

Fort Davis

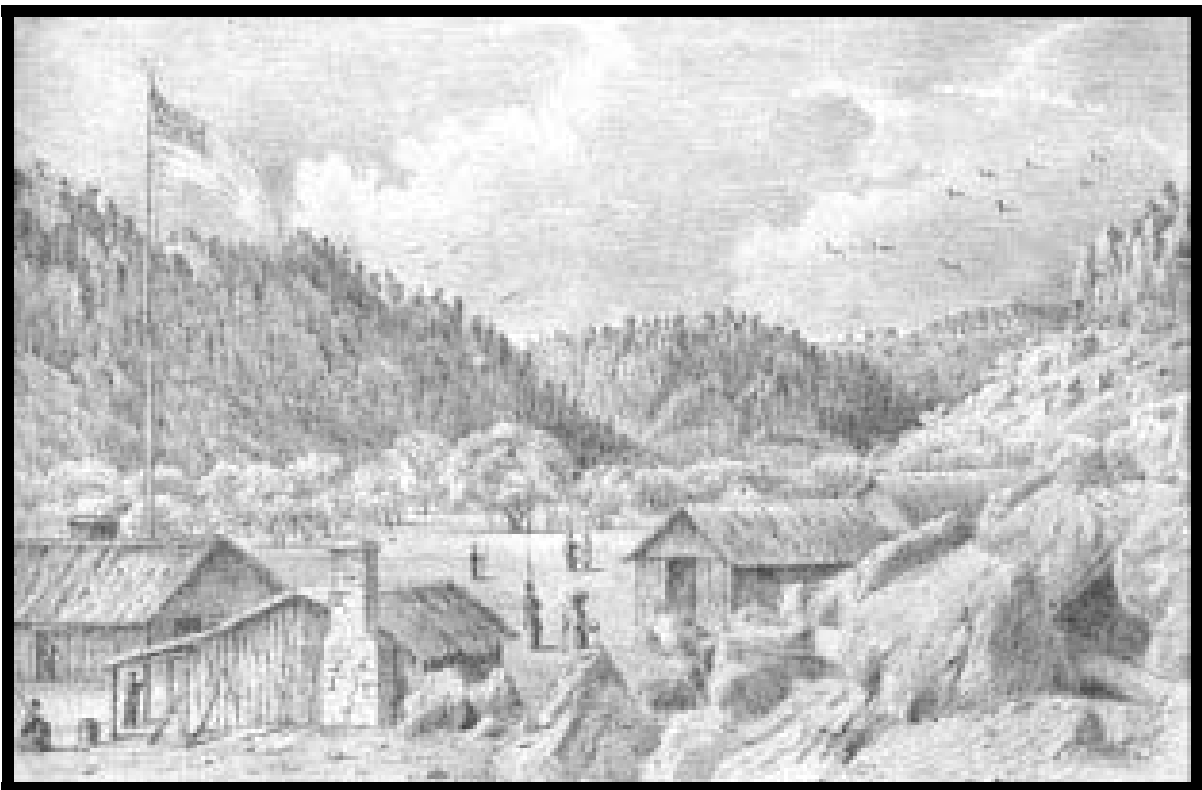
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Curriculum Materials Grades 2-5

The First Fort Davis 1854 - 1862



Pencil sketch of the first Fort Davis drawn by Captain Arthur T. Lee in the 1850s

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Teacher Notes: The First Fort Davis

Topic: The First Fort Davis

- Students will understand the factors that led to the establishment of Fort Davis along the Lower Road between San Antonio and El Paso.
- Students will become acquainted with the modes of travel in the 1850s and the hardships associated with traveling along frontier roads.
- Students will understand about the establishment of the first Fort Davis, the reasons and factors in its placement and its benefit to pioneers.

Objectives and Standards: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/>

Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies
113.4: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 13,18, 19	113.5: 1,2,3,4,5,10,11, 13,16,17,18	113.6: 4,5,6,8,9,21,22,23,24	113.7: 4,6,8,9,25,26,27

Methods of Adapting Material to Various Grade Levels:

Teachers can adapt the reading level of the materials by reading the information to the class in the lower levels and having older students read individually or in pairs. These questions and activities can be used as a springboard for discussion and research. They do not necessarily have to be completed as paper/pencil task.

Materials Needed: Student activity sheet, map of the San Antonio to El Paso

Roadmap, pen or pencil, Texas map, *Texas Almanac*

Student readings: *Traveling the San Antonio-El Paso Road . . . Gold Has Been Discovered in California, Covered Wagons through West Texas, Building the First Fort Davis*

Optional resources—Internet access

Daily Life in a Covered Wagon by Paul Erickson, Puffin Books

“California Trail” Cobblestone Magazine—Nov. 2002

Lesson Activities:

Activity 1 Traveling the San Antonio – El Paso Road . . . Gold Has Been Discovered in California

- Students will read the three page student historical background article as a class, individually, or in pairs depending on reading level.
- Students will answer the questions and locate San Antonio, El Paso and Fort Davis on the provided map.
- Students can use persuasive writing techniques to create an advertisement, poster, or brochure to encourage people to travel west or to sell a particular brand of wagon for the trip west.
- The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has a website detailing a re-enactment of wagon train to California through Texas in 1849 –1850. The wagon train followed the diary entries of

William Huff, a gold rush adventurer. View this website with your students:

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expltx/eft/huff/index.phtml>

Activity 2 Covered Wagons through West Texas

- Students will read the two page student historical background article, “Covered Wagon Through West Texas”, as a class, individually or in pairs depending on reading level. After reading the article have the students complete the “What Did I Learn?” activity and the “Taking a Trip” exercise.
- Students will complete the compare and contrast activity “Travel, Then and Now” on transportation and travel now and in the 1850s. This activity can be completed as a whole class or independent activity.
- Create a Covered Wagon: Students can create a covered wagon to store “possessions” cards that they might take with them to California (2 pages). An alternate cut and paste activity can be found at this website: <http://www.nps.gov/whmi/educate/ortrtg/12or5.htm>
- Students will complete the two page design and art activity “Quilts along the Trail” by designing individual quilt squares and compiling them into a classroom quilt for display.

Additional Resources for Covered Wagons through West Texas:

- ThinkQuest Pioneers <http://library.thinkquest.org/6400/>
- Making a covered wagon
<http://www.ridgefield.org/farmingville/Web%20Quests/wagons%20west/wagon%20train.htm>
- Prairie Schooners <http://www.endoftheoregontrail.org/wagons.html>
- Jefferson National Expansion Museum
http://www.nps.gov/jeff/independence_missouri.html

Activity 3 Building the First Fort Davis

- Students will read the four page article on Fort Davis, “Building the First Fort Davis” and answer the questions.
- They will write a letter to a soldier at Fort Davis telling about their community. Older students can create a letter from the viewpoint of a soldier to someone back home describing what the frontier and Fort Davis is like.
- Students can create a journal entry by a soldier describing the fort, his job or the area.
- Students can also cover milk cartons or small boxes to create fort buildings, fold paper for tents, and draw soldiers to create a diorama of the early fort.

Historic readings/background information:

Internet Resources:

The following websites will offer additional information:

www.over-land.com/

www.texasbeyondhistory.net

Building Adobe Bricks <http://www.nps.gov/whmi/educate/ortrtg/12or8.htm>

Reading resources:

If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon by Ellen Levine

How Would You Survive in the American West? by Jacqueline Morley, David Salariya

Covered Wagons, Bumpy Trails by Verla Kay, S.D. Schindler

Wagon Train by Sydelle Kramer, Deborah Kogan

Children of the Trail West by Holly Littlefield

A Pioneer Sampler by Barbara Greenwood

Westward Ho!: An Activity Guide to the Wild West by Laurie Carlson

Pioneer Days: Discover the Past with Fun Projects, Games, Activities, and Recipes by David C. King

Wrap-up and Assessment: Students will successfully complete the Student Activity sheets.

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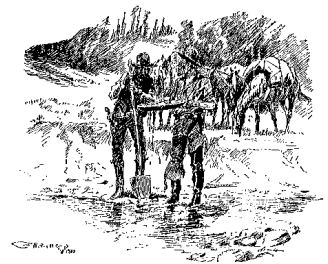
Student Activity: Traveling the San Antonio-El Paso Road

TRAVELING THE SAN ANTONIO – EL PASO ROAD

Gold!

Gold has been discovered in California

It is 1849 and everyone with an adventuresome spirit wants to go to the gold fields of California. For most people in the United States, California is very far away with a rugged wilderness to cross. Soldiers, as well as civilians, set out to locate and map a road between San Antonio and El Paso so that travelers can cross the rough and dangerous territory.



In 1849, two separate expeditions set out to find such a route. One group of explorers came through the area where Fort Davis would be established, while the other followed a more northerly path through the Guadalupe Mountains. The southern route became known as the Lower Road, while the one close to the New Mexico border was referred to as the Upper Road.



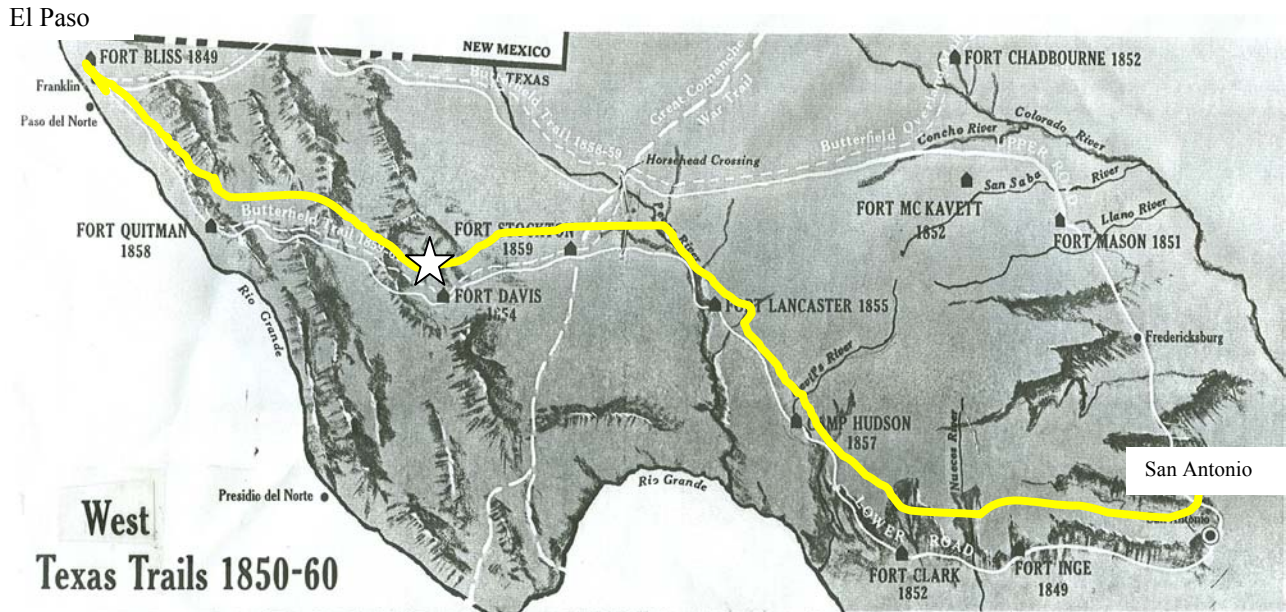
These two roads soon became the two major routes of travel across western Texas. Gold seekers came by the thousands. Pioneers came looking for land and a better life with more opportunities on the frontier. The Lower Road was considered the better route because it had more reliable watering places and weather conditions were generally better. The pioneers and gold seekers came on horseback and mule, in covered wagons and stagecoaches, or they just walked.



Photo from <http://www.archives.gov/education/history-day/migration-history/images/homesteading-family.gif>

Travelers had much to fear as they traveled through Texas on either of these roads. The road was just a trail with many dangerous and rough places. Weather often put travelers in great danger from extreme heat, cold, severe wind, rain, or hail, and flooding. Travelers died from disease or accidents, and unmarked graves were often seen on the side of the trail. Apache, Kiowa, Comanche, and sometimes bandits attacked travelers.

In 1854, the U. S. Army established Fort Davis to guard the Lower Road through western Texas. A young lady named Harriet Bunyard was traveling with her family to California in 1869. She wrote in her diary ... “ passed through Fort Davis. It is a pretty little place by the side of the mountains... This is a beautiful valley. We have a delightful camping place tonight. There is such a nice spring here and splendid water in abundance running out of the mountains.”

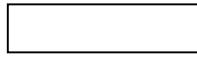


ACTIVITY: Picture yourself on a trip along the Lower Road.

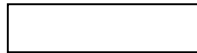
1. How would you feel about moving in a wagon across the country to a place you knew nothing about?

2. Why was it important to have the forts along the trail?

3. Label this map and answer the questions below.



Produced by the Dept. of Geography
The University of Alabama



Color the state of Texas Green.

Color the state of California Red.

Place the four directions, NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST in the correct box.

While traveling from Texas to California you will be heading _____.

Name the two states you will travel through before reaching California.



If your family has lived in any state other than Texas, color the state Blue. Describe the directions you would have to travel to get to Texas.



*Note: In 1854, when Fort Davis was established, Arizona and New Mexico were territories owned by the United States but were not states. California had just become a state in 1850.

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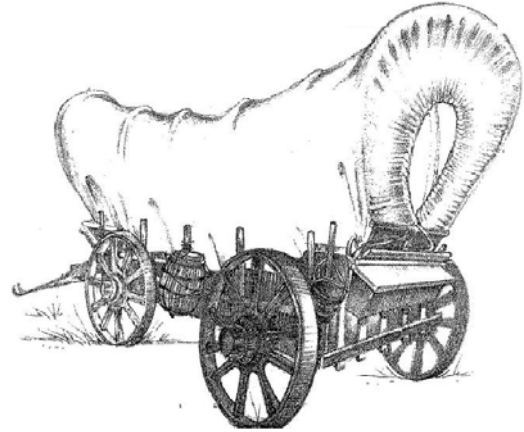
Curriculum Materials Grades 2-5

Student Activity: Covered Wagons - Reading

Covered Wagons through West Texas

When pioneers decided to move west, they packed their belongings into a covered wagon and set off. What were those wagons like? What was it like to travel over the Lower Road from San Antonio to El Paso?

Wagons came in many sizes and forms. Some were strong enough for the hardships of the trail, while others were not. One wagon that was particularly popular was the Conestoga wagon (shown at right). It was a large, heavy wagon and had a bed shaped somewhat like a boat so that the cargo would not shift. A smaller version of this wagon, called a Prairie Schooner, was also used. It had a watertight bonnet or cover to protect the cargo.



Teams of six or eight horses or up to two dozen oxen or mules pulled wagons. Pioneers found that oxen were a better choice because they could eat the native plants and did not require oats and hay to be carried along for them like horses and mules. Also, oxen were less likely to be stolen than horses but oxen were very slow. Groups of people traveled together for safety and were led by a guide or scout who was familiar with the route. These wagon trains traveled along roads that were often only rutted paths through the brush.

Travelers faced many dangers and hardships. Bad weather and flooding made travel dangerous. Many people died along the trail due to accidents or disease. Indians, bandits, and lack of water for both animals and people were frequently a danger.

Wagons often broke down or wore out from the difficulty of the trip. Equipment for making repairs during the trip was carried in a box attached to the wagon. Water barrels, farm tools, a butter churn, and maybe even a chicken coop were strapped to the outside of the wagon.

Inside the wagon were stored all the family's possessions. Care had to be taken not to



Immigrant wagon built by Hansen Wheel Company
<http://www.hansenwheel.com>

overload the wagon. Travelers had to pack carefully so they would have enough to eat; yet they could not pack food that would spoil. Food for the trip consisted of salt pork (a type of salted bacon), beef, flour, corn meal, hardtack, and rice. Other staples were dried beans, honey, dried fruit, tea, and coffee. Travelers often made do with only one change of clothes. Many times non-essential things had to be left by the side of the road in order to lighten the load on the animals pulling the wagon. Usually, only the driver rode in the wagon. Others, even children, had to walk behind or beside the wagon.

On a good day, a wagon train could travel about 10-15 miles. Many times there were rivers to cross, muddy roads, mountains, and hills to climb that slowed the wagons down or caused them to break down. The wagons would stop for a noon meal to rest the animals and then at evening. The families would sleep in, under, or near the wagons in tents.



Wagon train photo from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/codhtml/hawphome.html>

Every person with the wagon train had to help in some way. Children gathered wood, helped with the animals, and did other chores to help out. In the evenings, the travelers made their own fun by singing, listening to music played by another traveler, or telling stories. Imagine how it would feel to arrive at Fort Davis where there was clear water,

pleasant weather and scenery, and other people to visit with. The trip to California could take at least six months of hardship and danger.



Pioneer Family photo from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/codhtml/hawphome.html>

What Did You Learn?

1. Imagine you are a 1850s pioneer child. If you could take only one item with you on your covered wagon journey, what would it be? Why did you choose that thing?

2. Look at the photo of the pioneer family above. Imagine this being your family in the 1860s or 1870s. Describe a day in the life of such a pioneer family, with you being part of it.

3. If you could take one modern item that could fit into your pocket, what would it be? Why did you choose it? How would it have changed the journey for yourself or your fellow travelers?

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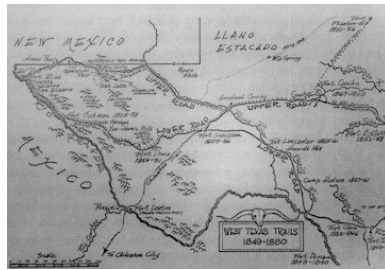
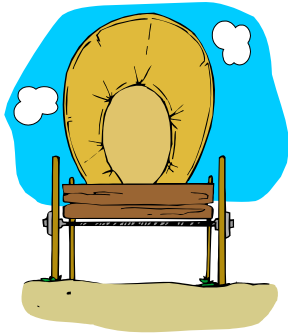


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Student Activity: Travel, Then and Now

Complete this chart. List items that fit into each category for pioneer days and for modern times. How many things can you think of for each box?

Travel...Then and Now



	Pioneer Days	Now
transportation	Example: wagon	Example: car
food		
shelter		
roads		
guides		
entertainment		
time		
dangers		
clothing		
energy source		

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Student Activity: Create a Covered Wagon

Create a Covered Wagon

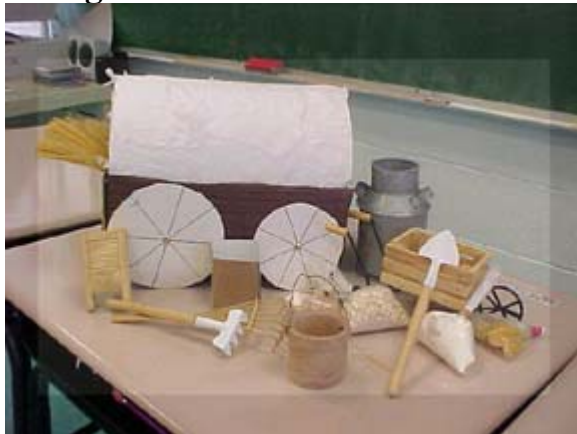
Look at this website for information on how covered wagons were made -

<http://www.endoftheoregontrail.org/wagons.html>

Make a model of a covered wagon by following these directions.

Gather materials:

- Shoe box
- Markers
- Brown paper
- Compass or patterns for wheels
- 2 large sheets of stiff white paper
- Popsicle sticks for wagon tongue
- Paper brads

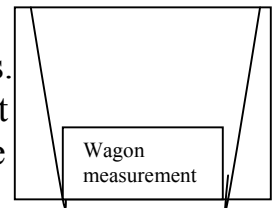


Picture from

<http://www.ridgefield.org/farmingville/Web%20Quests/wagons%20west/wagon%20train.htm>

Directions:

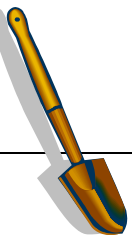
1. Cover the shoebox with brown paper.
2. Create four wheels from the stiff white paper. Use the compass or patterns to draw the wheels and measure the spokes.
3. Attach the wheels with brads by poking a hole on the wagon and wheel to attach.
4. Insert the Popsicle stick in the front for the wagon tongue.
Use a shortened stick for the neck yoke for the oxen.
5. Measure the length of the wagon box (shoebox) and add 3 inches.
6. Gently bend the paper and trim the paper at a rounded angle to fit in side the box. See illustration. Glue the paper edges inside the shoebox to form the wagon bonnet.
7. Finish your wagon by adding small boxes and pictures of items that would have been carried on the outside.
8. Use the cards below to draw pictures of the things you think your family would need on the trip through Texas. Store them in your wagon.





Create cards to store in your wagon. Draw one thing your family will take with you in your covered wagon in each square.





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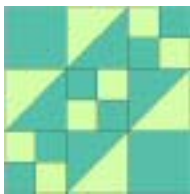
Student Activity: Quilts along the Trail

Quilts along the Trail

To keep their families warm, pioneer women created beautiful quilts from pieces and scraps of fabric. These were geometric designs made of squares, rectangles and triangles. Each block was made and sewn to the others. Then, the quilt top was layered with cotton or wool batting inside and a backing fabric. The three layers were then stitched together with tiny stitches in delicate patterns.

Families traveling west brought quilts and quilt block patterns with them on the trail. These quilt blocks often had names that told about family and national history, such as “Rocky Road to California” or “Texas Tears and Sunshine.” Sometimes they were embroidered with the names of family and friends.

Look at how the quilt blocks below are designed with squares and triangles. Use the blank block pattern to create and color your own quilt block. Give it a name and combine it with your classmates’ blocks to make your class quilt. Research quilts and different types of blocks using the library or Internet.



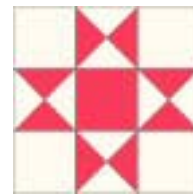
**Rocky Road to
California**



Churn Dash



Spool

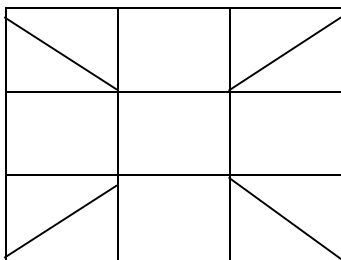


Texas Star

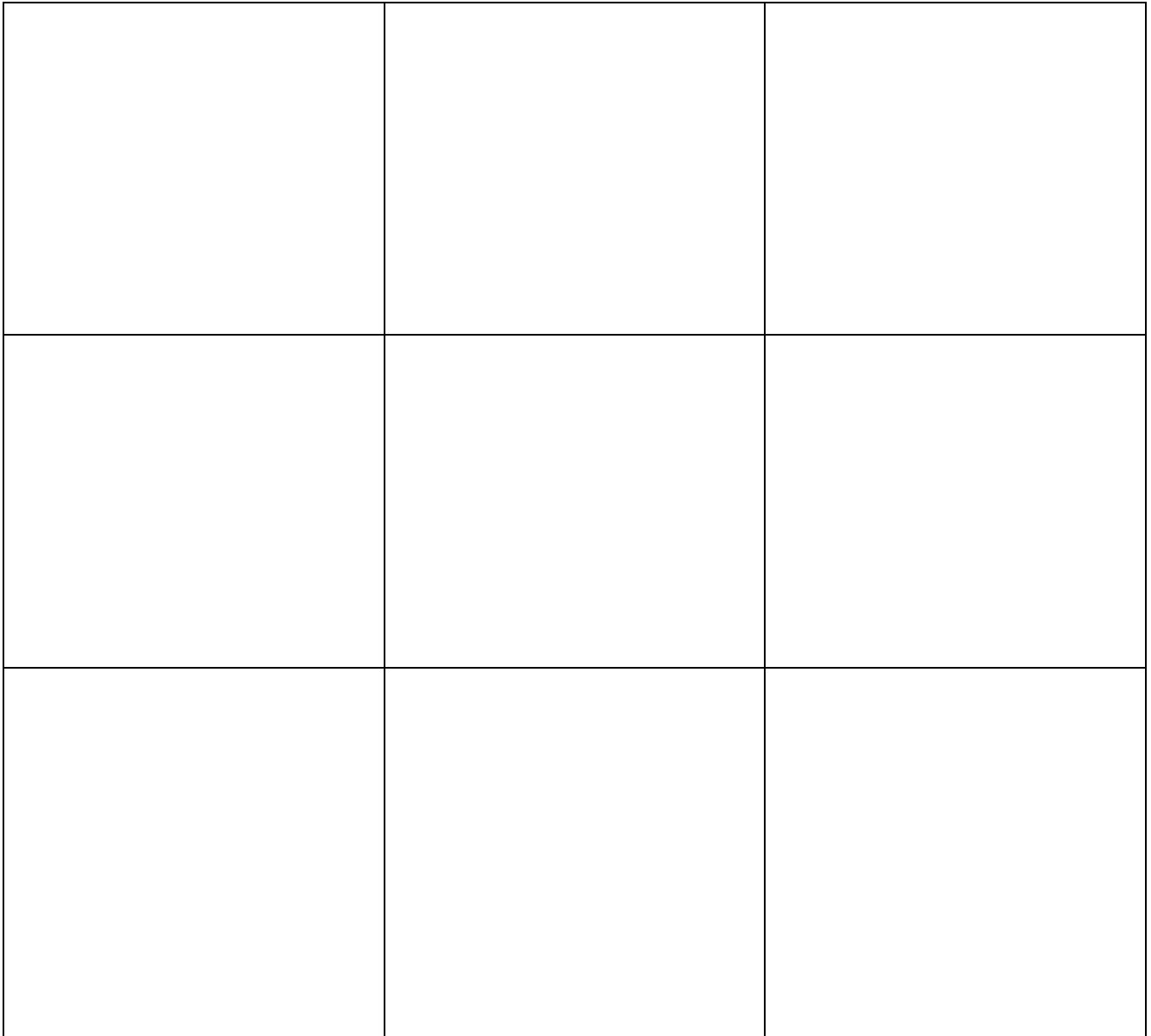
Block illustrations from <http://www.blockcentral.com/blocklibrary.shtml>

Example:

Experiment with different patterns and colors.



Quilt Square



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Student Activity: Building the First Fort Davis

Building the First Fort Davis

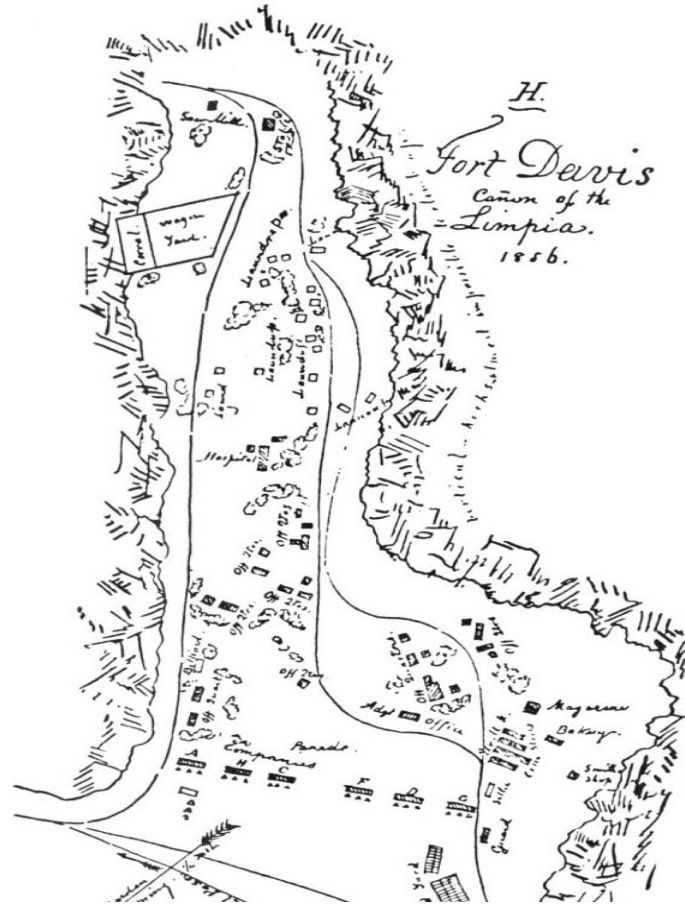
In 1848, gold was discovered in California and soon people began to travel along the Lower Road between San Antonio and El Paso. Many other people hoped to build a new life by settling in the newly-acquired western lands. Travel along the road, which was a segment of the most southern route to California, was dangerous because it crossed through Comanche and Apache lands.

Fort Davis was established in 1854 in a narrow canyon between two steep canyon walls. The first buildings were made of oak, pine,

and cottonwood and were covered with thatched roofs. They were uncomfortable and hard to keep warm. Bugs, snakes, and other creatures also tried to live in the barracks with the soldiers. In 1856, six stone barracks or soldiers' quarters were built, along with a bakery, blacksmith shop, and a warehouse.



The soldiers who manned Fort Davis were part of the Eighth U.S. Infantry. On average, there were nearly 200 soldiers stationed at Fort



This is the only known map of the first Fort Davis. It was sketched by Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield in 1856.

Davis. These foot soldiers had the task of protecting travelers, stagecoaches, freight wagons, and the U. S. mail along the Lower Road. This was a nearly impossible job. When soldiers were not protecting the road, life on post was tedious and filled with the hard work of building and training. However, Fort Davis was a welcome spot to rest for travelers along the road. Here they rested and found protection, supplies, and water they needed.

Federal troops abandoned the first Fort Davis in 1861 when the Civil War began. Confederate troops then occupied it until the summer of 1862. It was not until after the Civil War that army troops returned and built a new fort, sometimes called the Second Fort Davis – the same Fort Davis you will see if you visit Fort Davis National Historic Site.

What Did You Learn?

1. Why was Fort Davis established?

2. What was an important event in United States history that encouraged people to go west? What was another reason pioneers went west?



In the 1850s, cameras were just being invented and few pictures were taken. There were no pictures taken of the first Fort Davis. Any pictures from that time are illustrations or drawings by someone. Some soldiers kept diaries and sent letters home to family members in the East describing their lives. They often included drawings or paintings of unusual or interesting things they saw.

One of the officers at the first Fort Davis, Captain Arthur T. Lee, was quite an artist and created several drawings and watercolors of the first Fort Davis. Fortunately, his family saved his pictures including the one shown above and these were published in a book in 1976. They give us a look at life in west Texas in the 1850s.

Look at the picture above. Imagine you are a soldier at Fort Davis in 1856. Write a letter to someone at home describing Fort Davis and telling about your job. Tell about the good parts and the bad. You can include drawings of what you see at Fort Davis or on the trail.

