

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 15, 2007

Although there was a picture of my father's new 1913 Mountain Wagon with a load of passengers at Gettysburg on the back cover of our first *Herald*, the story of this enterprise has not been described in the *Weekly News*. To commemorate the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863, the summer of 1913 was very special there, as all veterans of the battle, north and south alike, were invited to come to a reunion encampment sponsored by the U.S. government and headed by the retired General Leonard Wood, hero of the Spanish American War. The effort was very successful in that nearly all who were still alive and well wanted to attend, even though most were in their 70s and 80s. The event was supposed to attract tourists from all parts of the country, which it did, and the main feature was to be a chance to tour the Battlefield. Twenty-eight-year-old T. Clarence Marshall, already a Stanley dealer in this area, became an active entrepreneur that summer and took delivery of a new Model 810 12-passenger Mountain Wagon in late spring.

Since my father was actively involved with the paper mills and the new fibre mill in Yorklyn and could not leave for an extended period, he hired two local men to spend the summer in Gettysburg with the Mountain Wagon. Thomas S. Dennison, son of Yorklyn's oldest storekeeper, was to be the business manager and P.R. man, and Bill Palmer was to be the mechanic and driver. In addition, they hired Warren Gilbert, a lecturer and guide at Gettysburg, to be in their employ during the 10 weeks or so the Mountain Wagon would be there. Gilbert would ride along on each tour of the Battlefield, explaining the details of the battle to the customers. He was born on November 23, 1863, four days after President Lincoln's "few appropriate remarks," which soon became known as the Gettysburg Address, one of the greatest short speeches in the English language. Gilbert contended he was present, as his mother, nearly nine months pregnant, was on the same platform as the president and sang in the church choir that was a part of the cemetery dedication at which Lincoln spoke.

The Mountain Wagon operation was a huge success. It was one of a very few mechanized vehicles touring the Battlefield, as horse-drawn carriages and hacks were widely used. Demand was so great that on busy days the whole tour took only 40 minutes, so another load could be accommodated. Attracting the attention of the top brass, Tom Dennison was contacted by General Wood's office, and arrangements were made to take him and his general staff from their headquarters to and from dinner across town on special occasions.

Soon after Labor Day, the Mountain Wagon returned to Yorklyn. In what was left of 1913 and again in 1914, it transported the Yorklyn baseball team to games as far away as Middletown. Since, for many millworkers, the work week ended at noon on Saturday, the "Wagon" was also used as a bus, making a couple of round-trips from Yorklyn to Wilmington during the afternoon and evening. Although competing with the train and trolley, the over-the-road trip was shorter and faster, and some historians have said this was the first bus line in Delaware. Toward the end of 1914, my father sold his Mountain Wagon to Bill Palmer, who established a more frequent bus service with it from Kennett Square to Wilmington and return. This ran for a couple of years before its final demise. The fate of that "Wagon" is unknown; it is assumed it was scrapped.

Two minor footnotes: A syndicated Christmas card appeared in the late 1940s showing Santa Claus and 11 of his helpers in *this* Mountain Wagon. How do I know? By comparing an actual photograph with the Christmas card, both of which showed a retrofitted bumper and Delaware front license plate, neither of which would have been on another Mountain Wagon. And as to Warren Gilbert: In 1951, I had the pleasure of driving around the Gettysburg Battlefield with him in the front seat of my 1914 Model 607, while I listened to his lecture on the Battle of Gettysburg. The car is now owned by the *Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve*.