

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 20, 2010

Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation: Yesterday, September 19, was the 15th Annual Car Show sponsored by the Hagley Museum & Library on its beautiful grounds on the banks of the Brandywine. The DuPont Company started making gunpowder here in 1802. In 1996, the first show celebrated the 100th anniversary of the automobile industry in the United States, and an effort was made to get at least one car from each of the 100 years. In the end, 1898 was the only year for which there was no entry. At the second show in 1997, the 100th anniversary of Oldsmobile and Stanley were celebrated. Twenty-one Stanleys were on the grounds, including the 14 from our collection.

Local people, including myself, read with interest the stories of the DuPont Company's 150th anniversary in 1952. Some of the ceremonies were held near the Brandywine down the hill from the original 1803 du Pont family mansion. From this reunion came the idea of restoring the former powder yards as a museum, and the original concept was that it would be funded 50% by the DuPont Company and 50% by the du Pont family. In the years just prior to 1952, I had often driven through the Hagley yard with out-of-town guests, entering from "Henry Clay," and exiting via Blacksmith Hill and Christ Church. I thought I was showing my guests something special, unknown to most. Nobody was around, and the gate was open.

Luther D. Reed was about to retire from DuPont. My father and I knew him well, as he was an active trapshooter in the Wilmington area. The elders in the company asked Mr. Reed to get the ball rolling for this museum and research library idea at the Hagley Yard. He soon recommended Walter Heacock to become its Executive Director. Heacock was responsible for developing a first-class operating history museum, for overseeing the building of the library and office building, and for establishing a graduate fellowship program with the University of Delaware. He managed well and served Hagley for the first 25 years of its outstanding life.

Glenn Porter was Hagley's second Executive Director, and he served in this capacity for almost another quarter-century. George Vogt served a few years before the present director, Geoff Halfpenny, was selected by the Board within the past five years. I have been privileged to know them all, and they have built a magnificent place in a beautiful setting. For many years, I have felt that Hagley is one of the truly "best kept secrets" in the eastern United States.

The wonderful staff people at Hagley have done me many favors over the past 35 years, and they have been vital to the growth of the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve. Since both organizations promote the history of technology, our educational goals are indeed similar. It will be a long time before FAHP can achieve a lot of them, but we have a shining example of what can be done when we look toward Hagley. Dan Muir, recently retired, was on our Board of Directors and now serves as an Advisor and active volunteer. John McCoy helped us rebuild our Auburn Valley Railroad turntable and develop professional museum signage. Mike Downs has been an active volunteer and upgraded some of the electrical circuits in our work areas.

Yesterday, the weather was perfect, and six of our cars and their occupants had a grand day on the Hagley grounds at the 15th Annual Car Show. The next one will be on September 18, 2011!