

April 25, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

"Tad" and his steamboat: The Marshall family has been enamored with Abraham Lincoln for 4 generations, so when Israel and Lizzie's youngest son, Thomas Clarence Marshall, was small, he was called "Tad" as was the Lincolns' youngest son, Thomas, a generation before. Our Tad was very mechanical even as a small boy, and when he was 12 or 14 set out to build a steamboat to run on Red Clay Creek just below the paper mill. It must have been the size of a rowboat with a home-made boiler and engine, and when completed it set off on its maiden run downstream with Tad and his buddy, Ralph Ryan (who related this story to me), aboard. The trouble was, it was top-heavy, and before reaching the Snuff Mill Dam, it capsized and sank. Steam flew everywhere. The boys were not hurt, but Israel dressed down Tad in no uncertain terms, and the steamboat idea was finished forever. Tad became Clarence before he built his first little steam car in 1904.

There is sad news to report. Our good friend and vice-president Emil Christofano was rushed to St. Francis Hospital in Wilmington late Sunday, April 24, where an emergency operation was performed in the wee hours to untangle some badly twisted and blocked portions of his intestines. The Novaks are in close touch with Doris and will keep us posted on his condition. He is expected to remain in the hospital for at least a week. Needless to say, all of us in the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve are very much concerned and offer our prayers for a swift and satisfactory recovery.

Now for a breaking story: This has been kept under wraps until now, as we wanted to make sure it was definite before reporting. The FAHP has purchased Alexis duPont's 1902 Mobile Steamer for \$20,000, and expects to bring it here tomorrow from the New Garden Airfield where it has been stored for many years. There are thought to be less than 10 Mobiles in existence (nearly 600 were built from 1900 through 1903 or 1904), this company being one of the off-shoots from the original Stanleys of 1898-99 (the other was the better-known Locomobile). The car we are acquiring is about as original as anything to be found today, as Lex bought it in 1945 from the nephew of the original owner, when he was a teen-ager attending prep school in Connecticut. It has not run since 1953, but is complete and has been kept in a dry and safe place. Generous donors in our group have already come up with \$15,000 of the \$20,000 needed, and we are confident that the balance can be raised so we will not tap our operating funds. It will be the first vehicle owned by the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve, and will fill a void in the Marshall collection which does not contain one of the early chain-drive steamers. Bill Rule and I plan to go with trailer and

Suburban tomorrow and bring it to Yorklyn.
Come and inspect it!

The playhouse I bought to serve as ticket office for our public events is now erected in its permanent position as you start up the driveway. Now I have to make minor modifications so it can serve its purpose. The latest idea for location of our new gift shop is under the overhang of the old snack bar, central for maximum exposure. Two new items are already on hand, Auburn Valley pencils and F.A.H.P. T-shirts. It will also feature old post cards, paper engineer's caps, paper-back booklets on the Auburn Valley and the Stanley twins, and key chains made from sections of Auburn Valley rail. More to follow!

Bill Schwoebel was here yesterday and was able to work quietly rather than organize and he finished up the Model CX after Emil and Ed Hoffmeister had installed an extension on the exhaust flue. Jim Personti discovered what we believe was the problem with adjustment to the rear of the Model 76, and happily the axle does not have to be dismantled again. Warmer weather will allow road-testing and when finally adjusted, we can say this car is also ready for the season. Last Tuesday, Ed ran a course on firing up and operating the popcorn machine with new member Ed Baldwin and several others as "students". On Thursday night, we had an active work session and welcomed back Herman Feissner as well as new member Willard Robinson, who helped Chuck Erikson sort nuts and bolts in the shop.

This week our emphasis will be on getting ready for the first event of the season at Auburn Heights, when we welcome the Wilmington Friends School Alumni on Sunday, May 1, from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. Sign-up sheets for this and other upcoming events are posted on the wall of the shop, and we still need volunteers to complete the roster. Please sign up to help if you are available Sunday afternoon. Richard Bernard is in charge of this event. Paul Nicholson informs me that the State Parks people will look at the grading necessary in the parking lot on Thursday, April 28, with the hope of getting this work completed before our May 29 "Steamin' Sunday".

Bill Rule and I plan to take the Mountain Wagon to Dover on Saturday, May 7, to help celebrate Old Dover Days. Rob Robison has kindly donated the use of his trailer for this trip. Anthony Zych and Butch Cannard have also expressed an interest in going and my trailer and Lincoln tow vehicle are available if a second smaller Stanley can be taken as well. We welcome and encourage any other members of the F.A.H.P. who would like to go. We understand there is a parade about 9:30 A.M., and then a show(?) or rides(?).

There will be more detailed information next week.

Tom