



Photo Courtesy of Christopher Nelson

# C.R. Patterson

## Carriages

U.S. PATENT NO. 364,849: Thill-coupling

**Inducted in 2025** Born: April 16, 1833 Died: April 26, 1910

### Primary Connections:

- C.R. Patterson & Sons Co.: Owner, Co-founder, Mechanic
- Dines & Simpson Coach and Carriage Co.: Blacksmith and Foreman

### Key Memberships/Awards:

- Automotive Hall of Fame: Inductee, 2021

Charles Richard (C.R.) Patterson was an inventor and entrepreneur whose successful carriage company, C.R. Patterson & Sons Co., evolved to become the first and only Black-owned and operated automobile company in the United States.



**Full Bio:** <https://www.invent.org/inductees/charles-richard-patterson>

### Things You Should Know:

- Patterson was born in 1833 in Virginia.
- When he was 10, his parents moved the family north in search of better opportunities. They settled in the small southwestern Ohio town of Greenfield, known at the time for its prevailing abolitionist views.
- In his career, Patterson worked with his sons Samuel and Frederick.
- Among Patterson & Sons' most popular offerings were horse-drawn school wagons, and buggies designed for winter or stormy weather.
- Patterson's company also built doctors' buggies, hearses, and wagons designed for mail and other deliveries.
- Patterson's 1887 patent was for a thill-coupling device. Thills are long wooden shafts that extend forward on either side of a horse and are attached to a harness just behind the horse's front legs, helping it to pull a wagon or carriage more easily.
- In 1915, as automobiles were rapidly replacing carriages, C.R. Patterson & Sons began developing its own automobile. The Patterson-Greenfield automobile was introduced in September 1915.
- C.R. Patterson & Sons later was renamed Greenfield Bus Body Co. and produced school bus and truck bodies, cargo trucks, hearses and moving vans before closing permanently in 1939.
- Patterson had three U.S. patents.