

Southern Chester County Community Life

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Running on a full head of steam

By Carla Lucas
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The modern automobile traces its roots to Henry Ford, and his mass-produced vehicles of the early 1900s. Cars today, with a turn of the key and the roar of a gas-powered combustion engine, take us where we want to go, in comfort with windshields, roofs, and air conditioning, and usually one gets to his or her destination without a breakdown.

Before these gas-powered engines propelled modern life to what we have today, automobiles powered by steam caught the attention, imagination, and desire of the people. The early steam cars consistently outperformed early gas-powered vehicles in speed, reliability, and distances traveled before running out of fuel. One of the advantages of steam cars over gas cars was there was no need to operate a clutch.

At the steam-powered automobile's heyday, from the turn of the century to about 1912, there were over 125 manufacturers of steam cars in the United States, including Locomobiles, Whites, and Stanleys.

Steam-powered engines required up to a half-an-hour after the burner was lit to heat water and convert it to steam pressure, although brochures of the day state one could be ready to go in just 10 minutes.

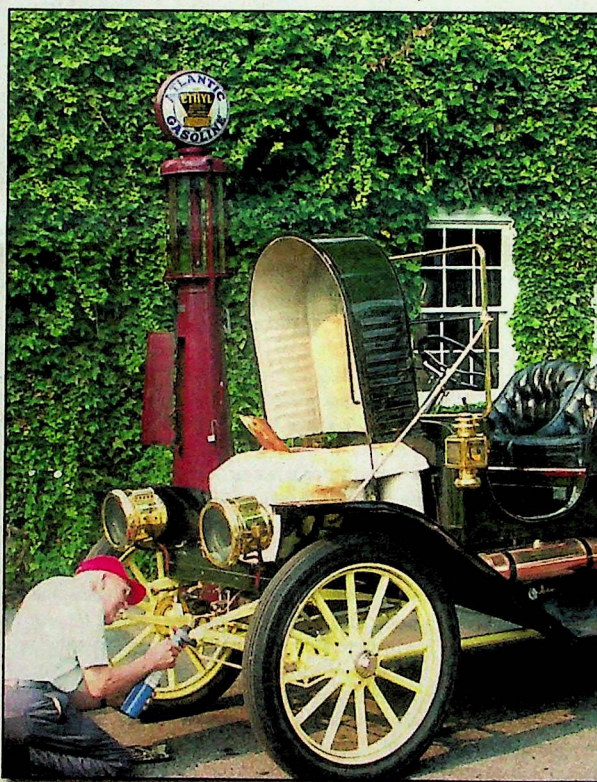
Drivers of steam cars had to learn to manage pumping water into the boiler's tank, the burner's fuel system (usually white gas or kerosene), and steam pressure in order to drive the car without problems and damage to the engine.

Although the steam-powered vehicle was replaced in popularity by the gas-powered vehicle, some of these vintage cars were preserved and collected. Today, there is a small, dedicated group of steam car owners that maintain and drive these cars of the past, preserving a part of history.

Last week, over 70 steam-powered automobiles, and the drivers and families (about 200 people in all), converged in the region to participate in the 2007 Auburn Heights Steam Car Tour. Each year this group of steam enthusiasts meets in a different location for a week of steam car touring.

Sixty-two of these cars (three Whites, one Mason, and the rest Stanley Steamers) came to the area from as far away as California, Washington, Colorado, Florida, Maine, Iowa, and Kansas, and as close as New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Additionally, about eight of the 15 Stanley Steamers in the collection of Tom Marshall, of Auburn Heights, (Yorklyn, Delaware), which are maintained and operated by the Marshall Steam Team (see related story), participated in the event.

"We started running these tours in the 1950s," said Marshall. "Back then, if we had 10 cars it was a lot. Usually the steam tours are run in New England or northern Ohio where there is a lot less traffic (than



Tom Marshall begins the process of firing-up the 1910 Stanley Steamer, Model 71. He is heating the pilot light, which once lit will light the burner. This will heat the water to make the steam that runs the engine.



Photos by Carla Lucas

Marshall's 1913 Stanley, Model 76, makes it way along Broad Run Road, on its way to Chesapeake City, Md.



A group gathered around this 1917 Stanley Roadster to check out the restoration being done by Bob Ostwald of Flemington, NJ at the Auburn Heights Open House.

here), but a number of people, including many members of the Steam Team wanted to have it here. For me the highlights of the tour were when we had all the steam cars come to Auburn Heights. We parked them all around the grounds. We've never had that many steam cars here before. Another highlight was our day at Granogue. The participants enjoyed the driving, enjoyed the scenery, and enjoyed each other's company."

"These vintage cars on tour steamed along back roads of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware for up to 100 miles each day. Along the way, tour members did some sightseeing, visited with fellow steam car owners from all over the country, and spent time tinkering with their cars. Continued on page 3B

Auburn Heights and the Marshall Steam Team

Tom Marshall's father, Clarence, operated a Stanley Steamer dealership in the carriage house at his Auburn Heights home, in Yorklyn, from 1910 to 1920. Clarence began collecting Stanley Steamers as a hobby in the 1940s. He also built a 1/8-size steam railroad around the estate, including a tunnel, a trestle, water tower, and a station.

Tom shared his father's interest in steam power and preserving its history. He continued to maintain, drive, and assemble the Stanley Steamer collection. "The fifteen steam autos in the collection today date from 1901 to 1922, and they are often referred to as 'the definitive steam car collection,'" said Reilly.

In 1997, Tom Marshall organized the Marshall Steam Team to pass on his knowledge of operating and maintaining steam cars to a volunteer group of drivers and mechanics. For the past 10 years, this group has helped Tom continue to keep all of the vehicles in driving condition. The group drives the Stanleys to various events and car shows to share their knowledge of the steam cars with the public.

Among the many volunteers that spend time maintaining and operating the Stanley Steamers are Art Wallace of Kennett Square, and Richard Bernard of Landenberg, Pennsylvania.

Wallace, a recent volunteer, became interested in joining the Steam Team after visiting a few of Auburn Heights' open houses. Although he wasn't sure he had the skills to help with the cars, he said the group has

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At DuPont's Granogue estate, there was plenty of interest in the horse-drawn carriage, as well as the steam cars.



Photo right: Yorklyn's postmaster, Sarah Quinn, was at Auburn Heights to postmark special commemorative stamps of the 2007 Auburn Heights Steam Tour.



Bill Schoebel works on Marshall's 1908 Model K along Route 100.



After a pit stop to fill the water tank, and with directions in hand, the Wells of Groton, Connecticut in their 1908 White prepare for the next leg of their tour to Chesapeake City.

Steamin' Days

The Friends of Auburn Heights will have open houses for the general public to learn more about steam power and life around the turn of the century on July 1, September 2, October 27 and 28, and November 23 and 24, from 1 to 4:30 p.m.

Activities include rides in the Stanley Mountain Wagon, an electric car and the steam railroad, popcorn popped by a steam popper, and admission to the Stanley Museum.

Admission is \$10 for adults, \$7 for children 2 to 12 years old, and children under 2 are free.

In 2007 special house tours of the Auburn Heights Mansion, which was built in 1897 and lived in by three generations of the Marshall family, will be given on October 27 and 28. Tickets are required and cost \$10.

Auburn Heights is located on Route 82 in Yorklyn, Delaware. More information is available at www.AuburnHeights.org or by calling 302-239-2385 (800-349-2134).



Auburn Heights engineer Ann McCleary adds coal to fuel the burner, as Brent McDougal fills the water tank of the 1/8-size steam train that takes guests around the Auburn Heights estate during Steamin' Days.



Guests to Steamin' Days always enjoy a ride in the Stanley Mountain Wagon.