

F.A.H.P. News, January 10, 2011

The End of a Country Club: The “News” of July 14, 2008, told of the sale of Hercules, Inc. to the Ashland Chemical Company. About a month ago, the local newspaper told us of the final closing of the old Hercules Country Club and its golf course, so the property can be developed. For quite a few years, neither Hercules nor its successor operated the club; it was privately managed and known as Delaware National Country Club.

The recent news story mentioned that executives of Hercules Powder Company bought several farms along Lancaster Pike west of Wilmington in 1937 to establish a private club and golf course. From my memory, I would have thought it was a few years earlier than that. In any event, a clubhouse and nine-hole golf course were built, which were greatly expanded over the next 20 years. The Hercules Experimental Station and its power house down the hill along the Wilmington & Western Railroad (then the Landenberg Branch of the B & O) were immediately adjacent. Being heavily involved in the manufacture of sporting gunpowder, officials of Hercules wanted to hold a “night shoot” on the grounds in the 1930s, and they borrowed flood lights from my father’s Yorklyn Gun Club to illuminate the clay targets thrown from their temporary trap.

Although not a golfer, I have many pleasant memories of the Hercules Country Club and its successor, Delaware National. In the 1950s, I showed travel films in the clubhouse, at the invitation of Hercules employees. In 1961, the first annual meeting of Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc. was held there at the invitation of Alto J. Smith, a Hercules executive who was later president of H.R.C.V. Our speaker was Don Halleck, one of the vice-presidents of the Strasburg Railroad, just then starting its successful tourist operation. Subsequent annual meetings of H.R.C.V. were held there. Charlie Bradshaw, then president of the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad in Colorado, was the guest speaker in 1990.

When Hercules leased the country club operation to a group that called themselves Delaware National Country Club, it seemed that little had changed, and the club was well run. H.R.C.V. had numerous annual dinner meetings there, the most recent being its 50th annual celebration in 2010. At the conclusion of our Eastern Invitational Steam Car Tour, the final banquet was held at Delaware National on June 22, 2007.

Apparently, the old club with its approximately 200 acres is owned by Pettinaro Enterprises, which in turn has a contract with Toll Brothers, who most likely will fill the acreage with town houses or condominiums.

Work Nights: The first week of the New Year was a busy and productive one at Auburn Heights. Volunteers removed Christmas decorations from the grounds and museum on Tuesday night. Bill Schwoebel and Steve Bryce updated the maintenance list showing what each Stanley in the collection may need in the coming months. Kelly Williams began investigating problems with the power steam oil pump on the Model 71 and determined that oil was not getting to the pump; Steve Bryce and Bill Schwoebel removed the oil reservoir from the car and found the

tank outlet was clogged. Tom put more than a quart of kerosene in the bottom of the little tank and set it on a radiator, hoping that would loosen any oil globs that may have restricted the flow. Bob Stransky, Sal Gioia, Ted Kamen and Steve Bryce rodded out the water down-pipes into the boilers, removing any mineral deposits on most of the Stanley's (finding only two partially choked). After removing and dismantling the wheels from the Mountain Wagon, Bill Schwoebel and Tom took the hubs to Bill Calimer in Waynesboro, PA, last Wednesday. Calimer will make new wheels and fit the felloe-bands and hubs, hopefully within the next three months. Tom will order new wheel bolts from Michael Bernard in Ohio. The new wheels for the Rauch & Lang are supposed to be ready for pick-up in about two weeks. Steve Bryce and Sal Gioia unloaded the Model 607 body at Dave Walls's shop near Price's Corner on Wednesday morning. Dave is removing the leather upholstery and padding, and the body will be brought back to Auburn Heights for stripping in preparation for delivery to the A-9 paint shop.

F.A.H.P. Annual Meeting, Feb. 8: Mark your calendar for the F.A.H.P. Annual Meeting on Tuesday, February 8. Location info and additional details to come!

Event Committee Meeting: The Event Committee will be meeting Tuesday, Jan. 11, at 7 pm in the F.A.H.P. Conference Room.

Final Call on Calendars: Susan has a handful (literally) of 2011 Auburn Heights calendars that she had tucked aside for the final two public dates in 2010... but Old Man Winter confounded her plans when the Dec. 27 event had to be canceled due to the snow. If you were thinking of getting one, you have one last chance.

They are \$15 each (plus shipping if you need them mailed) and feature the 2011 Steamin' Day dates so you won't miss a single event. You can reserve your copy online at the FAHP Holiday Gift Shop or call the office at 302-239-2385. When these final half dozen are gone, that's it til next year!

A special thanks to all who helped make the first calendar print run a success (despite the snow).