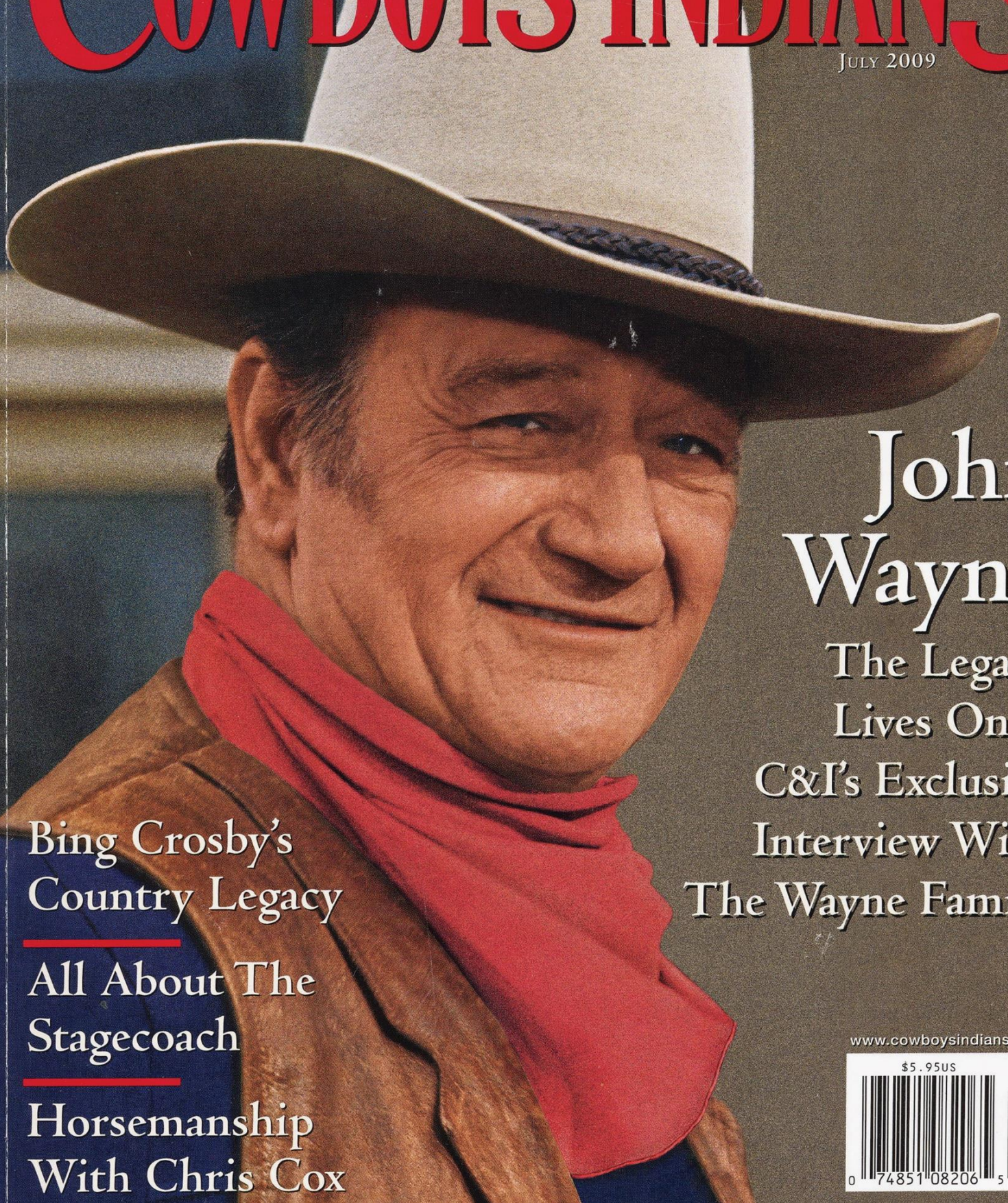


CELEBRATING THE HORSE

THE PREMIER MAGAZINE OF THE WEST

# COWBOYS & INDIANS

JULY 2009



## John Wayne

The Legacy Lives On —  
C&I's Exclusive Interview With  
The Wayne Family

Bing Crosby's  
Country Legacy

All About The  
Stagecoach

Horsemanship  
With Chris Cox

[www.cowboysindians.com](http://www.cowboysindians.com)

\$5.95US



0 74851 08206 5







# The Stagecoach

COWBOYS

INDIANS

HONORING THE HORSE-DRAWN VEHICLE THAT MADE THE AMERICAN WEST — A CONVERSATION WITH DOUG HANSEN OF HANSEN WHEEL AND WAGON SHOP.

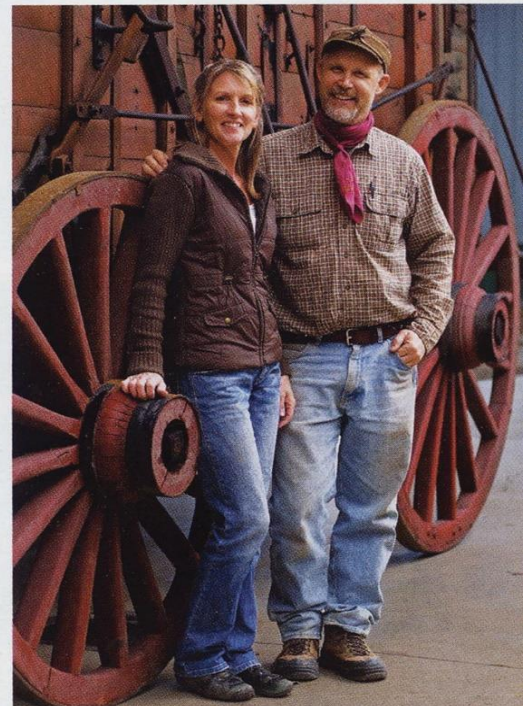


By Jordan Rane

**I**T RIVALS BASEBALL AND APPLE PIE—AMERICA'S age-old love affair with a sweet set of wheels. But just how deep do these roots go? Let's work back from something recent, say a 2008 Ford Mustang GT Premium Coupe packing a 4.6-liter, V8, 300-horsepower engine, alloy wheels, xenon headlights, chrome exhaust tips, embroidered leather seats, and a Shaker 1000 sound system with satellite radio and a navigation system. Black. Shiny. Just picture it in your head.

Okay, now erase that image. Climb into your time machine, roll back the clock 50 years, and feast your eyes on one of these: a brand-spanking-new 1958 Chevy Corvette Roadster with two-toned signet red exterior and sleek white coves, Powerglide auto transmission, dual quads, Wonder Bar radio, and a removable auxiliary hardtop. The envy of every Eisenhower-era neighbor and their Tang-drinking kids.

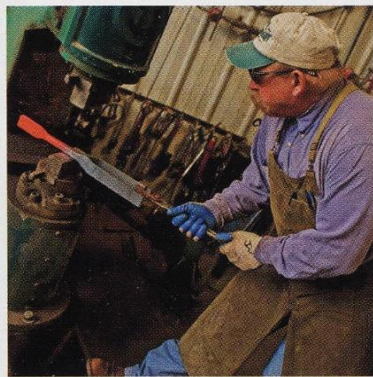
Now flip back another 50 years. It's 1908. This time it's a Ford Model T, fresh off the assembly line in its inaugural year, sporting an incredible four-cylinder, 20-horsepower,



**OPPOSITE:** Doug and crew take a replica Concord mail coach out for a test drive on the Hansen Wheel and Wagon Shop proving grounds, with Dan and Max assisting at the pole. **RIGHT:** Doug Hansen and his wife, Holly, at the Hansen Wheel and Wagon Shop in South Dakota.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GREG LATZA





**FROM TOP:** Doug Hansen rolls a Peter Schuttler wagon gear into location to receive the newly restored wagon box. A vintage Concord in the trimmer's shop receives the final phase of upholstery. Tools of the stagecoach trade: wood files and chisels. Lead blacksmith Joel Westberg forges a wagon brake under the big hammer. **OPPOSITE:** On the Ft. Pierre to Deadwood Trail.

water-cooled engine with hand-crank ignition, wooden-spoked artillery wheels, state-of-the-art acetylene lamp headlights, and a nifty brass horn.

Are we there yet—at the on-ramp of America's proud vehicular heritage? Actually, not quite.

Roll back another 50 years, to a time you may barely recall, when the Dakotas weren't even a territory, some lawyer named Lincoln was making waves in the "western" backwoods of Illinois, and the Toyota Prius was as foreseeable as a space shuttle. Now feast your eyes on this puppy: an 1858 Abbot Downing Western Concord mail coach with nine-passenger hickory and yellow-poplar body, leather upholstered interior, roll-down curtains, muraled doors, gold-leaf scrolled body panel, hand-forged ironwork, sturdy wheels with premium hickory spokes and elm hubs, and a springless, smooth-as-a-cradle leather thorough-brace suspension system cured from the hides of no fewer than a dozen oxen. Six-horse hitch and whip sold separately.

Behold the stagecoach.

*This* is the ride that really got America rolling unyieldingly in the right direction. Meaning, west. Over hills and prairies. Through impassable mountains and interminable deserts. Past hidden bandit lairs and across the wild frontier in a private, impeccably designed vehicle packed with precious cargo, stoic passengers, and a hell-bent driver. No disrespect to Mr. Ford and Mr. Olds, but the origin of American road culture sits a little farther back—in coach.

"The stagecoach remains one of the most perfect vehicles in our history," says Doug Hansen, president and founder of South





Dakota-based Hansen Wheel and Wagon Shop. “Stylistically, aesthetically, mechanically, and in terms of its role in opening the West, it’s one of the great American designs and symbols of all time.”

A world-renowned builder and preserver of 19th-century vehicles and the president of the recently launched National Stagecoach and Freight Wagon Association, Hansen has had his hands on just about every model and make of stagecoach from America’s horse-drawn heyday, as well as prairie schooners, hitch wagons, sleighs, fancy carriages, chuckwagons, and the Rolls Royce of them all—a top-of-the-line Concord stagecoach, the pride of an era and the hallowed branding symbol of one of the country’s largest and most storied financial institutions [see *Wells Fargo sidebar on page 137*].

We talked to Hansen about the importance of the stagecoach in Western history. If you doubt its central role or question its still-living legacy, a conversation with this guy will erase any doubt.

**Cowboys & Indians:** Stagecoaches retired from active duty a very long time ago. What’s fueling today’s interest in them?

**Doug Hansen:** I think anyone with an interest in the American West can’t help but marvel at the stagecoach and its prominent place in our history. It was arguably the most important vehicle of its day, and it’s still so iconic. Back in the mid-1800s, there were

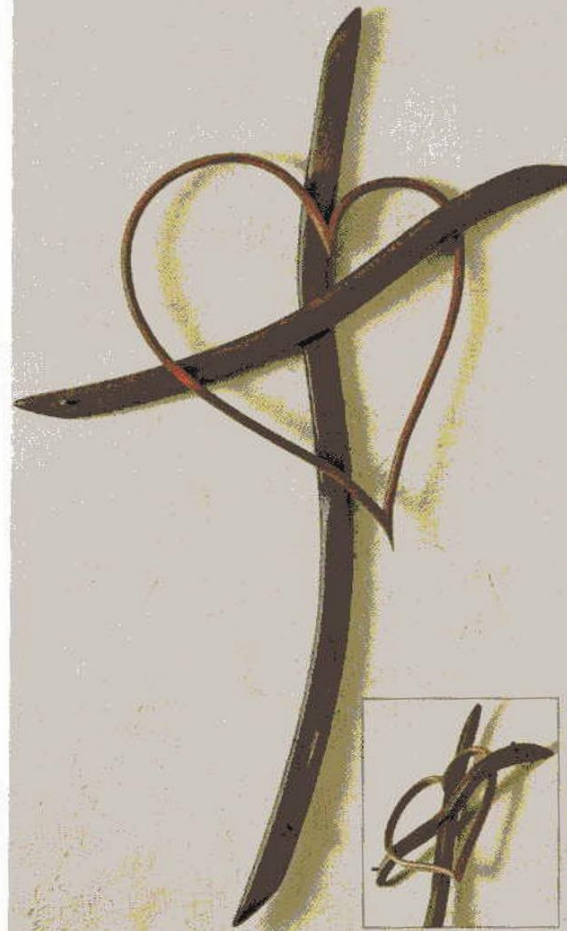
hundreds of different horse-drawn vehicles and we see a lot of them in our shop. But the stagecoach is really in its own league. No other vehicle from that era is as sought-after by collectors, historians, movie studios, and other enthusiasts. And as its selling price at Sotheby’s auctions suggests—often upward of a half-million dollars—it’s not just viewed as some old coach these days but as a bona fide work of art. It’s just a true American classic, in all respects.

**C&I:** Is the Concord—the one that everyone today views as “the stagecoach”—the most classic of them all?

**Hansen:** I would definitely say that the Concord—designed and produced by the Abbot Downing Company of Concord, New Hampshire, which supplied the finest stages to the biggest transport companies of its day—is the most recognizable stagecoach. It’s the one that Wells Fargo used in their coaching days and that they continue to use as their official branding symbol. And it’s also the one that’s gotten the most screen time in the movies. A broader interest in stagecoaches, though, includes not only the Concord but its more rugged cousins like the mud wagon and mountain wagon. They weren’t as elegant-looking as the classic Concord but were just as indispensable. So the lore that goes with stagecoaching connects to all kinds of stagecoaches.

# Chuck's Woodbarn LLC

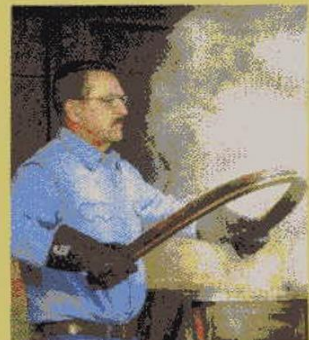
The lost art of Steam Bending Wood...still alive!



Hand crafted excellence

Made one at a time from premium quality oak, each cross is hand crafted by steam bending. Softening the lignum allows bending and shaping the wood to the desired shape. The wood is distressed, aged, then hand waxed to a beautiful sheen. Each cross is accented with three square-head nails.

- AVAILABLE WITH OR WITHOUT THE HEART
- SIZES 18", 30" & 48" TALL
- HEIRLOOM QUALITY
- SIGNED AND DATED BY THE ARTIST, CHUCK ZELLER
- CUSTOMIZATION AVAILABLE



Many other products available at:  
[www.chuckswoodbarn.com](http://www.chuckswoodbarn.com)  
 (308) 692-3119