



## ELP and ESP Station Handout Trade Store

### **INTRODUCTION**

This handout will teach you how to run the Trade Store station on an ELP or ESP day and will also give you historical background of trading and selling practices at Sutter's Fort in the 1840s. Through the Trade Store station, your students will experience firsthand what it was like to purchase store items of the 1840s. They will also get the opportunity to compare and contrast the money, as well as the items, of the 1840s with those of the present day. This is also a good opportunity to help teach the students how to handle money, determine what they can and cannot afford and practice basic math skills.

### **HISTORY**

There was not actually a store inside Sutter's Fort until the Gold Rush; before 1848, the Clerk's Office served as the General Store. Items available for purchase were displayed inside the Clerk's Office and customers would select what items they wanted to purchase and in what quantities they wanted. A runner was then sent to secure storage locations to retrieve the desired products. Generally, dry goods were stored in the Fort attic and more perishable items, or anything that needed to be kept cooler, such as candles and gunpowder, were stored in the basement. The attic and basement were kept under lock and key and could only be entered or exited through a trapdoor near the Clerk's Office.

This system was used by both emigrants and Native California Indians. Many overland emigrants were in a terrible condition by the time they reached the Fort; they were in desperate need of fresh food, new clothing and many of incidental items they used or abandoned along the trail. They were happy to reach the Fort where they could recuperate and resupply after the long journey. At the Fort they were able to buy many of the goods that reminded them of home.

The emigrants bartered, or used credit, or occasionally had silver coin to purchase goods. There were also banknotes (notes issued by banks) in circulation at that time. Only the notes issued by the largest, most creditworthy banks were widely accepted. The script of smaller, lesser known institutions circulated locally. Farther from home, bank issued notes were only accepted at a discounted rate, if they were accepted at all. Sutter's Native California Indian workers were paid with a tin coin that was redeemable only by the Native People and could only be spent at the Fort's Trade Store. This prevented the natives from being cheated by other merchants and ensured a steady clientele for Sutter.

Sutter's Fort was more of an agricultural and manufacturing center rather than a fun place to trade. Sutter grew wheat, cotton, barley, potatoes and a variety of other fruits and vegetables. He also grew hemp from which rope was made. The endeavor of which he may have been most





proud was the blanket factory. Here, Indians were taught to weave on large looms. But Sutter also had blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, shoemakers, gunsmiths, and wagon wrights, all of whom made items for sale and purchase.

The following are some prices from the account of John Bidwell from the 1846 *Bidwell Ledger*:

1 black silk kerchief	\$1.25
1 pea jacket	\$9.63
1 pair socks	\$1.00
1 shirt	\$1.00
1 blanket	\$2.00
10 lbs. sugar	\$5.00
2 lbs. tea	\$6.00
6 bowls	\$1.50
1 pair boots	\$10.00
2 handkerchiefs	\$1.25

## SETTING UP AND RUNNING YOUR TRADE STORE

### Place

The Trade Store can be set up in a variety of places around the fort. It can be as simple as a blanket on the ground if the weather permits; but usually schools set up their store using the Fort's wooden folding tables placed under a covered area, next to the wood pile, a ramada, or the area just west of the Distillery. On a rainy day, Fort staff will determine the best location for your Trade Store.

### Trade Store Items

You may elect to serve only snack items from your Trade Store or you may elect to sell a variety of other goods, including dry goods (textiles such as bonnets, aprons, bandanas, etc.), hard goods (durable items such as toys) and soft goods (consumable items such as food). The Trade Store is a place to be very creative with your set-up and your merchandise. The following is a list of potential items you can sell at your Trade Store:

1. Food – fresh or dried fruit, crackers, candy (lemon drops, horehound, licorice ropes), hardtack, beef jerky, cookies, pickles. But please, no modern plastic wrap.
2. Toys – marbles (no cats' eyes), leather balls, willow whistles, singing “buttons,” ring and pin, wooden tops, bull-roarers, cloth dolls, clothespin dolls, cornhusk dolls, applehead dolls, jacks, Jacob's ladders, checkers and board, string for cat's cradle.
3. Clothes – bonnets, mob caps, bandanas, fingerless gloves, cloth bags, leather pouches, necklaces, bracelets, earrings.





4. Other – beads, sinew, animal skins, small mirrors, tin cups, shells, bones (cleaned turkey neck bones are great for necklaces).

### **Other Items to Bring**

1. Blanket or table cloths
2. Money box
3. Extra currency (if your teacher wants stations to hand it out throughout the day)
4. Baskets and/or glass jars in which to put food
5. Waxed paper or plain brown paper (for wrapping purchases)

### **Money**

The most common type of currency used by groups is Sutter Bucks. These are paper notes that the teachers have available to them in their Teacher's Manual and which they can print out and give to students. Alternatively, the teacher may choose to use gold nuggets (pebbles painted gold); however, we recommend using these only if you are portraying 1848 or 1849. Schools can also use trade beads or the like. In the past, schools used to use metal washers to replicate the tin coin Sutter used to pay his California Indian workers; however, we ask that schools no longer use this for their Trade Store. Please do not use real money either, not even pennies.

Generally the money that students use to purchase items in the Trade Store is handed out by the teacher before the trip based on points earned in class. Sometimes teachers will also bring some for stations to hand out during the day for good behavior and participation.

Bartering, or trading actual items as opposed to buying goods with some form of currency, is another option, although this must be cleared with your teacher and takes a little bit more work. The idea of haggling, which can be worked in whether you are bartering with goods or buying with money, is also a good concept you can teach at your Trade Store.

### **Timing of Visits**

There are a variety of times your students might visit the Trade Store to buy goods throughout the day. Most schools have the Trade Store as a regular station that the students will visit as part of their station rotations throughout the day. It can either be its own station or combined with another station (depending on how your teacher wants to set it up). There might also be special times when it will be open to the whole class, such as at the end of the lunch break or just after stations are ending. If the students are receiving Sutter Bucks during the day, having a time after stations end for students to come back to the Trade Store is a good idea so that they can use up all of their Sutter Bucks.

An end-of-day auction is another time you can sell some of your Trade Store items. This is a fun and useful activity that can be assigned to any open time after stations have stopped and before





dinner or evening entertainment begins; as a result, it can help fill some time in the afternoon or evening. It is also a great way to have students spend any of their remaining Sutter Bucks and get rid of leftover inventory from the Trade Store. You simply gather all the children together at the Trade Store and auction off all remaining Trade Store items. Be sure to coordinate this activity with your teacher.

A silent auction is another way in which to sell some of your Trade Store items. Throughout the day, students can put their bids in; their bids should be written and put in a can or box. Then at the end of the day (perhaps before dinner), the silent auction will be over and the highest bid wins. If you choose to hold a silent auction, consider purchasing a few larger items such as a candle lantern, small replica wagon, blanket, or canteen.

### **PRECAUTIONS AND REMINDERS**

1. Make sure you are aware of students who have allergies to food items, and make sure you know the contents of all food items (e.g. cookies containing nuts or nut oil, etc.).
2. Avoid items in the Trade Store with sharp edges, points, or nails.
3. Keep in mind that some children's toys, such as those that are swung, could be dangerous if other people get too close. These types of games should be closely supervised.
4. Visitors to the Fort may want to buy your items too, but they are for your own group only. Let them know that your Trade Store is only for your students and direct them to the Sutter's Fort Trade Store (gift shop) along the west wall.
5. Do not feed visitors.
6. Make sure other children visiting the Fort do not take things from your store.
7. Be prepared for weather changes.
8. Be sure to have enough items so that all your students can buy several things. Some students will also want to buy things for parents or siblings, so try to have a variety of many items.
9. Always have an adult oversee the Trade Store while the Fort is open to the public (10am to 5pm).
10. Please remind students that wax paper and other wrappers, sticks, etc. are to be thrown in the garbage when finished, not on the ground. Please make sure no food is left on the ground and keep a small trash bin at our station.
11. Musical instruments or other noise-making toys that are sold must stay in the children's bags until the end of the day.
12. When students arrive, give them a brief history of trading at the Fort as well as sell them goods.

### **PRICE LIST**

The following is a sample price list you can use for assigning prices to your items at your Trade Store (all prices in Sutter Bucks). However, as mentioned previously, you can also make the prices somewhat flexible and allow the students the opportunity to haggle.



Quilt	15	Apple Boxes	10
Prairie Doll	15	Wooden Horses	5
Prairie Doll Dress	10	Marbles (bag of 10)	3
Checkers	15	Shooters	2
Tic-Tac-Toe (Wood Pieces)	13	Jacks	5
Tic-Tac-Toe (Marbles)	10	Pick-up-sticks	3
Gold Nuggets	5	Bookmarks	2
Large Arrowheads	4	Wooden Dice (2)	1
Rock Spearheads	3	Large Bags	3
Fossil Teeth	2	Small Bags	2
Abalone Shells	5	Large Feathers	3
Oyster Shells	1	Small Feathers	1

### **STOCKING YOUR TRADE STORE**

The following is a list of potential items you can sell at your Trade Store organized by the stores or websites at which they might be found. There is also a list of ideas for items that can be made instead of bought; there are links to websites for some of these items with directions on how to make them.

#### **Thrift Stores (Goodwill, SPCA, etc.)**

Cloth for dolls (gingham, muslin, etc.)  
Grosgrain ribbon  
Necklaces  
Bracelets

Earrings  
Small metal picture frames  
Candle holders  
Handkerchiefs for dolls

#### **Arts and Craft Stores (Michaels, Jo-Ann, etc.)**

Sticks for pick-up sticks game (BBQ skewers)  
Wooden clothespins  
Tote bag made of muslin  
Wooden puzzles  
Folding hand-held fans  
Small wooden boxes  
Wooden wheels (to make tops)  
Marbles

Wooden buttons for making spinner  
Old-style clothespins  
Spools (for tops or toys)  
Chalk boards and white chalk  
Feathers  
Wooden beads  
Wooden dowels (to make tops)

#### **Dollar Stores (Dollar Tree, Family Dollar, etc.)**

Red vines candy  
Ginger snaps  
Harmonicas

Grosgrain ribbon  
Wooden spoons  
Jacks

Playing cards

Wooden yoyos

**Hardware Stores (Ace Hardware, Home Depot, etc.)**

Scrap wood to make rulers and compasses

**Warehouse Stores (Costco, Smart & Final, etc.)**

Jerky

Red licorice

Gallon jars of whole pickles

Lemon Drops

Other candy and food items

**Online Sources for Buying Items**

[www.organzabagg.com/muslin.html](http://www.organzabagg.com/muslin.html) – Muslin pouches

[www.pouchmart.com](http://www.pouchmart.com) – Muslin pouches

[www.tandyleatherfactory.com](http://www.tandyleatherfactory.com) – Leather scraps, rabbit pelt, sinew, etc.

[www.crazycrow.com](http://www.crazycrow.com) – beads, pelts, bear claws, beads, jewelry

**Ideas for Items Which Can be Made**

Clothespin dolls

Cloth dolls

Oak ball

Wooden dice

Beanbags

Wooden tic-tac-toe games

Pick-up-sticks

String games

Checkers (cloth board with button checkers)

Leather pouches

Hand mirrors

Metal Altoid boxes (painted black)

Fake gold nuggets (gravel painted gold)

Sachets

Large over-the-shoulder tote bags

Spoons (rhythm instrument)

Spinner made with a button or wooden circle

Top made from an acorn

Necklaces and bracelets made with wooden beads and/or shells

**Online Sources for Making Items**

<http://mountainpulse.blogspot.com/2008/11/native-american-dice.html> – Native American Walnut Game

<http://www.instructables.com/id/A-Traditional-Jacob-s-Ladder/> – Jacob's Ladders

<http://www.hcsv.org/education/crafts/make-a-handkerchief-doll/> – Handkerchief Dolls

**Directions for Making an Acorn Spinner**

- Use a large, symmetrical acorn
- In the middle of the side of the acorn drill two 1/8" holes through the acorn
- Space the two holes 5/16" apart, parallel to the long sides of the acorn
- Clean out the holes with the drill bit
- Cut a piece of 1/16" diameter string 38" long
- Thread the string through both holes and tie the ends together