

A Wagon Caparison Tutorial

By Lady Margaret Palmer

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So you want to make a covering for your modern utility wagon, something you can identify at a distance, with your heraldry on it. This tutorial covers how to make a covering based on Mistress Annisa's Horse caparison: http://annisa.garrigues.net/classhandouts/Annisa_Caparison_Class.pdf

Like a horse caparison, the wagon caparison has an outer fabric and a lining fabric. Unlike a horse caparison, which would normally be made of linen, silk, or wool, the wagon comparison is made of felt, which does not need hemmed edges. The pattern includes a lining piece of a different color – you may decide to exclude the lining to cut down on time or fabric costs.

The tutorial includes making heraldic devices out of felt and sewing them to a caparison of a different color. You may decide to use your heraldic colors for the main and lining colors instead.

The caparison in this tutorial has an outer fabric of charcoal grey felt, a lining of pink felt, and heraldic devices consisting of blue, green, and gold felt. The lining and heraldic devices are sewn on with grey thread to match the outer fabric.



Concept:

The covering is sewn from four rectangular pieces and seven straps to tie to the cart. Two of the four pieces are sewn together to form the back half – three straps, two at the corners, one in the middle, tie the covering to the wagon. The remaining two pieces form the front two pieces, each with two straps to tie to the cart. The front section is in two parts to allow the handle of the cart to attach back to the cart.

Measurements:

You will need to measure the distance from the center of the cart on one side to the same point on the other side. This length is half of the cart perimeter. Mine was 53". Decide how long you want the covering to go. Mine is 15" - with seam allowance, everything will fit on 1 yard of 72" felt.

Measure the width of the cart handle enclosure – your covering will not cover this area.

Length [L] (in inches) :

Depth [D] (in inches) :

Cart handle enclosure [C] (in inches) :

Length – cart handle enclosure [B]:

Seam allowance (in inches) [SA]:

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The back covering measurement is the $(D + SA) \times (L/2 + 2*SA)$.

Back covering measurement:

The front covering measurement is $(D+ SA) \times (B/2 + 2*SA)$

Front covering measurement:

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On my cart, the depth was 15", the length was 53", the cart handle enclosure was 2", and the seam allowance was 5/8".

The back covering measurement = $(15 + 5/8") \times (53/2 + 5/8 *2) = 15 \frac{5}{8}" \times 27.75"$

The front covering measurement = $(15 + 5/8") \times ((53-2)/2 + 5/8 *2) = 15 \frac{5}{8}" \times 26.75"$

Going forward, the back covering piece is the larger rectangle. The front piece is the smaller rectangle.

Materials:

1 yard of 72" craft felt in one color for the outer fabric

1 yard of 72" craft felt in a contrasting color for the lining fabric

¼" yard of 72" craft felt in each heraldic color

Thread

Pattern paper

Scissors for cutting fabric

Pins

One or more paper copies of the heraldic device

Optional:

Thread in contrasting colors

Scissors for cutting small heraldic charges out of felt

Paper scissors

Marking pencil, pen, or chalk to trace heraldic charges

Procedure:

Draw out your large rectangular pieces on pattern paper. Draw out one 16" by 1" rectangle on pattern paper for your strap. Cut out the pattern paper.

Lay out your outer fabric. If you are doing a lining, you may stack the two fabrics together. Pin your patterns to the fabric and cut out two of the smaller rectangles, two of the larger rectangles, and seven straps from the outer fabric.

Line up one of the smaller rectangles with its lining. While there is no right side in felt, consider this as the right sides facing each other. Fold two of the straps in half so they are 8" long. Peel back the corners of the rectangles and arrange the straps so that the folded edge overhangs the corner by 1" and most of the strap is inside the fabric. Pin and sew all edges except for the long edge away from the straps. This is the bottom of the covering and does not get sewn.



Repeat with the second smaller rectangle.

Sew the two larger rectangles of the outer fabric together by the short edge. Repeat with the lining fabric pieces. Line these two pieces up and place the straps in the corners like on the shorter rectangles. The final strap is folded and placed along the seam where the rectangles were sewn together. Sew the three edges together, leaving the bottom edge unsewn.

Turn the sewn rectangles right side out. If you wish, you may press down the seams with a cool iron or stitch another line near the seam to hold the seam down.

You now have a basic covering for your wagon.



Making the mini heraldic devices:

Some notes: My device is equally divided horizontally into a blue section and a green section, with smaller animals in gold on each half. I found it simpler to cut the top and bottom portions separately, sew them together, then sew the animal charges on top of that field. If your device is less equally divided, you may want to build your device out one layer at a time. For instance, for the Barony of Madrone, I would cut out a black shield, sew a white triangle for the pile on top and then sew the Madrone tree on top of the pile.

You may make as many devices as you wish – I started with five. If you want more later on, it is simple to remove the existing devices, rearrange them, then tack them back on.

Procedure:

Cut out the paper pattern in a way that makes sense for your device. It is useful to have multiple copies for this purpose. Pin the pattern to your fabric and cut out your charges and field. It is alright if you can't get the details on smaller charges or if things don't line up exactly.

If there are field divisions that need to be attached, switch the two together (looking for recommendations on how to describe it). It is alright if the thread shows. Tack the charges onto the field with short stitches on the right side and long stitches on the wrong side.

With the covering tied to the wagon, pin the devices where you want them to go. Untie the covering and tack the device to the covering in the same fashion on the outer fabric. Because the bottom edge is open, you can avoid sewing through the lining.



Your caparison is now complete!

