

**1938 Flood on Red Clay Creek:** While sudden floods on Red Clay Creek come as surprises and some do tremendous damage, they, like cold winters in this area, seem to come in cycles. In August 1937, about a week after the Yorklyn Trapshooting Tournament, high waters of the creek washed out Bengé Road near the bridge over the raging stream and damaged several mill dams up and down the Red Clay Valley. For many years, my father had clear weather for his August “shoots,” but in 1937 his luck ran out on Saturday, the final day. That year he had erected a canvas awning on wooden framework to shield the front porch of the clubhouse from the afternoon sun. The high wind and rain on Saturday demolished this improvement. Showers continued almost daily for another week or more until the ground could hold no more water.

Late spring and early summer of 1938 featured clear weather with seasonal temperatures. The Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania Trapshooting Championships benefitted from this in May and June. At the end of June, my parents and I left Yorklyn in my dad’s new ’37 Packard Twelve (still in our collection) for the Annual Maplewood Tournament in New Hampshire’s White Mountains, with stops at the New York State Shoot at Johnsonville, northeast of Troy, and at Poland Spring, Maine, where my father wanted to show us where he had visited his father (Israel) in 1910. As we crossed southern Vermont and New Hampshire, the rains came, followed by unseasonably cold weather. This continued through our time at Maplewood, not nice at all for shooting at clay targets. There was a lot of rain in the northeastern United States during July.

About July 25, I was still in bed about 8 A.M. when my mother aroused me and told me to get up quickly as a “terrible roar” was being heard upstream from Auburn Heights. Indeed, a wall of water was coming down the meadow from the paper mill dam at the state line. I ran to get closer and was standing on the bank of the mill race across from my mother’s rock garden. My father shouted for me to come back up the hill. Within a few minutes there was at least 10 feet of fast-moving water covering the meadow between the race and the creek. This condition with all the debris it brought along lasted in intensity for two or three hours and then started to subside. The normal flow of water in Red Clay Creek is about 10 million gallons per day. In floods like this, it is estimated to be nearly 10 million gallons PER MINUTE!

There was measured 63” of water on the first floor of the National Vulcanized Fibre mill, and many mill dams were severely damaged. George Pusey’s Ashland Flour Mill dam, under the railroad where Sharpless Road meets Route 82, was washed out. The covered bridge just below Ashland (next to the railroad’s steel truss bridge) was toppled, and Route 82 was closed until the end of 1939, when a new bridge was finished. The Sunday after the flood, Pusey himself held forth at Ashland, explaining the damage to curious spectators who came to inspect the destruction. I’m sure many of the B & O Railroad’s wooden trestles, of which there were nine crossing Red Clay Creek, were damaged, but they were quickly repaired, so freight service on the line to Hercules, Yorklyn, Hockessin, and Landenberg could be restored. About 10 days later, the annual Marshall Trapshooting Tournament at Yorklyn took place with beautiful weather as if nothing had happened.

This was the greatest flood in the Red Clay Valley during my lifetime, until it was surpassed by the one caused by Tropical Storm Henri in 2003. In 1938, much of the problem was blamed on farmers for not implementing contour plowing on their hillsides; now the blame is placed on too many houses, too much black-top, and too many dams. But if heavy rains keep coming every day or two as they have recently, plus a downpour in Kennett Township, look for another Red Clay Creek flood in 2015. It may be cyclical.

Back to 1938: On September 21, a major hurricane made landfall on Long Island, and all of New England was seriously affected. Over 700 people were killed, and water from Narragansett Bay left a high-water mark 10 feet above the streets of downtown Providence. Whole forests were toppled in the White

Mountains, over 200 miles inland. A. H. "Bud" Chapman, a trapshooter from Pawcatuck, Connecticut, on the border with Rhode Island, who had recently attended the Yorklyn tournament, spent 24 hours atop an electric pole near his home before he was rescued. Wind velocity was believed to have been nearly 200 m.p.h.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, July 14, in addition to the Events Committee meeting, seven volunteers were on hand, viz: Jerry Lucas (in charge), Ted Kamen, Tom Marshall, Bill Schwoebel, Dave Leon, John Bacino, and Paul Kratunis.

On the Model 87, a flare nut was tightened between the cylinder oil tank and the pump, and the car was road tested in preparation for its run to the Strasburg Railroad on Saturday. Cracks around the fuel tank under the front seat were stuffed with insulation with the hope of reducing the burner odor and heat. A number of Cretors parts were sanded and repainted.

The Model 735 was fired up and test driven with good results, but some yellow was reported in the pilot flame. Locomotive 401 was moved onto the turntable and the boiler flues were rodded out, and wood was cut up for the locomotive class on Thursday, 7/16.

On Thursday, July 16, 19 volunteers were on hand in addition to Jesse Gagnon, who oversaw the steam locomotive training class. Thirteen participated in the class, including four new volunteers, Dennis Tiley, Billy Danardt, Walter Halberg, and Mark Bodenshtab. The others were Bill Schwoebel, Anne Cleary, Dave Leon, Bob Stransky, Steve Glazier, Jim Sank, Pete Higgins, Linda Herman, Tom Marshall, and Jesse Gagnon. Bill Schwoebel led the teaching program with Anne Cleary, Tom Marshall, and Jesse Gagnon assisting. The "regular session" attendees were Tim Ward (in charge), Ted Kamen, Devon Hall, Lou Mandich, Geoff Fallows, and Jim Personti.

With eager learners in attendance, our Auburn Valley locomotive #401 was fired up and hooked to a train. All was going well until the first trip around the loop, when a stone in the flangeway at the crossing on the back curve derailed the locomotive. It was re-railed without damage, but impending darkness eliminated additional runs around the loop. There will be another session soon, and we hope all will return.

More parts from the Cretors machine were repainted, and the drive belt was installed on its steam engine. The Model T Ford was serviced from its use on July 5, and another driving lesson (Lou Mandich teaching Devon Hall) took place. Our waste oil can was removed from the premises, and an empty one took its place (thanks to Lou Mandich).

A new battery was installed in the Model 87, and the electrical system was checked out and worked on until all lights were working properly. On Friday, final preparations were made for the 75-mile trip on Saturday. Dave Leon and Tom Marshall in the 87 joined Lou Mandich, Ed Paschall, and Lou's daughter in their cars for a very successful caravan to the Strasburg Railroad. About 30 antique cars showed up for the event, which featured complimentary train rides and our cars chasing the train as it made its way toward Paradise.

Don't forget our upcoming Ice Cream Run on Thursday, July 23. Passenger requests are coming in. Please let Tom or the FAHP office know by Monday night if you can take part, so the necessary scheduling can be done.