

FAHP News, October 6, 2014

John and Leroy Benge, Father and Son: John Benge Sr. (1864-1936) and his youngest son, Leroy Benge Sr. (1903-1982), were closely associated with three generations of Marshalls, Israel, Clarence (and Warren), and Tom. John was mentioned in the Weekly News of 6/20/05 and 6/27/05, first for his pick-pocket activities on the river steamboat *Republic* and second for the disappearance of his Stanley car on a trip to Tolchester Beach, Maryland. Roy's biography appeared on 10/22/07. In turn, both Benges were superintendents of the Marshall Brothers paper mill, and both owned Stanley "steamers."

John had learned his trade as a millwright and came to work for the Marshalls at Marshall's Bridge in 1888, shortly after Israel and Elwood had taken over the paper business from their father, Thomas S. Marshall. When Israel and Elwood, along with S. Franklin Ewart, bought the Yorklyn mill in 1890, he and his growing family moved to that location, as did Israel Marshall and his growing family. John and his wife, Fanny, had at least six children, born between 1884 and 1903. The eldest, Mae, married Bert Guest, who was the tower operator at Chadds Ford Junction, where the Octoraro Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad crossed the Wilmington & Northern Branch of the Reading. The second, Frank, was my father's age. Roy was the youngest, and all his life he followed closely in his father's footsteps, liking the same things, having the same excellent mechanical ability, and getting along well with the Marshalls. He remembered well when his father owned and drove three Stanley cars (one at a time), an early Model E or EX of about 1906, a Model 70 or 71 of about 1911, and a Model 720 of 1915. John bought these cars used from a young Stanley dealer named Clarence Marshall.

By 1900, John and his family were living in a large house owned by the mill company just across Red Clay Creek, and he was superintendent of the Yorklyn mill. By the time young Roy was in his 'teens, he was working in the mill, and he soon married a Yorklyn girl, Emma Watson, and they had a daughter, Bette, and two sons, John II and Leroy Jr. Upon the retirement of his father in the 1930s, Roy (Sr) became superintendent of the mill and soon moved from Kennett Square into his parents' old home at Yorklyn. In the mid-1950s, National Vulcanized Fibre Company, the parent of the Marshall Brothers Paper Company, wanted to sell the property and offered it to Roy and Emma. They declined the offer, built a new home up the hill on Springhouse Lane, and Roy Jr. and his wife, Margie, bought the old home. (This house was sold by the estate of Leroy Benge Jr. to FAHP Board member Stan Wilcox, who in turn sold it to FAHP board member Chris Connelly.)

About 1910, seven-year-old Roy was coming down the dirt road from Kennett Square with his father in the Model EX. These cars had numerous ball bearings in the engine and the rear axle. John knew something was wrong as things began to clatter and the engine got rough. When they stopped, they could see spots of oil behind, and John said they had lost many balls from the bearings. It was never clear to me whether these were from the engine or the rear; if they were from the engine, they must have been running with the engine case off, not a good idea on dirt roads. In any event, John said they must find the missing balls and sent Roy behind to hunt.

Some were found in the soft dirt but was like hunting for a needle in a haystack. As you can usually do with a Stanley, they limped home.

During World War II, Roy was interested in what my father was doing with his growing collection of Stanley cars, and almost daily he would walk up from the mill office to my dad's shop to help. By 1946, Roy said he would like to own a Stanley such as the last one his father had owned, a 1915 Model 720, one of the first condensing cars. Mervin Allatt of Three Bridges, New Jersey, who dealt in Stanley cars and parts, found him one; Roy was delighted and started its restoration (it has turned out that this 720 may be the only one in existence today; it has been owned by Allen Blazick in California for many years). Roy had his "new" 720 running well for the 1949 season, after retubing the steel-tube boiler and doing a lot of tuning up and cosmetic work to a very original car. In addition to attending several steam car tours, he and Emma enjoyed their Stanley on the Glidden Tours of 1949, 1950, and 1952 and, like my father, never seemed to have any trouble. Once Roy advised me: "Fix everything you know about before you leave home, enough will happen (to be fixed) that you don't know about."

Roy and Emma loved the old car hobby, they were members of AACA, and they joined the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania when it was founded in 1949. They were charter members of the Brandywine Region AACA when it was formed in 1956.

Work Report: On Tuesday, September 30, a group of 25 volunteers was on hand at 6:00 to wish Tim Nolan well on his permanent move to Littleton, Colorado. They were: Steve Bryce (in charge of the work session), Brent McDougall, Bill Schwoebel, Dave Leon, Jerry Lucas, Jerry Novak, Emil Christofano, Lou Mandich, Paul Kratunis, Richard Bernard, Bob Jordan, Jane Jordan, Gary Green, Mac Taylor, Ken Ricketts, Mark Russell, Dennis Dragon, Ted Kamen, Bob Wilhelm, Ed Paschall, Dan Citron, Anne Cleary, Tom Marshall, Ruth Marshall, and Tim Nolan (the honoree).

Jerry Novak cooked the hamburgers and half-smokes to perfection on his gas grill. A photo of Tim Nolan in his Auburn Heights livery was signed by those in attendance and was presented to our departing volunteer with our best wishes.

Before the work session, Bill Schwoebel, Dave Leon, and Tom Marshall set the valves again on Locomotive 401. This time the engine was jacked off its driving wheels on the turntable and run in place on compressed air, sometimes with a little resistance being provided by the hand brakes. There is a lot of wear on the valve gear, but it is hoped that the cut-off will be more even than it has been recently.

Lou Mandich brought a year's supply of pea coal for our steam locomotives in 40# bags, which were stored in the basement under the shop. With new parts acquired by Bill Schwoebel, Ted Kamen and Bob Jordan began the hook-up for the speedometer on the Model 607. Wiring of the buildings on the Lionel train layout was continued by Ken Ricketts and Mac Taylor.

Jerry Lucas prepped the Mountain Wagon for its use on 10/5, and the Model K was brought to the upper garage for installation of a bracket on the superheater just outside the burner.

On Thursday, October 2, a driving lesson was scheduled for 6:00 with Tom Marshall showing John Bacino, Devon Hall, and Jared Schoenly how to fire up the Model 735. Unfortunately, the instructor failed to teach them much or to give them their first experience behind the wheel of a Stanley. After checking all the preliminary items, such as water level in the boiler, fuel pressures, etc., a pronounced leak at the banjo bolt on the pilot prevented the project from moving forward, as darkness settled in. Another lesson has been scheduled for October 9.

The session was attended by 16 volunteers, viz: Tim Ward (in charge), Steve Bryce, Bill Schwoebel, Dave Leon, Ted Kamen, Bob Jordan, Gene Maute, Gerhard Maute, Jim Personti, Geoff Fallows, Richard Bernard, Kelly Williams, and the four mentioned above. The Model K was moved back to the museum, and the floor was mopped by Tim Ward in preparation for the Steamin' Sunday October 5.

Three of the items sold at the Stanley Museum auction on Sept. 13 were loaded on Dave Leon's truck, as he volunteered to deliver them to the successful bidders at Hershey next week. These were the old 3-venturi burner from the Model K, a Model 735 rear axle, and a Model 750 (or "SV") steering column and wheel. Work continued by Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Tim Ward, Geoff Fallows, and Bill Schwoebel on the speedometer drive for the Model 607, and it is almost completed. The new cable has been installed, and also the new 16-tooth gear. The Model K, having a new superheater bracket fabricated and installed, was returned to its place in the Museum.

The Maute boys cleaned flangeways and blew off the track on the Auburn Valley Railroad in preparation for its use on 10/5. They also worked in the FAHP library. Steve Bryce and Bill Schwoebel examined the broken glass on our gas pump (used for kerosene when operable), and a decision will be made on whether to replace it with plastic or glass. Jim Personti finished turning down the pistons for the Model H-5 engine, now being rebuilt, and new rings have been ordered through Bill Rule. Contractor Andy Walton met again with Steve Bryce and Susan Randolph to discuss the new wall to be built alongside the A.V.R.R. track near the race bank. The plan is to remove the track in this area right after our final runs on 11/29.

We are sad to report the passing of Kathy Beck's father and Ann Bryce's aunt in North Carolina and extend our sincere sympathies to Kathy and Ann. Tim Nolan reports that he has arrived safely in Colorado with his belongings.