

# Gichi-ode Akiing Park

Designed by landscape architect Kent Worley and completed in 1990, Lake Place created a link from downtown to the waterfront.

**When officials** first proposed extending Interstate 35 through eastern Duluth, plans included placing the highway on piers several hundred feet out over Lake Superior. Thanks to concerned Duluthians, public access to the lake was preserved with a new plan incorporating a system of tunnels. Landscaping to reduce the highway's visibility resulted in the creation of four public green spaces including Gichi-ode Akiing Park, originally named Lake Place.



**Sister City Sculptures (from left) Green Bear, The Stone, and Water & Friendship**

Brian Rauvola, HBR Studios

**The Park** became a sculpture garden featuring pieces from Duluth's Sister Cities around the globe. The sculptures include 1992's Green Bear by Leo Lankinen and Valter Soini, a gift from Petrozavodsk, Russia; The Stone, created in 1993 by Kenneth Johansson and commissioned by Växjö, Sweden; and Koji Horito's Water and Friendship, a 1994 gift from Ohara-Isumi City, Japan. The Arising, by Almut Heer and Carla Stetson.



**The Arising**

Brian Rauvola, HBR Studios



**Kechewaishe (Chief Buffalo) Mural**

Brian Rauvola, HBR Studios

**To heal** the community, in 2019 Duluth's Indigenous Commission changed the park's name to Gichi-ode Akiing, Ojibwe for "a grand heart place." In 1854 the land that covers much of today's downtown was reserved for the family of Ojibwe elder and statesman Kechewaishe, aka Bizhiki or Chief Buffalo. But following his death, his son-in-law, trader Benjamin Armstrong, sold the land to European Americans. Artists have used the plaza and stairways as a canvas for temporary and permanent artwork honoring Kechewaishe and celebrating Anishinaabe culture.



# The Montreal Canoe

This canoe was the principal cargo vessel of the fur trade era.

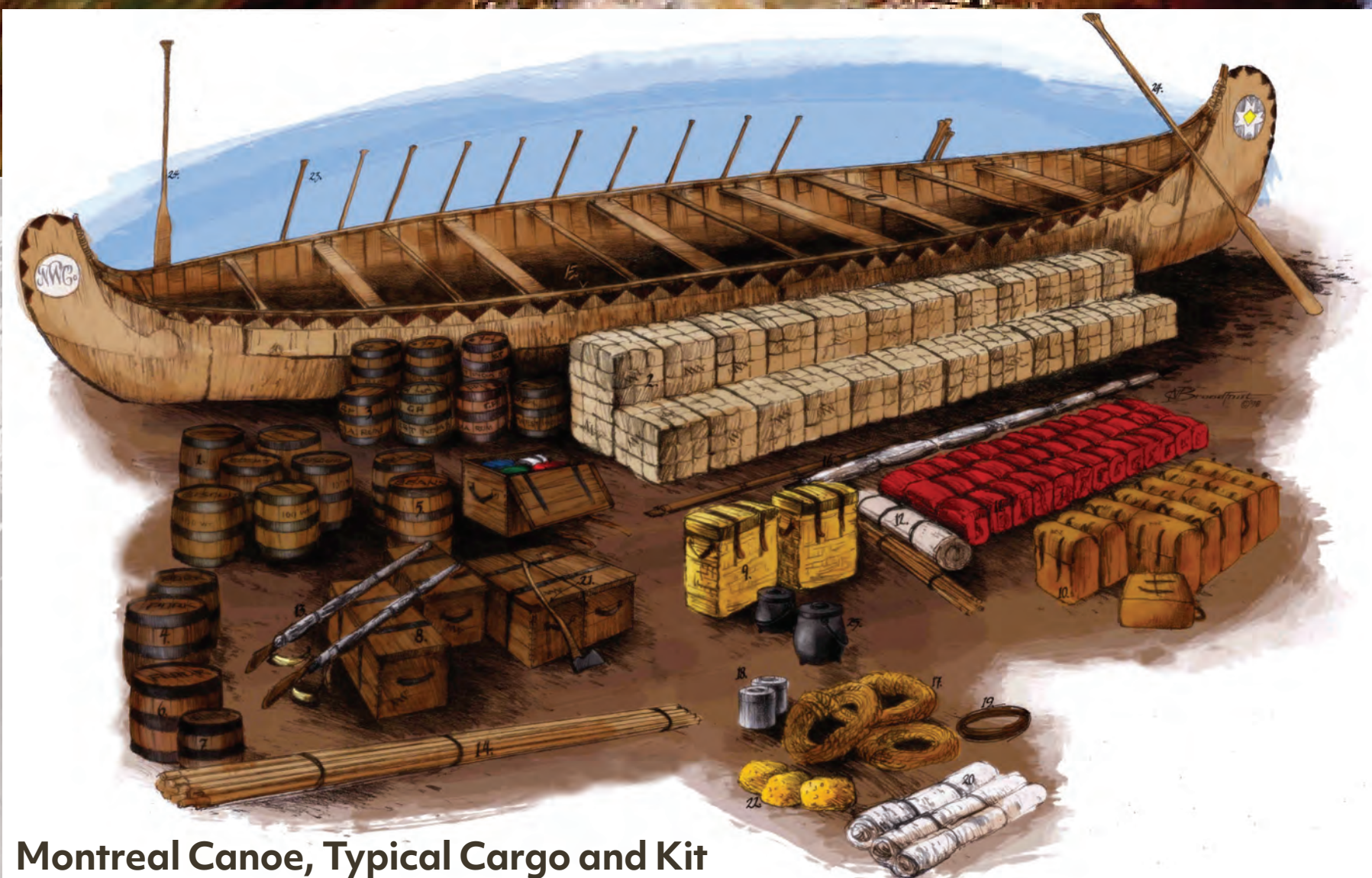
**Also known as the Canot d'Maitre**, it was based on the Native American birch bark design, but upscaled to improve cargo capacity and resistance. It was a symbol of pride for the Voyageurs who used it for both transportation and shelter during their fur trading expeditions.



**The canoes** typically held between 8 and 16 people, were 35-40 feet long and could carry up to 3,800 kg when fully loaded. These canoes were capable of traveling around 2000km over a six week period, and was capable of being portaged across the land when necessary.

*Shooting the Rapids,*  
Francis Anne Hopkins, 1879

**On portages**, each Voyageur would be responsible for carrying 180lb loads, plus their own kit for 1/2 mile carries, followed by a rest (pose), upon which they would return to repeat the process, until all of the cargo and the canoe had been successfully carried to the end of the portage.



**Montreal Canoe, Typical Cargo and Kit**



# The 1905 “Mataafa Storm”

Vessels navigating Lake Superior on November 28, 1905, found themselves battling hurricane force winds.

**The Mataafa** appeared out of the squall in mid afternoon, steaming hard for the Duluth Ship Canal and the safe harbor beyond it. As the Mataafa approached the canal, currents and wind gusts forced the vessel against the north pier, carried it briefly back into the lake, and then slammed it broadside against the pierhead. Waves then carried the Mataafa roughly 150 yards from shore where she split in two and settled on the lake bottom.

**Desperate sailors** in the fore and aft cabins, both still above water, signaled for help. Duluth’s U.S. Life Savers crew stood helplessly on shore, the storm too strong to launch their lifeboats.

**That night** thousands of Duluthians lined the shore, standing vigil as the storm pounded the wounded ship. When the Life Savers finally reached the Mataafa the next morning they found fifteen sailors alive in the fore cabin. Unfortunately, nine crewmen trapped in the aft cabin either drowned or froze to death.



Duluth’s U.S. Lifesaver’s Crew Struggling to Rescue the Mataafa



The Mataafa split and sank to the lake bottom



# Duluth's Lost Outer Harbor

Before the Canal, Duluth's industrial waterfront faced the Lake.

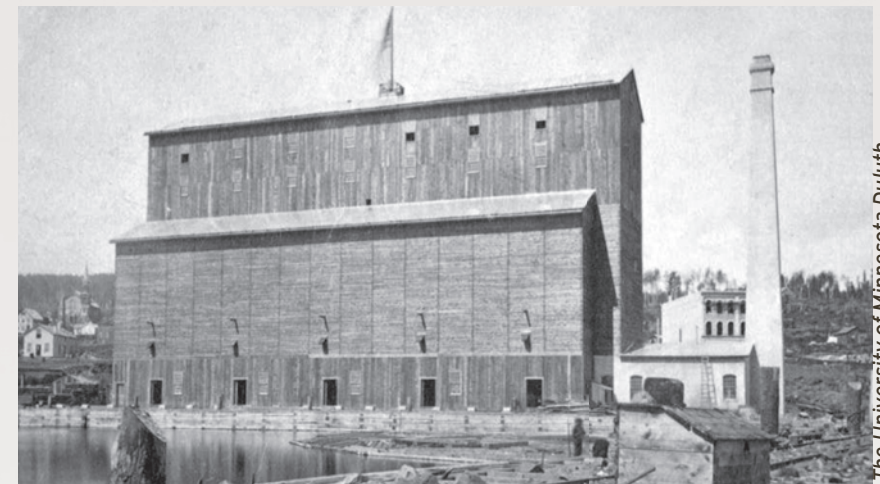
**Superior Entry**, the only natural inlet from Lake Superior to St. Louis Bay, lies between Minnesota and Wisconsin Points seven miles south of where the town of Duluth was established in 1856. Before the Duluth Ship Canal was dug in 1871, allowing entry to the bay through Duluth, the town developed an outer harbor to receive commercial shipping traffic, initially just a warehouse and dock near this spot. Duluth received little commercial traffic until 1869, when Jay Cooke's Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad (LS&MRR) began construction in Duluth.



**Duluth's Outer Harbor, 1870**

**Meanwhile**, Duluth founder Joshua Culver and first mayor financed the construction of Citizen's Dock, a municipal wharf for commercial and passenger vessels that extended into the lake off of Minnesota Point.

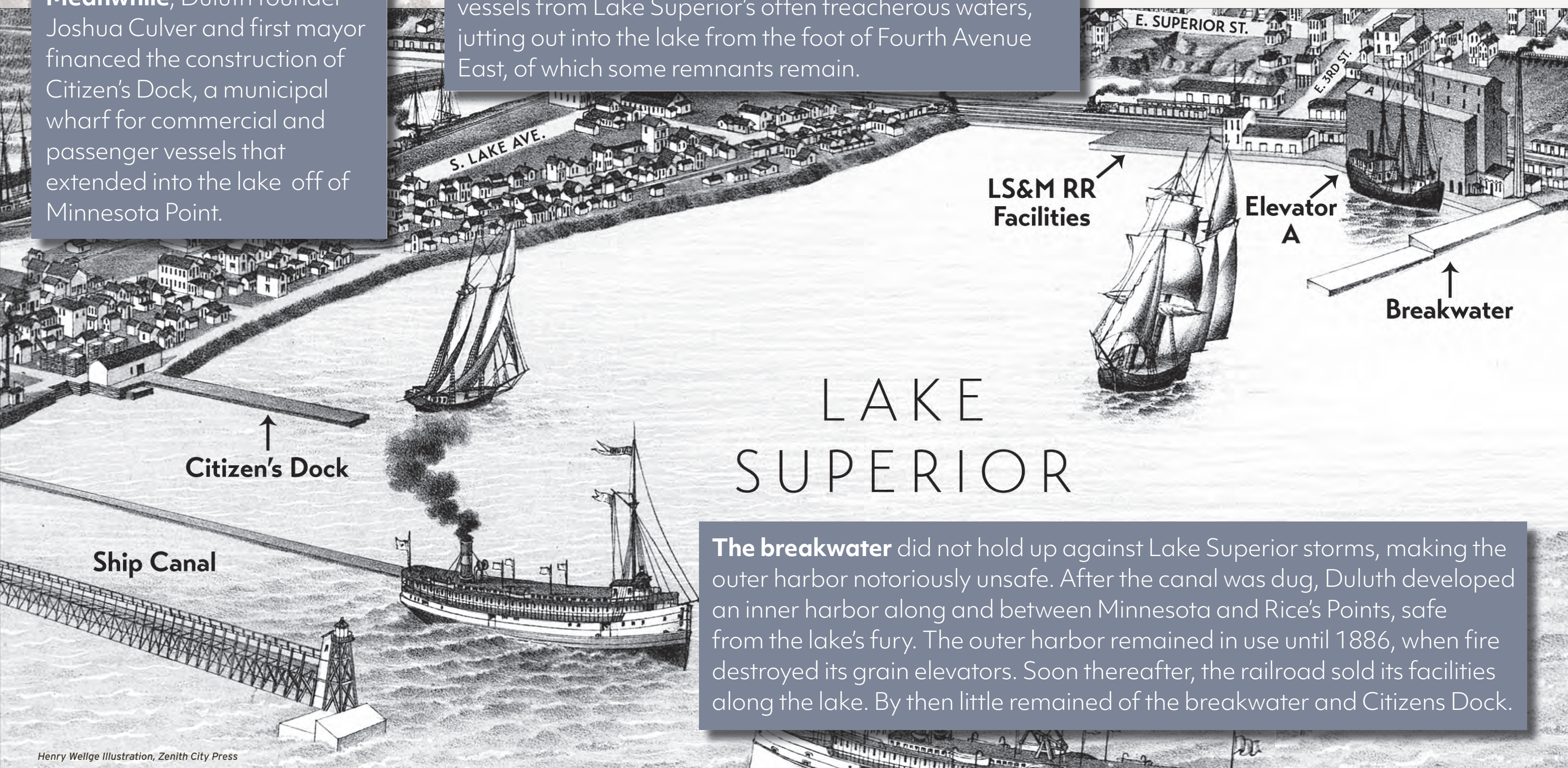
**Cooke** built a freight depot, warehouse, and dock along the lake between Third and Fourth Avenues East and also financed the construction of Elevator A, Duluth's first grain terminal. A breakwater was built to protect docked vessels from Lake Superior's often treacherous waters, jutting out into the lake from the foot of Fourth Avenue East, of which some remnants remain.



**Elevator A, 1874**



**LS&MRR Freight Depot, 1869**



**The breakwater** did not hold up against Lake Superior storms, making the outer harbor notoriously unsafe. After the canal was dug, Duluth developed an inner harbor along and between Minnesota and Rice's Points, safe from the lake's fury. The outer harbor remained in use until 1886, when fire destroyed its grain elevators. Soon thereafter, the railroad sold its facilities along the lake. By then little remained of the breakwater and Citizens Dock.



# The Historic Estuary

## Navigation Map of the St. Louis River Estuary, 1863



**This map** depicts the bathymetry of the St Louis River Estuary in 1863, prior to major industrial engineering and shows the location of tributaries and backwaters. The Duluth Ship Canal was excavated in 1871, and in 1896 the United States Congress appropriated \$3 million dollars to dredge twenty foot deep shipping lanes between Duluth and Superior to modernize the harbor for deeper hulled vessels.



# Addressing Pollution in the Inner Harbor

Part of a concerted effort to remedy legacy contamination to reduce health and environmental risks.

**The harbor shoreline** that you see today is much different than the historical waterfront. Gone are most coal and scrap yards, salt and cement processors, metal fabricators and ship builders. Gone is the practice of dumping waste directly into the harbor without treatment, thanks to the 1970's environmental laws. However, PAHs, PCBs, and heavy metals were contaminants left behind in the sediment, several feet deep in places.

**A legacy of contaminated sediment** can have negative impacts on human and environmental health. If remedies are not applied, fish and wildlife habitat and populations degrade, fish consumption advisories result, and restrictions are placed on dredging. Thanks to the combined efforts of local, state, federal and tribal partners, solutions that address these problems have been implemented to reduce the risk of contaminated sediment hotspots in the St. Louis River Area of Concern.



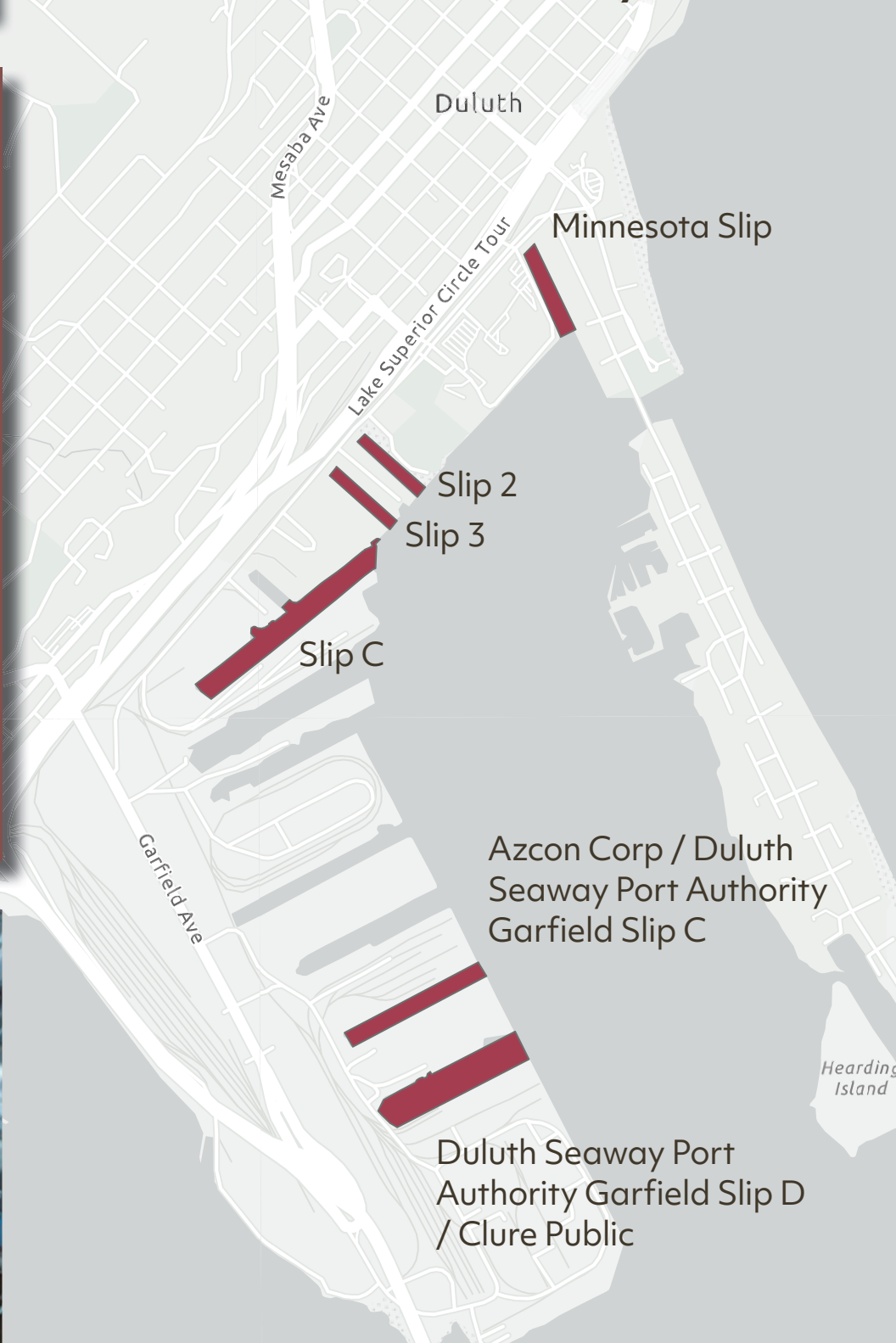
Pollution in Slip C, 1968

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency



Postcard of waterfront industry, circa 1960's near Slips 2 and 3

Zenith Interstate News Company of Duluth



Remediated Slips in Duluth's Harbor

**The St. Louis River Area of Concern** was federally designated in 1987 because historic, local human activities caused lost habitat and legacy contamination. Multiple agencies have worked for decades to remediate pollution and legacy contaminants in Duluth's Inner Harbor. Expertise and funding provided by many partners is the foundation for each project's success.



Capping Contaminants in Slip 3, 2018

**Remedial caps** made of clean sand and armoring stone were constructed over the top of contaminated sediments in these slips. The caps protect living organisms from exposure to the legacy contamination.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency



# Wiigwaasi-jiimaan

## The birch bark canoe of the Native American Peoples

### The Birch Bark Canoe

was a technological innovation perfect for navigating the inland waterways of the Great Lakes region. Light enough to be easily carried on portages and able to navigate both deep and shallow water, these vessels were hand crafted from materials from the region's forests and could be easily repaired if damaged.

**Its frame** is built from cedar or spruce wood. Sheets of carefully harvested birch bark are soaked in hot water and fit upon the frame, with the white outer bark inside the canoe, and its tan inner bark forming the outer hull. These panels are lashed to the frame using watap, the long slender roots of the white spruce and then sealed with a pitch made from pine sap and charcoal. A handmade canoe is a deeply personal item, reflecting the skill, value, and iconography of its builder and their culture.

**Canoes are a key part of traditional Ojibwe life.** Used not only for transportation, but also for the gathering of food. In the summer months, the Ojibwe harvest Manoomin (wild rice) by collecting it in the hull of their canoes, and in the spring use it as a vessel for spearfishing walleye.

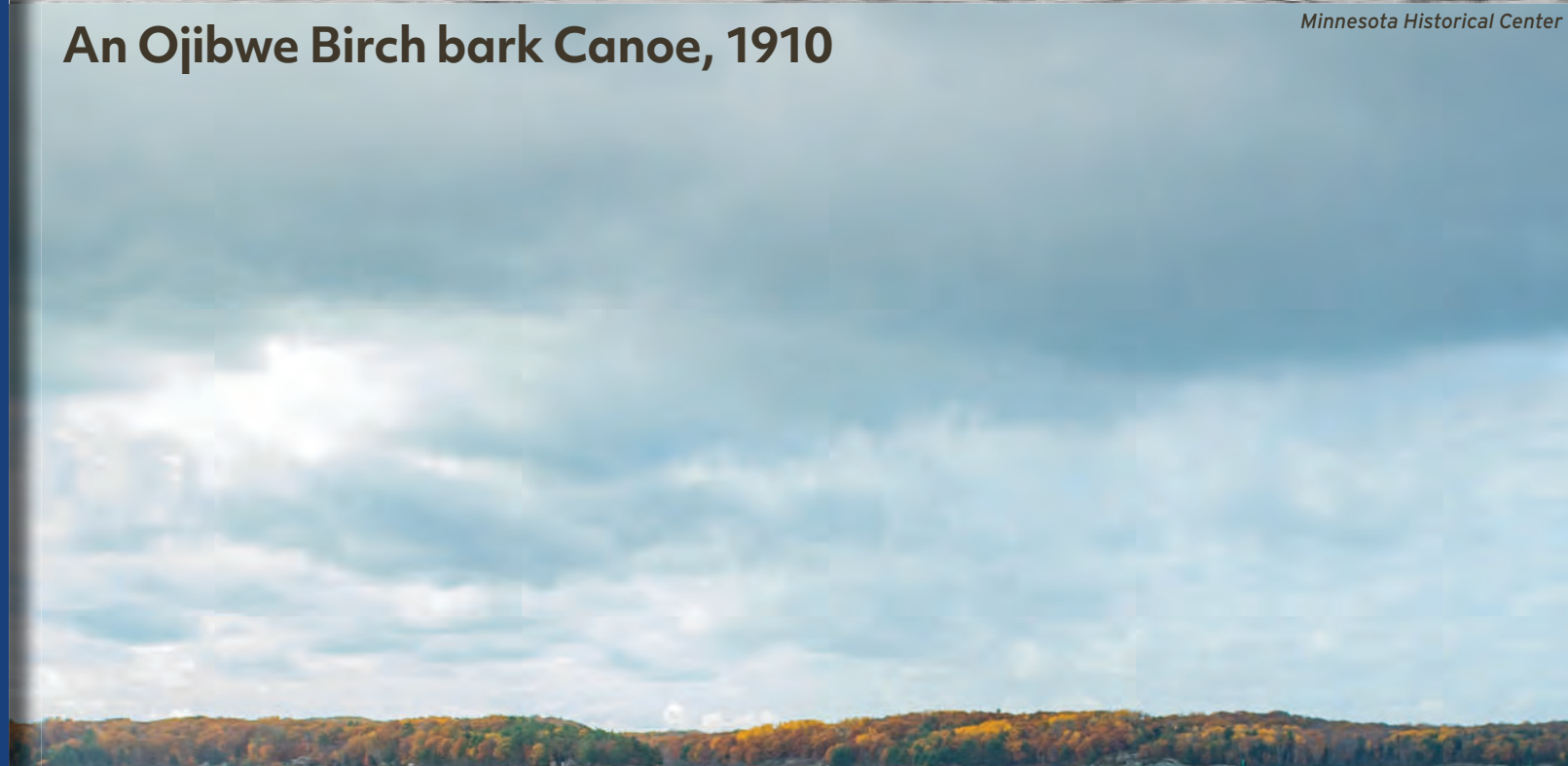
**In Ojibwe culture,** the prow is associated with the future and the stern with the past, placing the pilot at the confluence of both and serving as a vessel to carry their cultural spirit into the future.

**This Canoe** was built by Mino-Giizhig (Wayne Valliere), a Native birch bark canoe builder and member of the Lac du Flambeau Band. They work as an Ojibwe culture and language teacher and actively work to pass on the complex knowledge needed to continue this vital cultural legacy.



An Ojibwe Birch bark Canoe, 1910

Minnesota Historical Center



University of Wisconsin Milwaukee



# Duluth's Industrial Inner Harbor

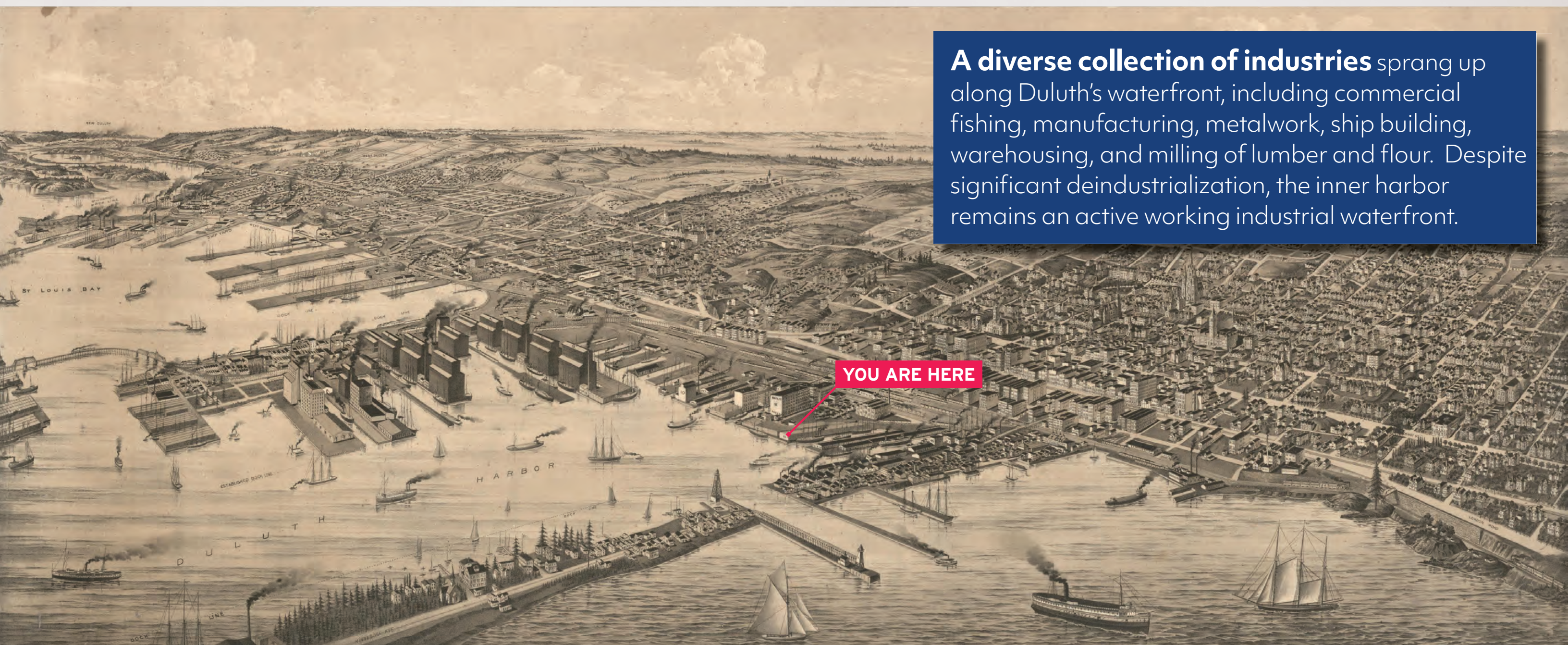
The Canal to the Inner Harbor provided a haven for industry & shipping, dramatically transforming the harbor in the late 1800's.

**The excavation of the Duluth Access Canal** in 1871 was inspired by competition with nearby Superior, over which city would be more attractive to railroads, shipping, and investors. Multiple economic booms and busts have occurred over the years, with the transformation of water's edge a physical testament to the rise and fall of industries.



View of Duluth, 1883

*Illustration by Henry Wellge, 1883, Library of Congress*



**A diverse collection of industries** sprang up along Duluth's waterfront, including commercial fishing, manufacturing, metalwork, ship building, warehousing, and milling of lumber and flour. Despite significant deindustrialization, the inner harbor remains an active working industrial waterfront.

YOU ARE HERE

View of Duluth, 1893



# Neia-shi & Wubishingweka

## The Eternal Significance of Minnesota Point & Rice's Point



Duluth, 1871

Minnesota Historical Society

**This long sandbar** at the end of Lake Superior at the mouth of the St Louis River Estuary is formed by sand deposits from waves and long-shore currents deposited atop the estuary sediments. This landscape has been a settlement and crossroads for centuries, and remains a sacred landscape for the Ojibwe people. This landscape has since been heavily reconstructed to accommodate shipping, urban development and coastal armoring.

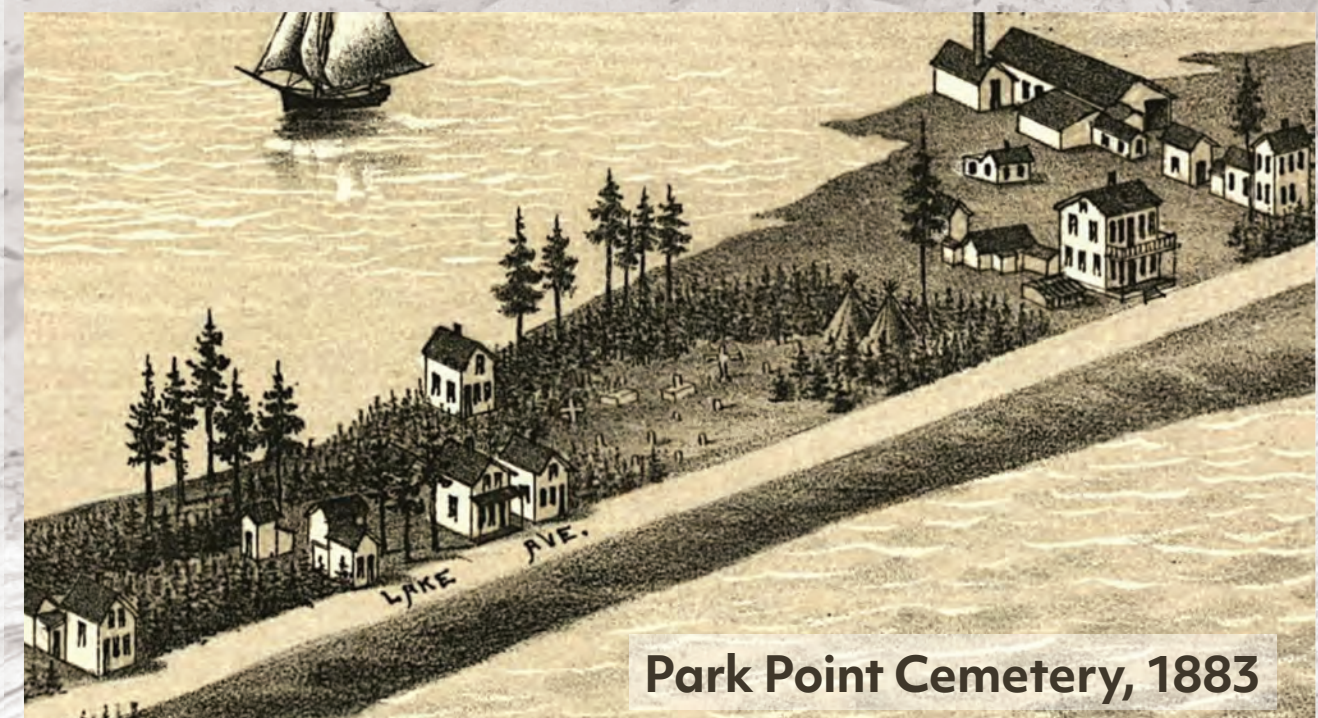
**At the time of European Settlement,** Minnesota Point was an important summer encampment for the Ojibwe people and the Dakota before them. Some of the earliest trading posts were located where Canal Park currently sits.

*There was quite a settlement of Indians on Minnesota Point at that time, also two Indian burial grounds...*

*We nearly always had Indians for neighbors and they were always very good and kind to us, never molesting us in any way. I often had rides in their birch bark canoes, and whenever they returned from the wild rice fields they gave to us bountifully....*

*The Indians used to encamp early in the summer; their arrival was accomplished without the least noise or sound; one would awake to find the wigwams erected, the fires glowing and the beach lined with birch bark canoes, and they would as silently slip away about the time the wild rice ripened.*

*- Reminiscences of Mrs. Ann E. Thomas in the 1870's*



Park Point Cemetery, 1883

Illustration by Henry Wellge, 1883, Library of Congress

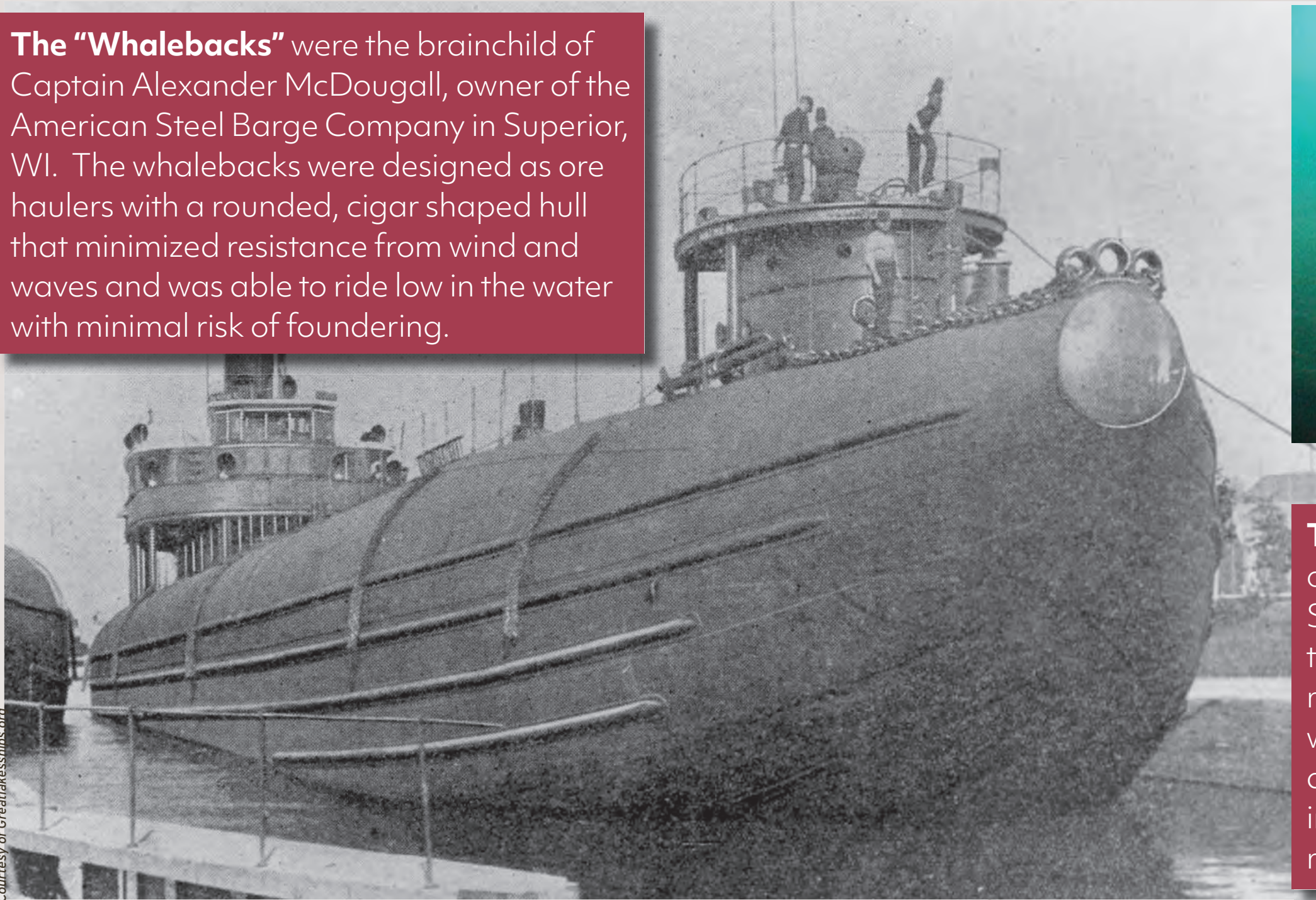
**The Native American burial grounds** along Minnesota Point and Rice's Point have been subject to numerous disturbances over the years, as a result of storms, engineering projects, as well as excavation to move human remains and grave robbery. One such burial ground once existed in what is now Franklin Square on Park Point. In 1883, the bodies interred here were removed and re-interred elsewhere. The protection and recognition of these sacred landscapes is an ongoing effort by Minnesota's indigenous peoples.



# The SS Meteor & The Thomas Wilson

## The Last Surviving “Whaleback” Ore Hauler & A Local Shipwreck

**The “Whalebacks”** were the brainchild of Captain Alexander McDougall, owner of the American Steel Barge Company in Superior, WI. The whalebacks were designed as ore haulers with a rounded, cigar shaped hull that minimized resistance from wind and waves and was able to ride low in the water with minimal risk of foundering.



Courtesy of GreatLakesShips.org

**The Thomas Wilson, 1892**

**The SS Meteor** is the last surviving Whaleback ship, and the longest serving. Originally launched in 1896 as the Frank Rockefeller, it served as an ore hauler until 1927 when it was renamed the South Park, and converted to haul sand for a dredging company. During World War II it was renamed the SS Meteor and converted to be an oil tanker, and carried cargoes of crude oil, gasoline, and jet fuel until 1969 when it ran aground near Marquette, Michigan. The ship was then converted to a museum ship and returned to Superior in 1971 and remains open to the public for tours.



**The SS Meteor**

Superior Public Museums



Superior Trips LLC

**The Wreck of the Thomas Wilson**

**The Thomas Wilson**, another “whaleback” ore carrier created by the Superior Shipwright Alexander McDougall, tragically sank less than three quarters of a mile from the Duluth Entry in 1902. Laden with iron ore, the ship was damaged in a collision with another vessel and sank in minutes, taking nine of its twenty crew members to the bottom with it.



# The USS Menemsha

Built in Duluth, this vessel served as a cargo hauler weather ship, patrol craft, convoy escort, and rescue ship from 1918 - 1951.

**Originally the Lake Orange,** this vessel was built at the McDougall Duluth Shipbuilding Company in Duluth's Riverside Neighborhood in 1918. First commissioned as a Great Lakes Cargo Hauler, in 1942 it was renamed the Menemsha and converted to a weather ship to serve in the US Navy and later the Coast Guard.

**During World War II,** the Menemsha was assigned to the North Atlantic Weather Patrol. It braved the storm tossed North Atlantic Ocean and the perils of German U-Boats to gather valuable weather data and rescue the survivors of torpedoed ships.



The USS Menemsha, 1942

**On August 11, 1943** the Menemsha's lookout spotted a surfaced U-Boat, U-760. She closed to attack, shelling the U-Boat with gunfire, but failed to hit the enemy ship. Fearing ambush from another vessel, the Menemsha broke off the attack. On October 1943, the Menemsha was transferred to the Coast Guard, where she was rebuilt to be a gunnery training ship. After a long and valuable service, she was scrapped in 1951



Riverside Shipyard, 1919



# The Cribs / “Uncle Harvey’s Mausoleum”

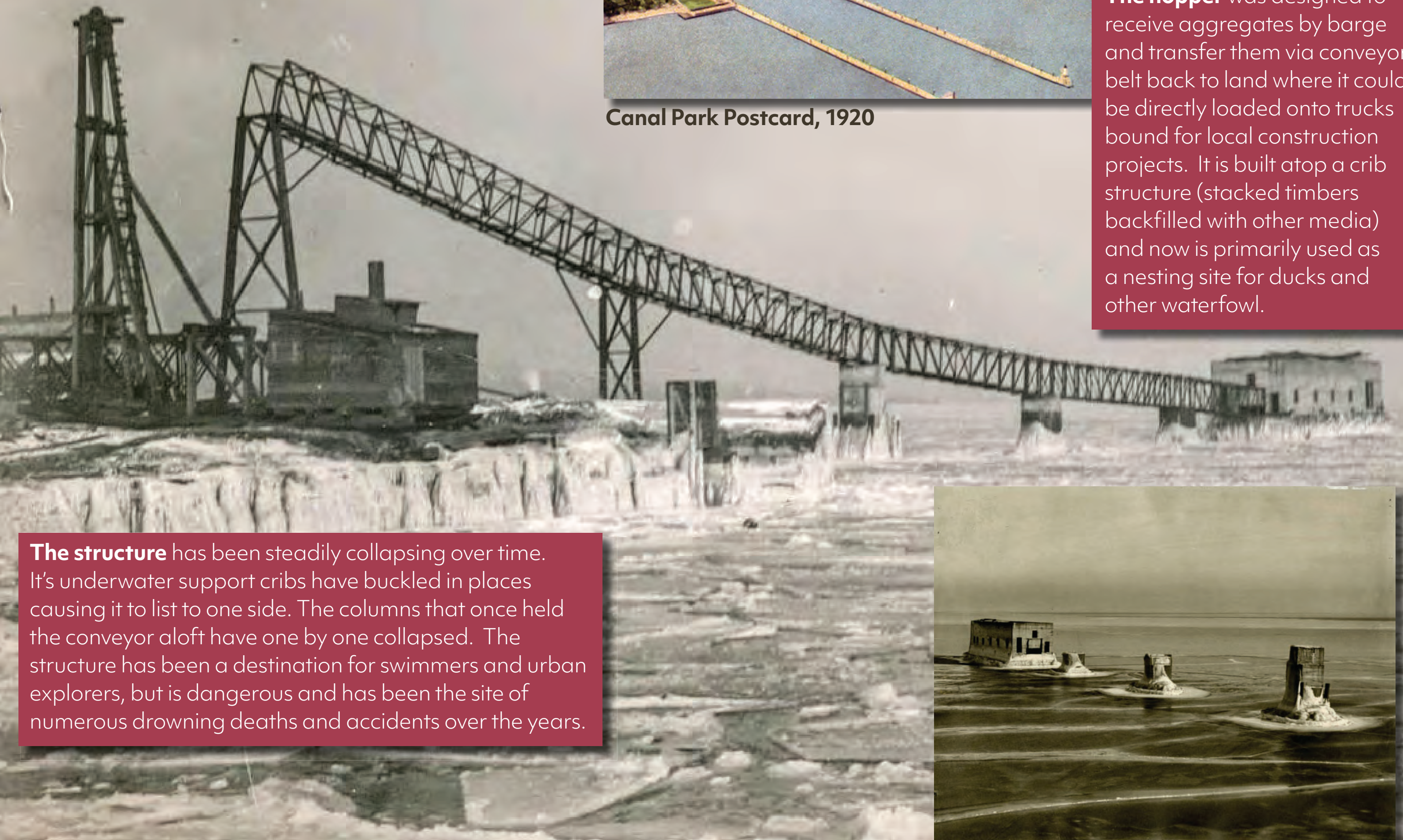
This obscure structure was originally an aggregate hopper, built to provide material for a construction boom that never took place

**Harvey Whitney**, a Superior businessman built the structure speculatively in 1919 to provide sand and gravel for construction projects. He thought this could be used as fill material for wetlands, and the construction of a breakwater to create a new outer harbor for Duluth. When these plans did not take place and demand for the aggregate faltered, Whitney abandoned the structure in 1922.



Canal Park Postcard, 1920

**The hopper** was designed to receive aggregates by barge and transfer them via conveyor belt back to land where it could be directly loaded onto trucks bound for local construction projects. It is built atop a crib structure (stacked timbers backfilled with other media) and now is primarily used as a nesting site for ducks and other waterfowl.



**The structure** has been steadily collapsing over time. It's underwater support cribs have buckled in places causing it to list to one side. The columns that once held the conveyor aloft have one by one collapsed. The structure has been a destination for swimmers and urban explorers, but is dangerous and has been the site of numerous drowning deaths and accidents over the years.

The Whitney Brothers Gravel Business Structure, 1919

US Army Corps of Engineers



The Cribs 1959

Minnesota Historical Society, Colorized Print

George Fairchild Starkey, University of Minnesota Duluth, Kathryn A. Martin Library



# The Duluth Art Wall

This mosaic art piece celebrates the maritime history of Duluth and the role that waterfront recreation plays in its quality of life.

**In the 1870s**, the opening of the Duluth Ship Canal and arrival of the railroad allowed Duluth to begin shipping grain to the east. The growing timber, brownstone, and coal industries increased the city's maritime traffic during the 1880s. In the next decade as vessels began shipping iron ore, Duluth became a major wholesale center, and commercial fishing expanded dramatically. In 1907 the Duluth-Superior Harbor—the world's largest inland seaport - briefly surpassed New York Harbor in tonnage, becoming the nation's largest port, a heyday for Duluth's Industrial history.



**The Duluth Boat Club, 1911**

*University of Minnesota Duluth, Kathryn A. Martin Library*

**When Gichi-ode Akiing** (originally Lake Place Park) was built in 1990, it created a land bridge across the interstate but left a large blank wall facing the water. Duluthians Mark Marino and Sandra Ettestad suggested covering the wall with a mosaic tile mural celebrating the city's maritime history and the recreational opportunities afforded by Lake Superior and the St. Louis River.

**The 580 foot long mosaic** recreates over fifty photographs selected from the Lake Superior Maritime Collection archives. A team of eight worked for two months placing 1.2 million -inch square ceramic tiles made of seven different shades of blue onto 6,960 12" x 12" panels to create the final piece.



**Duluth South Pier Front Lighthouse, 1893**



**The Minnesota pulling the SS America, 1917**

*U.S. Coast Guard*

*Hugh McKenzie, University of Wisconsin Madison*



# The Duluth Lift Bridge

The Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge is an iconic and beloved landmark of the Waterfront and a unique marvel of engineering.

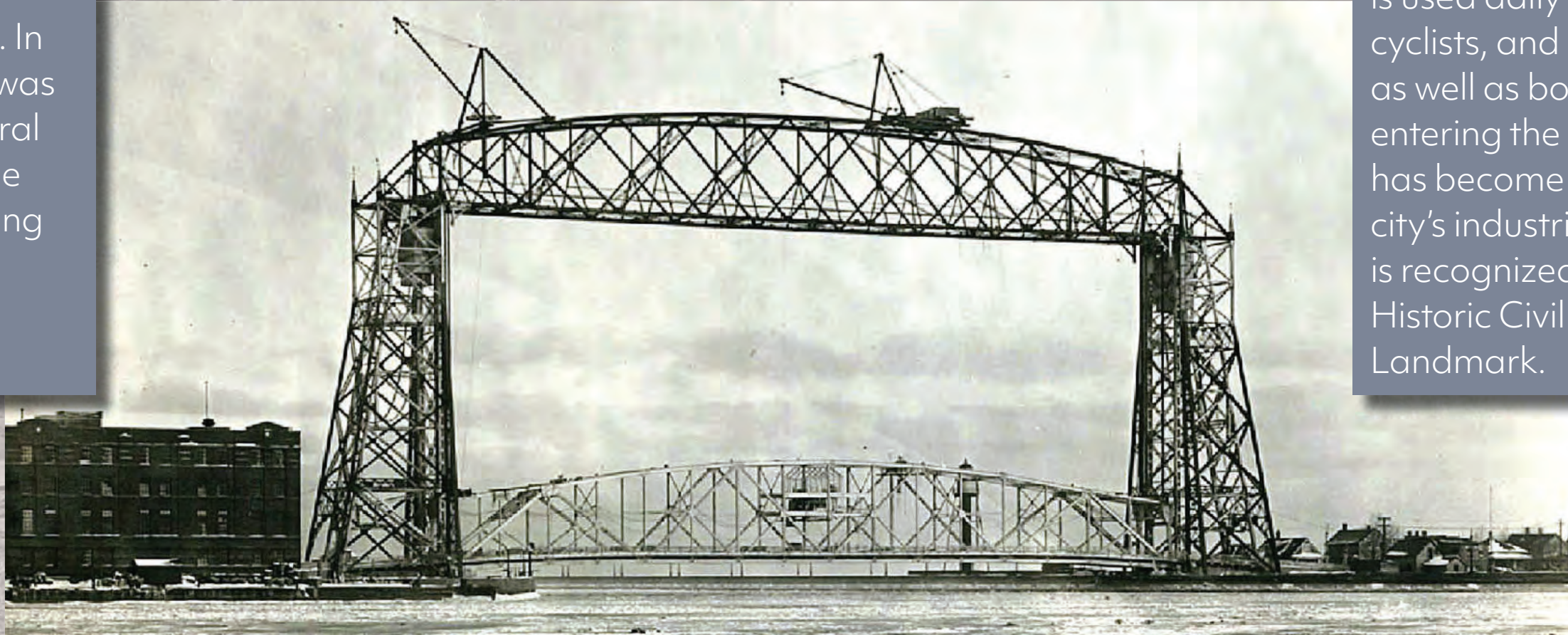
**The Duluth Ship Canal**, built in 1871, improved shipping access to the harbor, but cut off access to the Park Point Neighborhood. This led the City to build an improved crossing that would still allow tall ships to pass beneath.

**The bridge**, designed by Thomas McGilvray, the Duluth City Architect, and engineer Claude Allen Porter Turner was completed in 1905. It was a steel suspension bridge with a horizontal tramway that carried a gondola from one side to the other.

**Over the years**, the Duluth Lift Bridge has undergone several renovations and upgrades to improve its functionality and safety. In 1929-1930, the bridge was modified to add structural supports and replace the tramway with an elevating roadway platform that allows passage for automobiles.



**The Duluth Aerial Bridge, 1905**



**The Duluth Aerial Bridge, 1930**

**Today**, the Duluth Lift Bridge is used daily by vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, as well as boats and ships entering the Duluth Harbor. It has become a symbol of the city's industrial heritage and is recognized as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.



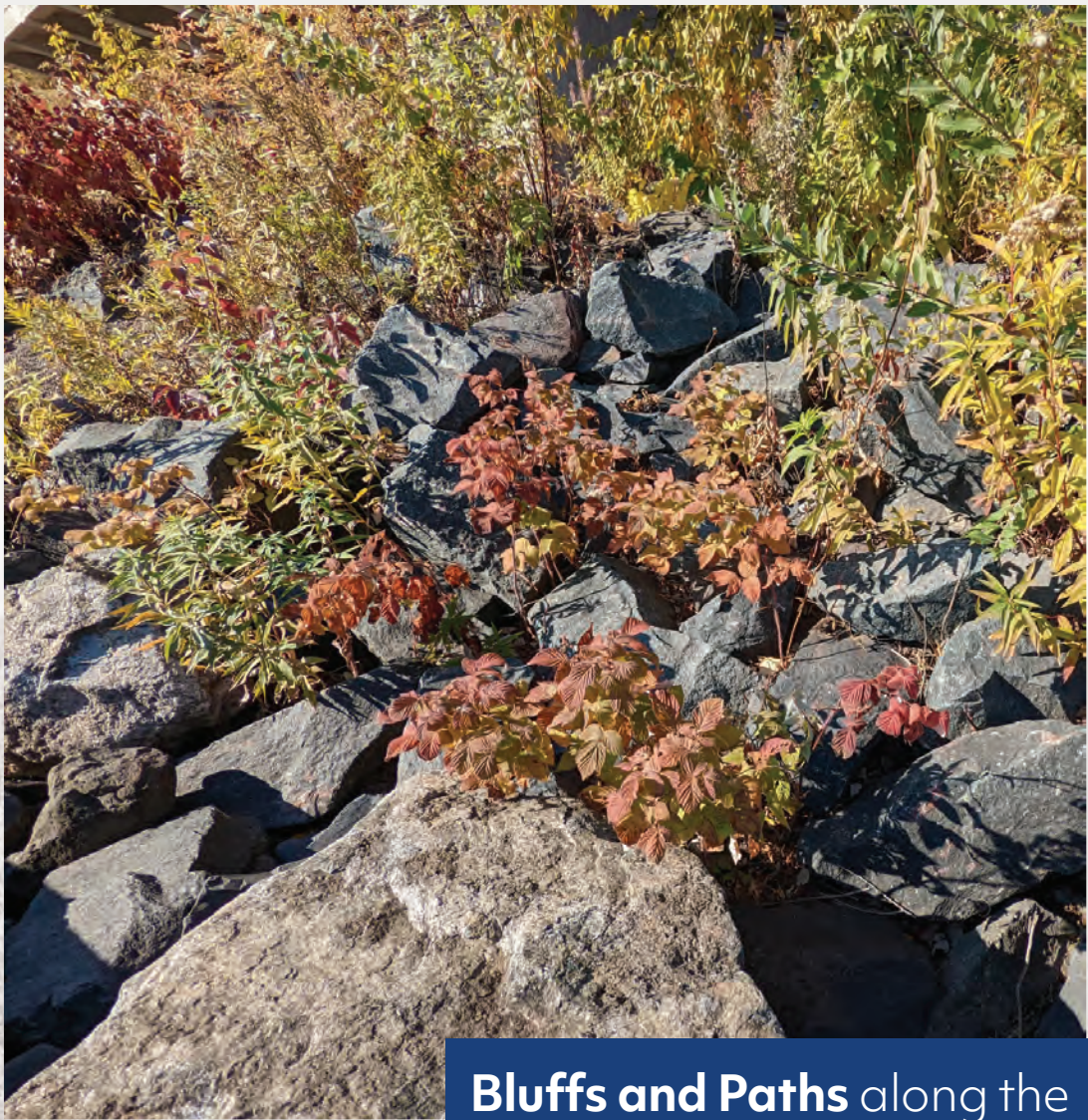
# Coastal Resiliency

The City of Duluth has committed to reconstruct and harden its shoreline to protect the Lakewalk and vital urban infrastructure.

**In 2017 and 2018**, a series of major storms did significant damage to the Lakewalk and Brighton Beach, necessitating their closure to the public. The storms caused an estimated \$30 million dollars in damage and were declared state and federal disasters.



Andrew Slade, Minnesota Environmental Partnership



Samuel Geer

**The City** has embarked on a multi-year process to rebuild the Lakewalk and harden the coastline against increasingly powerful storms. This effort is funded by a collection of local, state, and federal funds to protect the vital infrastructure that sits along Duluth's waterfront.

**Damage to the Lakewalk, 2017**     **Re-vegetation**

**Bluffs and Paths** along the shoreline have seen major erosion and bank failure in recent years. This requires the construction of new coastal revetments and resilient trails. Duluth is also utilizing this opportunity to improve community access to the waterfront, incorporate new parks programming, and to restore North Shore plant communities in areas disturbed by human use.



Samuel Geer

**Reconstructed Lakewalk and Coastal Revetment, 2022**



# The Historic Fitger's Brewery

Duluth's first brewery was built in 1857, but in 1881 the owner built a larger brewery on this site and hired August Fitger, a graduate of one of Germany's finest brewing schools, as their brewmeister.

**Fitger's Beer** quickly became one of the most popular beers in Minnesota, innovating in the sale of bottled beers for export to a larger regional audience. The brewing complex was steadily expanded over the first decades of the 20th century, including a brewery saloon on site. The advent of Prohibition in 1920 upended the brewing business. Fitgers survived this period by transitioning to products such as soda pop and candy, but quickly transitioned back into brewing alcoholic beverages when Prohibition ended in 1933.



A. Fitger & Co's Brewery with horse drawn carts, 1881



Canned Beer, 1935



Postcard of Fitgers

Fitgers Brewing Company

**The Brewery** boomed in the period of the 1930's and 1940's, diversifying its offerings to include champagne and canned beer. The Fitgers / Anneke families sold the brewery in 1944, but the brewery continued operating until 1972 when it closed its doors after 115 years in operation.

**The Fitgers Brewery Complex** reopened in September 1984 with a 48 room hotel, three full service restaurants, and a retail center. In 1995, a group of Duluth business people bought the complex and have improved it to have a spa, luxury suites, a theater, and a brewpub where beer is once again brewed and sold on site.



# The Duluth & Iron Range Railroad

As the iron ore industry developed in Minnesota, this line provided a direct connection to the rapidly growing Iron Range settlements.

**In 1874**, The Duluth & Iron Range Railroad (D&IRR) received a land grant from the Minnesota State Legislature to build a railroad from the Vermilion Range to Duluth. In 1882, the railroad was built along the shortest route from the mining center of Tower Junction to a new port in Two Harbors, eventually being expanded to Duluth

**The D&IRR began operations in 1884**, but in order to fulfill the land grant obligations, a track had to be built to connect Two Harbors and Duluth to satisfy the conditions of the legislation. Completed in 1886, this stretch of rail is what is now known as the Lakefront Line.

**After many changes in ownership**, this line was abandoned in the early 1980's. Historic railroad enthusiasts successfully lobbied for the creation of the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority, which purchased the line with a substantial grant from the State of Minnesota.

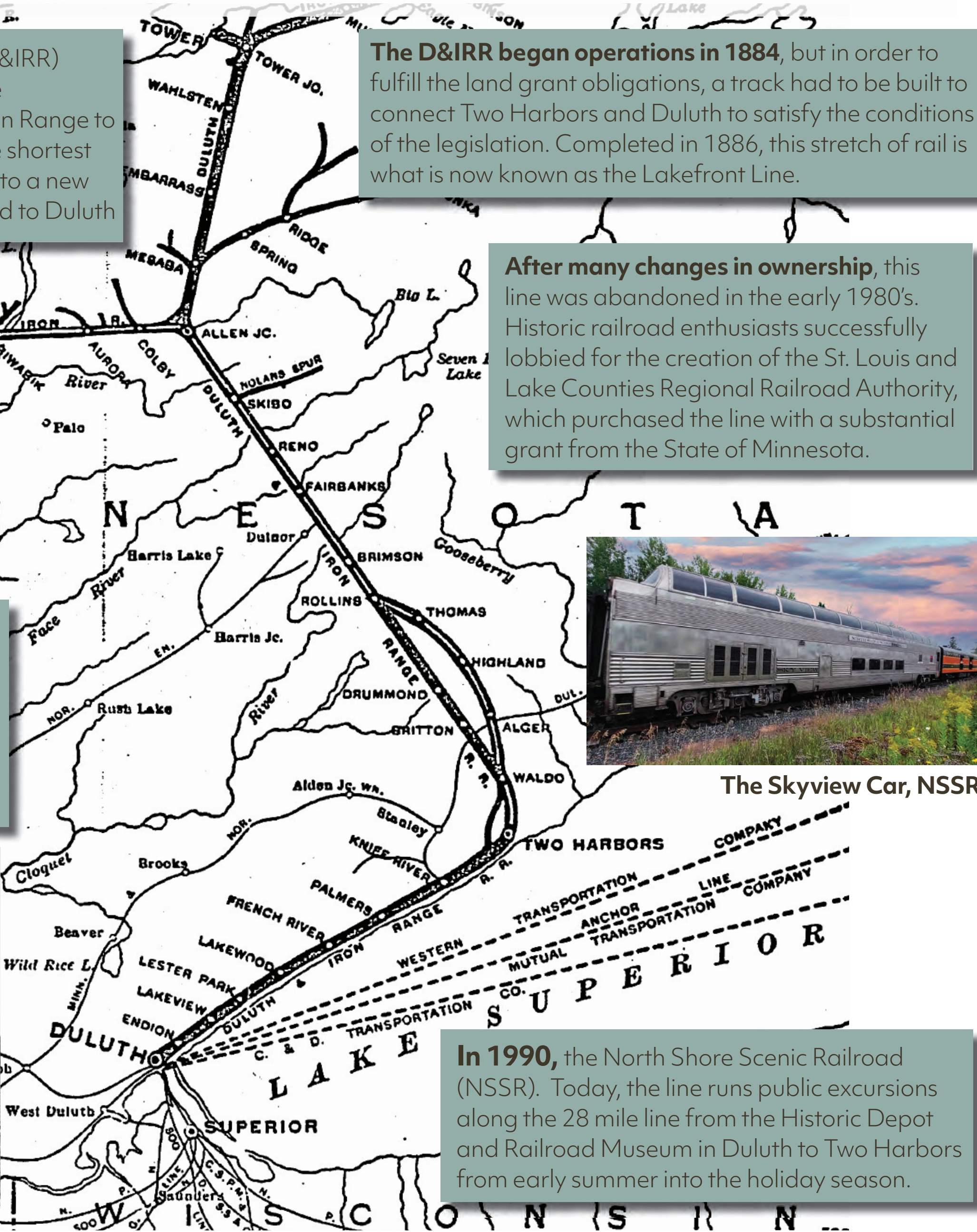
**The Lakefront Line** allowed ore to reach the docks of Duluth & Superior, and also allowed passengers and consumer goods to reach communities in the Iron Range. It also enabled timber floated down the Knife River to reach Duluth's Sawmills and served as a commuter line between Two Harbors & Duluth.



The Skyview Car, NSSR



The Lakefront Line, 1963



The Duluth and Iron Range Railroad, 1931

**In 1990**, the North Shore Scenic Railroad (NSSR). Today, the line runs public excursions along the 28 mile line from the Historic Depot and Railroad Museum in Duluth to Two Harbors from early summer into the holiday season.



# Endion Station

The original location of Endion Station was in the path of Interstate 35 but the building was preserved as a historic landmark.

**Endion Station**, was a passenger train depot in Duluth, built in 1899 as the first stop on the Lakefront Line to Two Harbors. Designed in the Romanesque style by noteworthy local architect I. Vernon Hill, Endion Station is one of the last of its kind. The structure once stood near this location, and was a major hub for commuters from the East End and freight traffic from the North Shore and the Iron Range. In the second half of the 20th Century, rail traffic on the Lakefront Line declined with passenger traffic ceasing in 1961, and the last freight traffic being discontinued in 1978.



**Moving Endion Station, 1986**

**In 1980**, the depot was purchased by a local architect who renovated it for use as an office. Due to the efforts of local rail historians, the Station was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.



**In 1985** the Minnesota Department of Transportation acquired the Depot and planned to demolish it. Because of its status as a historic landmark, State and local officials decided instead to move the Depot to Canal Park in 1986. In 2012, the City of Duluth sold the station, and it now is privately owned.

**Endion Station with Log Train, 1910**



# Cleaning Up the St. Louis River Estuary

The Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) was created in 1971 to treat wastewater and pollution in the Saint Louis River.

**Historically**, the neighborhoods and communities along the estuary used the St. Louis River as a means to dispose of wastewater and industrial pollution, often discharging it directly into the river untreated. This resulted in noxious odors, depleted oxygen, and large fish kills.

**By 1929**, the Minnesota State Board of Health concluded that the condition of the River made it unsuitable for fishing, swimming, and recreational boating.

**The Clean Water Act**, passed in 1972 allowed lawmakers to appropriate funds to build and improve wastewater treatment infrastructure across the country. One hundred million dollars was provided to build the WLSSD wastewater and treatment facilities.

**The St. Louis River Area of Concern**, is an EPA designation that has allowed state, local, and federal partners to direct extensive resources to the river cleanup and remediation activities. The miraculous recovery of the river over the last 30 years is a testament to this effort.

**The WLSSD Treatment Plant** began operating in 1978, consolidating 17 inadequately treated wastewater discharges into one point that met state and federal discharge standards. Water quality in the St. Louis River rapidly improved. By the early 1980s, an increasing number of citizens returned to the river for fishing and recreation. Efforts are underway within the St. Louis River Area of Concern to address the legacy of toxic materials in sediments. With each remedy applied, the water quality is improved.

Western Lake Superior Sanitary District Treatment Facility