

COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

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Nine Passenger Mud Wagon.

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In the historic photograph of the Cosmopolitan Hotel you will notice two horse-drawn vehicles. The vehicles are called Nine Passenger Mud Wagons. Mud Wagon refers to the sturdy undercarriage and open sides. This type of vehicle was used in areas where the roads were rough and unpaved like California during the 19th Century. This particular carriage (the one in the picture) was used to accommodate passengers traveling from Los Angeles to San Diego.

During the planning phase for the restoration of the Cosmopolitan Hotel it was decided that the restoration would not be complete without the horse drawn vehicle you see in the historic photograph. This is when we contacted Hansen Wheel & Wagon Shop a family owned and operated carriage and wagon manufacturer located in the plains of the Dakota's. They custom build horse drawn vehicles and wheels following the authentic style and design of the horse drawn wagon era, specializing in the construction and/or restoration of western and heavy vehicles, i.e., Covered Wagons, Chuck Wagons,

Buck Boards, Medicine Wagons, Stage Coaches and Draft Horse Show Wagons. Their location gives them the heritage of the pioneers and cowboys who developed the region in addition to a natural appreciation for the old ways. This area's historic resources and study material are used to authentically reproduce the wagons that they specialize in. Many Hansen employees have a farm & ranch background, bringing a familiarity from which they can apply to their work.

Dedication to authenticity begins with careful research and documentation of the original vehicles. Careful attention is given to detail throughout the entire construction of the vehicle, using traditional joinery and authentic hand-forged hardware to replicate wagons of the past. They work closely with their customers building and designing wagons that meet the needs of each assignment. Through years of dedicated research into the history and careful study of the style of original vehicles, they have compiled a thorough understanding of authentic horse-drawn vehicle construction.

They have thoroughly documented several original coaches as well as restored numerous historic stagecoaches, combining this experience with dedication to preserve the coach-

builder trade. Hansen Wheel & Wagon Shop has developed a reputation as the leading authority on stagecoach construction.

Collaborating with Hansen Wheel and Wagon Works we researched the vehicle in the historic photograph enlarging and pixilating it to view the wagon details and after much research and discussion we drew plans and contracted with them to build our wagon. A brief description a similar wagon was found in the collection at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History.

Manufactured by Abbot-Downing Co. Concord, New Hampshire this four passenger wagon is the smallest of the Hack Passenger Wagons. The lighter versions in the East were called Concord Coaches. The heavy version, suited for the rough conditions of the West, was often called a "mud wagon" or "the poor man's Concord". The leather suspension system gave a ride that was smooth by the day's standards. Our reconstructed Passenger Wagon sits presently in the entrance area of Seeley Stables. We will roll it out upon the completed restoration of the Cosmopolitan Hotel for the 21st Century version of the photograph and who knows perhaps in 2150 it will be done all over again. Who says you can't reinvent the wheel!

