

Army Ration (from page 1) and of a pattern to be prepared by the Quartermaster's Department, after making the requisite experiments. The haversack was usually made of canvas (15 X 15 inches) with a removable inner bag and a shoulder strap. The inner bag was attached by two buttons. The idea of the inner bag was to store the meat and other parts of the ration that would stain the haversack. The soldiers were to remove the inner bag and wash it on a regular basis. The soldiers soon discovered a better purpose for the inner bag, so they removed it to turn into cleaning patches for their rifles.

The haversack was worn with the strap over the right shoulder, the bag hanging on the left side of the body. Before 1857 uniform regulations, the haversack was made of white canvas and then changed to blacked canvas (painted or tarred) in 1857. The reason for this was that the food inside would stain the haversack, and then eventually the soldier's uniform. To keep the items separated in the haversack, the soldier would wrap the meat in paper or cloth, and keep other items in small cloth bags (Kautz mentions this in his book *Customs of Service*). The bags would be hand made or private purchase.

Unlike the army of today, the army of the 1800s did not enlist or train soldiers as permanent cooks. In garrison the ration issue would not be issued to individual soldiers, but issued to company mess instead. The meals would be prepared in the company kitchens, which were most often attached to the barracks (in some cases the soldiers mess and kitchen were in separate buildings). These meals were prepared by soldiers assigned to cook for their company, and usually overseen by soldiers who had some cooking knowledge. The army did have a small book for the mess, which listed items that should be in a company mess. It also gave some basic methods for preparing meals.

While on the march, the soldiers would be issued their rations, and

they would be left on their own on how to prepare their food. Meals that were ill prepared caused soldiers to suffer from numerous problems. Soldiers often would form messes and work together to prepare meals while at the halt. The mess was made up of 4 men (usually crib mates/comrades at arms in the battle line). The mess mates would even come up with colorful names to denote their particular mess. "The Lost Towney Mess," "Dirty Mucket Boys," or even "Coffee Boiler Mess," just to list a few.

Each soldier was issued a plate, cup, fork, knife, and spoon. Not much to prepare meals in the field. The members of the mess would pitch in to purchase items to facilitate the preparation of the meals. These items may have been a frying pan, small coffee pot, small camp kettle, and in some occasions a hand axe. These items would be rotated throughout the mess, to share in the care, and carrying of the heavier items (frying pan and axe).

Through experience the soldiers would devise different ways of preparing their rations in the field, but mostly it was boiled or fried.

Lt. A. Kautz saw that properly prepared food would keep the soldiers safe from unwanted disease. He even added an entire section to his book *Customs of Service* on how to prepare food in the field. I have added a couple of the paragraphs here: *Paragraph 703...A small iron vessel, half pan and half kettle, an iron fork, folding on a hinge, with a hook on the handle, to attach to his cooking-vessel to put and take off the fire, and a suitable knife, would seem to be sufficient to enable a soldier to do all the cooking that is absolutely requisite for short campaigns.*

Paragraph 704: With strong and well-made little bags for keeping the sugar, coffee, salt, pepper, flour & c. separate, his pantry, kitchen, and bed-chamber would be wherever he halted for the night...every soldier should make the art of cooking his

study: more disease and deaths are occasioned in an army by bad cooking than by any other cause.

Next time you heat up a meal in the microwave, or see a soldier eating a MRE, just think of what our 19th Century soldiers had to go through to get a meal.

19th Century terms:

Desiccated Potatoes – Dried potato slabs issued to the soldiers; aka pulverized potatoes.

Desiccated Vegetables – Dehydrated mixed vegetables issued in solid form. The idea was to break off a chunk and re-hydrate by boiling to make a stew or soup.

Desecrated Vegetables – A soldier's sarcastic term for desiccated vegetables.

Hard Bread – A 3 X 3 inch hard biscuit issued to the federal soldiers; also known as hard tack, tooth duller, or hard cracker. Songs and poems were even written about this ration item.

Dog Robber – Soldier's term for an army cook.

References:

Army regulations, 1861.

John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee, the Unwritten Story of Army Life*.

A. V. Kautz, *Custom of Service*.



Pvt. Lawrence Bateman

Fort Steilacoom

Vol. 27, No. 3

Fort Steilacoom, Washington

Autumn, 2010

What's in your Haversack The Army Ration

by Lawrence Bateman

It was Napoleon who said "Une armee marche sur son estomac" (an army marches on its stomach). With this in mind, the American army has always been one of the best fed armies in the world. By the 20th Century the Army Quartermaster Corp. had developed what many of us know as the K-ration, or the MRE (meal ready to eat). These rations are not always tasty, but they are designed to sustain the soldier through combat missions. The ration issued to the 19th Century soldier was much different than the canned and prepackaged rations issued to the soldiers of today. Still not tasty, but designed to sustain the soldiers during their daily life in garrison or on the march.

During the 19th Century the American soldier was issued two types of rations, the garrison ration and the march (field) ration. The garrison ration was issued in two parts. The individual issue and the bulk portion, which was issued out to 100 men. The individual ration, issued on a daily basis per soldier, would be: 12 oz. pork/bacon (or 1 lb. 4 oz. fresh beef), 1 lb. 6 oz. soft bread/flour (or 1 lb. 4 oz. corn meal, or 1 lb. hard bread).



Photo by Lawrence Bateman

Two haversacks with the contents spilled out show typical army food rations and utensils.

The bulk ration issued to 100 men twice a week would be: 1 peck of beans (or peas), 10 lbs. rice (or hominy), 10 lbs. green coffee (or 8 lbs. roasted & ground coffee, or 1 lb. tea), 15 lbs. sugar, 2 qts. salt, 4 qts. vinegar, 4 oz. pepper, ½ bushel potatoes (when practicable), 1 qt. molasses, 1 lb. 4 oz. candles, 4 lbs. soap. Desiccated potatoes or compressed vegetables might be substituted for the beans, peas, rice, hominy, or fresh potatoes. Vegetables and dried fruits, pickles, and pickled cabbage (sauerkraut) were occasionally issued to prevent scurvy, but only in small quantities.

The other type of rations that were issued to the soldier was the march

ration. This was a daily ration, and the soldier would receive 2-3 days issue at a time before going on the march. The daily ration issue would be: ¾ lb. salt pork/bacon (or salt beef), or 1 ¼ lb. fresh beef (rarely on the march), 1 lb. hard bread (9-10 pcs.), sugar, coffee, and salt. The beans, rice, soap, candles, etc. were not issued in order to cut down on the weight.

The soldiers would often visit the post trade store (post sutler) to purchase items to round out the ration issued.

It was even very common for the soldiers to forage in local homestead root cellars for canned (processed or jarred items to preserve them for future use) fruits, and vegetables. Canning gained popularity in the mid 19th Century, but canned items were not issued out as part of the soldier's ration. Too heavy, and the process still not perfected, caused the food to spoil—nothing worse than pushing along a sick group of soldiers.

Once the soldier was issued his march ration, he had to be able to transport it with him while on the march. As prescribed in the army regulations, paragraph 149: *Haversack-of gutta percha, or other material,* (Continued on page 4)

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Publication funded in part by City of Lakewood Lodging Tax Grant.

President's Message



I have a couple of items to report. In the past couple of months, the fort members have hosted several school groups, senior citizen groups, and a couple of military units from Fort Lewis.

We have some good events coming up at the fort. On September 11 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in all quarters we are having a Living History Day. Living historians in period clothing will talk about life at Fort Steilacoom from 1849 to 1868. Our Sunday lecture series continues with "Defense in Depth" on September 19 at 2 p.m. in Quarters 2. Our Annual Meeting and election is on October 17 at 2 p.m. in Quarters 2.

We are continuing to open the fort on Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m. until Labor Day weekend. Thereafter, our winter hours are the first Sunday of the month from 1 to 4 p.m.

Fort Steilacoom Interpretive Center is run by an all volunteer staff. And, as you can see, we have a lot of things going on. If you would like to work as a volunteer docent, please let us know.

Come visit us on Sundays or check out our web site.

Lawrence Bateman



Photo by Carol Neufeld Stout

Jacqueline and Jerold Dock receive life memberships to Historic Fort Steilacoom Association from President Lawrence Bateman at the annual Founders' Day Picnic on August 15, 2010. Others pictured are members Emmalou Lyle, Nancy Keller-Scholz and Orville Stout.

Founders' Day Picnic

A special feature of the Founders' Day Picnic held on August 15, 2010, was the presentation of Life Memberships to Jerold and Jacqueline Dock for their support and generous contributions to Historic Fort Steilacoom Association over many years. The Docks have been active participants in Fort activities since they first became members of the Association in 1999. Jerold has also served as a docent and tour guide at the museum.

David Schmidt also received a Life Membership this summer for his generous contributions.

The Founders' Day Picnic is held each year in honor of the founding of the fort by Capt. Bennett Hill in 1849 on the former Joseph Heath farm rented from the Hudson Bay Company. The fort established the first American military presence on the Puget Sound and served as protection for the settlers and a supply depot for the region's military activities. During the Indian War of 1855-56 it

was a refuge for farming families in the Puyallup valley.

Chuck Collier Remembered

Charles R. Collier, a founding member of Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, passed away this summer. Chuck worked to restore the historic buildings, served on the Board of Directors, and was maintenance foreman for many years. A special memorial service is open to the public on Saturday, August 28, at Oakbrook Country Club, 8102 Zircon Dr., Lakewood. The celebration of his life will begin at 3 p.m.

Beginning in 1983, Chuck worked with Lyle Dunkin, Bob Weir, Jack Langstrom, Arnold Stern and Jim Lawer to reconstruct the historic fort buildings. Many others helped on the daunting six year project as well. See Chuck's story in the 2007 Spring issue of the Newsletter.

Soldier's Clothing Allocation

by Lawrence Bateman

We think of the Old West movies when we think of the 19th Century soldier.

Dirty, tattered uniforms they have worn for years. Instead of writing an entire report on the issue, and returns of the soldier, I just want to post a list of clothing items a soldier would be issued during his five years of enlistment.

First Year:

- 1 Hat with trimmings complete
- 1 Fatigue forage cap
- 1 Cover
- 2 Coats
- 3 Trousers
- 3 Flannel shirts
- 3 Flannel drawers
- 4 Booties (brogans)
- 4 Stockings
- 1 leather stock
- 1 Great coat
- 1 Blanket

Second Year:

- 1 Hat with trimmings
- 1 Fatigue cap
- 1 Cover
- 1 Coat
- 2 Trousers
- 3 Flannel shirts
- 2 Flannel drawers
- 4 Booties
- 4 Stockings

Third Year:

- 1 Hat with trimmings
- 1 Fatigue cap
- 1 Cover
- 2 Coats
- 3 Trousers
- 3 Flannel shirts
- 2 Flannel drawers
- 4 Booties
- 4 Stockings
- 1 Leather stock
- 1 Blanket

Fourth and Fifth Year:

- 1 Hat with trimmings
- 1 Fatigue cap
- 1 Cover
- 1 Coat in 4th year and 2 Coats in 5th year
- 2 Trousers in 4th year and 3 Trousers in 5th year
- 3 Flannel shirts

- 2 Flannel drawers
- 4 Booties
- 4 Stockings

These uniform allowances would be drawn by the company commander from the Quartermaster Department. The issue would be divided in half and issued out twice a year.



Archambault
 Private, Company C
 4th United States Infantry Regiment
 1853-1855

Coming Events



Living History Day: September 11
 Fort Steilacoom will come alive as reenactors live and work as soldiers, officers, their wives, children and friends. Open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Donations accepted.



John McPherson

Defense in Depth: September 19
 Living historian John McPherson will provide a first person portrayal of the art of Field-employed military fortifications of the 1850s. Quarters 2 at 2 p.m. Donations accepted.

Annual Meeting: October 17
 Following the annual meeting in Quarters 2 after 2 p.m., Lawrence Bateman will portray officer August V. Kautz in "A Remembrance of Fort Steilacoom." No charge, donations accepted.