

Improved Commerce in Delaware: When William Penn laid out Dover in 1683, near the geographic center of his “Three Lower Counties on the Delaware”, transport was slow and the new settlers isolated. Small sailing ships plied the rivers flowing into Delaware Bay, carrying grain and supplies to small inland towns such as Milford, Frederica, Dover, Smyrna, and Cantwell’s Bridge (Odessa). In the early to mid-nineteenth century, steamboats took over, mainly connecting Delaware to the markets of Philadelphia.

In 1832 the New Castle and Frenchtown horse-drawn railroad was built, connecting the Delaware River with access to Chesapeake Bay, thereby providing some limited commerce between Philadelphia and Baltimore without sailing all the way around Cape Charles. This was soon superceded by the first Chesapeake and Delaware Canal with its locks at both ends. There was also primitive rail service provided by the construction of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore, but people and goods had to be ferried across the Susquehanna River near its mouth. The first railroad bridge from Perryville to Havre de Grace was opened in 1855.

The Delaware Railroad was built the length of the State in 1859, with considerable opposition. Some important towns were thereby connected, others sprang up along the new railroad. What a difference that made in getting Delaware’s produce to market, and manufactured goods and supplies into the First State, not to mention the jobs the railroad provided! Coming off the P. W. & B. above Newport, the new line passed through New Castle, then followed the old New Castle & Frenchtown right-of-way through what is now State Road and Bear, turning south to Kirkwood, Mount Pleasant, Middletown, Townsend, Clayton, Cheswold, Dover, Wyoming, Felton, Harrington, Bridgeville, Seaford, and Laurel to Delmar on the southern border with Maryland. My grandfather Shallcross, while holding political jobs in Wilmington, commuted daily from Mount Pleasant, the closest station to his home at Belleview Farm. Spurs were soon built westward to Eastern Shore of Maryland points and southeastward from Harrington to Milford, Georgetown, Millsboro and Selbyville. As service increased, so did Delaware’s ability to compete with other states in the growing nation.

Again there was opposition when T. Coleman duPont proposed to build a paved highway for automobiles the entire length of the State. His plan was accepted (as he agreed to finance it) and an 18-foot-wide concrete road was planned from Claymont in the north to Selbyville on the southern border with Maryland. Constructed mostly in 1918, shortly after Mr. duPont retired as president of the duPont Company, its route was generally parallel to but slightly east of the railroad. The Philadelphia Pike with its electric trolley line already covered the 8 miles or so between the Pennsylvania line and Wilmington, and from there the duPont Highway headed almost straight south. By-passing New Castle and Middletown, it went through St. Georges and Odessa instead, and kept to the east of Townsend, Clayton and Cheswold, going through Smyrna before entering Dover where it went right down State Street past the Old State House and the Dover Green. From Dover, it kept some distance east of the railroad, passing through Magnolia and Frederica to Milford, then to Ellendale, Georgetown, Millsboro, Dagsboro, and Frankford to Selbyville. Mr. duPont supervised the building of the entire road, using his big Model 66 Pierce Arrow. Other major road improvements did not come along until about 1930.

Yesterday, 65 members of FAHP and friends enjoyed Irene and Barbara duPont's estate at Granogue. Eight of our Stanleys and our two Packards were used for transport, and eight antique cars (including a motorcycle) owned by individual members were there as well. Despite the uncertain weather, no one was disappointed, and, as usual, our host outdid himself with his unmatched hospitality. We were so sorry Mrs. duPont was in bed with a painful back and was not able to join us during our 2-hour stay. The Aeolian Organ was played for us while many ventured among the organ pipes in the basement to witness this great operation. We were encouraged to go anywhere on the first floor of the mansion, and even invited to see the huge 1923 washing machine that our host demonstrated for us. Several agile people walked to the water tower, where, after climbing 135 spiral steps, a spectacular view of the Brandywine Valley and hills around is well worth the effort. Thank you, Irene and Barbara, for sharing your special treasure.

On Saturday, the 26th, two Stanleys and five active volunteers attended the 200th Anniversary of the "Clermont", Robert Fulton's steamboat, at Fulton's birthplace in southern Lancaster County, PA, about 35 miles from Auburn Heights. Steve Bryce, Dan Citron, Art Wallace, Mark Russell, and Kelly Williams made the trip in our Models 76 and 735, and promoted FAHP while they were there, in all a very satisfactory day. We are grateful to the Southern Lancaster County Historical Society for its contribution to FAHP.

Three committee meetings took place last week: on Thursday, the Search Committee and the Education Committee met, and on Friday, the Development Committee. Collectively, we are moving toward the selection of an Executive Director, establishment of a serious Educational program, and preparation for our Annual Appeal.

Bill Schwoebel has called a meeting of the railroad group for Tuesday, Sept. 29, at 7 P.M. in the FAHP office. It is important that all volunteers interested in helping run the Auburn Valley R.R. will try to attend. Some important rules regarding boiler safety will be discussed. Also, Bill is still soliciting help for October 7, 8, and 9 at Hershey, where FAHP will have 2 flea market spaces, thanks to the Hopkins family. It is helpful if our space can be manned during the busy days of the flea market, and the 7th and 8th are still not completely covered. If you can go either of these days, please contact Bill this week.

Five volunteers are distributing flyers at targeted places within 10 miles or so of Auburn Heights to promote our "Steamin' Sunday" October 4. Thanks go to all who offered to do this, as it's essential in attracting a good crowd. Also on Saturday, October 3, we plan to operate a Stanley with appropriate sign (as we did with the Mountain Wagon last month) in places where interested people assemble or pass by. This is not only a moving sign board, but where we stop it gives us a chance to share with people what they are missing by not attending one of our monthly events. If you'd like to help this Saturday, please let me know.

Anne Cleary still needs a few jobs covered for Oct. 4, so if you can help, please call her. Also, she is working on a "Volunteer's Skills" list, where a questionnaire will be asking what your skills and interests are. If you would like to be included on this list, please E-mail Anne at clearyak@verizon.net.
Tom