

F.A.H.P. News, May 20, 2013 Story

Fun with Our Mountain Wagon (Part Two: Tom Marshall): As mentioned last week, my father let me drive the “wagon” home from Boston, but I really didn’t know how to do it in 1946. After the restoration he gave it during the next year, however, it was his toy to enjoy for several years. By the mid-1950s, however, he had “moved on” and was glad to have me use it. I took to the car like a “duck takes to water,” and I did have FUN!

For many years, we were invited to the Woodward Farm at Mendenhall for a July 4th picnic, along with about 30 others. One year I had the wagon full of adults, giving a ride down Kennett Pike. I went around the curve at Fairville too fast, and it started to swerve from the passengers’ weight high and to the rear. I almost lost it, but fortunately I got things under control and drove much more conservatively thereafter. I followed my father’s footsteps in taking the car to the annual Old Timers’ Picnic in Wilmington’s Josephine Gardens. With the car packed for the one-mile free ride, we loaded on North Park Drive opposite the zoo, crossed Market Street Bridge, then up South Park Drive to Van Buren Street Bridge, and back to the starting point.

In the mid-1950s just before the Salk vaccine for Polio was perfected, the Wilmington JayCees staged a “Mile of Dimes” with sidewalk tapes along both sides of Market Street from 5th to 7th Streets, and those who put dimes on either tape could have a four-block ride in the “wagon,” complete with city traffic. On a much larger scale, Henry Austin Clark Jr., well known in antique automobile circles, convinced the National March of Dimes hierarchy that they should publicize a coast-to-coast tour on which a Pony Express mail pouch would be carried in an antique car from Boston to Los Angeles. With knowledge of the tour route and the schedule, hobbyists were invited to participate for one or more days near their prospective homes, with each participating car carrying the pouch for a short distance. The tour left Boston on January 2, 1956, and I joined with the Mountain Wagon at Phillipsburg, New Jersey, three days later, after driving to Earle Eckel’s home, 10 miles east of Phillipsburg, on a bitterly cold January afternoon. The next day, joined by about six other cars and with melting snow on the roads, we made the trip to Reading, Pennsylvania, after promotional stops at Easton, Bethlehem, and Allentown. Eckel had the good judgment to substitute his 1925 Pierce Arrow roadster for his 1914 Stanley as he followed along. The Mountain Wagon carried the illustrious pouch from Reading to Philadelphia, where high winds blew the top off going down the Benjamin Franklin Parkway toward City Hall. When we got to Rodney Square in Wilmington by 2:30 that day, I decided to call it quits and left the tour to head back to Auburn Heights with the wagon’s top in shreds. Clark, himself in a 1929 Lincoln Touring Car, was the only one to make the whole trip from Boston to Los Angeles, after a five-week journey.

About 1958, I carried about 14 beauty queens, who were vying for the title “Queen of the Furrow,” in a West Chester parade from the VFW home north of town. About 1960, a load of younger friends went Christmas caroling around Hockessin in the wagon on several occasions, often driving across someone’s frozen front lawn to serenade the occupants. My mother made sure we carried logs heated in her oven to keep the passengers’ feet warm under lap robes. Before the annual car shows started at the Hagley Museum in 1996, the museum often had fall festivals to which the Mountain Wagon was invited to give rides. On one such day, I was busy. Starting about 10 A.M. and stopping briefly about 2:00 to take on water, by the time we concluded, the Hagley people told me 850 had ridden on the big car that day.

In the 1970s, the Mountain Wagon appeared in one Hollywood production called “Ragtime.” This was the story of the architect Stanford White, his girlfriend actress Evelyn Nesbitt, and Evelyn’s husband, Harry K. Thaw, who shot and killed White in 1906. It was James Cagney’s last movie (he was the police commissioner). The scenes were shot in Lower Manhattan, advertised as Philadelphia, and Weldin Stumpf operated the car. The scene made it for about 10 seconds in the final movie version.

Work Report: On Tuesday, May 14, 16 volunteers attended the work session, with another nine attending the Events Committee meeting at the same time (Jerry Novak attended both). At the work session were Jerry Novak (in charge), Ken Ricketts (a new volunteer especially interested in our electric trains), Jay Williams, Dave Leon,

Jeff Pollock, Art Wallace, Bob Jordan, Dennis Dragon, Bill Schwoebel, Mark Russell, Lou Mandich, Tim Ward, Ted Kamen, Emil Christofano, Paul Kratunis, and Tom Marshall.

Several more stanchions were painted black, and an attempt was made to cut a mixing-tube hole in the new three-venturi burner casting. A thin coat of RTV was applied to the surfaces of two condenser pans for the Model 735. A new brass junction box for the brake lines on the 1937 Packard was installed, and the fluid was bled using a pressure pot. Most fittings are good, but there is a slight leak at one that will be addressed. On the Model 607, the speedometer has been hooked up and tested and more small parts were attached in various places. A search is on for some plated screws and one escutcheon plate. The Model 87 was prepped for the Brass-in-Berks tour next week, and a fuel line was replaced on the Model 76 for the same purpose.

The following attended the monthly Events Committee meeting: Anne Cleary (chair), Ryan Cleary, Susan Randolph, Rose Ann Hoover, Richard Bernard, Art Sybell, Brent McDougall, Dan Citron, and Jerry Novak.

On Thursday, May 16, 14 volunteers turned out, viz: Steve Bryce, Bill Schwoebel, Dave Leon, Tim Nolan, Ted Kamen, Paul Kratunis, Jerry Koss, Bob Stransky, Jim Personti, Geoff Fallows, Richard Bernard, Bob Jordan, Tim Pouch (from the Museum Studies Program at U of D, who is preparing "Little Toot" for new stain or paint), and Tom Marshall (in charge).

On the Model 607, a tiny fuel seepage near the low-water shut off was repaired, and a capped-off hose was attached to the siphon fitting. The water tank is full, and the gauge glass for same is properly attached. Other fixtures were installed, such as the seat cushion retainers, two of the door handle escutcheon plates (one is still missing), and the foot plates at each of the three doors. The 735 condenser is being re-studied to determine whether it is ready to be put back together. Preparations were continued on the Models 87 and 76 and on the trailers to haul them to Reading for the Brass-in-Berks Tour, May 19-23. A new 1-3/8" venturi-tube hole was cut in the three-nozzle grate for our Model K, and the mixing tube was fit in place; two of our three sections are complete in this respect.

On Saturday, May 18, Steve Bryce took the Model 76 and Jerry Novak took the '32 Packard to a "Day in Old New Castle," where they were parked in front of the old courthouse. On Monday, May 27, a few of our cars will participate in Kennett Square's Memorial Day parade, as we have done many times in past years. If you would like to ride in one of our cars, please contact Susan Randolph a.s.a.p.

Starting the week of May 28, new efforts will be put forth to rearrange our tools and parts in the shop and various storage areas and the cataloguing and appraising of the spare parts we want to sell.

On Tuesday, June 4, starting at 7 P.M. sharp, a classroom-type session will be held in the museum, explaining the Stanley system, including burner, boiler, engine, and other working parts. It is especially important for Beginner and Intermediate Operator candidates to attend. This is the only lecture planned this year covering the Stanley operating system. All volunteers are welcome, but this lecture is intended for those who have a serious interest in becoming operators of Stanley cars. Please let Susan Randolph at the FAHP office know by May 31 if you wish to attend.