



IRON HORSE CORRIDOR

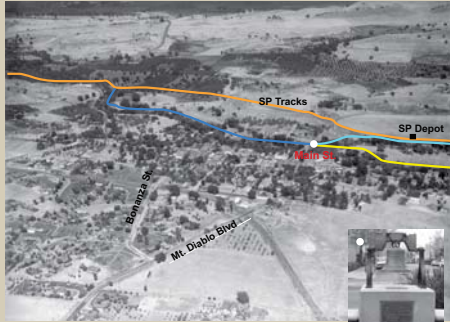


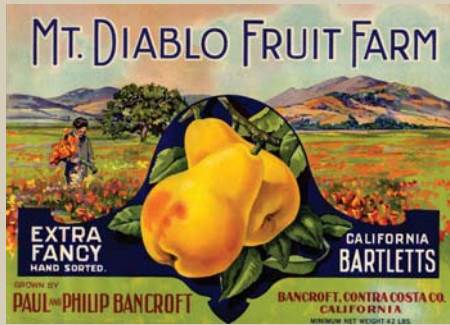
Photo by: HJW Geospatial Inc./Pacific Aerial Surveys, Oakland, CA

Aerial Photo of Walnut Creek from 1936

- Liberty Bell as it stands today
- San Ramon Creek
- Las Trampas Creek
- Walnut Creek
- SP Tracks



Ranch workers in orchard at Shadelands Ranch in Walnut Creek (1940s)



Fruit box label for the Bancroft Family's Fruit Farm

RAIL HISTORY

For over 80 years, this trail was not a footpath, but a railroad line. The "Iron Horse," as trains were sometimes called, was a catalyst for the growth and development of central Contra Costa County.

In the 1800s much local land was converted from ranching to farming. More than 30,000 acres of wheat were under cultivation by 1858. Grapes, pears, walnuts, apricots and almonds were important crops grown in Walnut Creek and surrounding areas. Freight trains became critical to this growing agricultural economy because they carried this produce to markets outside the county.

Farmers, who saw the economic benefits of rail for getting their crops to larger markets, donated much of the land for the Southern Pacific right of way. The first Southern Pacific train ran on June 7, 1891 with stops at stations in Concord, Walnut Creek, Danville and San Ramon. The San Ramon Branch Line, as this connector was called, extended from the Avon Main Terminal in Martinez to San Ramon where it met the Oakland/Stockton Line. It was extended to Radum near Pleasanton in 1909.

In addition to transporting food, the Iron Horse gave mobility to people. At the turn of the century rail was the principal means of travel for Bay Area residents. The fare to San Francisco or Oakland was \$1.50 and the running time to the Ferry Building in San Francisco was 2 1/2 hours. Typically a passenger going to San Francisco from Walnut Creek went by way of Martinez to Oakland and then by ferry to San Francisco.

RAIL TO TRAIL

With the introduction of autos, trucks and buses, railroad passenger and freight traffic decreased. Southern Pacific asked the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to discontinue service on the line. Operations ended in 1978 and the rails were removed.

The demise of this rail line created a new opportunity to create a recreational trail. Contra Costa County obtained \$18.8 million in transportation grants from the State of California to purchase the right of way. The East Bay Regional Park District operates and maintains the trail through a portion of the Corridor under a license agreement with the County. When completed, the Park District's Iron Horse Trail will extend from the Altamont Pass in eastern Alameda County to Suisun Bay along the Contra Costa shoreline, a distance of 55 miles. There are over 25 miles of trail completed so far in Contra Costa County.

EASEMENTS

This former rail corridor serves an additional purpose. Contra Costa County owns the Corridor and maintains the lands along the trail. It has granted easements and licenses to businesses and agencies to use this corridor for underground pipelines, water and sewer lines, fiber optic cables and flood control facilities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN THE CORRIDOR

- EBRPD - Trail Maps & Volunteer Opportunities • www.ebparks.org
- Contra Costa Watershed Forum www.cocowater.web
- Adopt a Corridor Program, www.ironhorse.info
- Iron Horse Corridor Management Advisory Committee, www.pw.cccounty.us
- Contra Costa County Resource Conservation District, www.ccrd.org



Section of the Iron Horse Corridor following LifeGarden's habitat restoration project.



Walnut Creek Southern Pacific Depot 1942



Walkers and bikers enjoying the Iron Horse trail at the 1929 rail bridge

This sign was prepared by LifeGarden, a Contra Costa County based 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization (www.lifegarden.org) with a Civic Pride grant from the City of Walnut Creek and a matching grant from Contra Costa County's Iron Horse Corridor Trust Fund. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of volunteers from the Walnut Creek Historical Society in the development of this panel.

