

F.A.H.P. News, March 21, 2011

Stevenson Morris Crothers (ca. 1887–ca. 1978): In the trapshooting world of the 1920s and 1930s, there was no one better than Steve Crothers, especially on 16-yard (single) targets. He was not a “natural shot” but had to work at it. Even when young, he wore eyeglasses, but he dominated shooting in the East. Not only was he a top shot, but he LOVED to shoot, unlike some Class AA shooters of the period who competed for the money they could make (or thought they could). The “money shooters” participated only in the big tournaments, while Crothers, in addition to attending several large tournaments each year, shot every Saturday at either Roxborough or Quaker City, the two gun clubs in the Philadelphia area, where he almost always won the shoot with 99 or 100 straight in the main 16-yard event.

Steve’s address was simply “Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania” or “Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia.” Although this sounds like a highly appealing suburban address, Steve was a gentleman farmer who liked farm work, and pitching hay and other strenuous activities kept him in top physical condition. How large his farm was in Chestnut Hill I don’t know, but I’m sure that land has been developed today.

Starting in 1921, Steve Crothers won the Pennsylvania State Championship 14 of the next 21 years. In his final win in 1941 at the Bradford Gun Club near the New York State Line, he and his arch-rival, Walter Beaver of Berwyn (later Conshohocken), tied with a score of 199 out of 200. As everyone in attendance watched the shoot-off between the two, Steve broke a string of 7 more 25-straights, with Beaver finally missing in the seventh frame.

At Yorklyn, Steve Crothers dominated at the shoots from the early 1920s until the mid-1930s. Starting in 1925, he won the “Marshall Marathon” 500-target championship five of eight years, with his string of wins ending in 1932. In 1931, he broke the unheard-of score of 499 to win the event and went on for the next two days (175 targets each day) to miss only two more, totaling 847 out of 850. The year before he had posted an average of well over 99% on the first 1,000 registered targets he shot that season. In later years, it was said that ammunition of the early 1930s was not that consistent, and the early clay target traps threw uneven targets, but these things presented a welcome challenge to Steve Crothers, and indeed he dominated.

Also unlike other shooters, he never had an excuse but always blamed himself for missing a target. In his later years with his eyesight failing, he still loved to shoot but seldom won. With every target he missed, and there were a few, you could see him burning up inside, mad at himself for letting the target get away. At the Delaware State Shoot in 1947, the first time I had shot in the Delaware championship since World War II, I was in the same five-man squad with Steve Crothers for the 100-target program. That in itself was an honor, but when I broke 100 straight to win the championship that day, there was no one more pleased to congratulate me than Steve Crothers (who broke 95). My father was not on the grounds when we shot, but he came in later, and Steve was the first to look him up and tell him of my big win. It was a great honor to know him and count him as a friend.

Work Nights: Last Tuesday night, Jerry Lucas worked on the burner pan for the museum's "hands-on" display, installing the grate, mixing tubes and insulation around the inside of the pan. Steve Bryce and John Roberts removed the cracked perch pole from the right side of the Model 76; the pole had been previously damaged and temporarily repaired. A new pole is being made in a woodworking shop in Unionville, PA. Emil Christofano, Jeff Pollock and Mark Russell continue with various projects on the Rauch & Lang. Mark also applied a coat of sealer to the new running boards for the Model 607. Jay Williams, Mark Hopkins and Ed Paschall installed the supports for the upper-level track platform on the train layout.

During the Thursday night work session, Ted Kamen continued applying "Quik-Poly" to the rear wheels of the Model 76, and Bob Jordan started touching up the yellow paint on the car. Butch Cannard and Dave Leon continued stripping paint from the body of the Model 607. Tom Marshall worked on the museum engine display, attaching rods to the boiler to hold the refurbished burner pan. Work on the train display continued with Jay Williams fabricating uprights for the trestle bridge supporting the upper level track, as Richard Bernard and Tim Ward cleared the many bits of scenery from the layout and cleaned the main board in preparation for a new coat of paint.

On Saturday, Bill Schwoebel and Tom inspected the track of the A.V.R.R. and made a note of the trouble spots. Bill sent an excellent illustrated report to the railroad committee and hopes they will get going soon on making the repairs and leveling the track for the season.

Stanley Technical Training Class: Anyone interested in learning more about Stanley steam cars and the technical details behind their operation is invited to a special open training class on March 29 at 7pm in the museum. The class is expected to last about 90 minutes. We hope to see you there!

Volunteer Meeting: A reminder to active volunteers that there will be a meeting tomorrow (Tues, Mar.22) at 7 pm in the museum.

High-Wheel Bicycle Training Session: Member Ed Lee has extended to anyone interested in learning how to ride a high-wheel bike the invitation to join him at his home in Chesapeake City, Maryland, on May 21. He's also offered to treat everyone to authentic Maryland crabs! If you can make it, please e-mail Susan (srandolph@auburnheights.org) in the FAHP office. He assures one and all that no prior experience is required -- just curiosity and enthusiasm!