

Hello, Steam Team:

January 29,2007

There has not been a real store in Yorklyn since the closing of Gregg's in 1976. In the 150 years before that, however, a small bustling town could not exist without some sort of general store, and there were a lot of them here. In the 18th century the center of the village was around the only mill located on the present Benge Road and known for the past 115 years as "Marshall Brothers". At that time it was known as Auburn Mills, or simply Auburn. The public road ran from here to Old Wilmington Road near the Hockessin Meeting House, which was then the center of Hockessin.

By the 1890's, Ed Dennison operated a general store in one of the mill houses directly across from the paper mill on Benge Road. Shortly after 1900, however, he moved his store operation to a larger house near the Yorklyn railroad station, and as the first fiber mills were being built across the tracks starting in 1904, the center of activity of the village shifted to the new location. Although I can't verify this before World I days, I believe there must have been another store operating for the benefit of the snuff mill workers on the other side of Red Clay Creek. The local post office was almost always in one of the stores, which made sense. Since postmasters were presidential appointments in those days, it was convenient to have both a Republican storekeeper and a Democratic storekeeper in town.

Grover Cleveland Gregg and his new wife came to Yorklyn from Newark and Downingtown respectively about 1913, and as President Wilson ousted the Republicans that year, young Grover replaced Dennison as postmaster and moved the post office to Gregg's new store, the same building where the Yorklyn P.O. is located today. The Dennison store closed and in 1922 the house where it was located was moved by mules and block-and-fall up the hill toward the Gun Club, where it still stands today. The Greggs had four sons, Raymond, S. Cooper, Horace, and Grover, Jr., who all grew up working in the store. During World War I, Charles J. Gormley, later a well-known Hockessin storekeeper and postmaster there, operated a store at the snuff mills. In the 1920's and early 1930's, Edward J. McGovern operated a smaller store near the bridge in Yorklyn, built on a platform where the entrance to the NVF treatment plant is today. There was also a barbershop and a small candy store in the Club House building near the snuff mills. And as late as the 1950's, Cicero Hamm built a small store, restaurant and garage in the building recently renovated by Charles S. Webb near the bridge. But Gregg's was THE STORE of Yorklyn for nearly 60 years.

When the Republicans regained control of the White House in 1921, Samuel S. Dennison, a nephew of Ed Dennison, became postmaster and since he was paymaster for National Vulcanized Fibre Company, the post office opened in a corner of Number One Mill across from the R.R. station. In 1933, FDR appointed Philip E. Touhey, a manager for the

George W. Helme Company (the snuff mills), postmaster and the post office was moved to the old snuff mill paymaster's shack, a tiny ornate brick building just west of the mills and between the mill race and Route 82. Three postmasters, Touhey, his cousin Ned Touhey, and Grover Gregg, Jr., functioned from this tiny post office for nearly 20 years. "June" Gregg moved it back to Gregg's store in the early 1950's.

In the 1930's and 1940's, Gregg's store was a vibrant place. In addition to Grover and his wife, four sons worked there, and at least four more employees. They handled not only canned goods, but fresh produce, a limited meat and poultry supply, and utility clothing, thread and dry goods. A section of the front porch was enclosed to house an ice cream freezer from which they hand-dipped Aristocrat Ice Cream for 10 cents per half-pint (40 cents per quart). In front were three gasoline pumps, two for Atlantic gasoline and one for American. Kerosene was sold from a hand pump on the porch, until one of the gasoline pumps was converted in the 1940's. After my father died in 1969, Mr. Gregg asked me if it was O.K. to eliminate kerosene, as I was his only customer. It was 25 cents per gallon. Stores did not have self-service in those days, and the clerks were kept busy. Most locals bought their necessities there and nearly all had charge accounts. Store hours were from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M. Monday through Wednesday, and closing time was extended to 8 P.M. Thursday through Saturday. On Sunday the store was open from 8 or 9 A.M. until noon, so locals could pick up their Sunday newspapers and have pleasant chats with their neighbors. On pay day, Mrs. Gregg cashed most of the mill workers' checks, so the Greggs were running a local bank branch as well. Grover, Sr., died in June, 1976, and the store with its full line of merchandise was officially closed on August 31 that year.

The Events Committee had a good meeting last Thursday night, and the dates for public openings at Auburn Heights in 2007 were established. A schedule will be printed and available very soon. The first date will be Sunday, May 6, following the Wilmington Friends School charter one week earlier. Rose Ann held a good meeting on Museum projects on Thursday night before the Events Committee met. The Finance Committee also met last week, and will meet again on February 6 to finalize the 2007 budget to be presented to and approved by the Board on February 22. Bob Reilly returns to Yorklyn on February 3 and has a full agenda for the rest of that month: 1) preparing for our promotional opportunities at the Newark Senior Center Feb. 9, 2) participating in the Trade Show and the AACA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, Feb. 9-10, 3) getting the committee organized for the running of our Eastern Steam Car Tour June 17-22, 4) assisting Rob Robison with the winter edition of the "Herald", and 5) planning for and producing reports for our Annual Membership Meeting Feb. 15 and our Annual Board Meeting Feb. 22. In addition, the first session of a special group asked to get us started on our long-range strategic plan

is scheduled for Feb. 7, and Bob and Barb hope to attend an area Museum Conference in Ocean City, MD, at the end of February.

Three volunteers have already offered to help with our promotional events February 9-10. Art Wallace and Dan Nichols have said they can go to Newark on Friday, the 9th, and they may have to go there to set up the afternoon of the 8th. Art has said he can go to Philadelphia on Saturday, the 10th, if needed, and Chuck Carisch has also offered to help man our booth at the accompanying Trade Show where we will have descriptive literature to hand out alongside our Model K Stanley on display. The car and our material should be set up Thursday afternoon, the 8th, so we ask that others volunteer to help get these things there. We really need at least 3 more volunteers for Philadelphia, either for Friday or for Saturday, although Bob Reilly will be there both days and I will be there some of the time.

Most of the Working Groups are functioning, and I'll try to give more direction this week. With Bill Schwoebel temporarily out of commission, and I attending meetings both Tuesday and Thursday last week, the volunteers who moved ahead deserve a lot of credit. Progress was made as Steve Bryce put a final layer of Diplag on the boiler of the CX, Kelly Williams, Walter Higgins, Rob Robison, and the Simpkins' determined how to better line up the hood on the 735, and took some things apart in this process, and electrical work will also proceed as soon as possible. Emil and Jim got the new windshield nearly installed on the Rauch & Lang, Mark Hopkins and Walter made progress on the electrical system on the 740, and Walter's team worked on final brake adjustment on this car. Art Wallace packed a number of additional front wheel bearings on several Stanleys, something that had been neglected for too long a time. Dale Simpkins and his helpers are doing a nice job in installing new injector ball valves and water glass shut-off valves on Locomotive 402. As usual, Chuck Erikson continued his sorting and organizing in the shop, and the Maute boys continue to catalog in our library.

Today the 735 was moved to the Museum, where the flat floor should help in the hood alignment problem, and the electrical work can also be done. There was a set-back, in that something is wrong with the boiler's water-level indicator, always having worked 100% in the years since we've had the car. Hopefully, the float is stuck, but it may be necessary to remove the indicator to check out the magnet, etc. The Model K was moved to the upper garage in preparation for its trip to Philadelphia in our trailer on February 8. It may be possible to do some burner experimental work while the car is in the garage. Butch is exploring several scenarios for replacing the burner on the Model CX. The present cast iron grate is not in good shape, but it can be patched up and hopefully used for a couple of years if we don't find a way to replace it. I did buy, thanks to Butch's research, a nice 18" grate which will be a spare for our Model EX if and when we need it. Our membership now stands at 158, a real challenge to keep everyone

interested and happy. Best wishes to all. Tom