

Recall Story of 'Windwagon' Thomas Who Built the Queerest Vehicle That Ever Traveled the Santa Fe Trail

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON
(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

THINK of the Santa Fe Trail and you think of wagons—"wagons creaking up long prairie slopes; wagons rolling down hills; wagons grinding through heavy sand, sucking through sticky mud, swishing through tall grass; wagons with locked wheels plunging down steep river-banks; wagons snaked through clinging quicksands, or jiggling over ribbed sandbars rough as cobblestones; wagons hauled yard by painful yard up the forbidding rocks of the Raton Pass, two slow miles a day; wagons corralled against the attack of treacherous redskins; wagons broken down, abandoned, stranded by the loss of animals stolen by raiding savages; wagons burned in prairie fires; wagons warped and shrunk by the heat and drouth. Wagons crammed with rich furs, Mexican silver, gold bullion."

Thus writes Stanley Vestal in his book, "The Old Santa Fe Trail," published recently by the Houghton Mifflin company of Boston, and the first chapter in that volume of interesting yarns is devoted to the story of what was probably the queerest vehicles that ever traveled over that trail. The scene of this true story is laid in Westport, Mo., the eastern terminus of the trail, and is described by Mr. Vestal thus:

"One spring day in 1853, the citizens of that frontier town were amazed to see a light vehicle steering down the street, driven by the wind which filled its white sail. Horses reared and ran away, women and children fled into their houses, dogs scuttled for safety, and the men of Westport stood with open mouths, watching that strange craft come sailing in."

"Its pilot lowered the sail, locked his brakes, and rolled to a stop before the entrance to the Yoakum Tavern. He disembarked, and the startled citizens gathered to inspect his bark and question him."

Navigator of the Prairie.

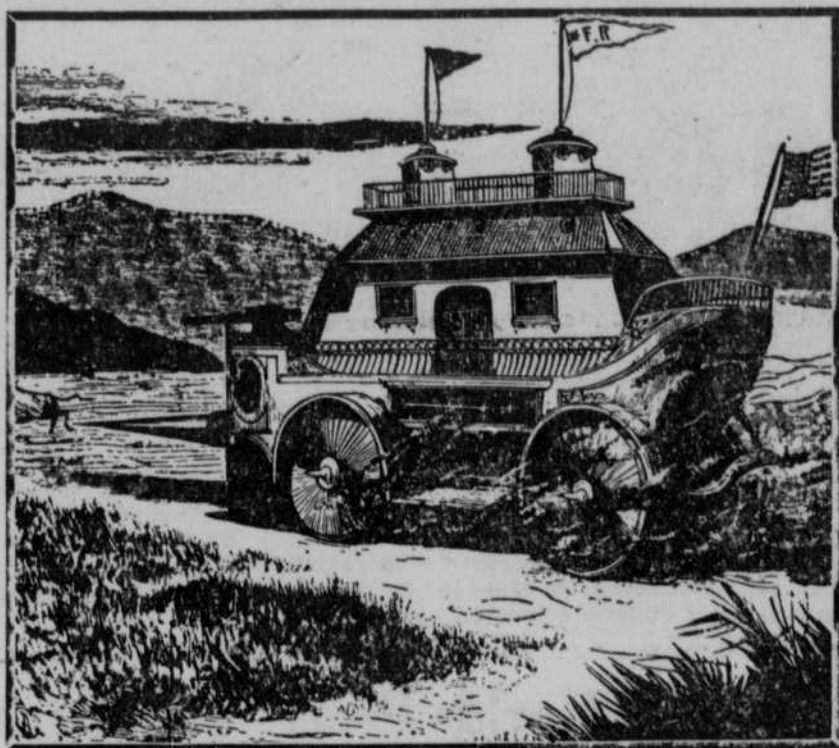
"They learned that his name was Thomas, that he had come from somewhere east, and that his sole cargo consisted of a compass, a water butt and a carpet-bag. He walked like a seafaring man, and they suspected that he was tattooed under his faded monkey jacket. Was he a whaler, had he ever struck a fish? They could not tell, for Thomas wasted few words in telling of himself. He announced that he had come as the Navigator of the Prairies, and invited them to join with him and form a company to engage in the Santa Fe trade!"

"In Yoakum's Tavern, leading citizens split a bottle with him, while he diverted them by explaining his plan. He proposed to build—with their backing—a fleet of large prairie clippers to carry cargo to the cussed Spaniards. The advantages of wind-powered were numerous, according to the nautical stranger. Speed, economy, freedom from the expense of buying and the trouble of feeding draft animals, freedom to leave the Trail along the Arkansas River (since there would be no animals requiring water) and sail on the high prairies by compass. Westport was the outfitting place for all travelers bound west; it would be easy to have the wagons built there. Injuns would be scared of the strange craft. And there would never be any lack of wind to drive them."

All of which sounded perfectly logical. But, according to Mr. Vestal, there were skeptics in the crowd who suspected that there was a catch somewhere in the scheme proposed by this clever Yankee. They scoffed at his idea of building what they derisively referred to as a "dryland navy." By gum, they weren't going to put any money of theirs in such a crazy proposition!

Proved It Would Sail.

But Thomas wasn't discouraged by their skepticism. Just to prove that his plan was practicable he announced that he would sail his queer craft to Council Grove—150 miles away—and then come back and make them eat their words about his "windwagon." As he left town in a cloud of dust and lumbered off across the prairie, they were quite sure that they would never see him again. But they were wrong, for in about a week he returned, bringing with him a letter from a man who ran a blacksmith shop at Council Grove as



A 'CLIPPER OF THE PRAIRIE'

Almost as strange as the "windwagon" described in this article was the vehicle conceived by the imaginative writer of one of the popular nickel novels of 50 years ago. Shown above is the illustration on the cover of No. 87 of Vol. IV of the Frank Reade Library which bore the title "Frank Reade Jr.'s Clipper of the Prairie; or, Fighting Apaches in the Far Southwest." This "prairie clipper" seems to have been a cross between a modern war tank and a trailer. The living quarters had an observation platform on the roof and a good-sized cannon mounted forward. It was propelled by steam on caterpillar-tread wheels and had a ram-like projection from the front with which that intrepid hero, Frank Reade Jr., ran down buffalo and impaled them!

proof that he had actually been there.

The former skeptics were now convinced that he knew what he was talking about and they agreed to finance the construction of a super-windwagon. They organized the "Overland Navigation Company" and the stockholders included some of the most prominent citizens of Westport—Dr. J. W. Parker, the leading physician; Attorney J. J. Mastin; Benjamin Newson, the Indian agent; Henry Sager; Thomas W. Adams; and, of course, the inventor, "Windwagon" Thomas.

A Huge Wagon-Ship.

Under his direction there was built a huge prairie schooner, 25 feet long and with a seven-foot beam, mounted on four big wheels, each 12 feet in diameter. The sides of the wagon, which formed the "cabin" of this ship of the plains, rose to the top of the wheels and above it was the "deck." Toward the front was a tall mast which carried only a mainsail, but instead of the front being the prow, as it is on a seagoing vessel, the tail-gate of the wagon was the prow and the tongue of the wagon was brought up and over the stern to serve as a tiller.

Came the day when "Windwagon" was ready to demonstrate his land leviathan. It required two yoke of oxen to haul it out on the open prairie. Then the directors of the company—who, according to Mr. Vestal, had "fortified themselves at Yoakum's bar"—went aboard. That is, all of them did except Dr. Parker. Evidently he decided that his professional services might be needed before the "voyage" was over and he wanted to be able to supply them. So he mounted his favorite mount, a mule, and prepared to follow the bold navigator, Cap'n Thomas, who mounted the deck, hoisted his sail and reached for the tiller.

A strong wind was blowing and as it began to belly the huge sail, the wagon-ship got under way. Gradually it picked up speed and Dr. Parker had to "put the gad" to his mule to keep up with it. Cap'n Thomas' passengers were delighted when the windwagon started, thus justifying their faith in its navigability and reassuring them that they hadn't invested in something that would prove to be a failure. But as its momentum increased they began to be a little alarmed and as it went careening over hill and dale they became frightened. It was going so fast that they didn't dare jump out, as they wished to do. So they began to yell to the skipper to slow his craft down.

"Windwagon," however, was figuratively, if not literally, "on the crest of the wave," due partly to the stimulation of the cargo he had taken on at Yoakum's bar and partly to the heady wine of success. Instead of heeding their frightened cries and shortening sail, he began to demonstrate his seamanship.

"Watch me run 'er against the wind!" he shouted as he put over the helm. That was a mistake, as he soon learned. For as the heavy ship-wagon came around, something went wrong. Evidently the wind caught her sail the wrong way for suddenly she went into reverse. The quick-footed mule on which Dr. Parker was riding jumped aside just in time,

otherwise both it and its rider would have been run down.

Then the steering-gear seemed to have locked and before Cap'n Thomas knew what was happening his ship was going around and around in ever-widening circles. By now his passengers were terror-stricken. High as they were from the ground and risky as a jump was, they decided that it was high time to heed the urge to "abandon ship." While their befuddled skipper roared out orders in nautical terms which neither they nor probably he could understand, they leaped overboard. By some miracle of good fortune no one was killed and the worst anyone could charge up against the experience was a few bruises and a thoroughly agitated mind.

As for Cap'n Thomas, true to the traditions of the sea, he stuck by his ship, evidently determined to go down with flying colors and perish with it if need be. But there was no such dramatic end to his career as a dryland sailor. For within a few minutes his craft ended up with a bump against a stake-and-rider fence on the bank of Turkey creek and stopped suddenly, albeit so suddenly that he was jolted off and landed in a heap on the ground.

With this inglorious end to his first voyage, his dream of a fleet of prairie ships vanished. "Nothing Windwagon could say would induce the Company to build the rest of the fleet," writes Mr. Vestal. "The lubbers had no heart for prairie seafaring. They went back to their shops and their offices, put the venture down to profit and loss, and thanked heaven that they were still alive and sound. What else could be expected of men who halted on the edge of the sea of grass?"

'Windwagon' Vanishes.

"But Windwagon remained undaunted. He embarked once more in the small, light craft in which he had come to Westport, made sail, and vanished as swiftly and mysteriously as he had come. History has no more to tell of him.

"Maybe he sailed away to shoot buffalo from the after-deck, or harpoon redskins daring enough to run afoul of him on their cruising ponies. Perhaps he ran hard aground in some deep valley or ravine, where no wind came to fill his sail, and no bull-whacker blundered in to haul him out upon the sandy plain. Perhaps the cussed Injuns found him thus becalmed, and hung his hair upon some pony's bridle.

"There are legends among the Indians of a vehicle seen on the prairie, a wagon that was bigger than any wagon, which moved without horses or oxen to draw it and carried a white 'flag' as tall as a tipi. What became of the Navigator of the Plains will never be known.

"But, in two respects, his story is significant, showing us how men of those days thought of the Plains, with all the beauty and mystery of the sea, and also illustrating the dauntless character of the men who crossed them, made them their home."

*According to Mr. Vestal's notes in the appendix to his volume, an account of this incident appeared in the Kansas City Star for August 6, 1905, and recent files of the Southwest Review gives a version of the Indian legend referred to.

While it may seem strange that "Windwagon" Thomas would think of applying some of the technique of ocean navigation to travel across the broad plains of the West, it is not really so unusual. For, as Mr. Vestal explains in this same chapter, "In the old days, travelers on those plains spoke habitually of 'making port,' urged Congress to enact navigation laws for the 'prairie ocean.' Their covered wagons, appropriately dubbed 'prairie schooners,' were in fact water-tight boats mounted on wheels, rising high at prow and stern. They thought of the plains in terms of seafaring, and felt the glamour of them as a magic of the sea. They named the jumping-off place in Missouri, Westport!"

The "prairie schooners" of Santa Fe trail and Oregon trail fame were modifications of the original "covered wagon," an eastern vehicle which was developed in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. This was the Conestoga wagon, which antedated the western "prairie schooner" by at least a century.

Although the first of these vehicles were modified English covered farm wagons, which came into use in New England and other places on the Atlantic seaboard early in the colonial days, local conditions in Pennsylvania—notably the greater distances between the producer and his market, which made it essential that the Pennsylvania farm wagon hold twice as much as the New England farm wagon, where distances were shorter, hence the sturdier built and heavier wagon requiring from four to eight horses to pull it—quickly resulted in the development of a distinctive type of wagon for this region.

Gradually the excellence of the wagons made by the wheelwrights of the Conestoga valley of Lancaster county caused them to become famous throughout the country and "Conestoga wagon" became a sort of trademark for this type of freight carrier. They differed from the English wagons from which they sprang in that the bed was longer and deeper and had considerable sag in the middle, both lengthwise and crosswise. There was a very good reason for this. If, while the wagon was pursuing its way over some rough trail or down a steep mountainside, the load would shift, settle toward the center and

WHEN in a dress-up mood, what to wear is the question. The revival of brocade among fabrics of high fashion, as announced for spring, may well be regarded as a perfectly good answer to the query. The big news is the neat-patterned brocades in necktie silk effects that make up into most wearable daytime frocks that are dressy at the same time that they are eminently practical.

If you are looking for a daytime frock that will guarantee style distinction take note of the three wank afternoon types here illustrated. The material used for this trio of exceptionally smart fashions is the new-this-season brocade of damask-woven bemberg rayon. You can get it in monotone or two-color effects, its high and low luster filaments producing a handsome brocade patterning. If you are your own seamstress, buy a few yards of this attractive brocade, provide yourself with a reliable pattern and turn on power for your electric sewing machine. However, if you are not enamored with the thought of being your own dressmaker you will find modes similar to the ones pictured easily available in shops and dress sections throughout style centers.

Looking at the illustration you sense at a glance that the new brocades yield perfectly to high-styling. Per example the gown to the right says it with "style" definitely. This peplum dress is figure-fitting and flattering. The brocade that fashions it is in a violet-leaf motif damask-woven patterning. A self-fabric bow at the belt and the high

not throw its bulk against the end-gates. Unlike the bows, which held the white cover of the English wagon, which were vertical, the bows of the Conestoga followed the line of the ends of the body and slanted outward, thus keeping out rain and dust. The whole appearance of the Conestoga was that of a boat and, as John Omwake, author of "The Conestoga Six-Horse Dell Teams of Eastern Pennsylvania, 1750-1850," says, "It is easy to see why this wagon should have been called the Ship of Inland Commerce, as it cruised with its great white top between the green Pennsylvania hills."

The Conestoga wagon came into existence just in time to have a part in making American history. As early as 1745 Benjamin Franklin was issuing a broadside urging wagoners to enlist with their wagons and teams in the king's service against the French and Indians. Ten years later when General Braddock set out upon his ill-fated expedition it was very necessary that he have adequate transport for his provisions during his march into the wilderness. Securing this was only one of the many difficulties of that harassed leader and it was not until Benjamin Franklin came to his aid and persuaded the Pennsylvania wagoners to enlist that the expedition was able to make any progress westward.

The Conestoga wagons played their part, too, in the struggle for liberty. It was these vehicles which carried supplies to the American army during that terrible winter at Valley Forge and in the spring of 1778 a sturdy Conestoga wagon, drawn by four horses and with a full company of Continental soldiers as a guard, brought \$600,000 in silver, the loan of the French government from Portsmouth, N. H., to the government treasury at York, Pa., (where the Continental congress was then meeting). But it was in the period after the Revolution that the Conestoga rose to its full glory—as the carrier of freight back and forth to the West and as the vehicle of the emigrants into the Kentucky and Ohio country. It also served once more as a weapon of war during the War of 1812 when Conestoga wagons carried powder from the Brandywine mills to Lake Erie, there to be used in Perry's brilliant victory at Put-in-Bay.

Revival of Brocade Tunes to Vogue for Fabric Elegance

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



neck closing is the only ornamentation, for material such as this handsome brocade exemplifies the thought that "beauty unadorned is adorned the most."

Centered in the picture is one of the season's best-loved fashions—the princess silhouette that is artfully fitted at the waistline with the skirt that is gently flared. A flower-patterned damask of bemberg rayon is used for this model.

To the left a figure-molding afternoon dress in a richly brocaded ballet dancing patterning holds forth in the illustration. The high-necked bodice is enhanced with a large old-fashioned brooch.

Designers are making varied uses of brocade. Milliners welcome this new damask-woven material as perfect for the very stylish draped turbans for which everybody is calling. These bright colorful bits of headwear are charming with winter furs.

Add a handbag of the same brocade and the ensemble will prove a delight to the eye. One even sees shoes made of brocade, likewise scarfs and belts.

The jacket suit made of the neat necktie-patterned brocade will be featured later on in the spring, its charm accented with the prettiness of a blouse of the daintiest lace-trimmed lingerie type.

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Improved Uniform | SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D.,
Dean of The Moody Bible Institute
of Chicago.
(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Lesson for January 14

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THE PROBLEM OF FORGIVENESS

LESSON TEXT—Matthew 18:21-35.
GOLDEN TEXT—And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.—Matthew 6:12.

Christianity and forgiveness belong together. Among the religions of the earth Christianity stands out as the one true faith because it properly and adequately meets the problem of sin. In Christ is provided forgiveness for sin, cleansing from all unrighteousness, a new birth by which one enters into a life of holiness and power.

Since these things are true it would seem to be almost unnecessary to urge God's children to be of a forgiving spirit. But as Bishop Ryle says, "It is a melancholy fact that there are few Christian duties so little practiced as that of forgiveness. It is sad to see how much bitterness, unmercifulness, spite, harshness and unkindness there is among men." Surely these things ought not so to be.

I. The Extent of Forgiveness (vv. 21, 22).

"How long do I have to stand it?" is the question of the human heart untouched by the spirit of Christ. The injustices of life, the offenses of our fellow men against us, all seem to pile up until the burden is about to crush us. What is the answer to man's cry?

The Jews had an answer. Three times is enough. Forgive once, yes. Again, yes. But the third time, no. Peter was big-hearted enough to more than double that allowance of mercy. He was willing to forgive not just two or three times, but seven times. The point to be kept in mind, however, is that whether forgiveness means three times or seven times, if there is a limit, it is a matter of reckoning, of keeping books, and of ultimately bringing down our judgment upon the heads of the offenders.

The spirit of Christ swept all of that aside. He said that one should forgive 70 times seven. In other words, Christian forgiveness is to be untiring, unlimited, to know no weariness and have no boundaries. If one really forgives it is because he has a forgiving spirit and that spirit is not exhausted by use, but rather grows by exercise.

A word of caution is in order at this point. Let no one suppose that our Lord's instruction means that offenses against the law of the land or against the good order of society are to be overlooked and condoned. It relates to the cultivation of a personal spirit of forgiveness, the laying aside of revenge, of malice, of retaliation which do not become the Christian.

II. The Motive of Forgiveness (vv. 23-34).

Two motives are given in our text, the first being that since we ourselves are daily and hourly in need of forgiveness at the merciful hand of God, we should in turn be merciful toward those who sin against us. Compared with our offenses against the law of God, we know that the misdeeds of our neighbors against us are mere trifles. Remember what God has done for you, and then when you are tempted to be hard and ungracious with your brother, remember the mercy of God.

The second motive is the remembrance that a day of judgment is to come. There is always a time of reckoning ahead even as was the case with these servants. Remember not only what God has done for you and is doing for you, but what you must yet expect Him to do in that day of judgment.

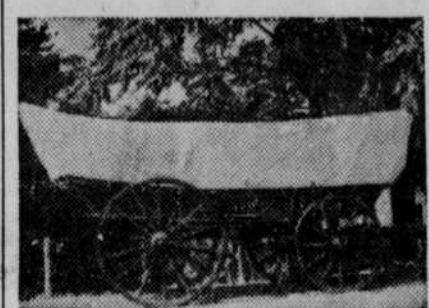
III. The Importance of Forgiveness (v. 35).

A man dealing with his fellow man is apt to think that it is merely a matter between man and man. We are not dealing with a straight line between ourselves and our brother (that was Peter's error), but with a triangle at whose apex is God Himself. If I expect God to forgive me, I must let that same forgiveness flow out to my brother. If I deal with him as though God had nothing to do with the matter, then I must not try to count God's forgiveness into the picture when I stand indebted before Him.

Here again we express a word of caution. Let no one suppose that our redemption in Christ is contingent upon what we do toward our brethren. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). Nor does the truth of our lesson mean that we are somehow going to bargain with God, trading a bit of our forgiveness toward others for His forgiveness toward us. God is not interested in such transactions. But it does mean that if you cannot or will not forgive, you may well consider whether you are a Christian at all.

Angry Words

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him.—Proverbs 29, 20.



A Conestoga Wagon at Williamsburg, Va.

New-Length Sleeve



Sleeve lengths grow capricious. The type most called for and one new in the field today is the bracelet-length sleeve. The dress pictured is so sleeved. Another feature in current styling is that dresses are subtly designed to achieve "lines" that take inches off the strategic points so as to slim the figure according to fashion's way of thinking. Details that accomplish this feat in the gown pictured are wide shoulders so as to make the waistline look smaller in comparison, darts above the waistline to accent the new "nipped in" look, and smoothness around the hips. Sou-tache scrolls trim this frock which is fashioned of moss-green sheer wool.

Glove Note

Even short gloves this season may be fastened with elaborate buttons. Screen Player Virginia Vale has a pair made of black suede, buttoned with tiny gold filigree beads.

Red Felt Drum

Bright red felt criss-crossed with strips of black suede forms an unusual new handbag which looks like an elongated drum.

Red Shoes Novel Touch at Resorts

If you would keep tab on coming events that "cast their shadows before," watch the style parade that is traveling the highways and beaches in southern sun-bright resorts. One thing your amazed eyes will see is red shoes. They are being worn with all types of costumes.

Worn with slacks they add a most zestful novelty touch. Look too clever for words with simple little gingham dresses, in fact with any type of casual daytime frocks, also good-looking with white afternoon dresses and tailcoats.

Now comes the sequence of this fashion story. As everybody knows, what's worn at the southern resorts in midwinter sets precedent for spring and summer fashions to come. Wherefore, the message that red shoes will be worn with tailored beige or navy street costumes has already winged its way northward. So if you crave fashion thrills, buy a pair of red shoes.

Fruit Motifs of Pasted Feathers

For a gay splash of color on your hat ask your milliner to show you the new fruit trims, done in pasted feathers. Plums, apples, pears, bananas, and so on are down the list. These motifs, in realistic colors, are to be applied on crown or brim or where you will on your hat. Buy an extra one to attach to the lapel of your coat.

Cloth Joined Up With Surah Print

Considerable emphasis is given in the advance costume displays to ensembles that are made of cloth combined with surah print, the latter used for, perhaps, the blouse, to line the coat and to serve as color accent on pocket, neckline and sleeve finishings.