



Coachmen of the Past

For the next year, we will be highlighting and honoring the many contributions of African American coachmen to Colonial Williamsburg and the Coach and Livestock program. In this issue, we spotlight the achievements of James Sampson. James Sampson was born 5/5/1922 in Philadelphia, PA. He was employed by the Foundation as Coachman / Ox Driver Interpreter beginning on 6/19/1964 and retiring in 1987. He died 11/24/1996 and is buried in the First Baptist Church Cemetery in King and Queen County.

CW News 1965 May 18 p.3



C. G. Kagey

Joe And John Haul, Plow And Pose To James Sampson's "Gee And Haw"

James agreed that driving oxen is a science the first rule of which is to "let 'em know you're the boss." Although the whip James carries is mostly for show, he admits sadly that sometimes he's forced to tap them on the tender part of their noses with the whip to remind them he is the boss. But, usually they respond to his authoritative gee and haw (right and left).

"Big" John weighs over 2,000 pounds while "Little" Joe tips the scales at about 1,800 pounds. They eat several bales of hay a day, plus an energy-giving mixture of grain and molasses.

CW's team of oxen are performing new tasks to earn their keep.

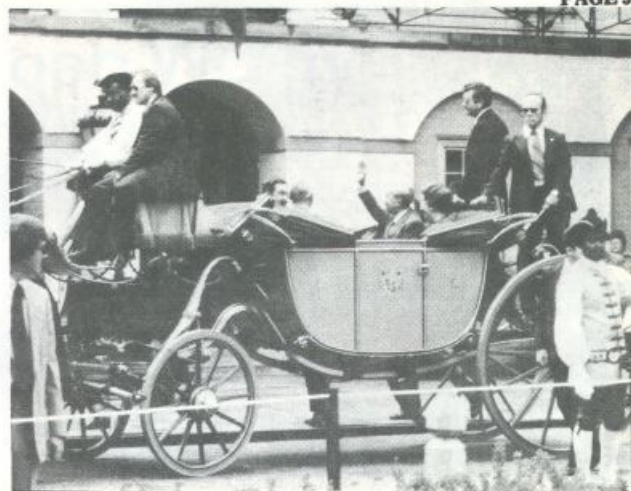
"Little" Joe and "Big" John, under the firm hand of driver James Sampson, have proven that they can do more than look impressive for the camera fans who visit Colonial Williamsburg. The nine-year-old oxen have taken on a full schedule, doing everything from plowing areas used for field crops to hauling trash from the restored area.

According to James, who joined CW last November as the oxen driver, Joe and John are an unusually fine pair of oxen. They like people and are very speedy -- for oxen, that is.

CW News 1975 October p.3
CW NEWS

Left: Hostess Elizabeth Hames interprets the Capitol for the Emporor and Empress of Japan as their interpreter, Mr. Humelsine, and others look on.

Right: The royal couple enjoys a carriage ride to the Capitol on the second day of their visit in Williamsburg. Carriage driver James Sampson is at the reins.



Photograph by Jane Iseley

CW News 1987 June p.3



James Made Memories For Our Young Visitors

"If you ask a person who visited CW as a child what they remember the most, I almost guarantee you that it would be Tom and Jerry and Sam at the top of the list," said Richard Nicoll, manager of coach and livestock, of James Sampson. James, or "Sam" as he was known around the stables, had made wonderful memories for children of this generation, giving ox cart rides to those under the age of nine.

James spent all of his 22-year career here at CW as an oxen cart driver, most of it driving the team of Tom and Jerry, retired last December. James will tell you, however, that each team has a different personality. The present team, Waylon and Willie, gifts from a gentleman in Connecticut, like people so much that they will even put their heads out to be patted.

Not only was James responsible for the care and maintenance of his

team, he was also responsible for their training. "You drive oxen by their command, and you have to get their attention to get them to understand that what you say is what you want them to do," said Sam. "I had a little trouble adjusting to Waylon and Willie because their commands were opposite the commands taught to the three other teams." But James is quick to point out that they are the best team that CW has had.

Besides grooming the oxen before they went out onto the street every day, James also had to make sure they were well and that they didn't gain too much weight.

"His fellow employees regarded him as the senior member of the coach and livestock staff, and they enjoyed his company," said Richard. "I'm going to miss his sense of humor and friendliness."

James plans to take life easy, do a little fishing or crabbing and "going different places." James has two sons, one daughter, eight grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

American Milking Devon

The American Milking Devon breed originated in Devonshire, England. The first recorded instance of a Milking Devon arriving in the New World was in 1623 when 2 heifers (females) and a bull arrived in Plymouth Colony. Over the next 200 years, the breed grew and spread throughout the East Coast. By the late 1800s, the breed had begun to be replaced by the Shorthorn Cattle and it was rare for a Devon to be seen outside of New England, hence it's placement on the Rare Breeds list by the Livestock Conservancy.

In the 1700's, the Milking Devons were used for milk, meat and labor, being used as oxen. Oxen pull carts and wagons, they do farm work like plowing and logging and they were used in quarries. Oxen are the trucks and tractors of the 18th century. Oxen can be any breed of cattle, but some breeds are better at working than others. Oxen can also be male or female but generally oxen are steers, or castrated males. Oxen are still used around the world as a valuable source of labor. We currently have 25 head of cattle in our American Milking Devon herd.



The Blue Carriage

The Blue Carriage, built in the 1950s, was the first carriage to be constructed entirely by Colonial Williamsburg. It was originally modeled after a coach called the Beekman Coach which was imported to the United States in the early 1770's.

At the time this carriage was being built, there was no wheelwright shop or trade shop at Colonial Williamsburg but a wood working shop as well as a machine shop were maintained. These shops became responsible for building the carriage, under the guidance of Paul H. Downing, who was engaged by the Foundation as a coach consultant.

It has played host to several famous guests such as Margaret Thatcher during the 1983 G7 summit hosted by Colonial Williamsburg. Betty White was also a passenger of this historic carriage.

Not much has changed in the 70 years since the carriage was built besides the occasional touch up and repair. While the foundation was closed due to the COVID Pandemic in 2020, the carriage was completely repainted by our coachman Edward Merkley.

While most of our drivers switch carriages on a daily basis, the Blue Carriage has become the favorite of one of our coachmen Lee. Make sure you say hi to Lee and his horses Brigadier and General the next time you are in town.



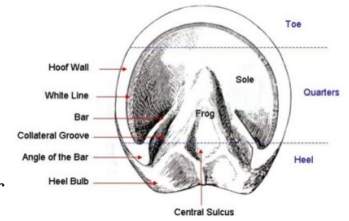
The Hoof

A horse's hoof is made of several different parts. The hoof wall, white line, and frog are three of the most important parts. The hoof wall is the part that you see as the outside of the hoof. It is essentially the horse's fingernail. This is the part of the hoof that the shoe gets nailed into. Now while this may sound painful, to a horse it is just like getting their nails clipped. They can feel the pressure but it does not hurt.

Next to the hoof wall is a line, this is the White Line. This is the equivalent of the quick from your fingernail. If a nail presses against the white line or gets too close, this can cause the horse discomfort.

The final section is the frog. This is a triangle shaped piece at the back of the hoof that acts like a shock absorber, slightly cushioning the foot as it hits the ground. It also helps move blood from the hoof. When the horse puts his foot down, the blood gets pushed from the frog back up his leg.

As the hoof is one of the most delicate and important parts of a horse, it is very important to protect them. So Drew Morales is a very important member of our team. He is our farrier and the man responsible for taking care of our horses' feet. He visits our barn twice a week to put new shoes on our horses as well as trim any that do not have shoes.



Drill Tec

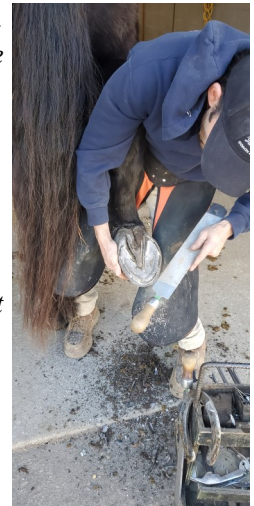
A horse's hoof on average grows about a quarter of an inch every 4-5 weeks. Due to their hoof growth, we must remove the shoe and file down the hoof, much like you do when cutting your own nails. It is the same process. While we do most of our work on asphalt, we also replace their shoes as well. Much like people, not all horses wear their shoes the same way. Some drag their feet slightly, some walk more on the inside than the outside, some drag their toe. All of this wears down the horse-shoe. To help our shoes stay together a little longer, as well as add some traction for our horses, we use a substance called "Drill tec." This is melted to the shoe before it goes on the horse. It has some sharpness to it and allows our horses to grip the asphalt better, especially in the rain.



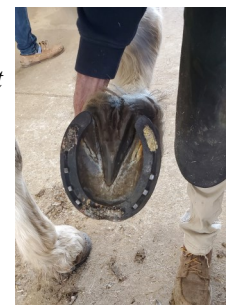
Checking the hoof after hot shoeing

There are several different types of shoeing styles in the horse world. We use a process called hot shoeing. This means that we take a horseshoe, heat it up in a forge and then hammer it to fit the horse's foot. When we think we have it correct, we place the shoe while it is still slightly warm on the horse's foot. This allows the shoe to leave a mark on their foot. Using this process, we can tell if we have filed their hoof flat or if there is a section that we missed. It also tells us if we got the shape of the hoof correct. It is important that the shoes fit the hoof and lie flat against the bottom of it.

Once the shoe has been fitted to the hoof it is time to nail it on. This does not cause the horse any discomfort. They feel the pressure but as long as the nail does not touch the white line, it does not bother them a bit. After the shoe is nailed on the horse can return to work with happy feet.



Filing the hoof



A finished shoe

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