

Special Edition

Extra Edition

November 7, 1957

"Mighty Mac" Facts

- Longest suspension bridge in the Western Hemisphere, third longest in the world
- Spans the Straits of Mackinac in Michigan, linking the upper and lower peninsulas
- Michigan Sen. Prentiss M. Brown, "Father of the Mackinac Bridge"
- Dr. David Steinman, designer of Mackinac Bridge
- Herman Ellis, photographer who documented construction process
- First plan for a link between Michigan's peninsulas was a floating tunnel
- Construction period 1954-1957
- Length of bridge 5 miles (26,372 feet)
- Main towers are 552 feet above water
- Total length of wire in main cables: 42,000 miles
- 3,500 workers were employed at the bridge site
- 350 engineers helped build bridge
- 85,000 blueprints made
- 71,300 tons of steel, 466,3000 cubic yards of concrete, 41,000 miles of cable and millions of bolts and steel rivets were used in construction of bridge
- \$99,800,000 in bonds were issued for construction costs
- 155 feet under-clearance at midspan for ships

"Mighty Mac" Bridges the Gap

Not only was Michigan on the brink of statehood in the early 1830s, it was also on the brink of war with Ohio. It was a bloodless boundary dispute over a seven mile strip of land that was claimed by both states. The federal government proposed a compromise; the Toledo land parcel went to Ohio, and Michigan was awarded all the peninsula lying north of the Straits.

Lower Michigan residents felt like they had gotten the short end of the stick: who would want the remote land that couldn't even be accessed?

Officials had to find a way to transport people and vehicles between the two peninsulas if business and tourism were going to flourish.

In 1887, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt met with a group of investors at the first board meeting of the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island. Vanderbilt told the investors: "We now have the largest well-equipped hotel of its kind in the world for short season business. Now what we need is a bridge across the straits."

Although the idea for a bridge began in the 1880s, it wasn't until years later that the Mackinac Bridge Authority was established to determine the feasibility of building a bridge to close the gap between the upper and lower portions of Michigan. Meanwhile, ferry service was established to transport people across the state.

In 1953, the Authority issued more than \$99 million dollars to private investors. Construction began in May of 1954.

A Great Engineering Achievement

David B. Steinman was a brilliant designer who earned his PhD before he was 20. He was the son of immigrant workers and grew up beneath the shadows of the Brooklyn Bridge. Steinman's family had little money and he had to work to put himself through City College of New York and Columbia University, where he completed his PhD in Civil Engineering.

Steinman designed the Mackinac Bridge to withstand extreme weather conditions ranging from ice pressure, to wind velocity and gravity. Throughout his career, Steinman has designed over 400 bridges in the United States, Thailand, England, Italy, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Canada, Korea, and Iraq, but considered his design of the "Mighty Mac" as his crowning achievement.

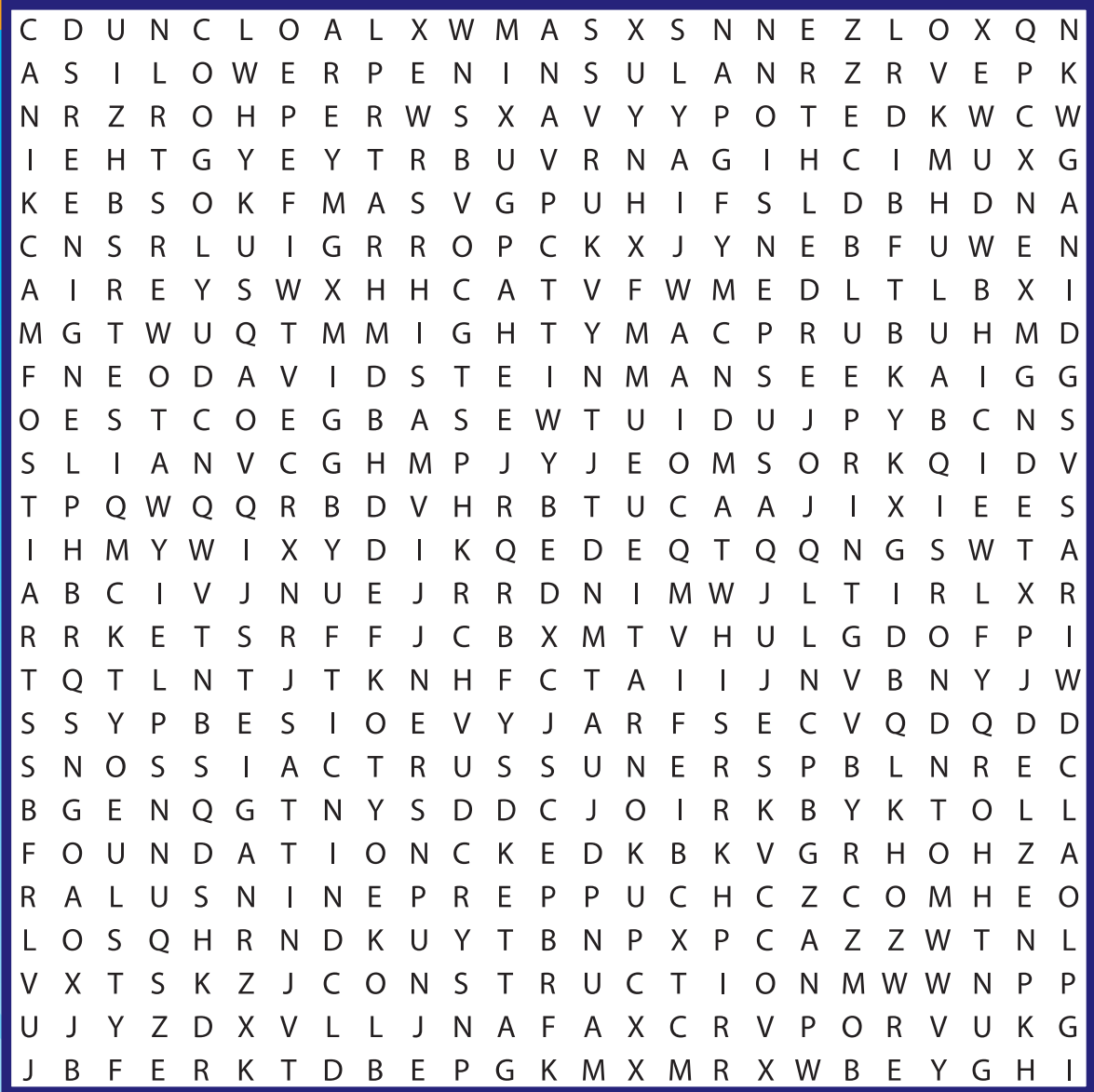


Mackinac Bridge designer, Dr. David B. Steinman

"A bridge is a poem stretched across a river, a symphony of stone and steel" - Quote from poem of Dr. David B. Steinman

Discovering the Mighty Mac!

The words at the bottom of this page are related to the Mackinac Bridge. Look for these words across, down, and diagonally. Some words may even be spelled backwards. Have fun!



MACKINAC BRIDGE
 STRAITS OF MACKINAC
 GRID
 TOLL
 ENGINEERS
 BLUE PRINT

CONSTRUCTION
 TRUSS
 STEEL
 PRENTIS BROWN
 MICHIGAN
 BOLTS

CAISSONS
 LOWER PENINSULA
 UPPER PENINSULA
 DESIGNER
 FOUNDATION
 DAVID STEINMAN

RIVETS
 CABLES
 CONCRETE
 ARCHITECT
 SUSPENSION
 TOWERS
 MIGHTY MAC

Did You Know?

At 80 feet long, the Mini Mac Bridge is the single largest exhibit at the Detroit Science Center. More than 20,000 "mini-rivets" and 2,500 feet of cable went into the construction of the Mini Mac. Its color scheme is authentic Mackinac Bridge Green and Off-White. American Bridge Company, constructor of the Mackinac Bridge, supported the construction of the Mini Mac Bridge.

