

NOVEMBER 24, 2008 F.A.H.P. NEWS

Sunday Evening Musicales: In the mid-1930's, about six families would gather for summer evening sit-down dinners, usually on the lawn if the weather was cooperative. At least three of the hosts were the Woodward of Mendenhall (PA), the Mancills, also of Mendenhall, and the Marshalls of Auburn Heights. While all six participating families may have brought food, the host family was in charge and did most of the preparation and work. To a 10-year-old, this group of possibly 25 people seemed like a very large gathering, and my cousins, Eleanor Marshall and the Mancill twins, joined me in creating numerous discipline problems for our parents.

It seemed that this group expanded to include a local musical program following dinner. Then it got so large that dinner was not possible, so it was a Sunday evening musicale. How many of these were held and for how many summers they occurred I am not certain. However, I remember one at Auburn Heights when nearly 70 people attended. All cars were parked along the driveway, in some places two abreast, as the drive then ended opposite the door to the shop and there was no "loop" around the east side of the house. Neither was the lot across the road accessible, as it was owned by the Snuff company and was cut off from Route 82 by a barbed wire fence to keep Joe DeStafney's grazing cattle out of the road.

The guests sat mostly in the big living room, with the audience spilling over into the front hall. In the living room's round alcove with 5 bay windows was my mother's Baby Grand piano, used by the performers doing recitals or performing piano accompaniment. A quartet of the barber shop variety seemed to sing from the other end of the room, however. Paul Hannum, a building contractor in Kennett Square (and a second cousin of my father) sat in the leather-covered arm chair still in the front hall. Isaac and Edith Wetherill from Chester (Edith was a Mitchell) also attended. His family built the Wetherill Corliss steam engines, very choice today. There must have been about six acts in the evening's musicale. Two of them I remember well. One was a men's quartet from Kennett Square. Two of its members with good voices were Scott McMurtrie (baritone or bass) and Monroe Nute (tenor). Scott was active in local theatrical productions and ran the House of Flowers for James B. D. Edge, Jr., and Monnie Nute owned the Chrysler-Plymouth dealership in Kennett. The other feature of my recollection was a piano solo and accompaniment by the Passmore sisters of Mendenhall. Helen played the piano and Lydia had a very good soprano voice. I don't know how we snuck in, but the Mancill boys and I were on the front row. When Lydia would hit the high notes, we would burst out in laughter. Since the room was crowded, our parents could not get to us to shut us down. If the Division of Parks ever has a musicale in the living room, I promise to behave better.

A lot happened last week with the meetings of the Collections Committee, attended by 15 members on Wednesday, and of the full Board, with 19 present on Thursday. Most notable were the decisions to begin restoration of the Rauch & Lang electric and the Model 607 Stanley this winter, and to make changes to the By-Laws requiring our secretary and our treasurer to be

Board members, and also requiring only a simple majority of those members attending the Annual Meeting to elect Board members, previously recommended by the Nominating Committee. All members will have the opportunity to comment on the slate of candidates in advance of the meeting. Kelly Williams was commended by the Collections Committee for his work in starting the electronic registry of the cars in our collection.

Two exciting developments are the prospects for leasing a diesel locomotive from member Jim Sank to run on the Auburn Valley R.R., and also the leasing of a 1920's Autocar bus from Ross Myers to transport visitors around the grounds while the Rauch & Lang is out of service.

The Stanley burner project, headed by Ted Kamen, is nearing completion. A vaporizer needs to be fabricated, the burner liner insulated and finished, and the pilot installed. The Museum is being decorated for our Thanksgiving events by Rose Ann Hoover and her committee. Tomorrow night will be the last work session for final preparations. If the weather moderates, it is hoped we can give rides again in the 100th-birthday cars and do the firing-up demonstration. Hot chocolate will supplement our steam-made popcorn. It is very important for active volunteers to distribute flyers and posters as a last-minute attempt to boost our attendance. It has been suggested that on Wednesday and even Friday one of our Stanleys with a large sign advertising Friday's and Saturday's events could circulate through Hockessin and/or Kennett Square. This will depend on the weather and the availability of a driver. As we look ahead, the two major car projects, approved by the Board, will require a lot of volunteer time for the portions of the work we can do ourselves (more on the 607 than on the R & L). This should keep us busy during the winter months.

This is the last "News" that will be published from Auburn Heights. Although Ruth and I will be back many days for small things not yet accomplished, we expect to be full-time residents of Cokesbury Village in about 24 hours, and as soon as my E-mail is functional there, the "News" and other trivia will continue. The State will settle for our old and long-time home tomorrow at 10 A.M. We have every confidence that we are leaving it in good hands. Howard McKean moved in today and will occupy the third floor of the big house. Our new address is: 726 Loveville Road, Apt. 904, Hockessin, DE 19707-1513. Phone and E-mail will remain the same.

We are happy to report that Chevonne Robison is progressing well, and with her positive attitude we know she will recover faster than her doctors believed possible. We are grateful to Chevonne and Rob to insist they can chair this week's events (Nov. 28, 29) and to tell us their annual Christmas party is still on- Saturday, December 6. With all that's happened in the Robison household, Rob got the fall edition of the "Herald" out this past week. Thanks!

Over the fields and through the woods to Grandmother's house we go. Ruth and I wish all of you a most happy Thanksgiving!

Tom