

F.A.H.P. News, October 29, 2012

The Shallcross Reunion, 1987: Five days ago, October 24, was the 25th anniversary of the only reunion ever held for “our branch” of the Shallcross family. It was held at Auburn Heights on a beautiful fall Saturday with Ruth and me as hosts. Those invited were direct descendants of James T. and Mary E. Shallcross, my maternal grandparents, and their spouses. A total of 66 were “eligible” to attend, and 54 were present. One of my cousins, Bassett Ferguson Jr., wrote a small booklet for the occasion, and I attempted a program of several pages.

The festivities began in mid-afternoon when the guests of all ages arrived. Since I was the only one of my generation who was an “only child,” I had been a catalyst among the seven first cousins on my mother’s side of the family, six of whom were living at the time of the reunion. Some had lost track of others over the years, but all seemed to be immersed in the fun that reunions can bring. In the third-floor rooms, we had old photographs displayed, and in the first-floor office (the original kitchen), a magician who was married to a great granddaughter of those memorialized performed tricks for the younger attendees. When it came time for dinner, Tom Maas of Copperfield Caterers had a sumptuous buffet laid out on the dining room table and used our first-floor kitchen for his preparations (the second-floor kitchen was not torn off the house until the next year). Leslie Welch made flower arrangements that were displayed all over the house. Those descendants under the age of 50 were asked to eat in the recreation room (under the kitchen), where several tables were set, and those over 50 were seated at tables in the living room, the front hall, and the sun porch. Ruth and I ate in the front hall—who cares?

Following dinner, the guests were requested to adjourn to the museum, where chairs were set up for a group photograph, done by a professional photographer who wasn’t very good. Subjects were assigned to one of four rows, with children under a certain age sitting on the floor in the forefront, those of our generation plus “Uncle Ned,” at age 96 the featured couple’s only living child, sitting in the front row, the next generation standing immediately behind, and the youngest adult generation standing on chairs to form the fourth row. The entertainment consisted of a digest of my father’s home movies, taken in the 1920s and featuring a few of those in attendance. A few family members from a distance, including the Bassett Ferguson Jr. family spent the night at Auburn Heights, and after Ruth’s Sunday morning breakfast, the reunion was over.

For the group photo, eight smiling youngsters sat on the floor, but of the 11 in my generation, only Jo Ferguson, Ruth, and I are still alive. My six living first cousins from the Shallcross side attended, but all are now deceased. Even from the next generation, three “once removed” cousins have departed plus at least one spouse. Edwin E. Shallcross (Uncle Ned) died in 1995 just short of his 104th birthday.

Work Report: Progress continued on putting together the Model 607. The flue and feed water heater have been properly fit and permanently attached under the car. The fuel tank for this car, having been greatly improved in appearance, has been further cleaned and was temporarily put

in place under the front seat. A hydrostatic test was applied to the boiler and its connecting fittings, with three leaks appearing, two of which have been fixed.

A new counter plunger has been made for the oil pump on the Model 87, and we are awaiting 1/8" drill rod material for making the main plunger. The cylinder oil tank has been removed and thoroughly cleaned. The burner was installed on the Model 740, and this car was fired up and tested prior to its run on October 27. Two new batteries were installed and hooked up on the Rauch & Lang electric, and seven steamers were readied for their anticipated runs on 10/27.

On Saturday, our 40-mile year-end tour for volunteers took place, with five of our Stanleys plus Kelly Williams's Stanley speedster, Lou Mandich's 1918 Buick, and Bill Schwoebel's 1930 Model A Ford completing the trip. In all, 24 of us enjoyed lunch at Perkins Family Restaurant near Avondale. In addition to the beautiful fall scenery as we passed through Chadds Ford, Lenape, and Unionville, a special highlight was our visit to Irénée du Pont's water tower with its two huge tanks holding over 100,000 gallons. Our host, not yet 93 years of age, easily climbs the 150 or so steps to the top, where he explains to his guests about the tower, his estate, and the commanding view. Also on Saturday, Susan Randolph and her father, Lee, used our steam popper to please patrons at the Hagley Museum during the 19th-century baseball game staged on their beautiful grounds.