

October 8, 2007

Hello, Steam Team:

The Summer of 1930: We are told this has been the second driest summer in Delaware since records began in 1895. 1964 was the driest (which did not make a lasting impression on me). My recollection is that 1930 was an extremely hot and dry summer as well. It was an unhappy summer for many Americans, as the effect of the previous fall's stock market crash was developing into a decade-long depression. The lower Midwest had dried up, and many from Oklahoma and Kansas emigrated to California.

Clarestom-by-the-Sea (better known as #1 Queen Street) in Rehoboth was less than 3 years old, and we spent most of the summer there. My maternal grandmother, Mary E. Shallcross from Middletown, and her favorite cousin, Gertrude Whittock, were with us for most of the time. Each July day seemed to be hotter than the previous one, with no breeze off the ocean. The temperature seemed to reach 100 degrees day after day. Some of the furniture was moved to the basement, and even though the coal furnace with its summer-winter hook-up to provide domestic hot water was there, that was still the coolest place to sit during the hottest part of each day. Old folks minded the heat the most; my grandmother's generation wore basically the same clothing summer and winter, and it exposed nothing below the neck.

My father came to Yorklyn and Kennett Square two days a week to chair the bank meetings at the National Bank and Trust Co. The worst was yet to come as the banking industry weathered the depression. He would travel the 100 miles early in the morning and late in the afternoon, avoiding the hottest time of the day. The flat concrete road in downstate Delaware was hot enough to fry an egg, or so it was said. Blow-outs on tires of 1930 were common, so speed was reduced.

During the hottest period, there was an estate sale in Milford, 25 miles from Rehoboth. The 18-foot-wide concrete road from Five Points to Milford was only 3 or 4 years old, and it buckled a few places under the extreme heat. At the south end of Milford's main north-south street and directly facing it was a large home with a spacious lawn surrounding it. The sale lasted 3 days, and house furnishings were spread out all over the lawn for inspection prior to the several auctions. My parents went all 3 days, as they were buying antiques to furnish the Rehoboth house. I tagged along at least two of the days and this 6-year-old thought it was neat (cool) to race around this maze of sale items spread out under the trees. Although north-south travelers seldom go through downtown Milford any more, as we did then, I have often looked up at this property in more recent times. I think the house is still there, possibly used for offices today.

An event this past week saddened all of us at FAHP. Our wonderful 16-year-old volunteer Joe Boxler was in a serious auto accident on Monday and died the next day of multiple injuries sustained therein. It was a one-car accident and he was alone. Several of us attended the viewing Friday evening, and there were many hundreds of people there. We have Art Sybell to thank for getting Joey interested in the things we do at Auburn Heights. He was an excellent student in his junior year at Salesianum in Wilmington. Apparently working with

us meant a lot to him, as he wrote an essay for school about us, and his parents listed us as one of two charities to which contributions can be made in his memory. If you want to remember Joey, we encourage you to participate. Contributions will be used to further our educational programs for young people. Art and Joyce Sybell, close neighbors of the Boxler family, also deserve our sincere sympathy.

We had two good work sessions last week and in addition, the two Steve Jensens, Bill Schwoebel, John McNamara and Art Sybell completed the track replacement where the bank was stabilized, and only leveling and tamping on the upper line remains. The urethane has been sprayed on the walls and painted at both ends of the tunnel, and Jim Sank has lettered another of our passenger cars. The boiler inspector was here on Sept. 25, passed our locomotive boilers, and informally inspected the air tank in the garage. Jose punched out boiler tubes on Locomotive 401, and Jim Personti, Kelly Williams, Steve Bryce and Jerry Lucas finished the H-5 and it is now ready for the road. Walter and Butch have been working on the steam automatic from the 740. Lou Mandich has taken some nut coal off our hands and exchanged it for pea coal that works better in our locomotives. Jimmy and Jeff Fallows finished slotting the burner grate for the CX, and drilled the hole for the mixing tube. Jim also took the Rauch & Lang to the Hercules Experimental Station on Thursday, where it was compared to some state-of-the-art modern vehicles. Art Sybell pressure-washed "Little Toot" and plans to touch up the paint prior to our Oct. 27-28 weekend. Bill Rule mounted the clincher tire on Norman Schaut's Stanley Model 61, and it's ready to be road-tested again. Bill also completed his roof, flashing, and sealing work at the Museum's little boiler room. On Saturday, Butch Cannard and Bob and Barb Reilly took our steam popcorn machine to the Delaware Nature Society's Harvest Moon Festival, and sold over \$100 worth of popcorn for the benefit of DNS. They reported that it was a good promotional opportunity for FAHP.

This week is "Hershey Week", and since a number of our volunteers will be there for 4 or 5 days, our work sessions are expected to be smaller than usual. I, too, will be away Tuesday night, but expect to be here Thursday. I plan to transfer 8 more cars to the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve this week, and have an appointment Thursday to get the titles changed. All will be transferred this year except for 5: the Mountain Wagon, the Models 71, 76, and 87, and the '37 Packard, which I'll keep for at least one more year. The Stanley Museum's Model 70, which we agreed to take in and recommend work that may be needed, is expected to arrive here on Wednesday. Our labor and what expertise we have will be gratis, and we will attempt to develop a cost figure for things that have to be purchased or made away from here. The Stanley Museum's trustees can then decide what they can afford and how far they want to go.

Between October 14 and the 28th, a lot of things are happening at Auburn Heights, including 3 committee meetings and a special Board meeting on the 14th and 15th, a visit from the Wheelmen (high-wheel bicycle riders) on Sunday, the 14th, celebrating their 40th anniversary, the Delaware Museum Association's study group on the 18th, the Historical Society of Delaware on the 21st, and the Delaware Community Foundation on the 22nd. In addition, The Fall Meet of the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania is at the Delaware County Community College near Media, PA, on Sunday, the 21st. The 27th and the 28th are public days at Auburn Heights. Stay tuned for details! Thanks to all of you. Tom