

Lesson Title: WESTERN FORTS

Lesson Design By: Elmer Gaug, Braymer C-4
Government, 11th Grade

June 2008

TEACHING TRADITIONAL AMERICAN HISTORY PROGRAM

Funded by U.S. Department of Education

Mike Lair, Project Director

<http://www.chillihistoryproject.com/>

LESSON OVERVIEW: The significance of forts on the western frontier, in particular Fort Union and Bent's Fort. Their purpose and how they contributed to the West being absorbed and assimilated into the rest of the United States, including the concept of Manifest Destiny.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- What part did Fort Union contribute to the military success in the West?
- What part did Bent's Fort contribute to the economics of the West?
- What part did Bent's Fort contribute to the Mexican War?

OBJECTIVES: After completing this lesson the student will be able to:

- Explain the contribution that Fort Union made to assimilating the West into the United States.
- Explain the contribution that Bent's Fort made toward the economics of the Southwest.
- Explain the contribution that Bent's Fort made toward the success of the Mexican War.
- Explain the general purpose of forts on the Western frontier.

ASSESSMENT: Within one page discuss an overview of the U.S. fort system on the Western frontier. Especially mention Fort Union and Fort.

- 25 points: Correctly identify Fort Union, Bent's Fort, Mexican War, International Trade and the general purpose of most forts.
- 20 points: Correctly identify how four of the above were important.
- 15 points: Correctly identify how three of the above were important.
- 10 points: Correctly identify how two of the above was important.
- 5 points: Correctly identify how one of the above was important.
- 0 points: The above was not correctly identified.

The following is an example of a constructed response to the above assessment.

The purpose of forts on the Western frontier were generally multiple. Forts on the Western frontier could be protecting the settlers, protection for traveling wagon caravans or protecting trading post. Fort Union would be an example of a fort protecting wagon caravans as well as supplying some forty to fifty other forts in the Southwest with supplies. Bent's Fort is an example of a trading post and a fort in the Southwest. It had been used as a launching position for the Mexican War and then a part of the international trade situation.

- Evidence of the desired result would be that the student used all of the above and used the information in a constructive manner.
- Did the student provide more information than was required for a good paper?

MATERIALS: The following are texts that can be used.

- AMERICAS'S STORY: Jacobs, Wilder, Ludlum and Brown. Houghton Mifflin Co. c1990. Chp. 16, p377-387.
- WORLD GEOGRAPHY: Swanson. Laidlaw Bros. c1987 Chp. 4 p79-81, 96-100.

CLASS TIME: Four class periods of 47 minutes each, including assessment.

TEACHER INPUT: The following topics and facts are concepts that would help the student understand how the "fort system" was functional in the southwest.

- International relations at the time frame.
- A meteorological understanding of the area.
- Use a generic map of the southwest and Old Mexico at that time.
- An understanding of what the concept of Manifest Destiny was at that time.

ACTIVITIES: The following is an activity that will encourage students to be more involved with the lesson. (this was not figured in as part of the four class periods.)

- Assign students into groups. Each group will brainstorm one of the following topics. A. Purpose of a Western fort. B. How were some forts established. C. Why did these forts "go out of business?" D. What was fort "life" like?
- Have the group(s) make a class presentation of 2-5 minutes in length.

CLOSURE: Make a strong point concerning the purpose of the forts and how they functioned.