FREIGHT TUNNELS IN CHICAGO.

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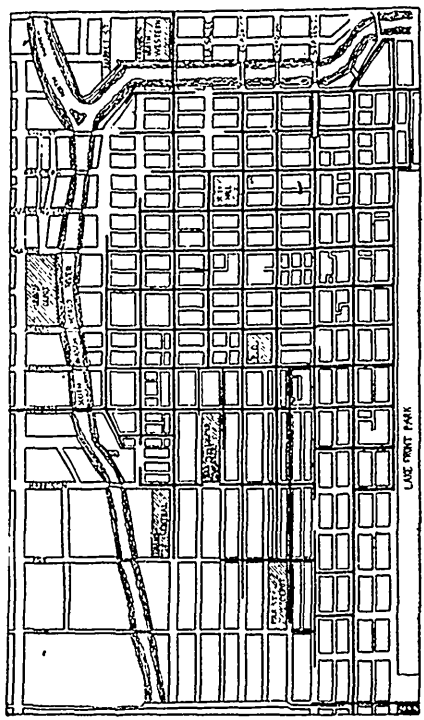

Map of Central Business District of Chicago, showing (in Heavy Lines) Network of Tunnels.

Chicago has achieved an evil reputation as a centre of labor strikes. In the famous hay-market riot two years ago batteries of artillery were planted in strategic points, creating a scene not unlike the revolution in Paris. In the more recent teamster strikes thousands of strikers assembled with riotous intention, scores were wounded, some killed, many brutally beaten. The promised municipalizing of the tram-cars and other public utilities will go far to solve these labor troubles, but nothing will do so much to make the great trading interests of the city independent of the surface teamsters as the colossal systems of freight tunnels now in course of organization. These are described as follows :

Sixty miles of tunnels are being constructed under the principal streets of Chicago. Twenty-six miles already have been completed. Over a narrow gauge electric railway in these conduits the Illinois Tunnel Company expects to transport 50,000 tons of freight daily.

So quietly has the work been carried on, with no interruption to traffic and no obstruction in the streets, that only a small percentage of Chicago's population is aware of the scope of the enterprise, or of the fact that the business district will be honeycombed with shafts, leading to all of the railroad stations and to the principal mercantile establishments.

Under an ordinance granted by the city of Chicago on February 20th, 1899, the Illinois Telephone and Telegraph Company—a new corporation—was given a franchise for the use of space under the streets. It constructed a network of large tunnels beneath the business district, with roofs not less than twenty-four feet from the surface. These tunnels are of two sizes, the trunk conduits being twelve feet wide and fourteen feet high and the branch shafts six feet wide and seven feet six inches high. The material is cement, which in the larger tunnels is twenty-one inches thick at the bottoms and eighteen inches at the walls.

Under the roof and along the walls of the tunnels on each side are strung the telephone cables, leaving space on the floor sufficient for a railway. The company in July, 1903, therefore secured an extension of its franchise rights, permitting it to operate apparatus for carrying freight of all kinds and for handling mail matter, packages, newspapers, and other articles. The Illinois Tunnel Company last January acquired the system.

Over these rails will run trains drawn by electric locomotives, now in successful operation. The cars are wholly of iron and steel and are twelve feet in length. Each will have a capacity of thirty thousand pounds of freight. The trolley system of propulsion is being used, driving the trains at a speed of from fifteen to twenty miles an hour. A five thousand horse-power electric plant soon will be in operation.

Upon the completion of the track laying, three thousand cars and one hundred and fifty locomotives will be put in service. These will run to the six great