

JANUARY 25, 2010 WEEKLY NEWS

Connections to the Outside World: The railroad came to Auburn in 1872, and changed the name to Yorklyn. Before that, how did the several milling operations get their raw materials and ship the finished goods out of the tiny community? After 1845, there were three distinct mill sites, and we can only surmise how they prospered and grew.

Some of the history of the Auburn Mills Historic District and its mills was covered in the “Weekly News” of January 11, 2010. Early roads in the general area were discussed in the “News” of March 23, 2009. The three mill sites were: 1) the old Garrett Grist Mill of 1730, enlarged and changed in the 19th century by a succession of owners, and operated through the entire 20th century as the Marshall Brothers Paper Mill on present-day Benge Road, much of which is intact today, 2) the Garrett Snuff Mills, by far the largest employer in the community during the 19th century, the brick mill buildings of which are mostly gone as a result of floods and neglect, and 3) the Lower Snuff Mill, one-half mile downstream destroyed by fire in 1964.

The only logical ways in and out were: 1) Up (or down) the steep hill on present-day Benge Road to Old Public Road which ran through to connect with Old Wilmington Road, 2) Up (or down) the steep hill (although at a somewhat different location prior to 1850) of Snuff Mill Road to Centreville on the Kennett Turnpike, and 3) Down Red Clay Creek on the “Creek Road” to Mount Cuba and then either jogging south to a junction with the Lancaster Pike (now Route 48) near “Hercules”, or navigating the hills to the Kennett Turnpike.

For the snuff business, tobacco stems (very little leaf was used) and flavored ingredients, and packaging barrels and tins had to be imported and the many brands of finished snuff shipped out to wholesale outlets in Philadelphia and Baltimore. For the manufacture of paper, and wool and cotton yarn, the same was true: raw materials came into the mills, and the finished products needed to be shipped out. History tells us that the Garrett family, living in Philadelphia through much of the 19th century, made millions from their snuff mills at Auburn (Yorklyn), but that the several proprietors of the mill on Benge Road had good times and bad, as evidenced by the several products manufactured (flour, cotton yarn, woolen yarn, and paper) and the many turnovers in ownership.

Steam was replacing water power in all the mills by the time the railroad arrived in 1872. Some local firewood was used but coal was the main fuel to power the heavy machinery, and coal had to be shipped in. Freight trains on the new railroad, tiny by today’s standards, solved the problem. Not only did the existing mills survive and enlarge, but new industrial expansion was made possible by the ease of moving goods. There is no manufacturing in Yorklyn today, but this might have been the case by the late 19th century, had it not been for the railroad.

Dan Citron has called a meeting of the Museum Committee for Tuesday, January 26 (tomorrow), at 7 P.M., probably convening in the F.A.H.P. office before going to the Museum itself. Please note this corrected date. Jonathan Rickerman has called a Publicity Committee meeting for the same time in the FAHP office. Both are important committees and members thereof are urged to attend. An A.V.R.R. meeting has been scheduled for February 2 at 7 P.M.

Two fruitful work sessions last week assembled Model 607 parts to be nickel-plated, which are presently spread out on a blanket on the garage floor. A few parts are still to be found before all are catalogued, photographed, and prepared for delivery to the plater at Harrisburg Airport. One of the traction motors, rebuilt and ready to go, was delivered to Emil Christofano for eventual installation in our Rauch & Lang electric. We purchased 381 gallons of clear kerosene from Griffith Oil in Nottingham, PA, which was delivered last Friday. The 3-nozzle burner grates should soon go to the foundry in Kalamazoo, MI, thanks to Mike May and a pattern-maker in Wayne, MI. Two of these grates will be for F.A.H.P., and four for Allen Blazick, who supplied the original grate from which the pattern was made. Jim Personti is working on newly-designed nozzles for the vaporizers required for these new grates.

Jeff Pollock, Ted Kamen, Bob Stransky, Bob Jordan, and others are making progress in fitting the new cross-member to the front of the frame of our Model 607. More metal parts from this car have been brought to the garage for the stripping of old paint. Bill Schwoebel and Jim Personti jacked up Locomotive 402 and tested the motion on compressed air to determine where the “knock” is coming from. They have come to tentative conclusions. Jerry Lucas, Steve Bryce, Mark Mathre, Mark Russell, Steve Bryce, and our new volunteer Jack Nicely proceeded with the work to be done on the Museum cars, following the list in the “official” notebook prepared by Steve Bryce. Lou Mandich patched a leaking steam pipe on the heating system in the garage (this section was replaced on Friday). Richard Bernard and Jack removed the gauges from the Model 78, and we are sending these, along with seven others, to England for rebuilding. The picnic tables were removed from the lawn and stacked at the rear of the property for the remainder of the winter and early spring. Some progress was made in cleaning up the “back building”, but there is a long way to go. Butch Cannard continues to keep the computers in the office working properly and, as always, did some needed printing. The Maute boys worked on more photos, literature, etc. in our library on Thursday night. Last Wednesday, Bill Schwoebel, Butch Cannard, Steve Bryce and Jerry Novak visited the Boyertown Museum, shared ideas, and inspected a stationary steam engine offered to us.

I am pleased to report that our Annual Meeting on Tuesday, February 16, will be held in the Kennett Township Building close to the “7-way” intersection at Rosedale. Specific directions on how to find it will be forthcoming. We are also very happy to tell you that Steve Bryce, Bill Schwoebel, and I met with Susan Randolph, our newly-selected Executive Director, last Friday, we had a very good exchange, and we are looking forward to introducing her to all of you a.s.a.p. She plans to attend our Annual Meeting, and will be with us full time starting March 1.

The health and well-being of our members is of interest to many of you. Steve Bryce gave us a little scare last Thursday, when he had a heart flare-up while playing tennis. Fortunately expert assistance at Christiana Hospital got him back to normal quickly, and he was told it was not a heart attack. He goes for a stress test this week, and hopes to have a clean bill of health. Gerhard Maute has been diagnosed with a recurrence of Lyme Disease, which greatly reduces his energy level. David Lumley is working at his old job in Atlanta, for which he is very thankful, but he travels a lot, and does not plan to relocate to Delaware in the near future. All of us wish the three of you our very best.

Tom