

May 22, 2006

Hello Steam Team:

In an earlier story, I told of restoring a very rough 1912 Mountain Wagon before and after my father died in 1969. It was finished in the spring of 1970, and I prepared to drive it to the Brass and Gas Tour at Woodstock, VT, in June of that year. Tom Ackerman went along as my passenger. The plan was to take two days in each direction, stopping overnight in Kingston, NY, about the mid-point of the journey. It was indeed an eventful trip.

Saturday morning we made good time and stopped somewhere near Bushkill Falls, PA, for lunch. In the early afternoon, however, just beyond Milford, PA, a loud clanking noise developed in the engine, and I pulled into a garage at Matamoras, PA, to investigate the problem. Several balls from the engine crossheads had escaped from their horizontal races, and were found broken up in the engine case. The garage man called a local Model T collector who was president of the bank in Matamoras, and he called several of his friends to locate the right-sized steel balls. By late that night we had our new steel balls, we got a room at a roadside motel nearby, and before noon on Sunday we thought we had made a good repair and were on our way again. Darkness caught us near Pittsfield, MA, where we spent the second night. About 20 miles short of Woodstock on Monday afternoon, the packings on the engine began to leak a lot of steam, but we made it in, knowing we could not take part in the daily tour runs without again checking into the engine. Again we found a good garage, and dug into the problem. Headquarters for the Brass and Gas Tour was at Lawrence Rockefeller's new Woodstock Inn, where our double room rate was \$22 daily, but they did not expect their guests to be covered with steam cylinder oil.

The balls had again escaped their crosshead guides, so it was decided to make a more permanent repair by installing bronze slides instead of the original-type balls. Harland Whitcomb of nearby North Springfield, VT, had a source for the round bronze bar stock, and a local ski-tow manufacturer in Woodstock turned them on his lathe and drilled them to fit. Once everything was put back together, I asked the master Stanley mechanic, Calvin Holmes, who was camping in Paul Bourdon's back yard, to check the clearances. He advised me to set one end of a slide somewhat looser- excellent advice. So, Tuesday night after bedtime, Tom Ackerman and I had everything put back together, and set to make 3 days of the 5-day Brass & Gas Tour.

Harland Whitcomb rode with us on the final day (Friday) along with about 8 others. As we were climbing a long Vermont grade in a drizzling rain, one of the passengers in the back remarked how well the

Mountain Wagon was handling the climb. Harland, on the front seat with me in his dry Vermont accent said "It has something to do with the management". That was one of the nicest compliments I ever received.

Tom and I left Woodstock for home in heavy rain on Saturday morning. It cleared in the afternoon and became windy. As we crossed the new high bridge over the Hudson River at Kingston, the wind velocity approached 60 m.p.h., or so it seemed. I shouted to Tom to climb over the seats and unfasten the rear curtain, as we couldn't stop on the bridge. He accomplished this outstanding feat, and the top was saved. I had remembered that January day nearly 15 years earlier when the top of our other Mountain Wagon was ripped to shreds on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. On our final water stop at Pottstown Sunday afternoon, a lady admiring the car said she had an original duster she would like to give me if I'd wait for her to go up the street to her home to fetch it. I was glad to accept the old and somewhat wholly grey duster. When I got home and examined it further, sewed in the collar was a name tag "B. Oldfield". No doubt the holes down the front were from his legendary cigar.

After Mike May determined the problem with the oil pumps on our locomotives, Brent McDougall and Jim Personti removed the pump from the 402 and Jim took it home to repair it. Richard Bernard and Dan Nichols cut and threaded four more sign stands for the museum, and Mark Hopkins and Dale and Ted Simpkins did some "paper hanging" around the boiler on the 725. Rob Robison continued reassembling piping under the hood of the 735, and he and Walter Higgins put the burner up on this car. On Wednesday, we handled 3 pre-school groups for train rides, electric train operations and visits to "Little Toot". Thanks to John McNamara, the Maute brothers, Bill Rule, Bob Reilly, and Ruth for making this day a success. Our quarterly Board of Directors meeting was held Thursday evening, with all members in attendance, save one. The day before Mike May and Greg Landrey chaired a meeting of the Collections Committee. John McNamara, Mike May and I also had a mini-Education Committee meeting at the conclusion of the train rides the same day. Saturday morning, 7 volunteers and Bob Reilly refined strategy for promoting our June 3-4 weekend at Auburn Heights. Each of the volunteers will try to distribute flyers or posters to 10 or more targeted locations within 10 miles or so. We have plenty of each promotional piece available, so pick them up and place them where they will do us some good. We are also running an ad in the Community Newspapers for two consecutive weeks, with the help of the Division of Parks. On Saturday, 4 cars and 7 volunteers went to Red Clay Valley Days at the Wilmington & Western R.R. (3 Stanleys and the Rauch & Lang) and on Sunday 3 cars and 6 volunteers attended the Linvilla Orchards Show (two Stanleys and the Rauch & Lang).

Bob and Barb Reilly are moved into the apartment over the garage and Bob has the FAHP office well on its way to being fully operational. FAHP will lease these premises from Tom, and later from

the State of Delaware after 2008. In addition to our continuing work projects this week, the Division of Parks and Recreation is having its Auburn Heights task force meet here Wednesday morning, 5/24. Next Monday, Memorial Day, there is a 10 A.M. parade in Kennett Square, and the 40th Anniversary of the Wilmington & Western (as a steam tourist railroad) at Greenbank. We hope to have some cars attend both events. Then comes our big "Steamin' Weekend" on June 3 and 4, where volunteers are needed and welcome. Thanks to one and all. Tom