

In 1921, the Port of New York Authority (now the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey) was created to oversee transportation in the Port of New York and New Jersey. At the time, bridges in New York City were being built at a brisk pace. Not long after, in 1928, the Port Authority opened its first two bridges between New Jersey and Staten Island: the Goethals Bridge and the Outerbridge Crossing. There were plans for a third bridge to Staten Island near Bayonne, New Jersey, across the Kill Van Kull. All three bridges were built to complement the traffic from a future fourth bridge or a tunnel from Staten Island to Brooklyn.

Construction on the bridge began in 1928. At the time, it was supposed to be open in early 1932 and was supposed to cost \$16 million but it ended up costing only \$13 million to build. The bridge had to be built without blocking shipping traffic on the Kill Van Kull. To do this, engineers used hydraulic jacks to support the two sides of the arch while the two pieces, consisting of prefabricated truss segments that were made up of high-strength alloy steel, were being built toward a point in the middle. Afterward, prefabricated pieces of the roadway's support structure were hung from cables connected to the arch.



The Bayonne Bridge opened on November 15, 1931, after dedication ceremonies were held the previous day. On opening day, about 7,000 pedestrians and 17,000 vehicles crossed the bridge. The Bayonne Bridge was the longest steel arch bridge in the world, barely surpassing its more massive-arched "sister bridge" in Australia—the Sydney Harbour Bridge—by 25 feet and taking the distinction from the Hell Gate Bridge a few miles to the northeast. The American Institute for Steel Construction selected the Bayonne Bridge as the "Most Beautiful Steel Bridge" in 1931, choosing it over the George Washington Bridge for that status.