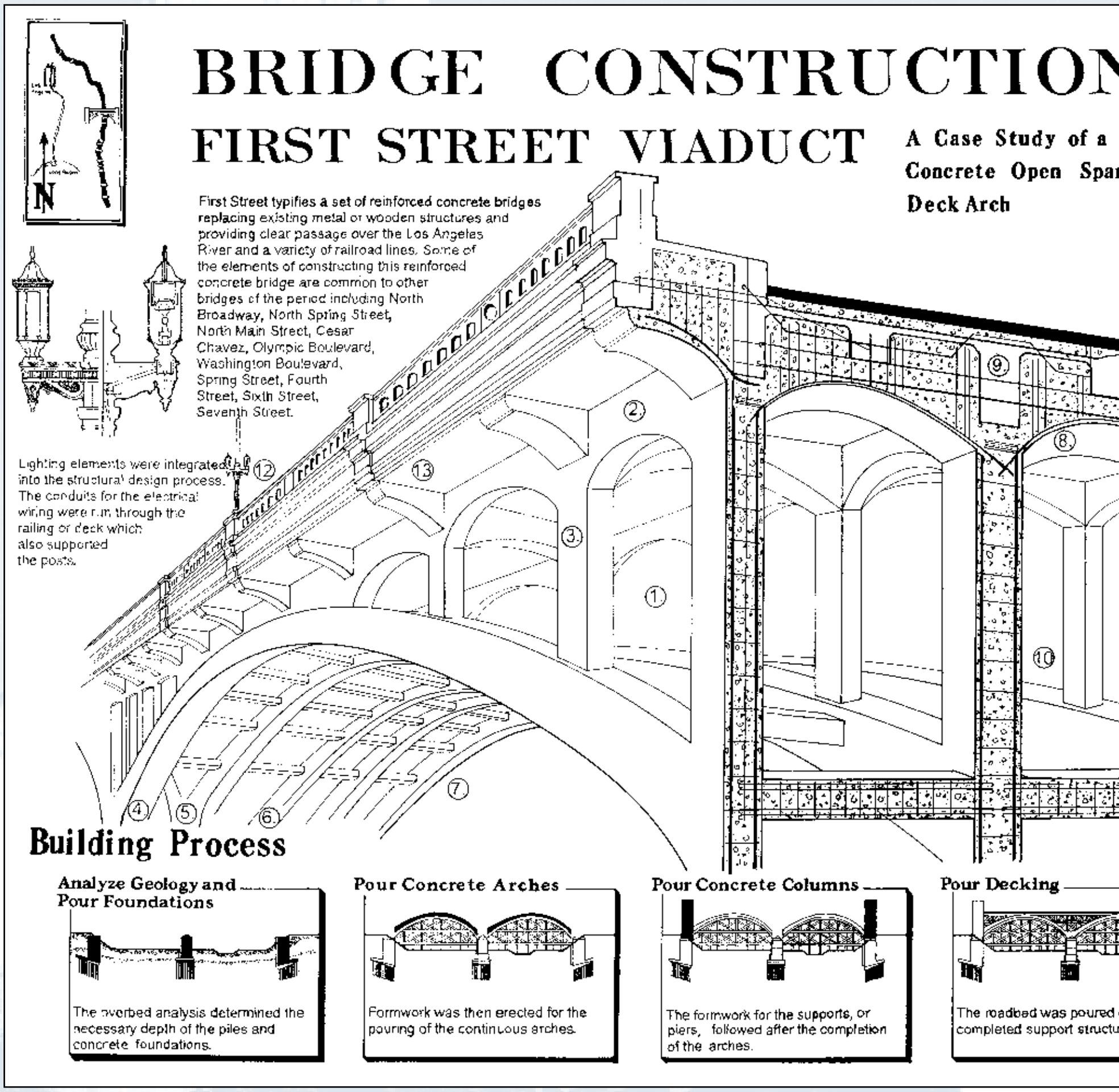
A rendering of the First Street Viaduct, with the (now under construction) Metro Gold Line extension in the median. There will be only one traffic lane in each direction, not two, as in this rendering.

First Street Viaduct:

(Almost) Ready for the Future



Public Works/Bureau of Engineering produced these wonderful analytical sketches of the First Avenue Bridge, as part of a collection of renderings of many engineering marvels in the City. Sketches courtesy the Los Angeles City Archives. Photos courtesy Public Works/Bureau of Engineering.

History Comes Alive!

Tales From the City Archives

by Hynda Rudd,
City Archivist (Retired),
and Club Member

■ The venerable downtown bridge is being retrofitted for better clearances, and for the Metro Gold Line.

Another in an occasional series on popular Los Angeles bridges and viaducts.

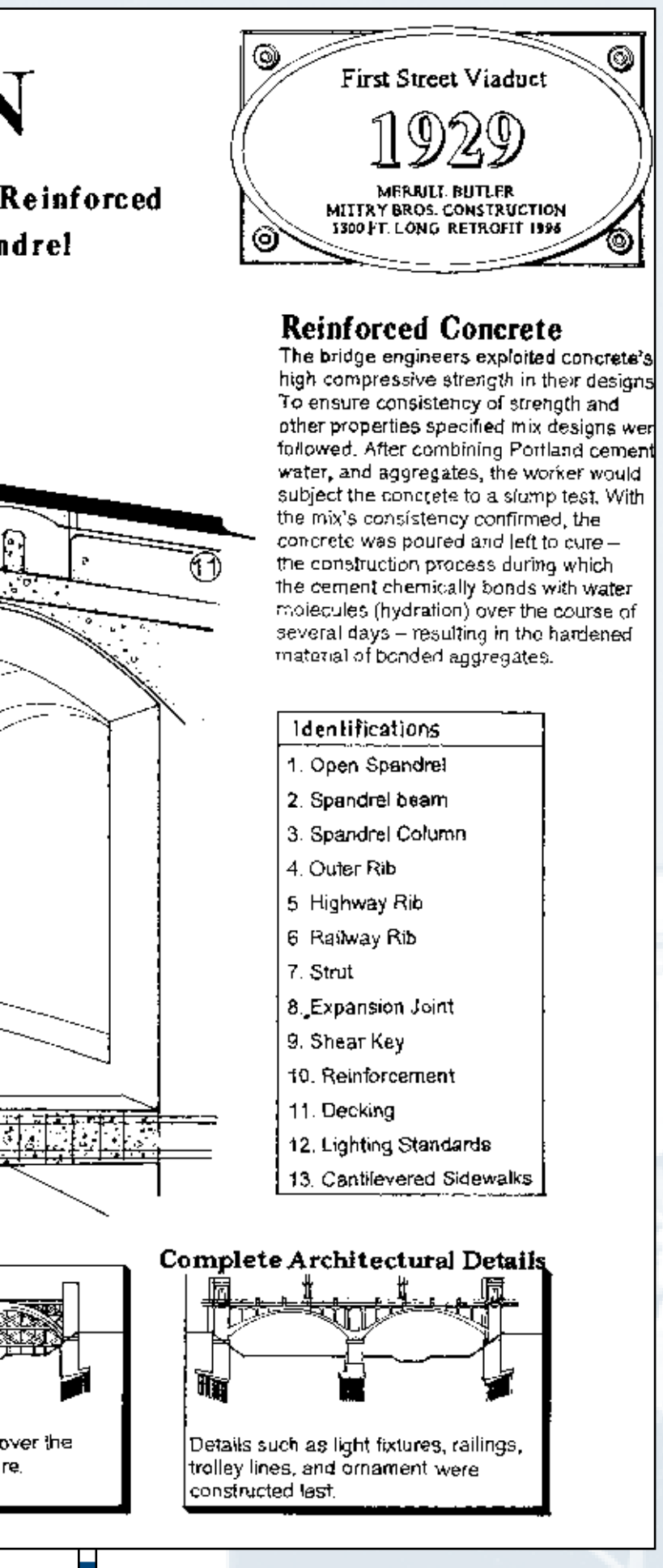
The beautiful First Street Viaduct (bridge), 1,300 feet long and completed in 1929, is at the moment going through a retrofitting, a contemporary maturation to meet modern Los Angeles' needs.

According to Public Works' Bureau of Engineering, "In January 2002, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) received approval for the Los Angeles Eastside Corridor Project … sometimes called the 'Gold Line Extension.'" This will extend the currently existing Pasadena to Union Station Light Rail Transit to link East Los Angeles and Atlantic Boulevard to the city of Pasadena. A portion of the Gold Line Extension will include work on the First Street Viaduct from Alameda Street to Indiana Street in Boyle Heights.

There is also a second need for this undertaking. Several of the early bridges have structural deficiencies. Many of the problems with the First Street Viaduct include inadequate bridge width, inadequate vertical and horizontal clearances at the Santa Fe Avenue and Myers Street under crossings. These problems also need retrofitting to protect bridge piers at the same locations. The preliminary schedule for designing the changes was from 2002 through September 2005. The construction began in the fall of 2005, lasting through the fall of 2007, and would be accomplished at the same time as the Gold Line Extension.

The viaduct was widened 26.3 feet with the dual tracks of the Gold Line on the bridge's centerline. There will be only two car lanes, one in each direction. The existing left-turn lanes at both ends of the viaduct will be removed.

I would once again like to thank Clark Robins, Deputy City Engineer, for the wonderful diagrams from Los Angeles River Bridges and City Engineer Dung Tran for assisting me with this fascinating history.



The First Street Viaduct, leading commuters to the gleaming downtown, on a clear Southern California day.

The First Street Viaduct, circa 1930.