



## Ankeny Chamber SummerFest Grand Parade Float Builder's Guide

### 2023 Theme: Ready.Set.Play.



**Rationale for theme =** The theme, "Ready. Set. Play." pays tribute to games of every generation. From Monopoly and Checkers to Super Mario and Minecraft, this year's theme was created to remind the entire community to have fun and play games.

**Decorated floats are encouraged in accordance with the parade theme and will receive priority in the staging lot as well as receiving priority in release order!**

### Introduction

Welcome to the Ankeny Chamber Summerfest Grand Parade. This document was assembled to help you get the most out of your parade experience. Please use this guide to make your entry have the greatest impact on our eager spectators.

### Parade Entrants, Please Note:

The grand parade is first and foremost a place to showcase the relationships between Ankeny, its area businesses and organizations, and the public. Therefore, it is important for all organizations and businesses to demonstrate this relationship, as well as the Ankeny Chamber SummerFest theme, within their floats and parade entries. **The parade is not simply a venue for rote advertising; it is designed to be entertaining and fun for both Ankeny's citizens and parade participants.** Interesting and creative floats and entries decorated by organizations should in

some way reflect the SummerFest theme. Simply entering a business vehicle does not constitute a parade entry that spectators will find enjoyable.

Themes are developed so that float builders will be able to employ their own tag lines and visualizations that relate their business or organization to the theme. We hope to see very original and creative ideas that display the interests and concepts of your organization. This guide is intended to offer suggestions and tips on how to make your parade entry the most impactful to the spectators.

While we allow undecorated entries, we give staging preference to decorated floats that are competing in our judged categories. We hope you take the time to express your organization's unique character by customizing your entry toward this year's theme.

Please use this guide to assist you in the design and construction of your entry. The information provided in this guide will help your entry have greater impact as you travel along the 2.5 mile, spectator filled streets during the parade.

## Judging

There are two main categories for general entries into the parade, Judged and not-Judged. The entries are segregated in the staging lots. Upon parade release, the judged entries are released onto the parade route in higher ratios than the non-judged entries so there is a clear advantage to being a judged entry.

Judged entries are broken into two categories, one for Commercial entries and the other for Community Groups. Prizes are awarded for First, Second and Third place in each category. Judging will take place along the route as you approach the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street intersection on SW Cherry St. It is completed by local dignitaries and personalities. A copy of the judging criteria is included in this document for reference.

| <b>Ankeny Chamber SummerFest Grand Parade<br/>Float Score Sheet</b> |                                |                           |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Commercial or<br>Community Group                                    | Business/Organization<br>Name: |                           |
| Judging will be based<br>on the following criteria:                 | Possible<br>Points             | Judges<br>Score/<br>Notes |
| Workmanship   |                                |                           |
| A. Originality  | 10                             |                           |
| B. Quality of Work  | 10                             |                           |
|   |                                |                           |
| Design:   |                                |                           |
| A. Originality  | 10                             |                           |
| B. Quality of Work  | 10                             |                           |
|   |                                |                           |
| Costume   | 10                             |                           |
|   |                                |                           |
| Theme   | 50                             |                           |
|   |                                |                           |
| Total Possible Points   | 100                            |                           |

## **Drivers and Operators**

Give some thought to who will drive the vehicle. Select someone with experience at driving while towing a trailer and maneuvering same in tight spaces. The parade is not the place to obtain "on-the-job training".

Floats can be built on a variety of beds: hay wagons, semi-trailers, low-boy trailers or any number of things.

## **Float Construction**

### **GETTING STARTED**

The best first step is to get a steering group organized. You may already know two or three friends or a group who would love to get involved. Make a few calls and see if they are interested. The success of your committee will depend on the commitment and dependability of those who will be working with you. You can organize the committee in any way you think will work, but these are some responsibilities you need to have covered: float chairperson, treasurer, theme and concept, structural design, decorating, and communications. Split up the work: one group can be in charge of props or costumes that will be used on the float. Another group can be in charge of the lettering or signage that will be displayed on the float. Another group can be in charge of the frame-work used underneath the decorating materials. Building a float is a team effort, so make sure everyone understands their part in building the float.

### **CREATING YOUR FLOAT**

Now that you have a solid organization, it's time to get down to the real fun of deciding what you are going to build. Have a brainstorming session. Kick around the theme and have everyone share their own ideas. **REMEMBER:** No ideas are thrown out here. That's the concept of brainstorming. Everyone will feed off the thoughts of everyone else. Before you know it, a great idea will begin to emerge. Be sure that your float concept is in some way consistent with the theme of the parade. Try to design a float concept that will be uniquely yours. Look for variations on shapes, materials, special effects, and anything else that will make your entry stand out from the pack. Determine the message you want to convey, staying within the parameters of the theme. If your theme is humorous, make sure no one will be offended by it. Also, remember that blatant advertising is boring, so try to keep your message subtle and positive.

### **FLOAT DESIGN**

When you decide on a concept, draw a rough pencil sketch. Most floats use a stair step effect with the most height at the rear of the float. After you have worked out the details, a drawing done to scale is very helpful. In your sketch, include the placement of your slogan, colors and designs for your decorations. For example, if you want the fringe to be green and the trim to be gold, label this on your sketch.

All entries must adhere to height, width, and length restrictions shown in the rules, and all must be able to navigate the parade route and make all turns required by the parade route.

Other important design considerations are your equipment and the capabilities of your float builders. If you plan to include elaborate props or woodwork, make sure that you have access to a capable technician who has the proper tools and equipment. If your float has electrical requirements, make sure you have consulted someone who is a qualified electrician.

### **LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION**

Before you begin, you need to identify a place where you can actually build your float. There should be enough room for both your float and off-float work areas. Make sure you can use a nearby garage or another covered space.

Be certain your workspace has clear access to electrical outlets. You are also going to need a variety of tools. Here are a few you'll want to plan for: a table saw or circular saw, saber saw, handsaws, hammers, staple guns, well-stocked tool box with screwdrivers, pliers, wrenches, utility knife, etc., a long tape measure and carpenter's square. Other stuff will certainly be needed if you're going to add animation, special effects or other features to your float.

You will need to plan for protection from the weather, especially in the later stages of construction. When moving your float, be sure that you have a roll of plastic sheeting with you; after you put in a lot of work, the last thing you want is to have your float ruined by a quick and unexpected five-minute rainstorm. Before that, you will probably be able to pull the float back into a garage each night for protection.

## VEHICLE SELECTION

Floats can be built on a variety of beds: trucks, hay wagons, semi-trailers, flatbed trailers, low-boy trailers or any number of things. Select a vehicle that will be suitable for your towing needs.

When you have determined the style of your float and reserved your wagon, you can plan around the exact measurements of the wagon you have reserved. You can certainly begin some pre-fabrication before that time, but the major construction will be done once the wagon arrives.

## SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

People riding on your float should have a safe place to sit, or clear areas to stand and have stanchions or hand-holds in case of sudden braking. Even brakes at 5 mph can send riders tumbling. Have adults to supervise if small children are riding the float. If children are allowed to ride, they should be seated and belted - no legs dangling over the edge of the float. Handrails can be incorporated in the design of your float if they are needed for safety, especially if you have high stages for riders.

## BUILDING TECHNIQUES

### BASIC FRAMEWORK

The first stop after you have your wagon is to build the basic framework. You have to decide just how elaborate your float frame must be based on your intended use. You will need more floor strength if you plan to have riders on the float than if you do not. Also, floats with large structures on the wagon will also need extra strength.

The first step of construction is to “skirt” or make the foundation. Next, it is time to build and decorate the different structures that are present on your float. Final procedures include any painting and/or touch-ups.

Float construction should be a paramount concern. **Remember: people have to ride on the float**, so watch for sharp corners, dangerous objects, and protruding nails.

If you will have people riding on the float, you’ll now want to lay a floor of inexpensive sheathing plywood over your frame. The plywood will also add strength and stability to the frame. Now you’ll begin to construct the part of your float that is more for show. At this point you’ll definitely start working with lighter lumber in areas that won’t be supporting much weight. This superstructure will generally be used to support chicken wire, cardboard or other light decorating items. Depending on the type of design you have planned, you may now add a framework around the side of the wagon to flare out and down. This can help to hide the fact that you are building on a hay wagon. This can be built from 2x2s and 1x2s. Be certain that you allow for free movement of the wagon tongue and wheels. The front wheels move quite a bit when you turn, so be particularly careful there.

Now is the time to add lattice strips to the floor. These are easily “ripped” from cheap 2x4s. They can be made more flexible for bending around curves by soaking them in wire prior to installation.

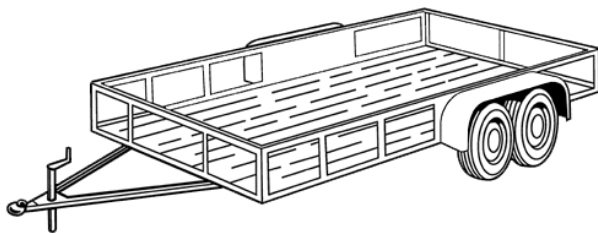
**FRAMING:** Set up platforms or stages. If you are building a multilevel float, you will want to build frames to support each “stage”, or deck. This can be done using 2x4 lumber framing with a plywood decking and should use material strong enough to support anything which will set upon this deck or be built above it. Usually each tier, or stage, will have its own skirt or wall of sorts around it.

Working from the design you made in the planning step, there will be objects or elements of your float you’ll want to build. For example, you might have a big snowman on your float. You can build a frame out of the 1x3s in the approximate shape of a decoration you want to create. The shape of the wood doesn’t have to be perfect. Or, you

can also cut wooden “ribs” or “frames” from plywood (much like the ribs of a boat) into the shape of the object you want to create. This allows you to create more complex shapes with more curves. In this fashion you can create a float that looks like a rolling section of earth, more rounded and natural.

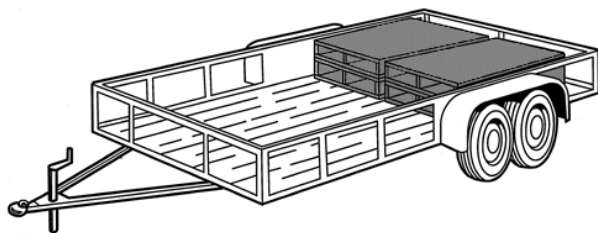
You’ll need to buy an adequate supply of chicken wire. This wire can be easily cut with tin snips and molded over the wooden superstructure into a wide variety of flexible shapes. You will find that it won’t take long to understand how to cut the wire and then join the pieces with staples or other short lengths of wire or plastic electrical ties. Fasten the wire to the wooden framework with staples wherever it crosses a brace. Shape the chicken wire into the form of your decoration and attach it to the frame with a staple gun. You can find chicken wire at local hardware and farm supply stores.

You are only limited by your imagination. But if it is your first time building a float, or if you need some inspiration to get started, we’ve included some suggestions and ideas for more simple, yet professional looking floats below.



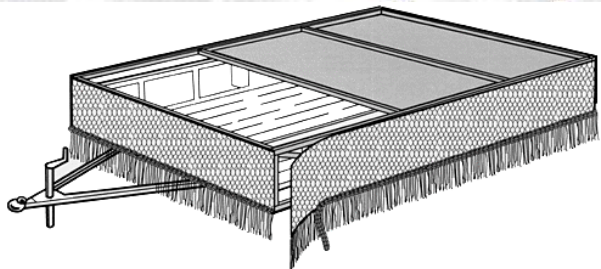
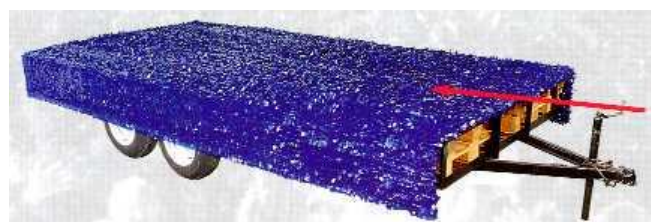
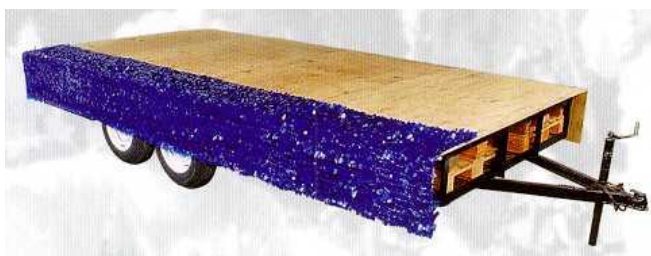
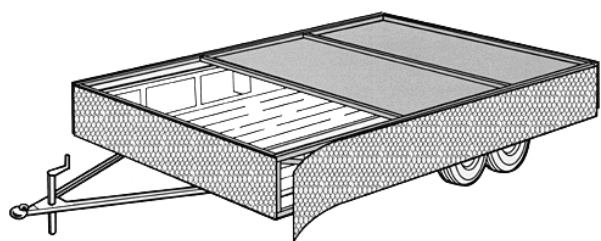
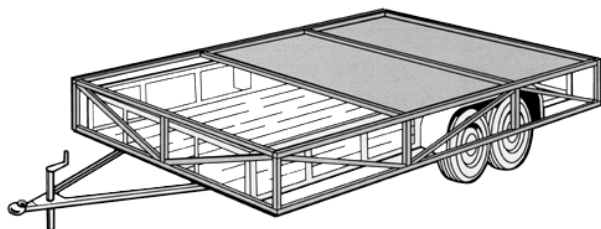
### ***Beginning Construction Using a Low-Boy Trailer***

Many float builders build a frame over the existing wagon. Other designs simply use the wagon bed as is and add the superstructure needed for your design. If you are going to build a new floor over the wagon that people will ride on, use 2x6s on edge for the outer framework and then run 2x4s between them side to side. In general, place these stringers no more than 16” apart for strength if you are actually going to stand on the floor. The edges of the wagons are protected with steel bands, so you’ll have to plan your frame to fasten solidly to the wagon bed. You can toenail the frame to the wagon bed. This part of the float should be very solid.



Instead of framing a box, pallets can also be used to build a partial or full sub-structure to elevate the platform of the float. It can be a good idea to build a partial or full deck that will be even with the top rails of the float. Make sure the pallets are firmly fastened to the bed of the float. Next, lay sheet plywood over the pallets. Now you will have a platform for your props and an area in the bed where float riders can stand or sit. If your float riders will be standing, make a stanchion and secure it to the trailer bed so that they have something to hold onto while traveling the parade route. Remember...*safety first!*





### ***Attachment of Skirt Frame and Sheet Plywood***

After the plywood is laid over the pallets, build a skirt frame using 1" X 1" or 2" X 2" pieces of wood and fasten the frame to the trailer rails and the plywood. The skirt frame is used to hide the wheels and undercarriage. Any number of items can be used to fasten the skirt frame to the rails: U-shaped brackets are ideal for attachment of the skirt frame to the trailer bed rails. Be sure to terminate the skirt frame approximately 16" from the ground and allow for tongue movement at the front of the float.

You can also make the sides out of plywood as shown in the photo at left. L-shaped brackets were used to attach the side skirts to the top deck. The top deck is screwed to a supporting frame inside the lowboy trailer. This design allows a large surface for easy stapling.

### ***Decorating the Float***

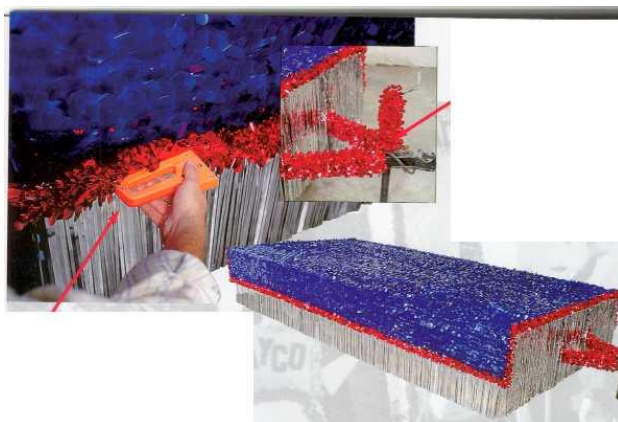
Deck and side skirts: calculate the sheeting requirements in square yards by multiplying the length times the width of each differently colored area. Cut the sheeting as needed and attach to the bottom of the skirt and staple to the deck of the trailer.

### ***Attachment of Sheeting to the Skirt Frame***

Next, apply sheeting by stapling it to the wood skirt frame as shown. Additionally, you can use sheeting to cover the deck-platform as well as on the bed of the float.

### ***Attachment of Fringe to the Sheeting and Wood Skirt Frame***

Next, staple "float away fringe" into the wood skirt frame at the bottom of the frame. It's ok to staple through the decorating material and into the wood frame. This will give your float the "floating" appearance.

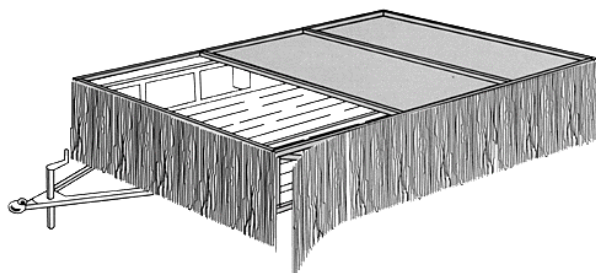


### ***Using Festooning to Hide the Seam Between the Sheeting and Fringe***

To hide the seam between the float fringe and sheeting, use festooning (a stiff-wire garland). The festooning colour you choose allows you to add even more colour to your float! Festooning can be stapled through the fringe and sheeting materials and into the wood frame.

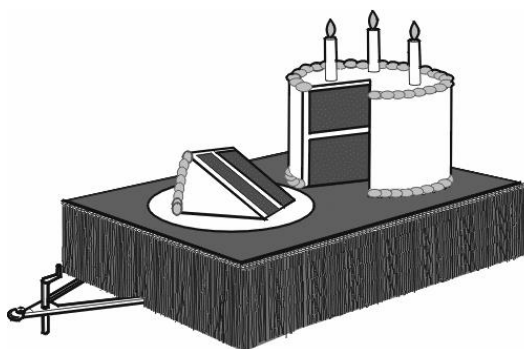
### ***Fringe Panels***

As an alternative to using sheeting, you can also use “fringe panels”. The sketch uses a longer fringe-skirt instead of a sheeting product. This skirt is approximately 30” tall and is designed to give the float a taller “floating” appearance. Many float builders like to use fringe-panels because of the ease of decorating.

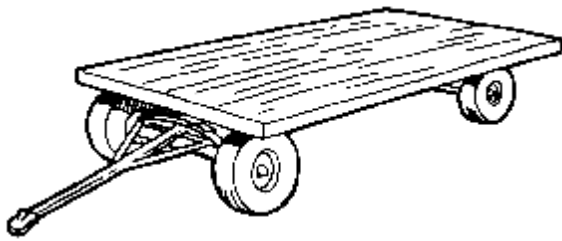


### ***Attachment of Festooning to Top of Fringe Panels***

Whether you use sheeting or fringe-panels on the sides of your float, it is a good idea to use festooning to finish the edges of the float. You can use festooning in a colour other than your fringe panels to add more colour to your float!



This float concept uses the longer fringe panels and pallets across the entire trailer bed to create a level deck area. Lettering can be made from Styrofoam, poster board, etc., and a birthday cake can be made out of cardboard, upside-down garbage cans, etc. But this is just one example—there are many others! You will build your float with your materials, float-builders, weather, timing, safety issues, etc., in mind.



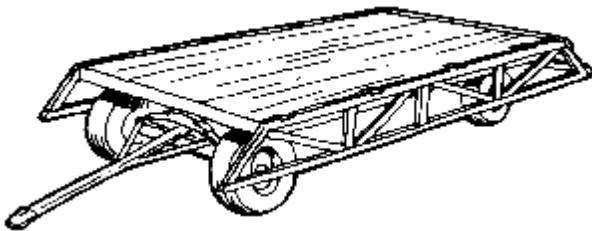
### ***Beginning Construction Using a Hay Trailer or Flatbed Trailer***

There are a few items you will want to have on hand before building your float. A staple gun, nails, wire, chicken-wire, 1" X 1" and 2" X 2" construction grade wood and plywood can be purchased at your local hardware store.

### ***Framing***

On a flatbed, you want to build a frame downward to hide the wheels and suspension of the float. You can also employ this same technique on truck beds, and it has even been done to old cars.

First, build a skirt frame from 2" X 2" pieces of wood and fasten the frame to the trailer bed with hinges. The skirt frame is used to hide the wheels and undercarriage. Be sure to terminate the skirt frame approximately 16" from the ground and allow for tongue movement at the front of the float.

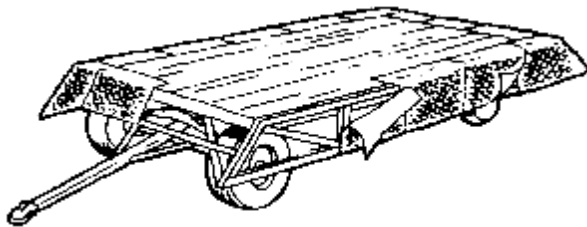


### ***Decorating the Float***

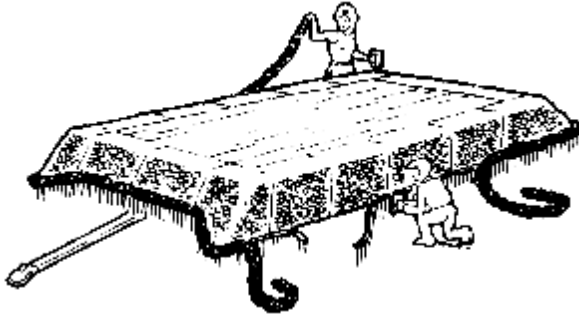
Deck and side skirts: Calculate the sheeting requirements in square yards by multiplying the length times the width of each differently colored area, (sheeting comes 36" wide by 10 or 25 yard lengths). Cut the sheeting as needed and attach to the bottom of the skirt and staple to the deck of the trailer.

### ***Attaching Sheeting Strips to the Skirts and Deck***

After attachment of the sheeting, use a staple-gun to attach our decorative fringe to the bottom of the 2" X 2" frame. Then use festooning to hide the seam line between the floral sheeting and fringe. You can calculate the amount of fringe and festooning you will need by adding the total running length of the perimeter of the float.







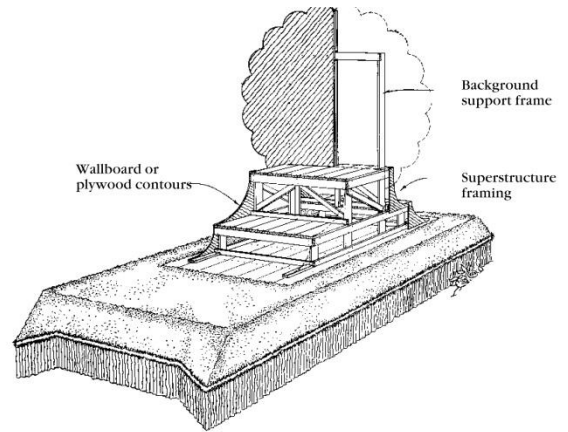
### ***Attachment of Fringe and Festooning***

Topside: The amount of sheeting needed for covering curved areas and props is determined by visualizing these areas as if they were boxes. Make sure you have enough material to cover the box. Sheeting can be attached to the props by using nails, staples, hog-rings, twist-ties etc.

This is just one more example—there are many others! You will build your float with your materials, float-builders, weather, timing, safety issues, etc., in mind. The examples shown here are very simple; you are only limited by your creativity and imagination. So go ahead: blow us away with what you are able to do. We know Ankeny has it in them!

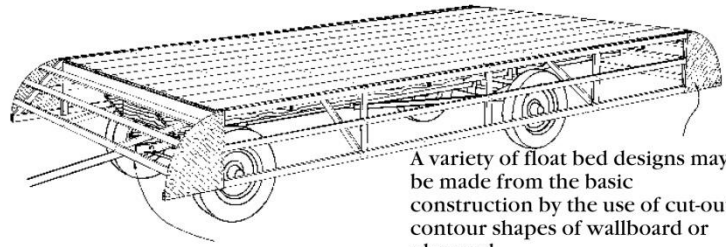
You can also give your float more than just a simple square look by building different “levels.” You’ll see some of these examples on the coming pages.

In addition, by adding different plywood shapes to the front and back of your skirting frame, you can also create different looks that make the base of the float more interesting, with a minimal amount of extra work. The chart below shows the side elevation look of skirts utilizing different cutout shapes on the leading and trailing edges.



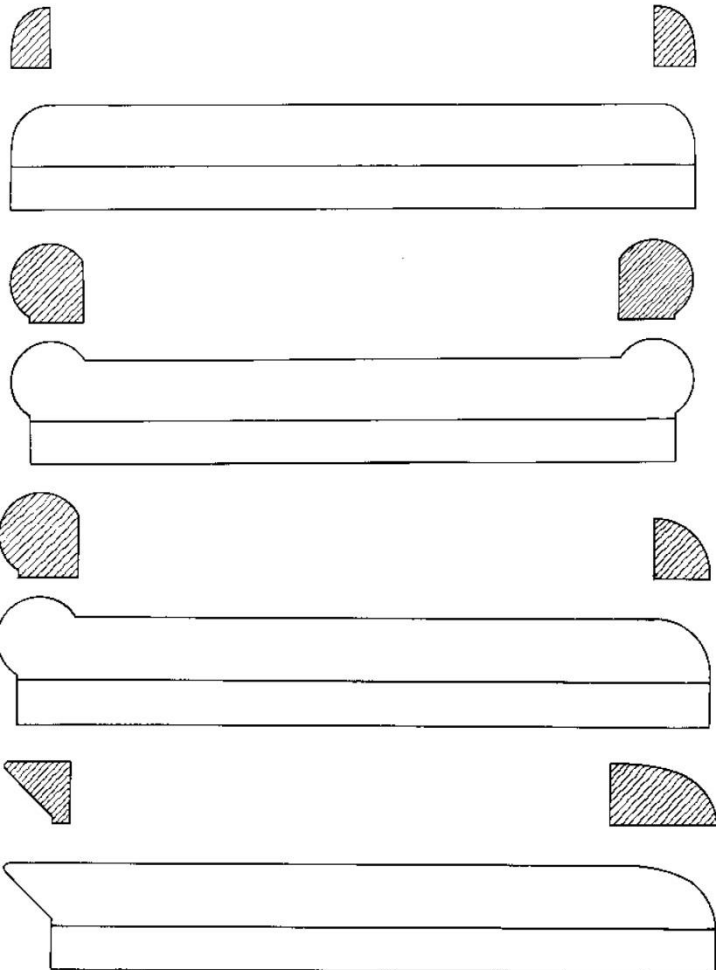
Once the basic frame and platform is complete, it is a good time to hook up the float and give it a short test run. This is when you want to be certain that everything is ship shape... not the morning of the parade. You'll be surprised at how much the float can wobble and you may want to add some additional bracing to minimize this. You'll be glad you did.

You'll also want to note if you will have to pull your float over a curb to get it in the street. If that's the case, set aside several boards to use for ramps the morning of the parade. This may also affect the height of your skirt from the street, and this is the time you want to find that out; not after all the work has been done to decorate the float.



A variety of float bed designs may be made from the basic construction by the use of cut-out contour shapes of wallboard or plywood.

Nail 1" X 2" cross members between contours. Nail braces to these members from 2" X 10" stringers.



## DECORATING YOUR ENTRY

Now that the main float structure is complete, you will start the decorating process.

**POMS:** One of the most common traditional techniques for final decorating of many floats from town parades to homecomings is the use of simple pre-cut squares of colored tissue paper, called Poms. They give a very rich and consistent appearance and come in a wide variety of colors. They also lend themselves to very elaborate decorating patterns. Poms can be created by cutting up your own tissue paper, but Poms can be purchased pre-cut to save you a lot of time and effort. A single package of Poms, used in every other hold in chicken wire can cover 4 sq. ft. The disadvantage is that they require quite a bit of time to stuff in place. Once the float is covered with wire, layout your design areas where different colors are to go. You can mark them with spray paint or paint brushes. Now you'll need all those volunteers who haven't gotten involved so far. There are two techniques used for stuffing Poms. For large areas of general coverage you can place a Pom in every other opening. For dense detail use every hole. Working with a small area, spray the chicken wire lightly with a spray adhesive. This is available at discount stores and building supply centers. Then take a single Pom, form it quickly into a cone over the tip of your index finger and place it firmly into the chicken wire. You'll catch onto this technique quickly.



**PAPER MACHE:** Paper-Mache is normally used for areas on your float that require great detail in shape or for contrast against the softer look of Poms or petal paper. The Paper-Mache process involves creating a chicken wire frame, stuffing toilet paper in the holes, and then covering it with several layers of newspaper soaked in a mixture of flour and water. Be sure to plan ahead because it takes several days before it will dry enough for you to paint it. When the Paper-Mache has dried, it's a good idea to use a primer before your final coat. A gloss or semi-gloss paint will help to make Paper-Mache more water-resistant.

**STYROFOAM INSULATION:** Styrofoam insulation is extremely versatile and can allow you to cut out, carve and create a number of shapes, letters and lightweight designs. Sheets of foam building insulation (pink or white) that can be inexpensively obtained from lumber yards. It is available in several thicknesses. Sheets can be glued together with foam board adhesive to create a bigger block from which to carve. They can also be used like building panels and glued together with foam board adhesive to create lightweight structures. If you have some talent, you can carve faces, objects and figures out of the blocks of Styrofoam. A knife, a thin saw blade (keyhole saw or hack saw blade) or a circular wire brush on a drill can be used to remove large areas of material. A Dremel tool works well for fine carving. Sandpaper can be used for fine carving and to smooth it. Spraying the styrofoam with aerosol oil-based paint eats away at the Styrofoam, but can leave a rough, rock-like surface. Latex paints can be used to paint the Styrofoam without eating it away. Craft stores also carry a number of other craft paints safe for Styrofoam.



**EXPANDING FOAM INSULATION:** This product is usually used in the building industry to fill in gaps between dry wall, bricks and any other building materials. It can be purchased in cans at the hardware store or lumber yard, usually under a brand name like "Great Stuff." In parade float building you can use the foam to achieve several effects. If you just spray the foam filler you can create the look of an exploding volcano or whipped cream and ice-cream. You can also form the foam into shapes if you work quickly to shape the foam before it turns solid. If you do shape the foam filler it is imperative to wear gloves, as it is extremely sticky. After it has completely set (overnight) it can also be carved, much like the pink Styrofoam sheets.

**FESTOONING:** This is a paper product that comes in long rolls and looks much like Hawaiian lei. It is great to cover seams, flaws or to blend areas where two colors or surfaces come together. It is especially helpful when using petal paper or applying skirting or fringe to the bottom of your float. Festooning is also available in foil and plastic. This is a product for which you will discover many original uses. Attach it with 3/8" to 5/8" staples.



**FLORAL SHEETING:** Floral sheeting is flameproof and waterproof. It is a great material for covering the sides and base of your float, as well as for building decorations with. Floral Sheetting is made of a heavy plastic backing sheet with rows of sewn-on scalloped plastic flower petal shapes. You can reuse this material for later floats too! It's 3' wide and is sold by the yard. You can be creative with the use of floral sheeting by mixing complementing colors, making your display even more appealing. Floral sheeting or "petal paper" is produced in a number of colors and has been used for a number of applications besides parade floats. From decorating a promotional display to decorating your exhibit booth or even using in a window display, you'll find it is easy to use.



**SEQUIN SHEETING:** Add some sparkle to your decorating touch! Sequin sheeting is perfect for use as an appliqué for accessories. Sequin Sheetting has raised dots giving a brilliant 3-dimensional effect and different colors when viewed at different angles. Sequin Sheetting will draw attention to your display from far away. Sequin sheeting can also be used for jeweled treasure chests, dragon and fish scales, simulated water, banners and flags, letter covering and borders. Available in 8 inch wide x 10 or 25 yard length rolls.



**FRINGE AND SKIRTING:** Add some vinyl fringe to your float to conceal the trailer's wheels and give the impression that the float is really "floating." Fringe has many other uses as well. These two products are commonly used to decorate the bottom of floats. Skirting comes in 30" lengths while fringe is 15" long. Keep the bottom edge approximately 2" above the street to prevent it from becoming soiled. Attach skirting and fringe through the narrow band at the top using medium length staples. Complete the installation by overlaying the band with a row of festooning. Skirting is available in plastic only while fringe is sold in both paper and plastic. Because of the vinyl construction, these products are re-usable.





**VINYL OR PLASTIC ROLLS:** Colorful Vinyl or Metallic decorative parade float covering is simply the base material of vinyl floral sheeting without the decorative flowers. Some colors are more transparent than others, so it's best to apply vinyl or metallic to a white background. Vinyl or Metallic covering can be used in many other creative decorating applications.



**BATTING AND CLOTH:** Simple cotton batting can be used to cover the chicken wire or other structure, and then covered with cloth for a “soft-sculpture” look. Leaving just the cotton batting by itself creates “clouds” or “smoke” for your float. Covering the batting with cloth can achieve a variety of looks, as cloth comes in many textures and patterns. Hot glue guns or thread can be used to fasten down both layers.

**FAKE GRASS:** Fake grass is great for covering the base of your float if your theme takes place outdoors. A variety of products can be used to create a grassy field on your float. Tissue grass mats are available in three colors—green, black, and medium blue—so you can get creative with how you use them. They measure 18” x 30” and are sold in dozens. Scatter grass is great for quickly covering large areas. It is flame retardant and each package covers 48 square feet. “Real” grass mats have a great, realistic look perfect for sports themed floats. You can also consider indoor-outdoor carpet that looks like grass.



retardant and each  
package covers 48 square feet.

**SPRAY PAINT:** One of the greatest tools you can use in the pursuit of a true professional look is spray paint. In the hands of a person with some artistic talent, spray paint can be used to add shading, shadowing, and highlights and to add color that may not be available in other float building products. Note: Be certain that paint is compatible with the materials on your float. Standard aerosol paints will actually melt plastic and Styrofoam. Special paints are available at craft stores.

**GLITTER:** Add a little sparkle in the sun! Glitter can be applied to cardboard or Styrofoam cut-out letters or even select float props. You'll find less glitter is used when the surface you are glittering is painted with flat latex paint, similar in color to the glitter you are using, and allowed to dry. Then give the surface another coat of the same paint and apply the glitter before the paint is dry. Glitter can actually be purchased by the pound! One pound of glitter covers approx. 10 square feet.



**LETTERING:** Letters are almost always used in some form on floats. Of course, you can make your own from foam board, poster board or other materials. You can also purchase ready-made lettering foam board float letters to promote your message. Foam board letters and numbers have a white poster board finish front and back with 1/8" rigid foam centers. Foam board letters can be brush painted, spray painted and glittered. They are easily applied with staples, double-adhesive tape, or magnetic tape.



Some general considerations for lettering your float include:

1. Contrast between the letter color and the background color.
2. Make all letters as large as possible. Will a spectator be able to read your message from 20 feet away?

3. Font/typeface – keep it simple and legible. Script or overly fancy lettering is rarely used in Informational signage for good reason; it is hard to read quickly.
4. Ready-made letters and paper letters are 2-dimensional, but they can be quite effective when used on the proper background.
5. Styrofoam letters can be cut from sheets of foam building insulation (pink or white) that can be inexpensively obtained from lumber yards. It is available in several thicknesses and produces letters that are 3-dimensional and can be mounted on a wide variety of surfaces. Cut the letters out with a knife or smooth saw blade (hack saw blades work well) and then lightly sand the edges. In addition, the Styrofoam is light in weight and very easy to cut. Craft stores carry a number of paints safe for Styrofoam.



## SPECIAL EFFECTS

Special effects are just that – SPECIAL. You can probably come up with an effect that has never been used in just that way in a parade before. Special effects can help to make a good float GREAT. Special effects enhance the visual appeal of floats and give creative types an outlet to express their imagination. Special effects include almost anything you can conceive that brings excitement, vitality and originality to your entry. Let your imagination run wild. Here are a few general techniques for adding pizzazz to your float.

**POWER SOURCES:** Many special effects require electrical power. You can decide on the best power source after you complete your plans and have some idea of what type and the quantity of power you will need. Many small items may run on a battery, normally a car or golf cart battery. Be sure you use a separate battery from the one being used to run the vehicle pulling your float. Pulling the float through the parade will be enough of a strain on the towing vehicle without tapping into its power supply. If you will be using a powerful sound system or any other 110 amp electrical equipment, you'll need to use a gas powered electric generator. They are normally available at equipment rental stores. Be sure to reserve these units early.



**ANIMATION:** Animation is one of the best special effects used on floats. In general there are three common methods used to put motion in float animation.

1. A turntable driven by a motor at the center that turns the table and creates animation.
2. An “extra” wheel that trails under or behind the float. Then a belt and pulley system transfers that rotation into the movement you need to make your creation run. Bicycle wheels are great for this purpose. I’m sure you know someone who has an old bicycle tire to “spare.”

3. A motor mounted on the object that is to move. That will allow you to have an object rotate around a turntable for example.



Other animation requires motions that will have to be worked out for your individual circumstances. Don't let the little extra time you might have to spend working on a solution keep you from using animation. It is a tremendous asset to a float and a great crowd pleaser.



**SOUND:** Sound – either music or sound effects – is another great dimension that you should consider for your float. Best of all, it can be added with little investment in either time or money. The best source

is either a portable CD or MP3 player. Many players will allow you to program a REPEAT function to re-play a track or playlist again and again. Once you have selected your sound source, you'll need to obtain a playback system with amplifier and speakers. Boom boxes are rarely a good solution. Although they may rattle walls of your children's bedroom, they won't supply the sound or quality you will need on the parade route. Instead, consider a stereo amplifier or receiver with several bookshelf-type speakers placed on both sides of the float. Position them behind your chicken wire frame or other surfaces that will allow the sound to penetrate. You will probably need a small generator, which can often be used to power a limited number of lights or other accessories. The difference a quality system will make in your sound is dramatic and it will pay off parade day.

**SMOKE:** Planning a dragon or a chimney as part of your float? How about a campfire? A Halloween smoke machine or dry ice can make safe, easy to control smoke.

**ODDS & ENDS:** Just a few final thoughts:

- Towing vehicles - cars, trucks and vans. Check out everything to be sure you are ready. Tank full? Tires checked? Cooling system in top shape? The parade moves at only 4 or 5 miles an hour for the 1.8- mile route. Overheating can be a problem if you use an old vehicle or you're not prepared.
- Plan your route to the parade carefully. Be certain you won't have to pass under any low hanging trees or other obstacles. Also, try to travel side streets and travel slowly. The wind can really damage a fragile float.
- Arrive on time at the staging area. The parade is very well organized and we are counting on you to arrive at your assigned time to make the assembly and coordination as smooth as possible. Go directly to the staging area you will be assigned in advance. Estimate the travel time you need, and double it!
- Bring a last minute repair kit. Include extra Poms to replace any that blow away, spray adhesive, staple guns, duct tape, a roll of patching wire, a good mechanics tool set and anything else you can think of that

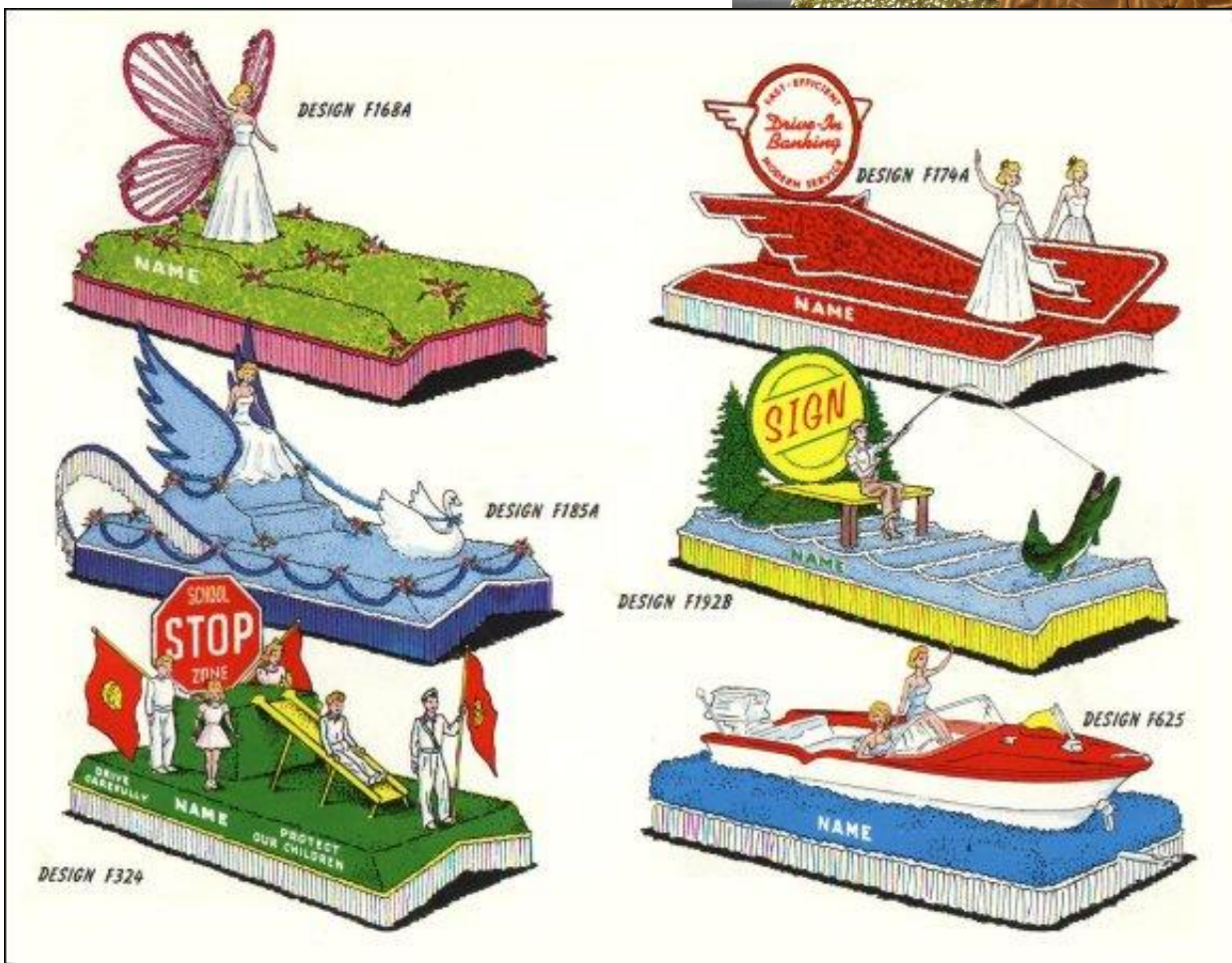


would be needed to make a last minute repair. Also, buy a “flat repair in a can.” It might keep you in the parade if a flat occurs on either the float or towing vehicle.

- Bring water for everyone! The parade will start at 10:03 A.M. on July 5th and by the time you have traveled the entire route and the sun has reached its peak, you’ll need it!
- If you have a balance in your float account after construction is complete, think about using a portion of the money to buy float award plaques or favors for neighbors who worked on the entry. This small recognition will help to keep the parade in your neighbors' minds from year to year and will make your neighborhood project easier to sell.

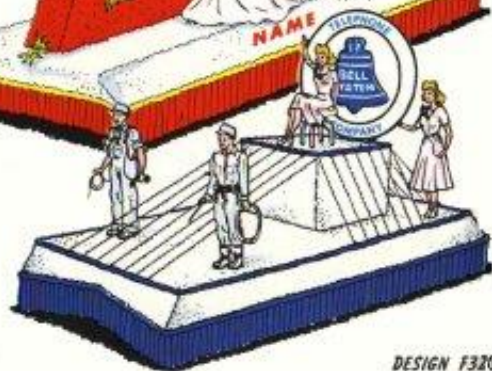


Good  
Luck  
and  
Happy  
Float

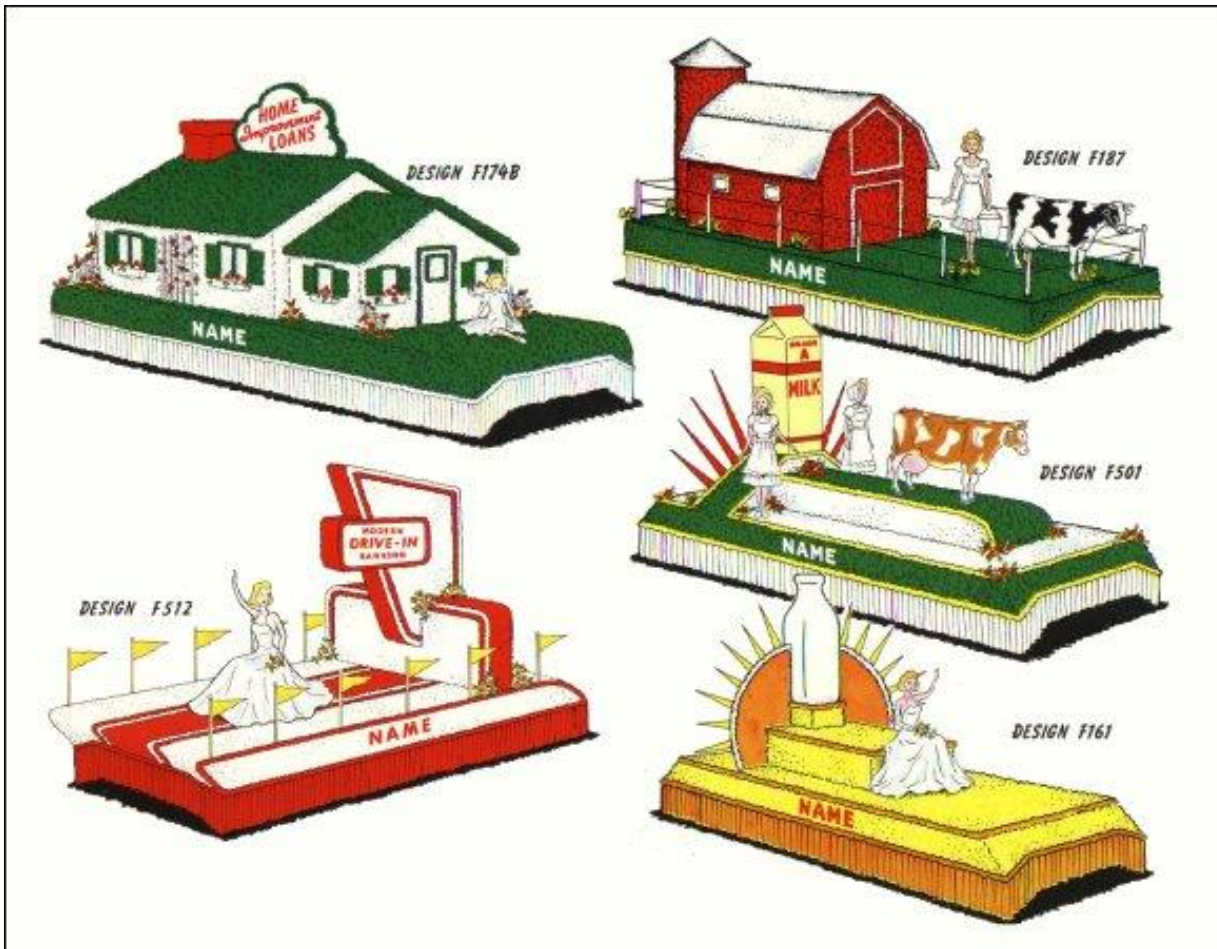


Building!









Special thanks are given to the sources for this material, from which this manual was adapted:

The Reedley Fiesta Parade Manual, Reedley California

Worthington Bicentennial Parade website: <http://www.worthington.org/bicentennial/events/paradepartic.cfm>

VEISHEA Non-Traditional Float Builder's Manual, Iowa State University

Worthington Bicentennial Parade Float Builder's Manual by Bruce Frank.

[www.1st-paradefloats.com](http://www.1st-paradefloats.com)

[www.deswerks.com/parade.htm](http://www.deswerks.com/parade.htm)

[www.victorycorps.com/floats.html](http://www.victorycorps.com/floats.html)

[www.paradesetc.com](http://www.paradesetc.com)

[www.valleydecorating.com](http://www.valleydecorating.com)

<http://www.paradefloatstuff.com/store/>

<http://www.paradesetc.com>