

November 9, 2003

Surface Transportation Board
Section of Environmental Analysis
1925 K Street, N. W.
Washington, DC 20423



Re: STB Finance Docket 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad Company—
Construction and Operation Exemption—Medina County, TX

Dear Ms. Rutson,

I am President of the Schweers Historical Foundation, a 501(c)(3) corporation, with a membership of approximately 120 members. Most of our members are descendants of the pioneer German and Alsatian families of Henry Castro's Colony, who settled the Quihi area of Medina County in the mid-1800s. When Vulcan Materials Company purchased the William and Henry Schweers houses, representatives of the family approached Vulcan with the request to purchase one or both of the houses. Vulcan generously agreed to donate both houses to a family historical foundation. The William Schweers house has already been deeded to our corporation. We have the promise of the Henry Schweers house and financial assistance to further our efforts to preserve the houses and their outbuildings.

Our secondary mission is to acquire and restore additional pioneer structures in and around Quihi. As Quihi's only foundation devoted solely to this effort, we are an important party to the cultural resources of the area. Because of our vision and goals, we enjoy the full support and backing of the much older and well established Castro Colonies Historical Association in Castroville, Texas.

Being thus established in the Quihi area, a former history teacher and member of the South Texas Archeological Association, it was with great interest that I read the Preliminary Cultural Resources Assessment. Your section has done an exemplary job of describing the area's cultural features, its historical events and prehistoric artifacts.

The SHF is very pleased with your choice of the proposed route, as it poses no barrier to our plans for an historical park showcasing a German Settlement of the mid-

19th century. Considering the route's distance from the houses and the results of the vibration study, we are satisfied the railroad will not be detrimental to our properties, or indeed, to others in its immediate area. The SHF has not discussed the idea with Vulcan, however, one day, the railroad might provide a route for excursion trains from San Antonio bringing visitors to the reconstructed homes and their historical park.

Interestingly enough, about a hundred years ago, another railroad line ran nearly the same route, but ended at the Medina Dam location. It carried supplies and workmen to build the dam. William Schweers, owner of the house by that name, and other ancestors of the families in the area, were those workmen. The earlier railroad brought much need jobs and prosperity to the region. Without a doubt, the Southwest Gulf Railroad and the quarry will provide an even larger economic boost to a greater portion of the county than did the earlier railroad.

During the course of our association with Vulcan, we have learned about the mining process and what the quarry's impact on the water, air, wildlife and the human community might be. In all cases, the negative impact is minimal while the environmental, social and economic advantages are numerous.

Vulcan's executive staff has kept us well informed on the entire process from the choosing of the railroad route to its environmental and vibration studies. We know that with the final choice of the route, engineers will survey, exactly, where the track will run. Subsequent to this survey, a 100% Field Survey team will study the entire route for any subsurface or unknown historical or archeological artifacts or features before the railroad will be built. Quite clearly, Vulcan is concerned about working with all entities to see that this project is done properly.

We are aware that Vulcan has demonstrated the merits of its project to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Edwards Aquifer Authority, the Medina County Government, other state and Federal agencies and many individuals in Medina County. Medina County is fortunate to have an environmentally responsible and socially concerned company wanting to bring economic development to the county.

In the event SEA might want to correct a couple of inaccuracies for its final report, I offer the following: The William Schweers home (2.5.1, page 24) was built in 1874, not 1884 as reported in the news article. The Schweers/Balzen Cemetery

(2.5.2,page 25) was deeded to the descendants of William M. Schweers (1843-1913) in 1950. The deed (No. 6217, Vol.147) is recorded in the Medina County Court House.

The SHF is happy to extend an invitation to the STB, its environmental contractor, URS, and any other entity the opportunity to tour the area. The members of our organization are also available for consultation. You may contact me by phone: (830) 336-3767; or by email: carpen@gvtc.com

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Carpenter".

Carol Carpenter, President
Schweers Historical Foundation