

May 1, 2006

Hello, Steam Team:

April 30 and May 1, 1949, were significant dates in Yorklyn. On Saturday, the last day of April, the first-ever New Castle County Championship was held at the Yorklyn Gun Club. It was won by Carl L. McCallister of Newport with a score of 97 x 100. Earlier in April, the Kent County Championship was held on the Harrington Fair Grounds, and in May the same for Sussex County was held near Selbyville. I was secretary-treasurer of the Delaware State Trapshooting Association at the time.

On Sunday, May 1, the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society ran a steam and electric excursion from the B & O passenger station at 24th & Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia, down the B & O's main line, then up the "Branch" to Hockessin. Upon the return to the main line, the train went on to Baltimore where the passengers visited the present B & O Museum collection in Bailey's Roundhouse near Camden Station, then took the electric cars of the old Baltimore & Annapolis Railway to Annapolis, and finally returning to Philadelphia to end the trip.

Those from here who wanted to go could board at the B & O's Delaware Avenue station in Wilmington. Homer Kratz (mentioned in earlier "Weekly News" episodes) drove my father and me to Wilmington where we were joined by Joe Mitchell of the Woodside Farm family. The main line Pacific (not one of the 5300's) arrived on time with its eight-car train, and we boarded. At Wilsmere Yard, the main line engine cut off, and the two 10-wheelers then used on the Branch were hooked on, one at each end of the train, heading east and west, respectively. Cautiously we proceeded up the Branch, as the veteran train crew knew it had been 25 years or so since a passenger train had used these rails. The station alongside the tracks at Hockessin was still standing and its roof overhangs were welcome as a drizzle descended on the local crowd as the train pulled to a stop. One in the crowd was Francis M. Walker, age 100, who had ridden the Branch train on a daily basis from his home near Hockessin to his law practice in Wilmington. My father asked him if he would like one last ride and when he replied in the affirmative, the crew agreed to stop the train at Yorklyn to let him off. His nieces, who had brought him to see the train, drove to Yorklyn and picked him up.

When we got back to Wilsmere Yard, the main line Pacific picked us up again, and we headed for Baltimore, Bailey's Roundhouse, and the antiquated electric cars at Camden Station. The trip to Annapolis and back to Baltimore was probably the last passenger train ever to run on that line. Again back on the B & O, steam brought us back to Wilmington, and as we stood on the platform after getting off, the sharp bark of the Pacific's exhaust echoed across the hills as the

train crossed the Brandywine and picked up speed on the long grade toward Philadelphia. It was a great weekend.

Yesterday, the Wilmington Friends School group enjoyed beautiful weather and everything went very well as we entertained over 150 people on the grounds of Auburn Heights. In addition to all our equipment working flawlessly, our new addition, built last week by the father-and-son Simpkins team, was a great hit. It is a wooden locomotive, constructed sturdy enough to be climbed over and in, with its authentic bell and whistle, and a hands-on exhibit it proved to be! This can be improved upon in the next weeks, but we know it will be popular with our young visitors. Richard Bernard, the Friends School officials, and our wonderful F.A.H.P. volunteers did a very professional job. Many thanks to all of you!

Last Tuesday, Anne Cleary held an Events Committee meeting at her home and on Thursday, Emil Christofano chaired a Finance Committee meeting which was very productive. I met twice with Richmond Williams, finalizing our contract with Bob Reilly. Steve Jensen did some track work (and his efforts paid off), Jim Personti is giving our '32 Packard a tune-up, and our condensing Stanleys, Models 725 and 735, are coming closer to completion. Our spring issue of the "Auburn Heights Herald" is ready to go to press.

May promises to be a busy month. On the 2nd, Bob Reilly and I have an appointment in Dover to speak with Chazz Salkin and Matt Chesser of the Division of Parks, hopefully bringing us closer to our final agreement with the State. On Saturday, the 6th, our two Packards have been requested by Winterthur to take part in one of their "Old Car Days", and the same day, several of us will go to Old Dover Days (parade and rides) with two of our Stanleys. On Monday, the 15th, we will be running the "Auburn Valley R.R." for pre-schools in the area. On Saturday, the 20th, several cars have been requested to participate in "Red Clay Valley Day" by the Wilmington & Western R.R., the Greenbank Mill, and the Friends of Brandywine Springs. Sunday, the 21st, is the annual spring meet of the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania at Linvilla Orchards, to which we usually take a few cars. Finally, on Monday, the 29th, we have been asked to participate in the Memorial Day Parade in Kennett Square, and to have one or more cars at the Wilmington & Western to help celebrate 40 years of our local steam tourist railroad. A lot of preparation is involved, but we'll try to do them all!

Anne Cleary is asking for volunteers to take cars to the May 20 and 21 events. Please see if you are free and let her know whether you can participate either day or both days.

Bob Reilly is getting close to moving into his new apartment and our new office. Much of the furniture, computer, software, and office equipment has been purchased at bargain prices, through the

efforts of Stan Wilcox, Matthew Harris, Butch Cannard, Cam Yorkston, Rob Robison, and the State of Delaware. Hopefully within about 10 days, our Executive Director will be "settled in". Stay tuned!

Finally, a very nice article on the upcoming events at Auburn Heights appears on Page 72 of the May-June issue of AAA WORLD, circulated to mid-Atlantic region members, and received here last week.

If you are an AAA member, be sure to look this up if you haven't seen it. Best wishes to all. Tom