

Chambers of Commerce -  
Tunnel - Publicity

AG#34  
Governor Allan Shivers snipped a bright green ribbon on September 22, and officially opened a \$10 million tunnel under the Houston Ship Channel between Baytown and La Porte.

This action culminated a dream of twenty years and a construction period of four years. It also eliminated a traffic bottleneck on Highway 146 in this highly industrialized section of the Texas Gulf Coast. It is the only tunnel on the sprawling highway system of Texas and the structure upholds the tradition of furnishing the motoring public of this and other states the finest facilities available.

Seven and one half miles of Highway 146 were relocated to furnish access to the tunnel. On the north side a two level grade separation affords safe entrance to the tube and on the south side a three level grade separation has been constructed.

The Baytown-La Porte Tunnel replaces ferry service on the highway. It will afford many hours of time saved by the 10,000 industrial workers of the immediate area, many of whom live on one side of the channel and work on the other. It will offer area shoppers a wider range of selection in shopping places. It furnishes a direct route to Galveston and other Gulf Coast cities from the east.

The tunnel was jointly financed by the State of Texas, Harris County, the Houston-Harris County Ship Channel Navigation District, and the federal government through its Bureau of Public Roads.

The navigation district entered the financing because elimination of ferries on the channel would remove a hazard to shipping. It also wanted tunnels instead of bridges for the same reason. Another factor that entered into a tunnel being built instead of a bridge was the fact that tunnels are much less vulnerable to bombing attack than bridges.

The tunnel is composed of nine separate steel tubes which were fabricated at the Consolidated Western Steel Company's Orange, Texas shipyards and towed through

the inter-coastal canal and up the Houston Ship Channel to Baytown. Much of the preparation of the roadways and concrete linings was done while the tubes rested above the water. They were then sunk in a trench dredged across the channel and placed together. After they were in place, bulkheads were cut from the ends of the tubes and the finishing work done.

The project was designed and supervised by the engineering firm of Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Hall and MacDonald, of New York. Construction was let in two separate contracts. Brown & Root did the first contract, Farnsworth & Chambers the second.

The opening was a gala day for the two cities of Baytown and La Porte. In addition to the governor, State Highway Commission Chairman E. H. Thornton, Jr., and Commissioners Robert J. Potts and Marshal Forby were present as well as United States Senator Price Daniel, Congressman Albert Thomas and Clark Thompson.