

People of Fort Larned

Infantry Soldiers- Most of the soldiers stationed at Fort Larned served in the infantry. Infantry are foot soldiers, carrying their weapon and all supplies on foot. Their duties included drilling, escorting wagon trains, guard duty, and cleaning. Some even took turns cooking and working in the bakery. They lived in cramped living conditions, even sharing a bed with another soldier. They were paid about \$13 per month.

Cavalry- Cavalry soldiers fought on horseback. They were ideal for fighting on the vast open areas of the Great Plains. Their speed on horseback allowed them to respond quickly to problems near the fort. The cavalry's horses were kept in a stable at the fort. Both infantry and cavalry soldiers were known as enlisted men.

Officers- The officers were in charge of the enlisted men. They were responsible for drilling, training and disciplining the enlisted men. Most officers attended college. They were provided better living quarters and pay than the enlisted men. They were allowed to bring their wives and children with them. Officers were required to purchase their own uniforms, food, and furnishings for their quarters.

Officers Wives- Leaving the "niceties" of the east, they followed their army husbands west with what few possessions could fit into a wagon. Their role was behind the scenes. Usually the officer's wives were in charge of entertaining, educating, and raising the children. The wives had a huge impact on the fort because they brought a civilizing influence.

Laundresses- Social standards in the 1860s prevented close relationships between officers' wives and the other women on post. Some of the enlisted men's wives served as laundresses. They were in charge of washing the soldier's laundry by hand. There was one laundress for every 19 enlisted men. They received two dollars out of every soldier's pay each month for their services, making their wages more than double that of an infantry soldier. The laundresses were the only women at the fort recognized by the government as employees.

Post Surgeon- The post surgeon was an officer and lived in the officer's quarters. He provided treatment, including surgery, for the soldiers as well as civilians. He also recorded the weather and other scientific data including plant and animal life around the fort.

Indian Agent- The Indian agent interacted with Native American tribes on behalf of the United States government. He helped negotiate peace treaties and provided annuities, payments of money or supplies, to the tribes.

Commissary- The commissary was where the food rations from the army were issued to the enlisted men. At best, the food supply at Fort Larned left a little to be

desired. Fresh vegetables and fruits were very rare. They were sometimes available in the sutler's store.

Sutler- The sutler was a civilian (not a member of the military) who sold items to the soldiers including food, tobacco, toothbrushes, candy, books, playing cards, pencils, papers, and other personal items - but prices were a bit high. They were set by the military. He would also trade with local Native Americans and travelers along the Santa Fe Trail. The sutler's store was a popular place for the soldiers to gather and play games. The store at Fort Larned even had a bowling alley!

Quartermaster- This position was one of the most important on any frontier fort. The quartermaster was in charge of all the army's supplies, except for food. All uniform items, weapons, and other supplies were issued to the soldiers by the quartermaster. He was also in charge of the construction and maintenance of the fort. The quartermaster was responsible for hiring and supervising civilian employees, including carpenters, blacksmiths, clerks, interpreters, scouts and guides.

Civilians- During the year of 1868 the quartermaster at Fort Larned employed about 54 civilians doing various duties. Civilians are non-military personnel who usually specialize in a trade. Some of the civilian positions included:

Interpreters- a person who translated speech between the military and Native Americans. They were paid up to \$100 per month.

Scouts- patrolled the area around the fort to keep an eye on the movement of the Native Americans. Most scouts were from other Native Americans tribes themselves. They were paid about \$75 per month.

Blacksmiths- made nails, horseshoes, and wagon pieces. They heated wrought (raw) iron and used tools such as a hammer and anvil to bend and shape the iron. They were paid about \$85 per month.

Carpenters- built and maintained the fort's structures. Carpenters also maintained many of the wooden wagon pieces for the military. They were paid about \$85 per month.

Wheelwrights- built and repaired the wooden wagon wheels. They were paid about \$85 per month.

Teamsters- a person who drove a team, usually of oxen or mules, pulling a military wagon. Teamsters were responsible for shipping most military supplies. They were paid about \$25 per month

Name: _____

Date: _____

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1. What roles did women play at the fort?

2. How many laundresses would a company of 76 soldiers require?

3. What foods would you like to be on the commissary list?

4. Which civilian earned the highest pay? Why do you think that is?

5. What job would you want at the fort? Why?