Dwellings of Fort Larned – An Earthy Experience

Fort Larned Field Trip Program

Grades 4 – 7

Fort Larned was established on the Santa Fe Trail in 1859. The soldiers built crude dugouts, sod and adobe shelters, and a picket stockade fencing for the animals. Students will explore the construction and the living conditions of the fort dwellings.

**Step into a Shelter Rich History**

You have been hired as a civilian to do work at Fort Larned. There is no room for you to stay at the fort. You will need to find shelter. What would you need to build your shelter so that it could withstand the weather, keep you safe, and feel like home? You will need to choose materials that are suitable for the climate and environment of the Kansas Plains. *Hands-on activities include materials for students to examine and choose for a shelter.*

Adobe buildings had very thick walls that keep them cool in the hot weather. Adobe buildings of the 19th century did not weather well. Too much water made adobe crumble. Imagine laying on a hospital bed in the original adobe hospital at Fort Larned, trying to get well – with adobe disintegrating around you. *Adobe brick making molds and baked adobe bricks will be on display and can be handled.*

Dugouts are built into the side of a hill and there is just one way in and out – and no windows! Your walls are dirt. If you are close to water, you might get flooded. Unwanted guests in your dugout will have four legs, possibly wings, and just might slither under your bed clothes! The first bakery at the fort was a dugout along the Pawnee Creek. *Hands-on activity will separate what you would need and what would be unwelcome in your dugout. Students will read primary documents written by Corporal Adolph Hunnius and Forrestine Hooker about living in a dugout.*

Students will explore geological features up close and personal. The sandstone and limestone that makes up the nine original buildings gives away secrets of the past. The geological processes occurred millions of years ago when Kansas was underwater. *Students will hold fossils, iron ore concretions and see dense smooth limestone known as Kansas Marble. Students will explore our mission of protecting and preserving Fort Larned.*

This education program includes the history of the 10th Cavalry Company A, known as the Buffalo Soldiers, while stationed at Fort Larned. An educational tour of the buildings will also be included in this two-hour program.