

By the Kansas State Historical Society

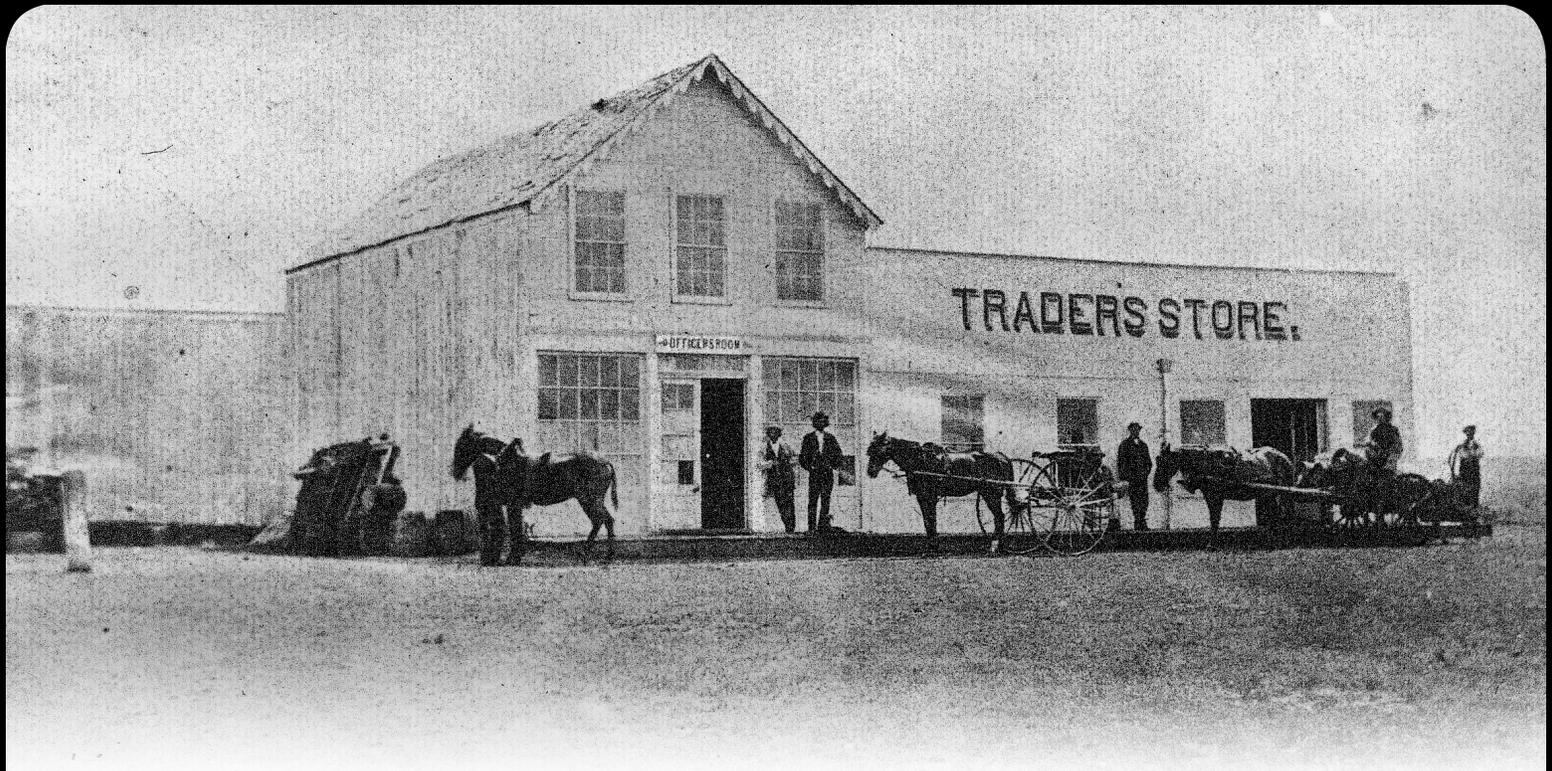
## The Economics of Being a Soldier On the Frontier

The government provided for most of a soldier's **needs**. Housing, food, and military clothing were issued to him. A soldier's pay then could be used for his **wants**. The lowest ranked enlisted man, a private, received about \$13 a month. A non-commissioned officer might earn \$30, and an officer's pay started at \$150 a month.

Post traders or sutlers were the only civilians allowed to set up shop on a military reserve. The sutler had a contract with the military to operate a general store in return for an annual salary. The prices at the store were determined not by the trader but by a board of officers.

Fort Hays had one of the best post trader's stores on the frontier. It was open to enlisted men and officers, as well as their families. In addition to the store, there was a club for officers and a lounge for enlisted men. On the back is a list of some of the items available for purchase from the Fort Hays sutler in 1863.





Potatoes, per bushel	\$ 2.25	Beer, per gallon	\$ 1.00
Apples, per bushel	\$ 3.50	Crackers, per pound	\$ .13
Flour, per sack	\$ 4.75	Corn Meal, per pound	\$ .04
Tomatoes, per can	\$ .60	Butter, per pound	\$ .25
Peaches, per can	\$ .85	Chocolate, per pound	\$ .50
Strawberries, per can	\$ .85	Brown Sugar, per pound	\$ .18
Oysters, per can	\$ .75	Cheese, per pound	\$ .22
Lobsters, per can	\$ .50	Tea, per pound	\$ 1.25
Pineapple, per can	\$ .85	Mixed Candy, per pound	\$ .90
Jelly, per can	\$ .75	Soap, per pound	\$ .30
Coffee, per box	\$ .45	Playing Cards, pack	\$ .25
Clothes Pins, per box	\$ 2.50	Diaper Pins	\$ .25
Cigars, per box	\$ 4.50	Neckties	\$ .30
Eggs, per dozen	\$ .30	Candles	\$ .25
Tomato Catsup, per bottle	\$ .20	Wash Boards	\$ 1.00
Blue Jean Pants, per pair	\$ 4.75	Hoop Skirts	\$ 2.50
Canvas, per yard	\$ .20	Lead Pencils	\$ .10
Blankets	\$11.00-15.00	Cologne, per bottle	\$ .25