

## F.A.H.P. News, August 29, 2011

**George W. Pusey (1868-1943):** George Pusey, a native of the West Chester, Pennsylvania, area, owned and operated the flour mill at Ashland for many years. In the 1890s, he learned his trade as a miller at Clifton Mill between Kennett Square and Yorklyn, quite an important operation with connections to Pillsbury and other large flour manufacturers. He married the former Florence Sharpless, a sister of Ruth Marshall's grandfather, William P. Sharpless. The Puseys had two daughters, Ruth and Alice, both of whom lived at home until their parents' deaths. Ruth Pusey (1904-1948) was my first contact with elementary education, as she taught first grade at the old Wilmington Friends School at 4<sup>th</sup> & West streets.

The Ashland mill had been built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Gregg family, but sometime before 1800, it had become a part of the Sharpless lands that encompassed nearly 1,000 acres between Hockessin and Ashland. Members of the Sharpless family either ran the milling operation or employed a miller to do so, but when George Pusey, already a successful miller, married Florence Sharpless, he took over the Ashland mill about 1898 and ran it until his death in January 1943. They lived in a nice frame house within walking distance and opposite the Ashland Station on the Wilmington & Western Railroad. The Puseys were active members of Hockessin Friends Meeting, and in his later years, George always sat on the facing bench at Meetings for Worship, in those days a respected position for older prominent attenders. He was never late, but neither was he early, and the two other occupants of the facing bench, John C. Mitchell and J. Warren Marshall, would be seated before the Puseys arrived. George came in the side door, neatly folded his overcoat, placed it on a bench near the door with his hat on top, and walked in front of everyone to take his place. During Meeting, his eyes were usually closed, and some thought he was asleep.

Prominent in the business community, George Pusey was a director of the National Bank and Trust Company of Kennett Square for many years. He was an expert bowler, but he didn't want his family to know about this. Secretly, he would go to Wilmington and take part in bowling tournaments, and my father said he thought George once won the state bowling championship. The damaging flood on Red Clay Creek in July 1938 took out the dam for the Ashland mill, located where Sharpless Road joins Route 82. The following Sunday, sightseers flocked to Ashland to look at the damage that included the Ashland covered bridge on Route 82 (not the existing one) that was floated off its foundations and carried downstream, never to be rebuilt. George Pusey conducted an open house for the many curious visitors. The dam was soon rebuilt, and the mill was back in business with its large water wheel turning its grinding burrs, conveyor belts and the other necessary machinery.

I was home for Christmas vacation from M.I.T., and on New Year's Day 1943, we called on George Pusey at the mill. He was in his working clothes—it was not a special holiday for him. Five days later he was dead, apparently from a heart attack. Florence died before the year was over. Within two years, the large frame mill was razed and the mill race bulldozed over, erasing what had been an important industry at Ashland for 200 years.

## **Big Winds, Earthquakes and Hurricanes, Oh My**

At Auburn Heights as elsewhere around the area, Mother Nature kept us jumping last week. Monday morning brought several Americorps volunteers and a team of staff from neighboring State Parks to finish cleaning up the portion of the Copper Beech that was felled during a violent pop-up storm almost two weeks earlier. While we mourn the loss of such a large piece of the tree, an arborist has declared the remaining part sound, and since the roots are undamaged, our beloved tree is expected to survive. On Tuesday, the earthquake shook up the regular F.A.H.P. routine but without any damage. By Friday, focus had turned from tornado-like winds and quakes to hurricanes as F.A.H.P. volunteers and State Parks staff secured all porch furniture, signage, and other items in preparation for Irene's Delaware debut. We are pleased to report that no damage was sustained, and the site never lost power. As we begin the countdown for the Labor Day Steamin' Weekend, we are keeping all fingers crossed for a calmer week ahead.

**Work Nights:** Last Tuesday night at Auburn Heights, volunteers took the last Ice Cream Run of the season. Tom Marshall drove the Mountain Wagon with wife, Ruth, and passengers Art Wallace, Jerry Novak, Emil Christofano, Susan Randolph, Steve & Ann Bryce, Ed & Betty Hoffmeister and Fred & Marsha Rosenberg. Mark Russell and Dan Citron drove the 735 with Dan's parents, Joel & Barbara Citron, and Mark's wife, Lynette, along for the ride. Ted Kamen and Richard Bernard drove the Model 740 with Ted's son and daughter-in-law; Chuck Erikson joined them for the return trip. Bob Stransky drove the Model 725 with Kelly Williams, Tim Ward and Paige Vichich as passengers. Thursday night, Jim Personti and Brent McDougall removed the leaking throttle from the Model 87, lapped in the seat and valve and reinstalled it in the car. Also last week, Jerry Novak worked with a glass installer from Safelite AutoGlass to replace the window in the left rear door of the 1937 Packard; Jerry also reinstalled the upholstery on the inside of the door. More painted parts for the Model 607 were returned, and the shop is now ready to take delivery of the 607 body and move the restoration along.

## **Special Vermeil Wines Offer**

If you live locally to Auburn Heights and wish you could have purchased some of the Vermeil wines available at the Benefit Concert last July, you're in luck! A limited number of bottles were made available again to benefit the Joseph Boxler Education Fund, which supports our educational programming efforts. It's first-come first-serve for:

- Sauvignon Blanc 2010, \$20/bottle
- Syrah 2005, \$25/bottle
- Zinfandel 2009 (Frediani "1956"), \$30/bottle
- Special Proprietary Red XXXIV, \$40/bottle

Contact the FAHP office ([admin@auburnheights.org](mailto:admin@auburnheights.org)) to confirm availability and reserve your bottle. Buyers will be responsible for picking up their purchase at Auburn Heights as we are unable to ship it.