

## An Alpine History Mystery:

### What is a Doctor's Phaeton?

May 2014

At the Alpine History Museum we are about half-way done with a restoration project that we started over a year ago. We have assembled a crackerjack team of volunteers to work on the project: one person has experience with furniture restorations, another has restored a couple of Model T Fords, the third member of the team grew up on a farm in the mid-west and has lots of experience around vintage farm equipment. The fourth member of our team is kind of a paper pusher who has had experience constructing exhibits and working with restoration experts. One thing that we all have in common is that none of us has worked on a project like this before.

The object we are working on, a Doctor's Phaeton, was donated to the museum by Don Walker and was used at the Willows Resort by the Walker family a century ago. It was made prior to 1906 by Larkins & Company in San Francisco. After the 1906 earthquake, the company moved to new facilities and began working on more modern products. As the years passed, they continued to evolve and are still in business in San Francisco under the name of Hanlon and Larkins Brothers. We found the company, but we also found out that they don't make any replacement parts, so everything has to be restored or we have to find similar parts from old world craftsmen in the Amish communities of Pennsylvania.



**Larkins & Co. Name Plate**

Working on this project has taught us a whole new vocabulary too. For example, we had a major structural problem in the **Right Reach** just behind the **Rub Iron** and in front of the **Right Reach Brace**. We also discovered that a fancy end carving on one of the hickory **Spring Bars** was broken, but the other spring bar and the **Head Block** were in good shape. Now, if you are wondering about the **King Pin, Fifth Wheel, Perch and Axle Clips**, and the **Body Hangers**, they are just fine – some clean-up and a good coat of paint will make them look just like new.



**Pin Stripe Detail and Original Paint Color**

There are some things that our volunteer crew just can't do, so we will be contracting with local experts to help restore the fabric and leather upholstery. And after we gently removed layers of paint we exposed the original pin stripe details on various parts of the Phaeton. Luckily, we found a craftsman who can artistically restore these details.

Do you know what a Doctor's Phaeton is? Well, that is our history mystery this month. If you know the answer, send a note to [mystery@alpinehistory.org](mailto:mystery@alpinehistory.org). Need help solving this one? Come visit us at the museum open house from 2 to 4 pm on Saturday, May 24 or Sunday, May 25, where docents will be on hand to help you solve this mystery. Or, attend the Alpine History Day celebration, June 7 from 11 am to 2 pm where the "work in progress" Phaeton will be on display. The museum is located at 2116 Tavern Road in Alpine.