

Company C 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

"The Sentinel" January 2024

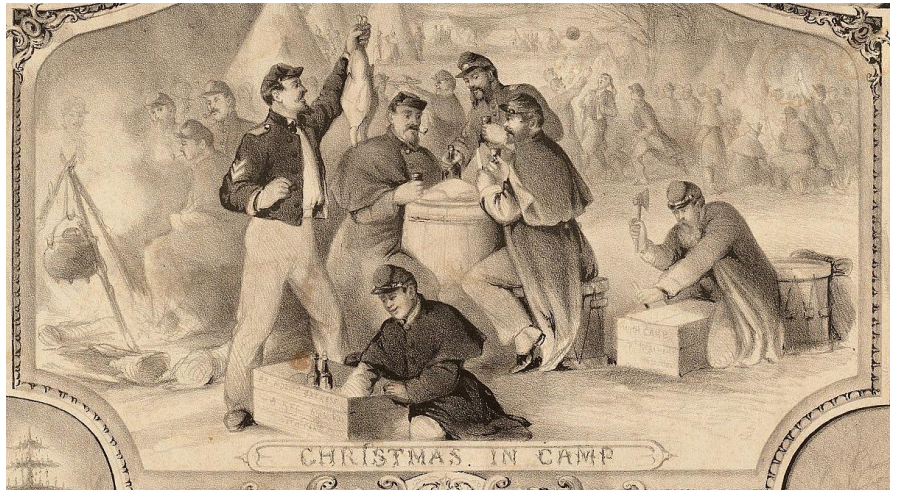
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

1. A Visit To The Lomas Center Museum
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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

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024 TO ALL 53RD PVI

MEMBERS, FRIENDS, AND ALUMNI!!!

A VISIT TO THE LOMAS CENTER MUSEUM

Last spring, my wife and I made a visit to the Lomas Center Museum in Gettysburg. It is a seemingly small and less frequently-visited museum (compared to some others in town) yet it is rather impressive when you get a look inside. It is located at 50 Mayor Alley which is just a short walk down the alley behind the Farnsworth House. The museum is free yet accepts donations.

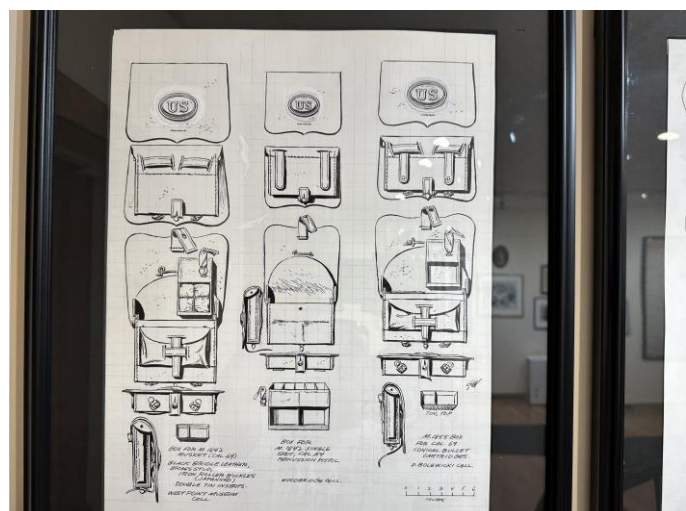
The site has a nice collection of muskets, swords, artillery equipment and much more from the Civil War and more modern wars. As noted on site's website: "The mission of the Lomas Center Museum is to procure, preserve, exhibit and interpret objects and stories related to American Military History and those exposed to armed conflict, and to provide access to educational and cultural programs for all."

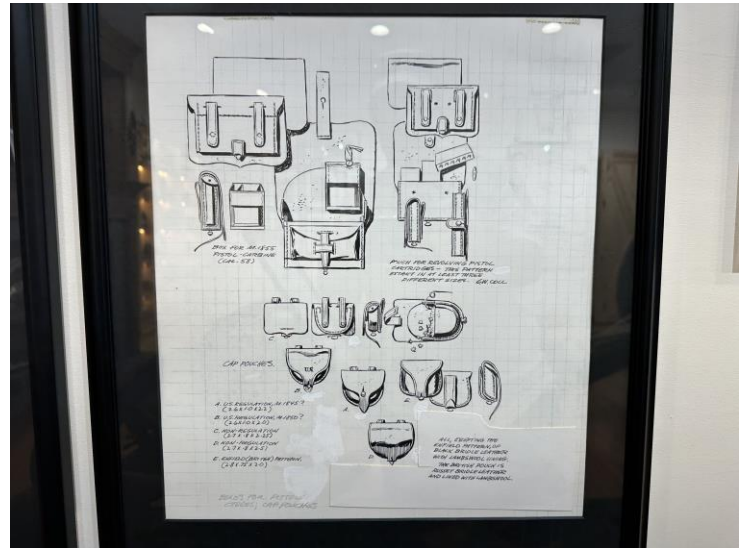
The museum's namesake (George Lomas who died in 2016) was the originator of the Regimental Quartermaster store in Gettysburg. The museum contains many items from his own personal collection. Just a simple example of what's inside is U.S. 3" Ordnance Rifle No. 1 of Reynold's battery L which was in use at the first battle of Bull



Run and used up to Gettysburg when it fell into the hands of the Confederates only to be recaptured by the Federals at the battle of Spotsylvania Court House.

My photos show just a sampling of what this museum has to offer:





To learn more about the Lomas Center, visit their website: <https://lomascenter.org/>



THE CONFEDERATE NAVY INVADES PORTLAND, MAINE

Norman Dasinger, Jr., January 24, 2022

blueandgrayeducation.org

Harper's Weekly illustration of USRC *Caleb Cushing* burning during the Battle of Portland Harbor on June 27, 1863 | public domain

Richard Poe wrote an article dated December 31, 2021 entitled "How the British Caused the American Civil War." In the commentary, he wrote, "On January 3, 1860,

the *London Morning Post* bluntly called for the restoration of British rule in America. . . Should North

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53rd
Pennsylvania
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and South separate, the colonies of British North America (later combined into the Dominion of Canada) would then ‘hold the balance of power on the Continent.’ Canada would find herself in a strong position to annex the quarreling fragments of the former USA. The first target should be Portland, Maine. Strategically located at the terminus of Canada’s Grand Trunk Railway, Portland harbor provided Canada with access to the Atlantic during the winter months, when every port on the St. Lawrence River was frozen.”

Would it be a stretch to assign the 1863 battle of Portland, Maine, by CSA Naval Officer Charles “Savez” Reed and 24 of his crew to a larger campaign to enrich the Brits? Probably so, but it is an interesting connection.

The battle of Portland Harbor began late in the evening of June 26, 1863. Reed and his men had been raiding the New England coast for some time, having destroyed 25 United States ships. The determined Confederates entered the harbor with their attention fixed on a particular U.S. Revenue (today’s Coast Guard) cutter/ship. Reed’s men overpowered the cutter’s skeleton crew and sailed out virtually unnoticed.

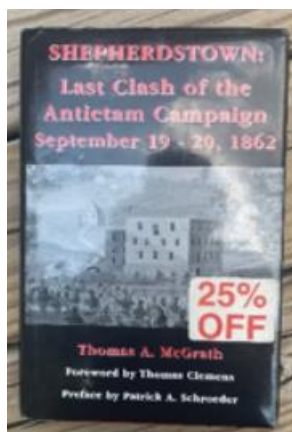
The next morning, residents awoke to find the Revenue ship gone. Rumors flew about Confederate raiders and pirates, but apparently, most residents believed it was all a big joke and the men had taken the ship out for a bit of fun. Portland’s Mayor Jacob McLellan did not believe it to be a joke and chartered two private steamships to chase Reed. With 30 soldiers from nearby Fort Preble and approximately 100 civilians, they set out. They found Reed and the stolen Revenue cutter, but McLellan ordered them not to shoot at the invaders. He knew the military capability of the cutter and that his two vessels stood no chance in a firefight. But Reed and his men did not know that the supply of ammunition on his captured boat was held in two secret compartments. In order do all they possibly could, Reed loaded the 32-pound gun and the two 6-pound guns with metal bits, pie pans, ballast stones, potatoes, and even hard cheese and began to fire on the two pursuing ships. McLellan now returned fire but noticed that his boats were receiving no damage from the Confederate’s guns. He finally decided to pull up alongside Reed’s boat, ram it, and let his company of soldiers and men board it



Fort Warren | public domain

Realizing it was over, Reed set his commandeered ship ablaze and surrendered. Once back in Portland, due to the angry mob of locals, it was decided the 25 Confederate captives could not be held in nearby Fort Preble. They were transported to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor. Reed and the others were exchanged later that year.

Upon investigation by the officials in Portland, it was discovered that Reed had in his possession over \$100,000 in bonds. Perhaps to be paid after a treaty for peace with the North was ratified—maybe with the help of the British. And, maybe, in return, the Brits would have gotten Portland.



BOOK REVIEW - SHEPHERDSTOWN: LAST CLASH OF THE ANTIETAM CAMPAIGN SEPT 19-20, 1862

Author: Thomas A. McGrath

Reviewed by: Mike Espenshade

Hardback; 2008; Schroeder Publications; 216 pp.; 68 pictures, 16 maps, 16 pages of detailed notes, 20 pages of bibliography and index. Free from a friend of Pete Zinkus.

This book is a must-read not only because it seems to be the only serious publication on this savage rear-guard action along the Potomac near Sharpsburg, but the highly skilled research and engaging narrative by McGrath rates this book very high to my liking.

The largest battle of the Civil War in what is today West Virginia, the Shepherdstown fight (also known as the Battle of Boteler's Ford, the crossing a mile downstream of Shepherdstown, Va.) is important more than the number of troops engaged or the size of the casualty lists may indicate.

This gripping story-line starts by inclusively bringing the reader into the pre-battle homes and minds of the Shepherdstown-area civilians. Evolving with the anxieties of these non-combatants, the reader is experiencing along with the combatants and leaders from both sides as the forces vie for the control of Boteler's Ford, the only crossing in the area, and the commanding bluffs guarding the crossing.

In an effort, modest at best, to pursue the CSA rearguard into Virginia, McClellan ordered on Sept 19, 1862 the 2 divisions of Porter's 5th Corps (who were not directly engaged in the Sept 17 Antietam fighting) to follow at Shepherdstown, only 3 miles from Sharpsburg. With a respectable performance from the Union infantry and an exceptionally effective job by the Union artillery, the rebels were pushed back from the heights and the crossing was skillfully secured by Lovell's brigade of US Regular troops.

The next day, 6 brigades of Confederate troops mostly from A.P. Hill's Light Division stubbornly and professionally regained the heights after a savage fight that pushed the reinforced, but now outnumbered Union troops back across the Potomac River. The huge, but green, 118th P.V.I., only 20 days in the service, paid a terrible price (268 lost of 745) for being poorly led and unprepared for this fighting. Many of their brand-new Enfield rifles malfunctioned (eg: nipples breaking off) or the troops loaded them improperly. Very sad.

With barely half of Porter's fresh men being engaged in a lamely led and slowly coordinated corps effort, the opportunity was missed to deal a devastating blow to Lee's exhausted and depleted soldiers was missed. However, even if the Yanks conquered the Rebs at Shepherdstown, McClellan did not have any inclination to pursue Lee into Va. further.

I really appreciated the photographs, Order of Battle, the notes, the list of dead, and other useful appendixes provided in the back. I would have appreciated better maps showing terrain and distance scales (the ones provided are crude).

ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

On Saturday December 2nd, the unit held its annual meeting at Sgt. Fasnacht's home in Kleinfeltersville. We discussed various topics including a summary of the 2023 season, the NR's recent annual meeting, the NR's approved 2024 schedule, the 53rd's 2024 schedule, our upcoming holiday party, treasurer's report, website/social media, unit NCO and Presidential elections, etc. We also officially voted in new recruit Ryan Orris as a full member. The meeting minutes were forwarded to 53rd PVI members via email; if you did not receive them, please contact Eric. The results of the election will be announced at the annual dinner/party in January. In attendance at the annual meeting were: Ford, Steger, Espenshade, Zinkus, Fasnacht, Brumbaugh, Dicks (Jacob), Orris, Kramer, and Marks (Jeff). The 2024 event schedule is listed below in this newsletter as well as at the unit website.

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 "Good Bye".



UPCOMING EVENTS

13 January 2024 - Annual Party/Dinner – 5pm cocktail hour, 6pm dinner. \$30 per person with the regular buffet. We will visit the Spring House Tavern afterwards to those who want to partake thanks to a private donation to keep the tavern open for us after dinner. Some of our ELF pards will be joining

us as well for the banquet. RSVPs (to Eric/Pete) and checks (payable to "53rd PVI" and sent to me) for your dinner/dues are due by 31 December.

3 February - Winter Drill - We will be having our annual winter drill at Landis Valley Museum. More details will be forthcoming. If you have a topic that you'd like discussed or would like to present a topic, please let Eric know asap. If you have gear that needs to be stenciled with your soldier number, please let Sgt. Benedict know. If you don't have a soldier number, please let Eric know so one can be assigned to you prior to the drill.

UPDATE!! – USAHEC recently notified us that they changed the dates for the 2024 USAHEC event. The previously announced dates for the 2024 event were 12~13 Oct. The new dates are now 14~15 Sept. which conflicts with our Gettysburg LH event. Due to this, we have removed USAHEC from our schedule for 2024.

53rd PVI LETTERS

Thanks to Rick Sauers for providing this letter from Frederick L. Snyder, 53rd PVI, Company C.

Harrison Landing
July 21, 1862.

Dear Brother:—I will now tell you all about the battle from the 26th of June to the 2d of July, as near as I can. I can tell you more about our division than the rest of the army, for that I saw and the rest I did not.

On the 26th of June Gen. Porter drove the rebels back on the right and crossed the Chickahominy; he drove them several miles. The next day, the 27th, the battle was renewed again and there was a severe engagement took place, Porter was then compelled to fall back again. In the morning there was skirmishing along the line in front of us among the pickets, and we had to lay in line of battle all day on our arms; they kept throwing shell back and forward more or less all day; we could hear the cannonading on the right and sometimes the musketry; in the evening all became quiet on our line.

About an hour before sundown they were wanting reinforcements at the Chickahominy, and our brigade and part of the Irish brigade went in quick time all the way, about five miles; we got there about sundown, the battle was raging, yet they were bringing plenty of our wounded in. We were drawn up in line of battle as quick as possible and started in double quick for two or three hundred yards to a fence and halted and laid behind the fence to wait for the rascals to come up. Several of their cannon balls struck close by us in the ground, and as soon as it was dark the battle ceased.

We laid there under arms till a while before daylight, then marched back to Fair Oaks again; the rebel's los was very heavy, but they still beat our men back with their overwhelming force. In the evening the rebels had a balloon up and as soon as they seen us leaving to go to the right to reinforce our men there, it lowered. They had seen our movements and thought after we had gone they could easily break through. After we had gone, as soon as it was dark they made a desperate attack. But they found that there were still men left there. Our men were afraid the rebels would break through so they made preparations to leave if they should, for in the morning when we got back everything was packed ready to leave. The rebels would have broke through had it not been for the artillery; they kept up a heavy fire with grape, cannister and shell and kept the rebels back.

It was daylight by the time we got back to our camp; we had scarcely time to get something to eat till we were called to arms again and laid in line of battle all day, this was Saturday 28th; that day all the wagons with baggage and camp equipage were started off towards the James River, to Harrison Landing, and a great many of the troops started off at the same time, but as we were the rear guard we did not leave till on Sunday morning 29th; we marched till above Savage Station, then halted, formed a line.

As soon as the rebels found that we were gone they came over our breastworks cheering and began to pursue us, but we were ready for that; they came round on our left through the woods and a brisk firing commenced. We were in a field on a small bluff near some buildings about a hundred yards from the woods; the 81st Pa. Reg., mostly called the 1st California Reg't., was in front of us. The rebels came through the woods till they came to the fence, then commenced firing; we were 25 yards behind the 81st, we were supporting them; we laid down flat on the ground so the balls passed over us. While the firing was gone on the 81st stood up to it very bravely, though they shot very wild. The 81st had many men wounded but not many killed. At length the first became most too hot, so they called for us to relieve them, Gen. French came riding along waived his hat and said: "Colonel, hurrah for the 53d." The 81st now marched away and we took their place. As the 81st passed they said, "take good aim for we have been shooting too much for nothing"; we could easily see that from where we laid. Our right wing commenced pouring in a heavy fire, but the left wing was ordered to refrain their fire till they got orders to shoot. The rebels could not stand our fire and soon took to their heels and run. There were several of our men wounded but none killed. The rebel loss was unknown to us, but it must have been

heavy. After the firing Gen. Sumner came riding along our ranks and said, "where are the men that behaved so well; they can't face you my gallant lads, they have gone to the right."

Some of our cavalry staid back at Fair Oaks after we had gone, to set fire to everything that could not be taken along, such as commissary stores and other property. There were 10,000 boxes of crackers burned on one pile, besides flour, sugar, coffee, meat and other provisions. We marched on down the railroad till below Savage Station—we laid in line at the edge of the woods to wait for the rebels—we laid there all afternoon.

In the evening another battle commenced near Savage Station, but we didn't get in this, they didn't even get down as far as we were. We remained there till awhile after night then we took up our march again, after all was quiet. We were to reach White Oak Swamp that night, our march was a dangerous one, as we were the rear guard we didn't know what minute we might be cut off, we had to be very cautious. We overtook our baggage and provision train a little before we reached the swamp; we got there about daylight and crossed it as quick as possible; there were 3 bridges across the swamp, one for wagons and artillery to cross, and two for soldiers; we were the last regiment crossing; we were both tired and sleepy as we had not much sleep for three nights.

As soon as we got over and marched about 200 yards, we stacked arms, thinking that now we would have some rest, but had hardly done so when the Colonel shouted, "attention 53d, counter march by file right!" His command was obeyed, we marched down to the swamp, he now said, "my men I want you to tear up those bridges as quick as you can." We tore up the bridges and burned them, then we marched up the hill and rested there till the middle of the day, when the rebels had planted a couple of batteries on the hill on the opposite side; they could see us and commenced shelling. The teamsters were just down at the swamp watering their mules, the drivers all jumped off and let their mules go. We were all lying down and some were sleeping when the cannons commenced to roar; we all jumped up when the shells and balls came flying over and among us as thick and fast; we all fell in ranks and marched to the far side of the field; by this time one of our batteries was ready to commence shelling and then we had to support that one, which threw us right in range of the rebel guns. We were about one hundred yards behind our battery, and laid there flat on the ground all afternoon. There was a heavy cannonading kept up on both sides until evening, when our men silenced the rebel batteries. There was only one man killed in our regiment, but several wounded, and a few more men killed.

At sundown we marched back toward the swamp to keep the rebels from crossing. After dark we could hear them giving command; they came to the swamp and attempted to build up the bridge; but one battery belonging to our brigade staid on the field till after we left, they kept throwing canister among them and kept them back till all the rest of the troops had left. We remained on the field till 11 o'clock at night and then left too. There were several wagons standing in the field loaded with pontoon bridges that could not be taken along, they were set on fire and burnt.

We marched all that night, and the next morning after sunrise we reached James River, and laid there about two hours when a battle took place on Malvern Hill, about three miles back from where we laid; we had to go there again, and when we reached the place it was covered with troops and artillery, there was more artillery there than I ever saw at one place. We had to lay there in the field all day on our arms in the hot sun, the rebel cannon balls and shells flying over us and sometimes they would strike close by us. The rebels shot pieces of *railroad iron* and all such things, and we could hear them whistling half a mile. There were none of our regiment hurt there.

We remained on the hill till early the next morning, then we started and came down to where we are now. We have it very easy here now and are encamped in a nice place, only a half mile from the James river and the same distance from McClellan's headquarters. We go to the river to bathe instead of drilling; it is an order from the General. We have been engaged in digging wells and have very good water now. Our captain is in the hospital now; he got sick after the battle of Fair Oaks. Col. Brook is acting as brigadier general in French's place. We have seen some very hard times and expect to see more, but it is all for the Union. I am in good health.

Yours, &c.

F. L. S.

Co. C, 53 Reg't Pa. Vols.

[*Huntingdon Globe*, August 19, 1862. FLS is Frederick L. Snyder]

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.) 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

(2.) 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 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

2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

13 January - Holiday Party - Dobbin House
 3 February - Winter Drill - Landis Valley
 2~3 March – NR School Of Instruction - Gettysburg
 6~7 April - NR Camp of Instruction - Gruber Wagon Works (Federal Alliance)*
 4~5 May - 160th Wilderness: Spotsylvania, VA*
 4 May - POSA Living History - Robeson, PA
 18 May - Lancaster Cemetery Flag-in event
 27 May - Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade
 20~21 July - Landis Valley
 14~15 Sept. - Gettysburg Living History - PA Monument
 19~20 Oct. - 160th Cedar Creek - Middletown, VA*
 16 Nov. - Remembrance Day – Gettysburg, PA

*NR max effort events

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>

