

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Company C

"The Sentinel" October 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, 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

ACHS WILLIAM FRASSANITO EXHIBIT

As part of the Adams County Historical Society's (ACHS) new "Beyond The Battle" museum in Gettysburg, a new William Frassanito exhibit has now been released to the public. My wife and I were part of a special invite-only, Frassanito-guided presentation on the new exhibit in April before it was opened to the public. It includes many photos and physical items relating to Bill's work over the past 60 years in the Gettysburg community as well as his numerous books. If you've read "A Journey Through Time" or any of his other many books, you are familiar with Bill's work. He has turned countless people on to the Civil War, the study of Civil War photos, early Gettysburg photography history, etc. since he first got introduced to the Civil War and Gettysburg when he was a child living on Long Island and visiting Gettysburg. He became a Licensed Battlefield Guide (LBG) when he attended Gettysburg College.

Below are some photos that I took during the private exhibit event. I encourage all of you to visit ACHS's new museum and the Frassanito collection exhibit contained within. All photos are courtesy of the editor. Acting as MC's for the special event, were the ACHS's own Tim Smith and Andrew Dalton.







I took way too many photos to display them all in the newsletter so I suggest you go see the exhibit yourself in person! You will really enjoy it.

BOOK REVIEW: ON BECOMING ABRAHAM LINCOLN

From the 1893 Biography - Author: John T. Morse, Jr.

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Hardback; 2008; Levenger Press; 199 pp.; 1 picture and about 2 dozen pages of facsimiles of Lincoln's handwritten speeches; 0 pp notes, 0 pp bibliography, 0 pp index. Free from a friend of Pete Zinkus.

As a gentleman-historian from Boston, John T. Morse, Jr. was intrigued by the paradox of Abraham Lincoln's life and thought. How could an uncouth westerner, with almost no formal education, rise to such intellectual and spiritual heights? Morse writes during the Victorian era when many persons were still alive who experienced, firsthand, the times of Lincoln. The author tries to convince of this advantage without sharing any source material for the statements made in his text.



As reference material, this book's main value is from the facsimile (and accompanying typed translation) of two of Lincoln's most defining works:

Appendix I: Letter to three Illinois farmers, released for thousands to read, Feb 14, 1860 "A House Divided" clarifying his previous statement that "a house divided against itself cannot stand".

Appendix II: March 4, 1861, first inaugural address, powerfully worded and clear in its intent to keep the Union together while respecting the two factions' issues. Includes his words "In your hands, my dissatisfied countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of Civil War. The government will not assail *you*. You can have no conflict, without you yourselves being the aggressors."

Readers, for me, the text in this book often was too verbose to allow for my enjoyable comprehension. Many sentences are over 100 words long, and of confusing construct. You will notice the bookmark still in the book in my photo ... I finally gave up on page 90 of 155 of text.

The author himself, ironically, complimented Lincoln's first inaugural address as being "simple, earnest, and direct, unincumbered by that rhetorical ornamentation which the American people have always admired as the highest form of eloquence." Too bad Morse did not follow this way himself.

Read at your own risk.

ANNUAL MEETING INFO

Our annual meeting is scheduled for 9AM on Saturday December 2nd at Sgt. Fasnacht's home in Kleinfeltersville. Should you need directions, please let me know. On the agenda will be topics such as 2023 in review, our 2024 schedule, the NR's 2024 schedule, treasurer's report, membership, the election, the holiday party, and more. Please arrive by 8:45AM so we can start on time. Please also bring a food item to share for lunch with the group after the meeting and please let Mark know asap (1.) if you are attending the meeting and (2.) what food item you are bringing.

I will also be accepting checks for 2024 dues and the holiday party. More details about the holiday party will be provided at the meeting. Hope to see you all at our annual meeting.

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

Nov. 1 – A bright, cool pleasant day, are relieved about noon. Are only half a mile from camp. Take a good wash and change clothes & feel like a new man. H. that some old acquaintances from Ulysses are in the 148th Reg. & went to see them. Hear that my brother was exempted of which I am very glad on his family's account.

Nov. 2 – Busy all the forenoon drilling, and washing. Clear pleasant day. Write to M in the afternoon. Two of our Co. are sick and we are in hopes they will be sent off to the hospital.

Nov. 3 – Rec'd a letter from Wilson, ans. it and write to Chloe. Brig. drill in the forenoon & Div. Drill in the afternoon. Write couple of letters for P. Davis. Warm pleasant day. Have a real visit with the boys that have been home since I have.

Nov. 4 – Very pleasant morning. Brigade drill at 10 o'clock P.M. Nothing particular going on today. All think that we will move soon. Busy mending in the afternoon. Rec. some envelopes from Wilson, Peter Davis & John Young are sent away to the hospital. Write to Mother in the evening.

Nov. 5 – Drill in the forenoon, busy the rest of the time reading. Battalion drill in the afternoon, fine warm pleasant day, and everything goes off in quiet, comfortable style. Rec'd a letter from Chloe in the evening.

Nov. 6 – Write to C. in the forenoon. Brigade drill in the afternoon. Rec'd letter from G. Freeman at night. Busy reading in the evening, have had a very windy day.

Nov. 7 – Are waked up very early and ordered to be ready to march at 7 o'clock. 4th Brig. was wagon guard & were far behind the Div. March to W - - n Junction, then to Bilton Station, then to Morrisville & from there to Kelly Ford. Get to the river about one o'clock at night, very tired & only 11 or 12 guns. The Brig. nearly all fell out by the way, a little Arty. firing going on in direction of R - - k Station.

Nov. 8 – Start early in the morning, and cross the river about 9 o'clock & form in line of battle and move forwards about 1 mi. from the bridge. The stragglers are all brought up about noon. The Adgt. Of each Regt. Was sent back after them. March all day in line of battle. Some arty. firing in front. Halt just at night & pitch tents.

Nov. 9 – Cool windy day with some snow. The first I have seen this season. Lay quiet all day. Write to C. and M. Have a large fire in the evening and sit around it all the eve.

Nov. 10 – Commence putting up quarters & just get several logs carried together & stop to rest & eat dinner, when orders come for us to pack up and get ready to march. Go about 3 miles and form a line a fix for putting up quarters.

Nov. 11 – Work all day building our hut. Make a fire place in it, and get it all done except mudding it up and banking. Wm. Brown came up just at night. This is my 28th birthday & if God should spare my life another year my term of service will probably be over. Time flies very fast.

Nov. 12 – It is a bright fair morning. Busy finishing up our tent. Our fireplace draws finely & will pay well for the trouble of building it, if we can stay here a couple of weeks. Helping build the Lieut's fireplace and cleaning up around camp. Lieut. Mann came back, rec. a letter from Chloe.

Nov. 13 – Busy washing, and clearing off our Parade Ground in the forenoon. Write to Chloe in the afternoon. A soldier's life is a busy one indeed if he tries to keep clean and neat, and properly cooks his food, & if he does not he will be apt to find his way back to the Hospital.

Nov. 14 – Rec. letter from Wilson, in a pocket bag___. Have another long pull at cleaning our streets and Parade Ground. Sweeping the ground clean. Have a general time cleaning and brushing up for Inspection at 2 o'clock P.M. Have a heavy Thunder shower in the evening.

Nov. 15 – Have a shower in the morning. Hear a few shots fired in the forenoon in the direction of the Rapidan, cleared off before noon. Write to Wilson and M in the forenoon. Busy reading in the afternoon. Had orders to be ready to march at short notice. But does not amt. To anything.

Nov. 16 – Daniel Eastwood and Charley Goodsell returned to the Co. this morning. Was ordered to report to the Regt. Q.M. for duty as acting Comisary Sergt. Draw one pr. Pants. Nothing particular doing in the afternoon.

Nov. 17 – Nothing particular in the forenoon. Brigade drill in the afternoon. Have beautiful weather for the season of the year. Paymaster has come again, & Co. sign the Pay Roll.

Nov. 18 – Doing nothing much in the forenoon. Draw rations in the afternoon from Brig. Comd. Four days of all except meat, 2 of pork & one of Beef. Get along very well with my new business. Issue to the Reg. At night. Moved from the Co. over to the Com. Serpts. Tent & stay all night.

Nov. 19 – Fair pleasant weather. The Paymaster Major Oakley comes & the Regt. Gets Two months pay. I received Serpts. Pay amounting to \$34.00 (Thirty-Four dollars.) Issue one days ration of Soap in the morning. Rec. Examiner at night but no letter.

Nov. 20 – Draw 3 days extra Rations to make up for what the men lack as they should have 8 days. But on Inspection are found to have only four. The Reg. Has the whole of this months rations given out, or drawn from Brig. Commissary, except meat. Write to M.

Nov. 21 – Rainy wet morning. Write to Martha in the forenoon. Rec. notice of my appointment as Commissary Sergeant of the Regt. Get a due Bill of the 5 days rations to be drawn for the first 5 days of Dec. Rains all day and some in the evening.

Nov. 22 – Busy in the forenoon reading and writing. Busy most of the afternoon drawing rations. Find it no small trouble to deal out so many little notions of such small amount that we can hardly weigh them.

Nov. 23 – Very clear morning. Issue one days ration and draw one from the Brig. Commissary, are to keep 9 days on hand, five with the men and four in the waggons if we move. Two of Co. G men return from Hospt. “Charles Gridley & Emerson Miles.”

Nov. 24 – Waked up at 4 o’clock A.M. ordered to be ready to march at daylight, Commenced raining before light. Had not nearly packed up when orders came to stop & put up tents. Of which all are glad as it would be very bad marching in the rain & mud. Rec. a letter in the evening and ans. it.

Nov. 25 – Clear, cool day. Doing nothing particular in forenoon. Draw one days ration in the afternoon, and deal it out. Mail one letter at night.

Nov. 26 – Rec. orders to march at 6 o’clock. Get ready and move off at sunrise. The first time I ever marched without carrying a gun. Went down to Germasia Ford, and crossed without meeting the rebs. Overtook the reg. After dark about three miles from the river.

Nov. 27 – Started in the morning & march South on the Plank Road until we strike the Pike leading to Orange C - - house. Find the rebs at Robinsons Tavern about 20 miles from the County seat, skirmishing going on all the afternoon, and a little artillery firing from our side, but no reply made by the rebs, a little fighting on the right & left. Draw beef in the night.

Nov. 28 – Gen. Meade came up early, and all get ready for a move. Start about 9 o’clock A.M. and move about 14 miles, when picket firing commences and line of battle is formed, and halt, remain in nearly the same position all day. The whole of the army comes up and take up position. Gen. Meades head quarters are established and Telegraph lines put up from there to the different Corps Head Qts.

Nov. 29 – Started before light and moved back to Robinsons tavern and turn to the right and move South til we strike the Plank Road running from Fredericksburg to Orange Courthouse. Pass Mt. Hope Church. The Regt. Goes out skirmishing & have six wounded. I & the Colors and drummers stay behind with the rest of the brigade. The Reg. Gets relieved at 10 o’clock P.M. & are very cold. Have a very cold night.

Nov. 30 – Started early & moved a short distance to the West on the Plank Road and form a line of battle. Heavy canonading commenced in the morning & some skirmishing. Troops commence moving back from the front & the 4th Brig. is moved to the front. The troops have all been drawn back by 9 o’clock P.M. except this brig. and the supports for the Picket. Bivouac in rear of stacks and get our suppers, draw beef, very cold night. Winter has commenced in earnest.

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 “A Shell Is Coming”.



CIVIL WAR LETTERS FROM THE 53RD, COMPANY C

*Continuing from past edition of **The Sentinel** are letters from a member of Company C who signed himself as "PILUM." All letters appeared in the Huntingdon Globe newspaper. The letters include the period January 1862 through December 1863. I have divided longer letters into more comprehensible paragraphs; otherwise, all wording has not been changed. Enjoy! Rick Sauers*

Camp Near Coal Harbor
May 30, 1862.

Mr. Editor:—The day after my last to the *Globe*, we received marching orders. We took up the line of march in the morning at six o'clock, and marched some ten miles to a place called "the summit," on the Richmond and York River Railroad. That day's marching was a little hard on the boys, as it was the first real warm day's marching we had—and I do assure you old Sol did pour forth his rays quite freely that day, and quite hot ones at that. One man died in the 52d Regiment N. Y. V. By the wayside, caused, it was supposed by the hot sun and fast marching, while the water along the road was extremely bad, which perhaps caused the sickness at first. We encamped at the above named place one day and night.

We then took up the march again towards the Chickahominy. This day we marched about six miles, and arrived on the banks of the Chickahominy in good time to put up our shelter tents, which we always carry with us. Our Regiment, the 53d, was detailed for picket duty. We are some half a mile from the main body of the Division, while the picket line is still about one half a mile farther in advance. No attack has yet been made on our lines. Two companies are detailed for duty at a time.

There are some fine farms along the line of our last two day's marching. The farms and buildings are far superior to those on the lower part of the Peninsula. As usual, you almost invariably find a flag of truce hanging in front of the houses. You can, however, set to see any of the inmates of the house, unless you go into it. I suppose they think the air is poisoned by the presence of the Yankees on the sacred soil. The *fair* part of the population, especially, appear very uncomfortable, on account of the presence of the "Yankee Hirelings," as they choose to call us, but the boys generally tell them they consider source or give them some other appropriate answer.

We are encamped on a tolerably good farm, owned by a violent Secessionist, though he claims to be for the Union, but he is that, simply because he is afraid openly to express his sympathy for the rebel cause. He was very much vexed when we came here. He had some fine sweet potatoes on which some of the boys made a supper. But much to the chagrin of the boys, the Commanding General placed a guard on his potatoes, so the boys were obliged to leave. He often wonders how long the troops will stay yet. Being told a few days since, that we would leave next morning, he very saucily remarked that he was tired of our company now, and he did not care how soon the troops would leave, but he has not been relieved of the nuisance around him, as he has called us when we first came here.

This is the way these Southern scoundrels use the Union troops. Yet no sooner have our troops arrived at a place, than a strong guard is placed around the houses of these outlaws, and are guarded as though they were the best of Union men, or a lump of gold. Now good Union men should be protected both in person and property to the utmost, but I do not think such rascals as these should be protected. Should they find a Union soldier by the wayside away from his companions, they would just as soon cut his throat as not. Should such men be protected by those whom they are trying to destroy? We answer never! Let them seek protection of those whom they are trying with all their power to sustain. There are many prisoners taken from the rebel ranks who are far more loyal than most of those who profess to be Union men.

Gen. Porter's Division had a spirited fight on Tuesday, in which he totally routed the enemy and took a good many prisoners. We saw many of them; a flock of four hundred were taken past the camp yesterday. They were the most degraded part of humanity we have seen for some time. No two were dressed alike, some were tall, muscular men, while others were small, feeble looking; some had caps, and some hats, while a number of them had neither. They all appeared to be in good humor, however some few would not speak to our men. They say they would sooner be a prisoner in the hands of the Federals, than to be in Confederate service. They say many will come over to our side when the opportunity presents itself. They were mostly North Carolina men. They report the rations to have been scarce for some time in the rebel army.

Some little excitement was noticed in camp for a day or two, account of the news of the reverse of Gen. Banks. No fear of the Capitol being in danger is entertained here. The retreat of Gen. Banks is generally considered by military men here to have been quite a masterly one, and to have reflected great credit on the General.

Preparations for the coming battle are going hourly on. You may look for good news from this quarter soon. We had a great thunder storm here to-day, cooling the atmosphere and making it much more pleasant. More anon.

Yours &c.,

PILUM.

[*Huntingdon Globe*, June 10, 1862]

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

I hope everyone is doing well. As we enter October, we have a few events on the horizon and some business matters to take care of:

- AHEC is coming up on the 14th. We'll be joining folks from the 7th PA Res. and 1st MD at this event. If you haven't already replied to Matt, please let him know ASAP if you're attending.
- Matt has made arrangements for us to take a field trip up to Harrisburg to view the original 53rd flag as well as some others. This is set up for October 28. Let me know if you would like to go and I'll look into the option of renting a van. We can plan to do lunch following. I'll need to know a headcount no later than October 7th. [editor - more info is included below]
- Remembrance Day is November 18th. Let me know if you are marching in the parade. Also, we're having a reception for Tom Downes at the Days Inn on Saturday evening to honor his retirement as NR Colonel. This is open to other units across the hobby. More details to come soon.

It's time to submit your nominations for this year's election. President and NCO's will be on the ballot. Nominations are due by October 15th and will be posted in the November newsletter. Remember to check with the individual **BEFORE** submitting his name. Send your nominations to me and I'll forward to Matt in time for the newsletter. We'll then form the election committee prior to the meeting.

Regarding nominations, I was asked to accept a nomination for another term which I agreed to. If elected, this will be my final term.

Save the date. The annual 53rd/ELF holiday banquet is set for Saturday January 13th. Full details will be presented at the business meeting.

Finally, I'll be working on the 2024 schedule for the unit's approval at the meeting. I'd like to freshen things up a bit so let me know if you have any contacts at sites or if you have suggestions of places to go. I'll also be coordinating some of the smaller/local events with ELF so we should have opportunities to do some newer things with them.

Thanks!
Eric

UPCOMING EVENTS

14~15 October - 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. The 53rd PVI is also one of the favored units at this event due to our long history of participation. 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 see all of the various eras of US military in action. We are scheduled for a firing demo and drill Saturday morning. Our fellow ELF pards will also be attending. I have the required parking passes and weapons inspection forms that all attendees need to bring with them, so if you plan on attending, please let me know ASAP.

28 October – our visit is scheduled for 10AM at the PA Civil War Flag Preservation Site in Harrisburg. Please arrive no later than 9:45AM that day. The site is located at 2221 Forster Street which is just north of the National Civil War Museum. I've asked the coordinator to have the flags of the 53rd PVI and 95th PVI available for us to see during our visit. Eric or I announced this visit to the group last spring but I can't remember who specifically from the unit said they were interested in attending back then. Please let me know ASAP via email or phone if you are interested so we can plan. Final details will come as we get closer. I came up with this group activity since normally, in early November, we would have been doing our monument cleanup.

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 Towson, 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 suspenders	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 children		\$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 (POSoFA) 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~~
~~2 December - Annual Meeting~~
~~13 January - Holiday Party~~

Secondary schedule -

~~20 May - Lancaster Cemetery - grave decoration day~~
~~28-30 July - Receding Tide - Trenches of Williamsport~~
~~21-22 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>

