

**The Modern History of Yorklyn:** Local history was made last week with the announcement and then the front page newspaper article on the disposition of the former NVF property in Yorklyn. When a long-prosperous mill town dies, what happens to the contaminated mill sites, the buildings falling down, and the desirable land gobbled up by over-zealous developers? Now we have our answers. Through an ambitious plan developed by concerned land owners, a responsible developer, and the Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation, the best possible solution seems to have been achieved. The Bankruptcy Court settling the NVF case has awarded the mills and about 85 acres of surrounding hillsides to CCS Developers and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), the parent of the Division of Parks. At this time, it looks like a wonderful solution to what could have been a serious problem for the environment and the future of the community.

Most of the NVF mills will be razed and their sites cleaned up, with several significant buildings being saved. Only three additional building lots will be carved out of the 85 hillside acres surrounding the mills; on the remainder, the State of Delaware will buy conservation easements. These easements will permit the Division of Parks to build up to 4 miles of trails connecting the Auburn Heights Preserve with Oversee Farm, both owned by the State, suitable for steam cars, bicycles, joggers, hikers, and horseback riders. Three of the buildings in the main fiber mill complex between Yorklyn Road and the Wilmington & Western R.R. will be saved and will provide modern office and warehouse space. The buildings in the Auburn Mills Historic District adjoining Auburn Heights will be saved and upgraded. These include the Marshall Brothers paper mill, the mill office (1895), and five dwelling units in two historic houses, the oldest of which was built in 1760.

The first of several generations of Garretts arrived in what is now Yorklyn in 1726, and built a grist mill in 1730 where the paper mill now stands next to Auburn Heights. In 1782, this was converted to a snuff mill, and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the mill site had various uses before the Marshall Brothers bought the property in 1889 and it became a paper mill, eventually funneling its entire output to the National Vulcanized Fibre Company downstream, a practice that continued until production was permanently halted in 2008. About 1800, the Garretts relocated their snuff business to a location where they developed many brick buildings on the east side of Red Clay Creek downstream from their original mill, and here snuff was made until 1954. These buildings have fallen into disrepair and many have collapsed. The first fiber mill at the location of the main NVF complex was built along the railroad in 1904, and most of the large buildings were constructed in 1911-12. Israel Marshall patented the idea for the largest endless fiber machine in the world, but he died before it was completed and installed. The uses for vulcanized fiber were diverse: originally it was popular for suit cases and satchels, trunks, and waste baskets. During World War II, it was used widely in the aircraft industry. In more recent years its main use was for all types of insulating products. The rapid growth of the plastics industry sealed the fate of vulcanized fiber and today the only manufacturers are in China.

Naturally, to complete a plan like this is expensive. Foundation and individual support, plus help from Federal flood-abatement funds, will be sought to make it all happen.

Last Saturday on a clear, crisp day, we finally had a very successful “mini-tour” for our cars and volunteers, taking us for 46 miles through adjoining southwestern Chester County (PA). Seven Stanleys and 23 volunteers completed the trip and we had an enjoyable lunch at the Twelves, a restaurant in an old bank building in West Grove. Steve Bryce and Walter Higgins laid out the route and Steve took care of all the details. The following cars were used, all operated professionally by our great volunteers: 1908 Model H-5, 1910 Model 71, 1912 Model 87, 1913 Models 76 and 78, 1916 Model 725, and 1918 Model 735. Many thanks, and let’s do it again!

Last Thursday, the Governor’s Advisory Council on Parks had a meeting and lunch at Auburn Heights, and inspected the NVF fiber mill complex, accompanied by Bill Campbell, NVF’s long-time manager at Yorklyn. I delivered some of the group with our Mountain Wagon to and from the mill sites. The committee searching for a new Executive Director met last Tuesday, and interviews are scheduled this coming week with at least two applicants. We have had about nine resumes submitted so far. On Wednesday, the Nominating Committee met, and on Friday the Executive Committee had a constructive meeting. On Tuesday past, Bill Schwoebel chaired a Railroad Committee meeting, and on Thursday, Jonathan Rickerman had a meeting of the new Publicity Committee. I am happy to report that our Annual Appeal is doing very well for this point in the fund-raising campaign.

Since our operating season, except for our on-site events on Nov. 27 and 28, is about over, the tops can be put up on our Stanley cars, and the fuel drained from our early gasoline burners. Some clean-up may be needed on the cars used on November 7. The semi-weekly work sessions continue to be productive, and we have plans to make them even better.

On Tuesday, November 10 at 7:00, the Events Committee will meet, and Executive Director interviews are scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday evenings starting at 6:00.

Next Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 14 and 15, our Museum will be open for 3 hours each day in connection with the CCArts Craft Fair in Yorklyn. Steve Bryce has promised a Stanley at CCArts to help promote FAHP, and get interested people there to come to our museum. The times are 12:00 to 3:00 each day, and two volunteers are needed each time to be at the Museum. Nothing else will be operated or open to view. Please let Richard Bernard or the office know if you can help.

On Thursday, November 19, our quarterly Board of Directors meeting takes place, and the Collections Committee will probably meet with Mike May and Greg Landrey on Tuesday evening, 11/17.

Have a good Veterans’ Day.

Tom