

# Canal Park Courier

www.canalparkcourier.com

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Volume 77/Number 16

## A Room at the Top

By Matthew R. Perrine  
Courier Staff Writer

Despite its iconic stature and massive size, Duluth's Aerial Lift Bridge can be raised with the push of a button.

It's like a big elevator," said Ryan Beamer, the bridge's supervisor.

The bridge, which is owned and operated by the city of Duluth, employs 10 operators (including Beamer's position). Their "office" is the bridge's pilot house, a booth that hangs over traffic crossing the shipping canal from Canal Park to Minnesota Point.

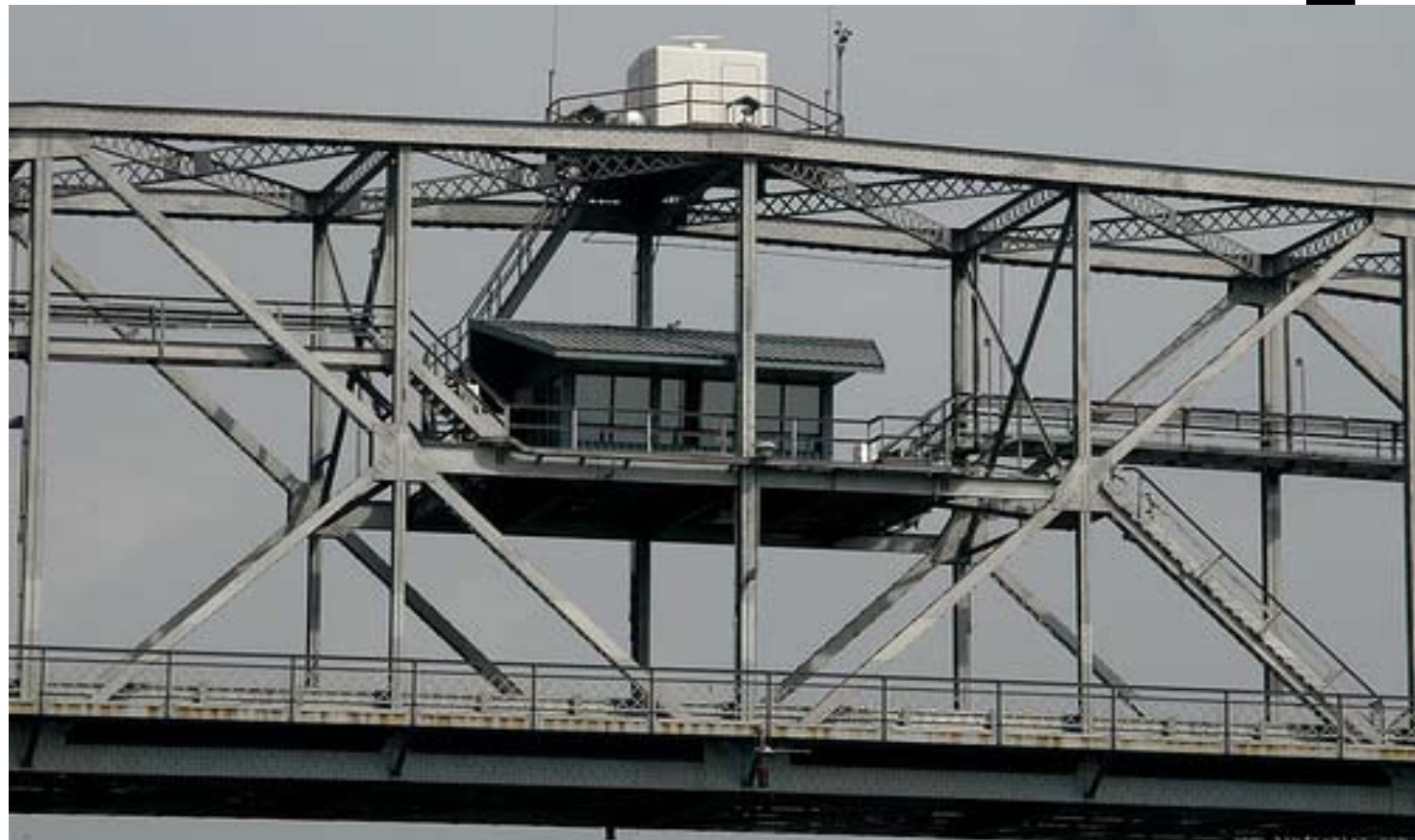
"One of the bigger problems we have is heavy vehicles driving across over the speed limit," Beamer said. "The speed limit's 15 mph, and you'll get loaded dump trucks doing 30. We've had coffee slosh out of the coffee pot."

And coffee is the lifeblood of the operators. One of their three rotating shifts runs from 11:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.

More importantly, speeding — even if it doesn't seem excessive — takes its toll on the 101-year-old bridge.

"People don't realize that they are creating a great deal of wear and tear on the bridge just by going fast," he continued. "You can have a perfectly calm day and a single jogger running across can get the bridge shaking."

That's not to discredit the bridge's operating prowess, though.



The pilot house used to raise and lower the Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge. Photo: Jim Frazier

"There's no time that we can't operate the bridge," Beamer said. "You know, it doesn't get so cold that the bridge doesn't work."

"You'll get 30, 40, 50 mph wind raining sideways. If it's really nice, that happens in late November and it freezes to the bridge. So you add tons of ice to the bridge, and you try to operate and it goes [makes a churning mechanical noise]."

Beamer first got involved with the operation of the bridge after completing nine years in the Navy. Because of his experience there as an electronics technician in nuclear submarines, he met the job's eclectic

qualifications.

In addition to experience with metal work, electronics and computers, Beamer said you have to be able to do plumbing, electrical work and carpentry.

"You kind of have to be a jack-of-all-trades," he said.

In April 2005, he succeeded Steve Douville as the bridge's supervisor — a position Douville had held since 1982.

"If we didn't have thick skin, we'd get stressed out pretty easily," Beamer said.

He said when it gets busy, there's the ship traffic, and then there's the (sometimes impatient) vehicle and foot traffic. And, as it happens, the local shipping industry's busiest months coincide nicely with Canal Park's busy

tourist season.

"Saturdays and Sundays in the middle of the summer get stressful," he said. "You don't sit down. You are constantly standing there, watching traffic, watching boats, watching pedestrians and keeping everybody safe."

Survival of the fittest?

Beamer said one of the biggest problems the operators face are people going underneath the bridge on the sidewalk and trying to hang on as it rises.

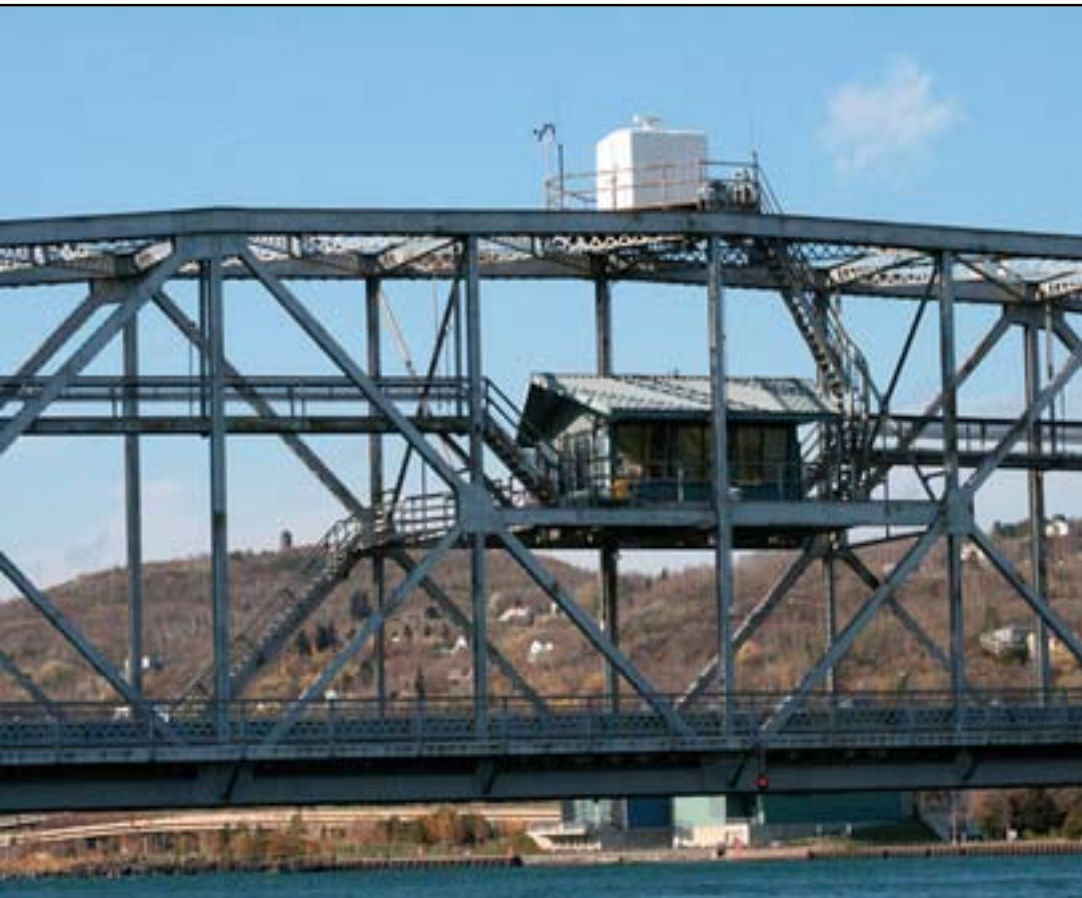
"You see people picking up their kid to hang on the bridge as it goes up, and you don't realize that it moves about a foot a second," Beamer said. "You know, pretty

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Aerial Lift Bridge Supervisor Ryan Beamer goes through the motions for raising the bridge.

Photo: Matthew R. Perrine



The Lift Bridge pilot house while bridge is at road level. Photo: Matthew R. Perrine

# First Ship of New Year Arrives

**DULUTH**, Minn. (AP) \_

There's a sign of spring even as a blizzard is forecast to hit Duluth. The first ship of the 2008 St. Lawrence Seaway navigation season is about to arrive.

The Hong Kong-flagged Gadwall is expected to pass under the Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge sometime Thursday.

The Gadwall will head to the CHS grain facility in Superior, Wisconsin, to load about 23,000 short tons of wheat destined for Portugal.

The new, 607-foot bulk carrier was built in 2007 in China and is operated by Canfornav Limited, headquartered in Mon-

treal.

The Welland Canal section of the St. Lawrence Seaway opened this year to vessel traffic on March 20. That tied a record set in 2007 as the earliest start of a regular shipping season since the seaway opened in 1959.

Right: A ship heading through the canal and under the lift bridge.

Photo: Jim Frazier

## Room

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soon you're high enough to where 'Oh God, I shouldn't let go' turns to 'Oh God, I better let go,' and now you're up another five feet."

Still, it's a fascination. Beamer said people attempting to hang on remains a daily occurrence during the summer months — despite at least one death.

"The longest people can hold on in a dead hang is maybe two minutes," he said, "and the shortest lift that we make is about three."

He recalled the story of two buddies messing around underneath the bridge one day. As one attempted to "hitch a ride," the other stayed on the concrete below and tried to catch him when he got too high. The one who fell lost his life, while his friend on the ground suffered broken legs.

"You have to be vigi-

lant or people get hurt," Beamer said.

The bridge is now equipped with a number of safety precautions, including numerous video cameras scattered throughout (the accompanying monitors adorn a panel inside the pilot house). Before the bridge can lift for vessel traffic, the operator must change the traffic lights to red, lower the gates to vehicle and foot traffic and check all the cameras to make sure people aren't hanging on underneath.

"And then all you do is press the raise button," he said.

But before the operator can relax and enjoy the view, there's always one more chance for shenanigans.

"On the rare occasion that somebody jumps up and grabs on," Beamer said, "you hit the emergency stop and politely chew them out."



# REVIEW: LITTLE ANGIE'S CANTINA & GRILL

By Cory Claeson  
Courier Staff Writer

Little Angie's Cantina is a restaurant that is a little more casual and a good place to bring the family. The atmosphere is fun but not overly wild and is great place to bring the kids to.

When my social group visited Little Angie's at the peak dinner time, we expected to be waiting for a table on a nice spring day. The opposite was the case. We got a table immediately in a prime location right on the wooden deck on the outside of the restaurant. The atmosphere is great both inside and out.

The waitresses were flawless the entire time at Little Angie's. They made several checks to see if we needed anything, filled our drinks and brought

us the extra napkins we asked for promptly. The food arrived very quickly and cooked very well. The time between appetizers and the main course may have been too quick, however.

Little Angie's serves mostly southwestern but also has a few American dishes for appetizers and meals. The appetizers are absolutely amazing and are not overly expensive. Some of the appetizers include buffalo and barbeque chicken wings, nachos and quesadillas.

The food tasted very good. I will be the first to admit that I am not the fondest of Tex-Mex food but in this case it was absolutely amazing. The whole meal from appetizer to the main meal was delicious although it was very filling. The prices were a little expensive but were definitely

worth it for the food that I received.

The social atmosphere was nice although not one for going for a "night on the town". The bar was average because it didn't have a large variety of drinks and a lack of televisions for sports games. To be fair, Little Angie's isn't designed to be a sports bar. Little Angie's is part of the Grandma's chain of restaurants in Canal Park. For the sports atmosphere you might want to try Grandma's Sports Bar.

Overall, I would say Little Angie's provides high quality food for a decent price with a solid atmosphere. The service is exceptional and it is nice to eat either inside or outside on the deck. My final rating for Little Angie's Cantina is four stars.



Photo: Andre Jenny

# Restaurant Review: Old Chicago

By Cory Claeson  
Courier Staff Writer

This bar and restaurant can be a family place to eat or for a casual night out with some friends. Old Chicago has an atmosphere that can please both while having separate areas for the bar and for eating.

Let me start with the family approach to the restaurant. While dining with a group of six, we took a half-circle table that was placed in the back corner of the restaurant. It was a poor placement for a table because no one else was near. The appetizers were excellent especially some of the real pizza rolls. Interactive games between handheld devices and the televisions livened up the table while waiting for food.

The waiter was a little below average because he did not visit our table very often and when he did, he did not offer more drinks when several cups were empty. The dinner serve time was fairly good but may have been offset because of our entertainment with the interactive games.

The food tasted excellent. Everything that I tried at the restaurant was very tasty and cooked perfectly. The restaurant serves pastas, pizza, American foods, and several others. Although the food tasted great, the price was a little expensive for the food being served. For instance, a plate of chicken fingers and fries was nearly 11 dollars.

The social side of the restaurant is second to none. There are televi-

sions all over the place to cover every sporting event that can be found on television. All the TV's near the bar are plasma. The atmosphere is amazing especially when most of the people are rooting for the same team.

The bar contains a selection of beers that numbers over 110. Old Chicago also has a world beer tour challenge in which you get a card to attempt to try all the beers the bar has to offer.

Overall, I would say Old Chicago suits anyone whether it's for family, socializing, or even business. The atmosphere is great but the service is only average. The food is excellent but may not be worth the price. My final rating is 3 and a half stars for Old Chicago.



Photo: Paul Schoolio

# Get To Know the Lake Superior Maritime Museum



The Lake Superior Maritime Visitor Center has a number of programs designed for the summer and fall crowds. And Kevin Gange, the museum's collections manager, couldn't be more excited.

"They give the museum a 'live' feeling," he said.

Gange, who has been with the museum for 21 years, is in charge of its main summer program, the weekday pier history tour. This 30-minute walking tour, which leaves from the museum's north entrance at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., has only one problem: it's outside.

While Gange is happy with the results so far, he said attendance can vary from 10 to 60 people depending on the weather. One day, when the temperature soared past 100 degrees, the tour had to be canceled because no one wanted to accompany him out in the heat. Those brave enough to

face the high temperatures are treated to an entertaining discourse by Gange, whose arms energetically flail in all directions as he educates anyone within earshot about the canal's history, the area's lighthouses and shipwrecks and the early feud between Duluth and Superior.

The outdoor programs were started 10 years ago in an effort to attract more visitors to the maritime museum, which is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Detroit District. Of an estimated 1 million visitors to Canal Park each summer, Gange said, about 400,000 of those people make it through the museum's doors.

Besides being a tour guide and collections manager, Gange is, among other things, a park ranger. Like himself, his coworkers at the maritime visitor center

are civilians.

"We're not in the military," he said, "we work for the military."

Gange signed up in 1985 for the museum job after spending four years at different historical societies in the Depot downtown.

Despite his undying adoration for (and bountiful knowledge of) the Twin Ports, though, Gange actually grew up in the Twin Cities. It wasn't until 1975 that he moved up to the area.

"Once you visit Duluth," he said, "you just fall in love."

When asked about some of his favorite chapters in the area's history, Gange quickly brings up Daniel Greysolon and, of course, shipwrecks.

One would think that Gange, having worked at the foot of the iconic aerial lift bridge for more than 20 years, has seen one of the shipping

canal's infamous wrecks — right?

"Yeah," he proudly exclaims, "just six months into my job here."

Gange is referring to the *Socrates*, a Greek freighter that grounded off Park Point in late 1985, drawing overnight vigils for those trapped aboard and national media attention.

Turning inside, Gange shows off some of the maritime museum's static displays and brings up the rest of the center's offerings.

Monday, Aug. 7, for example, is Twin Ports Lighthouse Day. The museum will be hosting a day of special festivities highlighting the lighthouses of the Twin Ports and Great Lakes in honor of the corresponding National Lighthouse Day.

The remaining summer program, which began in July and runs through

Above: Inside and out of the Lake Superior Maritime Museum.

Left Photo: Erica Carlson

Right Photo: Executive Products

Labor Day, includes films and slideshow lectures.

Four different videos show each week, he said. The museum has a pool of about 20 to choose from.

For the week's featured films and show times, the museum's information desk can be reached at 720-5260, ext. 1. The museum is open daily in the summer from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The museum switches to its fall schedule Oct. 16. The hours change to 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday.