

She restores past with painstaking care

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

LANCASTER — Among the myriad of roles she fulfills are carpenter and wood crafter, leather worker and engraver, upholsterer, painter, researcher, historian and genealogist.

And she combines the talents and skills of these and still more disciplines in a quiet, unassuming manner with an extremely fine blending of patience and painstaking care.

Last Saturday, these skills and patience were brought to the Lancaster Host Farm Resort ballroom in the form of an expertly restored Park Drag, which topped the first "Select Carriage Auction," of Martin Auctioneers, at \$37,000.

And, these skills and patience belong to Ms. Susan Elaine Green, of R2 Orwigsburg, who devoted thousands of hours over the past two years to the restoration project.

Her dedication to authentic detail could be seen throughout the large coach, which was originally manufactured about 1889 by C. P. Kimball and Co., of Chicago, Ill.

One specific example of the patience and painstaking care could be found in the coach's leather interior.

The leather seats feature a narrow, striped braid trim.

"I wrote 150 letters to textile manufacturers, trying to locate the original trim for the seats," Ms. Green explained.

"I finally located a manufacturer overseas who had a little bit left in his discontinued stock."

And besides being a stickler for details, such a restoration also requires ingenuity.

One of the many trappings that such a coach contained was a skid pan, which usually hung from the bottom and was used to slide under the wheel as an extra brake on a hill.

"I finally had to construct a wood pattern for the skid pan and have it cast at a foundry in Hamburg," she added.

But long before she launched the actual restoration came the many additional hours of research.

Along with this tracing of history, Ms. Green became a genealogist of sorts, performing her own "Roots" project into the Kimball family.

She traced the family back to 1736 when Richard Kimball, a wheelwright, brought his skills to the Colonies from England. The family's carriage-making skills were first plied in New England.

Six brothers in the family spread the coach-making fame, but some dropped out of business when Southern customers reneged on orders at the time of the Civil War.

One of the brothers, Charles Porter Kimball, moved on to Chicago in 1876. It was his company that made the Park Drag about 1889.

The museum in Dearborn, Mich. also was a resource for information for Ms. Green.

"I talked to the curator several times," she explained.

"The museum had a perfect original, which was made about 10 years later."

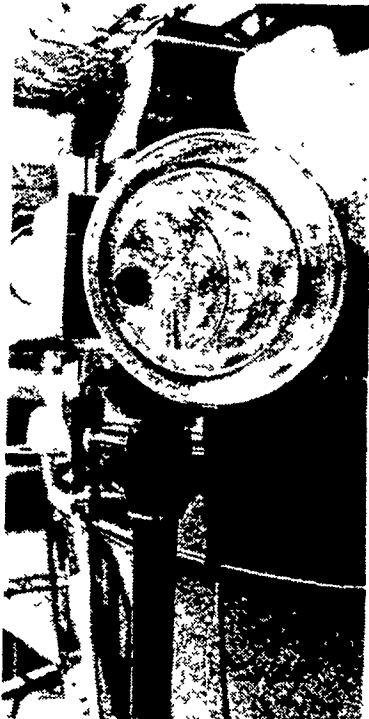
As automotive technology overtook the horse-drawn carriage trade, the C.P. Kimball Co. attempted to adapt for a time. It made electric cars from 1910 to 1912 and produced custom auto bodies until it went out of business in 1923.

But, just as the large coach, was

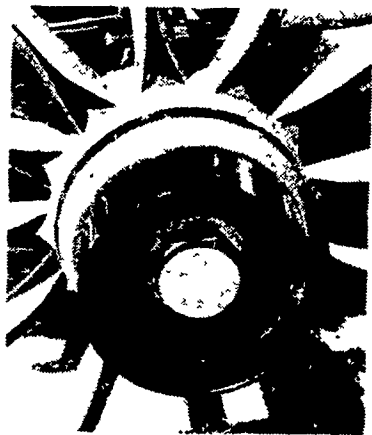


Standing beside the Park Drag, which required two years of precise and painstaking restoration, is Susan Elaine Green, R2, Orwigsburg. The large coach topped last

Saturday's Select Carriage Sale of Martin Auctioneers in the Host Farm ballroom at \$37,000.



Closeup shows ornate lamp of restored Park Drag.



Wheel hub identifies Park Drag manufacturer as C.P. Kimball & Co., Chicago.

the center of attention in the ballroom of the Host Farm last Saturday, it once likely also stood out as the private conveyance of the elite going to a ballroom of a bygone era.

Like the Rolls Royce of the later days of special transportation, the

park drag comes equipped with such things as an ice chest, silverware and dish drawer.

The coach was purchased by Jack and Marsha Bisgrove, of Auburn, upstate New York.

As the gavel rang down on their winning bid, it marked the culmination of the two-year

restoration project for Ms. Green.

"And before the work, the research can take a very long time," she said.

"I try not to even think of the actual work during that time."

"But it feels so satisfying when it finally starts going together."



Two of the 35 carriages, coaches, wagons and sleighs in the Select Auction are shown reflected in the large wall mirrors of the Host Farm ballroom.

At left is a U.S. Mail Delivery Wagon, which once "speeded" letters and parcels through

the rural countryside. (At times, present-day delivery schedules bring back memories of this postal past.) Sporting original government standard green, the doors swing open on spring-loaded hinges with a sliding glass door on top.



At right is a Surrey with fringe on-top (remember the song). Brass tag on its reads: W.E. Howry, Shireman, Pa. It was in the same family for 75 years before restoration by Fisher's Coach Shop, New Holland.