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"Dad" Gandy's "wild, visionary scheme"

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



"DAD" GANDY'S "WILD, VISIONARY SCHEME"

By HAMPTON DUNN

ST. PETERSBURG --- "The bridge is built!"

This pronouncement by George S. (Dad) Gandy himself at noon on Nov. 20, 1924, constituted one of the shortest speeches on record, but it packaged victory over the years of disappointments and discouragements which would have stumped a less determined person.

Opening of the famed Gandy Bridge across Old Tampa Bay was a dream the former Philadelphia industrialist had nurtured for 20 years before it became a reality. The skeptics, the scoffers and the kibitzers ridiculed Gandy and labeled his pet idea as a "wild, visionary scheme."

Home folks laughed and the financiers on Wall Street were not interested at first, but Gandy persisted. World War I set back his time-table but he renewed the project when peacetime came. In 1922, Gandy decided to "go public." A colorful promoter named Eugene M. Elliott and a crew of super salesmen conducted a razzle-dazzle campaign and sold \$2 million worth of preferred stock in 122 days! Dad Gandy moved fast and began construction.

Overcoming obstacles all the way, including bad weather, Gandy finished the long structure and it was dedicated by Gov. Cary A. Hardee with Governors from 16 other states looking on. (Two additional lanes in a twin span were added in 1954).

Gandy Bridge operated as a toll span until World War II when then Sen. Claude Pepper was instrumental in getting President Franklin D. Roosevelt to declare the bridge necessary to the war effort because of its use by MacDill Air Force personnel and the Government bought it.

