

JANUARY 19, 2009 F.A.H.P. NEWS

Presidential Inaugurations, 1861 and 2009: Indeed it was an historic occasion when the special train carrying Barack Obama and his family from Philadelphia to Washington for his inauguration stopped in Wilmington on Saturday to pick up Delaware's vice president-elect Joe Biden and his wife. As our newspapers pointed out, this journey was symbolic of an earlier one in 1861 when Abraham Lincoln went by train from Philadelphia to Washington during the night of February 22-23, after the president-elect had spoken on the steps of Independence Hall on Washington's birthday.

President-elect Obama has always been a great admirer of Lincoln, also an Illinois man. In 2004, he initiated his campaign for the U.S. Senate at Knox College in Galesburg, where Lincoln debated Stephen A. Douglas in 1858. Lincoln climbed out a window of the small college building onto a platform erected for the debate, and said "now I have been through college". Twice Obama spoke from the steps of the old Capitol building in Springfield, home turf for our 16th president, once to announce his bid for the nomination (in 2007), and once to begin his long and circuitous trek to Washington to become the 44th president of the United States.

January 20 has not always been inauguration day. Three times, Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated on March 4, but his third term was shortened by 6 weeks when the official time was moved to January 20. March 4 had been chosen by our country's founders, as it was considered too difficult to travel in mid-winter, and the early March date was about as soon as it was practical after the previous November's elections. Thomas Jefferson, the first president to be inaugurated in Washington, left Monticello the previous November to make sure he would be there on time. This consideration was valid through the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth, it became awkward to have such a long lame-duck period between election day and the inauguration. A very ill F.D.R. took the oath for his fourth term in front of the White House on January 20, 1945, and that date has been official since, except when the 20th falls on a Sunday, when the inauguration is delayed by one day.

Lincoln left Springfield for the last time on February 11, 1861, and arrived in Washington about 5 A.M. on February 23. Threats against his life were prevalent, and Alan Pinkerton, founder of the nation's most well-known detective agency, was hired to guard his life. In Philadelphia, Pinkerton heard of a plot to assassinate the president-elect as he passed through Baltimore, a hot-bed for southern sympathizers, so, instead of traveling a direct route through Wilmington on the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore R.R. (later the PRR and now Amtrak), the president-elect was secretly moved through Harrisburg during the night. He passed through Baltimore (where it was necessary to change R.R. stations) about 3 A.M. and checked in at the Willard Hotel before the capital was awake. About 8 days later, he was sworn in by a slavery man, Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, whose infamous Dred Scott decision had increased tensions leading to the Civil War, which the incoming president was about to inherit.

Our new president's inheritance seems no less daunting than that of President Lincoln. We are hoping he can get Americans working together for the common good. He will need help from all of us. Let us celebrate tomorrow, January 20, 2009, as the beginning.

A large number of volunteers provided two very productive work sessions on Tuesday and Thursday evenings last week. The modified burner for our Model K was finished and installed by Art Wallace and Bob Jordan, and the car is back in the museum. The Models 87 and 735 were brought up to our working area for minor work. The burner is off the 87 with the hope that modification can improve the extreme fuel-vapor smell when the burner shuts down. Jeary Vogt plans to complete the new electrical wiring on the 735 within the next several weeks. Ted Kamen, Jim Personti, and their helpers have virtually completed the 20-H.P. burner to be used as a spare and for display in the museum. Jimmy Groome, Dave Lumley, Bob Stransky and Bill Schwoebel removed and rebuilt the oil pump on Locomotive 402. Walter Higgins, Mark Russell, and Emil Christofano removed the motor from the Rauch & Lang electric, and this, together with a spare motor, will be rebuilt by a professional shop in New Jersey. Both boiler and engine are out of the Model 607, with Steve Bryce, Jerry Lucas and Lou Mandich heading the effort, and they are under study to see how these can be best modified and improved. Butch Cannard has spent two evenings bringing the new computer in our office up to speed. Yesterday, Kelly Williams began the wire-winding of his Mann (Stanley-type) boiler in our shop. Witnessing and helping with this process during the next couple of weeks will be especially worth-while for our newer volunteers.

Steve Bryce, with help from Bill Schwoebel and others, plans to list on a bulletin board in the shop the immediate and ongoing work projects, so that volunteer time spent at the work sessions will be more rewarding and productive. Steve, Howard McKean, Emil, Jerry Novak, and Dan Citron inherited a burner problem in the museum on Saturday, and through their resourcefulness got the burner operating on kerosene so the inside temperature did not drop out of the 40's. It appears the fuel line from the oil tank to the burner had moisture that froze, cutting off the supply. Many thanks to all of you for discovering the problem and temporarily fixing it.

The temporary Executive Committee, chaired by Steve Bryce, will meet on Thursday, January 22, at 4:30, in the F.A.H.P. office, and the Events and Scheduling Committee, chaired by Anne Cleary, will meet at the same place on Tuesday, January 27, at 7:00.

Our thoughts and best wishes go out to Bill Schwoebel's mother who has been in Intensive Care at Bryn Mawr Hospital, and to our good friend Art Hart, who was diagnosed with liver cancer.

Tom