

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, April 11, 2011

Blue Ridge Summit, Monterey, and PenMar Park: On the easternmost range of the Alleghenies, called South Mountain on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line, was a summer resort of some renown at the end of the 19th century. A few miles east of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, on top of the ridge was built a Victorian summer cottage colony called Monterey. Here members of prominent Baltimore families would come to escape the city heat, and at least eight of their large “cottages” still stand with their lawns largely intact. It appears they have been winterized by more modern owners and now serve as year-round residences.

Not more than 3 miles to the south, still on top of the ridge and barely in Maryland, is a small park maintained by Washington County named PenMar. Originally built by the Western Maryland (WM) Railroad that crossed the ridge at Blue Ridge Summit nearby, it has long been abandoned as a well-known amusement park (like Brandywine Springs). The main line of the WM between Gettysburg and Hagerstown passes by one side of the park, and although there has not been passenger service for many years, heavy freights can be observed passing the old depot. From this point of observation, there is a splendid view toward Waynesboro and the valley to the west. Like many such amusement parks over 100 years ago, there were numerous rides and experiences making a visit a special occasion. A miniature railroad with two or more Cagney locomotives wove through PenMar, always a delight to visitors of all ages. Today, the route of the railroad and the sites of most of the buildings have historical markers for the benefit of those who come for a quiet picnic.

One of my mother's closest friends when she was in nursing school at Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore was Bina Harbaugh of Waynesboro. About the time of their graduation in 1918, nearly three years before my parents were married, my mother was visiting her friend “Harbaugh” in Waynesboro. My father drove his new Stanley Model 735 out to see them, and we have a photo of him and the “girls” standing beside the car at PenMar Park. He used to tell me about PenMar Park, and I finally found it several years after his death. Bina Harbaugh made a career of nursing around Baltimore and finally retired to Waynesboro in the 1950s, where she lived with her widowed sister Hattie Martin at 49 Clayton Avenue. A frequent visitor at Auburn Heights, she spent a lot of time on this earth. Born in 1887, she was living alone when Ruth and I called on her in 1986. Soon thereafter, however, she went into a retirement facility, and died there when she was about 111!