Murray Baker Opening Day Much Colder

It was 1 degree above zero on Friday, Dec. 19, 1950, and a brisk wind gave the Illinois River a thoroughly chilly winter atmosphere.

But scheduling impediments, however, did not keep Gov. William G. Stratton, U.S. Senator Everett Dirksen, Congressman Joseph H. G. Jervis, and other dignitaries from attending the dedication ceremonies of the new bridge in Peoria.

Gov. Stratton and 86-year-old Baker each held a 'bridge ribbon' and together cut a ribbon across the bridge to symbolize the opening.

Baker rode in an automobile with the governor and a number of officials. Baker had a 'bridge ribbon' and together cut a ribbon across the bridge to symbolize the opening.

The ceremony was attended by a large crowd, including many state officials and representatives of the Illinois Highway Department. Following the ribbon cutting, Baker was given a watch as a token of appreciation.

The bridge was named after Baker, on the recommendation of a naming committee, which included Peoria attorney Thaddeus W. Swain, who was chairman.

Baker had a long career in the U.S. Army during World War II, during which time he was vice chairman of the Illinois Council of Defense.

Baker also served as a member of the Illinois Highway Department and was a former vice president of the Peoria Chamber of Commerce.

No rain came, though rain fell on the day of dedication, however, 19,697 vehicles crossed the bridge the following day (Saturday, Dec. 20) and 18,227 on the next day, Sunday, according to Illinois Highway Department figures.