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Bridge Problems Are Not New

By George McCulliston
(A Member of The Star's Staff)

A HISTORY of Clay and Platte County's efforts to enjoy unimpeded travel across the Missouri river shows that current problems in seeking free flow of traffic vary only in time and circumstances from those that began nearly a century ago.

Motorists now wait impatiently in line to drive across the A-S-B bridge, where two of four lanes are closed in a resurfacing program, and at the Paseo bridge tollgates interrupt the speed of traffic.

Efforts began in 1898. Hopes were high in the 1880s when Willard E. Winner planned to bridge the river. But these hopes collapsed with the financial panic of 1887 and the piers of the unfinished bridge were left jutting out of the water.

Ferries continued to be the principal method of crossing until December 23, 1911, when the Armour-Swift-Burlington syndicate completed construction of the 2-level A-S-B bridge on the piers built by Winner.

Originating in a period of uncertainty, it appeared for a time the bridge might never be built. There was tragedy. Two workers were killed during construction. One is believed buried in a pier into which he apparently fell as concrete was being poured.

Fourteen months before completion an attempt was made to dynamite the partly completed structure. Armed guards were posted to assure completion and the safety of construction workers.

Today, in the metropolitan area, the A-S-B bridge is but one of six bridges carrying traffic across the Missouri river but still is among the major traffic arteries.

The problems are not as acute with the Broadway Chouteau, Liberty and Fairfax bridges, but the traffic is not as heavy.

Today, traffic officials have decided, it is apparent that without alterations and perhaps construction of more bridges, the traffic needs of the growing area north of the river cannot be met.

State legislators—Rep. Charles Broomfield and Phil Snowden and Sen. William B. Waters—saw the removal of tollgates on the Paseo bridge as one need to improve traffic flow. But the state highway commission decided against the move because 6½ million dollars in unpaid revenue bonds remain on the bridge.

A resolution to remove the toll passed later by the House noted that the Paseo span was the only one in the state highway department system that has a toll charge.

Accidents a Factor
Removal of the gates also was seen as a step to minimize the danger of accidents. Lines two and three miles long develop during rush hours.

"We are going to wage a continuing effort to get those tollgates removed," Broom-

FIFTY-SIX YEARS old and archaic in design, the A-S-B bridge is still a major traffic artery connecting Kansas City with the Clay-Platte County area. A new deck has been constructed on its two inside lanes. Work on new decks for the outside lanes will start soon with completion expected this fall.

Further relief for traffic is expected when a freeway link joining Broadway with I-29 is completed opening Platte County traffic more directly to the downtown area across the Broadway bridge.

structural damage to the bridge and health hazards. Much of the traffic bind is expected to be relieved late this fall when the \$800,000 resurfacing program is completed.

field said last night. Obviously it will take a lot of effort.

The modern problems of the A-S-B bridge have been regular repair of its deck and invasion of pigeons and starlings. A campaign against the birds continues because of

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