

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, April 10, 2017

Early Trips of Clarence and Esther: My parents, Thomas Clarence Marshall and the former Esther Livezey Shallcross, both born in 1885, first knew each other about 1901 when Esther roomed with Clarence's sister, Anna Howard Marshall, at Swarthmore Preparatory School. This was a co-educational boarding school next to Swarthmore College in the town of the same name, less than 15 miles west of Philadelphia. Esther, along with three other girls, visited Auburn Heights frequently in the early years of the 20th century. Long after she became my mother, she told me she had very little interest in my father during that time, as he was too shy to talk much to the girls and sat around listening to his early phonograph records. However, my father's cousin Henry Marshall, very much a "ladies' man," would sneak up from the paper mill next to Auburn Heights and entertain the girls on the kitchen steps.

Things took a temporary change for the better about 1912, the year Anna married Norman B. Mancill. Clarence invited Esther to accompany him in his new 1912 Stanley Model 74 touring car on a trip through New England, to be chaperoned, of course. Walter and Bess Jefferis, both a few years older, went along (and presumably occupied the back seat). It was an ambitious trip over the roads of 1912, but my dad seldom had trouble, and this trip was no exception. They stayed at the Fort William Henry Hotel at Lake George, New York, and viewed the Old Man of the Mountain in Franconia Notch, New Hampshire.

Later that summer in the same car, they drove to Rehoboth Beach and return, this time accompanied by Clarence's brother, Warren, and his wife, Bertha, traveling in their gasoline-powered car of the same vintage. Since Esther lived with her mother and siblings in Middletown, the party was entertained for lunch there before proceeding southward. This was six years before T. Coleman du Pont built the DuPont Highway across Delaware from north to south, so the roads were gravel or sand. The section southeast from Milford (now a part of Delaware Route 1) was hardly passable. After getting stuck and unstuck a few times, they came to the little railroad town of Nassau, and from there to Rehoboth was easier. They returned via Georgetown with better roads.

Something must have happened that cooled the relationship, as Helen Philips of Kennett Square went with Clarence and Marshall-Mitchell family members to Gettysburg in three Stanleys in 1913. Soon thereafter, Esther entered nursing school at Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore, where she was graduated in 1918 as World War I was almost over. By that time, the romance was back on course, as Clarence entertained Esther and her friends from nursing school by giving them rides in his 1918 Stanley Model 735 at Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, and Penn-Mar Park close by. In this car, he and Esther also drove to Ocean City, Maryland, where Esther's sister Mary Ferguson and her family had rented a beach-front cottage. He showed off by driving the Stanley 60 m.p.h. between Ocean City and Berlin, about eight miles away.

When Clarence and Esther were married in June 1921, they drove in his new Packard Twin Six roadster to Pocono Manor Inn in the Poconos, where they spent their honeymoon for about a week. As a wedding present, he gave her a new Packard Six sedan, probably the first closed car to occupy the garage at Auburn Heights. Esther had learned to drive on her mother's 1917 Buick touring, although shifting gears was always a problem for her. After several Packards, the last car she drove was a 1952 Dodge straight six with Fluid Drive.

Later in the summer of 1921, Clarence and Esther went to Atlantic City for a weekend in his Twin Six roadster, which carried Delaware License Number 8. In Wilmington, as they approached the Penns Grove Ferry slip, the area was heavily guarded by police and military personnel who diverted traffic elsewhere. When the lawmen saw the license number, they waved my parents onto the deck of the ferry, thinking them to be important people. The puzzle was solved shortly when the motorcade of President Harding soon occupied the deck. He and his wife had come by train from Washington and were also on their way to Atlantic City. My parents stopped at Woodstown, where Harding was speaking from the steps of the new school, which he dedicated. The school building still stands along U.S. Route 40.

I was not quite four years old when I left with my parents and my mother's sister Helen Shallcross for a motor trip to Florida in my father's 1928 Packard Straight Eight seven-passenger sedan. I remember very little of this trip, but my dad took 16mm. black-and-white movies that were viewed many times as I grew up. They didn't care much for Miami, and we spent more time at Sebring in south central Florida and on the west coast at St. Petersburg. In the latter place we were staying at an old frame hotel (the name may have been Huntington) when the place caught fire in the middle of the night. Everyone was evacuated via the fire escapes, and I was told my father carried me down wrapped in a blanket. I don't know whether personal belongings were lost, but there were no fatalities. From that time on, my dad always insisted on hotel rooms close to the ground, no matter how noisy they were in cities with the windows open.

As I got older and learned to read road maps, I usually rode with my father on the front seat, with my mother in the back. She liked that as she often napped while riding along and could use the cloth upholstery of the big Packard sedans as pincushions. We made many trips to and from Rehoboth, of course, and often took fall weekend trips to the Poconos or Virginia to see the foliage. During the winter, we went to Southern Pines and Pinehurst, North Carolina, several times. In 1934, we went to the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in our big 1932 Straight Eight sedan with 147" wheelbase and stopped in Detroit on the return to trade for a '34 Packard Twelve Limousine of the same size.

The two longest motor trips ever undertaken by my parents were to Nova Scotia and the Gaspé Peninsula in 1936 and to the West Coast in 1941. The first was six weeks in length and was taken in the '34 limousine mentioned above. My father's cousin Mary Passmore, a very comical lady who taught 4th grade at Wilmington Friends School for nearly 40 years, went with us in 1936 and made every incident that occurred into a humorous event. Of special note was when a boom broke while lifting our big Packard onto the deck of a five-passenger ferry at Wolfville, Nova Scotia (the car bounced like a huge ball on the deck), and when my father got stuck between floors on the Chateau Frontenac elevator in Quebec City.

The 1941 trip of 10 weeks in our '37 Packard Twelve, still in the FAHP collection, covered nearly 12,000 miles and for my parents was certainly their "trip of a lifetime." It was the only time either of them visited the West Coast, and neither ever went to Europe. My father was never in an airplane. My mother made a 1946 flight with her sister Mary Ferguson on TWA from Philadelphia to Chicago and return to attend a National Women's Club Convention. They also went by train another time to San Antonio and Mexico City, and she took cruises on the Great Lakes and in the Caribbean. On our '41 motor trip, accompanied by my cousin Meta Shallcross, our route took us to Colorado, Salt Lake City and the Utah Parks, Grand Canyon, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Yosemite, Portland, Seattle, the Canadian Rockies, Glacier National Park, and Yellowstone. We viewed the sculptures on Mount Rushmore during their first year.

After World War II, trips got tougher for my parents. In 1945, they came by train to Oklahoma City to drive my car (a 1940 Packard 110) home as I left for the Pacific. In 1946, a wheel bearing went out on our '37 Packard as my parents were driving to Southern Pines, accompanied by Norris and Mary Woodward of Mendenhall. They had to take the train for the last 75 miles from Raleigh, North Carolina. About 1953, they drove in my dad's '40 Packard 180 to visit Maude Kemmerer, a longtime friend, who had retired in Essex, Connecticut. Not familiar with modern turnpikes, they had tire trouble coming home on the New Jersey Turnpike, and my dad didn't know how to deal with it. It turned out okay when a good Samaritan came to their rescue. They were certainly members of the first generation to rely on the automobile.