

Publication: Tri-City Voice, Summer
Months of 2006



ALLEY TALK: 50 years of Denial in Niles

Part 1 - "ALLEY" IS STILL WHISPERED

I forgot; why did the conversation stop?

The issue was coming up again - another client wanted to improve their property and use the Alley. I was told by the head of the Community Development Department that..."So much has changed in 10 years - be positive." I was so optimistic in the beginning: In the end, so disappointed that the situation - just got worse.



Lake Iron Horse - East, 2006

The City's attitude regarding the ownership issue has changed from a live-and-let-live attitude, to stripping alley access rights away from the property owners unless they legally prove their rights. In more concrete terms: in the past, the City allowed the Niles Congregational Church, which uses the Alley, to build its day-care facility adjacent to the alley without requiring them to legally prove they had the right¹. Now, everyone needs a lawyer. What's up?

It would be best for everyone to put the ownership issue behind us, stop the legal arguments, and move on to complete the revitalization of Niles.

Remembering what happened in 1993 took some time. I eventually recalled enough to ask some very specific questions of the City of Fremont - in writing. Utilizing the "Freedom of Information Act", I requested and received many documents, which answered my questions, and many others. The City never shared this information, because no one had asked. It is really quite astonishing.

How do you begin talking about the Alley subject which started 50 years ago, has never been resolved, and is a major deterrent to a full and healthy revitalization of Niles .

The only way is to jump in.

Just say the "A -word" and see what happens

It all started-up again when someone new moved into Niles and said the word.

As I understand, the term "A-word", was first coined by a City Council Member in the 1990's when dissuading an individual² from discussing the subject, as in, "There are many good things about to happen in Niles - just don't say the A-word ." Since then, the term has been absorbed into local culture and continues to be whispered.

¹ My Wife was the project coordinator for the church during design and construction. There was never an issue of proving the legal right to use the alley for the Day Care facility.

² If I recall correctly, I think it was myself.

The following is a reprint of a spontaneous Niles e-group conversation which took place in 2005. It has been edited only to make e-speak corrections and to retain focus on the subject. The full conversations can be read at groups.yahoo.com/group/Niles/ for the months of June and July 2005.

Ron: "I just moved here from out of state and love Niles. It looks like the town is on the cusp of really turning into something even better, but I wanted to know what the deal is with the alleys? Why are they not paved or maintained to a higher level? Can the Fire Department easily access homes along the alley in an emergency?"

Apologies if I am bringing up an issue that is already being dealt with, but I would love to see this change as I think it would continue to make Niles a fantastic and special place."

John: "You have raised an interesting point , which to my knowledge has not been identified in the long and disparate discussions on the Niles Alleys. Other than access to Fire Station Number 2 on 2nd Street, is there any intent by the Fremont Fire Department to utilize the Alleys for emergency vehicle access? The Alleys are the sole means of access for several properties in Niles."

Diana: "I just purchased a home on Iron Horse Lane, an alley. I was asking a friend who had lived on the same street for many years, the same question you have posed here. He said that the City has always treated it as the responsibility of the homeowners on the alleyways. But, I think it is time that the City realize that it is in their best interest to pave them. I have commented before that, in a one year time period on my block, two cars were hit, my gate was hit, the Library was hit, and another building was hit. People tend to drive too fast because they like the gravel or are trying to avoid main streets. They often hit rather large dips and probably lose control. I have named one seasonal puddle "Lake Iron Horse." The condition gets worse each year."

Kely: "Oh, the "Alley Issue" is back.

About 10 to 12 years ago a bunch of us in Niles asked the City to help maintain the alleys. There had been problems with emergency services, because those who lived on the alleys had addresses from the opposite streets. So to solve that problem the City named the alleys but insisted that they were private property. Apparently some residents' deeds state that their property ends at the alley, while other deeds include the alley. When Alameda County "gave" all the public roads, through fairs, and streets to the City of Fremont, the word "alleys" wasn't specifically noted, therefore the City refuses to take any responsibility. Since the City is in a perpetual budget crisis, I wouldn't get any hopes up that the City is going to do anything at all - EVER. My take is that there's free land in Niles since some property owners don't have the land in their deeds, and the City says it's not theirs either. Can people still homestead?



Alley details when they really work,
2006



Alley Cottage , PWAarchitects, 1994



Alley Cottage , PWAarchitects, 1994



Alley Details when they really work,
2006

Ron: This is great feedback! I talked to a neighbor and he told me about how Niles used to be its own town. When Niles incorporated into the City did it have some sort of agreement regarding the alleys?

Paul: It is sure is nice to hear conversations about the alleys are starting up again. It would be good to resolve this issue, otherwise our children are going to inherit the problem.

So, the City claims that they do not own the alleys! We did incorporate, didn't we? Well, that is like getting married and then at a later date claiming that " you weren't aware that your spouse's left arm was part of the marriage, and now that it is broken - you do not accept responsibility for it".

When the City says that they do not own the alleys - why do we believe them?

The City should be celebrating and promoting the use of the Alleys, but what happens instead, is denial."

Dirk: "Those are the key words, celebrate and promote. Ashland, Oregon and Port Townsend, Washington both have alleys that live, and add charm and ambiance not available on their major streets. The key is to empower the property owners to be able to beautify and make money off the things.

Asphalt would not be the most powerful choice here. Something on the human scale would have many times the value. Brick, cobbles, even high end rolled crushed rock would be far more appropriate. Shade trees or arbors with vines would go far toward turning these lanes into the attractive havens they could be. Street lights, sure, but low and warm."

Paul: "Those are passionate and powerful images you have, and represent - exactly - what Niles is all about. What prevents these ambitions and ideas from flourishing is the stifling non-support offered by the City.

Some years ago I had a wonderful Alley Cottage designed for a local resident which used the Alley for required parking access.

The project complied with all planning requirements, except one, said the City Planner. The City denied the project because they said the Alleys were not recognized as an approved roadway, and therefore they could not allow a car to drive on it, to get to the required parking space. They suggested that the project should be redesigned with a 150 foot long driveway built from Second Street to the back of the property (at the Alley) where the garage was located and yes, the garage would have to be turned around with the back of it facing the Alley. This, the City felt - was good design.

This irrational, insensitive and anti-historic position the City has in regards to the use of the Alleys has to stop, if visions like yours are to flourish.

We need to do something, any suggestions?"



The Commercial Alley, 2006

Dirk: "You know, as in anything, a lot of the uncertainty could be resolved by simply initiating positive changes. Owners, or empowered renters, with property abutting the alleys are the natural torch bearers in this. If these people are not motivated to make "meaningful places" out of their part of the alleys, it is highly doubtful that character-filled enrichment, and true comfort and inspiration will ever come to reside here. Master plans are simply incapable of instilling the charm that dozens of unique treatments effortlessly weave together.

"Talk is easy, Good Building is hard", is another way to say it.

The fact that people may want to volunteer or contribute is a wonderful empowerment, if the principals involved are sincerely motivated to make the small changes which can lead to establishing a firm positive identity and create momentum toward further, larger "improvements". Once individual and community energy and money is invested, the vision can start to emerge, the place begins to speak for itself, and become respected as - worth preserving - and able to attract ongoing attention and investment.

That first part is the leap of faith. After the inertia builds, it's a no-brainer.

People love Niles, and want to help it truly bloom, but it takes leadership, dedication, risky investment, and brazen initiative on the part of people who have valid stakes - or a certainty of vision - to test the waters. Then maybe, finally, we will get some real horsepower going."

Paul: "I do differ with you, that after the community inertia is built, everything else is a no-brainer.

The City is the obstacle. Our plight, as eloquently articulated to me one day by an experienced local, was..."Imagine that we (Nilians) are the historic town of Mendocino but we are governed by Orange County." The City of Fremont does not even have zoning regulations for our 50' wide lots with alley access. They consider our properties substandard to Fremont's "Manifest Destiny" of suburban sprawl, which is now complete.

I think the year was 1997 when my block took charge and graveled our alley . At the time we mentioned the need to the City's Public Works Department and they emphatically replied, " Do not tell us, because if you do, we will require asphalt or concrete paving and civil engineering drawings". To top it off, they could not allow us to do this work because they said we would have to prove we had the right to use the alley - even though we do every day. We had mud holes, drug problems, trash and general blight: Our alley is clean and safe now.

The point is, Fremont was going to prevent us from “Improving the quality of our town, and our lives” – so we did it ourselves. Fremont government must change it’s attitude toward the alleys.

I propose that we go to the Historic Architectural Review Board and request that the Alleys be identified as Historic Resources. This will require the City to commission an historic evaluation of the Alleys, which will determine their significance in defining the character of Niles. The report will conclude that the Alleys are eligible for the State Register of Historic Resources.

If we accomplish this, the alleys will be protected. We will have declared in a binding, governing manner, that the use of the Alleys should be celebrated and promoted in order to enhance and protect Niles.”

Dirk: “ I oversimplified the case, a no-brainer is out of the question in any ongoing relationship between citizen groups and a governing bureaucracy.

The "Institutional Memory" is only binding and contained in official status and legal standings such as you propose. What I meant to convey was just how far along independent action can get you in the meantime, such as the progress you all made in 1997 in the both the physical and attitude realms.

Niles citizenry is not at the beginning of the learning and experience curve on the alleys, we are some way along in the understanding of what the obstacles are for their respect and proper care, and what steps might be taken next to secure their protection into the future.

There are at least a few cautions and caveats to all this recognition, of course. Once the alleys are officially "on the radar", they will be subject to a set of guidelines and standards that may or may not be, enforced over time. The folks entrusted to draft the language and make the maps to preserve and protect "the character" of Iron Horse Lane and Victory Lane may find that less micromanaging is more productive in the long run. After all, the creative forces which have shaped the alley environment up until recently have been conspicuously free of "guidelines"! It should be considered that alley front owners may be giving up a measure of creative freedom which stems from the present benign neglect on the part of the City.

However, there can be little doubt that we need a legal way to accomplish the possibility of things like driveways in projects such as your cottage proposed, and other imaginative uses, so things can start to happen in pleasing and lively way.

In any good treatment of the alleys, the trick will be to provide for basics like setbacks, drainage, lighting, paving, etc. without losing the feeling which we enjoy now when sections of the alleys are at their best. This may mean doing things a little differently to support something unique, which we value above the conventional.”



Alley Residence, 2006

Paul: *“That’s leadership! - Well said.*

So when the Alleys become a recognized Historic Resource, their use will be encouraged, preserved and protected – mostly from the illusive policies of the City of Fremont. As Niles picks up the Alley issue again, some history needs to be recalled.

City policies - what policies?

Nothing has ever been publicly debated or voted on by the City Council. It took 40 years for the City to claim that they have no responsibilities for the alleys, and this came after they intended to pave them in 1984. There are complete engineering drawings on this project (PWC-391 – Niles Alleys). The last time alley discussions made it to the City Council was in the mid-1990s. There was no public debate because the City Council had a “closed door” meeting with their attorney. What was the secrecy for? What are they hiding? How did our community let this happen without debate or a vote? Isn’t this type of action considered unconstitutional?

Out of this “closed door” meeting the city’s position changed from laissez-faire support to removing access rights. This is their current position:

- 1. The City does not own them and takes no responsibility for their condition.*
- 2. If a property owner wishes to make improvements to their property in Niles, and they intend to use the alley for access to their property, they must legally prove they have the right to use them (even if they have been using them for the past 100 years), and then, they are required to pave them.*

The reason I mention this again, is only to counter your description of the City’s position as “benign neglect”. It appears to be willful - at the expense of historic stewardship, and the quality of Niles.

Coffee?”

So, it is easy to see what reactions the word “Alley” evokes. Whether these facts and opinions are accurate is not the point. The reality is, this is what the community still thinks and remembers.

Part 2 - CRITICAL FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Where are the Alleys anyway?

There are two Alleys which run the entire length of the original town in Niles; they are parallel to Niles Boulevard (originally Front Street), Second and Third Streets. Their function is to provide useful access to the rear properties. There were no automobiles in those days, and the dust thrown by horse-drawn wagons was something to avoid. It was always best to bring the wagons around the back

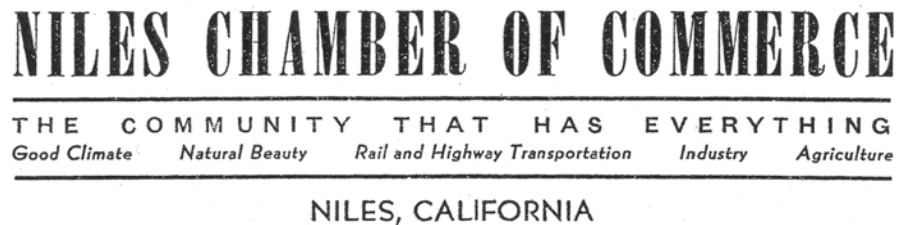


Niles Alleys - Original Town Street Grid

side of the buildings. The existence of the Alleys creates the fabric, or architectural vocabulary of the town: picket fences, western facades and the conspicuous absence of suburban two car garages.

Why are the Alleys so important?

In 1992, I remember someone asking this question. “Why don’t we just close them and let the the adjacent property owners take possession of the land? That should solve all the City’s problems”. Sometimes questions don’t dignify a response, this was one of those times. Looking at the other side of the coin; What if the Alleys had been usable since the day of incorporation? Niles had everything going for it, as proclaimed by the Niles Chamber of Commerce: Good Climate, Natural Beauty, Rail and Highway Transportation, Industry and Agriculture.



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On the positive side, How would things be different, if since 1956:

- How many businesses would have thrived on easy deliveries from the Alleys into the stores?
- How many commercial property owners would have expanded their buildings as the business community thrived?
- How many new shoppers and businesses would have been attracted to this thriving environment?
- How many residences would still have picket fences?
- How many garages would be accessed from the Alleys instead of from the main streets.?
- How much more bountiful would the residential gardens be if their was less driveway pavement? Many 150' long x 12' wide driveways were installed because of the poor conditions of the alleys.
-
- In the year 2006, how many old-town districts - like Pleasanton, Healdsburg, Livermore and Palo Alto - would be saying, “If we could only be as successful as Niles”.

³ Letterhead from the Niles Chamber of Commerce.

It is not hard to Imagine. The Alleys have, through the course of its history, defined the character of Niles. Over the last 50 years the impact could have been positive. Instead Niles has remained perplexingly depressed. Could the condition of the Alleys have anything to do with it?

Requesting Public Documents

As seen in the 2005 flurry of Alley conversations held on the Niles e-group, all it takes is one person to say the word; the flood gates open, and the community's ambitions, visions and mistrusts come boiling up to the surface. It has, in fact, been an issue since the day of incorporation.

The debate has lasted a generation, some history has been forgotten, and some was probably never known. So to try to put it all together again, I set out to see what the City had in its files. The Freedom of Information Act requires a City to provide copies of Public Documents when specifically requested. The key to all of this is to have some knowledge of the alley history. I focused my questions on three prior historic episodes.



Residential Alley, 2006

1. **The Myth Starts** - Fremont's refusal to accept the Alleys in Niles from the County at the time of Incorporation: 1955 - 1956

18 August 2005

From: P. Welschmeyer

To: City Manager, F. Diaz

"Please provide the documents indicating that the City of Fremont specifically refused acceptance of the Alleys in Niles from the County of Alameda as part of the jurisdictional land transfer between the County and the incorporating new city - Fremont."

2. **Vanishing Federal Funds** - City of Fremont public works project PWC 391 - Niles Alleys: 1982 - 1987

18 August 2005

From: P. Welschmeyer

To: City Manager, F. Diaz

"In the 1980's, the City of Fremont established funding methods and commissioned civil engineering road improvement plans for the Alleys in Niles. For some reason this project was never completed. Please provide the following documents: (1) City budgets indicating funding for the project; (2) Staff correspondence files regarding the financial / public communications and engineering work accomplished on the project; (3) Engineering drawings for the Alleys prepared by the City of Fremont (PWC 391 - Niles Alleys), dated 1984; (4) City Council meeting minutes / Staff Reports discussing cancelation of the project; (5) Documents indi-

cating the diversion of funds appropriated for the Alley improvements and where the funds were actually used.”

3. The Hammer Falls - “Closed Door” City Council meeting - policy changes regarding the use of the Alleys in Niles: 1993 - 1997

18 August 2005

From: P. Welschmeyer

To: City Manager, F. Diaz

“Prior to a specific “Closed Door” City Council meeting (1993-1997), The City of Fremont’s policies regarding improvements to properties abutting the Alleys in Niles was one of support and encouragement. Improvements to properties which utilized the alleys in their development plans were successfully completed prior to this “Closed Door” City Council meeting. As an example, the Niles Congregational Church, Day Care building addition located at the corner of Third and H street.

After this specific “Closed Door” City Council meeting , the City’s policies changed to specific denial of any public ownership of the Alleys and has adopted a policy that the property owners must legally prove they have the right to use the Alleys which abut their properties.

Please provide the documents which directed the City Staff to make these policy changes. Also, Please provide the appropriate governmental documents that indicate the City has the authority to make such “closed door” policy decisions without proper public input and public voting by the City Council.”

The City Replies

The first response letters from the City, requested a 30 day time period to collect the information. However, the specific response to the Closed Door meeting was very interesting:

23 August 2005

From: City Attorney’s Office, I. Seto

To: P. Welschmeyer

“In reviewing City Council agendas from this period with the City Clerk’s Office, please be advised that the City Council did hold a Closed Session meeting on July 6, 1993 to discuss potential or anticipated litigation regarding the validity and enforceability of the dedications of the Niles Alleys and the rights of abutting property owners.

The City Council's July 6, 1993 meeting regarding this subject was held pursuant to State Government Code 54950, which specifically permits closed meetings where there is a need for confidentiality, such as potential or anticipated litigation. Therefore, any documents provided to the City Council at such meeting are confidential, and not subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act."

Now we are getting somewhere: What liability or legal action is the City protecting itself from? Is there actually a law suit currently in progress? Was their legal position regarding non-ownership of the Alleys eroding?

I then wrote:

23 August 2005

From: P. Welschmeyer

To: City Attorney's Office, I. Seto

"Since the City has information to hide, please provide the following documents: (1.) Written ordinance/zoning regulations or governing policies regarding development requirements for properties abutting the Alleys in Niles prior to and after the 6 July 1993 "Closed Door" City Council meeting; (2.) List of City Council members during the year, 1993 and those members present at the "Closed Door" meeting of 6 July 1993.



For Better or Worse - an Incorporation: First City Council takes oath on 24 January 1956. Image from "City of Fremont, First Thirty Years".



For Better or Worse - a Marriage, 1950

Part 3 - ORIGINS OF THE MYTH

Is incorporation similar to marriage?

Of course it is!

Without getting into the history of incorporation politics, In 1956, when the communities of: Niles, Mission San Jose, Centerville, Irvington and Warm Springs; voted on incorporation, were there disclaimers in the voters information packet clearly stating, " But not including the Alleys" - Hardly! As in marriage, the incorporation of Fremont was an all encompassing union of 5 townships - for better or for worse.

A couple years after the marriage, officials of the new city claim the Alleys were not part of the incorporation, because they were not on the list of roads given over by Alameda County. To restate this opinion another way; *"That is like getting married and then at a later date claiming that you weren't aware that your spouse's left arm was part of the marriage, and now that it is broken - you do not accept responsibility for it". It is not possible to separate Niles and it's alleys - together they create the "whole".*

This is the City's position - right or wrong. In their mind, it is right because it is the legal advise given to them by their lawyers, which is probably similar to the advise any lawyer would give to a "Dead-Beat-Dad" in a child-support lawsuit.

Understanding the cultural dynamic between Niles and the City of Fremont

To many, Niles is well known and to even more, it is a complete mystery. This lost knowledge spans a generation. To understand the relationship between Niles and Fremont, it is best, to first recognize the relationship between Niles and the Bay Area.



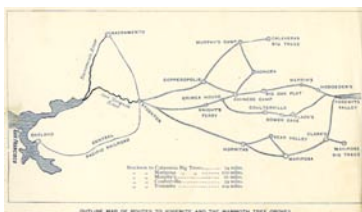
Niles Canyon, 2006 - Google Maps



Hacienda del Pozo de Verona, Sunol California. Photo from "Building with Nature", by L.M. Freudenheim. Completed 1896.



Private Station at Hacienda del Pozo de Verona, Sunol California. Photo from "Images of Rail, Niles Canyon



Train Map to Yosemite - Nelson Guide Book for Yosemite, 1871. Image from Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum. www.cprrr.org.

Transportation is the key. Think in terms of 1849 - the Gold Rush, and 1869 - The completion of the Transcontinental Railway into the Bay Area. If the Golden Gate inlet to the Bay Area could be considered the "front door" to San Francisco, then the "back door" to this region would be considered Niles Canyon, where the Central Pacific Railway first entered the Bay Area in 1869. Within 20 years the bay side of Niles Canyon witnessed increased developments due to its strategic location as a rail hub, and In 1888 the first map of Niles was drawn. Anyone who traveled by train, which was most everyone in those days, knew about Niles, including the San Franciscan elite and politicians.

Imagine being age 32, seated in a passenger car, peering out the window at Niles, the last town you would see when leaving the Bay Area. You were on your way into the wilds to a hunting lodge. Imagine yourself as William Randolph Hearst on you way to your mother's (Phoebe Hearst) private hunting lodge in Sunol, Hacienda del Pozo de Verona - completed 1896.

Imagine being age 42, an impassioned outdoors-man, on your way to meet John Muhr and experience the centerpiece of our nations natural beauty. To get there from San Francisco, you would take the train, and as the glass cleared from your breath, the last town you would see before leaving the Bay Area would be Niles. Imagine yourself as President Theodore Roosevelt⁴ on your way to Yosemite, to camp with John Muhr to understand why the sister valley to Yosemite, Hetch-Hetchy, should not be lost to a dam - the year, 1903. in 1923 water began to flow from the Hetch-Hetchy dam on its way to San Francisco - through Niles Canyon.

The point is, everyone knew about Niles. That is, until train transportation took second place to the automobile. From 1945 to 1956, Niles witnessed a slow de-

⁴ President Theodore Roosevelt's transcontinental rail road trip took from Washington to San Francisco in 1903, was discussed in detail in, "Dam! Water, Power, Politics and Preservation in Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite National Park", by John Warfield Simpson. The portion of the trip from San Francisco to Yosemite was not explicit in the methods of transportation. As there were only two way to travel from San Francisco to Yosemite in 1903, By train from Oakland or by boat to Stockton, it was assumed by the author that President t. Roosevelt's trip continued on the Transcontinental line on the Central Pacific Railroad - through Niles and Niles Canyon. This would have been the most secure way to travel.

cline in its industrial base and economy, which was caused by the shift from rail to highway transportation⁵. By 1956, Niles was depressed.

Fremont Incorporated in 1956, and had all of its farm land ready for conversion into housing. The condition of the original towns was not a primary issue: filling-in between them was! There was no looking back! With this mind set, the City of Fremont simply had no ability to act in a compassionate, meaningful and rejuvenating manner towards the depressed condition of Niles. The new city of Fremont had its own agenda: manifest destiny - build roads and houses.

50 years have passed, and the land developers have filled in the open space. The town of Warm Springs does not exist anymore, The great freeway to connect to downtown Fremont never happened, City hall was built, demolished and now resides in an office mall; Irvington, and soon Centerville will have been rebuilt in the cartooned manner of roadside architecture; Mission San Jose struggles to retain its identity and Niles remains the most vital redevelopment zone with the City of Fremont. What's to worry? Isn't it good to be vanilla? To date, Niles has survived the suburban forces of Fremont, but has become surrounded by it.

This is how Niles became lost in the Bay Area, and is probably why Niles sees its situation: as if it was the historic town of Mendocino, but governed by Orange County - a disturbing relationship.

The City builds a stone wall

It all started in 1956 in a few memos between the City Manager and the Public Works Director:

26 December 1956

From: City Manager, R.R. Coop

To: Public Works Director, W.G. Gonnason

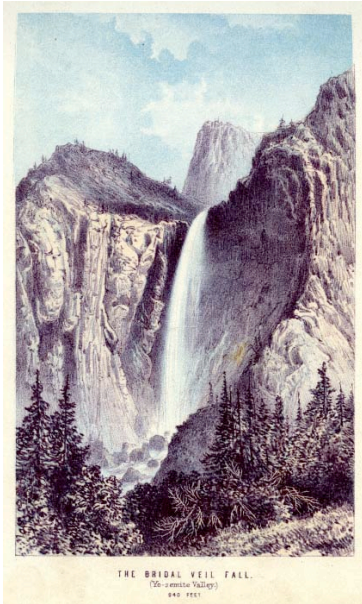
"We had a request for some minor repairs to the alley in Niles in back of Freeman's Market. This would be one block west of the main street near the north end of the business district. The question has arisen as to whether this alley is actually City property. If so, if some minor repairs can be made, I suggest you put Clarence Eddy on the job."

Hand written reply:

To: City Manager, R.R. Coop

From: Public Works Director, W.G. Gonnason

"These alleys have never been accepted as county alleys and consequently not as City alleys. Would suggest that we not get involved as maintenance would be an acceptance and then we would also become liable."



Nelson Guide Book for Yosemite, 1871. Image from Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum. www.cprh.org.



1951 Prior to Incorporation: Niles, Centerville, Irvington, Mission San Jose and Warm Springs; Niles in the foreground. Photo source, Pacific Aerial Surveys

⁵ *Historic resource Evaluation, Office of Dr. Grau by Page & Turnbull, 2005*

5 February 1957

From: City Manager, R.R. Coop

To: Public Works Director, W.G. Gonnason

“ I agree reluctantly with your recommendation. Please be prepared to discuss this matter with the Chamber of Commerce when they invite you to their next meeting...”

So, the stonewalling began. It was a brave new world for the City of Fremont and why would any citizen disagree with the leaders of the new city. The Director of Public Works conveyed the information the Chamber of Commerce and suggested that the only way for the alleys to become improved is through an assessment district.

From 1957 to 1960, based on the belief that the alleys were never incorporated into the City of Fremont, the Chamber of Commerce took steps to correct the problem, and worked with the City in preparation of plans and construction bids for the Commercial Alley. The cost of the project was estimated at between \$17,000 to \$27,800 based on the type of paving selected: Unfortunately no action was taken.

In 1966, frustrated and probably of-the-opinion, that Alameda County cared better for Niles than Fremont does, the following exchange took place between the Niles Merchants Association and the City of Fremont.

15 March 1966

From: Niles Merchant Association, Harry Avila

To: Fremont City Council

“...The condition of the alley has deteriorated to such a condition as to be hazardous to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Prior to the incorporation of Fremont, the county of Alameda assumed responsibility for grading, graveling and maintaining these alleys. Unfortunately, since incorporation there has been little or no care given to them, hence their present status and condition.

The Niles Merchants Association would hope that a study might reveal:(1) Ownership and maintenance liability. (2) Possible methods of improving the area. (3) Permanent maintenance responsibilities.”

As a response to this letter, an internal City memo occurred between the Public Works Department and the City Manager:

9 May 1966

From: Public Works Director, L.W. Milnes

To: City Manager

“The Niles Merchants Association’s letter alleges that “Prior to the incorporation of Fremont, the county of Alameda assumed responsibility...maintaining

these alleys". I contacted Mr. Robert Simpson and Mr. Clarence Eddy on 22 April 1966, for determination of the extent of maintenance provided these alleys by Alameda County. Mr. Simpson (Maintenance Superintendent, Fremont area, from 1958 to 1964) advised me the County did not maintain these alleys with the exception of one time wherein they graveled the access to the Fire Station in order to provide a more traversable alleyway for the city's emergency fire vehicles. The nature of this work was in line with the city's responsibility as being an abutting owner of this alley..."



The City paved the alley behind the Fire Station, but did not have to prove they had the legal right. Commercial Alley, 2006.

This detail is very critical and comes into play later. It illustrates how the City's policies changed after the Closed Door meeting in 1993. Why was the City not required to prove they had the legal right to use the alley when they paved them behind the Fire Station. It seems obvious that the alley needed to be in good working condition for the Fire Department for life safety reasons; but getting to the all the other residences which are accessed from the alley is not a life safety issue?

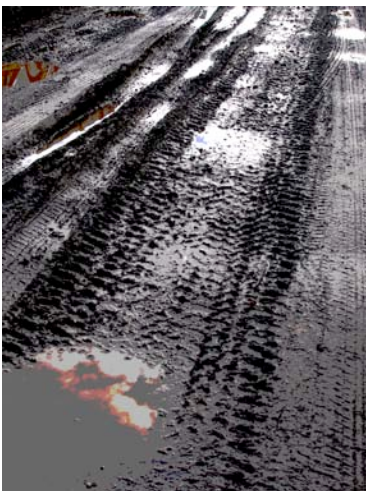
In 1973 Mr. Dyer of the Niles Merchants Association requested alley action again. He spoke with the City's Assistant City Manager, G. Lipsky. Mr. Lipsky in turn wrote a very revealing internal city memo to the City Manager.

26 July 1973

From: Assistant City Manager, G. Lipsky

To: City Manager

"I returned Jim Dyer's telephone call yesterday...He indicated that because of the alley naming agenda item and your comments ... he received the impression the City might currently be restudying the Niles alley situation...they (public Works Department) apparently did not tell him (Jim Dyer) the City is considering reversing its policy position by accepting maintenance responsibility for the alleys."



Paving detail at the Residential Alley, 2006

What was this all about? Records of additional discussions of this potential policy reversal are recorded in a log obtained from the City, however the actual memos were unfortunately not copied. For the record these documents were: 24 Feb' 76 - A report to the City Manager on the alleys with recommendations; 24 Mar' 76 - Memo from City Manager to City Attorney about "first steps, to implement an ordinance."

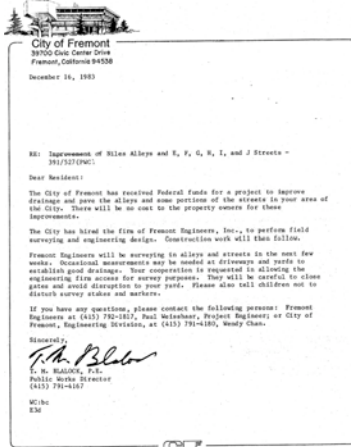
Part 4 - VANISHING FEDERAL FUNDS

This time it was really going to happen, or was it?

Praise to the City's Public Works Department is in order. Many of us get so frustrated with the City regarding the alleys, but this bit of history makes it clear that the Public Works Department, specifically George Bliss, was hard at work trying to fix the problem. The best insight into the Staff's efforts are the internal memos between the various departments working the project. The formal Reports to Council edit-out the personal efforts of the Staff and their disappointments with

the ultimate outcome of the project. In the end, the project was terminated and under suspicions of public funds mismanagement.

Those who were living in Niles at the time do remember, “Yes, I did get a letter from the City. They said some workers would be in the backyard surveying for the alleys. If I could only remember where I put the letter... here it is, finally.”



Notification letter of Federal Funds
for alley improvements - 1983

16 December 1983

From: Public Works Director, T.M. Blalock

To: Niles Residents (379 letters sent out)

“The City of Fremont has received Federal funds for a project to improve drainage and pave the alleys and some portions of the streets in your area of the City. There will be no cost to the property owners for these improvements.”

The Construction drawings were completed in March 1984 and had been fully reviewed by PG&E, County of Alameda Public Works Agency and the City of Fremont’s Public Works Department. The project was ready to go, but there were problems with the allocated federal funds for the project. The memo files best tell the story.

26 October 1982

From: Public Works Department, G.Bliss

To: RHA

Re: Niles Alley project PWC-391

“For eight months, I have been told that this project had been tabled. No design funds appear on the CDBG (Community Development Block Grant Funds) printouts. Helen now advises that: (1) Herb wants the project and was to advise us regarding his choice of consultant... (2) Design funds were inadvertently transferred to the contingency account by Helen. (3) Construction funds are mingled with those for PWC-390 (Upper Niles) and so do not show up on printouts. (4) I suggest, Herb have funds provided again and put the job out to a consultant along with our new projects.”

It must have been extremely fulfilling for the Public Works Department to begin the alley improvements. They could finally respond to the communities well founded requests which started in 1957. However, from the onset of the alley paving project, something was going-on with the approved federal funds. Shortly after this memo, the Public Works department went to the City Council for approvals to begin the project. As recorded in the City Council Agenda for 6 December 1983 (Item 7.2) the federal funds were discussed.

Council Agenda: 6 December, 1983 (Item 7.2)

“As part of a total Niles improvement program adopted in 1979/1980, Community Block Grant Funds were set aside for design and improvement of the alleys and cross streets,..Adequate funds have been budgeted for the design

work. Additional funds will probably be needed for construction...This can be addressed in the 1984/85 CDGB entitlement grant”.

Records show that the original design fees, as discussed in this Council meeting, were much less than the amount ultimately diverted by the City Council. A good question would be, “So just how much money was given to the City to improve

the Niles Alleys in the 1979/1980 federal grant”. Were the funds actually sufficient, but willfully mismanaged to fund other “pet projects” the City could not otherwise get federal funding for? In 1983 the community of Niles assumed that all was well. The construction drawings were completed and time passed; nothing happened. Then an interested merchant makes an inquiry into the status of the project. These memos explain the fight for the money.

24 June 1985

From: J & K Painting Co., Rosmary Epler

To: City of Fremont

Re: Niles Alley project PWC-391

“...We would like to inquire as to the status of this project (Niles Alleys).If the paving to be completed in the near future? It would be helpful to us to know when the paving will take place. Any information you can give us on the status of this project will be greatly appreciated”.

30 July 1985

From: Public Works Department, G.K. Bliss

To: Housing Dept., John J. Eshorn

Re: Niles Alleys

“Please draft a report to the citizens about the project not having sufficient funds. Confer with C. Lamont. She should prepare a report to Council on the CDBG funds. The letter can be coordinated so people can speak before Council if they want.”

8 August 1985

From: Public Works Department, G.K. Bliss

To: Debbie,

Re: Niles Alley update

“Upper Niles Project PWC-390 will consume all but a few thousand dollars of the CDBG funds. Carol Lamont reports that the City Council wants to put the remaining CDBG funds into the purchase of a building. Therefore the Alleys job will not be funded for the present. Carol and I will prepare a letter to the residents.”

14 August 1985

From: Public Works Department, G.K. Bliss

To: Director of Housing,, C. Lamont

Re: Niles Alley update

“Please advise what action is being taken by Council (and when) regarding the use of surplus CDBG funds in the Upper Niles project, for buying a building. If it turns out that no funds will be provided for the Niles Alleys, we should so inform the residents.”

19 August 1985

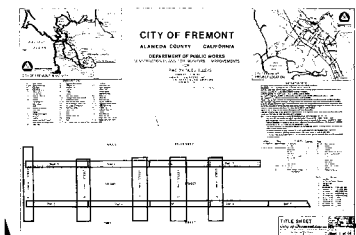
From: Housing Dept., John J. Eshorn

To: Public Works Department, G.K. Bliss

Re: Niles Alley

“Talked with C. Lamont... She will notify property owners when subject goes to Council in approximately 4 to 6 weeks.”

The Public Works Department was motivated to complete the Alley project, but somehow the Housing Department had become empowered and was after the Niles Alley funds. What was the big deal over a few thousand dollars, or was there more?



*PWC - 391, Niles Alleys
Cover page illustrating extent of
alley improvements, 1983.*

As suggested in the Council Agenda by the Public Works Department, additional CDBG funds for the period 1984/85 were not pursued and on 13 May 1986 the City Council transferred the remaining funds for the Alley project, approximately \$100,000 to the Housing Department and placed the money in its “landbanking” fund.

Well, \$100,000 is not a “few thousand” dollars, and there is no public record that any letters were sent to the Niles residents regarding the stalled project or the transfer of funds. There was definitely something inappropriate going on. If I’m not mistaken, federal funds are to be used for the projects intended. Why didn’t the City pursue additional funding for the Alleys and just finish the project? Did the ownership issue pose a problem or get in the way of the City requesting additional federal funding? Would the City have to tell the Federal Government that they did not know who owned them?

In 1988 the Niles Alley project PWC-391 was officially terminated due to lack of funds. In a closing letter to the engineers, the Public Works Department requested the original construction drawings be sent to their office, where they reside today.

Part 5 - THE HAMMER FALLS

Another Restart

This is when I became involved. In 1989, my family and I moved into the original quadrant of Niles. What a fantastic community: people, park, school, library, post office, stores, fire station and lots of potential. Just like Ron did in 2005 on the Niles egroup, we wondered what was going-on with the Alleys, so we got involved. In 1991 a group of like-minded neighbors realized that there was a Merchants Association, but no neighborhood group; so we formed one - The

Niles Community Association. There was a lot of political activism by a lot of people at that time, which resulted in many good accomplishments including: the sidewalk and street improvement project, design guidelines, concept plans and most importantly the ultimate formation of the Niles Main Street Organization. The one thing that was never resolved was the Alley issue. After three years of hard work (1990 to 1993) the word “Alley” was never spoken again. This was the birth of the “A-word” - we just whisper it now.

What I find wonderfully amazing or pathetic, depending on your point of view, are the complaint letters; they could have been written at any time between 1956 to 2006 - this one was penned in 1990.



Residential Alley, 2006

19 December 1990

From: Mr. Walton

To: City of Fremont, Mayor Bill Ball

“I’m writing to appraise you of a very urgent need, the improvement of the Alleys in the...Niles District. Traffic through the Alleys is very heavy as many of the businesses must be serviced from the alley since the streets will not accommodate the normal traffic...we have residential and commercial trash bin pick-ups in the Alleys, three days each week. The dust, dirt and mud generated in these alleys is very inconvenient and does not contribute to a suitable living environment, particularly for those families living around the Alleys...We the residents in Niles hope the time has come to improve these Alleys and to eliminate this terrible condition that has existed so long”.

An abandon car in the Alley was a reoccurring problem. Imagine that you need to get a car towed because it is blocking the alley and access to your property. You call a towing company. They come, look, and then tell you the bad news - their company policy prohibits them from towing abandon cars in the Alley. The driver says, “ Yes, I understand you problem, but know one knows who owns the Alleys and if we tow it, we could be sued. Sorry”. Pure frustration!

In 1992, a local resident did some research and wrote this letter to the City.

20 April 1992

From: Mr. Edwards

To: Public Works Department, G. Bliss

“ Last week I went to the Alameda County Public Works Agency in Hayward. I obtained a copy of the original recorded map of the town of Niles. Mr. Rory MacNeil and Ms. Erica La Fleur of the Real Estate Division assisted me. They informed me that this was the only recorded map for the indicated area of Niles, and that it had not been updated. Mr MacNeil states that the map indicates that the Alleys are public thoroughfares (just like Front, Second and Third Streets) to be maintained by the appropriate public entity, in this case the City of Fremont. He further stated that if a public entity had not “accepted” the Alleys at some point during the past 100 years, such refusal would have been recorded on the map. There is no indication of a refusal to

accept the Alleys, therefore ownership and maintenance of the Alleys rests with the City”.

Finally, documentation and a sound argument to combat the City’s bombastic policy - “We never accepted them.” So, what is a city policy anyway? Who makes them up and for what purpose?

After this letter, the City set out to evaluate if they actually have owned the alleys since 1956 - interesting. They could have done this 36 years ago, but they had never been faced with evidence contradicting their position. For the first time the City Attorney gets involved.

11 May 1992

From: City Attorney’s Office, P. Garcia

To: Public Works Department, G. Bliss

*“I have completed my research on the acceptance of the public streets. In our conversation with Rory MacNeil (Real Estate Division, County of Alameda) said he believed **the City accepted the dedication on incorporation**. I believe a good argument exists that the City of Fremont has not accepted the alleys for maintenance...”*

So, Alameda County believes the City of Fremont accepted the Alleys on incorporation! It is also clear that the City Attorney’s mission at this point was to develop a strategy to combat and down-play the position of Alameda County. Between May 1992 and the Closed Door Council meeting In July 1993, there were many City Council meetings that were well attended by the public. The Staff reports for these meetings outline methods for funding the Alley Improvement project (started in 1983) and methods of accepting ownership. The Staff reports never discuss the possibility that the City took ownership the instant Fremont incorporated. The City Council requested Staff to perform a title search for the properties abutting the alleys. North American Title assisted the City Staff with this research.

16 October 1992

From: City of Fremont, S. Markert

To: Fremont Public Works Department, T. Blalock

“...I met with B. O’Connell, Chief Title Officer of North American Title Company to discuss the title questions...(He) feels the offer of dedication of the streets and alleyways (some explicit, some implied) are still valid and may be accepted, if that is the City’s wish...When the legal questions have been researched and the cost of improving the alleys and the liability associated with accepting the property rights has been estimated, Council will then have the data needed to consider whether they want to proceed with acquiring title or to hold off.”

22 October 1992

*From: North American Title, J. O'Connel
To: City of Fremont, S. Markert*

"At your request I have undertaken a review of the alley ways in Niles that the City is being asked to maintain. The alley ways were created on six different maps filed between 1888 and 1927... Most deeds for the properties would carry the underlining fee to the alley...based on this...I can see no value to the title reports since the City (of Fremont) could possibly accept the offer of dedication."

This preliminary title search found that in a few instances both the Streets and Alleys were dedicated but not accepted by the County of Alameda. This was before the incorporation of Fremont. The point is - both Streets and Alleys were not accepted. But, today the City does maintain the Streets. How is it, that they do not maintain the alleys? Fremont's Public Works Department asked the same question.

*10 February 1993
From: Public Works Department, G. Bliss
To: City Attorney's Office, P. Garcia*

*"Not all of the six subdivision maps made offers of dedication for the alleys...Thus, about half of the areas with Alleys did not have Alleys offered in their original maps. In these cases, new offers of dedication would seem to be required from the current property owners if the City is to avoid more complicated legal alternatives...Also, the County rejected the offers of dedication **even for the streets**. It would seem the County later accepted the streets since the City accepted them from the County. Research would have to be done to see when, and under what circumstances the streets were accepted. Were the Alleys also mentioned and/or considered?"*

The last time Alley was spoken

11 May 1993 was the last time ALLEY was spoken. It was during the City Council meeting before the Closed Door meeting of 6 July 1993. All of this does get complicated, only because the City of Fremont does not recognize that when Mission San Jose, Centerville, Irvington, Warm Springs and Niles voted "Yes" for incorporation, it did not mean, "Yes let's incorporate - but not including the Alleys."

*11 May 1993
From: Staff Report Agenda Item 7.1
To: City Council*

"There are several legal theories available which could justify the City of Fremont commence the acceptance process without any further action by the property owners...There are additional legal theories which potentially provide support for finding that all of the Alleys have been dedicated. Furthermore, there is potential legal support for a finding of acceptance of the dedication

through public use... The relative merits of these theories are matters which are more appropriately handled in a Closed Session. The City Attorney's Office believe utilization of any of the alternative legal theories will probably involve litigation... The easiest process for acquisition of the right-of-way would be for each owner to affirm that the original offer of dedication is still open and will be unchallenged, or to make a new offer of dedication."

For all of these years the City has indicated that they can not accept the Alleys for maintenance until the are paved. This is the fundamental issue being discussed in all of this! In this Staff Report of 11 May 1993, it stated:

"The City's Street Right-of-way and Improvement Ordinance has been in effect since 1960 and clearly requires streets to be fully improved before the City can accept them for maintenance."

Well, the City incorporated in 1956, 4 years before the existence of this 1960 ordinance; So, is it impossible for the alleys to to have been excluded by the City in 1956 for lack of adequate improvements?

On 6 July 1993 the City Council held its Closed Door Meeting, " to discuss potential or anticipated litigation regarding the validity and enforceability of the dedications of the Niles Alleys and the rights of abutting property owners." as described by the City Attorney in a letter to me in 2005.

We will never know what was said in that meeting, but it is very important to remember who the City Council was 1993. Where have they gone and what were the issues they struggled with? They include: B.Ball, G. Morrison, J. Dutra, J. Zlatnik and B. Wasserman, Fremont's current Mayor.

Part 6 - THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE CITY'S POSITION

The Problem

Assume you are a merchant or a commercial property owner, business is doing well and it is time to reinvest in your property, making improvements to the vitality of Niles Boulevard. Your ambitions could span from new toilet facilities for the building, outdoor dining space for your restaurant, expanding the building for more commercial space or considering Live-Work facilities in the back. Any of these options require the use of the Alleys for general access and deliveries, which prompts the City of Fremont to impose their alley policy on your plans. You discover that you need to spend an additional ± \$100,000 on your project, which does not include the construction costs to build it - Fremont's policies have a negative impact on the quality of your life.

Assume yours is one of the wonderful, and small, homes along Second or Third Streets in Niles. The family is growing and/or your parents are elderly and are in need of care and companionship. It is time to consider improving the property. Chances are that nothing has been done to the house since it was built, sometime between 1890's to 1940's. Most importantly, you don't want to put a two



*Any issues with Garbage Pick-up?
Commercial Alley, 2006*

story addition on the original structure: (1), because it will destroy the character of the house and (2), stairs are not desirable for the elderly. The other option you are considering is a separate detached In-Law unit, which would have many uses: Home Office, Game Room, In-Law Unit or as a rental for additional income. Also assume you are an avid gardner and are planning many improvements to the garden along with building improvements. You notice how nicely the Alleys provide service access and enhanced utility to your property, and become interested in using the Alley. You also notice that the front yard of the house can be a garden, without a driveway, just like in the old days. You have become aware that the best thing you can do, is use the Alley as originally intended - put the garage in back of the house and use the Alley to get to it. Because of the City of Fremont's position on the Alley you discover that you need to spend an additional \pm \$100,000 on your project, which does not include the construction costs to build it - Fremont's policies have a negative impact on the quality of your life.

In both of these cases you would be like everyone in Niles whose properties abut the Alleys. How many properties are there?, lets count: approximately 160, commercial and residential - Interesting. Are these properties in the historic portion of Niles? - Yes! Are any of these commercial properties within the redevelopment zone? - All of them! Would it be in the best interest of the City of Fremont to see significant improvements the the historic core of Niles? - Absolutely. Does the current alley policy of the City's help redevelopment - No! Is the City's 50 year old policy responsible for the depressed economic conditions in Niles? - Possibly.

The problem is poor civic leadership.

The Cost Impacts of a Title Search

Since the 1993 "Closed Door" City council meeting the hammer has fallen hard on the quality of life in Niles. Town improvements, which remotely use the Alleys are stifled. Sadly, the City of Fremont is even afraid of itself. The new Fire Station which is planned at the corner of Niles Boulevard and G street, has alley access. The plans for the building avoid using the Alley for the fire trucks, which results in a small building and a lot of driveway pavement. Building a new Fire Station is a long term investment of our tax dollars, and each dollar should be spent wisely. Why is the City of Fremont planning to under utilize the property? Is it afraid of it's own alley policy?

When a building project in Niles (which implies use of the Alleys) goes to the City of Fremont Planning Department, the City's response usually brings devastating news to the applicant. This was the response to a request to build a garage which used the alley.

20 April 2005

From: City of Fremont, Planning Department

To: Property Owner (name withheld)

“Please submit a preliminary title report for the property and any type of ownership or title information for the alley if available. As discussed, neither the City nor the property owner owns the alley. To complete work in the alley, authorization must be granted in some manner. The City will work with you to accomplish this, however all costs associated with this will be the responsibility of the property owner. One method may be through a “quiet title action”, which would effectively grant property owner rights to the alley. However, this will also put the responsibility of the alley maintenance and any potential liability on the property owner.”

First, the City requests a title report knowing full well of the ambiguous outcome, costs, and problems. The City knows that deeds to the properties in Niles do not reference the Alleys, but the City still demands that this work be researched. In 1993, the City evaluated these costs as discussed in the following internal city memo.

9 March 1993

From: City of Fremont, Public Works Director

To: Assistant City Manager

“The costs of completing the title search is unknown at this time...many parcels had no old offers of dedication and it is unknown if the present owners will grant the offer. Even if they did, their mortgage companies may resist granting away a portion of the alley land. If the City has to formally go through acquisition for some 160 parcels, the processing cost would be in the order of \$70,000 to \$135,000.”

The City was so concerned with their preliminary title search costs done in 1992 that they were pleased to not have to pay for it, as stated in this internal city memo.

16 October 1992

From: City of Fremont, S. Markert

To: Public Works Department, T. Blalock

*“...When the legal questions have been researched and the costs of improving the Alleys and the liability associated with accepting the property rights has been eliminated, Council will then have the data needed to consider whether they want to proceed with acquiring title or to hold off. North American Title Company did not charge us (the City) **anything** for this research and has agreed to send us a letter summarizing their findings and retain the documents associated with the research for us (the City) for several years incase we (the City) want to pursue the matter at an other time...”*

Appallingly, the City knows that the title search they demand of the property owners (to even build a garage) leads into the dead end question of ownership.

Even the City's consultant, North American Title Company, felt the same way about the need for a title search.

22 October 1992

From: North American Title, J. O'Connel

To: City of Fremont, S. Markert

"At your request I have undertaken a review of the alley ways in Niles that the City is being asked to maintain. The alley ways were created on six different maps filed between 1888 and 1927... Most deeds for the properties would carry the underlining fee to the alley...based on this...I can see no value to the title reports since the City (of Fremont) could possibly accept the offer of dedication."

Is the City's intent to have the owner drop their project and save the City from having to resurrect these embarrassing issues? Does the City want the private property owner to formally take ownership of the Alley, knowing the ambiguous state of ownership, and that the City may actually own them anyway?

The Cost Impacts of Alley Improvements

Let's assume that an ambitious property owner who dreams to improve Niles, gets past the title search and ownership issue; the next City requirement of the owner is to pave them. At his point we all know that the City was given money to pave them in 1983 by the Federal Government. That money is gone, the paving project was never done and now the City wants the property owner to pay for paving the Alley, which is used by the general public. So, if your property is in the middle of the block, the City will require the owner to pave half the length. The alley lengths vary, but on average their length is 500 feet per block; half the distance would be 250 lineal feet. In 1993 the costs were estimated by the City's Public Works Department.

9 March 1993

From: Public Works Director, T. Blalock

To: Assistant City Manager

"The costs for construction has been estimated in previous Council reports as \$700,000 to \$1,000,000. We believe that range is still reasonable. If street lighting is added, the costs could increase about \$125,000 to \$150,000"

The total length of the alleyways in Niles is approximately 0.85 miles or 4,448 lineal feet. So, the Alley paving costs to the property owner who wants to build a simple garage, would be: $250 * (\$1,150,000/4,448) = \$64,635$. This is the amount it would have cost in 1993, so to adjust for current construction costs in the Bay Area, this amount would be closer to \$100,000, in 2006 - three times the costs of building the simple garage. For the commercial property owner or merchant, these costs are the same.

The City's alley policy is a devastating impact on the full revitalization of Niles. Prior to the 1993 "Closed Door" City Council Meeting, paving was not required and there was no need for a title search, or any need to higher a lawyer to figure everything out. After the "Closed Door" meeting, the City of Fremont began to play serious defense.

No wonder Niles is still depressed. Does the current state of the Alleys contribute this depression? In 1957 the costs to improve the alleys was \$55,600. In 1983 the cost was \$753, 000, in 1993 it was \$1,150,000; what are the costs in 2006? Where is the Redevelopment Agency? Where are the civic leaders? What would Niles be like if the Alleys had been paved since 1956? How much has been lost?

Has the City actually owned the Alleys since incorporation? Alameda County believes so, and isn't incorporation like marriage? - For better or worse.

Celebrate and Promote the Alleys

As voiced in the 2005 Niles yahoo e-group conversations, this community is not lacking in energy, passion, commitment or wisdom:

Dirk,; " ... Once individual and community energy and money is invested, the vision can start to emerge, the place begins to speak for itself, and become respected as - worth preserving - and able to attract ongoing attention and investment. That first part is the leap of faith...People love Niles, and want to help it truly bloom, but it takes leadership, dedication, risky investment, and brazen initiative on the part of people who have valid stakes - or a certainty of vision - to test the waters. Then maybe, finally, we will get some real horsepower going."

The Alleys are a cultural resource to be improved and protected. In a healthy state, the Alleys will provide systemic vitality to the local economy, and an experiential framework into the past, and most importantly, into the future culture of Niles.

It is time to celebrate and promote the Alleys!

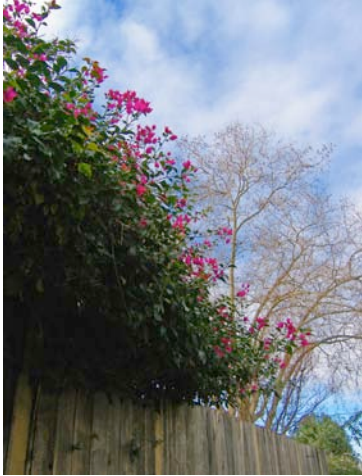
Alley Talk

2006

Paul Welschmeyer AIA

Architect

Historic Architectural Review Board: 1991 to 1998



*The Alleys are community gardens.
Residential Alley, 2006*



The Alleys have always defined the culture of Niles. For the next 50 years let's celebrate and promote them. Commercial Alley, 2006

Resources & Photo Credits

1. Yahoo egroup (Public Domain): groups.yahoo.com/group/Niles/ for the months of June and July 2005.
2. City of Fremont public documents regarding the Niles Alleys between 1956 and 1993: The process of recovery and review of these documents comprised of: public document request letters by the author, review of approximately 1,000 to 2,000 documents provided by the City of Fremont, identification of document to be copied (approximately 500), detailed review and chronological sortation of pertinent documents, and identification of non-disclosed (never offered to the public) documents.
3. General History of Fremont: "City of Fremont - The First Thirty Years", by the Mission Peak Heritage Foundation 1989.
4. Fremont Incorporation History: "Washington Township Events to Remember", "December 1955 - A Month to Remember", "17 Candidates for City Council, 1956" and "Vote Fremont" by Phil Holmes, published in the Tri-City Voice, 2005-2006.
5. Niles History from 1940's to 1956: Historic Resource Evaluation, Office of Dr Grau. by Page & Turnbull, 2005.
6. Knowledge of Niles Community: Niles residency 1989 - 2006.
7. Knowledge of Historic Conservation / Preservation policies of the City of Fremont: Board Member of the Fremont Historic Architectural Review Board, 1991 - 1998; Completed Historic Architectural Projects: Pickering House, Niles, Old School, Mission San Jose, Palm Avenue Residence, Mission San Jose.
8. Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum: cpr.org/Museum/Engravings/
9. Niles Canyon Railway and Pacific Locomotive Association: www.ncry.org
10. Anecdotes for Cultural memory loss of Niles: "Building with Nature", by Leslie M. Freudenheim, 2005; "Dam! Water, Power, Politics, and Preservation in the Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite National Park", by John Warfield Simpson, 2005; "Images of Rail, Niles Canyon Railways", by Henry Luna and The Pacific Locomotive Association, 2005.
11. Photo Credits: All photos by Paul Welschmeyer Architects unless otherwise noted.