Mess Call at Mackinac

Soldiers at Fort Mackinac in the late nineteenth century enjoyed three square meals a day. Their diet included a combination of army issued supplies and locally grown and purchased food.

The daily army ration included beef, bacon and bread along with beans, sugar, salt and coffee. Soldiers supplemented this bland army diet with a tasty variety of vegetables from the post garden. Located in front of the Fort (Marquette Park) the soldiers' garden usually produced a bountiful crop of vegetables including potatoes, beans, onions, corn, lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, peas, squash and rutabagas. Soldiers also purchased extra food with money from the Company Fund to add variety to their daily meals.

With fresh vegetables from the garden and a steady cash flow to purchase extra food, soldiers at Fort Mackinac generally ate well. Breakfast and supper were light meals, but the soldiers ate very well at the mid-day dinner. When the men of Company "E" 22nd Infantry sat down for dinner on October 16, 1874 they enjoyed a hearty meal of roast beef, gravy, bread and vegetable soup with beans, peas, cabbage and carrots. By the early 1890's the soldiers' menu also included such dinnertime treats as corn starch pudding, macaroni and cheese and stewed prunes. Post surgeons proudly reported that the food was healthy, the kitchens clean and the cooking satisfactory.

A portion of the proceeds of your dining experience at Fort Mackinac supports the Mackinac State Historic Parks mission to protect, preserve and present Mackinac's rich historic and natural resources to provide outstanding educational and recreational experiences for the public.