

THE WORK ON THE SUBWAY

All of the Digging in the City Hall Park Accomplished.

Delay Over the Post Office Vaults Will Not Be Long—Care in Constructing the Drifts—Grades in the Loop.

Although the work of excavating the City Hall loop of the rapid transit subway was abruptly brought to a stop in Mail Street because of the Post Office vaults in its path, all the digging in the park proper has been done. Mr. Fisher, the Degnon-McLean Company's engineer, says that the disturbed surface will be replaced probably within three months. After that a season will suffice to let the grass grow again along the strip over the tunnel, and new trees will be set out to take the places of the half dozen that were uprooted.

Between the front of the City Hall and the edge of Park Row, opposite the old Hall of Records, fifty feet of the concrete arch structure, forming the subway's final walls and roof, is in place, and a start has been made at filling in the space above it. The depth of the tunnel grade here is thirty-six feet above high-water level and about forty feet below the park surface. The concrete arches are used rather than the steel construction of the rest of the down-town work because of the depth. It is easier to put in the arches, but they would be impracticable along the sections under the streets, as in those stretches there is not room enough between tunnel roof and street level to allow a rounded arch.

After leaving the main line opposite the bridge the loop is to go under the old Hall of Records at practically the same grade as in front of the City Hall. Then it gradually travels downward, reaching its lowest grade at the centre of Park Row, off the end of Mail Street. There it passes under the four tracks of the main line, after which it begins to curve upward toward the bridge station. On the up-grade stretch it cuts under the large vault of THE TIMES Building, having previously skirted the foundations of the Potter Building. Not until the bridge station is reached does the loop again arrive at the main line's grade.

At the edge of the park, off Mail Street, the one-track breadth of the loop widens out to make room for a station, in which there will be a single platform for passengers. Detailed plans for this have not been prepared as yet, but they will be ready in a few days, after which the contractors promise a quick job of that part of the loop. Meanwhile they are looking every day for the formal permit from the Secretary of the Treasury to invade the Post Office vaults in Mail Street.

Considerable work has been done in Park Row, between THE TIMES and World Buildings. On both sides of the four surface car tracks open cuts have been made, the one on the park side extending for more than 150 feet. Under the trolley tracks, from one cut to the other, are numerous headings, or drifts, each about six feet square.

Park Row is fairly honeycombed with them. Pedestrians along the street cannot see that they are there, except by craning their necks over the board fences surrounding the cuts, but every hour in the day sees new lagging and underpinning inserted under the supported surface lines, and any one interested in engineering projects might profitably study for a whole day the methods employed by the men who are gradually burrowing beneath the pavements, and yet are taking every precaution that their underground work may not even be perceptible above.

Each of the small drifts is constructed as carefully as though it were a whole subway by itself, rather than a tunnel just big enough for two men to walk in together. The advance is literally an inch at a time, every clump of dirt that is removed being at once replaced by a substitute of wood. All the while crowded cars, each weighing some twenty tons without passengers, are speeding over the heads of the excavators, who chatter away as they work and do not worry at all about what seems to the uninitiated to be a continual danger of fatal wrecks.

The spaces between the tracks in Park Row are not to be torn up at all, all the digging of the wide terminal of the subway being done from the two open cuts on the sides. The little headings now sunk will have "needles" run through them, these "needles" being the cross-wise supports that will uphold all the four surface lines. Each "needle" will have upright props under it at various points. At first, when the tunnel is shallow, these uprights will be short. Gradually longer and longer ones will be substituted, until the final ones will be as long as the distance from tunnel grade to street level.

Until a connection is made with the Brooklyn tunnel the four tracks extending below the bridge station down Park Row will end at Ann Street. Thither trains will be switched back and forth, turning up town just as do the trolley cars of Madison and Second Avenue in front of the Post Office. In other words, the tracks under "the Row" will be nothing but switches for a while.

No work has been done yet on the bridge station. At the north end of that, between the old Hall of Records and the centre line of Chambers Street, is a stretch wherein the contractors expect to strike a harder proposition than even the jobs of holding up heavy vault walls further down. In this distance there is a succession of chambers containing coil after coil of live wires used in connection with the trolley switches there. In working around these, say the foremen, the laborers "lose their nerve," being in perpetual fear of a deadly shock.

The City Hall loop, Park Row tracks, bridge station, and the stretch thence to Chambers Street comprise Section 1 of the subway. The Degnon-McLean Company has the sub-contract for this, and also for No. 2, which extends from Chambers to Great Jones Street. In the latter section much work has been done. Along Centre Street, between Chambers and Reade, a two-track cut to grade has been made along the side of the new Hall of Records, and thence, after the turn into Elm Street, the steel for half the width of the tunnel is in as far as Duane. From there to Pearl Street the subway has been nearly finished to its full width, steel and flooring being in place. In the eight blocks from Pearl to Howard Street nothing has been done yet, part of the distance being in use for supply yards, engineers' quarters, and the like.

To the north of Howard Street the operations have been almost continuous all the way to the upper end of the section. In the blocks above Grand, Broome, Spring, Houston, Bleecker, and Bond Streets are stretches that are fast nearing completion. Between Prince and Houston Streets, the small thoroughfare known as Jersey Street intervening, is an entirely finished part, and there are short distances on the blocks above named where everything is completed with the exception of replacing the street pavement above the subway's roof.

At Prince Street stands the old house of President James Monroe, which was upheld for months, until the tunnel walls took the place of the wooden beams that kept its decayed foundations from going to pieces. It is a ramshackle, two-story affair. Inside, where there are several shops of various sorts, kept by people who speak some uncouth foreign dialect, traces of the building's one-time elegance can be discovered. The door posts are white, fluted columns, or, rather, they were once white. Now they are as dirty as can be, and generations of lead pencil scratches show that the place has not been occupied by cultured inhabitants for many a day. In some of the rooms, presumably those which were considered the finest chambers of the Presidential mansion, are more columns, larger than those beside the doors, and more ornate in their shape. These, too, are badly defaced.