

Tunnels beneath the city

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Dan Rabin — 08 Jul 2002, 04:36

I was recently reminded that Chicago has abandoned tunnels that underly most of the central business district (read about it at

<<http://www.ameritech.net/users/chicagotunnel/tunnel1.html>>, <<http://www.irm.org/railwire/rw162a1.html>>). I was struck by the similarity to Viron's tunnels, and especially by the fact that the Chicago system was used to haul away coal ash, and the Viron system for ash from sacrifices. The Chicago tunnels also have water in them to varying depths, have access to the city hall, and are lined with concrete ("shiprock"). On the other hand, the tunnels were **not** built mainly for the purpose of cooling Chicago :-).

The existence of these tunnels was (it is alleged) largely forgotten after their abandonment after World War II, but a railroad-enthusiast publication by Bruce Moffatt in 1982

<http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=1&ti=1,1&Search_Arg=Forty+Feet+Below&Search_Code=TALL&PIDT24&CNT%&SEQ 020708002451&SID=1> brought them to the attention of at least that audience, and they made news in 1992 when the Chicago River breached the system owing to a construction accident and flooded many basements in the Loop.

The latter incident was too late to have influenced the writing of *_Long Sun_*; if Wolfe had these tunnels as a model, he must have known of them beforehand.

Yours railroad-enthusiastically,

-- Dan Rabin