

Cultural Resource Survey Form

Clackamas County

I.D. Number _____

Study Area: Milwaukie
Legal: T: 1 R: 1E Sec.: _____
Tax (lots): 3901
Zone: DOS Lot Size: 13,544 sf

IDENTIFICATION

Common/Historical Name: Portland Traction Line
Address: Segment in Milwaukie Riverfront Park, from Johnson Creek to Jefferson Street
Current Owner: City of Milwaukie Use: City Park
Original Owner: Oregon City & Southern Railway Original Use: Streetcar alignment
Area of Significance: Town: _____ County: _____ City: _____ Nation: _____

HISTORIC INTEREST

Theme: Transportation -- late 19th/early 20th century Date: 1892-1950s
Description: Segment of the first streetcar alignment in Milwaukie. The route ran through Milwaukie, connecting Portland to Oregon City. This segment was constructed in 1892 and abandoned in 1967.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

Style: _____ Stories: _____
Date Constructed: 1892; passenger service inaugurated 1893 Condition: demolished
Builder: The Oregon City and Southern Railway, a subsidiary of the East Side Railway Company

Original Alignment: Beginning south of the Hawthorne Bridge and running south along the riverfront past Oaks Park and the Waverly Golf Club, through downtown Milwaukie and south to Gladstone, terminating in Oregon City.

Notes: Tracks on the original line still exist between SE Division and Umatilla in Portland; other segments of the original alignment have been converted to multi-use trails or have been purchased by adjacent landowners.



View north from Jefferson Street in Milwaukie Riverfront Park. The white dotted lines show the location of the alignment. The traffic signal in the upper right is at the intersection of SE 17th and McLoughlin Blvd.

Date: February 2007
Recorder: Martha Richards

CITY OF MILWAUKIE
CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY
Statement of Significance

ADDRESS: Milwaukie Riverfront Park, segment from Johnson Creek to Jefferson Street
In 1893, the Oregon City and Southern Railway inaugurated their new streetcar line that ran along the east bank of the Willamette River, from Portland to Oregon City. The line was the first streetcar line in Milwaukie. Roads in and around Milwaukie at that time were not very reliable, so the streetcar was an important connection between Milwaukie and the surrounding communities. In 1901, a bypass line was constructed north of Milwaukie to give the streetcar its own right-of-way, and this dramatically decreased travel times to Portland.

Passenger service on this line operated continuously between 1893 and 1958. In 1939, the Portland Traction Company, owner of the line, threatened to abandon the line because of inadequate ridership. Employees of the company staged a successful door-to-door campaign to increase ridership, and the line remained in operation until 1958. The segment between Golf Junction (just south of the Sellwood Bridge) and Oregon City was abandoned in 1967 and the tracks have since been removed. Of the original thirteen-mile line, only four miles of track still exist -- the tracks between Division Place and Golf Junction that are adjacent to the OMSI-to-Springwater Trail. These tracks enjoy light use as a hobby line, as well as incidental industrial use.

Few traces of the streetcar line remain in Milwaukie's riverfront area. Remnants of the footings of the trestle that once spanned Johnson Creek still exist on either side of the creek. A graded bed stretching from Johnson Creek to Jefferson Street, west of and downhill from the paved path in the Riverfront Park, is barely discernable. This bed is obscured by a paved area just north of Jefferson Street. This evidence of the former streetcar line is only apparent to an alert observer. Other stretches of the original line between Portland and Oregon City have been converted to multi-use paths or have been purchased by adjacent landowners.

Although the streetcar line was an important transportation improvement for the residents of Milwaukie, not enough physical evidence remains in this vicinity to warrant its designation as an historic resource.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Clackamas County Cultural Resource Inventory, Book 1. , prepared by the Clackamas County Policy & Project Development Division. November, 1983.

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