

## FAHP News, May 16, 2016

**John and Lee Minnick, Father and Son:** John H. Minnick, born about 1865, had a cycle shop at 700 Delaware Avenue in Wilmington, like Henry Ford and the Wright Brothers at Dearborn, Michigan, and Dayton, Ohio, respectively. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cycleries catered not only to growing boys but to adults who could not afford a horse and to those who liked to race. Racing bikes were often built for four or five riders (the Ford Museum has one built for 10), and Minnick told of personally racing on a five-passenger model. The lead rider had to get the bike started, followed by #2 getting on, and so forth until the bike had its five occupants and soon picked up speed.

John Minnick was also an expert trapshooter who was at the height of his career before and after World War I. My father first met him when he started shooting regularly at the DuPont Gun Club in 1914. My record is not complete, but Minnick probably won the State Championship during this period. In 1921, another prominent Wilmington trapshooter, Isaac Turner (1874-1965), challenged Minnick to a 500-target match to be shot in August at the time of the very first Marshall Trapshooting Tournament at Yorklyn. With no other participants, the two of them shot at 500 targets each in about three hours! Ike Turner won with an outstanding score of 492 to Minnick's 479. Turner was challenged by 23-year-old James L. Luke in 1925, and on a windy day on Gun Club Hill, Luke won with 461. Later that summer the "Marshall Marathon" began, which was open to all amateur trapshooters, its first winner being Steve Crothers with 497.

On June 30, 1933, my father held an "Old Timers' Shoot" at Yorklyn, and an effort was made to get well-known shooters from earlier years to participate if they were able. John Minnick, who had retired from shooting, came out and enjoyed himself while shooting the 100-target program. We have home movies transcribed onto DVDs of Minnick in action on this occasion.

Minnick's son, R. Lee Minnick (ca. 1905-ca. 1950), operated his father's cycle shop at the same location and became interested in shooting in the late 1930s. He worked on a few lightweight racing bikes and a lot of heavy children's bikes with 26" balloon tires, very popular at that time. Lee Minnick was never as good a shot as his father (who was then deceased) but participated in most of the 50-target Penn-Del League Shoots and occasionally shot registered targets at Yorklyn or at the Delaware State Championships. He and his good friend Clement A. Lippincott of Centreville enjoyed shooting together. Lippincott, whose family had owned and operated Lippincott's Department Store in Wilmington, lived in the old family mansion along Kennett Pike opposite Centre Meeting Road. The family had fallen on hard times, and Clem worked as a clerk in the Sears Roebuck store at 7<sup>th</sup> and Shipley Streets. Unfortunately his income was insufficient to keep up the large 19<sup>th</sup>-century home or to shoot clay targets, but he tried to do both. Only an 80% shooter, Clem and Lee Minnick (Lee was about 88%) dreamed of shooting the 500-target "Marathon," which they did about 1942. Clem built a small shooting ground with one trap in his back yard at Centreville, and the shot went over the hill toward the cemetery of Lower Brandywine Church, some distance away.

When I was a student at Beacom College at 10<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson Streets in 1947, I would wander over to Lee Minnick's cycle shop between classes to talk trapshooting. He had married a sophisticated lady with a 14-year-old son, they lived above the shop, and they seemed very happy. Later that year when I opened the Club House Theater next to the Snuff Mill in Yorklyn, the Minnick family came from Wilmington to attend the first showing. While still in his 40s, Lee Minnick died from heart failure about 1950, and the cycle shop closed immediately. His stepson was graduated from Wilmington Friends School in the Class of 1951.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, May 10, the following 18 volunteers attended: Steve Bryce (in charge), Bob Jordan, Tom Marshall, Dave Leon, Mike Ciosek, John Bacino, Jay Williams, Dennis Dragon, Neal Sobocinski, Ted Kamen, Jerry Lucas, Bill Schwoebel, Mark Russell, Mark Bodenshtab, Brent McDougall, Dennis Tiley, Bob Koury, and Larry Tenuity. In addition, Rose Ann Hoover, Art Sybell, Jerry Novak and Susan Randolph attended the monthly Events Committee meeting.

The AVRR “Diesel” was cleaned and prepped for its runs with pre-schoolers on Wednesday. The Model T Ford was unloaded from the trailer following its use at Dover Days, and the trailer was put away. On the Model 735, the Fiberfrax insulating job was finished on top of the boiler, and the Diplag covering was begun. The concrete floor in the carriage house (garage) next to the shop was scraped and prepped for new paint, after it had been thoroughly cleaned with Tri Sodium Phosphate. The inside of the sliding doors and much of the wooden cabinetry was painted.

The loose concrete was removed from the top of the portals at Steam Hill Tunnel. The train displays in the museum that had been borrowed for May’s “Evening at the Museum” were removed by the owner, Jay Williams. A parking brake band was loosened on the Model H-5, and the car was pushed for temporary location in the museum. Oil levels were checked on the Model 740, and the front wheel bearings were adjusted. The lag screws holding the truss rods to the bottom of the frame were tightened on the Model 76. A minor fuel leak was fixed on the Model 725.

John Bacino and Paul Kratunis are students of Bob Wilhelm while getting his 735 operable for the coming season. Robert Hopkins has been helping with this project. Exact timing of these “lessons” is not known, but they are taking place, and the car is expected to be used for several functions during the last week in May.

On Wednesday afternoon, May 11, seven volunteers were on hand: Jerry Novak (in charge), Larry Tennity, Tom Marshall, Steve Bryce, Mike Ciosek, Dave Leon, and Jeff Kennard.

Dave, Mike, and Jerry ran the Auburn Valley in the morning for many happy pre-schoolers. Several cars derailed when “running light” but seemed fine when loaded with passengers. However, car #870, the “Laura R. Sharpless” observation, had a problem on the back curve, so it was dropped from the train. The railroad group will check out these problems.

Painting continued on the woodwork in the garage. The “paperhanging” on the bonnet of the 735 was completed, and the brace rod from firewall-to-condenser was fastened back in place. The cars were rearranged in the museum for a fresh presentation of their history featuring competition with makes other than Stanleys.

Wednesday evening, Kelly Williams, using our Model 725, gave another operating lesson to Dave Stransky and Jeff Kennard. Kelly also brought the new wooden wheels for our Model 607 from Calimer’s Wheel Shop. The rims have been shrunk onto the felloes, but the wheels and lock rings must now be prepped for painting and the tires mounted.

On Thursday evening, the quarterly Board of Directors meeting took five regular volunteers away from the work session: Steve Bryce, Tom Marshall, Richard Bernard, Bill Schwoebel, and Jerry Novak. In addition, however, several more were on hand, as follows: Tim Ward (in charge), Ted Kamen, Bob Jordan, Larry Tennity, Mark Russell, Jim Personti, and probably more.

The concrete floor in the half of the garage that had been prepped was completely painted, much of the woodwork received a second coat, and the unpainted areas were completed. The hood was installed on the Model 735. Locomotive 402 will need to be moved to the center track in the basement for re-assembly. Jerry Lucas gave Mark Bodenshtab and Devon Hall another lesson on the Model 740 Thursday night. On Friday, the repainted hood from the 725 was returned from the auto body shop. It has not been decided whether it will be installed immediately or detailed and striped first. This car, along with our Rauch & Lang electric, will be honored during our “Birthday Bash” on June 5, celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays.