

Concord Coach Comes to Canaan

Submitted by Donna Zani Dunkerton, Canaan Town Historian

The Concord Coach pictured to the right will be featured in the Canaan Old Home Days parade on Saturday, August 2. It is the property of the Andover Lions Club of Andover, New Hampshire. The coach will be drawn by Roudy, a 12-year old Belgian gelding and Annie, a 5-year old registered Belgian mare of Nowell and Neily Horse Loggers of West Canaan.

*History of the Coach courtesy
of George Kidder*

The stagecoach was acquired through the efforts of club members and restored in 1958. It was obtained as a gift from Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, through the assistance of the Wallace Clark family of Potter Place, New Hampshire. At the time of acquisition it was in very poor state of repair.

The firm of Rising and Charles of East Andover, restorers of antiques and upholsterers, was hired by the Lions Club members to do a complete restoration of the coach to its original condition.

In order to do this, Rising and Charles had to research more than 100 years of history on the Concord Coach.

Known as number 36, its original run was probably from West Barnstable to Cotuitport on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. The owner at that time was W.F. Jones who carried passengers and mail as early as 1854.

At some time in its early history the coach was involved in some type of accident and was tipped over. After it was repaired it was painted light green by Southworth and Holmes of Middleboro, Mass. At the turn of the century, the coach was run from the Sunapee, NH station to the Grandliden Hotel, formerly located on the west shore of Lake Sunapee. The hotel name and crest was painted on the coach doors. On the window of one side was a Boston and Maine RR advertising flyer referring to any excursion from Concord to Lake Sunapee including a 2-hour boat ride. This gala excursion was offered in the summer of 1901.

The final lettering job on the coach was that of the Philbrook Farm, which had been painted over the name of C.E. Clark.

Not only were the Concord Coaches commonly used for local transportation of summer guests to the hotels, but they were used as the earliest forms of transportation in many areas of our nation before the advent of railroads.



Stagecoach lines were established in Colonial America about 1756 and operated between Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

In 1785, Congress began mail service by stagecoach. Many of the finest coaches of colonial days and pioneer times were made here in the Granite State at Concord by Abbott and Downing. Hence the name "Concord Coach."

Inns sprang up along the stagecoach runs and travelers bounced along at a brisk 10-miles per hour in elaborate coaches often taking two and a half days for a trip to Ohio.

Horses in teams of six were changed at relay stations every fifteen to twenty miles. Later the stage lines stretched across the west with such firms as Wells Fargo using the Concord Coaches.

On the morning of April 15, 1868, an express freight with a shipment of 30 coaches made by Abbott and Downing Co., pulled out of the Concord station bound for the Wells Fargo Co., in Omaha, Nebraska. Eventually, these coaches were used

throughout the world.

Gradually railroads took over the job of carrying people and goods to the more remote and mountainous areas.

After the arrival of the automobile, most local inns discontinued carrying their guests with the horse-drawn vehicles.

For a number of years the Andover Lions Club coach has appeared in numerous parades, a few weddings and other events.

At one time, charter member Alan Thompson of East Andover, now deceased, had provided storage, the horses and transportation to these affairs with the assistance of club members.

At the present time Lion member Roger Henderson is in charge of arrangements for the use of the coach, and the horses are provided and driven by Hugh Fifield of Canterbury, NH.

In the fall of 1995 the coach was taken to New England Coach and Carriage in Merrimac, Mass., for

some repair work. Nine coats of paint were painstakingly removed and the number 36 was very visible. It had been painted green as the restorers discovered while removing the old layers. Also the letters U.S.M appear on the right side of the seat and it looks like C.L.M. on the left side but not too discernible, creating more mystery in the coach's history.

In August of last year Andover's Concord Coach was the center of attraction at the Exposition in Springfield, Mass. The Lions are planning on taking it to the Expo again next month where it will be featured in the parade.

Anyone wishing to use the coach or obtain information on the use in an event or parade should contact Roger Henderson in East Andover, at 735-5551 or write care of the Andover Lions Club, PO Box 204, Andover, NH 03216, George Kidder Secretary.

All funds raised through the use of the coach are used to further the charitable efforts of the Andover Lions Club.

GRANITE NORTHLAND ASSOCIATES