The Bandera Prophet

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1938, the bridge over the Neches River connecting Port Arthur and Orange County was dedicated, replacing the Dryden Ferry. As a result of a contest in 1957 it became known as the "Rainbow Bridge."

The bridge was financed by the county, state and federal governments under the Public Works Administration at a cost of $2,750,000. Beaumont representatives opposed the bridge until a compromise of 176 feet clearance was reached. The clearance was to allow the tallest ship afloat at the time (the Navy dirigible tender USS Patoka) to pass and reach Beaumont's upstream dock.

This made the bridge the most elevated highway bridge over tidal waters in the world and the largest bridge built by the Texas Highway Department. No ship ever came close to hitting the bottom of the bridge.