

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" August 2023

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

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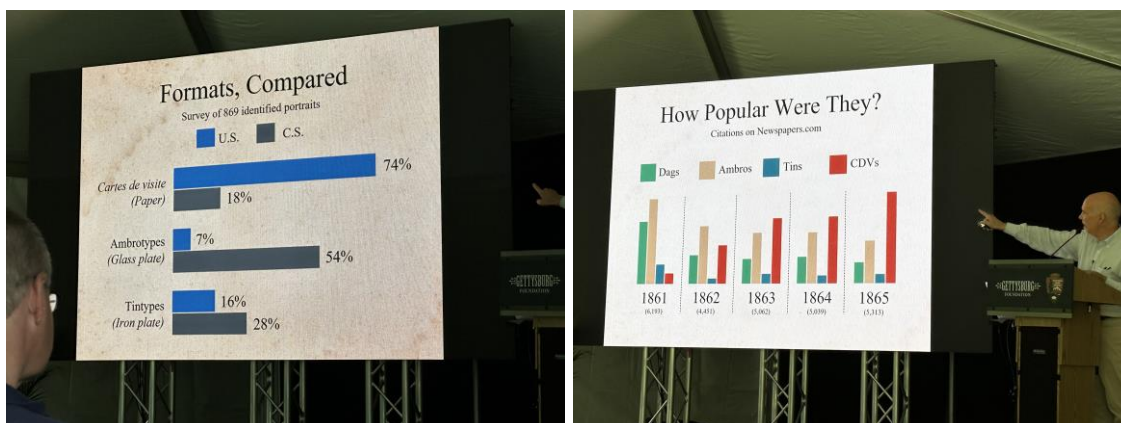


I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, CW-related movie or book reviews, event summaries/photos, stories, etc. to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor

2023 SACRED TRUST PRESENTATIONS

During the Gettysburg anniversary weekend of 2023, the Gettysburg Foundation and NPS once again held their Sacred Trust programs at the Visitors Center. Some of the speakers included Doug Douds, Wayne Motts, Ronald Coddington, and Patrick Brennan, just to name a few. The special ticketed evening presentations included William C. Davis, Jeff Shaara, and Gary Gallagher.

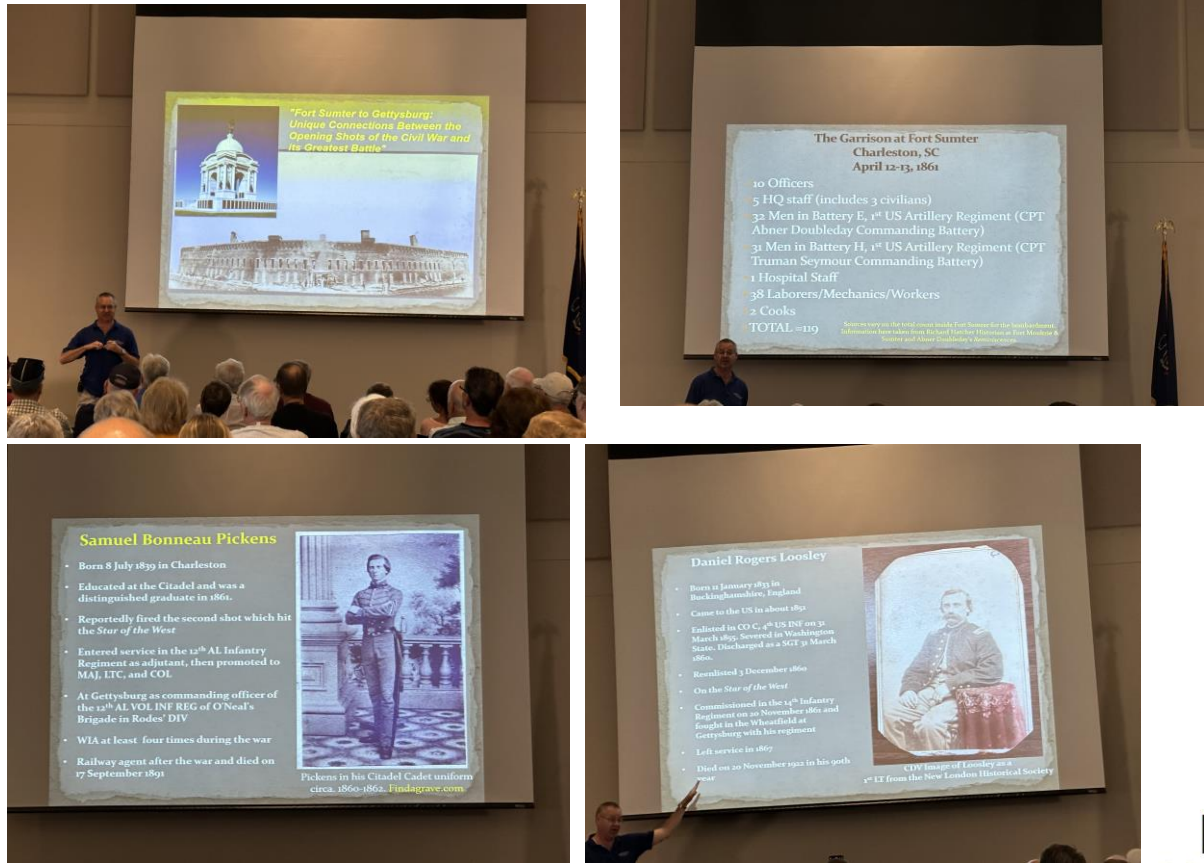
Ronald Coddington gave an interesting presentation on CW-era portrait photography discussing the various technologies used, the popularity of each type, why certain types were more popular than others and when, etc.



Doug Douds (Colonel, USMC retired) gave an excellent detailed presentation on army command structure comparing the AOP and the ANV.

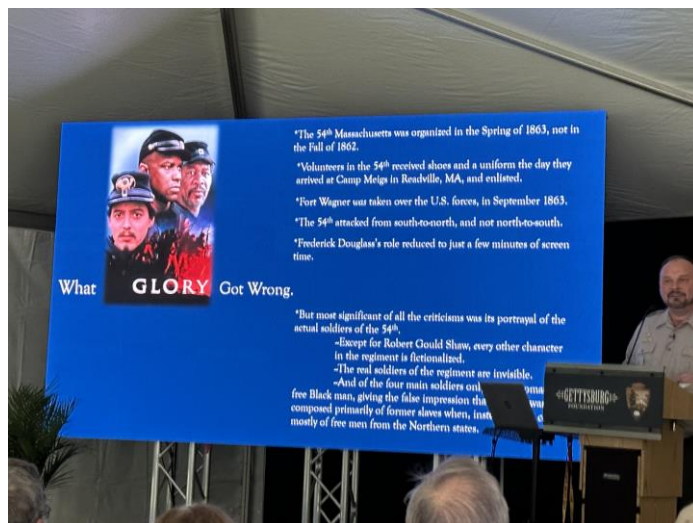


Wayne Motts (President and CEO of the Gettysburg Foundation) gave an informative talk on people linked between the initial shots at Ft. Sumter and Gettysburg.



People were still talking about Wayne's presentation last year about "The Battle of Gettysburg And The Titanic".

Park Ranger John Hoptak gave a great presentation on the 54th Massachusetts' members who hailed from south-central PA. He discussed the movie "Glory", corrected several errors in the movie, discussed how many of the 54th Mass. members actually originated in our area, how the 54th Mass. was organized, and what became of many of these local men.



William C. Davis discussed the relationship between Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis.



Jeff Shaara did a sit-down talk with Wayne Motts in which he discussed his books (including his newest book about Teddy Roosevelt), writing in general, etc. and took lots of audience questions.



Various Ranger programs were also going on throughout the weekend including 2 that I attended that covered the 9th Mass. artillery's fight on the 2nd day near the Peach Orchard and their pull back to the Trostle Farm and another program about the Medal Of Honor winners at Gettysburg.

FYI - Prior year's talks are available to watch on the Gettysburg Foundation's YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/gettysburgfoundation> This year's presentations will be added in the next several months to their YouTube page as well. I invite all of you to attend the future Sacred Trust talks and presentations next year. There are always a wide range of topics covered, top authors and experts present, and you really learn a lot plus they are free.

THE DIARY OF BENJAMIN JAY CUSHING (53rd 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. – editor]

1863

Sept. 1 – Find that we are to stay and guard the ford until the Cavalry (which we relieved) could go and take (or destroy) the gunboats which the Rebs captured in the mouth of the R—k River. Busy myself by reading or strolling in the woods, or dozing in the shade.

Sept. 2 – Still in the same place. Went and got some corn. Paid 25 cts. Per dozen ears. Soldiers all use corn freely. Some buy & others take it. Visiting the ruins of the Eagle Gold Mines which were destroyed at the commencement of the war. Have fine weather lately.

Sept. 3 – The boys have lively times while lying idle, By dividing off and having shamfights using corncobs for balls. Detail for picket in the afternoon and out of 4th Brig. On camp guard at night.

Sept. 4 – Start for camp at 6 o'clock and reach it about 1 o'clock P.M., March 13 miles, have a dusty time. Find several letters in camp for me. Busy reading, writing, and arranging things generally. Write to Chloe in the evening.

Sept. 5 – Get ready for general inspection at 8 o'clock But do not get through til afternoon. Wash after inspection is over. Busy bringing wood, water, and cooking til dark.

Sept. 6 – On picket this morning, have a very pleasant day and everything goes off pleasantly. Busy reading most of the time. The night is as quiet and pleasant as the day, at this season of the year are to be found the Soldier's pleasantest days, especially when in camp.

Sept. 7 – Busy after coming in from picket, writing to Martha, in the afternoon reading and choring around camp, cooking, drawing rations and Policing. The men in the Reg. Were all measured to ascertain their height & also demension of their chest, I am 5 ft 9 ½ in height and 38 in around the chest.

Sept. 8 – Mail one letter to M. Write to Wilson in the forenoon. Reading in the afternoon. We are having very pleasant weather nowdays. Drill at 4 o'clock and dress parade at sunset, reading in the evening.

Sept. 9 – Company drill in the morning. Receive an express box from home filled with all sorts of good things to tempt the appetite, which I do not much need at present. Battalion drill at 4 o'clock & Dress parade at sunset. Weather cool and pleasant.

Sept. 10 – Picket out of our Brig. doing various little chores in the forenoon & washing in the afternoon. Funeral of one of the Substitutes of the 145th Reg. Took place this afternoon. It was thought that he died from the effects of drinking Jamaica Ginger.

Sept. 11 – Write home in the forenoon. Hear Arty. firing and see the smoke 12 or 15 miles distant last only a short time. Write to M in the afternoon. Rec'd. the Examin. Tonight, busy myself most of the evening reading its various good articles. Got orders at 9 o'clock to be ready to march at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Sept. 12 – Get up early & get ready, but the order is postponed til 10 o'clock A.M. March til 3 o'clock and halt near Rhappahannock Station 1 ½ miles from the river. Have to go to the river for watter, Springs mostly dried up and the watter in the runs smells very bad.

Sept. 13 – Start at 8 o'clock and cros the river, and march towards Culpepper along the R.R. halt and make coffee at noon. Halt within a short distance of Culpepper and pitch tents for the night. Met 3 pieces of Arty. which the Cavalry captured & the Battery man belonging to them.

Sept. 14 – Hear a little Arty. firing in the distance. Rec. mail at noon, write to M. Nothing particular going on here in the forenoon. The cars come up for the first time at night. On guard at night.

Sept. 15 – Rec. orders to pack up at noon & march through C - r with tattered Collors flying & bands playing. See many ladies but few men. Go out about two miles and camp for the night.

Sept. 16 – Start at 1 o'clock in the morning, & go a short distance towards town and halt. Stay there till afternoon, & take a position on a hill nearby to support two pieces of Arty. Guarding a road, cannonading heard in the direction of Rapidan River.

Sept. 17 – Start in the morning and march to within a couple of miles of the Rapidan. Halt & rest awhile, Then go out on picket to relieve the Cavalry. Only a few shots fired during the afternoon. The Depot is about a mile from here and the rebs pickets on this side of the river.

Sept. 18 – Commenced raining this morning & continued til noon & after. Everything quiet in front of us. A little Arty. firing up the river in the afternoon. Got relieved at dark and have a windy walk into camp. Find a letter from Wilson for me.

Sept. 19 – Get orders to pack up & be ready to march at moments notice. Lay around til afternoon, then get orders to put up tents in regular order which we do. We are only a short distance from Cedar Mountain.

Sept. 20 – Writing and reading during the forenoon. Went up onto Cedar Mountain where we had a fine view of the country around here, up and down the Rapidan also back towards Culpeper.

Sept. 21 – Write to Chloe in the morning. Payrolls come in to be signed. Busy reading and doing the various other little camp duties. Have cool weather nowdays. Draw 6 days rations in the evening & have 8 days rations on hand.

Sept. 22 – Lieut. Col McMichael was thrown from his horse last night & put his shoulder out of joint. Hear a little Arty. firing up the river at noon.

Sept. 23 – Went out on picket after noon, get out on post about sundown. The rebs have been busy throwing up earthworks since we first came here. I only have to be up half the night. Very cool weather, or cold nights rather.

Sept. 24 – Slept til after sunrise this morning. Exchange of papers takes place daily between the pickets. The rebs claim a victory over Rosencrans near Chatanooga. Get into camp after dark. The Regt. Has been paid and Lieut. Roberts drew mine for me.

Sept. 25 – Idling the day away, doing nothing, as we expect to move. But do not. Write to Chloe and send \$10.00 in the letter. Very cool weather so that we begin to gather round the fire in the evening. Lieut. Mann was sent top C - r today.

Sept. 26 – Busy all the forenoon washing, & miss the chance of going on picket, by the means, Nothing in particular going on in this vicinity lately. Drew one pair shoes today. Rec. our mail for the first time this week. Rec'd. two letters from Pa.

Sept. 27 – Busy reading and writing most of the time. Everything very quiet around here. Rec. an account of the battle in East Tenn. & are pained to hear of the defeat which our armies sustained there but hope that nothing more will be lost. (Note added later: Chickamauga)

Sept. 28 – Write to Chloe in the forenoon. Go on guard at Brig. Hd. Qts. at 6 o'clock P.M. On from 6 to 8, then up at 12 til two. There has been a great deal of speculation going on today in the Reg.

Sept. 29 – Reading most of the time when not after watter or cooking. We have very pleasant weather lately. How strange it seems to be laying here so long & yet not regularly encamped. We have no cooking utensils.

Sept. 30 – Spend the day mostly in reading a book entitled "Mapleton" or an (Argument for the Maine Law) & find it very interesting. But it set the evils of Intemperance in a stronger light than I ever saw them before.



BOOK REVIEW: PROTECTING THE FLANK – THE BATTLES FOR BRINKERHOFF’S RIDGE AND EAST CAVALRY FIELD

Author: *Eric F. Wittenberg*. Reviewed by Mike Espenshade.

Paperback; 2002; Ironclad Publishing; 158 pp.; 62 pictures and maps, Driving Tour (very good) and Order of Battle; 18 pp notes, 10 pp bibliography, 0 pp index. Free from a friend of Pete Zinkus.

Another very good work by Civil War cavalry expert Eric Wittenberg. **Excellent/detailed maps provided by our very own John Heiser!!**

“Numbers of casualties and loss of life do not always reflect the importance of military engagements. These actions at Brinkerhoff’s Ridge and East Cavalry Field reflect that. The author describes how and why these fights on July 2 and 3 influenced operations and the outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg.” - D. Scott Hartwig



I recommend this easy-to-read/carry book, which I now plan to take with me and tour these seldom visited sites. It is an excellent investigation, sourced solely from primary accounts, covering the events and personalities of this important, but often overlooked action. Outnumbered, but not outfought, Gen David Gregg’s troopers fought desperately to protecting the right flank of the Federal army from potential disaster from Stuart’s Cavalry Division of more than 5,000 men.

The 10th NY and 3rd Pa Cavalry regiments held off the veteran 2nd Va Infantry regiment of the famous Stonewall Infantry Brigade at Brinkerhoff’s Ridge the evening of July 2. This prevented this renowned infantry force from joining, and possibly winning, the fighting on Culp’s Hill that evening. The Stonewall Brigade was protecting Lee’s extreme left flank until Stuarts cavalry arrived on July 3.

The mid-afternoon July 3 cavalry battle just east of Brinkerhoff’s Ridge on the more open and more level Rummel and Lott farms involved both dismounted, fence-to-fence struggles and the historic mounted head-on crash between Custer’s Michigan Brigade and Wade Hampton/Fitz Hugh Lee’s brigades. Wittenberg does a nice job of graphically putting you into the middle of these brutal and desperate mounted actions, where the use of the horse, the saber, and the pistol decided things.

Gregg’s superb tactics and masterful use of the terrain prevented JEB Stuart’s larger force from ambushing and destroying the Northern mounted forces protecting Meade’s right flank. Had the Southern troopers done this, they could have sorted into the rear of the Army of the Potomac and wreaked havoc.

SOMERS, CONNECTICUT: THE BIRTH TOWN OF STONEWALL JACKSON’S LITTLE SORRELL

By Norman Dasinger, Jr., March 4, 2022
blueandgrayeducation.org

Stonewall Jackson and Little Sorrell, by David Bendann | LOC

In her book *Stonewall Jackson’s Little Sorrell*, Sharon B. Smith wrote, “During the Civil War more than 3,000,000 horses and mules were pressed into service.”

At the Collins Farm on modern Springfield Road, around 1850 in Somers, Connecticut, was born the horse that would become Little Sorrell. Not long ago, the city named one of its roads Little Sorrell Lane as a tribute to the animal that grew up in Somers. In addition, the city has erected a sign explaining the history of the town that includes reference to its most famous war horse.



Connecticuthistory.org on November 19, 2019, wrote, “In 1861, he [Little Sorrell] and a number of other Union horses landed in Confederate hands when Southern forces at Harper’s Ferry overtook their transportation train. After reviewing the newly captured prizes, General Jackson selected a pair of chestnut horses for his own use. He intended to keep the larger of the two ... however, Jackson recognized that Big Sorrell frightened easily and did not have a disposition suitable for battle. . . [So] “Little Sorrell” became his mount for the remainder of the war.

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... It was Little Sorrell who carried Jackson on the fateful day in 1863 when friendly fire mortally wounded the General. ... [Afterward,] Little Sorrell briefly lived with Jackson's widow before moving to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and then the Confederate Soldiers' Home at Richmond's Robert E Lee Camp."

Little Sorrell passed away in March 1886. Sharon Smith wrote, "Little Sorrell was a survivor. He had carried Jackson in all but one of the great battles and apparently suffered only one minor injury. He had then lived longer than almost any other horse who had participated in the Civil War, longer even than thousands of human veterans." He was mounted and put on display first at the Confederate Soldiers Home in Richmond, Virginia, and later at VMI, where he still stands today in the school's museum.

In 1997, his bones were cremated and interred on the VMI parade ground where the statue to Stonewall Jackson stood. Since then, the statue has been removed, but the bones of Little Sorrell remain.

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 "Hard Tack".



LANDIS VALLEY EVENT SUMMARY & PHOTOS

On 15 and 16 August, we held our annual Landis Valley event. We were joined by friends from the 1st MD, 3rd MD, 7th PA Reserves, 8th OH, and 5th NY. We had From the 53rd, in attendance were Sgts. Steger and Benedict. Corporals Espenshade and Brumbaugh, Privates Ford, Dicks (Jacob), Fedorshak, and Bohnenblust. Musician Thomas. Surgeons Volpe and Willard. In the ranks, we had 24 total rifles and your editor served as 1st Sgt. for the weekend. Private Fedorshak fell in as a private on Sunday and as a 2nd Lt. on Saturday. We were also joined by potential new recruit Ryan Orris of York. Photos courtesy of Ford and Steger. On Saturday, we took some special photos of the 53rd PVI in action; some are included below. Special thanks to Tony Albright and Jonathan Psotka for providing great meals Sat. and Sunday. We had 2 firing demos each day as well as some drill on Saturday led by Capt. Tom Carlson.







OLD 53RD PVI PHOTO

Thought I'd post this photo from our first Gruber Wagon Works event several years ago that just popped up in my Facebook feed. It was a weekend that started at a 1-day event at Reamstown which ended in a downpour and then we headed over to Gruber that evening to prepare for our Sunday event there. It rained much of the night so we setup and slept in the covered bridge Saturday evening. We all had a good time with our pards that evening.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Our next event on the schedule is the Safe Harbor Cemetery grave re-dedication on 12 August. Corporal Brumbaugh will be sending more info via email and FB. Stay tuned.

On 8~10 Sept. is the “Thunder on the Gauley” event in Summersville, WV (Carnifax Ferry Battlefield). It is an NR MAX Effort event. Stay tuned to the NR Facebook page and email for more updates as we get closer. If you plan to attend, please let Eric know ASAP as the NR needs unit numbers very soon.

On 14~15 Oct. is the annual USAHEC event in Carlisle. It is our only paid event so it is important that everyone attend since payment requires a minimum number of attendees. We get paid more if we are present on Sunday as well. It is an easy, laid-back event where we talk to the public and can wander the site and see all of the various eras of US military in action. The schedule has not yet been released yet so I don’t know if we will be doing a demo or not, but we will likely, at least, be doing some drill.

THE CIVIL WAR MERCHANT

(if you have something for sale or are looking for something to add to your kit, email me your ad or want for a future edition of “The Sentinel”)

For Sale –

(1.) Dave Towsen, a fellow pard of mine in the old 83rd PVI, is selling off most of his CW gear. You can contact him directly at: 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. Still in great condition. Email me with any questions/inquiries: n3ntj@outlook.com

(3.) Kerry Williard is handling the sale of Dave Swigert items for Dave’s wife. Marc and I assembled an inventory list with approximate values. Some items remain. The list is current as of 21 July 2023. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: shamokin71@aol.com (see the updated list below)

| Quantity | Item Description | Detailed Description | Selling Price |
|-------------------------|--|---|---------------|
| Armaments | | | |
| 1 | 1861 Springfield Rifle - Armi Sport | | \$900.00 |
| Uniform Clothing | | | |
| 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 | 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 |
| 1 pairs | Grey Wool Socks -Modern | | \$2.00/pr |
| 2 | Hats - Union & Confederate for cchildren | | \$1.00 |
| Accoutrements | | | |
| 1 | Scabbord -Late war 7 Rivet | | \$15.00 |
| 1 | Gum Blanket | some cracking with oversized grommets | \$20.00 |
| 1 | Haversack - Tarred Black - Brittle Strap w/opwn seam | | \$5.00 |
| Misc Items | | | |
| 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 |
| 2 | Soap Bar | | \$1.00/ea |
| 1 | box rifle cleaning kit | pads, steel wool, rags, etc | \$5.00 |
| 1 Pair | shoe tree | | \$3.00 |
| 1 | Green Army Duffle Bag | | \$3.00 |
| 1 | drawers for use as patches | | \$1.00 |

2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

~~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 - Patriotic Order Sons of America (POSoA) event (Robesonia)~~
~~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 [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 [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~~
~~28-30 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 53rd 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)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Corporals: Mike Espenshade & Michael Brumbaugh

53rd 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>

