

Daily Life of an Army Soldier at Fort Stanton

Fort Stanton Historic Site



Essential Question

What was daily life like for an American army soldier stationed at Fort Stanton in 1858?

This lesson will introduce students to the daily routine of soldiers stationed along the New Mexico frontier during the 1850s and the U.S. Army's complex role in America's expansion into the Southwest. Students will read a historical document and view a video describing and demonstrating aspects of daily life at Fort Stanton, NM in the 1850s..

Objectives

After completing this lesson, student will be able to:

1. Describe the role that the US Army played in America's expansion into the Southwest.
2. Describe the daily routines of US Army soldiers stationed on the Western frontier during the mid-19th century.
3. Identify what soldiers wore, carried, and used during their daily tasks
4. Describe the daily life and duties of a soldier in camp and on campaign.

Background

When New Mexico became a United States territory in 1850, the army established forts across the region to encourage non-native settlement and protect existing settlements and trade routes. The U.S. Army established Fort Stanton in 1855 as part of this effort.

The Army chose to build this new fort at a strategic location in the Sacramento Mountains and they named the post in honor of Captain Henry W. Stanton, who had been killed during a skirmish nearby with Mescalero Apaches. The first

soldiers arrived at Fort Stanton in June of 1855 and immediately began constructing the post. The initial garrison at Fort Stanton consisted of soldiers from the U.S. 8th Infantry and the U. S. 1st Dragoons.

The U.S. Army played a complicated role during the development of the modern American West, acting as the primary enforcer of the American government’s evolving Indian policies but also undertaking more constructive and less violent missions. The U. S. Corps of Topographical Engineers conducted almost all the initial land surveys of the West. Officers of the U. S. Army wrote scientific reports describing the climate, the terrain, the natural resources, the indigenous people and the flora and fauna of the West. Enlisted men contributed by constructing roads and bridges, escorting the U. S. Mail and immigrant wagon trains, and building telegraph lines.

The men and women who lived and served at Fort Stanton came from all walks of life and from locations across America and beyond. During the late 19th-century, the U.S. Army officer corps consisted largely of West Point graduates, many of them veterans of the Civil War. The enlisted men, however, consisted primarily of poor farm boys, African-Americans (many of them veterans of the Civil War), and a large contingent of immigrants recruited from the streets and docks of East Coast cities. Most of these immigrants came from Ireland, Germany or other parts of western Europe, but a few also hailed from eastern Europe, Asia and even the West Indies.

A soldier’s day began at sunrise and ended about 9:00-10:00 p.m. He woke up to the first bugle call of the day, “Assembly of Trumpeters.” This call sounded between 4:45 a.m. and 6:40 a.m., depending on the time of the year and the preference of the commanding officer. A soldier’s day was filled with work details and drills. Soldiers constructed and repaired buildings, hauled water and cut wood, planted and maintained gardens, and did general maintenance of the grounds along with military duties such as drilling on the parade ground, tending to horses, and preparing for inspections.

Activities

K-4- Coloring and Identification Page

5-8- Reading Comprehension Journal Entry

9-12- Writing Assignment: Editorial Article

New Mexico Content Standards

<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/instructional-materials/new-mexico-content-standards/>

K-5th Grade Standards

STRAND: History

Content Standard I: Students are able to identify important people and events in order to analyze significant patterns, relationships, themes, ideas, beliefs, and turning points in New Mexico, United States, and world history in order to understand the complexity of the human experience.

K-4 Benchmark I-A—New Mexico: Describe how contemporary and historical people and events have influenced New Mexico communities and regions.

K-4 Grade Performance Standards

(2nd Grade) 1. Describe how historical people, groups, and events have influenced the local community.

(3rd Grade) 1. Describe how the lives and contributions of people of New Mexico influenced local communities and regions.

(4th Grade) 1. Identify important issues, events, and individuals from New Mexico pre-history to the present.

5th – 8th Grade Standards

STRAND: Geography

5-8 Benchmark 2-B: explain the physical and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define regions, their relationships with other regions, and their patterns of change:

5-8 Grade Performance Standards

(5th Grade) 1. describe human and natural characteristics of places.

(6th Grade) 1. explain how places change due to human activity.

(7th Grade) 1. select and explore a region by its distinguishing characteristics; 2. describe the role of technology in shaping the characteristics of places.

(8th Grade) 1. describe how individual and cultural characteristics affect perceptions of locales and regions; and 2. describe political, population and economic regions that result from patterns of human activity, using New Mexico as an example.

9th – 12th Grade Standards

STRAND: History

Content Standard I: Students are able to identify important people and events in order to analyze significant patterns, relationships, themes, ideas, beliefs, and turning points in New Mexico, United States, and world history in order to understand the complexity of the human experience.

9-12 Benchmark 1-A. New Mexico: analyze how people and events of New Mexico have influenced United States and world history since statehood:

9-12 Performance Standards

2. Analyze the geographic, economic, social and political factors of New Mexico that impact United States and world history, to include: d. role of the federal government (e.g., military bases, national laboratories, national parks, Indian reservations, transportation systems, water projects).

Additional Resources

1. The National Cowboy Museum: Those Who Served: The US Army on the Frontier
<https://nationalcowboymuseum.org/explore/served-u-s-army-frontier/>
2. Buffalo Soldier National Museum <http://buffalosoldiermuseum.com/>
3. U.S. Army Women's Museum <https://awm.lee.army.mil/>