

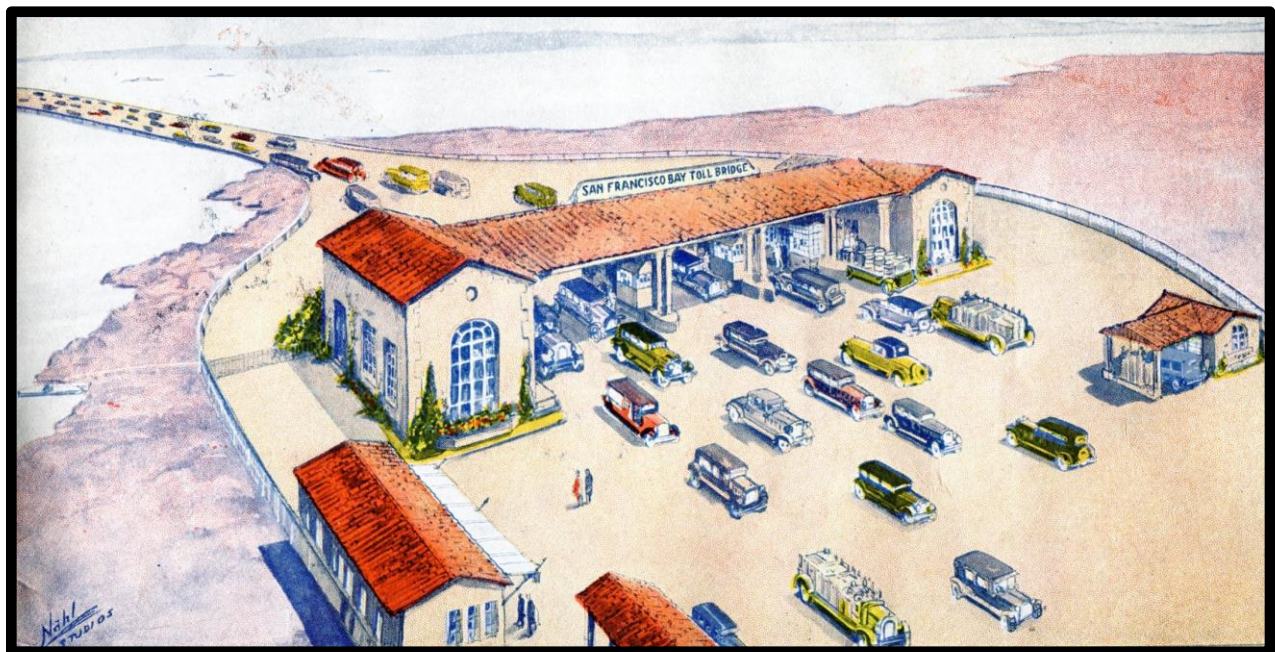
# “The Longest Bridge in the World”

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The Hayward-San Mateo Bridge was originally proposed in 1922 by the Oakland Chamber of Commerce as a way to jump start commerce between the Peninsula and East Bay. The original proposal however, did not include Hayward. Instead it called for the construction of the “San Mateo-Alvarado Bridge”. This idea did not come to fruition at that time but it highlighted a need for an automotive crossing in the middle section of San Francisco Bay. The Dumbarton Bridge was actually the first span across the Bay opening in 1927 because it was the shortest distance.

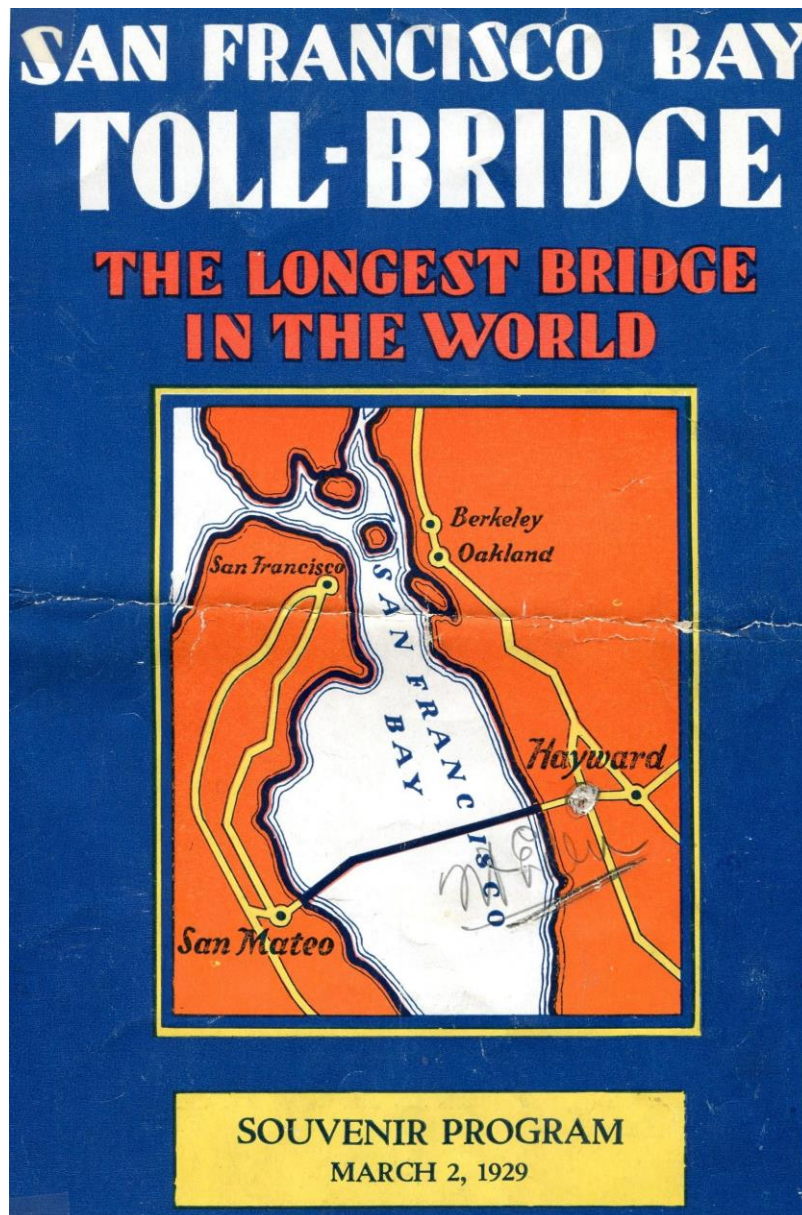
The Toll-Bridge Company began raising money for a span from Hayward to San Mateo in the late 1920s. Construction began in December 1927, but dredging of the bay and large scale work did not start until the spring of 1928. In March of that year, oyster shells were harvested from the area to make the cement mixture for all the concrete necessary for bridge construction.

On March 2, 1929 the so-called “San Francisco Bay Toll-Bridge” was ready for opening (it was later renamed the Hayward-San Mateo Bridge). It cost 7.5 million dollars to build. The original bridge was only 30 feet wide with just two lanes, and 7.1 miles long. Until the Lafayette Bridge in Louisiana opened in the early 1950s, the span remained the longest over water crossing in the world!



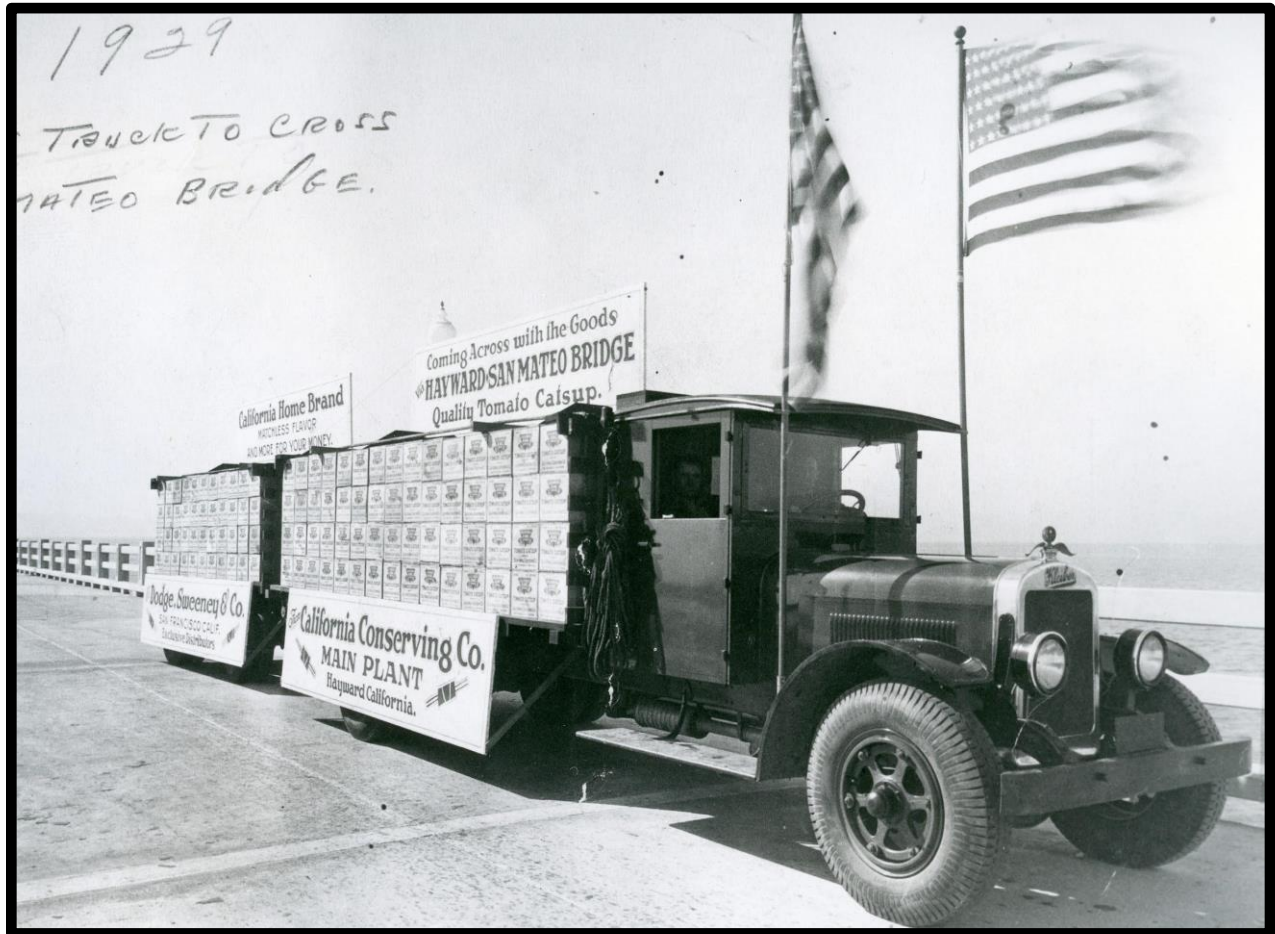
*An Illustration of the toll gate featured in the dedication program.*

The dedication ceremony featured a host of big name politicians including, San Francisco Mayor James Rolph. Even United States President Calvin Coolidge participated in the dedication. According to the *Oakland Tribune* Coolidge pressed a telegraph button in Washington D.C., directing the unfurling of an American flag from the bridge. The new bridge featured an electric drawbridge section that allowed marine traffic to pass underneath. A newspaper proudly reported that “New York newspapers and many other eastern papers have told their readers of this new evidence of California’s improvement.” The original toll to cross the bridge was 45 cents.



*The cover of the souvenir program given out at the dedication of the new bridge.*

For the next few decades the bridge is mentioned only sporadically in local newspapers. In the 1950s however, the bridge became a hot topic of debate. In 1951, the State of California purchased the Hayward-San Mateo Bridge (as well as the Dumbarton Bridge) for 8.35 million dollars. It was sold to the state by the Toll-Bridge company who had operated the bridge privately since its construction. The state celebrated its takeover of the bridge by lowering the toll to 35 cents.



***A Hayward cannery truck crosses the bridge bringing Hayward "Quality Tomato Catsup" to San Mateo as part of the 1929 dedication.***

By 1954, 7,400 cars were crossing the narrow bridge every day. Numerous articles describe the quarter-century old bridge as an "antique". By 1957 the bridge was at a complete standstill on average six times a day to allow boats and ships to pass underneath much to the frustration of commuters.

By the end of the 1950s, politicians agreed that the area had outgrown the original bridge. In 1961, the groundwork was laid for the construction of a wider bridge. The new span was built just a few feet north of the original span.

On October 20, 1967 the new Hayward-San Mateo Bridge was dedicated. Since its opening, the new bridge has been expanded a few times to ease traffic jams along the span—guess some things never change.