

**KINGSLEY WILLIAM C., EDSON
FRANKLIN, LOW SETH**

**OPENING CEREMONIES
OF THE NEW YORK AND
BROOKLYN BRIDGE,
MAY 24, 1883**

Franklin Edson

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and Brooklyn Bridge, May 24, 1883**

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Opening Ceremonies of the New York and Brooklyn Bridge, May 24, 1883

INTRODUCTORY

The New York and Brooklyn Bridge was formally opened on Thursday, May 24th, 1883, with befitting pomp and ceremonial, in the presence of the largest multitude that ever gathered in the two cities. From the announcement by the Trustees of the date which was to mark the turning-over of the work to the public, it was evident that the popular demonstration would be upon a scale commensurate with the magnificence of the structure and its importance to the people of the United States. The evidences of widespread and profound interest in the event were early and unmistakable. They were not confined to the metropolis and its sister city on the Long Island shore, nor yet to the majestic Empire State. The occurrence was recognized as one of National importance; and throughout the Union, from the rocky headlands of Maine to the golden shores of the Pacific, and from the gleaming waters of the St. Lawrence to the vast expanse of the Mexican Gulf, the opening ceremonies were regarded with intelligent concern and approval. Nearly every State contributed its representatives to the swelling throng that attended, while those who were unable to be present contemplated with pride and satisfaction the completion and consecration to its purpose of the greatest engineering work of modern times.

In the communities most directly benefited by the Bridge the demonstration was confined to no class or body of the populace. It was a holiday for high and low, rich and poor; it was, in fact, the People's Day. More delightful weather never dawned upon a festal morning. The heavens were radiant with the celestial blue of approaching summer; silvery fragments of cloud sailed gracefully across the firmament like winged messengers, bearing greetings of work well done; the clearest of spring sunshine tinged everything with a touch of gold, and a brisk, bracing breeze blown up from the Atlantic cooled the atmosphere to a healthful and invigorating temperature. The incoming dawn revealed the twin cities gorgeous in gala attire. From towering steeple and lofty façade, from the fronts of business houses and the cornices and walls of private dwellings, from the forests of shipping along the wharves and the vessels in the dimpled bay, floated bunting fashioned in every conceivable design, while high above all, from the massive and enduring granite towers of the Bridge the Stars and Stripes signaled to the world from the gateway of the continent the arrival of the auspicious day.

Almost before the sun was up the thoroughfares of both cities put on a festival appearance. Business was generally suspended. The mercantile and professional communities vied with one another in the extent and splendor of their decorations, while from the hearty voice of Labor arose a chorus of ringing acclamation. Tens of thousands of men, women and children crowded into the streets, and, after gazing admiringly upon the decorations, wended their way in the direction of the mighty river span. From neighboring cities and from the adjacent country for many miles around the incoming trains brought multitudes of excursionists and sight-seers. It seemed marvelous that they could all find accommodation, but the generous hospitality of the cities was cordially extended, and all were adequately provided for. The scenes presented during the day upon the streets and avenues of New York and Brooklyn will never be forgotten by those who witnessed them. Notwithstanding the enormous massing of people, the best of order was everywhere observable, and the day happily was free from any accident of a serious nature. The arrangements for the celebration were of a sensible and becoming character, and beside insuring an unobstructed and speedy course for the ceremonies, contributed beyond measure to the popular enjoyment.

Early in the afternoon the President of the United States, Gen. Chester A. Arthur, and the Hon. Grover Cleveland, Governor of the State of New York, the former accompanied by the members of his Cabinet and the latter by the officers of his Staff, were escorted from the Fifth Avenue Hotel to the New York City Hall, where they were joined by his Honor Mayor Franklin Edson and the New York officials. From the City Hall the procession proceeded to the New York Approach to the Bridge. The Seventh Regiment, N.G., S.N.Y., Col. Emmons Clark, commanding, acted as escort to the Presidential and Gubernatorial party. The regimental band, of 75 pieces, headed the column and played popular airs as the procession moved along the crowded and gaily decorated thoroughfares. At the New York Tower a battalion of the Fifth United States Artillery, under command of Major Jackson, joined the escort, and between the lines of brilliantly uniformed troops the distinguished guests passed upon the roadway. They were formally received by a Committee of the Bridge Trustees, headed by Mr. William C. Kingsley, Vice-President and acting President of the Board.

The arrival at the New York Tower was proclaimed to the multitudes on shore by the thundering of many cannon. Salutes were fired from the forts in the harbor, from the United States Navy Yard, and from the summit of Fort Greene. The United States fleet, consisting of the "Tennessee," the "Yantic," the "Kearsarge," the "Vandalia," and the "Minnesota," Rear-Admiral George H. Cooper, commanding, was anchored in the river below the Bridge and joined in the salute. As the procession moved across the roadway the yards of the men-of-war were manned, and from the docks and factories arose a tremendous babel of sounds, caused by the clanging of bells, the roaring of steam whistles, and the cheers of enthusiastic people, while sounding from afar, in delightful contrast with the clamorous discord, the silver chimes of Trinity rang out upon the river.

In the ornate iron railway depot at the Brooklyn terminus, where the exercises were to take place, the arrival of the approaching procession was anxiously awaited. The interior was bright with tasteful decorations, the prevailing feature being the sky-blue hangings of satin bordered with silver, and the coats-of-arms of the States appropriately interspersed amid a forest of flags. On the Brooklyn side the duties of escort were transferred to the 23d Regiment, N.G., S.N.Y., Colonel Rodney C. Ward commanding. The regiment appeared upon this occasion for the first time in their new State service uniform, and performed their duties most efficiently. The arrangements for the procession and exercises were under the direction of Major-General James Jourdan, commanding the Second Division, N.G., S.N.Y., who was ably assisted by the members of the Division Staff. The building was thronged in every part. In the throng were many of the most conspicuous citizens of New York and other States, including representatives of the bench, the bar, the pulpit, the press, and all other professions. Beside the President and his Cabinet, consisting of the Hon. Charles J. Folger, Secretary of the Treasury; the Hon. William E. Chandler, Secretary of the Navy; the Hon. Henry M. Teller, Secretary of the Interior; the Hon. Walter Q. Gresham, Postmaster-General, and the Hon. Benjamin Harris Brewster, Attorney-General; and Governor Cleveland and Staff, there were present the Governors of several States and the Mayors of nearly all the cities in the vicinity of the metropolis. In the vast assemblage none were more conspicuous than the officers of the Army and Navy, who occupied an entire section and attracted general attention.

When the Presidential party and their escort entered the hall they were greeted with enthusiastic cheers. They occupied seats directly opposite the stand erected for the orators of the day. The exercises proceeded without delay in an orderly manner, and were appropriate and impressive throughout. Music was furnished during the ceremonies by the bands of the Seventh and Twenty-third regiments. The Hon. James S.T. Stranahan presided with the skill and dignity gained during his long experience in public life. Near him were the speakers, Mr. William C. Kingsley, Rev. Richard S. Storrs, D.D., the Hon. Abram S. Hewitt, Mayor Franklin Edson, of New York, and Mayor Seth Low, of Brooklyn, together with the members of the Board of Bridge Trustees. Mr. Stranahan opened the ceremonies by introducing Bishop Littlejohn, who wore the Episcopal robes. The Bishop fervently and impressively made the opening prayer, the great assemblage bowing their

heads reverentially during its delivery. Vice-President Kingsley was next introduced, and was received with hearty applause. Mr. Kingsley, in clear and distinct tones, and in comprehensive and business-like terms, proceeded to make the formal speech presenting the Bridge to the cities of New York and Brooklyn. The address was heard with careful attention, and upon its conclusion a round of enthusiastic applause swept through the building. His Honor Mayor Low followed Mr. Kingsley with a concise and appropriate speech, receiving the structure on behalf of the City of Brooklyn. His address elicited several demonstrations of approval from the audience. The Hon. Franklin Edson, Mayor of New York, who was the next speaker, was heartily applauded as he aptly accepted the Bridge in behalf of the authorities of the great metropolis. When Mr. Hewitt was introduced as the orator on the part of New York City, he was warmly cheered. His eloquent address riveted the attention of his hearers from beginning to end, and his pointed and conclusive vindication of the bridge management from the outset aroused the enthusiasm of his hearers to the utmost pitch. Following Mr. Hewitt came the Rev. Richard S. Storrs, D.D., who delivered the oration on behalf of Brooklyn. Never did the distinguished preacher appear to better advantage, and his oration, which was punctuated with applause, was characterized as a masterpiece by all who heard it. Upon the conclusion of his address the presiding officer declared the exercises at an end, and the company in the building dispersed.

The festivities, however, did not end with the conclusion of the formal ceremonies. The celebration was continued in both cities throughout the day and far into the night. Thousands upon thousands of enthusiastic people crowded the streets. After the ceremonies, the President, the Governor, the speakers of the day, and the Trustees were driven to the residence of Col. Washington A. Roebling, on Columbia Heights, where a reception was held. As they passed through the streets the people cheered as people only can who cheer in the atmosphere of a free government. From Col. Roebling's house the company proceeded to the residence of Mayor Low, where they were entertained at a banquet. In the evening, under the auspices of the Municipal authorities, a grand reception to President Arthur and Governor Cleveland was given by the citizens of Brooklyn at the Academy of Music, and was attended by a great multitude. Another striking feature of the celebration at night was the display of fireworks on the Bridge given under the direction of the Board of Trustees. The pyrotechnic exhibition was viewed by almost the entire populace of the two cities, and a vast concourse of visitors from abroad. The East River was fairly blocked with craft of every description bearing legions of delighted spectators, and the streets and housetops were packed with people. The display was generally characterized as one of the grandest ever witnessed in America. The people of both cities evinced their public spirit in the decorations by day and the illuminations by night. The illuminations in Brooklyn, particularly, were on a magnificent scale, and excited the admiration of multitudes of visitors to the city. In addition to the special features of the celebration there were many entertainments in honor of the event, including concerts in the various city parks. Throughout the afternoon and evening the best of order was preserved; the casualties that occurred were few and unimportant, and the auspicious day ended without the intrusion of anything that would carry with it other than pleasant memories of the significant event which it commemorated.

Order of Religious Services, Conducted by Rt. Rev. A.N. Littlejohn, D.D

The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Deut. xxxiii.: 27.

Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations. Deut. vii.: 9.

Remember the marvelous works that He hath done: His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. Psalm cv.: 5.

Marvelous things did He in the sight of our forefathers, in the land of Egypt, even in the field of Zoan.

He divided the sea, and let them go through: He made the waters to stand on an heap.

In the day time also He led them with a cloud, and all the night through with a light of fire. Psalm lxxviii.: 13, 14, 15.

Oh, that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men. Psalm cvii.: 21.

The Lord hath been mindful of us, and He shall bless us; He shall bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great. Psalm cxv.: 12, 13.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost:

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Praise ye the Lord:

The Lord's name be praised.

PRAYER

Almighty God, who hast in all ages showed forth Thy power and mercy in the preservation and advancement of the race redeemed by the precious blood of Thy dear Son: we yield Thee our unfeigned thanks and praise as for all Thy public mercies, so especially for the signal manifestation of Thy Providence which we commemorate this day. All things – wealth, industry, energy, skill, genius – come of Thee; and when we consecrate their triumphs unto Thee, we give Thee but Thine own. Enable us to see in the strength and grandeur of this structure the evident tokens of Thy power, bringing mighty things to pass through the weakness of Thy creatures. Give us grace and wisdom to discern in all this work the nobler uses it was ordained by Thee to subserve. Teach us to know that all this mighty fabric is but vanity, save as it shall promote Thy sovereign purpose toward the sons of men. O Lord God, clothed with majesty and honor, decking Thyself with light as with a garment, and spreading out the heavens like a curtain, with the beams of Thy chambers in the waters, and the clouds for Thy chariot, walking upon the wings of the wind, Thy messengers spirits and Thy ministers a flaming fire, accept, we beseech Thee, this last and chiefest fruit of human toil and genius as a tribute to Thy glory, and a new power making for righteousness and peace amid all conflicts of earthly interests, and all the stir and pomp of worldly aggrandizement. Our life is a thing of nought, and our purposes vanish away; but Thy years shall not fail, and with Thee the beginning and the end are the same. Therefore we implore Thee to bless and direct this work, that it shall be more than a highway for the things that perish, even a path of Thy eternal Spirit lifting by His own infinite grace, more and more, as the years roll on, the people of these cities toward the plane of Thine own life – the life of endless peace, of absolute unity, and perfect love, through Jesus Christ, the one Redeemer and Mediator between God and man. Amen.

Address of Wm. C. Kingsley, President of the Board of Trustees

In the presence of this great assemblage, and of the chosen representatives of the people of these two great cities, of the Governor of the State of New York and of the President of the United States, the pleasing duty devolves upon me, as the official agent of the Board of Trustees of the New York and Brooklyn Bridge, to announce formally to the chief magistrates of these two municipalities that this Bridge is now ready to be opened for public use, and is subject in its control and management only to such restrictions as the people, to whom it belongs, may choose to impose upon themselves. If I were at liberty to consult my own wishes I should not attempt to occupy your attention any further. I am not here as the spokesman of my associates in the Board of Bridge Trustees. They are well content to let this great structure speak for them, and to speak more fittingly and more eloquently yet for the skillful, faithful and daring men who have given so many years of their lives – and in several instances even their lives – to the end that the natural barrier to the union, growth and greatness of this great commercial centre should be removed, and that a vast scientific conception should be matched in the skill, and courage, and endurance upon which it depended for its realization. With one name, in an especial sense, this Bridge will always be associated – that of Roebling. At the outset of this enterprise we were so fortunate as to be able to secure the services of the late John A. Roebling, who had built the chief suspension bridges in this country, and who had just then completed the largest suspension bridge ever constructed up to that time. His name and achievements were of invaluable service to this enterprise in its infancy. They secured for it a confidence not otherwise obtainable. He entered promptly and with more than professional zeal into the work of erecting a bridge over the East River. As is universally known, while testing and perfecting his surveys his foot was crushed between the planks of one of our piers; lockjaw supervened, and the man who designed this Bridge lost his life in its service. The main designs were, however, completed by the elder Roebling before he met his sad and untimely death. He was succeeded at once by his son, Colonel Washington A. Roebling, who had for years before shared in his father's professional confidences and labors. Here the son did not succeed the father by inheritance merely. The elder Roebling, according to his own statements, would not have undertaken the conduct of this work at his age – and he was independent of mere professional gain – if it were not for the fact, as he frequently stated, that he had a son who was entirely capable of building this Bridge. Indeed, the elder Roebling advised that the son, who was destined to carry on and complete the work, should be placed in chief authority at the beginning. The turning point – as determining the feasibility of this enterprise – was reached down in the earth, and under the bed of the East River. During the anxious days and nights while work was going on within the caissons, Colonel Roebling seemed to be always on hand, at the head of his men, to direct their efforts, and to guard against a mishap or a mistake which, at this stage of the work, might have proved to be disastrous. The foundations of the towers were successfully laid, and the problem of the feasibility of the Bridge was solved. Colonel Roebling contracted the mysterious disease in the caissons which had proved fatal to several of the workmen in our employ. For many long and weary years this man, who entered our service young and full of life, and hope, and daring, has been an invalid and confined to his home. He has never seen this structure as it now stands, save from a distance. But the disease, which has shattered his nervous system for the time, seemed not to have enfeebled his mind. It appeared even to quicken his intellect. His physical infirmities shut him out, so to speak, from the world, and left him dependent largely on the society of his family, but it gave him for a companion day and night this darling child of his genius – every step of whose progress he has directed and watched over with paternal solicitude. Colonel Roebling may never walk across this Bridge, as so many of his fellow-men have done to-day, but while this structure stands he will make

all who use it his debtor. His infirmities are still such that he who would be the centre of interest on this occasion, and even in this greatly distinguished company, is conspicuous by his absence. This enterprise was only less fortunate in securing an executive head than in obtaining scientific direction. For sixteen years together the late Hon. Henry C. Murphy stood for this work wherever it challenged the enmity of an opponent or needed an advocate, a supporter and a friend. He devised the legislation under which it was commenced. He staked in its inception a large portion of his private fortune on its success. He upheld its feasibility and utility before committees, and legislatures, and law courts, and in every forum of public discussion. For years he looked forward to this day to fittingly close the activities of a long, useful and, in many respects, an illustrious career. It was not permitted him to see it, but he saw very near the end, and he lived long enough to realize, what is now admitted, that he was to the end of his days engaged in a work from which the name of the city he loved so well will never be disassociated, for it is a work the history of which will for all time be embraced in the records of the achievements of American enterprise and of American genius. I am sure I speak for the Board of Trustees in returning their thanks to all the professional gentlemen who have been in our employ – and especially to Messrs. Martin, Paine, Farrington, McNulty and Probasco. For the most part these men have been engaged on the Bridge from its commencement to its completion. It has always seemed to the Trustees as if the highest and the humblest workmen engaged on this work were alike influenced by the spirit of enterprise in which the Bridge had its origin. Men whose daily compensation was not more than sufficient to provide them and their families with their daily bread were at all times ready to take their lives in their hands in the performance of the imperative and perilous duties assigned them. In the direct prosecution of the work twenty men lost their lives. Peace hath its victories, and it has its victims and its martyrs, too. Of the seven consulting engineers to whom the matured plans of the elder Roebling were submitted – all men of the highest eminence in their profession – three have passed away, and four are living to witness, in the assured success of this structure, the one ratification of their judgment which cannot be questioned.

It remains for me to say, in conclusion, that the two cities rose at all times to the level of the spirit of our time and country. Their citizens staked millions on what seemed to many to be an experiment – a structure, it was often said, that at its best would not be of any actual use. How solid it is; how far removed it is from all sense of apprehension; how severely practical it is in all its relations, and how great a factor in the corporate lives of these cities it is destined to be, we all now realize. This Bridge has cost many millions of dollars, and it has taken many years to build it. May I say on this occasion that the people whom you represent (turning to where the Mayors of the two cities stood together) would not part with the Bridge to-day for even twice or thrice its cost? And may I remind those who, not unnaturally, perhaps, have been disappointed and irritated by delays in the past, that those who enter a race with Time for a competitor have an antagonist that makes no mistakes, is subject to no interference and liable to no accident.

Address of Hon. Seth Low, Mayor of the City of Brooklyn

Gentlemen of the Trustees – With profound satisfaction, on behalf of the City of Brooklyn, I accept the completed Bridge. Fourteen times the earth has made its great march through the heavens since the work began. The vicissitudes of fourteen years have tried the courage and the faith of engineers and of people. At last we all rejoice in the signal triumph. The beautiful and stately structure fulfills the fondest hope. It will be a source of pleasure to-day to every citizen that no other name is associated with the end than that which has directed the work from the beginning – the name of Roebling. With all my heart I give to him who bears it now the city's acknowledgment and thanks.

Fourteen years ago a city of 400,000 people on this side of the river heard of a projected suspension bridge with incredulity. The span was so long, the height so great, and the enterprise likely to be so costly, that few thought of it as something begun in earnest. The irresistible demands of commerce enforced these hard conditions. But Science said, "It is possible," and Courage said, "It shall be!" To-day a city of 600,000 people welcomes with enthusiasm the wonderful creation of genius. Graceful, and yet majestic, it clings to the land like a thing that has taken root. Beautiful as a vision of fairyland it salutes our sight. The impression it makes upon the visitor is one of astonishment, an astonishment that grows with every visit. No one who has been upon it can ever forget it. This great structure cannot be confined to the limits of local pride. The glory of it belongs to the race. Not one shall see it and not feel prouder to be a man.

And yet it is distinctly an American triumph. American genius designed it, American skill built it, and American workshops made it. About 1837 the Screw Dock across the river, then known as the Hydrostatic Lifting Dock, was built. In order to construct it the Americans of that day were obliged to have the cylinders cast in England. What a stride from 1837 to 1883 – from the Hydrostatic Dock to the New York and Brooklyn Bridge!

And so this Bridge is a wonder of science. But in no less degree it is a triumph of faith. I speak not now of the courage of those who projected it. Except for the faith which removes mountains yonder river could not have been spanned by this Bridge. It is true that the material which has gone into it has been paid for; the labor which has been spent upon it has received its hire. But the money which did these things was not the money of those who own the Bridge. The money was lent to them on the faith that these two great cities would redeem their bond. So have the Alps been tunneled in our day; while the ancient prophecy has been fulfilled that faith should remove mountains. We justify this faith in us as we pay for the Bridge by redeeming the bond.

In the course of the construction of the Bridge a number of lives have been lost. Does it not sometimes seem as though every work of enduring value, in the material as in the moral world, must needs be purchased at the cost of human life? Let us recall with kindness at this hour the work of those who labored here faithfully unto the death, no less than of that great army of men who have wrought, year in and year out, to execute the great design. Let us give our meed of praise to-day to the humblest workman who has here done his duty well, no less than to the great engineer who told him what to do.

The importance of this Bridge in its far-reaching effects at once entices and baffles the imagination. At either end of the Bridge lies a great city – cities full of vigorous life. The activities and the energies of each flow over into the other. The electric current has conveyed unchecked between the two the interchanging thoughts, but the rapid river has ever bidden halt to the foot of man. It is as though the population of these cities had been brought down to the river-side, year after year, there to be taught patience; and as though, in this Bridge, after these many years, patience had had her perfect work. The ardent merchant, the busy lawyer, the impatient traveler – all, without distinction and without exception – at the river have been told to wait. No one can compute the loss of time ensuing daily from delays at the ferries to the multitudes crossing the stream. And time is not only money

– it is opportunity. Brooklyn becomes available, henceforth, as a place of residence to thousands, to whom the ability to reach their places of business without interruption from fog and ice is of paramount importance. To all Brooklyn's present citizens a distinct boon is given. The certainty of communication with New York afforded by the Bridge is the fundamental benefit it confers. Incident to this is the opportunity it gives for rapid communication.

As the water of the lakes found the salt sea when the Erie Canal was opened, so surely will quick communication seek and find this noble Bridge, and as the ships have carried hither and thither the products of the mighty West, so shall diverging railroads transport the people swiftly to their homes in the hospitable city of Brooklyn. The Erie Canal is a waterway through the land connecting the great West with the older East. This Bridge is a landway over the water, connecting two cities bearing to each other relations in some respects similar. It is the function of such works to bless "both him that gives and him that takes." The development of the West has not belittled, but has enlarged New York, and Brooklyn will grow by reason of this Bridge, not at New York's expense, but to her permanent advantage. The Brooklyn of 1900 can hardly be guessed at from the city of to-day. The hand of Time is a mighty hand. To those who are privileged to live in sight of this noble structure every line of it should be eloquent with inspiration. Courage, enterprise, skill, faith, endurance – these are the qualities which have made the great Bridge, and these are the qualities which will make our city great and our people great. God grant they never may be lacking in our midst. Gentlemen of the Trustees, in accepting the Bridge at your hands, I thank you warmly in Brooklyn's name for your manifold and arduous labors.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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