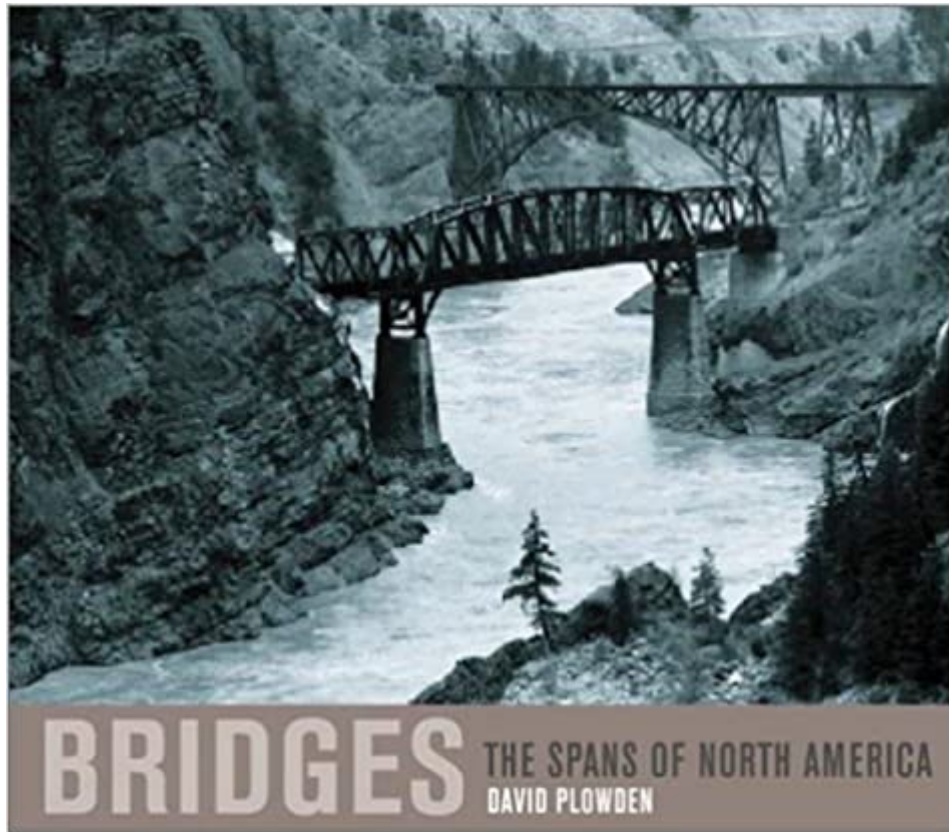




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Bridges: The Spans Of North America



Synopsis

Whether built of stone, brick, wood, iron, steel, or concrete, bridges have captivated our imaginations more than any other man-made structures. Whether built of wood, stone, iron, steel, or concrete, bridges have captivated our imaginations more than any other man-made structures. In David Plowden's words, "there is no more overt, powerful, or rational expression of accomplishment—of man's ability to build." And Americans, in particular, have excelled in this structural art. This book explores in depth how, when, where, and by whom the most important North American bridges were built. Over 185 of Plowden's superb photographs allow us to dwell on the most important scientific and aesthetic qualities of each bridge. In addition, Plowden has included original designs and drawings of structures—some unbuilt, gone, or dramatically altered—illuminating less obvious aspects of these engineering marvels and introducing us to bridges we otherwise would never have seen. In his extensive text, Plowden vividly records the discoveries, misconceptions, struggles, failures, and triumphs of the men who dedicated their energies to bridge design and construction. In the more than twenty-five years since this classic book was first published, bridges have been lost, and others have been built; some of the best examples of new bridges are included in this new, revised edition. All the photographs have been reprinted to achieve the best duotone reproduction. With this new edition, *Bridges* is the most thorough and beautiful volume ever published on the subject—a passionate and powerful argument for our continued reverence of these wonderful structures. Over 185 photographs

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Customer Reviews

David Plowden is the author of more than twenty photography books, including *Bridges: The Spans of North America*, *Vanishing Point: Fifty Years of Photography*, and *Requiem for Steam*. He lives in Winnetka, Illinois.

Bridges have fascinated me for years...the construction, the methods of moving traffic over rivers and gorges, the many different "styles" of bridges and where they are on maps. My grandfather was an iron worker on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (the old bridge which I think is gone now and a new bridge lives.) This wonderful book of photographs has all kinds of bridges and each seems to be unique in its location. Plowden did a fine job selecting each of the bridges with commentary for each. I love this book!!!!

I bought this book because I like to see pictures of beautiful bridges, and I knew the author's reputation for great photography. However, there was a huge bonus -- the author's entertaining and informative stories behind the building of the important and/or beautiful bridges. Some parts of the descriptions could be dry at times but it is easy to skip to the next paragraph if you fell like you're getting bogged down. He also devotes time to why the bridge was important in the development of bridge architecture. Plus, you'll get stories about the people who designed and built the bridges. The author clearly has a love affair with this form of architecture -- he sees the art as well as the functionality aspects of b ridge building. Highly recommended.

Great book I gave it for gift to friend who builds bridges.He loved it.

America's bridges are beautiful. This book provides a history of the materials used for construction, the designs of a great many American engineers, and photos of many, many bridges. There is also a comparison of the bridges of America and those of Europe. Now somebody needs to bring all this up through the outstanding bridges of very recent years.

We bridge difficulties. We like a bridge over troubled waters. We needed a bridge into the new millennium. Bridges have a hold on us in a way that other examples of civil engineering do not. And we often don't notice them as we use them. Although I had traveled on the Natchez Trace Parkway

many times, upheld by a bridge in Franklin, Tennessee, I had never looked down and appreciated the span until alerted to it a couple of years ago. It is a beautiful, big, parabolic concrete arch which I now get off and admire fairly often. According to *_Bridges: The Spans of North America_* (Norton) by David Plowden, I am not alone. This bridge "is unlike any heretofore built in America and has been the recipient of innumerable awards." Calling attention to the bridges we take for granted, and telling a history of American bridge building, Plowden's book is fittingly big, and displays his beautiful black and white pictures in large format, splendidly reproduced. It is properly sized for the coffee table, but the text is appropriately comprehensive, and as worth reading as the pictures are worth admiring. *_Bridges_* is divided into chronological sections based on the materials used: stone and brick; wood; iron; steel (divided into three time periods, since there are so many steel bridges); and concrete. Erecting a stone bridge was expensive and time consuming, especially compared to using wood. There are more miles of wooden bridges than any other type in America, although Plowden has little good to say about the "cult of the covered bridge" which has obscured the trusswork he thinks is the important part of these wooden bridges. Iron was used for bridges for only a short time, and iron bridges are the rarest of bridge artifacts. Concrete bridges are the way to go for the main bridge-building impetus in America, the highway system. Reinforced concrete does extremely well for piers to hold bridges up, as well as for the flats that carry traffic. Plowden spends many pages on the most famous type of bridge, the steel spans, and his pictures of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Brooklyn Bridge present them in new ways, and he hurtles through the engrossing stories of their construction because they are relatively familiar. The stories of lesser known bridges, such as the wonderful Eads bridge in St. Louis (built by Captain James Eads, of few engineering credentials and no bridge experience) bring to light many surprising difficulties and solutions the bridge builders came up with. Plowden's history serves as a demonstration of engineering problem-solving. Each bridge is unique in purpose, location, and difficulties of completion. This is true even in replacement bridges. Many of these beautiful photographs show bridges that are no longer existent. There have been bridge failures, of course, but usually bridges built in the nineteenth century show signs of distress, and are called out of commission. Sometimes railroads simply no longer need a particular link. There are, however, new vistas for bridge building, especially in the straits and bays that have needed bridges and now have proposals for bridges meeting new engineering and economic abilities previously unavailable. Plowden is confident that utility will continue to be combined with beauty, and his handsome book supports such confidence.

In his Preface, Plowden writes "One does not need to be an engineer to appreciate the idea of a

bridge, or its beauty; there is no more overt, powerful, or rational expression of man's ability to build." He then goes on to convincingly demonstrate the truth of his assertion. Featuring a large selection of 11" x 10" B&W photos (some a century and a half old), he uses them to brilliantly complement his authoritative text. The only fault I can find with the book is that there are no color photos. But my gripe is minor when compared to the rewards of reading through this masterpiece of bridge literature. A 'must read' for anyone interested in North American bridges.

I have the first edition from 1974 and all photos are in black and white. I didn't realize there was an older edition when I bought in used, online from an competitor. I would not have bought it had I known I was getting an almost 40-yr old book.

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