

F.A.H.P. News, February 6, 2012

The Early Mills on Red Clay Creek (continued from last week): Less than a mile downstream from where Burrows Run joins Red Clay Creek, there were two mills at Mount Cuba, served by a single dam and mill race. A stone mill, undoubtedly a grist mill, was just behind a frame mill that served as a saw mill and later as a cider mill. I remember visiting the latter mill in the 1930s, where my mother bought sweet apple cider in the fall. Next to it was a reciprocating blade for timber fed by hand, turning it into rough lumber. When Lamot Copeland bought the property in the mid-1960s, he had the walls of the stone mill restored, and so they stand today with no roof above. When the Wilmington & Western Railroad was built in 1872, the area around the mills and the dam was promoted as a picnic spot and recreational park, popular not only with those who came by special train but with local people as well. Predating Brandywine Springs as a park by 20 years, the “grove” contained a dance hall, a restaurant (of sorts), and a small chapel. At the urging of Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc., Mr. Copeland also rebuilt the dam in the late 1960s, so patrons of the revived Wilmington & Western could again enjoy the mill race and the lake above the dam, adjacent to its present picnic grove.

Over a mile downstream at Wooddale was one of the most famous mill sites, named for James and his son, Alan Wood, who built an iron rolling mill there about 1820. Most of the shovels for hand digging the original Chesapeake and Delaware Canal were manufactured at Wooddale. Alan Wood moved his home and business to Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, where the Alan Wood Steel Company prospered until about 20 years ago. Wood still owned the Wooddale property when the Wilmington & Western came through in 1872, and a station was built to serve the milling community. The mill had other owners until Israel and Elwood Marshall and their brother-in-law, Dr. Taylor S. Mitchell of Hockessin, bought the property in 1894 to expand their papermaking business. J. Albert Marshall, one of Elwood’s sons, managed the mill before and during World War I, until a disastrous fire in 1918 burned it to the ground. The property, along with the original Wood mansion and several mill houses, was then purchased by the Rupert and Biggs families, who still own portions of the area today. The most recent dam, obviously rebuilt before 1918, is still intact along Barley Mill Road opposite the Hoopes Reservoir Dam.

The community of Faulkland, on the road of the same name where it crosses Red Clay Creek adjacent to Brandywine Springs Park, also had two distinctive mills served by a single dam. The older grist mill in operation before 1790 was the original location of automated milling machinery installed by local inventor Oliver Evans. The other mill was a spice mill owned and operated by the Fell family for at least three generations. Two of the nineteenth-century homes, a barn, and a carriage house still exist, but the mill buildings are long gone.

I purposely skip the mill at Greenbank, as it warrants a special story yet to come. Downstream over ½ mile, however, was an original mill site at Marshallton that before 1900 had become the Delaware Hard Fibre Company owned by the Rupert family. A sprawling facility, it was serviced by a railroad trestle and several tracks from the W & W Railroad. When converted

from a fibre mill, it was big in the plastics business under the name Haveg Corporation, which was bought in the late 1960s by Hercules, Inc. Finally this property was known as Ametek and operated as such until about 15 years ago, when all operations shifted to Glasgow, Delaware.

Work Report: On Tuesday, Steve Bryce and Mark Russell brought back the new sign for “out front,” which Mark had finished in his shop. Susan has completed the text for this sign and will order the letters, both permanent and removable, as well as the tracks to be attached. A lot of time was spent on the steering of the 1912 Model 87, as it was discovered that some of the hard steering was attributed to the rack-and-pinion gear box. This was adjusted by Jerry Lucas and helpers. The throttle on the 725, the action of which was “too sharp,” was removed, and the problem was discovered. A new throttle will be installed and the old one repaired, either locally or by John Packard. The locomotive boiler was tested at 200# hydrostatic pressure, and we thought a small leak was apparent at the mud ring, left side. The new wheels for the Rauch & Lang were coated with a clear epoxy sealer. Volunteers working on Tuesday were Steve Bryce (in charge), Bob Jordan (coordinator of Model 607 project), Bob Stransky, Tim Ward, Tim Nolan, Robert Hopkins, Dave Leon, Mark Russell, Jeff Pollock, Lou Mandich, Ted Kamen, Jerry Lucas, Richard Bernard, Art Wallace, Kelly Williams, and Tom Marshall.

On Thursday, a lot more time was spent on the Model 87 steering, headed by Steve Bryce. The whole king pin adjustment was studied, and with written instructions from Herb Kephart, the front wheels were pulled off and proper adjustments made. It is not certain, but it appeared the right king pin was adjusted too tight. Everything is back together and ready for testing on the road. The new throttle has been installed on the Model 725, and it is nearly ready for testing under steam. A lot of cleaning work is continuing on parts for the 607, especially the flue and copper engine cases. We are still searching for the small plates that cover the joints on the wheel felloes, two per wheel. Butch installed the new gauge glass on the popcorn boiler, and it is almost ready for testing. The old A.V.R.R. locomotive boiler was turned upside down and tested again, and no leak of any kind was detected at 200# p.s.i. It has been returned to storage until we can dispose of it. Jim Personti completed the repair of the 1000# steam gauge for the Seal Cove Museum. A load of scrap was taken to the scrap yard last Monday and netted FAHP \$166.40. Volunteers working on Thursday were Tom Marshall (in charge), Bob Jordan (607), Steve Bryce, Tim Nolan, Ted Kamen, Richard Bernard, Art Wallace, Eugene Maute, Gerhard Maute, Bob Young, Chuck Erikson, Jim Personti, Geoff Fallows, Bill Schwoebel, and Butch Cannard.

There will be no work session on Tuesday, February 7, so everyone can attend FAHP's Annual Meeting. We hope to see you at the Hockessin Library on Valley Road near Old Lancaster Pike. Refreshments are at 6:30, and the meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M.