



## Virtual Traveling Trunk Teacher's Guide

The virtual traveling trunk is a collection of pictures of some of the rooms and items in the buildings at Fort Larned. It should be used with the “Being an Historical Investigator” lesson in the Life at Fort Larned Middle School Lesson Plan and is intended to give students a “snapshot” of life at Fort Larned in the 1860s.

The “trunk” is divided into three sections:

**Around the Post** - some items from buildings at the fort to give students an idea of typical army life at the time.

**Everyday Life** - items that people used on a daily basis.

**Uniforms and Equipment** - some uniform items and equipment the soldiers would have worn and used during their time in the army.

This guide provides some background information on the buildings and items found in the virtual traveling trunk to help facilitate student discussion about them. It is also divided into three sections to go along with the three sections of the trunk. You can use all the pictures in the trunk, or just the ones in one of the three sections.



## Around the Post

### *Inside the Barracks*

Each barracks building was divided into two company quarters, one on each side, to accommodate two companies of soldiers. Although regulations called for 100 soldiers per company, the average company size in the post-Civil War frontier army was 60 to 80 men. Each company quarters included a squad room, mess hall and first sergeant's quarters.

**Squad Room** – Like a bed room and living room all in one. This is where the soldiers slept and relaxed.

**Bunk Beds** – each bunk bed held slept four soldiers, two on each level head to foot. The mattresses were cloth bags, or ticks, filled with prairie hay and their pillows were their winter overcoats.

**Checkers and Cards** – a few games the soldiers played to pass the time.

**Heating Stove** – this would be the only source of heat in this room during the winter. It's obviously better to be closer rather than farther away.

**First Sergeant's Room and Company Office** – the First Sergeant was a senior enlisted man who helped the company officers run the company. He did not have to sleep in the squad room with the rest of the soldiers, and even got a bed to himself. During the day this room doubled as the company office where the First Sergeant and the company officers carried out the business of running the company.

**Mess Hall** – the soldiers "lunch room". They ate all their meals here as a company.

**Company Cups** – Many companies would collect money so they could get dishes identified with their company designation.

**Kitchen** – where the designated company cook would prepare the meals for the soldiers of his company.



## Around the Post

### *The Post Hospital*

The army provided medical care for all soldiers, which included the services of a post surgeon, or doctor, as well as a hospital. Medical knowledge was not as advanced in the 1860s as it is today so often the doctor could not do much more than make a patient comfortable and hope their body's natural defenses healed them. Also, in a time before antiseptics and antibiotics, even a simple scratch might kill you if it became infected.

**Examination and Operating Table** – this is an original table in the post surgeon's office used for both exams and operations.

**Medicine Bottles** – Although medical professionals at the time did not have a lot of options for curing people, there were actually lots of medicines around. These are original glass medicine bottles found in archeological digs at Fort Riley, Kansas. They are on loan to Fort Larned.

**Ward Room** – these beds are designed more for comfort than anything else. If you really can't cure somebody, you can always make them comfortable while you're waiting for nature to do the work for you.

**Office desk** – a work desk in the physician assistant's quarters and office. Note how the form is different from today's desks to accommodate the type of system used to gather and record information. The "pigeon holes" at the back of desk could be compared to file storage on a computer today.

### *The Shops Building*

The only building at the post that doesn't face the parade ground. With a bakery, carpenter shop and blacksmith shop in this building there was a lot of work going on here. Besides the men working inside and outside the building, wagons would be coming and going all day long – not the kind of activity you want disturbing the neatness of the parade ground.

**Blacksmith** – the army employed civilians as blacksmiths. They worked for the Quartermaster Department, which was responsible for all the supplies and building upkeep. The blacksmith made or repaired any metal object or tool on the post. He also provided shoes for the fort owned horses and mules but not the horses for any cavalry company stationed at the post.



## Around the Post

### *The Shops Building*

**Bakery Oven** – one of the staple foods for the soldiers was bread, which would be baked in the post bakery. The bakery oven would have a constant fire going to keep up with the huge demand for bread. Even using special heat resistant bricks and mortar the bakery oven had to be replaced several times while the fort was in operation.

**Bakers Quarters and Office** – the job of baking bread was so important the baker had his own quarters in the bakery along with an office.

### *The Blockhouse*

Since this fort, like many frontier forts, did not have a wall around it, this building was originally supposed to be a defensive place the soldiers could use in case they were attacked by Indians. Almost as soon as Fort Larned's blockhouse was finished, though, it was apparent that it wouldn't be needed for defense so it eventually became the post guard house. A guard house is where soldiers are sent when if they break one of the Army's many rules or regulations or if they are disrespectful to an officer.

**Ball and Chain** – soldiers in the guard house could still go out on work details so this device was used to keep them from running away when outside working. The clamp is placed around a person's ankle so they have to drag the heavy iron cannonball around wherever they go.

**Loopholes** – also known as gun holes. If the fort had ever been attacked and the soldiers had retreated to the blockhouse, they could have fired their rifles out the loopholes at the Indians.

**Sweatbox** – this stands outside the Guardhouse and is used for punishment. On hot days, a soldier sentenced to time in the sweatbox might stand in it for 8 hours at a time with no food or water.



## Around the Post

### *Old Commissary Building*

The commissary is where all food items on the post are kept. Although the staple food for soldiers was bread and beef, the army did provide a variety of other foods as the pictures from the food side of the Old Commissary Building show.

### *On the Commissary Side*

**Canned Goods**

**Food Storage Barrels 1 & 2**

**Food Stores**

**Provision List**

### *On the Arsenal Side*

While food was kept in Fort Larned's Old Commissary Building, one end was also used as the post arsenal, a place where ammunition and powder were stored.

**Ammunition chests** – For artillery ammunition. These chests could be carried with a cannon.

**Ammunition boxes** – Ammunition for the soldiers' rifles.



## Around the Post

### *Quartermaster's Warehouse*

The Quartermaster Department was responsible for all other supplies besides food. Like a modern day Wal-Mart, everything needed to live and work on a frontier post would be available through the quartermaster department – fuel, cleaning supplies and tools, uniforms, nails.

**Coffins** – A reality anywhere, you always need to be prepared when somebody dies.

**Nail Storage Barrels** – Like any good hardware store, there would always be nails on hand.

**Oil Storage Barrels** – Different kinds of oil were used for both fuel and lubricants.

**Scales** – One of the most important aspects of any supply operation is keeping track of what, and how much of, everything you have.

**Army Wagon** – This is a basic wagon used for hauling goods around the post. It's comparable to a small truck and the quartermaster department would have had many of these at the post to carry out the daily business of keeping the 300 or so soldiers, officers and civilians supplied with everyday items.



## Daily Life

Many of the items people used in daily life were very different from the ones we use today. At the same time, though some might have appeared different, you can often see similarities in the way they were designed and used. The pictures in this group are of some items used on a daily basis by people at Fort Larned.

### *Barracks and Hospital*

**Candles and Lanterns** - a very important item in a time with no electricity for overhead lights and lamps. These are sitting on tables in the company squad room of the barracks and in one of the hospital ward rooms.

**Indoor toilets** - the hospital is the only building on the post with an indoor “toilet”. As a bench with holes and buckets underneath it’s really not much more than indoor outhouse.

**Rocking chair** – this is not something very different from what many students may have in their houses and is an example of something that has stayed essentially the same over the years.

**Bath tub** – a very good discussion point for this is the fact that it’s so small. The reason has to do with how the bath water would be heated (and the amount of energy needed for that).

### *Officer’s Quarters*

**Bed ropes** – supported mattresses. Had to be pulled tight to keep the mattress from sagging, thus the expression “Sleep tight.”

**Bed rope winder** – used to tighten the bed ropes.

**Chamber pot (open and closed)** – used for a toilet when people didn’t want to go to the outhouse, usually at night and in really cold weather. A good discussion point for this one is the fact that it’s “disguised” as a stool.”

**Cook Stove** – how would it be different to use this stove?

**Lye soap** – People often made their own soap.



## Daily Life

**Outhouse** – What would it be like to live without indoor plumbing?

**Sewing Kit** – People back then tended to mend clothes rather than buy new ones when they started to wear out.

**Wash Basin and Pitcher** – Used for washing up.

**Washboard** – Used for washing clothes.

**Well** - What would it be like to not have running water (hot or cold) in the house?

### *School House*

One half of the New Commissary building was converted to a school house. It was used mainly by the children of the enlisted soldiers, and sometimes by the enlisted men themselves. At the time, the army did not require recruits to know how to read and write and many couldn't. Some posts provided these men with the opportunity to take classes in the evening after they were done with their regular duties.

**Dunce cap** – Can be used to contrast how students were treated at that time versus today.



## Uniform and Equipment

Soldiers did not have to pay for their uniforms, or their equipment. The army issued all the uniform items and equipment they would need throughout their five year enlistment. This section includes some of the uniform items and equipment a soldier of the frontier army would wear and use.

*The following items are found mostly in the barracks company squad room.*

**Rifles in wall holder** – The weapons are stored in the barracks where the men can get them quickly, however, they would have to get the ammunition from the arsenal. Why would you not want to store weapons and ammunition in the same place?

**Uniforms on wall pegs** – there are no closets or dressers in this room. Everything the soldiers have must be hung on the pegs or stored on the shelf above it. Each peg has a number that corresponds to the number on a bunk to which the soldier is assigned.

**Canteen and Haversack** – a haversack was used to carry food when the soldiers were out on escort duty.

**Cartridge Box and Bayonet** – a bayonet could be used for hand-to-hand fighting.

**Cartridge Box** - cartridge box carried a soldier's ammunition

**Cavalry Saddle** – this is McClellan saddle, designed by Gen. George McClellan before the Civil War. Although it's hard to tell from this picture, the saddle has a split down the middle of the seat for greater comfort.....for the horse.

**Knapsack** – like a backpack. Used to carry personal items, blankets, etc. when the soldiers were out on escort duty.

**Hats** – kepi and Hardee Hat. The kepi was for wear with the everyday work uniform.

**Hardee Hat** – dress hat

**Shirt**



## Uniform and Equipment

**Brogans** – often called booties because they were considered little boots. Cavalry boots were usually knee high and considered “real” boots.

**Dress Coat** - Worn for special occasions.

**Overcoat** - A soldier’s winter coat.

**Raincoat** - No Goretex for these soldiers. Soldiers’ raincoats were usually made of oilcloth, or rubberized canvas.

**Enlisted Uniform Allowance** (in the Quartermaster Warehouse Issue Room) - Shows how many of each item enlisted soldiers were allowed to have for each year of their enlistment..

### *Weapons*

**Rifle (in the barracks)** – These are muzzle loading single shot rifles converted to breech-loading, single shot rifles.

**Mountain Howitzer (in the arsenal)** – this is a small, easily transported artillery piece that can be operated by one person. Since Indians did not have any artillery there was no need for larger, full-size artillery pieces on the frontier.