



## ‘Crossing the Canal’ Celebrates Duluth’s Iconic Bridge

Duluth publisher X-communication releases the first full-length book on the bridge ever published

(Duluth, Minn.) When Duluth author and publisher Tony Dierckins went looking for a book about Duluth’s infamous aerial bridge in 2005, the bridge’s centennial year, he was surprised to discover no full-length work had ever been written.

Flashforward three years and Dierckins’ publishing house is set to release *Crossing the Canal: An Illustrated History of Duluth’s Aerial Bridge*, written by Dierckins himself. The book focuses on the bridge and the canal it crosses, beginning with Duluth’s establishment in 1856 through the bridge’s centennial in 2005.

The book’s title comes from the bridge’s practical application: getting people and goods across the government canal.

“People have slapped a lot of lofty labels on the bridge, such as ‘Duluth’s Eiffel Tower’ and the ‘gateway to the world.’ I like those titles; they’re poetic,” Dierckins says, “But they aren’t really accurate descriptions of the bridge.”

“The 1871 canal made Duluth the world’s largest inland port,” Dierckins argues. “That’s your gateway. The bridge gets people across the canal. Sure, it looks like a gate, but the lift span wasn’t added until 1929. More than anything, the bridge literally reconnected Duluth to its 1856 birthplace: Minnesota Point.”

The 208-page full-color book features over 250 photos, illustrations, maps and diagrams to give readers a vivid picture of Duluth throughout its history. The book covers the struggles of the fledgling city to establish itself, the cutting of the canal and lawsuits by Wisconsin to stop it, the efforts by Park Point residents and the city to create a safe method of crossing the canal, the lengthy process of building the 1905 bridge, and the controversy surrounding its 1929 conversion to a lift bridge.

Along the way the book celebrates the people that built, maintained and operated the bridge—from engineers and politicians to the bridge’s operators, including a complete list of everyone who has operated the bridge and biographies of every person who has held the title of Bridge Supervisor. There’s even a chart of how many times the bridge has raised each month since it first lifted in 1930 to its 2005 centennial and diagrams of how the original transfer bridge worked and the how the lift bridge works today.

Besides the bridge’s story and historical images of the bridge and canal, the book features extended photographic essays by Duluth photographers Dennis O’Hara and Janet Karon. O’Hara’s modern, full-color landscapes of the bridge and Karon’s black-and-white close-ups allow the bridge to speak for itself and show off the grace with which Duluth’s icon was designed.

The bridge’s story is also enhanced by 25 companion stories covering the canal dig and other legends, notorious and heroic events surrounding the bridge and canal, and the history of Duluth’s four lighthouses. Also included is a fold-out map of what today is called “Canal Park” showing every street and building that stood in 1905, when the bridge was first built—and when the area was home to industry, immigrants, saloons and prostitutes rather than than upscale hotels, shops and restaurants and tourists.

*Crossing the Canal* retails for just \$21.95 and is available at all area bookstores (and many gift shops) and online at [www.x-communication.org](http://www.x-communication.org).