



History & STEM Fun with the Campbell County Rockpile Museum

Wagons, Wagons, Wagons



Covered wagons on Gillette Avenue - Campbell County Rockpile Museum Photo #2007.015.0036

To learn more about pioneer travels visit these links:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=GdbnriTpg_M&feature=emb_logo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fJFUYKIVKA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XmWtLrfr-Y>

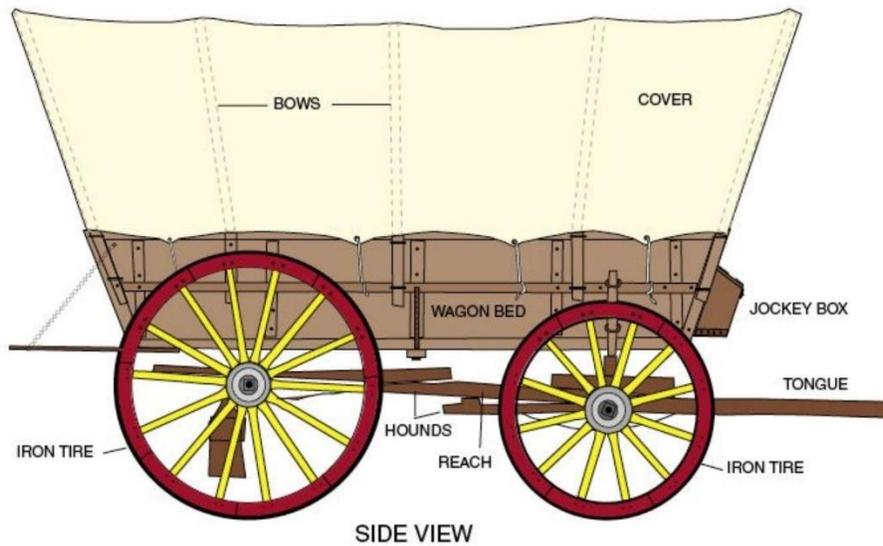
Most wagons on the Oregon Trail were **NOT** Conestoga wagons. These were slow, heavy freight wagons. Most Oregon Trail pioneers used ordinary farm wagons fitted with canvas covers. The expansion of the railroad into the American West in the mid to late 1800s led to the end of travel across the nation in wagons.

Are a Prairie Schooner and a Conestoga the same wagon? No.

The **Conestoga wagon** was a much heavier wagon and often pulled by teams of up to six horses. Such wagons required reasonably good roads and were simply not practical for moving westward across the plains. The entire wagon was 26 feet long and 11 feet wide. The front wheels were 3 ½ feet high, rear wheels 4 to 4 ½ feet high. The empty wagon weighed 3000 to 3500 lbs.

The **Prairie schooner** was the classic covered wagon that carried settlers westward across the North American plains. It was a lighter wagon designed to travel great distances on rough prairie trails. It stood 10-foot-tall, was 4 ft wide, and was 10 to 12 feet long. When the tongue and yoke were attached it was 23 feet long. The rear wheels were 50 inches in diameter and the front wheels 44 inches in diameter. The smaller front wheels allowed for sharper turns. The wagon weighed 1300 lbs. empty and was normally pulled by 4 to 6 oxen or 6 to 10 mules. The nickname came from the typical white cloth cover on the wagon, which, from a distance, made it resemble the white cloth of a ship's sails.

PARTS OF A PRAIRIE SCHOONER



Fun Facts:

Emigrants would walk beside their wagons as they traveled west, with only small children and the elderly riding inside. This was because the wagon was filled with the family's possessions and crates of supplies for the long journey.

Pioneers knew that eating fresh fruits and vegetables would keep them safe from the deficiency disease, scurvy; because fresh fruits and vegetables were hard to come by over much of the trail, pioneers would bring a lot of pickles along, which also were an excellent source of Vitamin C.

[Visit this link to learn more about what it would have been like to be a traveler on the Oregon trail.](#)

<https://www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail/files/packwagon.pdf>

Make your own Prairie Schooner

<https://thecraftyclassroom.com/crafts/pioneer-crafts-for-kids/covered-wagon-craft/>

Buckboard, Farm, Freight, and Spring Wagons



Wagon at the Spaeth Ranch
Campbell County Rockpile Museum Photo #1993.041.0017

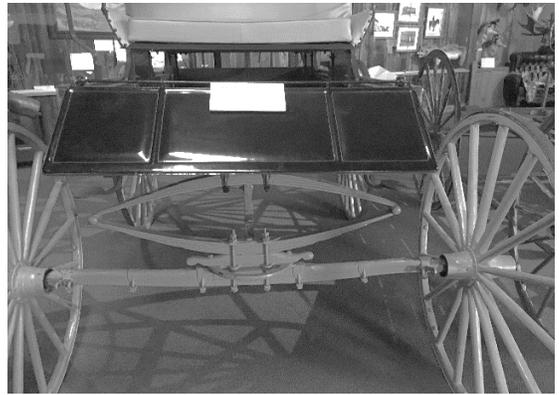


Photo of leaf spring that gives the Spring wagon its name

A **buckboard** is a four-wheeled wagon of simple construction meant to be drawn by a horse or other large animal. The "buckboard" is the front-most board on the wagon that could act as both a footrest for the driver and protection for the driver from the horse's rear hooves in case of a "buck".

Spring wagon, is a four-wheeled vehicle drawn by draft animals (most often horses), having a square box and between two and four movable seat boards. It was a general-purpose wagon used for the transportation of either goods or passengers, and in 19th century America it enjoyed wide popularity with farmers.

Farm wagons are built for general multi-purpose usage in an agricultural or rural setting. These include gathering hay, crops and wood, and delivering them to the farmstead or market.

Freight wagons are wagons used for the overland hauling of freight and bulk commodities.



Freight teams & drivers on Gillette Avenue, 1901 - Campbell County Rockpile Museum Photo #2002.006.0017

Visit this link for wagon and transportation themed activities:

<https://history.sd.gov/docs/South%20Dakota%20Transportation%20digital%20activities.pdf>

Campbell County Rockpile Museum, 900 W Second Street, Gillette, WY 82716
Email: rockpile@vcn.com - www.rockpilemuseum.com

Chuck wagon

Visit these links to learn more about the chuck wagon

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=86&v=67YEFa1ZzCA&feature=emb_logo

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLFI_Oeaz0c

The average chuck wagon was about 10 feet long and 38-40 inches wide.

Chuck wagon: A chuck wagon is a type of kitchen on wheels. Invented in 1866 by Charles Goodnight of Texas, it was historically used for the storage and transportation of food and cooking equipment for cowboys on a cattle drive. Cowboys sometimes referred to the chuck wagon as Crumb Castle.

Chuck: In the 18th century the term “chuck” was used to refer to good and hearty food. The daily menu was normally dried pork, beans, and bread with the choice of water or coffee to drink.

Cookie: The name given to the cook in charge of the chuck wagon. Besides cooking, he would have acted as their banker, been expected to make repairs to equipment or nurse sick workers who might have taken ill during the long drives.



T7 Round Up Camp 1911 - Campbell County Rockpile Museum Photo #1974.001.3044



SL Cowboys at Supper near Miles City, MT 1907 - Campbell County Rockpile Museum Photo #2008.004.0176

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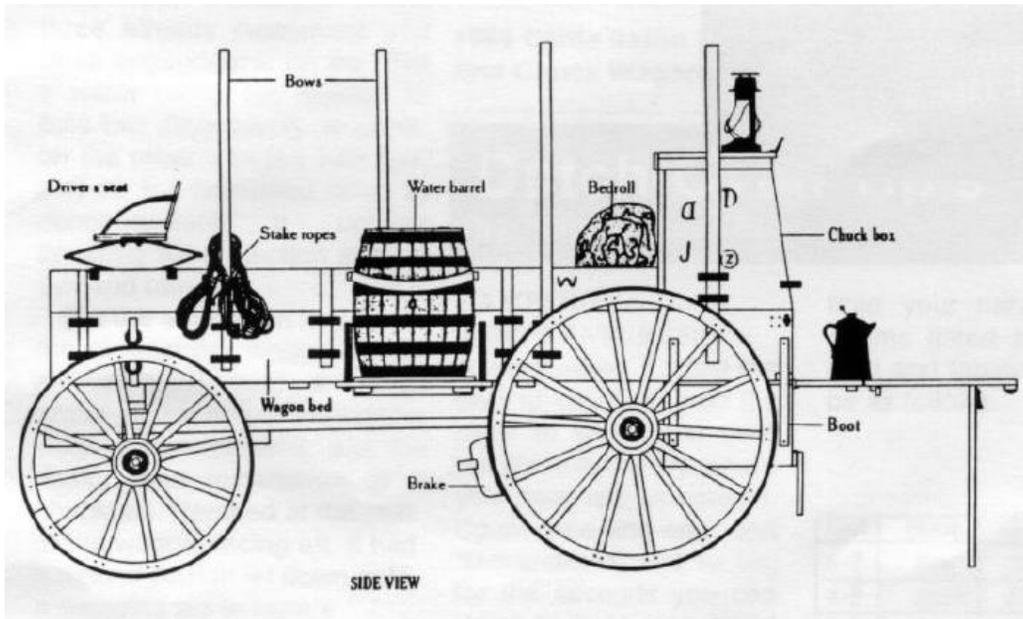


Diagram of the side view of a chuck wagon

The parts of the chuck wagon:

Wagon box: This was the main body of the wagon and held bulkier items like bags of potatoes, vegetables, salt pork, jerky, a container of sourdough. Possibly some extra bedrolls and camp equipment. Pick, axe, shovels, ropes and pulleys, a water barrel and sometimes coffee grinder were attached to the outside of the wagon.

Wagon-bow: A bent slat of wood used to support waterproof cover needed to keep everything dry in the case of rain.

Chuck box: This was the cook's box and inside there were shelves and drawers that would have held coffee grinders, coffee pots, plates, silverware, pots, pans etc. Traditionally there was a drawer used to keep the miscellaneous items that would be needed such as sewing supplies, medical items, straight razor and soap etc.

Cook Flys: A canvas awning that covers the cooking area on the chuck wagon. Attaches over the wagon bows and attached to five fly/support poles and held down with ropes and stakes.

Jockey box: The small box mounted at the outside, and front of the wagon under the driver's seat. It held extra tools and items that might be handy in an emergency. Wagon wheel wrench, adjustable wrenches, hammer, draw knife, wood chisel, rags, nails, good file for sharpening, shoeing tools, leather and leather repair tools, horse hobbles.

Possum belly: Nickname for the canvas or cowhide that was suspended under the wagon to carry firewood and cow chips.

Chuck wagon fun:

Fun Fact:

When Cookie was finished with his work for the day and before going to bed, he would always place the tongue of the chuck wagon facing north. This was done so that when the trail master started in the morning, he would be able to look at the tongue and know what direction he would be moving the herd.

Chuck Wagon Etiquette

1. No one eats until Cookie calls.
2. When Cookie calls, everyone comes a runnin'.
3. Hungry cowboys wait for no man. They fill their plates, fill their bellies, and then move on so stragglers can fill their plates.
4. Cowboys eat first, talk later.
5. It's okay to eat with your fingers. The food is clean.
6. If you're refilling the coffee cup and someone yells "Man at the pot." You're obliged to serve refills.
7. Don't take the last serving unless you're sure you're the last man.
8. Food left on the plate is an insult to the cook.
9. No running or saddling a horse near the wagon. And when you ride off, always ride downwind from the wagon.
10. If you come across any decent firewood, bring it back to the wagon.
11. Strangers are always welcome at the wagon.

Cowboy Slang:

Cookie - Term for the Chuck Wagon Cook. Other nicknames included *Grub Worm*, *Biscuit Shooter*, or *Belly Cheater*

Cow Grease - Butter

Canned Cow – Canned milk

Hen Fruit - Eggs

Calf Slobbers – Meringue on a pie

Bee-sweetening – Honey

Fried Chicken – Bacon rolled in flour and fried

Chuck Wagon Chicken – Fried bacon

Spotted Pup – Cooking raisins in rice

Eatin Irons – Silverware

Cow Chip – Dried cow manure

Boston Dollar – A penny

Dogie – An orphaned calf or small calf

Visit this link to make your own stick pony for riding the cattle drive using a pool noodle:

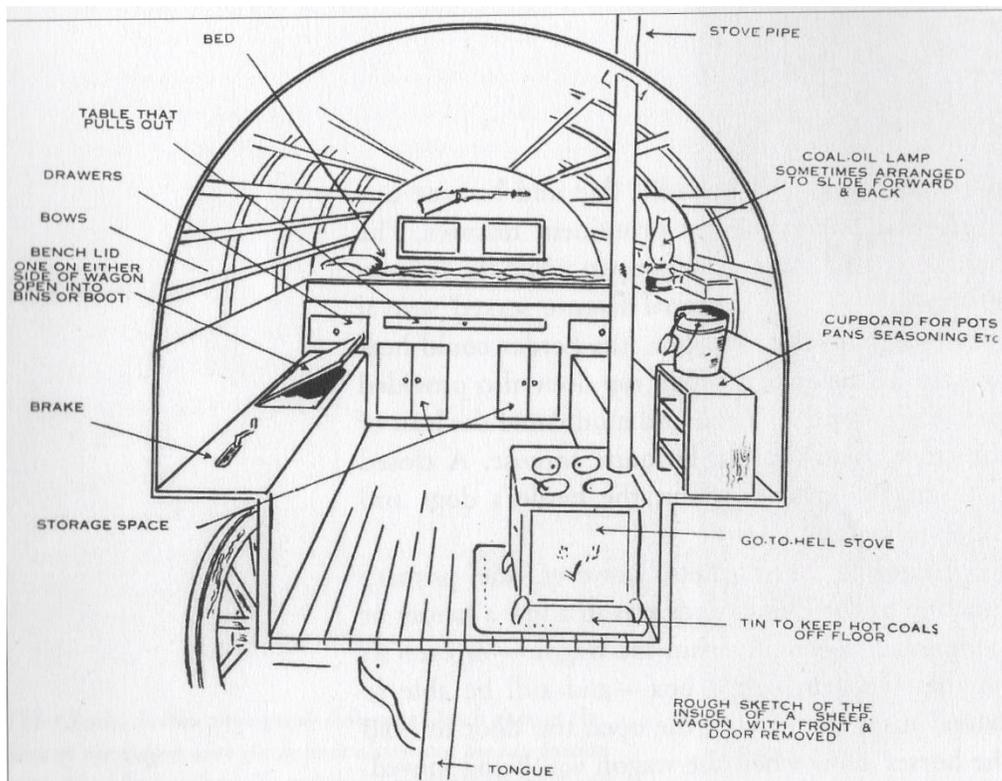
<https://www.pbs.org/parents/crafts-and-experiments/turn-a-pool-noodle-into-horse-stick>

Sheep wagon

The Sheep wagon as we know it today originated in Wyoming along with the developed sheep industry during the 1870s. Because the shepherd followed the flocks of sheep in order to watch over and protect them, they needed protection from the weather and this home on wheels gave them a safe place to stay. Sheep wagons were drawn by horse to remote pasture where the shepherd would sleep, cook, and live out of the wagon until the sheep exhausted the grass; then the flock and shepherd would move to greener pastures.



Sheep wagon on the Spaeth Ranch - Campbell County Rockpile Museum Photo #1993.041.0024



Shepherd job description:

Herder, mutton puncher, shepherd attends sheep flock grazing on range: Herds sheep and rounds up strays using trained dogs. Beds down sheep near evening campsite. Guards flock from predatory animals and from eating poisonous plants. Drenches sheep. May also assist in lambing, docking, and shearing.

Sheep Facts:

To learn about sheep click this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xwFALeyl5s>

Male sheep are called rams, the female sheep are called ewes, and immature animals lambs. Mature sheep weigh from about 80 to 400 pounds. Sheep are highly independent from birth and they like to be in a group. Female sheep (ewes) are very caring mothers and form deep bonds with their lambs that can recognize them by their call (bleat) when they wander too far away.



Merino sheep

Campbell County Rockpile Museum Photo# 2017.016.0031



Yearling Columbia Sheep

Campbell County Rockpile Museum Photo# 1995.082.0393

The Western sheep industry about 1900 was based on **Merinos** and **Rambouillets** with the emphasis on raising wool.

Columbia Sheep: In 1912, rams of the long wool breeds were crossed with high quality Rambouillet ewes to produce large ewes yielding more pounds of wool and more pounds of lamb.

Targhee sheep are popular in Wyoming, Montana and South Dakota. They are a dual-purpose breed with heavy, medium quality wool and good meat production characteristics.



Targhee Sheep



Rambouillet Ram

Sheep ranching tools



Shepherd's neck crook: The traditional staff carried by a shepherd, it usually has a curved head designed for catching sheep by the neck or leg. The curved handle is normally wide enough to fit around the neck of a sheep or goat, allowing a herder to catch an animal that is straying and reroute them to a different direction. May also serve as a walking stick.



Shepherd's leg crook: This leg crook or cleek is on the side of our sheep wagon. It is similar to a neck crook but with a much tighter curl, originally intended for catching a sheep by a hind leg. May also serve as a walking stick.



Dipping hook: Sheep dipping was a technique shepherds and farmers used to coat their sheep in formulations designed to protect the flock against diseases and parasites. Hooks of this type were used to guide the sheep into the wash pool and prevent their heads from going underwater if using a liquid dip.



Sheep shears: Blade shears consist of two blades arranged similarly to scissors except that the hinge is at the end farthest from the point (not in the middle). The cutting edges pass each other as the shearer squeezes them together and shear the wool close to the animal's skin.

Click here to watch a video about sheep shearing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqjfxO8ku7o>



Hootenannie: Was used to hold sheep shears at the correct angle on the grinding wheel.

Is there a difference between a sheepherder and a shepherd?

A sheepherder is a person who herds sheep in large numbers in unfenced country. A shepherd is a person employed to guard, tend, and herd sheep, especially at pasture.



*Alex Semlek herding sheep south of Gillette, WY in the Spring of 1927 at the Otis Wright Ranch.
Photo courtesy of Diann Avery*

Craft Activity

Make your own flock of sheep

<https://onelittleproject.com/paper-roll-sheep/>

Supplies needed:

Cotton Balls
Black Paper
Black Pipe Cleaners
Small Black Pom Poms

Googly Eyes
White Pen
Toilet Paper Roll
Craft Glue

- Step 1: First, take your paper roll and begin gluing cotton balls all around it.
Step 2: To make the sheep's arms, fold small piece of black pipe cleaner in half, so that it measures about 2 inches. Glue black pom poms to the end.
Step 3: Glue the arms to the sides of the sheep's body and add 2 more larger black pom poms to the bottom to create feet.
Step 4: Next, cut out an oval shape out of black paper for the face and 2 smaller oval shapes for the ears.
Step 5: Add googly eyes and use a white pen or marker to draw the rest of the face.
Step 6: Attach the head and ears to the body. Add a small white pom-pom or cotton ball to the top of the head for an extra pouf of hair!
Step 7: Make a bunch to create a sheep family!