

May 28, 2007

Hello, Steam Team:

Eight of our cars including six “steamers” participated in the Memorial Day Parade in Kennett Square this morning, which reminds me of special parades and anniversaries in that borough during my lifetime. I recall three of them, the first not very well.

In 1927 or 1928, dressed as an old man, I walked with Florence Marshall, my first cousin once removed, in Kennett’s “Baby Parade”. She was 5 or 6 and I was 3 or 4. According to home B & W movies taken by my father, there were a lot of “babies” in the parade. What was Kennett Square thinking of? Florence, who never married, left the area when a teen-ager, and became a well-known physician on Long Island before her death about 12 years ago.

I’m not sure what was special about 1940 in Kennett Square, but the borough was celebrating some sort of anniversary. Possibly it was first settled in 1740, but that seems too late. In June of 1940, festivities went on for two or three days, with a major parade through the center of town. All the local auto dealers had new cars in the parade. I remember Monroe L. Nute, who sold Chryslers and Plymouths, with about 3 cars. Charles H. Mason, Pierre duPont’s head chauffeur, took 16 mm. color movies from the upstairs porch of the old Kennett Hotel as the parade moved west on State Street. The old Kennett High School having been demolished, the Mary D. Lang Playground was dedicated on its site at Center and Mulberry Streets. “Miss Mame” Lang had been a fixture in Kennett schools, having taught at least two generations of local children. For the dedication, one of the borough’s beloved physicians, D. Duer Reynolds, had invited Owen J. Roberts of Phoenixville, a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, to deliver the address, and he accepted.

In 1955, Kennett celebrated its centennial as an incorporated borough. During the summer, merchants and prominent male citizens grew beards. Special events were held, and I think Bayard Taylor’s “Story of Kennett” was re-enacted at Longwood’s Open Air Theatre. The 100th Anniversary culminated with a 3-day festival in early September. An outside agency was hired to put on a pageant on the high ground behind the Kennett Consolidated School. A centennial queen was crowned, based on the number of pageant tickets she and her friends could sell. In the Saturday afternoon parade through town, I drove our 1908 Stanley Model EX and my father drove the Mountain Wagon. They wanted an old car for the pageant as well, so one evening I participated with the EX, and the next night Ralph “Rusty” Worth drove my father’s 1911 Model T Ford.

As mentioned above, today's Memorial Day parade in Kennett Square was both a fun event and sober occasion for the FAHP volunteers who participated. The Committee advised everyone there would be no whistle or horn blowing during the parade, which terminated at Union Hill Cemetery, in deference to the true meaning of Memorial Day. Emil Christofano and Art Sybell drove the '16 Rauch & Lang with its new batteries, Jerry Novak took the '37 Packard (was Holly along?), and the following shepherded the 6 Stanleys: Bill Schwoebel and Steve Jensen in the Model 87, Butch and Jane Cannard in the Model 607, Richard Bernard and Art Wallace in the Model 78 roadster, Rob and Chevonne Robison in the Model 735, Jerry and Carla Lucas, and Anne and Ryan Cleary in the Model 820 Mountain Wagon, and Steve and Ann Bryce in the Model 76. Congratulations to all for a successful day and for spreading the word about FAHP!

Art Sybell has been busy PAINTING. "Little Toot" is coming along nicely in its final colors and the new closet in the Museum has been stained to perfection. The other Art, whose last name is Wallace, is equally busy with FAHP projects. When not helping with and learning about the steamers, he is cleaning locomotives, polishing brass, and continually being helpful. Jim Personti and Steve Bryce re-worked the throttle from the H-5, and this car is almost ready for a test run. Jerry Lucas and Art Wallace tightened the rear wheel bolts on the Mountain Wagon. Rob Robison and I got the 735 on the road last week and it is starting to run as a condensing car should. Butch Cannard helped me with 3 projects on Sunday, 2 of which improved the operation of the cars today (the third car, the Model 71, did not go today). A small but visible portion of the Museum floor was painted early last week and is scheduled for its second coat tomorrow. And thanks to Brian Woodcock and Jim Personti, we have two 2-cycle mowers, a Toro and a Lawn Boy, for handling the steep banks at Auburn Heights.

Last Wednesday, May 23, Bob Wilhelm presented a "Museum" seminar for the benefit of those who are guides there on public days. A lot of thought had gone into his presentation, which was taped by Bill Schwoebel. Written hard copies of his talk are also available for those who could not attend. At the end, the physical layout in the museum was discussed, and Rose Ann Hoover hopes to implement several ideas for improvement in the coming months.

Our Steam Car Tour Committee, and especially Bob Reilly, remains busy planning and printing supplies for the upcoming Steam Car Tour, June 17-22. Bob is working on the Tour book and our active committee members have taken responsibility for many aspects of running this tour. About 50 cars and 150 people are currently enrolled, and registrations keep coming every day. Including the cars from here, it appears we may have nearly 70 cars on the road during that week. Before that, we have an Ice Cream Run to Woodside Farm scheduled for Tuesday, June 5, and an Events Committee meeting for Thursday, June 7.

Finally, I'm sorry to report that Kelly Williams' father-in-law passed away suddenly early last week. All of us at FAHP extend our sympathies to Kelly and his wife upon the death of her father.

Tom