

January 16, 2006

Hello, Steam Team:

A VERY IMPORTANT CORNER: Number One Fibre Mill, the construction of which was described in the "News" of November 28, '05, was completed in 1904. Being parallel to and close by the railroad directly across the tracks from the Yorklyn passenger and freight station now at Greenbank, it had one small corner on the first floor that in some ways was the most important room in Yorklyn for about 60 years. This room was on the track side at the end of the building nearest the public/private road connecting Yorklyn Road near the bridge with the new fibre mills, and the mill residences on the hill to the southeast, including the home of J. Warren Marshall and finally the Yorklyn Gun Club at the very top.

When "Number One" was new, the office of the National Fibre and Insulation Company was contained in this room. A telephone was installed, possibly being the second phone in Yorklyn (the Garrett Snuff Mills had the first). J. Homer Kratz, also described in an earlier edition of the "News", was hired as office manager, bookkeeper, and possibly paymaster, and had his desk in this room. We know there was a typewriter, but we don't know whether Homer operated it, or whether he had a secretary. As the company grew and the staff was expanded, this room was outgrown, and a new office building was built before 1920 on the same side of the tracks across the private road. This building served as the main office of the same company with a new name (National Vulcanized Fibre Co.) until the office was moved to Beech Street in Wilmington, with Warren Marshall and his top managers going to the new urban location, probably in the late 1920's. Homer Kratz went to Wilmington as well, but there were plenty of plant managers needing office space at Yorklyn, so they continued to fill the larger office building near the tracks.

In the 1920's, Samuel S. Dennison became paymaster, and used the tiny office in No. 1 Mill for his important purpose. Since Republican administrations occupied the White House in those days, Sam was appointed postmaster at Yorklyn, replacing Grover C. Gregg, Sr. The post office was moved from Gregg's store to this famous little room, and tiny P.O. boxes covered one partition wall. This is where I first remember picking up our mail, twice a day, but only once on Saturday. It was also a social location for the gathering of local news. When Franklin D. Roosevelt became president, Philip E. Touhey, in line to become superintendent of the Snuff Mill, became Yorklyn's postmaster, and the P. O. was moved again, this time to a tiny, ornate brick building next to the snuff mills, which had been the paymaster's shack for the snuff employees. (The P.O. remained in this tiny building until Grover C. Gregg, Jr., appointed by Harry Truman, moved it to Gregg's store again, and it remains in the same building today).

The tiny room in "Number One" was not yet abandoned to the public. As freight traffic dwindled on the B & O's Landenberg Branch in the early 1960's, the railroad found it too costly to maintain the old frame station built in 1872, and the local agent, John Eskridge, rented the little corner room for B & O's presence on the Landenberg Branch, as all other stations and agents were gone. From this little room, and later from an even smaller room on the second floor of the building, Eskridge handled the bills of lading for all shippers on the "Branch", as well as a small amount of Railway Express Agency business. When all record-keeping was closed out about 1970, and freight billings were handled from afar, NVF no longer had to allow access to this location as a public road.

There almost has to be a two-week break before the next edition of the "Weekly News". The Stanley Centennial celebrations at Ormond Beach and a short personal visit thereafter will keep Ruth and me out of town from January 22 until February 4 or 5. Our new "Auburn Heights Herald", edited and published by Rob Robison, is due out this week, and I know it will more than fill this void. Evening work sessions will continue on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with some of the veteran members of the Steam Team in charge. There are a myriad of small jobs that need to be accomplished.

The Events Committee will meet at Anne Cleary's home tomorrow night, 1/17, at 7:30, and the Executive Committee of the F.A.H.P. Board will meet in the big house at Auburn Heights on Thursday, 1/19, at the same hour. Rose Ann is having good response so far on membership renewals for 2006. Thank you, one and all, for joining up again. As has been mentioned, our Models K and 71 are going to Ormond Beach, we expect to load on Saturday, and leave Sunday morning. We thank Herb Kephart and Jim Personti for making the Model K's operation possible with their repair of the vaporizer. We may have as many as 14 F.A.H.P. members at Ormond. Both cars will stay in Florida and have been invited to participate in the Concours d'Elegance at Amelia Island in mid-March.

Through an invitation from Mike Jones, our '32 Packard will be on display in the Antique and Vintage Car section of the Philadelphia Automobile Show, February 3-11. Emil Christofano, Jerry Novak, and Alan Berry have volunteered to take over this activity- see one of them if you'd like to help. We've also been asked by Dan Muir and the Hagley Museum to have the two Packards and our popcorn machine at Hagley in early April for their Volunteer Appreciation Day.

Remember our ANNUAL MEETING in the Museum here, Thursday, February 16, at 7:30 P.M. Be sure to renew your membership before that date. Many thanks to all. Tom