November 30, 2015

Devin J.R. Sykes 2470 Melvin Avenue Rochester Hills, MI 48307 (850) 549-7113

Mr. Ed Anzek, and the Historic Districts Commission 1000 Rochester Hills Drive Rochester Hills, MI 48309

Greetings Mr. Ed Anzek, and Historic Districts Commission,

I wanted to bring to your attention a historic property that is likely in danger of demolition: the property at 820 E Auburn Road in Rochester Hills. After contacting the property's realtor, Mr. Kevin G Baird, I learned that the house has been sold for \$250,000 and is currently zoned as mix-use commercial. The house is likely going to be demolished; the land, repurposed and used as retail space.

Surrendering another of our landmark buildings to the whims of commercial development threatens to further erase the unique history in both the Brooklands neighborhood and in the Rochester Hills community. The identity, integrity, and character of a city relies heavily on the survival of its original and historic structures. Without them we are limited to a grid of streets redundantly lined with Starbucks and McDonalds. A development of this nature does not benefit the city's residents or home owners. In fact, it makes the area look more and more like our nearby suburbs of Warren and Hazel Park, where almost no pre-WWII architecture or original farm structures remain. For the sake of land value, and this property's significance to the individuality of the Brooklands neighborhood, let us consider taking the steps to protect, rehabilitate, and repurpose this 115-year-old farm house.

The history of 820 E Auburn Road is simple. Julian Siess (1850-1907) and Bertha Siess (-1926) built the house in 1901 to raise their family of 7.1 (The house was a likely replacement of a previous farmhouse that was built on or near the same foundation. The land is marked as "Oak Grove Farm, T.S. Tibbals" in an 1872 map.) Julian was a Russian immigrant who worked as a dairy farmer in the 1880s and 1890s on the southeast corner of Oakland Avenue and Caniff Road in Detroit. Bertha (Wrack) was a Detroit Native. Julian passed away at age 57 due to heart

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¹ The 1908 map of Avon Township included as Figure 1 includes the family's property at the southwest corner of Auburn Road and John R Road. The majority of the farmhouses in the area have been demolished. 820 E Auburn Rd. is shown in the top right corner of plot 35.

failure shortly after one of his sons, Edward (1889-1907), died at age 17 from a gunshot wound. Both Bertha and Julian are buried at Woodmere Cemetery in Detroit.

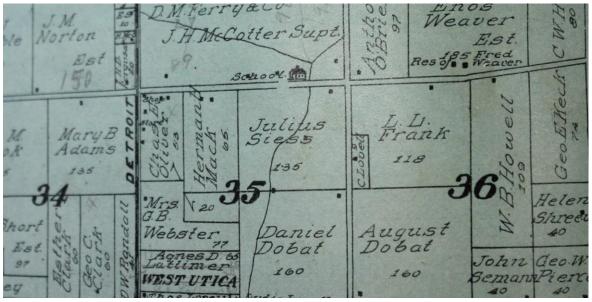


Figure 1. 1908 map of Avon Township, courtesy of the Rochester-Avon Archives. Photo taken by Devin Sykes.

The community surrounding 820 E Auburn Road has seen a resurgence in land value in recent years. Several historic homes along Auburn Road have been repainted and repaired, including a large farm house on the north side of Auburn Road, west of the fire station; a large farm house on the south side of Auburn Road at Frankson Road; and a commercial property in the small dining district between Longview and Harrison. In addition, both Johnny Black's Public House and Chad's Bistro are extremely popular restaurants in the area, and draw many people – residence and visitors alike – to the neighborhood.² Further, Brooklands neighborhood hosts a variety of delightful and interesting architectural nuances dating as far back as the 1920s, and features homes styled from bungalows to post- war ranches. Regrettably, though, too many of the original, pre-1920s farm houses specific to the Rochester Hills area were lost to suburbanization.

Unfortunately, the city of Rochester Hills does not currently have a good reputation for protecting these and other kinds of homes, which are integral to the area's history.³ After scouring maps in the archives, reading through stories posted by residents on the Rochester-Avon Historical Society website, and reviewing comments in the *Remembering Rochester* blog, it is apparent that the city could do more to honor its unique history. In "A Eulogy for our

² Chad's Bistro boasts a 5-star rating on Yelp.com, and has been review by 228 patrons.

³ Take, for example, the 2011 demolition of the Eddy House, a Queen Anne-style farm house built in 1900 (http://patch.com/michigan/rochester/111-year-old-farmhouse-coming-down-on-rochester-road).

Neighborhoods," posted to the *Remembering Rochester* blog on December 20, 2014, blogger Deborah Larsen poignantly states that

2014 has been the most destructive in the history of Rochester. When future historians examine the record of this year looking for the cause of the devastation, they will . . . find that in 2014, when Rochester's landscape was riddled with the pock-marks of demolished vintage houses, the damage was wholly self-inflicted.⁴

The threat of demolition of the vintage farm house at 820 E Auburn Road is especially troubling when you consider that the house is, overall, in sound condition. I visited the house when the most recent inheritor gained control of the property, and although I wasn't able to survey the whole house, the areas I saw were only in need of minor to moderate repairs: the floors need to be leveled, the paint needs refreshing, and the roof may need to be recovered. Of course, the property would need to be examined further by a certified inspector, but it is clear that the home is far from unrecoverable.

I am dedicated to protecting this area's unique, plentiful history. I will take whatever steps necessary to increase public awareness about, interest in, and support of this specific property, for as Jane Powell aptly notes,

"American culture, and advertising in particular, has done an excellent job of convincing consumers that they are the center of the universe, and that their needs and desires should be more important than anything else. This has led to a huge sense of entitlement, including the idea that one's time is so valuable that it couldn't possibly be spent maintaining the house. . . . "5"

Therefore, I would readily and humbly volunteer myself to speak at city hall meetings, develop and distribute a local petition, and help clear overgrown vegetation and enhance the curb appeal of the site.⁶ Again, Deborah Larsen:

These houses are witnesses, if only we would take the time to listen to their testimony. They all have stories to tell about the families they have sheltered over the decades, and the people in those families were the ones who built this community and left something behind for the citizens of today. Author and home restoration specialist Jane Powell once spoke quite eloquently on this issue; she said, in part:

". . . A house comes with responsibilities, and a historic house comes with more responsibilities. We are only the caretakers of these houses, which were here before we owned them and which will be here after we are gone. They contain the wood from the

⁴ http://rochesteravonhistory.blogspot.com/2014/12/a-eulogy-for-our-neighborhoods.html

⁵ Cited in Deborah Larsen's "A Euglogy for our Neighborhoods."

⁶ According to the Rochester Hills City website, the property has been issued a few citations for "blight."

old-growth forests, they are monuments to the skill of those who labored to build them, they represent our cultural heritage. To destroy them, or allow them to be destroyed by neglect, to remove their original fabric in the pointless pursuit of 'no maintenance" is profoundly disrespectful both to the trees that gave their lives and to the labor and skill of those who built the houses - with hand tools, I might add."

Please let me know if there is anything I can do, or anything I can work on alongside the Historic Districts Commission, to help save this historic home.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Devin J.R. Sykes

Julius Siess and Bertha Siess Historical Documents

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	artment of State-Division o		
Township of	TRRESCRIPT OF CERTIFICAT	6	1286
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Figure 2. Wayne County death records – Julius Siess

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Figure 3. Wayne County death records – Edward Siess

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DETROIT CITY DIRECTORY

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	Charles, shoemkr, by Gardeld av.	" August, helper, h 68 Brandon av.	
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Ihird, Fourth, Congress & Larned Sts. Tel. 594.	Otto, finisher, bds 715 Eskine.	" Louis C. lab, h n s Chamberlain 2 e of	Indication. TELEPHONE 1669.
slegel Joseph A, bkkpr Eagle Paper Box	Rudolph, lab, bds 124 25th.	" Oscar, cik, bds Fraderick Slevert,	Sigsworth Alexander, nolder, bds 165 Con-
" Tours ndlr h 248 High e.	" Wm C, painter, h 473 Chene.	Slevewright George, sailmkr, h 279 12th.	" Wm H. tmstr. h 5 Cleveland nl
" Louis E, cik B Slegel & Co, bds 222 Sl	elski Bernhard, lab, bds 660 23d. "Valentine, lab, h 660 23d.	" James L, asst sec Detroit & Deadwood Gold Mining Co, res Sandwich, Ont.	Sibler Augusta M (wid Charles), h 156 An-
" Veronica (wid Joseph), bds 96 Maple.	elz, see Selz and Zilz.	" Margaret J, clk Wm H Elliott, bds 279	George B, music tchr, h 553 Baldwin av
" Wm, clk Eagle Paper Box Co, Dds 19 Si	emiontkowski Joseph, lab, h 371 31st.	Siewers Christian, h 76 Bethune av e.	John H, mach, bds 46 Madison av.
Sleger, see also Seeger, Seger and Selger.	" Stephen, lab, bds 371 31st. emiradzki Thomas, prof St Mary's Polish	Slowert see also Seiwert.	"Otto, printer, bds 963 Baldwin av.
avenue.	Catholic Seminary, rms 886 St Aubin	" Albert H, printer Record Printing Co,	Sihloff, see Seeloff, Sielaff and Sieloff.
" Henry F C (aged 39), died Sept 13, '98. Slemon, see also Seaman, Slmeon, Slmon, "James F tailor, 60 Monroe av. h 723 Slemon, see also Seaman, Slmeon, Slmon,	emon, see also Seaman, Simeon, Simon,	" Bertha, blocker, bds 585 Elmwood av.	"Andrew, lab, h 731 Thoodore.
15th.	" Jacob, h 333 Champlain.	" Charlotte (wid Ernest), h 254 Brush. " Edward H messr Record Printing Co.	Anthony, baker, 807 St Aubin av, h
John, lab, bds 170 28th.	" Jacob, carp, h 540 Dragoon av.	bds 170 Adams av e.	Frank, painter, h 672 Theodore,
" John, shoemkr, 186 Canfield av e, h 773	House Blk, bds 303 24. Tel 2529.	" Ernest L, tinner, h 58 Elmwood av.	John, painter, h 576 Alexandrine av e.
" John jr, lithogr, bds 773 St Antoine. Si	ems John, tmstr, n is Moran. enklewicz Frank, lab, h \$2 Brandon av.	" Mary (wid Louis D), h 596 Jos Campau	Joseph grocer 199 Leland h some
Joseph, taulor, 579 6th, h same.	epp, see also Czapp.	" Tillie, domestic 85 Church.	" Stephen, pdlr, h 23 B.
" Joseph C, butcher, bds 120 Wilkins. Si	eradzki John, shoemkr, h 479 Superior.	Siffer Jules, student, bds 26 Congress e.	" Anthony, lab, h 679 Kirby av e.
view av 1 n of Gration and Wosehing. Slerakowski Anna (wid John), bds 45 St	erakowski Anna (wid John), bds 45 St	Sifferath Nicholas, lab, h 100 15th, "Anthony, lab, bds 567 Riopelle. Siford, see also Seifert, Seyfert, "Dorothea (wid Michael), bds 579 Rio-	" Anthony, lab, bds 967 Riopelle." " Dorothea (wid Michael), bds 979 Rio-
stegitted Limit A, mininer, n to washing Si	Josafar's al.	Slefert and Slevert. " Louis R. barber, 100 Grand River av	Pelle.
Siegie Christian F, ironwkr, n ill St Au- bin av.	" Alfred, plasterer, bds 233 Columbia e. " Wilhelmina (wid Alois), h 263 Colum-	h 326 same.	Frank, lab, h 605 Alexandrine av e.
" Christian G, bollermkr, h 78 Mitchell av bla e. " Fredericka (wid Gottlieb), h 711 St Au- Sierocki Andrew. lab, h 550 Forest av e.	bla e. erocki Andrew. lab, h 650 Forest av e.	Sifton France A off Byram & Co Nde 200	" Ignate, lab, n % Chene." Ignate, lab, h & lab. Hendrie av.
bin av.	" Jacob, lab, bds 617 Canfield av e. " John, lab, h 617 Canfield av e.	Bowen av.	John coremkr, h 867 Ropelle.
"Albert, mach hd, h 268 Scott.	ess Alexander, lab, bds e s Gilbert 4 n of Southern av.	same, Tel M 3247,	John, lab, h 179 32d.
liegrist, see also Sigrist,	"Anna M, rms 310 Campbell av, Charles nainter, bds Matthias Siess.	Tel E 22.	Joseph, iab, n 730 Theodore Julius, blksmith, h 977 Riopelle.
Conant av.	Charles A, wagonmkr, h 32 Brewster,	Sigel, see also Siegel. Toblas, phys. 383 Beaublen, h same.	" Leonard, baker, 1084 Dubois, h same. " Michael, lab, h 253 Alexandrine av e.
delaff, see also Saaloff, Seeloff, Seloff and	" Frederick M, wagonmkr, h 310 Camp-	Tel 2504. Siggelko Charles E. tmstr. bds 654 Scotten	" Michael, lab, h 612 Warren av e. " Michael, molder, h 858 Riopelle.
Albert, molder, h 450 Wilkins.	Henry, tmstr, h 112 Highland av, H P.	" Christina (wid Frederick C), h 654 Scot-	"Stanislaus, lab, bds 679 Kirby av e. Thomas, lab, h 1006 Orleans.
Frank, lab, h 210 Hale.	Julius, farmer, h s e cor Oakland and	" Ernest, collr Det Telephone Co. h 577	Silawski John, lab. bds 210 32d.
" Herman K (Slelaff & Son), bds 629 26th.	" Leo H, reedwkr, bds 302 Brewster.	Baker.	Silber, see also Silver.
"Louis A, carver, bds 363 Antletam. "Ludwig G, painter, h 138 Cleveland.	" Matthias, carp, h e s Gilbert 4 n of Southern av.	Siggins Wm. N. carpet cleaner, 569-511 Mich " Bernard jr, press fdr, bds 330 High e. Charles Bor Alfr & Clo hds 30 High e. Charles Bor Alfr & Clo hds 30	"Bernard jr, press fdr, bds 320 High e.
" Theodore, lab, h 173 26th. Si " Wm D. mason, h 369 Antietam.	etz, see Seitz.	Sigler, see also Siegler and Ziegler.	High e.
" Wm H (Slelaff & Son), h 629 26th.	bds 357 Cass av.	same.	" Joseph A, tinsmith, bds 320 High e. Silberblatt Anna, clk The Fair, bds 845 Rio-
" Wm L. appr., bds 369 Antietam.	Henry (Slevers & Erdman), h 122 Jos	Sigman Alfred H, fireman, h 415 18th.	Joseph, pdlr, bds 845 Riopelle.
felelt Joseph lab h 97 West End av Del-	EVERS HENRY, Carpet Weaving	Sigmund John, molder, h 697 St Antoine.	" Mayer, dry goods, 345 Riopelle, h same Silberman, see also Silverman.
ray. Joseph ir lah hds 97 West End av.	ceived by Mail 749 Grand River av,	Signs John Q K, 3a emikr, h 324 Abbott.	" Albert J, cigarmkr, bds 111 Spruce, " Hattle, clk Newcomb, Endicott & Co,
Delray.	EVERS & ERDMAN (Henry Stevers, Charles Erdman) Manufacturers	Louis P, tailor, 350 Ellot, h same.	Jacob (aged 78), died Jan 31, 1899.
Stelke Bertha domestic 50 Woodward av.	rriages, 294-296	Mary, domestic, rms 200 Ellot. Walter, photo printer, h 20 Mulberry.	" Milton J, trav agt A Krolik & Co, bds
otelike Del they were person of the person		Sigsby arrs inn, cook, rms 200 Remouph,	III Spruce.

For Lists of Names, R. L. Polk & Co.

PUBLIC WEIGHING WAGON SCALES, Separative Moreton Truck Go., Ltd., 32 Atwater St. W.

Figure 4. Detroit directory circa 1880s

DETROIT CITY DIRECTORY

SIE

RINGS WEDDING RINGS A SPECIALTY. Also Rings for Ladies, Gents and TRAUB BROS. 118 Woodward Ave. The most cen-Babies, at TRAUB BROS. tral Jewelry House in Detroit.

1247 DETROIT CITY DIRECTORY. Sierakowski Anna (wid John), bds 333 Willis av e. Siering, see also Searing and Seyring. "Alfred, plasterer, bds 263 Columbia e. "Wilhelmina (wid Alois), h 263 Columbia Frank J. Licht. Tel. 1780. Sless Annie, domestic 256 Morrell.

"August C. wagonmkr, h 14 Hale.
Frence, wagonmkr, h 130 Campbell
Henry, timstr, h 112 Highland av.
Joseph, mach, h 105 Willis av.
Joseph, lab, h 105 Willis av.
Matthias, lab, h e s Gilbert 4 n of
Southern av.
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Southern av.
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Siev Alexander M, pdir, bds 230 Elizabeth e.
Sievers Albert, fireman, bds 125 Russell.
Mrs Dora, bds 76 l7th.
Gustav, bkbndr, h 776 l7th.
Gustav, bkbndr, h 776 l7th.
Gustav, bkbndr, h 776 l7th.
Hermy, J. carpet weaver, h 36 Grant.
Sievers & Erdman, h 182 Jos
Henry Glevers & Erdman), h 182 Jos
Henry Glevers & Erdman, h 182 Jos
Henry J. carpet weaver, h 36 Grant.
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Handon av.
Herman, baker, bds 36 Grant.
Sievers & Erdman, n 106 Scotten av, h 46
Handon av.
Frederick Geoglar avs.
Herman, lab, h 374 Fort w, h same.
Joseph, lab, bds 129 Brevoort pl.
Louis, lab, h 115 Sullivan av.
Mattile, bds 40 Division.
Paul Laged 23), died October, 1894.
Sleweright George, salimkr, h 279 12th.
James L. sec American Eagle Tobacco
Slewer Arthur, bkbndr Winn & Hammond, bar Grant Siess Annie, domestic 256 Morrell.

"August C, wagonmkr, h 14 Hale.

"Frederick, wagonmkr, h 310 Campbell Holst), laundry, 40 Miami av.
Sihloff, see Saaloff, Seeloff, Sielaff and Sieloff.
Sikora Adam, lab, h 687 Hancock av e.

"Andrew, lab, bds 687 Hancock av e.

"Anton, painter, h 807 St Aubin av.

"Frank, painter, h 625 Hancock av e.

"John, lab, h 576 Alexandrine av e.

"Joseph, lab, h 803 St Aubin av.

"Joseph, lab, h 807 St Aubin av.

"Joseph, nangt, h 23 B.

Sikorski, see also Chikolski.

"Anthony, mason, bds 567 Riopelle.

"Dorothea (wid Michael), bds 981 Riopelle.

"Frank, carp, h 411 Forest av e.

"Frank, lab, bds 560 Alexandrine av e.

"Frank, lab, bds 560 Alexandrine av e.

"Frank, lab, bds 550 Alexandrine av e.

"Ignatius, lab, h 827 Chene.

"Ignatius, lab, h 827 Chene.

"John, lab, bds 581 Frederick av.

"John, lab, bds 581 Frederick av.

"John, lab, bf 878 Riopelle.

"Joseph, lab, h 979 Riopelle.

"Joseph, lab, h 979 Riopelle.

"Joseph, lab, h 979 Riopelle.

"Joseph, molder, h 840 Russell.

"Luius, lab, bds 841 Russell.

"Luius, lab, bds 841 Russell.

"Luius, lab, bds 841 Russell.

"Luius, lab, bds 669 Hancock av e.

"Michael, lab, bds 689 Hancock Ernest, inspr. h 577 Baker. Frederick (aged 70), died January 27, " Wm T, springmkr, bds 654 Scotten av. OF NEW YORK Stands

The Washington Life Ins. Co. of NEW YORK Stands at the TOP as the MODEL COMPANY.

Figure 5. Detroit directory circa 1880s