

F.A.H.P. News, November 14, 2011

The Walkers of Baltimore: Naomi Walker was a distant cousin and was the same age as my mother, and in the summer, she visited near my mother's girlhood home near Odessa, and they played together. Fifty years later, she was a frequent visitor at Auburn Heights. I called her "Aunt Naomi."

Naomi's father and her stepmother probably married about 1860, and they had two daughters, Tillie and Ida, before Mrs. Walker died. The widower married again, and by his second wife, there were three daughters and a son. She soon died as well, as did the six children's father. Naomi was the second child of the second marriage. "Miss Tillie" and "Miss Ida" had to raise their half-siblings, and this they did and very well. Tillie had a good job and brought in the income, and Ida kept house for all. Neither ever married. Their home was in West Arlington, on a direct trolley route from downtown Baltimore.

About 1907, Mary Walker, Naomi's older sister, married Allan Stuart, an up-and-coming dentist from Harrisburg, and they had a son and a daughter. About 1908, Naomi married Will Horn, who was in the publishing business in Baltimore, and they had a son, Gilbert, born in 1910. Naomi's marriage did not last, however, and she and Gilbert soon came home to live in the Walker household. During World War I, the younger sister, Edna, married Douglas Leftwich of Waynesboro, Virginia, and they had one son named for his father. The older Leftwich died, and Edna, too, along with young "Doug Lee," came home to live with her sister and half-sisters in West Arlington. Their brother Harmer seemed to make out well on his own and lived in Milwaukee most of his life. When my mother entered nurses' training at Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore in 1915, the Walker home was her "home away from home."

When I was small, I visited West Arlington several times with my mother. "Miss Tillie" was deceased, but "Miss Ida" was still there, being cared for by her younger half-sisters in repayment for all she had done for them. Gilbert Horn was then a fine looking young man who had a Model A Ford and worked for his father in the publishing business. He was the only one in the family with wheels, so his services were in great demand. My mother would invite Naomi and Gilbert to spend a week at Rehoboth nearly every summer, and this they both enjoyed. One year Gilbert worked at the Yorklyn "shoot" and stayed with us at Auburn Heights. When he got married in the late 1930s, followed a few years later by Doug Leftwich, it was no longer practical for Naomi and Edna to keep up the big house. Edna soon passed away, and Naomi moved to smaller quarters. Gilbert and his family lived nearby. It was in the years immediately preceding World War II that Naomi visited Auburn Heights on a regular basis, usually staying a week each time. She died about 1965 and I took my mother to her funeral. Gilbert lost his wife, Eleanor, about 1969, and he married again, but it didn't work out. As a loner, he came to the first "Old Fashioned Christmas" at the Magic Age of Steam in 1971, but he was unhappy, and it showed. A few months later, he took his life. Douglas Lee Leftwich, wanting to keep alive the memories of good times between our families, used to drive from Baltimore each summer for a short visit, long after my parents were gone. Doug died about two years ago."

Work Report: Dave Leon, Art Wallace, and Ted Kamen assembled the rear axle for the Model 607. The new worm gear for the Rauch & Lang was delivered from Rempco by Mike May, and the rear axle is now being assembled by Jeff Pollock, Emil Christofano, and Jim Personti. Jim refinished the slide valves for the Model H-5 engine, and Bob Stransky, Jerry Lucas, and Tim Ward removed the second piston rod from this engine and took the piston halves off the rod. Butch and Jim rebuilt the pilot on the Model 87, and the folding tops for two of the Stanleys were put up for the winter. All boilers were checked and filled (if necessary) after our 40-mile run on November 5. The new boiler for the Model 725 has been marked for drilling and tapping the various fitting holes, prior to its installation in the car. This work is being done under the leadership of Kelly Williams. Some new woodwork was fitted into the rear of the Rauch & Lang by Mark Russell. Mike May also brought the hood and flap for the 607, which was delivered by Steve Bryce to Walter Higgins for rebuilding. On Sunday, Bill Schwoebel, Jonathan Rickerman, and Dave Leon worked on AVRR track and tightened many loose spikes between the station and the tunnel. Dave goes in for medical tests on Tuesday, and we wish him well.