty accord with him." Earle pointed out that he had publicly declared the two peninsulas must be connected above water fully twenty years earlier and proposed to devote his best efforts to the project.<sup>22</sup>

It is impossible to make a satisfactory case that Green's support of the bridge proposal had a positive

<sup>21</sup>Detroit News, Sept. 16, 1928.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

effect on the electorate, although it may have been designed to win over supporters of Groesbeck. However, it is interesting to note that Green was running a campaign for re-election when he brought the issue before the public.

Green had stepped past Democratic hopeful William Comstock by a 126,326 vote margin, 483,990 to 357,664 in 1926. In 1928 with the aid of the presidential election Green moved past Comstock by 556,633 votes.<sup>23</sup> There is no evidence to indicate Green gained by his support of a bridge proposal since there were not a considerable number of votes to be gained in the Upper Peninsula. On the other hand, it apparently did not hurt him.

In 1929, according to House Journal reports at least one Republican bill favoring the establishment of a Mackinac Bridge was introduced. However, there is no record of its being discussed or of it carrying much weight with the legislature.

In 1929, that diminutive, but undiminishable Earle, now past seventy-three, published his autobiography. In the chapter "Public Life and Politics," Earle cites eight political campaigns of his life from fire commissioner in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts to governor of Michigan. In his final bid for a place in the minds of

<sup>23</sup>Michigan Manual, 1963-64, p. 431.

posterity, Earle cites as his eighth political work the Mackinac Bridge.

My eighth political work I am going to will to citizens of Michigan and to younger men than I am.

Being of sound and disposing mind, I do hereby bequeath to young men, my hopes for bridge and right of way to connect the Upper and Lower Peninsulas of this great commonwealth.

But knowing, from past experience, that some politician will claim to be the originator of the best and only practical way to obtain this, I will record my idea in this book to be printed in 1928.

Earle proceeds to carefully detail the island hopping route fervently backed in later years by Fowler.

In the year 1920, I made a preliminary investigation and found, it was easy and feasible to make this connection with only three and one-half miles of bridge; starting at a point northeast of Cheboygan to Bois Blanc Island, to Round Island, to Mackinac Island, to St. Ignace. If these three islands were owned by an individual or corporation, the increase in their values would be nearly, or quite as much, as the cost of the bridge and fills. Only one high bridge is needed; and my plan provided, that the fills and bridges should be so built, the state should lease a right of way to railroads.

The real kicker came in Earle's last line on the topic: "The direct line across, from Mackinaw City (sic) to St. Ignace, is impossible for either a bridge or tunnel, account of the depth of the channel."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Earle, Autobiography, pps. 170-182.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for a systematic approach to data collection and the importance of using reliable sources of information.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. It discusses the various statistical and analytical tools that can be used to identify trends, patterns, and relationships within the data.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the importance of communicating the results of the analysis to the relevant stakeholders. It emphasizes the need for clear and concise reporting and the importance of providing context and interpretation for the findings.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the various challenges and limitations associated with data collection and analysis. It highlights the need for careful planning and execution to ensure the quality and reliability of the data.

6. The sixth part of the document discusses the various applications and uses of the collected data. It highlights the importance of using the data to inform decision-making and to identify areas for improvement and optimization.

7. The seventh part of the document discusses the various ethical considerations and best practices associated with data collection and analysis. It emphasizes the need for transparency, accountability, and respect for privacy and confidentiality.

8. The eighth part of the document discusses the various future trends and developments in data collection and analysis. It highlights the importance of staying up-to-date on the latest technologies and techniques in the field.

9. The ninth part of the document discusses the various resources and tools available for data collection and analysis. It highlights the importance of using high-quality, reliable resources and tools to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data.

10. The tenth part of the document discusses the various conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the analysis. It emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to data collection and analysis and the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Earle was not the first nor the last man to enunciate that sentiment. He probably has more claim than any other single twentieth century politician to the title: "Father of the Mackinac Bridge." It is sad that he did not solidify his claim to the title by backing the direct route which was already gaining adherents.<sup>25</sup> However, modern engineers, including David B. Steinman, ultimate designer of the five mile long span, have indicated Earle was probably right considering 1928 engineering standards for the direct route could have resulted in a structure which would have collapsed, like Nana-bo-jo's rock effort of legend.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Detroit News, Sept. 16, 1928.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Mackinac Bridge Authority official who asked not to be identified, Feb. 23, 1966.



## CHAPTER II

### THE DEPRESSION DECADE

The depression, which blew its ill wind across the economy of the nation, actually breathed new life into the bridge proposal. It was with the idea that the gigantic undertaking could provide jobs for northern Michigan's unemployed that the first state effort was made.

During the depression decade the first bridge commission was named. More feasibility studies were made and plans actually drafted for the island hopping route. It was also during the decade, that politicians seized on the proposal as an issue which would further their efforts toward election. However, backing the bridge was a stand that many took easily without really knowing or caring at times whether the bridge was possible. The first federal rejection of participation in paying for the bridge was also recorded during the 1930's.

In 1930 the GOP candidate for governor was the youthful Wilber Brucker, who had been attorney general under Fred Green. Brucker held the Republican line and turned back William Comstock's third bid for the state's highest elective office by 126,326 votes. The total

votes cast for both candidates were less than 850,000.<sup>27</sup>

By 1932 the state and nation were in economic chaos. The tide had turned and Comstock, nominated for the fourth straight time, went into office on the strength of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidential popularity. When the votes were canvassed, Comstock had a plurality of 190,737 votes. His total was 887,672, more than the combined total for both gubernatorial candidates two years earlier. Brucker, who held important appointive posts in later life, was finished as a successful elective politician.<sup>28</sup>

Brucker, a co-chairman of the Michigan apportionment commission in 1966, recalled the Mackinac Bridge proposal was not a concrete issue in either of his campaigns.

" . . . let me say that I did not take any stand with reference to the building of the Mackinac Bridge in either of my campaigns in 1930 or 1932. I do not recall whether my opponent, William Comstock, made any mention of the Mackinac Bridge during the 1932 campaign," Brucker said.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Michigan Manual, 1963-64, p. 431.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to author from Wilber M. Brucker, Feb. 25, 1966.

Prentiss Brown, however, remembered that Comstock had brought up the bridge topic in a speech at Newberry in 1932. "I don't distinctly recall any earlier mention," Brown said.<sup>30</sup>

But the main issues in 1932 were economic, with Brucker pleading for a fair chance to govern. Newspaper reports of speeches by both candidates during the campaign in the Upper Peninsula fail to confirm Brown's statement on Comstock's Newberry speech.<sup>31</sup>

Comstock may have been favorably disposed toward the bridge proposal, like many others, because he was a north country native. Born in Alpena in 1877, he served as alderman and mayor of that community before entering statewide politics.<sup>32</sup>

During the second special session of the state legislature in 1934, Comstock proposed a bridge authority be named to investigate the feasibility of a bridge, issue and sell bonds, build a bridge, and fix and collect tolls. Comstock was supporting the Fowler island hopping scheme and the cost was estimated then at \$35,000,000.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Prentiss M. Brown, St. Ignace, Mich., Aug. 15, 1964.

<sup>31</sup> Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, June to Nov. 1932.

<sup>32</sup> John P. White, "The Governor of Michigan as Party Leader: The Case of William A. Comstock," Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters paper, Ann Arbor, Vol. XLII, 1957.

<sup>33</sup> State Journal, March 1 and 2, 1934.

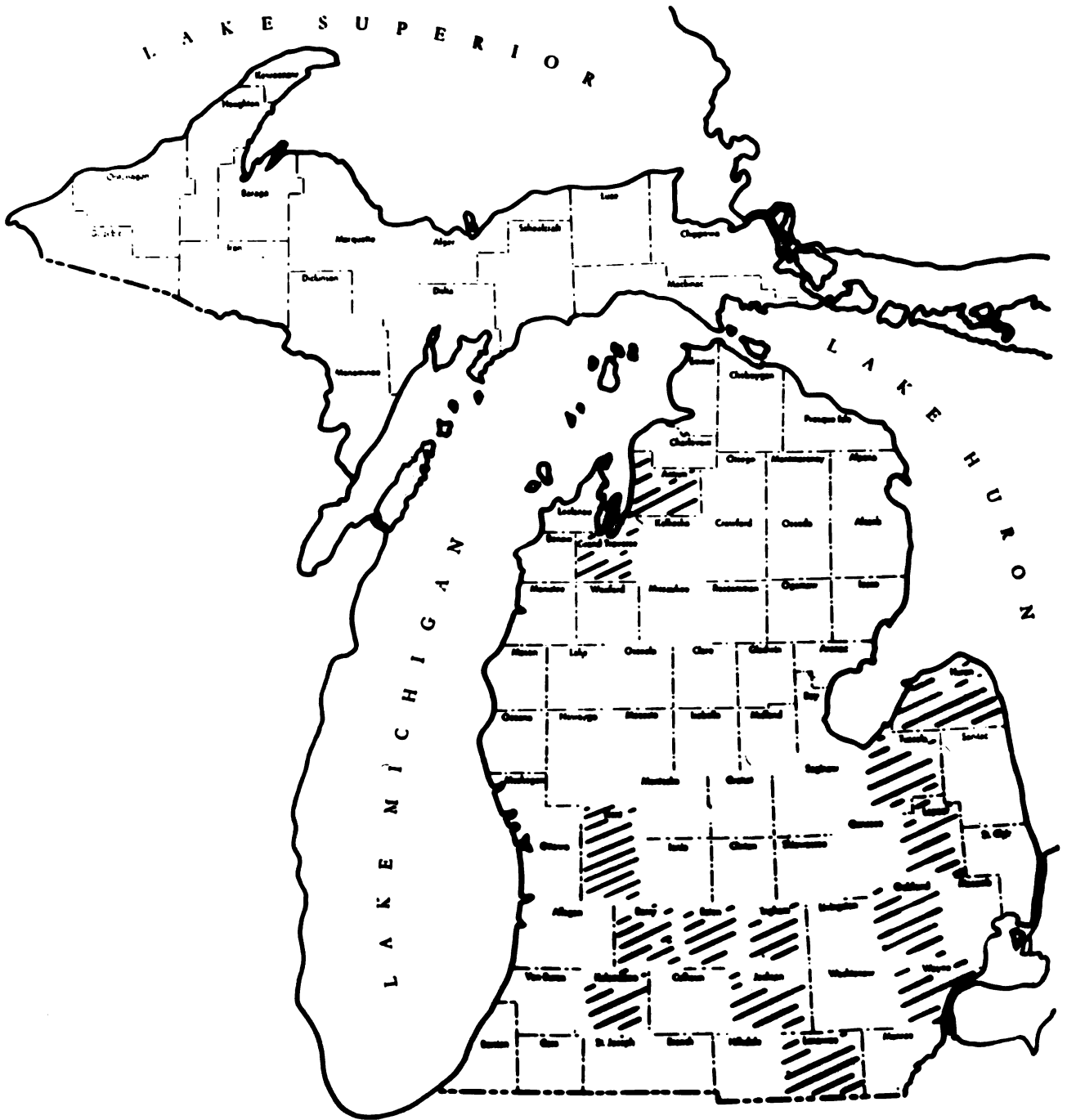
The enabling act was sponsored by another north country politician. Democratic Representative Edward Fenlon, a law partner to Prentiss M. Brown, introduced the successful measure. Fenlon later became circuit court judge for Mackinac and Emmett counties, the sites of the bridgeheads.

The Comstock backed proposal also asked the federal government for a loan of seventy per cent of the cost of the bridge.<sup>35</sup>

The Fenlon proposal passed the House by a 76-16 margin. Twelve of the sixteen no votes came from Republicans. The Comstock backed bill was approved in the Senate by a 17-9 margin with Republicans providing six of the negative votes. Figure 1 (page 19) shows only two of the negative votes were cast by lawmakers residing north of Bay County. These two were from Antrim and Grand Traverse Republican state representatives. All other no votes came from southern Michigan with Kent and Oakland counties providing three no votes each, and Wayne, Jackson and Lenawee counties showing two no votes each. The rest of the negative ballots were concentrated in Allegan, Barry, Eaton, Ingham and Kalamazoo, and in the thumb counties of Huron, Tuscola, and Lapeer.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> State Journal, March and April 1934.

<sup>36</sup> Michigan House Journal, Extra Sessions 1933-34, p. 95; and Michigan Senate Journal, Extra Sessions 1933-34, p. 254.



Negative Votes—1934 Bridge Authority Bill 



The Mackinac Bridge Authority named by Comstock in April 1934 included Patrick Kane of Port Huron, Otto W. Lang of Mackinac Island and Stephen T. Stackpole, of Detroit, who represented the railroad interests. Brown, who already was a U.S. Representative, was named legal advisor and Horatio Earle's New York import, Charles E. Fowler, was named temporary chief engineer.<sup>37</sup>

Fowler's appointment as chief engineer was probably made because he had more background in the bridge project than any other individual. It was probably reasoned that his choice as engineer would expedite federal acceptance.

In the fall of 1933, Fowler had attempted to interest the State Highway Department in the project. He apparently failed, but continued active promotion of the project. In December 1933, Fowler made efforts to set up a federal Civil Works Administration project. On January 9, 1934, presumably with the approval of Comstock, Fowler filed a preliminary application with the Public Works Administration.

The federal agency approved a project known as "local control survey and Mackinac Bridge survey" in February 1934. Fowler opened an office in Lansing and employed assistants and men for survey parties. They were paid by federal checks. In March Fowler was

<sup>37</sup>Brown, p. 5.

ordered to discontinue his surveys, but apparently the office in Lansing was continued throughout April with the government agency paying the bills.<sup>38</sup>

At the first meeting on April 28, the Bridge Authority appointed Fowler to his official post. He continued to direct field work until the latter part of July 1934. No reports were ever made by Fowler to the Authority and the information and data he assembled while working under both federal and state governments was never received.<sup>39</sup>

Immediately after the Bridge Authority was named, Brown introduced a bill for the federal government to pick up \$33,000,000 of the cost of the bridge linking the two peninsulas.

Optimistic in mid-May, Brown expected the bill would be reported out of committee. In early June an Associated Press dispatch noted: "the Straits of Mackinac Bridge was another step nearer realization today." The Senate had passed Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg's bridge bill. Two days later the House committee reported out the Brown bill.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup>J.H. Cissel, "Consulting Engineer's Report," Dec. 31, 1936, in the files of the State of Michigan library.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, May 21, June 7, and June 9, 1934.



However, the first legislative drive for federal aid failed on the final day of the session as GOP Representative George A. Dondero of Royal Oak officially put it to death by objecting to consideration of a bridge bill. Dondero said the bill should be rejected because it would destroy the scenic beauty of the Straits.<sup>41</sup>

August 28, 1934 the Bridge Authority put forth its first effort for federal aid as a slightly revised Fowler plan, which was submitted to the Public Works Administration with a request for seventy per cent of the estimated \$35,000,000 cost.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, objections were raised to the island hopping route. These were brought before the Authority chiefly by interest groups from Mackinac Island, which felt the distinctive character of the island would be ruined by Fowler's project. Others, in the western part of the state, particularly the Grand Rapids area, complained a terminus near Cheboygan would not be to their best interests. Many others also indicated a preference for a direct crossing, according to Cissel.<sup>43</sup>

Comstock, who had not been a particularly popular governor,<sup>44</sup> did practically no campaigning for renomina-

<sup>41</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, June 19, 1934.

<sup>42</sup>Brown, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup>Cissel, 1936 report, p.4.

<sup>44</sup>White, "Governor."

tion as his party's standard bearer in 1934. He insisted the Democrats either wanted him to run for a second term or they did not. Perhaps the four previous nominations made him vulnerable or perhaps it was simply that Comstock was not popular. In any event, the voters answered Comstock negatively and Arthur Lacy was named Democratic gubernatorial nominee in the September primary. Lacy had a margin of 9,000 votes.<sup>45</sup>

Apparently candidates in the more hotly contested Republican gubernatorial primary thought they had more to gain by espousing a bridge. In August former Governor Alexander J. Groesbeck, on the come-back trail, advocated elimination of all ferry tolls at the Straits.<sup>46</sup>

A few days later former Detroit Mayor John W. Smith, also seeking the GOP gubernatorial nomination, summed up an attitude that was to become common in regard to bridge advocacy. "Both Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Groesbeck declare they are in favor of a bridge across the Straits. I'm in favor of that too," said Smith.<sup>47</sup>

Fitzgerald won the nomination and went on to win the governorship by 82,699 votes.<sup>48</sup>

Since the federal government, through the PWA, had

<sup>45</sup>State Journal, Sept. 12 and Sept. 13, 1934.

<sup>46</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Aug. 23, 1934.

<sup>47</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Aug. 27, 1934.

<sup>48</sup>Michigan Manual, 1963-64, p. 431.

not acted by November, Comstock appeared before the Bridge Authority to ask it to pass a resolution urging an early and favorable decision on the application.

The resolution began: "in view of the imperative need for immediate employment in northern Michigan. . . ,"  
thus indicating the reasons behind the original push for a bridge.<sup>49</sup>

In the background a controversy was brewing between the direct route supporters and Fowler, who had become passionately involved with his island hopping route, to the exclusion of any consideration of the other. Brown said he was never in favor of Fowler's route and had to ignore constant urgings from Fowler while he was in Congress.<sup>50</sup>

The Authority attempted to secure necessary data in order to make a decision on the matter of location, but it was unable to secure from Fowler satisfactory information as to the merits and probable cost of construction on routes other than the one originally proposed by him.

After a number of urgings, Fowler finally stated: "It is absolutely certain beyond peradventure of a doubt that no highway bridge can be built for a direct crossing at less than \$50,000,000 upwards, and one to

<sup>49</sup>Minutes of the Mackinac Bridge Authority, Nov. 9, 1934, in Authority files at St. Ignace, Mich.

<sup>50</sup>Brown, pps. 5-6.

carry railways would cost so much it is useless to waste time in an estimate."<sup>51</sup>

The battle between Cissel, who supported the direct route, and Fowler, who had become the sole exponent of island hopping, came to a head in January 1935.

Cissel wrote to Stackpole, Authority chairman:

"I regret that Mr. Fowler and I have been unable to agree on these several matters and that so much controversy has developed over the matter of the 'direct' crossing. His attitude on this matter has, from the beginning, been such as to lead me to the conclusion that it is his purpose to force adoption of the route originally proposed by him. This situation, I believe, has been unfortunate in several particulars. In the first place, I believe that the 'direct' crossing, if feasible and economic, is favored by the highway department. With Mr. Fowler representing the Authority and avidly fighting consideration of anything except his own favored plan, it has been impossible to secure full cooperation of the highway department in development of the project as might have otherwise been possible."

On February 12 and 13, 1935, the Authority took steps to remedy the situation by informing Fowler his activities as temporary chief engineer were suspended

"and that he was not to further represent the Authority in discussions pertaining to the project."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Report by Charles E. Fowler to Mackinac Bridge Authority, Nov. 27, 1934.

<sup>52</sup>Letter from J. H. Cissel to S. T. Stackpole, Jan. 22, 1935, in Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

<sup>53</sup>Cissel, 1936 report.

However, Fowler continued to represent the Authority. He appeared with Stackpole and Cissel at a PWA Board of Review hearing on June 17. Members of the Lake Carriers Association presented strenuous objections to blocking the South Straits channel with a bridge with low clearance and a draw span.<sup>54</sup>

A month later the PWA notified the Authority that its application had been disapproved, but added the rejection would not prejudice an amended application for a new route. Fowler's services were again discontinued. However, the Authority was still not rid of Fowler, as Cissel duly noted in September the final disposition at which the Authority confirmed they no longer required the New York City engineer's services as of July 27.<sup>55</sup>

A few days later a renewed application for a PWA loan and grant were filed in Washington.

During the summer of 1935 the public began to evince an increased interest in the possibility of a bridge. This was particularly true in the Upper Peninsula where former Governor Chase S. Osborn was sponsoring the push.<sup>56</sup>

Osborn, one of the most venerable and eloquent

<sup>54</sup>H. H. Cissel, "A Report on the Mackinac Straits Bridge Project," Jan. 27, 1937, in the files of the State of Michigan library.

<sup>55</sup>Cissel, 1937 report.

<sup>56</sup>Cissel, 1937 report.

Republican elder statesmen of the time, had at one point opposed the bridge as impractical. However, he was persuaded the project was feasible largely due to the influence of Dean Mortimer E. Cooley, of the University of Michigan College of Engineering.<sup>57</sup>

In September 1935 a letter from Osborn to GOP Governor Frank Fitzgerald cited twenty-three reasons why a bridge should be built. This letter supposedly helped convince the Grand Ledge native to come out for the project. Fitzgerald, after a study of the proposals, said he was for it one hundred per cent. He claimed the federal government was responsible for financing the bridge because Michigan's two peninsulas were linked into one state by the federal government during the Andrew Jackson administration.<sup>58</sup>

In November 1935, Brown, who had dreamed of the link between the peninsulas since childhood,<sup>59</sup> indicated a desire to present the project to President Franklin D. Roosevelt for his consideration and possible backing.

<sup>57</sup>Woodford, introduction to Mighty Mac, p. 11.

<sup>58</sup>Stellanova Osborn, Les Cheneaux Breezes, Cedarville, Mich., Vol. 4, Nov. 1, 1936.

<sup>59</sup>Before the Bridge, the History and Directory of St. Ignace and Nearby Localities, St. Ignace, 1957, pps. 130-131.

Brown had been active in politics since he was elected prosecuting attorney in 1914 at age twenty-five. He was chairman of the Michigan State Democratic Convention six times between 1924 and 1940. He was first elected to Congress in 1932 and served two terms in the House before moving up to the Senate in 1936. He was beaten in 1942, thus ending his elective political life.<sup>60</sup>

The plan put forth by the Bridge Authority was to have Brown and Comstock make an appeal for Roosevelt's backing for the bridge.<sup>61</sup> This, however, never materialized. Instead it was Brown and Osborn, who eventually went to Roosevelt in December. Osborn apparently met twice with Roosevelt, once in Georgia and later in Washington, D.C.

Osborn's diary entry for December 6 recorded this remark on his meeting with Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Georgia: "He proceeded to favor a bridge across the Straits of Mackinac."<sup>62</sup>

Brown adds insight into Roosevelt's ability to charm with his recollections of the Washington meeting.

<sup>60</sup>"Sketch of Career, Prentiss M. Brown, Chairman of the Board," paper by the Detroit Edison Company, March 22, 1954, copy in State of Michigan Library files.

<sup>61</sup>Letter from Brown to S. T. Stackpole, Bridge Authority Chairman, Nov. 4, 1935, in Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

<sup>62</sup>Chase S. Osborn, diary, Dec. 6, 1935, p. 340, Michigan Historical Collections, The University of Michigan Library.

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After several hours closeted with the President, Brown said, "We left believing we had won his whole hearted support, but it was not until several hours later that I realized he had actually promised us nothing."<sup>63</sup>

On December 17, Roosevelt did order the Army Corps of Engineers to report on the location, cost, feasibility and necessity of the bridge.<sup>64</sup> The report, when made, was favorable.<sup>65</sup>

In January the Upper Peninsula Development Association at its annual meeting in Hancock endorsed the bridge. This culminated in the formation of a Mackinac Bridge Association, which held meetings throughout the state in the Spring of 1936. The push was made through the Chambers of Commerce and civic associations.<sup>66</sup> Another voice added to the chorus was that of George Osborn, Sault Ste. Marie Evening News publisher, who like his father, was a Republican. Osborn used the device of having friends in the Michigan Press Association ask questions about the bridge in order to keep the issue before the public.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup>Brown interview.

<sup>64</sup>Cissel, 1937 report.

<sup>65</sup>Brown, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup>Cissel, 1937 report.

<sup>67</sup>Interview with George Osborn, Aug. 16, 1964, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

But there were still substantial elements of disagreement on the project as was indicated by Republican U.S. Senator James Couzens, when he was asked to support the measure by a Michigan constituent.

So far as I have been able to determine there is not substantial agreement among the voters of Michigan on the desirability or the need of the construction of the bridge at the Straits of Mackinac. However, if there is any likelihood of the matter being seriously considered by the federal government I will be glad to go into the matter.

. . . The difficulty however seems to be that the government here does not believe that the project will be self liquidating.

Couzens went on to point out that Brown, who would be elected to ~~the~~ U.S. Senate that fall, was already working on the matter in Washington as a Congressman.<sup>68</sup>

Statements by six Michigan Governors from Osborn to Fitzgerald early in 1936 failed to indicate the bridge project was a major problem facing the state.<sup>69</sup>

However, Osborn's campaign was drawing some national attention to the proposal as was indicated by a half page article in the Chicago Tribune, which noted, "Chase S. Osborn, former Governor of Michigan, is behind a movement to have the state of Michigan build

<sup>68</sup> Letter from James Couzens to Seth Turner of the Heart of Nature Club, Pontiac, Mich., Feb. 3, 1936, reprinted in the Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

<sup>69</sup> Grand Rapids Press, Jan. 1, 1936.

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the bridge alone from state funds in celebration of the hundredth anniversary of Michigan's achievement of statehood next year." The article also contained a report on the status of the proposal before President Roosevelt.<sup>70</sup>

Governor Osborn's role in the bridge struggle was apolitical. He was most interested in development of the Upper Peninsula and approached the project on this basis.<sup>71</sup> In a letter to the Marquette Mining Journal, Osborn had summed up his position:

Suppose on a trunk line--and the Straits road is that--there was a mud hole, or chasm, or abyss, or sink-hole eight miles wide that every car had to be pulled over or through. Something would be done about that at once. . . . Michigan is unifying itself and a magnificent new route through Michigan to Lake Superior and the northwest United States is developing via the Straits of Mackinac. It cannot continue to grow as it ought with clumsy and inadequate ferries for any portion of the year.<sup>72</sup>

Osborn's interest "gave the proposal the first dignity accorded the idea by the federal government," a laudatory editorial writer was to later proclaim.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Chicago Tribune, March 16, 1936.

<sup>71</sup> Osborn interview.

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Chase Osborn to Marquette Mining Journal, Dec. 21, 1935, reprinted in Introduction to Identity Inc., p.11.

<sup>73</sup> Republican Tribune, Charlotte, Mich., Oct. 20, 1939.

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Others were to label him "an outstanding proponent." He was still actively fighting for the project in his late seventies.<sup>74</sup>

Osborn also used his political influence to get members of the Republican party to take a more favorable stand on the structure. In April 1936 Osborn wrote to Representative Carle E. Mapes, one of the more outspoken GOP opponents. The former Governor chided the Grand Rapids lawmaker for opposing bridge construction. Mapes' reply typified many Republican conservative thoughts on the bridge at that time. He said it had not been studied enough.<sup>75</sup>

Politics entered the picture, according to the elder Osborn's son, George, only after the bridge had been successfully promoted for several years. "Conservative Republicans were very opposed on the grounds of feasibility and economics," George Osborn added.<sup>76</sup>

Brown had introduced a bridge bill again in the 1936 session of Congress designed to ask for federal approval to bridge the navigable waters of the Straits. The 1936 bill still had the alternative of a series of

<sup>74</sup> An Accolade for Chase S. Osborn, Sault Ste. Marie, 1940, pps. 406 and 514, copy in State of Michigan Library.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from Chase Osborn to Carle E. Mapes, undated, copy in Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with George Osborn, Aug. 16, 1964, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

causeways in it, but it never got to the floor. Jesse D. Wolcott of Port Huron asked that the measure be passed without prejudice when it was reported from the Committee On Interstate and Foreign Commerce, but it was objected to by Representative Vito Marcantonio.<sup>77</sup>

A variety of politicians from former Governor Fred Green to Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Frank Murphy and incumbent Frank Fitzgerald spoke favorably of the bridge project during the campaign months of 1936.

Fitzgerald's approach to the bridge proposal and its possible impact on votes was more direct. In a Nagaunee campaign speech he declared "that getting automobiles across the Straits is just as much a state responsibility as clearing away the snowdrifts." This was a fairly apparent echo of Osborn's earlier sentiments.<sup>78</sup>

During heavy traffic periods five boats including the car ferry Ste. Marie and the Chief Wawatam were put into service in the summer of 1936 on a free schedule.<sup>79</sup>

It still could not be said the bridge was a significant issue in the determination of the campaign's outcome for the real issues in 1936 were obviously economic.

<sup>77</sup>Congressional Record, 74th Congress, Second session, pps. 8278 and 9472.

<sup>78</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, July 10, 1936.

<sup>79</sup>Cissel, 1936 report, p. 12.

Murphy did keep his promise to look into the bridge proposal.<sup>80</sup>

Bridge backers, who were gradually gaining voice across the state, got a bad blow in September when Michigan's application for a loan and grant of funds from the WPA was denied.<sup>81</sup>

Murphy's race in Michigan in 1936 could easily be claimed to be the race of President Roosevelt since it was at the President's urging that Murphy entered the campaign. And it was not without misgivings. In March Murphy wrote to Roosevelt: ". . . concerning the situation in Michigan, reports that reach me suggest party success, in the state this fall, if not hopeless, is at least very doubtful. There appears to be a general belief outside of strict party circles. . . that the state at large will go Republican."<sup>82</sup>

It was July before Murphy decided to make the race against the incumbent Fitzgerald. Murphy's campaign was a promise to bring the New Deal into Michigan. And it was from this standpoint that the one time Detroit Mayor was probably interested in the Mackinac Bridge project. In his first important speech of the campaign Murphy

<sup>80</sup> Survey of Detroit News and Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, August through October 1936.

<sup>81</sup> Detroit News, Sept. 18, 1936.

<sup>82</sup> Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol. II: The Inside Struggle, New York, 1944, p. 498.



cited a primary objective: to "assist as best I can in the reelection of the Roosevelt administration with its program of caring for the social and economic needs of the people."<sup>83</sup>

The national character of the campaign was indicated by a Detroit News article which indicated Republican politicians generally feared Roosevelt more than any other Democrat. "He, they believe, is the Democratic candidate most likely to carry Michigan," said the analyst.<sup>84</sup>

When the tumult of the election campaign was over, Roosevelt had carried Michigan by more than 250,000 votes. Murphy, trailing far behind, managed to squeak through to victory by 48,919 votes.<sup>85</sup>

Election statistics give no indication that the bridge proposal provided impetus to the Murphy victory. Fitzgerald carried all four counties in the area of the bridgeheads. Chippewa, Mackinac, Emmett and Cheboygan counties all went for the incumbent governor during the 1936 campaign. Fitzgerald's margin of victory in each was not significantly different from the edge he had over Lacey in 1934.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup>Detroit News, July 22, 1936.

<sup>84</sup>Detroit News, Aug. 29, 1936.

<sup>85</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, May 30, 1934.

<sup>86</sup>Michigan Manual, 1935-36, pps. 320-322 and Michigan Manual, 1937-38, pps. 321-405.

At year's end the support for the bridge proposal was still mounting despite the federal disappointment of September.

Chase Osborn indicated his support was undiminished by the September setback in a letter to Seth Turner of the Pontiac Heart of Nature Club: "Undoubtedly you know that Governor Murphy came out during the campaign in favor of the bridge at the Straits of Mackinac," Osborn wrote. "He did this at my request after discussing the question fully with me. That bridge shall be built yet, one of these days."<sup>87</sup>

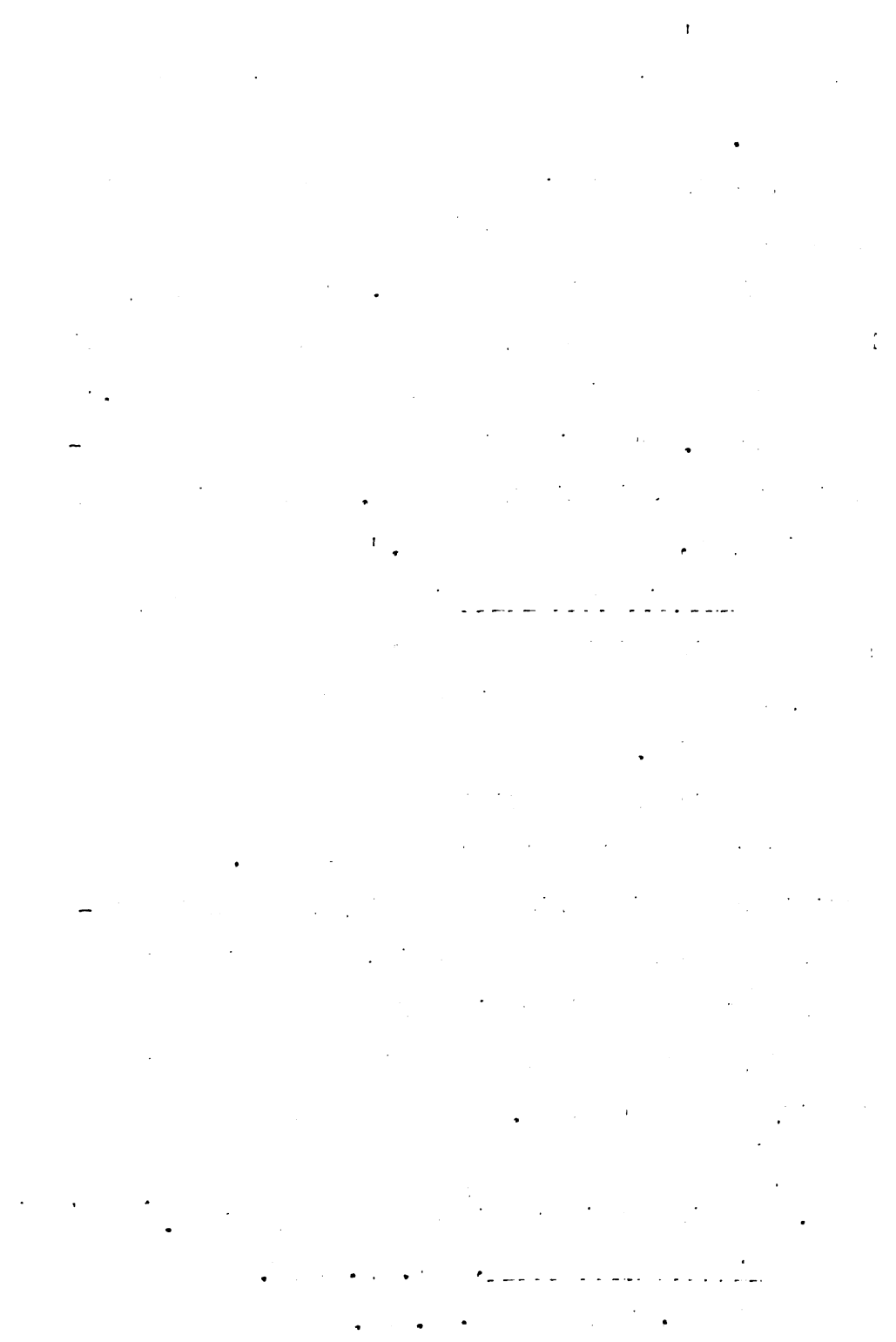
The Detroit Free Press in a December survey seconded this opinion with the report that one hundred twenty Michigan organizations had officially endorsed the undertaking.<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile state officials still had not given up hope of federal financing for the project. State PWA officials met with Bridge Authority leaders in mid-December to tell them the previous rejection did not preclude the reconsideration of the application if the Authority presented new and additional data which might justify reconsideration.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup>Letter from Chase Osborn to Seth Turner, Dec. 2, 1936, copy in Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

<sup>88</sup>Detroit Free Press, Dec. 7, 1936.

<sup>89</sup>Cissel, 1937 report, p. 11.



In January 1937 the Bridge Authority submitted a re-application on the grounds of increased traffic flow at the Straits and a hike in the total revenues for the state.<sup>90</sup>

In 1937 the Michigan Highway Department, under the leadership of Murray D. Van Wagoner, began to take a more active interest in the bridge project. A new one hundred and fifty passenger ferry was built during the year, but Van Wagoner pointed out that it was only a short term solution to the overall Straits' transportation problem. Cissel had found that traffic volume across the narrow neck of water had doubled from 1932 to 1937 and negotiations were launched to get a bridge building firm to supply preliminary plans for the structure.<sup>91</sup>

Cissel continued to attempt to win over the sentiments of lawmakers in the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate throughout the year.

Various organizations were continuing to add their voices to those already on record as supporting the bridge building project. For instance, the Taft Memorial Highway Association with members from five states and the Canadian province of Ontario resolved the bridge should be constructed during an annual meeting on

<sup>90</sup> Mackinac Bridge Authority meeting minutes, Jan. 30, 1937, Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

<sup>91</sup> Cissel, 1937 report, pps. 4-9.

Mackinac Island. Copies of the resolution went to major politicians from all the states, and Roosevelt.<sup>92</sup>

However, Detroit Free Press editors decided federal aid for the project was pretty much out of the question by April. "It now looks as if Michigan must await another depression to build a bridge over the Straits of Mackinac," the editors wrote. "Opposition to the project, from the Michigan standpoint has faded in recent months, but now that all other obstacles to the bridge have been resolved word comes from Washington that large outlays will no longer be approved by PWA." The editors went on to explain that Roosevelt had explained the slow down as a tapering off of PWA activities due to increases in steel and durable goods prices.<sup>93</sup>

Van Wagoner, who with his chief deputy G. Donald Kennedy, was in the process of building one of the state's most powerful political machines, also began to speak out on the bridge.<sup>94</sup> Utilizing a "build and dedicate," action-speaks-louder-than-words formula, Van Wagoner pointed out the difficulty of federal and state governments getting together on the project. Van Wagoner

<sup>92</sup>Copy of resolution in Mackinac Bridge Authority files, 1935-37, sec. 16.

<sup>93</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 25, 1937.

<sup>94</sup>Interview with Lawrence Rubin, Executive Secretary of the Mackinac Bridge Authority, Aug. 15, 1964, St. Ignace, Mich.

cited the construction of the Port Huron Blue Water bridge, which linked Michigan with Ontario, as an example which should challenge the state and federal governments to move forward.<sup>95</sup>

Final PWA rejection came in the summer of 1937 and later the Reconstruction Finance Corporation also decided against supplying money on the grounds that this was only for defense mobilization.<sup>96</sup>

However, Van Wagoner was still convinced that the bridge would be built. In late August the road builder said at Mackinac Island: "Eventually there will be one of the world's greatest bridges built to handle this multiplying annual traffic." He predicted then it might take five more years to have the project authorized and seven or eight years to build it.<sup>97</sup> If World War II had not altered the time schedule, Van Wagoner's predictions might well have proven true.

There was relative silence throughout the winter months of 1937-38, but with the summer of the election year came the first of the pronouncements in favor of bridge construction.

Governor Murphy announced that a new survey would be started in a few days of the proposed route and he

<sup>95</sup>Ann Arbor News, Aug. 18, 1937.

<sup>96</sup>Mackinac Bridge Authority publicity file, 1937-38.

<sup>97</sup>Mackinac Island News, Aug. 28, 1937.

added that President Roosevelt was greatly interested in the Mackinac Bridge and might visit the site during the campaign.<sup>98</sup>

Murphy continued to sing the same or similar tunes about the bridge throughout the campaign. He is quoted in June as saying: "The new authority will be instructed to start an immediate survey on the hopes of making a \$30,000,000 Straits bridge eligible under the new federal PWA program." Murphy said that Washington authorities were keenly interested in the project.<sup>99</sup>

The highway department backed up Murphy by stating its position, "backed by tourist and civic organizations in the northern part of the state," was that full development of Michigan's tourist industry would not be possible until the ferry fleet was replaced with a bridge.<sup>100</sup>

Fitzgerald, on the other hand, phrased his bridge position in terms of the immediate possibility of making the ferry service a free one.<sup>101</sup> It is likely that he hoped to gain more votes through the prompt promise than the long range approach.

In August, with the political campaign pace getting warmer, Murphy chose Mackinac Island to make an important

<sup>98</sup>The Emmett County Graphic, June 23, 1938.

<sup>99</sup>Detroit News, June 21, 1938.

<sup>100</sup>Detroit News, July 6, 1938.

<sup>101</sup>Detroit News, July 28, 1938.

speech on the bridge topic. Murphy said he would rally state citizens to support of the project through a committee of one hundred representing every county in the state and consolidate backers of it. He appointed Republican Chase Osborn to head the committee. Van Wagoner's right hand man, G. Donald Kennedy, Deputy Highway Commissioner, was named as chairman of a reorganized Mackinac Straits Bridge Authority.

Murphy again hammered the public with the claim Roosevelt was for the bridge. "Great impetus will be given the Mackinac Bridge movement when President Roosevelt comes to Michigan to dedicate the Blue Water International Bridge at Port Huron," Murphy said. "The President has talked over the question of a Straits bridge with me and is much interested in the idea. When he comes to Michigan he will gain useful information on how the bridge could be financed and what it would mean to the northern part of the state. I doubt if he will be able to visit the Straits region, but he is familiar with every detail of the project," Murphy claimed.<sup>102</sup>

In October Fitzgerald, in a speech at Sault Ste. Marie revived the tunnel proposal, saying engineers had told him it was feasible. However, by this time most engineers were convinced the underground route was

<sup>102</sup>Detroit News, Aug. 24, 1938.



impractical. Fitzgerald reiterated his position that he was in favor of free ferry service until construction of a bridge or tunnel could get underway. He said he would propose a ban on ferry tolls to the next legislature.

Fitzgerald slapped at the New Deal in the state and nation and said promises were being made in Michigan for bridges "for the New Deal fears one of its favored sons is on the way to the chopping block." The Grand Ledge Republican continued, "No one hopes more fervently than I that the time may come when a bridge or a tunnel shall connect the two peninsulas of Michigan. I favor such a project. . . . in cold concrete terms, which will provide for the fabrication of steel and the pouring of concrete--not in terms of political visions." Fitzgerald repeated the sentiment that the project should not be based on a gaudy appeal for votes throughout his swing through the Upper peninsula.<sup>103</sup>

In early November Murphy's federal aid approach to bridge financing received a blow in the form of an Associated Press dispatch from Washington, D.C. The story said: "The Public Works Administration considers a Michigan application for money to construct a bridge across the Straits of Mackinac as dead despite the pro-

<sup>103</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 12, 1938.

ject's White House standing. The original application has been in the PWA's files since 1934 without action. An authorized PWA spokesman said it had not received recent consideration."

However, the article also reported that Roosevelt at a recent press conference termed the bridge a definite need of Michigan and added it would benefit the state and nation by uniting Michigan's two peninsulas. The President said he would ask for a bill to provide for building and aiding in financing. The dispatch speculated that such a bill would have difficult passage since the Brown bill which failed had no appropriation attached to it.<sup>104</sup>

Murphy carried eleven counties in the election, half of those he carried in 1936. Eight Upper Peninsula counties, Wayne, Muskegon and Presque Isle counties went for the incumbent. The rest went to Fitzgerald. There was no significant change in the bridgehead county totals, both were carried again by Fitzgerald.

The analysts came up with various causes for Murphy's defeat. Some felt the Lansing labor holiday and sit-down strikes were the Governor's undoing.<sup>105</sup>

The Democratic county chairmen reported the farmers were up in arms against the state and national adminis-

<sup>104</sup> Detroit News, Nov. 1, 1938.

<sup>105</sup> New York Times, April 16, 1939.

trations.<sup>106</sup> The religious issue, the communists, party organization and the national trend were other reasons listed.<sup>107</sup> Murphy claimed the recession had swung the pendulum of public opinion against him.<sup>108</sup> And Fitzgerald was convinced it was a defeat of the New Deal.<sup>109</sup> At any rate, the bridge was not mentioned as a factor and certainly if it played any role either in the victory or defeat it had to be a miniscule one.

In his first message to the 1939 legislature, Fitzgerald kept his campaign promise and brought the subject of a free ferry service at the Straits before the lawmakers.<sup>110</sup> However, Fitzgerald did not live to see any action taken on his proposal. He died suddenly on March 16, 1939 and his successor, Luren D. Dickinson, a conservative Republican, apparently dropped the idea.<sup>111</sup>

Thus the Depression Decade ended with a considerable lobby among clubs and organizations, particularly in northern Michigan, in favor of the Mackinac Bridge project, but with little accomplished in favor of the

<sup>106</sup>Richard D. Lunt, The High Ministry of Government: The Political Career of Frank Murphy, unpublished thesis, U. of New Mexico, 1962, p. 193.

<sup>107</sup>Ickes, p. 498.

<sup>108</sup>News of Lansing, Dec. 9, 1938.

<sup>109</sup>Capitol Commentator, Feb. 14, 1939.

<sup>110</sup>Fitzgerald Message to state legislature, Jan. 5, 1939.

<sup>111</sup>Michigan Manual, 1963-64, p. 85.

scheme.

The half century old proposal had been an active item in at least two political campaigns, but had little effect on their outcomes and as an issue was virtually tabled after a politician won office.

As the ten year period ended it was Democratic Highway Commissioner Murrary D. Van Wagoner, who was at the head of efforts for a bridge. An engineering firm, Modjeski and Masters, was in the process of again determining the feasibility and route and its first report would be filed in 1940.<sup>112</sup>

Several times the federal government had spurned the proposal under both Democratic and Republican state administrations. Quarreling among supporters over route and method had probably served as factors in diminishing the chances of federal aid.

<sup>112</sup>Brown interview.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FORTIES

The dominant feature of the 1940's, World War II, also held sway over the fortunes of the Mackinac Bridge project. The 1940's were a period of highs and lows for the proposal which had colored man's imagination since the 1880's.

The first definite effort for the giant undertaking got underway with the construction, by the State Highway Department, of a causeway south from St. Ignace. However, the United States' entry into the war forced curtailment of the plan due to the difficulty of getting construction materials. And the 1940 collapse of Washington's Tacoma Narrows Bridge gave fuel to the claims of individuals who believed the bridge an impractical dream. At any rate, the dream was shelved for the war's duration, and the causeway was not utilized until the bridge was finally built in the 1950's.

Two new antagonistic personalities became part of the bridge's historical picture during the decade. They were Republican Highway Commissioner Charles Ziegler and youthful Governor G. Mennen Williams. Two other Republicans also made their presences felt during the ten year span. D. Hale Brake, state treasurer from 1943

to 1954, played a role as did an unusual apolitical Republican from Mackinac Island, W. Stewart Woodfill.

During the period the bridge proposal received its first official vote of approval from the federal government and the original Mackinac Bridge Authority was abolished because of inactivity. Late in the decade the stage was finally set by Williams for the successful push for a second Bridge commission and ultimately for the bridge itself in the 1950's.

In 1940 Congressional passage of a bill to allow Michigan to construct a bridge across the federally controlled Straits of Mackinac seemed pretty dim. Republican Congressman George Dondero pledged to continue his determined opposition to the structure as financially unfeasible and he was joined by fellow Michigan GOP member, Representative Fred L. Crawford. Both contended the expenditure was not justified and added the new plaint that if approved at this late date would be in conflict with the defense program.<sup>113</sup> And yet just a few months later the eight year fight for passage of the contested measure, first sponsored by Prentiss Brown, ended after a Michigan delegation caucus approved the proposal.

Actually all the bill did was give Michigan the federal go-ahead to build a bridge. As Democratic pro-

<sup>113</sup> Detroit News, June 5, 1940.

proponent Louis Rabaut explained on the House floor: "The bill requires no money and asks for no money. It merely asks permission to allow the state of Michigan to build a bridge across the Straits of Mackinac. This bill was originally introduced by Senator Brown when he first came to Congress and it has been pushed around and objected to ever since."<sup>114</sup>

Dondero's response was: "For eight years I have stood on the floor of this House opposing the pending proposal. . . . and I have opposed it mainly on the grounds there is no economic justification for the passage of the bill; secondly, that no necessity exists as yet." The Royal Oak Republican warned the proposed Straits bridge would be a financial flop like Detroit's Ambassador Bridge. He cited the great natural beauty of the Straits area and said: "Man thinks he can improve on its beauty with concrete and steel." He termed the ferry trip "one of the most delightful links in the journey of the traveler." Crawford added that construction at the Straits might hinder the defense program and said there is no guaranteed way to pay for the structure. Rabaut retorted that control over the eventual building would probably belong to a Republican legislature.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>114</sup>Congressional Record, 76th Congress, Third Session, p. 15055.

<sup>115</sup>Congressional Record, 76th Congress, Third Session, pps. 15060-15068.

In the final 98-4 vote, Michigan Representatives Fred Bradley, Republican, and Louis C. Rabaut, Democrat, favored the proposal while Dondero and Crawford held fast to their opposition. Only two other Congressmen shared the Dondero-Crawford negative position.<sup>116</sup>

According to Michigan sources negotiations between G. Donald Kennedy, Chairman of the Bridge Authority, and the War Department were to begin immediately. The War Department had expressed interest in the bridge because of its potential military value, Kennedy had said.<sup>117</sup> For Kennedy and his boss, Highway Commissioner Murray D. Van Wagoner, the Mackinac Bridge project was part of an overall, active approach to state highway construction. Van Wagoner, who had spent three years working for the Highway Department in Alpena after his college graduation, was convinced that the ferries were inadequate and that a bridge was necessary at the Straits.<sup>118</sup>

At the same time Van Wagoner and Kennedy were building a political machine that would parlay Van Wagoner into the Governor's chair in 1941 and would allow Kennedy to step up to Highway Commissioner.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup>Detroit News, August 6, 1940.

<sup>117</sup>Detroit News, August 6, 1940.

<sup>118</sup>Rubin interview.

<sup>119</sup>Rubin interview.



1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the smooth operation of any business and for the protection of its interests.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and procedures that should be followed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the records. It includes detailed instructions on how to collect, classify, and store the data.

3. The third part of the document provides a comprehensive overview of the different types of records that should be maintained, including financial statements, contracts, and correspondence. It also discusses the legal requirements for record-keeping in various jurisdictions.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the importance of regular audits and reviews of the records. It explains how these audits can help to identify any errors or discrepancies and ensure that the records are up-to-date and accurate.

5. The fifth part of the document provides a detailed description of the various software and tools that are available to assist with record-keeping. It discusses the benefits of using these tools and provides recommendations for the most suitable options for different types of businesses.

6. The sixth part of the document discusses the importance of training and education for the staff responsible for maintaining the records. It explains how training can help to ensure that the staff are up-to-date on the latest record-keeping practices and procedures.

7. The seventh part of the document discusses the importance of security and protection of the records. It explains how to implement effective security measures to prevent unauthorized access to the records and ensure their confidentiality.

8. The eighth part of the document discusses the importance of backup and recovery of the records. It explains how to implement a robust backup and recovery strategy to ensure that the records are protected in the event of a disaster or data loss.

9. The ninth part of the document discusses the importance of compliance with relevant laws and regulations. It explains how to stay up-to-date on the latest legal requirements and ensure that the record-keeping practices are in full compliance.

10. The tenth part of the document provides a summary of the key points discussed in the document and offers some final thoughts on the importance of record-keeping for the success of any business.

11. The eleventh part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining a clear and concise record-keeping system. It explains how to design a system that is easy to use and understand, and that can be adapted to the needs of the business.

12. The twelfth part of the document discusses the importance of regular communication and collaboration between the staff responsible for maintaining the records. It explains how to establish a clear line of communication and ensure that everyone is working together to maintain the records.

13. The thirteenth part of the document discusses the importance of staying up-to-date on the latest record-keeping practices and procedures. It explains how to stay informed on the latest developments in the field and ensure that the record-keeping practices are always up-to-date.

14. The fourteenth part of the document discusses the importance of being flexible and adaptable when it comes to record-keeping. It explains how to be open to new ideas and technologies, and how to adapt the record-keeping practices to the changing needs of the business.

15. The fifteenth part of the document discusses the importance of being thorough and detailed when it comes to record-keeping. It explains how to ensure that all relevant information is captured and recorded, and that the records are as complete and accurate as possible.

Van Wagoner had said in a 1930's radio address from Battle Creek that the "best politics was doing a good job" and it was such a campaign of "building and dedicating" roads which won him popularity and political strength.

Analysts from both sides of the political fence conclude it is hard to separate Van Wagoner's political motives from his genuine conviction that the bridge was necessary. Rubin concluded: "What emerges is a clear cut feeling that Van Wagoner felt the structure was needed."<sup>120</sup> While George Osborn opined, "It was partially both. Originally the basis was a campaign issue, but he was convinced it was a practical solution to a problem."<sup>121</sup>

Although the growing cloud of war in Europe was making it increasingly difficult to get steel for construction, Van Wagoner's department, upon receipt of an engineering report recommending a dual purpose causeway be built 4,200 feet south from St. Ignace as a first step toward bridge construction, let the contracts and the project was completed in 1941, during his term as Governor. The causeway was supposed to serve as a ferry dock temporarily and eventually as part of the bridge foundations.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup>Rubin interview.

<sup>121</sup>Osborn interview.

<sup>122</sup>Brown interview.

Even University of Michigan engineer James H. Cissel, who had been stumping the state talking up the bridge for nearly a decade, advised shelving projected bridge construction. The professor urged further plans be put aside for the duration "of the national defense emergency," and added the twin problems of obtaining steel and a federal loan made the project "out of the question."<sup>123</sup>

Another factor in the decision to hold off was the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows bridge in Washington, which had been cited as proof of the engineering feasibility of the Mackinac project. The west coast bridge fell during a sixty mile-per-hour wind and since the Straits experienced eighty mile-per-hour gales, shelving the project seemed wise.<sup>124</sup>

In the 1940 election, Van Wagoner had ousted Republican Luren Dickinson by 131,281 votes. However, Van Wagoner was beaten by Republican Harry Kelly, who stopped his bid for reelection with a 72,021 plurality. In the 1946 gubernatorial contest, Van Wagoner made a comeback bid against GOP nominee Kim Sigler. The former highway commissioner reportedly spoke out on the need for a Straits bridge in his Upper Peninsula appearances; however, Sigler won by 359,338 votes.<sup>125</sup> Although Van

<sup>123</sup>Detroit News, Jan. 25, 1941.

<sup>124</sup>Letter to author from A. J. Levin, former Detroit News reporter, Oct. 2, 1964.

<sup>125</sup>Michigan Manual, 1963-64, p. 432.

Wagoner, in retrospect, said he believed his stand on the bridge gained him votes in all three of his gubernatorial campaigns, the margins of his victory and two losses indicate any votes gained could have had no significant effect on the outcome of the races.<sup>126</sup>

Further activity in regard to the bridge was pretty much limited to newspapers and magazines until 1947. The feasibility question continued to crop up after the war and in January 1947 the Sault Ste. Marie Evening News reprinted a magazine article from the Michigan Tradesman, which questioned the project's practicality. In keeping with their long standing position in favor of the structure, the editors noted that they felt there was a good chance for federal aid and suggested agitation begin anew for the span.<sup>127</sup>

The Sault newspapermen continued to peck away almost weekly at the bridge proposal throughout the winter and in February optimistically theorized that Highway Commissioner Charles Ziegler was "nearing a point where he will become sold on the bridge."<sup>128</sup>

Ziegler had, in 1943, withdrawn the highway department's support for plans to construct a bridge. He had termed

<sup>126</sup>Van Wagoner interview.

<sup>127</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Jan. 30, 1947.

<sup>128</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Jan., Feb., and March, 1947.

Van Wagoner's causeway an "unused monument to bad planning." Ziegler had indicated he had no intention of spending more money on the causeway.<sup>129</sup>

Ziegler, who died in 1959, was State Highway Commissioner from 1943 to 1957, a period encompassing the scarcity and enforced thrift of the war years and the post-war highway building boom. He emerges as an irascible, stubborn man and a politician of the old school. There was little love lost between Ziegler and the Democrats.<sup>130</sup>

The Democrats were not so charitable as the Sault editors in assessing Ziegler's role and the white-haired commissioner's contention that the feasibility of the bridge had not been proven.

For example, Van Wagoner is convinced Ziegler's opposition was a personal thing. In discussing Republican opposition to the structure, Van Wagoner said: "It was only this one man--only Charlie Ziegler. It wasn't the Republicans. They helped. They helped in many ways. We were for the bridge and he (Ziegler) was against it. He told the bond people that the foundations wouldn't stand up, that it would collapse, he was opposed so much. I don't know why he would be opposed

<sup>129</sup>Detroit News, Sept. 3, 1943.

<sup>130</sup>"Special Soapy File, Correspondence of the Highway Commissioner and the Chief Executive," 62-33-A, 1949-57, State of Michigan Archives.

to the bridge unless he wanted to have a fleet. See, he was in charge of the state ferries. But he was the only one opposed," Van Wagoner said.<sup>131</sup>

Brown, usually a gentle man, had a similar opinion of Ziegler. "I wouldn't blame the Republican Party for Ziegler's attitude," Brown said. "The man's mind was not big enough to comprehend that it could be done. The opposition was Ziegler backed up by Administrative Board friends."<sup>132</sup>

Williams was more gentle in his summing up of the long war with Ziegler. Williams termed Ziegler's opposition "interesting" in light of the fact the Highway Commissioner was later "proud to accept an invitation to have his name appear on the bridge plaque when it was built. . ."<sup>133</sup>

Despite the bitter opposition attributed to the Highway Commissioner, Ziegler testified in favor of retaining the Mackinac Bridge Authority in 1947. Bay City Republican Arthur C. MacKinnon had introduced a bill to abolish the Authority in April and Ziegler was called on for his view.<sup>134</sup> Ziegler said: "Under existing

<sup>131</sup>Van Wagoner interview.

<sup>132</sup>Brown interview.

<sup>133</sup>Letter from G. Mennen Williams to author, Feb. 21, 1966.

<sup>134</sup>House Bill 448, April 24, 1947, Michigan House Bills and Joint Resolutions of 1947.

conditions activity of the Authority is practically nil." However, he recommended continuation of the Authority to deal with reviving interest. He also proposed abolishing the \$1,000 annual salaries of the Commissioners since they were largely inactive.<sup>135</sup>

The Republican oriented Sault newspaper saw logic in the Ziegler proposal and stated editorially: "In this day of economy-mindedness we cannot blame the state legislature too much for its peeve against the Mackinac Bridge Authority. A tidy sum of money has been charged against the group including \$1,000 annual salaries for each member." The writer pointed out that the salaries had continued throughout the war when little could be done to promote the bridge project. However, the editors made it clear that they favored the Ziegler approach, which had been incorporated in a senate bill, rather than the idea of abolishing the entire Authority. "If the legislature finds that the present Commission has been derelict in its duty of promoting the bridge let another Commission be appointed with zeal and courage enough to build for us a bridge," the editorial writer concluded.<sup>136</sup>

However, the lawmakers were not in a mood to listen and in June 1947 the house abolishment bill was passed

<sup>135</sup>House Journal, Vol. I, 1947, p. 849.

<sup>136</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, May 28, 1947.

and signed into law, ending the first chapter in the history of the Mackinac Bridge Authority.<sup>137</sup> The only no vote case in either legislative body against the abolishment was that of Senator George Girrbach, Republican from Sault Ste. Marie. The vote in the Senate was 20-1 and in the House it was 74-0, although eighteen northern Michigan legislators in that body abstained from voting.<sup>138</sup>

Despite the demise of the Authority, interest in the proposal to bridge the Straits was on the upswing. Some contended a tunnel was the answer while others claimed a bridge was the only practical method. The Junior Chambers of Commerce of Sault Ste. Marie and St. Ignace prepared 10,000 folders in support of petitions addressed to Governor Sigler and the legislature appealing for construction of a bridge or a tunnel.<sup>139</sup>

And the feasibility question continued to haunt the issue. Shortly before the 1948 political campaign two University of Michigan geologists examined the rock strata at the Straits and declared it too unstable to support the weight of the bridge.<sup>140</sup>

Arnold J. Levin, A Detroit News reporter in Lansing,

<sup>137</sup> Public Acts of 1947, p. 472.

<sup>138</sup> Journal of the Senate, 1947, v. 2, June 3, p. 1356-57 and House Journal, 1947, pps. 1106-1107.

<sup>139</sup> Detroit News, Nov. 22, 1947.

<sup>140</sup> Levin letter.



was assigned to get the Highway Department's viewpoint. The officials concluded questions raised by the University of Michigan geologists could be overcome by engineering technology and a bridge could be built.<sup>141</sup> Levin's subsequent story reviewed the history of the bridge and proposals for better communication between the two peninsulas by bridge or tunnel. And it set the stage for the entry of youthful, gubernatorial candidate G. Mennen Williams into the Mackinac Bridge picture.

After receiving the Democratic nomination in 1948, Williams went to the Upper Peninsula on his first out-state jaunt. Levin was assigned to cover Williams during the campaign and accompanied the future governor on the trip. As the Williams' party crossed the Straits on a ferry, Williams discussed the bridge situation briefly with Levin and viewed the unused Van Wagoner causeway, which had been built prior to the war.

That night in Sault Ste. Marie, Williams sought out Levin at his hotel room and asked if he could discuss Upper Peninsula problems and the reporter's recollections of the 1946 Van Wagoner campaign. Levin recited the background of bridging the Straits on the basis of his previous stories. "As I remember, I told him (Williams) that the people in the north of Michigan were very

<sup>141</sup>Levin letter.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in financial reporting and compliance with regulatory requirements. The text notes that incomplete or inconsistent records can lead to misunderstandings, disputes, and potential legal consequences.

2. The second section addresses the challenges associated with data management and storage. It highlights the need for secure, scalable, and accessible systems to handle large volumes of information. The document suggests that organizations should invest in robust infrastructure and implement strict security protocols to protect sensitive data from unauthorized access, loss, or corruption. Regular backups and disaster recovery plans are also recommended to ensure business continuity.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the role of technology in streamlining operations and improving efficiency. It discusses how automation and digital tools can reduce manual errors, save time, and enhance productivity. The text encourages organizations to stay updated on the latest technological advancements and to foster a culture of innovation and continuous learning among their employees.

4. The final section discusses the importance of clear communication and collaboration within an organization. It stresses that effective teamwork and open communication are crucial for achieving common goals and resolving conflicts. The document suggests that leaders should promote a transparent and inclusive environment where team members feel valued and empowered to contribute their ideas and expertise.

interested in a bridge but that it probably had little or no interest in the south. (I am not a deer hunter, so had no experience with the long line-ups for ferry service during the season.)" Levin told Williams it would be a tremendously expensive undertaking and mentioned that the geologists' reports and the Tacoma Narrows bridge collapse had thrown a lot of cold water on the idea, but that someday certainly "someone would do something about it."

Williams finally asked if Levin thought the bridge a good idea for him to promote and Levin suggested in view of the circumstances and questions which had been raised, that Williams might propose the establishment of a special citizens' committee to determine the feasibility of bridging the Straits.

Williams made a note of the suggestion and followed it up in a speech at Sault Ste. Marie. He proposed a citizens' committee, which would determine, on the basis of available evidence, the answer to the question of establishing better and faster communication between the two peninsulas.<sup>142</sup>

It was in these terms that Williams discussed the bridge throughout the 1948 gubernatorial campaign.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>142</sup>Levin letter.

<sup>143</sup>Detroit News, Sept., Oct., and Nov. 1948.

However, by 1948 bridge talk in political circles was nothing new. Columnist William Muller summed up in somewhat lyrical fashion the status of the bridge proposal in the minds of many Michigan politicians during that election year:

Now comes the season of the vote harvest moon--distinguished in the land of Hiawatha by the appearance of down-state politicians.

From one end of the Upper Peninsula to the other, they shove their way to platforms to discuss in sympathetic tones the stern and immediate necessity of facing up squarely to the issues and doing something about the crossing at the Straits of Mackinac.

Much of the debate between now and the November 2 election can be expected to center around whether the people would be happier crossing the Straits over a bridge or through a tunnel. Time was when a vote hunter in the Upper Peninsula had to come out squarely for either building a bridge right away or building it sometime in the future.

The late Governor Frank D. Fitzgerald changed all that. He suggested a tunnel--just at the time former State Highway Commissioner Murray D. Van Wagoner (later Governor) was making gestures like he might do something about planning a bridge.

The result, as the politically wise Fitzgerald hoped, was confusion and much subject matter for future discussions.<sup>144</sup>

Muller was not alone in his rather acidic opinion of the bridge proposal as a political issue. The Menominee Herald Leader editorialized: G. Mennen

<sup>144</sup> Detroit News, Aug. 21, 1948.

Williams' promise "may be good political pap for the east end of the Upper Peninsula, but it is an old record in the west." The writer pointed out that incumbent Governor Kim Sigler had said he would improve the situation at the Straits.<sup>145</sup>

Williams promised a Democratic state administration would see that Upper Peninsula residents got better service. The Democratic candidate also drew attention to the 1947 Sigler veto of legislation for a new ice-breaker type ferry.<sup>146</sup> Sigler's retaliation was to ridicule Williams' promise to do something about a Straits crossing. He labeled the promised citizens' committee "a political promise" and cautioned Williams not to make promises he could not keep.<sup>147</sup>

In November the voters cast 1,128,664 ballots for Williams, the new face. Incumbent Governor Sigler polled 964,810 votes, which was less than he pulled in the off-year 1946 gubernatorial race, in stopping Van Wagoner's bid. It is obvious that Williams' stand on the Mackinac Bridge citizens' committee did not play a significant role in attaining his 163,854 plurality.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup>Menominee Herald Leader, Sept. 29, 1948.

<sup>146</sup>"Nancy's Scrapbook," p. 25.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>148</sup>Michigan Manual, 1949-50, pps. 235-238.

Most of the vote shift came in Wayne County where Republican Sigler had beaten Van Wagoner in 1946 by more than 40,000 votes (344,573 to 300,091). In 1948, although GOP presidential nominee Thomas Dewey won Michigan over President Harry S. Truman, Sigler's Wayne vote dropped to 303,078 while Democrat Williams was accumulating 540,105 ballots in Wayne.

However, as Figure 2 (page 61) shows, Williams did carry the Upper Peninsula counties compared to Van Wagoner's four in 1946. These included Baraga, Iron, Keweenaw, Marquette, Menominee and Ontonagon counties. Van Wagoner and Williams both carried Alger, Delta, Dickinson and Gogebic counties. Williams also cut into Sigler's victory margin in the bridgehead counties of Emmet and Mackinac, but the GOP incumbent still carried them by wide margins.<sup>149</sup>

Within weeks of his inauguration, Williams wrote to Ziegler asking for information updating him on the situation at the Straits.

I am vitally interested in highway transportation and communication between the lower and upper peninsulas of Michigan.

Surveys have been made as to the feasibility of construction of a bridge or tunnel. I will greatly appreciate it if you will furnish me with all the material available so that I can make a study of this problem.

Some work also has been done on a causeway. I would like to know what plans

<sup>149</sup>Michigan Manual, 1947-48, pps. 254-256.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the integrity of the financial system and for the ability to detect and prevent fraud. The text notes that without reliable records, it would be difficult to track the flow of funds and identify any irregularities.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data. It describes the process of gathering information from different sources, such as interviews, surveys, and document reviews. The text also discusses the importance of ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data collected, and the need to use appropriate statistical techniques to analyze the results.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the interpretation of the data and the drawing of conclusions. It explains how the collected information is used to identify patterns, trends, and anomalies. The text also discusses the importance of considering the context of the data and the potential limitations of the study. Finally, the document concludes by summarizing the key findings and providing recommendations for further research.





**WILLIAMS 1948 ELECTIONS GAINS - U.P.**

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There is no record of a Zielger reply to the Williams' request, although in all probability the white-haired Highway Commissioner provided the information asked for, as he did frequently throughout his administration. As to the use of the causeway, Ziegler had earlier stated his opinion when he said that building a dock on the end of Van Wagoner's project would be throwing good money after bad.

Williams was not above getting full political mileage from his proposal. In March he told the Michigan Road Builders Association of his plans to appoint the Inter-Peninsula Citizens Committee to consider plans for linking the peninsulas. "Approaching this issue with fresh minds, armed with the accumulated information of several former investigating agencies, I believe we will be able to come up with some proposal for a permanent solution," Williams prophesied. Newspapers also publicized the fact that Williams had asked Ziegler for bridge information, an indicator that Williams probably released a copy of his letter to the press, a strategem that gained Ziegler's wrath and enmity on several occasions. The Governor also added: "Republicans have called the project a Democratic dream."<sup>151</sup>

<sup>150</sup>Letter from Williams to Ziegler, Jan. 17, 1949, copy in Mackinac Bridge Authority archives.

<sup>151</sup>Detroit News, Jan. 18, 1949 and March 31, 1949.

In June the press carried reports of Williams' exploratory mission to Washington to see if federal aid could be made available for the undertaking, but nothing came of the trip.<sup>152</sup>

True to his election promise, Williams invited individuals to become members of the Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee to study the question of a link at the Straits. John H. McCarthy, Chairman of the Michigan Public Service Commission, was named to head the group. Other members included James Kehoe, Mayor of Menominee, Maurice Hunt, Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie, and officials of the Michigan Aeronautics, Economic Development, and Highway Departments and the Michigan Tourist Council.<sup>153</sup>

In a letter inviting Harry C. Coones, Deputy Highway Commissioner and the department's chief engineer, Williams said:

The complete social, economic and political marriage of our two peninsulas of Michigan seems to one to be something all citizens of Michigan should work for in order to promote the best interests of our people.

Today our citizens can't even read the same news and their visiting together or sending goods or merchandise to each other is endlessly

<sup>152</sup>Detroit Times, June 3, 1949.

<sup>153</sup>Mackinac Straits Inter-Peninsula Communication Committee file, 1950, State of Michigan Archives.

delayed because of lack of adequate transportation facilities.

It seems to me that the time is ripe to bring out all the facts why and all the facts on how we can unite our peninsulas most efficiently and with the greatest prospects of final success.<sup>154</sup>

The Inter-Peninsula Communication Committee held its first meeting on Mackinac Island and its second in Lansing. Williams cited "political and cultural unity of the state" and improved commerce and transportation as reasons for the groups' being.<sup>155</sup>

Shortly after the organization of Williams' sponsored group, W. Steward Woodfill, the President of the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, organized a figurehead group of prominent Michigan businessmen into a Mackinac Bridge Citizens Committee, to lobby for the re-establishment of the Mackinac Bridge Authority. The entire group never actually held meetings, according to Woodfill, although it maintained offices in Detroit. One of its main efforts was to publish and distribute a pamphlet boosting re-establishment and urging readers to write to Williams or Ziegler.<sup>156</sup> The Mackinac Bridge Citizens Committee naturally had the backing of the Sault Ste.

<sup>154</sup> Letter from Governor Williams to Harry C. Coones, 1949, Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee file, State of Michigan Archives.

<sup>155</sup> Minutes of Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee, July 9, 1949.

<sup>156</sup> Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee file, 1950.

Marie Evening News and publisher Osborn was a member of the group. For example, the newspaper editorialized in October that it was time to revitalize the dead Straits of Mackinac Bridge Authority and staff it with men "recognized as being competent, regardless of political faith. . . ."157

Again and again the apolitical theme was sounded by individuals involved in pushing the Straits project. For instance, Commission Chairman McCarthy said: "I believe there isn't anybody on the Commission that has any political axes to grind. Myself, I am here as a member of the Inter-Peninsula Communications Commission, period. Whether or not there is an attempt in the papers to make it political that is beside the point, but this Commission is certainly bi-partisan, non-political or anything you want to call it. We look at it the way we feel is best for the State of Michigan, upper and lower." McCarthy added: "This can neither be done as a Democrat nor Republican bridge."158

This sentiment was echoed in various newspapers and the Detroit News said: "No bridge should be built on political suppositions" and called for a feasibility

<sup>157</sup> Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Oct. 18, 1949.

<sup>158</sup> Minutes of Inter-Peninsula Communications Commission, Dec. 16, 1949.

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study first.<sup>159</sup>

The News also pointed out in early December that Democrats had been making political capital out of the bridge proposal.<sup>160</sup>

Williams told two hundred officials and delegates at the Upper Peninsula Development Bureau's thirty-ninth annual convention: "It seems clear to me that there are no insurmountable natural obstacles to a Straits bridge. The main obstacles to a bridge are economic and political."<sup>161</sup> Williams also claimed that his appointment of a special commission to investigate improving transportation and communication between the peninsulas was one of the most popular things he had done as governor.<sup>162</sup>

The feeling was building up in favor of a bridge and in December Republican Woodfill, in a confidential memo, indicated Ziegler had stated in error to newspapermen that Congress would not permit federal grants. Woodfill added optimistically: "I confidently believe that our pamphlet campaign which will begin this week will bring on such publicity and pressure on the Governor and the legislature that this will be included in the Governor's call for the special session and the legisla-

<sup>159</sup>"Nancy's Scrapbook," p. 137.

<sup>160</sup>Detroit News, Dec. 7, 1949.

<sup>161</sup>Iron Mountain News, Oct. 14, 1949.

<sup>162</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 14, 1949.

ture will create a new authority such as we have been pressing for."<sup>163</sup>

The pamphlet Woodfill's group published also took pains to claim the bridge proposal was not political.

It stated:

This is not a political matter and must not be permitted to enter into partisan controversy. The project as outlined has the endorsement of political leaders of both parties. The membership and motives of this Committee are strictly non-partisan.

When the Mackinac Bridge Authority is created by the legislature, it should specify a bi-partisan commission. With appointments by the Governor of the very ablest men available and with the confirmation of the appointments reserved to the Senate, there will be every assurance of a truly non-political effort of a high order being made to solve this problem. . . ."

The news pundits were not completely convinced as the decade drew to a close. In mid-December Commissioner Ziegler pushed the Democratic State Administration Board members into a corner on the transportation issue. Carl Rudow of the Detroit News reported it thus:

"Frustrated Democrats scurried for shelter today after blowing up a political nor-wester that threatened to swamp their campaign for a bridge across the Straits of Mackinac as a vote getting issue.

<sup>163</sup>Williams' Papers, Box 18, Mackinac Island Park Commission file, Dec. 19, 1949.

<sup>164</sup>Copy of pamphlet in Inter-Peninsula Communication files, 1950, State of Michigan Archives.



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Caught in a legalistic maneuver that had served them well in the past, Governor Williams and Attorney General Stephen J. Roth were in a position where they had to side with Republican Highway Commissioner Charles M. Ziegler or be responsible for delay in construction of an icebreaking ferry that would improve service at the Straits.

Delay would be decidedly unpopular, not only in the Upper Peninsula but among the thousands of southern Michigan residents--particularly deer hunters--who cross the Straits.<sup>165</sup>

Thus the 1940's decade paved the way for the 1950's and the re-establishment of the Mackinac Bridge Authority. Williams and Woodfill were added as strong voices in favor of construction and Ziegler emerged as one of the most powerful opponents. In the background was Republican State Treasurer D. Hale Brake, who handled state finances from 1943 onward, but would play a larger role during the 1950's.

The decade, although overshadowed by World War II, began with the building of the Van Wagoner causeway and ended with the Woodfill push for a new bridge authority. The lobbies in favor of construction were gaining voice and all in all the proposal was a tentative step closer to reality.

<sup>165</sup>Detroit News, Dec. 7, 1949.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE 1950'S: ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE

The decade of the 1950's spelled step-by-step approval for the bridge through a series of bills in the state legislature and finally construction of the long awaited span from 1954 to 1957.

When the ten year period began there were already two coordinated movements pushing toward renewal of a Mackinac Bridge Authority as the first official step toward construction. Among those leading the publicity and political efforts were Governor G. Mennen Williams, a Democrat, and W. Stewart Woodfill, the unusual Republican from Mackinac Island.

There were, however, still occasional notes of disharmony as official Michigan edged toward accomplishment of the long extant dream. Most of these objections were voiced by Republican conservatives, principally concerned with financing and payment for the bridge. This lent some weight, but little substance, to Democratic claims that the bridge was their pet project. In reality, when it came down to counting the votes in favor of bridge bills the margin of victory was provided by GOP members, who were dominant in the state legislature.

The bridge efforts, in full-swing as the decade began, were the Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee, which had been set up by Williams to fulfill a campaign promise; and the Woodfill created Mackinac Bridge Citizens Committee, designed to lend weight to the hotel keeper's utterances in behalf of the subject.<sup>166</sup>

A Woodfill pamphlet booming the bridge as a non-political necessity went into its second printing in early January 1950. Frank Woodford, newspaperman-historian, noted the bridge might "soon again become an important political issue."<sup>167</sup> And Williams continued to include the bridge topic in Upper Peninsula speeches as he began to campaign for re-election. In a Newberry talk in late January, the young Governor promised an audience to ask for re-establishment of the Bridge Authority to determine "once and for all whether a bridge connecting the two peninsulas was feasible."<sup>168</sup>

Woodfill in a sense became an unpaid lobbyist for the bridge. Perhaps he was acting on the advice of Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of the original incorporators of the Grand Hotel, who suggested the need for a bridge before the turn of the century, or perhaps it was just

<sup>166</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Nov. 2, 1957.

<sup>167</sup>Detroit Free Press, Jan. 9, 1950.

<sup>168</sup>Detroit News, Jan. 27, 1950.

the hotelman's tremendous dedication to a cause. At any rate, Woodfill coordinated his efforts closely with the activities of the Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee and kept in constant touch with Governor Williams on the progress of the effort. The flamboyant Woodfill wrote, visited and telephoned all state lawmakers with any connection to the bridge bills during that 1950 session.

However, Woodfill ran into a large snag in the form of William C. Vandenberg, a Holland Republican and chairman of the Senate State Affairs Committee, which had control of the primary bridge bill. Woodfill communicated his dissatisfaction with Vandenberg's lack of cooperation in a letter to his comrades on the Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee. He wrote that Vandenberg had advised him after receipt of a March 24 letter from the bridge enthusiast that "when and if" the state affairs committee decided to hold hearing Woodfill would be informed. Showing characteristic tenacity, Woodfill continued to nag Vandenberg's steps. Later that month, during a telephone conversation, Vandenberg admitted to Woodfill that the bill "was wholly unacceptable and that a new bill had just been introduced which was also unacceptable to him as it only changed the methods of appointments to the authority."

Vandenberg's objection was that both bills put the full faith and credit of the state behind revenue bonds

for the bridge. This was the objection of other conservative financial critics of the economic feasibility of the bridge. Vandenberg told Woodfill the legislature was not going to authorize any funds from the State Highway Department or any other source to study and investigate building the structure. The greatest concession Woodfill had won was an agreement that Vandenberg would favor a study commission financed by someone other than the state.<sup>169</sup>

Long time political observer Will Muller of the Detroit News summed up the impending legislative battle in a March article:

The real shooting war of Michigan's campaign year will start Wednesday when Democrat Governor Williams meets the Republican dominated legislature again. Battle lines in the legislature will follow the pattern in the hustings where both major parties are early afield in the fight for control of the state administration for the next two years. Objectives of the Democrats will be to achieve a legislative record on which the administration seeks reelection by saying: "See what we did for you," or "We tried to do something, but the Republicans blocked it." For the Republicans, the strategy will be to work out a way of saying: "See how we protected you from new Democratic taxes" --without incurring the odium for "obstructing progress."<sup>170</sup>

Woodfill described Vandenberg's attitude in the

<sup>169</sup>Letter from W. S. Woodfill to Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee, April 3, 1950, State of Michigan Archives.

<sup>170</sup>Detroit News, March 11, 1950.

legislative push "as almost one of belligerency" and added if the state affairs committee should kill the bridge bills he was "inclined to think personally that the press of Michigan should be fully advised about it."<sup>171</sup>

The threat of taking the story to the newspapers was one which Woodfill used on several occasions during his push to win legislative backing for the bridge. Woodfill apparently felt that popular sentiment would go against lawmakers if it were revealed that they had rejected the bridge project. There is little real justification for this opinion, although Woodfill was apparently convinced the threat carried weight.

Woodfill called upon friends of the bridge proposal to bring all possible pressure to bear upon state Senator Vandenberg and the members of his committee to grant a hearing on the bills.<sup>172</sup> That Woodfill's push was having some success was evident when newspapers reported that Republican Senator William A. Ellsworth, from St. Ignace, had been asked by his party to outline the background of the original bridge commission in an attempt to overcome the GOP conviction that the push was a Williams' brain child.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>171</sup>Woodfill letter.

<sup>172</sup>Woodfill letter.

<sup>173</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, April 11, 1950.

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On April 12 Woodfill met with the Republican Policy Committee to discuss the issue. A week later the Hiawatha Land Tourist and Resort Association, with more than one hundred members in the eastern Upper Peninsula, wired Governor Williams to get the project out of politics. The telegram hit legislative inactivity and said: "Too long have we sat sedately by allowing the bridge to become a political football."<sup>174</sup> Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee chairman McCarthy responded: "This can neither be done as a Democrat or Republican bridge," while promising Woodfill to do everything consistent with the non-political status of the committee.<sup>175</sup>

Others also joined in the effort to get Vandenberg to relent to the bridge authority bill. Conservative Republican Senator George Higgins of Ferndale, a member of the State Affairs Committee attacked his chairman for denying the public hearing on the matter.<sup>176</sup> The attempt to circumvent or overcome Vandenberg's blockade of the bridge bills forced the smouldering feud into the open in late April as the maligned Senator Vandenberg objected to the tremendous pressures that

<sup>174</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, April 13, 1950.

<sup>175</sup>Inter-Peninsula Communications Committee files, 1950.

<sup>176</sup>"Nancy's Scrapbook," p. 135.

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were being exerted to bring about a public hearing.<sup>177</sup>

"This legislature has no moral right to accept at full face value all of the statements, publicity, and propaganda of the bridge proponents without making some inquiries of our own," said Vandenberg, who was preparing his own bill.<sup>178</sup> Vandenberg claimed his committee was studying the bridge bills before it, but this was immediately disputed by Higgins, who said: "I have seen nothing of it yet."<sup>179</sup>

Across the hall of the state capitol, Speaker Victor Knox, a Republican from Sault Ste. Marie, was preparing to have a bridge bill introduced there by Representative Edward Hutchinson, a Republican from Fennville, in order to avoid the Vandenberg wall. An Indian River Republican, Representative Hugo A. Nelson, also introduced a bill to create a bridge and tunnel authority with a six man bipartisan committee. Knox's forces worked quickly and the Hutchison bill got its first official airing by the legislature at a House Roads and Bridges Committee hearing May 3.<sup>180</sup>

Vandenberg countered with a proposition for a feasibility study to be run by the University of Michigan and Woodfill reacted promptly with the dark

<sup>177</sup>Ironwood Daily Globe, April 27, 1950.

<sup>178</sup>Associated Press dispatch, April 27, 1950.

<sup>179</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, April 27, 1950.

<sup>180</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, April 28, 1950.

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hint that the bridge "could become a political issue if the authority is not established."<sup>181</sup> The Woodfill quote was typical, like his grand scale hotel. The hotel keeper might well envision himself on a stage or before an audience with his descriptive dialogue and gestures. He retold those hectic days of 1950 for newspapers in 1957 when the bridge was finished. And in 1964, from the comfort of his Mackinac Island home, Woodfill recalled again his memories of that 1950 session.

Woodfill recalls Vandenberg as "the one man in the legislature who did the most to obstruct the Mackinac Bridge." Woodfill said he tried to meet the powerful Holland Republican, but Vandenberg dodged him. "I would try to catch him before he would leave the Senate floor, but he would beat me and race to his car to get back to Holland of an evening, where he would not receive me," Woodfill said. "I finally cornered him before he could get off the Senate floor one day and had a pleasant talk with him. Woodfill's personal assessment of Vandenberg was that he was "a very fine gentleman and an excellent legislator, but he was economical and ultra-conservative-minded and sincerely thought the bridge a dream."<sup>182</sup>

<sup>181</sup>Detroit Times, May 4, 1950.

<sup>182</sup>Woodfill interview.

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Woodfill hounded Vandenberg's heels in a gracious fashion throughout the legislative session. He likes to tell one particular anecdote, which he believes was the last straw that broke the back of the opposition. It was in late April or early May and the hotel keeper was at the end of his patience. Senator Ellsworth had had particularly gloomy reports for the ardent bridge supporter. "The bill he had introduced was stymied," recalled Woodfill. "No one seemed able to pressure Senator Vandenberg to have it heard. The project was about to die a natural death for lack of vehement support and pressure."

Ellsworth left Woodfill's rooms at the Hotel Olds (now the Jack Tar), directly across from the State Capitol shortly before midnight and returned to his own room at the Porter Hotel. Woodfill said he could not sleep because of an agitated state of mind. "I had spent a lot of time and effort on the matter; and had what I thought was a righteous cause, such as at least should have been heard, and was getting nowhere," he said. Ellsworth and Knox did not wish to unduly prod their party leader Vandenberg, Woodfill said. After pondering the problem, Woodfill finally got up and wrote a sharp note to Ellsworth telling him that he would either be heard in the next few days or would blow the lid off the situation. Woodfill said his note was not directed

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against his "good friends Knox and Ellsworth, but at the legislature." Woodfill could not find a bellboy so he put on a coat over his pajamas, called a cab, and tucked the note under Ellsworth's door at the Porter. Ellsworth awakened the agitated Woodfill with an 8:30 A.M. telephone call and asked if Woodfill were all right because he feared from the tone of the note that the bridge supporter might have suffered a seizure. Ellsworth informed Woodfill that a joint session had been scheduled to hear Woodfill out.

Later Woodfill concluded "my blasting note that night is what broke the dam of opposition and got the bridge its hearing. That appearance and that presentation turned the tide."<sup>183</sup> Whether Woodfill's interesting tale is entirely accurate is a matter for conjecture, and whether it turned the tide or not is a matter of opinion. But the opinions were fairly unanimous on both side of the political fence that Woodfill, an honest and honorable man, had been the factor behind the successful 1950 push to re-establish the Bridge Authority.

One thing is particularly certain. Woodfill had become a gadfly to Vandenberg, who asked waspishly in early May: "Is Woodfill to direct this legislature or are we to come to our own conclusions?"<sup>184</sup>

<sup>183</sup>Woodfill interview.

<sup>184</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, May 10, 1950.

The first part of the document discusses the general principles of the organization. It outlines the purpose and objectives of the group, which are to promote the welfare and interests of its members and to support the community. The document also describes the structure of the organization, including the roles and responsibilities of its various departments and committees. It emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability in all activities and encourages members to actively participate in the organization's affairs.

The second part of the document provides a detailed account of the organization's activities over the past year. It highlights the various projects and initiatives that have been undertaken, such as community outreach programs, educational seminars, and social events. It also mentions the financial performance of the organization, noting that it has remained within its budget and has managed to secure additional funding from external sources. The document concludes by expressing gratitude to all members and supporters for their continued dedication and support.

The third part of the document outlines the organization's plans for the upcoming year. It lists several key objectives and projects that will be undertaken, including the launch of a new community center, the organization of a large-scale charity event, and the implementation of a new financial management system. It also mentions the need to recruit new members and volunteers to ensure the organization's long-term sustainability. The document ends with a call to action, urging members to stay engaged and committed to the organization's mission.

The fourth part of the document is a closing statement that reiterates the organization's commitment to its members and the community. It expresses hope for a successful and productive year ahead and thanks everyone for their contributions. The document is signed by the organization's leadership and is dated at the bottom.

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A week later the House adopted the Hutchison bill by a 73-2 margin with sixteen members present abstaining. The two nay votes were both cast by Detroit Democrats.<sup>185</sup> In the Senate the vote for the final bill was unanimous, 24-0 with even Vandenberg voting for it.<sup>186</sup> Credit for passage of the measure was given to Knox, Ellsworth and Woodfill--all Republicans.<sup>187</sup> (See Figure 3, page 81).

Later Williams pointed out the bill, which gave the new bridge authority no power to build, was not the one he wanted, but on June 6 he signed the measure.<sup>188</sup> A day earlier the young Governor had gotten a letter from George E. Bishop, secretary-manager of the Upper Peninsula Development Bureau of Michigan, re-emphasizing the political football nature of the project. "It has been a political football," Bishop wrote, "The bill which you are about to sign, coming from a legislature divided politically, would seem to indicate that the leadership of both parties are ready now to join with

<sup>185</sup>Michigan House Journal, Extra Session of 1950,  
p. 318.

<sup>186</sup>Michigan Senate Journal, Extra Session of 1950,  
p. 319.

<sup>187</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, May 24, 1950.

<sup>188</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, May 29 to June 8,  
1950.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for consistent and reliable data collection processes to ensure the validity of the findings.

3. The third part of the document describes the results of the data analysis. It shows that there is a significant correlation between the variables studied, indicating that the factors being investigated are indeed related.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It suggests that the results can be used to inform decision-making and to develop strategies to address the issues identified in the study.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study and provides a summary of the key findings. It reiterates the importance of the research and the need for further investigation in this area.

6. The sixth part of the document provides a list of references and sources used in the study. This includes academic journals, books, and other relevant materials that have informed the research.

7. The seventh part of the document includes a list of appendices and supplementary materials. These provide additional data and information that support the main findings of the study.

8. The eighth part of the document contains a list of figures and tables. These visual aids help to present the data in a clear and concise manner, making it easier to understand the results.

9. The ninth part of the document includes a list of footnotes and endnotes. These provide additional information and clarification on specific points mentioned in the main text.

10. The tenth part of the document is a list of acknowledgments. It expresses gratitude to the individuals and organizations that have supported and assisted in the completion of the study.

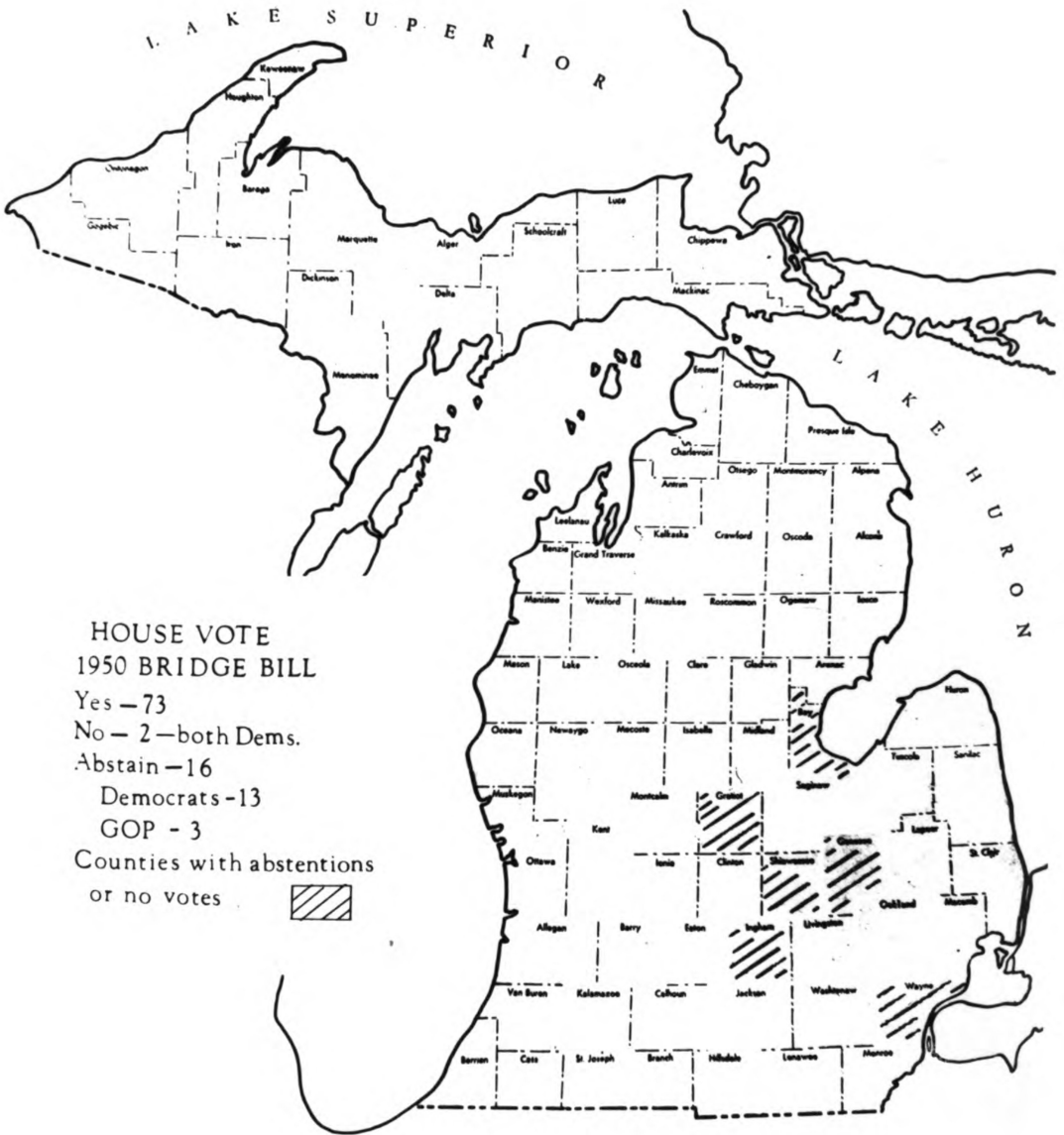
11. The eleventh part of the document is a list of contact information for the author. This allows readers to reach out if they have any questions or need further information about the study.

12. The twelfth part of the document is a list of keywords and terms. These are used to help readers find the study more easily in search engines and databases.

13. The thirteenth part of the document is a list of abbreviations and acronyms. This helps to clarify any shorthand or specialized terminology used throughout the document.

14. The fourteenth part of the document is a list of references. These are the sources that have been cited in the study and provide a way for readers to explore the topic further.

15. The fifteenth part of the document is a list of appendices. These are additional materials that are related to the study but are not included in the main text.



HOUSE VOTE  
1950 BRIDGE BILL

Yes - 73  
No - 2 - both Dems.  
Abstain - 16

    Democrats - 13

    GOP - 3

Counties with abstentions  
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sound thinking non-political groups and work toward the materialization of a bridge. . . ."<sup>189</sup>

Woodfill said his campaign during that legislative session had been directed primarily at the Republican lawmakers because, as a GOP supporter, he could convince them it was a bipartisan issue. The Democratic lawmakers were following Williams' leadership.

Woodfill later recalled that he had asked Democrats McCarthy and Williams to soft pedal their bridge backing in order to play down the football possibilities of the issue. "They never took a single political advantage and kept as mum as I asked," Woodfill said. It was Woodfill who picked the names of the new Mackinac Bridge Authority Commission members. Williams agreed with the selections which included Democratic naturals Brown and Van Wagoner. Only one Woodfill nominee was not named and that was Judge Raymond Starr of Grand Rapids, who refused. His spot went to William Cochran, Jr. <sup>190</sup>

In June Williams was getting ready to run for re-election. Columnist Will Muller pinpointed it with: "Williams will find a way to grab the spotlight and will spend the last two weeks of July on Mackinac

<sup>189</sup>G. Mennen Williams Papers, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan, Box 37.

<sup>190</sup>Woodfill interview.



Island and Upper Peninsula residents will hear him tell how he 'tried in vain' to put the Mackinac Straits Bridge Authority in an immediate finance-and-build position."<sup>191</sup>

Muller's prediction held true. Throughout the northern part of the state, candidate Williams talked the bridge. At rallies in June, July and August he reiterated the need for a bridge and at the same time stressed the necessity for Democrats to get out the vote in an off year election.<sup>192</sup> Through it all Williams cited the revival of the Bridge Authority as an accomplishment of his first two year term.<sup>193</sup> Williams continued in the same vein throughout the fall as newspapers were predicting the gubernatorial battle between Harry Kelly and Williams would be one of the bitterest in years.<sup>194</sup>

Not all the public was apparently convinced Williams was doing a good job in behalf of the proposed bridge. Williams' secretary sent the following reply to one irate Detroitter:

Don't you think you are being very unfair to blame Gov. Williams personally for this condition? Since the Governor first took office he has continually fought for better communications between the two peninsulas. I am enclosing a folder which will tell you just what the

<sup>191</sup>Detroit News, July 7, 1950.

<sup>192</sup>"Nancy's Scrapbook," Vol. V.

<sup>193</sup>Detroit News, Sept. 23, 1950.

<sup>194</sup>Detroit News, Sept. 14, 1950.

Governor has done and how interested he is in a bridge across the Straits or some better means of transportation. Be assured that Gov. Williams is doing all possible to correct this very bad situation and has received much opposition from the Republican legislature and other Republican leaders.<sup>195</sup>

That pamphlet is probably the same one that turns up in the Mackinac Bridge Authority files. The front page features a map of Michigan's two peninsulas with a voting box at the Straits. "X marks the spot," the caption reads. The promotion advised voters to vote Democratic and win "the battle of the bridge." The literature went on to cite the background of Democratic contributions to the structure, mentioning both Van Wagoner and Brown.<sup>196</sup>

But the bridge certainly was not the major issue of the hectic 1950 campaign, which turned out to be as bitter as prognosticators had warned. The big question was Communism, with a capital "C". In an early October swing through the Upper Peninsula neither candidate mentioned the bridge. Kelly's issues were CIO domination of the Democratic Party, insufficient roads, and alleged Communist infiltration of the Democratic Party. Williams confidently announced a few days later that he was convinced that the Upper Peninsula was his,

<sup>195</sup> G. Mennen Williams papers, Box 37.

<sup>196</sup> Mackinac Bridge Authority files, Woodfill file, 1950.

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but at least one former Democratic county chairman was beating the Upper Peninsula bushes for Kelly, predicting the Communist-socialist issue would cost the incumbent votes.<sup>197</sup>

Long-time political commentator W. K. Kelsey made this wry observation as Kelly and Williams stumped back and forth across the Upper Peninsula woodlands:

Don't candidates ever look at the census returns? Gov. Williams and his Republican opponent Harry Kelly have used about a quarter of their campaigning time in the Upper Peninsula, which contains about one-twentieth of the population of the state. . . only in the legislature where it is 1-3 is the Upper Peninsula important.

However, the longer the commentator lives the less he knows about politics. It may be that as the U.P. goes, so goes the state, and that major strategy dictates that candidates spend their time in swamps and sand plains and crossroad villages instead of in the great centers of population; that they sell themselves to porcupines and loons rather than to factory workers and housewives.<sup>198</sup>

Part of the Communist issue in the Upper Peninsula, which Williams had difficulty disassociating himself from, was the fact that John Sabol, Democratic candidate for Congress, had once signed a petition to put the Communist Party on the ballot. Williams tried to counter the socialism charges of Kelly by labeling the

<sup>197</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 11 and 13, 1950.

<sup>198</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 15, 1950.

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former two term governor "a big business stooge." It is noticeable, but not particularly significant, that the Mackinac Bridge began popping up on south and central Michigan speeches as a part of the Williams' progressive program that "sees and meets the needs of the people." Williams finally decided he could not avoid the Sabol issue and spoke directly on the topic of the petition signing a week before the election, calling it "a very foolish thing."<sup>199</sup>

It was a rainy Tuesday on election day in Detroit portending a gloomy forecast for Democrats who had to rely on heavy Wayne voting to overcome out-state GOP margins. The rain kept the Democratic supporters away from the polls and Kelly was declared unofficial winner on the strength of a 6,108 margin. The Detroit News calculated that two more votes in each of Detroit's 4,355 precincts would have spelled the difference. Kelly was jubilant, Williams was silent. Other members of the GOP team tallied far greater unofficial margins. These ranged from Frank G. Millard, elected Attorney General by a 60,000 vote margin to Fred Alger, named Secretary of State by 191,000 ballots.<sup>200</sup>

Kelly had headed south for a Florida vacation

<sup>199</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 15 through 31, 1950.

<sup>200</sup>Detroit News, Nov. 8, 1950.



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November 10 when errors showed up on the official tabulation of straight party ballots. Kelly's lead had slipped to a thin 298 vote margin by November 11 and the next day the rebounding Williams held a 558 vote lead on the strength of a Macomb County tabulation error. The Williams' lead doubled quickly as an Oakland error shot him into a 1,406 vote margin. Kelly cancelled his Florida stay and headed back to Michigan for a recount, but the Williams' margin continued to widen. On December 13 Kelly grudgingly conceded defeat with Williams leading by 4,250 votes. It was the first time a Democratic governor had succeeded himself since 1914.<sup>201</sup>

During the interim when the governorship was hanging in the balance, the irascible Republican Ziegler had re-stated his position in regard to the new Bridge Authority just to clarify things for the commissioners. "I would advise that the Michigan State Highway Department is to be maintained as an entity in itself, separate from the Mackinac Bridge Authority," Ziegler wrote to Lawrence Rubin, executive secretary of the Bridge Authority.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>201</sup>Detroit News, Nov. 10 through Dec. 13, 1950.

<sup>202</sup>Letter from Charles Ziegler to Lawrence Rubin, Mackinac Straits Inter-Peninsula Communications Commission file, 1950.

"Contacts between the Bridge Authority and the State Highway Department will be with me personally as a liason officer between the Authority and the Department.

"This department does and will continue to cooperate fully in every way possible with the bridge Authority, but in all cases it must be through me personally," Ziegler said, outlining his future policy. "This letter is not in the nature of a criticism, but merely setting up definitely the relationship between this department, or the members thereof, and the Mackinac Bridge Authority," he felt constrained to add.<sup>203</sup>

Although unofficial counting showed Williams with more than a 4,000 vote margin when the 1950 election was over, the official canvass, which would not include the partial recount, gave him only an advantage of 935,152 to 933,998 for a narrow 1,154 vote victory. Perry Hayden, the Prohibition Party candidate for governor had polled almost eight times that margin with 8,511 ballots, and Theos A. Grove of the Socialist Labor Party had gotten 1,077 ballots, while Howard Lerner of the Socialist Workers Party got 636. Surface analysis would indicate that Hayden's candidacy

<sup>203</sup>Letter from Ziegler to Rubin, Mackinac Straits Inter-Peninsula Communications Commission file, 1950.

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could easily have cost Republican Kelly the election.<sup>204</sup>

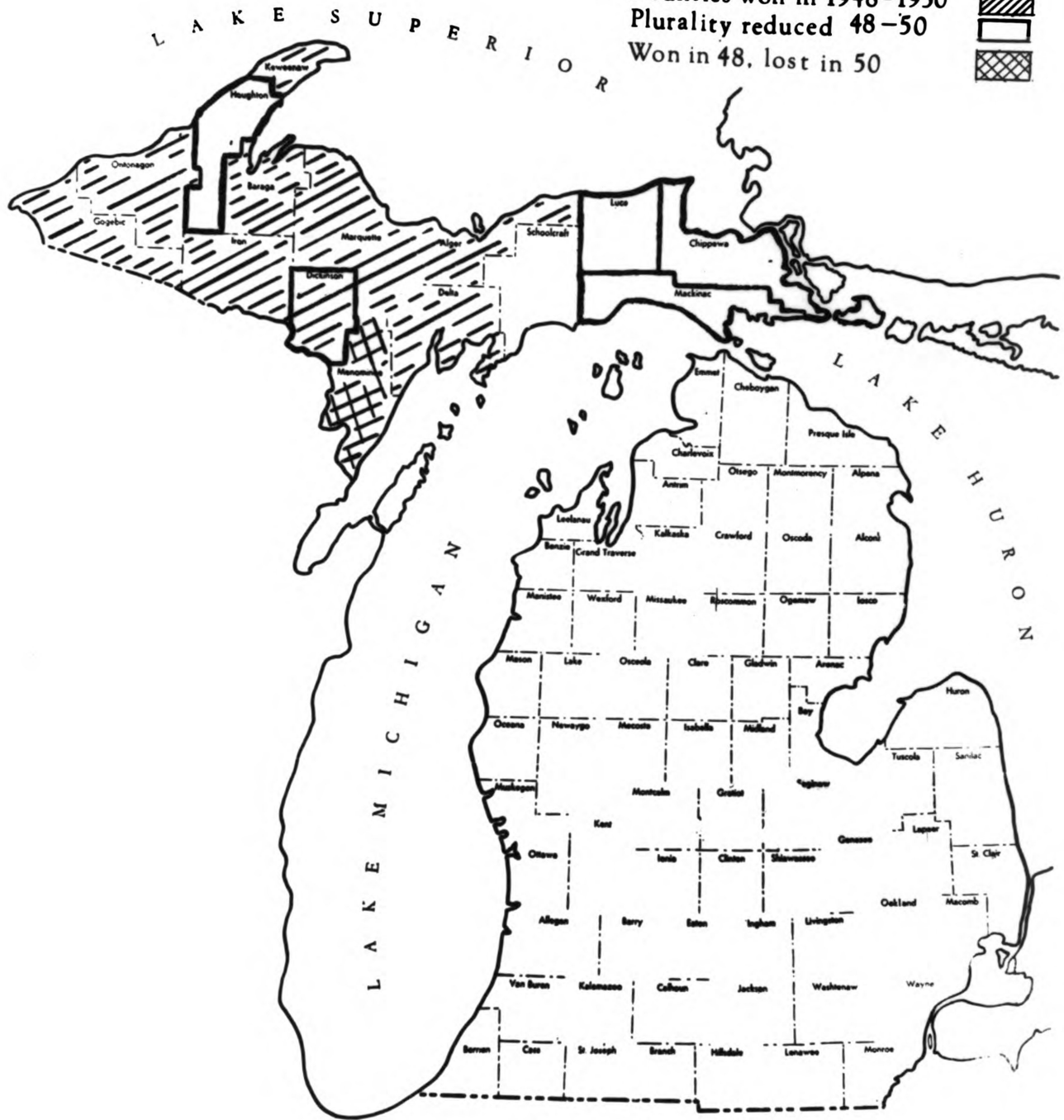
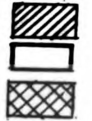
It is impossible to say that Williams' bridge stand saved the 1950 election for him. There simply are not figures to support the claim. However, there are distinct indications that Williams was more popular in the Upper Peninsula counties than his Democratic predecessor Murray Van Wagoner as shown in Figure 4 (page 90). There is also statistical support for the claim that Williams was more popular than the Democratic ticket in pro-Republican Upper Peninsula counties, which might lend weight to the statement that the bridge backing could have been a factor in the election.

In the 1948 election Dickinson County was rated as a landslide or sixty per cent supporter of the Democratic ticket. Nine other counties (Gogebic, Ontonagon, Keweenaw, Baraga, Iron, Marquette, Alger, Menominee and Delta) gave fifty to sixty per cent support for Democrats. Houghton, Schoolcraft, and Chippewa Counties favored the GOP ticket by fifty to sixty per cent margins and Luce and Mackinac Counties showed more than sixty per cent support for Republican candidates.<sup>205</sup> In every Republican county

<sup>204</sup>Michigan Manual, 1950, p. 464.

<sup>205</sup>Joseph LaPalombara, Guide to Michigan Politics, The Citizenship Clearing House affiliated with the Law Center of New York University, New York, pps. 17-20.

**WILLIAMS—U.P.**  
 Counties won in 1948-1950  
 Plurality reduced 48-50  
 Won in 48, lost in 50



Williams had reduced the margin by which his party lost the 1946 gubernatorial race. This was in the face of Republican Thomas Dewey polling fifty per cent of the state's vote and two per cent going to a Progressive Party slate and only forty-eight per cent to Democratic standard bearer President Harry S. Truman. For example, Governor Kim Sigler carried Chippewa County by 1,907 votes in 1946. Sigler's margin was reduced to 1,115 votes in 1948, the year Williams promised to appoint a bridge study committee.<sup>206</sup>

The Democratic party suffered in Michigan in 1950. The issues of union domination and Communist sympathizers were probably factors in the party losses. Menominee shifted to the Republican column and Dickinson slipped out of the landslide category. The other eight Democratic counties in the Upper Peninsula held the line by giving more than fifty per cent of the vote to the ticket. However, the Williams trend toward cutting into his opposition's lead in the Republican counties continued in four

<sup>206</sup>Michigan Manual, 1945-1946, pps. 254-256 and Michigan Manual, 1947-1948, pps. 235-238.

of the six in the Upper Peninsula. In Chippewa, where Sigler had won by 1,115 vote, Harry Kelly managed to eke out only a 371 vote margin.<sup>207</sup> Similarly in Houghton County the Sigler margin of 1,374 in 1946 dropped to 1,021 in 1948 and the Harry Kelly margin of 1950 slid to 578 votes. In Luce and Mackinac the trend was not as strong, but it was still there. Only in Menominee, the switchover county, where Williams dropped about 800 votes was the trend really bucked. In Schoolcraft the figures went against Williams, but only by a narrow margin. He lost to Sigler by 168 votes in 1948 and lost to Kelly by 192. Van Wagoner had lost to Sigler by 376 votes there in 1946.

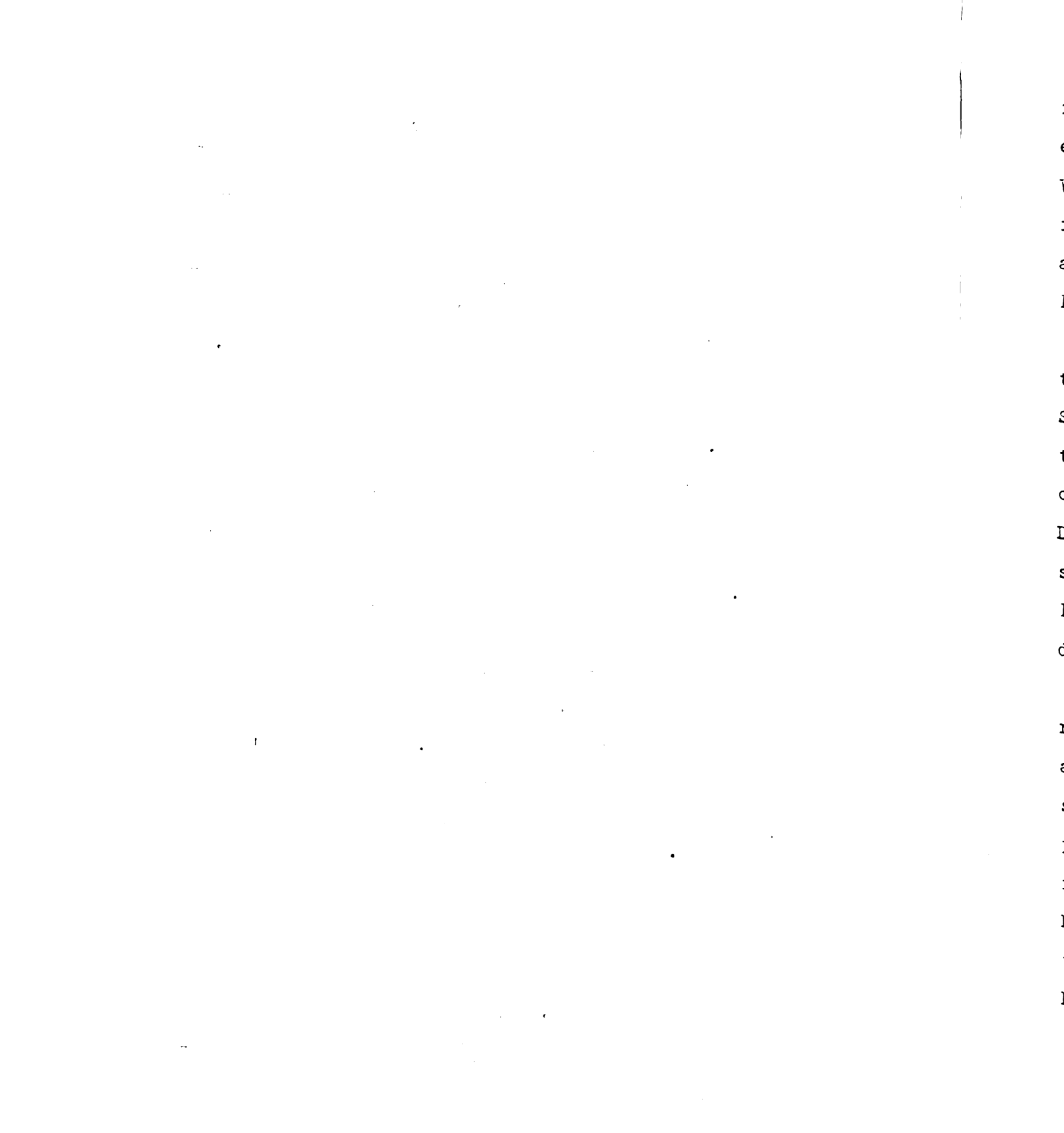
Tallying all the Upper Peninsula counties in 1950, Williams won by 5,057 votes, which provided more than his statewide margin. He was down from his 1948 margin over Sigler of 7,854 votes though. The Williams' 1950 margin also represented a 2,145 vote plurality over the Kim Sigler 1946 total and a 2,971 margin over the Sigler 1948 total. This is in contrast to Van Wagoner losing the Upper Peninsula in 1946 to Sigler by 4,513 ballots.<sup>208</sup>

Statistics which indicate that the bridge could not have been a major factor in the Upper Peninsula vote

<sup>207</sup> LaPalombara, p. 18.

<sup>208</sup> Michigan Manual, 1945-46, Michigan Manual, 1947-48, and Michigan Manual, 1949-50.





include the outcome of the 1950 Lieutenant Governor election between William Vandenberg and John Connolly. Vandenberg, who had been noted as an anti-bridge man in the previous legislature, ran more than 2,000 votes ahead of Kelly and defeated his opponent in the Upper Peninsula by more than 3,000 votes.

It is probably safe to say the Communist sympathizer issue hurt Williams in the Upper Peninsula where Sabol was running against John Bennett for Congress in the 12th District. Bennett polled 43,010 in the eight county district, more than 16,000 votes more than his Democratic opponent. But Figure 5 (page 94), which shows how the various candidates fared in the Upper Peninsula in 1950, also shows that votes against Sabol did not cause Williams the loss of any counties.

Additionally, the union control issue possibly reduced the Williams' total. Certainly when all factors are considered, it must be concluded that Williams' outspoken support for the Mackinac Bridge proposal, his positive action in naming a committee, and the reinstatement of the Bridge Authority must have gained him votes in 1950. Precisely how many would be conjecture, but certainly every vote he got was important in his first re-election bid.

George Osborn, editor of the Sault Ste. Marie

UPPER PENINSULA ELECTION RESULTS 1950

Governor, Twelfth District Congress, and Lieutenant Governor

Counties	Governor		Lieutenant Governor		Congress	
	Kelly	Williams	Vandenberg	Connolly	Bennett	Saboi
Alger	1,500	2,029	1,515	1,826	--	--
Baraga	1,633	2,030	1,727	1,771	2,163	1,328
Chippewa	4,869	4,498	5,174	3,800	--	--
Delta	5,349	6,563	5,382	6,187	--	--
Dickinson	4,314	6,359	4,551	5,600	5,709	4,473
Gogebic	5,125	6,622	5,196	6,144	5,783	5,704
Houghton	7,563	6,985	7,916	6,105	9,450	4,730
Iron	3,272	4,493	3,690	3,755	4,715	2,895
Keweenaw	640	757	680	612	835	504
Luce	1,096	667	1,136	579	--	--
Mackinac	2,130	1,503	2,166	1,321	--	--
Marquette	8,502	8,858	8,823	7,890	11,258	5,494
Merominee	4,571	4,201	4,609	3,864	--	--
Ontonagon	2,217	2,455	2,295	2,187	3,097	1,539
Schoolcraft	1,698	1,506	1,748	1,321	--	--
Totals	54,479	59,526	56,608	52,962	43,010	26,667

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Evening News more or less summed it up. "It was something to advocate that was popular up here. I don't know how many votes he won by it, but it had an effect because he finally carried Chippewa County. It built good will for him and helped get his name before the public in the early days."<sup>210</sup>

Williams only briefly mentioned the bridge in his 1951 message to a joint session of the legislature. He said if the Bridge Authority found the structure feasible he would recommend prompt enactment of legislation providing for construction of the bridge.<sup>211</sup> A three man board of long-span bridge experts reported a week later that a bridge could be built connecting the two peninsulas along the straight line route and utilizing the Van Wagoner causeway built in 1941. The bridge engineers--O. H. Ammann and D. B. Steirman of New York City and Glenn B. Woodruff, of San Francisco--said the structure would withstand physical forces in the area. At the same time a traffic engineering firm, Coverdale and Colpits, of New York, calculated the bridge could be paid for with bonds which would be paid off by tolls. The Bridge Authority filed the favorable reports with the legislature, but another national

<sup>210</sup>Osborn interview.

<sup>211</sup>Governor G. Nennen Williams, message to the legislature, January 4, 1951.

crisis was standing between the bridge and construction. The Korean War had placed such a premium on steel that the material could only be purchased for projects necessary for civilian defense. Hence the Authority did not request immediate additional legislation.

While the proposal was hanging in limbo, Highway Commissioner Ziegler took the opportunity to glorify the ferry business that was being run by his department:

. . . agitation for a bridge to span the Straits has been a perennial subject for many years. . . It has been determined feasible from an engineering standpoint. In the meantime the department must continue to provide adequate service across the Straits until such a time as a bridge, if built, could be opened to traffic. Because of the restrictions on critical materials which would be needed in its construction there is little hope that such a bridge could be started, if financed, in the foreseeable future.

Michigan, often called the playground of the nation, is a mecca for pleasure seekers, vacationers, and sports lovers from all parts of the country. The restful ride across the historic waters of the Straits furnishes a thrilling innovation in highway travel. The crossing is all too short to absorb the natural beauties of the area and to ponder over its romance from Jean Nicolet on down through the history of the great northwest.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>212</sup>Charles Ziegler, "A Highway on Water," American Highways, July 1951, pps. 3-4 and 11-12.

Ziegler's "foreseeable future" was apparently pretty short-sighted because the steel situation eased by late 1951 and early 1952, and the Bridge Authority proceeded to urge adoption of legislation signaling the go-ahead.

Bridge Authority Executive Secretary Lawrence Rubin said later of Ziegler, "it was hard to tell where the politics left off and the engineering began. He told the legislature he had figures that sixty days of the year the wind blew too hard to allow traffic. He discouraged financing in the 1950's. He said he wouldn't help or hurt, but there was a seven page document put on every member of the house and senate's desk by his people, in opposition."<sup>213</sup>

Firing the first round in the 1952 election campaign, Williams launched a "Build Michigan Program." One of his sixty-eight proposals was action on the next step toward building the Mackinac Bridge.<sup>214</sup>

In late January the Bridge Authority asked for a \$2,000,000 loan from state funds to obtain detailed blueprints for a bridge. Williams immediately supported the request.<sup>215</sup>

<sup>213</sup>Rubin interview.

<sup>214</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, January 10, 1952.

<sup>215</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, January 23, 1952.

A bill which would have taken the money from state highway department funds was introduced by Senator Ellsworth, the St. Ignace Republican. Two days later Prentiss Brown appeared at an informal joint convention of the state legislature and made an appeal for direct approval to go ahead with the bridge building project.<sup>216</sup>

Another bill to borrow the calculated cost of \$87,000,000 from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation was introduced by Upper Peninsula lawmakers and given Republican priority. It would have appropriated \$40,000 from the highway department for Bridge Authority operating costs. Several days later the state senate authorized issuance of self-liquidating bonds for the bridge, but balked at any use of state or highway funds. They suggested approaching the RFC for the building money.<sup>217</sup> Conservative Republican Senator Haskell Nichols from Jackson forced elimination of a section of the bill permitting the highway department to take over the bridge to protect bond holders. This was labeled a move "designed to stop the bridge" by weakening the investment strength of the bond issue, by Republican backers of the proposal. Nichols responded, that he was trying to protect highway funds for the state by

<sup>216</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Feb. 18 and 20, 1952.

<sup>217</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, April 4, 1952.



preventing a future raid. However, Nichols' critics claimed he was acting on the advice of Highway Commissioner Ziegler, who had put himself above the experts and showed antipathy to the bridge proposal at a senate committee hearing.<sup>218</sup>

Meanwhile the man who had proved so difficult a hurdle in the 1950 push for re-establishment of the Bridge Authority, Lieutenant Governor William C. Vandenberg, had announced his candidacy for the 1952 gubernatorial nomination. Vandenberg, in his late sixties, was rated as the darling of church, anti-horse racing, and dry groups.<sup>219</sup>

Williams termed the legislation authorizing an attempt to finance and construct "one more step forward" when he signed the bill.<sup>220</sup> The measure, which in essence only gave the Authority the right to try to sell bonds so they could build a bridge, passed both houses of the legislature by more than two-thirds majorities. The political breakdown of the senate during the 1952 session was twenty-five Republicans to seven democrats. In the house the Republicans also had the advantage with sixty-six members.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, April 4, 1952.

<sup>219</sup> Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Jan. 25, 1952.

<sup>220</sup> Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, May 1, 1952.

<sup>221</sup> LaPalombara, pps. 17-20.

Williams promised to go down the well worn path to Washington in early June and personally appeal to President Truman for support of Michigan's bid for an \$85,000,000 RFC loan.

In the August 5 party primary Fred M. Alger, Secretary of State, won the right to carry the Republican gubernatorial banner over Vandenberg and Donald Leonard. It was a relatively easy victory for Alger, who had led his party's ticket in the 1950 elections by a wide margin.<sup>222</sup>

By mid-September engineers had recalculated the cost of the proposed bridge upward to \$90,000,000 and officials were still hoping for RFC approval. The delay in federal approval was explained by a letter from RFC administrator Harry A. McDonald to Williams complaining about his confusion

". . .first I'm told that the project does not have the approval of Ziegler. Then I'm told the project does not have the wholehearted support of the legislature, and then additionally I am told there is an attempt to make of this a political project rather than an outright business venture projected solely for the development of Michigan."<sup>223</sup>

<sup>222</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Aug. 6, 1952.

<sup>223</sup>G. Mennen Williams papers, Box 79.

By 1952 both major political parties were passing resolutions favoring construction of the bridge. In fact the two parties reached quite similar sentiments in platforms on the same August day at separate conventions. The Democrats called the bridge "a vital part of our programs to build Michigan." In Grand Rapids after due deliberation the GOP favored "prompt construction of the Mackinac Straits Bridge as financed by the sale of revenue bonds as authorized by the Republican legislature."<sup>224</sup> How could the project fail with planks like that for support?

Meanwhile traffic at the Straits was increasing at a greater rate than analysts had forecast and private money was becoming interested in the prospect of financing the bridge. In late summer or early fall the bond bankers conveyed the interest to the Bridge Authority. Brown and company conferred. The Commissioners concluded the general sentiment nationally was to have the RFC cut back operations and on the political front there was a strong probability that Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower was going to win the November national election. This could spell the end of RFC. The Authority had Republican Charles Fisher get a private bond financier friend to compare the private offer with what

<sup>224</sup> Copies of resolutions in Mackinac Bridge Authority files, Brown folder, 1952.



would be available through the federal approach. The private bid was slightly lower on interest rate, four per cent compared to four and a quarter per cent. Given the uncertainty of the election campaign the Authority decided the bid in hand was the best bet when all factors were considered. They asked the RFC to hold the application in abeyance and in mid-October Brown announced a group of bankers had agreed to underwrite the revenue bridge bonds.<sup>225</sup>

Alger's war cry in the fierce political campaign was fiscal bankruptcy on the part of the Williams' administration. Williams countered with thrusts claiming Alger organized a political machine in the Secretary of State's office and laid the blame for financial problems on the GOP legislature for not levying necessary taxes.<sup>226</sup> Newspaper political pollsters' cross-section sampling of registered voters in the Detroit area found Alger leading Williams 54.6 per cent to 43.6 per cent in late October.<sup>227</sup> Both hopefuls continued to batter the fiscal situation black and blue in trips around the state and two weeks later those same pollsters somehow discovered Williams and Alger

<sup>225</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 18, 1952.

<sup>226</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 17 and 20, 1952.

<sup>227</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 19, 1952.

would be available through the federal approach. The private bid was slightly lower on interest rate, four per cent compared to four and a quarter per cent. Given the uncertainty of the election campaign the Authority decided the bid in hand was the best bet when all factors were considered. They asked the RFC to hold the application in abeyance and in mid-October Brown announced a group of bankers had agreed to underwrite the revenue bridge bonds.<sup>225</sup>

Alger's war cry in the fierce political campaign was fiscal bankruptcy on the part of the Williams' administration. Williams countered with thrusts claiming Alger organized a political machine in the Secretary of State's office and laid the blame for financial problems on the GOP legislature for not levying necessary taxes.<sup>226</sup> Newspaper political pollsters' cross-section sampling of registered voters in the Detroit area found Alger leading Williams 54.6 per cent to 43.6 per cent in late October.<sup>227</sup> Both hopefuls continued to batter the fiscal situation black and blue in trips around the state and two weeks later those same pollsters somehow discovered Williams and Alger

<sup>225</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 18, 1952.

<sup>226</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 17 and 20, 1952.

<sup>227</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 19, 1952.

had reversed positions with Williams holding about an eight per cent edge. After the first poll Alger had said he was disappointed his margin was not greater because "Michigan Democrats were so far left he wanted to smash them." After the second poll Alger did not say anything.<sup>228</sup> On election eve Alger told the people the GOP could give a "fresh start toward decency and stability in public affairs" while Williams offered a biting attack on Republican fiscal policies as his last punch before the voters went to the polls.<sup>229</sup>

On November 6 Williams became the first Democrat to win three consecutive terms as governor. Eisenhower carried Michigan by 325,000 votes. GOP state treasurer D. Hale Brake won his sixth term with 1,430,450 votes to Williams 1,423,189 ballots and Alger's 1,421,961.<sup>230</sup> Republican Clarence Reid was elected Lieutenant Governor. The Democrats, however, gained one seat in the senate making the margin 24-3 in favor of the GOP. The house split was 66-34 in the Republicans' favor. Since the official victory margin was less than 9,000 votes Alger did not concede defeat immediately. Instead he demanded a recount in

<sup>228</sup>Detroit News, Oct. 20, 1952 and Nov. 2, 1952.

<sup>229</sup>Detroit News, Nov. 3 and 5, 1952.

<sup>230</sup>Detroit News, Nov. 7 and 8, 1952.

selected counties. But the same trend as 1950 held true and on the tenth day of the recount when Williams' lead had built to over 10,700 votes, the grandson of 19th century Governor Russell A. Alger conceded.<sup>231</sup> It was Alger's last bid for elective political office although he continued to be active in GOP affairs, and was later named Ambassador to Belgium by the victorious Eisenhower.<sup>232</sup>

Williams polled 70,677 votes in the fifteen Upper Peninsula Counties compared to 64,000 for Alger, giving the incumbent a 6,587 vote margin. This plurality was achieved in the face of 74,639 ballots cast for Eisenhower. Democrat Adlai Stevenson trailed by 13,677 ballots and managed to win only two of the nine Upper Peninsula counties carried by Williams--Gogebic by 806 votes and Iron by 33 ballots. Williams beat Alger in Gogebic by 2,400 votes and in Iron the bow-tied governor stopped Alger by 1,740.

Figure 6 (page 105) shows Alger won the same six counties that Harry Kelly had carried in 1950, (Chippewa, Houghton, Luce, Mackinac, Menominee and Schoolcraft). And even with the Eisenhower coattails, Alger lost votes over the Kelly pluralities in two

<sup>231</sup>Detroit News, Dec. 17, 1952.

<sup>232</sup>Detroit Free Press, Jan. 7, 1967.





counties. His edge was chopped to seventy-three votes in Schoolcraft and only three ballots separated the candidates in Houghton. Williams increased his plurality in five counties despite the Eisenhower attraction. They were Alger, Delta, Gogebic, Iron and Marquette counties.

In summary it is fairly obvious that the Mackinac Bridge was not a deciding factor in determining the outcome of the 1952 Alger-Williams race. Again a better case could be made for the Prohibition Party candidate E. Harold Munn affecting the outcome since he polled more votes than the margin between Williams and Alger.<sup>233</sup> However, there are certainly indications that Williams' popularity in the Upper Peninsula transcended party lines. What, if any, part of this voter attraction was attributable to the bridge is impossible to ascertain. Certainly Williams did speak out strongly during the campaign in favor of the structure, while Alger was largely silent. The closest the Republicans came to support during the 1952 election was the largely innocuous platform plank, which said in essence "go ahead and finance it if you can get somebody to put up the money."

Of interest, but not particularly significant, in that 1952 race was the fact that bridge backer

<sup>233</sup>Michigan Manual, 1951-1952, pps. 405-406 and 411-412.

Victor Knox beat out Prentiss Brown Jr., for the eastern Upper Peninsula Congressional seat. Also Clayton Morrison, who was to become a steadfast backer of the bridge and later a sponsor of bills to remove tolls won the state representative seat from Chippewa County.<sup>234</sup>

In late 1952 the Bridge Authority named D. B. Steinman engineer for the undertaking and located a New York revenue bond underwriter to manage the financing. By January 1953 the Authority thought it was ready to have chairman Brown announce that they had assurances that revenue bonds to finance the bridge would be sold in time to start construction that spring. But the announcement proved premature. The money market, which had been tightening since the start of the year, was not ready to swallow the \$96,000,000 issue, necessary to cover interest and principal.<sup>235</sup>

Hearing of the financing problems, Michigan U.S. Representative Charles D. Oakman criticized the Authority, saying he understood RFC financing had been imminent on a loan for construction of the bridge the previous fall when the Authority turned to private financing. The Republican's claim was promptly denied

<sup>234</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Nov. 7-8, 1952.

<sup>235</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Jan. 13, 1953.

by Brown.<sup>236</sup> The Authority proceeded to let tentative contracts for sub- and superstructure in late February.<sup>237</sup>

The Authority and state officials prepared a concentrated effort to convince bond buyers of the value of the project, and Wall Street continued to show interest. Republican State Treasurer D. Hale Brake spoke to more than four hundred bonding and insurance representatives at two meetings in New York. The conservative Republican power told them the project was a bipartisan one in Michigan. He said, its success did not "depend on either party's success at the polls."<sup>238</sup> Williams was pleased with this show of support and said so. ". . .I appreciated your appearance at the Mackinac Bridge meeting in New York City. Not only did I personally feel your presentation was very effective, but the remarks I heard about it were all favorable to the construction of the bridge."<sup>239</sup>

Brake's support was important. The Stanton Republican had been a prominent figure in Michigan GOP politics since he was elected to the state senate in 1934, a Democratic year. He served four terms there

<sup>236</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Feb. 2, 1953.

<sup>237</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, Feb. 28, 1953.

<sup>238</sup>Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, March 19, 1953.

<sup>239</sup>G. Mennen Williams papers, letter from Williams to Brake, Box 117.

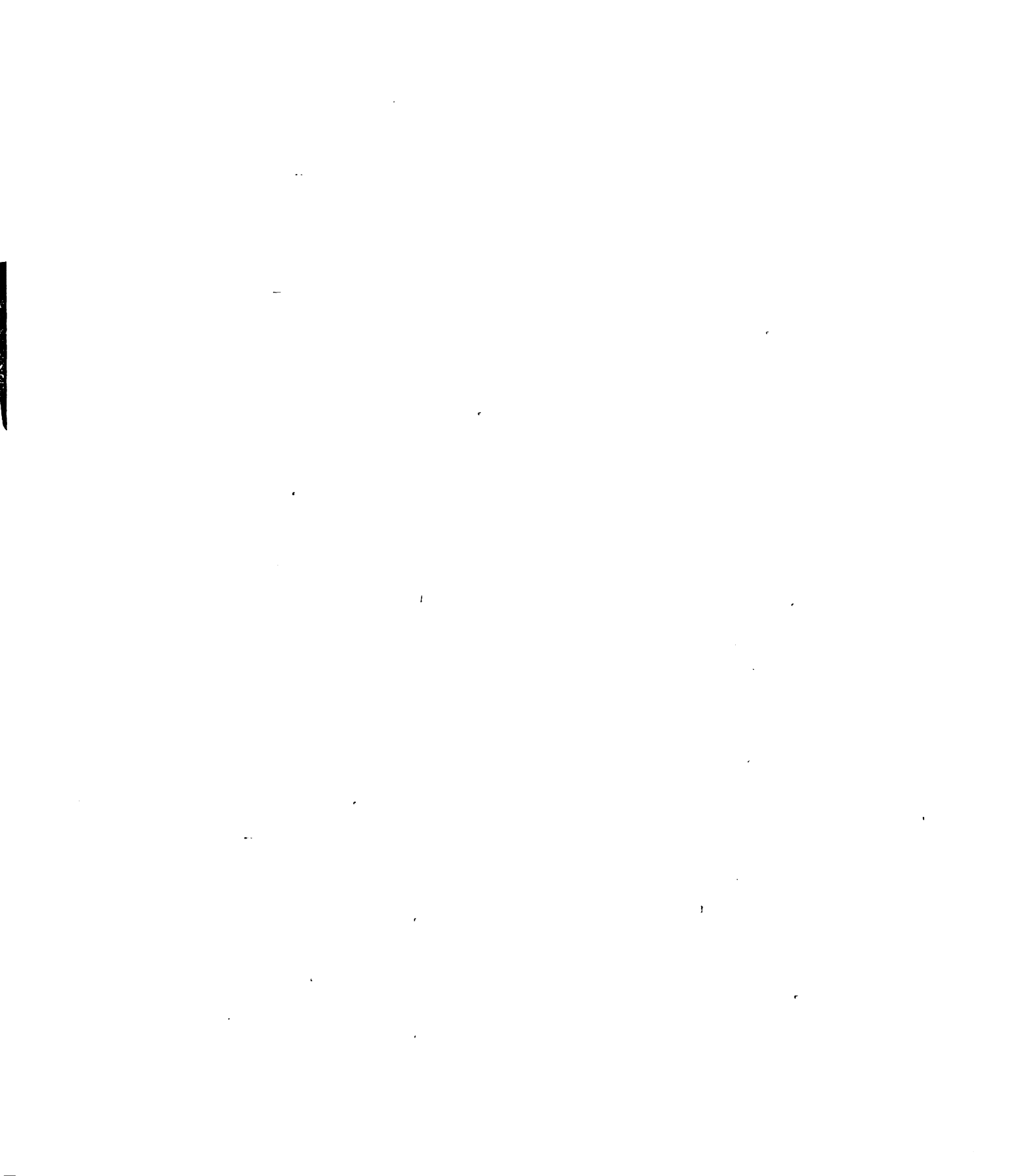
before becoming state treasurer in 1942. An austere, studious man he established a reputation for independent action when he teamed with Democratic lawmakers to help enact social welfare laws. He was rated "a powerful party figure," who was long an advocate of efficiency and common sense in government.<sup>240</sup>

But Brake supported the bridge and opposed the revenue bond method of financing. This gave rise to some confusion over whether Brake was for or against the structure in the minds of Democratic leaders. While Williams and Van Wagoner give Brake credit for being a proponent, others including Brown believed differently. Brown said, he believed Brake's "judgment was warped."<sup>241</sup>

Brake explains that he was labeled an opponent because he wanted a chance at a different method of financing. "I wanted to let the people have a chance to finance it with general obligation bonds. We could have sold them at less than half the cost of the revenue bonds. I believe the Authority was afraid the people wouldn't approve them in a vote. I got credit

<sup>240</sup>Lansing State Journal biography file, D. Hale Brake.

<sup>241</sup>Brown interview, Aug. 15, 1964.



for opposing the method, so I got credit for opposing the bridge," he said.<sup>242</sup>

Meanwhile Bridge Authority members had had legislation introduced that would have the state appropriate annually the amount currently being lost on the operation of the ferry system, to maintain, operate, and repair the bridge. The feeling was that this would make the bond issue more attractive since all toll profits would go toward paying off bonds.

Highway Commissioner Ziegler, rated a chameleon on the project, was campaigning for re-election. At an Upper Peninsula Development Bureau talk in February, Ziegler said, "I want to take this opportunity to make clear to you my position. . . I have always publicly and privately advocated the best communications between the two peninsulas that is economically possible. I resent the statements, editorial or otherwise that I am against a bridge."<sup>243</sup> But Ziegler had sung a slightly different tune early in 1952 when he addressed southern Michigan farm leaders. He told them he was very much opposed to the proposal to build a bridge across the Straits of Mackinac because he

<sup>242</sup>D. Hale Brake interview, Lansing, Mich., Feb. 23, 1966.

<sup>243</sup>Copy of Ziegler speech, Feb. 17, 1953, in Mackinac Bridge Authority files, 1953.

considered the project "financially unsound." He contended bridging the Straits would not increase traffic sufficiently to pay the cost of the project.<sup>244</sup> Ziegler won his 1953 re-election bid by a substantial margin, 511,213 votes to 351,115 for Democratic opponent Eugene I. VanAntwerp.

Van Wagoner, Brown, Fisher, and Williams all urged the legislature to pass the \$17,000 appropriations bill for bridge maintenance. Republican Auditor General John Martin is credited as being one of the main GOP forces for the project.<sup>245</sup> And newly-elected U.S. Congressman Victor Knox flew back to Lansing in mid-April to plead with his former colleagues for the bridge bill.<sup>246</sup> Again the irrepressible Woodfill was working, coordinating his efforts with the Bridge Authority. Lawrence Rubin, Authority executive secretary, reported in an April letter to Woodfill:

. . . We are not over the hump in the legislature by a long shot. There are three pitfalls. First, the State Highway Commissioner, while publicly maintaining a neutral attitude, will do everything he can to hamper our success

<sup>244</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, April 16, 1952.

<sup>245</sup>Brown interview.

<sup>246</sup>Mackinac Bridge Authority files, 1953.



in both houses. Second, timing is all important, both, from the point of view of passage of the legislation as well as for the sale of the bonds in time to get the money in the bank for this construction season. Third, there is a tendency on the part of the legislators to inflict this legislation with their own ideas, which, of course, are all designed either by accident or intent to hamper the sale of the bonds.<sup>247</sup>

Rubin asked Woodfill for additional help.

Sensing that Rubin was disturbed, Woodfill wrote back promptly offering to aid with the GOP members if he was needed. However, Woodfill said with GOP central committee backing and support of the Republican senatorial policy committee, "the matter is well in hand. The Republican party is behind the eight ball if they defeat the bridge. I cannot imagine them doing that now," Woodfill wrote.<sup>248</sup> Just to make sure, Woodfill fired off a letter to a Lansing worker for the project a few days later, essentially admitting Brake's contention that the proponents were afraid of a public vote. Woodfill said GOP State Senator Felix Flynn, R-Cadillac, had expressed opposition because he felt it should be

<sup>247</sup>Letter from Rubin to Woodfill, April 20, 1953, copy in Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

<sup>248</sup>Letter from Woodfill to Rubin, April 23, 1953, copy in Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

put to the voters and be toll free. Woodfill stated further:

It only means he is going to do everything he can to kill the bridge. The people of course would never vote to have themselves taxed for servicing \$100,000,000 of additional state indebtedness and he knows it.

Further I understand . . . that Senator (Charles T.) Prescott, R-Ogemaw, simply won't talk about the matter, indicating thereby that he will work to kill the bill. I hope your efforts to have his home area constituents work on him over the weekend prove helpful.

These old reactionary Republican bastards are going to keep on with this sort of drive until they kill the Republican party if they don't change their tune. It makes my blood boil.<sup>249</sup>

Williams operated again in 1953 under the tacit understanding that if he kept quiet on the bridge bill it was more likely to get through the Republican dominated legislature. Republican conservatives on the one hand did not want to give him credit for it and on the other hand felt they could not afford to block it completely.

The bridge bill thus got tied in with a GOP-Democrat dispute over taxing bills, particularly one on corporations profit taxes. The GOP solution was a business activities tax (BAT) and their strategy was to sit on the bridge appropriation

<sup>249</sup>Letter from Woodfill to Bruce Anderson, April 29, 1953, in Mackinac Bridge Authority files.

bill until Williams signed the tax measure. Rubin, who had been actively lobbying wherever possible for the bridge bill said he felt sick at this turn of events because it meant the bill would not clear the legislature until mid-June and tentative contracts let in February would have fallen through by then.

During a drive from Lansing for a Grand Rapids road builders banquet, Rubin deliberately broached the bridge topic with Representative Emil Peltz, R-Rogers City, chairman of the house roads and bridges committee.

"It wasn't an accidental conversation," Rubin recalled later. "I leveled with him."<sup>250</sup> Peltz, a methodical, teutonic, hardware merchant, found the business activities tax repugnant. He was apparently convinced of the need for the bridge bill by Rubin's plea. Rubin said, "A few days later I got a call from Peltz informing me that I owed him a bottle of whiskey." Peltz had just provided the necessary vote margin in the house to get the bridge bill moving. "Emil Peltz never got credit for what he did," Rubin said later. "He did it from a sincere motivation because there was a feeling in the Rogers City area that the bridge might hurt their tourist trade."<sup>251</sup>

<sup>250</sup>Rubin interview.

<sup>251</sup>Rubin interview.

The final measure was passed in May 1953 with a proviso that the bonds were to be sold by the end of the year or the \$417,000 would be withdrawn. Bridge Commissioners Brown and Fisher spent the summer bucking the tight money market and stumping eastern financial circles trying to peddle the bond issue. Finally a group of underwriters proposed splitting the project into two bond issues, the second to carry a higher interest rate. This offer of a sale required the approval of the GOP dominated state administrative board. Brake objected. He said the state should finance the project with general obligation bonds. Williams immediately implied that Brake was attempting to kill the project. But the conservative Republican replied, "I am not against the project. We will have to build it eventually."<sup>252</sup> Brown felt Brake's motivation was bad judgment:

Obviously, such a move was impossible at this late date. Lieutenant Governor Vandenberg, Speaker Van Valkenburg, several senate leaders, Joseph E. Warner, chairman of the house ways and means committee and many members of the legislature had always insisted that the financing must be done without issuing state supported bonds. No state supported bond bill could have been passed. It was explained that such faith and credit financing could be voted on by the public at any time in the future if the project was successful and the bonds refunded at a considerable saving.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>252</sup>"Nancy's Scrapbook," Vol. 12.

<sup>253</sup>Brown, pps. 19-20.

The administrative board agreed to recess for two days until it could legally adopt the resolution approving the bond sale. But the opponents were not through. On December 16 Nichols filed a petition with the State Supreme Court asking the jurists to block the approval because of various illegalities. Brown and the Authority attorneys happened to be in Lansing and they quickly sought audiences with several of the justices. They informed the judges that halting approval of the sale would have the effect of destroying the bond issue, new legislation would have to be drafted, contracts re-let. Brown calculated the petition could set back the project a year and suggested delay of consideration of the Nichols motion until after sale approval, but before bond delivery. Thus if the transaction were illegal the court could block the Authority from delivering the bonds. "It was lucky that Brown and the attorneys had the respect of the judges and could discuss the impact of the petition," Rubin said. The judges agreed to Brown's approach and delayed a ruling.<sup>254</sup>

Bridge backers concluded the Nichols petition was part of a plot to sink the bridge project. Rubin claims that Booth Newspapers correspondent Guy Jenkins, Nichols,

<sup>254</sup>Brown and Rubin interviews.

and Ziegler sat down to get the information together used in the Supreme Court brief. Rubin said Nichols claim that he was only interested in testing the validity of the bonds "is about as phony as can be. It was a plot to make sure the Democrats didn't get credit. They were afraid of the political impact."<sup>255</sup>

Furthermore, Nichols, himself, admits now it was not just a validity test. "I voted against the original bill and fought it in the Supreme Court as I felt a free bridge or a bridge with modest tolls and some gas tax would be better."<sup>256</sup>

On December 17, 1953 the bids were accepted on the two bond issues. The Bridge Authority immediately adopted a resolution approving the sale and the administrative board convened and approved the sale without a voice raised in dissent. Before the motion had been voted on the Republicans had decided their position at a caucus. It was the only time in Williams' twelve years as governor that anyone called a caucus before an administrative board vote.<sup>257</sup> Subsequently on January 22, 1954 the State Supreme Court handed down a decision

<sup>255</sup>Rubin interview.

<sup>256</sup>Letter from Nichols to author, July 9, 1965.

<sup>257</sup>Letter from Williams to author, Feb. 21, 1966.



finding the bond sale completely legal and dismissed Nichols' eleventh hour petition. The long engagement between the bridge backers and the dream of a Straits Bridge was over. Construction was about to begin.



## CHAPTER V

### MAKE IT FREE

The year 1954 was one of victory. The ceremonial groundbreaking was held on May 7 and 8 on both sides of the Straits to make sure neither St. Ignace or Mackinaw City residents felt slighted. Construction was underway. However, the bridge had not dropped out of the political limelight. It had simply taken on a new perspective with building an accomplished fact. Almost immediately various persons began suggesting who was most responsible for the success of the long sought project. Some favored Republican W. Stewart Woodfill, others sided with Prentiss Brown and a number decided G. Mennen Williams. The new perspective of the bridge would include within a few years a proposal to take the tolls off and tear down the financial Berlin Wall which separated the peninsulas. The thread of the bridge continued to be woven into the fabric of Michigan political history, throughout the three years of construction and for at least a decade more as lawmakers and citizens discussed making it a free passage.

The first proposal to name the bridge to cross Williams' desk came in February 1954 from a Frankfort,

Michigan resident. ". . .I think the bridge should be named after Prentiss M. Brown," he wrote. "The bridge represents years and years of effort and a refusal to concede defeat on the part of Prentiss M. Brown."<sup>258</sup>

The city attorney of Negaunee opined, ". . .in view of the very constructive service you have rendered in bringing the bridge to realization, I believe that the bridge could well be called the G. Mennen Williams bridge." He suggested Williams allow him to start a drive with that end in mind, but Williams responded, "I believe it is the Mackinac Straits Bridge and always will be."<sup>259</sup>

Both political parties still calculated there was some mileage left in the bridge as an issue. Former GOP Lieutenant Governor Eugene Keyes in an apparent bid for primary election support attacked Brake, saying, "Brake has sat in Democrat Williams lap as a member of the administrative board for nearly six years without opening his mouth--except on the Mackinac Bridge matter and when he did he put his foot in it." Keyes called

<sup>258</sup>Williams papers, letter from E. R. Luedtke to Williams, box 158.

<sup>259</sup>Williams papers, letters, April 2 and May 17, 1954, Box 158.

Brake's actions at that December meeting an attempt to throw up a road block and create a political football.<sup>260</sup> The Democrats were not innocent about trying to claim the bridge either. A "Build Michigan Committee" obviously designed to promote Williams into another term as governor enthused:

You'll soon drive across the world's biggest bridge. . . the Mackinac Bridge, uniting Michigan's two peninsulas is one of the great achievements of the people of Michigan under the leadership of their Governor, G. Mennen Williams. . . the man who won the battle of the bridge . . . Williams led the fight for the Mackinac Bridge. Williams took office in 1949 and he found the bridge project abandoned by a Republican legislature. When Governor Williams revived the bridge plan he was met with ridicule. They called it 'Soapy's Folly' but Governor Williams persisted. . . . In four years of effort he succeeded in getting legislative authority to proceed.<sup>261</sup>

Minor league politics apparently even complicated the groundbreaking ceremonies, according to a letter sent by Rubin to St. Ignace Mayor Alexander Phillips. "You worked against terrific odds all the way through, I know, on an event complicated by protocol, financing, politics and sometimes pettiness."<sup>262</sup>

<sup>260</sup>Williams papers, unsigned publicity release, Box 158.

<sup>261</sup>Williams papers, publicity release, Box 158.

<sup>262</sup>Mackinac Bridge Authority files, 1954.

Williams, himself, relished considering the political maneuvering to bring about the construction work at the Straits. "The heroes of the Napoleonic battles didn't have more fun talking over old campaigns than we will on this mighty Mackinac Bridge battle," he wrote.<sup>263</sup>

Writer Owen Deatruck, noting all the claims which were being bandied about, set forth his version in late May:

Before the political claims and arguments start about who should get credit for 'saving' the Mackinac Straits Bridge project, the record should be set straight.

It wasn't the Republicans, Democrats, Governor Williams, or Prentiss Brown, chairman. The man who really made the bridge possible is W. S. Woodfill, of Mackinac Island.

Woodfill corralled all U.P. and northern lower peninsula legislators and told them their political futures were at stake.<sup>264</sup>

Although the debate over who was the prime mover continues still, one thing is not debated about 1954, it was a Democratic year. Williams swept past Republican opponent Donald S. Leonard by 253,003 votes and for the first time carried an administrative board majority in with him. He carried thirteen of the Upper Peninsula counties

<sup>263</sup>Williams papers, letter from Williams to Woodfill, May 17, 1954.

<sup>264</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 30, 1954.

losing only in Luce and Mackinac.<sup>265</sup> Gogebic, Keweenaw, Baraga, Iron, Dickinson, Delta, and Alger counties went Democratic by a landslide margin. The Williams' popularity was still growing.<sup>266</sup>

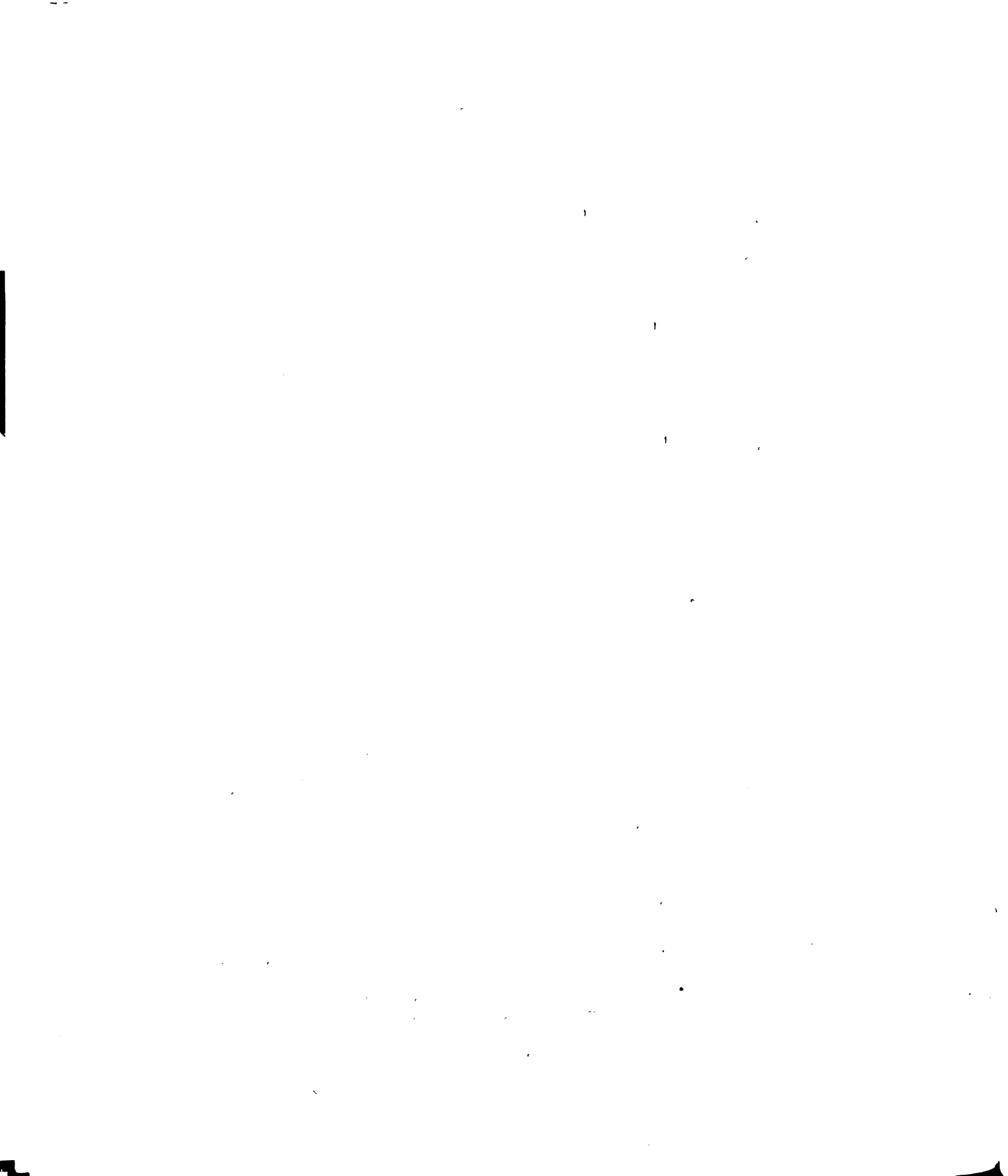
Brake, who had been almost a fixture in the state treasurer's office, was swept out with other GOP administrative board members up for election. Sanford Brown beat Brake by almost a 78,000 vote margin. Brake's 1950 plurality of 10,000 votes was translated into a 1954 election defeat largely on the strength of Democratic gains in Wayne County. Brake lost the Upper Peninsula to Brown by just under 12,000 votes.<sup>267</sup>

After the 1954 loss, Brake turned his political sights on the non-partisan Michigan Supreme Court elections of April 4, 1955. When the votes in that election were tallied Republican Leland W. Carr, of Lansing, had outstripped the field with 493,510 votes. Democrat Eugene F. Black won the second court vacancy with 401,038 ballots and Brake was a close third with 396,570 ballots. Just 4,513 votes separated the two.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>266</sup>LaPalombara, Guide to Michigan Politics, p. 20.

<sup>267</sup>Michigan Manual, 1951-52, pps. 471-72 and Michigan Manual, 1955-56, pps. 423-24.

<sup>268</sup>Michigan Manual pps. 545-46.



Brake later said that he lost "a good many votes" because of the Mackinac Bridge controversy. He felt public misunderstanding of his opposition to the method of financing led to a general belief that he was opposed to the bridge itself, and was translated into a defeat at the polls.<sup>269</sup> Although this belief may have some foundation in fact, it is not supported by Upper Peninsula election statistics. While Brake had lost to Brown in November in the Upper Peninsula by about 12,000 votes, five months later he beat Black there by more than 2,000 ballots. Official tallies showed Brake with 29,863 votes to 27,741 for Black.<sup>270</sup> Since bridge construction was already under way it must be rated as improbable that one out of every hundred voters, who went to the polls that April rejected Brake for the court post on the basis of previous statements on the bridge.

Ironically while construction crews were laboring on the gigantic undertaking from 1954 through 1957, the bridge basically stayed out of politics. Although two of the main characters from bridge history carried on one of the most vindictive feuds in Michigan election history during the period, the bridge was

<sup>269</sup>Brake interview, Feb. 23, 1966

<sup>270</sup>Michigan Manual, 1955-56, pps. 545-547.

rarely mentioned.

The political word war raged between the young and ambitious Williams and snowy-haired highway chief Charles Ziegler. Williams utilized direct attacks against Ziegler's highway planning in 1954 and 1956 as primary weapons in his campaigns for re-election. In 1954 Williams asked Ziegler for a report on past highway progress and future projects and then used the information as ammunition during the political campaign. Ziegler, an old school politician, saw the campaign punch coming and tried to duck it, but was unable. The Governor termed Ziegler's plans a "patchwork program." He told the voters the highway map of Michigan looked as though spaghetti had been thrown at it. Ziegler counterattacked calling Williams' analysis "a fascinating web of deliberate misrepresentations, badly garbled logic, and well-fogged generalities."

The feud was continued in 1956 and Williams' campaign became so focused on Ziegler, who did not have to run for re-election in the November balloting, that the Governor was accused of running for highway commissioner by GOP opponents. In December 1956 Ziegler, 68, had had enough and announced he would not seek re-election. "During the past eight years of my administration both the department and I have been criticized



by the Governor of this state for his own political self-aggrandizement," said the ascerbic commissioner. George M. Foster, Ziegler's deputy was tapped by the GOP as their candidate in the 1957 spring election, while the Democrats put up John C. Mackie.

A month before the election, Williams launched an investigation of right-of-way purchases by the highway department. Ziegler called it a political move. But Williams responded, "if it were not for the fact that you are voluntarily leaving office, your conduct in this matter, . . . your delegation of . . . authority to a non-elective deputy. . . would warrant me in considering your removal from office." In the spring election Mackie beat Foster by slightly more than 50,000 votes and thus Williams removed one of his most persistent GOP irritants on the administrative board.<sup>271</sup> Although 1956 had been an Eisenhower year nationally, Williams had proved that in Michigan it was his year as he hit the peak of his vote getting popularity by outstripping his GOP opponent by more than 290,000 votes.<sup>272</sup>

<sup>271</sup>"Special Soapy File," correspondence of the Highway Commissioner and the Chief Executive, Ziegler files, State of Michigan archives.

<sup>272</sup>Michigan Manual, 1963-64, p. 432.

On November 1, 1957 the big bridge officially opened to the public. It brought to an end 35 years of highway department ferry service. The ferries had carried twelve million vehicles and thirty million people across the Straits.<sup>273</sup> Bridge builder Steinman wrote that the construction was the most spectacular part of the work, but it failed to surpass in drama the "disillusioning developments, and heart-breaking setbacks of the long, active struggle for authorization and financing of the bridge. . . ." <sup>274</sup>

Although the Michigan Tourist Council passed a resolution citing W. Stewart Woodfill for his work in getting the bridge bills passed<sup>275</sup> and newspapers lauded him editorially, most bridge backers concluded Prentiss Marsh Brown "was the man singly responsible more than any other for the creation of the Mackinac Bridge."<sup>276</sup> Brown had spent a lifetime associated with the struggle to link the gap between the two peninsulas. At age 68, as Bridge Authority Chairman, he took part in the official opening ceremonies. Brown

<sup>273</sup>State Journal, Nov. 1, 1957.

<sup>274</sup>David B. Steinman, Miracle Bridge at Mackinac, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1957, introduction.

<sup>275</sup>Tourist Council resolution, Sept. 9, 1957.

<sup>276</sup>Brown biography, Michigan State Library files.

told an AP reporter that he saw the opening of the structure as "the end of a long, long battle."

But the battle wasn't really over. The bridge was dedicated smoothly enough in late June 1958. There were small mentions by both parties during the 1958 campaign claiming credit for the bridge and then the topic died down until the early 1960's when various individuals began clamoring for the tolls to be removed from the five mile long structure.

The bridge went to the Michigan Constitutional Convention in 1961 and that heavily Republican-dominated group wrote a provision into the Constitution passed in 1963, which would allow the state legislature to approve refinancing of the \$100,000,000 structure with revenue bonds and turn it over to the state highway department. The proposal was supported by D. Hale Brake, who was later named the most influential constitutional convention delegate.<sup>277</sup>

Other characters from earlier bridge battle scenes were still in the play as state Senator Haskell Nichols introduced a plan to refinance the bridge with low interest general obligation bonds to reduce tolls and stimulate tourist business in January 1963. The general reaction was that the proposal had merit, but was impractical or unconstitutional in approach.<sup>278</sup>

<sup>277</sup>Lansing State Journal, Dec. 9, 1961, March 9, 1962, and April 19, 1962.

<sup>278</sup>Lansing State Journal, Jan. 30, 1963.

Republican Bridge Commissioner and Sault Evening News publisher George Osborn rejected the Nichols plan, which was co-sponsored by Menominee Republican Kent Lundgren, who had been a constitutional convention delegate. This scheme would have had the federal government pick up ninety per cent of the cost of the bridge on the grounds that it was part of the interstate highway system. Osborn said, "In my judgment the bondholders would not agree to a ninety per cent redemption plan." "I wouldn't put up such a resolution at this time. . . . I fail to see the value of it except for publicity and to keep the bridge in the limelight."<sup>279</sup> The proposal died like numerous other proposals for refinancing introduced in the early 1960's. Most of it hinged on taking the money from some other form of state revenue such as the general fund or gas taxes and these consistently were rejected by the Republican dominated legislature.

In early 1964 an organization to campaign for removal of bridge tolls incorporated itself. It was formed basically by Seth H. Whitmore, an East Lansing public relations man. The group, known as the "Crusade for a Toll Free Mackinac Bridge," released dramatic sounding news claims and sent telegrams to various elected officials. Most of its activity was Whitmore's

<sup>279</sup>State Journal, Feb. 13, 1963.

doing.<sup>280</sup> In 1964 the state house of representatives killed GOP Representative Clayton Morrison's bill for a half cent tax on gasoline by a 77-13 margin, but sentiment was growing and politicians were beginning to pick up the toll free cry.<sup>281</sup> Once again eyes turned toward the federal purse in Washington. GOP U.S. senatorial candidate James F. O'Neil's statement was typical. He told a Rotary group that the state and nation had an obligation to make the bridge toll free. O'Neil proposed simply that the federal government pick up the \$100,000,000 tab on the bond issue.<sup>282</sup> U.S. Representative Victor Knox proposed federal takeover about six months earlier in connection with another Congressional bill to have the U.S. government pick up the cost of the Chicago Skyway. A Democratic Congressman from Detroit, Harold Ryan had also introduced a bill to have the federal government pick up ninety per cent of the cost on the bridge according to the interstate highway construction formula.

However, both Democratic senators, Pat McNamara of Detroit and Philip Hart of Mackinac Island, rejected the proposal as foolish because it would open the door to the federal government paying for about \$4,000,000,000

<sup>280</sup>State Journal, Jan. 15, 1964.

<sup>281</sup>State Journal, March 28, 1964.

<sup>282</sup>State Journal, June 30, 1964.

in total ways and bridges across the nation.<sup>283</sup>

Taking a page from the 1948 political campaign note book of former Governor G. Mennen Williams, Governor George Romney proposed naming a commission to study rate reductions and refinancing of the bridge. Romney chose a special Governor's Conference on Economic Opportunity for his announcement.<sup>284</sup> In October Romney unveiled his committee while speaking in the Upper Peninsula. The five member group was made up predominantly of Republican attorneys, businessmen and educators. One of them was the seventy-three year old Stanton Republican, D. Hale Brake.<sup>285</sup>

The 1964 elections resulted in a neat reversal of the Williams' situation in 1952. While the nation and state voted overwhelmingly for Lyndon B. Johnson as the Democratic president, the state voters crossed the ballot and gave Romney a 350,000 vote margin in the gubernatorial race. The Democrats won control of both houses of the legislature for the first time since 1933 with margins of twenty-three to fifteen in the state senate and seventy-three to thirty-seven in the house.<sup>286</sup>

Four northern Michigan lawmakers, including one Democrat, Representative Einar Erlandsen of Escanaba,

<sup>283</sup>United Press International dispatch, Nov. 2, 1963.

<sup>284</sup>State Journal, June 1, 1964.

<sup>285</sup>State Journal, Oct. 24, 1964.

<sup>286</sup>Michigan Manual, 1965-66, pps. 177-178 and p. 166 and Michigan Manual, 1963-64, p. 97.

said they would work for reduction and possibly elimination of bridge tolls.<sup>287</sup> Larry Rubin, representing the Bridge Authority, counseled Romney's committee that the time was favorable to refinance the bridge at a savings of \$1,000,000 to \$1,300,000.<sup>288</sup> On January 5, 1965 the special committee recommended prompt action to Romney to "initiate and support necessary legislation for refunding of the Mackinac Bridge bonds. The final decision as to whether the tolls should be reduced further than the amount permitted by interest savings realized from refunding or kept at present rates is a political decision, although not a partisan one."<sup>289</sup> It was as though Brake and Frank G. Millard, members of the committee who lived through the bridge battles of the Williams' administration foresaw that the 1965 legislative struggle would again be drawn to some extent along party lines.

The first bill enrolled in the 1965 session was a measure to refinance the bonds and replace the Bridge Authority. It was co-sponsored by members of both parties, and one signer was again Haskell Nichols of Jackson.<sup>290</sup>

<sup>287</sup>Lansing State Journal, Dec. 12, 1964.

<sup>288</sup>Unpublished transcript of testimony before the Mackinac Bridge Study Committee.

<sup>289</sup>"A Report of the Governor's Mackinac Bridge Study Committee," Jan. 5, 1965, p. 5.

<sup>290</sup>Enrolled Senate Bill No. 1, Jan. 14, 1965.

The same combination of Democrats and Republicans introduced a second bill to implement the provisions of the 1963 Constitution in early February.<sup>291</sup>

In mid-February the Democratic State Central Committee reiterated its previous stand favoring removal of the bridge tolls at a spring convention in Grand Rapids.<sup>292</sup>

Governor Romney may have spelled the doom of 1965 legislative efforts to pass Mackinac Bridge refinancing bills by coming out strongly in favor of toll removal at his second inaugural in Iron Mountain, according to several Capitol press corps reporters. "He grabbed the ball and ran with it and the Democrats weren't very happy," one correspondent said.<sup>293</sup> Romney told the enthusiastic citizens he had decided the state could afford to eliminate the tolls. "There is no valid reason why we should permit any internal economic barriers to separate us," he said. "I expect to submit my recommendations to the Legislature in an early special message and I am hopeful that passage may be possible this session," he said.<sup>294</sup>

The first indication that the bridge bills would

<sup>291</sup>Enrolled Senate Bill No. 57, Feb. 3, 1965.

<sup>292</sup>"Resolutions Adopted at Democratic Spring State Convention," Grand Rapids, Mich., Feb. 14, 1965.

<sup>293</sup>Interviews with reporters of Capitol Press Corps, July and August, 1965.

<sup>294</sup>"Second Inaugural Address," Governor George Romney, Iron Mountain-Kingsford, March 13, 1965.



not be sailing through unruffled waters in the legislature came in reactions by the Democratic leaders to Romney's remarks. "I'm not sure the legislature is going to go for this abolition of tolls," said Senator Raymond D. Dzendzel, D-Detroit, majority leader. House Speaker Joseph J. Kowalski, D-Detroit, echoed that statement, but said he had always been in favor of toll removal, but thought other things were more important. At least one Upper Peninsula Democrat, Senator Joseph Mack said, he was one hundred per cent in favor of Romney's proposal to remove tolls.<sup>295</sup>

Several additional bridge bills were introduced by a variety of Republicans and Democrats during early April.<sup>296</sup> Romney urged passage of a program to remove tolls on April 20. He agreed with Democrat objections to general fund financing and proposed hiking vehicle license fees by an average of \$1.75 to eliminate the tolls. Romney cited the monetary advantage of re-financing and said there was little chance the federal government would pick up ninety per cent of the cost as some lawmakers hoped.<sup>297</sup>

<sup>295</sup>Lansing State Journal, March 15, 1965.

<sup>296</sup>Enrolled House Bills, 2630 and 2884 and Enrolled Senate Bills 464 and 465.

<sup>297</sup>"Special Message on the Mackinac Bridge," Governor George Romney, April 20, 1965.

Democrat reaction to the special message was cool. Dzendzel said new revenues "should not go to pay off a bridge that the people were told would pay for itself." Despite unfavorable reaction Senator Thomas Schweigert, R-Petoskey, remained optimistic and reported he had received 35,000 signatures from a St. Ignace group dedicated to removing the tolls.<sup>298</sup> The optimism proved unfounded because on the final day for reporting bills from committee, the various bridge measures remained bottled up.

Somewhere among the personalities and events in that day's news from the legislature was the reason for the failure during the 1965 session. Schweigert claimed a double cross by state affairs committee head William Romano, D-Warren. Romano retorted that Romney had killed the measures by talking too much at the wrong time. Other senators commenting off the record tied the bridge bills' failure to the demise of a Romano-backed grayhound racing measure.

One senator told AP writer Richard Barnes that Romano had told him he could have any four bills reported out of the committee in return for dog bill support. Schweigert told Barnes he turned down a request to vote for the dog bill, but reluctantly

<sup>298</sup>State Journal, May 6, 1965.

agreed to support a liberalized chiropractors law in return for Romano's bridge bill support.<sup>299</sup>

In an interview Romano implied that a Democratic caucus had reacted unfavorably to Romney's comments about the committee and claimed he had been told to make sure no bridge bill vote was taken.

"He (Romney) criticized me on the dog bill and said I had never spent one minute on it in committee. . . . It mostly became a party policy with us that they shouldn't be released. It was a lot of hodge-podge. Romney hadn't contacted me by letter, himself, or sent a person from his office on the bills. It was his way of trying to get off the hook," Romano said.<sup>300</sup>

A senate Democratic aide, however, said the majority caucus took no position in regard to the bridge bills. He said, the answer simply was that Romano hid out because "he was miffed at Romney's charges."<sup>301</sup>

Schweigert's version of the events of May 14 is quite similar to reported accounts. He said other senate bills on the bridge were improperly drafted and

<sup>299</sup>Lansing State Journal, May 15, 1965.

<sup>300</sup>Interview with Romano, Lansing, June 24, 1965.

<sup>301</sup>Interview with Phillip Lee, Lansing, Aug. 18, 1965.

that he had prepared a substitute measure.

I offered the substitute as an amendment. . . on the morning of the last day for reporting bills from the committee in the house of origin. During the course of committee discussion, the noon hour approached. One member, whose vote I neither had nor needed, requested postponement of action until after lunch so he could obtain additional information. Out of courtesy, I acceded to his request in the hope that the bill might move from committee unanimously later in the day. However, the committee chairman failed to return to the Capitol until immediately prior to adjournment in the evening.<sup>302</sup>

Subsequently Schweigert offered his substitute bill as an amendment to two bills on the floor. Each time the amendment was challenged by a Democrat for not being germane. Each time the President of the Senate had to rule against Schweigert. But if the proposal hadn't been challenged it would have been legal.

"I am convinced that the Democrats have taken a party position in opposition to my bill for reasons best known to themselves," Schweigert said. "Conversations with certain of my Democratic colleagues bear out my belief, although I have been unable thus far to secure an official verification. Presumably they want to introduce a bill under Democratic sponsorship in order to be credited for having brought about lower

<sup>302</sup>Letter from Schweigert to author, July 19, 1965.

tolls on the bridge."

Schweigert said he felt Governor Romney had done all he could to promote passage of the bills ". . . considering that those of us on the Republican side of the aisle lack the votes necessary to act on anything unless the Democrats see fit to cooperate," he said.<sup>303</sup>

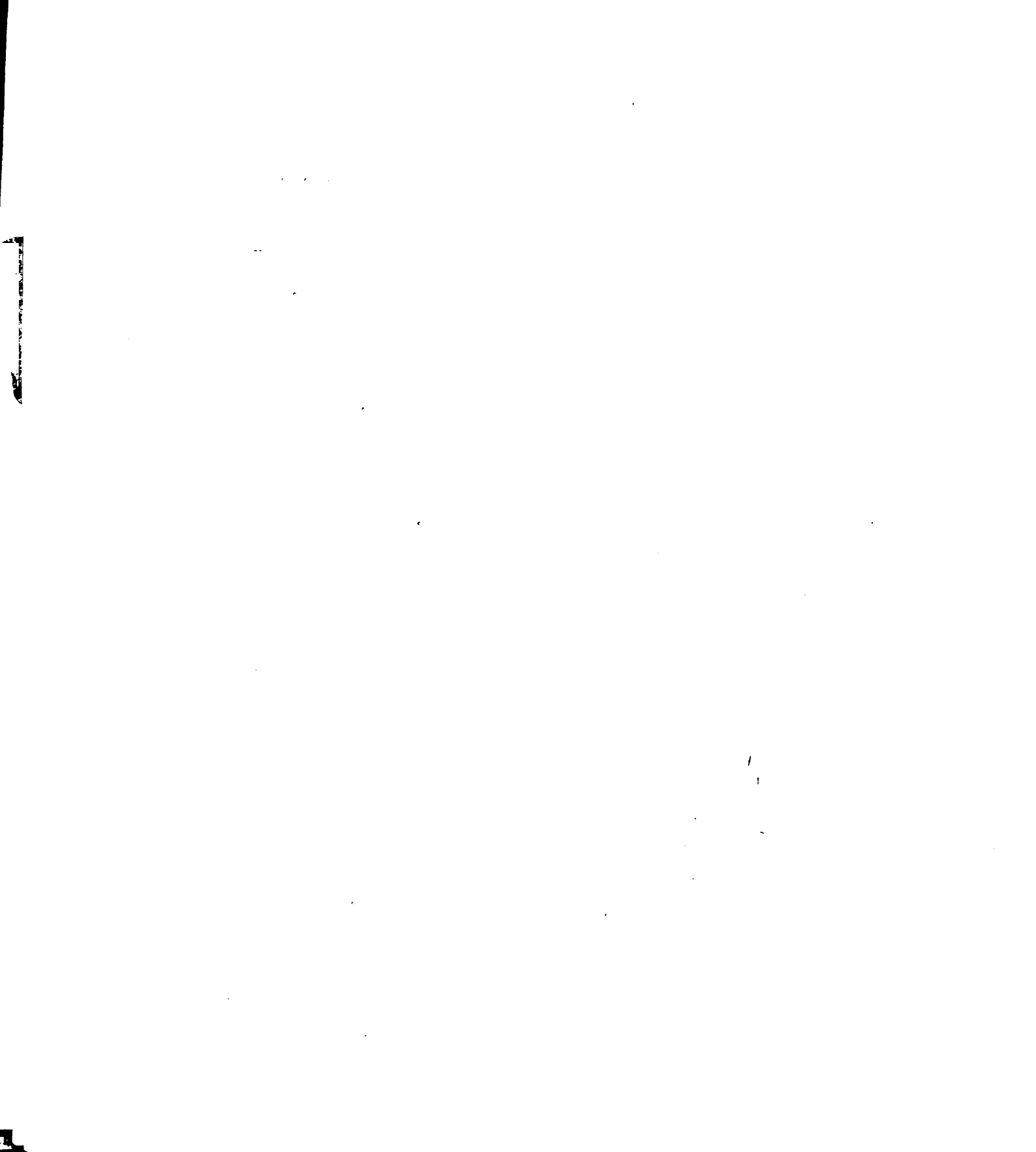
Chances for legislation were past when Senator Nichols moved May 24 to discharge one of the refinancing bills from the state affairs committee. "I think its going to be a mistake not to refinance the bridge as soon as possible," Nichols warned. The proposal was defeated on a straight party line vote. The only Democrat present who did not vote against the motion was long-time bridge backer and Upper Peninsula booster Senator Joseph Mack, who felt constrained to abstain.

Dzendzel set the tone of Democratic senate reaction by saying that the Republicans held majorities in 1963 and 1964 and asking "if it is a good bill now, why wasn't it a good bill then?"<sup>304</sup>

A May 26 motion by Swallow to discharge the house state affairs committee from consideration of a bridge bill, had to be largely for political effect. Reporters said, "he apparently hopes to force majority Democrats

<sup>303</sup>Letter from Schweigert to author, July 19, 1965.

<sup>304</sup>Lansing State Journal, May 25, 1965.



to choose between living up to their platform. . .and following their legislative leaders." The Swallow motion was rejected by a 64-38 margin, with 30 Republicans and eight Democrats voting for it and sixty-two Democrats and two Republicans against it.<sup>305</sup> Swallow's reaction to the defeat was, "the majority will move when it suits their fancy and when it will do them the most political good."<sup>306</sup> A resolution urging the U.S. Congress to take whatever steps necessary to pay for ninety per cent of the cost of the bridge was sponsored by seven house members, mostly Upper Peninsula Democrats, in early June.

One final splinter effort to reduce the tolls was pushed by freshman state Representative Richard Young, D-Dearborn. Young's plan, which would have raised the so-called severance tax on gas and oil producers surprisingly was approved in preliminary debate, 31-19, but was defeated 24-19 in the final voting stage. Democrat house floor leader Robert Traxler urged the rejection saying a committee would study the problem and come back with proposals in January 1966. One last Young effort was rejected on a roll call vote June 22 by a 35-34 margin. Young reminded both parties during

<sup>305</sup>Lansing State Journal, May 26, 1965.

<sup>306</sup>Interview with Swallow, Lansing, July 29, 1965.

debate that they had supported elimination of tolls.<sup>307</sup>

Under the rules of the 1963 Constitution the bills did not actually die in 1965 because they remained alive in committee. Senator John Bowman, D-Roseville, had a candid opinion about the politics involved.

". . . I would suggest that in the legislature, when important bills are under consideration, there is no such thing as a non-political issue."<sup>308</sup>

At least two press observers believed the defeat was traceable to some degree to Governor Romney. "Romney had espoused this cause and in the back of the legislators' minds was a distaste for having him propose and then pass it," said Al Sandner of AP. "I believe the Democrats wanted their own name on the program and that Romney's advocating elimination of the tolls played a part in the defeat."<sup>309</sup> Willard Baird, of Federated Publications, said, "I am flabbergasted that the Democrats turned it down. It could have saved the state some money. They didn't want to put a feather in Romney's cap."<sup>310</sup>

<sup>307</sup>Lansing State Journal, June 9, 22, and 24, 1965.

<sup>308</sup>Letter from Bowman to author, July 22, 1965.

<sup>309</sup>Interview with Sandner, Aug. 18, 1965.

<sup>310</sup>Interview with Baird, Aug. 19, 1965.



The bridge refinancing battle recessed for the summer and then resumed in the fall session, but while the two parties debated, the money market, which had been favorable to refinancing at about 3.25 per cent, began tightening up. The first engagement of the fall resulted in senate Democrats killing a Republican attempt to put bridge refinancing on the legislative calendar. Romano announced that refinancing legislation had virtually no chance of getting to the senate floor during the fall session because "there are still a lot of questions I want answered." He said, figures produced by bond experts "just don't add up."

Despite this comment two bridge bills were introduced in the house and the house committee on roads and bridges reported out a measure sponsored by Representative Einar Erlandsen, D-Escanaba. A week later the house lowered roadblocks and raced the Erlandsen bill through by a 103-0 margin.

However, the Erlandsen bill got only as far as the senate highway committee where the deadline passed for reporting it to the floor on October 12. After two hours of discussion on that date, the committee headed by Senator Stanley Rozycki, D-Detroit,

decided to conduct public hearings on bridge refinancing with a view toward passage in the 1966 session. Rozycki said, he was in sympathy with bridge backers, but "it is preposterous to expect the committee to take action within twenty-four hours..."

Rozycki also took swipes at Schweigert, observing the Petoskey Republican hadn't taken any action when he headed the senate state affairs committee in 1963-64. Rozycki said his political opponents "don't just ask to have the bill reported out. They practically demand it and exert every bit of pressure Republicans can muster to flush it out of the committee."<sup>312</sup>

The 1966 election year opened with Governor Romney repeating his call for refinancing and Democratic lawmakers announcing once again that they had reliable reports that the federal government might take over the giant structure within five years. State Senator Garland Lane, D-Flint, chairman of the senate appropriations committee, announced that he and four other Democrats would make a two day junket to Washington, D.C. to check out the rumors.<sup>313</sup>

A week later G. Mennen Williams' name came back

<sup>312</sup>Lansing State Journal, Oct. 13, 1965.

<sup>313</sup>Lansing State Journal, Jan. 15, 1966.

into the bridge picture as state Representative Victor Steeh, D-Mount Clemens, proposed naming the structure the "G. Kernen Williams Bridge" to honor the former governor for his work in getting it built.

Romney pointed out while the five Democrats were in Washington that the state highway department had checked federal sources the previous November and a Bureau of Public Roads official informed them "we have been advised the matter is dormant at the present time and will probably remain so for several years."<sup>314</sup> Romney said the main point was that state action should be taken immediately whether federal funds ultimately became available or not.<sup>315</sup> The delegation's hopes were dashed as a succession of federal spokesmen told them there was no basis for the rumors. The senate highway committee called for action on a state bill after it returned from the abortive Washington trip. Dzendzel promised there would be some kind of legislative action on the bridge during the year.<sup>316</sup>

Meanwhile, the Bridge Authority, disturbed by inaccurate newspaper reports, had Brown issue a four page statement to correct misconceptions. Brown

<sup>314</sup>Lansing State Journal, Jan. 17, 1966.

<sup>315</sup>Lansing State Journal, Jan. 17, 1966.

<sup>316</sup>Lansing State Journal, Jan. 19, 1966.

said it was his opinion that refunding legislation should be passed to provide standby power to refund at a net interest cost to the state of not more than 3.25 per cent. Any higher rate would be largely just exchanging dollars, Brown pointed out.<sup>317</sup>

It was basically this approach which cleared the senate on the strength of votes by fourteen Democrats and thirteen Republicans. The final senate vote was 27-7 in favor of the measure, while the vote in the house was 103-0 in favor of the bill. The political breakdown of the senate no votes was five Democrats and two Republicans. The Democrats were all Detroit area lawmakers, while both Republicans were from the southwestern lower peninsula.<sup>318</sup>

Bridge bill opponents called the bill meaningless because of the tight money market, but bridge backers claimed they would attempt to knock out the interest rate restrictions in future sessions.<sup>319</sup>

The bridge still had not cleared the realm of politics. Governor Romney in seeking his giant re-election victory of 1966 at one point attacked the Democratic controlled legislature for refusing to

<sup>317</sup>News release by Mackinac Bridge Authority, St. Ignace, Jan. 23, 1966.

<sup>318</sup>House Journal, 1966, No. 48, Mar. 21, 1966.

<sup>319</sup>Lansing State Journal, Mar. 22, 1966.

remove the tolls on the Mackinac Bridge, thus serving notice that the old political football still has some air left in its battered hide.<sup>320</sup> And in 1967 the legislature was considering a bill to re-finance and pay off the bridge with increased gas tax monies.<sup>321</sup>

Although statistics don't support the bridge's worth as a political issue it will continue to pop up in campaigns across Michigan until the tolls are finally removed. Publisher George Osborn aptly summed up the situation:

There is a growing movement to make the bridge toll free as quickly as possible. Anyone running for political office is bound to use it. But I don't think anyone can gain votes because all the candidates are for it. Conservatively, I predict it will come within the next ten years and there is a good chance of it coming sooner than that.<sup>322</sup>

Anyone who has traced the history of the bridge from its proposal by a Traverse City publisher in the 1880's through the many legislative attempts recognizes, despite loud and brash claims, the Mackinac Bridge is not a Democratic bridge or a Republican bridge. It is a Michigan bridge with a fascinating political history.

<sup>320</sup>Detroit Free Press, Oct. 4, 1966.

<sup>321</sup>Letter from Bill Davison, Legislative Service Bureau, to author, June 7, 1967.

<sup>322</sup>Osborn interview.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The political history of the Mackinac Bridge is primarily found in personal papers and diaries, official documents and election statistics, newspaper reports, and within the minds of the men who lived it.

The personal diaries of Chase Osborn and Horatio S. Earle aided in providing information on the early years of the study. The G. Mennen Williams papers in the Michian Historical Collections of the University of Michigan were voluminous and sporadically helpful. The former Governor and the University of Michigan generously offered to open various papers to the study.

The Mackinac Bridge Authority files were of considerable importance and contained a great deal of information pertaining to the paper. However, a major portion of some years were damaged by flooding and a considerable portion of the older files were in no particular order.

State of Michigan House and Senate Journals and the bi-annual Michigan Manuals were primary source material of the greatest importance in analyzing election statistics from the early 1900's to the late 1960's. Analysis would have proved impossible without them.

The State of Michigan Library and Archives also were quite helpful in providing resource information. The library's Mackinac Bridge file contains much of the original Bridge Commission's documents and reports by first engineer J. J. Cissel. The archives' "Special Soapy File" and "Inter Peninsula Communications Commission Files" were important in understanding political activities in the 1950's.

Three newspapers stand out from the many that contributed daily information on the political climate of the state. The Detroit News opened its Lansing files to the author for research and proved extremely helpful. The Lansing State Journal biographical files and newspapers also added detailed accounts of politicians and legislative maneuverings. The Sault Ste. Marie Evening News provided the most complete coverage during the entire period covered by the thesis. A day-by-day analysis of the Evening News elicited much information that would have been missed by other newspapers.

Since much of the bridge story deals with the present, a large number of the persons involved, generously allowed the author to interview them on various aspects of the paper. At the top of this list are Prentiss Marsh Brown, the distinguished chairman of the Mackinac Bridge Authority; Lawrence Rubin, the knowledgeable

Executive-Secretary of the Authority; and Commissioners George Osborn, Sault Ste. Marie Evening News publisher, Murray Van Wagoner, former governor and causeway builder, and W. Stewart Woodfill, Grand Hotel Chairman. Others who aided through interviews or telephone conversations included: former State Treasurer D. Hale Brake, State Senator William Romano, U.S. Senators Philip Hart and Patrick McNamara, and State Representative Joseph Swallow. Various politicians wrote letters to the author on aspects of the bridge history. These included former Governor Williams, former Governor Wilber Brucker, State Senator Haskell Nichols, and State Senators Thomas Schweigert and John Bowman.

The insight of reporters and former correspondents of the Lansing Capitol Press Corps also was a considerable aid in analyzing the reasons behind legislative actions. A.J. Levin, Carl Rudow, and Willard Baird stand out among the many. Gubernatorial Press Secretary Charles Harmon provided copies of Governor George Romney's speeches in connection with the bridge and also leads to other primary information on activity in the 1960's.

Three secondary sources are worthy of note. These include Prentiss Brown's, The Mackinac Bridge Story, the



basic historical work on the building of the bridge;  
Horatio Earle's autobiography, The Autobiography of  
By Gum Earle; and A Guide to Michigan Politics, by  
Joseph LaPalombara.

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