

OCTOBER 5, 2009 F.A.H.P. NEWS

Visiting Wilmington, then and now: Someone my age finds it easy to get lost today in downtown Wilmington, this despite the fact that I went to school there in the 1930's, often visited its many stores with my parents, and had a travel agency there for 14 years, 1949-1963.

In my earlier years, there were no shopping centers or malls where almost everything can be purchased very close to where your car is parked. Shopping for us at Yorklyn was at Grover Gregg's general store, or going by car to Kennett Square (4 miles) or to Wilmington (10 miles). Most of our food and pharmacy shopping was done in Kennett, as was our banking, as my father was on the Board of the National Bank and Trust Company of Kennett Square. But 90% of the other serious shopping was done in Wilmington (three or four times a year my mother would go to Philadelphia, either by being chauffeured or on the train from Wilmington).

My mother would often frequent Crosby & Hill, Kennard and Pyle Company (Kennard's), and Wilmington Dry Goods, not to mention F. W. Woolworth and S. S. Kresge 5 & 10-cent stores, all fronting on Market Street, with back doors accessible to Shipley or King Streets where it was easier to park, usually illegally. My mother, a tiny woman only 5'1" tall, was good at talking her way out of parking tickets. Purchases at these stores were usually dry goods such as cloth, towels and bed linens, cotton thread, and much more not very interesting to a young boy. But then there was the Reynolds Candy Company at 703 Market. The most interesting thing most of these stores had was the system for getting cash collected by the clerk at the counter to the bookkeeper at a hidden location one or two floors above. A mechanical system of tubes and light rope moved a canister with clicking noises similar to an electric trolley car to its destination, with the proper change and a receipt coming back on the return trip. Electronic banking today would marvel at the speed of these transactions. Most of my clothes came from James T. Mullin & Sons at 6th and Market, where the third floor, complete with a small Merry-Go-Round, was devoted to boys' clothing. Rosenbaum's Toy Store between 8th & 9th on Market was a wonderful place to look at and buy Lionel electric trains. There were good furniture stores such as Wilmington Furniture Company and Miller Brothers, across from each other at the corner of 9th and King Streets.

My father's trips to "town" usually involved a stop at Mac's Texaco station at Pennsylvania Avenue and Union Streets, where B & O steam passenger trains could be viewed crossing an overhead bridge, a visit to the Delaware Electric Supply Co. (Desco Corporation, much more of a plumbing supply house than it was electrical), and to the Delaware Hardware Company, the latter two located on Shipley Street between 2nd and 3rd. Desco was never the same when it moved out of town and became McArdle-Desco, and when Delaware Hardware Co. went out of business, nothing ever quite replaced it. (The discounts were attractive: I bought a hand truck about 1948 that listed for \$40; after all the discounts, I paid \$31.36, and we are still using this hand truck in our shop today). Back to the 1930's, after dropping my cousin and me off at school, my father would frequently make his rounds of these supply houses, and also stop at the Packard Motor Company of Wilmington, where his partner Frank W. Diver was successful in selling and servicing Packard cars (after 1936 at the present location of Diver's Chevrolet).

Yesterday, October 4, was a glorious fall day in Delaware. 412 visitors participated in our "Steamin' Sunday" and 101 toured the big house. All went well, we had our usual fine cadre of volunteers, and our visitors were ecstatic about what they experienced while at Auburn Heights. Paul and Joyce Harris were especially popular with their band organ and mechanical monkey, Steve Jensen displayed his newly-acquired 1911 Stanley, and a steamboat enthusiast from Lancaster County ran his 20"-long steamboat on the pond, controlled electronically from the bank. Bill Schwoebel reported to me that the engineers on the Auburn Valley were almost entirely new volunteers who have gone through the safety training and become quite efficient, which pleased him very much. Anne Cleary and Carol Bernard, as chairs for the day, are to be congratulated for conducting an excellent show, and Dan Citron had State support from his boss James Wagner and a number of staff people and Americorps volunteers. This month, our flyer distributors (to targeted areas) were Lou Mandich, Art Wallace, Jerry Novak, Brent McDougall, and Kathy Beck, and Steve Bryce and Dan Citron moved our traveling billboard (the Mountain Wagon) to local areas where people congregate the day before the event. THANKS TO ALL!

The Job Description for our Executive Director position has been posted at several sites, and a copy of same is attached herewith. If FAHP members know of candidates they would recommend, kindly pass this along, and ask them to request additional information from the source listed at the bottom of the page.

This week is HERSHEY week, and several of our regulars will be there at the huge flea market Tuesday through Saturday. Through the kindness of the Hopkins family, FAHP will have a presence this year, with Bill Schwoebel and Butch Cannard being in charge of our spaces there. The location is in the Red Field, RWO 38 and 39. This is close to the tent of the Horseless Carriage Club of America. Our 1908 Stanley Model EX will be on display and will be fired up daily, showing visitors how a Stanley car works. Several FAHP volunteers have offered to go for a day (or longer) and help man our exhibit. If any of you can do it on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, please let us know at our work session Tuesday or Thursday night, or call Bill Schwoebel on his cell phone (484) 433-8742.

Bill Schwoebel also ran a Locomotive training and boiler safety class last Tuesday at 7:00 which was well-attended. At our work sessions, the repaired and improved burner was installed on the Stick Seat Runabout, and it is running well again. The roughness in the engine on the Model 76 was discovered to be too much play in the slide valves, as the wear on the edge of the valves had allowed them to have about 3/8" end play, entirely too much. This week we will be working on repairing this problem, hopefully without taking the engine out of the car. Several worked on our Diesel locomotive, and while getting closer, it is still not quite ready to pull our trains. Emil and Jeff Pollock worked on the body of the electric car, Jerry Novak and John McCoy made additional progress on turntable improvements, and much time was spent last week in preparing the museum and the cars to be used for yesterday's operation.

The Events and Scheduling Committee, chaired by Anne Cleary, plans to meet on Tuesday, October 13, at 7 P.M. in the F.A.H.P. office.

Tom

