

THE CONCEPT OF "THE MAGIC AGE OF STEAM"

Probably in late summer of 1971, the collections of the late T. Clarence Marshall (1885-1969), including the largest exhibit of steam-powered automobiles in the world, an imposing display of miniature stationary steam engines and tiny railroad locomotives, and the 7½"-gauge coal-burning Auburn Valley Railroad, all located on the grounds of his home on Route 82 at Yorklyn, Delaware, will be opened to the public as "The Magic Age of Steam". It is hoped that this facility will take its place among northern Delaware's fine tourist attractions, and in addition to providing a history of steam during its heyday in America, will also provide good wholesome fun for all ages.

Visitors to the grounds prior to public opening must understand that a number of construction projects are underway with the necessary disarray. Around the lawn, a second "main line" of the Auburn Valley is being constructed, which will offer a tunnel, a second trestle, a bridge over a stream (possibly covered), and the only double-tracked main of a 7½"-gauge railroad anywhere! Also a pond is being built, which will not only have a miniature railroad around it, but tiny boats powered by steam for youngsters to ride in. And of course a giant steam pump will pump the water into the pond. New driveways providing better traffic patterns for steam vehicles like Stanley Steamer Mountain Wagons, which will be used on special occasions, will also be constructed on the premises.

In the Museum building, most of the exhibits will be operating by steam. These will include not only small stationary engines and locomotives, but a popcorn machine, and a partially cut-away Stanley car. A simulated ride on a real steam train will be offered when the weather is against outdoor activities. It is now expected that all facilities, indoor and outdoor, will operate Saturdays and Sundays, April through October, with the Museum being open to groups on a reservation basis on week-days and during the winter months.

For definition purposes, we consider the Age of Steam in America from the end of the Civil War until the early 1920's. T. Clarence Marshall was born into and grew up in the Age of Steam, and he loved it dearly. As a young lad, he worked on the boilers and the Corliss Engines in his father's paper mill, and at the age of 19 built his first steam automobile. From 1910 until 1920 he was the agent for Stanley Steam Cars in Delaware and Chester County, Penna. He traveled to the Stanley factory in Newton, Mass. several times, and met the Stanley twins. After 20 years away from steam cars (1920-1940), he bought back a 1913 Stanley touring he had sold when new, and thus, just prior to World War II, Mr. Marshall started the collection which is to become the "Magic Age of Steam". The Museum building was built in 1947, and soon was full of antique automobiles, most of them steamers. In addition to restoring some 20 steam cars, Mr. Marshall turned to the construction of small live-steam locomotives, and in 1960 the original line of the Auburn Valley Railroad was built, and this facility was opened to the public on limited days from 1961 through 1965, as an activity of Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc.

Thomas C. Marshall, Jr., who from childhood shared his father's interest in everything powered by steam, is president of the "Magic Age of Steam", and Weldin V. Stumpf is mechanical director. Further information may be had by calling Area Code 302, 239-4410, or writing THE MAGIC AGE OF STEAM, Yorklyn, Del. 19736.