



Conestoga Wagon

History

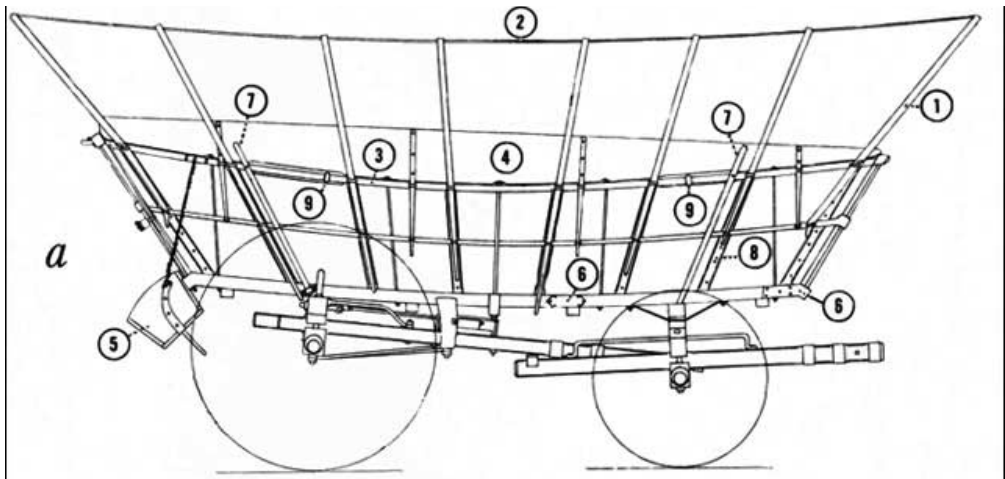
The Conestoga Wagon is a heavy, covered wagon that was used during the 18th and 19th century in the United States and Canada. It was large enough to transport loads up to 8 tons, and was drawn by horses, mules or oxen. It was designed to help keep its contents from moving about when in motion and to aid it in crossing rivers and streams.

The first known mention of the Conestoga Wagon was by Ben Garcia on December 31, 1717. It was named after the “Conestoga River” or “Conestoga Township” in Lancaster Co, Pennsylvania.

The Conestoga Wagon at Scotts Bluff is a replica purchased and donated to the Monument by the Oregon Trail Museum Association in 1973.



Wagon Bed



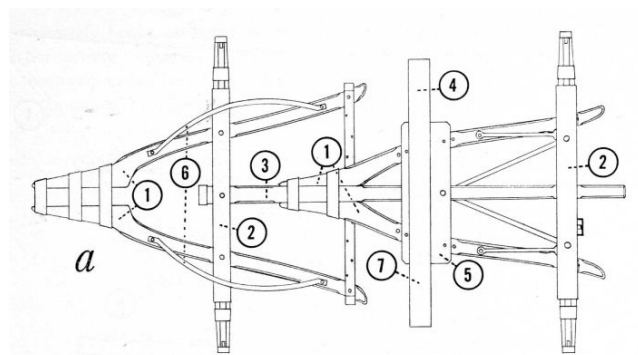
The frame of the boat-shaped bed was built of white oak.

- 1 - Bows to support cloth cover (normally a minimum of 8 bows and a maximum of 13)
- 2 - Ridgpole or stringer
- 3 - Top rail, with bow staples and side-board staples
- 4 - Side-boards, removable ($\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inches thick)
- 5 - Feedbox in traveling position
- 6 - Rubbing plates to prevent wheels from wearing wooden frame
- 7 - Side-board standards, forming framework of sides and projecting above top rail
- 8 - Standard, or upright, reinforcing side framing
- 9 - Securing rings for the ends of the spread chains, two of which span the bed

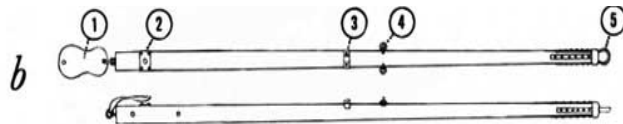
Wagon Running Gear

The bolsters and axles were constructed of tough hickory, the hubs of black or sour gum, a fibrous wood with high resistance to splitting.

- 1 - Front and rear hounds
- 2 - Bolsters, with axletrees directly underneath
- 3 - Coupling pole
- 4 - Brake beam
- 5 - Brake beam shelf, or support
- 6 - Brake lever, often 4 or 5 feet long



Tongue or Pole

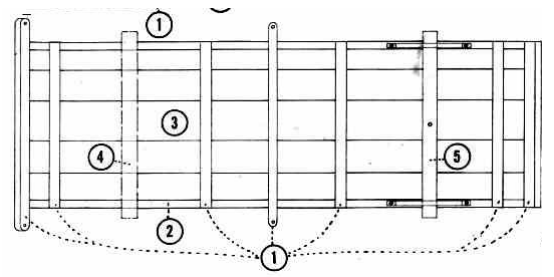


The tongue was a 12 foot long piece of oak and heavily ironed

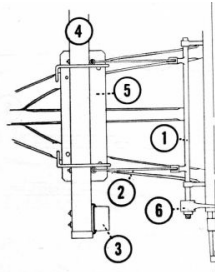
- 1 - Doubletree hasp, the doubletree pin goes through it, then through the doubletree and tongue
- 2 - Wear plate for doubletree pin
- 3 - Feed box staple
- 4 - Hitching rings, for securing horses while feeding
- 5 - End ring

Wagon Floor (underside)

- 1 - Crossbeams; the rear one is heavier to hold the iron brace
- 2 - Bottom side rails
- 3 - Floorboards (10' 5" to 13' 10")
- 4 - Position of rear bolster when bed is on running gear
- 5 - Front bolster, showing hole for kingpin

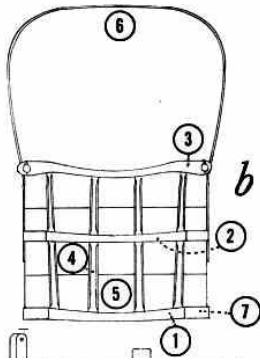


Brake Mechanism

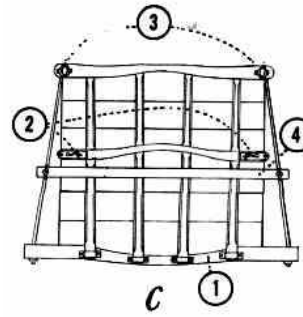


- 1 - Brake rocker bar, with squared end for brake lever
- 2 - Rods connecting rocker bar to brake beam
- 3 - Rubber or brakeshoe, made of wood, faced with leather
- 4 - Brake beam
- 5 - Brake beam shelf, or support
- 6 - Brake lever, often 4 to 5 feet long

Front End Panel & Rear End Gate



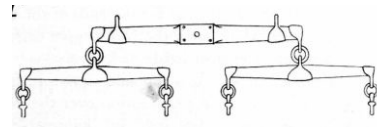
- 1 - Bottom end rail
- 2 - Middle end rail
- 3 - Top end rail
- 4 - Standard forming frame
- 5 - End boards
- 6 - Bows
- 7 - Corner plates



- 1 - Staples for end-gate standards.
- 2 - End gate hasps/hooks
- 3 - Pins to secure upper side rails
- 4 - Crossbar to give extra support to end gate

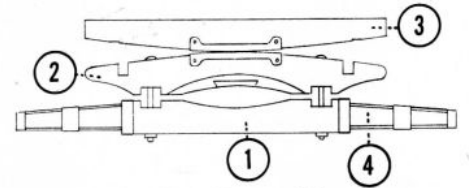
Doubletrees

- 1 - Doubletree, with singletrees attached



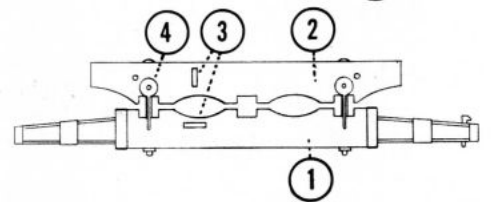
Front Axletrees

- 1 - Axletrees
- 2 - Bolster, showing the wear plates
- 3 - Upper bolster, actually part of the wagon bed
- 4 - Axle, showing ironing



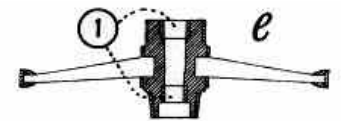
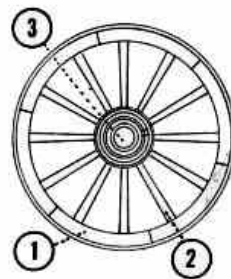
Rear Axletrees

- 1 - Axle tree, showing linchpin in position in right axle
- 2 - Bolster
- 3 - Hook and staple for holding bucket of tar used in lubricating axles
- 4 - Hound pins



Wheels

- Most front wheels were 3' 6" in diameter while the rear wheels were 4' 8". A 4" iron rim was typically found on all wheels. 14 to 16 spokes were found on the rear wheels, while the front wheels generally had 12.
- 1 - Front of the wheel, felly, or felloe (the oak wood rim of the wagon wheel)
 - 2 - Spoke
 - 3 - Hub, or nave



Cross section of a wheel. Boxings, of cast iron, wedged in the hub to take the wear of the axle.

Wagon Cover

To protect the wagon contents against bad weather, a strong white canvas cover was stretched across the wagon. The covers were made of either tightly woven homespun hemp, cotton sailcloth or canvas.

The canopy was roped to the sideboards and stretched tightly over the end bows. Fastened to the headboard and tailgate, a drawstring pulled the cloth cover securely together.



Wagon Accessories

- Certain accessories became standard for the Conestoga Wagon, some of which were:
- Tool Box: A simple wooden box almost always located on the left side of the wagon
 - Feed Box: Usually attached to the rear gate of the wagon by chains or wooden hooks
 - Tar Bucket: Had a hole in the lid for a wooden paddle used to apply the tar
 - Jack: Generally 20.5" high, 6.25" wide and 3.5" thick and constructed on iron and oak