



"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

The 2024 NSFVA Conference, held at Virginia City and Nevada City Montana was well planned by our Event Coordinator Ashlee Ganoung. Thanks, Ashlee!

A thank you also goes out to our tour guides Harlan and Joel Olson, who showed us a great old collection of Stagecoaches, Touring Coaches, and Gold Ore Wagons to name a few, and a tour of two historic 1800s towns.

Thank you to our speakers Thorton Waite, Jim Jarvis, Patrick Goodknight, and Rawhide Johnson; blacksmith Jem Blueher, Kayo Fraser of Wild Horse Books, and Vigilante Carriage Service for our Friday night dinner.

We wish to thank the Ruby Dell Ranch and its owners Jim Anderson and family, for a special day of enjoyable time at their historical old red barn that has been turned into a very nice reception hall. Last, but not least, thank you to all of our members who attended. The organization greatly appreciates your efforts to be there.

Please see the well-written story about the NSFVA Conference by Jon Christensen and Tammy Harty.



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Past Events

2024 Annual Conference: (Virginia City and Nevada City, MT)

June 20-23, 2024

A Trip Back in Time.....

It is springtime 2024 and we are all set up for the cattle drive down Main St. in Prineville OR. It is the tradition that on the opening day for the Crooked River Roundup Rodeo, they drive the cattle down Main Street to the rodeo grounds. We had been asked to bring the Chuck wagon and our team of Haflingers to follow the herd down Main St. Years prior, the cattle stampeded at the end of the drive and made the headlines of the local newspaper. so, Jon is always up for one of those memorable adventures.



The newsletter from the NSFVA and the itinerary for the summer conference arrived and it looked very interesting to us. Neither Jon, nor Tammy, had heard of Virginia City, Nevada City, or Bannack, Montana, nor had we ever attended the conference. But we are always up for anything of the old west. This year's NSFVA conference sounded like just "up our Valley". So, we decided to switch it up and pulled out of the cattle drive! We sent our gold and staked our claim in this year's event.

Summer rolled in, Jon gathering our gear for the trail and Tammy picking her best old mare (Chevy Silverado). We decided to make a vacation of it. First, we headed off for Sun Valley, Idaho. A bit to the left and not out West for us. Next day off to Salmon, Idaho which has been on our radar as a potential relocation spot. We spent enough time there to figure out it was an unfriendly town and a good place to get in a brawl.

We mounted up for Dillon, Montana after a few days. The ride was interesting as we ran out of pavement for approximately 30 miles. After some switchbacks and a lot of crow hopping we got back on pavement towards Dillon. Dillon was our kind of town. Clean, warm and friendly. After lunch and picking out some chinks for the youngest granddaughter at the local Saddlery, we mounted up for the trail to Virginia City. We arrived in Virginia City, so we thought, and pulled right up to the hotel. All the doors were locked! The sign overhead said Nevada City. Puzzled, we walked a bit then looked in at the museum. They informed us we were in Nevada City and assured us that Virginia City was just up the road a bit. Tammy looked quite relieved and couldn't mount the old mare fast enough. That hotel looked very rustic and did not look habitable to her. (and it wasn't.)





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Jeff McManus pointing to writing on a rock. The writing is axle grease from years ago.

We arrived at the historic Fairweather Hotel in Virginia City. Much more comfortable looking than the hotel in Nevada City. The room they gave us was up a narrow windy back staircase and they informed us that room was haunted and on the ghost town tour. Somehow, we always end up in the haunted rooms. The room was small and cozy with a tiny bed. (As was common at that time.) Jon had planned ahead and brought his bedroll just in case there wasn't room for him in the bed. Lol!! We did hear strange sounds every night in the room and just assumed it was the ghost. After the third night, we figured out the strange noise was actually one of the blinds rattling on the headboard. Darn, no ghost.....

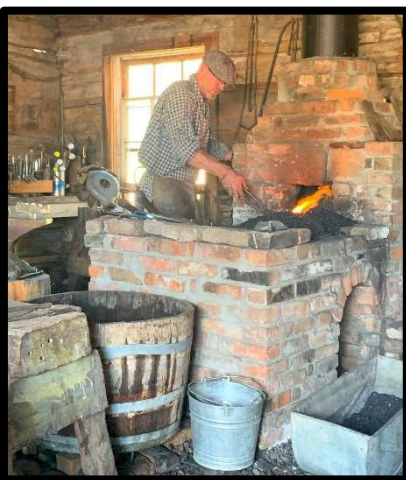
We spent Wednesday afternoon walking the streets of Virginia City and Nevada City. The storefronts were open and full of antiques. Endless amounts of smalls on the shelf. John found this quite fascinating being an avid antiquer and also one

himself. The quantity of duplicates was amazing. Tammy was taking what used to be called kodak moments. Lots of pictures with her phone. At one point we hit the vigilante stage stop right as the Stagecoach was

arriving. We got to meet Shiloh Moore who operates the stagecoach rides with her stepson Cody and his wife Hannah. Shiloh was exceptionally kind and allowed Jon to get a look over the Stagecoach. It was a replica of the Abbot Downing but done in fiberglass. Tammy talked up a storm with Shiloh and she invited us for a ride and a tour. We have a smaller stagecoach and realized that Jon had never ridden inside the coach- he always drives. It was quite a treat, and we learned a bit about the history of Virginia City. Our Stagecoach is also a replica and is not an Abbott Downing, but we know it was in a few movies. We were told it was "held up" several times in the movies.



Jon Christensen & Tammy Harty



Jem Blueher blacksmithing at the conference

Thursday afternoon was the meet and greet at the Bale of Hay Saloon. There we met our new friends from Missouri as well as Rawhide, Jeff, and others. We might even have met a few boys from Nebraska. Jon was shocked because he didn't realize anyone actually lived in Nebraska. There were many others who we did not meet and some we met later on. Friday morning, we met in some tall grass next door to the open air museum. Rawhide quickly noted the area was full of mosquitoes and headed out of the grass and towards the center of the ghost town. Harlan gave the tour of the ghost town of Nevada City. We got to see all of the old buildings and some places that the tourists don't get to see. The barn full of all the old vehicles was amazing and over the top. Just absolutely an amazing collection of wagons and buggies. We also got to see a blacksmith demonstration which was quite engaging for some.



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We both sat a while but mostly it was hot and dry so we wandered around town. We ended up in the saloon for a sarsaparilla. We both took tons of photos and when we stopped to look at the Sheriff's Office, several people wandered by and waved "Hey Sheriff". So, Jon took on that role and offered to take the ruly kids to jail.

We got a private tour of Harlan's cabin that he and his wife live in when they're in Nevada City. It's very primitive and has no modern luxury but does have an outhouse. That's a plus!!

That night was dinner barbecue style right out of the back of a chuck wagon at the Discovery Park. The event was hosted by Shiloh Moore, and Cody Moore was the cookie or camp chef. Dinner was tri-tip with all the fixings done over the fire and in Dutch ovens. We sat family style with our new friends from Missouri. Right after dinner, we got Dutch oven brownies for everybody. We loaded up into two wagons for a tour and history of the town. Jon studied everything over and noticed just a ring where the lines cross over on



the team of horses. Jon questioned Shiloh about that because we always use a heart with a ring on it and it's always flopping all over the place. Shiloh indicated that her horses were so lite mouthed, and she didn't want any added tugging on the lines. So, we learned something. Both of us enjoyed being hosted as mostly we are doing the hosting at home. It was a good night. Saturday morning, we all met in Alder at the Ruby Dell ranch. The morning was filled with a history of trains and how that impacted the use of stagecoaches. Rawhide shared information about thorough braces among other maintenance and care of harness and gear. We took a lot of notes.



Gold ore wagon that was used in the Virginia City, Montana

We skipped the directors meeting and instead went shopping in Virginia City. We also participate in the cowboy action shooting and are always dressing in the early 1900's clothing for the parades we do. We found a great store on Main Street with lots of that clothing and Jon found civil war era style boots, and Tammy a long "1893" style coat. Lots of treasures.

Then there was the Saturday Soiree with period clothing encouraged. This was held in the historic barn at the Ruby Dell ranch. All folks in costume were eligible for a drawing. The winner gets one year free membership to NSFVA. Only part of us dressed the part. It would have been quite a sight to have all of us dressed in that era clothing. Maybe that will happen next year.



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The next morning before saddling up, Jon met with Patrick for breakfast. They had a really good talk and Jon helped him load his buggy and horses for his trek home. We both enjoyed this trip to Montana and continued our ghost town adventure as we headed to Bannack on the way home. Another amazing ghost town.

On the way, we watched a cow moose wander into the road and we got to see her close up.

Somewhere along the way the boys from Nebraska mentioned next year's event might be held there in Nebraska. We are certainly looking forward to visiting Nebraska next year.

Overall a great experience. See ya next year..... Jon & Tammy – Bend, Oregon



Above Left: Patrick Goodknight's Mountain Wagon with a rave frame body.

Above Right: This photo shows the NSFVA giving one of our harness posters to the Anderson Family, owners of the Ruby Dell Ranch, in turn for the use of this historic old horse barn, to hear our speakers and dine. Left to right are: Jeanie Anderson-Bluett, Jeff McManus, Jim Anderson, and our Event Coordinator, Ashlee Ganoung, presenting The Ruby Dell Ranch the harness poster to hang in this barn for public viewing, during other events.