

LOOKINGBACK BECHTEL'S FIRST MEGAPROJECT



Seventy-five years ago, on September 30, 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt attended the dedication of Hoover Dam. Looking out over the massive structure on the Arizona-Nevada border, he told the assembled crowd, "I came, I saw, I was conquered—as everyone will be who sees for the first time this great feat of mankind."

Built during the depths of the Great Depression, Hoover Dam was the largest civil engineering project in the history of the United States. It still is. Standing 726 feet (221 meters) high, 1,200 feet (366 meters) across the crest, and 660 feet (201 meters) thick at its base, the dam placed huge requirements on Bechtel and five other companies involved in its construction.

The project, which began in 1931, required 45 million pounds (20.4 million kilograms) of pipe and structural steel, 4.4 million cubic yards (3.4 million cubic meters) of concrete, and the excavation of 3.7 million cubic yards (2.8 million cubic meters) of rock. Prior to building the dam, engineers diverted the powerful Colorado River with more than 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) of 50-foot

(15.2-meter) tunnels, driven straight through the walls of Black Canyon.

Hoover Dam was built to provide electricity to Arizona, Nevada, and Southern California. Its reservoir, Lake Mead, became the first national recreation area in the United States. And it was Bechtel's first megaproject.