The fight that had been in progress with its lulls and fresh outbreaks for a quarter of a century now neared an end. Interests antagonistic to the enterprise made a final struggle in the courts; were defeated, and the bonds were issued and sold July 22, 1919, just two years after they were voted. Contracts were awarded to the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company for the substructure and to the Bethlehem Steel Bridge & Iron Company for the superstructure. The first shovel of dirt was thrown September 25, 1919, by St. Elmo W. Acosta. Erection of the steel superstructure began in July, 1920. There were no serious delays during the progress of the work. Amidst a three-day celebration the bridge was thrown open to traffic on the afternoon of July 1, 1921, the event being marked by the christening ceremonies when the sponsor, Miss Katherine Wilson, christened it the “Jacksonville-St. Johns River Bridge.” It was advertised far and near at the time as “Duval County’s Gift to Florida.”

The total length of the bridge, including approaches, is three-fourths of a mile, and the part over the water is slightly less than half a mile. The roadway is 30 feet wide between curbs and has double street car tracks; there is a seven-foot sidewalk on each side—width over all 45 feet. The “down” position of the movable span in the center gives a clearance of 57 feet for navigation; when raised there is a clearance of 165 feet. The elevation of the lifting towers above the water is 228 feet. There are 20 piers, their footings varying from 30 to 91 feet below water level and their sizes from eight feet in diameter to 18 feet square. The materials for the bridge came from 12 different States and if all had been hauled at one time it would have required a train 12 miles long. The total cost of the bridge was $1,193,000, or $243,000 above the estimate; the extra cost was provided by another bond issue.

City Buildings

The first building owned by the town of Jacksonville was a diminutive one at the river's edge at the foot of Market Street. It was a fish market and was built during the Seminole Indian war. About 1840 another small building was built for a meat market at the foot of Ocean Street; this was probably the building overturned by McMullen and Bryant when they made their notorious raid upon Jacksonville. The