

Vt. PLO. - Budget

# Murray Baker Opening Day Much Colder

It was 3 degrees above zero on Friday, Dec. 12, 1958, and a biting north wind came down the Illinois River.

Such climatic impediments, however, did not keep Gov. William G. Stratton, U.S. Senator Everett Dirksen, Congressman Robert Michel, representatives of the city of Peoria, the Illinois Divisions of Highways and of Waterways, and about 1200 people of no official status from congregating at 10 a.m. at the Peoria end of the Murray Baker bridge, where the Governor and 86-year old Baker each held a handle of a pair of gold-plated scissors and together cut a ribbon across the bridge access to symbolically open it to traffic.

Then Stratton started to walk across the bridge, while Baker rode in an automobile. When they were near the East Peoria side of the river, Baker left the automobile and walked with the governor to the bridge approach, where they were officially greeted by East Peoria Mayor John Keayes. Then the three were driven to the Peoria side of the bridge, and at 10:50 a.m. it was opened to motorists.

A dedication luncheon was held at the Hotel Pere Marquette (now Peoria Hilton) at which Baker was accompanied by his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur T. Moulding of Winnetka. Following the luncheon, Baker was given the scissors with which he helped cut the ribbon across the bridge access.

The bridge was named after Baker on the recommendation of a naming committee of which Peoria attorney Timothy W. Swain was chairman. Swain said Baker had initiated a plan for such a bridge to relieve traffic between Peoria and East Peoria during World War II, when he was vice chairman of the Illinois Council of Defense.

Baker was also a former vice president of both Caterpillar Tractor Co. and R.G. LeTourneau Inc.

Stratton noted that it was built as part of an interstate highway system.

Built at a cost of \$5½ million, it was under construction four years.

No count was made of the automobiles using it on the day of its dedication; however, 19,469 vehicles crossed it the following day (Saturday, Dec. 13) and 18,527 on the next day, Sunday, according to the Illinois Division of Highways, which