

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 5, 2005

Early Train Trips: I will relate some of the Marshall family's early trips by train, as gleaned from stories passed down and from family papers found at Auburn Heights. Israel and Lizzie, on their honeymoon in October 1877, went by train to Washington, D.C., shook hands at the White House with President Hayes, and continued about 20 miles farther south to Accotink, Virginia, the station for Woodlawn Plantation, where members of the Way family, cousins of Israel, were then living. Little more is known about this honeymoon, but they were probably gone no more than three or four days before returning home to Marshall's Bridge.

In 1893, possibly celebrating their 10th wedding anniversary, Howard Mitchell and his wife, also Lizzie, went by train from Mill Creek (Hockessin) to Chicago to attend the World's Columbian Exposition. Howard was Lizzie Marshall's brother. My father, just eight years old, perhaps by chance, was on the platform at the Yorklyn station when the train bringing his aunt and uncle home stopped briefly, and they shouted to him out the coach window what a wonderful experience they had had.

By 1897, Warren and Anna Marshall, older siblings of my father, were enrolled at Wilmington Friends School and took the morning train daily, leaving Yorklyn at 7:20 and arriving at Front & Market Streets, Wilmington, at 7:55. My father, together with his cousins Henry and Ellen Mitchell, also started using this train about 1900 and continued until 1903. The Mitchells got on at Mill Creek (Valley Road west of Hockessin), and my father at Yorklyn. One foggy morning 7:20 came and went at Yorklyn and no train. For 30 minutes or so, no one knew why. Then a messenger reported that the locomotive had run into one or more of Sammy Sharpless's cows, midway between Hockessin and Yorklyn, and derailed. It was at least two hours before the engine was back on track, and some country kids were quite late for school that day. It is not known the fate of the cows, but Samuel Sharpless was Ruth's great-grandfather.

In 1899, Israel went on a rail trip run by the Pennsylvania Railroad through the Shenandoah Valley, Charlottesville, and other parts of Virginia, about six or seven days in all. Lizzie didn't go, perhaps because she had to run Auburn Heights with its teenage children, get them off to school, etc. A small brochure of this trip was found, and on it, in Lizzie's writing: "My husband enjoyed this trip very much." In early September 1901, Warren and his younger brother, Clarence (my father), set off by excursion train for the Pan American Exposition at Buffalo, New York. All was going well until just a few miles short of Buffalo, when the train stopped, and the passengers wondered why it could not proceed into the city. After a lengthy wait, word came back that President McKinley had been shot.