

Traveling by Steam with the Gardners (Part One): Frank Hale Gardner (1920-2004) was descended from one of the prominent families in the Boston area, and his widow, Eloise Woodward Gardner (1924-), is the daughter of a prominent artist, the late Cleveland Woodward, originally from Cincinnati. Frank and “Weezie” were childhood sweethearts, dating steadily when he was 16 and she was 13 while both families were vacationing at Truro on Cape Cod. Frank loved old cars, especially Franklins, Stanleys, and Packards, and that’s where we connected many years ago. Actually my father had known of and corresponded with Frank before either of us had met him.

Frank went off to the Pacific in World War II, and Weezie was in nursing school in Boston. When he returned at the end of the conflict, they were married. First they lived in his grandfather’s gate house on one of the few remaining estates in Newton, a fashionable Boston suburb and former home of the Stanley twins. Then they bought a home at 141 Prince Street in West Newton, where I visited many times, as they did at Auburn Heights. My wife, Ruth, enjoyed this reciprocal hospitality from 1985 (when they came to Delaware for our wedding) until Frank’s passing in 2004.

In October 1946, I accompanied my father when we went to George Monreau’s home in Cochituate, Massachusetts, to take delivery of our well-known 15-passenger Mountain Wagon. Monreau’s grandson, Brent Campbell, was 15 months old at the time, and he and his mother were living with her parents. Brent insists he probably looked out the window and got hooked on Stanleys that day. The Gardners drove out from West Newton in Frank’s 1918 Franklin on that Sunday afternoon to meet us for the first time.

As a teenager, Frank had been collecting old cars he could afford, and in those days many fine ones could be had for under \$100. He owned a 1913 Stanley Model 65 (now in the Swigart Museum) and a 1912 Model 74, which was apart, awaiting a good restoration. In 1947, the Model 65 was sold to Jim Keith, then of Charlottesville, Virginia, so Frank could devote the time allocated to steam cars to his larger Model 74. In 1948, at the first-ever steam car tour, hosted by the Henry Wings Sr. and Jr., on the Mohawk Trail west of Greenfield, Massachusetts, Frank and Weezie helped run the tour (along with their friend Stanley Ellis), although he didn’t have a Stanley running at that time. In 1949, the Gardners and Reverend Ellis came to Delaware on the night train from Boston to attend a steam car meet we hosted at Yorklyn. My father met them in the Mountain Wagon, and we went to the Hotel DuPont for breakfast!

In 1951, Frank Gardner, Stanley Ellis, and Ed Pamphilon hosted a steam car tour in the Wellesley-Lexington area west of Boston. Earle Eckel and I drove our 1914 Stanleys from our homes in North Jersey and Delaware, respectively. Frank had his Model 74 running, but with no body as yet, and riding on a box behind the wheel, he easily out-performed all the cars there. Early in the summer of 1952, disaster struck the Gardner family. Vacationing on Cape Cod, Frank, Weezie, and their three very young daughters, along with Frank’s only brother, came down with the dreaded polio. Frank’s brother died within 24 hours. Fortunately, Weezie and the girls were not paralyzed, although Weezie has suffered from a weak back from that experience. Frank was not so lucky; he was completely paralyzed from the waist down. That would not stop this remarkable man. He loved to drive, so he had his cars equipped with hand controls, including his antiques. His unfinished Stanley Model 74 was put in the hands of the late Calvin Holmes, who completed a beautiful restoration. In late October 1952, the Gardners stopped at Yorklyn en route to Warm Springs, Georgia, where Frank was going for therapy. Coming up the front steps at Auburn Heights, one of his temporary crutches broke. My father welded it together, and they proceeded toward Warm Springs the next day. I first saw Frank’s beautiful Model 74 restored as they started the 1954 Glidden Tour in New England. (Part Two of our many years of touring together will be continued next week.)

Work Report: On Tuesday, January 13, 10 volunteers were on hand, plus those who attended the Events Committee meeting in the office. Those working in the shop were Jerry Lucas (in charge), Jerry Novak, Steve Bryce, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, John Bacino, Tom Marshall, Bill Schwoebel, Ken Ricketts, and Mac Taylor.

On the Mountain Wagon, after careful placement of the insulation, the burner was “put up,” mudded up around the boiler fittings, and the fuel lines connected. The down-pipe flue from the bonnet was attached to the superheater bracket. The burner was left ready for testing. On the Model 87, the burner brackets were adjusted properly and secured, and the six-chime whistle was removed for polishing.

On the Model H-5’s engine, a troublesome new valve rod was successfully straightened and fit in place, and shavings were cleaned from the cylinders and the heads temporarily screwed in to keep the cylinders clean. The “Auto-Chime type” whistle was removed from the Model 76 for polishing and photographing. On the Lionel train layout, more house lighting and locomotive work was done.

White boards were furnished for the “Engine House” (basement of the shop), and a fluorescent fixture was hung over a new bench to work on rolling stock. Our radial table saw was located on a new bench and set up on our side of the back building; it will be used soon for the cutting to length of some new cypress railroad ties.

On Thursday, January 15, 11 volunteers answered the call, and Dennis Dragon was on hand for a brief period in the afternoon. Bill Rule also stops by about three times a week, but he does not get mentioned as being at the work sessions. Working “during hours” were Mark Russell (in charge), Tom Marshall, Bob Jordan, Devon Hall, Ted Kamen, Gerhard Maute, Eugene Maute, Jared Schoenly, Mike Olsen, Jim Personti, and Geoff Fallows.

The pilot was lit on the Mountain Wagon, and the main burner lit off. All appeared to be tight and “ready to go.” Two or three brass whistles were polished, and the Models 725 and 735 were cleaned underneath. The trucks from Locomotive 402 were further disassembled and found to be “worn out.” The Pullman Company step stool, having had new feet welded on, was thoroughly cleaned and repainted. Work continued in the FAHP library.

The valve rod glands from the H-5 engine would not fit the new cylinder block, as the threaded holes for these glands was larger as in a #7 engine. Fortunately, we had spare glands of the larger size that were cleaned up and the old packing dug out. These were slid over the valve rods and located correctly in the engine. Alignment of the crankshaft and piston clearance in the cylinders was adjusted. An old AVRR locomotive boiler, owned by Tom, was made ready, by use of our “Come-Along,” for lifting onto a pick-up truck for transport off the property. The Cretors popcorn unit, with its steam engine already removed, was examined to see if it will fit properly on its new cart. All looks good, so the painted surfaces will be stripped, primed and painted, the bright work sent away for replating, and the new cart, already primed, will have its finish coat of paint applied. A new burner is on hand for use under the popcorn pan.

On Monday, January 12, Jim Personti, Bill Schwoebel, and Tom spent some time with Mike Venezia, owner of Little Engines, Inc. in Lancaster. Jim “picked his brain” about running gear, springs and rigging, and other aspects of rebuilding our #402. Bill and Tom talked to him about new aluminum rail, and we have ordered 1,000 feet, which should be available in 5 or 6 weeks. We also bought enough bronze brake shoes to complete one locomotive, which are badly needed.