

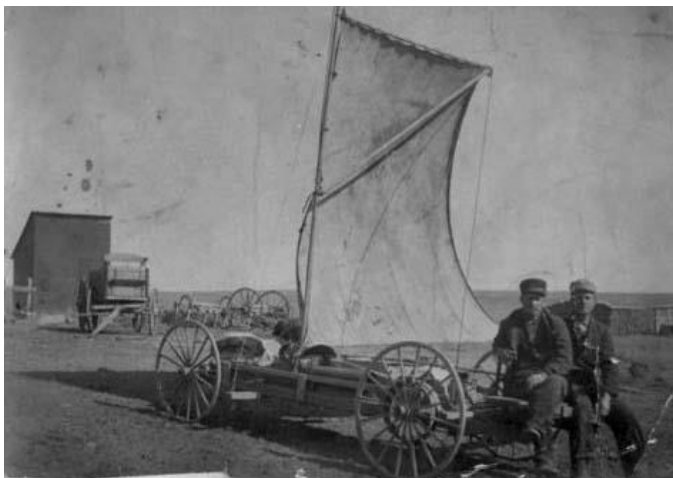
# The Colorado History Gazette

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## WIND WAGONS HEAD WEST

IN 1860, WITH PIKE'S PEAK GOLD FEVER RAMPANT, SAMUEL PEPPARD CONSTRUCTED A SAILING WAGON WITH THE HOPES OF REACHING THE COLORADO TERRITORY FASTER THAN A TRADITIONAL OX- OR MULE-PULLED WAGON. THE MAY 17<sup>TH</sup>, 1860 ISSUE OF *INDEPENDENT*, A NEWSPAPER FROM OSKALOOSA, KANSAS, DESCRIBED PEPPARD'S WAGON IN THE FOLLOWING WAY. "IT WAS AN ORDINARY LIGHT WAGON OF 350 POUNDS, 3 X 8 FEET X 6 INCHES DEEP. OVER THE CENTER OF THE FRONT AXLE WAS A RAISED MAST WITH A SAIL 9 X 11 FEET. THE STEERING APPARATUS RESEMBLED A BOAT TILLER REVERSED."



ON MAY 9<sup>TH</sup>, SAMUEL PEPPARD AND HIS COMPANIONS, STEVE RANDALL, J.T. JONES-FORBES, AND CID GOLDEN TESTED THE WAGON ON THE PLAINS A MILE SOUTH OF OSKALOOSA. WHEN THE SAIL WAS RAISED AGAINST THE WIND, THE WAGON WHIZZED AWAY SO FAST, THE BOXING IN THE WHEELS HEATED. THE WAGON LITERALLY FLEW OVER A SMALL KNOLL, LEAPING ALMOST 30 FEET INTO THE AIR BEFORE CRASHING.

PEPPARD REPAIRED THE WAGON AND SET OUT FOR COLORADO. HE DESCRIBED THIS JOURNEY IN THE FOLLOWING

WAY. "OUR BEST TIME WAS TWO MILES IN FOUR MINUTES. WE COULD NOT RUN FASTER THAN THAT RATE AS THE BOXING WOULD HAVE HEATED. ONE DAY WE WENT FIFTY MILES IN THREE HOURS, AND IN DOING SO PASSED 625 TEAMS BY ACTUAL COUNT. THERE WERE, YOU KNOW, A GREAT MANY PEOPLE EN ROUTE FOR THE GOLD FIELDS AT THE TIME. THIS WAS AN UNUSUALLY GOOD PACE. MANY AMUSING INCIDENTS HAPPENED ALONG THE WAY, AND WE HAD NO LITTLE FUN JOKING THE TEAMSTERS AS WE FLEW BY THEM."

MR. PEPPARD DESCRIBED THE FINAL LEG OF HIS JOURNEY. "ABOUT 50 MILES NORTHEAST OF DENVER WE WERE MOVING LEISURELY ALONG WHEN WE SAW A WHIRLWIND APPROACHING. WE HAD ENCOUNTERED A NUMBER OF THESE BEFORE, AND HAD ONLY TO LET DOWN THE SAILS UNTIL IT PASSED AND THEN RAISE THEM AGAIN. ON THIS OCCASION THE WHIRLWIND WAS UPON US BEFORE WE WERE AWARE... IN AN INSTANT THE WHIRLWIND STRUCK THE WAGON AND CARRIED IT ABOUT 30 FEET INTO THE AIR. WHEN THE WAGON CAME DOWN IT STRUCK ON THE HIND WHEELS AND THEY BROKE UNDER THE WEIGHT. IT WAS ONLY A MIRACLE NONE OF US WERE HURT... BY THE TIME WE HAD GATHERED OURSELVES TOGETHER WE WERE SURROUNDED BY TRAVELERS WHO EXTENDED US INVITATIONS FOR A FREE RIDE FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE JOURNEY. A BAGGAGE CAR WAS NOT FAR BEHIND AND WE CAST OUR LOT WITH IT."

SO PEPPARD'S WIND WAGON NEVER REACHED DENVER CITY, BUT OTHERS, INCLUDING WILLIAM WILLS, JOHN PARKER, AND AGUST RODERT EXPERIMENTED WITH SIMILAR WAGONS.

1. Picture from the Kansas Historical Society, kansapedia, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/wind-wagons/12239>
2. *The Westport Historical Quarterly*, Legends of the Windwagons of Westport, V1 #2, 1965, p 18-22