

Hoover Dam improvements enhance visitor safety

By Howard B. Pearson
News Staff Writer
Hoover Dam improvements

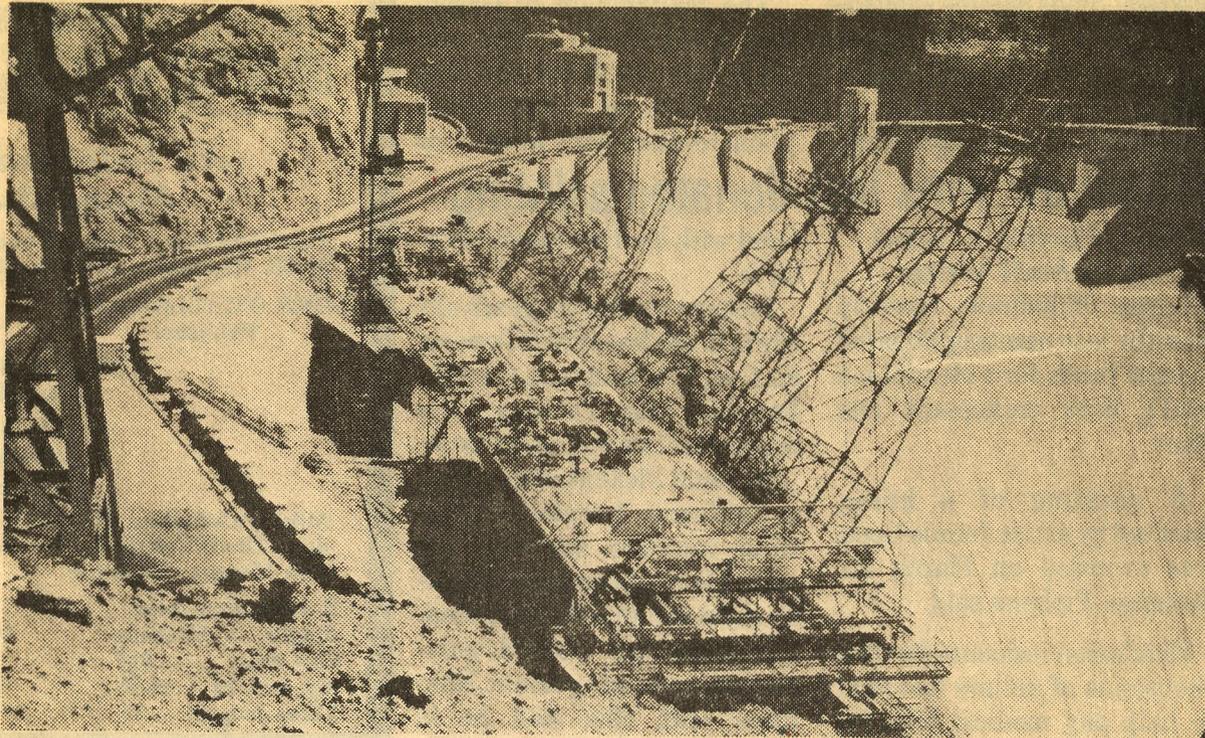
are targeted to enhance visitor safety in the years ahead, said Tom Gailey, public affairs

officer for the dam, this week. The new realignment bridge, part of Phase I, is near

completion and will be open to traffic this summer, he said. The 535-foot bridge will suspend Highway 93 along the canyon wall and provide additional room for a new parking facility, walkway and Visitors Center, he noted.

As for customary long waiting lines at the dam, the new Visitors Center, which is part of Phase II of the project, will operate two high-speed 50-passenger elevators to help eliminate visitor waiting. In addition to the new 527-foot elevator, there will be other tunnels, adits and lobbies, Gailey said.

Phase III will include a new five-story parking structure that will accommodate 420 parked vehicles, including bus



The new re-alignment bridge at Hoover Dam is expected to open for the summer.

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and motor home parking at lower levels. The new parking structure is scheduled for completion early in 1993.

With the new parking facility and Visitor Center, none of the projected one million annual visitors will ever have to cross Highway 93, Gailey said. The tour route will include parking and walking down underneath the roadway and into the new Visitor Center.

Once inside, a tourist will be able to see numerous displays, pictures and artifacts that depict the history of Hoover Dam, officials said.

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Blackburn. Prior to completion of the new bridge, there will be some delays in going over the dam because of temporary single-lane traffic conditions during construction, he added. Blackburn won the bid to build the \$54 million improvement project for Hoover Dam, said safety engineer Deke Blackburn. Prior to completion of the new bridge, there will be some delays in going over the dam because of temporary single-lane traffic conditions during construction, he added.

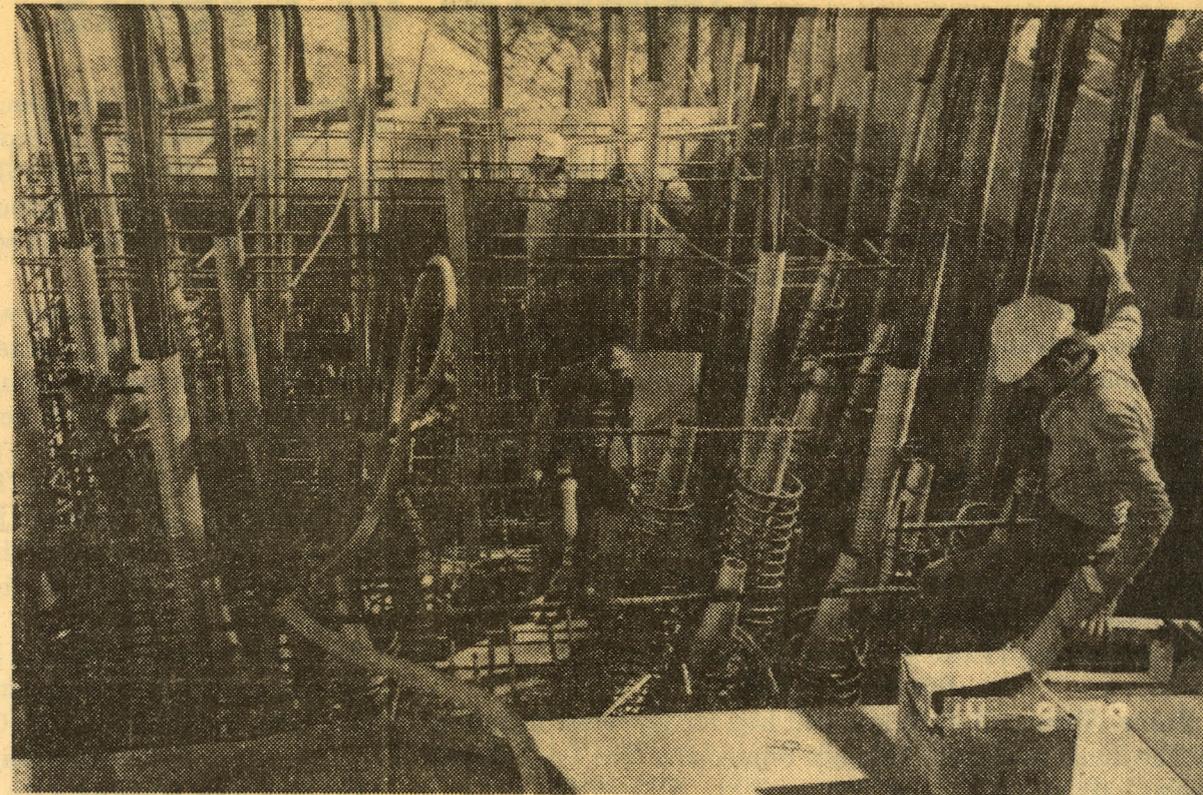
Construction of the new bridge had many interesting steps in the process. For example, excess rock could not be blasted from the canyon wall because of danger to tourists and dam operations below.

To remove the hard rock, a

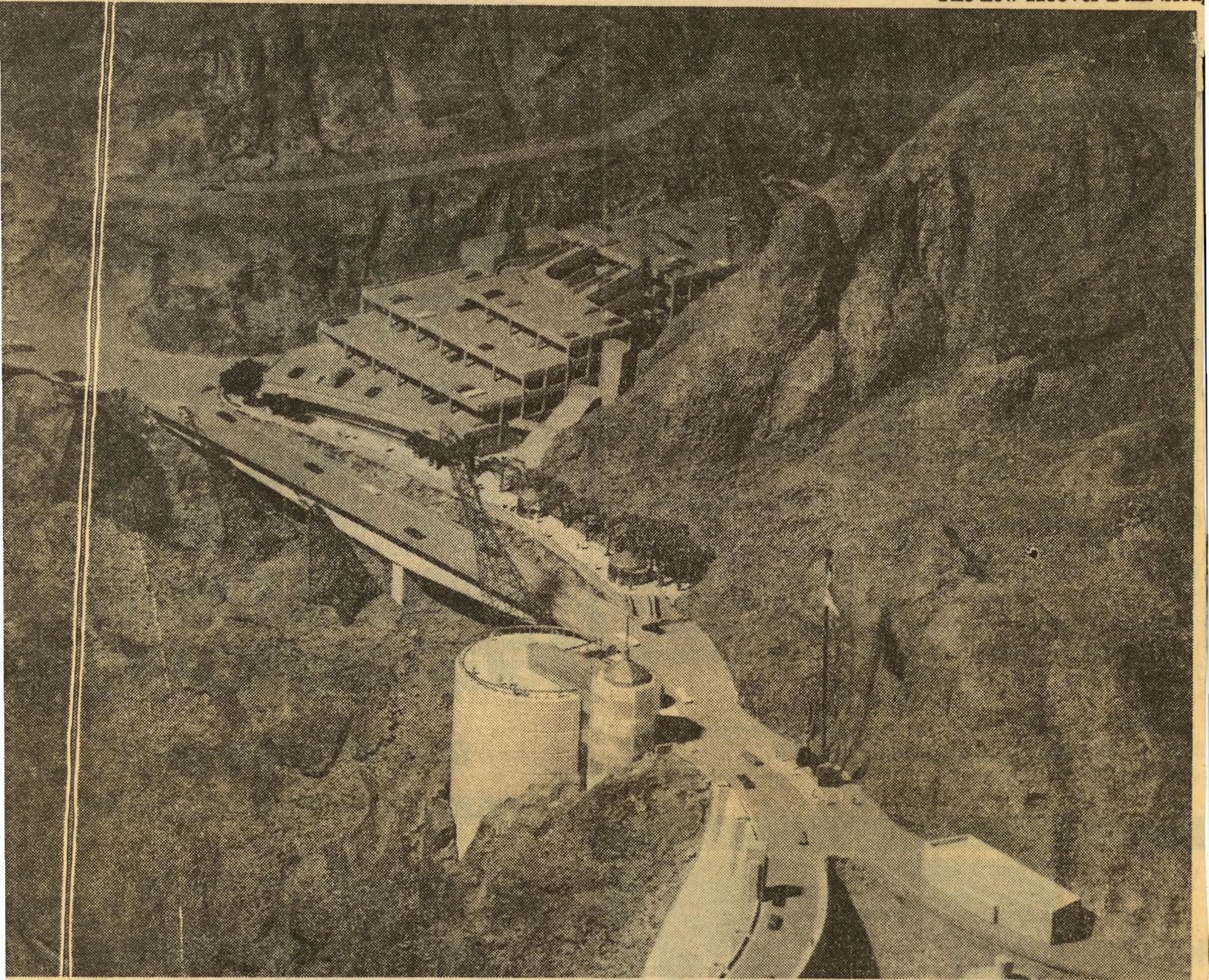
new technology is being used. The process involves liquid S-Mite, which is poured into drilled holes. Once the S-Mite dries, it expands and splits the rock into smaller pieces, which then can be removed by rammer and front end-loaders. "It is a safe, quiet way to remove hard rock with a minimum of risk," Blackburn said.

Hoover Dam is one of the largest concrete dams in the world, producing more than 1,800 mega-watts of electricity and processing more than nine million acre-feet of water a year. Annual water passing through the dam each year is enough to cover the state of Connecticut to a depth of a two and one-half feet.

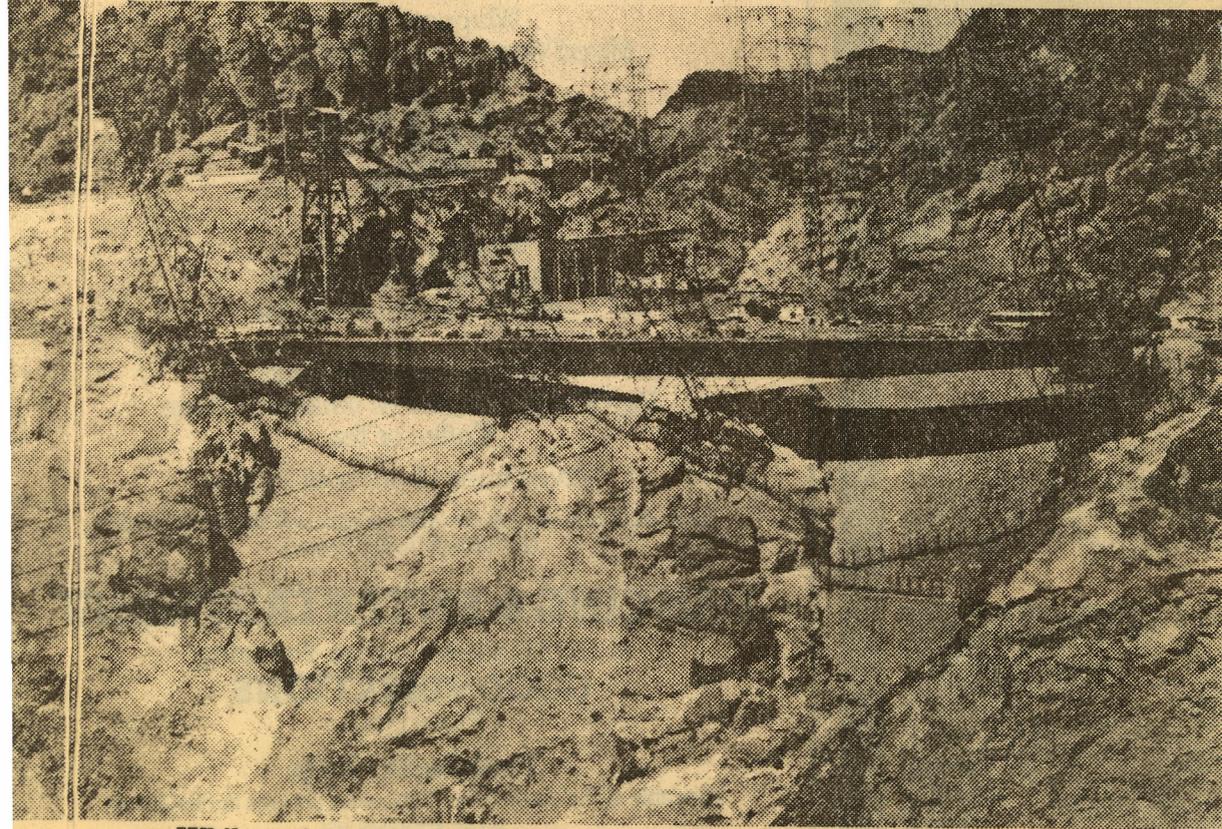
"That's a lot of water," Gailey noted.



The new Hoover Dam bridge is constructed of steel-reinforced, high-density cement.



Artist's three-dimensional sculptural concept of new bridge, Visitors Center and parking facility at Hoover Dam.



While under construction the bridge is balanced in the center.