

F.A.H.P. News, February 3, 2014

The Avondale Squad: The Avondale Squad was a group of five trapshooters who shot together during the period 1915-1924. My father, who became a serious trapshooter in 1914, was a member of this squad. The other four members were William B. Cochran, a house painter from Kennett Square, Paul H. Way, a wholesale florist also from Kennett, Mike Conner, a blacksmith (I think) from Avondale, and Pat Morris, a meat cutter who had his own store in Avondale. Connor and Cochran were Class A shooters, my father would have an occasional good score, and Way and Morris were Class C or D. They always shot together in the Philadelphia Trapshooters' League, which flourished during the winter months in the 1910s and '20s. In addition to Philadelphia clubs, there was one at Lansdale, at Camden, and the Wilmington Trapshooting Association, with its club at Bellevue shooting into the railroad bank of the Pennsylvania Railroad, with steam trains going by continuously. Shooting contests between the teams circulated among all the clubs. All in the squad except my father had stopped shooting before I started in 1934. (Paul Way died with cancer in 1928, and Bill Cochran was killed in a car crash about 1934.)

In the 35 years that my father was an active shooter, he had an average of about 90%, which put him sometimes in Class B and sometimes in C. Once in a while he had an outstanding score. In the mid-1920s at a registered shoot at Sharpless Park just outside Avondale, he broke 149 out of 150, far outdistancing his nearest competitor, who broke something like 141. Although he never won the Delaware State 16-yard Championship, he won the State Handicap at Yorklyn in 1930 with 95 out of 100 from 20 yards. In 1934, he won a 50-target handicap at the Roxborough Gun Club near Philadelphia with 50 straight, also from 20 yards. In 1938 at the Atlantic Indians, he tied with Walter Beaver for the Doubles title but lost the shoot-off, 24 to 22 out of 12 pairs. In 1939 at Quaker City Gun Club, he won the handicap and doubles, breaking 25 straight in the handicap and all 12 pairs in the doubles. In 1940, he almost won the Delaware State Championship at the Wilmington Trapshooting Association (Basin Road near New Castle), breaking 194 out of 200 (Isadore Keil won with 195).

Back to the Avondale Squad: Mike Connor always shot well, and he won an important shoot operated by Bill Reybold at Delaware City, where they shot over the old C & D Canal. In 1930, although all members of the squad were not there, Bill Cochran won the Pennsylvania State Championship at Conneaut Lake, where he missed his first target and then broke 199. The borough of Avondale had a population of about 700, but it did have a gun club, mentioned above, and the squad adopted Avondale as its nickname. Kennett Square had clubs at two locations in the 1920s and early '30s, and a small club behind the Sons of Italy Lodge west of Kennett in the 1960s and '70s. As mentioned in a recent "News" story about Jim Luke and his Lukehurst Gun Club, Pierre S. du Pont allowed Charlie Mason and Doug Gilpin to establish the Longwood Gun Club on Longwood property in the late 1920s.

Pat Morris had a meat market in Avondale, and his son Frank carried this on in a building still standing along Pennsylvania Avenue. Watson's Restaurant, quite good before and after World War II, was in the same building. One of the two trap guns still at Auburn Heights is the Baker

single-barrel that was new when my father started shooting in 1914. He did quite well with this gun, but a few years later he sold it to Mike Connor. Connor was still living on a side street in Avondale in 1940, and my father bought it back and tried to shoot it again. I was with him when we called on Connor, but I never saw the latter shoot. My father tried, but he liked other guns better during the last 10 years of his active shooting.

Work Report: On Tuesday, January 28, 10 volunteers were on hand on another very cold (but dry) night, as follows: Steve Bryce (in charge), Tom Marshall, Jerry Lucas, Jerry Novak, Tim Ward, Ken Ricketts, Ted Kamen, Bob Jordan, Mark Russell, and Brent McDougall.

The big job accomplished was the tearing out of what was left of the old interior stairway in the carriage house (garage). The debris was cleaned up on Wednesday. Lumber was ordered for building a new partition for the adjoining closet and encapsulating the ceiling insulation. On the Model 607, the acetylene tubing to the headlights was roughed out.

Work continued on cleaning the fender skirts and splash apron on the right side of the Model 750. The burner on the 740 is ready to install (we found out later it needs a modification) but was delayed because of the stairway demolition in close proximity to the car's location. The cleaning of the water tank for this car is delayed due to the extremely cold weather. Work continued on improving the electric train layout, and on construction of the three-venturi burner for our Model K.

On Thursday, January 30, again 10 volunteers were in attendance, viz: Bill Schwoebel and Tom Marshall (both in charge on short notice), Gerhard Maute, Eugene Maute, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Paul Kratunis, Richard Bernard, Jim Personti, and Geoff Fallows.

An attempt was made to install the burner under the Model 740, only to find that the vaporizer is too high to clear the superheater already in place. This should be an easy fix. On the Model 607, the acetylene headlight lines are complete except for installing ferrules on the ends of the tubing and acquiring rubber hoses to make the connections to the lamps and the tank. The original electrical switch box was reworked and is nearly ready for final installation.

The side rods and main drive rods from Locomotive 402 were removed, and all removed parts were well tagged. One set of drivers was brought to the shop and set up in our big lathe for turning down the tread to the proper contour (this has been lost by excessive wear). Rock wool insulation was mixed with paste and water to make plastering "mud" for the new Model K burner, being the suggested replacement for asbestos, and inserting it in the burner was begun. Work continued in our FAHP Library.

On Friday, the carpentry work started on enclosing the closet and ceiling insulation in the carriage house. The locomotive prints were examined, which prints will be needed in rebuilding the working parts of Locomotive 402.