18th Annual City Tech Poster Session

Roebling before the bridge

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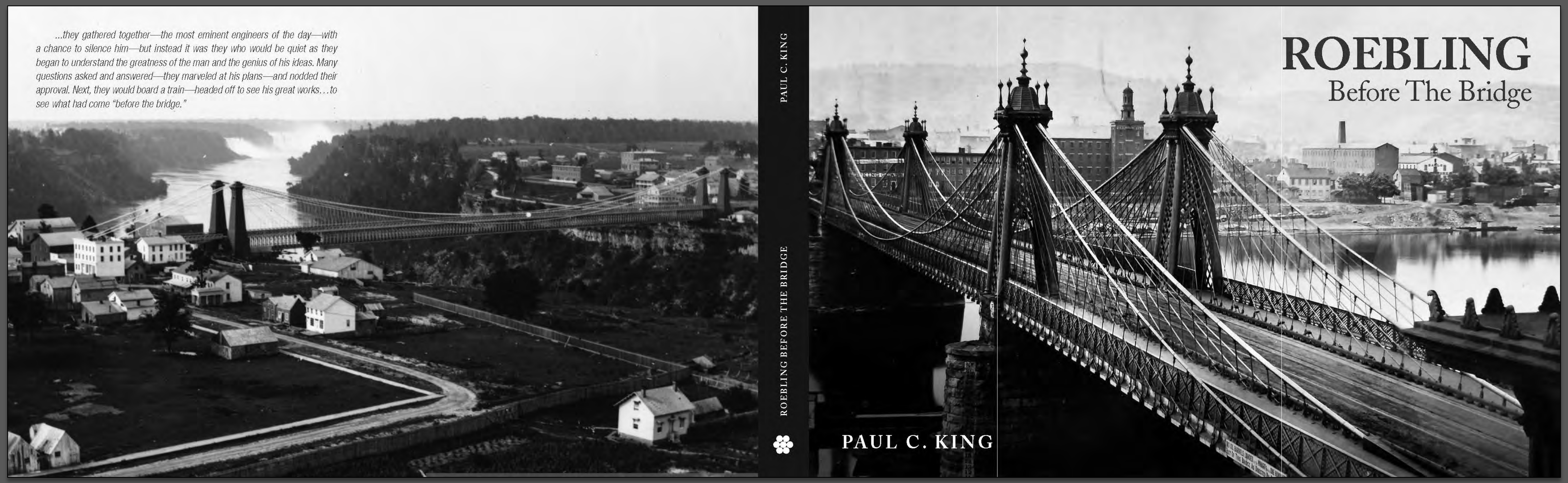
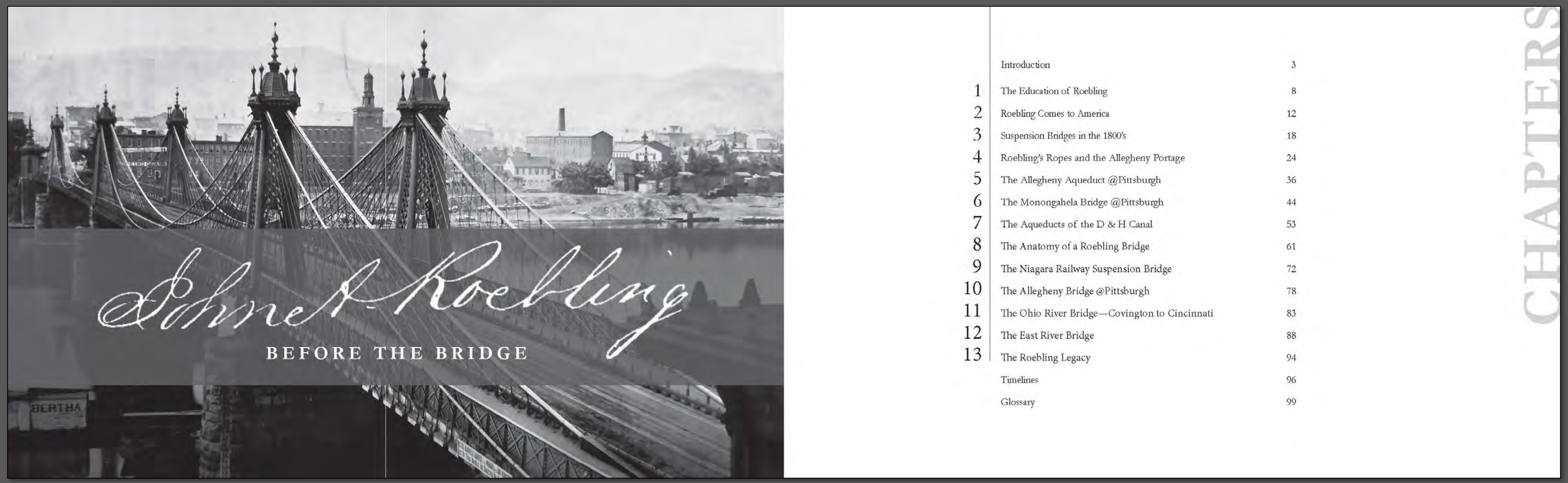
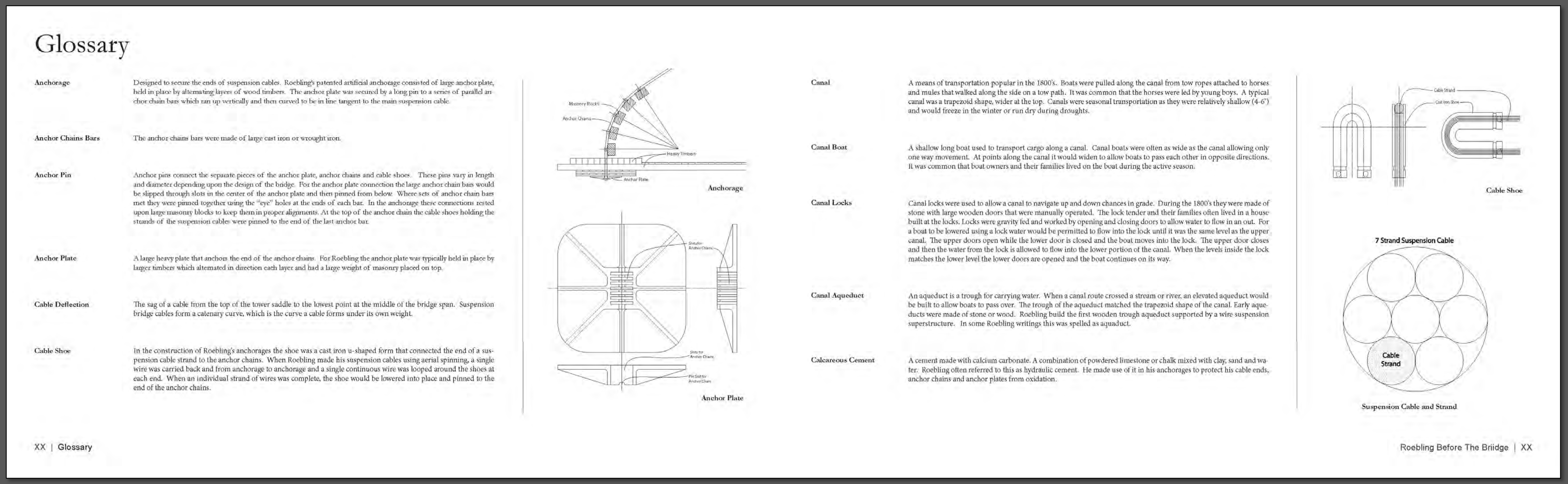
They gathered together - the most eminent engineers of the day - with a chance to silence him - but instead it was they who would be quiet as they began to understand the greatness of the man and the genius of his ideas. Many questions asked and answered - they marveled at his plans - and nodded their approval. Next, they would board a train- headed off to see his great works….to see what had come "before the bridge."

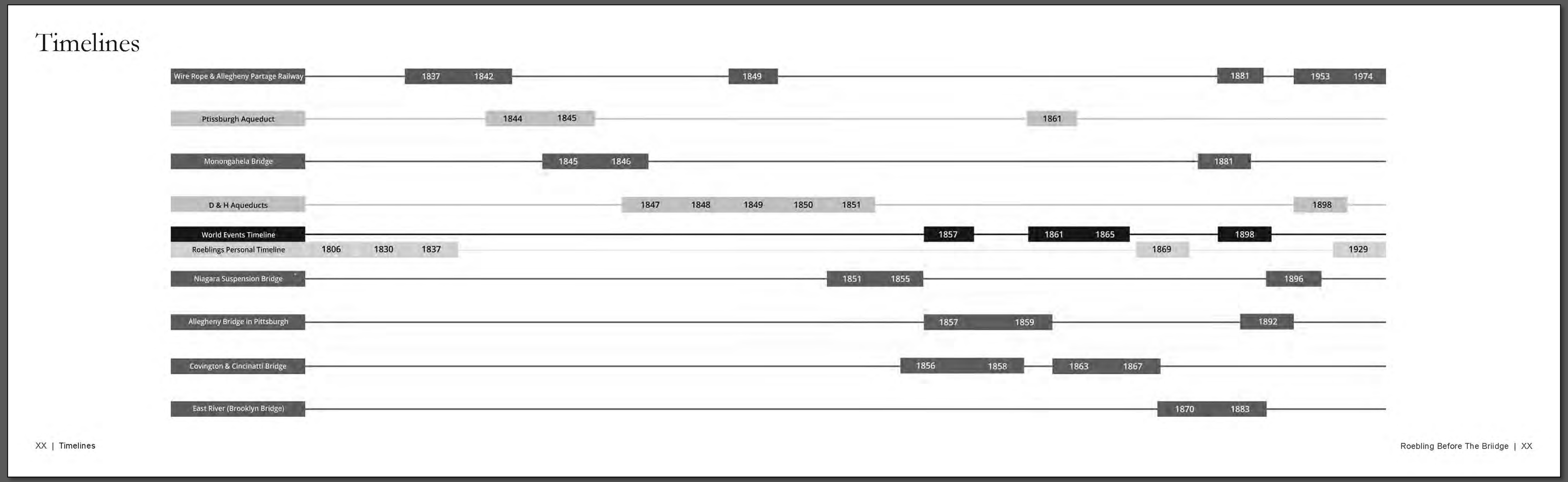
We all know the Brooklyn Bridge. Taking in the panoramic view from shore with the city behind, we admire the beautiful lines of the cables stretching across the East River, gently curving down from the tops of the towers to meet the gentle curve of the deck. Walking across on the center boardwalk, we are met by the strength of the towers, the two gothic arches and the web of cables, that gives the bridge its iconic look – a look unique to a Roebling Bridge. The Brooklyn Bridge is a suspension bridge, perhaps the greatest example of a modern era, that began with the use of iron for the construction of chain and wire suspension cables.

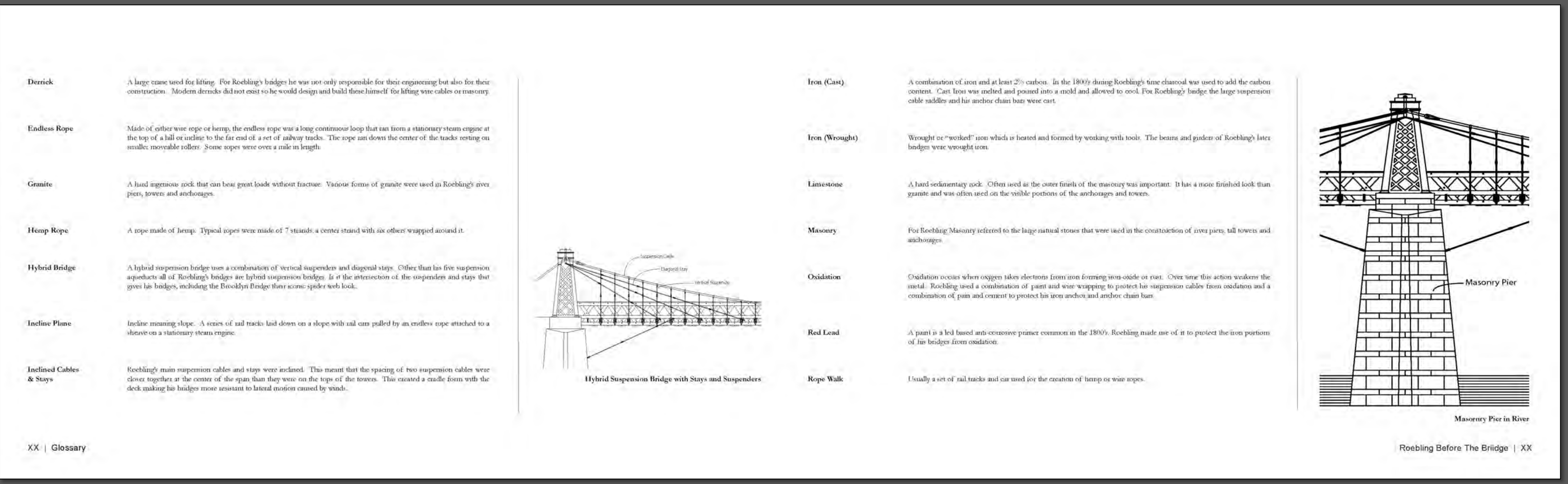
A suspension bridge is a simple concept, string a rope across a span, secure it at both ends and hang a deck below. When we look at the Brooklyn Bridge, we see it as solid and immovable. We cannot image the city without it, and we do not for a moment, doubt its safety. This is a modern perspective; it is not how people of the 1800's viewed suspension bridges. For both the public and for engineers, who did not understand how to build them properly, they were viewed with suspicion and distrust. This view was not without good reason, as they often fell down as quickly as they were put up.











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