

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, December 12, 2005

### "SAND"

"I observed a locomotive in the railroad yards one day;  
It was waiting in the roundhouse where the locomotives stay.  
It was panting for the journey, it was coaled and fully manned  
And it had a little box the fireman was filling full of SAND.

"It appears that locomotives cannot always get a grip  
On their slender iron pavements, 'cause the wheels are apt to slip,  
And when they hit a slippery spot, your tactics they command,  
And to get a grip upon the rail, you sprinkle it with SAND.

"If the track is steep and hilly, and you have a heavy grade,  
And if those who've gone before you have the rails quite slippery made,  
If you ever reach the summit of the upper tableland,  
You'll find you have to do it with a liberal use of SAND.

"If you strike quite frigid weather and discover to your cost  
That you're liable to slip on a heavy coat of frost,  
Then some quick decided action will be called into demand,  
And you'll slip clear to the bottom if you haven't any SAND.

"You can get to any station that's on life's schedule seen  
If there's fire beneath the boiler of ambition's strong machine,  
And you'll reach a place called Richtown at a rate of speed that's grand  
If for all the slippery places, you've a good supply of SAND."

This anonymous poem was committed to memory by my father some time before 1900. He taught it to me when I was about eight years old. Always a favorite, I never saw it written until I typed it about 65 years ago. In the final stanza the poet reflected on a philosophy prevalent at the end of the 19th century, when Auburn Heights was built: if you had ambition and worked hard there was no limit to how far you could go. The U.S.A. was not yet a super-power, but we didn't know it. Herewith is the railroad story for this week.