

"You may think you know northeastern Minnesota, but I bet you'll be surprised at the things you'll learn from this guidebook. Enjoy the trip."

From the introduction by Cathy Wurzer

"One of the most competent and comprehensive ever undertaken . . . its informal, chatty style makes it first rate reading about one of America's treasured spots—the Minnesota Arrowhead Country."

Duluth Herald and News Tribune, November 1941



In the 1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, the federal government put thousands of unemployed writers to work in the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Out of their efforts came the American Guide series, the first comprehensive guidebooks to the people, resources, and traditions of each state in the union.

*The WPA Guide to the Minnesota Arrowhead Country* is a vivid word-picture of the northeastern part of the state, long famed for the breathtaking beauty of its landscape, the colorful variety of its ethnic groups, and the worldwide impact of its industries. First published in 1941, this unique guide has much more than nostalgia to offer today's readers. Forty-seven city, town, and village profiles; fifteen canoe trips; and four auto tours tell the stories of the region's people and places and offer a fascinating alternative to freeway travel. Essays on major themes such as native peoples, history, architecture, transportation, and recreation provide an authentic self-portrait of the 1940s Minnesota Arrowhead Country in humorous, loving, and literary prose. In a new introduction, Minnesota Public Radio's Cathy Wurzer shares the story behind this guidebook's creation—from the two politically active women who edited it to the group of businessmen and boosters who helped get it published.

This time-traveler's guide to the Minnesota Arrowhead Country is an evocative reminder of the state's history and a challenge to contemporary readers who seek to find how that past lives on in the present day.

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The WPA Guide to the MINNESOTA ARROWHEAD COUNTRY

THE WPA GUIDE TO THE  
MINNESOTA

# Arrowhead

COUNTRY

The  
FEDERAL  
WRITERS' PROJECT  
Guide to  
**1940s**  
MINNESOTA



INTRODUCTION BY  
CATHY WURZER

*Aladdin and His Lamp* was the first production as a separate organization in its own building, then at 114 N. 15th Ave. E.

*L. on 23rd Ave. E. to 2nd St.; L. to 19th Ave. E.*

THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM (L), 1832 E. 2nd St., is housed in a rebuilt residence donated by Mrs. Archibald Chisholm. The exhibits were moved there in 1935, after five years in Salter School. With a wide range of exhibits (*open daily except Sun. and holidays 9 a. m. to 5 p. m., Wed. and Sat. 9 a. m. to 12*), the Museum is a valuable visual aid in the education of public school students. Outstanding relics are a paint brush used by Rosa Bonheur and a glass once belonging to George Washington. Children, assisted by the staff, study the displays, draw pictures and make notes.

*R. to E. 4th St.; R. on E. 4th St. to Hawthorne Rd.*

Tudor-style EAST JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (R), cor. 4th St., completed in 1927, offers an inspiring view of Lake Superior from its classroom windows.

*R. on Hawthorne Rd. (31st Ave. E.); L. on Superior St.*

Picturesque 35-acre CONGDON PARK (R and L), bet. 32nd and 33rd Aves. E., is cut by driveways on both sides of Tischer Creek.

A modern, comprehensive playground, ORDEAN FIELD (R), cor. 40th Ave. E., covers 28 acres, has a field house and a brick, 7,000-seat stadium, football and baseball fields, tennis courts, cinder track and jumping and vaulting pits.

*R. on 60th Ave. E. (see DULUTH TOUR 4); L. on London Rd.*

The only hatchery under Federal control on Lake Superior, the U. S. FISH HATCHERY (R), 6008 London Rd., is the largest in Minnesota. Open daily from 8 a. m. to 5 p. m., the hatchery has young trout which can be seen in outdoor troughs, and pike and whitefish in indoor tanks. Both the Federal Government and the State Conservation Department cooperate in the work, raising fingerlings from eggs taken from State hatcheries or purchased from other States. Most of the species indigenous to the Great Lakes and to the smaller lakes and streams of this locality are distributed from the hatchery.

*Cross Lester River Bridge.*

(L) BRIGHTON BEACH MUNICIPAL TOURIST CAMP.

KITCHI GAMMI PARK (L and R), bet. E. Lester Blvd. (61st Ave. E.) and Lakewood Rd. (81st Ave. E.) has 153 acres of native trees and several species foreign to Minnesota, with excellent picnic sites along the lake.

*(Retrace to 60th Ave. E. and continue on Duluth Tour 4.)*

## TOUR 2

### MINNESOTA POINT, 7 miles.

*S. from Superior St. on Lake Ave. S.*

At 301 Lake Ave. S. (R) is the MARSHALL-WELLS COMPANY, in the heart of the wholesale district. This company is the largest hardware jobber and distributor in the Northwest.

The U. S. ENGINEERS OFFICE (L), 600 Lake Ave. S. (*open daily except Sun. and holidays 9 a. m. to 4:30 p. m., Sat. 8 a. m. to 12*), has jurisdiction over the Duluth district, from the Lake Superior watershed east to Iroquois Point, just above the Soo Locks. It supervises navigation and power development and oversees all phases of river and harbor improvement. It is a cream brick and gray stone building. On the lawn is a bronze PLAQUE which memorializes Du Lhut's crossing of Minnesota Point in 1679.

Unique among Duluth's structures is the AERIAL LIFT BRIDGE, spanning the Duluth Ship Canal at the base of Minnesota Point. It uses the overhead structure and towers of the original Aerial Bridge, built in 1905 from plans drawn by C. A. P. Turner of Minneapolis. Its electrically operated car, suspended from cables, could carry a load of six vehicles and 350 passengers across the channel. It was replaced by the present structure in 1930, having by that time become inadequate to accommodate the growing traffic to and from the mainland. This new bridge, which operates as a lift span, is 510 feet long, with a vertical clearance of 138 feet to permit lake steamers to pass into the bay. Two 450-ton concrete blocks counter-balance the 900-ton lift. The electrically-operated machinery is extremely rapid in its action, raising the span 120 feet in 55 seconds.

Throughout the shipping season, tourists congregate here to watch boats pass under the bridge. Three hoarse whistle blasts from an approaching ship evoke three answering blasts from the bridge, the entire span rises as the counterweights descend, and the ship slides ponderously through the canal.

MINNESOTA POINT (Park Point) across the bridge, is a community on an island, with a modern school, homes and stores, community building and fire department. This curiously-formed strip of land has small, constantly-moving sand dunes, which often bury vegetation. Legend has it that a storm once blew away an Indian graveyard near the far end of the Point. (*See Folklore and Festivals.*)

*R. on 10th St.*

With docking accommodations and storage space for boats up to 50 feet in length, the DULUTH BOAT CLUB occupies a large frame building at the west end of 10th St. Julius H. Barnes, nationally-prominent Duluthian, donated the natatorium.

*Retrace on 10th St.; R. on Lake Ave. S.*

The U. S. COAST GUARD STATION AND WATCHTOWER (R), 1225 Lake Ave. S. (*open*), fronts on both lake and harbor.

*Retrace on Lake Ave. S.; L. on 12th St.*

At the west end of 12th St. is the U. S. NAVAL BASE.

*R. on Minnesota Ave.*

The MINNESOTA POINT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (R and L), 4300 Minnesota Ave., is a well-equipped recreation center covering 200 acres. It sustains 400 varieties of plant life including Black Hill spruce, Scotch pine and birch trees. Here is Duluth's most popular bathing beach, with a modern bathhouse completed in 1939. Duluthians prefer to swim on cloudy, windy days, and like best to go in during or soon after

a northeaster; though the atmosphere may be cool, the wind will have carried the warmer surface water in shore.

Development of the Minnesota Point recreation area on a comprehensive plan already has provided an athletic field, a large amusement center, picnic grounds with tables to accommodate several hundred persons, and parking space for hundreds of cars. A weather-beaten brick ruin, **REMAINS OF THE FIRST LIGHTHOUSE** at the head of the lakes, stands at the southern tip of Minnesota Point. R. H. Barrett, who clerked in George Stuntz's trading post (*see Duluth*), was its first keeper. He blew an old-fashioned warning horn to signal approaching boats in foggy weather. The spot is still the "zero" point for marine surveys.

### TOUR 3

#### WESTERN DULUTH, 19.6 miles.

*N. from Superior St. on Lake Ave. N.; L. on 2nd st.*

The **DULUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY** (R), cor. 1st Ave. W. (*open week days 9 a. m. to 9 p. m., Sun. and holidays 2 to 9 p. m.*), occupies a two-story building of Port Wing stone in Grecian design, erected in 1902 through funds donated by Andrew Carnegie. The city's first library consisted of a small collection in a reading room at 106 West Superior Street. This served for 20 years, but was destroyed by fire in 1889. A year later, a library board was appointed and \$500 appropriated for books. The library was opened in the old Masonic Temple building, corner Second Avenue West and Superior Street, where it was housed until the present building was erected. In addition to the main library, there are seven branches and numerous stations. Of its more than 150,000 volumes, many are in foreign languages.

*R. on 3rd Ave. W.*

The **FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH** (L), 215 N. 3rd Ave. W., of red sandstone in a Gothic design, had the first chimes in the city. The carillon consists of ten bells that can be played in two keys.

*Retrace on 3rd Ave. W.*

The **WOLVIN BUILDING** (L), cor. 1st St., houses the offices of the United States Steel Corporation and its subsidiaries.

The **DULUTH BOARD OF TRADE** (R), cor. 1st St., is the largest export market of spring wheat in the United States and one of the two largest primary spring wheat markets; it handles grain from Minnesota, the Dakotas and Montana.

*R. on Superior St.*

The **MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING** (L), 324 W. Superior St., 14 stories high, of white stone, is Duluth's most modern office building. The main entrance is two stories high with black marble pilasters on each side. Lobby walls are marble, floors black granite, and the ceiling is finished in golf leaf.

The **DULUTH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** occupies most of the second floor of the building.

*R. on 4th Ave. W.; L. on 1st St.*

The **DULUTH HERALD AND NEWS-TRIBUNE PLANT** (L), 420 W. 1st St., publishes Duluth's two largest daily newspapers.

Three impressive granite buildings make up the **CIVIC CENTER** (R), bet. 4th and 6th Aves. W.: the **FEDERAL BUILDING** (built 1930), **ST. LOUIS COUNTY COURTHOUSE** (1910), and **CITY HALL** (1927). The center was designed by Daniel H. Burnham of Chicago.

On the fourth floor of the Courthouse is the **ST. LOUIS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM AND LIBRARY** (*open daily except Sun. and holidays 8 a. m. to 4 p. m., Sat. 8:30 a. m. to 12*). Here the visitor may examine maps, books, war records, and artifacts of St. Louis County. There is a valuable display of Indian paintings and sketches by Eastman Johnson, who visited the Arrowhead country back in the 1850's.

The **SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' MONUMENT**, *Patriotism Guarding the Flag*, stands in front of the Courthouse. It was designed by Cass Gilbert.

*L. on 5th Ave. W.; R. on Superior St.*

The **DULUTH AUTOMOBILE CLUB** (L) is at 600 W. Superior St. The **NORTHERN BIBLE SOCIETY** (R), 715 W. Superior St. (*open daily except Sunday 9 a. m. to 5 p. m.*), has a notable display of Bibles and Testaments, the private collection of the Reverend Henry Ramseyer, secretary of the society. The collection includes a first edition of the King James Bible, 1611; a seventeenth-century Hebrew scroll written by hand on 52 sheepskins; an Archbishop Cranmer's Bible, 1541; a Luther's Bible, set in Gothic type, 1560. Represented in the collection are 550 languages, 60 alphabets and phonetic scripts.

Where Mesaba Ave. intersects Superior St. was once an **INDIAN VILLAGE**.

Duluth gabbro with glacial markings outcrops at **POINT OF ROCKS** (R), bet. 8th and 14th Aves. W. At 10th Ave. W. and Michigan St. is a tunnel driven 375 feet through solid rock. It was opened many years ago by a group of men who hoped to find silver in paying quantities. The project finally was abandoned, but not until after an estimated \$30,000 in silver and copper had been taken out.

*L. on Garfield Ave. (16th Ave. W.).*

The **PEAVEY-DULUTH GRAIN ELEVATOR** (L), 900 Garfield Ave. (*not open to visitors*) is the largest in Duluth, its 310 tanks having a capacity of 7,500,000 bushels. It is equipped to unload 180 cars a day. Most of Duluth's elevators are in this district.

The **INTERSTATE BRIDGE** (*toll: cars, 10¢; passengers, 5¢*), leading to Superior, Wisconsin, was completed in 1898. Both highway and railway traffic are carried over the 2,142-foot structure.

*Retrace on Garfield Ave., which becomes Piedmont Ave. at Superior St.; L. on 1st St.*

The **CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH** (R), 2001 W. 1st St., has a removable suspension roof, anchored by cables to concrete piers in the ground, and a sanctuary floor that can be tilted forward or backward on a central axle.