

Nearing Rehoboth, there was no choice but to swing left, cross the canal on another draw bridge, and proceed straight down Rehoboth Avenue, unless, of course, you were headed for the “Pines,” in which case you veered left onto Columbia Avenue. We called it 100 miles from Yorklyn to Rehoboth, but it was about 96. Before the concrete road was built from Milford through Nassau (later to be Delaware Route 14) about 1927, it was necessary to go via Georgetown, and then the total mileage was well over 100. I loved the ride almost as much as my father did. By the time he occasionally drove to Rehoboth in the Model 740 Stanley during World War II, the DuPont Highway was a dual road as far south as Dover, and there were by-passes around Smyrna, Dover, Frederica, and Milford, passing east of downtown in all cases, and the preferred route by-passed Magnolia in favor of a more easterly route with a new draw bridge over the St. Jones River. I guess Little Heaven was always there, but I never knew of that name until many years later.

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, April 28, 2008

**The History of Gun Club Hill:** "Gun Club Hill" has been in the local news lately as CCS Developers want to build 16 homes on former NVF land under contract from the Bankruptcy Court. The total area consists of about 45 acres on high ground southeast of the fibre mills in Yorklyn. From the early 1930s until 1971, I had a major interest in the Yorklyn Gun Club, owned and operated by my father at the very top of the hill, although no trapshooting occurred there after 1950.

Old timers called it Poplar Hill. It was part of a farm of at least 150 acres bought by the Marshall brothers about 1902 so they could expand their fibre-making business. Entirely in Mill Creek Hundred (west of Red Clay Creek), it extended from the Marshall Brothers paper mill property on Bengé Road, across Yorklyn Road, and up the hill to a common line with the Sharpless lands to the south. The National Fibre and Insulation Company was founded in 1904, and the first fibre mill, later known as No. 1 Mill, was built the same year opposite the Yorklyn Station on the Landenberg Branch of the B & O Railroad (originally the Wilmington & Western). The old brick farmhouse and presumably its barn, part way up the hill, were the only buildings south of the railroad before 1904.

In 1908, J. Warren Marshall, age 27, and his wife, Bertha, moved into a bungalow they had built northeast of the old farmhouse and barn. In 1921, T. Clarence Marshall, Warren's younger brother, having become an avid trapshooter, located three traps (now called "fields") up the hill from the barn and southwest of it. No permanent buildings were erected here; several tents were pitched for the three-day trapshooting tournament in August. Within a year, however, National Fibre wanted this location, with its commanding view of the mills, for superintendents' homes. Coming up the cinder drive from the barn, the first house, a 2½-story frame dwelling, was located. It was moved in one piece by mule teams and block-and-falls from its original location next to the railroad station, where it had served as Ed Dennison's store and the Yorklyn Post Office. J. Burtwell White soon became the occupant, and he and his wife were here until he retired during World War II. The second house, also frame, was a Sears Roebuck pre-fab, soon occupied by efficiency expert Manley P. Northam. The third was stucco and built for Frank Cronin and his family. White and Cronin were superintendents in different departments of the mills. These three homes, improved over the years, stood alone for 15 years, until about 1937, when a fourth house of Avondale stone was built for manager William D. Marsey. These four houses still stand in a row, the newest being the present home of William J. Campbell, manager of Yorklyn operations for NVF.

In 1922, the Gun Club moved to the very top of the hill, with four traps located so the contestants shot directly toward the mills (and almost toward the houses mentioned above). Utilizing tents in 1922 and 1923, the first clubhouse building was erected in 1924, immediately behind the traps. This building along with the traps were close to the property line, so a few adjoining acres were rented from William P. Sharpless (Ruth Marshall's grandfather) for parking, as automobiles were fast becoming the favored way to travel to the shoots. My father, Clarence Marshall, rented 10 acres from National Fibre on a 50-year lease in 1925 and was able to buy 18 acres from Mr. Sharpless (\$100 per acre) before the latter died in 1928; the Gun Club grounds extended over both properties. From the Sharpless purchase, ¾ acre was sold in 1929 to Palmer D. "Pete" Guest, who built a home later owned by his daughter and son-in-law, Marguerite and James Marsey. Their property was enlarged about 1972, when Esther Marshall, my mother, sold them an additional 60,000 square feet, making the total just over two acres. By 1929 the clubhouse had been enlarged to include a dining room and a kitchen, and there were seven traps facing Yorklyn and one called a "practice trap" facing the present Ashland Nature Center. In 1938, two more traps were added, making a total of 10.

About 1930, John P. Eckles, purchasing agent for National Fibre, bought a hillside east of the Gun Club property and built a home at the top, very close to the clubhouse building. He built a steel truss bridge across Red Clay Creek with a serpentine driveway up the hill that provided access from Route 82 between Yorklyn and Ashland. Unfortunately the flood of July 1938 took out his bridge, and from then on, he used a right-of-way