

# Carriage Museum of America-Library

## ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Librarian: Susan Green Post Office Box 417, Bird-In-Hand, Pennsylvania, United States of America 17505  
Phone 717-656-7019 Fax 717-656-6251 Web-site [www.carriagemuseumlibrary.org](http://www.carriagemuseumlibrary.org)

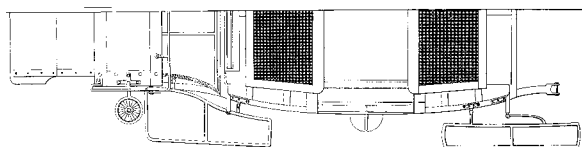
### CANE -WORK FOR CARRIAGES.

Cane work on or for the body panels of carriages has been in use for much of the carriage era during the 19th century. The earliest example that we found was in Rudolf Wackernagel's new book, *Staats- und Galawagen der Wittelsbacher*, published by Arnoldsche, 2003, for two vehicles built circa 1775 by a London coach builder for Elector Karl Theodor von der Pfalz. The carriages show the entire side and back panels woven with cane, known as hand-strand process.



Park-Phaeton with hand-stranded cane for the body panels made in London circa 1775 for Elector Karl Theodor von der Pfalz. From *Staats- und Galawagen der Wittelsbacher* by Rudolf H. Wackernagel, Vol. II page 126.

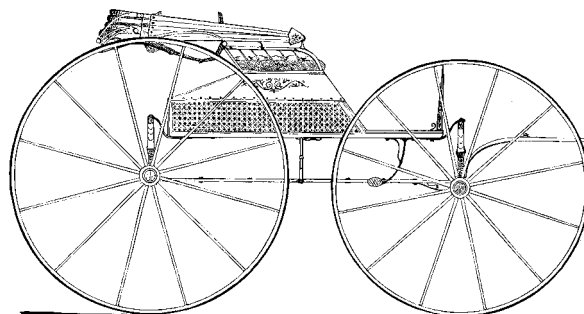
The material known as cane is split from the outer surface of the rattan plant. Rattan is a climbing plant that can grow to several hundred feet from the ground into the dense tree tops of the rain forest and is found growing in countries such as Thailand, China, Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. It is harvested by cutting the stem at the ground and pulling it down from the tree tops and then cutting it into lengths. The outer thorns and leaves are removed. The cane is then sorted, dried and bundled for shipping. Once the rattan reaches the processing plant, the thorny bark is removed and the cane is split from the inner skin. One of America's biggest processors of rattan in 19th century was the Wakefield Rattan Company of South Reading, Massachusetts now (Wakefield, MA). They were inventors of machinery for processing and splitting cane in the most efficient manner.



Working drawing of Double Suspension Landau, showing the hand strand cane-work for the seat frames.

#### HAND STRAND OR TRADITIONAL.

In hand stranding each piece of cane is woven individually by hand through holes drilled in a frame. Traditional, there are seven steps taken to complete the pattern. This method has been in existence since at least, the seventeenth century. Using strand cane was a process that went in and out of fashion for the carriage industry--the biggest use was for seat frames on which seat cushions rested. This was thought to keep the seat cushions aired. A more popular idea with the carriage industry was imitation cane work and throughout the 19th century someone was always trying to come up with a better idea of how to do this. This was accomplished mainly in two ways: 1. Painted directly to the surface, 2. Transfer/decals, or moulded sheets.



The first documented American carriage we could find for hand strand cane was a series of carriages designed by R. H. Brown. *Coach-makers' Magazine*, June 1857.

#### IMITATION CANE-WORK.

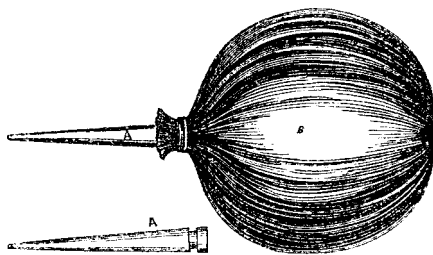
The first reference to imitation cane-work for carriages is the *New York Coach-Maker's Magazine*, March 1861, pages 191-192 in which they state: "in London they have succeeded in painting imitation tolerably well, but still very imperfectly, inasmuch as they do not appear to be interlaced, like the models they desire to imitate... many attempts are being made, and even patents rights are taken out... a patent taken out by Mr. Bellevallette, for an imitation of cane. This process, or system, consists in stamping dressed sheep-skins in relief, and this giving it the form of cane, and then spreading this tanned skin upon the panels." The sheep skin method was extremely short lived not being as attractive as the painted method.

Besides the promotion of the painted method for imitation cane-work, there was also a painted design for imitation basket work. In order to accomplish such work the panel is marked with white chalk, and is afterwards filled up with a fillet-brush. The material employed for the purpose is composed of ceruse, or white lead, ground with spirits of turpentine, and mixed with drying varnish. Add

thereto a little chrome yellow, also ground with spirits of turpentine, thickened or thinned as the brush may require; it is made thinner with spirits of turpentine, and thicker with white lead and yellow chrome. When the work is done, and well dried, the whole of the panel is repolished, and the last coat of varnish is given. There wasn't any further information given as to what a fillet-brush is.

### SHAM-CANING.

A reference for imitation cane work in the March 1866 *New York Coach-maker's Magazine*, page 152-153, in which they call the process Sham-caning and give the following instruction on how to do it by making something similar to a pastry bag. This method may have first been introduced by Mr. Biddlecombe an Englishman, *Hub* March 1884 page 789. "To begin, the painter must provide himself with an apparatus, of which the engraving here given is a representation. This cannot be found at the shops, and must be made by the operator himself, in the following manner: Have the tubular end, A, made by a tin-smith, of copper, with a very small hole in the point, and the other end formed after the shape given, so that the bag--this bag, B, is made of sheep-skin-- Tool for Squeeze Method. *New York Coach-maker's Magazine*, March 1866, page 152. string to the tube, after filling it with paint. This paint must, of course, be mixed of white and yellow colors to match the natural color of the cane, and of the proper consistency to work well.



Before we proceed further: we must cut out a stiff paper pattern the exact shape-in this pattern the full size of a panel, including the swell; must be taken—of the surface to be caned, and lay it out with a pencil in lines as formed in the real cane, on the outside. When these lines have all been drawn according to mechanical laws, this entire pattern must be pricked off in every line. To do this effectually it is necessary to have a small wheel full of points, inserted in a handle, after the manner of the trimmer's tool, known as the "pricker."



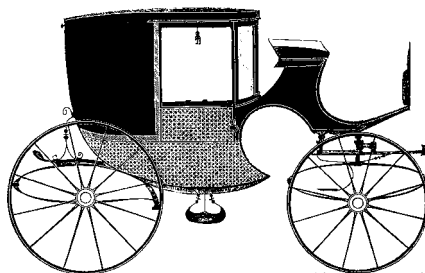
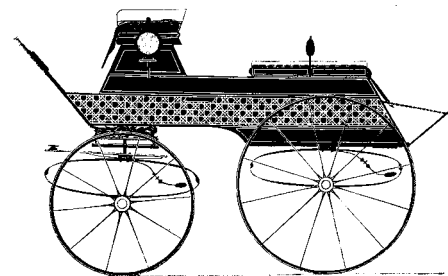
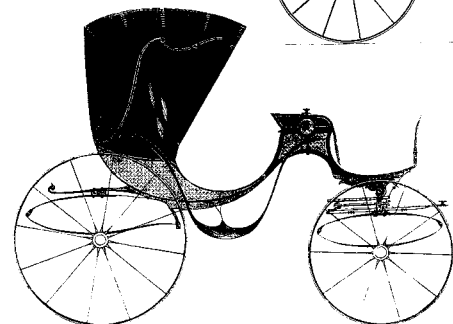
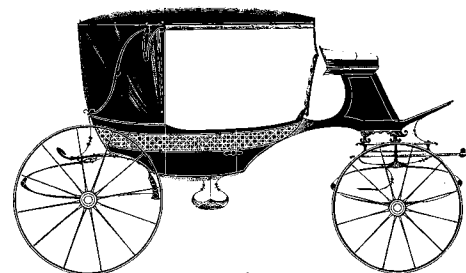
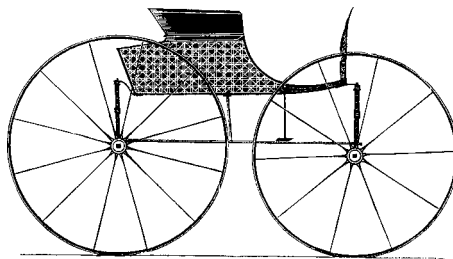
Pricking tool for making holes in paper.

Supposing that our panel has already been painted black, so as to fit it for striping, we next lay our pricked-off pattern thereon, and then hammer away at it throughout with a bag of tied-up whiting or pulverized chalk, just as the trimmer does to obtain a pattern for his white ornamental stitching. On removing this paper pattern we find the entire panel laid out in white dots. If the color of the paint in the ground work is red, some color in contrast must be substituted for our chalk above named, and *vice versa*. Next, a rest-stick must be improvised, of a tapering form, and of suitable length, with a ball of cotton or soft leather at the end, to prevent scratching.

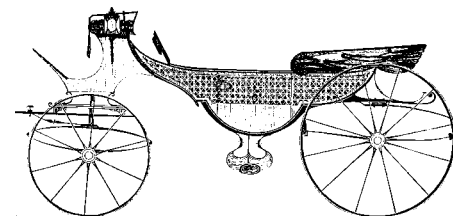
Everything being now ready for manipulation, seizing the tube and rest-stick in the left, with the right hand we press the paint-bag B, which pressure makes the paint exude from the end of the tube in the proper quantity to form the raised cane-strings, as with the left hand-guided by the rest-stick-the apparatus is moved toward the operator's body, leaving a string of paint behind it." This was the entire process for sham-caning and, with practice, it was believed any

amateur could become proficient in sham-caning." Reference is again made to the use of sheets of imitation caning, most like printed oil-cloth, but not nearly as attractive as the painted sham-caning.

### FASHIONABLE CARRIAGES FOR 1863-1864 WITH SHAM-CANING.

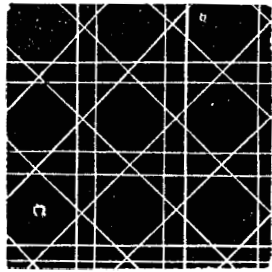


*New York Coach-maker's Magazine*, Vol. V.



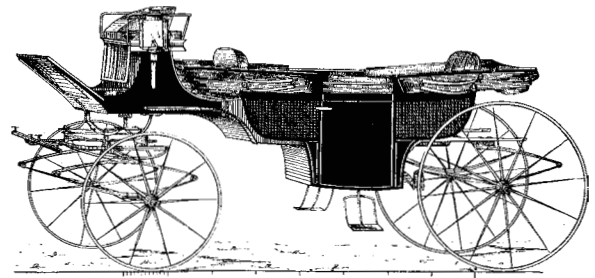
### TO LAY OUT IMITATION CANE -WORK.

Laying the lines on a flat panel surface for sham-caning is a fairly straight forward job, but for panels that have a swell this is a rather challenging job. The October 1870, *Coach-makers' International Journal*, page 5-6, proposed the use of flexible rulers



the width of caning pattern to lay off the pattern, rather than the use of compasses and dividers. An excellent example of the problem of swell panels is when sheets of imitation caning are used the caning wholes are uneven around the edges (the holes might range from a whole to part of a hole). This happens because there is a greater distance on one edge of the panel.

The edge with the greater distance needs more space between the divisions than the side with the smaller distance. Both sides will have the same number of divisions just different distances between them. This 1870 article talks about putting the painted lines on with a fine line pencil, or, which is better, a striping pen. Pencil means brush in this case and striping pen means mechanical pen, *Carriage Monthly*, January 1881 page 189.



Full Leather-Top Landau with cane-work finish from Raud Bros., of Paris. *Hub* October, 1882.

- No. 1. Small pattern, 13½ inches wide.
- No. 2. Small pattern, 27 inches wide.
- No. 3. Small pattern interlaced, 27 inches wide.
- No. 4. Larger pattern, 27 inches wide.
- No. 5. Larger pattern interlaced, 27 inches wide.

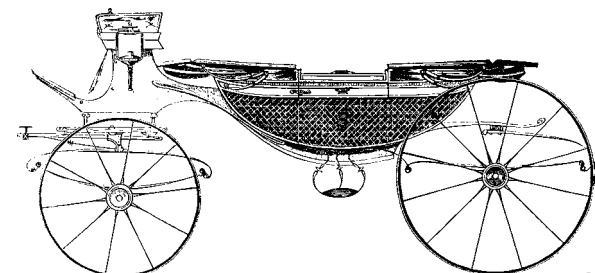
No. 6. Flat pattern, exactly resembling split cane; same width as next above. The price of the varieties above named is from ten to twenty-eight francs (or \$2 to \$6) per piece, according to pattern.

The method of applying the canvas to the panel may be described as follows: The panels require to be prepared as for ordinary sham caning with the tube, and then varnished. Then wash as much of the cane-work as is needed, rolling up the rest in the powder in which it is packed. When the varnish is about half dry, and still tacky, put on the cane-work, which must be perfectly free from dampness. Press it down gently, but firmly, and if any difficulty be found in making it adhere, a little japan gold-size applied to the under surface will insure its sticking. When dry a coat of varnish should be applied as usual. All the cane-work should be pressed down from the center outward, so as to exclude the air, and should then be surrounded by the beading in the usual manner. [Directions in the *Carriage Monthly*, July 1881, page 69 from Raud Bros., state that it is applied with rye paste.]

Mr. Raud also supplies a very good imitation, in canvas, of panels carved to represent wicker-work. This is sold in sheets, from 6 to 8 feet in length by 18 to 20 inches wide, at the price of about twenty-five cents per square foot.

It possesses the advantage of flexibility, so that it can be adjusted perfectly to any curve or sweep that may be desired, and it only needs to be glued on to the ordinary panel of the carriage, which requires no previous preparation. One other great advantage of imitation cane-work in sheets is that it eliminates the necessity for tilting the bodies on end in order to sham-cane the back panels.

A large portion of Mr. Raud's stock goes to London, where Messrs. Whittingham & Wilkin, 136 Long-Acre, act as his representatives and agents, and their arrangement with him is such that they are prepared to supply wholesale at Paris prices. Coach-builders in the United States, wishing to order samples, can do so through them most conveniently, and with the same cost as through Mr. Raud. We



English Landau at the International Exhibition by Whittingham & Wilkin, England. *New York Coach-maker's Magazine* January 1863.

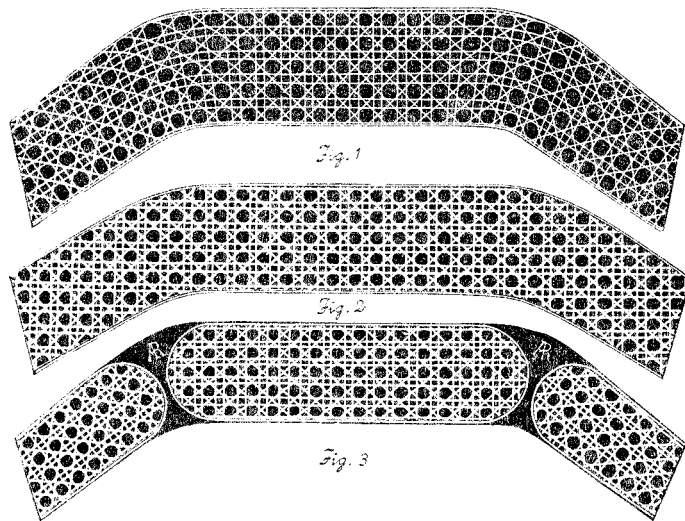


Fig. 1 & 2 show the difficulty of cutting out sheets of prepared cane-work for rounded body panels, the center back is even but the holes on the sides become uneven. Fig. 3 shows one solution to the problem. *Carriage Monthly* Feb. 1900.

### 1874 POSITIVE NOTE FOR SHEETS OF IMITATION CANE-WORK.

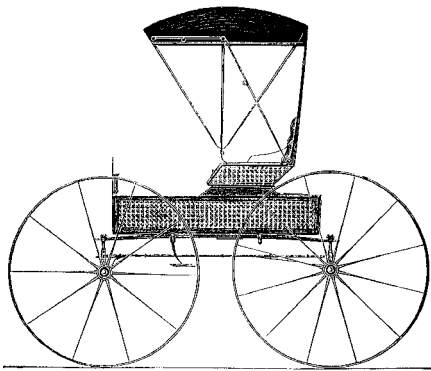
The first mention of American carriage builders having an interest in imitation cane-work using sheets is the *Hub*, October 1874, page 198 and January, 1875, page 300. A Baltimore carriage builder had asked the editor of the *Hub* were he could get such material. "Through a London carriage builder Martin H. Wilkin the editor learned that it was quite popular in England and was made by the firm of Eugene Raud, of 113 Boulevard Haussmann, Paris, who, in connection with his stationery business, prepares imitation cane and wicker-work for coach-builders, particularly for the trade in London. The cane is very neatly prepared, by machinery, upon perforated canvas, and is sold in pieces 6 feet 6 inches long, and varying in width. There are six patterns of perforated cane, which the maker is accustomed to keep in stock, and which are thus described in his price list:



understand that Mr. Whittingham was the first to originate a [portable] imitation cane-work for carriages. (Mr. Whittingham preferred that his method be called portable sham-caning as opposed to the first originator of sham-caning, who's identity is unknown). It was about: fifteen years ago (1859) when he first conceived the idea of supplying the work painted upon sheets of canvas, finished complete, and only demanding of the painter to be pasted upon the panel. As originated by Mr. Whittingham, the sheet of canvas was first painted black, and then tubed by hand. This met with much success, and one of the first large orders received by the firm was from Messrs. J. C. Parker & Co., of New-York, for an invoice which amounted to over £150. It was not long after this that Mr. Raud came to London for the purpose of introducing his new invention for the same object. Mr. Whittingham was pleased with it, and believing it to be preferable to his in some respects, particularly in the comparative cheapness of its production, he offered to take its agency, and introduce it to the English trade. He still keeps in stock that of his own invention, and for some purposes it is superior to the other. Thus the tubed canvas, unlike the perforated, has an undercoat of black, and therefore does not require any previous preparation of the panel; and, again, it is better adapted, from the same cause, for concealing a split panel. A third advantage of the tubed canvas occurs in cases where it is wished to apply it to the back of a Stanhope phaeton, for instance, where the panel to be tubed is not of a uniform width at its top and bottom; and thus when made by hand, in the Whittingham method, an allowance can be made for this discrepancy in preparing the canvas, and the tubing can be so graduated as to come out parallel with the beading on each side."

#### TRADITIONAL METHOD IS STILL USED.

In 1876, the August *Hub*, on page 166, gives a description of Rogers' Cane-sided Piano-box Wagon, exhibited by William D. Rogers & Co., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as follows: "This is a very striking job, the sides, back, front and boot being all made of cane-work. The frame of the wagon is made of ash in the usual manner, and the panels are of whitewood, 1/2 inch thick, which are boxed out to receive the cane, and after the holes were made for the cane, the panels were again boxed out inside, and the holes covered with a molding, and planed level, so that neither any holes nor any molding can be seen inside, and much curiosity has been expressed by visitors as to how the cane was put on. The seat is also made of cane, applied in the same manner. The cane is very fine, the holes being 3/16 inch apart, and the man who caned it informs us that there are about 12,000 holes in the job." *Currently people who do hand strand work charge by the hole, it is estimated this vehilce would cost \$21,600 for the cane-work. Beth Schaffer.*



Roger's Cane-side Top-Wagon.

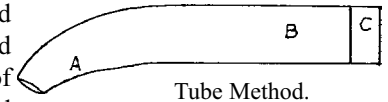
#### METHOD OF SHAM-CANING FROM EXPERT.

James Warner of England who won a prize in 1851 against all nations for his work of imitation cane-work on carriages sent the following information to be printed in the May 1881, *Hub* page 74-75: "The way I have executed the work is to grind the dry white lead in gold-size, very fine, and tint it with stone ochre, to give it a cane color.

Make it thin enough to use without turps, as your lines would otherwise be apt to split or sink down in the middle. I use the striping tube, which flows much better than one squeezed out, because it comes out gradually while squeezing out in the ordinary way you are liable to have more color in one place than another.

Beginning your work, mark it well out with dividers, and do the longest lines first, because in crossing in squares you will not have the difficulty of getting over the short ones.

Now a few words as to the difficulty of round backs or round cornered wagonets. Draw your lines straight as far as you can, and then draw your dividers around the corners, and get a piece of leather, about 3/4 inch wide, and sweep it round, and run your tube around to meet your other lines. The pattern tube I send you will flow well with a vent-hole, as marked, so as to run gradually. Do not let this be stopped up, or the color will not flow. A, side of oval tube, made either of brass or copper; B, vent-hole; and C, cork end, to fill up to vent-hole.



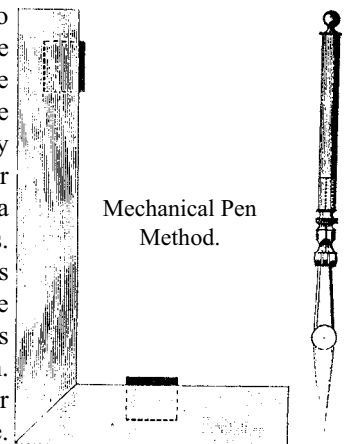
Tube Method.

Sandpaper off the edges of straight-edge, or your color might flow under and spoil your lines.

Practice in such matters is the only thing to make a good workman, and patience will help him on to success. The canoe landaus look best with caned doors, and the square ones do not look well with doors left undone. James Warner."

#### MECHANICAL PEN METHOD.

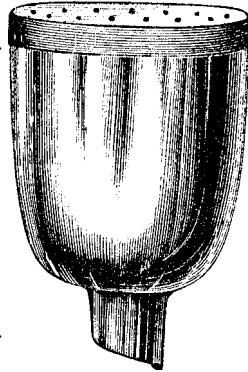
A carriage painter not in favor of the tube or squeeze method had his method published in January 1881 *Carriage Monthly*, page 188-189. He did not believe that squeezing the color through the bag was very neat as it risked having uneven lines and many knots, and the tube method along with squeezing it from a bag was way to tedious. He indicates that it is a method that he has used for the last twenty years [1861] and the following instructions are given: "This method is called a striping-pen, or more properly a mechanical pen, with home-made rule or straight edge. The pen can be made to draw a hair line, or be enlarged by the set screw on the side to a line as heavy as ordinary cane-work. The color used with pen, is generally made distemper color to prevent spreading, and insure at the same time clean lines; or if there should be a small job to do, and the painter has no pen, take an ordinary quill pen, soften it in warm water before using, and you find it make a better job than tubes or paper bags. The straight edge used for caning is made as given in cut. The pen can be procured in any first-class artist's furnishing store for a small sum. When new, the pen is rather sharp for paint work, and so it is ground a little.



In using, keep a piece of buckskin or chamois wrapped on your left thumb, and as the pencil is loaded, wipe the outer sides clean before placing on the panel. The straight edge should never touch panel of body, and where the panel has no molding, tack or glue a strip on both ends to keep it from part you want to line. This piece can also be made to answer any size block of cane you want to make as given on drawing."

### FUNNEL METHOD.

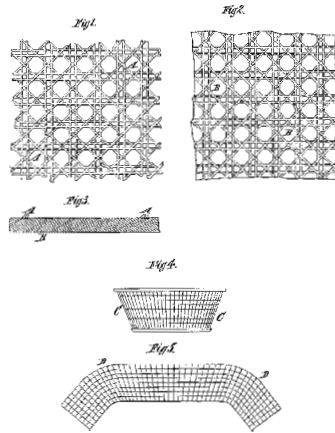
The *Carriage Monthly* of April 1881, page 8, gives the following information for the funnel method: "The cane work is put on with a funnel with a short, flat neck. This funnel should be large enough to hold two pounds of paint, made of dry lead and ochre, about the shade of rattan; mixed with japan and turpentine so to be sure to dry like putty or cement. Some painters use shellac, instead of japan, but where shellac is used alcohol should be substituted for turpentine. Rules to be observed for raised cane work: Use a funnel with air-holes and the mouth hole the size needed for the size of the cane. Place the panel face upward, that is, in a horizontal position, to prevent the paint from running. Do not force the color in the funnel, but let it squeeze through by its own weight. The lid of this funnel is perforated with holes, to give it vent, and the neck is filled with pewter or lead, so that the hole can be made any size, and the metal being soft, does not scratch the panels. The neck is about 1/2 inch wide, 1/4 inch broad, and not more than 1 1/4 inches long. The color must be such as to run slowly through the mouth. All the cane work must be outlined first with chalk, and to do this the lines must be equally divided, which is a very difficult and tedious work." This method is known to have been used til 1913. *From the Library of Congress & Smithsonian Institution Library also reprinted in the Carriage Monthly March 1913.*



Funnel Method.

### HOW IT WAS DONE AT BREWSTER & CO., NEW YORK 1882 RETICULATED WORK FOR CARRIAGE-BODIES.

On January 28th, 1882, patent number 259,461 was issued to Peter Barry of New York, painter for Brewster & Co., called Reticulated Work for Carriage-bodies. This patent claimed to be a new article of manufacture, an imitation of cane, wicker, or other woven or net work for carriage-bodies or for other purposes, consisting of a reticulated fabric or tissue of oil-paint or other analogous composition. The method of making imitation cane-work fabric or tissue, consisted of first coating a mold with an adhesive substance soluble in water, then covering and filling the mold with a composition of which the fabric or tissue is to be made and allowing such composition to dry, then sandpapering off or otherwise removing all the composition except that contained in the grooved or intagliated portions of the mold, and finally dissolving the adhesive substance by immersing the mold in water, and thereby releasing the reticulated fabric or tissue.

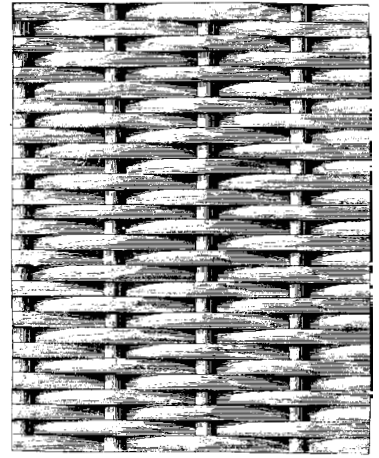
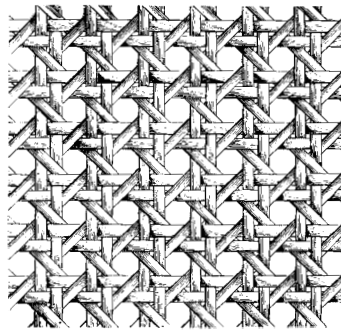


Patent # 259,461 issued to Peter Barry.

### 1884 TRANSFERS FOR CANE-WORK.

The *Hub*, March 1884, page 789, features a review of imitation cane-work and imitation basket-work in the form of transfers or colored decalcomania designs by the Palm & Fechteler Co., New York, New York. The Palm & Fechteler Co., was well known to the carriage industry for many years as a supplier of

Imitation Cane-work and Basket-work Transfers made by Palm & Fechteler.



ornamental transfers, and there new line of transfers for imitation cane work received the following review: "It is so simple in its application, so perfect in its general appearance, and so inexpensive, that imitation cane-work seems now within the reach of every grade of builder and painter. It consists of colored decalcomania designs, of great variety, produced in sheets, from which it is transferred to the panel by the ordinary method, well understood by all painters.

We herewith show two specimen designs. The first example represents a perfect imitation of cane-work, adapted to the seats of Victorias, phaetons, etc. The original is produce in the natural color of cane, and the interlacing and shading of the cane-work are represented with great accuracy.

The second example represents a specimen of basket work, adapted for pony phaetons, village carts, etc., or for any seat or panel where this finish may be preferred to cane. This also is produced in the natural color, and is quite deceptive in its effect, by reason of its accurate shading and brilliant high-lights."

By 1899 another American company began to supply imitation cane-work transfers called the Meyercord Co., of Chicago, this type of imitation cane-work was used to the end of the carriage era.

The *Carriage Monthly*, March 1913, page 61, gives the following information as to how transfers are made and applied: "As the first step in the production of imitation cane or transfers, an outline drawing is made. This outline drawing is transferred to as many lithographic stones as there are colors, as each color or shade requires a separate stone, and before the outlines are printed on the stones the latter must be specially prepared.

Lithographic crayon is used to cover over such portions of the design as are to receive a certain color, which, when the stone has been placed under acid, is the only portion of the surface that will receive or transfer to the paper any color whatever. The next stone is prepared the same way, and so on, until all the stones are ready. The first stone, which is the last in the chromo lithograph, is then placed upon the bed of the press, being printed in inverted order, so that the ornament may show right side up when transferred.

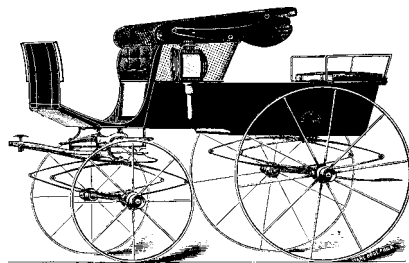
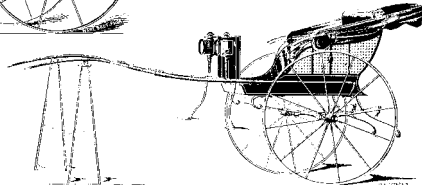
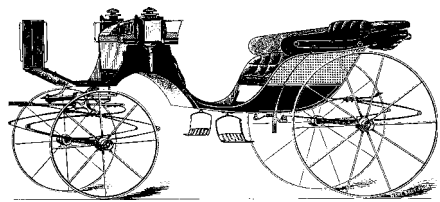
The color having been spread over the stone with a roller, as in type and cut printing, the sheets of the prepared paper, upon which the picture is to be printed, are placed upon it one by one and an impression taken. When the whole edition has received its first color, the same sheets are run through again for the second color. The second stone is replaced by the third, and this in turn by the fourth, and so on until the printing is finished. The printed papers are then prepared with a gum coating that can easily be dissolved by water.

**DIRECTIONS FOR USING TRANSFER ORNAMENTS.**

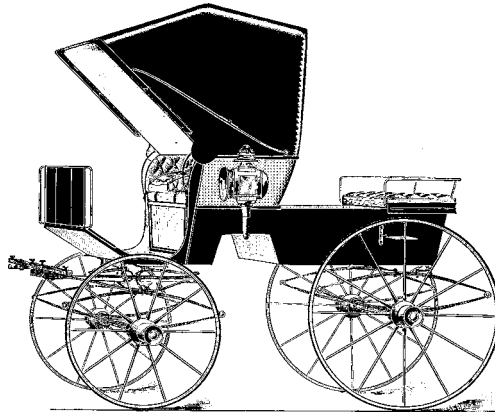
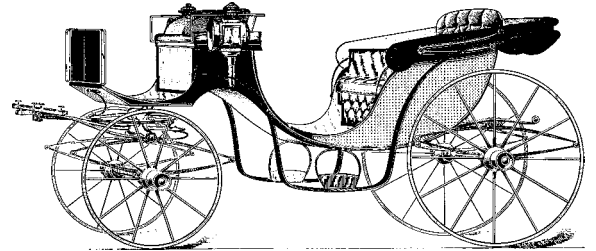
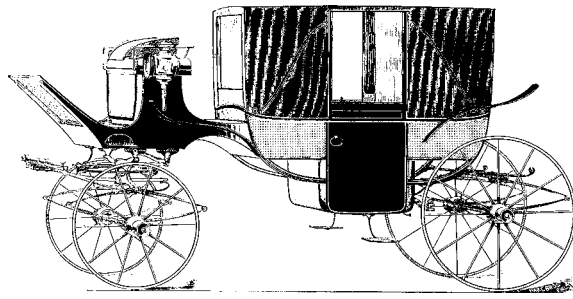
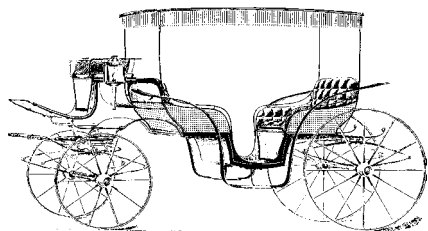
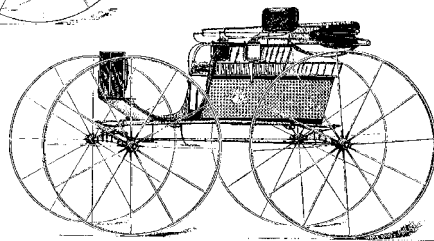
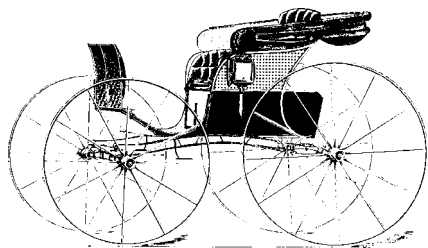
To transfer wipe the transfer, that is, the side showing the colors, with a dry chamois skin or a soft towel in order to remove dust or loose particles on the sheet. Give the side showing the colors a thin coat of quick-drying varnish. Let it remain five or ten minutes until the varnish is tacky, then place the picture, face down, in the proper position on the article it is to be applied to: dampen the back with a wet sponge, pressing it at the same time until the paper is thoroughly saturated and adheres smoothly.

Pull off the paper carefully, and press the picture well with a damp sponge until every part adheres perfectly; wash it clean to remove the gum, then allow it to dry. To heighten the brilliancy of the colors, and also to protect the transfer, a light coat of varnish may be applied."

This concludes our disussion of cane-work for horse-drawn vehicles. If anyone has been successful in executing sham-work or imitation cane-work please let us know, we might have people getting in touch with us to learn more.



**FASHIONABLE  
CARRIAGES  
FOR  
1883-1884  
WITH  
IMITATION  
CANE-WORK**



**FASHIONABLE  
CARRIAGES  
FOR  
1889-1890  
WITH  
IMITATION  
CANE-WORK**

