

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Company C

"The Sentinel" March 2023

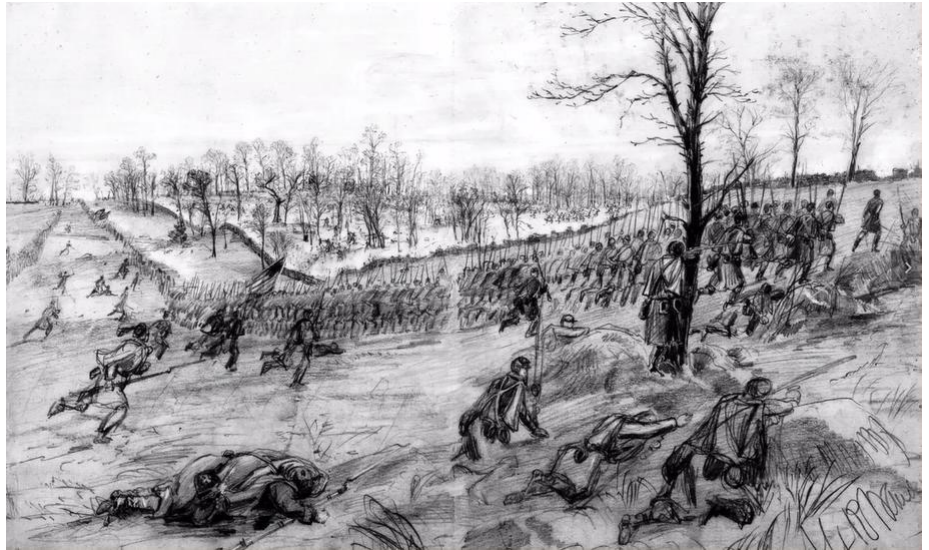
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

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*I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, event summaries/photos, stories, etc.) to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor*

## **THE ICONIC PHOTOGRAPH THAT SYMBOLIZES THE RUIN OF THE SOUTH**

Robert S. Davis January 13, 2023,  
[blueandgrayeducation.org](http://blueandgrayeducation.org)

*Ruins of Atlanta's Confederate Rolling Mill by  
George Barnard / courtesy of the author*

One of the most often reproduced photographs of the Civil War is of the ruins of Atlanta's Confederate Rolling Mill, taken by famed photographic-artist George Barnard (above). This image symbolizes the success of American industry in the 1850s, even in a plantation economy, and as a victim in a war that was won and lost on manufacturing and railroads.

No photographs of it before the complex's 1864 destruction seemed to have survived. Even the great Atlanta historian Franklin Garrett knew of no photograph of it. Some scholars have mistakenly used an engraving of a mill built elsewhere in Atlanta after the war as a substitute.



Atlanta, named for the Western & Atlantic Railroad, was incorporated in 1847 as one of the nation's most important transportation junctions. This "Gate City" boomed by benefiting from but also servicing four regional railroads, with plans for more in the water-limited transportation region.

Boosters of this "Gate City" desperately sought to acquire a rolling mill for restoring worn-out rails. Antebellum Atlanta was promoted as a city of commerce, manufacturing, and trade with minimal direct connection to enslaved labor.

Lewis Schofield, James Blake, and William Markham built the massive Atlanta Rolling Mill (aka the Gate City Rolling Mill) in 1858. Only the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond was a larger such operation in the South. It became the center of a large Atlanta ordnance and military complex that complemented the extensive military production works in nearby Augusta and Macon.

The South Carolina Railroad Company bought what it renamed the Confederate Rolling Mill for \$600,000 for the buildings and equipment, plus \$75,000 for the mill's 100 enslaved workers in 1863. The mill also employed 100 white laborers. Trenholm, Fraser & Company of Charleston subsequently owned the operation.

When Sherman's armies threatened Atlanta, the machinery of the plant was moved to Columbia. The buildings were destroyed when 81 ammunition cars were detonated by the retreating Confederate army on the morning of September 2, 1864, a scene depicted in the motion picture *Gone With the Wind*.

*Movie poster for Gone With the Wind / Flickr*

Images of the Atlanta Rolling Mill as it appeared before its destruction do survive, however. In 1885, artists arrived in Atlanta to make sketches for what would become the *Cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta*, for a time the largest painting in the world and now on display at the Atlanta History Center. Atlantans who had lived in the city during the war shared their first-hand knowledge of what the battlefield looked like on July 22, 1864. The Confederate Rolling Mill appears in the Cyclorama as part of the skyline of Civil War Atlanta.

Comparing that image to an engraving made from a drawing by Capt. David R. Brown of the 20th Connecticut Infantry (below) reveals the other side of the rolling mill. It is on the left side of the Brown engraving and in the far distance. The two images match the chimneys shown in the famous 1864 photograph of its ruins.



Atlanta has erased almost all that was left of its past through rebuilding and modern urban renewal. What remains are photographs like that of the rolling mill and other images such as the Cyclorama.



*Engraving of the rolling mill made from a drawing by Capt. David R. Brown of the 20th Connecticut Infantry / courtesy of the author*



## **THE DIARY OF BENJAMIN JAY CUSHING (53<sup>RD</sup> PVI, CO. G) -**

*Transcribed and provided to me by Thomas Kear, a direct descendent of the Cushing brothers. Any typos or grammatical errors were left in place.*

1863 (note - Both Benjamin and his brother Leavitt were both wounded at Fredericksburg in December 1862)

Apr. 1 – Fair this morning. Drill in bayonet exercise in the forenoon, Brigade Drill in the afternoon.

Apr. 2 – In camp all day. Drill in the forenoon, pleasant weather, Regimental Skirmish Drill in the afternoon. Wind blowing hard all day.

Apr. 3 – Fair and pleasant. Write to Charles in the forenoon. Out on Brigade Drill in the afternoon shall have to go on picket tomorrow.

Apr. 4 – On picket today, very cold and windy and uncomfortable., lay curled up in a hole in the side of a hill all day, go out on support at 11 o'clock P.M. and on post at 5 o'clock relieved at 10 get in camp at 1 o'clock.

Apr. 5 – On post at daylight. It snowed all night and found ourselves uncomfortable at daylight. It seems very little like the Sabbath as one can think of nothing but the cold, and storm, rec. one letter from Ulysses.

Apr. 6 – Wash in the morning Wilson and George on picket. Write one letter to Ulysses. Rec'd letter from home this morning.

Apr. 7 – Get ready for a grand review, but it is postponed. Write home in the forenoon.

Apr. 8 – Went 4 or 5 miles to a Grand Review of the army of the Potomac by the President and Genr. Hooker, all passed off well.

Apr. 9 – On Camp Guard. Have a general inspection by the Brigad. Inspector. Also an inspection of quarters.

Apr. 10 – Fall in at 10 o'clock A.M. for the purpose of being mustered. The Regt. Is to be filled up with drafted men. Skirmish drill is in the afternoon, rec. a letter from home.

Apr. 11 – Mail one letter to Ulysses. Brigade drill at 9 o'clock A.M. Wilson and myself had our likeness taken together. Received an unexpected visitor from Ulysses, Ira Vangilder, sat up quite late talking with him.

Apr. 12 – Inspection as usual at half past 8 o'clock. Ira V. left in the forenoon. Hear a short discourse from the Chaplain of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Del. At 11 o'clock A.M. rec. one letter from Chancey.

Apr. 13 – In camp in the forenoon. Brigade drill in the afternoon.

Apr. 14 – On Guard today. Rec. orders to pack up our extra clothing and be ready to march tomorrow morning at daylight. Three days rations in our haversack & 5 in our knapsack.

Apr. 15 – Slept very late this morn. Rained hard all the forenoon, did not move as was anticipated. Write to M.

Apr. 16 – On guard, Nothing particularly going on except Ball playing. Our Paymaster Major Potter has arrived in camp.

Apr. 17 – Brigade inspection at 10 o'clock A.M. To see that we have eight days rations on hand (or on our backs rather).

Apr. 18 – Skirmish drill in the morning. Rec. one letter from M. Was paid off today.

Apr. 19 – On guard at the Brigade Quartermasters, Rather a dull day of it. Very pleasant warm day.

Apr. 20 – Off guard at 9 o'clock A.M. Commenced raining this morning. Rec'd 2 letters from Ulysses.

Apr. 21 – Quite cool weather for the season. No drill today, Busy writing letters, reading & playing ball.

Apr. 22 – Drill at 9 o'clock A.M. wash after drill. Have Brigade drill at 3 o'clock P.M. By Brigadier Gen. Brook.

Apr. 23 – On fatigue, Report at Brigade C.S. to Capt. Burnham with 8 men. Go down to Falmouth Station to load wagons. Raining hard all the forenoon.

Apr. 24 – On guard at the Brigade C.S. Raining most all day. Thunder shower in the evening. Write to E. Lewis.

Apr. 25 – Off duty today cold and windy, mud drying up very fast. Write to C. G. Rec. a letter from Chloe in the evening.

Apr. 26 – Mail a letter to Chloe Sunday morning inspection as usual. Write to M in the afternoon, rec. a letter from home in the evening.

Apr. 27 – Write to Chloe in the forenoon. Battalion drill in the afternoon. Inspection at 5 o'clock P.M. Have orders to have everything in readiness to move in the morning.

Apr. 28 – Called up at 3 o'clock in the morning to get our breakfast and be ready to march at daybreak. March about 3 miles up the river and Bivoac, & put up our tents as it is rainy.

Apr. 29 – Weather foggy and rainy, 75 men were called out last night, (in the night) to build Corduroy Road, Wilson and Freeman went. Cannonading heard far up the river. Marched about \_ miles up the river and bivouaced for the night.

Note added later: South of Fredericksburg under Sedgwick in Battle of Chancellorsville

Apr. 30 – March slowly towards the \_ in the forenoon. Cross the Rappahanock about 4 o'clock P.M. March til 11 o'clock at night and bivouac for the night. All are happily disappointed in not seeing a rebel to dispute the Passage.

## **WINSLOW HOMER SOUVENIR CARD**

Noted American artist Winslow Homer (1836 ~ 1910) created a series of drawings entitled "Life In Camp" originally published circa 1864 by L. Prang & Co. The series was exhibited in "The Civil War in America" at the Library of Congress in 2013. This month's image is entitled "An Unwelcome Visit".



## **FROM SNOWBALLS TO CANNONBALLS**

The Nature of History • January 31, 2023 • Updated January 31, 2023  
From American Battlefield Trust ([battlefields.org](http://battlefields.org))



Napoleon's crossing of the Berezina, a 1866 painting by January Suchodolski, oil on canvas, National Museum, Poznań Public Domain (cropped by the editor)

Like most of us during the winter season, Civil War soldiers made light of the plummeting temperatures and falling snow to play games and engage in those sports which can only be practiced in the winter. During the war, however, these activities took on new meaning as rival armies jockeyed for terrain. Drawing from the Napoleonic Wars of the early 1800s, both armies used the winter to their advantage, transforming seasonal hobbies and real-life conditions into a practical training ground for the trials of combat. So,  
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grab your snow shovels, bundle up, and man the ramparts of your impromptu winter quarters for this edition of *Nature of History*!

## Napoleonic Winter

Many generals, both Union and Confederate, studied European warfare as a means of refining their techniques. Gen. George McClellan had even joined a British command during the Crimean War as an observer, learning quickly the value of fortifications and the importance of robust supply chains in a protracted, modern war. Looming large over European warfare, and by extension U.S. Army Doctrine, was the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte. From the division of armies into distinct, self-sustaining corps, to the employment of massed artillery in support of infantry, Napoleon arguably invented the style of fighting that came to characterize the American Civil War. In an eerie foreshadowing of many of the Civil War's darkest moments, Napoleon met his defeat at the hands of supply shortages and harsh winters, the kind of which would cripple both Union and Confederate armies over the first half of the 1860s.



*The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries, an 1812 painting by Jacques-Louis David, oil on canvas. [Samuel H. Kress Collection](#)*

The school of fighting known as “Polytechnique,” which was pioneered by Napoleon, capitalized on mobile divisions of the army, each with its own cavalry, infantry and artillery components. This same form of organization was taught at West Point, with its benefits being utilized by Gen. Robert E. Lee’s Confederate Army of Northern Virginia to great effect at Chancellorsville and elsewhere. Its pitfalls were also evident, as with Napoleon’s defeat through supply constraints in Russia, as well as the overstretching of Confederate forces in the Western Theater.

In the early days of the war, undersupplied recruits under Gen. Benjamin McCulloch were caught off guard by Union forces in Missouri. At Pea Ridge in March 1862, an understrength Confederate detachment was isolated by Union forces and forced to perform a long march south through a series of running battles. This winter defeat would echo into the war, as Confederate forces were never again able to take and hold ground north of the Arkansas River.

## Winter Warfare, Young and Old

The similarity in practices between Civil War soldiers and Napoleon's forces are not limited to the level of general officers. An apocryphal tale of the Corsican Fiend’s first command came vividly to life in Civil War training. The young Napoleon, at school in a military academy in northern France, supposedly organized his classmates into two teams during a winter storm; one side built and manned a snow fortification, the other assaulted the stronghold. Bonaparte, still young, must have gathered the importance of training and drilling his men from this experience – much of his success on the battlefield came from the discipline of his men. During the Civil War, the urgent need for swift and rigorous training became apparent in the aftermath of Bull Run. It was an enormous task to turn a flood of volunteers into a fighting force that could withstand the unprecedented violence of modern conflict. This required the adaptation of activities familiar to the young, green soldiery that populated the incoming ranks.



*The 1864 "American Boy's Book of Sports and Games" included snow play among its many activities for American boys. This panel illustrates the perfect snow fort. Public Domain*

A peculiar instance of this is an article written as part of an 1864 book, “*American Boy's Book of Sports and Games*.” The text details the ways in which a number of young boys, small or large, can raise elaborate fortifications out of snow in order to protect themselves during a winter skirmish. Almost explicitly modeling the methodologies used around Petersburg at the same time to construct earthworks, the book instructs children that, “To make a snow fort, the foundations should at first be marked out, either in a square or circular form, and then clear out the snow from within, piling it

upon the line of boundary to form the wall. A similar process goes on from without, and thus a good stout wall is soon produced, which must be considerably broader at the base than at the top.”

Given its tangible familiarity, usage of snow forts as a model for actual fortification would have been a widely applicable training practice. This was not far from the authors mind, as the preface of the book states, “Strength, courage, and a wholesome spirit of emulation, are among the best characteristics of all really great nations; and the presence of these noble attributes in the Man depends largely upon his training as a Boy.”

While we can now insulate ourselves from the worst weather, the lives of our 19th century forebearers were influenced by the seasons to an enormous degree. Both during the dawn of modern warfare and also its nascent steps on the North American continent, winter played an immense role in the decision making, training, and engagement of soldiers.

## **53<sup>RD</sup> PVI WINTER DRILL**

On Saturday (2/4), we held our annual winter drill at Landis Valley. In attendance were: Benedict, Steger, Espenshade, Ford, Brumbaugh, Bohnenblust, Thomas, Dicks R., and Dicks J. We were also joined by Tom Carlson and Paul Parvis. NCO duties, safety guidelines, bayonet drill, and skirmish drill were among the topics covered.

## **CARTRIDGE ROLLING PARTY INFO**

The unit will hold a cartridge rolling party at 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Fasnacht’s home in Kleinfeltersville on Saturday March 25<sup>th</sup> beginning at 9AM. Mark will plan on grilling hot dogs. Please bring a side to share. Please also bring cartridge rolling materials (glue sticks, toilet paper, scissors, etc.) and also RSVP with Mark ASAP regarding your attendance AND what side you plan on bringing to share. If you need directions to Mark’s home, let me know.

## **2023 NATIONAL REGIMENT SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION SUMMARY**

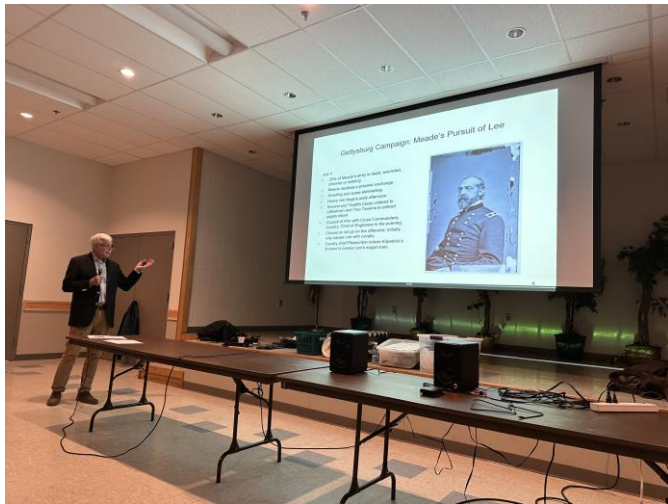
On 18 February, the National Regiment held it’s annual School of Instruction (SOI) at the Gettysburg Fire Station. Various topics were presented including 1863 Gear, Meade’s Pursuit of Lee after Gettysburg, Canteens, Coffee, Battalion Drill, How To Properly Wear Your Gear, Manual Of Arms, Safety Guidelines, Less Common CW-era firearms, Finding Graves Of The 5<sup>th</sup> NY, and more. In attendance from the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI were: Steger, Benedict, and Ford. Also, the National Regiment’s new Colonel was announced. Congratulations go to Ted Brennan who was named our new Colonel! Tom Downes is stepping down as the NR’s Colonel as of 1 July but will still be active with the NR and the 8<sup>th</sup> OH. Photos are courtesy of Steger.

Presenters included Michael Kraus, Scott Washburn, Paul Parvis, George Franks, Scot Buffington, James Owens, Chris Sedlak, Timothy App, Rich Meler, Henry Schmeid, Matty Cronin, Mark McNierney, and Larry Clemens.

On Sunday (19 February), our very own John Heiser led the group on a battlefield walk of the Wheatfield covering 2 and 3 July 1863.











## **WEBSITE UPDATES**

I have added some additional new content to the unit website ([www.53rdpvi.org](http://www.53rdpvi.org)) including a new page under the Historical tab called "53<sup>rd</sup> PVI At Gettysburg". This new page includes 3 videos showing overhead views of troop movements in and around the Wheatfield on 2 July 1863; of course, the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI was part of this. Thanks to Steve Dillon for passing these along to me. I also added some additional training docs and videos to the "Training" and "Training Videos" pages. Over the past 6~9 months, I've also added other random fresh content so check out the unit website and look over these updates.

## **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 –**

(1.) Dave Townsen, a fellow pard of mine in the old 83<sup>rd</sup> PVI, is selling off most of his CW gear. You can contact him directly at: [grumpydave58@comcast.net](mailto:grumpydave58@comcast.net) with any inquiries about items, pricing, etc. He lives in Mechanicsburg and he has quality gear.

(2.) I have a C&D Jarnagin size 46 federal enlisted frock coat for sale. I bought a new one recently; the coat for sale has sleeves that were just a tad long for my arms. Still in great condition. Email me with any questions/inquiries: [n3ntj@outlook.com](mailto:n3ntj@outlook.com)



(3.) Kerry Williard is handling the selling of Dave Swigert items for Dave's wife. Marc and I assembled an inventory list and assigned approx. values for each item. The items shown in the below list still remain as of February 2023. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: [shamokin71@aol.com](mailto:shamokin71@aol.com)

Uniform Clothing	Item Description	Detailed Description	Price
1	Trouser - Steel Blue each with suspendors	34 min waist/27" inseam-avg. condx and a little dirt w/ braces no watch pck	\$25.00
1	Dk Blue Vest Size 42	3 pockets - light wear	\$20.00
1	Colored Pattern Shirt	blue plaid with white china buttons - sun faded - good condx	\$10.00
1	White muslin Shirt	19" at shoulder 14" neck - very short in body length	\$5.00
1	White muslin Shirt	20" at shoulder 16" neck - very short in body length - cuffs are stained	\$5.00
1 pair	Woolen Grey Gloves	modern - right hand is fingerless	\$2.00
1	Underpants - Night Pants - White	36" waist - knee stains - 25" inseam white muslin - rear repair	\$3.00
1	Lt Brown Scarf -Acrylic - Modern		\$1.00
1	Havelock - White - VG condx		\$2.00
3 pairs	Grey Wool Socks -Modern		\$2.00/pr
2	Hats - Union & Confederate for cchildren		\$1.00
<b>Accoutrements</b>			
1	Scabbord -Late war 7 Rivet		\$15.00
1	Gum Blanket	some cracking with oversized grommets	\$20.00
1	Shelter Tent - Both Halves - Heavy Canvas w/Loops w/Mildew		\$35.00
1	Bag of 7 wooden Tent Stakes w/Rope		\$3.00
1	Grey Smooth Face Canteen - Leather Sling Satinette Cover w/ Corded Stopper		\$20.00
1	Haversack - Tarred Black - Brittle Strap w/opwn seam		\$5.00
1	Haversack - Tarred Black w/Liner- Paint peeling Holes @ Strap Connection		\$10.00
1	Grey Smooth Face Canteen - Leather Sling Satinette Cover w/ Corded Stopper		\$20.00
<b>Misc Items</b>			
1 can	sno-seal (half full)		\$1.00
1	Wood Mirror - Haversack filler	sliding cover	\$3.00
1	Wood Comb - Haversack filler		\$1.00
1	Wooden button board		\$1.00
2	Coin Purses - Made from Tic Material		\$1.00/ea
1	Bag with Coffee	brown coffee	\$1.00/ea
1	shoe lace - undied		\$0.25/ea
2	Soap Bar		\$1.00/ea
6 1/2	Wax Candles		\$0.25/ea
1	pocket sharpenig stone	new	\$2.00
1	box rifle cleaning kit	pads, steel wool, rags, etc	\$5.00
3	match boxes w/ matches		\$0.25/ea
1 Pair	shoe tree		\$3.00
1	Green Army Duffle Bag		\$3.00
1	drawers for use as patches		\$1.00
<b>Armaments</b>			
1	1861 Springfield Rifle - Armi Sport		\$900.00

## 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS – UPDATED FROM LAST MONTH!

15 January - Holiday Party - Gettysburg (private)  
 4 February - Winter Drill - Landis Valley (our NR pards are invited)  
 18-19 February - NR School of Instruction (Gettysburg Fire Hall)  
 25 March - Cartridge Rolling Party (1st Sgt.'s Home)  
 1 April - ELF Drill at Ft. McHenry  
 15 April - Robesonia - Patriotic Order Sons of America (POSoFA) event  
 6 - 7 May - NR Camp Of Instruction (COI) - Gruber Wagon Works (Reading, PA)  
 29 May - Memorial Day Parade (Hummelstown) **[Max Effort]**  
 23 -25 June - Gettysburg 160 **[NR Max Effort]**  
 15-16 July - Landis Valley Civil War Days (Lancaster) **[Max Effort]**  
 12 August - Safe Harbor Cemetery - grave rededication  
 8-10 September - Thunder on the Gauley (Summersville, WV - Carnifax Ferry Battlefield **[NR Max Effort]**)  
 14-15 October - USAHEC Army Heritage Days (Carlisle) **[Max Effort]**  
 18 November - Remembrance Day (Gettysburg) - NR Annual Meeting and Parade



### Secondary schedule -

20 May - Lancaster Cemetery - grave decoration day  
 28-20 July - Receding Tide - Trenches of Williamsport  
 14-15 October - Cedar Creek re-enactment

For updated event info and other news, please check out the Facebook pages of the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI and/or the National Regiment (links below) and check your email on a regular basis

### 53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford ([reenactor53@gmail.com](mailto:reenactor53@gmail.com))

Vice President: Pete Zinkus ([zinkusp@gmail.com](mailto:zinkusp@gmail.com))

Treasurer/Secretary: Matthew Steger ([n3ntj@outlook.com](mailto:n3ntj@outlook.com))

Newsletter Editor: Matthew Steger ([n3ntj@outlook.com](mailto:n3ntj@outlook.com))

Webmasters: Steve Dillon ([steve@gofoxpro.com](mailto:steve@gofoxpro.com)) and Matthew Steger ([n3ntj@outlook.com](mailto:n3ntj@outlook.com))

53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Website: <http://www.53rdpvi.org>

2023 Field Officers - Sergeants: Mark Fasnacht (1<sup>st</sup> Sgt), Marc Benedict, Matthew Steger

Corporals: Mike Espenshade & Michael Brumbaugh

53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/53rdPVI>

National Regiment Phone line: 800-777-1861 (code 61)

National Regiment Website: <https://www.thenationalregiment.com>

National Regiment Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/842904089142263>

