Mackinac National Park
1875-1895

Keith R. Widder

Reports in Mackinac History and Archaeology
Number 4

MACKINAC ISLAND STATE PARK COMMISSION
Reports in Mackinac History and Archaeology

This series is designed to provide a format for the publication of substantial reports relating to the Straits of Mackinac, Michigan. As the continued research efforts of the staff of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission produce studies of the history and archaeology of this region, they will be published in this series. Relevant papers by non-staff members will also be included.

Research by the Mackinac Island State Park Commission is primarily directed toward the restoration, reconstruction, and interpretation of the historic sites of Fort Michilimackinac, Fort Mackinac, and other historic structures in Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island. It is also the purpose of our program to present the results of our research to both the general public and the scholar. Museum displays, live interpretation, and attractive publications serve to accomplish this goal in their own unique ways. This report illuminates another aspect of our heritage in a way we trust will be interesting and informative.

David A. Armour, General Editor


Number 2. The Preservation of History at Mackinac. EUGENE T. PETERSEN

Number 3. King’s Men at Mackinac: The British Garrisons, 1780-1796. BRIAN LEIGH DUNNIGAN

Number 4. Mackinac National Park, 1875-1895. KEITH R. WIDDER

Cover—Robinson’s Folly from A Lake Tour To Picturesque Mackinac (1884) by C. D. Whitcomb, published by The Detroit and Cleveland Steam Navigation Company. Michigan Historical Collections
Foreword

In 1872 the United States Congress created at Yellowstone in Wyoming the world’s first national park. Three years later Mackinac Island, Michigan, became the site of the second. Although much has been written about our national parks, Mackinac National Park has received scant attention. Perhaps this is because it existed for only twenty years from 1875 until it was transferred to the State of Michigan in 1895 and became Michigan’s first state park.

In this short history of Mackinac National Park no attempt has been made to compare it with Yellowstone or the three parks established in 1890—Yosemite, General Grant and Sequoia in California. However, several features about Mackinac made it quite different from the others.

Mackinac National Park was under jurisdiction of the War Department rather than the Interior Department. This meant the army was able to use some soldier labor from Fort Mackinac to police and maintain the park. Even though Congress was not in the habit of appropriating funds for park purposes, the commander at Fort Mackinac gave attention to the park as soon as it was established.

By 1875 thousands of tourists were already coming to Mackinac Island by steamboat. This, coupled with the island’s natural beauty and historical significance, brought about the establishment of the park. People were an integral and essential part of the national park from its beginning to end. Mackinac National Park was created to meet the immediate needs of tourists, as well as potential visitors.

Since the national park was part of a small island community, its policies and administration closely affected the residents of the village outside the park boundaries. This meant park superintendents at times had to cooperate and other times oppose private citizens’ activities in the park. The local inhabitants and businessmen found the park both an economic asset and a point of irritation when their access to its resources was curtailed. In short, preservation of the park’s wonders and simultaneously exploiting them occasionally produced conflict. But above all, the government did preserve and maintain the national park for the benefit of the people.

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I. Mackinac National Park Established

I wish to state that this island is simply a watering-place. It is an old French trading post, and an old Indian post. It is a rock out in the lake a few miles, with, as my colleague says, very little vegetation, but it is a romantic spot visited by people from all parts of the United States. This is simply to reserve it.

Senator Zachariah Chandler, Michigan, the United State Senate, March 11, 1873

For two centuries European and American entrepreneurs and visitors have been coming to Mackinac Island. Before them, Great Lakes Indians had revered the spirits whom they believed dwelled on this sacred island. For a variety of reasons, ranging from economic to aesthetic to spiritual, thousands of people have reserved a special place in their hearts for this beautiful site. These emotions prompted the move to preserve Mackinac’s natural and historic resources in the 1870’s.

On March 11, 1873 Michigan Senator Thomas W. Ferry introduced a resolution before the United States Senate directing the Secretary of War to study the proposition of setting apart a portion of Mackinac Island as a national public park. One-half of the island, over one thousand acres comprising the Fort Mackinac military reservation, was already owned by the U.S. Government. Ferry wanted all of this land, except the fort and approximately one hundred acres immediately surrounding it, designated a park. He pointed out that although still garrisoned by troops, Fort Mackinac was no longer militarily significant.

However, the island was indeed historically significant. Ferry reminded his colleagues that at the same time the Puritans were making their migration to New England, the French were busy exploring the Mackinac region. He pointed out that Mackinac Island, which first came into British hands in 1780, was ceded to the United States by the Treaty of 1783 which ended the American Revolution. The British recaptured it in 1812, but returned it by the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. Bearing in mind this rich Indian, French, British, and American heritage, Ferry prophetically assessed the island’s lasting historical worth. “Of traditional and historical value it possesses much more to endear it to the people, and as one of the earlier landmarks of national boundary and history, it will not easily pass out of annals or recollections.”

Mackinac Island possessed, in addition to its unique beauty, many beautiful natural features. While enjoying the cool summer air, visitors gazed in awe upon Sugar Loaf, Arch Rock, Robinson’s Folly and other unique geological formations. This, plus quiet tours through the white birches and the majestic view of the Straits of Mackinac from the heights of
Fort Holmes brought people in close communication with nature. Certainly any place with such magical qualities ought to be preserved.

As fate would have it, during the early post-Civil War era some interest developed among Americans to preserve some of their irreplaceable natural and aesthetic resources. In 1872 Congress had created Yellowstone National Park, the first national park in the country. This was done to protect “all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities or wonders” found in the park. Several years earlier in 1864, Congress had ceded a large tract at Yosemite to the state of California in an attempt to save the big sequoia trees from destruction.

This philosophy or practice of conservation was not shared by all. For this was a time of rapid industrialization and westward expansion. Most Americans believed natural resources existed to be used, and through it should result financial gain. America seemingly possessed endless amounts of timber, water, and minerals so why be concerned with saving them or eliminating waste?

Amidst the national pre-occupation with building railroads, settling prairies, and exploiting natural resources, a few wise voices began to be heard. Perhaps some things were so unique or precious that no one individual or corporation ought to own them. After all, where else could you find geysers like those at Yellowstone or trees like the sequoias at Yosemite? If the government would not set aside these priceless features, surely private enterprise would destroy them in the name of profit.

Senator Ferry, well aware of the Yellowstone precedent, was haunted by the fear of private parties coming into possession of Mackinac’s treasures. During the debate on his resolution, he said, “I am opposed to its passing into private hands, so that by fees the public will be milked while enjoying places of public interest.” Throughout this argument appears his sincere concern for the public good. Since steamships were bringing thousands of visitors to the island each summer, Ferry considered it vital that its beauty and attractions be protected and made accessible.

Senator Morgan C. Hamilton of Texas did not share Ferry’s convictions. He was puzzled by the very idea of creating parks to set aside land when at the same time great effort was being exerted to encourage immigrants to settle in America’s vast vacant territory. Opposed to spending government funds for such a purpose, he sarcastically stated, “There are thousands of historic spots just as sacred as the island of Mackinac which the people of the respective localities would like to have improved at the national expense, so as to enhance the value of surrounding property.” Admitting that he knew nothing of the island’s “surface,” he suggested that it might better be made an Indian reservation.

Hamilton’s concluding remark revealed the most serious objection to the entire park concept. To him, a national park at Mackinac “would be but a sinkhole to waste money in.” Senator Eli Saulsbury of Dela-
ware echoed Hamilton's fear. He favored delaying the consideration of the resolution until the potential of future expenditures on public lands to be used as public parks could be considered in greater depth. California Senator Eugene Casserly disagreed with Saulsbury and gave his support to Ferry's resolution which he thought "entirely unobjectionable." 

Following debate, the Senate passed the resolution by a vote of thirty-seven to thirteen. Senator Ferry thus won the first round of his fight and now awaited the War Department's recommendations.

On December 17, 1873 Secretary of War William W. Belknap informed the Senate that his Department believed Ferry's idea to be excellent. From a military viewpoint he saw no objection "to the purpose of a park." Brigadier General Phillip St. George Cooke, Commander, Department of the Lakes, thought the "project good even without purchasing any land." The army's support certainly improved the chance of passage for Senator Ferry's park bill which he had introduced on December 2.

It was not until May 28, 1874 that the Senate passed this bill and sent it to the House of Representatives. During the final debate on March 3, 1875 the principle objection, as in the Senate, was the expense of maintaining it or any other parks. Representative William S. Holman of Indiana, when reminded that Yellowstone had not, as yet, cost the government even one dollar, still opposed the federal government establishing parks for which it was responsible. He suggested that Mackinac be given to the State of Michigan to be used as a park. Although his recommendation would be followed twenty years later, it received little support at this time. The House acted favorably, with two-thirds voting in favor of the bill. Thus, on March 3, 1875 President Ulysses S. Grant signed this measure into law creating the Mackinac National Park:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representaties of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That so much of the island of Mackinac, lying in the Straits of Mackinac, within the county of Mackinac, in the State of Michigan, as is now held by the United States under military reservation or otherwise, (excepting the Fort Mackinac and so much of the present reservation thereof as bounds it to the south of the village of Mackinac, and to the west, north and east respectively by lines drawn north and south, east and west, at a distance from the present fort flag-staff of four hundred yards,) hereby is reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale under the laws of the United States, and dedicated and set apart as a national public park, or grounds, for health, comfort, and pleasure, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people; and all persons who shall locate or settle upon or occupy the same, or any part thereof, except as here-in provided, shall be considered trespassers, and removed therefrom.

SEC. 2. That said public park shall be under the exclusive control of the Secretary of War, whose duty it shall be, as soon as practicable, to make and publish such rules and regulations as he may deem necessary or proper for the care and management of the same. Such regulations shall provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition. The Secretary may in his discretion grant leases, for building purposes, of small parcels of ground, at such places in said park as shall require the erection of buildings for the accommodation of visitors, for terms not exceeding ten years; all of the proceeds of said leases and all other revenues derived from any source connected with said park, to be expended, under his direction, in the management of the same and in the construction of roads and bridle-paths therein. He shall provide against the wanton destruction of game or fish found within said park, and against their capture or destruction for any purposes of use or profit. He also shall cause all persons trespassing upon the same after the passage of this act to be removed therefrom, and generally shall be authorized to take all such measures as shall be necessary or proper to fully carry out the objects and purposes of this act.

SEC. 3. That any part of the park hereby created shall at all times be available for military purposes, either as a parade or drill ground, in time of peace, or for complete occupation in time of war, or whenever war is expected, and may also be used for the erection of any public buildings or works: Provided, That no person shall ever claim or receive of the United States any damage on account of any future amendment or repeal of this act, or the taking of said park, or any part thereof, for public purposes or use.

Several factors had worked in favor of the national park idea. The government already owned the land and had troops garrisoned at Fort Mackinac who could care for the grounds. It appeared no significant additional expense would be required for park maintenance.

Since visitors were coming from all over the eastern United States, Mackinac Island was well known to many Congressmen and their constituents. Many travellers were among the more affluent members of society and were quite concerned with finding pleasurable activities for their increasing amount of leisure time. A steamship trip on the Great Lakes was one enjoyable pursuit. Some of the wealthier sojourners had long cast covetous eyes upon the island's beautiful bluffs overlooking the straits as sites for summer homes. The act authorized the War Department to grant leases for this purpose.

Mackinac Island possessed no mineral deposits or significant stands of timber. Nor did it have any potential for settlement by large numbers of people and subsequent agricultural or industrial development. Its resources truly were historical and aesthetic, and their preservation did not deprive private enterprise the opportunity to exploit them.
Map of the
MACKINAC NATIONAL PARK.
SHOWING THE LOT WHICH IT IS PROPOSED TO LEASE
AND ROADS IT IS PROPOSED TO MAKE.

FROM A SURVEY MADE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR
BY MAJOR G. WERNER, CORPS OF ENGINEERS, U.S.A.

H. A. Ellms, Amhurst.
1875.

To the

Michael Dousman
British landing

Battle Field Aug 7th 1816

Mackinaw

Dr. Mitchell

NATIONAL PARK

MILITARY RESERVATION

Handwritten note:

[Handwritten note on the map: "Map handly transmitted with letter of the date."
Signed: "Major Werners."
Date: June 8, 1877"]
In fact, government ownership and protection of the park actually benefited several commercial interests. Mackinac Island occupied a central place in northern Michigan, which was doing a thriving tourist business in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The creation of a national park enhanced the stature of the island. Certainly, local hotel owners, curio shopkeepers, and other businessmen were very happy to serve the park visitors. Railroad lines were rapidly approaching the Straits and the steamship companies were expanding services to accommodate increasing demand. 9 Mackinac Island was a favorite destination of their routes.

Although Mackinac National Park was to exist for only twenty years, its creation ensured the preservation of its most treasured “curiosities.” It guaranteed that private interests and individuals could not freely carve up or buy the island’s wonders. Entrusted with this responsibility, the War Department did its best to protect the park while enabling visitors to enjoy its attractions. This job would not always be easy.

II. Preserving the Enchanted Isle

We owe it to ourselves and to the future to grasp and fix in some form to hand down to posterity, all points or incidents of historic value which serve to illustrate the march of the nation. I would add this example in perpetuity of that worthy record that this, with other national memorials, may not perish but brighten with the lapse of time.

 Senator Thomas W. Ferry in the United States Senate, March 11, 1873.

Congress’ act creating the national park gave the Commanding Officer at Fort Mackinac new responsibilities. The War Department designated him Park Superintendent and instructed him to provide for the safety and comfort of park visitors. Civilian use was to supersede military use of the former reservation lands. To ensure the park’s attractiveness and charm, the superintendent had to protect its resources from both visitors and local residents. This proved to be difficult.

To carry out Congress’ mandate, the army needed to survey the government lands and to establish a set of rules and regulations for the park. In August, 1875 Major Godfrey Weitzel of the U.S. Engineers Office in Detroit sent his assistant, H. A. Ulffers, to conduct the survey. After Ulffers’ party finished its work, Weitzel reported to headquarters that the park could be kept beautiful if the underbrush was cleared from among the trees. He also recommended the construction of roads and paths. Some drives were necessary to reach the seventy-eight building lots he proposed to make available for leasing. 1

Weitzel also conferred with Major Alfred L. Hough, Post Commandant, and drafted a “well-digested” system of park regulations. Some serious jurisdictional questions involving possible challenges to the superintendent’s legal authority became apparent. Hough asked the Judge Advocate, “What will be done with persons not under military authority who may commit offenses in Mackinac Park?” Hough believed that the military code could not be applied to civilian lawbreakers even though the Secretary of War had authority over the park. Therefore, the park rules had to conform to “the general laws of the United States and the State of Michigan covering trespasses, etc.” Otherwise, there would be no way to enforce them.

Hough feared that when civilians were violating laws, the Post Commander could do little more than notify civil authorities and let them take action. 2 Referring to an 1837 Attorney General’s opinion, the Judge Advocate responded that he believed the commandant had the authority “of restraining and ejecting offenders not subject to military law.” 3 He then ordered Hough and Weitzel to prepare rules that appeared suitable under existing laws. Any legal questions which arose regarding these regulations or their enforcement could then be disposed of at a later time. 4
After lengthy consideration, this set of rules and regulations was adopted:

**Rules and Regulations.**

I... Mackinac Park will be under the immediate control and management of the commanding officer of Fort Mackinac, who is charged with the duty of preserving order, protecting the public property therein, and enforcing these rules.

II... All tenants renting under the act of Congress providing therefor must conform to, and abide by, such rules and regulations as are prescribed for the care of the park, and will be held responsible for a compliance with the same on the part of the members of their families, their agents, and employees.

III... The sale of wines and malt or spirituous liquors on the park without special authority from the commanding officer of Fort Mackinac, or higher military authority, is prohibited.

IV... No person shall put cattle, swine, horses, or other animals on the park, except as follows:

The cows belonging to the residents of the Island of Mackinac may be placed in a herd, under the care of a herder, and be permitted to graze in such parts of the park as may be designated by the commanding officer of Fort Mackinac.

V... Racing or riding and driving at great speed is prohibited.

VI... No person shall indulge in any threatening, abusive, insulting, or indecent language in the park.

VII... No person shall commit any obscene or indecent act in the park.

VIII... No frays, quarrels, or disorders of any kind will be permitted in the park.

IX... No person shall carry or discharge fire-arms in the park.

X... No person shall injure or deface the trees, shrubs, turf, natural curiosities, or any of the buildings, fences, bridges, or other structures within the park.

XI... No person shall injure, deface, or destroy any notices, rules or regulations for the government of the park, posted, or in any other manner permanently fixed, by order or permission of the authorities of the park.

XII... No person shall wantonly destroy any game or fish within the park, nor capture nor destroy the same for any purposes of use or profit.

XIII... Any person who shall violate any of these Rules and Regulations shall be ejected from the park by military authority, and in case the person so offending shall have committed any offense in violation of any of the statutes of the United States or of the State of Michigan the offender will be proceeded against before the United States or State courts according to the laws providing for the same.

XIV... The commanding officer of Fort Mackinac may, at any time, add to or modify these rules, subject to the approval of the Secretary of War.

**BY COMMAND OF GENERAL SHERMAN:**

E. D. TOWNSEND,

*Adjutant General.*

These new park responsibilities became almost a full-time job for the post commander. As superintendent, he had to execute leases, receive rents, and disburse funds. He also had to manage the park, make improvements, and construct new roads. Furthermore, he had to keep the War Department informed of all his activities and solicit authorization for expenditures of funds and approval for any significant work to be done in the park. All this was in addition to his duties as the commanding officer at Fort Mackinac.

This heavy work load, coupled with increasing visitation, prompted Dr. John R. Bailey of Mackinac Island on February 25, 1884 to ask Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln to appoint a full-time superin-
Bailey claimed that he had originally suggested to Senator Ferry that the park be created. Possessing a deep concern for the park's welfare, Bailey feared that natural "curiosities" would be destroyed by visitors unless the park was more closely supervised. Captain Edwin E. Sellers, the current superintendent, agreed with Bailey. In a letter to his superiors, Sellers said that $50,000 should be spent "to put the park in proper condition." He proposed that the government sell the lands of the military reservation on Bois Blanc Island and use those proceeds to finance park improvements. To upgrade the maintenance of the park, Sellers suggested a full-time civilian superintendent be hired.

Bailey's and Sellers' campaign was in support of a bill introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Edward Breitung of Michigan. This bill called for all the measures advocated by Sellers. It appeared the fears of those opposed to the park ten years earlier might be realized. However, Congress, in no mood to expend large sums of money on such a project, only authorized the sale of government lands on Bois Blanc Island for the benefit of the park. Insufficient funding was to be a constant problem in the park's operation.

Lack of money made it difficult to protect the park's features from vandals and thieves. In 1876 the War Department refused to authorize putting soldiers on extra duty to work in the park; this limited their use as park police. Extra duty assignment freed a man from regular military routine and required additional compensation of twenty cents a day. Yet, the need for adequate law enforcement was always evident.

Inability to protect the park's resources caused the superintendents great frustration. In their annual reports, they bitterly complained that tourists tore bark off the birch trees. In 1886 Captain Greenleaf A. Goodale said that "nearly every white-birch tree near the park roads has been stripped of its outer bark up to the lower limbs." To combat this, the following summer one man was sent on a mounted patrol to protect the trees. Other senseless visitors claimed their souvenirs by breaking off pieces of Sugar Loaf and Arch Rock. On August 14, 1894 Major Clarence E. Bennett threatened to expel from the park anyone found guilty of defacing Sugar Loaf.

An almost continuous struggle raged between the commandant and local residents over illegal cutting of timber. To islanders it seemed quite logical that they should be permitted to harvest trees needed for firewood and logs, particularly with the woods so nearby. To the superintendent, unauthorized cutting was a direct affront to his authority and an intolerable depredation to the park. This controversy led to some unpleasant events.

In 1876 Captain Joseph Bush offered a ten dollar reward to anyone who assisted in the arrest and conviction of violators. Several years later, Captain Edwin E. Sellers sent this sternly worded message to
Benjamin McGulpin and several others: "If you do not at once desist from cutting wood in the National Park, you will be proceeded against in the United States Courts." On January 25, 1889 a young private tacked a poster on a wall in the island post office. It informed the citizens that anyone cutting wood in the park would be prosecuted by the United States Attorney. The penalty could be a $500 fine and a one-year prison term. Threats accomplished little, and in 1894 Major Clarence E. Bennett told the Quartermaster General that it was unsafe to send a man alone on patrol at night in the park. Since most of the thievery took place at night, it was almost impossible to catch offenders in the act. The problem was never solved to the army's satisfaction.

Shortly after his arrival at Fort Mackinac during the summer of 1884, Captain George K. Brady ran into a swirl of heated charges over some work done by Lieutenant Dwight L. Kelton. Kelton had cut "stunted trees" and some bushes and removed stumps and roots protruding from Sugar Loaf. He described the results of his efforts this way: "Of course the appearance of the rock has changed it now stands out boldly against the sky, and being isolated from the tall surrounding trees, it can be seen in all its majesty." At Arch Rock, he claimed to have cut an opening through the bushes so that tourists could "look through the Arch without alighting from the carriages."

Dwight L. Kelton.
North Blockhouse.

Such park improvements failed to impress A. G. Boynton of Detroit. On a short visit to the island he was appalled to learn "the fact that two of the most attractive objects in the Park—Sugar Loaf Rock and Arch Rock—have been shamefully defaced by the removal of trees which gave them much of their picturesque beauty." Being accustomed to using his pen as the Vice-President of the Detroit Free Press, Boynton expressed his rage to Secretary Lincoln. He demanded an investigation be made into this "vandalism."¹⁵

Unattended cattle admiring their reflections near the Grand Hotel.

To everyone's relief, Sugar Loaf and Arch Rock endured Kelton's landscaping. Lincoln informed Boynton that if any "improper work" had been performed it was a "mere error in judgment" with no maliciousness intended.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Lincoln took this complaint seriously. Hereafter, any proposed changes in the park's features or their surroundings were to be undertaken only with the Secretary's approval.¹⁷ Lincoln was sensitive to public scrutiny of the War Department's responsibility to preserve the island's "natural curiosities."

In the spring of 1876 the Secretary of War made the foresighted decision that Fort Mackinac's buildings also should be preserved. Major Alfred L. Hough had requested permission to tear down the North Blockhouse, which was in a very dilapidated condition. Hough informed his superiors no funds were available for its repair, and he could use its stone. Remembering the words of Senator Ferry, Quartermaster General M. G. Meigs vetoed Hough's plan. Meigs termed the fort's blockhouses as "among the few relics of the older times which exist in this country," and the old fort was to the public one of the "great curiosities within the bounds of the park though it is not part thereof." Thus, the blockhouses should be repaired and "preserved as curiosities even if of no use." Meigs, keeping in mind the public interest, said that "If demolished for the sake of the stone they contain there will be a cry from the tourists against their destruction as an act of vandalism."¹⁸

Meigs' concept of historic preservation was not shared by all in the War Department. Since the fort was not really part of the park, the conditions of the Act of March 3, 1875 did not apply to it. Meigs
argued that the law's intent did indeed encompass Fort Mackinac. The Secretary of War agreed. The army quickly allotted $723 for repairs to the North Blockhouse. Meigs' enlightened thinking broadened the park concept and insured the existence of Fort Mackinac's most historic structures.

If the superintendents found men difficult to control, at least they could talk over their differences with their adversaries. But what about those four-legged creatures whose only response to an accusation of trespassing was a grudging "moo!" or a switch of the tail? Many islanders owned cattle that were accustomed to grazing on government lands; park boundaries meant nothing to them. Successive superintendents wrestled with this problem with little success. In 1877 Captain Joseph Bush posted a notice that all stray cows would be put in a pound until reclaimed by their owners. His directive also required that all cattle be placed in a herd under the control of a herder. They then could graze on authorized portions of the park.19

The main reason for the trouble was that the villagers refused to cooperate in efforts to control their cattle. Locals failed to hire a herder and simply ignored the park rules. Even village ordinances encouraged animal trespassing. An 1875 law barred cattle from running at large at night, while a later ordinance kept cattle off streets only between the Grand Hotel and Robinson's Folly.20 Nothing was said of the island's interior, and park grass tasted as good as town grass any time.

These animals were a true menace. They trampled vegetation and blocked roadways. Furthermore, their droppings attracted flies and generated noxious odors, which fouled the otherwise refreshing Mackinac air. Yet the park superintendent, despite numerous complaints to his superiors and the village fathers, could never control these beasts.

The William Springer family found a way to overcome this problem—they did not return to Mackinac. Springer, a Congressman from Illinois, spent a summer on the island and contemplated leasing a lot and building a cottage. When spring arrived in 1885, he expressed his feelings to Captain George K. Brady by letter:

We have been hesitating what to do about the lease of lot No. 23. We would be very glad to spend our summers at Mackinac, but our experience last season has somewhat discouraged us. Owing to the "cowbell nuisance" Mrs. Springer did not get the rest desired and in consequence failed to improve in health at all and as a result has been ill the entire winter. With the present mayor of the village, there seems to be no hope of having the nuisance abated—I fear we will have to seek summer quarters elsewhere...21
On August 28, 1887 the St. Ignace News reported that Springer and his son were again visiting the island, but it was unlikely they would ever return “unless the bells are taken off the cows...”

Enforcing park regulations could lead to tense situations. On July 1, 1894 Major Clarence E. Bennett learned that several men were illegally loading earth and gravel on board a vessel on the island’s west side. He ordered Lieutenant Woodbridge Geary to take an armed party to the scene of the crime and arrest the culprits, which was done. Soon afterwards, the men and their vessel, the schooner H. A. Emery, were ordered away from the park. The case was then turned over to the U.S. Courts.

During the early years of the park, superintendents faced difficulties regarding claims or encroachments on government land. In 1871 Congress authorized the sale of “16 acres more or less” to Edward A. Franks. This property surrounded the Mission House which he operated as a hotel. The legal status of this land had been unclear ever since the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had abandoned their work in 1837. The government had allowed them to build this mission on public lands in 1825, and the subsequent Mission House owners’ had made various claims to the land around it. This act of Congress had helped to prompt Senator Ferry to introduce the park bill, for it created a precedent whereby private parties could acquire ownership of public land.

Shortly after Ullfors’ survey, the army identified eight encroachments on park land. Some involved overlapping lots or buildings and were easily settled. However, J. T. A. Wendell, Henry Van Allen, and Dr. John R. Bailey claimed their adjoining lots extended further than the survey lines indicated. Van Allen, operator of the Island House Hotel, had built a barr that was partially situated on government land. This incident generated some colorful exchanges between fort officers and Van Allen as well as some disputes among the military men themselves. These three landowners petitioned Congress for relief, and on March 1, 1879 Congress authorized the transfer of the disputed grounds to Wendell, Van Allen, and Bailey.

While in the process of settling these boundary disputes, the army built a fence marking the southern boundary from Robinson’s Folly west. This separated the park and military reserve on one side from the village and private lands on the other. Once the boundary was clearly established and marked, it was hoped future trespasses could be prevented.

Another piece of disputed property involved an existing fence. A large private claim in the island’s
A soldier strolling through the park with his girlfriend.

interior was owned by Michael Early. The fence enclosing his land had been constructed prior to his acquiring it in 1856 from Michael Dousman. In 1883 Captain Edwin E. Sellers informed Early that his fence line enclosed about ninety acres of park land and directed it taken down. Early did not dispute the superintendent's charge and complied with Seller's order the following year.28

From time to time, various special interest groups sought permission to use government land for their own benefit. In 1877 a church group calling itself the Mackinac Protestant Christian Association wanted to build a non-denominational church on the Old Indian Agency lot. The Old Agency House, which had been immortalized in Constance Fenimore Woolson's novel Anne, had burned on December 31, 1873. They felt this spot would make a beautiful place for the church. Moreover, some of the island's most prominent citizens backed the project, and it received an initial favorable response from the army. When Major Alfred L. Hough returned later in the year, he objected to the idea because such an act would create a precedent for future encroachments. Besides, the army needed the land for part of its post garden. As a result, the War Department reversed itself and denied the request.29

During the national park's last year, several interesting petitions were made. The Lake Michigan and Lake Superior Transportation Company wanted to lease government water frontage to build a dock.30 In August, 1894 Samuel Lewis of Pittsburgh expressed interest in drilling holes in the park to search for natural gas.31 Perhaps the most exotic idea came from J. H. Roberts of Grand Rapids. He wanted to build an electric railway along Mackinac's shores and through certain island streets, and the village council approved his plan on November 14, 1894.32 Secretary of War Daniel Lamont denied all these demands.

In its efforts to preserve the natural and historical "curiosities" on Mackinac Island one thing is clear; the War Department took its congressional orders seriously. Although not always in agreement with each other, the park superintendents and their superiors conscientiously strove to protect these features from vandals, thieves, and special interest groups. Despite the fact they never had adequate funds to supervise the park, they did a commendable job of maintaining it. Out of the twenty years of controversy and frustration emerged a park still intact despite its heavy use. The mold had been set; the historical and natural "curiosities" would be preserved for generations to come. 

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III. For the Enjoyment of the People

Mackinac is really worth seeing. I think it by no means improbable, especially should the steamboats extend their route to it, that it will become a place of fashionable resort for the summer. There is no finer climate in the world. The purest, sweetest air--lake scenery in all its aged and grand magnificence, and the purest water;...

Thomas McKenney, Sketches of a Tour to the Lakes, 1826

Besides protecting the island’s wonders, the superintendent was charged with the responsibility of insuring the public’s right to use the park. Mackinac National Park had been set aside for the people’s health, comfort, pleasure, benefit, and enjoyment. To carry out this mandate, the army had to construct roads, let leases, and provide for visitor safety. This required the superintendent to be sensitive to the public’s needs, whether tourist or local resident.

Shortly after the park’s establishment, the need for additional troops at Fort Mackinac became apparent. In August, 1875 Senator Ferry urged the army to send another company of troops to the fort. In May, 1876 Company “C” of the Twenty-second Infantry joined Company “E.” Presumably a sufficient labor pool now existed to make all necessary park improvements. Over the next few years several new buildings were built at the fort, including two officers’ houses, laundress’ quarters, sergeants’ quarters, a bakehouse, a commissary storehouse, and a bathhouse. Nevertheless, the commandant was unable to utilize effectively these same men in construction projects beyond the fort grounds.

This resulted from the War Department’s refusal to grant extra duty pay for men working in the park. James B. Fry, the Assistant Adjutant General, informed Captain Joseph Bush on September 2, 1876 that the division’s incidental expenses appropriation
was small, consequently all park work was to be performed by "daily details." He reminded the superintendent that an extra company had been recently transferred from the frontier and all labor was limited to what these men could do without being placed on extra duty. Quartermaster General M. C. Meigs concurred with this decision pointing out that Congress had not authorized military appropriations for expenditure on park projects.  

While this may appear to be contradictory to Meigs' adamant efforts to save the North Blockhouse earlier in 1876, it was not. At the time Congress created the park it also increased the army's responsibility. However, it did not raise the army's appropriations to care for it. From the War Department's view, the two companies at Fort Mackinac, although only a small fraction of the army's 28,565 men, could be better used on the western frontier. Maintaining this force took a sizable sum out of the Department's budget, and it was not about to commit any more money unless Congress so directed. Meigs and the Secretary of War believed the Act of March 3, 1875 required them to preserve the island's "curiosities," but it did not allow them to spend military funds on park improvements. Only work that could be done during the normal activities of the garrison was permissible. As a result, very few changes were made in the park prior to 1884. On the other hand, improvements inside the fort could be justified as legitimate military expenses.

Although Congress would not appropriate additional funds for the park, it made it possible for the War Department to generate revenue for that purpose. The superintendent was authorized to lease lots on which summer cottages could be built. By November, 1875 Francis B. Stockbridge of Kalamazoo, Michigan, among others, had requested a lease. In 1882 Captain Edwin E. Sellers reported that he had executed seven leases but "nothing further could be effected in regard to leasing the lots until the grounds were surveyed, staked, and roads cut out, ..." When he suggested the Corps of Engineers do the survey, they replied that there were no appropriations for such a project.

Ever since 1849 when W. B. Ogden of Chicago expressed interest in building a summer home on the east bluff, wealthy island visitors had wanted to erect cottages above the beautiful Straits of Mackinac. Now that Congress had authorized it, prospective cottagers began to wonder just when they would be able to do so. Responding to their requests, Captain George K. Brady informed the War Department on August 29, 1884 that he had thirteen leases on file. He, too, wondered if and when the Department would ever authorize these lots to be used. Finally, on September 16 Secretary Robert T. Lincoln ordered the park surveyed so that cottages could be erected the following summer. Brady directed Lieutenant C. D. Cowles and Lieutenant Benjamin C. Morse to do this work.

The West Bluff.
Once the survey was completed, eleven lots were leased in 1885. They were for ten years, with the opportunity for ten-year renewals after expiration. Three cottages were erected on the east bluff in 1885. The first to be completed probably belonged to Mrs. Phoebe B. Gehr of Chicago. Mrs. Charlotte R. Warren of Chicago and John Atkinson of Detroit built the other two. The next year William Westover of Bay City, Michigan, constructed the first cottage on the west bluff. Initially the annual rental was $25, which was raised to $50 in 1895.

By 1891 the superintendent reported that all of the lots on the west bluff had been leased and built upon; on the east bluff all had been leased as far as the road went, and all but two were built upon. A total of twenty-five had homes, and two had stables. Some less desirable lots were leased for stable purposes at a yearly rental of $15.

The War Department exercised tight control over construction of the dwellings. Plans had to be submitted to the superintendent, who in turn forwarded them to headquarters. Finally, the Secretary had to give his approval before work began. Lessees were people of means, and it was expected that they improve their leased property accordingly.
The superintendent was very pleased by the arrival of his tenants. Perhaps Captain Greenleaf A. Goodale summed it up best in his annual report for 1886. "It is desirable to obtain as many good tenants as possible, partly for the reason that the only money available for the improvement of the park in any direction is from the fund created by annual rent of lots." Applicants for leases generally had to submit recommendations from worthy acquaintances. Despite this, many of the early lessees defaulted by failing to build their cottages within the required one year. In an attempt to discourage this, the War Department in 1888 stipulated that two years rent be paid when the lease was signed.

Even though the amount of money raised from these rents was not large, the superintendents put it to good use. Most was spent on building and improving roads. They constructed drives to the bluff lots and repaired some of the interior roadways used by tourists and carriage drivers. In 1884 the army reaffirmed its resolve not to put soldiers on extra duty to perform labor in the park. As a result, the superintendent received bids on projects from civilian contractors and awarded the jobs to the lowest bidders.

Once money started to come into the park fund, the superintendent acquired new responsibilities for its proper use. Prior to 1886 all expenditures had to be approved by his superiors, but in this year Captain Goodale got authority to expend up to $20 without higher approval. Five years later this figure was raised to $50. In addition, in 1887 Goodale was allowed to expend $12 a month for clerical labor relative to park business.

Not every dollar went for roads. In 1886 Goodale contracted with A. G. Couchois to build an observatory at Fort Holmes at a cost of $160. This twenty-foot tower replaced an old one and allowed visitors to see for miles as the Straits disappeared into Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. Goodale also laid some planks along the way to Arch Rock and placed a handrail along side. To save money, he used old materials from the fort. The year before, George Brady had spent $93.50 to build a stairway from the foot to the crest of the east bluff. Such improvements helped to make a visit to Mackinac National Park safer and more enjoyable.

Fort Holmes in 1886. On her visit in 1837 Harriet Martineau was overwhelmed by the view: "I can compare it to nothing but to what Noah might have seen, the first bright morning after the deluge. Such a cluster of little paradises rising out of such a congregation of waters, I can hardly fancy to have been seen elsewhere. The capacity of the human eye seems here suddenly enlarged, as if it could see to the verge of the watery creation . . . ."
Additional money came from the sale of government lands on Bois Blanc Island, funds which Congress set aside in 1884 for park improvements. In 1887 the Interior Department sold about five hundred acres for approximately $2000.19 Although this sale produced less revenue than anticipated, Goodale used it to build Leslie Avenue running nearly two miles through the trees from Arch Rock along the cliff to the Early farm. To do the work, Goodale proposed to hire a foreman at two dollars a day, two teams with drivers at four dollars a day each, and twenty laborers for $1.50 a day—all for twenty-five days.20 This roadway had been started by Captain Leslie Smith in 1871 when he commanded Fort Mackinac. In a thoughtful gesture, Goodale named this beautiful drive after his predecessor.21 Goodale opened the road on July 4, 1889 by leading a carriage caravan along its scenic way. In his annual report for 1889 he stated it was “the most attractive and popular drive on the island.”

To accommodate visitor needs, the superintendent allowed businessmen to operate concessions at key points in the park, such as Arch Rock and Sugar Loaf. Refreshments, candy, pictorial views of the island, and tobacco were all sold to the tourists.22 Often several operators desired these potentially lucrative concerns. Frank Lasley offered to pay ten dollars for the “exclusive right” to do business at Arch Rock in 1894.23 In 1887 E. T. Foley tried to build a stand at Arch Rock without receiving permission from the superintendent. Upon learning of this, Captain Goodale ordered an immediate halt to it.24 The superintendent also had to see that concessionaires did not litter the park.

Numerous publications were prepared to encourage people to visit the island or to acquaint them with the island’s landmarks and history. One very popular booklet was Dwight Kelton’s Annals of Fort Mackinac, which was published in yearly editions. While Kelton was still stationed at Fort Mackinac, his efforts to sell the book got him into trouble with his commander, Captain Edwin E. Sellers. On July 26, 1883 Sellers ordered Kelton to remove from the park all signs advertising the Annals and to stop peddling them there.

Kelton complied with this order, but expressed his displeasure to the Post Adjutant, Lieutenant W. J. Duggan, and demanded that it be withdrawn. Kelton claimed that since boys were allowed to sell the Police Gazette and other literature in and around the fort, carriages could use the park for profit, and cattle could roam at will, he should have the same right to vend his product. In fact, he argued, the maps and descriptions included in the Annals helped to make a tourist’s visit more enjoyable and offered a real serv-
ice to one who was unfamiliar with the island. It was not until the next summer, after Seller’s death, that the Annals were again sold on the park grounds.

Businessmen frequently nailed posters to trees promoting their establishments or services. When this happened, the mounted police tore them down.

To prevent this practice, Captain Goodale issued a General Order in 1887 forbidding any advertisement on park trees.

In addition to protecting visitors from unauthorized salesmen, the military tried to make a person’s visit a safe one. Railings, fences, and stairways

Lieutenant Benjamin C. Morse supervises target practice on rifle range in 1890.
1776. 1879.

FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION

AT THE

"NATIONAL PARK" Mackinac Island.

Picnic at the platform in the Park at 11 o'clock a.m. Reading of the Declaration of Independence at 12:30 p.m., after which an oration will be delivered by P. M. Packard, Esq. Dancing on the platform until 3 o'clock p.m. At 3:30 there will be a

FREE TO ALL ROWING REGATTA, ONE MILE AND RETURN.

for ordinary row boats two men in a boat; 1st prize $7, 2nd prize $5, 3rd prize $3. After the Regatta there will be a "Heel and Toe" walking match, distance two miles on Main street; first prize $5, second prize $4, third prize $2, after which a "Go-as-you-Please" walking match of two miles; first prize $5, second $3. A "Go-as-you-Please" walking match one-half mile for boys under 12 years; FIRST PRIZE three dollars, second two dollars, third one dollar. Other amusements will be arranged by the Committee on that day. Vocal music by a choir of ladies and gentlemen.

The FORT MACKINAC MILITARY BAND will furnish music during the day.

The steam Yatch "MARY" will make an excursion from Cheboygan and Point St. Ignace, and the Steamer A.

VAN RAALTE will reduce the fare to ONE DOLLAR from Petoskey to Mackinac and return.

COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS:
JAMES ROGAN, S. BURDGOYNE, C. LAWRENCE, JAMES B. CARR

JOHN R. BAILIY, Chairman of Board Committee

W. P. PRESTON CHAIRMAN

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Fort Mackinac military band.

had to be kept in good order. They apprehended, when possible, carriage drivers or horsemen who speeded over roadways.27 Visitors did not have to fear wild animals since no large game or dangerous beasts lived on the island.

Because of large numbers of visitors, each summer the garrison curtailed its activity on the rifle range. Located behind the fort, the shooting path cut across areas where tourists were likely to roam. As a rule, shooting was prohibited during the summer months except on special occasions. When the range was used, it usually was early in the morning and two soldiers were detailed to keep civilians away.28

A number of visitors came in uniform. During the summer of 1888, three regiments of the Michigan State Troops held their annual summer encampment in the park. They were joined by two companies of the Twenty-third Infantry from Fort Wayne and the two companies at Fort Mackinac for their summer maneuvers.29 The proposed gathering of eight companies of the Nineteenth Infantry in July and August of 1891 concerned Robert Hulbert, a local businessman. In his diary he stated doubts that the Secretary of War would allow target practice during the “season.” He noted that the park was filled with people “who almost live in the woods of the Park in quest of health, rest, and pleasure.”30 The Nineteenth Infantry assembled on the island and moved to Whitmore Lake, Michigan, on July 15.31 In the mid 1890’s the Ohio National Guard and the Detroit Naval Reserve also used the government’s facilities for summer drills and maneuvers.

Visitors found the soldiers a real attraction. This was a time of nostalgia over the recent war between the states and a period of military activity in the Indian country to the west. Yet, here in a most peaceful environment were some real live men in army blue. A man on mounted patrol or the company drilling on the parade ground behind the fort no doubt stirred patriotic emotions.

Holidays, particularly the Fourth of July, meant a celebration was in order. One memorable occasion was the centennial of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1876. At ten o’clock sharp the courthouse bell rang, and a procession headed for a grove of trees in the park. At noon a prayer was offered and the Mackinac Glee Club sang the “Centennial hymn.” Then Lieutenant John MacAdam Webster read the Declaration of Independence, and James J.
Brown of Cheboygan gave the oration. Following lunch, Perault's violin and harp band played, with dancing until dark.32

Three years later a similar program took place with a few additional activities. A rowing regatta and two walking matches were offered. Music for the day was provided by the Fort Mackinac military band. In addition, steamboats made special excursions to Cheboygan, St. Ignace, and Petoskey. Decoration Day, 1888, saw Captain Goodale lead his garrison, members of the Grand Army of the Republic, and civilians from St. Ignace and Mackinac Island to the island cemeteries. Here they decorated the graves of Civil War veterans.33

These holiday observances were for the local people because great numbers of tourists did not arrive until mid-July. So Decoration Day and Independence Day offered an opportunity for residents of Mackinac Island, Cheboygan, St. Ignace, Petoskey, and St. Helena's Island to gather together and have a good time in the national park. On these occasions, too, the military mixed with the civilians and created a sense of camaraderie that was not always present.

For years the island residents had been burying their dead in two cemeteries near the post cemetery, about one-half mile behind Fort Mackinac. Protestants and Catholics each had a separate plot. Park records show that the Secretary of War had authorized this use of government land in 1851.34 Although no clear boundaries appear to have ever been drawn, apparently the islander's right to use these burial grounds was never challenged. That is, until Captain Joseph Bush angered the entire island community by his actions following the burial of A. B. Madison.

Following his death in September, 1876 Madison was interred within the limits of the Protestant cemetery. Believing his gravesite to be in "a very crowded place," Mrs. Madison hired a man who moved the bodies of her husband and two children to a site slightly beyond the cemetery limits. She then had the plot enclosed with an iron fence. Bush claimed all this was done without his knowledge and was an encroachment on the national park. If allowed to go unchallenged, he argued, his authority as park superintendent would be impaired.35

Bush brought the controversy to a head on April 27, 1877 when he officially notified the village council that they could no longer use the cemeteries. The telegraph wire to Washington, D.C., suddenly heated up. Village President W. P. Preston sent a telegram to Secretary of War George McCrary asking him to overrule Bush until Senator Ferry could look into the matter. If anyone should die, a burial ground was needed.36 In less than a week the War Department rescinded Bush's order and prohibited him from disturbing the Madison graves.

This squabble abated after Major Alfred L. Hough re-assumed command in the summer of 1877. But he, too, found the cemeteries to be a real problem because no one wanted to keep the grounds in good order. Hough recommended that the cemeteries be given to the village, and that they maintain them under the direction of the post commander. In May, 1878 he described their condition as being "a disgrace to a civilized community." Since they occupied a central location, their unsightliness reflected upon the beauty of the entire park.37

The whole affair was further complicated by Secretary McCrary's opinion in December, 1877 that he could not authorize use of park land as a cemetery. This required Congressional action.38 Islanders,
Henry M. Duffield. This prominent Detroit attorney owned a cottage on the east bluff.

anticipating this, refused to take any responsibility for their cemeteries until they officially received ownership. The park records do not indicate Congress ever passed this authorization. The matter seems to have been dropped and the status quo retained. Residents simply picked out a gravesite for their deceased and buried them there. The superintendent did the best he could to maintain the grounds.

The community made other demands for the use of park land. Large numbers of visitors generated huge piles of garbage that needed to be disposed of properly. This became evident to John O. Plank, manager of the Grand Hotel, after just one season, and he petitioned Captain Goodale for the right to lease several acres of park land. He planned to feed the garbage to several hundred hogs. A man would be employed to watch them and keep the grounds "sweet and clean." Goodale wisely rejected this idea, but agreed to allow Plank to dig a deep hole where the hotel's refuse could be dumped and covered with lime.39

While it probably was to be expected that inconsiderate visitors dropped litter in their tracks, it is somewhat surprising to find that many cottagers were insensitive to the park's tidiness. They dumped rubbish in the park, on the roads, or over the bluff. Upset, the superintendent had to remind his tenants that garbage was to be deposited in the places designated by him.40 When they burned their refuse, the superintendent warned them to exercise great care. He did not want any trees scorched or, worse yet, a forest fire.41

Secretary of War George W. McCrary.

John Cudahy. This wealthy Chicago meatpacker had a cottage on the west bluff.

These summer tenants placed other demands on the superintendent. C. C. Bowen wanted to start a garden in 1892 and needed some soil from the woods.42 In 1889 Frank Clark and his neighbors had
built a fence in front of their cottages which enclosed the bluff. Captain Goodale tactfully informed Clark that he could not prevent the public's access to the bluff. Even though the fence was constructed without authorization, it could stay if a conspicuous sign was placed near the turnstile which read "Public Way" or "Public Way along the bluff."

When these cottages were unoccupied, which was most of the year, the owners expected the superintendent to keep them secure. Following a break-in to the Duffield cottage during the winter of 1888, Captain Goodale assured Whipple Gehr of Chicago that he would "look after the cottages frequently." Three years later the Duffield cottage and four others were burglarized. Major Edwin M. Coates did not have to search far for the culprits. They were five of his recent recruits, who were turned over to the state courts for trial.

Many of these summer dwellers were not reluctant to make demands of governmental authorities. However, when the local tax collectors put them on the tax rolls, they exercised their pens quite freely. Until 1890 the lessees had not been assessed any local taxes, but in that year Thomas Chambers, Treasurer of Holmes Township, sent out tax bills to the cottagers. When Henry Duffield opened his mail one icy January morning, he was incensed that Holmes Township expected him to pay taxes! He quickly wrote to Captain Goodale to find out what was happening. He argued that since his house was on government land, neither state nor local authorities had the right to tax his personal property there.

Goodale, with great dispatch, asked for an opinion by the Judge Advocate General. J. W. Clous, Judge Advocate in Charge, upheld the township's action. He said, "The State of Michigan does not seem to have ceded jurisdiction over the lands owned by the Government of the United States, and within the boundaries of the National Park on Mackinac Island; it, therefore, never parted with its right of taxation of private property located thereon."

This represented a change from an earlier opinion rendered by G. Norman Lieber, Acting Judge Advocate General in 1886. At that time James Gallagher, a supervisor from Mackinac Island, had inquired about the tax status of these cottages. Lieber's opinion, which stated that structures in the park were exempt from taxation, was the basis of Duffield's position.

Suffering this rebuff by the War Department, the cottagers took their case to Lansing. They hoped to entice the state legislature to cede jurisdiction of the park property to the federal government. This would then free the property holders from all taxes. Learning of this in late January, 1890, the town board sent Supervisor Gallagher to Lansing to protect the township's interest in this matter. The cottages remained on the tax rolls.

The primary reason the local government decided to assess taxes upon the properties was to help pay for roads. The town board argued they were maintaining roads on the island including some in the park; therefore, the cottagers should pay their share.

Surely Duffield and his neighbors had little trouble meeting their civic obligations. In 1890 he paid a total of $6.95 to Holmes Township; two years later his bill was $17.65. This tax was based on the value of the owner's personal property, not the land upon which the cottage stood. This policy has continued to the present. The opposition to these assessments was a matter of principle, but it is hard to understand the cottagers reluctance to contribute so little to a place that gave them so much.

Due to the rising numbers of tourists and cottagers, the park rules were changed somewhat in 1890. Recognizing the futility of trying to control the cattle, all reference to them was dropped. Regulations were added pertaining to tenants' use of fires, disposal of garbage, and encroachment on grounds next to their lots. Unauthorized concessions in the park were banned, and all advertising prohibited.

Throughout the National Park's existence, the War Department made a good faith effort to maintain and to improve its visitor appeal. People were welcome here, and it was the army's duty to make their visits as enjoyable as possible. At times it did appear the superintendent gave more attention to the cottagers than their numbers would seem to merit. Since their dwellings were so visible, close supervision was required to keep them in order, and these prominent people were accustomed to receiving special attention. In addition, it was their rental payments that provided the revenue for park improvements. Thus, the superintendent had to make every effort to satisfy them.

Though one can find fault with the park's administration, the superintendents did a creditable job. They were managing an operation for which they were not trained. In fact, who in the country knew anything about running national parks? Probably no one. Until 1890 Yellowstone was the only other national park, and its operation was not a model of excellence. Considering the funds available and their military duties as post commander, these "part-time" superintendents kept Mackinac National Park in good shape. They made it possible for thousands of visitors to enjoy the park's wonders.
People came to Mackinac because nature had created an ideal environment which was healthy, scenic, and quiet. Visitors arrived hoping to restore their health, wanting to escape summer heat in crowded cities, trying to satisfy their love of travel and adventure, or just to enjoy the island's romantic charm. Some stayed for less than a day, others all summer. They came by steamboat and railroad. Once there, they discovered that island businessmen had provided many accommodations for them.

Throughout the nineteenth century visitors had exalted Mackinac's refreshing summer climate. Steamship and railroad promoters informed would-be passengers that a visit to Mackinac would surely be good for whatever ailed them. On his visit in 1842 the eminent Cincinnati physician, Dr. Daniel Drake, made this observation:

The island of Mackinac is the last, and, of the whole, the most important summer residence to which we can direct the attention of the infirm and the fashionable.... An ague, contracted below, has been known to cease even before the patient had set his foot on the island, as a bad cold evaporates under the warm sun in a voyage to Cuba....

What accounted for this seemingly miraculous healing power? Many theories emphasizing Mackinac's unique climatic features were offered. Dr. H. R. Mills, a former surgeon at Fort Mackinac, found several factors which comprised this haven of health. It's temperature was mild and uniform, the climate was favorably influenced by evaporation off the lakes, and the atmosphere was pure and buoyant. He recommended a stay at Mackinac for people suffering almost any ailment—"No better place can be found for sickly chlorotic girls and puny boys; worn-out men and women, whether suffering from overworked brain or muscle."
The Detroit and Cleveland Steam Navigation Company's City of Cleveland (renamed City of Alpena in 1886) and the City of Mackinac inaugurated their run between Detroit and the island in 1882 and 1883, respectively. This 350-mile trip along some of the most scenic Great Lakes shoreline included stops at Port Huron, Oscoda, Alpena, Cheboygan, Mackinac Island, and St. Ignace. In 1890 the round trip from Detroit cost "but a trifle more than $4.00 per day all told." The trip took 2 3/4 days; if one made the voyage from Cleveland it took 4 1/2 days.
Northern Steamship Company's schedule out of Mackinac Island for 1895.

The North West is greeted by a large crowd.

1890 schedule for the D & C.
Promotional pamphlet distributed by the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad in 1882.

The Michigan Central Railroad issued this attractive publication to its passengers in the late 1880's.

The GR & I ran all the way from Cincinnati, Ohio to Mackinaw City.

The North Land approaching the Mackinac harbor.
The railroad depot in Mackinaw City.

The Michigan Central brought many visitors from Detroit and points further east.

The Algomah.
The D & C worked hard to convince would-be passengers, “A summer trip should be planned to get all the quiet and fresh air possible.” Their promotional pamphlet Midsummer Voyages on the D & C pointed how this could best be accomplished “by taking a water trip.” Any one who chose not to lay over at Mackinac had between four and six hours to “see considerable of the main points of interest at the famous National Park, if they engage one of the charioteers for a drive.” Those desiring to see more of the park’s wonders could catch another run to Detroit a few days later.

Seeing the great numbers of travellers, James J. Hill, the railroad tycoon, decided to build the most luxurious liners of their day. Not wanting second place to anyone, Hill made sure the North West (1894) and the North Land (1895) offered every convenience possible. These two ships of the Northern Steamship Company brought thousands of visitors to Mackinac until the second decade of the twentieth century.

The elegant steamships did not have a monopoly on passenger traffic, however, for by 1875 the railroads were rapidly extending their tracks northward.
At the end of a trip aboard the Michigan Central only a short boat ride was needed to take visitors to Mackinac National Park.

Lake View House

The New Mackinac on August 11, 1895.
The Michigan Central reached Mackinaw City in 1881, the Grand Rapids and Indiana got there the next year, and the Detroit, Mackinac, and Marquette opened its tracks between Marquette and St. Ignace in 1881. Tourists could now come directly by rail from the cities of the east, south, and west.

Once at Mackinaw City, ferries transported anxious visitors to the island. The first passenger ferry was the Algomah. It was brought into service in 1881, when the three railroads serving the Straits banded together to form the Mackinac Transportation Company. The Algomah carried passengers and freight across the triangular route between Mackinaw City, Mackinac Island, and St. Ignace. Even earlier, in 1878, the Arnold Line, still an active company, began carrying passengers on scenic tours throughout the Straits area.

Before the Grand Rapids & Indiana reached Mackinaw City, it got as far as Petoskey. From here travellers would board steamers such as the A. C. Van Raalte and take a trip to the island. Others chose to go by the Inland Waterway route. After riding a tramway to Conway Springs, they boarded a small steamboat which took them through an untamed scenic chain of lakes and rivers. Through Crooked Lake, Crooked River, Burt Lake, Indian River, Mullet Lake, and Cheboygan River they sailed. At the terminus of the voyage was Cheboygan, where a steamer could be boarded for passage to Mackinac. For many years this remained a favorite route.

These fun-loving rail and boat passengers came from all over the eastern United States. An analysis of registers from several hotels and Fenton's Bazaar between 1875 and 1895 revealed some interesting findings. Only one-third of those who signed these...
books came from Michigan; Illinois ranked second with twenty percent and Ohio third with eighteen percent. Nearly twice as many Chicagoans as Detroiters visited Mackinac. Significant numbers travelled from Cincinnati, Cleveland, Grand Rapids, and St. Louis, with fewer people from such lake cities as Buffalo and Milwaukee. Even though local reporters observed “great numbers” of visitors from the south, the register books show that only one or two percent were from that region.

Visitors found a choice of several hotels at which to stay while enjoying themselves. In 1875 five were in business—Island House, Mission House, Astor House, Commerical House, and Lake View House,

Main Street, 1900.
A naval unit marches past lined-up carriages on Main Street around 1900.

Stereographic view of village from post hospital.
plus several boarding houses. During the next twenty years numerous establishments were opened. Among these were the Palmer House, Murray Hotel, Mackinac House (after it burned, the New Mackinac), St. Cloud’s Place, and the Grand Hotel. Rates at the Grand were three or four dollars a day, while the other hotels charged between two and three dollars. Most also had weekly plans. In 1890 the capacity of all the hotels was slightly under two thousand. None of these places could compare with the Grand. Built and opened in 1887 and first managed by John O. Plank, it set a standard of excellence for summer resorts across the country. Many of its guests stayed for most of the season between mid-July and September. While in residence there, they dined in elegance, danced to fine orchestra music, and enjoyed the breath-taking view from the world’s longest porch. Strolls or carriage rides through the park, picnics at Fort Holmes or perhaps a treacherous walk across Arch Rock enabled visitors to inhale fresh, healthy Mackinac air and to escape the cares of their distant homes.

At different times, men expressed interest in constructing a hotel on park land. Senator Ferry favored leasing ground to parties who would build facilities designed for the public benefit. In 1882 Francis B. Stockbridge purchased the private lot where the Grand now stands for the expressed purpose of erecting a hotel. Although he personally was not interested in undertaking the project, he wanted to ensure the availability of the proper location when the right people came along. Shortly before the park passed to the State of Michigan, there was conjecture that James J. Hill planned to construct a hotel even more pretentious than the Grand on the government field adjacent to it. Speculators also dreamed of putting up hotels at Fort Holmes and even in Fort Mackinac itself. Fortunately, good sense prevailed, and the park withstood all these fanciful schemes.

Island merchants offered a wide variety of goods for tourists to purchase. Fenton’s Indian Bazaar stocked quill work, shells, “Florida and Japanese goods,” and “all kinds of curiousities.”

This mid-1890’s view of Main Street shows Fort Mackinac above the village.
articles, medicine, and guidebooks could be purchased at John R. Bailey's National Park Drugstore. Edward J. McAdam operated two stores in the village and one at the Grand specializing in jewelry, "Indian curiosities," and "fruit and nuts in season." For the more conventional shopper, a stop at Richard P. Hulbert's General Merchandise Store was in order. Numerous other shops, restaurants, and saloons catered to visitor needs.

Photography was enjoying its adolescence during the late nineteenth century, and fortunately numerous cameras snapped pictures of people and places at Mackinac during the national park era. In 1887 Charles G. Agrell brought a "portable gallery" from St. Ignace and set it up on the site of the recently burned Mackinac House. Many sat to have their portraits taken, including the park superintendent, Captain Greenleaf A. Goodale. Other photographers took numerous stereographic views of the national park and the village which were sold to the passing tourists. These shots preserved park scenes for the ages.

Of all the services available, the favorite was the carriage tour through the island. These rigs took people from the dock to their hotels, and to almost any spot on the island they wanted to see. Competition between drivers for passengers was intense and not all tourists felt their services worth the price. One unhappy man described his experience this way:

On arriving at the dock, one is besieged by a swarm of old and young men and boys, all anxious to take the stranger on a trip around the Island to see the sight. One dollar is the price and no deviation. It is to be deplored that many of these would-be guides know very little about the Island or its history.

Certainly not all felt this way. For many who spent only a few hours on the island, this was the easiest and quickest way to see many places in the park.
The carriage business created problems for both the village and the park superintendent. Ordinances were passed requiring that all operators of "any public carriage, cab, hackney, coach, omnibus, or other wheeled vehicle, for carrying passengers" get a license from the Village President. The fees varied according to the size of the vehicle, and nonresidents generally paid double that for a resident. The village council also established rates to prevent the dreadful spectacle of cutthroat price reduction practices. Ordinance violators were subject to a fine and up to thirty days in jail. While this gave the authorities some control over this business, it did not wholly prevent unethical behavior by carriage operators in their dealings with the public.

These vehicles caused much wear on village streets and park roads. The village did appropriate funds for road maintenance in the woods. Despite this, the superintendent complained that these private operators were wearing out the roads and the government was expected to repair them. He also feared for the public's safety due to careless handling of both saddle horses and horses pulling carriages. Consequently, the War Department was urged to establish tough rules to regulate horse traffic through the park. This was not done.

Numerous other amusements were available. In the 1890's Captain G. W. Boynton took the Algomah on a tour around the island every afternoon at 2:45. Daily excursions were made to Petoskey, Cheboygan, and Sault Ste. Marie. The Arnold Line took sightseers to the Les Cheneaux Islands located a few miles east of Mackinac. For those wanting to learn, Jerome Murdick gave sailing and rowing lessons at his National Park Boat Livery.

For the upper class, the island's summer social life revolved around the Grand. Gala balls and concerts attracted large crowds of wealthy citizens. In the early
Two very popular events during the Grand Hotel's Field Day were a "gentlemen's rowing race" and a greased pole event. At the end of the twenty-five foot pole awaited a cool, but refreshing, dip. Beneath the greased wood pole was a five dollar bill. Beneath the greased wood awaited a cool, but refreshing, dip.

The back cover of Midsummer Voyages on the D & C illustrated the elegance of life at the Grand.

The John Jacob Astor House.
1890's Len H. Salisbury directed the Grand's Orchestra and featured top guest professional entertainers as a daily feature of the Grand's program. A benefit concert given on August 16, 1893 attracted over five hundred people, and the Petoskey Daily Resorter reported that: "Every hotel gave its quota and the cottagers turned out en masse. The number contained the elite of Mackinac's society and a better audience will scarcely be seen in the Casino again this year."23 These merrymakers danced the night away at the full dress ball which followed the concert.

The Grand also sponsored ample day-time activities including bowling, golf, and tennis tournaments. A highlight of the summer was its "Field Day." On this occasion a variety of games were staged for which prizes were awarded to the winners. In 1894 participants battled one another in these events—a yacht race, a gentlemen's rowing race, a bell boy's tub race, a dog swimming race, a greased pole event, a gentlemen's swimming contest, a high jumping horse event, an egg race (riding a horse around a track holding an egg on a spoon), a 100-yard dash, bicycle races, and a rugby football match.24

Not all of the social activity took place at the Grand. Other hotels had nightly dances and card games.25 Many island workers, summer guests, and soldiers formed baseball teams who played each other. Among the wealthy, frequent parties were given by the cottagers. In addition, those who had sailed their yachts to the island hosted friends on board.

During the summer of 1894, the Mackinac Island Racing Association sponsored horse races on Mondays and Fridays. On August 6 the running of the Astor House Hurdle Race, the Murray House Handicap, and the Mission House Handicap took place. Winners got seventy percent of the purse, which was paid in gold; second place took thirty percent. Carriage transportation to the track, on the British battlefield, was provided for two cents each way, and admission was a quarter.26

Summer life may have been quiet on Mackinac Island, but it was not dull. There were numerous ways people could spend time and money. The day visitor had to move hurriedly if he hoped to see and enjoy even a portion of the park and the village. Those who had extended stays went about their sightseeing and relaxation in a much more leisurely manner. Accustomed to glamorous living, the upper class visitors found activities that fit their life style. To nature, social status meant nothing; she offered her beauty and refreshing breezes to everyone there. Hopefully, all derived the comfort and relaxation that a summer vacation ought to bring to those fortunate enough to take one.
V. From National Park to State Park

A third course would be for Congress to authorize all government lands—park as well as the Fort and military reserve—to be transferred to the State of Michigan with the condition attached that the state shall be required to devote the donation to the purposes for which the park was created.

Memorandum prepared by Secretary of War, 1894

On October 9, 1894 the army marched out of Fort Mackinac leaving only a contingent of eleven men commanded by Lieutenant Woodbridge Geary. They were left to guard the fort and park against man and forest fire. Now that the army had abandoned the fort, what would happen to the park? Park lovers feared the U.S. Government might reverse its action of 1875 and auction off the island they held so dear. Once again a powerful Michigan politician, U. S. Senator James McMillan, came to the island's rescue.

The War Department had decided earlier in the year that it could no longer afford to garrison Fort Mackinac. The Department estimated it cost between forty and fifty thousand dollars a year to maintain this post which provided no practical military service. It concluded that in reality this money was being spent “to maintain a place where are the summer homes of some thirty-five families and objects of interest to the summer tourists who visit this region.” The army did not have the resources to provide this luxury.

Since any disposition of the park required Congressional action, Secretary of War Daniel S. Lamont outlined three possible courses:

1) Retain the fort and put it under the control of an ordnance sergeant and sell the approximately one thousand acres outside it.
2) Keep the garrison there and continue as at present.
3) Increase the rentals to cover all costs required for proper maintenance and to pay a custodian.

As an afterthought, he suggested the possibility of turning the park and fort over to the State of Michigan.1

A few days before the troops departed, the Commanding General of the Army, Lieutenant General John M. Schofield, wrote to Senator McMillan that he did not think Geary's force sufficient to protect and maintain the park. At the heart of the problem was the fact that the army's work load exceeded its capacity. Congress had not appropriated sufficient funds to meet increased responsibilities. Among these were the "extra-military" duties in the national parks.
By now the army was active in the administration of Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant National Parks. Because of increase in the army’s duties, Schofield questioned its ability to meet a military emergency.2

Though Fort Mackinac had been abandoned, the War Department still had to contend with the park. Lamont favored selling all government property on the island except the fort, which he described as “an interesting memorial of the early history of the region.” In his annual report for 1894, he argued that the park had never really been “a park for the people,” but rather a resort for the wealthy.3 While true that rich summer residents benefited immensely from the government’s work, Lamont conveniently overlooked the fact that thousands of not-so-rich folks also visited and enjoyed the park. He also assumed that Congress’ intent in 1875 to preserve the historical and natural “curiousities” could be easily changed. He was wrong.

Once the islanders and cottagers realized the army was serious about leaving Mackinac, they took action. On September 21, 1894 a group of citizens lead by Benoni LaChance and John D. Davis enlisted the aid of Senator McMillan.4 At the same time they wrote to Secretary Lamont begging him to reconsider his decision to abandon the fort. They reminded him that the Act of March 3, 1875 specifically set aside the park, under his control, with the post commander designated superintendent. The letter continued:

Under the provision of this act, the park has been greatly improved by the erection of summer homes upon it, to the amount of $250,000 which is represented by citizens of six different states.

The system adopted by the War Department for the government and regulations of the park has been salutary and creditable.

The presence of a garrison at Fort Mackinac, has had a great effect in the development of a park and its present great popularity.5

Two days later, George T. Arnold, a part-owner of the Arnold Line, informed David Carter, manager of the D & C Line in Detroit, that political pressure
was also being exerted in Chicago. George W. Smith and Walter C. Newberry, both cottage owners, planned to visit Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles, soon to become Commanding General of the Army, hoping to convince him that the army should remain at Mackinac.6

Other citizens also expressed their feelings to Senator McMillan. George H. Barbour, the Vice-President and General Manager of the Michigan Stove Company, informed the senator his family had spent the past summer on the island. Writing in terms McMillan understood very well, Barbour stated, “the removal of the Fort would prove a great detriment in my opinion to the prosperity of this Island, and we all, I know, are interested to have any part of Michigan grow.”7

An alliance with Senator James McMillan certainly was useful for those opposed to the War Department’s policy, for the Senator was a man who was accustomed to getting things done and on his terms. He had made a fortune with the Michigan Car Company and was a large stockholder in the D & C Line and in the Duluth, South Shore, and Atlantic Railway. This Republican leader saw the economic benefits of the park on Mackinac Island, but he also had a genuine interest in park programs. In 1902 he was to formulate a plan for improving the park system in Washington, D.C., which was credited with making it one of the world’s most beautiful capitals.8

McMillan moved decisively on February 14, 1895. On this day he paid a visit to the War Department and discussed the idea of transferring the park grounds to the State of Michigan. Receiving the department’s blessing, he next saw Senator J. H. Berry, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, and got his support. McMillan then introduced in the Senate this amendment to an appropriation bill.9

That the Secretary of War is hereby authorized, on the application of the governor of Michigan, to turn over to the State of Michigan, for use as a State park, the military reservation and buildings and the lands of the national park on Mackinac Island, Michigan.

In order for this amendment to pass, the Michigan State Legislature had to adopt a memorial asking for this transfer. To accomplish this, McMillan wired Governor John T. Rich to push such a measure through the legislature, warning that the “Senate appropriation committee is considering seriously the sale of Mackinac Island park to private parties.”10 The state complied with McMillan’s wishes.

Back in Michigan there was growing support for McMillan’s scheme. The Detroit Tribune urged the legislature to support this proposal. The Tribune attacked the government’s interest to sell this “national park... to speculators and private claimants...” This editorial advice was relayed to Secretary Lamont by P. M. Duffield of Detroit.11

All this letter writing and political maneuvering produced a favorable result for the public park supporters. On March 2, 1895 Congress passed a sundry civil bill including McMillan’s amendment. One stipulation had been added which called for the reversion of the land to the United States if the state ever ceased to use it for park purposes.
Thomas W. Ferry's acceptance of his appointment to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission.

The next moves were up to Michigan state officials. On May 31 the Legislature passed a joint resolution creating the Mackinac Island State Park Commission. Governor Rich appointed the park's founder, Thomas W. Ferry of Grand Haven, William M. Clark of Lansing, Peter White of Marquette, George T. Arnold of Mackinac Island, and Albert M. Stevens of Detroit.
as its first members. They held their first meeting on July 11 at the Grand Hotel and elected former Senator Ferry president. This was a well-deserved honor for the man who had fought so hard for the national park twenty years earlier.

On July 15 Rich made formal application to the Secretary of War for the transfer of the park. Before this actually took place, the Commission tried to squeeze some assistance out of the War Department. On July 13 Commissioner Peter White met with Secretary Lamont aboard the North Land as it passed through the Soo Locks. White asked that all the rental income from park leases received since Congress passed the act on March 2, 1895 be given to the Commission. Lamont denied the request saying the Act of Congress only authorized turning over the park upon the Governor's application. Until the park was actually transferred to the state, it belonged to the United States. Consequently, all rentals went to the federal treasury. The Commission also wanted the Secretary to appoint an army officer to be park superintendent. Citing regulations prohibiting officers from working on non-military projects, Lamont turned down this appeal, too.

On August 3 Secretary Lamont ordered Lieutenant Geary to turn the fort and the park over to Governor Rich. His troops were to remain at Mackinac until September 10, when they were to report to Fort Brady. Not satisfied, Rich asked Lamont that the soldiers stay until the navigation season closed. Lamont, who must have been annoyed by all these demands, rejected this proposal on the grounds that no soldier could be assigned a non-military job.

There was a practical reason for the Commission seeking all of this help. The state legislature had not appropriated funds for the operation of its new state park, and the Commission needed money to even provide minimal service. In an attempt to raise some dollars, the Commission raised the annual rentals to $100 for front lots and $60 for rear lots.

Nonetheless, at 8 o'clock in the morning, September 16, 1895, Lieutenant Woodbridge Geary transferred the lands of the military reservation, Fort Mackinac and the National Park, to Governor John T. Rich. Thus, the federal government's responsibility on Mackinac Island passed to the State of Michigan. For twenty years, despite many frustrations and lack of adequate funds, the War Department had preserved the island's "curiosities." Its work had made the park a pleasant and safe place for thousands of visitors.

Now Michigan became the protector of Mackinac's wonders. Michigan had its first state park. From 1895 on, the State of Michigan has preserved the old national park, added to it, and maintained it for millions of fortunate visitors. Yes, indeed, Senator Ferry's dreams, although over a century old, still live on, and the enchanted isle still stands in all its splendor.

Although Secretary Lamont authorized the turning over of the park to the State of Michigan on August 3, 1895, the actual transfer did not take place until September 16.

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

CCMNP—Consolidated Correspondence, Mackinac National Park, 1886-91, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, National Archives.

MNPS—Military Reservation Division, 1809-1942, Reservation File, Mackinac National Park Section, RG 153, National Archives.

QM—Consolidated Correspondence File on Fort Mackinac, Michigan, 1819-90, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, National Archives.

RMNP—Records of Mackinac National Park, RG 393, National Archives.

USAC—Records of United States Army Commands (Army Posts), Fort Mackinac, Michigan, RG 393, National Archives.

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Keith R. Widder, born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, received his B.A. in history from Wheaton College (1965) and an M.A. in American History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1968. While teaching history at Brookfield East High School, Brookfield, Wisconsin and lecturing at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, he also worked for the Mackinac Island State Park Commission during the summers of 1969 and 1970. In 1971 he was appointed curator of collections and supervisor of the live interpretive program for the Mackinac Island State Park Commission projects at Fort Michillimackinac and Mackinac Island. Mr. Widder is also the author of *Reveille Till Taps: Soldiers Life at Fort Mackinac 1780-1895* and *Justice at Mackinac: The Execution of Private James Brown*. His most recent publication is *Dr. William Beaumont: The Mackinac Years*.
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1875-1895

by 1975 edition

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