

The Oak Cliff Viaduct made for Streetcars!

About a year ago, I dug around some old papers in the Preservation Dallas house on Swiss, and came across the original 1909 call-for-bids sheet sent out by the city which outlined the requirements for building the Dallas-Oak Cliff Viaduct. In it, one line stood out...the bridge must be made to allow for a trolley in its future.

Fast forward to today, Luis and I head over the city vault on Jefferson Blvd, where all of the public works blueprints exist. Our hope was to find some evidence that the bridge was built for the advent of rail, what we found was incredible.

First of all, the old scrolls were completely falling apart since they're 100 years old. We slowly unraveled them and found that, not only was the mid-section reinforced for a double track trolley line, but they even built columns in preparation for the trolley poles. This is INCREDIBLE news! Also, it appears they went ahead and added the rails, and just covered them with asphalt, to dig up at a later time. Luis took a metal detector out later in the day, and picked up a very positive signal in the same location as the rails notation on the blueprints.

This is a major find because it means that connecting Downtown Dallas/Union Station and the future Convention Center hotel to North Oak Cliff is partially done, and a giant chunk of the expense is knocked out because the rail is waiting to be uncovered and used, plus the bridge is structurally prepared. It's also a big deal because the viaduct is on the state's historic register.

Here's an image of one of the trolley pole columns: