

The Residents of Auburn Mills: The settlement called “Auburn Mills” was founded 200 years before I grew up, and the name was long forgotten. This was simply a section of Yorklyn known as “the houses next to Marshall Brothers” along what would later become Benge Road, where there were eight dwelling units in three large buildings. The frame house closest to Auburn Heights had three units, and was torn down about 1970. The other two large stone houses with five units are still standing and are presently owned by the State of Delaware with a long-term lease to Brandywine Management. During the 1930’s and ‘40’s, most of those who occupied these dwellings worked for National Vulcanized Fibre or its subsidiary, Marshall Brothers Paper Company. Friendships and marriages took place among many of these families.

In the end of the frame house nearest Auburn Heights lived the Thomas Peirson family, and they raised three daughters and three sons here. Starting from the eldest were Emma who married Joseph C. “Lum” Jordan, Jack, Helen who married Benjamin Lloyd, Sr., Jim, Myrtle who married Otto Lloyd, and Bill. Myrtle and Otto lived with her parents until they moved into one of the Snuff Mill houses, Bill and his family lived with his parents, and Jack and his wife Alice lived next door in the middle section of this house. In the far end lived Joe Bird and his wife who raised one son, Wilbur, and two daughters, Mildred and Josephine. The Birds’ section was very close to the paper mill office in the 1895 brick building still standing.

On the other side of the office was the “triple” three-story stone house, also standing. The one-third closest to the office has quite a history. It’s my understanding that Ed Dennison lived there in the late 19th century and operated a country store on the first floor. He was also postmaster of Yorklyn, and had the P.O. in this end of the building. He moved his home, store, and P.O. to a larger house near the railroad right after 1900. In my time, however, I think it was the dwelling of Benjamin and Helen Lloyd, who raised their sons, Benny, Jr. and Eddie, here. Benny Lloyd (Sr.) became superintendent of the Marshall Brothers paper mill, following in the footsteps of John Benge, Leroy Benge, Sr., and Norman Mancill. In the center section of this house lived Barney Miller and his wife, who had two sons, Lewis and Harold who was called “Stump”. Barney kept a pony in the back yard, and Stump and his wife Barbara are members of FAHP. In the far end of this house I remember Mr. and Mrs. Bill Neide, the Berry family who had at least four sons and one daughter (Wilson, Albert, Carlton, Harvey, and “Effie”), Jake and Molly Lafferty who moved from the Brick Row when it was torn down about 1966, and James E. and Millie Jordan. Their son Jim (Jr.) was instrumental in getting the State to buy the Auburn Heights Preserve from NVF in 2002.

Finally, in the “farmhouse” occupied by my grandparents (1890-1897) before they built Auburn Heights, there have been two dwelling units for many years. When I grew up, “Lum” and Emma Jordan lived in the half closest to the other house, and John Lloyd and his family lived in the far half. The Jordans raised two sons and two daughters here, Joseph C. (Jr.), James E. (Sr.), Dorothy who married Bill Cox of Marshalls Bridge, and Barbara. The Lloyds had come from New Market, VA, to work in the paper mill, and raised three sons and two daughters. Benjamin “Benny” is mentioned above, Mary who married Harry Quinn, Dick, Dan, and Sally. Harry Quinn and Dick Lloyd worked for the Snuff Mill, and Sally married a man from Illinois.

Our June 6 “Steamin’ Sunday” was a success with many happy people but with only average attendance because of a very hot and humid day plus the threat of tornados in the forecast. There were 290 paid attendees and 70 toured the mansion. As usual our dedicated volunteers did a wonderful job, and were joined by 6 Americorps members. One of the latter, Kim Harkins, will be Dan Citron’s assistant this summer. We thank Richard Bernard and Art Sybell for chairing this event, and thank all the volunteers for their exemplary help.

The Museum overhaul, which looked hopeless a few days ago, was pulled together by Susan Randolph and a few very talented and dedicated helpers. Many excellent comments were received on the professional appearance of the reception room with its new décor and photographs, on the mini-theatre in which Richard Bernard gave a history of the Stanley twins at 1:00 and 3:00 and between times the NFL film on how to fire up a Stanley was shown, on the new hands-on Stanley display, and on new signage describing each of the cars in the collection. New, too, was Arlie Lane’s Merry-Go-‘Round with its builder/owner on hand to demonstrate it throughout the afternoon. To make things complete, the electric trains ran much better thanks to our new member Mac Taylor, there were no derailments on the Auburn Valley R.R., the firing up demonstration was completed using our 100-year-old Model 71, and the “birthday car” plus the faithful Mountain Wagon and the Stanley Model 735 gave rides to happy visitors all afternoon. As always, popcorn from our Cretors steam popper was very popular. Beautiful sketches and note paper done by local artist Lynn D’Amour were available in the gift shop for the first time. Paul and Joyce Harris entertained with their delightful band organ, Ed Lee performed on his high-wheeled bicycle, and the Woodside Farm Ice Cream trailer was on hand for the best treat of all on a hot day. We thank Jonathan Rickerman for organizing the greatly expanded promotional effort for the day, and Susan and her office staff for sending many releases to get out the word. Continuing these programs is bound to pay off in increased attendance very soon. Tell your friends to come visit us on Sunday, August 1st!

Virgil Engel worked on the outdoor landing at the Museum’s second-floor door, and should finish up tomorrow. A State Parks Committee and other involved people are having all-day meetings tomorrow and Thursday at Auburn Heights to finalize some immediate arrangements involving the NVF properties which officially came to the State on May 28. Susan will represent FAHP at Tuesday’s meeting. The Events Committee meets Tuesday night at 7:00.

On Thursday, June 10, we will have our first “Ice Cream Run” of the season from Auburn Heights to Woodside Farm, where several of our cars are driven on a circuitous route of about 8 miles outbound, and directly through Hockessin inbound before dark. Assignments of cars and driver/operators will be made at Tuesday night’s work session. This will be an opportunity for driving “students” to get some more time behind the wheel, and all interested are encouraged to take part. Please inform Steve Bryce or myself if you plan to participate. For those who are not driver candidates, you are welcome to ride along, and we invite all members to enjoy the evening with us. Again, it will be helpful if we know you intend to go. Please E-mail or call the office if you won’t be at A.H. Tuesday night. On Thursday, all cars should leave Auburn Heights by 6:30 P.M., and will plan to leave Woodside Farm for the return not later than 8:15. The operators will know how early they need to be on hand to get fired up and ready. Tom