

November 28, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

What was the "Insulite" mill? The Marshall Brothers' paper mills at Yorklyn and at Marshall's Bridge were very profitable in the 1890's, largely because they specialized in making only "fibre paper", sold to the several fibre companies around Wilmington and Newark. A large fibre company, probably owned by the Taylors, the Ruperts (Delaware Hard Fibre Company at Marshallton), or the Wrights (Continental Diamond Fibre Company at Newark), was buying all its paper from the Marshalls and this amounted to perhaps 80% of the Marshalls' business. When this prosperous fibre company bought its own paper mill, it no longer had a need for the Marshalls' paper. So Israel and Elwood got their heads together, and decided to enter the fibre-making business in order to have an outlet for their paper, just about 1900.

On the Auburn Heights side of Benge Road were four large houses with about 11 family dwelling units, plus a fairly new brick office building. The paper mill was (and still is) directly across the road. There was also a single dwelling in the triangle between Benge Road and Route 82. The large frame house closest to the lawn of Auburn Heights was razed, and a new mill, about 3 times the area of the razed house, was erected on the site to house the first fibre machine in Yorklyn. Completed in 1901, this building was called the "Insulite Mill". Within a very short time the fibre business flourished, and the capacity of the Insulite Mill was severely taxed. A large farm was bought by the Marshall Brothers on both sides of the railroad in Yorklyn, some of it flood plain and some a high hill to the southeast. The plan was to expand both the paper and fibre business in this new location. "Number One" fibre mill was the first building on this new site, but a freak storm blew the stone walls down before the roof was on. The debris was soon cleaned up, the new building completed, and the machinery was in operation by the end of 1904. Before all the machines were installed, however, a community dance was held in a large, open room on the second floor. The National Fibre and Insulation Company came into being with 23-year-old J. Warren Marshall, eldest son of Israel and Lizzie, as its first president. In the early 1920's the name was changed to National Vulcanized Fibre Company, which was abbreviated to "NVF" in 1965. Warren Marshall was president until the end of his life in 1953.

Except for the active continuation of paper-making at the old Marshall Brothers mill, almost all activity shifted to the new location, and the paper and fibre plant there was greatly expanded in 1911-12. By 1912, the fibre machines had been removed from the Insulite mill, and it became a heated storage area for the next 89 years. Steam pipes through the building continued under the lawn to Auburn Heights to heat the house, garage, and later the Museum. The lower level along Benge Road was a truck garage and repair shop, and a

small blacksmith shop on the Route 82 end was converted for welding and vehicle maintenance. Barn swallows loved the tall brick chimney, and Clarence Marshall stored some antique tires and old Stanley boilers in the building right after World War II. The blacksmith shop collapsed first, then in 2001 one end of the main roof fell in. The company immediately tore everything down; the Insulite Mill had lasted exactly 100 years!

We have a full week without committee meetings, and several ongoing mechanical projects are on the schedule. The new running-board moldings for the 735, secured for us by Dale Simpkins, are on hand, and need to be bent, cut, and screwed on. Dale is also refinishing the steering column and appurtenances on this car. Rob Robison plans to see how much more cleaning is required under the car, and when this is done, will affix the truss rod under the rear axle. He has also done a fine job on the windshield and its braces- some are nicely painted, and some are nickel-plated. Jerry Lucas is going to attack the leak on the steam pipe on the Model 78 roadster. With Bill Schwoebel's lead, and Mike May's advice, the clincher tire was successfully mounted on the Model H-5 last Tuesday, and now the wheel must be sanded and repainted where it is badly nicked. Butch has a couple of projects on the Model 76, the most important being the securing of the bracket holding the tail light and the license plate. The Models K and 71 are in the upper garage, the K for minor valve adjustment, and the 71 for diagnosis of a "clunk" in the engine or rear. It is hoped to take both these cars to Ormond Beach in late January. The older locomotive safety valves (which we like the best) have been sent to a place in Berwyn for rebuilding and sealing. Bob Barrett, the hydraulic brake man, wanted the second brake drum from the 735 as well as the differential from the EX for the completion of his conversion work on these two cars, so they have been sent to him. The boiler on the popcorn machine was washed the best I could, and it is back in the museum, but the locomotive boilers have not been washed and winterized as yet. I have not recommended this for a winter evening, but another warm day will come along when I should have time to get this done.

Our Annual Appeal is coming along well, with about \$10,000 in new money in hand. Many thanks to all who have helped in this effort. We still have \$15,000 to go, so if you can spare a little, you know where it will be put to good use. The Events Committee will meet at Anne Cleary's home on Tuesday, December 6, and we hope to have a representative from the State with us, as well as Bob Reilly on a "conference call". Foremost on the agenda will be the establishment of a schedule of events for 2006. Thanks to all. Tom