

## **The Mackinaw Bridge**

### **Much More Than a Bridge Connecting Two Peninsulas**

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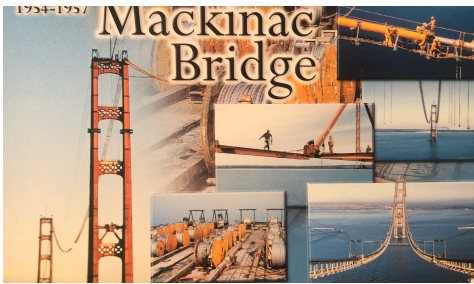
As early as the mid 1880s, the idea of a bridge connecting the Lower and Upper Peninsulas of Michigan was born. This was the result of the region becoming an important transportation, commerce as well as a tourist mecca. For many years, a railroad car ferry service via the straits of Mackinaw provided the only means by which the two peninsulas were connected.

For various reasons, there was no formal action on the engineering and construction of an alternative to the ferry operation until the early 1950s' at which time the State legislature of

Michigan authorized the sale of bonds for the bridge construction<sup>(1)</sup>. Opening in late 1957 to traffic, car ferry service was ultimately abandoned.



Car Ferry connecting Upper and Lower Peninsulas of Michigan. Courtesy MDOT/ Mackinaw Bridge Authority



Postcard showing building of the bridge which spans five miles of open water known as the Straits of Mackinaw. Shown at 43%

Today, the 'Mighty Mac'...the longest suspension bridge between anchorages

in the Western Hemisphere <sup>(2)</sup> and the fifth longest suspension bridge in the world, not only serves as an easy crossing between peninsulas, but is also a tourist attraction bringing thousands of people to Michigan every year. For example, following the precedent set by G. Mennen Williams, the governor of Michigan during the bridge construction, upwards of ten thousand individuals now accompany the current governor of Michigan who leads the annual five mile labour day walk across the bridge, normally not accessible to pedestrians.



First Day Cover showing cache of bridge, indicia and cache showing both upper and lower peninsulas and plate block composition. Shown at 70%  
Scott # 1109

In addition the bridge has also become a destination point for bridge aficionados eager to see the 'Big Mac's' special engineering and to birdwatchers from the region yearning to add a new bird to their life list.



Overhead view showing twin towers and perspective of main span between towers of 3800 ft. Shown at 116% Scott #4438

The bridge also plays host to a yearly tractor bridge ride where upwards of 1500 tractors from multiple states, in perhaps the world's longest tractor parade, cross the bridge below its main structure that towers 550 feet high. This in addition to the annual September 'Trek the Mighty Mac' event when Off Road Vehicles, in a one of a kind parade have the opportunity to cross the bridge which forms a portion of the U.S. North Country National Scenic Trail.

Recognized as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, 'Big Mac' is truly a bridge not only connecting two peninsulas, but a bridge to enjoy for a wide array of reasons.

References: 1Wikipedia, 2 Mackinaw Bridge Authority Website, MDOT. Exhibitor Information: [vscs@marshallfiber.com](mailto:vscs@marshallfiber.com)  
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