



Paying the Toll: Local Power, Regional Politics, and the Golden Gate Bridge (American Business, Politics, and Society)

Louise Nelson Dyble

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Since its opening in 1937, the Golden Gate Bridge has become an icon for the beauty and prosperity of the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as a symbol of engineering achievement. Constructing the bridge posed political and financial challenges that were at least as difficult as those faced by the project's builders. To meet these challenges, northern California boosters created a new kind of agency: an autonomous, self-financing special district. The Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District developed into a powerful organization that shaped the politics and government of the Bay Area as much as the bridge shaped its physical development.

From the moment of the bridge district's incorporation in 1928, its managers pursued their own agenda. They used all the resources at their disposal to preserve their control over the bridge, cultivating political allies, influencing regional policy, and developing an ambitious public relations program. Undaunted by charges of mismanagement and persistent efforts to turn the bridge (as well as its lucrative tolls) over to the state, the bridge district expanded into mass transportation, taking on ferry and bus operations to ensure its survival to this day.

Drawing on previously unavailable archives, *Paying the Toll* gives us an inside view of the world of high-stakes development, cronyism, and bureaucratic power politics that have surrounded the Golden Gate Bridge since its inception.

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