



May 2020

*“Sharing The Legacy of a Transportation Empire”*

## **President’s Message**

Greetings to the members of NSFVA,

I would like to start by saying thank you to the members. Your participation and belonging to the NSFVA has brought this organization a long way. I have witnessed many times the members taking the lead with the educational aspects of “Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire.” Our membership is over 100 members at this date and it is growing. I hope that, every so often, you have time to check out and respond to our Facebook page. The site is very active with interesting subjects that relate to our legacy of preserving our history of the stages, freight wagons and transportation of people and goods. Please also visit your website to enjoy information and photos of past events. The NSFVA website is [www.stagecoachfreightwagon.org](http://www.stagecoachfreightwagon.org).

It is with sorrow that we needed to report to you of the corona virus forcing us to postpone the 2020 conference, which was to be held at Fort Davis, Texas. There were many weeks of hard work by Glenn and Patty Moreland spent organizing what was to be a very enjoyable NSFVA Conference. It’s really too bad to postpone the conference, but not all is wasted, because the Morelands wish to hold and host the same conference once again, in the years to come. May we say to Patty and Glenn: From the NSFVA Board, and all NSFVA members, we wish to shout out a very heartfelt Thank You for your hard work and we look forward to attending this same NSFVA conference in the future.

While visiting with you about conferences, I would like to announce the next scheduled conference, which will be held at Lawrence, Kansas on June 2-5, 2021. Our hosts call themselves “the Kansas Delegation.” I have been reported to by the delegation, and the conference is shaping up nicely. Please be sure to visit our website and Facebook page for conference information as it develops.

May I take a minute and visit with you about the year just past (2019)? I’m very happy with the attendance and success of Eli Anderson’s great ‘Golden Spike’ conference. What a spectacular job our Eli did to organize and carry out one of our very best NSFVA conferences. If you were registered, and 147 members, spouses, and guests were in attendance, there was a set of DVDs that were recently sent to those families to enjoy the total conference. If you missed the conference, then I will encourage you to contact another member to borrow their DVD set and sit back and enjoy. Pictures from the conference may also be found on our website.

I want to bring to your attention one more subject, our new 'NSFWA Membership Directory." The Board and I would like to give a special THANK YOU to Mrs. Lyn Neel, who volunteered to organize the directory and get it printed along with mailing it to each member's home. Thank you Lynn, I use mine almost daily.

I hope to visit with each of you in the near future. Thank you for letting me serve you along with the NSFWA Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

Jeff McManus  
President of NSFWA

---

### **2021 NSFWA Conference**

Sorry we had to cancel our 2020 conference, we all wanted to thank the Morelands for all the time and effort they spent on preparations.

Our 2021 conference is being planned to be held in Kansas. Our Kansas delegation is planning this event to be in Lawrence, Kansas on June 2-5, 2021.

Attendees will be able to make reservations at the Historic Eldredge Hotel. More information to come later.

Plans are in progress for a very exciting conference. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend!

-Frank Burkdoll

### **JR Hill Harness Poster Preservation Project**

We are happy to announce that the JR Hill poster conservation project is done and the poster will soon be on its way back to the Montana Heritage Commission at Virginia City/Nevada City, Montana. The JR Hill Harness Company provided harness for the Abbot Downing coaches that came west. Their office was across the street from the Abbot Downing Company in Concord, New Hampshire. This fabulous and rare poster is a great example of early American advertising. We are pleased to be able to help the Montana Heritage Commission preserve this great poster for generations to come. We have also received a copy of the poster for our archives.

-Rawhide Johnson

## Facebook Activity

I administer the page according to our mission statement as far as content goes. As per our mission statement, the NSFVA Facebook page is part of "our commitment to the research, archiving, and sharing of historical information."

To do this, I start by "mining" other pages - pages that our followers may not be linked to or following. I also find articles from the web and when time permits, articles from books and archival sources that I can access. As an example, I recently purchased a four volume set of the "History of Travel in America," published over 100 years ago. There are some nuggets in there. Museums are also good sources.

Normally our posts will garner about 20 likes, and reach about 140 followers with approximately two shares. Through this process, we have over 1,400 followers and just shy of 1,000 people that like our page. Organic posts where I do the post without sharing from somewhere else do much better. For example, I found an article about the White Pass and Yukon Line, added a picture from my archives, and within 24 hours had reached over 5,000 people. Another shared post on an Omaha stagecoach also surprised me with a reach to followers in the thousands. So, you never know who is following or reading our posts, or what tweaks the interest.

If followers have historic nuggets they wish to post, they can do so through messaging on the page or posting to comments of existing posts. From there I can pull the comment or message, attribute, and post it.

-Doran Degenstein

### April 4, 2020 Facebook Post



Las Vegas, Nevada ca. 1900

A 12-horse jerk line hitch pulling 2 freight wagons to Bullfrog from Las Vegas. The foreman rides close to the hitch probably in control of the jerk line.

University of Southern California. Libraries Building the Past.

## 2019 Utah Conference Summary



An article written by NSFVA member Lyn Neel for the Carriage Association of America and the International Carriage Association

### THE GOLDEN SPIKE SESQUICENTENNIAL

Promontory Summit, Utah

May 10, 2019

—●●    ———    —●    ●

“Clackity Click Click” , “Clackity Clackity Clackity”, “Clackity Click”, “ Click”

D O N E

This message was tapped out on the telegraph lines across the country when the final “Golden Spike” was driven into the rail ties connecting the Trans-Continental Railroad on May 10, 1869, 150 years ago. What an event as the country was now united by rail from Coast to Coast. It has been called the 19<sup>th</sup> Century equivalent of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century “Moon Landing”.

In 1862 Congress granted the charter for a railroad connecting the East and the West and the first ground was broken in February 1863. The furthest the railroad had reached into the great western expanse of this country was Omaha, Nebraska. The Union Pacific started from here under the direction of its Vice President, Thomas Durant. The Central Pacific started its track East from Sacramento, California under the leadership of Governor Leland Stanford who served as President and C. P. Huntington, Vice President. Until the uniting of these great rail lines, travel from Omaha further west was only by stagecoach, wagon, horseback, or walking, along dusty rough trails, or a lengthy trip from the Eastern Seaboard by sea. It was critical to our country to find a better way to travel to the West. Many of the original pioneers who came across by wagon train had now settled west of Omaha. The West had great natural resources and there was a need for commerce in both directions. Mail service, which was originally by Pony Express, then Overland Stage was often raided by Indians, highway men, or outlaws.

There have been many annual ceremonies of the Golden Spike, but 2019 was the Sesquicentennial of this historic event and much of Northern Utah was again putting on a celebration marking 150 years. Many groups who enjoy and follow the major historic events of this country were gathering in the area to attend this remarkable celebration. A few members of the Carriage Association of America (CAA) who were also members of the National Stagecoach and Freight Wagon Association (NSFWA) were there to enjoy this special occurrence. Attending from CAA were Director Ken Wheeling from Vermont who was a guest speaker, Director Roger Murray & wife Susan from Ohio, Director Craig Paulsen and wife & M'Lisa were in attendance from Salt Lake City, and Bill & Lyn Neel traveled from Oregon for the event. The seven of us stayed pretty much together. Other members of CAA who attended some of the events were Rick and Pat Bischoff and Scott Anderson.

The NSFWA planned its annual Convention around the Golden Spike activities and we congregated in Brigham City, Utah which was only 32 miles from the Golden Spike Ceremony at Promontory Summit. The NSFWA Convention was to start on Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup> for 4 days of spectacular adventure.

That first morning we met in a small conference room at a local hotel in Brigham City. It was quickly learned that if you wanted a seat, you had better be there early as more than expected, about 100 attendees, had turned out for the affair. The president of NSFWA, Jeff McManus greeted us all and introduced Eli Anderson who was the Event Chairman. He also recognized the several CAA members who had helped Eli with the conference planning and funding. Jeff and Eli gave us a brief run-down of where we would be going the next few days, and what we would be seeing. Also, in attendance were some members of the Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) and one of the local OCTA guides, Terry Welch, gave us a history of many of the places we would be visiting that day.

This Convention was not your usual "sit in a big ballroom and listen to lectures", but it was a "CONVENTION ON WHEELS." The NSFWA had hired a large motor coach to take everyone "on the road", but with so many wanting to attend and a motor coach that would only hold 48, those of us with sturdy trucks or vans were asked to drive our own vehicles and we would "caravan" daily to see the sights. We were given maps showing the route we would be taking and the various stops we would make.

We soon were all loaded either into the motor coach or our vehicles, maps in hand and began caravanning across many of the rail beds or old historic wagon trails heading west skirting the Great Salt Lake. Eli led us in his pickup, then the motor coach, followed by all of us in our private cars. I was VERY WINDY and cool most days but fortunately the predicted rain held off for the most part. The wind was so strong at times you could hardly walk against it and many of us resorted to using our walking sticks. That first day we were mostly on the BARTLESON-BIDWELL Wagon trail. We drove through the historic town of Corrine which sprouted up with all the rail activity and had hoped to be a "railhead", only to be eventually passed by. We learned that water was the big issue for the railroad, as locomotives used large amounts of water to make the steam. The Union Pacific was using coal from the East and the Central Pacific had to rely on west coast wood as coal was not as readily available at that time. The tenders could only hold enough water to travel about 15 miles before needing to replenish their tanks. It was also noted that the Great Salt Lake was too brackish for the steam engines, so fresh water was needed.

Springs in the area were an important feature needed where the railroad or trails would need to be built, and fortunately the early settlers, travelers & freighters discovered the same thing, starting up small settlements around these precious sources of water. Our tour took us to some of these "watering holes" before we made our first stop at the GOLDEN SPIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK at Promontory Summit. Here we were asked to gather outside the motor coach where sound systems were quickly set up and cameras to record the event were in place. Again, our OTCA speaker gave us information on why this spot was chosen and we viewed the tracks where the Trans-Continental Railroad finally joined. We were out in middle of no-where, overlooking the Utah desert. The locomotives were not there yet, as they were still in their storage areas getting final preparations for the ceremony on Friday May 10<sup>th</sup>, but there were numerous port-a-potties, an historic town scene set up, and vender areas everywhere awaiting the big event.

An interesting fact we learned from our lecturers – when the Congress had commissioned the two railroads to build track, they were paid by the mile. The Central Pacific hired thousands of Chinese to build their road beds and lay the track as it headed east. The Union Pacific used immigrants which were dominantly Irish, ex-slaves and Civil War Veterans as their track-laying teams. Both Railroad companies used Mormon workers from the local area. These two work groups were pressed to lay track as fast as possible and it was never clear where they would meet. It was noted that one day they would lay over 10 miles of track alone. As it was, they actually passed each other in Northern Utah by about a mile, and when the Government learned that there were two sets of tracks now going across the country, they put a halt to it and told both railroads to get together and connect. Promontory Summit, where we were standing was that final spot. While we were standing on one set of tracks, the other spur tracks in the area showed how close the railroads had been when they passed each other, but "money was money" and neither railroad wanted to stop.

From Promontory Summit, we re-boarded and headed further west on the Bartleson-Bidwell wagon trail to Monument Point. Again, we disembarked, and with sound systems and camera in place, our speaker told us more of the history and we viewed the original trans-continental rail grade built in 1869. Monument Point is a huge prominent pillar near the Great Salt Lake and there is an historic RR marker nearby along with a Monument Plaque giving the history.

Our next stop was lunch in Park Valley where a delicious homemade meal was served, all arranged and donated by friends of Eli Anderson. The shelter we were to eat in was open on all sides, and the wind was cold, and strong. Very few wanted to sit and eat in this gale, so most returned to our vehicles and ate there. After lunch another set of speakers gave us the history of the Early Wagon Days and the Raft River Valley. We all tried to find a windless spot to stand and listen.

Boarding the motor coach and our vehicles, we headed further on the Bartleson-Bidwell wagon trail to the small ghost remains of Kelton which once was a thriving Railroad town and also a major trail head to Boise, Idaho. In the days of stagecoach and wagon travels it was notorious for wagon robberies. Today only graves and some rock foundations remain. Our last leg of the afternoon was back to the Hotel. As we motored down very dusty gravel roads, we could see some of the old wagon tracks still visible near the town of Snowville. When we got back to civilization, we realized we had driven over 200 miles, and the motor coach and our vehicles showed the results of the back roads we had been on, but what fabulous sights we saw.

Our second day on the road was not as long. We left the Hotel after our early morning briefing by Jeff and Eli and our caravan headed on the old CALIFORNIA TRAIL that headed from Salt Lake City to northern Utah hugging the mountains. We went to The Old Barn Theater in Collision, Utah where we were treated to a "home grown " play "THE CROSSING" about the history of the area and the railroad. This spot is located on Bear Creek where the early stagecoach crossing known as Hampton Ford is located. Before the play, a local sheepherder, bounty hunter and teamster gave the history of the Bear River Ferry and the Malad River Bridge. We saw where they put the stagecoaches or wagons in the water and with ropes pulled them across the creek. Later a ferry was installed and now a permanent bridge crosses the creek as it is one of the main ways to travel the area. The Play which had been written especially for our convention group, had about 35 in the cast –many children and adults dancing and singing. It was extremely well done, and everyone enjoyed it. For lunch we were driven to a nearby park for another delicious spread and an excellent talk on The First Wagon Pioneers who arrived in 1865 and lived in Dugout Caves on the banks of Bear River. After lunch we again hit the road and returned to the small town of Corrine where a local historian gave the history of the town, freighting and stagecoach history from 1869-2019. With the day almost ending, we returned to the Hotel to freshen up, then met again at the Lodge at Maddox which was just south of Brigham City. Dinner was served and our last speaker of the day told us of the Treacherous Wagon Travel with artwork on display by a local artist Larry Winborg. We all headed to bed early after supper as Friday was the big railroad event – the Re-Enactment of the Golden Spike.

For Friday's fare, we had 2 options. Any who did not want to attend the actual ceremony at Promontory Summit could go to the local Box Elder Fairgrounds and see a live stream production on big screen TV. If anyone wanted to brave the traffic and a possible long walk, event chairman Eli Anderson had some VIP parking passes that would get us closer. Information had been put out that they would like those attending to come in appropriate dress of the 1860's and Bill and I had brought clothes for the occasion. I grabbed one of the passes and was glad I did. Bill really wanted to attend, and wear costumes and we were worried about the long walk in frock coat and hoop skirts.

We left early and got to the site about 8AM, put on our costumes and took our chairs. We found a pretty good place to sit and walked around for a while. The locomotives, Central Pacific's "JUPITER" and Union Pacific's "#119" were in place looking VERY Special. There were quite a few attendees "in dress" and many people wanted to take our pictures. Starting at 8AM, they had a modern skit going at the Ceremony Site depicting the railroad crews building the railbeds, laying track and the history of the event. It was excellent and kept us entertained while we waited for the actual ceremony to begin. People continued to pour into the area after the ceremony had started and were milling everywhere looking for a place to sit or stand and watch. Fortunately there were large- screen TV's around so we resorted to watching those when we could not see the action on stage. We later learned there were over 20,000 that came to Promontory Summit, but we were so glad we went.

After the ceremony, the modern skit was repeated on stage for a third time, and we took this opportunity to pick up our chairs and head out. Traffic was fortunately fairly light, and we had a dinner and wagon viewing at our host, Eli Anderson's who had arranged all of these events for us. Eli's farm, WAGON LAND ADVENTURE, was not far from Promontory Summit and we returned to his house and barns where we saw his LARGE wagon collection. There were 3 barns full of various wagons, coaches, sleighs, hearses etc., and it was quite a display. Fortunately, the May issue of the Carriage Journal has just completed an article on Eli's Collections. A chuck wagon dinner and auction awaited us, complete with a western band. What a wonderful day...we all enjoyed the festivities.

Saturday, we wrapped up the conference with lectures on what we had seen and more history of the area and the railroad at the local Stake House of the Church of Latter-Day Saints. Ken Wheeling was one of our speakers that day giving us wonderful information on the Staging North of the Santa Fe Trail Prior to 1869. We also heard from Lucas Hugie, a Park Ranger at Golden Spike National Historic Site which answered many of our questions about the trains, the exhibit and all we had seen.

Event Chairman for the NSFVA, Eli Anderson, was outstanding. His many friends, convention sponsors and family worked hard to provide our food, gifts, entertainment and all the set -up necessary for such an undertaking, much of it donated. The organization of the entire Convention was excellent, and you were kept very entertained not only by the speakers, but the sights we were able to view. What a fabulous few days.

Lyn Neel – Eugene, Oregon