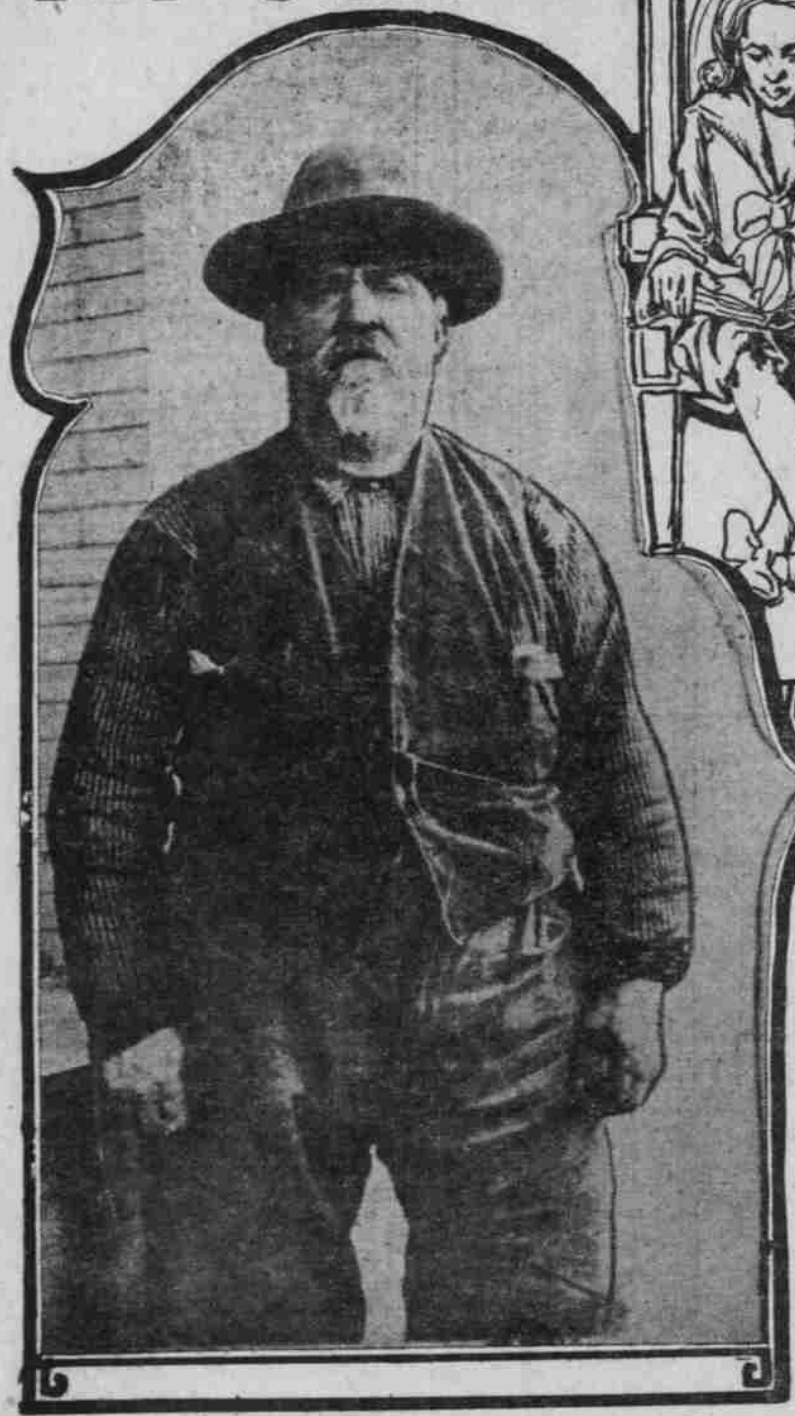


Passing the Old Stage Driver

Civilization Has Forced Him, Like the Indian and the Buffalo, into Story Books for Children



JAMES SAMPSON, 50 YEARS A STAGE DRIVER AND STILL IN THE BUSINESS IN OREGON

BY A. E. GUYTON.

FOR fifty years a stage-driver in different parts of the country, from New York to the Pacific Coast, James Sampson, one of the oldest veterans with the whip and lines in Oregon, is following his profession in about as far-away a place from where he began life as he could find. He, with his comrades and his business, has gradually been crowded farther and farther west, and the history of the life of this particular man illustrates vividly that pathetic but too true feature of the rapid western development—the passing of the stagecoach and the stage driver.

Like the Indian who once flourished and has been driven to his last reservation, like the big Western ranches which are being divided into small farms, like the buffalo of the plains which is seen now only in parks and picture-books, the stage driver is quickly coming to his last stand, and he, like the buffalo of the plains, must at last give up to the ever-advancing settlement and live only in the memory of his past usefulness.

It has been a battle of the steel rails and the four-in-hand, and the steel rails have won.

Oh, but for the old stagecoach days when that was the real way to travel, when brave men were required on the box and skill needed to handle the horses. Then the stage driver was an important man, for passengers entrusted their safety, even their life, to his care, and many were the thrilling adventures through which he passed.

A stage driver could see the country as it really was, could enjoy the scenery and share in the excitement that accompanied the trip, instead of catching a fleeting glance through a small window while seated comfortably in a Pullman car. Talk to the old-timer and you will realize that you have never traveled unless you have at some time or other been a passenger on a stagecoach.

That was traveling and the real old-time stage driver, when you mention the word, will throw his head up in the air like a stagehorse smelling a panther, say nothing, and sniff the air with contempt.

The days of the stagecoach were glorious days, but there came to spoil it all that awkward, noisy locomotive, belching fire and smoke and thundering through the country on steel rails which seem to defile the natural beauty of the canyons, mountains and plains, and night as he would, the stage driver gradually was driven back until now even he himself will recognize and admit that although once so necessary to the general traffic of the country, he is now only a factor of time gone by.

Of course, there are still stagecoach-

es and stagelines in the country, but the number is comparatively few and even those still existing will soon be crowded out by the railroads.

Peculiarly the Western Type.

However, of the stagelines which are still operated and because of the necessity to reach certain districts, there are none affording more beautiful scenery or better opportunity of seeing really wild and uncultivated country than the many routes in Oregon. It is well worth one's time to "stage" a little in Oregon just to enjoy it before it is too late, just to have tied one's self to the dying epoch of transportation, and thus more greatly appreciate and enjoy the new and modern travel. If indeed the new way is more to be enjoyed than the old, get on a stage, get on the box seat, if you can, and then "get next" to the driver. If you can get him wound up, he will tell you some interesting history. These old-timers have been through the mill, and if they want to do so, can entertain you with absorbing tales. The stage-driver is a character peculiar to the West, once a bright star in the pioneer group, but now flickering.

The James Sampson referred to in the foregoing history of the stage drivers on the Coast who is still in the harness. He is hale and hearty and good to draw the lines over a four-in-hand for many a day to come, but he has seen the dying struggle and knows that the passing of the stage is near at hand.

Of medium height, heavy set, with white mustache and imperial and wearing a broad-brimmed hat and high boots, he is typical of the stage driver as we picture him. He is the Buffalo Bill of the stage drivers, one might say, and his history reads like a story book.

Born in Springfield, O., in 1841, Sampson as a boy watched the stages pass his home and determined to be a driver. At the age of 17 years he was driving a stage out of Buffalo, N. Y., and gradually worked his way west. He drove a six-horse omnibus in St. Louis for a year or more during the Civil War; took a wagon train from Fort Leavenworth west with an Army detachment, and drove stages in Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, Colorado and other states, and finally in Oregon. For a time he was in Eastern Oregon, then he drove stage into Klamath Falls and now is driver on one of the relays between Roseburg and Coos Bay, taking the hardest shift, where the trip must be made over the Coast Range.

No Good Any More.

"No, a stage driver is no good any more," said Mr. Sampson. "There was a time when he was important. He had to know his business and you bet he was taken care of properly because

the stage line needed good men, but now a driver is lucky if he gets to sleep with the wheel horses.

"I must admit that the stage driver was more needed in the early days. The whole business has degenerated. In the olden times we had good stages, the stock was well-fed, the harness kept shiny and some pride was taken in the business. But now the lines are being crowded out by the railroads and the owners do not expect to have their routes for very long, so cannot afford to spend much on keeping them up. People regard it now as a hardship if they must travel by stage instead of railroad. They have forgotten their old friend the stage driver and need their new friends the conductor and the engineer, and have relegated the stage coach to the scrap heap in order to ride on the cushions of the railway cars. The way it is now I would rather do anything else than drive a stage, but how can I? Fifty years in the business has unlearned me. I have no idea where I will have to hang onto a job somewhere as long as there is a line running or step from the box and lay down the reins to the new order of things.

"What becomes of the old drivers? Oh, I don't know. A lot of them die and the others I guess just give up and sit down and wait to die. Why shouldn't they? The business is nearly done for and once a stage driver, always a stage driver.

"The way used to be better than it is now. Of course a man can make a living driving a stage as he is paid a salary and board, but the worst feature is that there is no discrimination as to the value of a man. A first-class driver who can be depended upon to take care of the horses and the passengers and properly protect the mail, gets no more than some greenhorn who thinks he can drive."

Never Resisted a Robber.

Mr. Sampson has on a number of occasions in the early days been along with Indians and managed to find shelter in a stage station and time and again he has been helped up by robbers.

"I never tried to fight when held up," said he. "It is the height of folly for a driver to start any shooting when the cobbler takes the crop on him for it only endangers the passengers and someone gets killed. The robbers will get you anyway as they only have to kill a horse in order to stop your escape.

"I will never forget one time I was held up in New Mexico. There was \$28,000 in bullion on the stage and this was all taken. Old John Chisholm the cattle king was a passenger. The robbers took all he had with him in money and also a fine \$500 gold watch. This had been a present to him from his friends and he valued it highly. He offered to send \$200 to the robbers at any place they would designate if they would only return the watch, but he never got it back. The old cattle man also had a bottle of whiskey and he rebelled at giving this up. He insisted that the robbers take just one drink and leave him the rest and to this they agreed. The gold, of course, was never recovered and it was a good haul for the highwaymen. I have frequently carried large sums of money on the stage and in those days when we had valuables we generally anticipated trouble."

Good Luck Followed Him.

Mr. Sampson has never had any serious accidents, has never caused the death of a passenger and has never had anyone on his stage badly hurt during all the 50 years he has been driving.

"But that is largely luck," said the old driver, "and while I always followed my early training of taking every precaution, my lack of bad accidents cannot be attributed to skill on my part. The best drivers will have accidents just the same as the best railroad men will have wrecks. I just never happened to strike my run of bad luck, but might get it tomorrow and make up in accidents for the whole 50 years.

Mr. Sampson, however, has excellent papers showing high recommendations as a driver. These were given him by stage line proprietors for whom he has worked in different parts of the country, and by men with whom he became acquainted. And this acquaintance of the old-time driver extends from the early day Middle West desperado to the lead-

ing business men and prominent citizens of their times, for those were times when everybody wanted to know the stage driver.

Ex-Stage Drivers of Oregon.

Several of the old Oregon stage drivers who have given up the business are found ending their days in the towns on the stage lines. They generally manage to be around the stables or any place where they will see horses or stages. George Roberts, of Roseburg, is one of the old retired drivers who has seen long service, and has behind him an honorable record. He is a proud, spirited old man of gentlemanly bearing and knows a thing or two about staging. W. J. Carlson, also of Roseburg, and now retired, drove in Oregon for 10 or 12 years, and his brother, J. W. Carlson, is another old-timer.

A well-known driver who is regarded as one of the best in Southern Oregon is Charles Archambeau, known as "Fat Charley," and who is on the route between Roseburg and Myrtle Point. He is always in good humor and is well known among the traveling men who like to ride with him because of his cheerful disposition and his anxiety to please the passengers. He carries a gun on the box seat with him and he can always find room there for one of the fair sex. He can handle any kind of horse and is proud of his team, two very necessary qualifications.

While not as old as some of the others, Ed Patterson, who drives from Elkton to Scottsburg on the Drain line into Coos Bay, is a well-known driver with a large acquaintance among the traveling public. Ed knows his horses and takes good care of them and always gets his passengers through safely.

Has Abundance of Troubles.

A stage driver these days has a good deal with which to contend. He finds among his passengers many a jolly soul who is easily entertained and who is willing to take things as they come, but along with these are many who are kickers and constantly complain about everything. The stage routes in Oregon are in many places rough traveling and there is no use to kick. As one driver says, if a passenger kicks because the stage strikes a stone the chances are that the driver will manage to hit four stones the next time. There is a lot to see on any line and it is best to take in the scenery and forget the jolting. But the kicker who one minute complains of going too slow and the next of going too fast will work himself into a miserable state of mind and none will offer him any sympathy.

The driver will think a good deal of contenting the kicker, but will say little. He has his time to make and his passengers to get through. There are places where he must drive slow to save the horses, and other stages where he can drive down fast and make sudden turns around a curve on the edge of the precipice. These maneuvers make the kicker stand up straight on the heads of the passenger fresh from the East. But there is no use getting scared. The driver knows the road well and enjoys these sudden curves and, besides, the chances are the passenger was complaining a little while back about going up hill too slow.

But you can do it to say the prayers you learned when you were a little boy, think of home, trust in the driver and in the motto President Roosevelt wanted taken out of the silver dollars, and then hang on. Be sure and hang on, for if you don't you will fall and fall hard.

There are occasionally accidents on the stage lines, but they are really not as frequent in proportion as on the railroads. There need be little fear of the stage being held up. During the past few years some of the stages in Northern California have been robbed, but a hold-up in Oregon is rare. Years ago Wells-Fargo sent armed guards on the stages when there were valuables being carried, but those are in days gone by.

Winter travel on some stage lines in Oregon is abandoned as far as passenger service is concerned, excepting where some few are sent through on horseback, and the mail is carried on pack horses. The roads become so muddy that they are impassable for coaches. A stage driver dreads the mud worse than snow. It is hard on the horses and travel is slow.

A traveler on a stage should always wear old clothes for he will get dirty in

Summer time and be covered with mud in the winter for his horses and he will have to walk up the mountain grades.

Doesn't Drink to Excess.

The real true stage driver likes a nip of whiskey now and then and it may not go amiss to have an extra bottle at hand. The chances are the driver has one concealed in a convenient place near his seat. There is never any use registering a complaint about the stage-driver being drunk. He may consume a good deal of whiskey but his capacity is great and then he needs a little stimulation in order to properly make those thrilling down-hill curves around the mountain sides. If you ever expect to win the esteem of a stage driver by taking along some whiskey be sure not to flash a small flask but have enough. The driver has little use for the small bottle man. One stager in referring to two of his passengers said: "Those two were a cheap lot. They had a bottle of whiskey and think of it, only a pint. I have my opinion of the caliber of a man from the way he handles a stage with only a pint of whiskey." Had the two passengers carried a two-gallon jug they would have commended the respect of the driver and been classed as true American citizens in the mind of this worthy Westerner.

Of course some stage drivers do not drink at all and others will never indulge while en route but will take a little bracer to start out and one when they reach their destination. One driver who always had the reputation of sobriety and who is known as a particularly fine linesman was Al Decker who drove on the old Pogeak line into Klamath Falls. He could handle six horses as well as any horse in the West and was especially careful with his team. He would not drive on a line unless the outfit was kept up in good style. Decker always carried a set of tools so that he could mend any break that occurred. Passengers always liked to ride with him because of his skill with the horses and his jolly way.

No Incentive to Excellence.

In these days the reputation of a driver does not go for so much. The owners are not so particular. If a man says he can drive he will generally get a job if there is an opening and will receive as much pay as the real old timer who thoroughly understands his business. This is probably due to the fact that the old drivers are passing away and the operators of lines must take who they can get.

The stage horse is almost as important as the driver, and is in a class of its own. Stage "stock" is generally chosen from horses of about 1600 lbs. weight. Heavy draft horses cannot stand the work but these sturdy little stage horses with their severe training can do more hard pulling than would ever be suspected, particularly when the ribbons are in experienced hands.

Many kinds of vehicles are dignified with the name of stage coach. The old Concord wheel side coach was a fine wagon, and another style was the Copey top beach wagon. But the rough roads of Oregon will not stand a spring vehicle and over the mountains is used a heavy, strongly built wagon with high seats fastened with springs. One gets a good deal of jolting at times but what matter, you are staging, and think of the fun you are having. A good feature of this kind of travel is that excellent meals can be procured at the stage stations and when a stop over night is necessary good beds are furnished for night.

Stage lines at one time were highly profitable to the owners if properly managed. Many of the lines make money today but in order to keep up and clear profit it is generally necessary to have the contract for carrying the mail, as well as passenger and express business. The mail contract is let at regular periods and in times there is strong competition in the bidding so a stage line may lose that part of the revenue when it comes time to renew the contract. This gives an element of uncertainty to the business, which, coupled with the inevitable coming of a railroad prevents any more expensive outfit than is necessary being made.

Traps That May Be Made Now.

If a traveler wants to take a stage in Oregon there are plenty of interesting routes. One line runs out of Heppner on a branch of the O. R. & N. Railroad. The trip is up a gradual grade and is hilly for 20 miles to Hartman, where a stop is made for night. From there the trip is resumed past

Parker's sawmill, through the timber and up to the top of Monument Hill and down a long drop into the valley where is located Monument, a pretty little town. It is 10 miles on to Hamilton, 10 miles more to Long Creek and 23 miles to Canyon City. There are three separate lines from Heppner to Canyon City, but they connect so that the journey can be made continuously. The traveler can penetrate still further into the interior by taking the line from Canyon City to Austin.

The trip into the Klamath country is now made from the Southern Pacific at Doris, on the stage 11 miles to Tetter's Landing, where the boat takes the passenger to Klamath Falls.

The old route into Klamath, which was not long ago abandoned, was a pleasant trip and the line was well kept up. This extended from Pogeak to Keno, where it connected with the boat. Spencer's ranch was one of the stations, where a stop was made for dinner. Old man Spencer, with his bald head and in a blue flannel shirt, was a character who was always remembered by those who visited the place. He would announce in a thunderous voice when the passengers arrived, "Dinner ready." All those who were carried on men's backs to the land. There is a ride of 25 miles down the wet sand of the beach, and when opposite Coos Bay a walk of two miles across the sand spit to Jarvis Landing, where a gasoline boat is boarded and the passenger, after a bay trip of eight or ten miles, is landed at Marshfield or North Bend.

This route in particular illustrates the passing of the old and the coming of the new in the way of travel. All along the lines are evidences of the grading, bridge building, and other work which the Southern Pacific has done preparatory to the construction of the branch from Drain to Coos Bay, and the traveler realizes that soon the beautiful scenery can only be seen from the car window and is glad that he made the stage trip.

The average cost of stage travel in Oregon is about 10 cents a mile, and the passenger pays for his meals and lodging at the stations. Any of the trips are well worth taking. You can stage a little jolting over the mountains, rocks in order to get acquainted with the old-time drivers, and however extensively you may travel over the world's railways in future years you will never entirely forget your staging in Oregon, nor ever entirely obliterate from your memory your old acquaintance, the stage driver whose day has passed.

From Roseburg two stage lines reach

MARSHFIELD, OR.

THE TYPE OF COMMON CARRIER THAT IS FAST PASSING AWAY

Canned Music on the Violin

ALTHOUGH one of the most popular of American composers and hand-masters has written and published a denunciation of mechanical music, the automatic piano-player continues to gain ground in public favor. Gifted and versatile as the composer of the "Washington Post March" and the author of "The Fifth String" may be, he failed to comprehend the enormous force back of the movement against which he, with so scientific and inventive age, and neither music nor the fine arts can hope to entirely escape from the tendency of the times.

The piano-player, owing to its having been brought to a high standard of perfection, has become a common feature of a modern drawing-room. As a result of this success, attempts have been made to apply in a somewhat similar manner to the violin. This after many years' patient experiment, has been accomplished, and a remarkable musical instrument, constituting a revival of mechanical ingenuity, has been evolved.

This consists of the old-fashioned violin with the usual strings; but instead of the bow and fingers there is a series of revolving discs for the former, and an elaborate array of stops. These latter acting as fingers, depress the string at the desired points to give the requisite musical tone. They are operated by electricity, the necessary energy being furnished by a small motor.

All the peculiar effects incidental to this time-honored instrument are perfectly produced, including those which tax the skilled performer to the utmost. Thirds, fourths, octaves and tenths are produced as easily as single notes, and every phase of expression is faithfully rendered. The most intricate works of the leading exponents of violin playing are given with ease and unerring energy, while many effects beyond the possibilities of the virtuoso are secured. For instance, four chords may be placed simultaneously, thus giving the resemblance of a quartet.

It is said that a fashionable salon in London, in which this curious device has recently been demonstrated, for the further exploitation of the automatic violin. There lovers of the instrument will be able to enjoy the choice compositions of Wieniawski, Paderewski and Paganini played by a master hand whose dramatic and delicate touch, combined with fidelity, cannot be excelled by the most finished human exponent of that instrument. If the dead could speak, it would be interesting to know what the greatest of violinists, Paganini, thought of a world in which electricity and the mechanical arts had been applied to his beloved instrument. Probably, like the American composer already quoted, he would attempt to turn the tide of a too scientific age.

Human Nature.

Links—He is a strange boy. He doesn't care about going swimming.

Winks—No; his mother doesn't object—that's why.—Illustrated Bits.