

Model of Covered Wagon

By Ivan Collins

Ivan Collins produced this replica of a mid 19th century covered wagon in 1937. It is a one-eighth scale model of the wagon used by Mr. and Mrs. Linus, Collins' great-grandparents, on their overland journey to Oregon in 1850.

Born in Dufur, Oregon in 1906, Ivan Collins' boyhood coincided with the final years of the horse-drawn transportation era. As a youth in Eastern Oregon, Collins gained first-hand knowledge of various horse-drawn vehicles, knowledge he would later rely on in his meticulous construction of over sixty miniature replicas of horse-drawn conveyances. Collins explained that the motive for his work was to "recapture some of the color and romance of the vehicles of yesteryear; to preserve a visual as well as documentary record of the now rapidly disappearing wagon and the part it played in the development of these United States."

The covered wagon of the type depicted here played a key role in the Euro American re-settlement of the Far West during the mid 19th century. Beginning with the first overland wagon trains of the early 1840s and continuing until the debut of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, thousands of Americans emigrated annually to Oregon and California. These overland emigrants made the arduous 2,000 mile trek from Independence, Missouri to the West Coast in wagons such as the one used by Collin's grandparents. As the model replica shows, the wagons used by the overland emigrants had to hold all of their personal belongings as well as much of the food for their six-month journey.

Further Reading: Palmer, Joel. *Journal of Travels: Over the Oregon Trail in 1845*. Portland, Oreg., 1999.

Unruh, John D. *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi, 1840-1860*. Urbana, Ill., 1979.

Written by Melinda Jette, © Oregon Historical Society, 2003.

Oregon History Project

<https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/model-of-covered-wagon/>