

The 60 Year Story of Krislund's Covered Wagons

As Krislund prepares to celebrate its 60 years of ministry, we thought it would be fun to follow the story of Krislund's iconic covered wagons from their inception to their continued service in 2023. This story is a compilation of many persons' memories and, as memories go, the story may leave out some of your important memories. If this be the case, please visit Krislund's page on Facebook or contact Kealy or Josh at camp and add to the story.



In 1963

When Tor Edvar, the camp's first director, was developing the Krislund site, he recommended that the camp create covered wagons to meet some of the housing needs for the growing camp. Harold Aitkin, a current volunteer from Lewistown, recalls that he would go with his dad, J.M. Aitkin, to local farm auctions to purchase wagon chassis for the project. Harold remembers his dad would pay \$6, \$7 or \$8 for each chassis and they hauled the first 8 chassis to Krislund on an old pickup truck. Later, when they wanted an additional 8 wagons, Harold said the camp purchased the chassis for around \$20.

Once the wagon chassis arrived at camp, various volunteers began turning them into covered wagons. Among the volunteers were Maggie and Bob Foster who are current members of the State College Presbyterian Church. There must have been many others, and if you, or someone you know, worked on this effort, please let Josh and Kealy know so that this story may be more complete.

The wagons held three bunk beds. With two units of 8 (The East Wagons and the West Wagons) they served for many years as a special place for campers to bunk. It was often a goal to be old enough as a camper to get to sleep in the covered wagons.



Each year staff and volunteers would put the covers on the wagons in the Spring and remove them in the Fall.



Wagon Maintenance

As you might imagine 60 years of use took its toll on the covered wagons. New canvases were purchased. New cords were strung in the canvases, wheels were repaired and rebuilt, new steps were added, support beams were installed to give stability to the wagons and new staves were purchased to support the canvasses.



Time Demands Change

The wagons served well as camper lodging until recently. As times change and regulations required that there must be at least two counselors with campers at all times, using the wagons as sleeping quarters is no longer feasible. In recent years there has been much discussion as to how to best use the covered wagons.

New Lives for the Wagons

At last it was decided to reposition the best several wagons and make them into activity centers where campers can undertake projects. By placing the wagons in the form of wheel spokes, counselors can be in the center of the “wheel” and work with campers in each wagon as they undertake different projects in each wagon.



Some of the wagons were dismantled. The wood was saved and all nails were removed so that various camp projects could be developed. Some of the board were used to create gaga pits which provide for one of the campers' favorite activities.



Many of the wheels have been taken apart and cleaned by volunteers. They are ready for their next life.



As we look forward to the years of ministry ahead, it is good to know that the covered wagons that have been an integral part of Krislund since its beginning will continue to provide good service. We hope you will come to visit Krislund during this anniversary year. You might even want to take a picture in front of the covered wagons and create your own memory.