

May 9, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

The Mountain Wagon and the March of Dimes (continued from last week): In early January, 1956, the late Austin Clark left Boston in a '29 Lincoln touring car carrying a Pony Express pouch. His destination was Los Angeles and the historic pouch was to travel in an antique car for the entire distance to benefit the March of Dimes. Old car collectors were asked to participate for sections of the prescribed route for as long as they could, some for a few hours, some for several days, and important promotional stops were arranged in major cities. The pouch was to be passed from one car to another. It turned out Austin himself was the only one to make the entire trip.

I asked my father if I could take his '15 Mountain Wagon for about 3 days, joining at Phillipsburg, NJ, and ending somewhere in the Baltimore area. He reluctantly consented, so on a very cold Sunday (the temperature reached 22 degrees at noon) I left Yorklyn enroute to Earle Eckel's home in Washington, NJ, 100 miles to the north. Earle said he would join Monday morning with his '14 Stanley roadster and we would have 2 Stanleys on a few days of the trip. Sunday afternoon I stopped for water at Norristown and Lambertville, and each time was allowed on the wash rack in a filling station to permit car and driver to thaw out. About 15 miles short of Washington, I was stopped by a patrolman who said traffic was getting lost in the vapor and I would have to stop. It was getting colder by the minute and darkness was approaching so I prevailed upon him to let me continue if I pulled off whenever cars were piling up behind. Thankfully he allowed me to proceed on that basis. I got to Washington and Earle had storage for the Mountain Wagon in a warm place.

It snowed during the night but Monday morning the temperature had risen to 32 degrees. Earle decided, however, that he would take his '25 Pierce Arrow roadster, rather than the Stanley. We drove the 10 miles or so to Phillipsburg and waited for the entourage, which had left New York that morning. About 8 cars of us followed the tour route that day through thawing slush, but it wasn't slippery. We had promotional stops in Easton, Bethlehem, and Allentown before the final sprint to Reading. That night in the garage of the Abraham Lincoln Hotel, the Pony Express pouch was passed to the Mountain Wagon and its driver. (Final chapter next week)

Speaking of the Mountain Wagon, we had a great day with it and the Model 76 in Dover last Saturday to participate in Old Dover Days. We were treated royally by the State Parks people, enjoyed the parade at 9:30, and then gave rides around the Dover Green from 1:00 until after 4:00. Thanks to Rob Robison's loan of his long trailer,

we got the Mountain Wagon to and fro with no problems. Bill Rule, Butch Cannard, Anthony Zych and I spelled each other as operators and Jerry Novak was our excellent PR man. On Sunday, two Steve Jensens, Anne Cleary and Bill Schwoebel replaced some track and then made trial runs with Locomotive 401 and its train with good results. Jerry Novak and Emil took a ride in the '37 Packard, preparing it for next weekend's events. Many things were accomplished at last week's work sessions, not the least of which was the improvement on the burner of the popcorn machine, after which Ed and Jim served popcorn to those present.

We will be busy for the rest of this month. Upcoming events, on and off site, are 1) Pre-schoolers at the Auburn Valley R.R. (and the electric trains) Wednesday morning, 5/11, 2) The Wilmington & Western/Greenbank Mill/Friends of Brandywine Springs Day on Saturday, 5/14, 3) The Linvilla Orchards Car Show (Spring Meet of HCCP) on Sunday, 5/15, 4) A visit to Auburn Heights of 10 or 12 State Parks officials on Wednesday morning, 5/18, 5) Educational visit about steam technology for Bob Wilson and his Vo-Tech high-schoolers, mid-day Friday, 5/20, 6) F.A.H.P. Committee meetings Thursday afternoon or evening, 5/26, 7) Invitational Event for Directors and Advisors at Auburn Heights, Friday evening, 5/27, 8) Our May "Steamin' Sunday" (including a House Tour) on Sunday, 5/29, and 9) an old-fashioned Memorial Day parade celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Borough of Kennett Square on Monday morning, 5/30. All but the last one have been approved by our Management Group and its Special Events Committee. I would especially urge you to participate on May 14 and 15, as these are both fun and quality events. I hope more will commit to taking cars, but for those who don't feel qualified or desirous of doing that, we'll have seats available (probably on the Mountain Wagon on 5/14). We don't have to register for Saturday, but we do for Sunday, and time is running out. At present, we have about 3 or 4 cars going each day.

At our work sessions this week, I have some painting projects as well as our regular preparations for the upcoming special events. Willard Robinson has volunteered to build some lattice work around the base of our new ticket office. We are delighted to report that Emil's health is improving rapidly. Herman Feissner continues to have plaguing health problems and we wish him the best. Also, our thoughts go to Chuck Erikson, our faithful shop organizer, who rushed his wife to the hospital on Saturday. We hope her recovery is satisfactory. Thanks for your continued interest! Tom