

Road Wagons ^[1]

Road Wagons

by William S. Powell, 2006

See also: [Transportation, History of](#) ^[2]



The Conestoga Wagon. Image courtesy of the Pennsylvania and Historical & Museum Commission.

Road wagons, or freight wagons, were large horse-drawn wagons used primarily before the advent of the railroad to haul produce to market and carry other goods and supplies. Often operated as a business by two or more men, these wagons followed trails or roads from the backcountry to such centers of commerce as [Fayetteville](#) ^[4], [Wilmington](#) ^[5], Petersburg, Va., or Charleston, S.C., and later to the railroad. Some occasionally took passengers. On 6 Dec. 1815 one couple traveled from [Bethabara](#) ^[6] to [Salem](#) ^[7] to attend a meeting, but the onset of rain, snow, and sleet compelled them to return home "in a freight-wagon" that they encountered in Salem "and which was coming this way."

[Bennehan Cameron](#) ^[8] recalled a black man named George, born in 1790 on the plantation of Cameron's grandfather, who "had all his life charge of the road wagons to Petersburg . . . and then to Henderson after the completion of the old Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, so that he knew everybody along the road and everybody knew him." In Salisbury, the *Yadkin and Catawba Journal* ^[9] (25 Feb. 1829 and 26 Nov. 1832) advertised road wagons for sale from the estates of the late Nicholas Filhowar and John Pool, respectively; the estate of Abel Cowan of the same county (1844) also included a road wagon.

Image Credit:

The Conestoga Wagon. Image courtesy of the Pennsylvania and Historical & Museum Commission. Available online from http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/things/4280/conestoga_wagon/478210 ^[3] (accessed August 31, 2012).

Subjects:

[Antebellum \(1820-1861\)](#) ^[10]

[Civil War \(1861-1865\)](#) ^[11]

[Early Statehood \(1789-1820\)](#) ^[12]

[Reconstruction \(1865-1876\)](#) ^[13]

[Transportation](#) ^[14]

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From:

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^[1] <https://ncpedia.org/road-wagons> ^[2] <https://ncpedia.org/transportation/history> ^[3]

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<https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/reconstruction> ^[14] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/transportation> ^[15]

