

## Did Bart and Dick really take a wagon all the way to Colorado?



“Bart and Dick Cline starting to Colorado, 1915”

In the story of Bart Mahaffie’s move west to homestead in Colorado in 1915 we have a photograph of Bart and his friend, Dick Cline, seated in a wagon, hitched to two horses. Mollie Mahaffie, Bart’s mother, captioned it, “Bart and Dick Cline start to Colorado, 1915.” [Note: if you click on this and other pictures on this site, you can view an enlarged version.]

We could take the caption as fact, but there are reasons to be unsure if the men traveled to Colorado by wagon or took trains or a motor vehicle.

Robert Mahaffie put the question to his friend Bob Olson. Bob and Julie Olson operate [Olson Carriage & Harness](#) in Black Forest, Colorado. Bob teaches people to drive teams of horses and builds and restores vintaged wheeled, horse-drawn vehicles. Robert filmed his short western film, “[Black Forest](#)” largely on Bob’s ranch, using Bob’s team of Percheron draft horses, and Bob’s replica covered wagon. For good measure, he cast Bob himself in the movie. A couple of years ago, I wrote a post about Bob titled “[The Best Time in History](#)” on my foresight

blog.

Bob has deep knowledge of these sorts of vehicles and a keen eye for horse flesh.

Bob studied the photograph. He reckoned that the men could have readily made 20 miles a day with that light wagon and a load of the sort shown. But he pointed out that what was most common back then would be for people to walk most of the way, alongside their wagon and team, and leave the wagon for carrying their belongings. Bob thought that Bart and Dick likely hopped aboard the wagon for the picture.

The horses are both quarterhorses (smaller and less common for drawing loads than draft horses (such as Clydesdales or Percherons). Quarter horses were common for use as working horses on ranches. That would make them the type of horses Doc was likely to keep on his ranch in Oklahoma, but also the right sort for Bart to put to work on his Colorado homestead.

Bob says that both of the horses were in good health. The wagon's wheels are designed for lighter loads as are the bridles and spreaders on the horses. With those observations combined, it's unlikely that Bart and Dick were hauling much. But Bob can't be certain whether or not that they went to Colorado by wagon, only that they could have.

The table below summarizes arguments on either side. After the table, please weigh in with your opinion.

**Did Bart and Dick really take a wagon all the way to Colorado?**

- Yes
- No
- We will never know

Vote

[View Results](#)

⊗ Loading ...