

PRESENTATION ON THE SCOTTSBORO DEPOT  
JULY 23, 2023  
SCOTTSBORO FREIGHT DEPOT

GOOD AFTERNOON EVERYONE.

IT IS A REAL HONOR TO BE SPEAKING TO YOU THIS AFTERNOON AT THE SITE OF WHAT I CONSIDER SCOTTSBORO'S MOST HISTORIC BUILDING – THE SCOTTSBORO DEPOT.

THIS DEPOT IS THE SITE OF SOME OF THE CITY'S MOST IMPORTANT HISTORY AND INDEED THE BUILDING IS A SURVIVOR – LIKE THAT PROVERBIAL CAT WITH NINE LIVES.

I AM HERE PRIMARILY TO TELL YOU ABOUT ONE OF THOSE SURVIVOR EPISODES BUT I WILL OUTLINE TO YOU A FEW OTHER OF THOSE OCCASIONS WHEN WE COULD HAVE LOST THIS BUILDING – SPECIFICALLY IN THE 1990s WHEN THE BUILDING FOR CERTAIN HAD A TARGET ON ITS BACK AND EVEN A DATE FOR DEMOLITION.

BUT BEFORE WE GET TO THAT, LET ME GIVE YOU SOME BACKGROUND TO THE DEPOT. I WILL SAY THAT THE DEPOT ITSELF AND ITS HISTORY IS NOT THE FOCUS OF MY PRESENTATION. OTHERS HAVE WELL DESCRIBED THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BUILDING TO THE TOWN.

WHAT I WILL DESCRIBE TO YOU IS HOW THE TOWN CAME TOGETHER TO SAVE THE BUILDING. THIS INCLUDED PEOPLE FROM THIS ORGANIZATION, THE JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS, THE SCOTTSBORO MAYOR, THE SCOTTSBORO CITY COUNCIL, THE ALABAMA HISTORIC COMMISSION, AND WE HAD SOME HELP FROM EVEN ONE MEMBER OF THE NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAILROAD COMPANY, THE AGENCY THAT WAS INTENT ON DEMOLISHING THE BUILDING.

IN DOING THIS PRESENTATION, I HOPE THAT IN THE PROCESS I WILL GAVE YOU A PICTURE OF HOW HISTORIC PRESERVATION WORKS AND WHAT SOME OF THE ELEMENTS ARE THAT PERMIT IT TO HAPPEN. WHERE WE NOW ARE, THE DEPOT, I BELIEVE, IS A MODEL OF HOW HISTORIC PRESERVATION CAN OCCUR IF EVERYTHING COMES TOGETHER.

BUT DO PERMIT ME TO SET THE SCOTTSBORO DEPOT IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT. WE OWE MRS. ANN CHAMBLESS FOR HER WORK IN RESEARCHING THE DEPOT, AS WE OWE HER SO MUCH FOR THE WORK IN LOCAL HISTORY THAT SHE DOCUMENTED.

ANN'S RESEARCH IDENTIFIES THE SCOTTSBORO DEPOT AS BEING BUILT BY THE MEMPHIS AND CHARLESTON RAILROAD AS OPENING IN 1861, IT WAS BUILT IN WHAT WAS THEN CALLED SCOTT'S STATION, NAMED AFTER AS YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS IDENTIFIED AS THE FOUNDER OF SCOTTSBORO – ROBERT THOMAS SCOTT.

THE DEPOT WAS BUILT IN AN ERA WHEN RAILROADS WERE FAST BECOMING THE NATION'S PRIMARY SOURCE OF TRANSPORTING BOTH PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT, DISPLACING RIVER SHIPPING AND HORSE-DRAWN WAGONS. INDEED, THE DEPOT HERE WAS A PASSENGER STATION AS WELL AS FREIGHT STATION WHEN IT OPENED. IT WAS NOT ALWAYS A FREIGHT DEPOT, THE REASON I CALL IT THE SCOTTSBORO DEPOT. IT DID BECOME A FREIGHT DEPOT IN 1891 WHEN A SEPARATE PASSENGER WAS BUILT ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE RAILROAD TRACKS IN A CLOSE LOCATION.

ONE OF THOSE TIMES WHEN WE CAME CLOSE TO LOSING THE DEPOT WAS SOON AFTER IT HAD BEEN BUILT ON JANUARY 8, 1865. THIS IS SO IMPORTANT IN THE DEPOT'S HISTORY. THE OCCASION WAS

WHEN THERE WAS A SKIRMISH AT THE DEPOT BETWEEN CONFEDERATE AND UNION SOLDIERS AT THE DEPOT, WHICH I WILL DESCRIBE IN MORE DETAIL LATER.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT MORE THAN FIFTY OF THE UNION TROOPS INVOLVED IN THIS SKIRMISH WERE AFRICAN-AMERICAN SOLDIERS. THE UNION SOLDIERS WERE IN CONTROL OF THE BUILDING AND IN CONTROL OF MOST OF THE MEMPHIS AND CHARLESTON LINE IN NORTH ALABAMA. THE CONFEDERATE TROOPS WANTED TO BREAK PART OF THAT CONTROL BY THEIR ATTACK ON THE DEPOT. AFTER AN INTENSE SKIRMISH THE UNION TROOPS WERE DRIVEN FROM THE BUILDING BY CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS LED BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL H. B. LYON. THE CONFEDERATES DROVE THE UNION SOLDIERS FROM THE BUILDING WITH ARTILLERY FIRE.

ACCORDING TO HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS, THE CONFEDERATE TROOPS, AFTER DRIVING THE UNION SOLDIERS FROM THE DEPOT, THE CONFEDERATE TROOPS SET THE BUILDING ON FIRE TO DESTROY IT. THEY WERE AWARE THAT A LARGE REINFORCEMENT UNIT OF UNION SOLDIERS WERE ON THE WAY, SO THEY SET THE BUILDING ON FIRE THEN RETREATED. (THERE ARE SOME REMAINING HISTORICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS. ACCORDING TO WAR RECORDS AT LEAST ONE UNION SOLDIER WAS KILLED AND THE UNION OFFICER IN HIS REPORT CLAIMED 18 CONFEDERATES WERE KILLED. IS THIS ACCURATE? WHERE IN PARTICULAR WERE THE CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS BURIED. RESEARCH SHOULD BE DONE ON THIS.) BUT TO CONTINUE WITH THE DEPOT STORY.

THE UNION REINFORCEMENTS, ACCORDING TO WAR RECORDS, EXTINGUISHED THE FLAMES AND SAVED THE BUILDING FROM DESTRUCTION BY THE FIRE. THE BUILDING WAS SAVED BY UNION TROOPS.

THE BUILDING WAS REPAIRED AFTER THE WAR ENDED AND SERVED THE AREA FOR THE NEXT ONE HUNDRED YEARS (EDITING NOTE: THIS SHOULD BE NEXT ONE HUNDRED YEARS OR SO.) ALTHOUGH THE DEPOT DID USE ANOTHER ONE OF IT'S NINE LIVES IN 1881 WHEN THE DEVASTATING FIRE SWEEPED THROUGH THE RAILROAD DISTRICT OF SCOTTSBORO, DESTROYING MOST BUILDINGS.

ALAN MAPLES WROTE AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE ON THE DEPOT IN THE OCTOBER 2001 EDITION OF THE CHRONICLES AND QUOTES WENDELL PAGE AS SAYING THAT CITIZENS OF SCOTTSBORO SAVED THE DEPOT ONCE AGAIN BY EXTINGUISHING THE FIRE BY CLIMBING ON THE BUILDING AND COVERING THE EMBERS WITH WET BLANKETS. SAVED AGAIN.

THE DEPOT BECAME THE COMMERCIAL CENTER OF THE TOWN, AS WELL AS ONE OF THE TOWNS MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL CENTERS. IT WOULD REMAIN SO FOR THE NEXT ONE HUNDRED YEARS, ALTHOUGH AFTER THE 1891 FIRE THE BUSINESS DISTRICT OF SCOTTSBORO SHIFTED TO AROUND THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE.

THERE WERE NO REAL MAJOR CHANGES IN THE DEPOT'S STATUS UNTIL THE 1950S AND 60S WHEN THE HIGHWAY TRUCKING INDUSTRY BEGAN TO RIVAL THE RAILROADS FOR PROMINENCE IN SHIPPING. THIS HAPPENED PARTICULARLY AFTER THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY ACT WAS PASSED IN 1956, WHICH WAS CO-SPONSORED BY OUR OWN CONGRESSMAN BOB JONES. THIS ACT HAS HAD ONE OF THE GREATEST IMPACTS ON AMERICA IN THE COUNTRY'S HISTORY.

IN RESPONSE TO THIS COMMERCIAL COMPETITION WITH THE TRUCKING INDUSTRY, THE RAILROADS BEGAN TO ECONOMIZE AND MODERNIZE. ONE THING THAT THEY ATTEMPTED WAS TO ELIMINATE VARIOUS STATIONS AND SITES ALONG THEIR RAILROAD LINES IN ORDER TO SPEED UP THEIR FREIGHT SERVICES.

ENTER NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAILROAD WHICH OWNED THE LINE THROUGH SCOTTSBORO. NORFOLK SOUTHERN HAD BOUGHT THE RAILROAD LINE IN 1982, AFTER IT (NORFOLK AND WESTERN) HAD

MERGED WITH THE SOUTHERN RAILROAD TO BECOME NORFOLK SOUTHERN. IT HAD BECOME ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS IN AMERICA. NORFOLK SOUTHERN IS A MAJOR COMMERCIAL POWER, NOW OPERATING 19,420 MILES OF TRACK WITH TOTAL ASSETS OF 39 BILLION DOLLARS AND 19,300 EMPLOYEES. (RECENT NUMBERS) THAT WAS WHO WE WERE DEALING WITH.

NORFOLK SOUTHERN ANNOUNCED THAT THE SCOTTSBORO FREIGHT DEPOT WOULD BE CLOSED IN 1993. AT THIS TIME THERE WAS VERY LITTLE FREIGHT SHIPPING THAT OCCURRED AT THE DEPOT. THE STATION HAD BEEN MANAGED BY BILL BORDER, WHO MANY PEOPLE IN SCOTTSBORO KNEW. HERE IS HIS PICTURE. MR. BORDER WORKED AT THE STATE FOR 29 YEARS AND WAS WELL KNOWN IN SCOTTSBORO. FOR AN EXCELLENT ACCOUNT OF HIS YEARS AT THE DEPOT AND WHAT THINGS HAD BEEN LIKE IN THE DEPOT'S HAY DAYS SEE MR. ALAN MAPLES EXCELLENT ARTICLE IN THE CHRONICLES OF OCTOBER 2001.

THE DEPOT BY 1993 WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A MEETING AND COMMUNICATION STATION TO ORGANIZE NORFOLK SOUTHERN CREWS THAT WORKED ON THE RAILROAD LINES.

NOW THAT THE BUILDING WAS BEING CLOSED DOWN, WHAT WOULD BE DONE WITH BUILDING? THAT WAS THE QUESTION. FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS NORFOLK SOUTHERN DID NOTHING WITH THE BUILDING AND DID NOT MAINTAIN IT. THE BUILDING STEADILY WENT DOWN. DILAPADATED WAS A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF IT. BUT THAT DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO DESCRIBE THE INSIDE OF IT. NO ONE EVER SAID THIS, BUT I SUSPECT RAILROAD OFFICIALS THOUGHT THAT THE WORSE CONDITIION IT WAS IN, THE LESS LIKELY TOWNSPEOPLE WOULD OBJECT TO IT BEING TORN DOWN. (HERE ARE SOME PICTURES OF THE INSIDE OF THE BUILDING AT THE TIME.)

ACCORDING TO JOHN BAKER, A DEKALB COUNTY NATIVE WHO WORKED AS A GOVERNMENT LIASON WITH NORFOLK SOUTHERN FOR 26 YEARS, THE COMPANY HAD A REPUTATION FOR GOING INTO A COMMUNITY AT NIGHT AND RAZING A STATION, DEPOT, OR RAILROAD STRUCTURE TO LESSON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT. (I DID TALK TO MR. BAKER AS A PART OF THIS PRESENTATION.)

RUMORS BEGAN TO CIRCULATE IN SCOTTSBORO THAT NORFOLK SOUTHERN WAS GOING TO DEMOLISH THE BUILDING. ENTER MY FRIEND CLYDE BROADWAY WHO CONTACTED ME ABOUT THE DEPOT'S GLOOMY FUTURE. CLYDE AND I WERE FRIENDS SINCE SCOTTSBORO HIGH SCHOOL DAYS. CLYDE KNEW THAT I HAD RECENTLY BEEN INVOLVED IN A PRESERVATION PROJECT AT THE SKYLINE FARMS PROJECT AND THOUGHT I SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN A PRESERVATION EFFORT FOR THE DEPOT.

CLYDE CAN BE VERY CONVINCING. HE SUGGESTED THAT WE TRY TO HAVE THE BUILDING PLACED ON THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION'S YEARLY LIST OF THE MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN ALABAMA. CLYDE TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE BUILDING AND I WROTE THE APPLICATION ALONG WITH DRINDA KING OF THE JCHA. (I WILL MENTION DRENDA HERE LATER.) WE MADE THE LIST FOR OCTOBER 1995 ALONG WITH 11 OTHER SITES IN THE STATE, INCLUDING THE EASTERN SHORE OF MOBILE BAY, GREENWOOD-WOODLAWN CEMETERY OF BIRMINGHAM WHERE THREE VICTIMS OF THE CHURCH BOMBING ARE BURIED. THIS WAS PUBLISHED IN ALABAMA HERITAGE MAGAZINE. HERE ARE SOME OF CLYDE'S PICTURES THAT WERER SUBMITTED TO THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION ALONG WITH THE ARTICLE. THIS WAS PUBLISHED IN ALABAMA HERITAGE MAGAZINE.

IN THE PROCESS WE GOT TO KNOW MR. BOB GAMBLE OF THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION WHO BECAME ONE OF THOSE IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE EFFORT TO SAVE THE DEPOT. THE COMMISSION'S JOB, AMONG OTHER THINGS, IS TO PRESERVE IMPORTANT HISTORICAL SITES IN THE STATE. BOB TOLD US HE AND THE COMMISSION WOULD HELP, BUT IT WOULD TAKE A SHOW OF LOCAL SUPPORT AND

INVOLVEMENT TO GET IT DONE. BOB WOULD TURN OUT TO BE SO INSTRUMENTAL IN THE PROJECT. HE HELPED STRATEGY, HISTORICAL INFORMATION, GRANT OPPORTUNITIES. HE FULLY WANTED TO SEE THE DEPOT SAVED. AS DID OTHER GREAT ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION PEOPLE WHO HELPED: LAWRENCE OAKS, TRINA BRINKLY, CAMELLE BOWMAN ARE ONES WHO I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER.

I PERSONALLY HAD FELT THAT WE NEEDED THE STRONGEST EFFORT THAT WE COULD MAKE TO "SAVE THE DEPOT," AND I FELT MORE DOCUMENTATION WAS NEEDED. SO I DROVE TO HUNTSVILLE ONE AFTERNOON TO GO THROUGH CIVIL WAR RECORDS AT THE HUNTSVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

NOW UP TO THIS TIME, MOST HISTORIES OF SCOTTSBORO HAD DESCRIBED THE SKIRMISH AT THE DEPOT TO HAVE BEEN INSIGNIFICANT AND MINOR. BUT WHAT I DISCOVERED IN THOSE RECORDS WAS THE AFRICAN-AMERICANS HAD DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES WITH THE BRAVERY AND FIGHTING SPIRIT THEY DISPLAYED IN THE SKIRMISH.

THEIR OFFICIERS HAD PRAISED THEIR EFFORTS AND WANTED TO HONOR THEM. I IMMEDIATELY THOUGHT THAT THEIR EFFORTS COULD BE VERY IMPORTANT IN PRESERVING THE DEPOT. MY REASONING WAS THAT FEW CORPORATIONS LIKE NORFOLK SOUTHERN IN THEIR RIGHT MINDS WOULD DEMOLISH SUCH AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF THE ROLE AFRICAN AMERICANS HAD DISPLAYED IN THE WAR.

THIS WAS NOT JUST IMPORTANT LOCAL HISTORY, BUT IMPORTANT NATIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AS WELL. I DON'T KNOW THAT IT CAN EVER BE PROVEN, BUT I THINK I WAS RIGHT.

I IMMEDIATELY PUT TOGETHER THE ARTICLE THAT WAS REPRINTED IN THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE CHRONICLE. THE ARTICLE WAS PRINTED IN THE SCOTTSBORO DAILY SENTINEL ON MARCH 26, 1995, I OF COURSE ALSO SENT THE ARTICLE TO NORFOLK SOUTHERN OFFICIALS. OF COURSE, WE INCLUDED THIS INFORMATION WITH OUR NOMINATION OF THE DEPOT TO ALABAMA PLACES ON PERIL. I LIKE TO THINK THAT IT HELPED US GET NAMED TO THE LIST IN THAT NOW THE DEPOT COULD BE IDENTIFIED AS A SITE OF IMPORTANT AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY.

THIS WAS ANOTHER STEP IN THE "SAVE THE DEPOT" MOVEMENT THAT WAS DEVELOPING. SOON AFTER THE ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED THERE WAS A LETTER IN THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER FROM A CITIZEN ENDORSING SAVING THE DEPOT. AND THAT WAS ANOTHER STEP IN GETTING THE PUBLIC BEHIND US. REMEMBER THAT THE DEPOT WAS A VERY DILAPIDATED BUILDING AND ALTHOUGH NO ONE EVER SAID IT TO ME, I AM SURE THAT IN MANY PEOPLE'S MINDS THERE WERE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHY TO SPEND TIME AND MONEY ON SUCH A BUILDING.

YOU HAVE TO GET COMMUNITY SUPPORT ON YOUR SIDE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN A PRESERVATION PROJECT. GRADUALLY WE WERE ABLE TO DO THAT. MYSELF AND THE JCHA WORKED ON THAT. WE DISCOVERED FROM BOB GAMBLE THAT THE SCOTTSBORO FREIGHT DEPOT WAS ONLY ONE OF THREE PRE-CIVIL WAR DEPOTS REMAINING IN THE SOUTH. WE PUBLISHED THAT INFORMATION IN THE LOCAL MEDIA.

THE JCHA, ALONG WITH THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION, HIRED NOTED HUNTSVILLE ARCHITECT HARVEY JONES TO INSPECT THE DEPOT TO DETERMINE IF IT INDEED COULD BE SAVED. HE FOUND IT STRUCTURALLY SOUND. THAT BECAME ANOTHER ONE OF OUR NEWS STORIES THAT WAS PUBLISHED LOCALLY. HERE ARE A FEW PICTURES OF OUR GROUP INSPECTING THE DEPOT. (NAME THOSE IN PICTURES.)

WE FOUND OUT THAT THE DEPOT WAS USED TO SET THE CITY LIMITS OF THE TOWN WHEN IT WAS INCORPORATED IN 1870. THE CENTER OF THE SCOTTSBORO CITY LIMITS WHEN THE TOWN WAS INCORPORATED. CITY LIMITS WENT ONE HALF A MILE IN EACH DIRECTION FROM THE CENTER OF THE DEPOT BUILDING. WE PUBLISHED THAT.

WE HAD DESIGN ALABAMA FROM AUBURN COME IN AND STUDENTS CREATED A PROPOSED RAILROAD HISTORIC DISTRICT THAT INCLUDED A WALKWAY THAT CONNECTED THE DEPOT TO THE HERITAGE CENTER WITH CITY STREET LIGHTS. WE PUBLISHED THAT.

MORE AND MORE WE TRIED TO BUILD SUPPORT TO "SAVE THE DEPOT." WE MADE CONTACT WITH HUNTSVILLE TELEVISION STATIONS TO DO REPORTS ON OUR EFFORTS, AND I REMEMBER ONE IN PARTICULAR IN WHICH MS. DRENDA KING DID IN WHICH SHE STATED IT WOULD "BE A SIN TO DEMOLISH A BUILDING THAT WAS SO IMPORTANT IN HISTORY." WE OF COURSE, SENT ALL THIS INFORMATION TO OFFICIALS AT NORFOLK SOUTHERN. (MAKE NOTE OF JOHN GRAHAM'S LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM THE JCHA IN 1996. ACTUALLY JCHA MEMBERS WORKING ON MUCH OF THIS.)

ENTER MR. JOHN NEELY. MR. NEELY, AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, WAS A WELL RESPECTED AND POPULAR INSURANCE EXECUTIVE IN SCOTTSBORO. HE WAS THE PRESIDENT OF THE JCHA AND HE TOOK A GREAT INTEREST IN THE "SAVE THE DEPOT" EFFORT. HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, AT ONE TIME SERVING AS PRESIDENT. HE HAD A GREAT INTEREST IN THE DEPOT AND TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO SAVING THE BUILDING. HE WAS CHAIR OF THE DEPOT COMMITTEE. HE WAS INDISPENSABLE IN THE PROCESS.THE DEPOT COMMITTEE. I THINK MYSELF, MR. BROADWAY, ANN CHAMBLESS, MRS. KING, AND MR. NEELY WERE ON THAT COMMITTEE, AND I APOLOGIZE IF I LEFT ANYONE OFF.

FORTUNATELY, FOR ALL OF US, MR. NEELY WHO BECAME A GREAT FRIEND AND MENTOR TO ME, WAS AN INFLUENTIAL MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY AND A GOOD FRIEND TO THEN MAYOR LOUIS PRICE. MR. NEELY DID NOT THINK WE WERE MAKING MUCH HEADWAY WITH NORFOLK SOUTHERN, SO HE WENT TO MAYOR PRICE AND THE CITY COUNCIL TO ASK FOR HELP.

NOW CITY OFFICIALS HAD BEEN PRETTY QUIET UP UNTIL THIS. THERE WAS SOME CONTROVERSY WITH THIS "SAVE THE DEPOT" EFFORT. THERE WERE THOSE IN THE COMMUNITY I AM SURE WHO FELT THAT THE CITY SHOULD NOT BECOME OWNERS OF SUCH A DILAPADATED BUILDING, THAT IT WAS A WASTE OF MONEY. PRESERVATION, AS YOU KNOW, IS NOT ALWAYS AN EASY SELL.

HOWEVER, MR. NEELY CONVINCED THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE DEPOT PROJECT THROUGH THE RAILROAD AND HELD A MEETING IN SCOTTSBORO WITH NORFOLK SOUTHERN OFFICIALS.

MR, JOHNNY IVEY, WHO MANY OF YOU KNOW, WAS PRESIDENT OF THE SCOTTSBORO CITY COUNCIL. HE AND THE MAYOR MET WITH NORFOLK SOUTHERN OFFICIALS. THEY SAID THEY WOULD SELL THE DEPOT TO THE CITY FOR ONE MILLION DOLLARS. MR. IVEY, NEVER NOT TO GIVE HIS OPINION, OBJECTED AND SAID I THOUGHT YOU WOULD DONATE IT TO US. MAYOR PRICE OF COURSE WAS IN AGREEMENT. (NORFOLK SOUTHERN HAD OFFERED TO GIVE THE DEPOT TO THE CITY IN 1993 BUT THE CITY HAD REFUSED AS THERE WAS NO REAL SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY TO DO THIS AT THAT TIME.)

THE RAILROAD OFFICIALS DID AGREE THAT THEY WOULD GO BACK AND CONSIDER WHAT TO DO WITH THE DEPOT. AND THEY DID. THEY CAME BACK WITH A PROPOSAL TO DONATE THE DEPOT TO THE CITY IF THE CITY WOULD CLOSE THREE RAILROAD STREET CROSSINGS IN SCOTTSBORO AND MAINTAIN THE BUILDING, SECURE IT FOR SAFETY, AND BUY LIABILITY INSURANCE.

CITY OFFICIALS DID NOT BUY INTO THIS, ESPECIALLY ABOUT CLOSING THE CROSSINGS. THE MAYOR AND MR. IVEY WHO MET WITH THE RAILROAD OFFICIALS DID NOT GO FOR THIS. THEY TOLD THE RAILROAD OFFICIALS THAT THEY SUPPOSED THEY WOULD HAVE TO TAKE THE CASE TO THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION, WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN DONE. ACCORDING TO MR. IVEY, THE RAILROAD OFFICIALS SAID, "WAIT DON'T DO THAT. WE WILL CONSIDER IT SOME MORE." THINGS WERE AT A STANDSTILL.

THAT'S WHERE IT STOOD. THEN SURPRISINGLY IN A LETTER DATED DECEMBER 10, 1996, NORFOLK SOUTHERN OFFICIALS NOTIFIED MAYOR PRICE THAT THEY WOULD DONATE THE BUILDING TO SCOTTSBORO. THEIR DEMAND TO CLOSE THE THREE CROSSINGS WAS NOT INCLUDED. AS LONG AS THE CITY MAINTAINED IT AND PROVIDED INSURANCE. THE CITY COUNCIL VOTED A UNANIMOUS YES. THIS INCLUDED MAYOR PRICE, JOHNNY IVEY, ISSAC ASHMORE, SANDY KEEN, AND (WAS THERE ANOTHER?)\_\_\_\_\_. THE DEAL WAS DONE.

BY THIS POINT THE JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION HAD AGREED WITH THE CITY TO TAKE OVER THE DEPOT AS A HEADQUARTERS AND MUSEUM FOR THE RENT OF ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR, TO PAY FOR UTILITIES, RESTORATION, AND UPKEEP.

BUT PROGRESS FORWARD WAS NOT A SIMPLE PATH. YOU HAVE SEEN PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CONDITION THE DEPOT WAS IN. IT HAD TO BE RESTORED. THE FIRST THING THAT WAS DONE WAS THAT THE JCHA RAISED MONEY TO PUT A ROOF ON THE DEPOT TO STOP WATER DAMAGE. UNDER MR. NEELY'S LEADERSHIP, THE JCHA RAISED SOME \$30,000 TO REPLACE THE ROOF ON THE DEPOT AND TO MAKE SOME INTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS. MR. NEELY'S THEORY, AND HE WAS RIGHT, WAS TO STOP THE BLEEDING – STOP THE BUILDING FROM ANY FURTHER DAMAGE BY RAIN FROM THE LEAKING ROOF. AFTER WATER DAMAGE WAS STOPPED, THEN THE JCHA WOULD HAVE TIME TO RESTORE THE INSIDE OF THE DEPOT. STOPPING THAT WATER DAMAGE WAS REALLY ANOTHER WAY THAT THE DEPOT WAS SAVED – ANOTHER TIME IN ITS HISTORY.

THEN I WORKED WITH DONNA FREDERICK, WHO WAS DIRECTOR OF THE TOWN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM CALLED SPIRIT OF SCOTTSBORO, TO OBTAIN A \$50,000 GRANT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION WITH A \$10,000 MATCH FROM THE CITY. \$60,000 IN ALL, THIS WAS FOR THE DEPOT. THE GRANT WAS AWARDED IN FEBRUARY OF 2001.

THE GRANT WAS USED TO RESTORE THE BUILDING'S WAREHOUSE PORTION AND THE BUILDING'S EXTERIOR, UPGRADE THE RESTROOM TO MEET DISABILITY SERVICE STANDARDS, REPAIR THE LOADING DOCK, AND TO INSTALL A HEATING AND COOLING UNIT. ALL THIS WAS DONE UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION SO THAT HISTORICAL INTEGRITY WAS MAINTAINED.

I ACTUALLY DON'T THINK WE WOULD HAVE GOTTEN THE GRANT WITHOUT THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION.

I SHOULD MENTION THAT I HAD THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AN EXTRA LAYER OF PRESERVATION IF WE COULD GET THE DEPOT NAMED TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES. SO I BEGAN THAT PROCESS, WHICH WAS VERY INTENSE AND CHALLENGING.

EVERY WORD, EVERY DESCRIPTION, EVERY STATEMENT OF HISTORY HAS TO BE VERIFIED AND PROVEN AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL AND ALL THIS HAD TO GO THROUGH THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION AS WELL. I THINK IT WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING DOCUMENT I HAVE EVER WRITTEN. IT WAS ACCEPTED AND PLACED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES. IT WAS APPROVED ON FEBRUARY 20, 1998. THE PLAQUE OUT FRONT DESIGNATES THAT THIS BUILDING IS ON THE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES IN AMERICA.

AFTER ROOF REPAIRS AND THE GRANT, MR. NEELY AND I BECAME LESS INVOLVED IN THE DEPOT PROJECT. THE YEAR OF THE GRANT, 2001, I BECAME PRESIDENT OF NORTHEAST AND THAT CHANGED MY FOCUS. MR. NEELY, AS I RECALL, HAD DEVELOPED SOME HEALTH ISSUES AND I THINK HE HAD GROWN A LITTLE TIRED OF THE BUREAUCRACY OF RESTORATION AND GOVERNMENT REGULATION, I KNOW I HAD. BUT THE DEPOT WAS IN GOOD HANDS. THERE WERE MANY OTHERS WHO TOOK UP THE CHALLENGE TO "SAVE THE DEPOT" BY RESTORING IT. BY THIS TIME, IT WAS GOING ANYWHERE.

I KNOW MANY OF YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THIS LATER STAGE OF THE DEPOT'S LIFE. DAVID AND ANNETTE BRADFORD HAVE BEEN INVOLVED, DONNA FREDERICK VEST, AND IMPORTANTLY KELLY GOODOWENS.

I CERTAINLY FEEL UNINFORMED TO ACKNOWLEDGE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE SINCE PICKED UP WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO RESTORE THE DEPOT TO THE STATE WE SEE IT IN TODAY. I KNOW MUCH OF IT WAS JUST PLAIN HARD AND TIRING WORK. I DO HOPE ONE DAY ONE OF YOU MIGHT PRESENT ON THESE EFFORTS TO 'SAVE THE DEPOT" AND ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED.

AS I FIGURE THAT WAS AND IS THE FIFTH EFFORT TO "SAVE THE DEPOT." THESE INCLUDE EXTINGUISHING THE FIRE AFTER THE CIVIL WAR SKIRMISH, EXTINGUISHING THE FIRE AT THE BUILDING AFTER THE GREAT SCOTTSBORO FIRE OF 1881, FIGHTING OFF ONE OF AMERICAN'S MOST POWERFUL CORPORATIONS'S INTENT WHO SEEMINGLY WANTED TO DEMOLISH THE DEPOT IN THE 1990S, STABILIZING ANY MORE STRUCTURAL DETERIORATION OF THE DEPOT WITH MONEY AND GRANTS AFTER THE BUILDING WAS OBTAINED, AND WORKING TO BRING THE BUILDING INTO THE SHAPE IT IS TODAY. IF I AM CORRECT THAT IS FIVE LIVES THAT THE DEPOT HAS EXPERIENCED TO BE SAVED. IF THE ADAGE ABOUT CATS IS TRUE, WE HAVE FOUR MORE LIVES FOR THE DEPOT TO GO!

IT INDEED HAS BEEN A COMMUNITY PROJECT, INVOLVING MANY PEOPLE. AS FOR MY PART, I LEARNED MANY LESSONS FROM MY ROLE. I LEARNED THAT REASON PREVAILS WITH THE PUBLIC IF YOUR FACTS AND STORY ARE PRESENTED RATIONALLY. PEOPLE WANT TO LOVE THEIR COMMUNITY AND WILL COMMIT TO PROTECTING THAT COMMUNITY.

I LEARNED PERSONALLY THAT IN BEING IN A PROJECT LIKE THIS, YOU HAVE TO STAY ON YOUR FEET AND NOT GIVE UP AS GLOOMY AS THINGS SOMETIMES APPEAR. AS LONG AS YOU ARE STILL GOING, YOU HAVE A CHANCE, NO MATTER WHAT THE SITUATION IS.

I LEARNED ALSO THAT IN THESE TYPES OF SITUATIONS, YOU MAY EVEN COME TO QUESTION YOURSELF. IN THIS CASE WITH ME I WOULD THINK THAT WELL MAYBE THE RAILROAD IS RIGHT – MAYBE THERE IS A DANGER AND LIABILITY IN KEEPING THE BUILDING. OR I WOULD THINK THAT PERHAPS THE CITY IS WASTING PEOPLE'S MONEY ON SAVING SUCH AN OLD DILAPIDATED BUILDING. BUT FROM THIS QUESTIONING I LEARNED THAT THE MORE YOU DOUBT YOURSELF, THE MORE AND GREATER THE REWARDS ARE IF YOUR MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED AND THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE ARE HARD AND NEVER EASY TO ACCOMPLISH.

SO THANK YOU VERY MUCH!