

FAHP News, December 8, 2014

Remember Pearl Harbor: [*Since December 7, 1941, and December 7, 2014, both fell on a Sunday, this year's is repeating the "Weekly News" of December 3, 2007*] This date 73 years ago was a “date that will live in infamy,” when the U. S. Pacific Fleet was wiped out by the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. People my age could always remember where they were on that day, which changed their lives.

I was included, along with 11 other students and three teachers, in a weekend trip to Washington, Richmond, and Williamsburg, sponsored by the history department at Mercersburg Academy. Leaving Mercersburg early Saturday morning, December 6, we first stopped in the nation's capital, where we visited the Library of Congress and the brand new National Airport across the Potomac. Later in the afternoon we had tours of Virginia's capitol building designed by Thomas Jefferson and the church where Patrick Henry gave his stirring “Give me Liberty or give me Death!” speech. Finally, we bedded down in one of the houses operated by Colonial Williamsburg, a short distance from Duke of Gloucester Street and the College of William and Mary.

Sunday morning we toured the several important buildings open to the public after their authentic reconstruction only a few years before. These included the House of Burgesses, the Raleigh Tavern, the George Wythe House, and the Governor's Palace, in addition to the Christopher Wren Building (1693) on the William and Mary campus. After a light lunch, the three cars (owned by three teachers, respectively) stopped for gas on the old Richmond Road just east of Williamsburg, before heading back to Washington and Mercersburg. It was about 2 P.M., and the radio was on in the filling station. News was coming through that the Japanese had bombed the U. S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in the Territory of Hawaii, where most of the Pacific Fleet was anchored. That would have been about 8:30 A.M. Hawaii time (if I'm correct, Hawaii was 2½ hours behind the West Coast in those days), so the attack was barely over. No one in this area knew the extent of damage at that point.

We reached Washington just after dark and stopped for dinner at a restaurant that resembled an old stable. In passing the government buildings, it was a strange sight to see them guarded by military men. On our way out of town, we went past the Japanese Embassy, which was also well guarded but dark inside. We reached Mercersburg by 10:30 or so and went to bed in our dormitories. That was the end of December 7, 1941, in the Eastern Time Zone.

On Monday morning, we learned what had really happened and heard an early assessment of the damage. President Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress and gave his “Day of Infamy” speech, after which Congress declared war on Japan. Within a day or two, war had also been declared against Hitler's Germany. A cloud hung over the Christmas season in 1941. “Remember Pearl Harbor” became a marching and rallying song for the rest of World War II. Our Pre-Meteorology unit at Brown University sang it almost daily as we marched all over Providence in 1943.

Work Report: On Tuesday, December 2, seven members attended the work session with over a dozen more at the Auburn Valley Railroad meeting. Those working were: Ted Kamen (in charge), Bob Jordan, Devon Hall, Lou Mandich, Brent McDougall, Tom Marshall, and Bill Schwoebel. A new 1-5/8" exhaust hose, furnished by Lou Mandich, was installed on the Model K. The oil was changed in the Model T Ford.

Lou Mandich took away more waste oil in small cans for disposal. The burner and superheater were removed from the Mountain Wagon, and cracks were evident in the superheater coil. It appears that the heat sink on the vaporizer also needs attention. We have on hand a 10-foot piece of 1/2-inch #304 stainless Schedule 40, so a new superheater will be fabricated soon.

On Thursday, December 4, 14 volunteers were on hand, viz: Mark Russell (in charge), Ted Kamen, Steve Bryce, Eugene Maute, Gerhard Maute, Dave Leon, Tom Marshall, Jared Schoenly, Kelly Williams, John Bacino, Tim Ward, Jim Personti, Geoff Fallows, and Brent McDougall.

Several worked on the Model H-5 engine, the main bearing caps were correctly aligned, the valve gear's eccentric straps were properly fitted, and it was determined that more clearance is required on the crankshaft end of the new bronze slides to allow for the connecting rod travel. Also, Jim took the crank bushings home to relieve them so the new crank bearings will fit the crank pins correctly. On the Model 87, the burner was installed or "put up" with new strip insulation making the seal between the burner pan and boiler. When the fitting holes are "mudded up," the car can be fired up and returned to the museum.

The Mountain Wagon burner was inspected and needs to be thoroughly cleaned. Locomotive 401, having had its annual "boiler wash" on Monday (by Jerry Novak and Tom), was externally cleaned from its runs on November 29. The remainder of the old pipe rack in the shop basement or "engine house" was removed and the area cleaned for other railroad use. The water in the batteries of the Rauch & Lang electric was topped off and the batteries automatically charged. On 11/29, the car was run on 84 volts, vs. the usual 90 v., and seemed to do very well. The traction motor is designed for the lower voltage.

In preparation for installing our Cretors popper on its new original-style cart, all fasteners attaching the unit to the long-used two-wheel trailer were disconnected. When the paint scheme is decided and the actual painting of the new cart takes place, the antique Cretors unit will be transferred. During this process, some plumbing changes may be required. Work continued in the FAHP library.