

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" April 2019

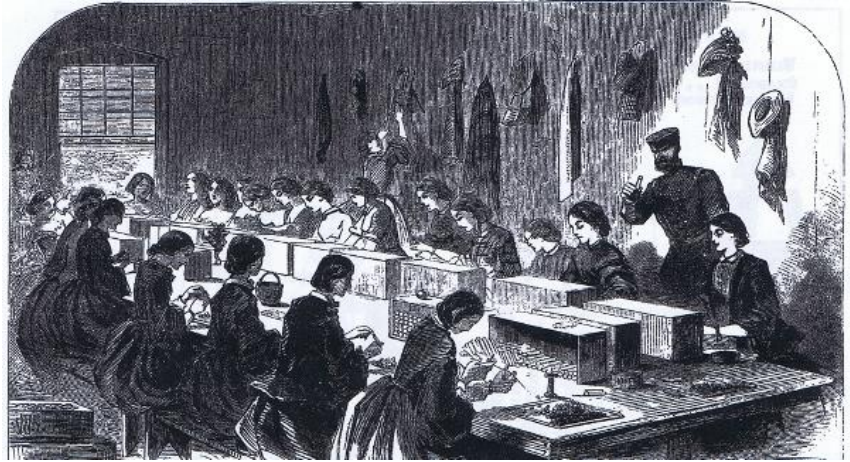
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

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I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, photos, stories, etc. and your "Get To Know Your Pard" profile (if you have not done so already) to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor

Duck hunting? Really?

[by [The Jersey Gallinipper](#) (reprinted with permission)]

[The "Jersey Gallinipper" (Bill Watson) was one of the guest speakers at the recent National Regiment School of Instruction - editor]

It's pointless and looks silly

We all have our pet peeves. For some folks it's the incredibly widespread misunderstanding of how to do "support arms". Others are upset that field commanders have no idea of proper



tactics. Then there's speckleware, and iron frying pans, and ponytails (on guys, I mean). My pet peeves include all of the above and much more, hence this blog. However, the most annoying pet peeve for me right now is the command "Elevate, damn it!" when opposing forces are not in range of the powder speckles that flutter from our weapons.

Looks silly. Is silly. Do to suit yourself, but it serves no purpose other than to cater to an overdeveloped and non-reality-based fear of blistering the other guys with powder.

I don't just believe this is without actual benefit, I know it.

At a 2018 event we hung a sheet and fired right at it from a variety of distances. We shot loose powder and we shot with rammed paper. We finally, at four **yards**, put two specks of powder on the sheet. I'm not even going to show you photos, because if you are really in the belief that black powder can sting your advancing battle line at anything more than four **yards**, you are going to have to do this for yourself to prove firing at elevation is just reenactor jiggery-pokery to make you feel safe. You should also carry a rabbit's foot and pray to the spaghetti monster.



In exchange for shooting down another reenacting canard, I offer you an actual checklist of things not done at most events that can actually save you some grief and some minor bloodshed.

First, why aren't arms rudimentarily inspected as soon as someone unpacks to set up camp? Or at registration? For the basic, I mean really, utterly basic, purpose of making sure nobody shows up loaded with either a decrepit wad of powder from the last event or, even worse, with a projectile from target shooting or hunting? All that's required is a ramrod dropped in a musket barrel, a breaking open of cartridge guns, a quick look at a revolver.

If you want the black-diamond-quality safety checklist, you stop everyone at registration and insist on a "loaded or not?" fast inspection.

Second, the lack of real oversight on the firing line is simply amazing, as is the lack of adherence to drill in firing.

- Foot placement goes to hell in a handstitched sack in most units, with privates loading without moving from the right-foot-back "ready" position; that means the weapon is being loaded alongside the next guy's head
- Rear rank shooters drift backward quite often, opening the space between ranks and putting muzzles alongside ears.
- Many shooters absolutely cannot remember to go to the ready to prime, which usually produces guns held level to the ground at waist level so the shooter can see the cone.
- Incredible as it sounds, there are folks out there who remove the used percussion cap as soon as they've fired. If you really want to see someone scorched with black powder residue, this is your man.

File closers matter. This is the stuff file closers are supposed to address, not only correcting problems on the spot, but also noting chronic offenders and taking them aside later for intense instruction.

Finally, how about a weapons inspection on the company street that actually means something? Yes, the barrel needs to be clean on the inside. But did you ever look at your hammer? There's a smooth, shiny spot where it strikes the percussion cap. It should be dead center. If it is too close to an edge, guess what? It's shearing pieces of the cap off and flinging them into the cheek of the shooter or the guy on his right. The hammer may have been bent slightly due to the inevitable hard use over the years, or it may have worn where it pivots, or it may actually be over or under tightened. But it needs to be fixed.



I've seen a great many fellows who have been "bit" on the cheek by percussion cap shrapnel. I have yet to meet anyone dusted with powder at any distance other than at the muzzle when powder dumped in ignited with the guy's hands still pouring.

And besides, if you are shooting at each other at 30 to 40 yards, you are unrealistically close for that kind of thing. A hundred yards or more, a football field, and you are not ridiculously anachronistic. But at 40 yards, you need to be running. At them or away from them, either one is fine, but running.

Cartridge Rolling Party

On 2 February, the unit held its annual cartridge rolling party at Mark Fasnacht's home. In attendance were: Fasnacht, Steger, Benedict, Zinkus, and Kramer. We rolled 21 packs for the 2019 season.

The Civil War Letters of Levi J. Fritz

(thank you to Rich Sauers for providing this series)

[Note – any grammatical and typographical errors were kept intact as they are original to the letter - editor]

Levi J. Fritz served in Company A, 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. He enlisted in 1861 and was mustered out with the regiment in July 1865. During the course of the first three years of the conflict, Fritz wrote a number of lengthy missives to the *Montgomery Ledger*, a Pottstown newspaper.

Headquarters 53d Regiment P. V.,
Camp near the Pamunkey river, Kent co., Va.
Wednesday, May 14th, 1862

Messers Editors:—The last time we wrote you we promised to favor you next from West Point, at the confluence of the Pamunkey and Mattapony rivers, but as the steamboat took us past that place, up the first mentioned river, we must acknowledge that we are at least twelve miles from the fulfillment of our promise.

Orders were received early on the morning of the 12th inst., to be ready to march with three days rations. The time was first fixed at seven o'clock, A.M., but soon afterwards changed to ten, at which hour the regiment was marched to the landing at Yorktown. We stacked arms and waited on the sandy beach for half an hour when the large double decked steamboat Louisiana, came alongside the wharf. We went on board. The 57th New York also was put on the boat. The steamer was originally intended, I premise, for the accommodation of perhaps four hundred passengers; you may judge, therefore, that when two regiments were on board the boat was rather loaded down by

a “press of matter;” by a little ingenuity, however, a limited quantity of standing room could be secured. The 52d New York and Gen. French and staff were accommodated on board the steamboat C. Vanderbilt. At noon the boats headed up the York river, but as they were heavily loaded we could not move very fast. The river is a wide and deep one, the narrowest place is between Yorktown and Gloucester Point. The shores are principally covered with woodland—now and then the eye would catch the top of a house or so. The only place along the river that appeared to make any pretensions to belong to a villa or burg, is Ferry Point, some twelve miles beyond Yorktown. We reached West Point at five o’clock, P.M., but did not land. This is the terminus of a railroad connecting the head of York river with the rebel capital. Our troops had a pretty severe fight here in taking possession of the place, but we have heard no details of the battle. The fact is we know very little of what transpires out of our own particular brigade and division. We laid at anchor off West Point until Tuesday morning, when we steamed up the Pamunkey about twelve miles. We remained on board the boat until near sundown, when we disembarked and marching about a mile inland, went into camp in the woods. The whole of this (Richardson’s) division is in camp here. The distance from this place to Richmond is about twenty-eight miles.

Duties and Roles –

At the NR’s School Of Instruction, Bill Watson gave a presentation on the duties and roles of different personnel including company officers and NCOs. Below is my summary of his presentation.

Saluting – from Kautz’s “Customs of Service”, salute officers/higher ranks when you meet them and look them in the eye when you do so. When an officer speaks to you, salute. When you speak to an officer, salute. When the encounter is complete, salute again and leave.

There are exceptions for saluting, such as many on a work detail, men marching, and not after an initial encounter.

Duties of Corporals –

The number one duty of a corporal is to act as a ‘shift supervisor’ for an 8-hour tour of guard mount. He instructs the soldiers (privates) on the manual of arms, maneuver, and weapons care and firing.

Corporals organize and directly supervise work details, such as filling canteens, meal prep, wood gathering, camp layout, fire pit preparation, etc.

Corporals need to know the duties of a sergeant including the job functions, positions in formation, and all of the ‘stuff’ that goes with having the company ready to obey the officer’s orders. Corporals must possess leadership skills.

Duties of the 1st Sgt. –

He has the immediate supervision of the company. He prepares the company to do what is required. His preparation includes inspecting the men, their weapons, and their gear BEFORE a formal inspection and inspecting men chosen for guard details before they report. The 1st Sgt. gets his orders from the company commander. He lays out and superintends details of work. He also keeps rosters and assigns each soldier to details. Ideally, he should memorize his roster so he can even call roll in darkness.

In calling roll: without arms, men fall in at parade rest. With arms, men should fall in at shoulder arms.

Morning roll: company forms between *Musician’s Call* and the last note of *Reveille*. The means that the men should be familiar with these bugle calls. When the music sends, the sergeant calls “attention, support arms”. As each man’s name is called, he responds “here”, comes to shoulder arms and then to order arms. After calling the roll, the 1st Sgt. turns to the company

commander (normally the Captain) and reports. He also prepares the morning report for the Captain's signature.

Duties of the Officers (Company Commanders) –

From Kautz “there is no position in the Army that will give as much satisfaction in return for an honest, capable, and conscientious discharge of his duty as that of Captain, or Commanding Officer, of a company.” A good company commander should stay with his company and be present at all times to attend to any matter that may need attention. The instruction of a company in tactics is best attained by instructing the NCOs in the school of the soldier and then require them to instruct their squads or sections. In an illustrative sense, the Captain is the proprietor of the company, and the 1st Sgt is the foreman. All orders and instructions should, therefore, pass through the 1st Sgt. from the Captain to the other NCOs and men, otherwise errors and conflicts of authority will occur. The 1st Sgt. must know, and should be held responsible for a knowledge of the whereabouts and duty of every man in his company.

In quarters, the daily inspection of arms usually takes place at Retreat, but in campaign, and on the march, the men should be required to fall in with their arms, both at Reveille and Tattoo. When there is a parade, at Retreat, or any other time, after the roll is called, the Captain pauses the ranks to be opened, and then makes a rapid inspection, to see that the arms and accoutrements are in order, that the men's clothes are clean and shoes blackened.

Duties in Manuever and Line of Battle –

Privates – Be quiet. Pay attention. Listen. Follow orders!

Corporals – quietly correct alignments and dress, using specific names and corrections.

Sergeants – less quietly correct alignments and dress. In our modern ‘re-enactor’ world, pay attention to firearm safety and periodically check for physical distress.

Commanding Officer – Focus on the battalion commander's orders and pay attention to what the company ahead of you is doing. Think what orders you must give to carry out the maneuver. Call for silence if everyone ignored the above. It is imperative when maneuvering that the Captain hears the Colonel and the men hear the Captain. Do NOT do the corporal's jobs! Ignore alignment.

Camp Guard -

A camp guard presentation was also provided at the NR School Of Instruction. As has been discussed before, guard mount will be much more common at smaller and larger events whether they be NR or smaller unit events. All members (officers, NCOs, and privates) need to be familiar with the procedures, reasons, etc. of why guard mount and guard duty are so important. In prior years, the few times that guard duty was done, was more of a ‘show’ and to invite the public into our camps. With more recent security issues at some events, guard duty will be less show and more function in order to protect ourselves and our camps. Luckily, the handout and presentation have been posted to the NR's website under the “Letters” tab. Instead of republishing the entire documents, here the links to access the Word doc and the Powerpoint presentation to review at your leisure:

(Word doc hand out) [http://nationalregiment.com/Camp%20Guard\[6814\].pdf](http://nationalregiment.com/Camp%20Guard[6814].pdf)

(Powerpoint presentation) [http://nationalregiment.com/Camp%20Guard2\[6815\].pdf](http://nationalregiment.com/Camp%20Guard2[6815].pdf)

A word from our president.....

Hello Pardes,

Spring is finally here and we have a few events on the horizon. This coming Saturday is our Spring Adopt-a-Position event at the 53rd's monument. Please plan to be at the monument and ready to work by 10:00am. The NR's camp of instruction at Ft. McHenry is scheduled for April 13-14. This will be the only NR event until October. If you haven't already committed to this one, I will encourage you to do so. For those who are going, please look for the event details in a separate email coming soon. AHEC is on the schedule for May 18-19. Keep in mind that this is a paid event. The more we turnout, the more we make. The funds are a good way to offset our annual holiday party expense. Keep May 27 open for the Hummelstown Parade.

See y'all soon
Eric

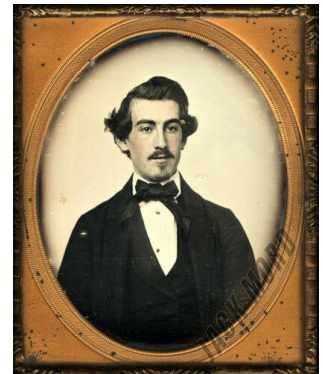
Canteen Video - Looking for a good video about Civil War canteens? It's an hour and 20 minutes, but its pretty indepth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqavdiHZD0I>

Honoring the men of the Original 53rd PVI –

Corporal Franklin Westover, Co. F
Buried in Shawnee Cemetery, Luzerne Co., Plymouth, PA



Charles Parker Hatch, Adj. 53rd
Adjutant 53rd PVI. Born August 3, 1833. Died May 5, 1900. Buried at Charles Evans Cemetery, Reading, PA.



Pvt. Wm. Henry, Co. K
Mustered in Feb. 14, 1864. Died June 22, 1864. Buried at City Point National Cemetery, Hopewell City, VA



Pvt. Pember Edson Higley, Co. D

Born Sept. 12, 1845. He enlisted in Co. A, 145th PVI on Jan. 5, 1864 and was transferred to Co. D, 53rd PVI. Died Feb. 5, 1923. Buried in Pine Grove Cemetery, Corry, PA.



Upcoming events –

5 April – Ephrata Middle School Event -

A 1 day session to help educate the young minds of Ephrata about the Civil War, etc. Contact Michael Fedorshak ASAP if you are able to assist, even for part of the day.

6 April – Spring Adopt-A-Position

Spring cleanup at the 53rd PVI's monument on Brooke Avenue in Gettysburg. Arrive by 10AM and bring a rake, loppers, work gloves, etc. We are normally done within 2 hours.

13-14 April – National Regiment Camp Of Instruction – Ft. McHenry (Baltimore, MD)

This is the field half of the NR's School Of Instruction (held in early March) where we can put what we learned into the field. Guard duty will likely be a key feature of this event so everyone knows how to perform guard properly. With security issues at past events in recent years, guard duty is becoming more of a need to protect the camp, event participants, and even spectators.

For Sale -

All items in good shape unless noted otherwise. Listed by Rick Kramer for a friend; contact Rick directly for any inquiries/questions - auction8@comcast.net

| | | | |
|--|-------|---|--------|
| Unlined Sack Coat (approx. xlarge) | 30.00 | CnD Jarnigan Great Coat (approx. Exlarge) | 100.00 |
| Keune McDowell Kepi some brim cracking | 20.00 | Grey Blanket with black stripe | 50.00 |
| Rubber Poncho | 20.00 | Older shelter half with brass grommets | 5.00 |

If you have not submitted your "Get To Know Your Pard" profile yet, please send it to the editor ASAP for inclusion in a future newsletter! We still have quite a few members who have yet to share theirs with their pards. This isn't meant to pry into your private life, but simply a fun way of letting your pards get to know you more.

A sampling of 10 questions you can answer as part of your 'Get To Know Your Pard' profile (you may substitute your own questions if you'd like):

1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you been re-enacting?
3. What is your favorite part of the hobby?
4. What was the first Civil War-related kit item that you bought?
5. Have you ever taken part of a Civil War movie, TV, or other production?
6. Do you have a favorite or most memorable CW event?
7. Do you have any other non-Civil War hobbies?
8. Do you have a Civil War photo (wet-plate or tin-type image) to share?
9. What do you do (or did you do, if retired) for a living?
10. Favorite Saying?

2019 Calendar of Events -

12 Jan. — Annual Holiday Party — Dobbin House (Reservations/Payment due by 31 Dec.)
2 Feb. — Winter Drill — Landis Valley (weather back up date is 16 Feb)
16 Feb. — Cartridge Rolling Party — Mark Fasnacht's home (9 March back up date)
2-3 March — NR School of Instruction — Gettysburg Fire Hall
5 April — Ephrata Middle School — Civil War Day event with Michael Fedorshak
6 April — Spring Adopt-A-Position
13-14 April — NR Camp Of Instruction — Ft. McHenry **NR MAX EFFORT**
18-19 May — USAHEC (Carlisle, PA) — PAID Event **53rd MAX EFFORT**
27 May — Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade
5-7 July — Gettysburg GAC - 2ndary Event
20-21 July — Landis Valley Civil War Days - **53rd MAX EFFORT**
28 July - Gruber Wagon Works (Reading, PA) **53rd MAX EFFORT**
24-25 Aug. — 53rd Gettysburg Living History — Spangler Spring **53rd MAX EFFORT**
14-15 Sept. — C&O Canal (ELF event)
4-6 Oct. — Shenandoah 1864 (Lovettsville, VA) **NR MAX EFFORT**
19-20 Oct. — Cedar Creek (Middletown, VA) - 2ndary Event
2 Nov. - Autumn Adopt-A-Position — spring cleanup at the 53rd PVI Monument
16 Nov. — Remembrance Day Parade — Gettysburg
7 Dec. — 53rd PVI Annual Meeting (Mark Fasnacht's home)



53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford (reenactor53@gmail.com)
Vice President-elect: Pete Zinkus (zinkusp@gmail.com)
Treasurer/Secretary: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@comcast.net)
Newsletter Editor: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@comcast.net)
Webmasters: Steve Dillon (steve@gofoxpro.com) and Matthew Steger (n3ntj@comcast.net)
Website: <http://www.53rdpvi.org>
53rd PVI Member Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/53rdPVI>
National Regiment Phone line: 800-777-1861 (code 61) NR Website: <http://nationalregiment.com>

