



FRYEBURG FAIR RECEIVES STAGE COACH DONATION - THE LAST ABBOT DOWNING HORSE-DRAWN WAGON

Fryeburg Fair opened their Horse Drawn Wagon building in 2004. During fair week, the building houses antique wagons and stage coaches from the vast collection belonging to Sutton "Sut" & Margaret Marshall of Conway, NH. Sut is a very serious collector. He is effusive in thanking his wife, Margaret, for putting up with his addiction to collecting antique carriages, stage coaches and wagons. Twenty years ago Dr. Eugene Hussey (1920-2006), local veterinarian, Fryeburg Fair trustee, and owner of draft horses asked Marshall if



Sut Marshall at Fryeburg Fair with the 1902 Abbot Downing stage coach donated by the Jordan Smith Family of Sonoma, California. Photo by David Andrews

they (Fryeburg Fair) built a special barn would he consider displaying their collection. Marshall enthusiastically agreed, made a hand-shake deal, and in 2004, Hussey called back to say, "Your building is ready."

The Marshalls are joined in their devotion to these early transportation vehicles by expert historian and writer, Ken Wheeling, of Monkton, Vermont. Wheeling was a former director at The Shelburne Museum. The Marshalls and Wheeling are great friends and colleagues. Sut Marshall refers to Wheeling as "The Professor." Besides greeting fairgoers and educating them on the wagons being shown during Fair week, Wheeling has been commentating the draft horse shows for over 35 years.

Over the last 17 years the Horse Drawn Wagon building annually displays a wide variety of wagons and stage coaches that is beyond exceptional. The Marshalls and Wheeling are often on hand to share their enthusiasm and expertise.

The big news this year is that Fryeburg Fair is now the proud owner of a very important historical stage coach - the very last one built by the Abbot Downing Company of Concord, NH - the #605. The stage coach was donated to Fryeburg Fair by the Jordan Smith Family of Sonoma, California. Fair Origins of the wagon trace back to its custom-building for Chester W. Chapin, Jr., his wife, Emelia, and daughters, Julia and Pauline as evidenced by a printed order dated June 25, 1902. The Chapins lived in Manhattan. Chapin was a financier and businessman. He was a major investor and owner of railroads and steamship lines. He was one of four children of Chester W. Chap-

in, Sr. of Springfield, MA who was a stagecoach driver.

For reasons unknown to historians, specifically Ken Wheeling, who has written about the #605, Chester W. Chapin, Jr. cancelled his order for this stage coach. It is surmised that after a trip to Europe he decided to go with a gas-powered vehicle instead. From there the coach remained at the Abbot Downing Company until 1934. Its running gear had been removed and likely sold separately. Edgar Simpson of Sacramento, California, wanted to buy the coach but also wanted it whole with running gear. The story goes that retired employees returned to the Abbot Downing Company and built the running gear for it. So the #605 literally was the last stage coach built at the Abbot Downing factory. The coach was shipped to Sacramento. At this date the stage coach had not been driven yet. Edgar Simpson sold #605 to his son Meade Simpson who in turn sold it to Jordan Smith in 1999. Ken Wheeling and Sut Marshall were known to the Smith family. After receiving information about the Fair and its history from the two, the Smiths determined Fryeburg was the place the #605 should be. Marshall hired a truck to drive to California to pick it up and it was delivered to the Horse Drawn Wagon Barn two weeks ago.

Fryeburg Fair is very grateful to the Jordan Smith Family for their donation of this important historical stage coach to be shared with fairgoers, and especially young people, annually.

For more information on Fryeburg Fair, go to www.fryeburgfair.org

Written by Rachel Andrews Damon



*Ken Wheeling commentates at the Fryeburg Fair draft horse shows. Wheeling is an expert on stage coaches and wagons, a writer for *The Carriage Journal* and past Director of *The Shelburne Museum*.
Photo by Rachel Andrews Damon*



Photo by Bessie Daniels