

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF AUBURN HEIGHTS AND ITS COLLECTABLES

### **POSSIBLE WAYS TO PRESERVE A LATE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY MILL OWNER'S MANSION, CARRIAGE HOUSE, AND THE COLLECTIONS OF 3 GENERATIONS OF THE MARSHALL FAMILY, MOST NOTABLY AN OUTSTANDING COLLECTION OF STANLEY STEAM CARS**

As of March, 2001, Ruth and Tom Marshall are still living in the main "mansion" originally built in 1897 by Tom's grandparents, which has 8 bedrooms and 6-1/2 baths and is furnished with antiques from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The carriage house is now used for a garage and shop with an apartment overhead, and is the building from which a Stanley "Steamer" dealership was conducted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Another large building of more modern design houses the world's finest collection of Stanley Steam Cars and other exhibits describing local history. There are two other out-buildings, and a tiny steam railroad circumvents the 3.8 acres of the property. All buildings and facilities are well preserved. This property, along with the adjoining paper mills and three large 19<sup>th</sup>-century houses, comprise the Auburn Mills Historic District which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Should Tom die today, his Will states that the Real Estate, along with a substantial endowment, would go to the Hagley Museum and Library, and the Stanley collection would go to the Stanley Museum.

Through innovative programs properly planned and executed utilizing the unique facilities available at AUBURN HEIGHTS, however, it might be possible to keep everything intact and provide both educational and exciting experiences for segments of the general public to enjoy. What this scenario does not address is the present plan we have in effect: "members" with enough experience have a chance to work on and drive "their" cars, and to attend tours. In all the activities undertaken and items manufactured for sale, care should be taken to make what we have different from what is being offered by nearby museums or sold by others in the steam car hobby. Listed below are some ideas for consideration:

A private operating foundation should be established under the guidelines of a 501 (c) 3 corporation as defined by I.R.S., which, when proper status is granted, permits prospective donors to make tax-deductible contributions. The non-profit corporation might be a membership organization, with various categories of membership, such as active, associate, senior, and children's. Active members might be expected to contribute volunteer time. An active corps of volunteers is essential to the success of the venture. Associate members would be those who want to support the effort financially or who live too far away to be active. Members would elect a Board of Directors or "Trustees". This Board might consist of 6 or 8 members, and they in turn would elect the officers. By-Laws, which would be filed at the time of the Incorporation papers, would take care of the details.

Proper insurance coverages and licensing would have to be accomplished before anything is open to the public. A zoning change would be required for the property, and probably improvements in utilities would be mandated, especially if the big house is to be used as a part of the overall program. Accessibility for the physically handicapped would need to be addressed. Adequate parking across the road is a definite requirement, and can be worked out with the Delaware Nature Society. A paid staff of from 4 to 8 people would probably be required within 3 years: some full-time, some part-time. The annual payroll would most likely be in the \$150,000-\$200,000 range including fringe benefits, and income from services offered would be

expected to cover this within 3 years of its beginning. It is hoped that another \$200,000 annually can be realized from income on endowment, which will be needed for improvements to and maintenance of facilities, and other operating expenses. The endowment fund goal should therefore be at least \$4 million. It is possible that this can be obtained if our goals are meritorious enough. Many new businesses fail because of inadequate start-up funds- a lot of money must be spent before anything comes back.

Close cooperation with other non-profit organizations including joint advertising and promotions will be desirable. Such organizations might be the Stanley Museum, the Hagley Museum, Winterthur Museum, Longwood Gardens, Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc., Greenbank Mill Associates, Friends of Brandywine Springs, Red Clay Valley Association, Delaware Nature Society, and the Historical Society of Delaware. Adequate promotional expenses must be a part of the operating budget. A WEB site should be established prior to opening.

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO BE OFFERED:**

### SPECIAL ONE-DAY EVENTS:

- 1) Open House Days, when Auburn Valley R.R. will run, mansion tours and museum tours will be offered, and at least one Stanley car will be running, probably the Mountain Wagon. About 12 to 15 days per year, April through October.
- 2) Special week-days in May and October when A.V.R.R. will run for the excitement of Pre-Schoolers and Kindergartners. (6 or 8 days, mostly for two hours each in late morning by reservation only).
- 3) Old Fashioned Christmas days or evenings, when A.V.R.R. will run, Museum containing special holiday exhibits, many featuring old-time toys, will be open, and refreshments, possibly in the big house if children are properly supervised by their parents, will be offered. (5 or 6 times per year around the holidays).
- 4) Visits from local antique car clubs, as an added attraction for paying customers, possibly on Open House Days (Item 1 above). (3 or 4 times per year). Enticements to the car clubs would be necessary, such as free admission for those in each antique car.
- 5) Special seminar on 19<sup>th</sup>-century steam in America, used in industry, locomotion, and automobiles at the dawn of the auto age, and how Stanley cars utilized 19<sup>th</sup>-century technology, all this making use of our cars and steam things to illustrate the seminar. (Twice per year)
- 6) Barbecue chicken dinner trips on summer evenings in connection with the Wilmington & Western R.R. (3 or 4 times per year).
- 7) House tour of the mansion (when other activities are relatively quiet), studying architecture, construction, furnishings, etc. (2 or 3 times per year).

### RENTING OF THE MANSION:

- 1) For wedding receptions, anniversary parties, special private entertaining.
- 2) For small business seminars, group and committee meetings where participants want to get away from their regular premises. Limited food service could be catered.

## COMPREHENSIVE 5-DAY PROGRAM PATTERNED AFTER ELDERHOSTELS:

This would not be inexpensive to the participants, and in all probability the group would have to be large enough (say 20 people optimum) so they would have to be housed and fed elsewhere, unless perhaps the first six or seven couples to sign up could live at Auburn Heights, like at a bed-and-breakfast. Women might be offered alternative museum visits, where mechanical portions are too intense. Such a program might include:

- 1) History of settlement of the Red Clay Valley and its 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century farms.
- 2) History of milling and industry in the Valley, first water-powered, then steam.
- 3) The coming of public transportation (the railroad, the electric trolley line, bus service) and its demise.
- 4) The Snuff Mill story and the Garrett fortune.
- 5) Industry in Yorklyn- the 4 mills in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and what their operations entailed.
- 6) Architecture in the area: the mills themselves, covered bridges, mill houses, the owners' mansions.
- 7) The building of Auburn Heights, its connection with the paper and fibre mills, and a tour of the house.
- 8) The coming of the automobile, and how early cars became a part of this property, including the operation of a Stanley dealership from the carriage house at Auburn Heights. Tour of the shop and Museum.
- 9) The Stanley system, adapting an earlier technology to the automobile, using the cars and museum to illustrate this subject.
- 10) To supplement the serious studies of the program, "fun things" would include a ride on the A.V.R.R., the playing of the orchestration, and a Mountain Wagon ride to dinner at a near-by restaurant.

## COURSES, INFORMATION LIBRARY, LEARNING PROGRAMS, TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS

- 1) "Steam Car 101" or similar program to be conducted about once each year.
- 2) Work sessions once a week for several weeks for "on hands" training.
- 3) Driving lessons for those who have recently purchased Stanley cars (Volunteer members will be trained without charge).
- 4) Literature, videos, and expertise shared world-wide for a nominal charge (Mail order business).
- 5) An ongoing docent program will train members for house and museum guides, and for other necessary jobs around the grounds and our operations. Most but not all these positions can ideally be filled by volunteers.

## OTHER INCOME SOURCES

- 1) Stanley cars owned by others might be taken in during winter months or "off-times" for mechanical restorations, complete or partial; also rebuilding of parts for others.
- 2) A mail-order Stanley parts business could be established, where we can furnish parts fabricated here. This can be determined as time passes and depends somewhat on what others in the hobby like Art Hart, Mark Herman, and Don Bourdon are furnishing already.
- 3) A comprehensive course of two or three days for new owners of Stanley cars, not only teaching them to drive, but how to learn complete "operation" (not easy for some people).
- 4) A gift shop and book store on the premises.

It is not clear at this time how the big house can be used in connection with our outdoor events, but possibly an ice cream parlor might be established in the sun porch, and this room, along with the open porch and the patio could be available to families when the A.V.R.R. is running and other outdoor things are taking place.