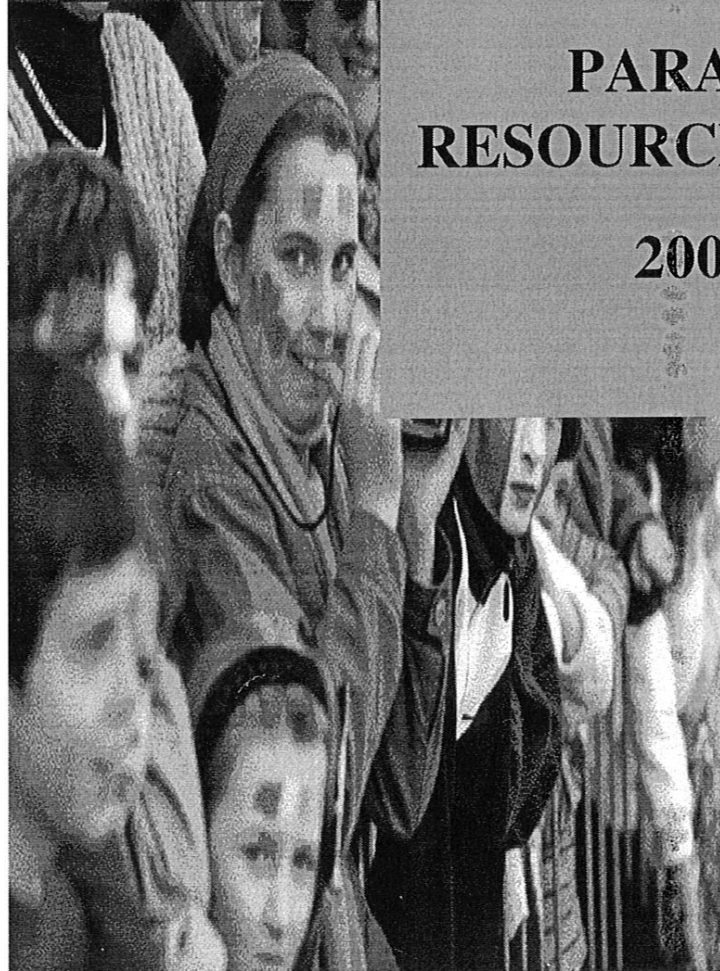




**LONDON ST.
PATRICKS DAY
FESTIVAL**

**PARADE
RESOURCE GUIDE**

2003



Few Suggestions Before You Begin

Nothing is more exciting than participating with your own parade float in The London St. Patrick's Day Parade. As you will see, planning and building your float is half the fun! It is not as hard as it may look. It really can be fun and easy to build an award-winning parade float!

Many floats that you may see in a parade are built overnight. Their originality is limited to the group's budget and knowledge about float building.

Hopefully you will find this guide useful for brainstorming ideas and for reference in building your group's entry. Keep in mind that the objective of this effort is to provide you and members of your organization with an opportunity to have fun, be part of a great tradition, and show your organisations spirit. Preparation and participation (with the help of this guide and proper planning) will provide hours of stories and laughs for years to come.

**Thank you for your interest in the London St. Patrick's Day Festival
2003**

Good luck in planning and building your float!

I. Getting Started

It is a good idea to start to plan several weeks before the day of the parade. Gather creative and imaginative people and form a small committee of four to six members. Decide on a chairperson who is a good leader and organizer.

Then have a meeting to discuss ideas. The first step in planning any kind of float is to thoroughly read all information concerning any deadlines, transporting the float, parade rules and regulations, and most importantly, safety requirements. Decide on an appropriate design for the float.

When planning your float, be careful not to overcrowd it. Your message should be conveyed simply yet powerfully. You will want your float to be entertaining, colorful, and eye-catching. It should make its point quickly. Your goal is to attract the attention of everyone in the audience, including the many people who are along the parade route.

II. Float Types

Most people probably picture a float as a large and expensive moving object. In reality, most (i.e. any parade not held in Los Angeles or Disney World) parades consist of fun, less expensive, homemade affairs atop a pickup truck or even a group simply walking happily. There are actually a variety of float types that are both appropriate and necessary for a good parade such as The London St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Everyone involved in building the float should give input on how the float should look. If everyone has a say regarding how the float should look, creativity will be at its best. Write down the ideas and decide on a mutual design. Creativity can be the hardest part of building the float, but it is also the most fun!

Once you accurately assess what your group is able to do (i.e. how much money you want to spend, the spirit of your presentation- funny, historical, satirical, etc.) and how much time you have, you should pick a float type that matches your group's desires and resources.

Floats can be built on anything with wheels so there is a lot of room for interpretation – these are just some of the suggestions:

- Some very interesting things can be done with a shopping trolley
- One of the easiest floats can be constructed around an electronic golf cart or lawnmower tractors.

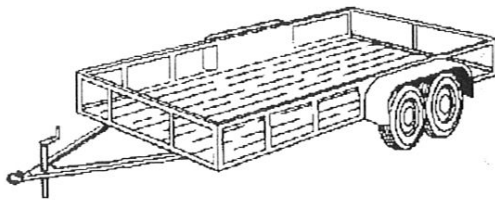
1. The Traditional Float

The traditional float is usually constructed on a flatbed truck and the traditional St. Patrick's Day Float usually includes Irish dancers, Irish musicians, some form of fireside theme and decoration. This type of float has become very common and there is a danger that after all your hard work your float will be undistinguishable from everyone else's.

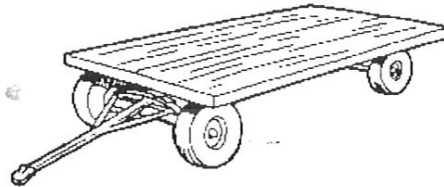
However a traditional float can be elaborate and could involve the construction of scenery or props similar to what is done in theatre stage craft.

~ Trailer and Tow vehicle: The two vehicles should not detract from the float. The tow vehicle should be as small as possible and decorated if possible. A borrowed trailer will dictate the size and shape of your float, however they are usually only available for short periods of time.

Two examples you may use:



Low-boy trailer

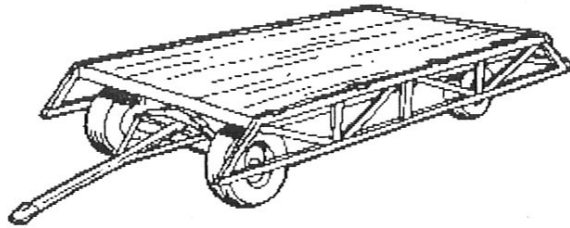


Hay-trailer

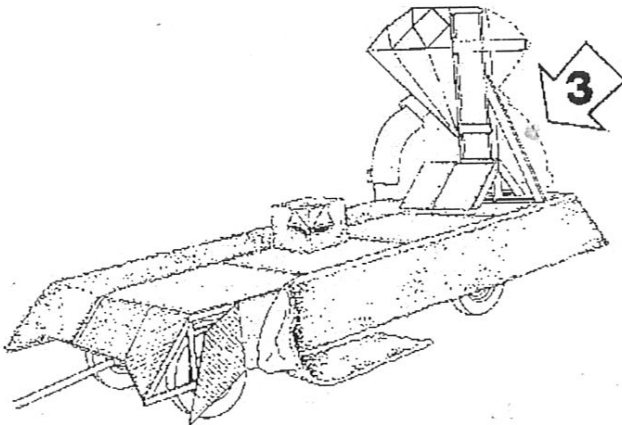
The following are some general directions that you may want to follow for building a parade float using a hay-trailer. These directions may be adjusted for other types of trailers that you may want to use.

- a. A parade float can begin with a basic 4-wheel flatbed trailer. Trailers normally vary from seven to eight feet wide and fourteen to twenty-four feet in length. You may want to cover the top with sheets of plywood to provide a sturdy and smooth construction area if the surface of the flatbed is uneven or has holes in it.
- b. Determine the width of the apron that goes around the trailer platform by measuring the distance from the trailer bed to the ground. Deduct fifteen inches for the fringe drop; the remaining measurement is the width of the apron framework. It can be made of plywood or you can build a skirt frame from 2"x2" pieces of wood. The apron can be nailed to the trailer bed or fastened to the trailer bed with hinges, so that the sides can be folded onto the bed of the trailer to facilitate

transportation to and from the parade. The skirt frame hides the wheels and undercarriage. Be sure to allow for tongue movement at the front of the float.

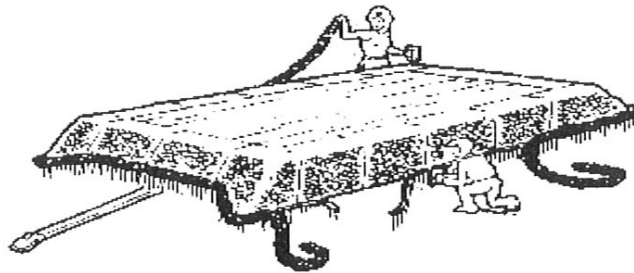


- c. The next step is to construct the superstructures, the components above the platform. The decks, background supports, seating platforms, and major props should be put into place and secured to the flatbed. Superstructures should be kept simple and well placed.

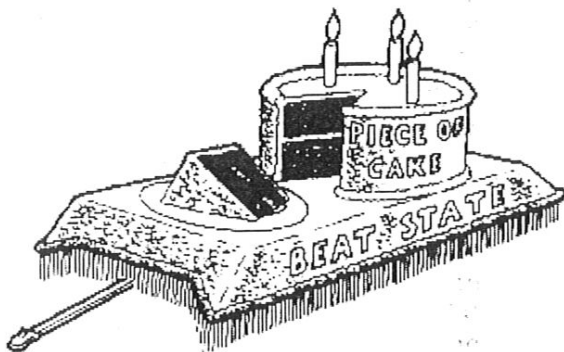


- d. Determine the width of the apron that goes around the trailer platform by measuring the distance from the trailer bed to the ground. Deduct fifteen inches for the fringe drop; the remaining measurement is the width of the apron framework. It can be made of plywood or you can build a skirt frame from 2"x2" pieces of wood. The apron can be nailed to the trailer bed or fastened to the trailer bed with hinges, so that the sides can be folded onto the bed of the trailer to facilitate transportation to and from the parade. The skirt frame hides the wheels and undercarriage. Be sure to allow for tongue movement at the front of the float.
- e. The next step is to construct the superstructures, the components above the platform. The decks, background supports, seating platforms, and major props should be put into place and secured to the flatbed. Superstructures should be kept simple and well placed.

- f. The final step is decorating. The different materials are as endless as your imagination. Vinyl floral sheeting, signs, and trim will add more details. Cut the floral sheeting into strips. Attach these strips to the bottom of the skirt if your float has one and staple to the deck of trailer.



- g. You may want to use vinyl twist or bunting around the edges, around signs, and where two colors meet. To determine the amount of materials needed to cover the rest of the float, visualize those areas as if they were boxes. Be sure that you have enough material to cover the boxes. It often works best to decorate from the top down. Then, fringe or twist can be added to the bottom of the apron or floral sheeting in order to conceal the wheels and give a floating appearance.



- A representative flatbed float consists of people dressed in costume to represent an event or team or depicting some significant scene.
- A simple version may be a group riding on an open backed truck or convertible waving at the crowd, walking from the float to the audience shaking hands or giving small tokens to children. **Remember, NO ITEMS MAY BE THROWN FROM FLOATS DURING THE PARADE.**

These floats often include a placard with the group's name on it and a slogan that matches the parade theme. Obviously, a group could do something more elaborate.

Again, depending on complexity, a group might spend as little as one afternoon or as many as three or four weeks working on the float. It may take more time to create and perfect a skit or some actions to take place aboard the float since it focuses more on originality and improvisational performance than on decoration and pomp. Other things to consider are costumes. Most of the time spent will be committed to getting costumes together. Other more elaborate floats will require more work.

2. Walking Float:

The least expensive and simplest of floats, the walking float, can also be the most popular and entertaining in the parade. The walking parade unit presents an excellent opportunity for groups with little time or money to get involved in the parade. With a bit of creativity and some time to rehearse, any group is quite capable of putting forth a super parade entry. A very well known example of the walking float is the dragon often seen in Asian festivals. Still another very popular form of the walking float is performing groups. Choral groups or military groups that develop some sort of synchronized movements often create very impressive and popular walking entries. In this kind of a float, participants have the chance to utilize the whole parade corridor as a stage to run their "float" near the crowd.

Iv. Locating Resources

Throughout this guide we have repeatedly mentioned the need to be creative and resourceful in building your float. It is important to be equally creative in locating materials for the construction of your float. While some materials will need to be purchased, how much your float costs will be a function of how creative you are in acquiring the necessary resources.

Other good sources include contractors (see yellow pages), who would probably be welcome your offer to carry off some of the usable remains from a demolition job. You may also want to contact several carpenters to acquire the necessary amount of wood for your task.

Paint and painting supplies are expensive but necessary float-building materials. They are the type of supplies that businesses and other organizations may be willing to donate. You can begin by asking for donations at hardware and paint stores, but if you do not start early, someone else may beat you to it. Most stores will only donate once. Contractors are

another good source. Check your yellow pages for house painting crews and the like. As a final source, you might have some luck by asking those in your organisation - asking them to help by having each member search his or her garage for paint that he or she does not need. You may come up with a large variety of colors. But what the heck, it is free and it just might be that something extra to bring home first prize.

III. Safety

In order to ensure a successful parade, it is very important that all safety regulations are closely followed. This will provide a fun and relaxing atmosphere for everyone involved in and watching the parade.

Any entry with non-complying materials on the day of the parade will not be allowed to participate.

The following are Safety Regulations to remember

“Decorations and Floats – No decorations, floats, or displays shall be erected of combustible material, such as, as made with paper napkins, crepe papers, facial tissues, toilet tissue, newspaper, or any other combustible material.

No decorative material shall be used which as applied will ignite and allow flame to spread over the surface or allow burning particles to drop when exposed.

The Organiser can reject any display, float, house decoration, or structure placed in a hazardous location to life, safety, or dangerous to property.

Prizes: Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three entries as determined by a panel of judges. The following schedule of awards will be presented:

Floats:

First Prize £400 + trophy
Second Prize £250 + trophy
Third Prize £150 + trophy

Walking Units:

First Prize £150 + trophy
Second Prize £100 + trophy

How to Enter:

Obtain an Application from Daire Dolan 020 8735 9407 or daire@irishpost.co.uk or by writing to Daire Dolan, Smurfit Communications, Cambridge House, Cambridge Grove, Hammersmith, London, W6 0LE

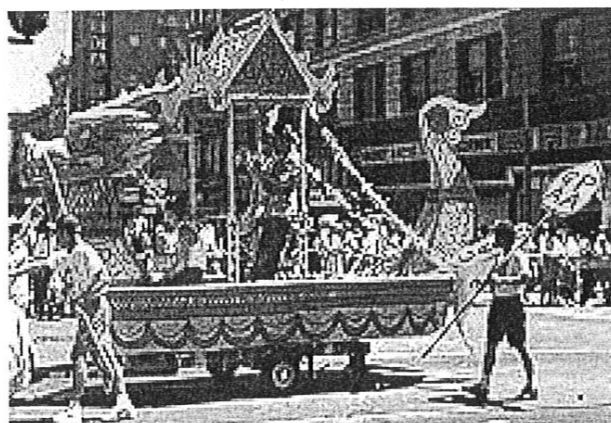
The Day of the Parade:

On the day of the parade, units must check in no later than 11am on Park Lane. The Organiser will instruct each unit to their parade location. All floats will be judged prior to the parade and prizes will be awarded prior to step off.



Small trailers and Sailboats on Trailers:

One idea was a small sailboat on it trailer. Decorate the sides, put the sails up, and put a couple of people in the boat, and we would have a float called "Sailing into the new millennium".



(small trailer)

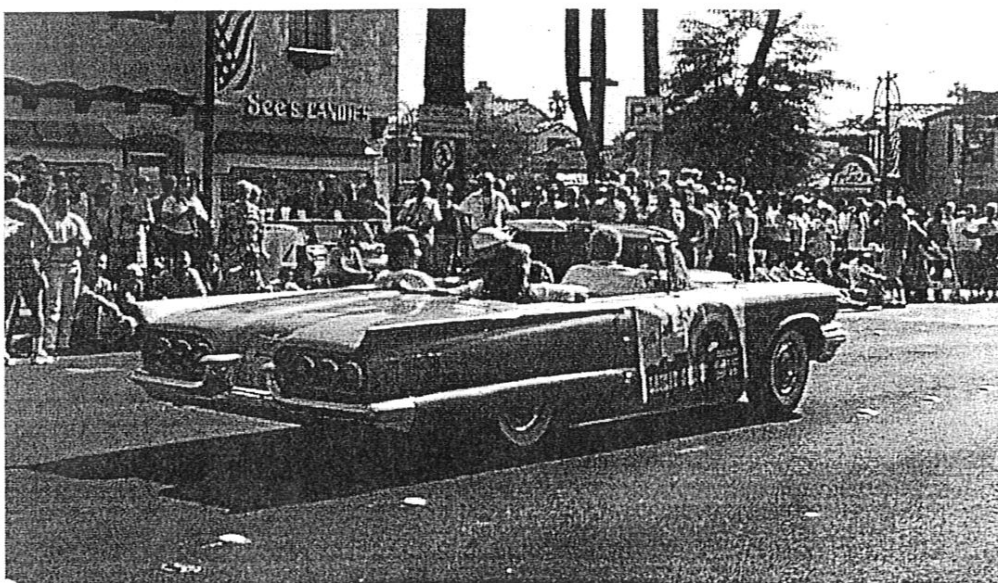
Here are some examples of floats built on lawn tractors:



Balloons Add Sparkle:



Antique Cars:

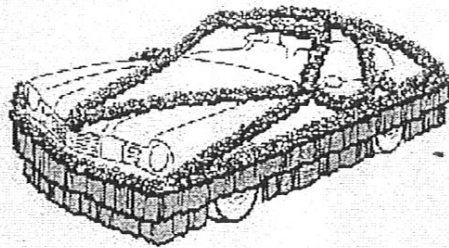
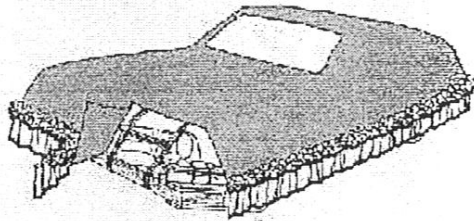


Here is an example of a float made from a Golf Cart:



Cars, and Golf Carts:

Using these techniques, it is easy to see how most types of floats can be made using many different bases and themes. Cars, Golf Carts, Lawn tractors.



(courtesy of Valley Decorating)

Flat Bed Trailers:

The same principles apply for trailers. For most trailers however, people can be added. Make sure there are handrails or posts for each person to hold. Note that the side frame is usually on hinges to lift up during transport and is at least 16" from the ground. The 8" fringe will lower the effect. You can use special mats for the floor of the float or spray paint the plywood. You can make the props on the float with cutout plywood and chicken wire.