

JULY 13, 2009 F. A. H. P. NEWS

Saratoga Springs, NY, 1770-2009: This week's "history lesson" combines some of what we learned about Saratoga last week with a wonderful Steam Car Tour in which we participated. Gideon Putnam, for whom our headquarters hotel was named, arrived on the site of present-day Saratoga about 1770, and discovered some healing qualities in the water of the many springs in the area. He built a boarding house and then a small hotel to accommodate those who were drawn to the site for their health. During the construction of a much larger and fancier hotel, Gideon died in 1812 before it was completed.

The Saratoga Battlefield, about 10 miles to the east, was made famous during the American Revolution when Colonial Generals Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold annihilated British and German mercenary forces under General John Burgoyne in early October of 1777, thwarting the British attempt to cut off New England from the rest of the rebelling colonies. Burgoyne, with less-than-accurate intelligence reports, had marched south from Montreal, a similar force under St. Leger was to come down the Mohawk, and another under General Clinton was to come up the Hudson from New York, all to meet in the vicinity of Albany. Clinton decided not to come, and St. Leger was soundly defeated in August, 1777, by General Nicholas Herkimer at Oriskany (near Rome), who paid for the victory with his life.

General U. S. Grant, 18th president of the United States, spent the last six weeks of his life at a cottage on McGregor's Mountain about 8 miles north of Saratoga, where he died on July 23, 1885 at the age of 63. Knowing he was in very poor health, a friend offered him the use of his cottage near the top of the mountain, and here Grant finished writing his memoirs. Mark Twain saw to it that they were published and the proceeds went to the Grant family, clearing them of their considerable debts. I had known that the Civil War hero was deeply in debt and was determined to complete this work in order to pay off this debt before his imminent decease, but I had not known where his memoirs were completed or where he died. We visited the Grant Cottage last Tuesday and learned that the task was finished about 4 days before he died.

In the 19th century Saratoga Springs became famous, first for its springs of healing waters, then as a place for the rich and famous to be seen during the social season, and finally (and perhaps most famously) for its thoroughbred and harness racing. At the turn of the 20th century, several huge hotels (two of them, the Grand Union and the United States, had about 900 guest rooms each!) accommodated important guests as they attended the races and were seen during the racing season. One of the favorite novels of my grandmother, Elizabeth C. Marshall, was entitled "Samantha at Saratoga". Things fell apart in the mid-20th century, and the town became derelict, but an outstanding revival has brought back much of the glory that was Saratoga. The 15 of us from Auburn Heights who attended the Steam Car Tour last week enjoyed spending our five days there.

In four trailers, we took five Stanleys to Saratoga. All our cars ran some, and none came home “broken”, but with the exception of the 725, each of the cars needs minor repair. Five cars were on the road to Lake George on Monday, and four made the 70 plus miles, with only the EX failing because of brake clearances with the new hydraulic brakes. The vaporizer cable was stuck on the Model 740, so it didn’t run after Monday. The burner and fuel system on the Model K gave some trouble, so it was driven about 3 days out of the five. The brake problem was corrected on the EX, and it made part of the tour on Thursday. The 725 and the 76 ran well all five days, although the 76 has a leaking water tank and a leak in the feed water heater. It is feared the boiler is leaking slightly on the Model K. The Cannards, the Schwoebels, the Bryces, the Higgins’, the John Hopkins’ including son Robert, Kelly Williams, Bob Hargraves, and the Marshalls all played a part in our enjoyment and our success. We are delighted that the “Young Driver Award” was presented to Robert Hopkins, and not so delighted that the trophy for the 10-H.P. car with the most trouble was awarded to our Model EX. Congratulations, Robert!

In our absence, an estimated 48 volunteers and staff people helped run the July 5 public event at Auburn Heights. Under the leadership of chairperson Richard Bernard, all went like clockwork (according to my hotline), and we had 291 paid visitors, with 60 to 70 touring the big house. Many thanks to all who made this possible. It proves that we can do it on the “platoon” system, as several of our key people were on their way to Saratoga that day.

Our participation in the July 4 parade in Hockessin was a great success, with three Stanleys from F.A.H.P. plus Bob Wilhelm’s ’18 Stanley taking part. Following the annual event, all cars journeyed to Woodside Farm, where Kathy Mitchell made sure everyone traveling in our cars was treated to ice cream on the house! The cleaning work on our Model 607 frame and wheels is progressing well, and Jonathan Rickerman has completed the new seats for a special flat car on the Auburn Valley R.R. Jerry Novak, with help from Emil Christofano, has modified the air line and installed the new shelving on the back wall of our garage/work area. We can now work out a better system for storing parts from the 607 and the Rauch & Lang during their complete restorations.

We have several Stanley projects for those who wish to participate in them. The burner must be dropped on the Model K to determine where the slight boiler leak is coming from. The back case can come off the Model EX to see if anything is broken or damaged in the differential area of this car. The burner can be dropped on the 740, with the hope of saving the vaporizer if the cable can be removed. The water tank can come out of the Model 76 for repair. A pressure test on this car’s feed water heater may tell us whether we need to drop the flue. We can continue work on the “hands on” Stanley engine exhibit in the museum, adding a pump box, a used boiler (donated by Don Bourdon), and the fabricating of a burner (we don’t have all we need to make this burner).

The Events and Scheduling Committee, chaired by Anne Cleary, will meet Tuesday night, July 14, at 7 P.M. in the F.A.H.P. office. All this in the “Good Ol’ Summertime”. Tom