

FAHP News, August 29, 2016

Alden B. Richardson (1871-1916): When he died 100 years ago this month, Alden “Doll” Richardson of Dover, Delaware, was one of the top trapshooters in the United States. In the first half of the 20th century, only two other shooters from Delaware could claim this distinction: William M. “Billy” Foord (ca. 1880-ca.1960), and John B. “Cap” Grier (1901-1991). Foord, originally from Wilmington who later operated a quail farm near Broadkill Beach, won the Delaware State Championship numerous times between 1910 and 1936, and Grier, who lived on the hill in Rockland, won in 1934 and 1935 before turning “pro” when he was employed by Western-Winchester starting the next year.

Richardson, owner/operator of Richardson and Robbins, a very successful canning operation in Dover, killed himself accidentally when a loaded shotgun discharged as he was taking it out of his big Pierce Arrow near his home on State Street in Dover. He was 45 years of age and died immediately. A few weeks before, he was a member of the World Championship Squad (five shooters who shot together) that collectively broke 497 out of 500 at the annual tournament at Maplewood, New Hampshire. Richardson broke 100 straight. My father knew him slightly, as my dad had taken up trapshooting seriously in 1914. This squad record stood until 1935, when the squad of Arthur Cuscaden, Ned Lilly, Hale Jones, Joe Hiestand, and Bill Eldred broke it at Yorklyn with 498.

The large Richardson Hotel, which stood for many years at the intersection of King’s Highway and State Street in Dover, was undoubtedly owned by the family or by Richardson and Robbins. It was a top hostelry when T. Coleman du Pont was often a guest while supervising the building of the DuPont Highway from Wilmington to Selbyville about 1918. In the 1930s, it was still a hotel where the bus from Wilmington to Rehoboth stopped, but it had fallen on hard times. Today the site has been cleared and has more modern uses. The home office building of Richardson and Robbins on King’s Highway, however, has been renovated and is the home office of the Division of Parks and Recreation of the State of Delaware, which oversees the operation of Auburn Heights.

I remember Mrs. Richardson, a most gracious lady who had an attractive flower garden around her State Street home. She enjoyed sharing it with those walking by, whether she knew them or not. The Richardsons had two sons, Harry and William, and I think both were involved in running Richardson and Robbins at least until World War II. They both had beach homes at Rehoboth, close to my parents’ place on Queen Street in Rehoboth Heights.

William bought an ocean-front lot and built a small beach house on Norfolk Street at the boardwalk. Harry and his attractive wife bought Reese Layton’s beach home on Queen Street, three doors from our property. Harry had Parkinson’s disease, but despite his shaking, he went to the beach daily when in Rehoboth. I never saw his wife in a bathing suit, which was not that unusual for women of the 1930s. They had Delaware license numbers 156 (we had 154 and 155), 199, and 200. Often they rented their Rehoboth property for part of the season, sometimes to Norris Wright and his family from Newark.

Harry Richardson must have died about 1960, but his widow continued to own the house on Queen Street into the 1980s. Seldom did she use it in her later years. I think it is still standing, but I have not visited the area for many years. With the canning business in Delaware in a steep decline, the Richardson & Robbins building in Dover was unoccupied for some time before the state bought and renovated it for state offices.

Work Report: On Tuesday, August 23, 14 volunteers were on hand: Ted Kamen (in charge), Tom Marshall, Steve Bryce, Nate Blau, Paul Blau, Mark Bodestab, Mike Ciosek, Bob Jordan, Dave Leon, Jerry Lucas, Brent McDougall, Matt Richard, Neal Sobocinski, and Dennis Tiley.

After inserting additional 1/8” shims on the frame rods, the engine was installed again in the Model H-5 and the gear mesh adjusted. The mystery of why longer spacers and shorter springs are now required on the frame rods is solved, but why the overall engine is 3/4” longer with its new cylinders is still not solved. The steam pipe

needs to be shortened by that amount. Locomotive 402 was cleaned up after its training runs, and the trucks from two of the red passenger cars were checked over.

Many of the fitting holes in the new boiler for the Model 87 were drilled and tapped. About a dozen tubes were removed from the old boiler, as all of these need to come out before scrapping. The plugged drain on the shop sink was worked on. The nozzles on the Model 740 were cleaned, and a blow-down valve on the 735 was tightened. The cable housing for the Mountain Wagon speedometer was cleaned further on its interior, and it was taken by Dave Leon for repainting. The pilot was lit on the Model EX after its modification, and it appeared to be good. The main fire did not come on properly, and darkness prevented further testing.

On Wednesday, August 24, Tom Marshall (in charge) and Jeff Kennard were the only volunteers attending the whole session, but Steve Bryce came and connected the kerosene suction line from the tank to the hand pump, as this had been damaged by the falling tree behind the carriage house. Steve also worked on the drain from the sink in the shop. Richard Bernard appeared after giving a talk on FAHP to a group of developmentally challenged young adults at Wilmington's Riverfront.

The "borrowed" pilot from the spare 20-H.P. burner in stock was reinstalled in this burner. A second "tool center" was established in the museum, using a portable tool cart that was in storage. Basic tools will be kept in the drawer of this cart, which is located behind the Model 740. It is hoped that this will prevent many steps to and from the regular shop for minor jobs in the museum. It is important that TOOLS BE RETURNED to this drawer after their use.

Fuel was run through the vaporizer on the Model EX, and it appeared to be clear. It is thought that air pocketed in the line was the reason the burner did not light properly when tested the night before. Jeff and Tom tried to remove more tubes from the old Model 87 boiler, but they did not have the right combination, so this will continue under the direction of Steve Bryce, Mark Bodenstab, or Jared Schoenly.

On Thursday, August 25, the final Ice Cream Run of the season took three steamers and our Model T Ford with their occupants to Woodside Farm Creamery. Sixteen volunteers (including spouses) plus our Models 71, 725, and 740 (and the "T") enjoyed a pleasant summer evening, and the cars ran well. The 735 was left behind because of a pilot problem that looked like kerosene had infiltrated the pilot system.

Those on the "run" were: Tim Ward (in charge), Jerry Lucas, Mark Bodenstab, Dennis and Laura Tiley, Jared Schoenly, Bob and Marilyn Stransky, Tom Marshall, Bob Wilhelm, Paul Kratunis, Steve and Ann Bryce, Dave Leon, Devon Hall, and Lou Mandich.

At the Work Session were four more: Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Neal Sobocinski, and Matt Richard. Wiring work on the '37 Packard continued, this time centering on the line to the electric fuel pump. A good many tubes were drilled through one head of the boiler to be scrapped from the Model 87. It is our intention to scrap the tubes separately, so we can collect the proceeds from the copper scrap.