

F.A.H.P. News, July 29, 2013

The Masons of Longwood Gardens: Charles H. Mason, II (1886-1949), a native of Lewes, Delaware, was hired by Pierre S. du Pont at the end of World War I to be his head chauffeur. The title was misleading, as Mason was soon in charge of the growing fleet of trucks and other vehicles required to expand Longwood Gardens, and seldom did he actually chauffeur Mr. or Mrs. Du Pont. Mason had a young bride, the attractive former Marguerite Lauritsen (1896-1934), also of Lewes. Mr. du Pont built a fine stone home on the Longwood property for the Masons, as he had done for Russell P. Brewer, who was in charge of building and operating Longwood's famous fountains, copied from the Palace of Versailles. (The Brewers' daughter Louise married Alan Shepard, America's first astronaut.)

Pierre du Pont loved the Mason family, and since he and his wife had no children of their own, he treated the Mason children as his own. They went to the best schools and had a nice inheritance. There were two daughters and a son. Virginia, born about 1920, married John McChesney Morgan; Ann (1921-1970) married Robert S. Ewing; and Charles Mason 3rd married a Texas girl named Janice. All three Mason children attended Wilmington Friends School, and Charlie was a few months younger than I. When my cousin, Eleanor Marshall (Reynolds) (1924-1999), and I were sent to teacher Ruth Pusey's First Grade in September 1930, we were put at a tiny table with a good-looking little boy named Charlie Mason. Charlie and I became lifelong friends, as our fathers were avid trapshooters, and both of the sons followed their fathers in the love of tournament shooting. On a windy day on the boardwalk at Brigantine Beach, just outside Atlantic City, Charlie Mason and I shot our first registered targets at age 11 during the Westy Hogans Tournament in 1935. I broke 43 out of 100 with a 20-gauge gun; Charlie may have done a little better. (Harry S. Crawford of Dover, Delaware, won the handicap that day with 90 from 20 yards.) Charlie's sister Ann became a very good woman shooter, and after her marriage to Bob Ewing, she tried to teach her new husband to shoot. Other things were more important, however, and they moved to Pinehurst, North Carolina, where they ran a publishing house. Ann died with an aneurism at the age of 49.

The senior Charlie Mason, along with Douglas Gilpin, Mr. du Pont's farm supervisor, asked their boss if they could establish a trapshooting ground on an unused portion of Longwood Gardens. About 1930, two traps were installed with a small clubhouse on the southwest corner of the property, shooting into a hillside. Soon thereafter with the forming of the Penn-Del Twilight League, Longwood became a member, and 50-target shoots were held there about three Tuesday evenings each summer with 50 to 60 shooters taking part each time. In the early 1930s, the other clubs in the League were Kennett, Lukehurst (near Talleyville), and the Wilmington Trapshooting Association. By 1938, Kennett and Lukehurst had dropped out, and Brinton Lake and Yorklyn were added. In 1941, the league was expanded from 4 to 6 clubs with the addition of West Chester and the Delaware County Sportsmen's Association. The Longwood Gun Club did not survive World War II (nor did Brinton Lake).

As a teenager, I had more opportunities to shoot than did Charlie Mason. Both of us improved our skills, however, and in 1941 Charlie won the coveted "Signal of Peace" trophy at the Atlantic Indians, which I won the following year. Both of us were in the service during World War II, but we came out in 1946 wanting to shoot again. The Wilmington Gun Club (WTA) held an annual Red and Blue Shoot in late March, and veteran club members were usually chosen to head the two teams. In 1947, however, the powers-that-be decided the team captains should be Charlie Mason and myself. My blue team won the day, but Charlie broke 50 straight for his Red Team to my very poor 39. All that year we competed against each other as we improved. We went to the Grand American Tournament in Vandalia, Ohio, together, and Charlie shot much more there than I did (and he shot very well), as I had a job working in

the office. Shortly thereafter the Hercules Powder Company offered Charlie a job in its Sporting Powder Division to represent the company in the Southwest. He lived in Dallas, where he met his future wife. He shot very well for Hercules and had a warm and very pleasant personality, which suited him well for the job. Unfortunately, the Sporting Powder Division was phased out by 1950, and Charlie, Janice, and their growing family divided their time between Dallas and Lewes, Delaware, where the Masons had kept a summer home.

Charlie's mother had died at the age of 38. When his father died suddenly of a heart attack in 1949, the funeral service was held in their former home at Longwood. Shortly thereafter, the surviving family members cleaned out the house, and other Longwood people moved in. My friend Charlie died in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, about 2000. I think five children survive him.

Work Report: On Tuesday, July 23, 18 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Jerry Novak (in charge), Jeff Pollock, Dave Leon, Art Wallace, Dennis Dragon, Bob Jordan, Steve Bryce, Ted Kamen, Bill Schwoebel, Mark Russell, Robert Hopkins, Mark Hopkins, Richard Bernard, Jay Williams, Ken Ricketts, Tim Ward, Emil Christofano, and Tom Marshall.

On the Model 607, the left-side running board was installed, and the right running board had the linoleum fit and made ready to install. On the Model 740, it was cleaned for the upcoming Ice Cream Run, and one of the banjo bolts for the pilot was modified. On our newly acquired Model 750, parts from the front door pockets were removed, cleaned, identified, and tagged.

On the Model 725, the Hopkins team, uncle and nephew, changed the steam automatic, replacing the old one with a rebuilt one from John Packard. The old one was then rebuilt with a new diaphragm, and a second steam gauge was attached to the whistle line with the thought of testing the gauge on the car. The new brakes on the '37 Packard were road-tested after the dust cover on the left front wheel was properly adjusted. The job appears to be a complete success. The brakes do not pull the car sideways when applied at some speed. It was discovered that the front floor mat had been wet, and some mold was discovered on the adjoining door panel. The Lionel train layout work continued.

On Wednesday, July 24, Kelly Williams gave Tim Nolan another steam car lesson, one-on-one. The steam gauge on the car was tested, and it was discovered that it registered over 100# too high at operating pressure. The new automatic appears to shut off the fire at 500#, but the gauge reads over 600#. This will be addressed.

On Thursday, July 25, the second Ice Cream Run of the summer took place with three of our Stanleys plus Bob Wilhelm's Model 735 taking part. While it's possible someone is missed, at least 22 volunteers and their family members made the trip to and from Woodside Farm Creamery. Burner leaks were troublesome on the 740, but all was fixed so the trip was made in good shape. Eleven were on the Mountain Wagon with Robert Hopkins and Dan Citron in charge; Tim Ward, Dave Leon, and Steve and Ann Bryce were in the Model 725; Richard Bernard, Ted Kamen, and Art Wallace in the Model 740, and Bob Wilhelm and the Gregg family were in Bob's 735.

The work session on July 25 was limited to five volunteers: Gene Maute, Gerhard Maute, Bob Jordan, Emil Christofano, and Tom Marshall. The Maute boys continued their library work, and the 607 project moved along well. The Packard door panel was dried to eliminate mold.