

Wheel And Wagon Shop Preserves Western Legacy

Doug Hansen has 35 years of experience as a wheelright, blacksmith, and carriage maker. "There are only a few people and businesses in the country who practice this trade," Hansen says. "We're the premier builder and restorer of authentic horse-drawn vehicles, including coaches, wagons and buggies."

Hansen owns and operates Hansen Wheel and Wagon Shop on his ranch north of Mitchell, S. Dak. It's a scenic western setting that overlooks the James River, adding to the company's western aura. "We're a self-sufficient company that's grown by employing skilled and dedicated craftsmen and having a passion for producing authentic and historically accurate vehicles, wheels and hitch equipment," he says.

Hansen started his wagon and wheel repair business in 1978 after he finished welding training. His grandfather suggested that he hang out a shingle and see if he could make a go of it. "I'd fixed a few buggies on our ranch and done work for our neighbors, and over the years that reputation spread and business continued to roll in." Today he employs 12 people building a wide range of authentic horse-drawn vehicles, restoring historical coaches and wagons, designing and building wood wheels, and producing chuck wagons. It's a passion that extends to his wife Holly and daughters, Leah and Emily.

"In this business I learned early that I had to teach myself or it wouldn't get taught," Hansen says. "I learned by observing work of old time craftsmen and then figuring out how to do the work myself. Now we've got people who are highly skilled blacksmiths,

wheelrights, coach trimmers, painting and finishing experts – all true craftsmen."

The company has a 44 page color catalog and a sophisticated website, assembled by his wife Holly. Both resemble a carefully illustrated history book. Photographs show hundreds of projects that Hansen and his craftsmen have produced over the years, from forging authentic hardware to historical carriage renovations to building new coaches like the nationally recognized Wells Fargo corporate coach and the historic coaches for Yosemite and Yellowstone Parks. "Projects like those require about 2,000 hrs. or more for completion," Hansen says.

"Our work has evolved as word of our expertise has spread," says Hansen. "Now we work on vehicles for corporate identity, tourism vehicles for Disney and Dollywood, movie props, museum restoration projects, heavy horse show wagons, and special projects for private collectors." The shop also has wagons, buggies, wheels and a big inventory of parts for sale. Most projects, however, are one-of-a-kind and require special attention.

"Many of our designs have been influenced by historical vehicles that we have documented over the years," Hansen says. "We've done this with a tape measure and making detailed measurements of intricate pieces. We take a lot of pictures, look at old drawings and make very careful notes," he adds. "Then we come back to the shop and get busy."

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Doug Hansen builds and restores authentic horse-drawn vehicles. This Wells Fargo corporate coach is shown in commercials and used in company advertising.



Hansen's restores a wide range of rigs, including historical coaches and wagons as well as buggies.



Hansen and his craftsmen have produced hundreds of projects over the years, including chuck wagons and historical carriage renovations.

Colorful Exotic Pheasants Thrive In Northern Farmyards

If you love poultry and can justify spending \$400 for a pair of birds, you might want to take a look at Impeyan pheasants, which originated in the Himalayas.

Breeders of exotic animals appreciate the beauty of Impeyans, which are sometimes called the "nine-colored bird" because of the mixes of green, purple, red and blue in the male's feathers. Impeyans make a shrill whistling sound and have a short, rounded tail.

"They have such beautiful colors," agrees Laurie Seifer, who owns Hilltop Exotics with her husband, Greg, in North Liberty, Ind. "They have a topknot on their head and are just very interesting."

The Seifers have had the best luck keeping them in pairs in separate pens, sometimes with a pair of doves. With their sharp, downward beaks, Impeyans are notorious diggers. So the Seifers have wire on the bottom of the pens and protect any vegetation they want to keep with wire fencing.

Their birds thrive on a 30 percent game bird feed mix, supplemented with bread every day, and apples and lettuce every other day.

Since captive exotic birds don't breed well, eggs are removed and incubated. Hens can lay as many as 10 to 14 eggs a season, every 3 or 4 days apart.

Because of their origins, Impeyans do well in winter. The Seifers provide shelter, but never lock them in, and the birds spend



Colorful Impeyan pheasants originated in the Himalayas.

a lot of time outside in the winter. The breed does well in much of Canada and the U.S., but isn't suitable for the deep South and Southwest.

During hot weather, the Seifers run an oscillating sprinkler to keep the pheasants cool.

"People will lose them in the heat, and they're very susceptible to West Nile virus," Seifer cautions.

But with ordinary care, the Seifers have found them to be a beautiful and unique addition to their business. They only sell the young chicks after they're at least 3-month-old to make sure they have a healthy start.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Hilltop Exotics, 29805 New Rd., North Liberty, Ind. 46554 (ph 574 656-8557).



"Mini kiln" operates on 120 volts. It comes with a separate controller and a remote control that's used to set the temperature and moisture level.

"Mini Kiln" Dries Lumber In Small Batches

If you cut your own lumber, you might want to look at this new "mini kiln" as a way to enhance the value of your sawn wood.

The Nyle kiln is designed to be placed inside an insulated building. It dries wood by drawing moist air across a cold coil, where it then condenses. It operates on 120 volts and comes with a separate controller and a remote control that's easy to use. You use the controller to set the temperature and moisture level.

Two fans provide circulation to assure even drying. The unit will handle 300 board feet of fast-drying soft woods and up to 1,000 board

feet for slow drying hardwoods like oak.

"Cabinet makers don't want to wait for wood to dry because it can change color. Kiln-dried lumber stays looking natural without any grayish tints or cracks," says a spokesman for the company.

Sells for \$2,995 plus S&H. The company also makes full-size kilns.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Nyle Systems, 12 Stevens Rd., Brewer, Maine 04412 (ph 800 777-6953; ncytr@nyle.com; info@nyle.com; www.nyle.com).