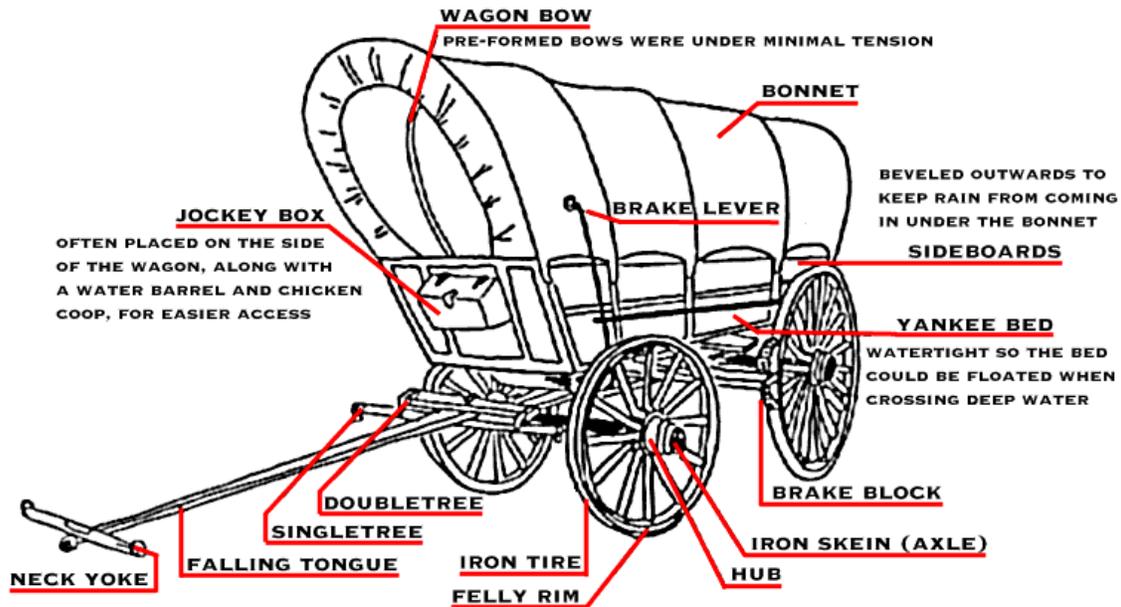


## Types of Covered Wagons



WAGON DESIGN COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

## WHAT'S IN THAT WAGON?

<http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0210182/supplies.html>

CLICK ON "What's In That Wagon" to actually see!!!

What supplies to take was the most important decision the emigrant had to make. They had just so much room on the wagon so they depended on Oregon Trail Guide book and other books to advise them. Each wagon did not have the same supplies, but they were similar. We would like to share with you some examples of clothing, pioneer games, recipes, some interesting facts and examples of animals of the trail. All the links are at the top of this page.

### Wagon

A covered wagon or as the pioneers called them, "Prairie Schooners," had a white canvas cloth on top with 4 wheels on the bottom. The wagons were known as the "Prairie Schooner" because the white canvas reminded many

pioneers of sailing ships. The wagons were made out of wood 4 feet wide by 12 feet long. The bottom of the wagon looked like a "normal" wagon except that the front wheels were smaller than the back wheels because it helped to turn quickly when needed. The supplies they carried in the wagons were mainly tools, food and family treasures.

The pioneers would grease the canvas so it would be waterproof. The canvas was stretched over the bows the curved wood used to make a "roof" on the wagon. and there were drawstrings to close and open the ends for protection from the weather and dust.

Inside the wagon there were wooden hoops with hooks on them to hang guns, milk cans, spoons, bonnets, jackets, dolls and anything else there was room for.

The wagon was packed with supplies for a 3-5 month journey. The cost of the journey was expensive but they managed to either borrow or save for the trip.

Most of the treasures were luxury items and usually didn't make it all the way to Oregon City. The trail was marked by items discarded by pioneers.

#### Handcarts

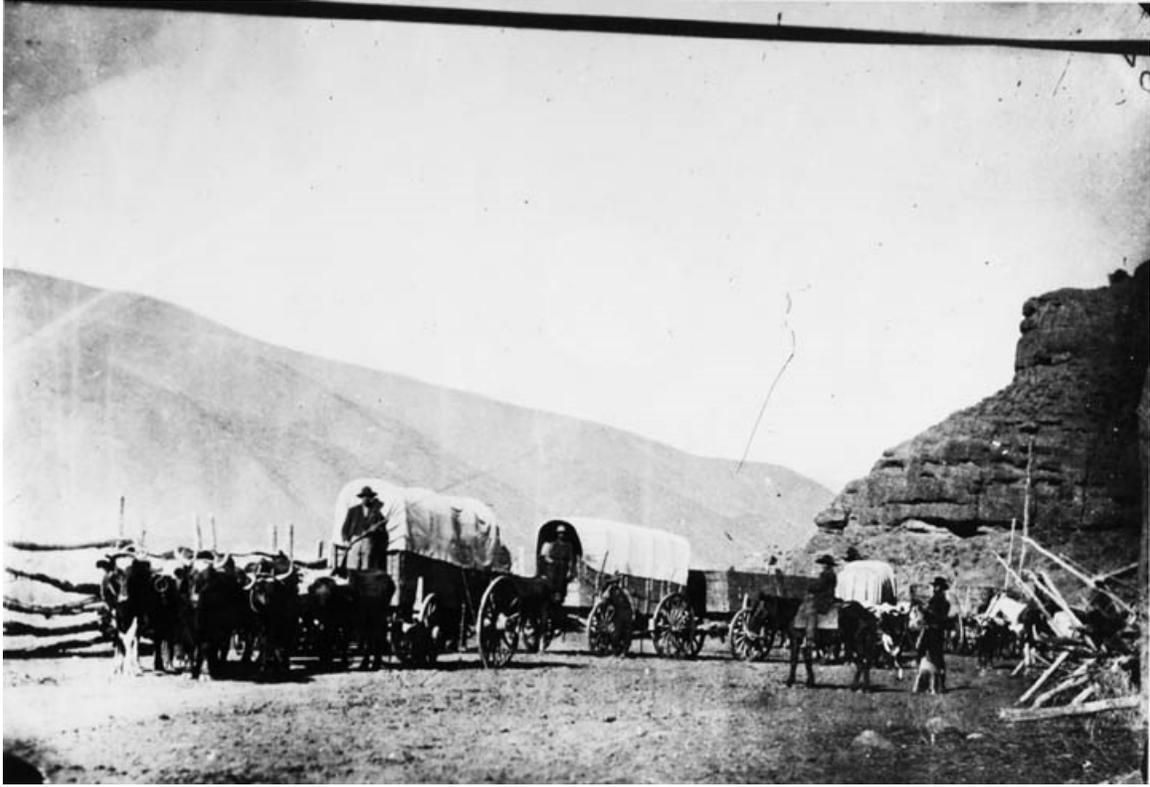
Handcarts were also used. The handcarts were made of wood with either rawhide or light metal tires. They came in three sizes and weighed 60 lbs. Sometimes they were poorly made and often needed repair. Pioneers pulled the carts across the trail.



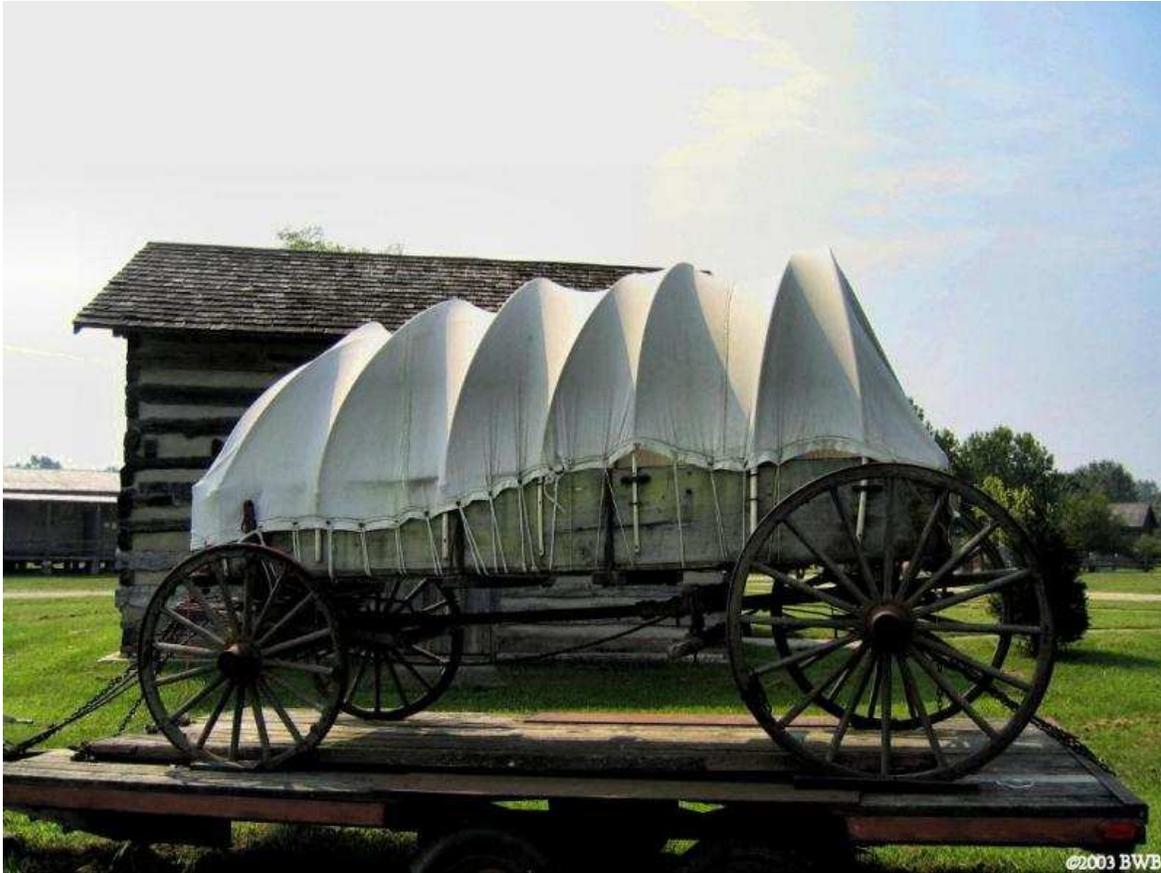
Here is a prairie schooner



Wagon Train



Another Wagon Train



## How Did the Pioneers Travel?



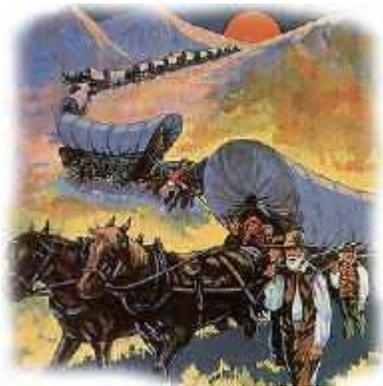
Most pioneers traveled in a [conestoga](#) wagon or a spring wagon. Many of the pioneers chose oxen instead of mules or horses because the oxen were a lot stronger.

**They would buy up to 4 oxen per wagon. The father would drive the oxen by walking beside the wagon. The children would walk behind of the wagon much of the time.**



Conestoga Wagon

## **What Were Their Wagons Like?**



**The Pioneers traveled in a wagon called a covered wagon. The wagon was usually a wooden wagon made of hickory, oak, or maple. A wooden piece made from hickory stuck out from the front of the wagon. This piece called a tongue was connected to the yoke of the oxen, mules, or horses.**

The wagon could not carry more than 2,000 pounds. It had big wooden hoops, called bows that were bent from side to side. There would be 4 to 7 wooden hoops on one wagon. There was a canvas pulled across the hoops that would keep out the rain, wind, and the hot sunshine. Pioneers would rub oil on the canvas to make it waterproof. Inside the wagon there were many hooks that hung from the wooden hoops. They could hang weapons, clothes, milk cans, and anything there was room for. The front wheels of the wagon were smaller than the back wheels. This helped the wagon turn. Underneath the back wheels there was a bucket full of grease hanging from the [axle](#). This was used to make the wheels run smoothly. The conestoga wagons were called [prairie schooners](#) because from a distance the conestoga wagon looked like a ship sailing slowly across the green prairie. Traveling in a wagon was not an easy trip. There were many things that could go wrong. For example some wagon wheels would break or there would be no water. If they ran out of food they would need to hunt. When they were on the trail it was very noisy because all the pots and pans hanging off the wagons were clanging against each other.



[Click here to learn more about the conestoga wagon.](#)

## What Was a Wagon Train?



**A wagon train was a group of covered wagons that went west. The wagons would travel in a straight single line. The wagon train looked like a slow-moving train. If the trail was wide enough they would spread out to get away from the dust. At night the wagon master would have the wagons form a big circle for protection from hostile Indians, marauders and other dangers. Sometimes the children would play inside the wagon circle after dinner and just before bed time.**

## **Captains**



**The captain, also known as the wagon master led the caravan down the trail and made any decisions that affected the whole caravan. He made decisions like when and where they were going to camp for the night. If there was a river nearby, the captain would decide when and how they would cross the river. Captains**

**were also in charge of waking up the members of the wagon train, deciding when they would stop for lunch, and making sure everything ran smoothly on the trail.**

## **Scouts**



**The scouts or trail guides usually had been fur traders or trappers. They knew the routes for the destination of the wagon trains. The scouts knew where to cross rivers, how to get through dangerous mountain passes, and how far the caravan should travel each day. They also helped the captain take care of the members of the wagon train.**