

Kennett  
Unionville  
Chadds Ford

# The Kennett Paper

www.kennettpaper.com

Vol. XX No. 43

Oct. 20-26, 2005

## Take a ride back in time at 'Steamin' Sunday'

By PRUE OSBORN

On Sunday, Oct. 30, the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve invite the public to its Halfwoven "Steamin' Sunday" when guests of all ages may *can catch a ride in the 1916 electric car, tour the grounds on the one-eight-horse steam engine train, ride on the 1915 Stanley steam mountain wagon and visit the museum containing, among other things, the world's largest collection of operating Stanley steam automobiles.*

Thomas and Ruth Marshall will also host tours of the first floor of their home just south of the Pennsylvania line in Yorklyn, Del. on Creek Road. The Auburn Heights mansion, built by Thomas Marshall's grandfather, Israel Marshall, in high Victorian style in 1897, was passed down through the generation and kept in pristine condition. Many of the furnishings date back to the earliest days of the house.

Children most love to ride on the

child-size steam trains that run for about a half-mile on track around the Auburn Heights property. One train runs in each direction.

The Marshalls host events at the preserve eight or nine times a year, as well as private events for special groups. Each week as many as 20 volunteers do mechanical work on the engines to keep the trains running well. The trains are housed in the Marshall's original carriage house and stable.

Steaming along in an automobile was a way of life in the early 20th century. And, it's a way of life Thomas Marshall and his father Clarence wanted to preserve for future generations to appreciate. The family collected and restored back to running condition 14 Stanley Steamers, one Mobile steamer, two Packards and the 1916 electric car, all of which are housed in the museum that they built in 1947. All the cars are driven and kept in driving condition, as well as shining condition with lots of shiny

brass and gleaming paint jobs. Each has been given new hydraulic brakes over the years. "The original brakes were awful," Thomas Marshall said.

"They didn't care much about stopping. They just cared about going."

The Marshall family owned and operated the Marshall Brothers' Paper Mill and later the insulte fiber mill known as National Vulcanized Fiber and later still as NVR. On the side Clarence Marshall owned a Stanley Steamer dealership from 1910-1918.

The jewels of the collection are a 1905 buggy-style vehicle that Thomas Marshall has driven as far as Media for a show and a Stanley racer, the 1908 version of a sports car.

The first Stanley came out in 1902 and the last one in 1924 when the improvement of gas-powered cars sealed the steamers' fate. The Marshalls have the largest collection of Stanleys in the world. Thomas Marshall said the really big seven pas-

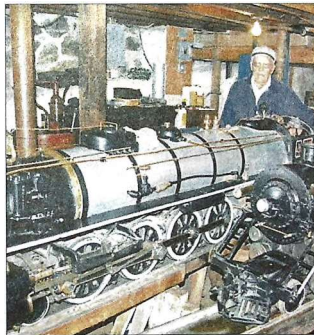


Photo by Prue Osborn

Thomas Marshall stands beside the two spiffy steam engines that pull the child-size trains around the grounds of Auburn Heights.

TRAINS continues on Page A14

## Take a train ride back in time at 'Steamin' Sunday' at Auburn Heights

TRAINS from Page A1

enger 1912 Stanley had 30 horsepower engines, but the nicest to drive is the smaller 1914 10-horse power Model

607. Also in the collection is a 1932 Packard Twin Six Dual-cowl Sport Phaeton and a 175-horse power Packard which Marshall's father bought new in 1937 for \$4,500.

Visitors to Auburn Heights have the opportunity to tour around in the Stanley Steamer Mountain Wagon that is built like an open-air bus with five bench seats that carry as many as 10 people. It has a fold-down canvas top and the seats can be removed to allow its use as a flatbed truck.

Electric cars might be all the rage in 2005, but they were also the rage a

century ago when one-third of the vehicles were electric, one third were steam and the final third were gas powered. Thomas Marshall said steam cars were the most reliable while gas cars were noisy, smelly and difficult to start and electric cars could only travel so far.

The creature comforts in Thomas Marshall's 1916 electric car at Auburn Heights might give today's Plus a run for its money. The coach driver's and passengers' seats are arranged like a conversation nook and there is even a vase with a rose. You cannot see any one behind the wheel because there is no wheel. The passengers sit in front of the driver, facing him to allow for easier socializing and steering is done with a tiller. The gears are tucked away to the side of

the driver.

Clarence Marshall bought the five-seater Buick and Lang electric car after World War II when gas was at a premium. "When gas became available, he threw it away," his son remembered.

It sat in the museum with out running until three years ago when neighbor Emil Christofano became a volunteer at the preserve and made it his mission to restore the car to running condition. It now has a modern charger and it can run for about 30 miles on a lot of golf cart batteries. "All it takes is an extension cord," Christofano said.

On the day before Halloween, visitors will enjoy free popcorn popped in 1920 Creators and Co. steam popper and peanut butter.

Thomas and Ruth Marshall said they would be the last generation of Marshalls to live at Auburn Heights as they have willed the preserve to the State of Delaware to be part of the state parks system.

"Steamin' Sunday" will be held from 1 until 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 30. Tickets for rides and a museum tour cost \$10 for adults and \$7 for children ages 2 to 12.

Adults who also wish to tour the mansion can buy a combination ticket for \$18. Tickets for the house tour only cost \$10.

Visitors arriving in Halloween costume will have tickets prices reduced by \$1.

For more information, visit the Website [www.auburnheights.org](http://www.auburnheights.org).