

**The DeStafney Farm behind Auburn Heights:** Louis DeStafney bought a nearly abandoned farm on the west side of Red Clay Creek in 1923. The total acreage was about 120, with 50 acres or so in Pennsylvania- the remainder in Delaware. Access to the farm was from Meeting House Road, which ran from Marshall's Bridge to the Hockessin Friends Meeting House, about 2¼ miles. The portion of this road from Marshall's Bridge to present-day Auburn, much of it in Pennsylvania, was abandoned in 1930.

Louis had three sons, Joseph, Pete, and Jim. Joe and his wife, Gert, occupied the old farmhouse next to the barn, while Pete and Jim built smaller homes for their families about 1930. I didn't know all the children, but Joe had three sons and one daughter, and Pete had at least one daughter. Joe had dairy cows, his youngest son, Francis, grew mushrooms in the backyard, and Pete had chickens and delivered fresh eggs throughout the community. Jim died many years before his brothers, and I really never knew him.

Joe DeStafney obtained an informal right-of-way into their farm from Benge Road near Marshall Brothers (part of National Vulcanized Fibre Co.), but the driveway had to cross the meadow and ford Red Clay Creek. Early cars with high wheels usually handled this ford, but in 1936 or '37 a crude bridge was built above the stream. All was well until the massive flood in July 1938 took out the bridge. The second bridge attempt was much more successful, and the 1938-39 bridge is still in service, although a much sturdier iron truss bridge is planned for the Auburn Valley Trail system. DeStafney needed grazing space for his dairy herd, and he leased unused land from NVF and from the George W. Helme Snuff Company. Most of his fences consisted of barbed wire nailed to trees where that was possible. His cattle could usually be seen in the meadows on both sides of Auburn Heights, in addition to the hillside across Route 82, then part of the Snuff Mill Farm. Occasionally the curious in the herd would cross the ornate footbridge over the mill race near my mother's rock garden and graze on the lawn of Auburn Heights.

About 1970, NVF bought the DeStafney farm except for approximately eight acres around their family houses. With the adjacent Marshall Brothers mill property, this tract was now nearly 200 acres. Then controlled by Victor Posner, the company floated a plan to build 400 houses on the property. Fortunately, this plan didn't get far, as many things were against it. NVF established a dump at one end of the property but continued to let the DeStafneys graze their cattle, although the family had switched from milking cows to beef cattle. Joe DeStafney Jr., who had worked for the DuPont Company during much of his lifetime, continued this operation but with a much smaller herd that he would buy and sell seasonally. NVF allowed him to continue, but this ended soon after the State of Delaware bought the property for the Auburn Heights Preserve in 2002.

The first sections of the Auburn Valley Trail system were dedicated by Governor Markell in 2012. There is a hillside loop around the perimeter of the DeStafney farm just over one mile long, and a shorter trail in the meadow paralleling the mill race along the bed of the old

Kennett-to-Brandywine Springs trolley line. These trails were designed by the State Division of Parks and Recreation for hikers, bikers, and steam cars.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, May 3, the Evening at the Museum program took place, this month featuring the history of toy electric trains. Mac Taylor, Jay Williams, and John Schubel described the history of Lionel, American Flyer, and Ives, and in addition to their verbal descriptions, examples of several of these early trains from their personal collections were displayed. On a rainy evening outside, Jonathan Rickerman demonstrated his Garden Railroad on track set up alongside the museum. A total of 20+ volunteers and visitors enjoyed the program. We also celebrated Bill Rule's 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

Jerry Lucas was in charge of the work session, which, including himself, counted 22 volunteers: Ted Kamen, Richard Bernard, Jerry Novak, Bob Jordan, John Schubel, Jay Williams, Brent McDougall, Tom Marshall, Dave Leon, Mike Ciosek, Mark Bodenstab, Mac Taylor, Mark Russell, Jonathan Rickerman, Steve Bryce, Larry Tennity, Tim Ward, Bill Schwoebel, Matt Richard, Neal Sobocinski, and Bill Rule.

Wiring work continued on the '37 Packard. One side of the garage was completely cleaned out in preparation for fresh paint. Paint, hardware, and other items were boxed and stored, mostly in the old snack bar and pump house. The seat was set on the Model H-5, but it is not fastened down as the water tank is still out of the car. The wooden bins and steel shelving were moved temporarily behind the '37 Packard on the other side of the garage.

On Wednesday, May 4, six volunteers were on hand, viz: Richard Bernard (in charge), Steve Bryce, Bob Jordan, Tom Marshall, Jerry Novak, and Larry Tennity.

The old paint on top of a closet was sorted, some was thrown away, and some was stored in the snack bar. The workbench in the garage was cleaned off, as well as the shelf below and the floor beneath, with everything being boxed and stored temporarily in the pump house. An attempt was made to check the PVC air line for a leak across the ceiling of the garage, but too many cars are in the way, so this will be done later.

On Thursday, May 5, 16 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Dave Leon (in charge), Mark Russell, Ted Kamen, Jerry Lucas, Devon Hall, Geoff Fallows, Jim Personti, Matt Richard, Mark Bodenstab, Bob Stransky, Dave Stransky, Lou Mandich, Bob Jordan, Bill Schwoebel, Steve Bryce, and Tom Marshall.

The defroster and heater wires were worked on in the '37 Packard. The bonnet was insulated and the stack blower was hooked up on the Model 735. The rebuilt rear trucks were installed in the frame of Locomotive 402. The Model 76 and the Model T Ford were loaded in our trailers for their trip to Old Dover Days.

The back wall of the garage was patch-painted where the bins had been. An inventory of spare parts for the Model T Ford was begun. Jerry Lucas gave operating lessons to Mark Bodenshtab and Devon Hall in our Model 740.

On Saturday, May 7, with rain showers all day, the Model T and the '13 Stanley Model 76, both with their tops up, gave 251 rides to passengers around Dover's Green. Steve Bryce, Bill Schwoebel, Dave Leon, Devon Hall, and Robert Hopkins managed the operation, and the cars worked flawlessly. Jerry Novak did not take the '32 Packard Phaeton to Winterthur as planned. The trip and display there are rescheduled for next Saturday, May 14.

Next Sunday, May 15, the annual spring meet of the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania takes place at Linvilla Orchards, 18 miles from Auburn Heights. This is a pleasant run for Stanley drivers and an excellent learning experience for those in our driving program. Cars should leave A.H. by 10 A.M., and should be back by 5 P.M. If any volunteers are interested in going, please contact the office or Tom Marshall by Wednesday, May 11. If there is interest, scheduling will be done immediately thereafter. Since bikers will be passing through Auburn Heights that day, extra caution must be taken while firing up and using the driveway.