

December 19, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

How did Auburn Heights look during the Christmas period long, long ago? Although the photo in my playroom dates from 1927, my first real remembrance was Christmas, 1929. Like most women before and since, my mother loved to decorate for special occasions, not the least of which was Christmas. In 1929, she had invited her mother and all her siblings and their families for dinner on Christmas day. The table was set for 22 in the dining room with a "T" extending into the living room. The front hall, the sun porch, then heated by steam, and the remainder of the living room were "gathering" areas. All guests were asked to take their outer garments to one or two of the upstairs bedrooms. Ida Murray (1866-1953), mother of Clifford who was written up earlier this year, was the main cook, and she was assisted by Mary Simpson, my grandmother's cook from Middletown. Ida (and Mary while she was here) lived in the apartment over the garage, quite primitive at that time. Before my bedtime on Christmas Eve with the table settings just about completed, our electricity went off. Direct current came to Auburn Heights by overhead wires from the adjoining paper mill. I think I went to bed by candle light, but our power must have been restored shortly thereafter.

When it was our turn to host the family, my grandmother Shallcross usually came a few days before and stayed a few days after Christmas. Since I was her youngest grandchild, we had a special relationship. All others came Christmas morning in automobiles without heaters. My father carved the 30-lb. turkey at the head of the table. When most of the guests asked for "seconds", he went at it again. There was not much time for him to eat. A freshly-roasted home-grown turkey was a special treat, as we seldom had turkey more than twice a year. That evening and the next day we could expect cold turkey with filling, then turkey salad, and finally, turkey soup. All the women in my mother's family were good cooks, and Ida was special, too. They knew all the tricks in getting the most from a wood-burning cook stove.

The toy I remember receiving that day was a coupe about 8" long that had real headlights, activated by a "D" dry cell battery.

Our attendance at work sessions last week was down, not totally unexpected with the looming of the holiday season. Thursday night, the weather was threatening, and Rob Robison was the only volunteer to appear. He and I started to re-assemble the axle from the Model 71, and then enjoyed conversation for the next 1-1/2 hours. On Saturday, Bill Schwoebel and Butch came in the afternoon, and we worked 4 hours on getting the rear back under the car. I hope to "button up" that job this week. Then, all that is needed is a nice warm day to test the 71 and the Model K before their final preparations for Ormond Beach. It will seem quiet this week and next, but we usually look forward to a little vacation during the holidays each year. If any of you are in

the middle of a project, however, and want to come on a free day or evening, please feel free to do so. Our Annual Appeal total stands at just over \$38,000, with \$12,000 to go. We welcome new members Larry Anderson and Brian and Linda Woodcock, and we thank several of you for renewing for 2006 already.

Ruth and I treasure your friendship and your interest in Auburn Heights and what we have here.
I attach our trivial activities of the past year, and wish all of you a very MERRY CHRISTMAS! Tom