

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Willow Glen Trestle over Los Gatos Creek

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, Santa Clara

DATE RECEIVED: 5/20/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/02/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/17/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/05/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000422

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

 ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RETURN

SEE ATTACHED COMMENTS

RECOM./CRITERIA RETURN

REVIEWER Paul Lusignea / Tim Gabbent DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN

TELEPHONE 202.354.2229 DATE 7/5/2016

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments (Y)/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

WILLOW GLEN TRESTLE OVER LOS GATOS CREEK

Santa Clara County, CA

National Register of Historic Places - Return Comments:

The current documentation is being returned for substantive reasons. The National Register eligibility of this modest, isolated railroad infrastructure resource is not sufficiently justified under Criterion A. While the resource clearly represents an example of the common railroad construction forms erected during the early twentieth century, the case for significance in association with the local themes of Commerce and Transportation are weak at best.

Mere connection to an important rail line or an aspect of local history is not necessarily sufficient grounds for establishing the individual eligibility of a resource. The Trestle was only a minor element of the extensive rail infrastructure that was developed in the region. The nomination fails to directly answer the question in what way this particular element of the rail network was individually significant? What are its important associations? What was its important role in the larger patterns? Why this resource? In other words, why is this particular feature worthy of recognition within the context of local history outlined in the nomination?

In response to the nomination, the City of San Jose provided extensive comments that raise serious concerns regarding the significance of the Willow Glen Trestle and the evaluation of National Register eligibility. Among the most applicable statements may be the following: *The National Register guidelines differentiate, however, between the importance of the historical development and the importance of the association between the historic property and that historical development. Few would dispute the notion that the packing industry was a key economic force in Santa Clara County from the 1870s through the 1950s. It is legitimate to ask, however, whether this trestle is associated with that development "in any important way."* (Mikesell report, page 21).

In many ways the current nomination attempts to assert or imply importance that appears out of proportion to actual historic patterns. In some areas seeming to assert that the Western Pacific was a dominant player in the economic development of San Jose and the local canning industry, when in fact the industry was well established before arrival of the line and the line itself was never more than a minor carrier of local tonnage. Creating a more competitive environment is one thing, but establishing the true importance of the line to local commerce is another. There is a clear difference between generating industrial development and being built to serve it. The railroad was certainly part of the necessary industrial infrastructure of the community, but the question remains, how is the Trestle the best evidence of this commercial significance? Please consider addressing the points made by the City of San Jose in their comments if revision of the nomination is undertaken.

Likewise, the assertions regarding promises of limited disruption to the residential nature of the Willow Glen neighborhood raise questions of their own with regard to justifying National Register eligibility. Again see City report for more details. One might even dispute the benign level of disruption to the community given the resulting street pattern development in the neighborhood and the daily passage of freight-bearing trains through the heart of the community. This certainly may not have risen to the same level as grade crossing issues elsewhere, but actual community disruption nevertheless.

If you have questions regarding these comments, please contact me directly at the number or e-mail listed below.



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