

LESSON 5

TOPIC

Fabric Sources

TIME

30 minutes



MATERIALS FROM THE TRUNK

Photograph #3
Montgomery Ward Catalog Pages
Worksheet #1

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Students will understand the consequences of the inability to grow cotton in Kansas.
- 2) Students will be able to understand the function of mail-order service in early day Kansas.
- 3) Students will be able to evaluate and calculate the materials needed to complete a quilt.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Most quilts are made from cotton fabrics. Although some individuals have grown cotton in Kansas, it has not been grown commercially in the state; Kansas is too cold for cotton which requires a longer summer than the state traditionally has. By the time Kansas was open for settlement, fabric could be brought to the territory from factories in the East.

Railroads were first talked about in Kansas Territory in the late 1850s. By 1861, the territorial legislature had chartered fifty-one railroad companies. The Civil War interrupted progress. However, in 1862, President Lincoln approved the Pacific Railroad bill which provided federal aid for the building of a transcontinental railroad with three feeder lines in Kansas. Once the railroad came to Kansas almost anything sold in the East could be brought to Kansas for a price.

For most of the state's history Kansans had access to goods in the East. A major development occurred in 1876 when Montgomery Ward and Company started the first mail-order business. Sears, Roebuck and Company started catalog sales in 1895. Once the post office could get mail to people in isolated areas through rural free delivery (RFD), farmers and ranchers could order through catalogs everything from fabric for a quilt to the wood for a house. By the end of the 1800s, rural free delivery was common in Kansas. However, before some areas of Kansas were part of RFD, neighbors would take turns going to town to pick up the mail.

Source: Richmond, Robert W. *Kansas: A Land of Contrasts*. Arlington Heights, Ill.: Forum Press, 1989.

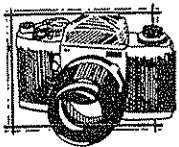
VOCABULARY

Catalog	A mail-order catalog is a book that contains items for sale through the mail.
Fabric Mill	A building equipped with machinery for weaving fabric.
Mail-order	An order for goods (objects for sale) that is received and filled by mail.
Rural Free Delivery	Free delivery of mail to farms and other rural areas that was common by the end of the 1800s.

ACTIVITIES

1) Remind the students that most quilts are made of cotton fiber and quilts require many yards of fabric. Ask the students where they think early settlers in Kansas got their fabric? Point out that most fabric in the United States, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, has been made in factories called mills. Since no cotton fabric factories (mills) were in Kansas, how would people obtain fabric to make quilts and clothing? The answer is buy it in stores, buy it mail-order, get it as gifts from people in the East, use scraps, or bring it with you.

Note: If it is suggested that you could make your own cotton fabric at home, remind the students that most of Kansas is too cold to grow cotton. It requires a longer summer than exists in Kansas. People in Kansas could raise sheep for wool, and some undoubtedly made quilts out of home-raised wool. Most quilts in Kansas were made of factory-made cotton that came here from the East Coast mills.



2) Show the students *photograph #3* and the *Montgomery Ward catalog pages*. Explain that two ways the settlers obtained fabric were through the general store (*photograph #3*) and the mail order catalog (*Montgomery Ward catalog pages*).

a) Explain to the students that the number of general stores in Kansas increased as more people moved here and more railroads laid track so goods from the East could be shipped here more cheaply. Allow the students to examine the photograph of the general store. Can they find the fabric (on bolts)? What other things could be bought at the general store. Ask the students if we have "general stores" today?

b) Explain that one of the things that made the lives of pioneers in Kansas easier was the mail-order catalog, such as the Montgomery Ward and Company catalog which began in 1876, and the later Sears, Roebuck and Company catalog which started circulating in

1895. Another important development was the ability of the post office to get mail to people in isolated areas through rural free delivery (RFD). Ask the students why the Montgomery Ward catalog make life easier and why was RFD important?



6) Using the *Montgomery Ward catalog pages* (originals for copying are included) and *worksheet #1*, have the students develop an order. The students can work as individuals or in small groups. Give each individual or group a copy of the pages from the catalog and a copy of *worksheet #1*. Introduce the worksheet by telling the students that they are to pretend it is 1895 and they are going to order sewing equipment and fabric from Montgomery Ward for a quilt. They may pick any fabric from the catalog but they need to compute on the worksheet how many yards they will need and the cost. Remind the students they will need a total of six yards of fabric for the quilt top (made up of two to three different fabrics) and six yards (of one fabric) for the back. To complete a quilt, the student will need two rolls of cotton batting. Remind the students that they may need basic sewing supplies.

ASSESSMENT

Levels of Achievement

For Objective 1

- a) Students recognize that cotton is difficult to grow in Kansas.
- b) Students realize that alternative sources of cotton were required (and name an alternative source, e.g., mail-order).
- c) Students recognize a number of alternative sources of cotton (e.g., buy it in stores, gifts from people in the East, scraps, bring it with you from the East).

For Objective 2

- a) Students recognize the mail-order service as being important, but do not explain why.
- b) Students recognize importance and give reasons (e.g., life made easier, fabrics made available).
- c) Students link this to RFD.

For Objective 3

- a) Students correctly pick out fabric for the top. Students correctly pick out fabric for the back. Students correctly pick out cotton batting and other supplies.
- b) Order form is filled out correctly.
- c) Total price is calculated correctly.

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EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1) COMPARING CATALOGS:

Have the students compare and contrast the Montgomery Ward catalog in this trunk with a current Montgomery Ward catalog. Can fabric and sewing instruments still be bought through the catalog?