

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" March 2026

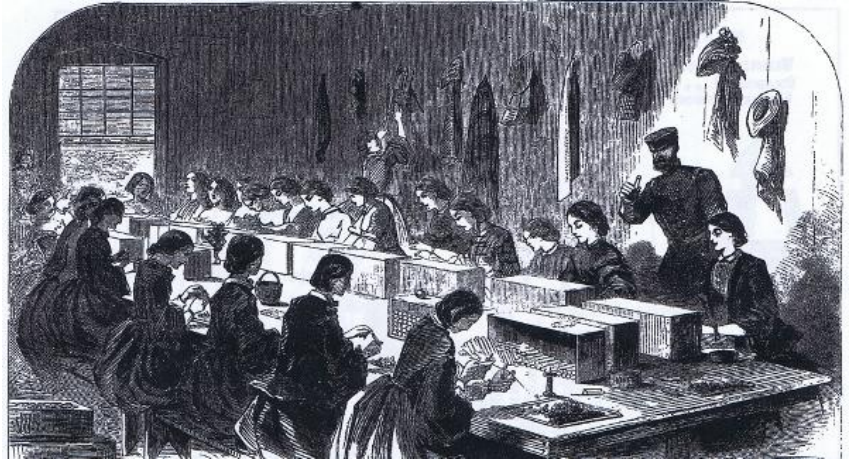
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

1. Book Review: The Rebel Yell & The Yankee Hurrah
2. Letter from Capt. Jones, 53rd Co. G.
3. Bayonet Exercise Photo
4. New Member
5. In Memorium
6. NR School Of Instruction Summary
7. From The Desk Of The President
8. Upcoming Events
9. The Civil War Merchant
10. 2025 Calendar of Events
11. 53rd PVI Contact Info

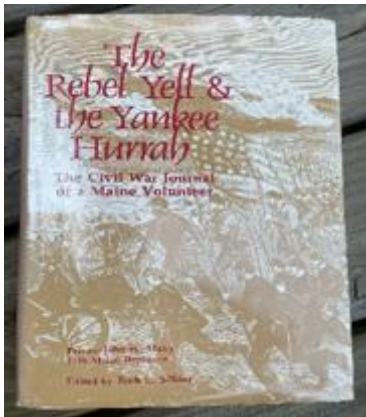


I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, event summaries & photos, stories, etc.) to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor

BOOK REVIEW: THE REBEL YELL & THE YANKEE HURRAH – THE CIVIL WAR JOURNAL OF A MAINE VOLUNTEER

Author – Private John W. Haley, 17th Maine Infantry Regiment Edited by Ruth L. Sulliker

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade



Hardback; 1985; Down East Books, Camden, Maine; 283 pp text; 12 pictures; 15 pp notes, 1 page bibliography. Bought at a used bookstore for \$3.

This personal record of serving in the ranks of the Army of the Potomac is one of the most revealing, honest, and readable accounts I have come across. The author's style and irrepressible wit skillfully transform the everyday life of the infantryman into delightful reading, a real page turner!

John Haley, a 3 year-veteran, puts much more work and time into his journals than keeping a simple diary. His multi-volume journal shows his commitment, every day, explaining much more than the weather and a drill or two. His experiences of the long marches, fatigue, scanty food, picket duty, and camp life are detailed and frank. Mud March, Jan 23, 1863: "Our feet are well encased in the soil of Virginia despite the most frantic efforts to shake it off. The quantity of soil that has changed places in the last 24 hours would furnish a subject for geological speculation. ..."

On picket, June 18, 1863: "It was so dark that one couldn't see his hand in front of him, or as one wag remarked, 'So dark that bats ran into each other.'"

About a picket who left his post, June 19, 1863: "The man is not actually a coward, but he is sadly deficient in judgement and knowledge, having no more sense of propriety than a 3-year-old. (I assume he did as well as he could, for he doesn't even know how many weeks there in a month). Captain

Hobson at one time threatened to put him on extra duty for six weeks if he disobeyed an order again. The private retorted by saying, "I don't care if you put me on for a month!" This caused an audible smile all around."

Breaking ranks at evening after a long march, July 26, 1863: "From the odor of bruised vegetation under our feet, we judged this to be a potato patch and thought of the feast in store for us when we could dig and roast them. We actually contemplated the feat of converting our stomachs into human potato pens. However after vigorous clawing we discovered that we only were in a large patch of villainous ragweed. From such a pitch of expectation the fall was quite severe. The bottom dropped from our stomachs, and we retired for the night to prevent them from getting any lower."

Following a long march, December 15, 1864: "After rumors of another move, we huddled - to continue to build or not to build, that was the question. Whether it were better to endure the ills of lying out-of-doors without shelter, or take axe, and by cutting timber, end them. We decided to go on with the work. It was soon ascertained that "the move" the officers were meaning was one of our houses, which projected out a quarter of an inch beyond the rest. After much deliberation, it was decided to put the building in line. Now the crisis is past and the country is safe."

January 25, 1865: "Was on camp guard all day and had a quiet time of it. Although it was Sunday, we had no full inspection. Strange to say, we didn't grow recklessly immoral from lack of drill either."

Re: Lincoln's assassination, April 16, 1865: "No people were ever so agitated and grieved over the taking of one man. Billy Patterson desires to "fry his liver before his very eyes". Another would hang him til most dead, then resuscitate him, and repeat the procedure for several days."

May 22, 1865: "Today was devoted to cleaning up and getting for a review in Washington. At night, we had a dress parade and a sorting of men to see who looks fit and nice enough to go on review. Orders are to have the companies composed of men who are all nearly the same height. Being an intensely plain person with a strong tendency to corpulency, I was left in camp with all the other short men. This is one case where an excess of adipose tissue is not a detriment. During battle, shortness has a decided advantage as the missiles pass slightly above our heads."

Your reading about the Civil War will not be greatly enhanced when you absorb this book!

LETTER FROM CAPT. ARCHIBALD F. JONES, CO. G

Submitted by Marc Benedict

The following Civil War soldier letter was written by Archibald ("Arch") F. Jones (1825-1879) who served as Captain of Co. G, 53rd Pennsylvania Infantry. He wrote to his wife, Mary Ann (Ross) Jones (1830-1920) with whom he married in 1848. Arch served nearly three years and was discharged on 24 July 1864. He was a farmer in Potter County, PA before the war, but afterwards, returned to Coudersport where he went into the dry good business.

Archibald's letter was written in November 1862, just after the regiment's arrival at Falmouth where they were assigned Provost Duty. In the Battle of Fredericksburg that would take place some three weeks later, the 53rd was part of the 2nd Corps crossing of the Rappahannock at dawn on the 13th with 283 officers and men. They suffered heavy casualties with 158 men lost (21 killed and 133 wounded). [editor - I left in the typographic errors from the original letter]



Capt. Archibald F. Jones, Co. G, 53rd PV (Library of Congress)

Falmouth, Virginia
November 20, 1862

Dear Mary,

I take this opportunity to write a few lines to you without any hopes of sending it at present for we have no communication open at present. This is a small town on the north side of the Rappahannock opposite Fredericksburg. Our regiment is doing provost duty in the town. When I last wrote you it was from Warrenton. We took up the line of march from that place on last Saturday [15 November] and moved through the town on the Fredericksburg Pike. Although I had spent 3 days in sight of the town, I had not been in the town before. I was very much [] in the town. It was much larger than I expected it to be. It is the finest town that I have seen in Virginia. There was nothing on our march worth

mentioning.

We arrived here in 3 light days march—a distance of 40 miles. On the last day our regiment and Pettit's Battery [1st N. Y. Light Artillery] had the advance. As we arrived in sight of the town, it was ascertained

that the Rebs had crossed into Fredericksburg and planted a battery to rake the road on our advance and we halted for a short time for a reconnoissance and then moved around on the left under cover of woods until we got position right in front of the battery. Pettit's [Battery] opened fire on the which was soon answered to no effect. His shots was so close and quick that they ran off and left the guns. They made several efforts to get them with the teams but was repulsed every time. At last they crept up and got hold of the drag rope and drew them off. Report says that we killed 6 and wounded several and killed two horses.

We then [posted] our pickets on the bank of the river and rested for the night. Two days has passed off without any demonstration excepting our forces be all around here. There is 8 guns distinctly to be seen on the heights beyond the city commanding the fords. We have about fifty guns in posish [position] all ranged on the city so if they resist our crossing, we will scatter the brick for them. Their pickets are on the one side of the river and ours on the other side—a distance of about fifty rods. They have been talking across the river all day. Yesterday our men was inviting them to come over and get a drink of coffee and some salt. They inquired of our men where Commissary Banks was. While I was writing the last sentence, there has been two guns fired, both down the river. Perhaps the ball will soon open. I don't understand the plan—whether we are to ford or wait for a pontoon bridge. I can gain no opinion of the amount of forces on the other side. There is as much signs of forces as there was at Antietam. Still I don't expect a hard battle here. I had rather it would come off here than farther back for we are near railroad connection and of wounded, could be moved much sooner.

This is a secession town. The women are very bitter. Four pounds of coffee here is as good as a five dollar bill for purpose of trades. Salt is worth one dollar per pound. I will go out and see what this firing means and what party is firing.

The firing is from a battery of 32-pounders that our men have got on a hill a mile below the town. It has got no answer. Probably is feeling for something. The batteries in front of ours are quiet but the men seem to be [] rounds rather lively/ It has been raining all night. If we are to ford the stream, it will probably be done today for the stream must rise some. The wind is blowing up cold and a prospect of clearing up.

The health of our company is good. But four sick and they are fit for a month by having the load covered. My health was never better than at the present time. If there is such a thing as a man being in good rig for a fight, it is me. Col. [Richard] McMichael is sick [and] has got a sick leave. Major [Octavius S.] Bull is also sick but still does duty. There is but three companies that has more than one officer for duty. Some time since I wrote for a pair of under shirts. If they are not sent, don't send them for I have bought some here.

The firing still continues. I have no more to write at present. If I don't send this today. I will write more tomorrow. I have received no mail but once since we left Harper's Ferry. That was answer to the letter than I wrote to Baker. Give my love to all, yours truly, — Arch

Morning of the 21st. All quiet along the line. The firing alluded to was our men had a battery that commanded the Richmond Railroad. As a train was leaving [], they fired on it. Report says that they wrecked it on the track. It has ben rainy all night very hard. I had quite a time. The wet softened the ground and lost the pins and the wind came up and blew the tent in [] of me. During a heavy rain I called two brave men to my assistance and succeeded in restoring order [] and to hold away the night with wet blankets. All well. — Arch

[Note - Additional letters from Capt. Jones will be re-printed in upcoming editions of *The Sentinel*]

BAYONET EXERCISE PHOTO

[The Center for Civil War Photography](#) recently posted on their Facebook account some period photos showing, what is reported, the 34th Mass. Volunteer Infantry at Minor's Hill, Virginia, practicing the Bayonet Exercise (aka bayonet drill). Minor's Hill is a high point in Arlington County where a signal station also existed. Notice the Sibley tents in the background. I found these photos interesting so thought I'd share one here.



NEW MEMBER

We'd like to welcome back former 53rd PVI member, Barry Dusel, who has rejoined the 53rd PVI as of February. Welcome Back Pard!

IN MEMORIUM

We recently lost a former member of the 53rd PVI, Rich Kadwill. I bought a "Living Tribute Tree" in honor of Rich to be planted in the Allegheny State Forest in Rich's memory on behalf of the 53rd PVI.

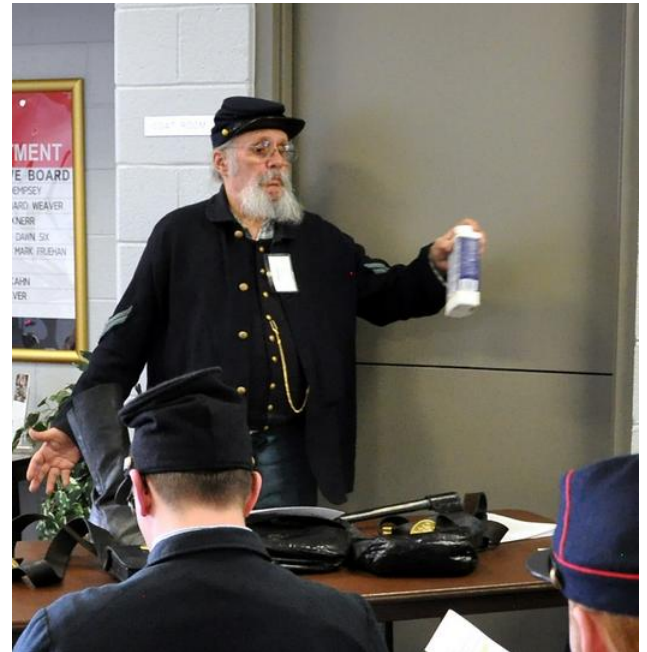
NR SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION (SOI) SUMMARY

The National Regiment held it's annual School of Instruction (COI) at the Gettysburg on February 21st. A good range of topics were presented at this year's SOI including: Improving Your Federal Army

Impression, Making Period Correct Rounds, Taking Care Of Your Leather Gear, Federal Flags, the two Bull Run Events in 2026 (and the impressions that will be done), Cartridge Boxes and Cap Pouches, Manual Of Arms, 1861 Federal Army Gear, etc. Due to forecasted winter weather on Sunday morning, the battlefield walk at "Lost Avenue" was cancelled. I contacted John Heiser and Dean Shultz and we plan on try again next February. I have posted all of the presentations and handouts from this year's School Of Instruction on the 53rd PVI website under "Training" (<https://www.53rdpvi.org/training/>). Please check them out as they are very educational and helpful.

Attending from the 53rd PA were: Sgts. Steger and Benedict and Private Ben Hinceman and Private Oskar Hinceman. Photos courtesy of your editor (Matt Steger), Ira Seidel, and Chip Smith.







FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Pards,

As we begin to move farther into the year, I would like to bring 2 events to your attention. One event would be at the Baker Mansion in Altoona, the staff at the mansion have reached out to Rusty and Jacob about the 53rd attending a weekend event there. This event would be the weekend of August 29-30. Company C of the 53rd was partially recruited from Blair County, so this would be a good event for the 53rd to attend. According to Rusty, since this would be militia as well, those of us that have civilian clothes could wear them as part of the event since not all the men had uniforms. It would be similar to the event that we participated in a few years ago at Bedford Village.

The second event would be an open house at Fort Indiantown Gap, they will be having National Guard soldiers in various periods of uniform. Since they do not have Civil War era uniforms, Travis Shick has reached out to see if any members of the 53rd would like to set up a tent and display their kit. This event would be June 6 from 11-3. Since it is fairly local to some of us, I figured a small event may be of some interest.

If the membership is interested in these events we can add them to the schedule and send out emails with further details.

UPCOMING EVENTS

14 March – Cartridge Rolling Party – we need to make more company rounds so we will be meeting at Mark’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. Besides being a Camp of Instruction, we will also be doing a Pratt Street Riots re-enactment. More details will be coming out as we get closer. Stay tuned to the NR Facebook page! We can also sleep in the fort Saturday night. All 53rd members should plan on attending as this should be a very worthwhile event.

15~17 May – 165 Bull Run re-enactment at Brandy Station, VA. The NR will be portraying the 11th NY Fire Zouaves. This means red, grey or civilian battle shirt. Preferred trousers are navy (early war) infantry trousers, however, sky blue trousers are acceptable. Head gear will be fez, red kepi or standard forage cap, with a havelock. Rifle and accoutrement is standard issue. This will be a great chance for us to wear our 95th PA jackets since we rarely do Zouave. Event website with registration: <http://www.165th.org/>. (FYI – there are 2 Bull Run events in 2026.. this event in May is an NR Max Effort event and is a re-enactment. The event in July is not an NR event and is a living history.)

25 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade – The unit has participated in this parade for many years and the crowd enjoys our double-volley in the Square each year. Arrive at the Parkside Avenue pavilion no later than 9:30 AM for inspection. Frock coats are preferred over sack coats. Polish your brass and clean your leathers. Parade begins at 10 AM sharp. Afterwards, a quick lunch at the American Legion and then a debriefing at Corp. Espenshade’s hut. Bring 3 rounds, and approx. 6 caps.

14 June – Hummelstown 250 Event – 3 hour ‘Living History’ event at the Hummelstown cemetery. We simply need to set up a small camp and talk to the visitors. The Hummelstown Area Historical Society is providing a \$150 honorarium to the 53rd assuming that we get a minimum of 6 participants, although we’d really love to have, at least, 10 guys there. We can set up Saturday evening and sleep in the old historic graveyard should you be interested. We will also have free museum access. We will not be firing so no rounds/caps are needed.

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

- 7 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 (NR)
- 25 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade
- 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)



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 (pntbl1499@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>

