



# HISTORY PRESENTATIONS

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Public presentations by Zenith City Press publisher and award-winning author Tony Dierckins cover a variety of topics concerning historic Duluth and the Western Lake Superior Region. Select from the topics listed on the next pages or request a custom presentation for your event.

## SPEAKING FEES

### SERVICE-ORIENTED CIVIC ORGANIZATION LUNCHEONS, ETC

(Weekly or Monthly meetings of Rotary, Kiwanis, Scottish Rite, etc.)

COST: Free | *Speaker must be allowed to sell books following the presentation*

LENGTH: 20 Minutes

EQUIPMENT: Facility or host organization provides screen and projector

### SENIOR FACILITIES & HISTORY-RELATED NONPROFITS

(Senior Living Facilities, Assisted-Living Facilities, "College for Seniors" & Community Education Classes, Historical Societies, Preservation Groups, Genealogy Clubs, Libraries, etc.)

COST: \$200 | *\$120 if the speaker is allowed to sell books following the presentation.*

LENGTH: Up to one hour

EQUIPMENT: Facility or host organization provides screen and projector

### PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION LUNCHEONS, ETC

(Weekly or monthly meetings of occupation-related societies, including labor unions)

COST: \$200 | *\$125 if the speaker is allowed to sell books following the presentation.*

LENGTH: Up to one hour with Q&A

EQUIPMENT: Facility or host organization provides screen and projector

### CORPORATE EVENTS & CONFERENCES

(Annual dinners, fund-raisers, staff retreats, client-enticing events)

COST: \$500

LENGTH: Up to one hour with Q&A

EQUIPMENT: Facility or host organization provides screen and projector

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## CUSTOM PRESENTATIONS

Zenith City Press can create and deliver unique presentations for your event, such as the history of or relating to your organization or customize existing presentations to include appropriate references your organization. Costs include research, image procurement, presentation design, and speaking at the event itself:

20-30 Minute Presentation: \$950 | 35-60 Minute Presentation: \$1,300



# HISTORY PRESENTATIONS

## DULUTH'S HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE & LANDMARKS

### GRAND OLD BUILDINGS OF THE ZENITH CITY [45 MINUTES]

Developed from the book *Duluth's Grand Old Architecture: 1870–1940*, author Tony Dierckins introduces the audience to Duluth's Landmark buildings and those listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Along the way Dierckins discusses the details of preservation efforts surrounding many of these buildings, including some of the often contradictory ways the City of Duluth has approached preservation issues over the past twenty years and NRHP buildings whose future is in jeopardy. Adapted from the book *Duluth's Grand Old Buildings, 1870–1940* by Tony Dierckins & Maryanne C. Norton.

### OLIVER TRAPHAGEN: DULUTH'S QUINTESSENTIAL BOOMTOWN ARCHITECT [20–25 MINUTES]

Between 1886 and 1896 Oliver Traphagen—alone and with Francis Fitzpatrick—designed more Duluth buildings than any other architect, primarily employing his signature Richardsonian Romanesque style to create powerful and often fanciful brick-and-brownstone masterpieces, some of which are still with us today. After leaving Duluth, Traphagen headed to Hawaii where his work heavily influenced the architecture of Honolulu. Adapted from the book *Duluth's Grand Old Buildings, 1870–1940* by Tony Dierckins & Maryanne C. Norton.

### DULUTH'S GRAND THEATERS & MOVIE HOUSES [45 MINUTES]

Audience members travel from 1868 to today to cover the life of Duluth's grand theaters—the 1883 Grand Opera House, the 1889 Temple Opera Block, the 1891 Lyceum Theatre, and the 1912 Orpheum Theatre Vaudeville house—before moving on to the movie houses that replaced them, including Duluth's iconic Art Deco movie house, the NorShor Theater. Adapted from the book *Duluth's Grand Old Buildings, 1870–1940* by Tony Dierckins & Maryanne C. Norton.

### HISTORIC GLENSHEEN [20 or 45 MINUTES]

We begin with the story of Chester and Clara Congdon and their family, how they came to make Duluth their home and how Chester built the fortune that paid for their remarkable estate. Then modern and historic images help explain what makes Glensheen a remarkable example of shifting ideals in American architecture at the turn of the twentieth century and show off the work of Minnesota's premier architect, interior designers, and landscape designers. Adapted from the books *Glensheen: The Official Guide to Duluth's Congdon Estate* (winner of the 2017 Northeast Minnesota Book Award) and *Historic Glensheen 1905 – 1930*.

### DULUTH'S AERIAL TRANSFER BRIDGE, 1905–1929 [45 MINUTES]

Duluth finished digging its ship canal in 1871, but it wasn't until 1905 that a permanent bridge spanned its piers—and it was one of the most innovative structures in the world. An aerial transfer bridge, it ferried passengers back and forth across the canal in a gondola car. But by 1925 it was obsolete, and five years later it was converted into the most unique aerial lift bridge on the planet. The presentation covers early ideas for bridging the canal, the struggle to build the bridge, its life serving Duluth, and how it was converted into the city's aerial lift bridge. Adapted from *Duluth's Aerial Bridge & the Canal It Crosses*.

## DULUTH'S DEVELOPMENT

### FROM A 'PILE OF ROCKS' TO A 'DACHSHUND' OF A CITY: DULUTH, 1856–1950 [45 MINUTES]

In 1949 the *Saturday Evening Post* wrote that “Like the dachshund, Duluth is a city and a half long and a tenth of a city-wide.... its average width is only one-tenth its length.” When it was first platted in 1856, Duluth covered just a small portion of today’s downtown and Canal Park—so how did it take its current shape? Thanks to a series of booms and busts and annexations, it eventually grew into the city we know today, stretching nearly 28 miles along the northern shores of Lake Superior’s and the St. Louis River. Discover how Duluth grew, how the lake and river influenced that growth, and what led to the east/west sociopolitical split that divides the city to this day. Adapted from Tony Dierckins’s *Duluth: An Urban Biography*.

### FROM A 'PILE OF ROCKS' TO A CITY: DULUTH, 1856–1873 [20–25 MINUTES]

Duluth was established as a town in 1856, but thanks to a failed copper-mining effort, a financial depression, and a war, it remained stagnant and relatively unpopulated until 1869. A year later the community thrived as the Zenith City of the Unsalted Seas, boasting a population of over 3,000 and officially becoming a city on March 6, 1870. Discover how Duluthians survived the desolate 1860s, the factors that lead to Duluth’s remarkable recovery, what the nascent city looked like in its first year, who lived here and what they did, and how it all came crashing down just three years later. Adapted from Tony Dierckins’s *Duluth: An Urban Biography*.

### BECOMING THE TWIN PORTS: DULUTH & SUPERIOR, 1855–1910 [45 MINUTES]

The region known today as “The Northland” was called the “Head of Lakes” for much of its early history. Superior, Wisconsin, and Duluth, Minnesota, competed to see which community would emerge as the nation’s most important inland port. While Duluth’s railroad and ship canal gave it an early advantage, the cities together weathered cycles of financial booms and busts throughout the second half of the 19th century. By 1910 the federal government considered the dueling duo as one, and that year the cities began calling themselves the “Twin Ports.” Adapted from Tony Dierckins’s *Duluth: An Urban Biography*.

### DULUTH'S HISTORIC PARKS: FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE [20–45 MINUTES]

Duluth as one of the most expansive and remarkable public park systems in the world, with over 170 park properties that make up more than 25 percent of the city. This presentation outlines how the park system was developed and expanded over the years, adapting to the needs of Duluth’s Citizens. Adapted from Zenith City Press’s *Duluth's Historic Parks: Their First 160 Years*, winner of the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award.

## DULUTH INDUSTRY

### THE LOST INDUSTRIES THAT BUILT DULUTH: [45 to 60 MINUTES]

Both sides of the St. Louis River at Duluth and Superior were once lined with ore docks, coal docks, lumber mills, flour mills, grain terminals, and metal manufacturers. From the early fur post and brownstone quarries of Fond du Lac to Morgan Park’s giant Minnesota Steel Plant, this presentation explains the rise—and demise—of the industries that built the Zenith City. Adapted from *Duluth: An Urban Biography and Twin Ports Trains: The Historic Railroads of Duluth and Superior, 1870–2020*

### PURE LAKE SUPERIOR WATER: BEER BREWING HISTORY OF THE TWIN PORTS [20–45 MINUTES]

Beer brewing is the oldest and newest industry at the Head of the Lakes. It began in 1859 and by 1910 the Twin Ports supported four major breweries—Fitzger’s, Peoples, and Duluth Brewing & Malting in Duluth and Northern in Superior. Prohibition forced breweries to adapt to survive (most didn’t), after which they retooled only to face stiff competition following World War II as larger breweries overpowered regional brands. By 1972, all four were gone, but brewing returned with the craft-brewing movement in 1994, and today the Twin Ports boasts a dozen breweries. Adapted from our book *Naturally Brewed, Naturally Better: Historic Breweries of Duluth & Superior*.

## NOTORIOUS TALES

### DULUTH'S GREATEST MYTHS: FAMOUS FABULOUS FIBS AND FANTASTIC FICTIONS [20-40 MINUTES]

Was the Duluth Ship Canal really dug overnight by “100 stout men”? Was the Zenith City ever home to “more millionaires per capita than any other city in America”? Did Mark Twain really say “The worst winter I ever spent was a summer in Duluth”? Was that America’s “Ace of Aces” Richard I. Bong flying that P-38 through the Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge during World War II? Was a baby ever born—or conceived—on Duluth’s Aerial Transfer Bridge? And did Rosa Brochi—the “grandma” of Grandma’s Restaurant—even exist? Adapted from *Duluth: An Urban Biography*.

### DRYING OUT DULUTH: PROHIBITION IN THE ZENITH CITY [35 MINUTES]

In 1920, when national Prohibition became the law of the land, Duluth had already been dry for nearly three years, and would remain dry after Prohibition was repealed. The Zenith City had a long and complicated relationship with liquor for over sixty years before booze was banned—drinking fueled the community’s first murder, the first city ordinance addressed liquor licenses, and for decades the city ignored the state ban on Sunday liquor sales. Prohibition had a dramatic affect on Duluth, but while its breweries struggled to survive, Duluthians still found ways to enjoy a drink. Adapted from *Naturally Brewed, Naturally Better: Historic Breweries of Duluth & Superior*.

### WILL TO MURDER: THE KILLINGS AT GLENSHEEN & BEYOND [45 MINUTES]

The June 27, 1977, killings of Elisabeth Congdon and Velma Pietila have become the most notorious double murder in the history of Minnesota. This talk introduces the audience to the victims, follows the investigation that lead to the arrests of Elisabeth’s daughter Marjorie Caldwell and her husband Roger, covers the trials that convicted Roger yet set Marjorie free, and then tracks Marjorie’s exploits as a serial arsonist and poisoner who has likely gotten away with murder five times. Adapted from the book *Will to Murder* by Gail Feichtinger with Gary Waller and John DeSanto, the men who lead the investigations and prosecutions of the 1977 crimes at Glensheen.

### AMERICA'S ROBBER BARONS & THE IRON RANGE [30 MINUTES]

Duluth’s famous Merritt family opened the Mesabi Iron Range in the early 1890s only to lose it to John D. Rockefeller by 1895. Afterwards, Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie and Henry Oliver (with his partner Chester Congdon) battled over the Iron Range until J. P. Morgan formed U. S. Steel, creating the fortune that financed public libraries and Duluth’s most famous home, Congdon’s Glensheen. Adapted from the book *Glensheen: The Official Guide to Duluth’s Congdon Estate*, winner of the 2017 Northeast Minnesota Book Award.