

June Bulletin from the Annisquam Historical Society

Return of the Annisquam Stagecoach, Summer Solstice, June 21st, 2023



Image courtesy of Carla Grooms

We couldn't have asked for a more auspicious date to welcome the coach back to Annisquam. It had been away for much longer than anyone had predicted. Because of Covid, supply chain and transportation issues, it was away for 28 months at Hansen Wheel and Wagon Shop in South Dakota. During that time, it was treated to a complete restoration which was worth the wait. June 21, 2023, the summer solstice, began with a shining sun, and no rain in the forecast.

Gary Straight collected the stagecoach in South Dakota and drove his 18-wheel truck to Gloucester, via a less than straight course! He was taking vehicles to other locations in the east; our stagecoach was the last drop off. Because roads in Annisquam cannot accommodate large trucks, particularly when cars are parked on the main access roads, Tally's graciously agreed to provide backup service if required. Paul Horovitz and Steve Harris met Gary Straight at Tally's on Pond Road at 9 a.m. and drove him back to Annisquam. Their verdict: Gary's transport vehicle would be unable to safely negotiate narrow streets and parked cars. What followed was a trip back to Pond Road and transfer of the stagecoach onto a flatbed trailer. Accomplished with finesse, and clean strapping, thanks to driver, Ronnie Spellman and Jim Deleidi, Tally's closed the loop. Months before, Tally's had helped get the stagecoach on its transport vehicle to South Dakota.

It was shortly after 11 a.m. when Tally's truck rolled into the village. From Leonard Street, the driver took the curve onto Walnut Street. The driver's expertise in sliding up the hill abutting Walnut Street and angling the trailer to line up with the barn doors of the Firehouse, was (to use a contemporary word) awesome! I was honored to be one of the people needed to load the coach. The coach body on its leather thoroughbraces, could then pass, stern first, under the top edge of the opening to the Firehouse without getting stuck.

This trick was noted by Eben Andrew, years ago, when the stagecoach left the Firehouse for Gloucester's 350th parade.



(Image courtesy of Gail McCarthy GDT)

The stagecoach will be on view when the Firehouse is open during the summer months. (See AHS website for times). We are also planning a presentation on the restoration of the coach at the Annisquam Village Hall, in midsummer,

Thanks to all who made it possible for the stagecoach to be back in good repair, reupholstered excepting one door where the original fabric could be saved, and wearing its original red color. It now flaunts beautiful paintings on its doors and clear lettering of destinations: Riverdale, Annisquam, and Bay View. The lettering, indicating that it carried U.S. mail, was discovered during the restoration. The coach now advertises the fact in gold leaf which you can see on the above image.

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