



# The Bridge at Quebec

*William D. Middleton*

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In the middle of the 19th century the leaders of the City of Québec dreamed of a great bridge across the St. Lawrence River. It would link their city to the new railway lines developing along the south shore, giving Québec a competitive edge in its long struggle with Montréal for commercial dominance.

The width and depth of the St. Lawrence necessitated a bridge of unprecedented scale, and many of the best engineers of the time turned their attention to the problem. Three serious proposals for a bridge never materialized. A fourth plan finally moved ahead at the beginning of the 20th century, only to end in one of the greatest construction failures of all time. In 1907 the incomplete structure collapsed into the river with a loss of 75 lives. From the ruins of this first attempt emerged still another plan. In 1916, when the great bridge was nearing completion, tragedy struck again. As the huge center span was being lifted into place, it fell into the river, taking another 11 lives. It was not until a year later that a replacement was installed, and the great bridge was finally complete.

Today the Québec Bridge stands firmly astride the St. Lawrence, safely carrying the commerce of Canada across its broad waters. No one has yet built a longer cantilever span, so the bridge still ranks as the greatest of its kind.

The Bridge at Québec provides a full account of the long effort to build a bridge at this difficult site, with particular emphasis on the extraordinary story of the failure of the first one, the human tragedies that accompanied it, and the lessons that its story holds today for engineers and builders as they continue to extend the boundaries of technology. Fully illustrated, the book makes clear to the general reader and technical audiences alike the engineering issues involved in constructing one of the world's greatest bridges.

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