

January 20, 1938: Just over 80 years ago during the first winter for my father's new shop, two things in the shop stick in my memory. Built on the end of the carriage house in the summer of 1937, two lathes, a bench grinder, a heavy vise, and a drill press were quickly installed, and the drawers and cupboards were beginning to fill with tools. On a cold, dreary winter weekday, Paul J. Buxton, chief engineer of the Western Cartridge Company of East Alton, Illinois, was due to visit. The occasion was the demonstration of a new clay target trap my father had designed and set up in the new shop, based on earlier models of Western traps, both somewhat obsolete. My father sent Clifford Murray to the railroad station in Wilmington to meet Mr. Buxton, who had taken the night train from St. Louis.

The Western traps used at the Yorklyn Gun Club from 1921 through 1937 had been very satisfactory, and scores of 499 out of 500 had been made by Steve Crothers (1931) and Joe Hiestand (1935) over these traps. Like most clay target traps of that time, they were spring-loaded, and had an arm to which was connected a cup or hand on which to place the clay target. This hand had wrist action, which gave the target extra spin as it flew into the air to be shot at. The trap was cocked and released by a "puller" who stood behind the shooters. One problem was that it was hard to set this trap to throw doubles (two targets at a time), as a second arm was required with major tightening of the trap's spring. About 1935, Western had come out with what they called the McCrea Trap, greatly simplified but incapable of throwing even targets as it had no swivel to change the target's angle. Instead of the arm and cup, this trap had a cast aluminum carrier with a rubber-lined rail along one side. To change angles, the human loader simply placed the target in a different position against the rail, and to throw doubles, two targets were placed next to each other on this single carrier. Unfortunately, this geometry produced left-angle targets that went much farther than right-angle ones, as they were on the carrier longer as the trap was released. Being mechanically inclined, my father knew he could build a better trap, and his experiments were conducted privately but not completely without the knowledge of Western employees such as Leo Shaab, who took care of the Yorklyn traps during the big tournament each year.

My father's experimental trap utilized the best features of Western's earlier traps while eliminating some of the problems. Like the McCrea trap, it had an aluminum carrier (somewhat longer), and like the earlier traps, it had a swivel base. A second carrier was attached to throw doubles. He set this new device on the floor in his new shop, and by opening the big door, clay targets could be thrown over the rose arbor and onto the lawn beyond (there was no Auburn Valley Railroad in those days). Most of the targets could be reclaimed.

Mr. Buxton arrived and observed the trap's operation before I got home from school. As I arrived, "Cliffey" was loading him in the car for return to Wilmington and his train trip home. He was impressed and thought that his company might like to manufacture a trap very similar to the prototype my father had made. My dad told Western officials he didn't want any money; he would settle for 10 new traps for the Yorklyn Gun Club.

On a beautiful spring day in May 1938, my dad's trap was demonstrated again, this time at the gun club with Leo Shaab and Fletcher H. Woodcock, an up-and-coming Western-Winchester "trade man" from Ithaca, New York. The company decided it would definitely manufacture a trap very similar to the one demonstrated. At the New York State Shoot held at Johnsonville (near Troy) in late June, Woodcock had one of the first new Western traps about to go on the market, which he demonstrated to interested shooters. The only change from my father's trap was that the second carrier for throwing doubles was eliminated, and both targets were placed on the same carrier, as with the former McCrea trap. Before the Marshall tournament at Yorklyn in early August, seven *new* Western traps were installed, and three more were on hand, which were used later. These were in service until the Yorklyn Gun Club ceased operations in 1950.

In competition with Western traps, the Remington Arms Company came out with a new trap about the same time. These traps, built at Findlay, Ohio, were based on the old Chamberlin Trap, and were twice as heavy as those built by Western. My father, having many friends with DuPont and Remington, didn't want to offend them altogether, so the trap immediately in front of the club house was a new Remington trap. Both new traps threw beautiful targets to shoot at, but Remington traps were harder to maintain, and Western traps outnumbered those built by Remington, probably four to one, at gun clubs across the country.

Within two years from the introduction of the new Western trap in 1938, an automatic-angle base attachment was recommended and furnished with most new traps. Ten such attachments were sent to my father, but he never installed them. Jake Hughes was given four of them when he built his four-trap Darlington Gun Club in nearby Maryland in 1947. By the late 1940s, demand for electric pullers was increasing, which resulted in faster "pulls" and one less employee at each trap. Napier Electric Traps had been available since the mid-1930s, but they were troublesome and marginally

successful. After World War II, the Cline brothers of Camp Troy, Ohio, invented an electric puller for Western traps, which were very satisfactory, and they sold a lot of them.

My knowledge of trapshooting after 1950 is severely limited, but automatic improvements include the elimination of a loader. The scorekeeper is the only person required to operate a trap for clay-target shooting, whereas it used to take three. One of the 1938 traps from the Yorklyn Gun Club is still a part of the F.A.H.P. collection.

The other special occasion during that first winter for the shop was the day I came home from school in November 1937 and found a brand new Packard Twelve backed in over the pit in the middle of the floor. That car has been housed, owned, and operated by those at Auburn Heights for more than 80 years.

Work Report: On Tuesday, January 23, nine volunteers turned out, as follows: Larry Tenny (in charge, substituting for Mark Bodestab), Steve Bryce, Anne Cleary, Ken Hilbeck, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Bob Koury, Stan Lakey, and Brent McDougall. The Model 735 was pushed back into position in the museum. Its left rear tire was low, and pressure was restored to 50 p.s.i. On the Model 76, the left front wheel was finally removed, but the inside bearing is still frozen on the spindle. The outer bearing surface is rough and it will not go back on. On the '32 Packard, the Zerk fittings for the driveshaft bearings were thoroughly greased, the air filter was removed and cleaned, and the fluid in the Bijur lubricator was checked. The train crew worked on the shop basement (engine house).

On Wednesday, January 24, eight volunteers were on hand: Larry Tenny (in charge), Steve Bryce, Bob Koury, Stan Lakey, Tom Marshall, Jerry Lucas, Bill Schwoebel, and Mike Todd. On the Mountain Wagon, a loose oil line that had been spraying on the insulation at the steam-pipe loop, was repaired. Another coat of paint was applied to the underside of the new railroad utility cars. The oil level in the engine case on the Model 78 was checked. A bearing separator was hunted in our shop but was not found. This is needed for removal of the inside front wheel bearing on the Model 76. This tool can be borrowed without charge from an Advanced Auto store.

Our supply of old safety valves from our AVRR locomotives was not found. A further search will be needed. The fuel, a mixture of gasoline and hexane, was drained from the Model CX and stored for the winter. The fuel pressure gauge on this car seems to stick at 10 p.s.i. when the pressure tank is empty.

On Thursday, January 25, the following nine volunteers attended the session: John Bacino (in charge), Jim Personti, Steve Bryce, Ted Kamen, Mark Russell, Bob Jordan, Geoff Fallows, Kelly Williams, and Bob Koury. With a borrowed bearing separator, the inside front wheel bearing was removed from the spindle on the Model 76. The fuel tank in the Model CX was removed and flushed out with kerosene; it was very dirty. Still with a lot of solid material inside, the tank was taken by John Bacino to try his pressure washer. The pipe vise was re-attached to the wooden post in the shop basement.

The '37 Packard was detailed and cleaned. The Model 735 was moved back toward the middle of the museum, as the oil burner has not yet been serviced. The running board trim on the Model 607 was addressed by Mark Russell.

On Thursday, February 1, the heavily-publicized "Jay Leno Climbs Mount Washington," will air on CNBC at 10:00 P.M. For those with Comcast Cable (Xfinity), this is Channel 43. On July 4, 2017, Jay Leno drove Brent Campbell's "Ray Stanley Special" up the Motor Road to the top of New England's highest peak, followed by Bill Barnes in his Vanderbilt Cup Racer.

Last Week on the AVRR

Volunteers: John Bacino, Anne Cleary, Bob Koury, Mike Leister, Brent McDougall

Accomplishments:

1. Completed painting second coat of paint on the MOW Supply car
2. Installed couplers on MOW Tool Car
3. Started painting MOW tool car
4. Painted desk and work bench
5. Continued reorganization of the basement
6. Disassembled water tower. Mike Leister picked up stand to take home and rebuild
7. Started marking tools with red paint for identification