



“Sharing The Legacy of a Transportation Empire”

NSFWA Newsletter

President’s Message

Greetings to all members of the National Stagecoach and Freight Wagon Association,

2020 has been a very unstable year to plan a “Get Together.” It seems that the gathering spots become questionable, and we as members may not be able to risk our health to the unpredictable virus. We, your Board of Directors and the Hosts of our events, this year, felt it necessary to postpone two events that were promised earlier. So, let us hope we can soon be able to report that we are all safe from the virus. Ok, plenty of that. Let me say, although we have had cancellations and postponements this year, we did accomplish with the help from a gracious grantor, the chance for our organization to successfully conserve a very rare 1886 poster of JR Hill Coach Harness. Mr. J.R. Hill had the exclusive job of harness making for the Abbot & Downing coaches in the 1886 era. This poster was very well conserved and we can offer you a copy. For further information on how to get a copy, please keep reading the newsletter. Your Board of Directors: Jeff McManus, Rawhide Johnson, Kathryn McKee, Cameron Bean, Frank Burkdoll, Doran Degenstein, Patrick Goodknight all hope for you to have a prosperous 2021 and hope we can soon all be safe to meet and have an enjoyable time. Thank you for belonging to this fine organization.

-Jeff McManus, NSFWA President



Kathryn McKee recently completed this 500-piece puzzle from Germany of a runaway stage chased by hooligans on a bicycle, scooter, and horse.

2021 NSFVA Conference

Dear members of the NSFVA,

I truly regret having to do this, but it only seems the correct thing to do under the circumstances. The 2021 Conference being planned to be held here in Kansas has been cancelled. It seemed only appropriate with all the unknowns, Chinavirus, how you folks felt about travel and the organization not having an abundance of funds to take a chance of losing money.

We were working on an itinerary that we thought was going to be a very good conference. We were working with Ft. Leavenworth, which has a very nice wagon and carriage museum, and Mahaffey Stage Stop which has a museum and onsite demonstrations. We had also made arrangements to hold the conference at the Historic Eldridge Hotel in downtown Lawrence. As you may know this hotel was burnt by Quantrill during the Civil War. It was actually burnt three times- a very ornate and impressive building full of history.

Our final day was to be at the Douglas County fairgrounds. We planned to have some of our Kansas Members bring in their wagons to look at and have other members give some talks on refurbishing and general care of our prized possessions. Plans were being made to have some Chuckwagons do some cooking. We were also hoping to have people bring things they would like to trade or barter. It was also our hope to open this to the public trying to get outside interest. Well as for now all I can do is try to think just how exciting it was going to be. We hope to reschedule sometime down the road.

-Frank and Peg Burkdoll

2021 Fun Days

Since the 2021 Conference in Kansas is postponed until another year, the Board of Directors has chosen to pursue Fun Days' activities for 2021. If any members would like to host, recommend, or otherwise discuss a location for a Fun Day, please contact any of the Board Members.

Patrick Goodknight and the Springfield Wagon

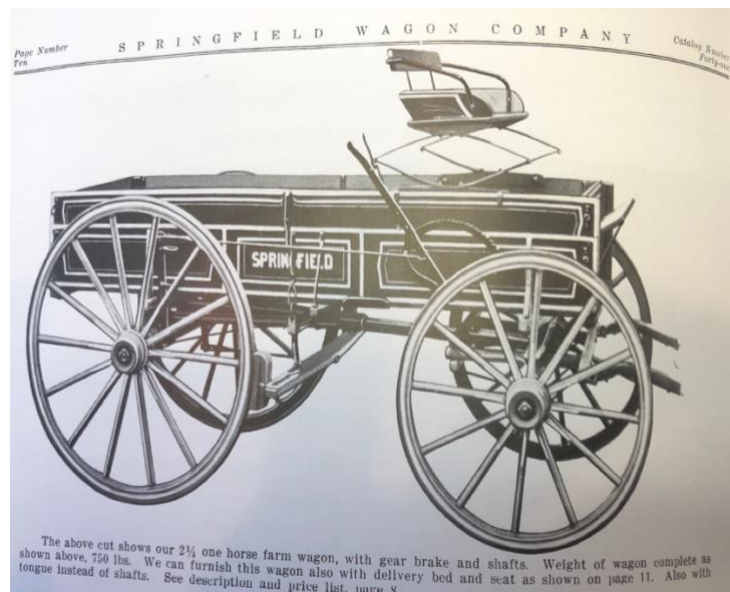
By Doran Degenstein



Patrick Goodknight

Patrick Goodknight is one of our NSFVA Directors, whose ancestry traces back to Charles Goodknight, the Texas Ranger and rancher, inventor of the chuck wagon, and proponent of the big cattle drives to the North. Charles Goodknight also established the Goodknight-Loving trail with his partner Oliver Loving, and later extended the trail into Wyoming with the Chisum trail after partnering with John Chisum.

Patrick resides in Joplin, Missouri where his long quest for a Springfield wagon finally came to fruition this past spring when restoration was completed. In 1991, Patrick bought the wagon from his neighbor Bill Collins, who bought and sold wagons and equipment. In 1991, at the time, the wheels had been cut down as was common, and the wagon needed to be restored. Patrick concluded his wagon was likely a 1916 Springfield one-horse wagon after research off and on through the years.



The above cut shows our 2 1/4 one horse farm wagon, with gear brake and shafts. Weight of wagon complete as shown above, 750 lbs. We can furnish this wagon also with delivery bed and seat as shown on page 11. Also with tongue instead of shafts. See description and price list, page 8.

The Springfield Wagon Co. had its beginnings in 1872. Soon the wagon “built by master wagon makers equipped with precision tools and dressed in bright green and yellow paint...a work of grace and beauty... light of weight, easy of draft, yet sturdy in construction” gained popularity for its reputation suitable for the geography of Southwest Missouri, Northwest Arkansas, and Northeast Oklahoma. By 1877, the company was producing 75 wagons per week.



When Patrick and I were discussing his wagon, we contemplated its history, how it might have been used, and the propensity of these wagons in his region. Aside from the design as stated above, and being 72 miles from Springfield, we began to ponder another interesting aspect of its history, born from an 1891 photograph from South Dakota.

It was then that Patrick recalled that the wagon may have come from the Indian Territory, or what is now Oklahoma, before being purchased and used by Bill.



Yale Collection of Western Americana

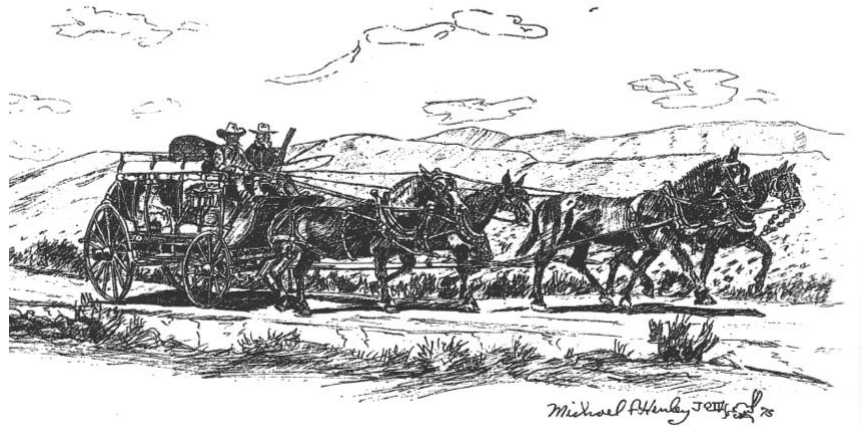
The Sioux encampment photo attributed to the Yale Collection of Western Americana identifies the photo in this article and the NSFVA Facebook post from April 8 as a Lakota camp at Pine Ridge South Dakota in 1891. It would appear that every lodge has a wagon beside it. An excerpt from the 1868 Laramie Treaty Article VIII “entitled to receive seeds and agricultural implements” perhaps sheds some light on the abundance of wagons in the Pine Ridge photograph and perhaps the origins of Patrick’s wagon.

As a fellow board member, I appreciate Patrick sharing his story and his willingness to serve the NSFVA in the preservation of history.

-Doran Degenstein

***Sagebrush and Axle Grease* excerpt**

-We thought this story would be fun to read. The NSFWA would like to thank Mr. Michael Hanley for the opportunity to share an excerpt from his book *Sagebrush and Axle Grease* along with the use of a detailed drawing. Thank you, Michael Hanley!



Samuel Clemens, tired of the conditions in the strife torn "states," decided to go west with his brother Orion Clemens, the newly-appointed Secretary of the Territory of Nevada. Orion was broke so Sam went to the Overland Stage office at St. Joseph, Missouri, and investigated the price of two fares for Nevada. The manager said \$150 for single and \$300 for two. Sam was about to refuse such a high price but the manager reminded him that there were worse alternatives. They could either go around the Horn, cross the Isthmus of Panama, or go overland over the Overland Oregon Trail. After considering the stories of hardships encountered on the other routes, Sam Clemens decided that \$300 was a wise investment.

On July 25, 1861, the brothers boarded the stagecoach for the twenty-day journey west. The coach was filled with huge mail bags thereby leaving room for the passengers on a bench in the rear. The driver announced that there were 2,700 pounds of mail aboard, "a little for Brigham, Carson, and Frisco."

About every ten miles, the coach stopped to change horses at one of the way stations. The men who managed the way stations were chosen for their jobs because of their ability to handle any situation- be it Indians, highwaymen, weather, or cooking. The station keepers carried long navy revolvers and bone-handled bowie knives. Sam and Orion had their own idea why the keepers were armed to the teeth- it was to reduce remarks about their cooking. They would slice off a piece of bacon for each man. However, only the experienced old hands could eat it because it was condemned army bacon which the army would not feed soldiers in the forts. The stage company had bought it cheap for the subsistence of their passengers and employees.

About 300 miles out of St. Joseph, the coach crossed the Platte River. The driver yelled out that the pony express rider was coming- "here he comes: there he goes." The brothers made a hurried attempt to crawl over the mail bags so they could see the rider as he went by. When they got to the window, all they could see was a wisp of dust some distance down the road.

Life on the plains fascinated Sam. The jack rabbits and coyotes especially interested him because of their swiftness. When the Rocky Mountains were reached, horses were exchanged for sure-footed mules which could better travel the rough mountain roads. After crossing the Great Divide, the coach

made its way to Salt Lake City where Sam had a chance to witness the Mormons. The road from Salt Lake City to Carson City showed evidence of the early immigrants and their suffering. Here and there he could see from the coach, a wrecked wagon, a bit of chain, or a lonely grave.

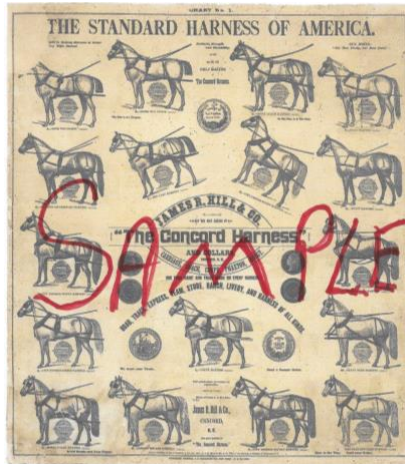
At the end of the twentieth day, the coach reached Carson City, Capitol of Nevada Territory. Orion immediately assumed his secretarial duties and Sam Clemens went on to become Mark Twain.

Other News:

If members would like to contribute stories, images, upcoming events, or other information to future newsletters, please send material to Kathryn McKee before March 1st, 2021.

JR Hill Harness Poster Preservation Project

The JR Hill harness poster has been returned to Virginia City, Montana after several months away in Pennsylvania being restored. The NSFVA received a donation to help sponsor this restoration and preservation project. As part of the agreement, NSFVA is able to reproduce prints of the poster. This poster would make a great gift for a stagecoach enthusiast on your gift list, and don't forget to treat yourself! The prints will be sold for \$130 as a fundraiser towards the next preservation project. Please use the form below to order a print.



JR HILL HARNESS POSTER ORDER FORM

Please make check to: National Stagecoach and Freight Wagon Association

_____ poster(s) at \$130 each Total Included: _____

Mail to: _____

Send Order Form To:
NSFWA Attn: Kathryn McKee
237 E. Corbin St.
Hillsborough, NC 27278