

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" March 2024

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

1. HAHS Parish House Presentation – Split Rail Fences
2. Winslow Homer Card
3. What Happened the Day Before the Merrimac and Monitor Met?
4. The Diary of Benjamin Jay Cushing
5. Winter Drill Summary
6. Book Review: The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan
7. Upcoming Events
8. The Civil War Merchant
9. 2024 Preliminary Calendar of Events
10. 53rd PVI Contact Info



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

HAHS PARISH HOUSE PRESENTATION – 18 MARCH 2024

"Split Rail Fences – How they were made, used, and their influence on Civil War Battlefields"

Presented by Michael Espenshade



Many of us are impressed by the historical look of a split rail fence. But why were there different styles, how were they used, and what does it take to build them? Some people even refer to them as "Civil War fences". How did they affect the outcome of many Civil War Battles? As an experienced split rail fence builder, Mike Espenshade will use photographs to show how to make split rail fences. As a historian, Mike will explain their use and cite their influence on the outcome of multiple Civil War combat situations.

Where/When: Hummelstown Area Historical Society on Monday night, March 18th, 2024 at 7:00 pm. This will happen at our Museum/Parish House located at Rosanna and 2nd Streets in Hummelstown, PA. Any questions, contact Mike directly at 717.215.6308.

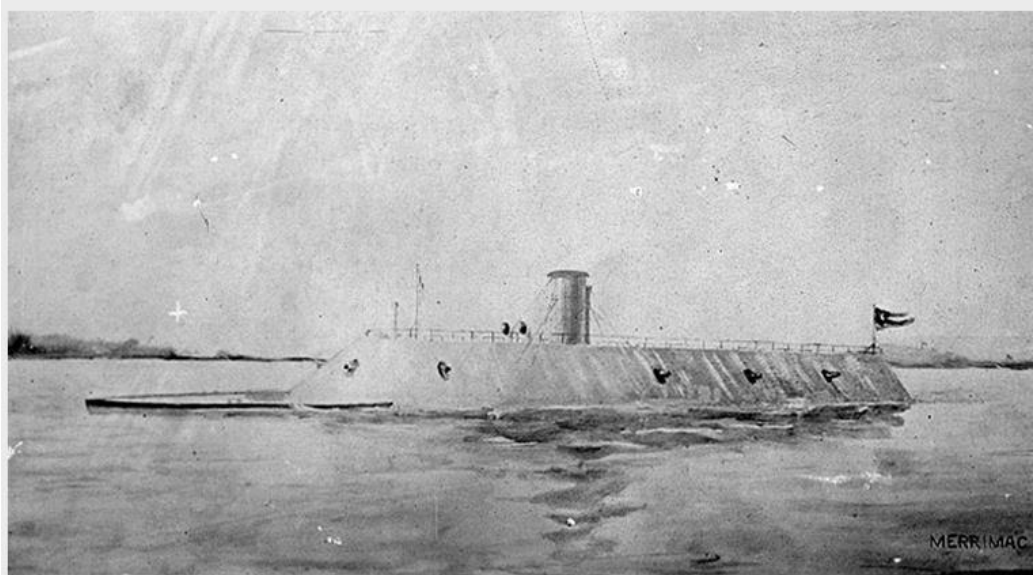
WINSLOW HOMER SOUVENIR CARD

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 image is entitled "The Rifle Pit".



WHAT HAPPENED THE DAY BEFORE THE MERRIMAC AND MONITOR MET?

Gene Smith, January 8, 2024, blueandgrayeducation.org



CSS *Virginia* (aka USS *Merrimac*) | U.S. Naval Historical Center

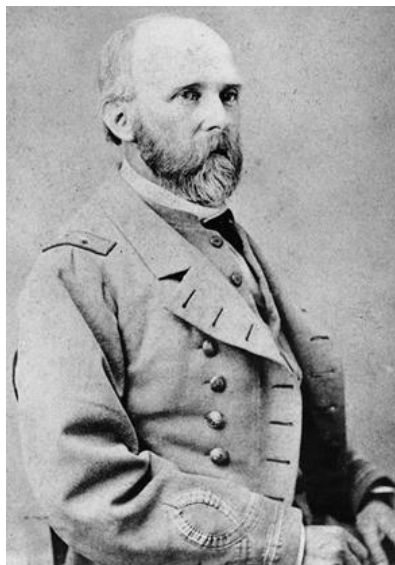
Forty-one-year-old Welsh Virginian, Catesby ap Roger Jones, sat at the desk in his cramped cabin aboard the CSS *Virginia* (formerly the USS *Merrimac* and usually known by that name) shortly before midnight on March 8, 1862. He hastily drafted a brief account of the day's events to be forwarded to Capt. French Forrest, commander of the

Confederate Gosport Navy Yard at Norfolk, Virginia. First Lt. Jones, now serving as flag officer owing to his captain (Franklin Buchanan) having been wounded, nonchalantly claimed that his steam-powered ironclad vessel had left port at 11 a.m. that morning and proceeded down the Elizabeth River to engage Union warships off Hampton Roads, Virginia.

During the afternoon, his ironclad had sunk the frigates *Cumberland* and *Congress*, driven the steam frigates *Minnesota* and *Roanoke* into shoal waters, and exchanged fire with several small armed steamers and shore batteries. He boasted that only shallow waters and nightfall had prevented the deep-draft *Merrimac* from attacking and destroying other Union warships. At 6:30 p.m., the ironclad had fired her last gun, and 90 minutes later had anchored under the Confederate cannon at nearby Sewell's Point. The destruction that lay behind amazed all who had witnessed the day's events. Jones wrote: "Amid the smoke, and flame, and blood of the last few hours, the centuries-long era of the wooden warship had passed forever." Aboard the *Merrimac*, Lt. Robert Minor noted that "the IRON and the HEAVY GUNS did the work." A new era had been born.

Lieutenant Jones concluded his brief account by reporting the *Merrimac* had suffered but two men killed and eight wounded during the engagements. After inspecting the condition of his "half

submerged crocodile," he described its damage as light. But more importantly, Jones proudly maintained that "the bearing of officers and men was all that could be wished."



Catesby ap Roger Jones | public domain

Changing Loyalties

Months earlier, after Virginia left the Union, Catesby ap Roger Jones had placed loyalty to Virginia above loyalty to the Union, and on April 17, 1861, he resigned his commission in the U.S. Navy. Not surprisingly, three of his six younger brothers did likewise and took positions in the Confederate Army and Navy. Of his three brothers who remained loyal to the Union, only one fought in the conflict, attaining the rank of brigadier general in the army. On the day following Jones's resignation, Virginia governor John Letcher appointed him a captain in the Virginia Navy. Less than two months later, he participated in an unauthorized attack on the Gosport Navy Yard at Norfolk that captured 300,000 pounds of powder and many shells. After the daring attack, Jones was commissioned a lieutenant in the Confederate States Navy on June 10, 1861; he took command of the defenses at Jamestown Island on the James River. For the next five months, Jones oversaw the construction of fortifications and batteries on the island before being instructed to proceed to the Confederate Gosport Navy Yard at Norfolk, Virginia.

On November 11, 1861, Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Russell Mallory appointed Jones executive and ordnance officer aboard the CSS *Merrimac*, then being outfitted as an ironclad warship. The lieutenant had come full circle. He would spend the next four months preparing the former Union ship *Merrimac*—the vessel on which he had previously served in 1856.

On that March 8, 1862, evening, dead tired, Jones signed and dispatched his report, ate dinner, spoke briefly with ex-Virginia governor Henry Wise and a group of civilians who had gathered on shore, and then tried to catch a few valuable moments of sleep. Little did Jones or anyone else realize that the following day, March 9, 1862, naval warfare would be forever revolutionized as the *Merrimac* confronted the Union ironclad *Monitor* in the world's first modern naval engagement.

Chromolithograph depicting the Battle of Hampton Roads | Library of Congress



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]

1864

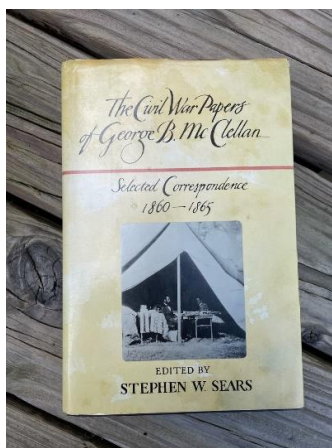
Jan. 1 - Find myself in Coudersport New Years morning at Uncle Lucas C-gs, And am feeling well and thankful, in view of soon being (home), I have renewed occasion for thankfulness to God, for His kind care over me during the last year. Unc. L takes me home in the afternoon, reach home at 5:00 and find them all well.

- Jan. 2 - An exceedingly cold day. Stay indoors nearly all day. Just at night ride up to Mr Bennett's with Unc Lucas, only stay a few minutes, & come back to Chantey's. Ride over to Gardner Olmsteads, & stay an hour or more. Then come back to C-s & stay all night with them.
- Jan. 3 - Slept so late that could not go to meeting. Went down home at noon, & stay til Martha leaves for her school. Went down to L-le at night And call at Mr. Bs. and spend the evening.
- Jan. 4 - Visiting with E- during the day. Call at Mr. Leets on my way home. Came across Charles Barnaby on the road.
- Jan. 6 - Went over to Mr. Bakers early in the morning & get foot measured for pr. b.)ots, visit Unc Seth P-rs in forenoon, Call on J. Brown on my way home, also at C. Barnabys. Find our folks threshing when I get home. Go up to Chanceys and get his horses and sleigh to go to Wellsville with in the morning.
- Jan. 5 - Stay at home til night. Cold, snowy, windy day. Ride down to Mr. Leets and stay all night with Eugene.
- Jan 6 - Started for W-e as soon as light. Call at Mr B's. and get Em. Reach Wellsville at noon. Afternoon spent running around town & trading a little. Take dinner and supper at Spicers. Start for home at 9 oc in the evening. And get home at half past 3 oc in the morning.
- Jan 8 - Overslept myself, or my time, so that Chancey came down after his team. At home til night. Go to Eugenies and stay awhile in the morning.
- Jan. 9 - Went over to Mr Olmsteads and get a horse, and get C. Parkers Jumper and go after Martha, have a cold ride. Get home after dark.
- Jan. 10 - Go down to Eugenies, and stay all day and til late in the evening.
- Jan. 11 - Went to Lewisville at noon and took a ride in the afternoon. To Harrison Valley. Got back to Mr. Bassetts after dark and staid during the evening and. all night.
- Jan. 12 - Called in to Chappels store in the morning and also the Blacksmith. shop. And meet many old acquaintances who seem pleased to see me, And whom I am glad to see once more. Get home at noon. Go back down to Mr. Leets and stay all night.
- Jan. 13 - Start for Coudersport early in the morning & get there about noon. Wilson came from Phila.& soon after by the way of Shippen. Start back at four oc. Stopp at the Raymond School house a short time, Get home at 11 oc & find all in bed. Wilson did not surprise them as they had heard of his coming.
- Jan. 14 - Went down to Lewisville in the afternoon and called on a number of friends or acquaintances. Staid all night at Mr. Bassetts.
- Jan. 15 - Stopped at Mr. Bennetts on my way home and found Miles Bennett there. Rode down home with them and visited all day. Warm pleasant weather for winter.
- Jan. 16 -- Fussing around home in the forenoon. Went to Covenant meeting in the afternoon, Went down to Eugene's afterwards, and from there to Lewisville to see Eld- Rowland. Got around home at 9 oc in the evening
- Jan. 17 - Get ready for Church. Eugene came down and got Chloe, Wilson and myself. Drove up to Mr Bassetts and staid a few minutes til Eld. Robertson came up and we arranged everything for the wedding which. was to take place at the close of the Services. Was united in the bonds of Matrimony to 'Emma' as were also Eugene and Chloe, went home and took supper with the friends and relatives after which Wilson brought us down to Mr. Bassetts.
- Jan. 18 - Brothers and. Sisters all came down to Mr. B's. and Emma's sisters also came, and the second day passed off pleasantly. All went. home at night leaving us nearly alone. Have a quiet pleasant evening.
- Jan. 19 - Went to Mr. Leets in the afternoon. Stay tit the company all leave. Go to ci donation party at Hr. Woodbury's for Eld. Scott. Have a terrible stormy night. Get back to Mr. Leets at 2 oc in Md. night.
- Jan. 20 - Stay with Eugene during the forenoon. Go up to Chancey's in the afternoon and stay til in the evening. Get home about 9 oc.

- Jan. 21 - Stay at home all day. Busy myself visiting, a little chopping a little & Eugene and I waste some powder shooting at a mark. Also went a hunting a little while but find nothing but rabbits tracks.
- Jan. 22 - Went down to James Dbuglases and made an afternoon's visit. Eugene and Chloe going with Emma and myself. Went to a donation in the evening at the Academy, for Eld. Rowland. Go to Mr. Bassetts after it is over.
- Jan. 23 - Start in good season for Uncle Hosea's and spend the day & have a good visit. Eugene took E- and myself home at night. Feel somewhat tired and weary at the close of the week. The effects of constant visiting and being late every night. Made P. Brigham and wife an evening visit.
- Jan. 24 - Edwin took Emma, Mate and myself down to J. Daniels and staid. til near night. Went up home in the evening to see Martha and bid her good-bye, as she had to go to her school in the morning. Went back down to Father Bassetts and staid all night.
- Jan. 25 - Staid at Father Bassetts all day. Visiting and setting around the house, reading a little in the 'History of the Late War' Make a short call at Ben. Corey's in the evening.
- Jan. 26 - Bid Father Bassett and family good-bye, as I expect to go to Coudersport and from there to Shippen to take the cars for H-q, Edwin took E-a and myself home to Fathers, to make my last visit, before leaving for H--%. Attended the funeral of Mrs. Youngs.
- Jan. 27 - At home all day, Chancey and Sarah come down in the evening and make a short visit.
- Jan. 2d - At home during the day, busy making preparations for leaving home. Go down to Mr. Leets at night. Bid parents and brothers and sisters once more, and start on. my way back. Stay all night with Eugene.
- Jan. 29 - Started for W-e before light. Leave Emma at her Fathers bidding her a sad good bye once more and start for the rendesvous of the Reg. at H-s. Get the W-le at 2 past 12 oc leave at 112, oc P.M. get to Corning at 4• oc and stop take supper with Hiram stay to take the ii oc train for Elmira.
- Jan. 30 - Missed the train last night & staid all night with Hiram. Went to the dentists at 10 oc and staid til after 3 oc. Took cars at 4:30 P.M. & went 'to Elmira. Found that no trains would leave there (South) til 4 oc Mon. morn. Took cars back to Corning to stay with. Cor. H, til Sun. eve.
- Jan. 31 - Went to church at 10 oc and hear a good sermon from Eld. Bacon Sunday and enjoy the services very much as they have excellent instrumental music and a good choir. Feel somewhat uneasy from being behind the time for getting back to H-g. Leave Corning for E-a at 11:30 P.M. and get to Elmira after 2 oc.

WINTER DRILL SUMMARY

On Saturday 10 February, the 53rd PVI held its annual winter drill at Landis Valley. We covered a wide range of topics including stacking arms, wearing your gear correctly, wheels, loading in 9-times, bayonet drill, as well as various drill items we'll be using at Wilderness 160. We also got soldier numbers painted onto some members' gear. In attendance from the 53rd PVI were: Sgts. Steger and Benedict, Corp. Espenshade, and privates Ford, Kramer, Fasnacht, Thomas, and Orris. We also reviewed some of the unit gear to decide what to do with it. We were also joined by a few of our fellow ELF pads, Nick Miranda and Tom Carlson.



BOOK REVIEW: THE CIVIL WAR PAPERS OF GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN – EDITED BY STEPHEN W. SEARS

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Hardback; 1989; Tickner & Fields; total 651 pp.; 1 picture, 0 maps, 0 pp Bibliography, 15 pp Index. Free from a friend.

No major Civil War figure wrote as many candid letters about himself, his motivations, and his intentions as did George McClellan. Surprisingly, well over half of these selected 813 letters and dispatches are being published for the first time. Perhaps most telling of all are the uninhibited letters he wrote to his wife, Mary Ellen – apparently meant as reminders to himself toward the writing of his memoirs. Also, for this reason, McClellan took the pains to have nearly all of his correspondence copied and saved for future reference. This book does not include all of

McClellan's letters written during the war period 1861-1865.

As did the top Union military management team of Scott, Cameron, and Lincoln **in 1861 (note my emphasis)**, I admire McClellan's persuasive (but not arrogant) writing style, his attention to detail, his organizational/motivational skills, self-promotion, and military energy, assertiveness, and prowess. This contributed towards his fast something-from-nothing army development and ensuing victories in 1861 in western Virginia and the Dept of Ohio theatre ... and his incredible promotion to General-in-Chief by 1862.

However, the heavy load of responsibilities as General-in-Chief quickly began to wear McClelland down as he often stated in many of his correspondences to others, not only his wife. A bout with typhoid fever and his growing distrust of Scott, Lincoln, the cabinet, etc., and the belief in grossly exaggerated enemy strength eroded the previously energetic and optimistic man. As 1861 turned into 1862, you will follow through reading these letters as he became the general of his reputation to most historians = a good organizer, but slow to fight on the field. His reasoning was to save the lives of his men (whom he knew loved him – see note below) by fighting only when out maneuvering the enemy could not work.

I do wonder, though he admits his only relaxation was to read and write letters to/from his wife, that he would have accomplished much more militarily if he had written her less. (wryly stated)

Note: an excerpt of his March 14, 1862 message read to all men of the Army of the Potomac: [caution, this was (and is) very impactful]

“For a long time I have kept you inactive, but not without a purpose: you were to be disciplined, armed and instructed; the formidable artillery you now have had to be created; other armies were to move and accomplish certain results. I have held you back that you might give the death-blow to the rebellion that has distracted our once-happy country. The patience you have shown, and your confidence in your general, are worth a dozen victories. ... The moment for action has arrived and I know I can trust in you to save our country. As I ride through your ranks, I see in your faces the sure presage of victory; I feel that you will do whatever I ask of you. ... I am to watch over you as a parent over his children, and you know that the General loves you from the depths of his heart. It shall be my care, as it has ever been, to gain success with the least possible loss; but that I know that, if it is necessary, you will willingly follow me to our graves, for our righteous cause. ...”

UPCOMING EVENTS

2~3 March – National Regiment School Of Instruction (SOI) –Gettysburg Firehouse at 35 N. Stratton Street. Open to all NR members. Numerous good training topics are covered each year. 53rd PVI members who attend get their entrance fee paid by the unit. Please let Eric know immediately if you plan on attending but haven't informed him yet. Breakfast and lunch are provided on Saturday. On Sunday morning, our very own John Heiser will lead us on a tour of Culp's Hill.

Agenda - National Regiment School of Instruction (SOI)

Saturday, March 2, 2024:

6:45 a.m. Registration opens

7:00 a.m. Breakfast at the Firehouse

7:30 a.m. Formation and announcements – (Brennan)

7:40 a.m. Looking 1864 - (Windahl)

8:40 a.m. Caps and Corps Badges - (Kraus)

9:30 a.m. Break

9:45 a.m. Class A – Camping in cold and damp weather - (Van Valkenburg)

Class B – The Union Ration: Salt Pork and other culinary delights (Sedlak)

Class C – The Pack and Blanket Roll - (Martinello)

Class D – Late War Small Arms - (App)

11:45 a.m. Company Paperwork - (Schoun)

12:30 p.m. Lunch Break – Provided - Sutlers will be available for your shopping needs

1:15 p.m. The Manual of Arms (McNierny)

2:15 p.m. 44th New York at the Wilderness - (Smith)

3:15 p.m. 160th Cedar Creek Review - (Buffington)

4:00 p.m. The Grand Guard (Outpost Duties) - (THE CARLSON)

5:15 p.m. Colonels Time

5:17 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. NR Show and Tell and Market Place - Civil War displays, Sutlers and Flea Market (Buy, Sell or Trade)

DINNER and EVENING activities are NOT Hosted. All troops are to scavenge on your own.

Sunday, March 3, 2024:

Page 6 of 8

9:15 a.m. Field Trip: The fight at Culp's Hill (Hieser, NPS (ret.) WEATHER PERMITTING

ORDERS: For Saturday, uniform will be uniform coat (sack or frock OK), cover and appropriate accoutrement. Soldiers will bring musket and leathers. Officers will have sword and sword belt. Soft soled shoes must be worn in the Fire House (no booties!)

6~7 April – National Regiment Camp Of Instruction (COI) – Gruber Wagon Works in Reading. We will drill and cover many of the scenarios that the NR will be portraying as the 44th NY at the Wilderness 160 event in early May including Grand Guard, Camp Guard, etc. Stay tuned for the schedule.

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.) 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)

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 children		\$1.00
Accoutrements			
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
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
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
Armaments			
1	1861 Springfield Rifle - Armi Sport		\$900.00

2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

13 January - Holiday Party - Dobbin House

10 February - Winter Drill - Landis Valley (note the new date!!)

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



53rd PVI Contacts

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2024 Field Officers - Sergeants: Matthew Steger (1st) & Marc Benedict

Corporals: Mike Espenshade (1st) & 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>

