

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" February 2026

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

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

ORIGINAL MEMBER OF THE 53RD PVI

Submitted by Ken Darrenbacher of the 1st MD – shared on a Facebook group.

"William Case - 53rd PA Volunteers - I have never seen a GAR marker this size. Succasunna, New Jersey"



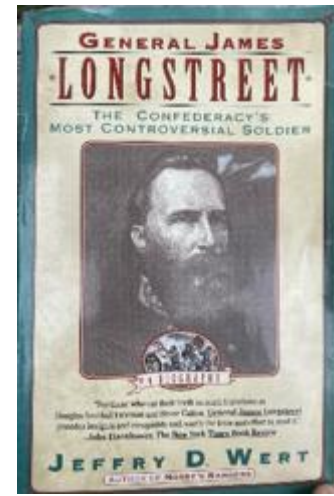
BOOK REVIEW: GENERAL JAMES LONGSTREET – THE CONFEDERACY’S MOST CONTROVERSIAL SOLDIER

Author – Jeffrey D. Wert

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Hardback; 1993; Simon & Schuster; 447 pp text; 18 pictures; 61 pp notes, 12 maps, 22 pp bibliography. It was a gift from a friend at church.

General James Longstreet fought in nearly every major campaign of the Civil War, from 1st Manassas (1st Bull Run), Peninsula, 2nd Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Suffolk, Chickamauga, Knoxville, Gettysburg, Wilderness, Petersburg, and was present at the final surrender at Appomattox. Yet, he was largely to blame by southerners for the Confederacy’s defeat at Gettysburg. Jeffrey Wert sheds new light on the controversial commander and the man Robert E. Lee confided with, trusted, and called “my old war horse”.



The author’s style is engaging, submersing, and authentically descriptive. Wert reviews Longstreet’s upbringing by his uncle, his West Point years (1842 graduate), his personality development, romantic contacts, Mexican War front-line experiences, and how those first 20 years of military life gained him important friendships and skills for the future use. Longstreet’s tragic loss of three children to typhoid during the war is covered. His uncharacteristically consuming effort to remove, with little evidence, General McLaws and others from their commands after the Knoxville campaign are a stain on his generally commendable record.

The post-Civil War experiences of Longstreet are covered as he ventured into various businesses successfully and dabbled in politics generally supporting the Republican interests in Mississippi. Longstreet supported black freedoms and nation-unifying policies, not always to the pleasure of many in his sphere of influence.

Wert evaluates Longstreet’s military strategies and their mostly successful results (but not always, ex: Knoxville campaign). His disgust with the heavy losses of the CSA frontal assaults during the Peninsula Campaign (ex: Mechanicsville, Gaines Mill, Malvern Hill) convinced him that there must always be a better way to attack the enemy, and whenever possible, **to maneuver the enemy into attacking him at a terrain of his choosing**. This “avoid the heavy casualties of frontal assault” strategy became the bone-of-contention between him and General Lee during the Gettysburg Campaign.

Wert demonstrates, via many sources - and it is shown in the 1993 **Gettysburg** film - how Longstreet and Lee very often were in each other’s company while riding or in camp. They developed strong trust, admiration, and respect for each other. But Longstreet, almost to the point of insubordination, could not agree with Lee’s frontal assault tactics at Gettysburg on July 2 and 3. Post-battle/war feedback from both Union and Confederate high-ranking officers affirmed to Longstreet that his plan to go around the Round Tops and make Meade attack Lee on a ground of Lee’s choosing, would have likely been successful.

This is a very professional and exhaustively-researched work supported constantly by first person accounts. The maps provided are often lacking in supporting the narrative, and the author fails to provide dates within the narrative allowing the reader to guess when the described events are occurring.

Overall, I highly recommend this work to those who wish to learn more about James Longstreet and the elements of his command in the CSA, and how they were interpreted in the South after the war.

“GETTYSBURG 1863” MOVIE SHOOT

On Saturday January 10th, several of us participated in a movie shoot for the new “Gettysburg 1863” movie project. This shoot was done at Loudoun Heights (near Harper’s Ferry) at the same house that Major Cole of the 1st MD Cavalry used as his headquarters and winter camp in December 1863. We actually filmed on the 162nd Anniversary date of when Major Mosby attacked Major Cole’s Camp.

Participating from the 53rd were 1st Sgt. Steger and Corporal Brumbaugh. We were also joined by Mike Koehler of the 8th OH (plus 2 of his sons), Tony McAvinue (1st MD), and Greg Hale. I would estimate that approx. 25 re-enactors participated in this shoot. We portrayed U.S. Cavalry in which we participated in about 5 scenes that portrayed a December 1863 time-frame. You may remember that some scenes were already shot on Baltimore Street (street action) and in the adjacent Shriver House (also on Baltimore St.) in Gettysburg in October and more recently. Bo Brinkman (“Major Taylor” in the film “Gettysburg”) is the director. As of now, the film is scheduled to be released around Remembrance Day

2026. Garry Adelman of the ABT also was onsite doing a guest appearance in the movie. Tim Smith of Gettysburg History is also in, at least, one scene, too.





WEBSITE HOSTING

A special thanks goes out to Steve Dillon for again paying to host the 53rd PVI website for 2 more years. He has also done so for the past numerous years. For those that don't know, Steve had a direct descent in the 53rd PVI and served with us in the field for a few years. We hope to see him back in the ranks with us again soon!

ANNUAL PARTY

The 53rd held its annual party at the Dobbin House in Gettysburg on Saturday January 17th. We were joined by our parads from the 1st MD, 3rd MD, 8th OH, 9th PA Reserves, and Syke's Regulars. From the 53rd in attendance, Capt. Rusty Dicks, 1st Sgt. Steger, Corporals Espenshade and Brumbaugh, and Privates Dicks (J.), Thomas, Fink, Ford, Orris, Bohnenblust, Kramer, both Hincemans, and Hospital Steward Klee. From the NR, we were also joined by Colonel Brennan, Lt. Col. Adler, Capt. McConnell, Capt. Carlson, Sgt. Seibert, and privates Brandon Kelly and Mike Koehler, Sgt. Major Chris Sedlak, and 53rd alum Dave Van Bomel. Our guest speaker was Codie Eash of the Seminary Ridge Museum plus his wife. We are also joined by Michael Fedorshak's parents, Jerry Ventresca (Croce's cousin) and his girlfriend, as well as wives, mothers, etc. This was the largest turnout (~44) for our annual party that I can ever recall in my ~22 years in the unit. A special thank-you gift was given to Eric Ford for his many years of service to the unit. Thanks to Jacob and Rusty for putting this party on.





NR SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION

Make sure the National Regiment's School of Instruction (SOI) is on your calendar for Feb. 21~22. At the 53rd's annual meeting, we decided to not hold our winter drill this year but, instead, encourage all members to attend the NR SOI. It is scheduled for Feb.21~22 at the Gettysburg Firehouse on N. Stratton St. There are topics being presented that both seasoned veterans, brand new guys, and everyone in-between will find educational.

The unit will pay your \$35 registration fee but I must know by Friday February 20th if you are attending. Please inform me ASAP if you will be attending. ALSO, the unit will pay for 1 night (1 room) at the Day's Inn. Marc has reserved the unit hotel room for Saturday night. If you desire, you can share the room with him as there are 2 queen beds and floor space. You can also get a room for Friday night at the same price of \$55+tax but that is at your own cost and you can, of course, split that with others that share the room with you, if so desired.

Here is the NR SOI agenda:

Saturday, February 21, 2026-

- 7:15 a.m. Registration and Breakfast
 - 7:50 a.m. Formation and announcements – Brennan
 - 8:00 a.m. Early War Regular Army Uniforms - Buffington
 - 9:00 a.m. Early War Zouaves/Firemen Jason Smith
 - 10:00 a.m. Authenticity Standards (What is authentic?) - Benedict and Steger
 - 11:15 a.m. The Manual of Arms (Manore) - NCOs
 - Sword Drill - (Adler) - Officers
 - 12:00 p.m. Lunch Break – Provided - Sutlers will be available for your shopping needs
 - 1:00 p.m. Rolling Cartridges - Sedlak
 - 2:00 p.m. Break
 - 2:15 p.m. Round Robin
 - Class A – Flags - Windahl
 - Class B – Principles of Leadership - Brennan
 - Class C – Accoutrements - James Owens
 - Class D – Care for equipment in field and at home - Craven
 - 4:15 p.m. Break
 - 4:30 p.m. Original Gear - Sheads
 - 5:15 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. NR Show and Tell and Market Place
 - Civil War displays, Sutlers and Flea Market (Buy, Sell or Trade)
 - 7:00 p.m. Secure the Facility (Cronin)
- DINNER and EVENING activities are NOT Hosted. All troops are to scavenge on your own.**

Sunday, February 22, 2026-

9:00 a.m. - Field Trip: Neill Avenue (aka "Lost Avenue") - led by John Heiser [NPS (ret.)] and Dean Shultz
WEATHER PERMITTING

ORDERS:

Uniform will be uniform coat, cover and appropriate accoutrement. Soldiers will bring muskets and leathers. Officers will have swords and sword belts. Soft soled shoes must be worn in the Fire House. NO BOOTEES!

NEW PUBLIC FACEBOOK PAGE

To help get the word out to the public about the 53rd PA, Co. C, I created a new 'public-facing' page on Facebook. The purpose is to help with recruitment and let the public know about us...marketing, essentially. The members-only (private) page will remain but the new public page is meant for the general public to see. We have multiple admins for the page including Eric Ford, Michael Fedorshak, and myself. We plan on posting event photos and other content that the general public may find useful and educational. Feel free to invite any of your friends that would like to follow along with the unit and/or may have an interest in joining us. The more people that follow our public page, the more likely that others may find out about it. The link to the public page is: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61586734625435>

Not related, but figured I'd place it here.. I recently added some Pilum and Levi Fritz letters to the 53rd website under the "Historical" tab and then under "Resources". You can find these and others here: <https://www.53rdpvi.org/resources/>. I will gradually add some more original letters to the website in the future.

UPCOMING EVENTS

21~22 February – NR School Of Instruction (SOI) – Gettysburg Firehall. Info is provided above.

14 March – Cartridge Rolling Party – we need to make more company rounds so we will be meeting at Mark Fasnacht's home in Kleinfeltersville. Bring items for making rounds, such as cotton balls, glue sticks, scissors, string, etc. Also, bring an item to share for lunch; please let Mark know if you will be attending and what food item you will be bringing. The unit will supply the powder and caps.

17~19 April – This year's NR Camp of Instruction will be at Ft. McHenry. Beyond being a Camp of Instruction, we will also be commemorating the Pratt Street Riots. More details will be coming out as we get closer. We can also sleep in the fort Saturday night. All 53rd members should plan on attending as this should be a very worthwhile event. See the flyer at the right that Chris Wesp of the 8th OH created. This is shaping up to be a good drill. Many items are planned, including bayonet drill, guard mount, etc.

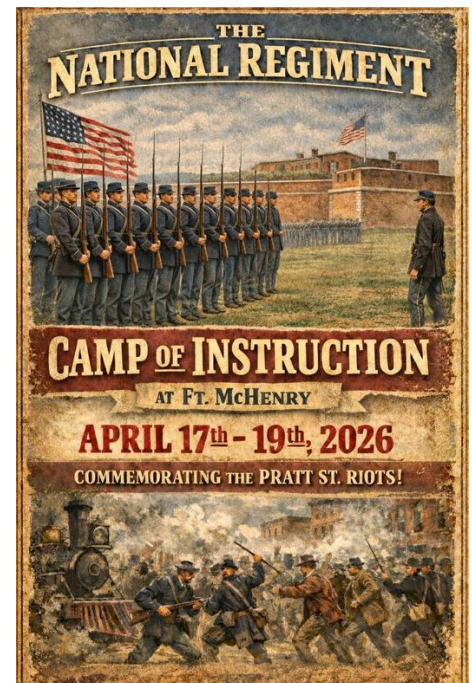
THE CIVIL WAR MERCHANT

(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. *Hard Tack and Coffee or The Unwritten Story of Army Life*; by John D. Billings; originally published 1887, facsimile reprint of 1993; hard cover; excellent condition; 408 pgs.; 211 illustrations. A must-read for any new member. Email to claim: oldsolger@juno.com -- \$5.00

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 April 2025. This is not the unit's quartermaster, but a separate list of items that Kerry is selling for the Swigart estate. Contact Kerry directly with all inquiries: shamokin71@aol.com (see the updated list below)



Quantity	Item Description	Detailed Description	Price
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 children		\$1.00
Accoutrements			
1	Scabbord -Late war 7 Rivet		\$15.00
1	Gum Blanket	some cracking with oversized grommets	\$20.00
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
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

2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 17 January – Annual Party/Banquet – Dobbin House (Gettysburg)
- 21~22 February – NR School of Instruction – Gettysburg [w/ Sunday tour of Neill Avenue] – 53rd Max Effort
- 14 March – Cartridge Rolling Party – Kleinfeltersville
- 17~19 April – NR Camp of Instruction/Pratt St. Riots (Ft. McHenry) – 53rd Max Effort
- 15~17 May – Bull Run Re-enactment – Brandy Station, VA (NR)
- 25 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade – 53rd Max Effort
- 14 June – Hummelstown 250th Living History
- 8~9 August – Landis Valley “Civil War Days” – 53rd Max Effort
- 3~4 October – Seminary Ridge Museum Living History – 53rd Max Effort
- 7~11 October – Bulltown, WV. Organized by the 116th (NR)
- 17~18 October – Cedar Creek Re-enactment
- 14 November – NR Annual Meeting and Remembrance Day Parade (NR)
- December – 53rd PVI Annual Meeting (date TBD)



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: Alec Bohnenblust (pntbll499@gmail.com)

Vice President: Jacob Dicks (jdwarrior@yahoo.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>

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

Corporals: Mike Espenshade & Michael Brumbaugh

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

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

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

