
Virtual Field Trip

— Fort Yamhill, Grand Ronde OR —



WELCOME TO OUR SHARED HISTORY

The Story of Fort Yamhill and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde



Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area

Think of this place as a portal to the past. Explore the trails, use your imagination, and step back in time to gain a new perspective on what occurred here a century and a half ago. The Fort was in operation from 1856-1866 and served as a buffer between white settlers moving into the area and Native Americans located on the nearby Grand Ronde Reservation. Today, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are working together to better understand our heritage through archaeological and historic research.

Take a Walk into the Past

As you walk the trails, interpretive signs will help you discover original building locations, view the Grand Ronde Reservation, and picture the daily life of soldiers, settlers, and Native Americans. Of the 24 buildings associated with the Fort, only two exist today. One of the original officer's quarters is here. The Blockhouse has been moved to Palmer City Park in Dayton, Oregon.

During your walk, if you discover what looks like an artifact, don't disturb it. Contact the park staff.



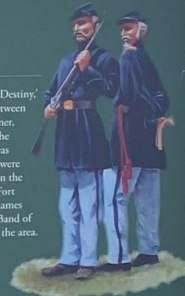
Our Voices From The Past



This icon will appear at the beginning of stories telling the Native American perspective on life at Fort Yamhill. Our stories tell of the impact of settlers coming to Oregon and our life on the Grand Ronde Reservation. Visit our website, www.grandronde.org, for more information.

Westward Expansion Why Fort Yamhill was Built

The flood of westward US settlement, known popularly as 'Manifest Destiny', reached its peak in the mid-1800s. Threats of conflicts in Oregon between settlers and Native Americans became so widespread that Joel Palmer, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Oregon Territory, begged the United States government for military intervention. This was primarily for the protection of Native Americans who were threatened by settlers. Three forts were created on the borders of the new reservations, including Fort Yamhill. The fort and nearby river's names were derived from the Yamhala Band of Kalapuyans who inhabited the area.



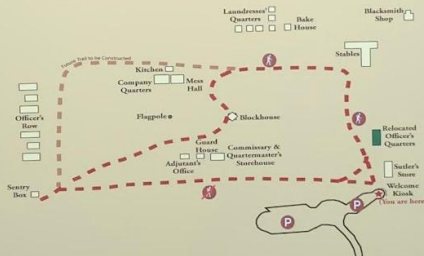
Our Voices From The Past



This icon will appear at the beginning of stories telling the soldier's perspective on life at Fort Yamhill. Our stories tell what it was like to be stationed here, policing the Indians who found Grand Ronde Reservation their new home.

Your Trail Experience

- Interpretive signs and historic site markers
- Vista of Grand Ronde Valley and Spirit Mountain
- 1/2 mile interpretive trail
- While portions of the trail are accessible, certain segments may be difficult.




Map Legend

- ★ Welcome Kiosk (you are here)
Begin trail to your left
- Relocated Officer's Quarters
- Trail Location (approximate)
- Historic Structure Location (approximate)
- P Parking Lot
- f ADA accessible trail

**WE GREET SETTLEMENT . . .
... WITH RESERVATIONS**

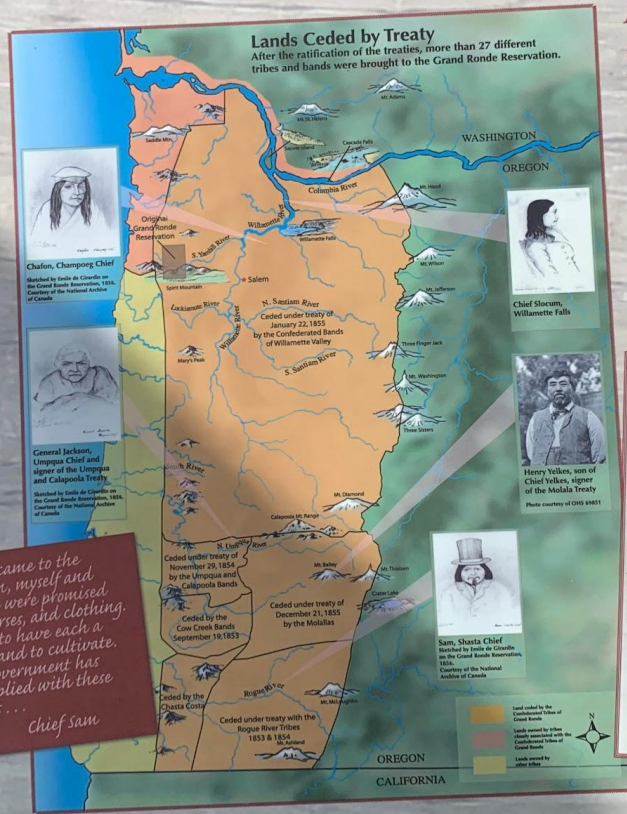
Good-bye
to Our Homelands




For thousands of years we lived on this land, thankful for its bounty. We lived for generations until white men came in strange clothes bringing goods to trade, and wanting more, always wanting more. A westward invasion in the mid-1800s showed us that the white men wanted our land and resources for themselves. Wagon trains brought settlers into our homelands. They were squatters. It was a dangerous, difficult time for us.

In treaty negotiations in the early 1850s, we attempted to reserve land within our traditional homelands. Facing more land taking by the settlers, we ceded most of our lands and were moved to the Grand Ronde Reservation. Over the years, the reservation dwindled from 64,000-plus acres to 5 acres (a tribal cemetery) in 1954. We began the slow process of reacquiring some of our original lands in 1983.

Before we came to the reservation, myself and my people were promised cattle, horses, and clothing. We were to have each a piece of land to cultivate. . . The government has not complied with these promises. . .



Accepting a New Life



We agreed to treaties that extinguished
aboriginal title to our homeland and
brought various tribes and bands
together on the Grand Ronde Reservation. The
government intended this reservation to ease
tensions between the settlers and our people. In
1856, we became a group of camps at Grand
Ronde beginning a struggle to scratch out an
existence. We attempted to survive as farmers,

gatherers, and laborers

while trying to maintain our tribal identities. Moving to the reservation forced our different tribes, with vastly different lifeways, to live side by side while speaking different languages and living under foreign rule.

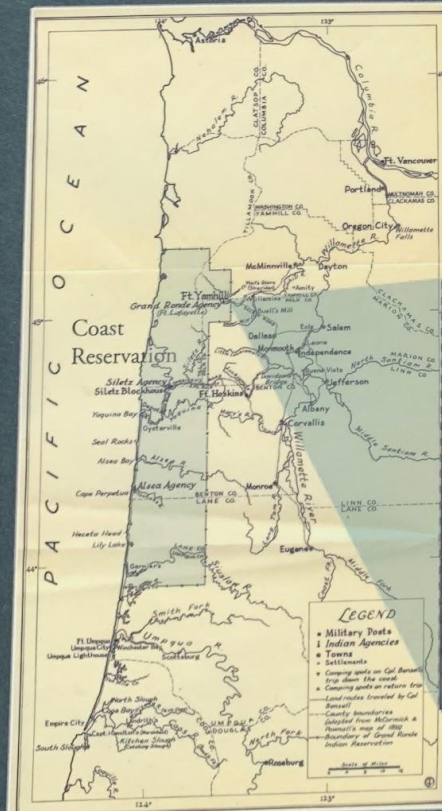
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Willamette Valley Treaty

POLICING OR PROTECTING?

A System of Forts

Fort Yamhill was one of several forts in western Oregon. Hostilities between Native Americans and settlers led to treaties and the establishment of the Grand Ronde Reservation. Forts such as Yamhill and Hoskins were built to keep the peace, protect Natives and settlers, and enforce reservation boundaries and rules.



Western Oregon Forts and Coast Reservation Map from *All Quiet on the Yamhill* by Royal A. Bensell edited by Gunter Barth



Hazen Map of 1886 (National Archives)

The Hazen Map to the left shows the Fort's location in relation to surrounding farmland and Indian camps. The Smith Map below shows the plan for Fort Yamhill.



Smith Map of 1856 (National Archives)

To Keep the Peace



Our first troops moved in after Indian Agent Joel Palmer wrote requesting military assistance. He feared the reservation would be overrun by angry white settlers moving in on the Indian's reservation land. Our intent—to maintain a temporary camp, protect the Indians and settlers from one another, and enforce rules. After two years, we had our fort with more than twenty buildings. Our job—to enforce the “Line of Demarcation” keeping the settlers and Indians separate. No one could pass our line without permission.

There are quarters sufficient for one company of soldiers . . . There are more than quarters enough for the officers, allowing one building to an officer. There is a good blockhouse . . . A good store house for quarter master & Commissary, a guard house and prison: a good hospital . . . laundresses houses: bake house: stables: barn: smith's & carpenter's shops: sutler's store &c. In short there are no buildings wanted.

Col. J.K.F. Mansfield, 1858








PASSAGE THROUGH TIME AND CHANGE


One Trail – Many Travelers

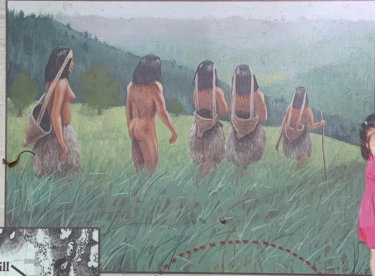

 This route was known by the settlers as the Killinuck Trail. We used it to travel between places like the Salmon River and Willamette Falls to trade and interact with others. This was long before white people came. Local tribes used this path to visit their tilxam (friends and relations) on the coast and the valley. It was a good route, the path of least resistance. Settlers recognized this and began to use it. Whites staying in the area created fear and friction. Later, we traveled this and other routes as we were relocated from our original homelands to the Grand Ronde Reservation.

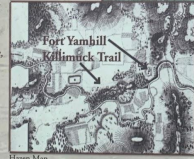
Time Marches On

Once used for trade, then for control, this route's significance would endure through time and change. Sections of the route became State Highway 22 in the 1920s, a link to Salem. A portion of the old route in the park has been restored as a foot trail for your enjoyment. Highway 22 continues to be an important route for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde as they revitalize their culture and traditions and welcome all people to visit and participate.


A Sliver in Time

 We located our fort along the trail so we could restrict traffic at the gate to the reservation. We could easily observe the gate, sentry box, and trail from Officers' Row and the blockhouse. During this ten-year sliver in time, we could easily control Indians' movements as well as movements of settlers who would harass them. The path turned into our road to Salem.

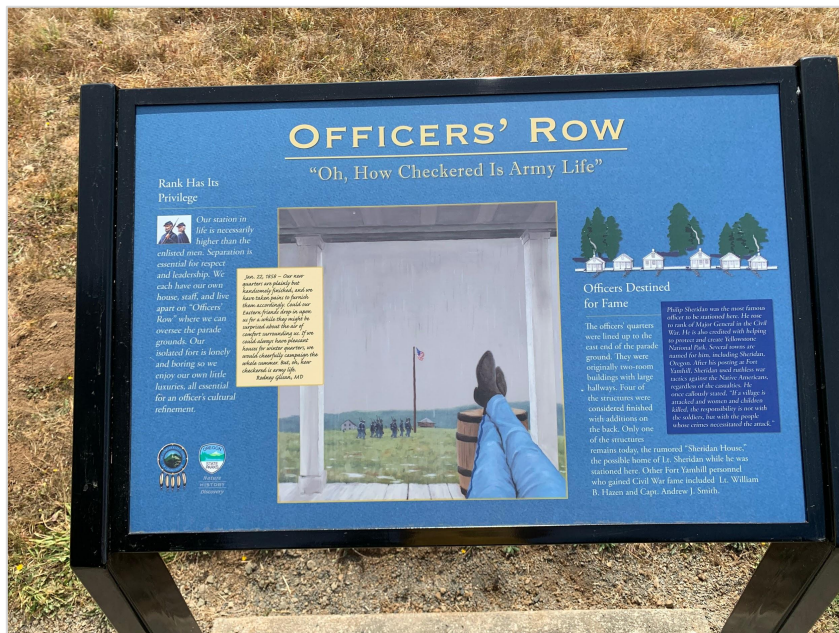





Hansen Map









RECONSTRUCTING OUR HERITAGE

Restoring a Cultural Landscape

Does your image of today's Willamette Valley region include large areas of prairie, stately oaks, and citrus flowers? This was the scene when Native Americans traditionally used fire to maintain a lightly forested grassland. They did it for easier hunting and gathering of food and other supplies. Elimination of fire in the 18th box allowed the forest to take over former prairie. Over time, tree roots have damaged historic foundations, roads, and fence lines here at Fort Yamhill. Many trees have been removed to prevent further disturbance to historic resources.

Count the tree rings on a nearby stump to see just how quickly the forest can take over.

Park in Progress

This cultural restoration in Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area is a cooperative effort between Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. It involves the work of archaeologists, historians, tribal elders, and others. Archaeological investigations reveal locations of buildings from the fort period. Artifacts discovered, in place, can reveal the precise location of buildings, for example, and can offer clues about the events and the lives of the past.

During your visit, if you discover what looks like an artifact, don't disturb it. Contact the park staff. Restoring our cultural heritage depends on it.



Artifacts collected during an Oregon State University archaeological dig at the site.

SOLDIER LIFE IS "SO INTIRELY VOID OF INTEREST"

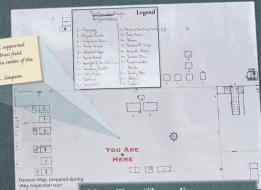
Minding the Fence

Fort Yamhill's not an exciting post. We're basically keeping watch and Indian on opposite sides of a fence. Add to this, the Civil War has begun. Any soldier worth his salt wants to serve in the defense of his country—not be half a continent away minding a fence.

It's 1862, and we volunteers replaced the regular Army types last year. We thought we had enlisted for the Great Cause. Our battles, while different from those of the soldiers in places like Gettysburg, are very real to us. We fight hunger, rain, isolation, alcoholism, monotony. Excitement by the officers, and regulation. Desertion is common here, but the wet winter and rough country drives most of the deserters back to duty.

July 9, 1862
Dear Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th inst. in relation to the matter of the fence. I have the honor to inform you that the fence is now being built and will be completed in a few days. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
John A. Smith

July 10, 1862
Dear Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th inst. in relation to the matter of the fence. I have the honor to inform you that the fence is now being built and will be completed in a few days. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
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Hup, Two, Three, Four

This map shows locations of the blockhouse, flag staff, adjutant's office, guard house, commissary and other buildings. Imagine the seemingly endless cadence of soldiers practicing their parade ground drill around these structures.

Using the map's legend, see how many building locations you can identify.





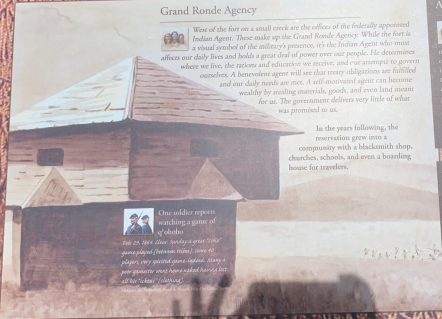
LIFE IN THE SHADOW OF THE FORT

Grand Ronde Agency



Wise as the fort on a small creek are the offices of the federally appointed Indian Agent. These make up the Grand Ronde Agency. While the fort is a visual symbol of the military's presence, it's the Indian Agent who must affect our daily lives and holds a great deal of power over our people. He determines where we live, the nation and education we receive, and our attempts to govern ourselves. A benevolent agent will see that treaty obligations are fulfilled and our daily needs are met. A self-interested agent can impoverish us by selling materials, goods, and even land meant for us. The government delivers very little of what was promised to us.

In the years following, the reservation grew into a community with a blacksmith shop, churches, schools, and even a boarding house for travelers.



One soldier reports watching a game of q'oboho.

q'oboho (q'oboho) is a favorite game. It is played on a flat prairie or beach. Two teams of nine players begin play when their leaders first strike the ball in the center of the playing area. Our equipment includes a wooden ball and nine bent wooden sticks. We try to pass the ball through the opposing team's goal. q'oboho is a very physical sport.

A Common Language



Over 25 dialects of twelve or thirteen languages were spoken on the early Reservation. Chinuk Wawa, our English, was the common language of the community. Chinuk Wawa is an indigenous language that originated from the mouth of the Columbia River. Nearly everyone who came here knew this language prior to arriving. Early Indian Agents, teachers, and priests found learning Chinuk Wawa essential to communicate with us. We remember and continue to teach this language to our children today.

q'oboho



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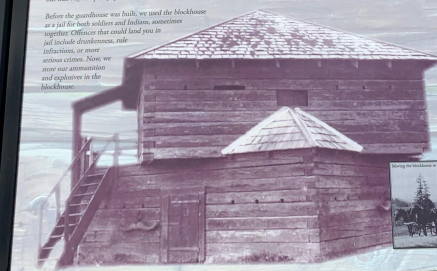
BLOCKHOUSE . . . SYMBOL OF DEFENSE

Strategic Location



We placed our blockhouse where our greatest (or only) defense was the Indian camp below the fort. The point on land on the strategic location, originally to defend our fort. Things didn't turn out that way. It's pretty quiet.

Before the guardhouse was built, we used the blockhouse as a jail for both soldiers and Indians, sometimes together. Offenders that could land you in jail include drunkenness, rule infractions, or more serious crimes. Now we store our ammunition and explosives in the blockhouse.



Been Around the Block

The blockhouse was sold at auction in 1866 to the auctioneer for \$2.00 and used for storage. About a year later, it was moved to the Grand Ronde Agency and used as a storage house and jail. In 1911, the blockhouse was moved to Dayton and is now in Palmer Park. The park commemorates Joel Palmer, a former Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Oregon Territory.





CLOSE COMPANY

Misery Shared



Our company quarters are quite a contrast to those of our officers. We are stacked like cordwood with about as much space per man as we have in our little wedge tents. This compares poorly with each officer's house, which is about the size of our entire barracks. Our barracks are only 50 feet by 30 feet for as many as 100 soldiers. Five windows on the side open to a full length porch. To the west is our mess room where we eat our breakfast and dinner. Supper is really simple—coffee and bread. We are paid \$16 per month for soldier duties—whether chopping firewood, marching endlessly, or recapturing Indians who have left the reservation. But, sometimes the paymaster doesn't come by for many months, and when he does, we are paid in scrip, which is good only for full value at the sutler's store. That should keep us close to home!

March 28, 1862. This is military justice: a Soldier is allowed simply Coffee and Bread for Supper and because he don't eat all he receives at dinner and reserves the same for his Supper he is placed in confinement.

Apr. 5 1862. Weather fine. Some excitement caused by "Ty-ee John" demanding a pass from soldiers saying he "had Orders from our Officers to souse every Soldier in the River who would not show a pass." This sounds every like Lieut Garden who considers an Indian better than a Soldier. Such Orders, if persisted in, will result in a row.

Apr. 7 1862. Our fare is rancid Pork and Beans, Sour Bread and Coffee; if we subsist on this diet, Scurvy will be the inevitable consequence.

April 8, 1862. Captain, at Retreat, informed us that we could draw an Extra Blanket. Now, at this late day, Summer nearly here, we are generously informed that we can have a Blanket. Why in the name of Common Sense and humanity did he refuse to [have] issued those 7 Blankets in the Quartermasters Department when suffering men solicited the favor during the extreme cold of last winter. Question!!!

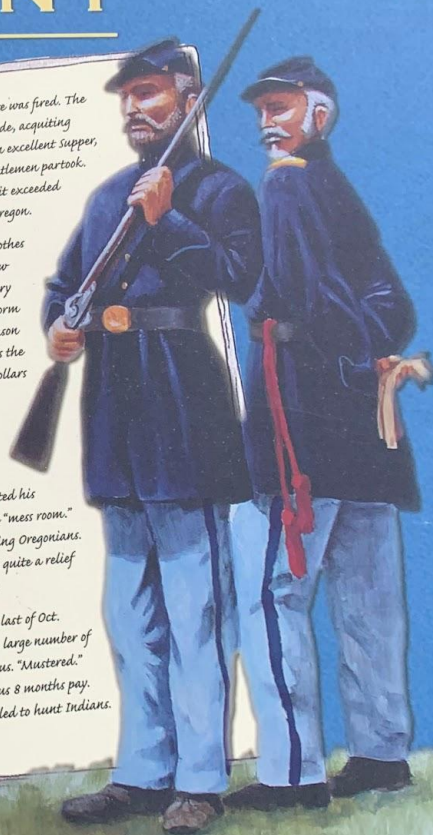
All Quiet on the Yamhill – The Civil War in Oregon, Corporal Royal A. Bensell's diary, edited by Gunter Barth, gives us insight on the life and thoughts in the Company Quarters. Pull on Bensell's boots, walk these grounds, look through his eyes, listen through his ears.

July 4, 1862. At 12 a national salute was fired. The company then formed for Dress Parade, acquiting themselves creditably... we had an excellent Supper, 63 ladies and not less than 150 Gentlemen partook. All concurred in the opinion that it exceeded anything of the kind yet had in Oregon.

Aug. 21, 1862. Cool. Our New Clothes proved to be some parts of the new sky blue color, nearly all wool, very fine, and add much to the uniform appearance of the men. The reason for this change of color by Gov is the saving of nearly a million of Dollars year for Dying material...

Aug. 25, 1862. Mounted guard. Weather extremely hot. One Indian in Charge. Kengorn, Magician, exhibited his slight-of-hand tricks in the "mess room." A large audience of admiring Oregonians. Tho' nothing extra, it was quite a relief from the usual monotony.

Oct. 31, 1862. 31st And last of Oct. General Muster. A large number of people here to see us. "Mustered." Uncle Sams owes us 8 months pay. Several boys detailed to hunt Indians.





Laundress Quarters



Bake House





Stables

Fackeln





CROSS-CULTURAL CONVENIENCE STORE

Sutler's Store. Makuk-haws. One Store. Many Shoppers.

Life on the Outside

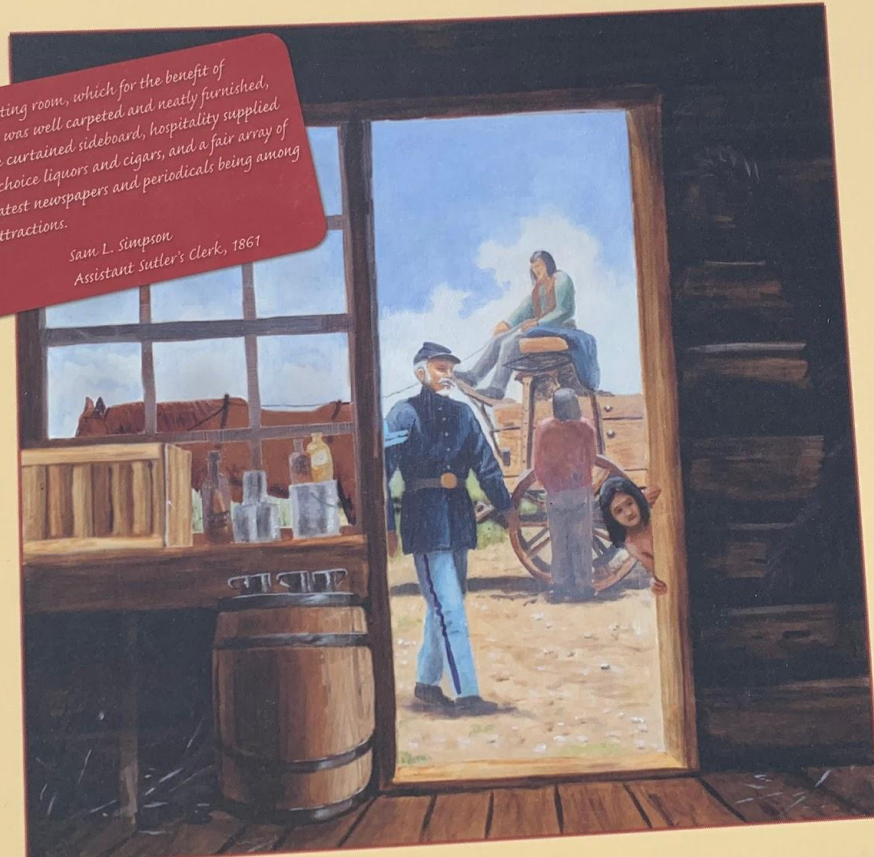


Payday! We can head to the sutler's store.

That's where we satisfy our thirst and get our tobacco. The officers go there to enjoy their fine cigars and catch up on the newspapers. We see the Indians stocking up on their supplies. The sutler's store and other civilian buildings such as the laundresses' quarters, bake house, blacksmith shop, and the stables are outside the fence surrounding the parade grounds. This fence is a dividing line between our strict military life and the freedom the civilians have.

Our sitting room, which for the benefit of officers, was well carpeted and neatly furnished, a little curtained sideboard, hospitality supplied with choice liquors and cigars, and a fair array of the latest newspapers and periodicals being among its attractions.

*Sam L. Simpson
Assistant Sutler's Clerk, 1861*



We Buy It Twice



We signed treaties to exchange our homelands for materials, education, and this reservation. Now we find we have to buy or trade for what we were promised.

Daily Necessities

Traditionally, the sutler played an important role in support of the fort. A sutler was responsible for selling items that were not issued by the military. Here, officers could enjoy the luxuries of civilian life by socializing and relaxing among friends. Soldiers would spend their meager pay on alcohol and tobacco. Local settlers could purchase supplies to get them through the long winters. Sometimes, Native Americans had to purchase needed supplies promised by the Indian Agent, but not delivered.

