

FAHP News, December 14, 2015

Mitchell Reunions: The greater Mitchell family, numerous around Hockessin for several generations, were mostly Quakers descended from Thomas Mitchell, who bought about 1,000 acres of land around North Star Crossroads in 1796. Eight years later he built a portion of the stone farmhouse next to Woodside Farm Creamery, and seven generations named Mitchell have lived in this house continuously since that time. James and Janet Mitchell operate the creamery and represent the seventh generation, with Jim's parents, Joseph and Kathryne, and their daughter Deborah, still living in the old farmhouse.

As the family grew in the early 19th century, the 1,000 acres was divided between sons, and several built homes in the direction of present-day North Star development. Soon there were numerous Mitchell cousins occupying many of these properties. One such cousin was John Mitchell, who left the North Star area in the mid-19th century to purchase the original William Cox farm on Old Wilmington Road. John was an original shareholder in the Wilmington & Western Railroad in 1872, and his farm remained in the family until sold for development by his granddaughter about 25 years ago. One of John's sons, Stephen Mitchell, bought a smaller farm on a connecting lane between Old Wilmington Road and Newport-Gap Turnpike, which connector is now named Mitchell Road.

Another family member to leave the North Star area after the Civil War was Taylor S. Mitchell, who became a family doctor in Hockessin and married Mary Marshall, sister of the Marshall brothers Israel and Elwood. They bought a large frame house in the center of present-day Hockessin, and perhaps inspired by his brother-in-law who was building Auburn Heights, they built a stone mansion around the old dwelling, which was named the "Gateway." Taylor and Mary had three daughters: Elizabeth "Bessie," who was never married; Edith, who married Isaac Wetherill of Chester; and Jane, who married John Rubincame. The Wetherills had two sons, John and Richard.

Elizabeth Cloud Mitchell married Israel Marshall in 1877. I am the only one living of their six grandchildren, all born during the 19 years that Elizabeth "Lizzie" was a widow.

Several reunions of "our branch" of the Mitchell family were held in the first 60 years of the 20th century. One such was at Auburn Heights in 1903, celebrating the 50th wedding anniversary of Joseph and Hannah Cloud Mitchell. A group photo on the front lawn shows the honored couple with their three children and their spouses, and their 12 grandchildren, none of whom were yet married. Another was held 10 years later to celebrate their 60th, this time at a Mitchell farm adjoining the original of 1796, which had been purchased by the expanding family in the mid-19th century. In 1913 Lorraine Edwards Marshall (born in 1912) was the couples' only great-grandchild. In 1923, another reunion of this branch of the family was held at "Linger Longer," the new home of Norman and Anna Marshall Mancill on Kennett Pike between Mendenhall and Hamorton.

About 1960, I recall two Mitchell summer reunions. One was held at the farm down the road from Woodside Farm Creamery, then occupied by the brothers Joseph and Paul Mitchell and their wives, Betsy and Ruth. In attendance were members of the Wollaston family, the Wetherills, the Passmores, the Marshalls, the Mancills, the Gilmores, and of course the Mitchells. The second was at the home of Norman and June Mancill in Rose Valley (near Media) a few years later, with many of the same cousins in attendance.

Work Report: On Tuesday afternoon, Kelly Williams, Steve Bryce, and Tom Marshall participated in a photo-shoot with master photographer Mike Ciosek in an attempt to replicate the May 30, 1908, photo of D. Walter Harper at Giant's Despair Hill Climb in a Stanley Model K, many parts of which are in our present Model K, rebuilt by Hyde Ballard in the 1970s. The front fenders, lamps, and imitation carbide generator were removed, as they did not show in the 1908 photo. These parts weighed about 70 pounds. Look for the results in the next "Herald" edition.

At the Work Session on Tuesday, December 8, seven volunteers were on hand, as follows: Jerry Lucas (in charge), Steve Bryce, John Bacino, Ted Kamen, Bob Jordan, Dennis Dragon, and Mark Russell.

Final sanding and masking was done on the running boards of the '37 Packard. On the Model H-5 engine, the steam chest cover was packed and installed, and the piston rod and valve rod glands were packed. The engine was hooked up to air, but shims on the wrist pins are necessary before it is run.

The rear wheels were "pulled" on the Mountain Wagon, and the hub bolts tightened. The left front wheel also had these bolts tightened, but it was not necessary to remove the wheel to reach the nuts. All four wheels have now been done. On the Model 76, a new steam delivery pipe on top of the boiler was fabricated. The floor tile work in the tiny toilet room in the shop was virtually finished with the addition of trim strips and a door-step plate.

On Thursday, December 10, eight volunteers answered the call: Dave Leon (in charge), Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Jim Personti, Geoff Fallows, Jared Schoenly, Steve Bryce, and Lou Mandich.

After several tries at final bending, the steam pipe from the top of the boiler to the throttle on the Model 76 was successfully fastened in place, and the firing-up valve on this car was re-packed. The running boards on the '37 Packard were sanded one last time and painted and now await the installation of the rubber matting and trim strips. It is thought that the water-level gauge on the Model 735 will now be too high with the new boiler height of 16", vs. 18" on the old boiler. This will be further studied to ascertain whether a change in height is required. New insurance cards were placed in all our cars, and the outdated ones were destroyed. The museum was cleaned and checked out for the final "public day" of the season, the upcoming "Old-Fashioned Holiday" event on Sunday, December 13.

The last regular work session of 2015 will be on Thursday, December 17, with Tim Ward in charge. This will be a regular session with nothing special planned. We hope as many as possible can attend to exchange holiday greetings.