

PAGEANT WAGONS: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY HISTORY PROJECT

Peter Bjornson, Manitoba

INTENDED GRADE/SUBJECT AREA

Grades 9-12 History, Welding, Woodworking, Art

CONCEPTS

- local heritage, application and development of a variety of skills, community involvement and ownership, multidisciplinary collaboration, history, woodworking, welding, and art classes

INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES

History students will:

- develop research skills;
- develop diorama and model building skills using a wide variety of materials;
- develop layout and design skills;
- recognize the importance of this form of representative history.

Woodworking students will apply and develop the skills:

- necessary to design and layout;
- involving lumber sizing and measurement;
- involving glueing techniques;
- in hardware assembly;
- with respect to the operation of power tools such as table saws, power mitre drills, and radial arm saws.

Welding students will:

- apply and develop skills necessary to design and layout;
- hone their skills in accurate measurement;
- apply and develop welding skills and controlling warping as the weld cools;
- apply their knowledge and skills with respect to the operation of power tools such as a M/G welder, drill press, bench grinders, angle grinders, a horizontal band saw, and a chop saw.

Art students will:

- apply and develop their artistic abilities;
- apply and develop their interpretation of scale and depth.

All students will:

- develop collaborative skills with students from other disciplines;
- develop a sense of ownership and stewardship of local heritage.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Pageant Wagon Project is based on the medieval parade wagons, which would be hooked in succession and pulled through villages. These wagons would showcase the wares of merchants and peddlers and the skills of the musicians and craftsmen.

The Gimli High School version of the pageant wagon consists of a three-foot-by five-foot diorama, which will be mounted on a wooden shell (constructed by the woodworking class). This fits over a steel frame, (constructed by the welding class) and is complemented by a two to three-foot mural or backdrop (created by the art class). The wooden shells also contain banquet table legs so once the wagons have been taken through a parade, they are set up in community buildings for permanent display. The shells are 3'x 5' to facilitate take down, set up, and display.

The construction of the wagon frames is a one-time project and expense, with the welding class providing any maintenance. The intent is to build three dioramas per year and participate in annual parades in our community. The Canada Day and Icelandic Festival Parades are two proposed for this summer.

The Icelandic Festival of Manitoba has agreed to publish a feature on the pageant wagons in the souvenir program so parade viewers will have the background behind each diorama. The wagons will be parked on the parade grounds after the parade so people will have an opportunity to get a closer look at the details of the dioramas. Where the wagons are set up, history students are involved in selling raffle tickets to assist with funding next year's projects.

The three dioramas constructed by GHS in 2000/2001 were:

January 1877 — “The Wedding”

During a smallpox epidemic between 1876 and 1877, the colony of New Iceland was under quarantine. The boundary of the quarantine was Netley Creek where, on a cold, stormy winter day, Carrie Taylor and Sigurdur Kristofferson stood on the north bank in the quarantine area, while an Anglican Minister stood on the south bank and the couple yelled their vows across the creek. This cart is on display in the high school library.

April 1943 — “The Lighthouse”

The spring break-up of the ice was accompanied by a fierce north wind, which crushed the wooden lighthouse at the end of the pier. The lighthouse was salvaged and has had numerous homes until it was perched atop the new Lake Winnipeg Visitors Centre where the diorama will be on display.

June 1970 — “The Crash”

Gimli was home to a CFB Air Base from the 1940s to 1972. In June of 1970, a T-33 pilot lost control of his jet due to a serious malfunction in the navigation equipment. The pilot managed to get the jet over Lake Winnipeg and he ejected safely. While parachuting to the ground, he watched in horror as the jet turned around and headed towards the town. The jet was being chased by ground crews and emergency teams

for over 25 minutes before it ran out of fuel and crash landed into a storage shed behind a lumber yard. This jet crashed less than 200 yards from a Shell bulk fuel station. Miraculously, no one was injured. This is currently on display in the town hall.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The multidisciplinary nature of this project involves coordinating the work in four classes. The shop teachers were very accommodating as they facilitated the project in one of two ways. The projects fit into the curriculum, the woodworking skills were consistent with the Grade 9 program, and the welding skills were consistent with the Grade 11/12 program. The options to complete the carts included assigning it to advanced students who had finished their required projects early or to students who needed additional work, which would not incur any extra shop fees. As it turned out, both of these options were applicable.

The art class program included work with acrylics. The option was presented to the art class at a time when most projects were well underway. However, one student approached the administration suggesting he be allowed to complete all three murals under a co-op art credit program. The administration allowed him to do so. The multidisciplinary considerations were all addressed as a matter of a perfect fit for these projects within the curriculum of the shops and art programs. Thus it created little extra work for the shop and art teachers involved.

MATERIALS/RESOURCES

Materials for the dioramas vary with the event represented. Many materials were purchased through the local craft store, a hobby shop, and the local lumberyards. The materials consisted of:

Wood & Welding Classes

- 75' 2 x 4 63' 1 1/4" x 1 1/4" x 1/8" structural square tube
- 20' 2 x 4 4' 2" x 1/8" flat strap
- 2 sheets 4 x 8 x 3/8" 4' 1" x 1/8" flat strap
- 6 sheets 4 x 8 x 1/2" 10" rubber pneumatic tires
- 1 box air nails 12 5" x 1/2" bolts
- 1 box wood screws 12 1/2" washers
- 6 1/2" locking nuts

Art Class

- All artwork is done in acrylic paint
- Other materials vary with each backdrop

About the Educator

Peter Bjornson teaches Canadian history through diverse units such as World Hunger Awareness Day, mock elections, oral histories, and the analysis of rock music lyrics to explore political and historical themes. He designed "Pageant Wagons" in which students produce three-dimensional dioramas depicting local historic events. In creating a local archive, students work with a community

newspaper to document events. Peter has created a “Special Collections” library incorporating Icelandic and Ukrainian studies as well as the works of local authors. These programs have expanded to incorporate heritage murals.