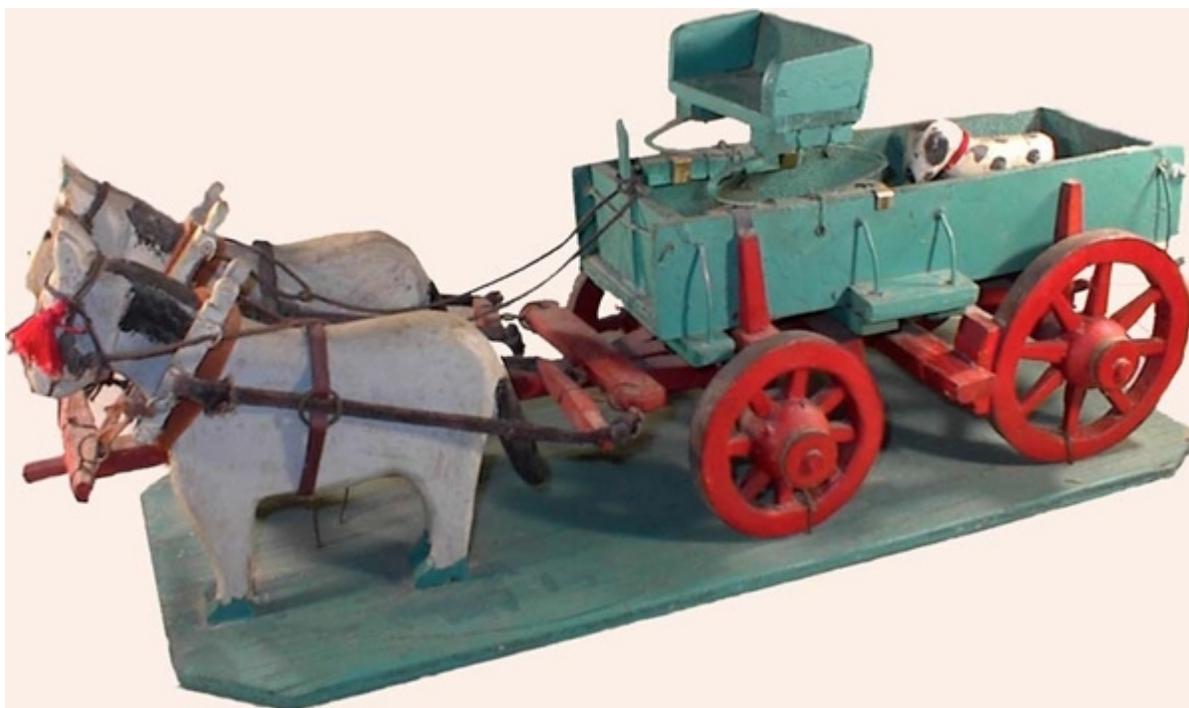


Donation of the Month

Horse Drawn Wagon



Horse-drawn Wagon 2006.57.1
Donor: William Haskell, Jr.

Folk artists are an important part of the history of Northwest Arkansas. This wooden wagon was carved by one such artist, who traveled many parts of the United States before coming to Rogers.

This miniature wagon was carved from wood, as were the horses pulling it and the small dog riding in it. The wagon is complete with details like metal wheel rims, seat springs, and even tiny tassels on the horses' bridles. The wagon and all of its details were created by Henry Rector Smith of Rogers, Arkansas, probably in the 1950s or 60s. The wagon may have been reminiscent of the ones that Mr. Smith and his wife, Mate, lived and traveled in during the early years of their marriage. According to a family history, when the Smiths left their home in Texas, they loaded everything needed for housekeeping into a wagon including the bedsprings and mattress, which made the "bedroom." The "kitchen" was in the back in the form of a box. The box held dishes made of tin that wouldn't easily break, as well as cooking utensils and food supplies. The lid of the box folded down to create a work table. The water keg was carried on one side of the wagon and, at times, the other side carried a box of chickens. They cooked over campfires and enjoyed watching the stars come out at night.

The Smiths had four children. They lived in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and California before moving to Arkansas. In the 1930s, they moved to Rogers and stayed. Mr. Smith supported his family with several different skilled occupations. Besides ranching with his brother, he did some carpentry, farming, and blacksmithing. He helped local families build homes, dig wells, and put up windmills. In later years, Mr. Smith turned to whittling and created miniature wagons, furniture, animals, and even puzzles for friends and family. In 1967, the Smiths celebrated 70 years of marriage which prompted the family history to be written and shared.

This particular carving found its way to the museum through a generous donor, whose mother was a

friend of the Smiths. The wagon was given to her as a gift and passed to her son. According to the donor, his mother kept the wagon in their house on display for many years. Recently, he found the wagon in his own house, along with the Smith family history, a handwritten family letter, and a newspaper article featuring the Smiths. The donor offered the wagon and the Smith family documents to the Rogers Historical Museum, where the creativity and pioneering spirit they represent will be enjoyed for generations to come.

CREDITS

“70 Years as Mr. + Mrs., 1897-1967” family history, provided by donor; donor file.
Photo courtesy of the Rogers Historical Museum.