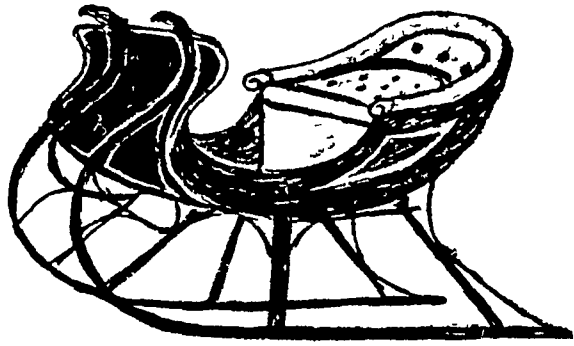


# Cin-Ron Carriage Shop is not Horsin' around

*This  
shop  
puts  
cart  
before  
horse*



BY SHEILA MILLER

**CENTREPORT** — This weekend hundreds of carriage enthusiasts flocked to Lancaster County to try to find buys at the Martin's October Carriage Auction.

At this fall's sale, over 100 old vehicles were put on the block. Carriages, with names like Brewster and Co. landau, coupe rockaway, brougham, surreys, phaetons, runabouts, top buggies, brought back memories of the days when horse-drawn vehicles were the mode of transportation.

The vehicles that passed before the auctioneer's gavel, ranged in the state of disrepair from barely recognizable to totally restored. For those people who purchased one of the rougher carriages, much work lies ahead. Although it is fairly easy to find a body mechanic to fix up an old car, it is much harder to find someone to restore an old carriage.

Not very far away, nestled in the rolling hills of Berks County, lies a little five acre farm. This is the residence of Ronald and Cindy Kunkel, and is the location of the Cin-Ron Carriage Shop. Although the farm is in a rural part of the county, just north of the tiny village of Centreport, the shop is known to many carriage collectors throughout Pennsylvania and in a number of other states.

According to Cindy Kunkel, their shop specializes in restoring the dashes and fenders of the old vehicles, and re-upholstering the trim. Cindy does the restoration work on the dashes and fenders by hand, and uses patent

leather to cover the metal frames.

In order to have a quality product, Cindy takes a lot of care to measure and lay out the dash before she begins to cut the material that will eventually cover it.

After the pattern is made and the material cut, she punches each of the thousands of little holes needed to stitch the material onto the frame.

Then with an awl, she precisely stitches the back and front of the dash around the metal frame. The patent leather draws tightly around the frame and reflects Cindy's work like a mirror.

The Cin-Ron Carriage Shop actually came into existence in 1975, but Ron and Cindy have been in the buggy business since 1971.

Since then their enterprise has grown until today they receive work from fourteen states, including New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Ontario, Canada, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Texas, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Delaware and Virginia.

The Kunkels got started in the business after trading a couple hundred horses for a cart and an old top buggy. This might seem like a lot to trade, but the horses were in the engine of an old truck that the Kunkel's neighbor, Earl Mengel, wanted. Since cash was short, the trade was agreeable to both parties.

Earl, by the way, taught Ron the art of shoeing horses, which was a big help and savings to the Kunkels. Whenever a horse threw a shoe, Ron could reset it himself rather than call a farrier.

After Ron and Cindy brought their buggy home,

Cindy set out to find someone who would help her to fix it up. She described the top as being in such bad shape that if you sat under it, you would have to hold it up in order to peek out from under it.

Cindy took the dash to a local shoe repair shop to see if she could get new leather put on the frame. The cobbler thought she was a bit crazy to even ask him to use his stitching machine to sew the dash. So, Cindy decided if she wanted to restore the dash, she would have to do it herself.

She explained the craft training she received as an art student at Kutztown State College helped her to get the dash work started.

An excellent seamstress naturally, Cindy also studied dashes and fenders from old carriages so she knew what they should look like after being restored. Today, her hand-stitched work is sought out by many people, including some quite famous ones.

The Kunkels recently restored a dash for a carriage that Senator Ted Kennedy was going to be using in a Memorial Day parade.

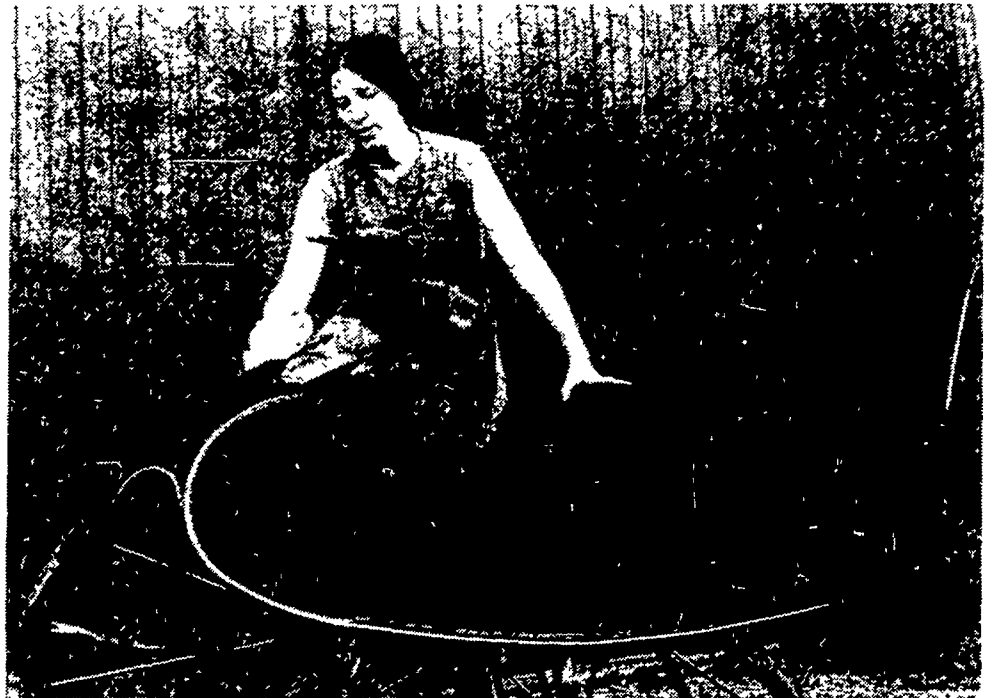
They also restored a Brewster brougham for a friend of Governor Wallace of Alabama. That carriage's trim required over 500 buttons to be sewn on by Cindy.

In order to see how their restoration work compared to other shops, Ron and Cindy participated in the Reading Symphony Orchestra Carriage Show, held in Stirling on September 8. They entered an Albany cutter which they had totally restored, and placed first in the sleigh division.

(Turn to Page 145)



Cindy Kunkel, of the Cin-Ron Carriage Shop, R.1 Mohrsville, applies her artistic talent to restoring dashes, fenders, and trim of old carriages. She recently completed the patent leather work on a Vis-a-vis sleigh fender which she said was the most difficult job she's tackled.



Cindy carefully wipes the dash of their prize-winning Albany cutter. The sleigh placed first in its division at a recent carriage show in Stirling.



The Kunkel's totally restored this old cutter, including the ornate pin-striping and the delicate cameos.



The Kunkel's daughter, Gretchen, stretches out her hand to give Tuckaho, Cindy's driving horse, a gentle pat on the nose. Gretchen enjoys going for rides in the buckboard.

