

20 JUNE 2018

Dear Ms. Danielle Gosselin,

I would like to be considered as a consulting party to the Section 106 process and involving the Norfolk Southern Railroad (NSR) abandonment and proposed historical preservation of 455 feet of track in Aurora, Ohio.

I currently own the residence at 414 E. Garfield Rd in the city of Aurora, Ohio and my property consists of just under two (2) acres that abuts directly against the NSR railroad. My home was built in 1840s and consists of the main house, a century barn and partially cleared and partly wooded acreage. There are extremely old-growth trees that are older than the home within 25-50 feet of the railroad.

My concerns are as follows:

1. I feel it is necessary to preserve more than 455 feet of NSR railroad. My neighbors and I suggest 2500-3500 feet further than this to the east, which will be past the century old boulder railroad bridge that spans the Chagrin River, Aurora branch. This is about where the Aurora City historic district ends which will preserve the historic bridge and historic essence. The city and park intend to build a hike and bike trail along my property with the entrance/exit behind my house and the neighbor's home at 386 E. Garfield Rd. This will create a complete loss of the historic essence of my home.

NOTE: Keeping a longer portion of railroad track in place and preventing a hike and bike trail there will not halt the ability of the City of Aurora and the Portage County Park District from building a trail. They still have ample land and resources to put the trail along the remaining (non-historic district) railroad tracks and instead will have the entrance/exit to the city park 2500-3500 feet further east where the city park already has paved trails.

I have suggested this to the Portage County Park District, executive director Christine Craycroft with no positive feedback, only excuses that it would be too costly, or responses that she will look into it and then no response after.

2. Removing or altering the track or railroad bed behind my home and the neighboring properties will destroy any historical esthetics and heritage of these properties. My home and the others existed throughout the entire railroad experience and this would be lost forever if the railroad is changed in any way. *For example*, my back yard is level and goes right up to the railroad tracks and this historic location. This view will be lost if the railroad was altered, removed, or a hike and bike trail put in. My home would just become an old house with no link to the railroad.
3. My home and the others on each side of the Chagrin River are the survivors of the great flood that destroyed the Aurora Cheese House and other historic locations throughout northern U.S. in 1913. The railroad survived nature's

fury and remained with our homes; it should not be destroyed for personal gain and a bike path that dead ends on each side to nowhere.

4. On my property I have found railroad historic artifacts that indicate the home was in some way part of the railroad experience. Specifically my land and the property at 386 E. Garfield being the only flat and level area within yards east of the Aurora Depot Station leads me to reasonably believe the houses were used for a multitude of things during the railroad's history such as overnight stays as needed, offloading coal and other items, working on the engines as the cars would have been at the depot, and connections back to the civil war.
5. When purchased, the real estate agent gave me a list of historical info in which he wrote the home had a civil war stone cookstove in the basement that is currently torn down and walled up with rock but the beams are still there. I haven't pulled the stones away to look but this is another unique attribute to these old homes. He mentioned the historical value people found in my house was its relationship right along the railroad, where you could watch the trains go by. This history will be lost if it is changed.
6. My yard is littered with coal, railroad locks, railroad plates and spikes, and other things such as a serving spoon marked with a railroad initials stamp. Century old hand blown inkwells, bottles, and other items are found easily in the yard. The providence of the items and my home relative to the railroad has not been documented extensively; however, it appears evident they are both part of a history that is still being uncovered every day.

During repairs of my home inside I have found entire newspapers from December 24, 1925 used as insulation between walls showing the home has stood the test of time from the early 1800s, through the depression periods, and to present day. My neighbors and I all agree that the railroad is part of our homes' histories and currently part of our lives that we do not wish to loose just for the decisions of a very few people and a trail. It is not a highly desired location for a trail, it dead ends each way only after just over 5 miles, and very few persons are going to drive to the Aurora City Park, unload a bicycle, and hike or ride a trail that goes nowhere. Is simply is an eyesore in an otherwise beautiful historic district with homes that have been here since the beginning of the railroad and hope to remain.

Thank you



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ocw



1-25-07

Conversations about 414 E. Garfield Rd, Aurora Ohio
Nancy McElhiney prior owner

Oldest house in Aurora ???
Built in 1840's
Doors and windows 6 years old
Furnace and HW Heater 6 years old
They built the rooms upstairs

The barn was a museum "Max's Museum"
Telephones, electronics, recorders etc.
Had busses full of visitors pull into the yard for tours.

Fireplace in basement actually was used in 1860's and "rocked in" due to fear of slide

The rock for the building was brought up from the river by horse drawn equipment

Family with the name "Baldwin" were the original owners

Aurora was the "Cheese Capitol of the World" at one point in history.

The prior owners that lost the property (Robert and Sherrienne Lamont) had chickens and exotic animals on the property including a peacock and others.

Ms. McElhiney will meet with you and bring pictures of the house and property.
Phone- 330-562-2625