

## FAHP News, February 1, 2016

**George W. Pusey (1868-1943):** George Pusey owned and operated the flour mill at Ashland, Delaware, for over 40 years. A native of West Chester, he learned the milling trade in the flour mill at Clifton Mill on the east branch of Red Clay Creek, halfway between Yorklyn and Kennett Square. The Sharpless family owned large tracts of land in the Yorklyn-Ashland area, and about 1900, George married Florence Sharpless, whose family owned the grist mill at Ashland. They were a handsome couple. Florence Pusey was a great aunt of my wife, Ruth.

The Puseys, as well as the Sharplesses, were birthright Quakers, and George, Florence, and their two daughters, Ruth and Alice, were very active in Hockessin Friends Meeting. Ruth H. Pusey (1904-1948) was my first-grade teacher at Wilmington Friends School in 1930. Neither she nor her sister married, and both lived at Ashland with their parents until the elder Puseys died in 1943. Alice was a piano teacher and tried to teach me with negative results.

The dam for the water-powered Ashland Mill was at the end of Sharpless Road, next to the railroad and Route 82. The mill race was about ½ mile long, running from this location across a meadow to the mill. The elaborate slow-running machinery covered three floors and was powered by a wide breast wheel, as there was not enough fall from the dam for an over-shot wheel (a breast wheel takes in the water at the level of the wheel's axle, not from a sluice at the top). The mill itself, almost as large as the one still standing at Clifton, was very close to Barley Mill Road between the Ashland covered bridge and the Ashland railroad station and freight siding. A wooden vehicular bridge crossed over the deep railroad cut above the mill, allowing for a more direct route to Route 82 when heading toward Yorklyn.

The Puseys lived in the comfortable frame house facing the railroad, nicely restored today. About 8:15 each morning, George would walk across the wooden bridge up to his mailbox, tight against a stone wall along Route 82. Here he would be joined by his neighbor Tom Mullin, who lived with his sister in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century brick house on the hill adjacent. Mullin had a dairy, and he farmed probably 50 to 100 surrounding acres. Pusey and Mullin would hold what my father called a "council of war" each morning at their mailboxes, and we would pass them en-route to school in Wilmington. For many years, George Pusey was a member of the Board of the National Bank and Trust Company of Kennett Square, and he was also a champion bowler (which he tried to keep secret from his family).

In the massive flood of July 1938, Pusey's dam washed out, and the flood waters also capsized the covered bridge on Route 82 next to the railroad's truss bridge. The Sunday following the flood, curiosity seekers by the dozens visited Ashland (my father and I were among them), and Pusey, who was considered Ashland's leading citizen, was on hand to explain the devastation. The railroad seemed to sustain minimal damage; freight soon continued to move to Yorklyn, Hockessin, and Landenberg; and Pusey set about to rebuild his dam and mill race. Route 82 was detoured for about a year until a new concrete and steel bridge was in place. The Ashland mill was shut down for no more than a few weeks.

On January 1, 1943, the day before I returned to M.I.T. as a freshman, my mother, a few friends, and I visited George Pusey in the mill. New Year's Day was not a holiday for him; he was in his working clothes grinding flour. A few days later she or my father wrote me saying that George Pusey had died. He was 74 and suffered a heart attack walking home from the mill. The mill closed for the last time within days. His wife, Florence, was an invalid at home, and she died before 1943 was over. Within a year or two, the two girls sold the Ashland properties and moved into Wilmington.

I think my Aunt Bertha Marshall (Mrs. J. Warren) bought much of the property, including the mill race, the mill, and at least three houses. The mill was razed and the race bull-dozed over, leaving almost no trace of where it had been. She owned one of the houses for some years, but everything else was sold in a short time. It's likely Henry Belin du Pont bought some of it and incorporated it into Red Clay Reservation, as he bought the brick Mullin house on the hill across Route 82, originally built in 1737.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, January 26, only three volunteers were at work (and two more showed up late) because of the aftermath of the big snowstorm and the competition of a railroad planning meeting at the Hockessin Library, attended by 13 people.

On hand were Steve Bryce (in charge), Ted Kamen and Bob Jordan, joined toward the end by Mark Bodenshtab and Tom Marshall.

Wiring harness installation continued on the '37 Packard, with the sloping floor under the pedals being removed for access to the dimmer switch. The faulty heating thermostat in the museum building was replaced with one furnished by State Parks.

On Thursday, January 28, eight volunteers answered the call: Bill Schwoebel (in charge), Steve Bryce, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Tom Marshall, Bob Stransky, Tom Sandbrook, and John Bacino.

The last of the many small leaks in the new piping attached to the Model 735's boiler were corrected, and a satisfactory hydrostatic test of 500# was applied. The burner was lifted under the boiler on a floor jack, and the pan and liner were marked for new cut-outs required for the newly located blow-down and water column fittings. The burner was returned to the shop for the necessary modification. Wiring continued on the '37 Packard, especially in the instrument area on the dash.

The red steel railroad coaches were measured for new carpeting. More shims were fabricated for the Model H-5 engine, and the wrist pins have now received a proper rough adjustment. This needs to be fine-tuned for final operation.

There will be no work session on Tuesday, February 2, as the Annual Meeting of FAHP will be held at CCArts in Yorklyn that night. Happy Ground Hog's Day!