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Windwagons to Pike's Peak

Richard Gehling, Mary Ann Gehling

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The story of the windwagons that sailed to Pike's Peak was played out on the Kansas-Missouri frontier in the mid-19th century. It involved a trio of dryland sailors - the original windwagon man named William Thomas from western Missouri, and two innovators from Oskaloosa in Kansas Territory named Andy Dawson and Sam Peppard, all of whom attempted to sail across the western plains during the great Pike’s Peak Gold Rush of 1859-60. For countless gold seekers the sight of an approaching windwagon, with its sails billowing in the wind, became a memory that would remain with them all the days of their lives. There was something about the audacity of it that stirred the imagination. Who but a seeming madman would attempt to cross six hundred miles of prairie with no means of locomotion other than the fickle western wind? Only three men are known to have chanced it, but their attempts have inspired many later imitators, and have - over time - become the stuff of legend

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