

A Fine Country...

“Long ago the Arapahoes had a fine country of their own. The white man came to see them, and the Indians gave him buffalo meat and a horse to ride on...the country was big enough for the white man and the Arapahoes, too...The government sent agents and soldiers out there...and both have driven us from our lands. We do not want to fight.”

Chief Little Raven, 1871

Courtesy of Boot Hill Museum

Tension in the Homelands

We became more circumspect in our wanderings, and the wagons loitered not behind; for the dreaded Camanche [sic] and Pawnee claim the region over which we were journeying.

Lewis Garrard, 1847

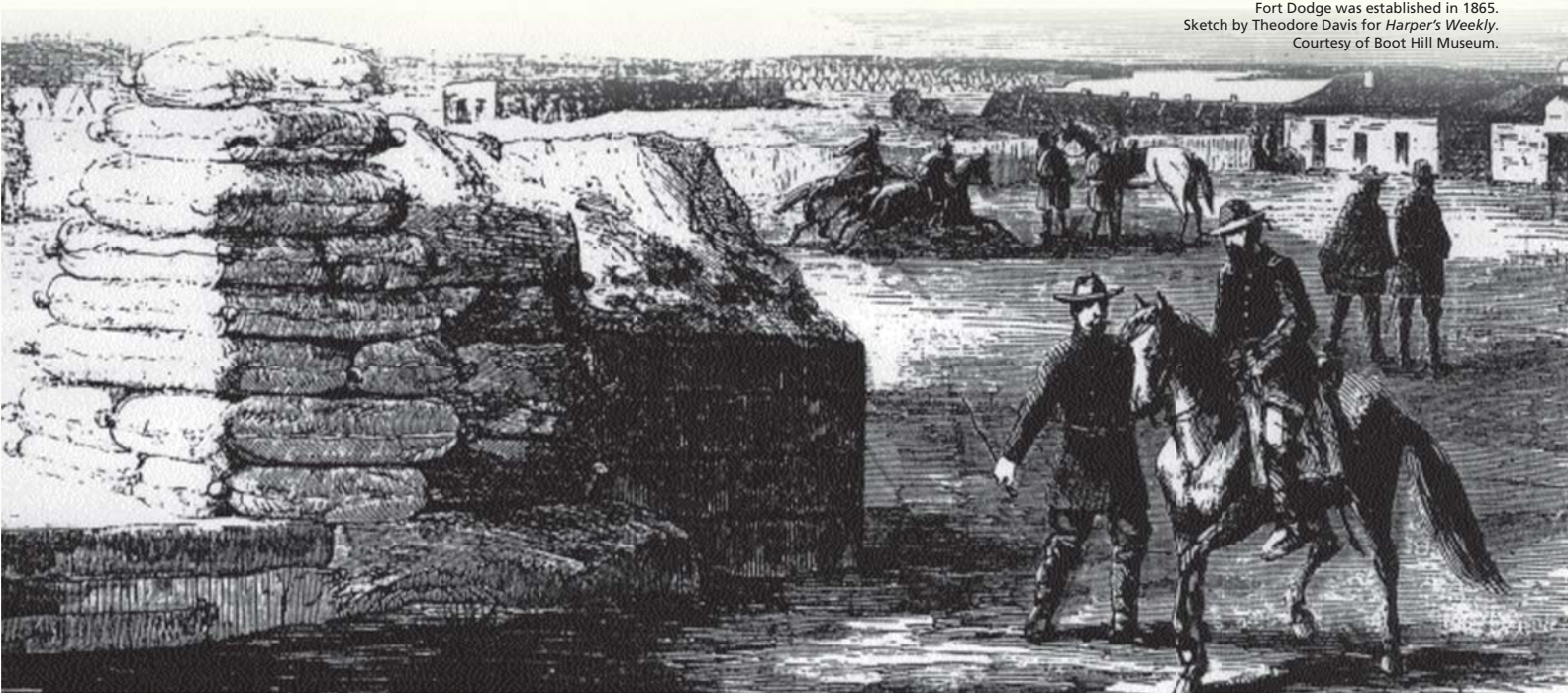
While Santa Fe Trail traders saw this arid land as isolated, Plains Indians saw it as home. Cheyenne, Apache, Kiowa-Apaches, and Arapahoe Indians roamed here. Through war and cooperation, the various tribes defined their home territories.

As more and more Santa Fe Trail travelers passed through the lands of the Plains Indians, an uneasy tension developed. Although Mexicans, Americans, and Plains Indians traded with and married one another, trouble could arise at any time. Friendly trade, wary suspicion, plunder, or bloodshed could result from any encounter.

End of Isolation

Soldiers and temporary fortifications protected trading caravans as early as 1847, but isolation and lack of supplies led to their abandonment by 1854. Fort Dodge, established in 1865, was the area's first permanent fort.

With the permanent fort came increased numbers of traders and settlers. When combined with a new railroad and a strong military presence, this pushed Plains Indians into the territories of other tribes. Facing the loss of bison and other migrating wildlife, Plains Indians found their survival jeopardized. Eventually consigned to reservations, it became impossible to live the traditional way of life.



Fort Dodge was established in 1865.
Sketch by Theodore Davis for *Harper's Weekly*.
Courtesy of Boot Hill Museum.