

Riverside Drive Manhattan Valley Viaduct
Built 1900; Rehabilitated 1961 and 1968



Twenty six steel arches



Bolted arch connections



Bolted lattice work on arches



Bolted lattice work



Bolted connections



Bolt head no bolt identification

The Manhattan Valley Viaduct

The New York Times, November 11, 1897

The public hearing given by the Board of Street Openings and Improvements yesterday developed vigorous and righteous opposition to the plans of the Department of Public Works for the extension of Riverside Drive across the Manhattan Valley. The plan is just the sort of scheme the public would expect from the official who proposed to convert the lower end of Central Park into a desert of asphalt. It seems that the law is mandatory in some respects in which it should not be, but it seems also that Commissioner Collis has made a very bad use of such discretion as was left to him.

The extension of Riverside Drive is a worthy, but cannot be said to be a very pressing, public object. The time will come, no doubt, when it will be necessary to bridge the Manhattan Valley as well as the valley lower down the Riverside Drive at Ninety-sixth Street with a viaduct which shall separate the business traffic of the lower level from the pleasure traffic of the other. But of the two improvements, that which completes the existing drive is of much more urgency than that which extends it.

In either case, what New York has a right to expect is a substantial and dignified structure which shall be worth looking at on its own account, and which shall not disfigure the drive, the great monument that is already built, or any others that may be built hereafter. The problem is not one that can be handled by an engineer who is merely an engineer, even with the assistance of the aesthetic Gen. Collis, or treated from a merely engineering point of view, without threatening the most lamentable results. The remonstrances made yesterday denote that the threat of such results has been fulfilled in the plans prepared.

The question is not alone one of engineering. It is one of landscape architecture and of architecture. No plan should be seriously considered which has not received the assent of experts in those arts. Evidently the bridging of the valleys should be done by means of handsome and substantial viaducts of masonry supplemented if necessary by embankments which would comport with the dignity and beauty of the drive itself. Unless and until we can afford to do this work in a fitting way, we cannot afford to do it at all. The notion of throwing across the valley, north of Grant's tomb, another such unsightly lattice-work as now skirts the northwest corner of Central Park should not be thought of for a moment.

The postponement of the question till next week and its reference in the meanwhile to the Department of Parks as well as of Works seems clearly preferable to the adoption of the scheme submitted yesterday. Park Commissioner Cruger, in behalf of Trinity Church, was one of the remonstrants yesterday. Unfortunately, since the death of Mr. Stiles, the Park Board has contained no one of authority upon such questions, and the proposition of President McMillan that the viaduct should be raised twenty feet seems to add new terrors to the scheme submitted by the commissioner of Public Works. It is greatly to be hoped that the Park Board may take competent advice before it reports an alternative plan. The present plan seems to contemplate a grievous and irreparable public injury.