

The National Stagecoach & Freight Wagon

Spring News Letter 2009

The National Stagecoach & Freight Wagon second annual meet took place at the Santa Ynez Valley Historical Museum, in the beautiful Santa Ynez Valley of California, in conjunction with their Western Vehicle Symposium on April 3-5. The host of this year's meet was the Santa Ynez Historical Society Museum. We give great acclaim to the museum for providing their venue, and the spectacular collection of stagecoaches at the Parks-Janeway Carriage House for commentary and public viewing. This historic collection contains a unique blend of western vehicles. If you missed this year's event, we encourage you to include the Santa Ynez Museum in your next trip thru this area. The collection contains a variety of vehicles, including Henderson vehicles, mountain wagons, and concord coaches that lend historical significance to that region. The Santa Ynez Historical Society – headed by John Crockett (Symposium Chairman) and Chris Bashforth (Executive Director), along with a number of dedicated staff and volunteers, did a magnificent job of organizing this Western Vehicle Symposium, "A Bit of the West That Was".

About 100 people attended the three day events, with presentations on Friday and Saturday. NSFWA had three members with speaking engagements at the symposium. Ken Wheeling gave lectures on Vehicles of the Westward Movement & the Stagecoach (history of the Downing and Abbot-Downing coaches). Doug Hansen's presentation covered the Unique Design of Western Vehicles, and how the terrain and environment of the west influenced the adaptation of various wagon design elements. Michael Sanborn, director of the Banning Residence Museum, gave a talk on the history of Phineas Banning- and his Staging & Freighting Empire. The lectures prompted much interaction and discussion on stagecoaches and freight wagons. On Friday evening, an open forum for the public was hosted by NSFWA founders and officers, including Rawhide Johnson, David Sneed, Ashlee Ganoung, Ken Wheeling and Doug Hansen. Member involvement was the main topic of discussion, as well as establishing some committees to be involved in website development and research for the association.

David Sneed, Ken Wheeling, and Doug Hansen had the opportunity to visit the Cold Springs Tavern on San Marcos Pass. This historic stage station and Mattei's Tavern (also still standing today) were stops on the original Santa Ynez Trail. We drove the old stage road down a steep, winding path that made us aware of the formidable terrain that had to be navigated in order to navigate San Marcos Pass. David, Ken, and Doug also toured the Santa Barbara Carriage Museum, as well as the Parks-Janeway Carriage House at Santa Ynez.

The Symposium generated great anticipation and local participation of Sunday's event of historical stagecoach rides through the picturesque and unspoiled environment of the Chamberlin Ranch in the wildflower laden Santa Ynez Valley.

Regional teamsters brought a variety of vehicles and passenger wagons, including mudwagons, concord coaches, and mountain wagons, to entertain the public and provide 30 minute stagecoach rides to those who wished to take part in this opportunity to experience a bit of history. List drivers and types of vehicles, breeds of horses represented-Hanoverians, draft mules, Belgians, and thoroughbreds. Doug Hansen & Ken Wheeling gave oral interpretation of the history of the vehicles, the horses, and there operation, in the staging industry.

Our thanks to John Crockett and Chris Bashforth, for allowing the National Stagecoach & Freight AWagon Association to be a part of their first-ever Western Vehicle Symposium. The NSFWA is a fledgling volunteer organization, gaining momentum and members who share an interest in historical content and are intent upon keeping the spirit of these unique transportation vehicles of the west alive.

Sincerely,

Doug Hansen

President