

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, July 13, 2009

Saratoga Springs, New York, 1770-2009: This week's "history lesson" combines some of what we learned about Saratoga last week with a wonderful steam car tour in which we participated. Gideon Putnam, for whom our headquarters hotel was named, arrived on the site of present-day Saratoga about 1770 and discovered some healing qualities in the water of the many springs in the area. He built a boarding house and then a small hotel to accommodate those who were drawn to the site for their health. During the construction of a much larger and fancier hotel, Gideon died in 1812 before it was completed.

The Saratoga Battlefield, about 10 miles to the east, was made famous during the American Revolution when Colonial Generals Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold annihilated British and German mercenary forces under General John Burgoyne in early October of 1777, thwarting the British attempt to cut off New England from the rest of the rebelling colonies. Burgoyne, with less-than-accurate intelligence reports, had marched south from Montreal, a similar force under St. Leger was to come down the Mohawk, and another under General Clinton was to come up the Hudson from New York, all to meet in the vicinity of Albany. Clinton decided not to come, and St. Leger was soundly defeated in August 1777 by General Nicholas Herkimer at Oriskany (near Rome), who paid for the victory with his life.

General U. S. Grant, 18th president of the United States, spent the last six weeks of his life at a cottage on McGregor's Mountain about 8 miles north of Saratoga, where he died on July 23, 1885, at the age of 63. Knowing he was in very poor health, a friend offered him the use of his cottage near the top of the mountain, and here Grant finished writing his memoirs. Mark Twain saw to it that they were published, and the proceeds went to the Grant family, clearing them of their considerable debts. I had known that the Civil War hero was deeply in debt and was determined to complete this work in order to pay off this debt before his imminent decease, but I had not known where his memoirs were completed or where he died. We visited the Grant Cottage last Tuesday and learned that the task was finished about four days before he died.

In the 19th century, Saratoga Springs became famous, first for its springs of healing waters, then as a place for the rich and famous to be seen during the social season, and finally (and perhaps most famously) for its thoroughbred and harness racing. At the turn of the 20th century, several huge hotels (two of them, the Grand Union and the United States, had about 900 guest rooms each!) accommodated important guests as they attended the races and were seen during the racing season. One of the favorite novels of my grandmother, Elizabeth C. Marshall, was entitled *Samantha at Saratoga*. Things fell apart in the mid-20th century, and the town became derelict, but an outstanding revival has brought back much of the glory that was Saratoga. The 15 of us from Auburn Heights who attended the steam car tour last week enjoyed spending our five days there.

In four trailers, we took five Stanleys to Saratoga. All our cars ran some, and none came home "broken," but with the exception of the 725, each of the cars needs minor repair. Five cars were on the road to Lake George on Monday, and four made the 70-plus miles, with only the EX failing because of brake clearances with the new hydraulic brakes. The vaporizer cable was stuck on the Model 740, so it didn't run after Monday. The burner and fuel system on the Model K gave some trouble, so it was driven about three days out of the five. The brake problem was corrected on the EX, and it made part of the tour on Thursday. The 725 and the 76 ran well all five days, although the 76 has a leaking water tank and a leak in the feed water heater. It is feared the boiler is leaking slightly on the Model K. The Cannards, the Schwoebels, the Bryces, the Higginses, the John Hopkins family (including son Robert), Kelly Williams, Bob Hargraves, and the Marshalls all played a part in our enjoyment and our success. We are delighted that the "Young Driver Award" was presented to Robert Hopkins, and not so delighted that the trophy for the 10-horsepower car with the most trouble was awarded to our Model EX. Congratulations, Robert!