

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 24, 2005

Train Trip to Poland Spring, Maine, 1910: Israel Marshall fell off a scaffold at the paper mill at Marshall's Bridge when he was 18 (about 1869) and injured his kidney. He fought kidney problems the rest of his life and finally succumbed to this illness in 1911 at the age of 60. In the summer of 1910, he thought he'd try Poland Spring, Maine, as the spring water from there was supposed to be the world's best, especially recommended for kidney sufferers. He probably changed trains in New York and Boston, and possibly Portland, Maine, but his luggage (probably including a large "steamer" trunk) could be checked through on his railroad ticket. Danville Junction on the Maine Central Railroad was the station for Poland Spring, 6 miles distant. Here he was met by one of the spring's Stanley Mountain Wagons and taken to the Mansion House, one of three hotels owned by the Poland Spring company (Hiram Ricker and Sons). It is almost certain that this would have been a three-seat nine-passenger "wagon," as the larger ones did not appear until 1911 or 1912. It's not known just how long he stayed, but sometime in August, he wrote to the "dear folks" at home saying that he thought he'd return soon.

Israel's younger son, Clarence (my father), went by train that summer to visit his father at Poland Spring. Again, we don't know how long he stayed, but I believe it was over a long weekend. He related that he, too, was met by a Stanley Mountain Wagon at Danville Junction and rode in the front seat with the driver for the 6-mile trip. He told me that the driver kept the water "down in the glass" for the whole trip—Stanley operators will understand what this means.

About two months before his Maine trip, my father made a similar trip by train as far as Boston, one way. However, a very pleasant diversion in traveling between New York and Boston in those days was to take the overnight "steamer" with good food and a pleasant stateroom. There were at least two if not more coastal steamship companies plying the waters of Long Island Sound and usually Narragansett Bay. The most famous of these was the Fall River Line. Leaving its East River Pier in Manhattan, it would proceed up Long Island Sound and into Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay, terminating at Fall River, Massachusetts, or Providence, Rhode Island. Here a boat train would be waiting to take passengers on the 40-plus mile sprint to Boston. Over Memorial Day weekend in 1910, my father and his second cousin, Paul Way of Kennett Square, made this trip. Their destination: the Stanley Motor Carriage Company in Newton, Massachusetts, about 10 miles west of downtown Boston. Their purpose: to take delivery of a new Model 61 and drive it home. Way had ordered this car from his dealer-cousin, and it may have been the very first car the young Stanley dealer had sold. It was fun for young people to drive "over the road," but the train was the way people of those days were expected to travel.