

Curtin Village 2/23/15 Email -Gary Hoover

Hello,

Earlier in the year i was asked by the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association (BHCA) to explore the establishment of a committee of BHCA members and interested others to assist in the preservation of Curtin Village and to help it become more available to the public.

I had contacted Gloria Briggs via e-mail some time ago regarding Curtin Village and in following up today spoke with her on the telephone. She said she had been ill and so, hadn't responded.

I reviewed my earlier e-mail regarding the desire to put together a committee to see what could be done to revitalize Curtin Village.

Gloria said the the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC) owns the land, buildings and some of the artifacts and that the Curtin Foundation "Can't drive a nail without permission form the state."

She went on to say the state has been trying to close Curtin Village for a number of years and was recently interested in turning the mansion house into quarters for state park officers. Gloria said the Village has only stayed open because she has been attending meetings over the years to convince the PHMC to keep it that way on at least a minimum level. Gloria noted that the state had closed many historic sites because of lack of funding--some much larger than Curtin Village. I replied that Curtin is, arguably, a nationally significant site--the last water powered cold blast furnace to operate--and the best preserved exemplar of the early iron industry in the state--it is special.

Gloria said funding was a major problem. The Foundation only had a few small events there last year. Gloria said it is impossible to get reliable volunteers to serve as tour guides, write grants, do maintenance, etc for the long run.

I got the impression that the Roland Curtin Foundation has dwindled to little more than Gloria, herself.

In regard to the grounds and buildings, they are deteriorating. Evidently, the PHMC has made no provision for a regular maintenance program--other than cutting the grass. All maintenance and repairs are currently piecemeal fashion via requests to the PHMC--Gloria notes a need and contacts the state with a request to fix something. Gloria said the public restrooms were closed by state order and the shutters can't be put back on the mansion because the window frames and some window bottoms are rotted.

The foundation is allowed to keep the rent from the small house for expenses relating to tours and to pay for heating oil. They had a few small events, but there are no grant writers working on anything.

Gloria said to get anything going we would have to meet with PHMC representatives. She offered to contact them to see if they were interested. I told her that I would rather put together a viable committee to show the state there is a serious effort and to tell the PHMC that a revitalization of the Village is something we want to see happen. She agreed to meet once the weather improved for further discussion.

I think we should go ahead and organize the committee in the meantime. Perhaps if Gloria sees a committee in place it will be encouraging to her. She said she did not really feel she had the energy to start over with a new group of people and wasn't up to the long hours necessary to plan and execute events any longer. I said she could absolutely remain involved in any way she desired while passing the hard work of putting together events and seeking funds to others.

BHCA Membership: please let me know if you are willing to serve on a committee to help Curtin Village by replying to this e-mail.

Many thanks,

Gary