



Smithsonian
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Guide to the Chicago Surface Lines Drawings

NMAH.AC.0212

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Chicago Surface Lines Drawings
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0212
Date:	1880-1948
Extent:	4.6 Cubic feet (13 oversized folders)
Creator:	Chicago City Railway Company. West Chicago Street Railroad Company. National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Transportation Pennsylvania & West Virginia Railway. Chicago Transit Authority. Chicago Surface Lines.
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of the Chicago Transit Authority.

Provenance

Collection transferred to the Archives Center from the Division of Transportation (now Division of Work and Industry) on July 2, 1996.

Related Materials

Materials at Other Organizations

The Chicago Historical Society

Holds approximately 13 cubic feet of materials documenting the Chicago Surface Lines, 1857-1951. The materials include minute books, corporate records, account books, agreements, correspondence, contracts, ordinances, patents, memoranda, stock certificates, bank statements, and blueprints.

Processing Information

Collection processed by David Stevens and Robert Harding, August 1986

Preferred Citation

Chicago Surface Lines Drawings, 1880-1948, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

The first street cars in Chicago were horse cars run by the Chicago City railway Company and the North Chicago City railway Company around 1858-1861. This method, however, was slow and expensive, and the companies began substituting cable cars in the 1880s. Chicago City was the first railway company in 1881, with the addition of the Chicago Passenger Railway in 1883, and the West Chicago Street Railroad Company in 1887. Chicago had the largest cable railway system in the world.

In the 1880s, electric powered trolleys first became practical. The Chicago companies hesitated at first to install these faster and more efficient systems because of their heavy investment in cable cars. Smaller Illinois cities and the Calumet Electric Street Railway of the South Side of the city built successful systems, causing the Chicago companies to feel themselves dropping behind. By the mid 1890s most companies began the conversion to electricity.

The 1890s saw the consolidation of many of the Chicago companies and through this reorganization continued into the next century. In 1905 the city voted that the surface railways should come under municipal ownership but not operation, provided the companies rehabilitate their systems, and give the city the right to buy the property at a fixed value. In addition, new construction was to be approved by a new bureau, the Board of Traction Supervising Engineers.

The continuous reorganization was finally completed by the Unification Ordinance of 1913 which stipulated that all lines would come under the management of a single operating company called the Chicago Surface Lines (CSL). Four companies made up the CSL-the Chicago Railways Company, Chicago City Railway, Calumet and South Chicago Railway, and Southern Street Railway. At this time Chicago had the largest street railway system, the longest one-fare ride, the longest average ride, and the most liberal transfer privileges in the world.

The 1920s saw continued growth despite the increasing competition from the automobile, but the Depression dealt a heavy blow to traffic. By 1948 the Chicago Transit Authority, which took over the Chicago Surface Lines in 1927, had abandoned all but four lines in favor of buses. By 1958 the remaining lines were "bustituted."

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of blueprints, working drawings, line drawings, tracings, and plans of the Chicago Surface Railway system from 1896-1926; 1948. The majority of the drawings are on linen and are 24" x 36" or larger. Some of the drawings are annotated. The drawing number, title of drawing and the date are provided for each sheet.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into seven series:

- Series 1: West Chicago Street Railroad Company
- Series 2: Chicago Board of Traction Supervising Engineers/Chicago Railway Company
- Series 3: Chicago Traction System (Car Drawings)
- Series 4: Chicago Cable Blueprints
- Series 5: Chicago Union Traction Company
- Series 6: Pennsylvania & West Virginia Railway
- Series 7: Miscellaneous

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Cable railroads
Civil engineering
Civil engineers
Engineering and technology
Railroad engineers
Railroads
Railroads -- Buildings and structures
Railroads -- Equipment and facilities
Railroads -- Rolling-stock

Types of Materials:

Blueprints
Drawings
Tracings

Names:

Chicago Board of Traction Supervising Engineers.
Chicago Consolidated Traction Company.
Chicago Railways Company.
Chicago Union Traction Company.
D.T. Steelwork Company.
Garden City Construction Company.
Gilbert Car Manufacturing Company.
Lake Street Elevated Railroad (Chicago, Ill.).
National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Transportation
North Chicago Street Railroad Company.
United States Construction Company.

Geographic Names:

Chicago (Ill.)

Container Listing

Series 1: West Chicago Street Railroad Company, 1880-1895

Map-folder 1	Drawing # 325 Grip chair July 30, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 327 Plan of grip August 3, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 336 Rack, lever, and grip connection in position on car September 14, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 337 Grip lever November 8, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing #342 9" shaft and idlers , undated
Map-folder 1	Drawing #345 Grip September 7, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing #350 Detail 18" carrying pulley October 26, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 353 4 foot elevating and depressing wheel November 10, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 354 List of machinery used for all vaults , undated
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 355 Grip and lever movement December 4, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 356 Engine shaft for 20" x 48' engine for auxiliary cable November 29, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 357 Foundation for 20" x 48" engine for auxiliary cable, Madison & Rockwell Streets December 12, 1889
Map-folder 1	Drawing # 358 Details for tension for vault no. 1 December 10, 1889
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Map-folder 1	Drawing # 360 Elevating wheels, shafts, steel beam frame and journal boxes for south track of vault no. 2, undated
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Map-folder 2	Drawing # 392 Shafts and boxes for elevating wheels, vault no. 4 March 31, 1890
Map-folder 2	Drawing #393 South Box for inclined elevating wheel, south track vault no. 4 March 21, 1890
Map-folder 2	Drawing # 394 Box for stationary shaft for 4 foot elevating wheel, undated
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Map-folder 2	Drawing # 396 Shafts for 4 foot elevating and depressing wheels for vaults nos. 6 and 7 subways on Washington Street April 15, 1890
Map-folder 2	Drawing # 397 42" depression wheels and shafts for west curve, Madison Street station cable April 18, 1890

Map-folder 2	Drawing #399 Guide wheel details for renewing cable, Madison Street Station May 12, 1890
Map-folder 3	Drawing #400 Arrangement of wheels for taking in old cable, Madison Street Station May 1890
Map-folder 3	Drawing # 401 Details of gear for renewing cable May 19, 1890
Map-folder 3	Drawing # 402 3 foot special sheave May 20, 1890
Map-folder 3	Drawing# 403 18" rope wheel for Madison Street Station May 22, 1890
Map-folder 3	Drawing # 404 Details of structure for reels for renewing cable, Madison Street Station May 24, 1890
Map-folder 3	Drawing # 406 Support for guide wheel for renewing cable, Madison Street Station June 3, 1890
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Map-folder 3	Drawing # 414 Vault machinery pattern list for West Chicago Street Railroad Company , undated
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Map-folder 3	Drawing # 419 Reel and driving gear for taking in old cable at Madison & Rockwell Streets Station October 13, 1890

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 421 Details of reel and driving gear for taking in old cable at Madison & Rockwell Streets Station October 15, 1890

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 422 Details of winding drum for Madison & Rockwell Street Station October 28, 1890

Map-folder 4 Drawing # B-422 Proposed signal tower on street railway pole, northwest corner of Harrison & Halstead Streets November 1895

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 423 Proposed change of 12 foot idler November 18, 1890

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 424 Details for 8 foot idlers of loop cable at 40th Street April 3, 1891

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 425 Extension plate for lower veering vault no. 1 , undated

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 426 18" idler and shafts for vault no. 1 at 40th Street loop cable April 15, 1891

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 427 Details for 4 foot guide wheels at southeast corner of power station no. 4 August 18, 1891

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 428 Ticket Furnance August 20, 1891

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 429 Details for new 12 and 13 foot wheels at vault no. 6 September 14, 1891

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 431 Machinery plan for power station no. 4 September 17, 1891

Map-folder 4 Drawing #432 12 and 13 foot idlers September 18, 1891

Map-folder 4 Drawing # 436 Position of Des Plaines Street cable and conduit in boiler room of Jefferson Street power house September 25, 1891

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Map-folder 5	Drawing #684 Vault No. 9 for auxiliary cable in alley on Madison & Rockwell Streets station December 9, 1889
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