

January 1960

Bridge is Florida's largest public works

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



BRIDGE IS FLORIDA'S LARGEST PUBLIC WORKS

By HAMPTON DUNN

ST. PETERSBURG --- Once upon a time, a rickety old ferry plodded between St. Petersburg and Palmetto. Years of discussion about the need for a bridge between the two points finally brought action and in 1954 a giant span was opened and dedicated.

The Sunshine Skyway is the largest public works project ever built by the State of Florida. The original two-lane structure is getting a twin as another two lanes are added and due to open in 1969.

Talk of a bridge link between Pinellas and Manatee goes back to 1912. The first actual link between the areas came with the start of the Bee Line Ferry in 1924. A \$7 million high-level bridge was approved by the government in 1926, but area wide political squabbles stalled it. Finally, during the administration of Gov. Fuller Warren, Sunshine Skyway---an ultra-modern, high level bridge, so high ocean-going steamships pass underneath it---was started.

The first structure cost \$22,000,000 and the additional two lanes in a parallel bridge will cost about \$25,000,000. The high-level bridge is over four miles long, rises 15 stories above water (250 feet). The central span rises on a five per cent grade from trestle approaches 21 feet above water. The causeway offers ten miles of beach recreational facilities and there are catwalks for fishing on four small bridges in the system.

