

Ox-Cart Man

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Read about the ox-cart man and how one thing leads to another.

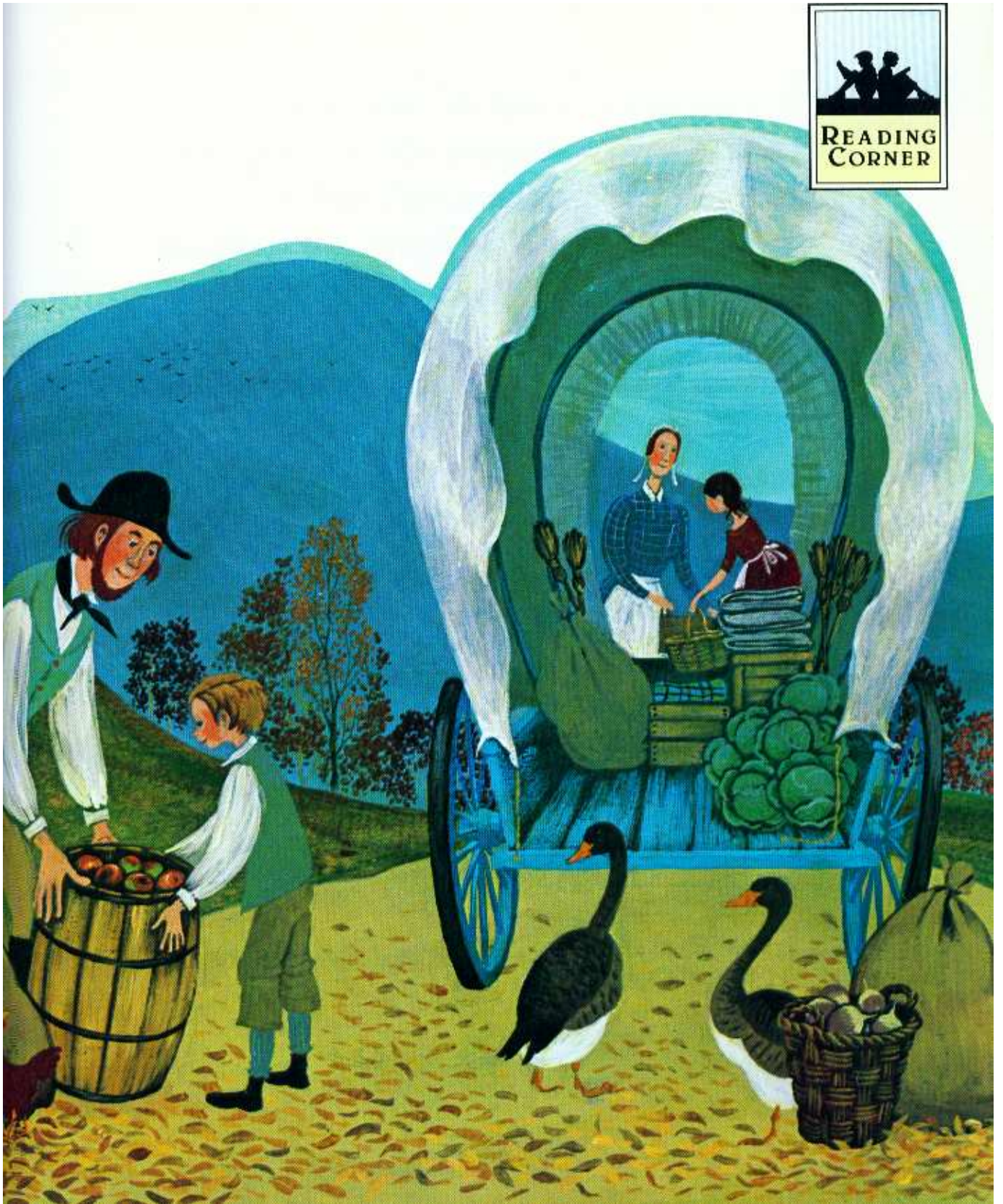
In October he backed his ox into his cart and he and his family filled it up with everything they made or grew all year long that was left over.

He packed a bag of wool he sheared from the sheep in April.

He packed a shawl his wife wove on a loom from yarn spun at the spinning wheel from sheep sheared in April.

He packed five pairs of mittens his daughter knit from yarn spun at the spinning wheel from sheep sheared in April.





He packed candles the family made.

He packed linen made from flax they grew.

He packed shingles he split himself.

He packed birch brooms his son carved with
a borrowed kitchen knife.

He packed potatoes they dug from their
garden—but first he counted out potatoes enough
to eat all winter and potatoes for seed next
spring.

He packed a barrel of apples, honey and
honeycombs, turnips, and cabbages, a wooden
box of maple sugar from the maples they tapped
in March when they boiled and boiled and boiled
the sap away.

He packed a bag of goose feathers that his
children collected from the barnyard geese.



When his cart was full, he waved good-bye
to his wife, his daughter, and his son and he
walked at his ox's head ten days over hills,
through valleys, by streams, past farms and
villages until he came to Portsmouth and
Portsmouth Market.

He sold the bag of wool.

He sold the shawl his wife made.

He sold five pairs of mittens.

He sold candles and shingles.

He sold birch brooms.

He sold potatoes.

He sold apples.

He sold honey and honeycombs, turnips and
cabbages.

He sold maple sugar.



He sold a bag of goose feathers.

Then he sold the wooden box he carried the maple sugar in.

Then he sold the barrel he carried the apples in.

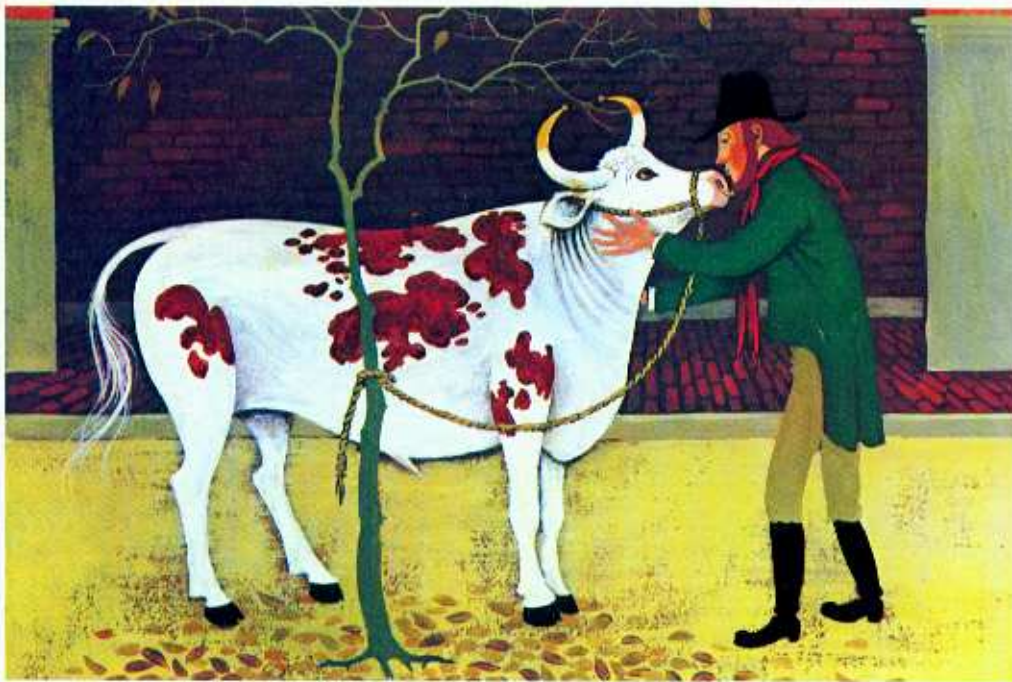
Then he sold the bag he carried the potatoes in.

Then he sold his ox cart.

Then he sold his ox, and kissed him good-bye on his nose.

Then he sold his ox's yoke and harness.

With his pockets full of coins, he walked through Portsmouth Market.





He bought an iron kettle to hang over the fire at home, and for his daughter he bought an embroidery needle that came from a boat in the harbor that had sailed all the way from England, for his son he bought a Barlow knife, for carving birch brooms with and for the whole family he bought two pounds of wintergreen peppermint candies.



Then he walked home, with the needle and the knife and the wintergreen peppermint candies tucked into the kettle, and a stick over his shoulder, stuck through the kettle's handle, and coins still in his pockets, past farms and villages, over hills, through valleys, by streams, until he came to his farm, and his son, his daughter, and his wife were waiting for him, and his daughter took her needle and began stitching, and his son

took his Barlow knife and started whittling, and they cooked dinner in their new kettle, and afterward everyone ate a wintergreen peppermint candy, and that night the ox-cart man sat in front of his fire stitching new harness for the young ox in the barn and he carved a new yoke and sawed planks for a new cart and split shingles all winter, while his wife made flax into linen all



winter, and his daughter embroidered linen all winter, and his son carved Indian brooms from birch all winter, and everybody made candles, and in March they tapped the sugar maple trees and boiled the sap down, and in April they sheared the sheep, spun yarn, and wove and knitted, and in May they planted potatoes,





turnips, and cabbages, while apple blossoms bloomed and fell, while bees woke up, starting to make new honey, and geese squawked in the barnyard, dropping feathers as soft as clouds.