

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 11, 2006

Transportation to and from Yorklyn: We believe the first settler in what is now Yorklyn was John Garrett, who made his way down the creek from the vicinity of Kennett Square in 1726. It's hard to imagine what sort of trail or road existed at that time, but we do know that a few years later Garrett and his second wife traveled to Chadds Ford to the Baptist Church there. Could they have gone every Sunday? How could they do it in the winter? How long would it take them?

Many generations later, when at least two prosperous milling operations existed in the community, the coming of the railroad changed many things forever. When it began service from Wilmington to Landenberg in 1872, the original name of Auburn was changed to Yorklyn (a year or two earlier Chandlerville had been changed to Landenberg). Three or four passenger trains a day each way made it possible to reach Wilmington in about 40 minutes. Some of the "Branch trains" even went through to the B & O Station at 24th and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia. Yorklyn was not an isolated community any longer!

The "Kennett trolley" came through in 1903, on its route from Kennett Square to Brandywine Springs. Israel and Elwood Marshall gladly gave the trolley line a right-of-way across their properties at Marshall's Bridge and at Yorklyn. One of the stops was at the foot of the hill and across the mill race from Auburn Heights. Samuel Sharpless, Ruth's great grandfather, also sold them a right of way across his extensive lands between Yorklyn and Hockessin. Now local residents could get to Kennett Square in about 15 minutes (5 cents from the Auburn Heights stop) and to Wilmington via a circuitous route, changing trolleys at Brandywine Springs. It would have taken longer, but service would have been more frequent and less expensive than on the train. The trolley continued until 1923.

Creek Road, now Route 82, was also being improved, and although not paved, a serious effort was being put forth to accommodate automobiles. Mud holes and ruts were quickly repaired so the road could be used for most of the year. Clarence Marshall traveled this road as well as the "Hockessin road" with his Stanley steamers. After his successful summer of 1913 at Gettysburg with his new Mountain Wagon, he put it in service on weekends from Yorklyn to Wilmington in the winter of 1913-14, thereby establishing what some call the first bus line in Delaware. Selling this "wagon" to a man named Palmer in 1914, this car continued a bus service with its new owner, this time from Kennett Square to Wilmington, probably on a more frequent schedule.

The right-of-way of Creek Road (or Route 82 as we know it today) changed slightly over the years, the most drastic change being when Hoopes Reservoir was built in 1931-32. Eastbound from the Mount Cuba area after climbing the steep hill through the woods, it continued straight down the next hill to an old mill on the lower side of a small lake. This mill was owned by T. Coleman du Pont, who had converted the mill building into a very nice summer residence, with gardens behind. Overflow from the lake ran across the public road and through a sluice to the water wheel alongside the mill (in the winter this could produce an icy surface on the road). The road then ran alongside the lake for ¼ mile, then through what is now Valley Garden Park and up the hill, joining 82 again about ½ mile before reaching Kennett Pike. When the dam, 2 miles to the south, was completed in 1932 and the land flooded to form the reservoir, the mill, gardens, old lake, and the road next to them were under about 30 feet of water, and so it has remained for the past 74 years.