

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" January 2019

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

This Month:

1. Drill Tip: Always lean in on wheels? No!
2. Levi Fritz Letter
3. A Word From The President
4. Book Review "Blood And Thunder"
5. CSS Shenandoah: Last Flag Down
6. Upcoming Events
7. Civil War Merchant
8. Event Schedule
9. 53rd PVI Contact Info



I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, event summaries/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

DRILL TIP: ALWAYS LEAN IN ON WHEELS? NO!

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

It's pretty clear a lot of people need to know it. It's the wheeling thing. It's not always "lean in, look out" like many of us were taught.

You lean in when ordered to wheel **from the halt**.

You lean OUT when ordered to wheel **from a formation on the move**.

And guess what? All the files of men in fours on a flank march are, when the unit turns, doing "micro" wheels on the move. So it's lean out, look out when the colonel orders "by file, left, MARCH."

Don't take my word for it. Here's Silas Casey, on a moving wheel, with text that's the same in content if not wording in every other drill manual ever written, for reasons that will become clear later. Let's just do it in a company battle front for now:

...the rank being in march, ... he will command: 1. Right (or left) wheel. 2. MARCH The first command will be given when the rank is yet four paces from the wheeling point. At the second command, the wheel will be executed in the same manner as from a halt, except that the touch of the elbow will remain toward the marching flank (or side of the guide) instead of the side of the actual pivot; that the pivot man, instead of merely turning in his place, will conform himself to the movement of the marching flank, feel lightly the elbow of the next man, take steps of full nine inches, and thus gain ground forward in describing a small curve so as to clear the point of the wheel. The middle of the rank will bend slightly to the rear.



← *The 50th Illinois won a streamer for their flag for winning a drill competition. Pride then, pride now.*

WHEELING IN MARCHING, OR ON A MOVABLE PIVOT.

As soon as the movement shall commence, the man who conducts the marching flank will cast his eyes on the ground over which he will have to pass.

The wheel being ended, the instructor will command: Forward. 2. MARCH. The first command will be pronounced when four paces are yet required to complete the change of direction.

*At the command march, which will be given at the instant of completing the wheel, **the man who conducts the marching flank will direct himself straight-forward**; the pivot man and all the rank will retake the step of twenty-eight inches, and bring the head direct to the front.*

Got all that? Probably not, because it can get confusing, especially the part about taking the touch to the side of the guide. You have to know that the guide is on the outside of the wheel all the time, even in a wheel from a halt; in a wheel from a halt, you touch to the pivot point to maintain continuity, but look to the outside man *to make sure you don't get ahead*. In this, a wheel while the line is on the move, you both look to the outside, so you don't get ahead, and take the touch of the elbow to the outside as well, to keep the line intact.

The "touch of the elbow" may change again when the maneuver is complete; that's up to the captain and, in a battalion formation, the colonel, to figure out AND ANNOUNCE.



A company of the 134th Illinois at drill, in Kentucky. Must be hot, they got to drill without coats. And a variety of hats. But every foot is toeing that invisible line.

Where we go wrong:

1. When you have a proper color company, with the color guard simply part of that company, the tendency is there to dress to the colors. And, in a unit where the men haven't figured out that they need to be quiet and let the officers think and the noncoms quietly direct alignment, you are sure to hear someone who didn't read the book angrily telling everyone else to "dress to the colors." Nah. This time, the tail wags the dog - the colors, while simply part of the color company and not in a battalion battle front, are just like any other men in the company and handle themselves as if they were not a color guard.
2. In any company, especially in one that is, like so many these days, made up on men from different reenacting clubs, you will have a real mess if some of the men think they lean in while others think they lean out. And, again, angry and often uninformed shouting. I really hate shouting.
3. When a company of columns changes direction, if the inside pivot man simply stays in place rather than moving in nine-inch steps, the company behind will walk up his butt in no time at all and we have Collision of the Companies, a horror film in Technicolor to the accompaniment of a drunken accordion.

4. "By file left,(right), MARCH," when marching by the flank ("in fours), is really a series of four-man wheels, and the principles apply. The direction of the touch doesn't matter too much in such a quick wheel, but the idea of the outside of the wheel being the guide really does matter a lot. Both the first sergeant (or second sergeant, if you left-faced to start) can't just change direction and take off. They need to take the small steps in a small arc. So does the corporal following in their wake; the corporal must NOT get ahead of the rest of the men in his four-man file. The outside man sets the pace, not the inside man; the outside man should not have to trot to catch up with his runaway noncoms.

5. In a company front wheel, we spend a lot of noise trying to keep the line perfectly straight. Look what Casey says: *The middle of the rank will bend slightly to the rear.* And that's expected! So forget about it. The time for correction (by noncoms, not every jackanapes with a mouth) is when the line splits apart or someone gets out in front of the man on the outside of the wheel.

6. Which brings up a related issue, one deserving it's own treatment later: Wheeling a battalion battle line is just not the best way to change position, even with the unrealistically small battalions we find ourselves with at some events. The better maneuver, if you are unlucky enough to find yourself the battalion commander and facing in a useless direction, is to put one company out facing the direction you want the new battle line and ordering "change front forward (or to the rear) on X company." The company commanders then issue whatever commands are necessary to make that happen, which are simply a combination of obliques, partial wheels or turns as the case may require. But we'll talk about that in the future.

Just to set you straight: When I sit down to write one of these posts, I research what I'm writing about and try to write it up so we all can understand it in context of modern language and culture. So it sounds pretty authoritative, and it's usually right to the extent that it is useful. HOWEVER, when I take to the field, I am as occasionally forgetful as the next guy, to the point where, for example, I had to ask my first sergeant (Jeff Myzie) what the command was to let the men not march in lockstep on the icy road we were following. I got a funny look, and he said, "Route step?" So yeah, nobody's perfect, and I prove that at almost every event I attend.

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 at Fair Oaks, Virginia,
Sunday, June 22d, 1862.

Messers. Editors:—We are still camped on the battle field of Fair Oaks, and no probability of changing it unless we press forward to Richmond.

Although no general engagement has yet taken place between the Federals and Confederate armies, yet fighting is going on continually on some part of our lines, and every day we are often called up and stand under arms. About sundown on the 19th inst., we concluded to retaliate on the rebels who had been molesting our pickets for some time past. A force of several hundred was sent out in front of our division, and drove in the rebel pickets, who fell back on the approach of our boys in the smartest kind of manner, leaving, however, a number of dead and wounded on the field. Our loss was only several wounded. Immediately after this little affair ceased, the enemy came down in strong force on our pickets about half a mile to the right of the place the previous mentioned affray occurred. This is just what they were expected to do, and we had cannon placed to command the ground. Our pickets received them with a few shots and then fell back according to orders, when one of our batteries opened upon them with grape and canister.

The guns were fired so quickly and with such precision, that the frightened rebs, who had never expected to meet with such a cordial welcome, skedaddled in the fastest kind of double quick, leaving behind over one hundred dead and wounded. This appeared to settle them for a time, for not one shot was fired that night. The whole division, however, was kept under arms until late the next day, which was unusually quiet throughout the entire lines.—On Friday last there was heavy cannonading, commencing in the morning, on the right, in front of Porter's provisional corps, continuing in that vicinity for several hours. Gen. Porter answered their fire and finally succeeded in silencing the enemy's guns. They (the rebels) then commenced moving their fire gradually towards the left, but along the whole left of the line there was not one of our Generals who condescended to reply to the rebels, although some of the shells fell near our camps.

Yesterday evening the enemy in strong force again attempted to force his way through the picket lines in front of our division, but again was he caught in an ugly trap and forced to ignominiously retire. The facts are these: Beyond the woods in which our pickets are placed is an open space. We had several of our cannon so planted that they completely controlled this spot. A body of two hundred infantry were thrown out on the edge of the woods beyond our picket line as a bait to draw the rebels on; and it had the desired effect. Last evening about 6 o'clock the enemy, about six hundred strong, moved down upon these two hundred, expecting to make an easy capture of them all.

The firing between the two parties commenced as the rebels began coming out of the woods. (We were standing under arms all the while.) Our boys fired a volley and then according to orders, fell back. The rebels then charged upon them, with loud yells, that we could plainly hear. Just as they were fairly in the open space, our batteries opened upon them with a terrific cross fire of shells and grape. The cannonading was beautiful, and the rebels did not hurrah much after it commenced, but fell back towards Richmond in a manner that Floyd could hardly have equalled. We followed up their retreat with our death dealing shell; the last thrown must have gone half way to the rebel capital. In all some thirty shell and a number of grape shot were thrown. The rebels managed to get most of their dead and wounded away. Their loss must have been very severe; ours, slight. Today up to the time of the present writing, (4½ P.M.), it has been as quiet along the lines as the calm Sundays at home.

During the whole time we have been upon the peninsula, we have, with a single exception, had no band-playing, drum-beating, or bugling in our camps. This is to prevent the enemy from determining our position by those means. Musicians have, therefore, had an easy time of it. Notwithstanding the fact that three fresh regiments have been added to our brigade, and that nearly one hundred men were taken from active service in the late battle, we are still the strongest regiment in the brigade. We can give you no information as to when we will advance on the enemy's position.

Since the regiment left Camp Curtin, at Harrisburg, the following changes have taken place in commissioned officers:

Dr. M. J. McKinnon, appointed Surgeon vice Dr. John H. Fromberger, resigned.

Joseph M. Obdyke, promoted from Orderly Sergeant to 2d Lieutenant Company B, vice T. A. Roberts, resigned—cause, ill health.

Samuel M. Moyer, promoted from 2d Lieut. To 1st Lieut. Company C, vice Thomas Macnamara, resigned—cause, ill health.

Harry Baker, promoted from Orderly Sergeant to 2d Lieut. Company G, vice M. S. Crosby—deceased.

George C. M. Eicholtz promoted Captain Company B, vice Wm. M. Potts, resigned—cause ill health.

Jos. M. Obdyke, promoted 1st Lieut. Company B, vice G. C. M. Eicholtz, promoted.

Henry J. Smith, promoted 2d Lieut. Company C, vice Samuel M. Royer, promoted.

L. R. Bland, promoted to 2d Lieut. Company B, vice J. M. Obdyke, promoted.

Yours, &c., L.J.F.

[Ledger, July 8, 1862]

A word from our president.....

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone had a great Holiday season. As we move into the new year our first event is the unit's annual Holiday Party where we'll be celebrating our 40th anniversary. We have a nice list of folks attending but still have not heard from a number of current and "retired" members. Time is running out to RSVP. Pete will need to notify the Dobbin House on January 3rd with a final count. If you plan to attend, please contact Pete, Matt or I ASAP.

The 2020 event schedule is now listed on the website. If you have a topic to cover at the Winter Drill and/or you're willing to teach a certain topic, please contact Mark Fasnacht in the coming weeks so he can prepare the day's agenda. We're also looking for the same for the NR's School of instruction. Please contact me if you have suggestions and if you're willing to teach the lesson at the school. Please take note of the two reenactments as well as the Camp of Instruction (Gruber Wagon Works) on the schedule and give it your best to attend these events in support of the NR.

Also, please forward you 2020 dues to Matt Steger as soon as possible.

Thanks!

Eric

(Editor – dues are payable to “53rd PVI” and should be mailed to me ASAP!)

Book Review-

“Blood and Thunder” by Mark Fasnacht

I recently had this book shoved into my hands and was told “you must read this!”. Mike Espenshade was doing the shoving.

It was after a fairly recent trip that Mike took with his wife, Carol, that he engaged me with a book in hand called “Blood And Thunder”. It is about 5’4” tall Kit Carson and the American west. I knew Kit Carson was a part of the Civil War out west but never really had any context connecting him with historical events and the Civil War. Boy, does this book really accomplish that,,and so much more!!

The author, Hampton Sides, unleashes his immense extensive research (which seems as big as the west itself) with a narrative that flows like jelly on bread.

You get two things from this book: a comprehensive biography of Kit Carson And a synopsis of all the historical events that Kit Carson was willingly and unwillingly a part of. You quickly realize that the author is making Kit the “sun” in a solar system of historical western events unfolding before us. Kit’s connection to all of this becomes the fascinating tale.

First... Kit:

Starting out as a bored young Missouri leather apprentice, you’re taken on a journey of adventure: a mountain man, a scout, a trapper, a leader of Dragoons, a tracker, a courier, and Indian fighter, and an Indian agent. He is an illiterate man who eventually becomes the Colonel of the 1st Mexico Volunteers defending the Union from Confederate expansionist efforts by the Texans. Eventually, he is made a Brevet General of Volunteers by Pres. Lincoln himself!

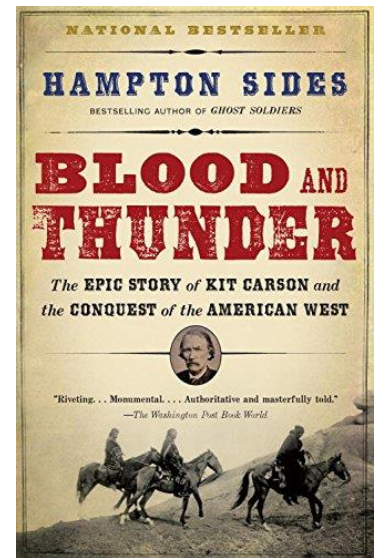
The author shows Kit’s connections to the epic events of the times.

The events of the times:

The Fremont Expeditions, the Army of the West with Kearny (during the Mexican War), the Battle of Valverde and Glorietta (during the Civil War), the Navajo problem, and the amazing skirmishes like the Battle of San Pasqual and the Battle of the Adobe Walls.

Kit lived in the days before political correctness. This book shows the raw and uncompromising way in which everyone seemed to live where “reprisal, retribution, and loyalty” was essentially the law of the land before there was law. Kit understood that and it seems to have helped him through the hard times and to live what seems like many life times over.

Do yourself a favor... “you must read this!!”



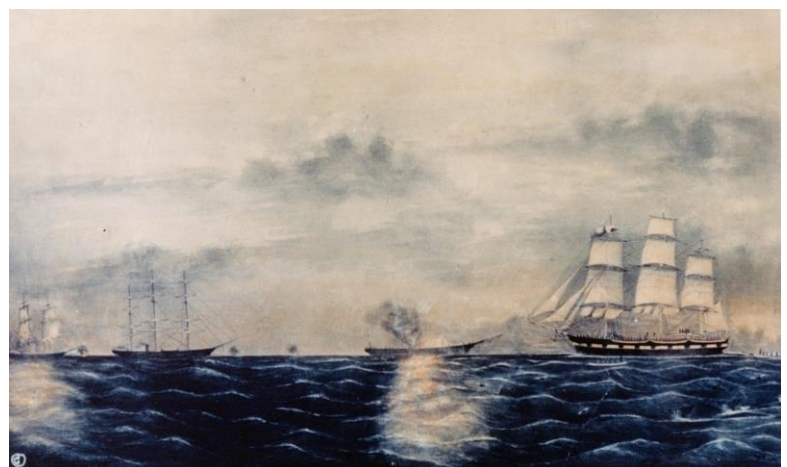
CSS Shenandoah: Last Flag Down

By Len Ellison – December 10, 2019

CSS Shenandoah Destroying Whale Ships in → 1865, lithograph by B. Russell | Photo courtesy of U.S. Naval Historical Center

Although the last battle of the American Civil War took place in Texas, at the Palmito Ranch on May 12–13, 1865, the last Confederate surrender occurred six months later in Liverpool, England, on November 6, 1865. It happened like this.

During 1864–1865, the Confederate warship *CSS Shenandoah* captured, sank, or bonded 37 Union merchant vessels with a value of \$1.4 million, mostly Union whaling ships. Capt. James Waddell was unaware of the Confederate surrender and continued to sink Union merchant ships off the coast of Alaska. Then, on August 2, 1865, he met the Liverpool ship *Barrocouta* sailing out of San Francisco harbor, whose captain told him the Confederacy had surrendered. Waddell immediately sailed the *Shenandoah* via Cape Horn to Liverpool to surrender, because he knew that both he and his



officers would face a Union court and be tried as pirates if they returned to the United States, as terms of surrender did not extend amnesty to sailors above the rank of lieutenant.

Shenandoah met the pilot charged with guiding her up the river at the mouth of the estuary at Mersey Bar. The pilot, however, would not sail without the ship's flag of her country being flown—and so the Confederate flag was furled. She sailed upriver, flag flying high, with crowds watching on from the riverbanks. She moored alongside the HMS *Donegal*, a British warship, a crew from that vessel was placed onboard her, and Captain Waddell surrendered to Captain Paynter of HMS *Donegal*. The Confederate flag was lowered and became known as the "Last Flag Down."

Wendell presented a letter to Captain Paynter and addressed to the British Prime Minister surrendering *Shenandoah* to the British Navy—the last surrender of the American Civil War.

After the surrender of *Shenandoah*, it was reported on November 9, 1865, that the British government had decided that the whole of the ship's officers and crew were to be paroled and free to go ashore, as long as they were not British, which would have broken the neutrality laws between the U.S. and Britain (and they would be arrested). All the crew said that they were from the Confederate State of America, even the sailors with a strong Liverpool accent who had joined the ship at the beginning.

Thomas Haines Dudley, United States Consul in Liverpool, had the responsibility of disposing of *Shenandoah*, along with three other Confederate ships that the British had handed over to the U.S. (the *Rappahannock*, *Sumter*, and *Tallahassee*). After a failed attempt in January to sail *Shenandoah* back to the U.S., she was sold at auction in Liverpool in April 1866.

Waddell did not return to the United States until 1875, when he became captain of the commercial steamer *City of San Francisco*. He later oversaw the State of Maryland's oyster regulation force. James Iredell Waddell died at Annapolis, Maryland, on March 15, 1886.

The story does not end there, as a number of articles from the CSS *Shenandoah* remain on display across America today, reminding us of this tidbit of history.

Shenandoah's flag at the American Civil War Museum in Richmond



Upcoming events –

11 January Annual Party - Gettysburg

The annual party is Sat. Jan. 11th at the Dobbin House. Cocktails begin at 5:30pm. Dinner at 6:15pm. Program to follow. 9pm tavern. The cost per person fee is \$28; invitations were sent by Pete earlier this month. All checks get paid to: **53rd PVI**.

1-2 February – Winter Drill – Landis Valley (Lancaster) (rain/snow date 8-9 Feb)

Annual drill to help get the rust off and help get us all ready for the 2020 season. Training will include basic drill, marching, wheels, as well as manual of arms, etc. Should you have a specific topic(s) that you would like covered by the NCOs or if you'd like to present a topic, please contact 1st Sgt. Fasnacht ASAP. Please dress appropriately based upon the weather. Sack or frock coats are OK as well as overcoats. No rounds or caps are needed but bring food for lunch. For those planning on staying overnight Saturday, we generally do a company mess for dinner and Sunday breakfast so bring one or more of the following for these meals to share, such as bread, cookies, potatoes, eggs, bacon, etc. Any pertinent updates will be forthcoming as we get closer to the event so please check your email and the group Facebook page. Should weather cause a cancellation, our rain/snow date is 8~9 Feb.

The Civil War Merchant -

(if you have something for sale or are looking for something, email me to include it in a future edition of "The Sentinel")

For Sale -

Listed by Rick Kramer for a friend. All items in good shape unless noted otherwise. Contact Rick directly for any inquiries/questions - auktion8@comcast.net

Unlined Sack Coat (approx. XL)	30.00	CD Jarnigan Great Coat (approx. XL)	100.00
Keune McDowell Kepi some brim cracking	20.00	Grey Blanket with black stripe	50.00

If you have not submitted your "Get To Know 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.

2020 Calendar of Events -

11 Jan. - Annual Holiday Party - Dobbin House (Gettysburg)
1-2 Feb - Winter Drill (Landis Valley) [rain/snow date is 8-9 Feb]
29 Feb - 1 March - National Regiment School of Instruction (Gettysburg)
14 March - Cartridge Rolling Party (Sgt. Fasnacht's home)
4 April - Adopt-A-Position - 53rd PVI Spring Monument Cleanup (Gettysburg)
2-3 May - National Regiment Camp of Instruction (Gruber Wagon Works) **53rd PVI MAX Effort**
16-17 May - USAHEC Event - **53rd PVI MAX Effort** (paid event) (Carlisle)
25 May - Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade
18-19 July - Landis Valley "Civil War Days" (Lancaster) **53rd PVI MAX Effort**
29-30 Aug - Gettysburg Living History (Spangler Spring - Gettysburg NMP) **53rd PVI MAX Effort**
12-13 Sept. - Burkittsville Re-Enactment (Burkittsville, MD) - **53rd/NR Max Effort**
17-18 Oct. - Cedar Creek Re-Enactment (Middletown, Virginia) **53rd/NR Max Effort**
7 Nov. - Adopt-A-Position - 53rd PVI Fall Monument Cleanup (Gettysburg)
21 Nov. - Remembrance Day Parade (Gettysburg)
5 Dec. - 53rd PVI Annual Meeting (Sgt. Fasnacht's home)



Secondary Events -

3-5 April - Lee's Last Stand Re-Enactment
8-9 August - Cedar Mountain Re-Enactment (1st MN)
5-6 Sept. - Bedford Village (1st MN)

53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford (reenactor53@gmail.com)
Vice President: 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>

