

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, August 2, 2010

**The Big Trapshooting Week at Yorklyn:** Traditionally, the first week in August was the time of the annual trapshooting tournament, operated by my father from 1921 through 1950, at the Yorklyn Gun Club. Although the program varied some from year to year, the week usually began with a preliminary day on Tuesday, the “Marshall Marathon” 500-target championship on Wednesday, the “Brandywine” (usually a 200-target event) on Thursday, the “Auburn Special” (at either 150 or 200 targets) on Friday, and the T. C. Marshall Handicap (at either 100 or 150 targets) on Saturday. Night shoots with 50 targets per shooter were held on Wednesday and Friday evenings starting at dark, and the Yorklyn Doubles Championship was usually on Thursday after the “Brandywine.” A special event called the “Red Clay” took place Friday afternoon. Although it would have been the largest day, there was never shooting on Sunday.

The week before, my mother would supervise a thorough cleaning of the clubhouse building and arrange for the meals that would be served during the tournament. A box car load of clay targets would be hauled up the hill from a siding next to the Yorklyn station, all 10 trap houses would be filled and the additional supply stored in a building behind the clubhouse. Originally, these came in wooden barrels, 570 to the barrel, with stacks of targets wrapped in newspaper and sawdust to prevent breakage. On the barrels were labels: “Fragile as Eggs.” After 1937, however, cardboard cartons holding 135 targets and weighing 35 lbs. were much easier to handle and store. Before the shooting week began, these had to be opened and the stacks of targets unwrapped so the trap loaders could grab them quickly and place them on the arm of the trap that threw them 50 yards over the brow of the hill. The grass would be neatly cut and trimmed, and supplies of ammunition, squad sheets, cashier sheets, and bulletin sheets would be on hand. Very seldom did we know how many shooters were coming, as no advance reservations were made. During the shoot, my father made frequent trips to the bank, as all transactions were in cash.

No later than Monday, about 20 directional sign boards would be nailed to trees and electric poles pointing to the Yorklyn Gun Club. By Monday afternoon, a few shooters from a distance would begin to arrive to “check things out.” Sometimes my dad would know them; sometimes he would not. Many were repeaters who came to Yorklyn each year. On Tuesday, there was ample time for practice, along with a preliminary event, usually attended by about 40 shooters. And then the “big shoot” got under way with the “Marathon” on Wednesday.

It took about 40 people to run the trapshooting program, and another 12 or 15 to handle the store and serve the meals in the dining room. The trap pullers and loaders were mostly local teenage boys, glad for four or five days' work. The referees might be local trapshooters, school teachers on summer vacation, or experienced scorers from other gun clubs. The cashiering and bulletin board work was done gratis by representatives from the ammunition and powder companies (called “professionals”). Ammunition was sold by the supplier. For many years, the women of the Kennett New Century Club served the meals and ran the store, helping to pay off the mortgage on their clubhouse building. My mother seemed to “run the show.”

By late Saturday, about 500 shooters had taken part. We were tired—it had been a busy week!