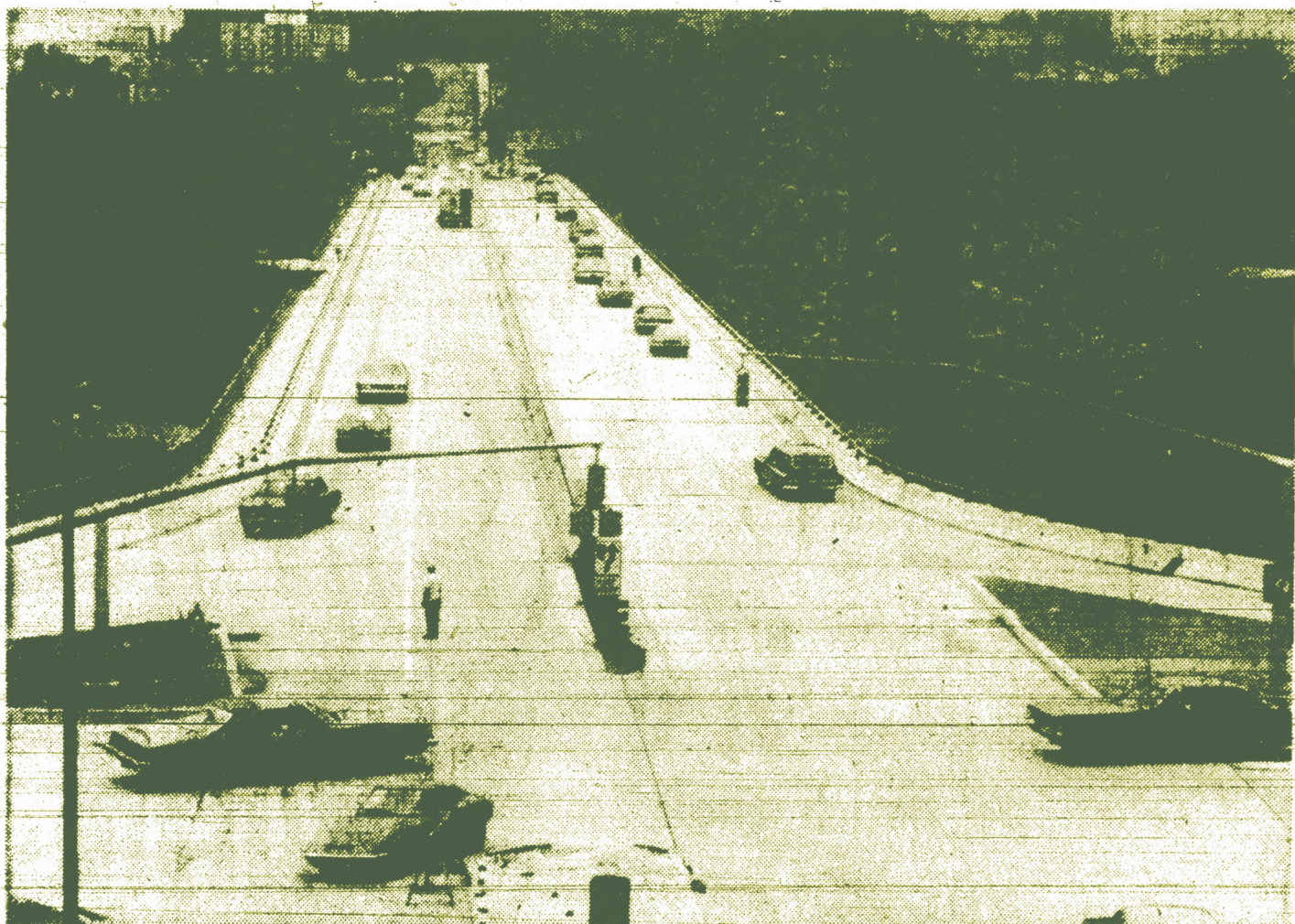


Church, Dan. "All Lanes 'Go' On Bridge 18 Months After Deadline."

Bethlehem Globe-Times (Bethlehem, PA). 20 June 1973: 1,12. Microfilm.



(Globe-Times Photo)

Traffic moves on all four lanes across the New St. (Philip J. Fahy) Bridge.

All Lanes 'Go' On Bridge 18 Months After Deadline

By DAN CHURCH
Globe-Times Staff Writer

Bethlehem's New Street span, now officially called the Philip J. Fahy Bridge, opened to four-lane traffic this afternoon — 18 months late and \$880,000 more costly than expected.

Perhaps fittingly, the 11 a.m. schedule for first traffic over the recently reinforced western span was delayed more than one hour, as a score of spectators watched state crews paint traffic lines on the bare

concrete roadway.

And only minutes after partial reopening, the repaired span was blocked at the north end by a car out of gasoline. Two minutes later, another car stopped with a flat tire in the middle of the span.

Completion was originally set for December, 1971, but apparent design problems forced an extended deadline to June 30 for rewelding buckled supports on the western span's southern portion.

No ceremonies marked today's opening, unlike the ribbon-cutting held May 29, 1970 when the first western bridge span was completed.

City officials indicated formal dedication ceremonies are planned in September, sponsored by the city's Fraternal Order of Police honoring Fahy, a policeman slain on duty in August, 1969.

While span repairs have been completed, PennDOT officials say, detail work remaining includes laying

brick sidewalks and some minor concrete pouring. Landscaping work is still underway on Sand Island and on the slopes below the City Center Complex.

Al Bauer, a PennDOT official in the construction department, said 18 work orders processed to date have pushed the bridge cost up to an estimated \$6,400,000. All such work, he said, is done on a "force account" basis with payments subject both to

Continued on Page 12, Col. 5

All Lanes 'Go' On Bridge 18 Months After Deadline

Continued From Page 1

audit and later arbitration.

"Responsibilities for the break have not and are not fully determined yet," said Bauer. "We have approved additional work always with the understanding the responsibility will be determined at a later date."

Bauer said arbitration on additional costs is expected sometime after the completion of bridge construction.

The force account payments, the official said, are made after review of material invoices, rental rates for equipment and copies of certified payrolls.

No payments are due the contractor for higher costs incurred on normal bridge work which resulted from the 18 month delay, he said.

Steel Razed Structures

Bethlehem Steel Corp.'s razing in March, 1968, of two furnaces, smoke stacks and a washroom building adjacent to the old New St. Bridge opened a path for expansion from the two narrow lanes to a wider twin-span design.

No. 1 Contracting Corp., with a \$5,519,408 offer, was successful bidder on Sept. 27 the same year, receiving the contract award Oct. 15 and breaking ground Oct. 31.

Work actually began on the new bridge Dec. 4, 1968, with excavations for the structure's first pier starting later the same month. Contractors rushed ahead with work, but were set back briefly when Bethlehem Steel indicated accelerated delivery of steelwork for the span was impossible much before the date contracted in August, 1969.

Using four 60-ton cranes, the bridge workers moved the southern section of the old span 25 feet downstream on March 9, 1969, this to allow construction of southern footings on the replacement. With the alteration, only passenger cars were permitted on the bridge.

By May 29, 1970, the new western span was complete and traffic passed from the old bridge to the new. And 19 days later, the old bridge was gone, taken apart for construction of the eastern span.

All was proceeding smoothly until July 2.

During routine inspection, a PennDOT engineer spotted an uneven weld line on a south back support. The line should have been straight. Webs on the steel support had buckled, a further inspection revealed, and the bridge was declared 'unsafe' and closed 'indefinitely.'

Lester E. Jordan, the PennDOT District 5 engineer, at

that time, determined the bridge might fail "abruptly" and Bethlehem Mayor H. Gordon Payrow ordered the one-month-old bridge closed.

Three days later on July 5, the traffic was again rolling across the river at New St., after several days of extreme traffic congestion on the remaining two city bridges over the Lehigh River. Weekend workers installed support braces, should the spans begin buckling.

Meanwhile, corresponding frames for the eastern jump still in the fabricating shop were reinforced and several returned for reworking. PennDOT blamed poor fabrication on the steel corporation; Bethlehem denied the charges.

Finally in late December, bridge work began anew with PennDOT in March, 1971, requesting a postponement of the original December, 1971, completion date until December, 31, 1973.

The State Public Utility Commission cut six months off the request, ordering work finished by June 30, 1973.