



**March
2017**

www.concordcoach.org

March Meeting Notice

The March Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, the 9th at 6:00 pm. The location is Johnny Prescott Oil Co., 122 Airport Road in Concord. In case of stormy weather, please check the website: www.concordcoach.org

to find out if the meeting has been rescheduled. Because we did not have a meeting in February, we have several things to discuss and we hope that many of you will be there.



Horseshoe Art Stagecoach

Our Vice President, Pat Maimone, sent me this picture. It is a life sized Concord Coach and six horses made up of thousands of horseshoes welded together, Some of the shoes still have the nails in them from when they were removed from the horses' hoofs. The photograph was taken near Ritzville, Washington and is in wide circulation on the internet..

Second Dues Notice

If your dues for 2017 are due, you will find a notice attached to this newsletter. Please note any changes to your contact information and send the form along with your check to:

ADHS
PO Box 4077
Concord, NH 03302

Your prompt payment is appreciated. Your dues are one of our main sources of income and help to cover our operating costs, including this newsletter.

Newsletter material

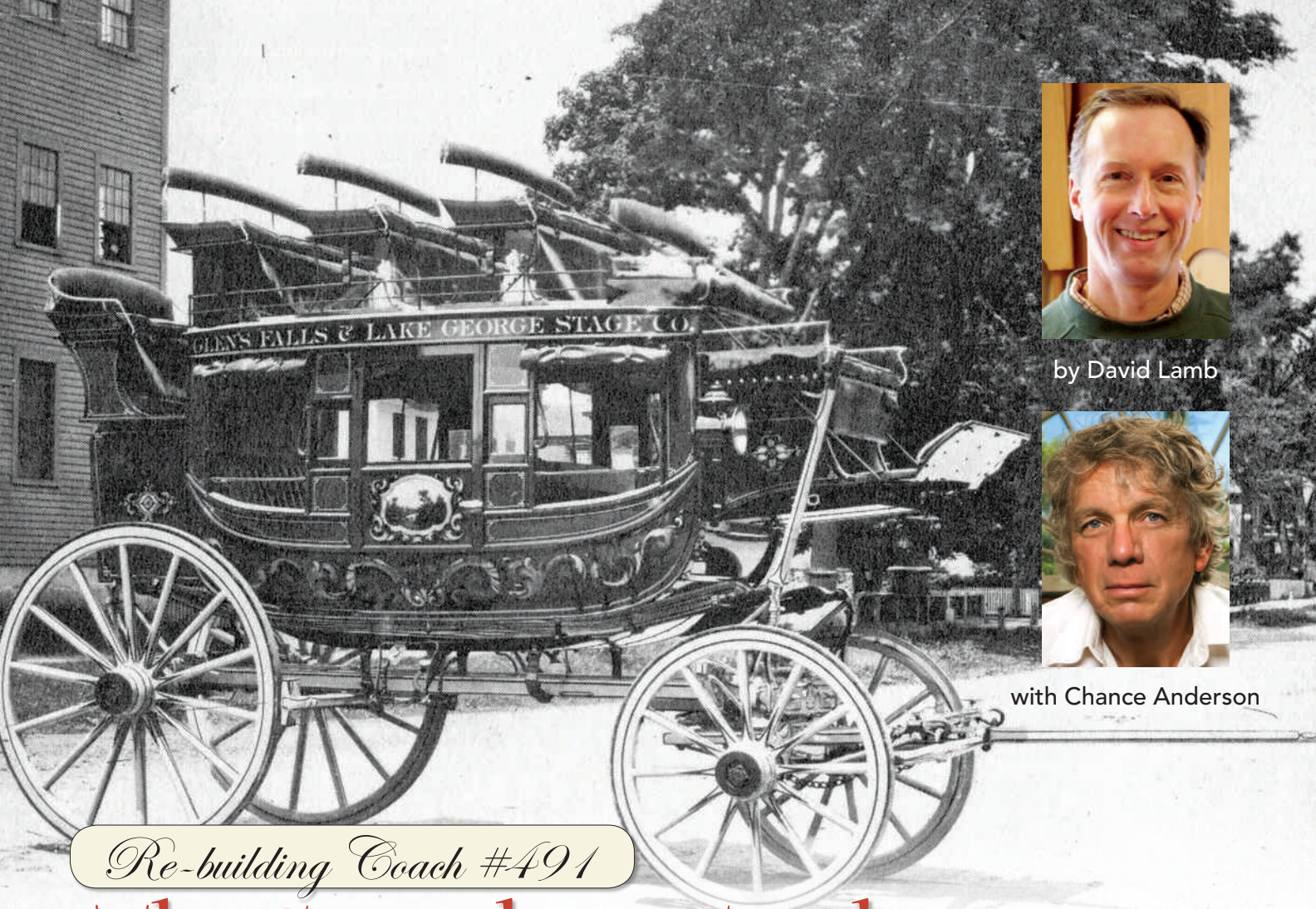
Submissions by members are what makes this newsletter interesting and informative. You do not have to be a professional writer or photographer to have your material used. Many of us have photographs and stories that relate to Abbot & Downing and the Concord Coaches that would interest the membership. So take some time and see if you don't have an article in mind that we could use or photographs both old and new of coaches that we can publish. The more we get from the membership, the better the newsletter will be and the more often we can publish one. One or two pages with or without photographs are fine.

Abbot-Downing Articles

The second article from "*The Journal of The Guild Of New Hampshire Woodworkers*" is part of this issue. It is used with permission of the author and the editor of the *Journal*. It was written for the Woodworking Guild by David Lamb with input from Chance Anderson. The article illustrates some of the work required to restore coach #491 by Ed and Barbara Rowse with the body restoration done by David and Chance.

The Coach is now owned by Tom Prescott and is on display in his museum in Concord, New Hampshire

David is a cabinetmaker living and working in Canterbury, New Hampshire. He is a member of the *New Hampshire Furniture Masters* and was *New Hampshire's Artist Laureate* from 2010 to 2014.



by David Lamb



with Chance Anderson

Re-building Coach #491

The Canterbury Coach

Produced in 1880, coach #491 was made by the world famous Abbot and Downing Co. of Concord, NH. This coach was made originally for the Glens Falls and Lake George (NY) Stage Co.

Coach #491 was not your typical mail or hotel coach. Being the largest model, this vehicle had the capacity to haul 32 passengers—12 inside and 20 outside including the driver. Abbot and Downing made these vehicles in 6, 9 and 12 passenger sizes. Many consider this particular coach to be the highest development of its form. Already with 60 years of production behind it, the company and its various corporate entities had a lot of experience building, developing and refining this general coach design.

By 1983, this vehicle fell into the hands of Edward Rowse of Loudon, NH. However, this “high-tech” jewel of the roads had seen some history, use and abuse. Edward had built a strong reputation as a wagon and sleigh restorer and he and his wife, Barbara, already had several coach restorations under their belts. This particular vehicle was a different story and required a higher set of skills to complete a restoration.

It was at this point that Ed contacted Canterbury woodworker and timber framer, Chance Anderson, to assist in the restoration.

They in turn contacted me, a furnituremaker, also of Canterbury, to help in this restoration effort.

By the time the coach was delivered to Rowse’s shop in Loudon and then to Chance’s shop in Canterbury, the coach was known as *The Deadwood Overland Stage*. It was in horrible, decrepit condition. Its red paint masked layers of canvas, tape and masonite patching attempts. The structure was clearly fire damaged and riddled with mold and mildew. A standard restoration was not the answer. A more correct directive would be a re-build.

We saved what we could, basically minor framing for a door and window opening, but the rest of the body structure needed to be built as new. Ed kept the running gear in Loudon and dealt with shops in Pennsylvania to re-build wheels. He also built the cargo boxes and exterior driver’s seats and restored the roof top seating and interior seating.

Chance and I had work to do with a lot of head scratching and forensic problem solving. Pattern making was the first step. By suspending the coach from above we could transfer lines to the floor and thus create a layout for new parts. Top, side and end views were developed, all full size, and patterns were generated from these for making parts.



A coachmaker's methods were not a cabinetmaker's or timber framer's methods, but more of a hybrid, a very specialized skill set. We discovered very intricate and complex joinery methods. Some parts were bent, some were cut from the solid with careful attention paid to grain structure. By the 1890's when this coach was first created, definite methods were in place for hand work and machine work to save valuable time. We did not have access to this information and had to develop our own methods to get the job done using our wits and own experiences. Chance even used a Bridgeport milling machine for some processes.

One of the great discoveries we had was of the making of the quarter panels. These panels are shaped like egg shells in that they are a compound curved shape. We also found that they were made of local poplar known regionally as popple or more correctly perhaps as quaking aspen. We wondered why, of course, this wood was chosen. Popple seemed to have no particularly endearing traits we knew of. In fact a local sawyer, Hugh Fifield, referred to it as Devil Wood because of the bad luck associated with using it. But for quarter panels, this wood was perfect. Through trial and error we found that after cutting out the shape, we'd soak the wood to make it very pliable and then dried it on a form. These panels are captured in the frame work, so shrinkage must be allowed for after the soak. Once dry the panels were

installed in the framing and backed on the interior side with ribs that are reminiscent of boat hull framing.

One of the results of our exploratory method of building led us to create our own terminology and nomenclature such as quarter panels, shoe, heal etc.

As was the tradition, various aspects of the job were handled by different people. Barbara Rowse did the upholstery work inside the coach and the decorative painting on the exterior. The exterior painting was done by an auto restoration shop in Loudon and by Ed. Certain iron parts were redone and the wheel work done by others too. It was a collaborative effort by many hands.

When completed, a profound amount of respect had been developed for those workmen on South Main Street in Concord. Hundreds of years of tradition and methods became greatly appreciated. I'm sure we only scratched the surface of what went on there as many, many different, very specialized vehicles were produced by Abbot and Downing.

In the end, it was the automobile that put them out of business. They did not give up without a fight however—for example, the Concord Truck...see Peter James' history for the story.

In recalling this story and what was going on in our lives, an interesting shift in history occurred during our work on this project. As we were unravelling and discovering the mysteries of coach building, basically putting ourselves back 100 years technologically, the exact opposite occurred nationally. We clearly recall the day doing benchwork, fitting joints, listening to NPR covering yet another NASA launch when one of our own met a tragic end. While we were rediscovering 19th century ways of technology, Christa McAuliffe and the crew of Challenger was embarking on a promising and exciting discovery of their own, riding on the edge of late 20th century transportation. The climactic, explosive end of that launch was significant to us in several ways, and so sad for the nation and our state specifically. Concord and America suffered a huge loss.

After restoration, the coach served a wedding facility providing unique and exquisite transportation for the wedding party. It is now in the collection of Tom Prescott of Prescott Oil Co., Concord, NH where it is on full display, for public enjoyment in a special building at the company's location on Airport Road. Included in the display is the original bill of sale from 1880. ■

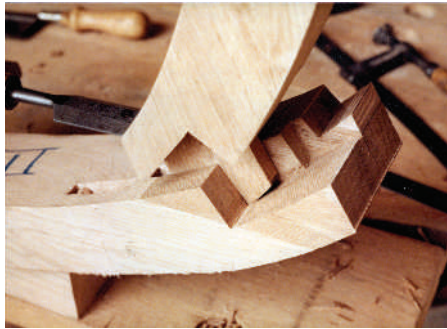




Fitting the quarter panel in the framing. Background shows one in the coach frame.



Intersection of quarter panel(s) framing with corner post. The use of wood screws was commonly used as a holding technique and we continued this tradition.



Fitting the lower main corner post with the lower "shoe"/base rail. A very complicated stepped tenon joint.



Ed Rowse



Chance Anderson
Recreating parts—the red piece is from the old coach. The form was created based on that piece. The form helps generate both right and left pieces. The pieces themselves are cut from the solid so the form is more of a pattern to cut and shape to rather than to bend on.



