

March 30, 2007

1590 County Road 366
Hondo, Texas 78861-6431

Received 4/9/07
E1-2885
FD-34284
JTW

Mr. F. Lawrence Oaks
Executive Director
Texas Historical Commission
1511 Colorado Street
Austin, Texas 78711-2276

Dear Mr. Oaks:

The purpose of this letter is to request that the Texas Historical Commission consider the value of historical land while making decisions regarding the placement of the Southwest Gulf Railroad Company rail line from a Vulcan Construction Materials, LP limestone quarry to the Union Pacific Railroad Company rail line near Dunlay, Texas.

My family [Nelson and Paulette Martin, Jerry and Jeanne Martin, Dean and Ronda McNew] live on a historical property that is in the path of the proposed eastern routes. This land has been in our family for over 100 years, qualifying it for Texas Department of Agriculture Family Land Heritage Program recognition. We are completing the required documentation for recognition as a historic property in 2008.

We understand and are a part of the multi-faceted tapestry of the community of Quihi. We also own land in the town of Quihi, which has been in our family since 1855. This land was part of an original Texas land grant and received a Texas Department of Agriculture Family Land Heritage award in 1975. We have an ancestral home on the land and appreciate the value of ancestral Quihi homes, especially since we are direct descendants of the Schweers, Saathoff, Lindeburg, and Balzen families. However, the land grants in Texas were issued to our ancestors for the purpose of farming and ranching. Henri Castro founded Quihi to serve as a farming community for immigrants from Alsace and nearby German states. An ancestral house is important, but the importance pales in light of ancestral land. Our ancestral land is the true heritage of Texas, the true heritage of our community, and the true heritage of our family.

Before we worked and utilized our land over the past century, Native Americans worked and utilized the land. While helping work the land as children, we found arrowheads, tomahawk heads, and various scraping and cutting rocks located in our fields and pastures and continue to find these artifacts today. In addition, there is evidence of a Native American campground on our land substantiated by the piles of flint rock chips and burnt rocks, near a natural alkaline high sodium soil lick.

Growing up, our family stressed the appreciation for the wildlife that lived around us. Everything, including tarantula spiders, horned lizards, whitetail deer, bobcats, cougars, dove, quail, turkeys, owls, and blue darter hawks, had a purpose on our land. We learned to identify and, more importantly, respect all wildlife and the importance each played in our life - a practice that we continue today.

We have witnessed many times that our land serves as the headwater of several different creeks, which flow both to the east and to the west. Topology maps show the upper portion of our land has an elevation of 1,039 feet above sea level and rises up to 1,050 feet. This watershed is the main headwater of one of the branches of the Quihi Creek, a tributary to the Frio River via the Verde and Hondo Creeks. The southern portion of our property has an elevation of 1,038 feet above sea level, tapering down to 900 feet. The watershed is part of the Opossum Creek, which is also a tributary to the San Antonio River via the Medina River.

Please consider the bigger picture, the greater good, the better value, and the larger significance of the heritage family land when making the decision for location of the rail line and elect not to cross these historic partials of land. We request that the THC elect to leave this historic land intact by choosing the Original Proposed Route through Quihi, a decision that will not be regretted.

Sincerely,


Dean McNew
Ronda (Martin) McNew

CC: Rick Perry, Governor of Texas
Diana Wood, Surface Transportation Board
Todd Staples, Secretary of Agriculture