

September 11, 2006

Hello, Steam Team:

Transportation to and from Yorklyn: We believe the first settler in what is now Yorklyn was John Garrett who made his way down the creek from the vicinity of Kennett Square in 1726. It's hard to imagine what sort of trail or road existed at that time, but we do know that a few years later Garrett and his second wife traveled to Chadds Ford to the Baptist Church there. Could they have gone every Sunday? How could they do it in the winter? How long would it take them?

Many generations later when at least two prosperous milling operations existed in the community, the coming of the railroad changed many things forever. When it began service from Wilmington to Landenberg in 1872, the original name of Auburn was changed to Yorklyn (a year or two earlier Chandlerville had been changed to Landenberg). Three or four passenger trains a day each way made it possible to reach Wilmington in about 40 minutes. Some of the "Branch trains" even went through to the B & O Station at 24th and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia. Yorklyn was not an isolated community any longer!

The "Kennett trolley" came through in 1903, on its route from Kennett Square to Brandywine Springs. Israel and Elwood Marshall gladly gave the trolley line a right-of-way across their properties at Marshall's Bridge and at Yorklyn. One of the stops was at the foot of the hill and across the mill race from Auburn Heights. Samuel Sharpless, Ruth's great grandfather, also sold them a right of way across his extensive lands between Yorklyn and Hockessin. Now local residents could get to Kennett Square in about 15 minutes (5 cents from the Auburn Heights stop), and to Wilmington via a circuitous route changing trolleys at Brandywine Springs. It would have taken longer but service would have been more frequent and less expensive than on the train. The trolley continued until 1923.

The "Creek Road", now Route 82, was also being improved and, although not paved, a serious effort was being put forth to accommodate automobiles. Mud holes and ruts were quickly repaired, so the road could be used for most of the year. Clarence Marshall traveled this road as well as the "Hockessin road" with his Stanley steamers. After his successful summer of 1913 at Gettysburg with his new Mountain Wagon, he put it in service on weekends from Yorklyn to Wilmington in the winter of 1913-14, thereby establishing what some call the first bus line in Delaware. Selling this "Wagon" to a man named Palmer in 1914, this car continued a bus service with its new owner, this time from Kennett Square to Wilmington, probably on a more frequent schedule.

The right-of-way of Creek Road (or Route 82 as we know it

today) changed slightly over the years, the most drastic change being when the Hoopes Reservoir was built in 1931-32. Eastbound from the Mount Cuba area after climbing the steep hill through the woods, it continued straight down the next hill to an old mill on the lower side of a small lake. This mill was owned by T. Coleman duPont, who had converted the mill building into a very nice summer residence, with gardens behind. Overflow from the lake ran across the public road and through a sluice to the water wheel alongside the mill (in the winter this could produce an icy surface on the road). The road then ran alongside the lake for 1/4 mile, then through what is now Valley Garden Park, and up the hill joining 82 again about 1/2 mile before reaching Kennett Pike. When the dam, 2 miles to the south, was completed in 1932 and the land flooded to form the reservoir, the mill, gardens, old lake, and the road next to them was under about 30 feet of water, and so it has remained for the past 74 years.

Last week and this one continue to be busy around Auburn Heights. Much of the activity has been preparing cars for their appearances at the Hagley car show and at Longwood Gardens this coming weekend. We are expecting to have five Stanleys and the Rauch & Lang electric at Hagley on Sunday, Sept. 17, and Don Davidson and Sarah Stanley expect to be our guests with one of their cars (1899 Locomobile or 1913 Stanley roadster). Jerry Lucas in the H-5, Richard Bernard in the 78, Rob Robison in the 607, Bill Schwoebel in the K, Emil Christofano in the Rauch & Lang, and I in the 87 will comprise our "team". The Mountain Wagon and the Model CX are scheduled to go to Longwood Gardens Saturday morning, and remain there until Sunday evening, and Bob Reilly will be our PR man there for most of the time.

Jim Personti has come to our rescue four or five times in about 3 days! The master cylinder for the new hydraulic brakes on the 735, almost ready for the road, was defective, and finally a new one is on its way, thanks to Jim and his brother. The oil pump on the 78 has stretched our mechanical ability, but Jim repaired it and it's now working fine. The pilot vaporizer on the Model CX was leaking when the car was fired up on Saturday, and Jim has taken it for a brazing repair. He should work for us full time!

In addition to the "crash" program on several of the cars, the "Little Toot" project continues to move ahead under the leadership of Ron Turochy and Art Sybell, the R.R. signal project is ongoing, and the shop organization continues with Chuck Erikson. Some minor work is needed on our locomotives before our October public weekend, some very minor work is required on the Models 740 and 725, and the engine must

come out of the EX to repair a loose piston. We are hoping to have a small section of the bottom head of the Model 76's boiler tig-welded to temporarily repair a blow-down fitting leak.

Last Thursday at the work session, we were treated by the visit of two White Steam Car experts from Poughkeepsie, NY, Jim Weidenhammer and Lorne Richards. Jim told us how a White operates and how it is much different from a Stanley. He is still going strong at age 88 and hopes to have his '10 White at our Steam Car Tour next summer, as does Lorne who has a similar car. On Sunday, Auburn Heights was the site of a 50th birthday party for Bob McGovern, Jr., who worked for us at the Magic Age of Steam as a teen-ager. The McGovern family and their guests had a picnic on the front lawn while Bill Schwoebel ran a railroad training class for volunteers on the A.V.R.R. At the same time Mark Hopkins in the 725 and Jerry Lucas in the 607 gave further instruction to several driver/operator trainees. Bob Reilly also called a meeting of a newly-formed committee to plan the Eastern Steam Car Tour next June or July. The exact date will be established very soon.

Ed Hoffmeister must have his shoulder operated on again, and this was scheduled for September 6, but is now postponed until the 26th. We wish you well, Ed, as we know how painful this has been. Best wishes to all. Tom