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Chicago River Bridges



Synopsis

Chicago River Bridges presents the untold history and development of Chicago's iconic bridges, from the first wood footbridge built by a tavern owner in 1832 to the fantastic marvels of steel, concrete, and machinery of today. It is the story of Chicago as seen through its bridges, for it has been the bridges that proved critical in connecting and reconnecting the people, industry, and neighborhoods of a city that is constantly remaking itself. In this book, author Patrick T. McBriarty shows how generations of Chicagoans built (and rebuilt) the thriving city trisected by the Chicago River and linked by its many crossings.Â This comprehensive guidebook chronicles more than 175 bridges spanning 55 locations along the Main Channel, South Branch, and North Branch of the Chicago River. With new full-color photography of existing bridges and more than one hundred black and white images of bridges past, the book unearths the rich history of Chicago's downtown bridges from the Michigan Avenue Bridge to the often forgotten bridges that once connected thoroughfares such as Rush, Erie, Taylor, and Polk Streets.Â Throughout, McBriarty delivers new research into the bridges' architectural designs, engineering innovations, and their impact on Chicagoans' daily lives, explaining how the dominance of the "Chicago-style" bascule drawbridge influenced the style and mechanics of bridges worldwide. Interspersed throughout are the human dramas that played out on and around the bridges, such as the floods of 1849 and 1992, the cattle crossing collapse of the Rush Street Bridge, or Vincent "The Schemer" Drucci's Michigan Avenue Bridge jump. A confluence of Chicago history, urban design, and engineering lore, Chicago River Bridges illustrates Chicago's significant contribution to drawbridge innovation and the city's emergence as the drawbridge capital of the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Â "After reading Patrick McBriarty's impressive and thoroughly researched Chicago River Bridges, no one could ever again overlook or take for granted Chicago's bridges. Thanks to this comprehensive book--filled with a treasure trove of stunning photographs, drawings, and maps--we now know that designing, funding, building, operating, maintaining, moving, and rebuilding Chicago's bridges was vital to the development of the Windy City. To 'stacker of wheat' and 'player with railroads,' we must now add 'designer and builder of bridges.'"--Greg Borzo, author of The Chicago "L" and Chicago Cable Cars

"This meticulously researched compendium of the city's bridges over the Chicago River. . . . will please both scholars and amateur enthusiasts. Recommended."--Choice

Richly detailed and easy to navigate, Chicago River Bridges is a must for bridge enthusiasts and those with a strong interest in the city's history.Â •--Civil Engineering

"During the same years that architects invented the metal-framed skeleton skyscraper, engineers were working on a related problem: the design of the modern iron drawbridge.Â Patrick T. McBriarty's Chicago River Bridges gives these innovators their due recognition.Â Bridge enthusiasts and those who love the city will be fascinated by his careful attention to their design and history."--Journal of Illinois History

This is my first book and it has been quite a journey over the past 7-8 years researching, writing, editing, and curating the photography and images.Â The impetus for this book was sparked a dozen years or more ago on a blustery winter Sunday photographing the two bridges at Kinzie Street along the North Branch of the Chicago River.Â Through the lens I really first "saw" the bridges and their gritty, industrial beauty seized my imagination.Â Each bridge though similar, on closer inspection was clearly unique, and Chicago's many drawbridges begged so many questions.Â I have been fortunate to be able to spend great chunks of time on this project in an effort to raise awareness for the city's fantastic bridges.Â A literal working drawbridge museum, Chicago hosts the finest collection of different drawbridge designs of any city on earth.Â A resident of the city for over 20 years, I never really thought much of the bridges, but since starting the project I can no longer look at a bridge the same way.Â The concept, practicality, and beauty of a bridge, and magic of the moveable bridges, to me, is now irresistible.Â Surely the engineer-want-to-be within me and the steel dust of Youngstown, Ohio were important factors, but there were easily a

dozen influences that conspired and compelled me to research and write this book.Â Looking back it seems almost destiny, as this project has been a metaphorical bridge for my crossing of a void into a new life, and hopefully into a new career.Â Thankfully the University of Illinois Press also believed in the concept and created this magnificent book with its beautiful layout, hardback cover, and glittery red spine containing nearly 200 full-color images in this coffee-table book format.Â It is hoped that most everyone will enjoy this book and relate to the beauty and my fascination for bridges, and in turn utilize this as a valuable reference and guide to the Chicago River's bridges for years to come.

I am a bridge-nut and have read 100's of bridge books. Those that include "every bridge on the river" are usually boring and always redundant. In "Chicago River Bridges" the author describes 175 bridges which are basically of only 3 or 4 types, but remarkably, he does it in a manner which kept this reader interested throughout. His interjections of local anecdotal history liven the text and will make for entertaining reading even if you aren't a bridge-nut.

I grew up in Chicago during the 1950s and 1960s when there was still a fair amount of shipping on the Chicago River and its branches, and also the Calumet River. (I've been tied up in traffic downtown due to the Medusa Challenger.) I was (and still am) fascinated by the movable bridges. This book provides a comprehensive and interesting history of these bridges that I have never seen elsewhere. If you are interested in the history of the Chicago area, this book is a "must read"!

Beautiful book. It si full of great stories maps, diagrams and photos. Very interesgting coffee table book.

Great book and overview, bought for my husband who loves chicago bridges

Very well written book..lots of facts and engineering information. Its a great coffee table book. Love the bridges in Chicago

Beautiful well illustrated and well written.

Great book if you love the Chicago river!

Disappointed. I was hoping for some bridge porn, but the photos are mostly standard tourist postcard quality.

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