

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" June 2020

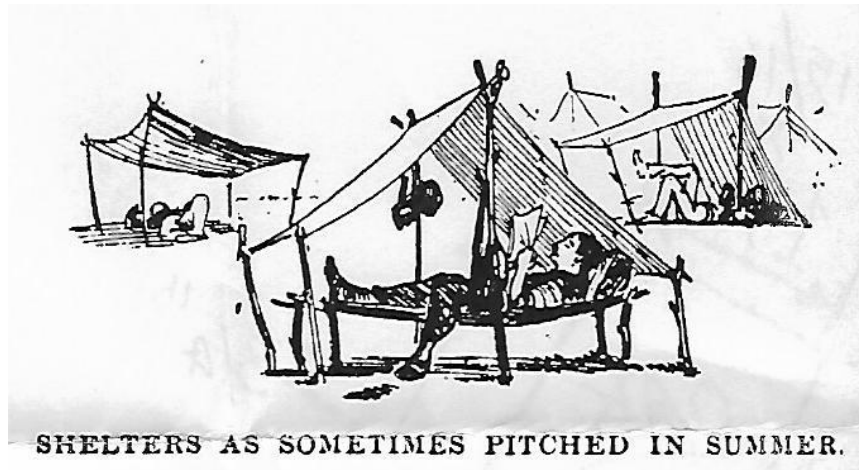
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

This Month:

1. Kathy Bates' Rich Civil War History
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I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, event summaries/photos, stories, 53rd memories, etc. to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". Matthew Steger, editor

FAMILY OF ACTRESS KATHY BATES HAS A RICH AND UNUSUAL CIVIL WAR HISTORY By Norman Dasinger, Jr., May 4, 2020 (reprinted from Blue and Gray Dispatch)

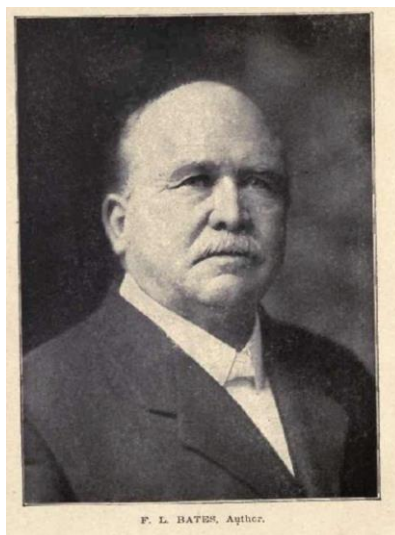
Almost everyone has seen a TV show or movie in which Kathy Bates has starred: *The Waterboy*, *Titanic*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Misery*, *Harry's Law*, *American Horror Story*, and *The Big Bang Theory*, just name a few.

She grew up in Memphis, and her family has some fascinating Civil War characters.

Her grandfather was Finis Bates. In 1873, in Granbury, Texas, Finis met John St. Helen, and this encounter would later alter Bates' life. St. Helen claimed to really be John Wilkes Booth. He told Finis he escaped capture in 1865 and had traveled around Oklahoma, Colorado, and Texas as a salesman. Bates spent time with him but soon parted ways and would not see him alive again. St.

Helen—using another alias—had killed himself, and in his papers he had requested that Finis Bates be asked to identify him following his death in 1903. With no one to claim the body, Finis took possession of it and stored it in his garage in Memphis. He would tour the mummified body at different side shows

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and events for the next 15 years. Finis honestly believed that St. Helen was Booth, the killer of President Lincoln. In 1904, the body was displayed at the St. Louis World's Fair, and Bates tried to sell his friend to Henry Ford for \$1,000. Ford refused.



In 1920, Bates rented the body to William B. Evans—known as the “Carnival King of the Southwest.” Bates died in 1923, so Evans took ownership of St. Helen/Booth and displayed him in a Pullman train car on his potato farm in Idaho. In the 1930s, the body was seen at various circus shows and display tents. In 1938, LIFE magazine ran a story about the travels of the body of St. Helen and included photos. By the 1950s he was stored in a house in Philadelphia. He was last seen in the 1970s at a carnival in Illinois.

Kathy Bates’ Civil War story does not end with her grandfather. Finis married Madge Doyle, and she was the daughter of 1st Lieutenant, Confederate States Army, Jack Doyle. Lt. Doyle fought with the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry, which was formed by Nathan Bedford Forrest. In fact, Jack was part of Forrest’s command that rode their horses into the Gayoso Hotel during a raid

into Memphis to scare the Yankee occupiers. Doyle served as Shelby County sheriff after the War Between the States and died in 1907.



One more story: Finis had a brother named William Stout Bates. He served in the 13th Mississippi Infantry fighting under Robert E. Lee in Virginia. His Civil War-era house still stands in Houston, Chickasaw County, Mississippi.

So, actress Kathy Bates comes by her showmanship and bravado naturally, having family that displayed those qualities before she was born.

Jack Doyle
(courtesy - Find A Grave)

HONORING OUR FALLEN DEAD – THE MEN OF THE ORIGINAL 53RD PVI

Thanks to Marc Benedict for sharing:

Pvt. John J. Ott - born about 1839. He lived in Philadelphia when he hired himself out as a substitute. He mustered in Sept. 16, 1864 for 3 years as a private in Co. A at the age of 25 in Philadelphia. He was on furlough when the regiment mustered out. The year of his death is unknown. He is buried in St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery, Ardmore, PA.





Pvt. Osmond B. Ostrander - (first name is listed as Osman in Bates) was born on Feb. 5, 1844 in Saratoga Co., NY. He was married in 1844 and had 3 children while employed as a lumberman and constable in Black Rock, NY. He was 42 when he was enrolled on March 3, 1864 in Shippen, PA. He mustered in April 4, 1864 as a private for 3 years in Co. D, 53rd PVI in Harrisburg, PA. He was 5'8" with blue eyes, dark hair and fair complexion. Exactly 2 months later, June 4, 1864, he died of wounds received a day earlier at Cold Harbor, VA. A memorial stone (cenotaph) is located in Riverside Cemetery, Black River Falls, Wis.

Capt. Joseph M. Opdyke - born on June 25, 1827. He was mustered in on Feb. 6, 1862 as a 2nd Lieut. in Co. B, 53rd PVI at the age of 35 for 3 years. He was promoted to 1st Lieut. on April 26, 1862 and Captain on Oct. 1, 1863. He was discharged on Sept. 13, 1864. He died on Dec. 2, 1898 and is buried in Greenwich Baptist Church Cemetery, Greenwich, NJ.



Pvt. John H. Stahl - born on May 15, 1825. Residing in Philadelphia, he was mustered in in Pittsburgh, PA as a substitute for 1 year as a private in Co. C, 53rd PVI when he was 40 years old on Jan. 16, 1865. He mustered out on June 30, 1865. He died June 8, 1891 and is buried in Grandview Cemetery, Southmont, PA.



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 Regt. P. V.,
Camp Near Harper's Ferry, Va.
Thursday, Sept. 25th, 1862.

Messrs. Editors:— On the day of the battle of South Mountain or Middletown Heights, Richardson's Division was temporarily attached to Hooker's Corps, and was held as reserves at the Middletown fight, and did not get actively engaged. It was marched to the top of the heights, and forming line of battle swept down the side, but no enemy was lurking in the forest shades or behind projecting rocks. The rebel skedaddle had left nothing but dead and wounded on the mountain of their defeat. And of these there was a sufficient number to show that the loss of the enemy must have been severe. Near the top of the mountain, beside stone walls that bounded the road, we at one place not more than fifty feet counted twenty-two dead rebels. Some of these had been killed by the bayonet in the fierce charges which our gallant soldiers made and which resulted in victoriously driving the enemy from his stone entrenchments. We noticed, as we passed along, more than 600 rebel prisoners, half starved, doleful looking fellows. But the battle of South Mountain was but the savage prologue that shadowed forth the desperately grand conflict of the Antietam.

The line of march for Boonsboro' was taken up—Richardson's Division in the advance. At the above-mentioned place our cavalry came up to the enemy's rear and a slight engagement took place. About 2 o'clock P.M., on Monday the 15th inst., the division came up with the enemy near Sharpsburg. In our immediate front, beyond the Antietam creek, he was resting in his chosen position of battle. The whole force of the enemy was confronted by the single division of Richardson, and for the time being unaided and alone, and without a single piece of artillery, gallant "Fighting Dick" boldly placed his brigade in a fighting position, thus daring the whole rebel army to the combat. The rebels opened a battery upon us, but did not endeavor to advance their lines. In the evening a battery of Flying Artillery came up, and was immediately assigned a position. The night was spent by each party laying upon their arms and watching each other. During the night and next day (Tuesday) our troops commenced to pour in. This day a brisk artillery duel was kept up. Our troops were put into position as fast as possible. Sometimes a savage shell fight being the prelude to our troops becoming the masters of certain desirable situations. On Tuesday evening, Hooker had a savage little skirmish on the right. The night before the Great Day—seemed to pass with a forced calmness. Even the stars of the night's blue concave appeared to be sadly red with the bloody reflection of the morrow's gorgeous scene of awful slaughter. How many on this night sunk in gentle repose, and dreaming of the joys and peacefulness of homes far away where mother's smile, and sweet sisters and kind companions are, shall ere to-morrow's sun has reached the horizon, on the crimson stained field of death, sleep the sleep that knows no waking. Sad thought—here within the circuit of a few miles unthinkingly repose thousands of human beings that tomorrow night will be gathered to their Father, and this world shall know them in the flesh no more.

Wednesday, September the seventeenth. The sun had not yet left his eastern couch and ushered in the day that was to be ever memorable in our history, ere the iron dogs of war were loosened, and sullen boom after boom echoes through the defiles, and waking half drowsy soldiers, it warns them to leave their cold bed of earth, and buckle on the armour for the fast approaching fray. Early in the morning, Sedgwick's Division was advanced across the Antietam creek, and opened the infantry engagement on the enemy's centre. He soon became hotly engaged—the enemy stubbornly yet valiantly contesting every inch of ground. Soon after, French's new Division opened the ball farther to the right. The fighting became desperate and bloody and men were falling by scores on both sides. The enemy had his forces strongly posted—with his flanks resting in the woods or protected by the abrupt declivity a hill out of reach of the cannons. The rebel lines to which our division was opposed its right in a cornfield, passing through which its left rested in a ditch or defile just beyond an orchard. The next line extending further to the right, ran along a public road, and was partially protected by stonewall and woods. Caldwell's Brigade of Richardson's Division, went in about 10 o'clock to the relief of French's Division that became badly pushed in by a charge of the enemy. The Irish Brigade became engaged in the cornfield. They made a furious charge chasing the enemy before them, shooting them down like sheep, but many a gallant Irishman bit the dust for his adopted country in that grand old charge. It was now nearly noon and along the whole line of five miles in extent, swept the fiery tide of battle. The booming of artillery, the continuous road of musketry, and the fire flashing, the hissing of bullets, the screaming of shells, the tearing through the air of thousands of death dealing missiles, was magnificently terrible. While shot and shells were being vomited furiously from heated cannon, while tens of thousands of small arms were unceasingly flashing forth their leaden messengers of death while brave men were falling by hundreds, while victory herself appeared to be crushed by the intensity of the efforts to win her: then was it that Gen. Sumner ordered Col. Brooke to forward his gallant old brigade to the front and participate in the hell fire of that bloody tide of battle. Right nobly every man responded to that mandate. The glorious old 53d, with the noble scars of many a Peninsular fight, leads the advance. Forming line of battle with the right resting near the cornfield they opened fire upon the enemy, at some points the lines were not more than a

hundred yards apart. You can imagine how desperately bloody was the fighting. Our regiment, the 53d, was ordered to take possession of the orchard at Thomas' house and hold it at every hazard. Not fifty yards beyond this orchard, drawn up in splendid manner, and occupying a strong position, was a whole brigade of rebels. Yet the brave Col. McMichael, nothing daunted led his regiment of unflinching veterans fair and square against the rebel hosts. Company A with gallant Mintzer leading it bravely on, were advanced in front as skirmishers, just as they raised the brow of the hill on which the orchard is, and began to have a good view of rebels in their front, the enemy, for some unaccountable reason, broke and ran: the 53d pouring deadly volley after volley into their retreating ranks. This position in the orchard the regiment held for several hours, keeping up a continual sharpshooting fight with the enemy. In the meanwhile, the other regiments of the brigade were winning laurels; the 66th and 57th N.Y., made a splendid charge upon the enemy's lines, breaking them, and capturing two stands of colors, a number of prisoners, and several hundred stands of arms. Col. Brooke led this glorious old charge in person—exhibiting a coolness and dashing bravery that put new strength in the arms and fresh courage in the hearts of his brave troops. And as he sometimes would ride a hundred yards ahead of the lines, into the very fire flashes of the enemy's guns, his every look and gesture urging them forward to victory; the men would say—"why look at our brave young General; let's follow him," and then dash furiously on. About 2 o'clock, P.M., the 53d was moved from its position in the orchard to the support of a battery. Here while lying in the hot sun exposed to the heavy shelling and graping of the enemy, that brave officer, 1st Lieut. Jno. D. Weaver, Acting Adjutant of the regiment was struck by a piece of shell and mortally wounded. A more gallant officer never drew sword in defense of his country—a regiment mourning his loss. About the same time, Lieut. P. H. Schreyer of Company H was struck by a piece of shell and severely wounded in the face. Early in the afternoon, Lieut. John T. Potts, the gallant Aid-de-camp of Col. Brooke, while riding with orders to the 2d Delaware was struck in the side by a spent grape shot causing a painful contusion.

By 6 o'clock P.M., the fury of the battle was spent, the cannonading was kept up, but it was not so fierce, occasionally heavy volleys of musketry would be heard,—the battle was decided—a glorious victory was won by McClellan's gallant Union army. The Star Spangled Banner waved triumphant over the hard fought field of the Antietam. The flag we hailed with pleasure in the morning's first gleamings, we saw victoriously waving in the twilight of evening graced with new laurels, and rebaptized with the holy blood of the patriots that died gloriously fighting for it during the day. Col. Brooke's Brigade did nobly—under heavy fire all the time, never once breaking, it made several beautiful charges; captured two stands of colors; two thousand stands of arms and a number of prisoners. All honor to the brave young warrior who led it on!

On Wednesday and the following night our regiment was picketing on the front lines. This was the most disagreeable duty imaginable, as they were compelled to lay flat on the ground for hours among the dead and wounded—the groans of the wounded and stench of the dead was awful. So near were the rebel sharpshooters that when one of our boys would raise up to get a "peep," he would be certain to be shot at. In this unpleasant position, they were kept for 36 hours, or until it was discovered that the rebels had evacuated. The officers, as well as the men of the 53d, all did gallantly. Capt. Bull, the acting Lieut. Colonel, was always at his post cheering on the men. Capt. Eicholtz of Company B, picked up a secesh rifle, and kept banging away in high old style. Lieut. Mintzer proved himself well worthy of commanding gallant old Company A. Orderly Sergeant John H. Root of the Pottstown company, greatly aided Lieutenant Mintzer by his bravery and coolness. The Orderly, who is an excellent shot, dropped his man on several occasions. In this connection, we will take occasion to give honor where honor is due: Robert Roberts, of Pottstown, a member of Col. Hartranft's Regt. during the march became sick, and was left behind his regiment. On getting better he started out to join his company, but could not find it. In the course of his tramp he came upon our regiment, the day before the fight, and in order not to miss the fun as he said, he went into the ranks of Company A, and through Tuesday's hard struggle he was one of the bravest of the brave.

It is with feelings of heartfelt regret that we have to record upon the list of wounded the name of our friend and fellow printer, William Rhoads, of Company A. He was wounded in the leg by a rifle ball, and while endeavoring to reach the shelter of a tree, he was again struck by a piece of shell, fracturing the same leg. He was taken to the division hospital. Two days afterwards it was found necessary to amputate. The last time we saw him, was the day following the amputation, when he was in good spirits, and doing well. Thus was lost to the regiment one of its bravest men, one who nobly braved the hardships of every march, and gallantly fought through every battle in which the 53d was engaged. May he long live "to shoulder his crutch and show how fields were won."

Before the dead were removed, we passed over about two miles of the lines of battle. But the horrors we witnessed—the bloody effects of this most desperate fight of modern times—the dead lying on heaps in clusters and in rows—we counted over a thousand, but the sight was too sickening, we could count no more. We shall not describe this legion of butchered humanity—let the dead rest.

Several days ago, we marched from the battlefield to this place, a distance of twelve miles. We are now in camp on Bolivar Heights.

Yours &c.

L.J.F.

[Ledger, October 7, 1862]

WEBSITE SUBMISSION –

(the below email was submitted to the 53rd website last month)

Hi there, I was hesitant to reach out in the middle of the pandemic, however I thought we all could use some good news right about now. :) My name is Roger and I am an after school book club staff member. With the pandemic leaving us quarantined, I have taken a step back from the book club to help my kids out with their school work. One of my sons, Danny, has been finishing his school year online. For his social studies class, they were assigned an end of year project on whatever time period they would like to do, and he's chosen to do his project on the Civil War. Unfortunately, Danny is having a little trouble getting his project started, so I thought I would help him find a few resources for his project. During my search, I came across your links page, <https://www.53rdpvi.org/links/> and the resources you have on the Civil War were extremely helpful for beginning Danny's project, so I wanted to reach out to thank you!

Recently, Danny has been using your "Civil War News" resource and has found the information quite interesting. He loves that he is able to read about finding Civil War ancestors, and has been able to find books and additional websites about the Civil War he can use for his project based on the suggestions they have. Since finding your page, Danny has been able to learn a lot about the Civil War, and is eager to begin his project, so thank you for taking the time to put these resources together! Further into my search, Danny actually stumbled across a page that talks about the legal changes that were made in result of the Civil War. It also gave him information about the changes that were made to the 14th Amendment. He found the resource very easy to read, and he liked how it talks about the 14th Amendment in sections, making it easier for him to understand the changes that were made to the Amendment.

Overall, it really benefited Danny's learning and understanding on how the Civil War ended. Would you be able to include this on your page in the "forums, news and sites of interest" section? Danny was so happy when he came across the resource, but he realized it was one we hadn't found off your page and he wanted to let you know it existed. I agreed to share it with you, since others visiting your page might find it helpful too! Here it is for you: <http://www.statutes-of-limitations.com/news/read/legal-changes-after-the-civil-war-and-the-14th-amendment>

Thank you again and feel free to let me know your thoughts and if you decide to include it on your page. I know Danny would be so pleased with himself if he saw it on there. Have a wonderful rest of your week, Roger

MEMORIAL DAY ZOOM MEETING –

On Memorial Day morning, since our annual parade and events in Hummelstown were cancelled this year, the 53rd PVI held an informal meeting and get together via Zoom. Members participating were: Steger, Ford, Bohnenblust, Volpe, Shick, and Benedict.

We discussed what each of us have been doing the past few months and possible upcoming events this summer (including Landis Valley) and fall just to name a few topics. I figured such a meeting would be a good way for us to keep in touch since we've not had an event since the NR School of Instruction or our annual party many months ago.

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT –

Pard's:

I hope this finds each of well. It goes without saying that our season has shaped up to be one disappointment after another. However, there's still hope for us to have a chance to get into the field. As of the time I'm writing this, Landis Valley is still scheduled. With the Governor moving this part of the state into the yellow status on June 4 we're one step closer to Landis Valley opening. They can only open once we move into the green status. One can only speculate that we have a good chance to go green in early July. That's all I can report on the matter at this time. I encourage all of you to keep the event on your schedules. If something changes I will communicate with you right away.

I received word from Tom Holbrook that the LH programs at Gettysburg are going to resume in July. As you know, we have a combined event with ELF in August at Spangler's Spring. Additionally, our friend James Owens has extended an invitation for us to join the 1st MN July 11-12 at the PA monument. If you wish to attend, touch base with me and I'll give you James' contact info so you can communicate with him directly. While I fully endorse supporting other units, I have to add their event is the week prior to Landis Valley. If you can do both,

great. If you can only do one, I'd expect Landis Valley to take priority. There will be some significant changes at the Gettysburg events this year to comply with the NPS's Covid-19 guidelines. I will be sending this info in a future email to the membership.

James Owens has also formally invited us to attend a LH in place of the Cedar Mtn. reenactment. I know that we only had a handful registered for the reenactment but since it will be a LH style event we may have more people willing to attend. I will include this info in the same email with the Gettysburg guidelines.

See y'all soon!
Eric

UPCOMING EVENTS –

18-19 July – Civil War Days – Landis Valley Museum (Lancaster)

Our annual “Civil War Days” event of the summer. We invite our friends from ELF and The National Regiment to join us for this 2-day event. More details will be forth-coming as we get closer to the event so please stay tuned to the 53rd PVI Facebook page and email updates.

Regular kit and tentage are the norm. Bring approx. 50 rounds as that should suffice for the weekend assuming we follow our normal schedule. Also, bring food for the weekend.

29-30 August - Gettysburg Living History (Spangler Spring – Gettysburg NMP)

Our annual living history in Gettysburg at Spangler Spring. Kit is similar to the Landis Valley event (above). Again, updates will be forth-coming as we get closer to the event but again bring approx. 50 rounds as well as your normal kit and tentage, food, etc. for this 2-day event. Our ELF friends are also invited to fall in with us. Again, please stay tuned to the 53rd PVI Facebook page and email updates.

The Civil War Merchant -

(if you have something for sale or are looking for something, submit it for inclusion 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 - auction8@comcast.net

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

2020 Calendar of Events -

~~11 Jan. – Annual Holiday Party – Dobbin House (Gettysburg)~~
~~1-2 Feb – Winter Drill (Landis Valley)~~
~~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) (CANCELLED)~~
~~2-3 May – National Regiment Camp of Instruction (Gruber Wagon Works) (CANCELLED)~~
~~16-17 May – USAHEC Event – 53rd PVI MAX Effort (CANCELLED but may be rescheduled)~~
~~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 (CANCELLED)~~

~~18-19 April - Spring Drill at Ft. McHenry (ELF) (CANCELLED)~~

8-9 August - Cedar Mountain Re-Enactment (1st MN)

5-6 Sept. - Bedford Village (1st MN)

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