

OC's Street Car History

Thomas L. Marsalis first operated steam-powered streetcars in the carefully constructed suburb of Oak Cliff in 1887. An elevated bridge was built crossing the Trinity River into the city of Dallas that travelled along Jefferson Boulevard. In 1894, electric streetcars replaced the steam engines and a network of rails began booming throughout the city.

At one point, Oak Cliff had over twenty miles of streetcar lines running along its beautifully sculpted boulevards. In 1956, to the chagrin of local residents, the last streetcars were run. Over time, the city paved over the rails and the once familiar ring of the trolley bell lay silent.

Oak Cliff was once considered one of the greatest suburban developments in all of the country. Sprouting up almost overnight, it boasted an opera house, theme park, a major league baseball team, and a girls' college. The 1950's and 60's would take their toll on the area beginning with the devastation from a massive tornado and climaxing with the assassination of a president.

In the 1980's and 90's, the area started to breathe new life again with artists and young families taking up residence once again in the area. The housing development of Winnetka Heights became one of the largest designated historical districts in Texas. Along Seventh Street and The Bishop Arts District, a series of small boutique restaurants and gift shops, began making it's mark and finding itself on national "must see" lists. Like San Francisco's re-admittance of the now signature trolleys, Oak Cliff residents too hope to have a small piece of their heritage returned and restored to its once former glory.