

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, May 28, 2007

Special Parades: Eight of our cars, including six “steamers,” participated in the Memorial Day Parade in Kennett Square this morning, which reminds me of special parades and anniversaries in that borough during my lifetime. I recall three of them, the first not very well.

In 1927 or 1928, dressed as an old man, I walked with Florence Marshall, my first cousin once removed, in Kennett's “Baby Parade.” She was five or six and I was three or four. According to home black-and-white movies taken by my father, there were a lot of “babies” in the parade. What was Kennett Square thinking of? Florence, who never married, left the area when a teenager and became a well-known physician on Long Island before her death about 12 years ago.

I'm not sure what was special about 1940 in Kennett Square, but the borough was celebrating some sort of anniversary. Possibly it was first settled in 1740, but that seems too late. In June of 1940, festivities went on for two or three days, with a major parade through the center of town. All the local auto dealers had new cars in the parade. I remember Monroe L. Nute, who sold Chryslers and Plymouths, with about three cars. Charles H. Mason, Pierre du Pont's head chauffeur, took 16 mm. color movies from the upstairs porch of the old Kennett Hotel as the parade moved west on State Street. The old Kennett High School having been demolished, the Mary D. Lang Playground was dedicated on its site at Center and Mulberry Streets. “Miss Mame” Lang had been a fixture in Kennett schools, having taught at least two generations of local children. For the dedication, one of the borough's beloved physicians, D. Duer Reynolds, had invited Owen J. Roberts of Phoenixville, a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, to deliver the address, and he accepted.

In 1955, Kennett celebrated its centennial as an incorporated borough. During the summer, merchants and prominent male citizens grew beards. Special events were held, and I think Bayard Taylor's *Story of Kennett* was re-enacted at Longwood's Open Air Theatre. The 100th Anniversary culminated with a three-day festival in early September. An outside agency was hired to put on a pageant on the high ground behind the Kennett Consolidated School. A centennial queen was crowned, based on the number of pageant tickets she and her friends could sell. In the Saturday afternoon parade through town, I drove our 1908 Stanley Model EX, and my father drove the Mountain Wagon. They wanted an old car for the pageant as well, so one evening I participated with the EX, and the next night Ralph “Rusty” Worth drove my father's 1911 Model T Ford.