

# Outlook

## Wagon Train or Rail Car?

Some years ago, I visited the Museum of Western Expansion under the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, MO. I remember being shocked (gobsmacked, as I like to say) to learn that back in 1820, the trip by wagon train from St. Louis to California would take pioneers anywhere from five to six months. That's 2000 miles at an average



speed of 10 to 20 miles a day—with the pioneers mostly walking next to their heavily-laden wagons. After the Civil War concluded and the transcontinental railroad began its service, the wagon trains largely died out. Understandable, as the “iron horse” could make relatively the same journey in under a week, and was of course far less risky and considerably more reliable.

I was reminded of all this recently as I walked the factory floor and noted the extraordinary number of orders with accelerated delivery dates currently in process. I was also struck by just how few late jobs there were on the special tables reserved for these items. I won't bore you with all the details, but the key takeaway here is that Glenair is absolutely killing our on-time delivery numbers—even with super-short lead times. To say this is extraordinary is a monumental understatement—particularly to us veterans in the industry who know only too well the crazy lead times and late deliveries that, for our customers, are sadly so routine.

So how does all this relate to wagon trains? My thought is that sometimes the pace in business, the speed at which we operate, is tied to the standards and norms of the day. In 1820, the norms of human migration were tied to how far and how fast you could walk in a day. Available technology (oxen, Conestoga wagons, etc.) was another norm. The fact that the travelers were mostly families—and not for example single men—was another factor. And so, the pace of Western Expansion, the “lead time” if you will, was five to six months—with no real guarantee you would even make it to the Golden State.

Then along came the train. And suddenly, six days was the new norm. Technology and service had made it so. And the era of the wagon train, about 1820 to 1860, was summarily over. The way I see it, Glenair is that train. Because unless I miss my guess, our fast lead times and dependable on-time delivery will change customer perceptions regarding how they “travel” from point A to point B. Not to put too fine a point on it, but who wants to walk to California when you can ride on the train with us?

*Chris Toomey*

# QwikConnect

GLENAIR • Volume 26 • Number 1

## Publisher

Christopher J. Toomey

## Managing Editor

Marcus Kaufman

## Art Director/Editor

Mike Borgsdorf

## Graphic Designer

George Ramirez

## Editor

Meghan Taylor

## Technical Consultant

Jim Donaldson

## Issue Contributors

Josh Castrey

Don Denny

Mike Ghara

Guido Hunziker

Robert Johnson

## Distribution

Terry White

*To subscribe or unsubscribe,  
please contact Terry White:  
twhite@glenair.com*

QwikConnect is published quarterly by Glenair, Inc. and printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. © Copyright 2022 Glenair, Inc. A complete archive of past issues of QwikConnect is available on the Internet at [www.glenair.com/qwikconnect](http://www.glenair.com/qwikconnect)

## GLENAIR, INC.

1211 AIR WAY  
GLENDALE, CA 91201-2497  
TEL: 818-247-6000  
FAX: 818-500-9912  
E-MAIL: [sales@glenair.com](mailto:sales@glenair.com)  
[www.glenair.com](http://www.glenair.com)

