

F.A.H.P. News, October 22, 2012

Happy Halloween: I was saddened to read of the passing of Donald R. Gregg, originally of Yorklyn, a few days ago. “Donny” was the younger son of S. Cooper and Mary Lafferty Gregg, born in 1938. He was an official and 40-year employee of Longwood Gardens before his recent retirement.

Donny and his older brother Dave, also deceased, grew up working in the Yorklyn store, operated for over 60 years by their grandfather, Grover C. Gregg Sr. As teenagers, the boys also cleaned buses for their parents, who owned and operated the Gregg Bus Company.

Our 1915 Stanley Mountain Wagon has been carrying passengers locally for over 65 years. In 1947, just a year after my father acquired it, he planned to participate with it in Kennett Square’s Halloween Parade with its new coat of red paint, heavy-duty wheels (the wrong size), and a certain amount of mechanical work. He needed costumed passengers to make a suitable showing. Mary Gregg dressed as a witch, and had her two boys, Davey (11) and Donny (9), completely disguised, to supplement my parents and me on our trip to Kennett. Once at the parade’s gathering point, we picked up more passengers, including Jacob Noznesky, until a total of 19 were aboard, some standing on the running boards. My father didn’t seem to mind, and he operated the “Wagon” flawlessly, as was usually the case. He was probably dressed as an American Indian Chief with a full complement of feathers, one of his favorite impersonations (next to being a clown).

The early success of this largest of Stanley vehicles inspired my father to drive it on two consecutive Glidden Tours in 1948 and 1949. On the Pennsylvania Glidden in ’48, he shared first prize for the most outstanding car with Cadwallader W. Kelsey of Troy, New York, who, along with Mrs. Kelsey at his side, drove his three-wheeled 1901 Kelsey Motorette through the progressive tour from Philadelphia to Hershey to Bedford Springs to Reading, culminating in the climb up Mount Penn on Duryea Drive. In ’49, the Mountain Wagon broke up a baseball game at the local park in Luray, Virginia, when the whistle sounded as the big car passed.

Our Mountain Wagon was used both locally and on a portion of a transcontinental trip to promote the March of Dimes in the 1950s and annually to carry happy passengers at countless Old Timers’ Picnics in Wilmington’s Brandywine Park. It helped crown a “Queen of the Furrow” at a pageant and parade in West Chester and was driven to the AACA Spring Meet at Pottstown in 1952 and again to the same place on the 50th anniversary of that meet in 2002.

In recent years, it has carried happy passengers around the grounds of Auburn Heights on our Steamin’ Days, and around Halloween in 2012, 65 years after the Kennett parade, it will again be used off-site to please happy passengers. 100,000 is a very conservative number of people this 97-year-old vehicle has transported, which has led us to the claim that it has carried more people than any antique automobile in the world. Look between the goblins in the days to come and you will find it there.

Work Report: On Tuesday night with Dave Leon in charge, the heavy cook stove was moved by Lou Mandich and Jeff Pollock from the back building to the basement of the big house for permanent storage. Bob Jordan and Ted Kamen fastened the top of the flue in place on the Model 607, and Dave and Bill Schwoebel unloaded the Model EX and returned it to its place in the museum after its trip to Hershey the week before. Bill also by-passed the feed water heater on the Model 87 and wrapped the steam pipe from the Model 740. Tom completed work on the 87's water and cylinder oil pumps. A total of 14 volunteers participated.

On Thursday, with Bill Schwoebel in charge. Only 10 volunteers were on hand, but the following was reported. Jim Personti returned the fuel tank for the Model 607 (it looks much nicer), and he and Emil fabricated a missing coupling that connects the cable to the speedometer head on the Rauch & Lang. Bill Schwoebel and Ted Kamen removed window air conditioners from the office and shop and stored them upstairs in the museum building for the winter. The steam pipe was installed in the Model 740, and Richard Bernard, Dave Leon and Ted Kamen fastened the burner ring in place and connected one end of the superheater. The Model 87 was tested under steam, and the oil pump and winker are functioning well again. During the day, Steve Bryce worked on packing pumps on the Model 76 and doing other necessary maintenance jobs on this car. He expects to use the Model 87 on the new trail for a special event on Saturday.

As an update, the Delaware Nature Society's nature program on the new Auburn Valley Trail on Saturday was a success with our Model 87 participating. However, the repair Tom made to the oil pump failed when the plunger broke again (as it did on the return from Hagley on 9/16). The Rauch & Lang also gave trouble, but the repair should be prompt. A good number of railroad ties on the Auburn Valley were replaced on Saturday by the volunteer work crew, and 17 paying customers toured the mansion and museum, which was one of our "Open House" days.