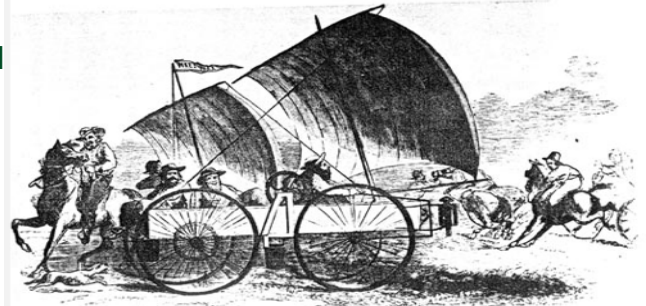


In the mid-19th century, the journey from the eastern United States to California was long and hard. People were on the road for months. In their covered wagons they had food, clothing, and other supplies. Most of these heavy carts were pulled by oxen, horses, or mules. When going uphill or downhill, the animals had great difficulty. Some died during the journey.



Zeb Thomas wanted to find a way to cross the Great Plains without animals. Since the prairie was flat and windy, he thought of a wagon with a sail.

Would a sail-powered wagon work as a means of transportation?

Zeb Thomas was given the nickname “Windwagon Thomas”. In Westport, Missouri, he met several investors. He promised to reach California within six days. The investors gave him money to help him build his cart. They hoped that wind wagons would make them rich too.

The construction was seven meters long and two and a half meters wide. The four wheels were two meters in diameter. There were two two-meter-high masts, each with a sail.

The first ride of the wagon promised to be a sensation. Many spectators flocked to see it.

A brisk wind filled the sails. Soon the wagon was rolling at a speed of forty kilometers per hour. Without shock absorbers, this speed was too high. The wheels hubs were smoking, and the craft was shaken so badly that the steering stopped working. At this point, the investors who had been invited on the maiden voyage began to make an exit from their promising investment in a hurry – several broke their arms or legs. Although unable to control the huge ship alone, Thomas, like any good captain, stayed with his wind wagon until it went down. The wagon crashed into the side of a hill and shattered.

Thomas crawled out of the wreckage. He was more or less unhurt. He limped home to face his shame – and some annoyed investors. Thomas was chased out of town by an angry crowd.

No one has tried to cross the Great Plains in a wind wagon since.

journey: trip
covered: sheltered
supplies: goods
cart: wagon
flat: smooth, plane

investors: financiers
spectators: watchers
to flock: to gather
craft: vehicle
shock absorber: bumper

hub: center
maiden voyage: first trip
exit: way out
huge: very big
wreckage: debris

CHANGE FROM THE PASSIVE VOICE INTO THE ACTIVE:

He was chased out of town by an angry crowd.

...An angry crowd chased him out of town.

The nickname *Windwagon Thomas* was given to him by the people.

Money will be given to him by the investors.

The heavy carts are pulled by oxen.

The sails were filled by a brisk wind.

The investors had been invited on the trip by Thomas.