

HISTORY

OF THE

CITY OF COLUMBUS OHIO

FROM THE FOUNDING OF FRANKLINTON IN 1797,
THROUGH THE WORLD WAR PERIOD,
TO THE YEAR 1920

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By
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*The Levees.**Grade Crossing Elimination.*

With the coming of railroads there began the inconvenience, delay and loss arising from the interruption of street traffic. High street, the main thoroughfare of the city north and south was crossed by the first railroad and later by others until a considerable section of the street was occupied by railway tracks over which there was not only the passage of passenger trains, but the switching of freight cars in the making up of trains for other points. This not only caused a serious interruption of traffic, but created a real menace to life and property. The matter early became a source of irritation which increased with the years. In 1873, the Council declared that there must be a bridge over or a tunnel under the tracks, and in 1874, tunneling, having been decided upon, was begun. The tunnel was completed in the following year, and the street railway company was authorized to lay its tracks through. The tunnel cost \$45,050 and for 20 years it continued to offer its opportunity of escape from delay and danger. But it was ill ventilated and little used except by the street cars.

At the end of that time came the successful agitation for something better. The tunnel was torn away and, after much negotiation with the railroad companies and much bargaining with property-owners for damage or fancied damage to their abutting property, the present High street viaduct, with approaches from Naghten street and Maple street, was erected. Josiah Kinnear was the city engineer in charge, and the cost was approximately \$369,000. Practically contemporaneous with this great improvement, the Union Depot Co. at an outlay of something less than three-quarters of a million dollars built the fine new Union Station, with train shed, concrete driveways and covered walk from train shed to viaduct. The front of the station along the viaduct, with its beautifully arched and pillared entrance, was designed by Burnham, of Chicago. The interior arrangements are excellent and elegant, and there is provision for the convenience and safety of passengers. The Union Station was completed in 1897. The first Fourth street (originally Buckeye street) viaduct was built in 1890-93 at an approximate cost of \$120,000, and the Front street viaduct was built in 1894 at a cost of \$69,000. Thus, there were three safe avenues of travel between the northern and southern sections of the city. In 1915, the present Fourth street viaduct, on the site of the one the construction of which had been begun in 1890, was built under the direction of City Engineer Henry Maetzel at a cost of \$233,000.

By this time the situation on the West Side had become acute. The flood of 1898 made it apparent that increased protection must be afforded, and flood protection and track elevation were taken up together. Up to that time the law provided that the cost of track elevation should be borne equally by the railroad company and the city. The companies affected were reluctant, but in 1907 the people of the city voted to issue \$1,000,000 of bonds to pay the city's share, and the companies finally agreed to the proposition. The work of eliminating the West Side grade crossings was begun by the city and the railroad companies jointly in the spring of 1909 and, in a report to Director of Public Service George

A. Borden, October 21, 1916, Henry Maetzel, chief engineer, announced the practical completion of the work, except for the adjustment of a few damage claims, enumerated in detail the construction of 20 subways and two viaducts—Mound street and South High street—and gave the total cost to the city as \$1,096,283.37. In all of the track elevation the city's share was 50% or less. The city's half of the cost of the Mound street viaduct was \$157,446.87. Of the cost of the South High street viaduct it paid one-fourth, or \$124,897.66. The Parsons avenue viaduct was built by the Toledo & Ohio Central Railroad Co., under requirements of its franchise, without cost to the city.

In the meantime the people had voted another bond issue of \$700,000 to eliminate the remaining grade crossings on the east side of the river. This work was begun, and a number of the grade crossings north have been eliminated, those north and east of the State Fair Grounds and those along the Norfolk & Western track east remaining to be treated. "In grade crossing elimination," to quote City Engineer Maetzel, "Columbus has gone further and accomplished more than any other city of its size."

In this work Franklin county has materially helped by constructing viaducts on Cleveland avenue, St. Clair avenue, Taylor avenue and Joyce avenue at points which were at the time outside of the city limits, but have since been included.