

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, June 27, 2011

The Long Days of June: As I write this, June is fast disappearing for another year. It is the favorite month for both Ruth and me. We wish the long days could last. Twice we sought far-northern latitudes so see the midnight sun. The first time, in July 1988, as we covered the Alaska Highway and then the Richardson Highway from Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, to Fairbanks, Alaska, it was dark for less than one hour. In 1990, we took a Norwegian coastal steamer from Bergen to the Lofoten Islands and around Norway's North Cape to Kirkenes. Since it was cloudy, we didn't see the midnight sun, but for two nights darkness never fell.

Also as I write this (on June 26), my grandfather, Israel Way Marshall, has been dead 100 years. Perhaps people were more superstitious in 1911 than they are today, but my father often told me the tall clock in Auburn Heights' front hall stopped the minute he died in a room upstairs. Israel treasured this clock, which he bought for his new home in 1900, having his name and the date engraved on its pendulum. In their sadness, no one looked at the clock for some time, but when they did, they found it stopped exactly when its owner expired.

Since I'm not yet 100, although some of our young visitors who rode the Mountain Wagon yesterday thought I was, I never knew either of my grandfathers (both died in 1911). I could have learned so much from them, as I always treasured the time spent with older people. I assume Israel must have been quite mechanical, as was my father, but I don't know that. He loved paper and vulcanized fibre manufacturing and held several patents in connection with these businesses. We know he was financially successful, as he and his younger brother, Elwood, bought the mill on Benge Road in 1889 and converted it to make paper, he built Auburn Heights (1897) and finally, with other family members, the large buildings that housed the National Fibre and Insulation Company (1904–12), which also lasted 100 years. The "big mill" was not completed when Israel died.

Israel seldom enjoyed good health, as he had a troublesome kidney. I was told he fell off a scaffold at the Homestead Mill at Marshall's Bridge when he was 18 and injured it. Off and on for the rest of his life, it would plague him. When his son Warren was married in the front hall at Auburn Heights in 1907, Israel was too ill to attend, but he listened from upstairs. In the summer of 1910, he went to Poland Spring, Maine (by train, of course), and stayed six or eight weeks at the Mansion House there, drinking Poland Water, which was recommended for weak kidneys (and many other diseases). My father visited over a long weekend and rode Poland Spring's Mountain Wagon the six miles from Danville Junction to the resort. It's not clear whether Israel's health really improved or whether he just got homesick, but he was back at Auburn Heights before summer's end.

Like most in his generation, Israel seemed to take little interest in new transportation opportunities, such as automobiles or airplanes. However, he was on the committee to help Old Kennett Friends Meeting celebrate its 200th anniversary in September 1910 and rode to the occasion with his son Clarence in the latter's 1908 Stanley Model K Semi-Racer. My grandfather should have lived beyond 60. None of his six grandchildren were born when he died. I would have cherished sitting on his lap, listening to his stories from the 19th century.