

## APRIL 21, 2008 F.A.H.P. NEWS

**The Trip to Rehoboth, early 1930's:** My parents rented the Bradford house on Maryland Avenue in Rehoboth in 1925, and the Handy cottage on the same street in 1926 and 1927. They liked the place, especially my mother, and wanted to build a modern beachfront home there. Henry W. Conant had proposed to develop about 20 blocks of land south of Laurel Street, and had formed the Rehoboth Heights Development Corporation. This area, running all the way to Silver Lake on the south and covering the first three blocks west of the Atlantic shoreline, was originally part of a farm at least twice this large, and the old farmhouse, just west of the development, was turned into the Rehoboth Country Club with its 9-hole golf course. Before 1927, only one beachfront home was in this area, that of Dover attorney Henry Ridgely on what was later Stockly Street. My father bought two blocks of ocean-front property and helped Mr. Conant promote the new development. Streets were laid out and concrete curbs and sidewalks poured. King Charles Avenue was a macadam road and Bayard Avenue a dual highway with 9-foot concrete strips in each direction; all other streets were sand and gravel. Our house, first known in the family as "Clarestom-by-the-Sea" and later as #1 Queen Street, was in the family most of the time from its construction in 1927 until it was sold in 1983. Many of the lots were sold quickly and perhaps 100 houses were built in the next two years. I recall seeing basements being dug by steam shovels, drags and mule teams. The boardwalk was extended about 8 blocks to the south end of Rehoboth Heights at Prospect Street. Development ended quickly with the stock market crash, and there were virtually no homes built for the next 10 years.

Except for 2 weeks in Yorklyn at the time of the Marshall Trapshooting Tournament in early August each year, we lived in Rehoboth from mid-June until just after Labor Day. My father enjoyed the drive down and back in his big Packard straight eights as much as he did the time at the shore. The eastern cities were experimenting with Daylight Saving Time, but farmers wanted nothing to do with it, and neither did down-State people. Wilmington and Newark had D.S.T., as did the mills at Yorklyn. The farmers around Hockessin stayed on Standard Time. Everything south of Newark was on "Standard". Some called Daylight Time "fast time"; others called it "new time". It started the last Sunday in April and ended the last Sunday in September. When my father came home once a week (sometimes twice a week) to attend his bank board meetings in Kennett Square, he left Rehoboth about 4:45 A.M. EST, in order to be in Kennett by 8:30 D.S.T. Returning in late afternoon, it was the reverse: he could leave Yorklyn when the mill whistles signaled 5 P.M., and be in Rehoboth in time for dinner.

T. Coleman duPont's original duPont Highway, mostly an 18-foot-wide concrete road completed about 1918, did not parallel the railroad to Delmar, but rather moved south from Dover to Selbyville through Milford, Georgetown, and Millsboro. None of the towns were bypassed, and we passed through many of them going to and from Rehoboth. From Yorklyn and Hockessin, we usually went by Newark and Middletown, since my maternal grandmother, Mary E. Shallcross, lived in Middletown and a brief stop there was always welcomed. The old road south of Newark went through Cooch's Bridge, then Glasgow, and crossed the C & D Canal

over the draw bridge at Summit. Coming along the railroad at Mount Pleasant, our route followed the track to Middletown and right down Broad Street.

We joined the duPont Highway at the H & H Garage just north of Blackbird, then through the main street of Smyrna (is it Commerce Street?), and into Dover across Silver Lake and down State Street to the center of town. No turns were made as we proceeded straight south past some wonderful old-fashioned produce places under the trees, skirted Rising Sun and went through Magnolia. Traveling down the main street of Frederica, there was an old wooden bridge over the Murderkill, and soon we passed the large cemetery on our left entering Milford. South of the Mispillian and near the dead end of Milford's main street, we turned left, passed Marshall's Pond, and then the two-mile-long Diamond State Nursery, Lester C. Lovett, Proprietor. At Argo's Corner, the roof of a garage was painted with the lettering: "This is Argo. Slaughter Beach, 3 miles". Eventually we crossed the draw bridge over the Broadkill and passed through Nassau, Five Points, and Westcoat's Corner, where an attractive sign with flower beds around it pointed to Rehoboth, right, and Lewes, left. Nearing Rehoboth, there was no choice but to swing left, cross the canal on another draw bridge and proceed straight down Rehoboth Avenue, unless, of course, you were headed for the "Pines", in which case you veered left onto Columbia Avenue. We called it 100 miles from Yorklyn to Rehoboth, but it was about 96. Before the concrete road was built from Milford through Nassau (later to be Delaware Route 14) about 1927, it was necessary to go via Georgetown, and then the total mileage was well over 100. I loved the ride almost as much as my father did. By the time he occasionally drove to Rehoboth in the Model 740 Stanley during World War II, the duPont Highway was a dual road as far south as Dover, and there were by-passes around Smyrna, Dover, Frederica, and Milford, passing east of downtown in all cases, and the preferred route by-passed Magnolia in favor of a more easterly route with a new draw bridge over the St. Jones River. I guess Little Heaven was always there, but I never knew of that name until many years later.

Yesterday, 5 of our cars plus the Cretors popper were at Hagley for "Power Up Gambia", a special event featuring power of the future (and the past). Jerry Novak, Rose Ann Hoover, Anne Cleary, Catherine Coin, Art Sybell, Emil Christofano, Bill Schwoebel, Chevonne and Rob Robison, Butch Cannard, Peter Parlett, Richard Bernard, and George ? took our Stanleys Model CX, 78, and 820 (Mountain Wagon), the '32 Packard and the Rauch & Lang electric. Many thanks to all who made our presence there possible and rewarding. The two Steve Jensens made a trial run with Locomotive 402 and its 4-car train in preparation for our April 27 Friends School charter event here. We need a few more volunteers for this event, so please let Anne Cleary know if you can help.

Three sub-committees of the Strategic Plan are to meet early this week in preparation for a Steering Committee meeting on Monday, April 28. On Thursday, April 24, a volunteers' orientation meeting will be held in the Museum at 7:30, to which all active volunteers are urged to attend. Happy Springtime! Tom