

Couple donate home, steam museum to state



The News Journal/BOB HERBERT

Ruth Marshall stands Thursday in front of the stone mansion she and husband Thomas C. Marshall are giving to Delaware.

By **ROBIN BROWN**
Staff reporter

Thomas C. and Ruth Marshall, owners of the former Magic Age of Steam Museum and an 1896 mansion, said Thursday they are giving their Yorklyn home, land and most of their belongings to the public.

Their total gift is worth \$4 million to \$5 million, state officials said at a ceremony on the site.

The donation to the state Division of Parks and Recreation is valued at \$3 million to \$4 million and includes the property and possessions, officials said. Their aim is to preserve and reopen the site, where visitors saw a steam-powered car collection and rode a miniature train before the Marshalls closed the public attraction in 1977.

The Marshalls also are creating a \$1 million endowment for the site's upkeep through the Delaware Community Fund, an independent non-profit group.

The property is 3.8 acres now, but officials expect it to grow long before the state takes ownership in 2008. State agencies are working to acquire and protect surrounding open space, said Mark Chura, manager of state park planning, preservation and development.

The gift is Delaware's second major historic preservation acquisition in as many weeks.

Last Friday, Gov. Ruth Ann Minner announced the \$6.75 million state purchase of development rights to 190 acres at Cooch's Bridge,

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THE MARSHALL FAMILY

Thomas C. Marshall's grandfather, Israel, founded Yorklyn's first paper mill and the company now called NVE. Israel Marshall also built the mansion being donated to the state out of local stone in 1896 at a cost of \$11,500. The gift of the home, land and the Marshalls' belongings is worth an estimated \$4 million to \$5 million, according to state officials.

Marshalls: Gift includes state's first bus

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preserving the site of Delaware's only Revolutionary War battle. Owner Edward W. Cooch is creating a \$1.5 million fund to improve a nearby mill complex, built by his ancestors and owned by the state.

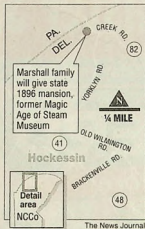
Marshall, whose grandfather founded Yorklyn's first paper mill and the company now called NVF, said he plans to give the vehicle collection started by his father, Clarence, to a nonprofit group being formed by about three dozen current site volunteers. The volunteers, called "The Steam Team," already help Marshall maintain his historic fleet.

The state plans to lease the car museum, shop and garage to the team. The group will own, maintain and show the collection that includes 13 Stanley Steamer steam-power cars and an 18-seat 1915 Stanley Mountain Wagon documented as Delaware's first bus, Marshall said.

Longtime Yorklyn resident Marta Harwanko said she is



Thomas Marshall



happy that such a big piece of the village's history will be saved.

Charles A. Salkin, director of the parks division, said the combination of a donated site and endowment fund also will preserve a multi-generation local family's legacy.

After the ceremony, state officials and other visitors toured the T. Clarence Marshall Museum of Stanley Steam Cars and rode the steam-powered bus.

Down the hill, they could see NVF, which Israel Marshall started as National Vulcanized Fibre, along Red Clay Creek. Company officials said it is the world's only production site of stiffened cotton fiber used in firefighters' helmets, circuit breakers and other products.

Israel Marshall, who grew up on a farm in Kennett Square, Pa., built the mansion of local stone in 1896 at a cost of \$11,500, his grandson said. "That is an amazing donation in and of it-

self," Salkin said.

Ruth Marshall said, "We're just preserving what's here."

Her husband said he has thought about saving his family's legacy for decades and had started other arrangements over the years but backed out because they didn't feel right.

When friends suggested giving it to the public, Marshall said, "That was the right fit."

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