Since 1940, the U.S. 190 Bridge has been a link between East and West Baton Rouge parishes. Its orange-red color originally came from the bauxite being processed by the Kaiser Aluminum plant located under the east approach. In the mid-1960s, the bridge was painted a color to blend in with the bauxite.

Three-year-old Carolyn Jelks Jones cuts the ribbon to open the U.S. 190 Bridge as her parents, Gov. and Mrs. Sam Jones, look on.

Ralph Sims recalls Saturday afternoons of LSU football games before the bridge opened. "The traffic would be backed up for miles on the other side of the river," Sims said, "because the ferry could only take so many cars at a time."

Early attempts
There were several early attempts at building a bridge at Baton Rouge, beginning with plans for a railroad bridge as early as 1913. Over the next 19 years, various railroad companies floated ideas for a structure. The problem was money.

ONE IN A SERIES
In the 1920s, the Missouri Pacific Railroad sponsored the formation of the Baton Rouge-Mississippi River Bridge Co. with Mayor Wade H. Byrum, Joseph Gottlieb, Charles P. Mansfield Sr. and Eli T. Watson.

See BRIDGE, Page 2H

Advocate file photos
ABOVE: By Sept. 1, 1939, the piers in the river had been poured and the center span of the U.S. 190 Bridge had been completed, as shown in this Advocate file photo taken for the Bethlehem Steel Co.
LEFT: Guests who attended the Aug. 10, 1940, dedication ceremonies for the Old Bridge parked their cars on the approaches and walked to the ceremonies on the main span.
The spans of the Old Bridge were almost completed when this Advocate file photo was taken for the Bethlehem Steel Co. on Jan. 2, 1940.

**Bridge**

**Conceived on Page 11**

As incorporated in the 1940 Missouri-Pacific Railroad, working with the Louisiana Highway Commission, developed the idea of the Old Bridge. The concept grew from the desire to improve the traffic and transportation around Baton Rouge and to meet the growing demands of the area.

After several failed attempts to secure the necessary funding, the state’s Bridge Design Office was tasked with the project. The designer, Raymond A. Brien, was an accomplished engineer with a reputation for his work on bridge projects.

The construction of the Old Bridge began in 1937 and was completed in 1940. It was a massive project involving the work of hundreds of people. The bridge was built at a cost of $8,360,718.89, with funding from the state and federal government.

Several major milestones were reached during the construction process. The first was the pouring of concrete into the steel superstructure, which was a significant achievement. The steel was then hoisted by derrick and placed on 900 carloads of sand. The bridge was painted a bright red color, which became its identifying feature.

The bridge was dedicated on May 12, 1940, in a ceremony attended by Gov. Leche, who pulled the first of the bridge’s 900 carloads of sand. The dedication included speeches and the cutting of the first piece of ribbon.

After the dedication, the bridge was opened to traffic, and it quickly became an essential part of the transportation network in the region. The bridge was designed to handle traffic for many years, and it continued to be a vital part of the regional economy.

In the years since its construction, the Old Bridge has undergone several renovations and repairs. It remains a significant icon of the region and a testament to the ingenuity and dedication of the people who built it.