

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, July 23 2018

The 2018 Return to Auburn Heights Steam Car Tour: After more than nine months of careful planning by Tour Chairman Tom Marshall and the 13-person Tour Committee (Mark Bodenstab, Steve Bryce, John Hopkins, Carla and Jerry Lucas, Jerry Novak, Susan Randolph, Rob Reilly, Bill Rule, Jared Schoenly, Tim Ward, Bob Wilhelm, and Kelly Williams), the 2018 Eastern Steam Car Tour – dubbed the Return to Auburn Heights Tour – kicked off on Sunday, July 8. On Saturday and Sunday, about 36 trailers (including one 48-footer!) descended on Kennett Square and Mendenhall, PA, bringing 38 Stanleys and 1 Grout steamer to the region. John Hopkins, who handled trailer parking for the 2007 Auburn Heights Steam Car Tour, resumed his pivotal role and, with a great team of volunteers, masterfully directed the parking of more than 30 trailers at the Fairfield Inn & Suites (with several more at Mendenhall).

Arriving to beautiful sunshine that remained for the entire week, about a dozen steamers took advantage of Sunday's Warm-Up Tour, a short excursion to West Chester's Antique Ice Tool Museum, where a beautifully restored 1834 barn houses the largest private collection of antique ice tools and memorabilia in the United States. If you have not visited, it is well worth the trip and open Saturdays from 9am to noon through October. Sunday evening, more than 135 gathered at the Red Clay Room in historic Kennett Square for the Firing Up Banquet, which kicked off the busy week with great food and camaraderie.

Touring began in earnest on Monday, with a morning trip to Granogue, the private home of Irénée and Barbara du Pont, where visitors toured the main floor of the grand home and viewed its exquisite Maxfield Parrish mural and Aeolian organ. The steamers then meandered along back roads to Auburn Heights, where they enjoyed their own private Steamin' Day, complete with box lunches from the Country Butcher, steam train rides, mansion tours, fresh steam-popped popcorn and museum displays. Tom Marshall was kept busy all afternoon signing copies of his *Weekly News* book *How It Was* and visiting with tour participants, who represented 24 states (plus Canada, as well as a visiting passenger from Australia, too). Many then capped off the leisurely afternoon with an "ice cream run" to Woodside Farm Creamery to sample the signature Auburn Heights flavor: Motor Oil.

Tuesday brought the first chance for the FAHP steam cars and drivers to tour since the cars remained in the museum for the enjoyment of our guests on Monday. Seven cars, the Stanley models 71, 87, 76, 78, 607, 725 and 735, set out that morning, although the 607 encountered water pump issues that required an early return to Auburn Heights and repair, and the 735 was plagued with burner firing issues that required its return in the trailer later that evening and kept it off the tour until Friday.

The destinations on Tuesday were the National Iron and Steel Heritage Museum, St. Peters Village and Jared Schoenly's home, shop and amazing basement full of mechanical collections. That evening, nearly 80 returned to Auburn Heights for the Evening at the Museum program, featuring Terry Amsley and family, who shared stories of Carl Amsley's adventures in the hobby while visitors enjoyed dinner fare from Pizza Capo Food Truck.

On Wednesday, six FAHP cars made the journey with the visiting steamers to Old New Castle, where members of the public gathered to admire the cars as they arrived and circled the cobbled streets to the parking that had been roped off especially for the visit. Treated to coffee, cold water and welcome A/C in the Arsenal, tour participants were free to explore and tour before heading southward to Cheseapeake City, MD, crossing the Reedy Point Bridge. FAHP's Model 87 was towed home with a broken oil pump plunger, and the 740 was towed with an as-yet-undiagnosed valve issue. That evening, the Stanley Museum held its Annual Meeting at Station 52, with approximately 22 attending.

The Thursday itinerary included a scenic drive through Amish country to Lancaster and a stop at the Strasburg Rail Road, where the earliest arrivals were treated to a private shop tour and all were encouraged to explore the

many sights and lunch options. That evening, more than 85 tour participants visited Longwood Gardens for the new and spectacular Fountain Show.

The last day, Friday, included a morning drive to Hagley Museum & Library, where visitors were treated to live demonstrations not regularly available to the public before heading to lunch at the complex of restaurants on Route 202 via back roads through the rolling hills along the Brandywine. Many then finished up their touring experience with a private visit to the Mount Cuba Observatory, arranged and coordinated by volunteer Bob Wilhelm. A delicious Blow-Down Dinner (which included complimentary hors d'oeuvres courtesy of Alex Joyce, who could not attend due to a European tour) provided a perfect end to a wonderful week of touring.

We cannot thank enough the many volunteers who made the tour memorable: from those who brought Auburn Heights to life on Monday to those who helped with parking, staffed water & coffee stops, handled supplies, and helped in countless other ways. Rob Reilly, as always, did a magnificent job on the tour book, and the Support Truck (managed expertly by Jerry Novak) provided aid to all who called. Without question, it takes a village – or a Steam Team – to make the magic happen, and we are truly fortunate to have an amazing corps of volunteers working so tirelessly as we steam forward in all endeavors.

We thank, too, everyone who signed up for the tour -- from first-timers to seasoned tourers! I hope you enjoyed it as much as we did – and we look forward to seeing you down the road!