

Auckland Harbour Bridge

The Auckland Harbour Bridge was officially opened on Saturday 30 May 1959, after many years in the making. The images in this gallery are a small selection from the archives of the Auckland Harbour Bridge Authority. These archives and photographic albums may be viewed on request in the reading rooms at Archives New Zealand in Auckland.

The Auckland Harbour Bridge Authority was established by law in 1959 to construct, maintain and control a bridge across the Waitemata Harbour from Point Eden, West Haven to Stokes Point, Northcote.

Sir John Allum was the Chairman of the Auckland Harbour Bridge Authority from 1951, and Auckland Mayor from 1941-1953. He was passionate about the building of a bridge, which he promoted for many years before construction began.

Contract documents for the construction of the four lane bridge were signed on 29 October 1954 and work on the site began on 1 May 1955. Officials involved in the Bridge's construction included: Richard L. Wells, General Manager of the Auckland Harbour Bridge Authority, Wilfred Carlson, Project Manager for the construction company, Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Co. Ltd and Desmond Long, H.E. Whitehouse, resident engineer for Bridge Designer Freeman, Fox and Partners.

The foundation tablet was unveiled by the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon C.H. Hilliard on 27 January 1956.

Public response to the Bridge varied, and the decision to go ahead was not welcomed by everyone. Once construction had started there was great interest in roadworks and progress of the Bridge. People invested in various public issues of the Auckland Harbour Bridge loan, with Sir John Allum reported as saying that "the authority never had the slightest difficulty in getting money".

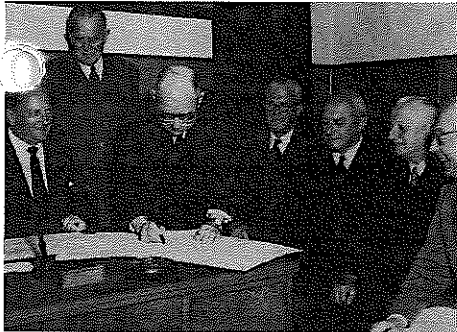
In April 1959 the Bridge was complete 3 weeks ahead of schedule, and workers qualified for a bonus of around £10 each. The first car to cross the bridge was on Friday 24 April, driven by Mr W. Chyffers, project supervisor for the contractor. The Bridge was opened on Saturday 30 May 1959 by the Governor-General, His Excellency Lord Cobham, whose car made the first crossing that day. The ceremony was held on the Toll Plaza, at Sulphur Beach, with about 1000 guests in attendance. The Bridge Superintendent, Mr O.G. Macfarlane made the first entry in the daily log book on opening day: "12.10 Bridge open. Good luck to you and God bless. It lay it never dies". The Bridge opened for traffic at 2.58pm, with Lady Allum collecting the first toll from Mr Frank Perry.

Stories about paying tolls appeared in the paper even before the Bridge opened - the toll for a car was 2/6 (15 cents). However that didn't seem to stop the volume of traffic - over 20,000 vehicles crossed the Bridge on the first day - One million vehicles had crossed the Bridge by mid-August, just eleven weeks after the Bridge's opening.



Sir John Allum

Reference: BRW_46221a



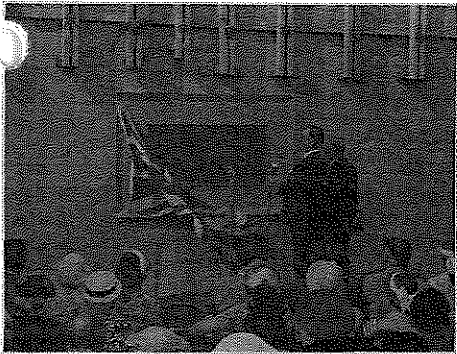
Signing the Bridge contract

Reference: BRW_46221a



Marking the foundation

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Unveiling the stone

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