

NATIONAL STAGECOACH AND FREIGHT WAGON ASSOCIATION



SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

“Sharing The Legacy of a Transportation Empire”



"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

NSFWA President's Message

Greetings NSFWA Members & Family,

The Spring season is just around the corner, and we will meet it with open arms. Looking ahead in 2026, we wish to invite each of you to attend the Events that Members work hard to provide; a look at the times gone by, and how the wooden wheel vehicle served early expansion across America.

In finishing the President's Message to each of you, I would like to announce that Rawhide Johnson, an original founder of our NSFWA, has chosen to retire from the Board of Directors. We thank Rawhide for organizing the NSFWA and serving on the Board since its beginning.

I also would like to familiarize you with your present Board of Directors and Officers:

Jeff McManus - President & Board Member, Patrick Goodknight - Vice President & Board Member, Julie Williams - Secretary & Board Member, Jerry Palmer - Treasurer & Board Member, Adam Hanger - Newsletter Editor & Board Member, Frank Burkdoll - Board Member, Cameron Bean - Board Member

On behalf of the NSFWA Board, we wish for you to have a very enjoyable Spring and Summer.

Your NSFWA President,

Jeff McManus

NSFWA Merchandise for Sale

We have been trying to sell shirts at our annual conferences and are trying to add to our merchandise list at the conference and year around. We will have T-Shirts, hats, and bandannas for sale. The shirts will sell for \$20, hats for \$25, and bandannas for \$5. There are an assortment of colors of hats and bandannas. They will all be available at the conference or we can ship them if shipping is paid. We are working on some nice wool vests and will get that information out soon. If anyone has any questions or would like to place an order, please contact Julie Williams @ 417-844-5224 or firemanjulie@gmail.com.





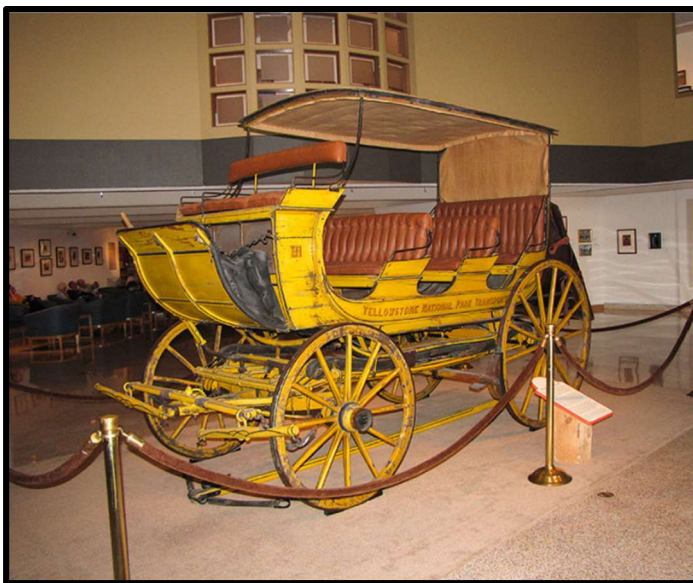
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NSFWA Newsletter Editor Report

Starting in 2026, businesses will have the opportunity to advertise their business with a business card sized ad in our newsletter for \$75.00 a year or at a pro-rated amount (\$25 per issue) if you get your ad submitted part way through the year. Members will also have the ability to have their business card sized ad put on the website free of charge. By doing this, this will spotlight your business, as well as, help the National Stagecoach and Freight Wagon Association offset the cost of printing the newsletters. Currently, the newsletter goes out three times a year in March, September, and December. More information on this, along with a form, can be found at the end of this newsletter, so if you haven't gotten yours in yet, it's not too late! Also, see the special newsletter story that is found further down in this issue. **Also, if you have a story about wagons or wagon history, please if you can, send it in for newsletter content. This newsletter is not possible without stories from you all.**

NSFWA Email Blast

The NSFWA board is constantly looking for new and better ways to share information with its membership. Our membership being scattered throughout the USA, poses a few challenges. In 2025 we established the "email blast" system. It was our hope that sending monthly emails regarding all things related to our organization, would help keep our membership involved and informed. Tracking of these emails showed about a 50% success rate in them being read by members. We are going to start off 2026 trying the "email blast" system again. We will send out monthly emails about events coming up, or information clips that we think you might be interested in. Please watch your emails for anything from email@nsfwa.org and titled Stagecoach and Freightwagon Friends. We will send a minimum of one email per month so as of this newsletter if you have not received an email and cannot find it in your junk folder please contact Julie Williams and we will make sure we have all your information correct. The only good reason to miss our emails is because you are in your wagon out of service range. Happy Trails! Julie Williams NSFWA Secretary, firemanjulie@gmail.com or 417-844-5224.



Front Cover: Photo taken from NSFWA website

Left: An original Yellowstone touring coach, in the entrance to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, sets the stage for a world of amazing displays and collections inside the multi-level museum. Photo courtesy NSFWA website.



"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

NSFWA Director/Officer Spotlight



Jeff McManus, President

Jeff McManus has lived in Wyoming and been a part of ranching his entire life. Jeff joined the NSFWA in 2009, while attending that year's convention held at West Yellowstone, Montana. With his wife, Barb, he owns a small collection of teams and wagons and his efforts in this organization are to encourage us all to preserve our history and knowledge of horse-drawn transportation. Jeff has been president since 2016 and has enjoyed serving the board and the NSFWA members.

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Upcoming Events

Farm Team Competition:

(Lyndon, Kansas)

April 25-26, 2026

The Lyndon Saddle Club is holding their Fifth Annual Farm Team Competition in Lyndon, Kansas. Farm teams from different parts of the country will have fun and compete in a log skidding challenge, cultivating challenge, driving challenge, and more! Come out to Lyndon, Kansas to check out this event that is focused on participants being challenged to become better teamsters. If there are any questions, please contact Frank Burkdoll @ 785-256-3430. More information to come.

2026 Annual Conference:

(Fort Davis, Texas) May 14-16, 2026

The NSFVA 2026 Conference will be held in Fort Davis, Texas! For any questions, contact Glenn & Patty Moreland, 512-627-5943, the conference hosts, or contact Adam Hanger at 540-490-2565.

We hope that you all can come out to this exciting and event-filled conference to enjoy the history of the past, the old Butterfield-Overland Trail from the 1850s, and the Fort Davis, Texas area! Come out for talks on *Restoring Wagons, Southwest Map Collection, Butterfield Trail through West Texas, Trail Routes of Freight Wagons through Texas, and "Horsehead Crossing on The Pecos: Indians, Wagon Trains, Stagecoaches, and Cattle Drives"*

It's not too late to register so please see the end of this newsletter for a registration form and tentative schedule. We hope you can attend!

2nd Annual Middlebrook Horse Drawn Heritage

Days: (Middlebrook, Virginia)

August 28-29, 2026

Come out to the 2nd Annual Middlebrook Horse Drawn Heritage Days on August 28th and 29th, 2026 in Middlebrook, Va. We will be having a horse drawn vehicle and farm implement display, farm team/single horse exhibition, chuckwagon meal and chuckwagon dessert, historical presentations, saddle and harness demonstrations, and more! Come check out this event that promotes the horse heritage of the past! More information to come to include a flyer and schedule of events! Contact Adam Hanger @ 540-490-2565.

SAVE THE DATE!

**2nd Annual
Middlebrook
Horse Drawn Heritage Days**

Friday, August 28th, 2026

(Chuckwagon Dinner, Horse Drawn Vehicle/Farm
Implement Display, and more!)

and

Saturday August 29th, 2026

(Horse Drawn Vehicles/Farm Implement Display,
Chuckwagon, Historical Presentations, and more!!)

For info, contact Adam Hanger @ 540-490-2565
or visit
Middlebrook Horse Drawn Heritage Days -
Middlebrook, Va. on Facebook.



"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

Photo Gallery: Historic Ventura Transfer Wagon

Submission courtesy of hansenwheel.com



This particular wagon is a heavy platform spring express wagon. It was a heavy haul delivery wagon that served the oil and water industries starting in the 1890's in Ventura, California. Ventura Transfer was the dominant transportation company of that area, moving passengers and freight that originated with the ships in the new Ventura Harbor. With the building of Ventura's wharf in 1872, coastal steamers put in and landed goods, and these wagons served as transportation delivering pipe and valves from the ships. This wagon travelled on the El Camino Real. The Ventura Transfer Company is still in business today.





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Photo Gallery: Historic Ventura Transfer Wagon (continued)



Thank you to our partners!!

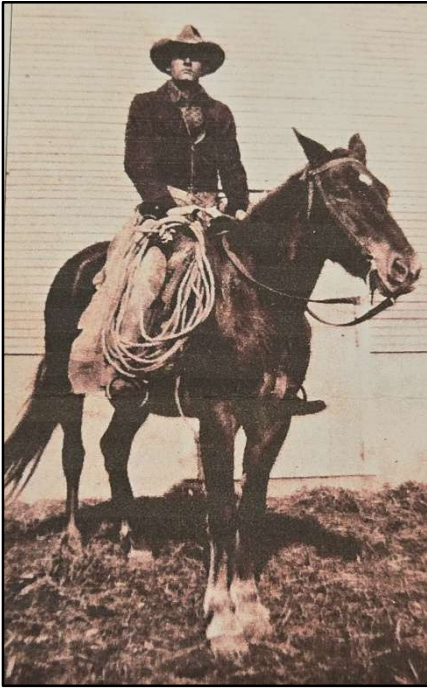




"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

Short Stories from the Trail: Dirty Thirties Trail Drive

By Warren Leroy Johnson as told to Mary Ann Johnson, Submitted by Todd Johnson



In the fall of 1929, my folks, Clark and Blanche Johnson, and six kids moved from Tiff City, Mo., to Lamar, Colorado. In the spring of 1930, we moved by teaming wagon to 40 miles southwest of Lamar and homesteaded 320 acres. It took five trips to get everything. We lived in a dugout at first. It was 6 miles to our mailbox, and the mail ran every other day. Dad once hitch-hiked about 75 miles to La Junta, Colo., to buy a saddle, and gave \$25 for it. On the way back, he met the mailman, who dropped the saddle off at our mailbox. But Dad walked the rest of the way home since the mailman couldn't carry any passengers.

These were Dust Bowl days, from 1930-1936. It was often so dark the chickens went to roost at noon. We stayed on the homestead until the spring of 1935, when Dad decided to move back to Missouri.

Dad had me trail-drive our horses and mules cross-country, because we didn't have any other way to move them. I would travel through the area hardest hit by several winds and brutal dust. I was 16 years old, had \$15 in my pocket, and rode the saddle Dad bought in La Junta.

The day I left, the wind was blowing dust so hard you couldn't see half-a-quarter-section in front of you. I had two horses, two mules, and was riding the only broke horse close to the Kansas state line. The first day, I made about 30 miles, to Two Buttes, Colo., a place of about a dozen people.

At noon the next day, I got to the state line, where I had to wait for a brand inspector before I could cross the state line into Kansas. The only thing there was a store in a sod shanty. I had left a stray black horse at home; because he wasn't branded, I was afraid the brand inspector would give me problems. When he finally arrived at the state line, the inspector didn't even go outside to check my horses. Boy, I wished I had brought the black the. Horses were real cheap out there.

My next stop was Ulysses, Kan., where Dad had bought some unbroke horses from Vete Bramburg. They were in a pasture south of Ulysses, and we gathered them, and brought them to the stockyards at Ulysses, where we waited for a guy Dad had sold mules to.

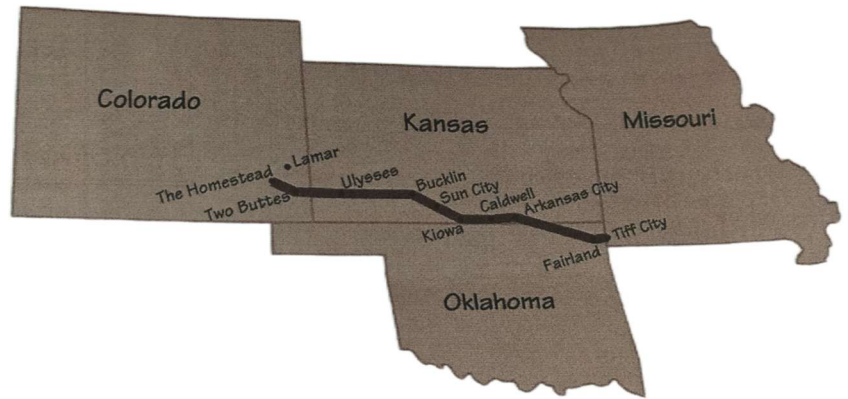
I had dust pneumonia and wasn't feeling very good. Vete said what I needed was a drink of whiskey, which would be bootleg whiskey from Colorado because Kansas was a dry state. As we left Ulysses going to our camp, 15 miles northwest, I was feeling better after a drink. I was riding a litte green-broke mare. I giggered her with my thumbs; she bucked the pint of valuable bootleg whiskey out of my coat, but it didn't break. Vete picked it up, and you can bet I didn't do that again.



"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

Short Stories from the Trail: Dirty Thirties Trail Drive (continued)

We slept in an old granary, but the other buildings had blown away long ago. I stayed at camp a day or two and rode a couple more of the horses and then left Ulysses with 22 head. Since none of the horses were shod, I had to switch mounts often to prevent lameness. This meant I had to break my mount as I went. After about a week in Kansas, I decided to ride this 4-year old black horse who belonged to my brother, Ivan. I saddled the black, and he bucked me off. He kicked himself in the ankle, peeled the hide off, and lamed himself; I had to get another mount for the day. Dow the road 4 or 5 miles, I sold the black to a farmer for \$15. I had already spent the \$15 I started my trip with, so now I could buy another sack of Bull Durham.



I averaged about 20 miles a day, but didn't carry any feed along with me, so I grazed the horses along the way. Several times this made wheat farmers mad, because it was their wheat I was grazing. I would try to find a farmer who had a corral or small fenced pasture to let me stay all night. The farther east I came, the harder it was to find someone who would.

I finally rode out of the dust of Bucklin, Kansas. Then I got my first barbershop haircut at Sun City. At Kiowa, I decided to ride the little bucking mare again. I saddled her up and turned her loose. After she almost jumped a fence, she settled down, and I rode her about 100 miles before she went lame.

When I finally got to Caldwell, I was a little over halfway across Kansas, Dad had a friend there, so I hunted him up and stayed for 2 weeks. While the horses rested, I helped Dad's friend haul wheat and worked on the combine. I sent Mom and Dad a card, for the first time, to tell them where I was. Dad wrote back and said to get home; he needed the horses.

When I reached the Arkansas River, the low-water bridge, about 20 miles south of Arkansas City, was underwater. I had to go back to Arkansas City and cross another bridge right through town. Some men met me at the edge of town and said they had a herd law-I couldn't take the horses through town. I told them I was herding them through anyway; I didn't have time to wait for the water to go down. I held traffic up for quite a while, too, right in the middle of the day.

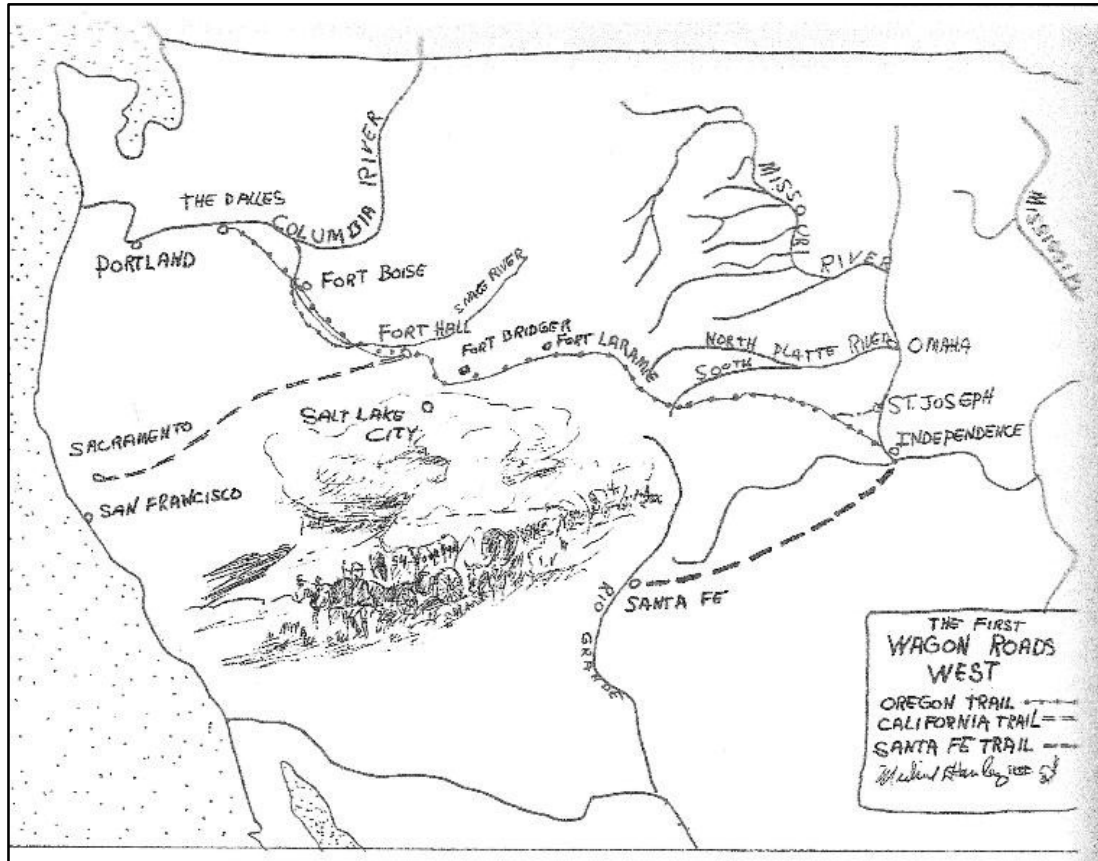
After Arkansas City, I made it real good, but I still had a bout 130 miles to go, as the crow flies. The weather was getting warmer all the time, but there was no dust blowing, and it was good to be getting closer to home. I went between Miami and Fairland, in northeast Oklahoma, and hit Council Hollow. One of my neighbors, Frank Records, waited for me to cross Bee Creek Bridge, east of Fairland. Frank was the only neighbor to actually witness me driving in these horses,. I got to Tiff City, Mo., at 5 p.m. that day. The horses and mules were sore-footed, they could hardly walk. It had taken 8 weeks to make the long and lonesome drive.



"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

History of Wagons by Michael Hanley: A Partial Chapter from: Sagebrush and Axle Grease

(Permission Given by Mr. Hanley)



The Emigrants using the early roads shared a life of hardship that often ended in tragedy. It has been estimated that an average of 17 people died for every mile of the Oregon Trail. Roughly figuring this would be 30,000 or more lonely graves along the now faded trail that added much to the boundaries of the continental United States. The dreaded cholera killed many more than the uncompromising environment and Indians put together.

Mary and Cole Carter joined the thousands on the Missouri River at St. Joseph for the journey across the Oregon Trail in the Spring of 1854. Mary kept a Journal and on July 16, 1854 wrote, “ The sickness that plagued us on the Platte and the many miles after that seems to have left us in peace. It did though, before it ran its course, take fifty more of our people and that is how many graves we added to the total between the Platte and the Snake Rivers”

Mary Carter was later critically injured in a wagon accident near Fort Boise and Cole completed her Journal. “ My Mary is gone and with her went all our dreams and plans. Now I am alone. I must leave my beloved wife here in this high mountain valley. I can hardly put on paper what has happened, but before she left me, I promised to finish her Journal....”



"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

History of Wagons by Michael Hanley: A Partial Chapter from: *Sagebrush and Axle Grease* (continued)

As the west opened up in the mid 1850's and early 1860's huge freighting and staging companies organized. Some of the companies were Butterfield Overland Dispatch, Russell, Majors and Waddell, Overland Freight Line, Overland Stage Company and Wells Fargo and Company.

The flow of commerce across the plains was almost beyond comprehension. Julesburg, Colorado was one of the Overland Stage Company's main division points and also a freighting center. In a single year 3,574 freighters came into town. There were 4,000 men employed in the business besides 28,000 horses and mules stationed there. Ben Holladay's Overland Stage Company was the largest of the stage and freighting concerns with some 20,000 vehicles. He had more than 100 Abbot and Downing coaches on the road at all times, plus several times that number of the more economical "Mud Wagons" for the rougher routes. It required 6,000 racing thoroughbreds for his coaches alone. When he bought stock for the company, he bought the very best, often paying \$50,000 at a time. Cheaper stock could be obtained but Holladay looked beyond them paying upwards of \$250 for horses and mules of the best quality. Just for his stages he had \$500,000 invested in horses and that was separate from the stock he purchased for his freight outfits. On top of all this the feed bill for the stock was \$1,000,000 annually. Often using his own capital while waiting for government payments that never came through. Holladay went way out on the limb to keep mail and freight moving. His heirs were still trying to collect when all government debts were cancelled during WWI.

Another of the companies engaged in freighting in a big way was the Overland Freight Line owned by E. G. Maclay and Co. It was known as the Diamond R and was immortalized by Charles M Russell in his painting "The Wagon Boss." It has been estimated that the company had approximately 12 hundred head of oxen, 400 head of mules and a large number of horses that were used to freight, with well over 100 large freight wagons. The most important contribution wagon s made for the United States was the role they played in the transfer of large tracts of the public domain into private ownership. In order to open up the lands to the west, it was essential for roads to be built into them, so that they could be settled and developed. Congress could not raise the funds for road building so land grants were offered for construction of wagon roads and in later years for railroads.

Some Fun Wagon Terms

The roads that the wagons used binding our country together have names that are synonymous with the word 'wagon.' A list of a few of the more famous takes in: The Santa Fe Trail, The Pennsylvania Turnpike, The Cumberland Road, Braddock Road, Applegate Road, National Road, Mullens Road, The Barlo Road and The Kelton Road.

Besides roads there are towns and cities which owe their fame and in some cases origins to the wagon. A few of them are: Santa Fe, New Mexico, Wheeling ,West Virginia, Independence, Missouri, Julesburg, Colorado, Concord, New Hampshire, Saint Joseph, Missouri, and Denver, Colorado.,"

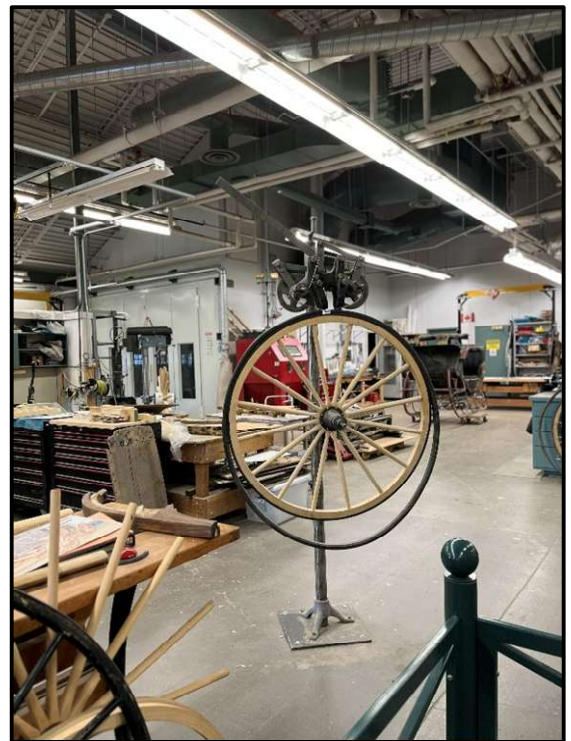
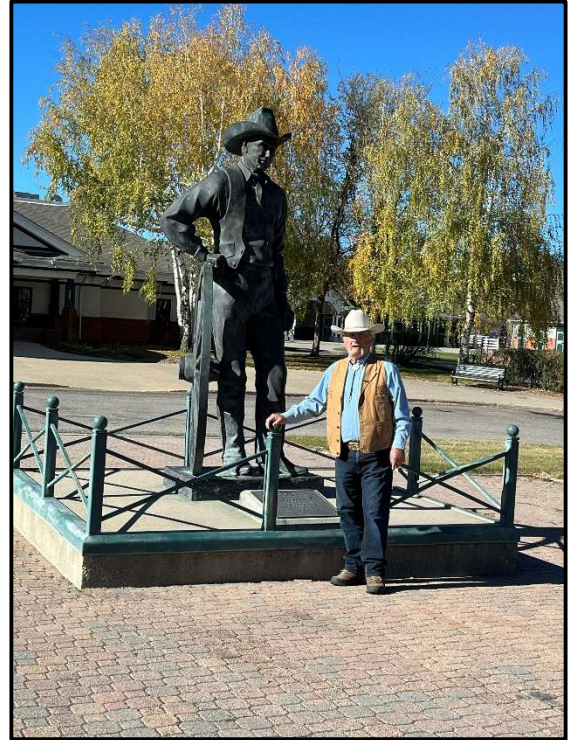
The wagon people contributed more than their fair share of songs too. A list would include: "Wait for the wagon", "All the Pretty Little Horses," "Skip to My Lou," "Oh Suzanna," "Buffalo Gals," "Coming 'Round the Mountain," and "The High Salary Driver on the Denver City Line.



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Photo Gallery: A Visit to Remington Carriage Museum in British Columbia, Canada

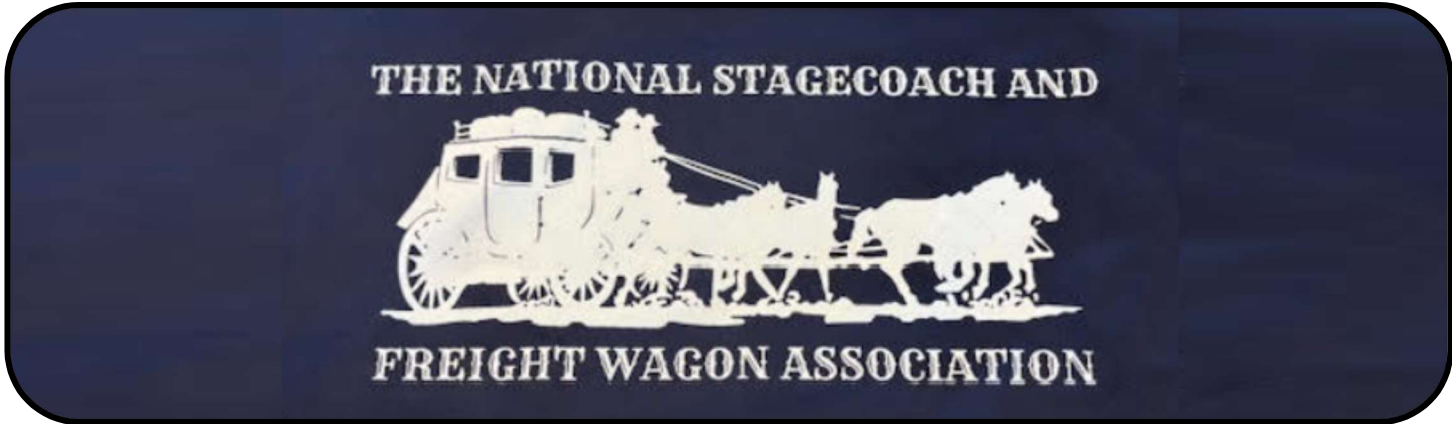
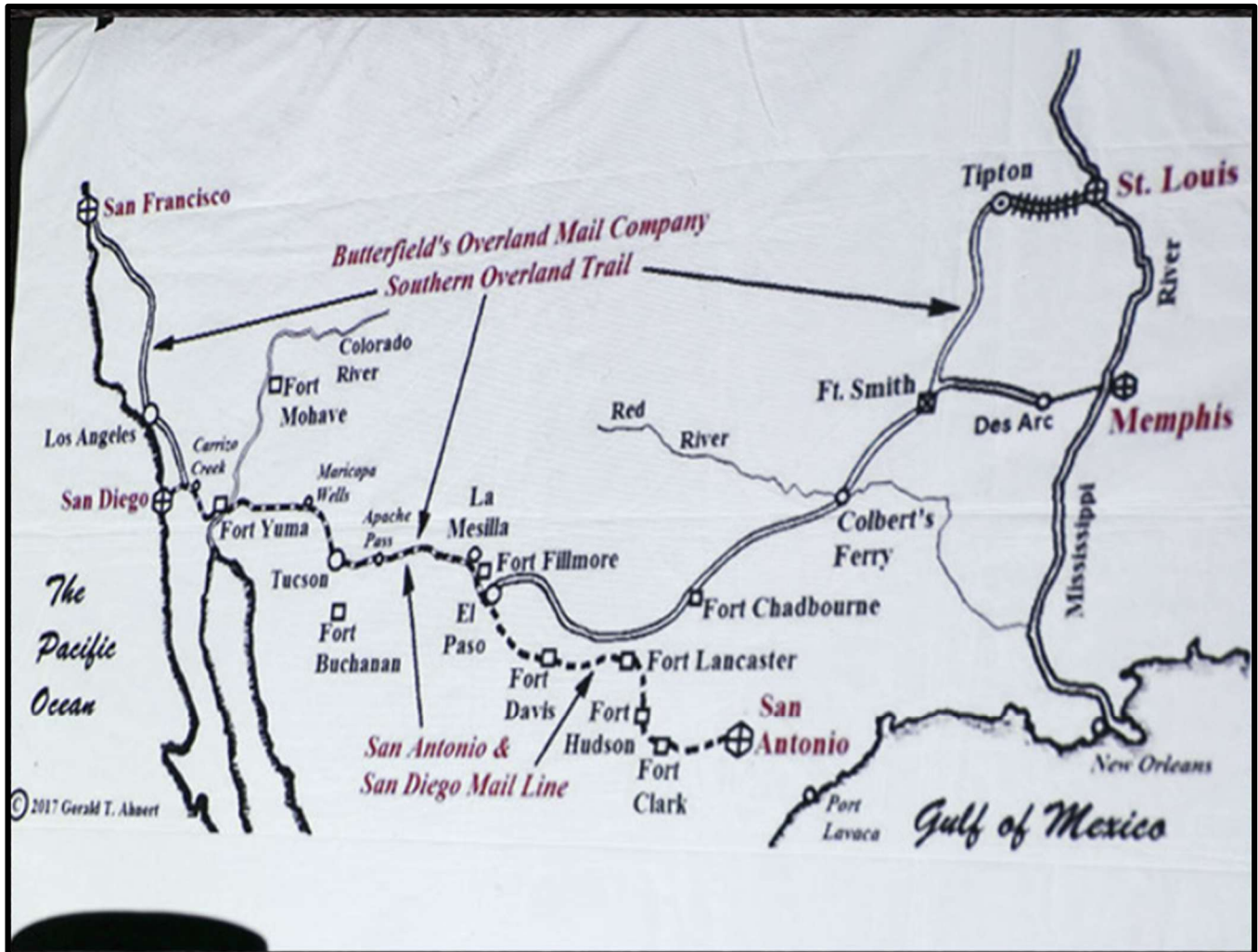
Submitted by Victor Haenny





"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"

Historical Photos and Stories: Butterfield Overland Mail Company Map Photograph





"Sharing the Legacy of a Transportation Empire"



"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

-Philippians 4:13 KJV-

NSFWA Mission Statement:

We are dedicated to the interpretation, education and preservation of the legacy of commercial stagecoaches and freight wagons which were integral to the development of the western United States in the 19th century, this includes the stories of the people who designed, built and drove these remarkable vehicles.