

SAVE THE MIDLAND VALLEY BRIDGE

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Cultural Resources Report: Midland Valley Bridge

Save the Bridge

The Midland Valley Bridge should be saved for the following salient reasons:

- Built in 1905 it is one of the oldest man-made structures in Tulsa;
- The bridge was constructed in the classic Warren Deck Truss style which visually evokes the period from 1900-1930 when such bridges were popular;
- The bridge facilitated Tulsa's exponential growth and the moniker as "The Oil Capital of the World.";
- The bridge historically connects us to the famous oil discoveries at Redfork in 1901 and the Glenn Pool Field in 1905;
- The bridge is closely linked historically with the founding citizen of Tulsa, Tuckabatche (Muscogee-Creek);
- The story of Tuckabatche is the history of Tulsa;
- The bridge serves as an historic bridge to Tulsa's rich Muscogee-Creek roots and heritage.

Save the Bridge

Excerpt from the Cultural Resource Report (Paragraph 2, Page 17):

"Such alterations have left only a minimal amount of original materials and evidence of original workmanship. Although the bridge remains in its original location, the cumulative effect of modifications leaves little evidence of its original setting, feeling and association."

This statement could not possibly be more incorrect. It is tantamount to saying that one of Tulsa's treasured Art Deco buildings should not be saved because the interior has been modified to accommodate modern technologies as well as modifications to accommodate the handicapped. The statement wholly ignores the prominence of the bridge in Tulsa's history.

Oil Capital of the World

The Midland Valley Bridge, constructed circa 1905, is one of the oldest and prominent man-made structures in Tulsa. Its Warren Deck Truss construction connects us to Tulsa's earliest days and to signature events in Tulsa's history. The existence of the Midland Valley Bridge visually connects us to modern Tulsa's very beginnings.

From its earliest days, Tulsa was known for years as the Oil Capital of the World. The discovery of oil at the Sue Bland #1 in Redfork in 1901 and at the Ida Glenn #1 in the Glenn Pool Field in 1905 engendered Tulsa's modern growth and development.

As the report correctly noted, the Midland Valley Bridge was built to facilitate oil commerce as well as the transportation needs of Tulsa's burgeoning population. In 1900 Tulsa's population was approximately 1,300.

Only 30 years later there were approximately 140,000 Tulsans. The bridge and the Midland Valley Railroad were instrumental in that exponential growth and development. For that reason alone, the bridge should be saved.

Iconic Architecture

Moreover, even with the modifications noted in the report, the Midland Valley Bridge still retains its iconic and classic Warren Deck Truss elements. Indeed, that is the *sine qua non* of the bridge. Such architecture alone visually harkens us back to a time when such construction was dominant and to the birth of modern Tulsa.

Warren Truss bridge architecture visually ties us to a specific period of history, primarily 1900-1930. Far too many of such rail and automobile truss bridges have been demolished. However, we still have the opportunity to save the Midland Valley Bridge.

Connection to Tulsa's Creek History

In addition, the bridge has very close ties to a founding citizen of Tulsa, the legendary, if mythic, Muscogee-Creek medicine man and warrior, Tuckabatche. It was Tuckabatche who granted the Midland Valley Railroad an easement to construct the railroad on the land of his Creek allotment in 1904. Tuckabatche's

allotment encompassed much of today's Maple Ridge residential district as well as the world renown Gathering Place.

Tuckabatche/Tulsa's History

Tuckabatche's life story is the history of Tulsa. He was born circa 1800 in the Creek homelands of present-day Alabama. He was born into the Locvpokv Creek tribal town. Locvpokv's mother town was Tvlvhassee (meaning "Old Town" and from where the word Tulsa is derived).

As a young teenaged warrior, he may well have fought with the Creek traditionalists (viz., Upper Creeks) in the Creek civil war of 1813-14, which spilled over into the U.S. war of 1812. Over the next twenty years he would have witnessed the continued diminishment of the Creek homelands via forced land cessations. He would have been aware of cascading agitations for the Creeks to be forcibly removed to Indian Territory.

In 1836 he would have walked The Trail of Tears with his tribesman to his new home in Indian Territory. He almost certainly would have been present when the Locvpokv ignited the ashes of their ceremonial fires that they had carried with them from present day Lochapoka, AL. He thus would have participated in the First Founding of Tulsa underneath the still standing Council Oak tree at 18th and Cheyenne.

He would have been actively involved in the Locvpokv rebuilding their tribal town with remarkable precision to how their town looked in the homelands. For the next 25 years the Locvpokv lived peacefully in their reestablished communal and traditional lifestyle. Their tribal town was known as Tvlv'hasse-Locvpokv in honor of Tvlv'hasse, the mother town of Locvpokv.

This halcyon existence was suddenly upended by the U.S. Civil War. Tuckabatche enlisted with the Union army even though he was in his early 60s. He served honorably and was discharged at the conclusion of the hostilities.

Tuckabatche and the Locvpokv returned to Tvlv'hasse-Locvpokv to find their tribal town had been utterly destroyed. He was thus present and a participant in the Second Founding of Tulsa during the immediate post-Civil War period.

For approximately the next 30 years, Tuckabatche was content to live modestly in his log cabin that he had built at today's intersection of Hazel and Cincinnati streets (the far northeast corner of the Gathering Place). He was known to hunt and fish along the east bank of the Arkansas River with his pack of hounds.

This was a relatively tranquil time for the Locvpokv. A branch of the Texas Trail ran through Tulsa. Texas cattlemen were routinely driving large herds through the area on their way to cattle markets in Kansas City.

George Perryman had leased approximately 200,000 acres from Creek Nation. In turn, he subleased grazing rights to the cattlemen. Thus, the grazing of thousands of head of cattle became a common sight. A small downtown developed with the coming of the railroad to Tulsa in 1882.

In 1901, individual land allotments were forced upon the Creeks. Tuckabatche naturally selected his 160-acre allotment at the location of his log cabin and where he may have resided since 1836.

All of Tulsa, from present day Admiral Boulevard/Edison street and to the south was allotted to Creek citizens. To the north and east were Cherokee allotments and to the north and west were Osage allotments. Tulsa is unique among the major metropolitan cities in the U.S. in that it is the only city that has this allotment history. Indeed, many aver that the Indian allotments is the foundation for modern Tulsa.

As noted *supra*, it was in the early 1900s that major oil discoveries occurred in and around Tulsa. Tuckabatche was an eye witness to boomtown Tulsa. He greatly disliked it as he was distrustful of whites and was antagonistic to modern development.

When Tuckabatche died on March 18, 1910, at the approximate age of 110, his death was described as "Like Geronimo, the passing of Tuckabatche represents the passing of one of the most famous Indian characters of the entire southwest." Tuckabatche's obituary was published in scores of newspapers across America.

Tuckabatche/Tulsa/Midland Valley Railroad

So, it is clear that the history of Tulsa and that of Tuckabatche are deeply intertwined. Tuckabatche's life story is the history of Tulsa. It is also clear that the

history of the Midland Valley Bridge and that of Tuckabatche are part and parcel of one another. All of the foregoing simply underscores the historical importance of the bridge.

False Narrative

Finally, the report embraces the false narrative that the bridge should only be saved if it meets all of the technical requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act. Even if the current state of the bridge doesn't comport with all of the technical requirements of the Act (it might if viewed through the foregoing historical lens), the bridge deserves to be preserved due to its paramount status in Tulsa's history.

Summary

The Midland Valley Bridge should be saved for the following salient reasons:

- Built in 1905 it is one of the oldest man-made structures in Tulsa;
- The bridge was constructed in the classic Warren Deck Truss style which was popular from approximately 1900-1930;
- The bridge facilitated Tulsa's exponential growth and the moniker as "The Oil Capital of the World."
- The bridge historically connects us to the famous oil discoveries at Redfork in 1901 and the Glenn Pool Field in 1905;
- The bridge is closely linked historically with the founding citizen of Tulsa, Tuckabatche (Muscogee-Creek);
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