

Bartering at the Mercantile

During pioneer days many people didn't have much "cash money" (coins and bills). Although they might "charge" things (buy on credit) there were no credit or debit cards.

To make up for the lack of cash money people often traded what they made or grew to the storekeeper. This was called "bartering". A farmer might trade ground flour or a freshly butchered hog for a new coat, sugar, salt or other things they couldn't grow or make. Someone who was good at bartering could make a lot of money so people had to be careful.

Sample Prices from the 1870s

Molasses	15¢/gallon	Dried Peaches	12¢/pound
Fresh Apples	05¢ for 2	Hard Cover Book	50¢
Man's White Shirt	80¢	Nails	02¢/pound
Sugar	07¢/pound	Eggs	15¢/dozen
Lard	06¢/pound	Silk Parasol	\$1.00
Cigars	05¢ each	Cowboy Saddle	\$6.00
Cheese	05¢/pound	Rice	05¢/pound
Oranges	50¢/dozen	Calico Fabric	07¢/yard
Farm Wagon	\$65.00	Work Horse	\$150.00

It may not seem that things cost much by today's standards but remember that an 1870 dollar would be worth \$12.00 today.

Want to barter? Try these activities with a friend!
And remember, the items on the shelves are meant to be used.

You can barter with any or all of these.

1 Cow - \$25	1 Hog - \$5	20 Bushels of Wheat - \$14	2 Chickens - \$1
10 Bushels of Corn - \$3	2 dozen eggs - 50¢	1 Sheep - \$3	

There are no prices on the Smoky Hill Mercantile's items so use the 1870s price list to estimate what they would cost.

1. Choose items from stock at the Smoky Hill Mercantile that you think you should be able to trade for the hog that you think is worth \$5.
2. You want a new dress and need material and thread. What are you going to barter for them?
3. You are moving out of your old sod house and into a new wooden one. Look at the stock on the shelves and decide which you would like to have in your new home. From your bartering stock, what would you have to trade to get them?
4. Use your imagination and make up your own scenarios!

1890 Farm Economics

You're a farmer in 1890. Harvest is over and you've sold your corn, wheat, and some cattle. You can finally afford buy some things at The Smoky Hill Mercantile.

Before you can spend any money you have to find out how much money you have to spend.

Do the math problems to find out how much you can spend at the Smoky Hill Mercantile!

Income

1. You harvested 40 acres of wheat. The yield is 15 bushels per acre. How many bushels of wheat do you have to sell?

2. The price of wheat in 1890 in Kansas was 70 cents per bushel. How much money does that give you to spend from your wheat crop?

3. You harvested 50 acres of corn. Your yield was 30 bushels per acre. How many bushels of wheat do you have to sell?

4. In 1890, Kansas corn sold for 30 cents a bushel. How much money did you get for your corn crop?

5. You sold 5 head of cattle at \$25 a head. How much money did you make from cattle sales?

6. After paying expenses, how much money do you have to spend at the Smoky Hill Mercantile?

Expenses

Taxes	\$50
New Farm Equipment	\$150
Fencing Equipment	\$25
Tools	\$25
Church Giving	\$50
Down Payment on Land Purchase (160 acres)	\$320
Bank Loan Payment	\$100
Miscellaneous	\$50
Total Expenses	\$770

Income

Wheat	\$_____
Corn	\$_____
Cattle	\$_____
Total Income	\$_____