

## **WILKES STREET TUNNEL**

A Certificate of Appropriateness has been filed to construct an addition to a house which is located at the northeast corner of the tunnel.

This proposed construction has caused concern about both the effects of the construction itself-- as it will be immediately adjacent to this historic structure--and the very real possibility that some of the support structure of the tunnel itself may extend near to, if not into, the property where the construction is proposed.

Construction of this tunnel began in approximately 1852 and was used extensively during the Civil War when Alexandria was under federal control.

The train tracks themselves were operational until 1975: thus, tales are told of Old Town kids jumping on the box car for a quick ride and also of placing pennies on the rails just to watch them get flattened.

The trains stopped when the electrical plant stopped using coal for fuel. The tunnel then was converted into a walking/biking pleasure that has become a vital part of our neighborhood, its charm, and its history.

The question now has arisen as to where exactly the supports for the tunnel end, both to the north and to the south.

There are many photos of the early construction (as at the east entrance to the tunnel), as shown below.

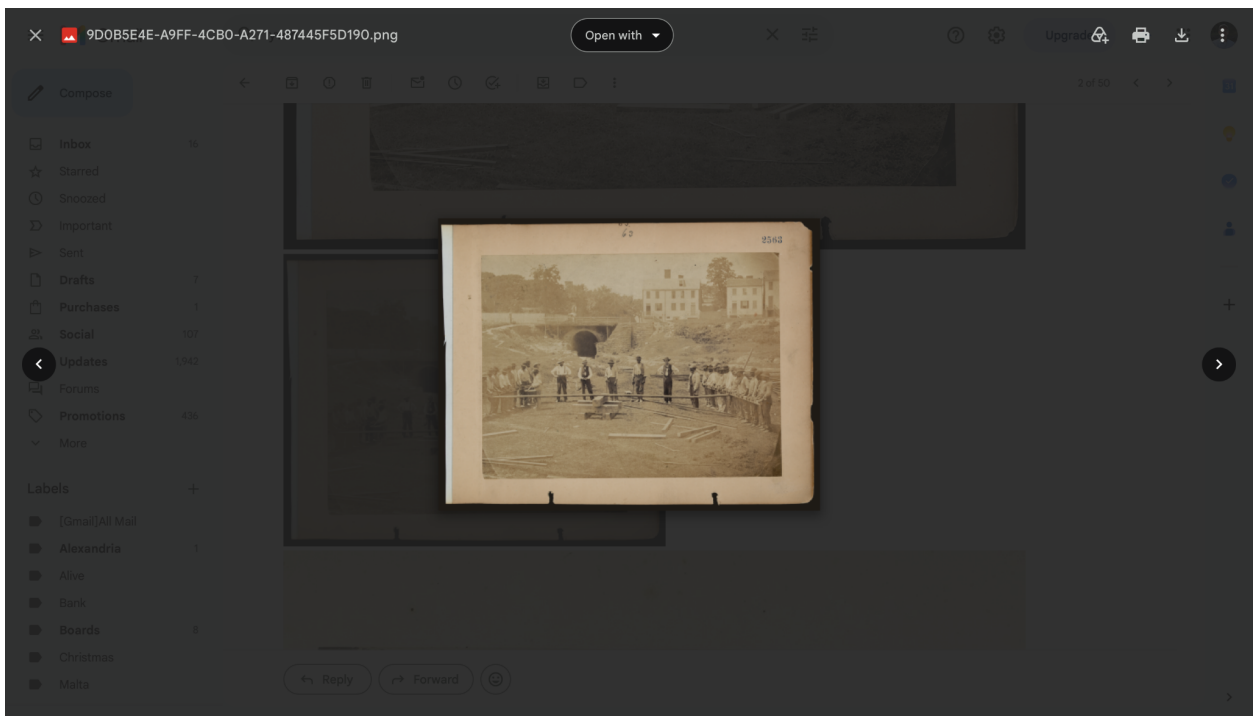
Historical records indicate that, starting almost from the first completion of the tunnel, the east side of the tunnel, shown in the photographs, remained a constant challenge. Whether it was the nature of the soil, the vibrations of

the trains, or something else, remains an open question. It had to be rebuilt or added to, on more than one occasion.

Therefore, the ongoing need for such bolstering makes it imperative that a thorough examination of the precise location of the entire support structure be conducted. We have some early photographs, but that might not tell the whole story.

We are hoping that the City will take a careful look at this issue before permitting the new construction to proceed.

Here are 3 photos taken while the tunnel was being built that demonstrate our concerns.





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September 2026