

October 2, 2006

Hello, Steam Team:

The telephone comes to Yorklyn: A famous country doctor in the 1880's was "Doc" Chandler of Centerville. Some time early in that decade, he had a phone line run along the Kennett Turnpike from Wilmington to his office. Soon thereafter, Walter Garrett, owner of the snuff mills, thought it important to have a phone connection from his office in Philadelphia to the Yorklyn mills and paid for an extension from Centerville to Yorklyn to provide this service. If illness, death, or important business matters required fast service, a member of the community could go to the snuff mill and be assisted in making the call. Incoming phone messages would be delivered to the designee by whomever was attending the mill's phone. It is assumed that soon after the Marshall brothers bought their mill on Benge Road in 1889, that a phone was installed there, but this is supposition on my part.

Soon after 1900 a phone exchange was established at Hockessin, and service for Yorklyn telephones came through that exchange. There was a company phone in the Fibre Company's #1 Mill, usually answered by Homer Kratz. Most lines were party lines; that is, several families' telephones would be hooked to the same line, and the operator, called "central", at the exchange would designate the appropriate party by the number of rings he or she would apply by hand. Privacy was limited, as a curious person on a party line could listen to any conversation on the line, and gossip flourished. A private line was much more expensive, but we had one at Auburn Heights by the 1920's, although our service came through the mill. The only phone in the house was in the dining room and our phone number was Hockessin 36. One morning in 1930 as I came down to breakfast, my father was standing by the phone, and he had just hung up. He told me my grandmother (his mother) had died.

Direct dialing came to the cities long before it reached the country. The large places like Philadelphia and New York had a name before the number (remember Glenn Miller's "Pennsylvania 6-5000" which was the number of the Hotel Pennsylvania next to New York's Penn Station?). Wilmington was not large enough to need names before numbers, but eventually it followed suit ("Olympia" was the exchange for downtown). Newark was the first place outside Wilmington for direct dial, and not only could you dial other Newark phones, but Wilmington phones as well, and vice versa. Hockessin was the first "country exchange" in the State to have direct dial. All direct dial calls were free, but the first year or so, Hockessin could dial Newark and vice versa, but we could not dial Wilmington. If you had friends in Newark, you could call them and they could transmit your message to Wilmington, all without charge, but it was awkward!

With the coming of the dial (rotary, of course), our phone number changed from 36 to 5131. Soon they decided 513 was enough, so the final one was dropped. Some time during World War II, it was changed from 513 to 215. In the 1950's it seemed to become necessary for everyone to have 5 digits, so all Hockessin subscribers had 95 before their old number (Auburn Heights was 95215). Then, with long experience from the cities, the Hockessin exchange was called "Cedar" and our number was CE-95215. Why mix up letters and numbers? We were then 239-5215. When the Magic Age of Steam started in 1971, the phone company said I needed a commercial line and I could not keep my old number, and they assigned 239-4410. I think it was in the 1970's when touch-tone dialing became available and I was an immediate subscriber. In the early '80's when there was no good reason for paying a commercial rate any longer, they said I could not keep "4410", so they changed it to 239-6379, an awkward number that has remained into 2006. I like 239-2385, the Friends number, much better.

Our Longwood commitment was completed this past weekend with the Model CX and the Mountain Wagon on display. The little car was trailered to and from and the "Wagon" was driven. Bob Reilly manned the exhibit both days but he was ably assisted by Art Sybell on Saturday and Butch Cannard on Sunday, and I was there briefly both times. Despite some showers requiring Bob to polish brass again, all went well and many people inquired and were told about the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve. For our 3 weekends, a lot of literature was distributed and Longwood paid us an honorarium of \$450.

Next Sunday, October 8, Emil Christofano and Brent McDougall have offered to make popcorn with our Cretors popper at the Harvest Festival of the Delaware Nature Society at Coverdale Farm. Profits at \$1 per bag will go to the Nature Society. It is a long day (9:00 to 5:00), and they can use help if any of you are free for part of the day and are willing to commit. Bob Reilly and I have already said we can be there some of the time. On Sunday, October 15, the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania holds its fall meet at the Delaware County Community College near Media, and we usually have a few members and cars in attendance. This year Anne Cleary, Bill Schwoebel, Butch Cannard, Jerry Lucas and Steve Jensen have expressed interest in going, which will mean 3 or 4 cars. Please let Anne Cleary or Bob Reilly know if you have an interest, either in driving a car or going as a passenger. There should be plenty of seats.

This week is "Hershey Week" and a number of our active members will be there for several days. The regular work sessions will be held Tuesday and Thursday evenings, however, and several projects can continue or be started. The burner is off the 735 for a vaporizer repair (probably by Jim Personti or Walter Higgins), and the throttle can be removed from the H-5 for lapping in. The two generations of Jensens fired up Locomotive 401 on Sunday past, checked out several things, and made some repairs. Fabrication of new plates taking the

place of insulated splice bars for the new signal system can begin this week. There are lesser jobs on the Models 78, 87, and 740, and the wiring on the 735 should wait until Rob Robison is back on the scene. Donnie Simpkins gave me the name of Paul Roberts as one who might weld the boiler on the 76. I know Paul and have tried to call him. Ron Turochy and Art Sybell finished spraying the primer on "Little Toot" last Saturday and will soon start applying the color on locomotive and cars by hand brushing. It is going to look nice and be a credit to Dale and Ted Simpkins, Ron and Art.

Bob Reilly is finalizing budget figures in preparation for our Annual Appeal letters to go out very soon. Joyce Sybell helped Bob in the office last Thursday evening, and Butch (home from a 9,800-mile motor home trip through the West with his mother) printed more flyers for us on Sunday. Bob is also beginning work on a 5-year plan and hopes to assemble a small ad hoc committee to get us started on the right track. The best of fall is upon us! Tom