

**Willow Glen's Sword of Damacles:
Western Pacific's Beltline and its Los Gatos Creek Trestle**

The Los Gatos Creek Trestle is the last remaining physical manifestation of the Western Pacific's "Beltline" ("Willow Glen Trestle") which traversed from Niles Canyon to East San Jose around the southern edge of San Jose to the cannery-rich area of San Jose's westside. The Beltline served as a sword of Damacles hanging over the heads of the residents of the "high-class" Willows neighborhood from 1917 when the Western Pacific Beltline route was first proposed and constructed through Willow Glen until 1929 when Southern Pacific's relocated mainline began construction. Even as the Western Pacific began operation on the spur to the canning neighborhood, the very real fear of Southern Pacific's mainline running on the same route threatened the peace of mind of Willow Glen residents for over a 12 years. The DEIR underestimates the importance of this Western Pacific alignment in the formation of a culture of Willow Glen, as a place apart from the City of San Jose—an attitude that persists to this day, long after the Western Pacific's tracks were removed. The neighborhood's ambience and attitude attracts national attention in press such as the Wall Street Journal with the mythology surrounding the incorporation and battles with the Southern Pacific playing a key role. Lost to the mists of time through multiple retellings, the role of the Western Pacific railroad alignment is underplayed but had much to do with keeping the Willow Glen community engaged in the railroad alignment and grade separation battles of the 1920s.

Sadly, the DEIR depended on secondary resources to analyze the Willow Glen trestle and the Western Pacific alignment in the context of Willow Glen. Among the weaker sources, a 1998 article from the local "shopper" newspaper, quoted a woman at a festival. Her information was just flat out wrong. (page 18, Appendix F). No mainline alignment was ever proposed for Lincoln Avenue, the "main" street of Willow Glen.

This analysis will cover the Willow Glen Trestle from the perspective of Category 1 of the National Register of History, Criterion 1 of California's regulations, and categories in San Jose's landmark program. Specifically

National

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B. Associated with the lives of significant persons in or past

California register

- 1. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage
- 2. Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history

San Jose standards:

1. Its character, interest, or value as part of the local, regional, state or national history, heritage or culture;
3. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the local, regional, state or national culture and history;
4. Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of the city of San Jose

As the final physical manifestation of the Western Pacific's right of way through Willow Glen, a discussion of the alignment and its impact is important.

First, a discussion of the key local players:

San Jose capitalist and financier T. S. Montgomery was a board member of the Western Pacific and an advocate of bringing the Beltline to San Jose. He began revealed plans in 1914 for a line from Niles to San Jose. As president of the Garden City Bank, head of the California Prune and Apricot Growers Association, large real estate developer and broker with statewide interests, board member of the Chamber of Commerce, and major property owner, T.S. Montgomery was in a position to "make it so." And he did.¹ With the formation of Cal-pak and the burgeoning construction in the Westside canning district, Montgomery saw and opportunity for his railroad, his city and his pocket. Montgomery would benefit from land sales and developments in and around the Western Pacific alignment. His Montgomery Hotel is a City landmark.

L.D. Bohnett came to prominence as a young reformer—elected to the state legislature in 1909 and serving with distinction as a floor leader for three terms until 1916. He was critical in progressive legislation that served to reduce the power of the railroads—especially the Southern Pacific. His exploits are featured in reforming reporter Franklin Hichborn's books. Born in 1880, Bohnett was a young man when he went to the legislature. An attorney, Bohnett returned to a private practice in San Jose ultimately locating in the pre-eminent multi-story Bank of America building. Bohnett's home at 899 Delmas Avenue (old numbering) at Jerome was within a block of the proposed 1906 Southern Pacific alignment.

¹ California Fruit News March 30, 1918, vol 57 #1551 p 9)

Western Banker, Vol 28, June 1922, p 669

Railway Review July 18, 1914

Listing statements of the New York Stock Exchange, Vol 20. 1921

Commercial and financial Chronicle Volume 106 1917

<http://www.historysanjose.org/cannerylife/through-the-years/1917-1966/cal-pak/index.html>

Befitting an upward bound young attorney and state legislator, Bohnett jumped to Palm Haven in about 1916, acquiring 6 lots where he built his 940 Plaza home, recognized as a city landmark. Bohnett was active in the Willow Glen Improvement association and would take a major role in fighting the railroad alignments as the two lines—Western Pacific and Southern Pacific proposed alignments on either side of his subdivision. Through his work as an attorney, legislator, and civic booster, became acquainted with two retired attorneys from Nebraska, Charles S. Allen and Paul Clarke who would form a legal triumverate that led the battles against the railroads and the formation of the city of Willow Glen. After incorporation, Bohnett served as the city attorney for the City of Willow Glen leading to extensive law suits against the Southern Pacific. Bohnett suffered significant personal attacks for his prominent role in the alignment negotiations.

Charles Allen retired from Nebraska in 1913 about the same time as his former legal partner Paul Clarke. Allen built a home across Plaza Drive from Bohnett in the Palm Haven neighborhood. Allen served for many years as President of the school board as well as on the boards of other civic organizations.

Attorney Paul Clark (1861-1932) served about eight years in the Nebraska state legislature, including a term as Speaker. Clark retired to California in 1912 after a he lost the Congressional election. He and his wife built a home on Minnesota Avenue in the Willows (a San Jose landmark) and he became active in civic affairs, including the Willow Glen Improvement Association. Ultimately, Bohnett and Clark led the charge for incorporation in both 1917 and 1927, with Clark serving as Mayor of Willow Glen until his death in 1932.

While the battles were ostensibly the actions of corporate giants—Western Pacific and Southern Pacific, the alignment battles played out locally among the leaders of those most affected: Montgomery, Bohnett, Allen, and Clark.

Railroad and Alignment History to 1918.

In 1906, Southern Pacific obtained permission from the State Railroad Commission to run a Westside line, generally on a straight line diagonal from present-day Cahill Station to just north of Oak Hill cemetery at Monterey Road. The alignment would cross Willow Street near the Guadalupe River. Immediately, SP began to secretly acquire land along the alignment and enter into negotiation with the City of San Jose for a franchise. Negotiations included issues of grade separations, apportionment of costs and property damage. Meanwhile, the Southern Pacific went to the Railroad Commission which assigned 35% to the City of San Jose and 35% to the County. San Jose sued and lost in 1917.

Meanwhile, the Western Pacific reorganized in 1916 and apparently while no one was looking, they obtained permission in 1917 to run their “Beltline” through the Willows. A group of Western Pacific reps met with Chamber of Commerce reps in June 1912. Plans called for an east side station and a west side freight side. Through

the rest of the summer, local officials and the papers asked that the two lines Southern Pacific and Western Pacific share a union station. This evolved into the idea to share a single alignment. San Jose asked the railroad commission to order it, but they declined, saying it was a good idea, but they lacked jurisdiction. The San Jose City Manager Reed revealed at the September 1917 Railroad Commission hearing that the city would never have granted Western Pacific a franchise if they had known the railroad plan to run a main line and it would be better if WP did not come at all. The city claimed that the railroad didn't tell them, while the railroad said they had. LD Bohnett represented the Willow Glen Improvement association at the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Western Pacific surveyed and began to acquire land for the "Beltline." in August 1917 the Willow Improvement Club met and President Paul Clark assigned Charles Allen and LD Bohnett to job to research legal options. Through the fall, more community meetings were held. In October 1917, a petition to incorporate was filed with the County Supervisors. Just before the election, flyer appeared explaining that 100 trains per day would traverse the new Western Pacific alignment. Paul Clark and others signed the flyer. T. S. Montgomery felt compelled to issue a statement that the Willow Glen folks were inconsistent both demanding a union alignment and threatening people with the specter of a main line. He pointed out that signers included those with interests who are not part of the boundaries of the proposed Willow Glen. Presumably, he was referenced LD Bohnett and Charles Allen who both lived in Palm Having within San Jose's city limit, but between the Western Pacific alignment and the future Southern Pacific alignment. The article is a great rhetoric argument. It appears to promise that no canneries and industrial activities are planned for Willow Glen, but careful reading shows it does not.

The incorporation election failed. After the election, TS Montgomery celebrated and stated "hardly a train per day" would traverse the route. "It will never cross the Alameda." "We will improve the Willows wherever we have property."²

After the election, the railroad commission held a hearing in late December 1917 where it was revealed that yes, the city of San Jose knew about the WG Western Pacific line but had hoped to talk the Western Pacific out of building it. The railroad had threatened the city with taking it to an initiative, so the city caved. LD Bohnett objected at one point when the leader of the SJ Chamber of Commerce stood up to make a point on behalf of the Chamber; Bohnett pointed out that the man did not have permission of the Chamber board to speak on behalf of the Chamber. During the hearing, the Western Pacific revealed that they had already built about 1000 ft. of track in an area where they felt the right of way is at risk.³ They built across the

² "Hardly Train Per Day" 1917 Dec 1.

³ "WP reject all Plans of Union. Elmer Chase Grilled on City's Delay Producing Plan" 1917 Dec 23. Secondary sources suggest the track was laid near Broadway Avenue.

Southern Pacific's Peninsular Railway tracks.⁴ In January 1918, both WP and SP confirmed they had no interest in a joint alignment.

In April 1918, the Federal government took over the railroads and construction was suspended.

After World War I

After the War was over,, control of the railroad returned to their owners. The Railroad commissioned issued orders about grade crossings and there were no grade separations. In another section of this comment letter, the construction of the Willow Glen Trestle is discussed. The line was completed in August 1922.

According to both Prune Country Railroading and Arbuckle's History of San Jose, the line was a immediate success. Western Pacific established overnight less than car load service to San Francisco and San Jose, forcing SP to improve service. Arbuckle writes with more detail about the western freight office and the overflow of packages due to the fractional car lots—a service not provided by the Southern Pacific.⁵

Meanwhile, the Southern Pacific grade separation issue had not been solved. The franchise on the 4th street line had expired in 1918 during the war. The PUC changed the apportionment of the Alameda subway costs, reducing San Jose's portion to about 19%, down from 35%. However, the City failed to pass a bond to pay for the property damage and subway costs.⁶ Things sat quietly for a time.

In April 1925, SP asked for a renewed 4th Street franchise. The city denied. This revived plans for the \$4.5 M West side location project. San Jose hires William Hudson of the Hardland Batholomew & Associates Company of St Louis (precursors to modern day Parsons Brinkerhoff) to come up with a better plan for the City. He proposes an elevated and electrified 4th Street station **with all freight for Western Pacific and Southern Pacific traveling through Willow Glen over the Western Pacific alignment.** Hudson recommends 8 grade separations.⁷

The DEIR does not mention this plan to use the Western Pacific alignment for ALL freight and only mentions the plan for the Southern Pacific to build along the 1906 alignment, (and subsequently the modified 1906 alignment.) There was never a

⁴ To extend WP. 1920 Feb 18.

⁵ Holmes, Norman. Prune Country Railroading. P. 143.
Arbuckle, Clyde History of San Jose. Arbuckle uses the word "bisect" Willow Glen to describe the alignment from Coe to Almaden. Road. Less than ¼ of the proposed City of Willow Glen would be sliced away.

⁶ 1923 Oct 23.

⁷ Original letter at Washington University St Louis, Missouri. McGarry GH "New West Side Line, Culminates Years of Effort" 1935 Dec 31.

plan to move the Southern Pacific mainline to Lincoln Avenue as indicated on page 18 of the History report in the DEIR. The Peninsular Railroad, owned by SP, had a line that traversed Lincoln Avenue for a few blocks from Coe to Lincoln and thence to Willow and Meridian Avenue out to Campbell. This was single car passenger service.⁸

In response to the Hudson Report, the Southern Pacific responded in May 1926 with an offer of 5 grade separations, making it possible for Willow Glen residents to travel to central San Jose completely unimpeded.⁹

Yet, for whatever reason, the City of San Jose did not accept this offer. The residents of the Willows sat with the sword of Damocles over their head, left to wonder whether the City was angled for the freight to traverse their community as preferred by the Hudson report. Meanwhile, the City of San Jose and Southern Pacific continued to skirmish. San Jose attacked SP's national mail contract with the US Postal Service charging the company was operating illegally without a franchise. To quiet the complaint, the SP paid San Jose \$1000 per day.

According a published reports, the City of San Jose told SP in May 1927 that they would agree to grant a franchise subject to conditions: 1) **Use the Western Pacific route through Willow Glen as the mainline.** Pay for 4 grade separation (Julian, The Alameda, Park, and West San Carlos). Removal of 4th Street tracks in two years and city would pay damages to property rather than a percentage for the grade separations.¹⁰ According to newspaperman G.H. McGarry, writing in 1929, settlement seemed near.

Not surprisingly, residents of the Willows exploded. They had lived with the Western Pacific alignment relatively modest traffic level. Now they were threatened with 100+ trains per day. Bohnett and Clark organized, with others to lead an incorporation fight.

In August 1927, an editorial appeared that explains, somewhat the complicated situation just before the incorporation election for the city of Willow Glen. Rumors were flying. And Willow Glen stood to lose and suffer from the presence of the Western Pacific alignment and the Willow Glen Trestle's gateway into the West Side.

⁸ McCaleb. Tracks Trains and Wheels.

⁹ 1926 May 28.

¹⁰ 1929 Aug 9. And holmes. Prune Country Railroading.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1927

Let's Not Call Names

MIGHTY hard names are being called in the quarrel over the incorporation of Willow Glen. The word petty is being used by those who want the tracks off Fourth Street. And those who want them to remain are talking of speculators, who bought their Fourth Street property hoping for track removal and consequent skyrocketing of prices.

The Evening News owns no property on Fourth Street, nor in Willow Glen. It does regret the hard feelings which are being stirred up between the two factions.

It is easy to see the side of Willow Glen. Put yourself in their position, with the Western Pacific already there and prospects of the Southern Pacific going the same way—all, as they believe, in order to help speculators and political wire pullers who bought on Fourth Street counting on removal of the rails.

That's one side of it. On the other side is the fact that having the railroad on Fourth Street is acting as an iron band to hamper the growth of the city, that track removal would be a boon to the State College and, more than all, that establishment of the tracks on the West Side would mean the building of a beautiful new station along the lines of the one at Sacramento—and everyone will admit we certainly do need that station.

What The Evening News has wondered about a good deal is this: If it is true that the Southern Pacific has owned a right of way along the West Side for 20 years, why isn't that right of way used? Certainly no one ought to complain if the Southern Pacific occupied property which it had owned for that length of time. There is a possibility that it may be a little longer than the route through Willow Glen, which has stirred up so much opposition, and yet this added distance ought to be balanced by the increased speed which would be possible, as compared with the present slow stretch on Fourth Street, plus the fact that the present route is itself a very indirect one.

The Evening News hopes the matter may be settled with a minimum of hard feelings. You people who want the tracks removed, imagine how you would feel if you were in the position of Willow Glen, with everything to lose and nothing to gain through the re-routing of the tracks. Be prepared to understand the position of these people. Don't talk of being "petty," but try to solve the matter honestly and with justice to them.

And you folk in the Willows, please try to get the viewpoint of San Jose, of which you are really, in everything except name, a part. Remember that the tracks do hamper the growth of the business district eastward, and that not all those who desire the street cleared are speculators.

Let us not call names but try, if it is humanly possible, to find a way out with a minimum of harm and a maximum of justice.

Throughout the campaign season, mostly anonymous letters to the editor appear in the newspaper. *It's folly to fight SP. ...SP will just use the WPRR route...No, they have to get a franchise before they can operate...A city will cost too much...It's all downtown and Palm Haven interests that want this.*

Ultimately, incorporation passes and the City of Willow Glen is formed on September 7, 1927. It was up to the newly elected council people to protect the residents from Southern Pacific on the Western Pacific line and along the 1906 alignment that ran from Coe to Willow at Guadalupe River.

Six days after the election, on September 13, the SP released a letter confirming July 22 discussions with the City of San Jose. The SP's letter is silent on the Willows incorporation and "resumes parley with San Jose." The letter is issued at the telephone request on Sept 12 of the City. 1. Route won't go through Palm Haven, New station, removal of 4th street tracks in two years, grade separations at the Alameda, West San Carlos, Julian, Park, property damages, franchises and the city would seek \$75K from state highway commission for half of Monterey road grade sep at Oak Hill cemetery. Within the letter, SP wrote 'question of industry spurs between LG Creek and Guadalupe creek, restriction should not be part of franchise but zoning ordinance.' One has to wonder why the letter was released *after the election with no mention of Willows in letter? What complicated chess game was underway?* The Newspaper contacted four of 5 WG councilmembers and two spoke of being adamantly opposed to coming to any agreement with SP.

At this point, SP was operating on 4th Street, had a recalcitrant Willow Glen City Council led by Paul Clark and advised by City Attorney LD Bohnett. Through joint trackage agreements, it would be theoretically possible for SP to run their mainline along the Western Pacific alignment, but additional land and upgrades would be needed and Southern Pacific already owned all of the alignment along the 1906 alignment from Bird to Willow (Coe to Almaden).

The citizens of Willow Glen watched trains traverse the Willow Glen trestle and awaited the next action of the Southern Pacific.

At the end of September, 1917 SP and City of San Jose announced that they had an agreement on the 1906 alignment. Presumably, what remained was an agreement with Willow Glen for that portion slicing through the northeast of the City.

Apparently, it did not go further, on Jan 1928, **the Southern Pacific announced that they would join the Western Pacific alignment—provided legal hurdles could be overcome.** The Willow Glen trestle was back in play as the gateway to San Jose. Yet, by the end of the month, Willow Glen had blocked SPs plan and the modified 1906 alignment was announced.

In the modified 1906 alignment, the area between present-day Bird and Willow Street was modified to run along Fuller Avenue utilizing two right angle turns avoiding the new City Limits. It eliminates the 6 worse grade crossings.

Meanwhile City conspired with SP and inspired annexation in Hillsdale and Cottage Grove sections which prevented WG from embarking on annexation program that would cut off the west side route entirely. [Hillsdale district has the Lick Branch to Almaden and it would have been easy to bring it around the south side of Willow Glen.]

On 1928 Feb 21 City manager Clarence Goodwin opened negotiation with SP for franchise using the modified 1906 route. The plan is “assured of success as efforts of WG to annex the Cottage-Grove Hillsdale district are blocked for 75 days by a petition to annex Hillsdale and Cottage Gove. By March, 1928 The City of San Jose and SP agree to eight grade separations: Julian The Alameda Park San Carlos Bird Delmas Prevost and Willow¹¹ HD Hudson, planning engineer with Harland Bartolomew came to town to walk the route and estimate property damage for new 1906 alignment. He liked that it is more square with fewer skew crossings.

At this point, it appears that the Western Pacific’s alignment is out of play for the Southern Pacific’s mainline and Willow Glen is home free. Yet it is not. On 1928 Mar 15 San Jose City Manager Clarence Goodwin, WH Hudson and WG Council, including Paul Clark and attorney LD Bohnett met. The meeting was characterized as “pleasant but ineffective.”At the Willow Glen meeting Hudson pointed out that the most effective way of solving the district’s railroad problem was to route both the Southern Pacific’s and Western Pacific’s tracks over the right of way of the latter on an elevated three track line which would do away with all grade crossings and which by being converted into a park-way with trees and other landscaping would not be a detriment to any residential district.” Major Clark of WG joked that he did want to be a pig and take away Clarence [Goodwin]s] only railroad. ¹²

Plans for CSJ to meet with SP was thwarted and Hudson returned to working on modifications to 1906 modified alignment. In April, San Jose and SP come to an agreement and publish the map of the modified 1906 alignment. Articles explain the cost savings over an elevated alignment at 4th Street.

But the City of Willow Glen apparently was still bargaining. The newspaper reports 1928 Apr 17 anonymous representative Willow Glen residents said their city was willing to have Modified 1906 alignment cut through their city IF WPRR tracks were moved to SP. And might annex to CSJ. Original 1906 route cut through wide swatch of newly incorporated WG. **WG officials intimated they might be willing**

¹¹ Holmes, Norman. Prune Country Railroading. P 67

¹² Suburb is firm in stand” 1928 Mar 15

to straighten the modified 1906 alignment's large S curve if WP moved to the SP alignment.¹³



Modified 1906 Alignment showing S curve.

Now the eastern part of the City of Willow Glen, where city officials wanted industry was being used as a bargaining chip to rid the residential and commercial area of the Western Pacific alignment.

Meanwhile, April was San Jose City Council election season and LD Bohnett received particular vitriole for his efforts on behalf of the City of Willow Glen and the residents of Palm Haven. At a 1928 Apr 26 City Council campaign meeting there is a Progressive alliance of 3 candidates that includes W. Biebrach of Palm Haven. Issue

¹³ Willows would join San Jose if WP was put on SP's Route. San Jose News. 1928 April 17.

is vice, but the RR comes up and how if persons opposed to the west side ROW get into power, the RR problem may not be settled for 10 years. Attorney LD answered the charge that the election issues are those concerning the RR problem::

BOHNETT: “The insinuations that the three candidates we indorse are opposed to the removal of the tracks is unfounded. Mr. Meyer has twice voted for their removal. Mr Lawrence who is associated with Charles Crothers [Lutheran minister and resident of WG I believe] has long advocated the removal of the tracks. Mr. Biebrach has publicaly declared he would abide by the decision of the city’s expert. **At any rate these three men alone could not possibly prevent the settle of the railroad question. We westsiders believe the present settlement is a thousand times better than anything that has eve been proposed previously and feel that it is as good as it is because of our insistent demands.**”¹⁴

One of the council candidates—not part of the progressive slate—chose to run ads calling out LD Bohnett and Charles S. Allen. He acknowledges their astute role in manipulating the railroad questions, which this analysis shows includes using the Western Pacific alignment as bargaining chips.

See following.

¹⁴ “Speakers Clash over council candidates.” 1928 Apr 26.



WILLIAM M. IRONS
Candidate for Re-election to the City Council
Primary Election, May 7, 1928

IT does not
surprise me
a bit to find
Mr. L. D. Bohnett

*one of the shrewdest, most
astute, and selfish politi-
cians in the State of Califor-
nia, opposed to my re-elec-
tion to the City Council*

*As every citizen of this community knows, the great question facing the
City of San Jose for the past six years and more has been the selection of
a suitable route for the Southern Pacific tracks.*

Years ago the Railroad Company bought a right-of-way west of San Jose. Everyone who purchased property in that location thereafter knew that at some time the Railroad Company would run their tracks in that vicinity. Afterwards nearly all that territory came into the City limits. Our friend, L. D. Bohnett, built his home in Palm Haven. *Immediately Bohnett spent every effort and used every means within his power to prevent the City from forcing the tracks off Fourth Street, and placing them where they belonged, on the west side of the City. Bohnett was not actuated by the good of the community at large, but actuated by his own self-interest.*

When it was practically determined that the railroad, after a battle lasting six years with the Council, should be forced to remove their tracks from Fourth Street, *Mr. Bohnett himself was responsible for the organization of the residents of Willow Glen into an incorporated City. This was done by Bohnett and his coterie for the avowed purpose, openly expressed by them, of preventing the Railroad Company from taking that route. Bohnett's interest was absolutely selfish.*

About a month ago the members of the City Council, with the exception of Joe Brooks, were called to attend a meeting in a certain office in this City. Upon arriving at the place appointed, imagine their surprise upon meeting L. D. Bohnett, and other residents of Palm Haven and vicinity who wished to have a secret conference with the Council as to the Railroad question. *Why didn't L. D. Bohnett and his friends attend a council meeting and there discuss openly and before the people the railroad matter?* At that secret meeting, Mr. Bohnett said that HE had prevented the trains from passing through Willow Glen, and that HE had no apologies to offer in the matter. In other words, *if Bohnett's private interests were served, the interests of the community were of no moment to him.* The Council, of course, could not discuss a proposition involving the welfare of the entire community with a few persons actuated by their own self-interest and left the meeting, telling Bohnett and others to appear before the Council any Monday night, which was the proper forum for the hearing of such matters.

I note that Bohnett's candidates state that "the railroad question is settled, and we will not do anything to hinder the placing of the railroad according to the franchise granted by the Council." *"I want to tell you people that the railroad question is not settled, and will not be settled until the last spike is driven and the trains move over the tracks. The people of this community have thirty days from last Monday night to referendum the franchise passed by the Council, and it only requires about fifteen per cent of the signatures of the voters to call for such a referendum election. These could probably be obtained by Bohnett and his west side friends in two or three days, and the people in San Jose will in all probability, after the present election is over, be faced with that referendum election, REGARDLESS OF WHAT L. D. BOHNETT AND HIS FRIENDS SAY NOW.*

L. D. Bohnett is not only an astute politician, as I have said before, but a very practical one. He handled the fight for Joe McKimmon for Supervisor last election, and I note the other day that Bohnett's brother was appointed by the Supervisors to fill the first vacancy in the County Traffic Squad.

I wonder if Bohnett knows something that the rest of us do not know! He appears to be very anxious to gain control of this City Council. Probably there is some great development work that is to go on in San Jose, and it would be very handy for a self-seeking attorney like Bohnett to have a few Councilmen on his staff. Great corporations require attorneys and great corporation development work requires a complacent Council, and Bohnett is never averse to forwarding his own interests.

He claims that there is a moral issue before the community. There ~~was~~ when I entered the Council six years ago. Since that time the Chief of Police, backed by the City Council, has so effectually cleaned up vice in this City that I understand that the *Law Enforcement League has been disbanded.* Even Mrs. McClintic in a meeting of the W. C. T. U. the other day stated that there was no vice problem at the present time in San Jose, but there might be in the future. How about the Councilmen who helped to clean up that vice problem by standing behind the Chief of Police? Are they not to be trusted to keep conditions as they are? At least, are they not to be trusted as well as candidates who have not made the fight for present conditions?

Another thing I will point to is that during my term of office the School Department of the City of San Jose has absolutely and entirely been kept out of politics, and I defy anyone to prove anything to the contrary. For many years that has been the peoples' cry, "KEEP THE SCHOOLS OUT OF POLITICS." We have done so. The only man that I know of connected with the School Department who is taking an active interest in municipal politics now, and who has previously taken an active part in municipal politics, is C. S. Allen, Chairman of the Board of Education of this City. He is fighting me, probably because I do not stand for that kind of stuff.

As far as I know, *there is no political boss in San Jose* at the present time. My record on the Council speaks for itself. I cannot say, however, that there is no aspirant for the high honor of Political Boss, and should his Councilmen be elected, all ye who wish anything at the City's hands, kindly visit the offices of L. D. Bohnett first, at the present time City Attorney for the City of Willow Glen.

(Signed) Wm. M. Irons

At this point, the City of Willow Glen was on its own to solve the problem with SPRR about slice of land at the eastern boundary over the Guadalupe River. SP wanted to modify their alignment and avoid the Monterey Highway grade separation at Oak Hill cemetery and use a cut through the Azevedo property on Dairy Hill (present day Communication Hill area). SP took the matter in hand and laid track early one dawn December morning on CB Nicora's property from the crossing of the WPRR at Guadalupe River to Willow Street. The press reported that it was to facilitate moving materials to Willow Street. Secondary sources indicate that SPRR laid tracks through Nicora's basement. SP was famous for strong-arm intimidation tactics with unwilling sellers.

After the second track construction day, the City of Willow Glen filed an injunction. SP argued that if the railroad stayed on private land and didn't cross a public street or public land, they could lay their tracks anywhere.

Now it was in the courts and in the hands of City Attorney LD Bohnett. In march 1929, local residents called for disincorporation to stop the legal suit. Unsuccessful, the City of Willow Glen pursued and was joined by other municipalities in their arguments against the railroads actions.

At this point, the Western Pacific alignment was no longer in play. For 12 years, it hung over the head of residents of Willow Glen. The triumvirate of LD Bohnett, Paul Clark, and Charles Allen, used the Western Pacific alignment when they could and suffered from threats from the City of San Jose when San Jose used it as a threat.

For over 75 years, the alignment served as a regular reminder to Willow Glen's citizens of the wrangling over the location of trains on the West side. Long, slow moving freight-trains that had to stop for the streetcar interlockings (crossings) at Willow Street and Minnesota Avenue delayed Willow Glen residents as the head for downtown San Jose. Even after the interlockings were removed, the train moved slowly through Willow Glen—where workers allowed young people to jump onto the train to hitch a ride, and school children recall "tomatoe fights" from fruit spilled at derailments or from overloaded freight cars. More recent residents recall buses being required to stop at the WPRR rail crossing—long after the tracks were removed.

The trestle over Los Gatos Creek, then, as now, serves as a symbol of that wrangling in the 1920s over the alignment and the legal wrangling in modern times over the survival of the trestle itself.

Using the categories for historic preservation:

People and Local Area and State Role

LD Bohnett, Charles S. Allen, and Paul Clark serve as monuments to how involved citizens can make the great Southern Pacific blink. Their interplay with the City of San Jose allowed the City to negotiate 8 grade separations rather than the one that Sp offered in 1906. The combined actions attracted the attention and support of communities throughout California who struggled to negotiate with SP and reign in its excesses. Willow Glen's reputation and current community sense of identity depends on that historic wrangling which would not have been as successful without the presence of the Western Pacific alignment through the heart of Willow Glen.