

A Day With Company K

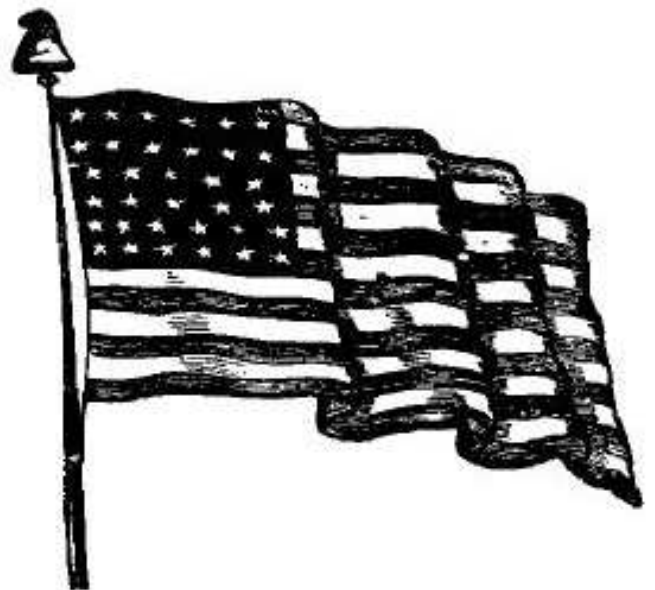


Soldiers living at Fort Mackinac in the 1880s did not spend much time fighting in battles. Most of the time they practiced marching (drill) and target practice, guarded the fort and repaired the buildings and walls.

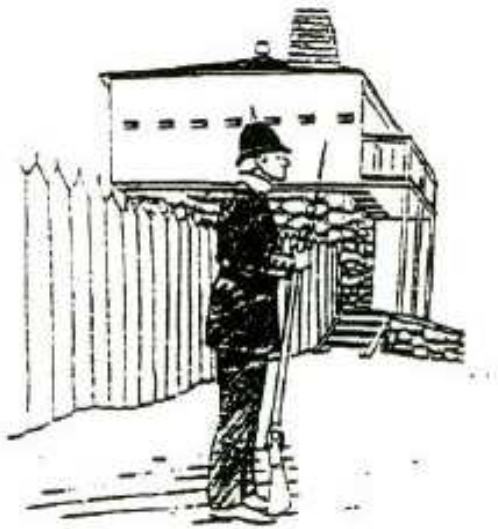
Soldiers were divided into groups. The Army was divided into regiments, and the regiments were divided into companies of about 50 men each. In the 1880s, soldiers from companies “E” and “K” of the 23rd Regiment of Infantry lived and worked at Fort Mackinac.

Soldiers had different levels, or ranks, depending on their job. They were either officers or enlisted men. Officers were the bosses and enlisted men followed their orders. The Post Commandant was the officer in charge of the entire fort. When Fort Mackinac was a National Park, the commandant was also in charge of the park.

The commandant had other officers to help him. They were ranked as Captains and Lieutenants. These men served as Quartermaster, Adjutant and Commissary of Subsistence. Quartermasters took care of buildings, equipment and uniforms. The Adjutant was the Commandant’s secretary. The Commissary officer of Subsistence was in charge of the food supply.



Noncommissioned officers were enlisted men who had been promoted. They were ranked as Sergeants and Corporals. These men helped the Quartermaster and Commissary Officers. They were also in charge of some of the other enlisted men. The regular enlisted men, or Privates, did the work like marching, guarding and repairing.



The soldiers' most important job was to guard the fort. They served guard duty in small groups, or squads. A noncommissioned officer was in charge of them.

The guards would take turns walking around the walls of the fort. Each guard had a certain part of the wall to walk and watch a certain area of the fort. These were called sentry beats. The squads would walk their sentry beats all

day and night until the next group took over.

Soldiers on guard duty stayed in the guard house. There was a bed for them to rest on during breaks. The soldiers in the guard house had to watch the prisoners too, if they had any. It was a long day (or night). A soldier had to serve guard duty about once a week.

The life of the soldier was very strict. Musicians, who would play music at certain times, kept the soldier on schedule. They were like alarm clocks, buzzers and school bells. Different songs told a soldier what he was supposed to do at that time. The soldiers had to know over 70 different military calls.



FYI...

Here is a schedule for the soldiers who lived at Fort Mackinac in 1889. Each of these tasks or times in the day had a call, a song played by the buglers, drummers and fifers.

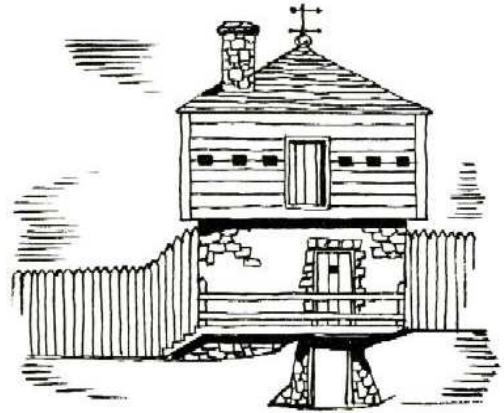
Reveille	5:45 a.m.
Breakfast	6:15 a.m.
Sick&Fatigue	7:15 a.m.
Guard Duty	8:50 a.m.
Mess Call	Noon
Drill	12:55 p.m.
Assembly	1:00 p.m.
Fatigue	2:10 p.m.
Retreat	Sunset
Tattoo	8:55 p.m.
Assembly	9:00 p.m.
Taps	9:45 p.m.

At sunrise, the musicians played reveille and the soldiers knew it was time to get up. At night, taps was played to tell the soldiers to go to bed for the night.

Fatigue duty meant the soldiers had to do chores. They had to clean the fort, repair the buildings and take care of the trails and roads in the National Park. In the winter, the soldiers had to shovel snow. In the summer, they had to work in the gardens.

Each building at Fort Mackinac was used for something different. The enlisted men slept in the Barracks. Officers and their family lived in the Stone Quarters or the Hill Quarters. Post Headquarters was where the Commandant, Quartermaster and Adjutant all worked.

The uniforms and equipment were kept in the Quartermaster's Storehouse. The gunpowder for when the soldiers practiced shooting was kept in the Powder Magazine.



Fort Mackinac has three Blockhouses. They are small forts inside the big fort. If the fort was attacked and the other army got into the fort, this is where the soldiers would go. They could fire guns and cannon out the small openings in the building, but be protected from things attacking them.

Some soldiers had their families with them at the fort. The enlisted men's wives could not stay in the fort, but sometimes they could work in the fort as laundresses or in the Post Hospital. All the officers could have their wives and children living with them. Often children living at the fort would go to the Post Schoolhouse.

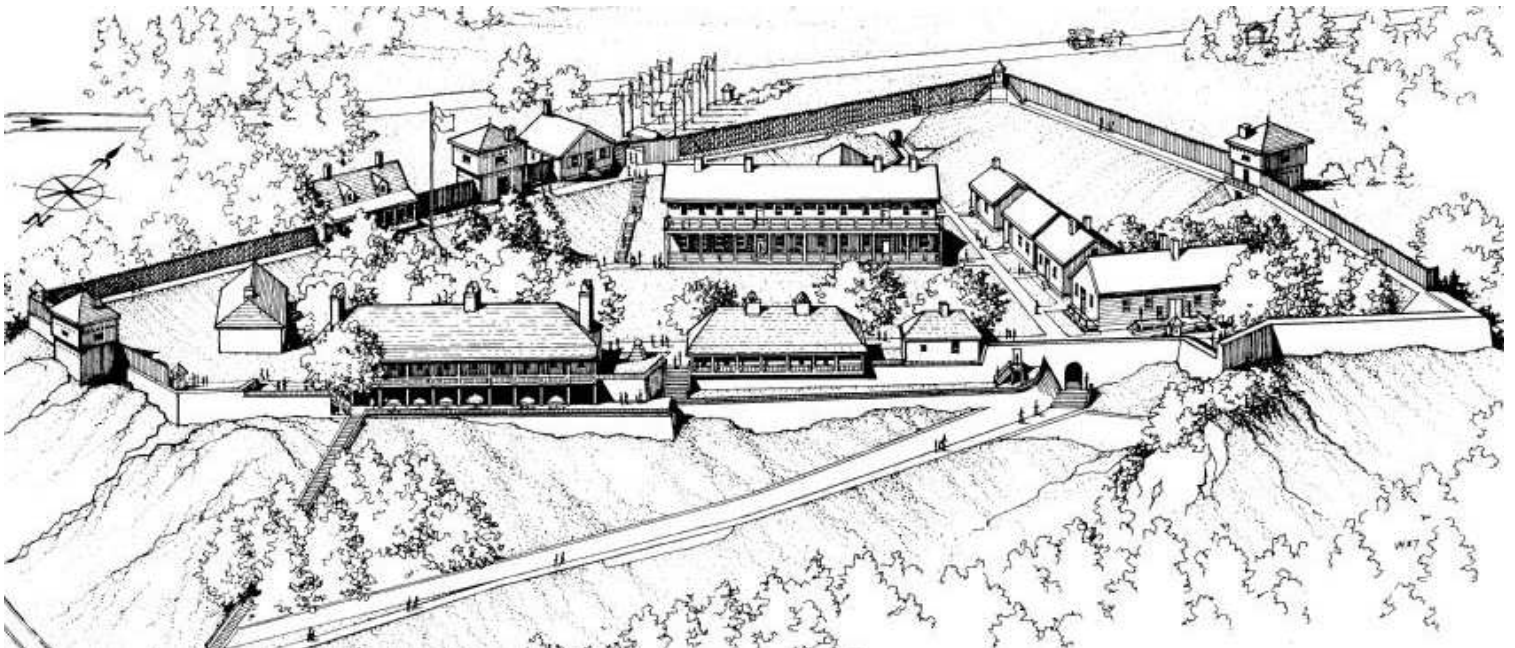
Life for the soldiers was monotonous, especially during the winter. But they did have fun, too. They had dances, shooting contests and played baseball. In the Post Canteen they could play pool and billiards. The soldiers could also visit friends that lived in town.

Not all soldiers could read. If a soldier could not read, he could take classes at the school and learn. Most of the men in the 23rd Regiment could read. There were magazines and books for them in the Schoolhouse and Canteen.

Sometimes the soldiers got in trouble. If they did, they had to go to a trial called a court martial. At the court martial, the soldier would tell what had happened. Other witnesses would tell what they saw. Finally, the officers in charge would decide if the soldier was guilty and give the punishment, if he was.

Soldiers did many things to get in trouble. They might have not done a job they were supposed to do, left the fort at the wrong time or gotten drunk. If they were guilty, soldiers were punished by losing their pay, doing hard labor or serving time in jail.

The life of a soldier at Fort Mackinac was very busy!

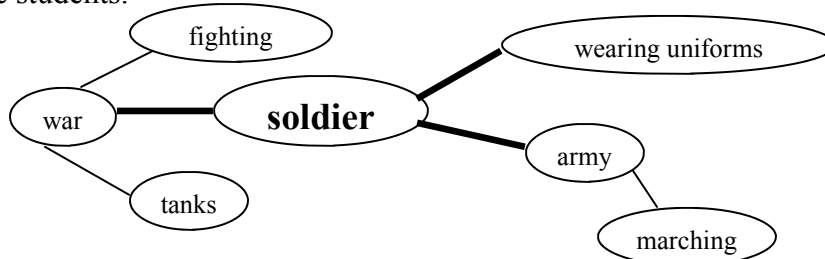


Lesson 4

Using A Day with Company K

☞ **Brainstorm about what they think of when they hear the word “soldier”.**

Use a web (see example below) to organize what the term means to the students.



GLCEs that may be reached in Lesson 4:

4-H3.0.4 Draw upon stories, photos, artifacts and other primary sources to compare life of people in towns and cities in Michigan and in the Great Lakes region during a variety of time periods from 1837 to the present.
4-H3.0.5 Use visual data and informational text or primary accounts to compare a major Michigan economic activity today with that same or related activity in the past.

☞ **Read the “A Day with Company K”.**

☞ **Discuss the following questions with students during or after reading.**

1. What did the soldiers at Fort Mackinac do with most of their time?
Most of the time the soldiers were practicing marching (drill) and shooting, guarded the fort and repaired buildings and walls at the fort.
2. What was the difference between an officer and an enlisted man?
*The officers were the bosses and they were given more responsibilities.
The enlisted men did a lot of the physical work and followed officers’ orders.*
3. What was the most important job of a soldier at Fort Mackinac?
The most important job was to watch and guard the fort.
4. How did a soldier know when he was supposed to do certain jobs?
He would hear certain music played by the musicians to keep his schedule. Different songs would tell a soldier what he was supposed to do at that time.

☞ **Compare what they thought about soldiers before, when brainstorming, and what they learned after the reading.**

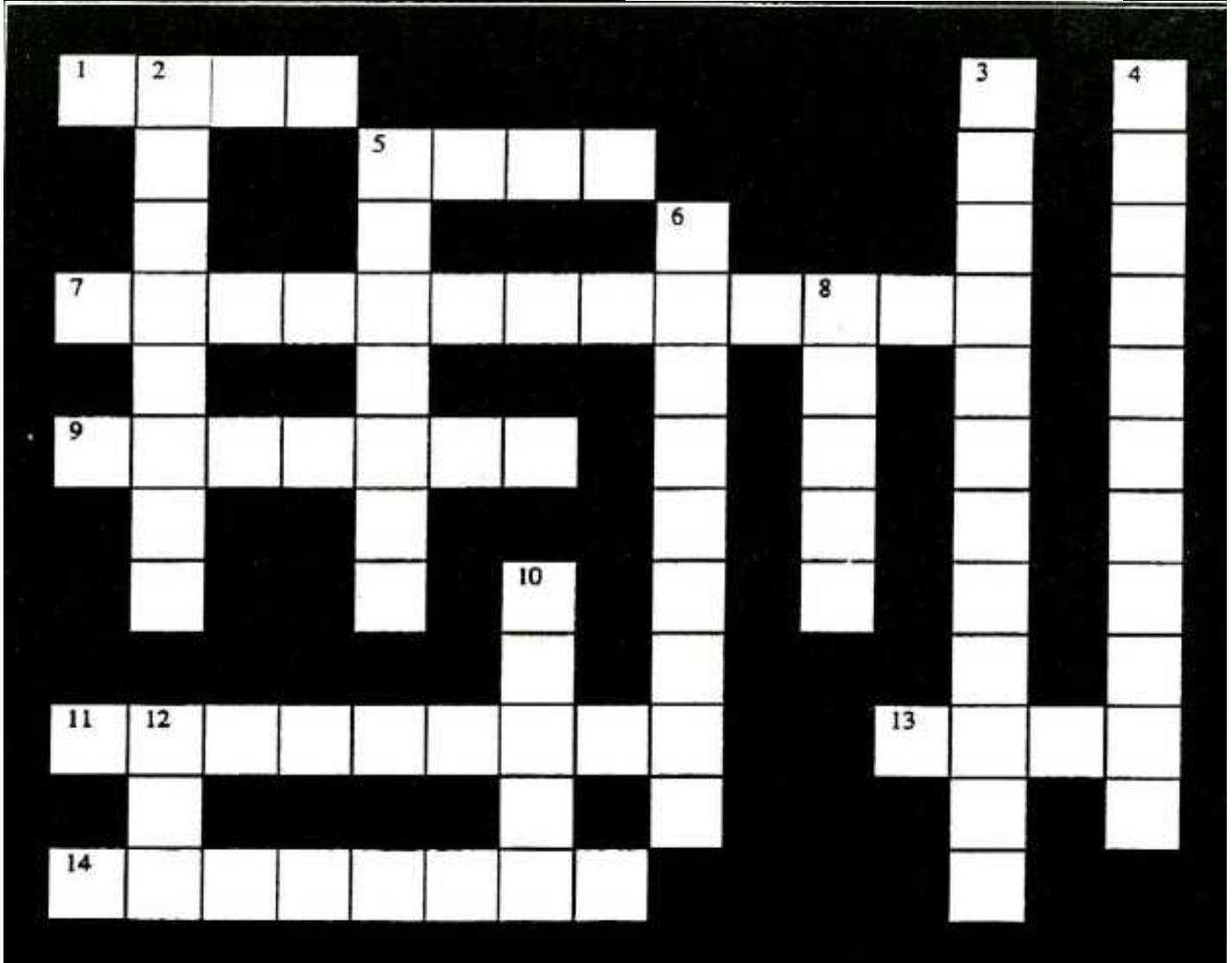
Soldiers did go to war and fight, but they can see another side of soldier daily life.

☞ **Use Activities 13, 14, 15 to further support the ideas in “A Day with Company K”.**

Vocabulary Words:	drill	Adjutant	Quartermaster
	sentry	fatigue	blockhouse
	canteen		

The soldiers who lived and worked at Fort Mackinac followed a very strict schedule of things they did every day. You also follow a schedule every day. Fill out the form below for a schedule of what you do in a normal day. Then compare it with a soldier's schedule at Fort Mackinac. What is the same? What is different?

Time	Activity



ACROSS

- 1. Time to go to bed at night.
- 5. Not all soldiers could do this; sometimes the learned in the schoolhouse.
- 7. Who took care of the equipment.
- 9. Where soldiers could play pool.
- 11. Regiments were divided into these.
- 13. Musical instrument that signaled soldiers during the day.
- 14. Time to get up in the morning.

DOWN

- 2. The Commandant's secretary.
- 3. Trial in the army. (two words)
- 4. Forts inside a fort.
- 5. Bugle call played at sunset.
- 6. A soldier's wife could be this.
- 8. One of the last bugle calls each day.
- 10. Marching practice.
- 12. Soldiers had guard duty about this many day(s) a week.

Company K Wordsearch

F G C A X S K C A R R A B G H
 S U E S S Y F Y S X Q Y C U E
 M L B G R S X A R S C I J S U
 G H I X F E E O T T E E H M C
 E U C I V A T M B I N M V W O
 G Y A R M Z H R B N G E T B M
 S W D R A S Q O A L R U S A M
 K U E J D M D E S U Y W E S I
 E L L I E V E R H P Q J A E S
 N R Z N H D Y A A T I C M B S
 Y C O R P O R A L L M T Z A A
 A N Z B B O J A W C L P A L R
 Y R E G I M E N T S H I U L Y
 Q D M H A C O F N T D I B G P
 H B P A Q M X M A G A Z I N E

Find these words used in the A Day with Company K story backwards and forwards, up and down:

MARCH	REGIMENTS
QUARTERS	BASEBALL
REVEILLE	MAGAZINE
ASSEMBLY	HOSPITAL
BARRACKS	COMMISSARY
CORPORAL	SENTRY
BILLARDS	GUARD
FATIGUE	MESS

Life of a Victorian Soldier

The soldiers at Fort Mackinac has different opinions about life at the Fort. Some thought it was boring and wanted to fight, some found it nice to be in a safe place and enjoyed the visitors to the island.

Tell a story about if you were a soldier at Fort Mackinac in the 1880s. Reread the story and look at the schedule you would have to follow during an ordinary day. Describe what you did during the day and how you felt about your work. Did you like living at the fort? Did you like living on Mackinac Island? Did you like being a soldier? What did you do all day? When did you eat? When did you wake up? When did you sleep? What did you do with your free time? What told you when to do all these things?

Tell your story to the class. See the differences in all of your stories.

