

August 11, 2019

Marilyn Messina  
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you as a Subject Matter Expert at the request of The Willow Glen Conservancy to offer my knowledge and experience with the ongoing pursuit of preserving and documenting the history of the Willow Glen Trestle. The Conservancy is applying for a grant to continue researching the history of the Trestle, a state historical resource, and ultimately write book that tells the long history of the Trestle as part of the industrial and agricultural legacy of the Santa Clara Valley.

I was born and raised in the once, "Valley of the Heart's Delight" and derive from three generations of orchardists. My father and grandfather raised and sold a variety of stone fruits to most of the local canneries spanning the years from 1908 to the late 1960's. I have a deeply personal connection to the Trestle because as a child I would ride with my Dad to deliver tons of fruits in one of our long flatbed orchard trucks to the local canneries that numbered over forty at the time. On the way home from the cannery we would often stop at the railroad crossing and see the boxes upon boxes of fruit passing before us on the fruit car trains. He told me our fruit was on that train and it was going to feed people all over the world.

The Conservancy's ongoing battle with the City of San Jose to preserve the Trestle has uncovered significant information that reveals the unique contribution the Trestle made as part of the industrial development of the valley. In 1922 the Western Pacific Railroad built a Fishhook Line into downtown San Jose to carry fruit to the canneries. The Willow Glen Trestle was on that line which ran from east San Jose to the south part of town. This Fishhook Line also marked a break in the monopoly the Southern Pacific Railroad had over industrial transport in the valley.

Dr. Ames and several historians hope to further explore, document and compile their research into a book telling the unique and embattled history of the Willow Glen Trestle. As a former Historic Landmarks Commissioner for the City of San Jose I was presented the Trestle as a proposed landmark. My fellow commissioners and myself voted unanimously to recommend the Trestle as a historical resource to the City Council but the recommendation was not accepted by Council. The Conservancy has since tried unceasingly to stop the demolition of the Trestle and at each crisis the courts have favored the preservation of the Trestle and upheld the state's historical designation.

I urge the committee to allow grant funds be issued to the Conservancy to continue their research. The history of the Trestle is a story worth telling and should be shared with the people of the Santa Clara Valley.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Messina

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