

## The Rems Valley Railroad 1861-91

The beginnings of a railroad in the new Kingdom of Württemberg go back to the 1840s. It began with a single-track stretch from Stuttgart to Ludwigsburg. King Wilhelm I was an open-minded monarch who understood the importance of assigning able experts to the right jobs. We must imagine what it meant, after centuries of very limited travel possibilities, to grasp the idea that everyman with relatively simple means could himself visit distant lands and people. As long of course as he had the necessary small change.

The next point of contention in the public and the press was the line from Stuttgart in the Munich direction. Pastor Wittich reported on this at length in his yearbook. Difficulties were encountered primarily in the topography of the land, in particular the *Alb* elevation grades by Geislingen with its many sharp curves, still today a narrow pass. The alternative here would have been to run the line through the Remstal via Heidenheim-Donauwörth. But the King's railroad planner Negrelli decided on the first solution.

From Wittich's yearbook of 1843 we learn his point of view:

*Accordingly the railroad route through the Fils Valley was decided by the authorities, and the proposed branch through the Rems Valley was killed, as it would have ruined the Fils rail plan already adopted.*

*Most of the people in the Rems Valley indicated satisfaction with this decision, as for agriculture, the rail line would have further limited an already limited area, and the obvious benefits of the rail line would accrue mostly to the cities that had a station.*

*If and what advantages such a huge undertaking would bring in general, and in particular to our little Württemberg, who can decide now? Only time will tell!*

Nonetheless the Rems Valley acquired rail service, if only many years later. One track, indeed, with simple stations and facilities. The dedication of the section Cannstatt-Wasserafingen followed in the year 1861. The latter town was then important as the seat of the Swabian metal works. Unfortunately the town of Geradstetten was asleep during this development. Stations were built only in Grunbach (on Geradstetten property!) and in Winterbach.

The town of Geradstetten had to fight for another 30 years, until, after agreeing to numerous, substantial construction taxes, it received its own station. In the month of July of 1891 at last the time had come. Town council and citizen committee took the opportunity to go on an excursion to Schorndorf on the first train!

Before this there were endless dealings between the KWStE and the town. Most important were the following problems:

Boundary marking agreement with Grunbach because of the railroad.  
Widening of the Mühlweg, now Bahnhofstrasse [more recently Rathausstrasse] about four meters. The street was often impassable in bad weather, complaints about it filling volumes.  
The Rems bridge should also be usable by Hebsackers and allow for heavy wagon loads.  
For the planned waiting room of 3 x 4 m, the town had to make the space available and take on the costs of heating and cleaning.

The joy of the town was mighty when the new station was dedicated. Now the milk and the grapes no longer had to be carted to Grunbach. The town proceedings read as follows:

*The citizen board takes happy notice and resolves:*

*on tomorrow morning a letter of thanks will be telegraphed to his majesty the King and his excellency the Minister-President Dr. Freiherr von Mittnacht.*

*to dedicate the new station, a community excursion to Schorndorf will be undertaken tomorrow with the new local train.*

Many townspeople found work and a living in the new undertaking. First, with the construction of the rail section, and later in its operation. And so it remained for almost another hundred years: strong [local] young men enlisted themselves even in the construction of the Swiss railroads. But matters were not so simple then, because of the recruitment authorities of the Württemberg military administration. So it happened to young Johann Chr. Mack in the year 1854:

*...similary Johann Christian Mak wanted to go to Switzerland to work on the railroad. Because he also in the next spring, 1855, had to appear before the draft board, so it was decided: until 1 Jan 1855 he had to stay here, in order to serve the draft.*

Yet even when there was a strong desire to work on the railroads, the town could still shut the door on the idea. Johann Georg Bühler felt the need to try his luck with the town council in his search for a new job. Unfortunately without result, because he was too well known!

*Dealt with 6 May 1852*

*Johann Georg Bühler, 43 years old, appeared at the Mayor's office, and argued that he was without a sledge hammer, and considering work on the railroad, and because he had no money, he would like to be paid travel money of 30 x from the town accounts and for them to buy a sledge hammer for him.*

*This request was considered by the town council, whereupon it was decided,*

*that Bühler apparently had lent his sledge hammer to an innkeeper, so none should be provided, also he should not be given his travel money, because he will spend it in town.*