



Company C 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

"The Sentinel" April 2026

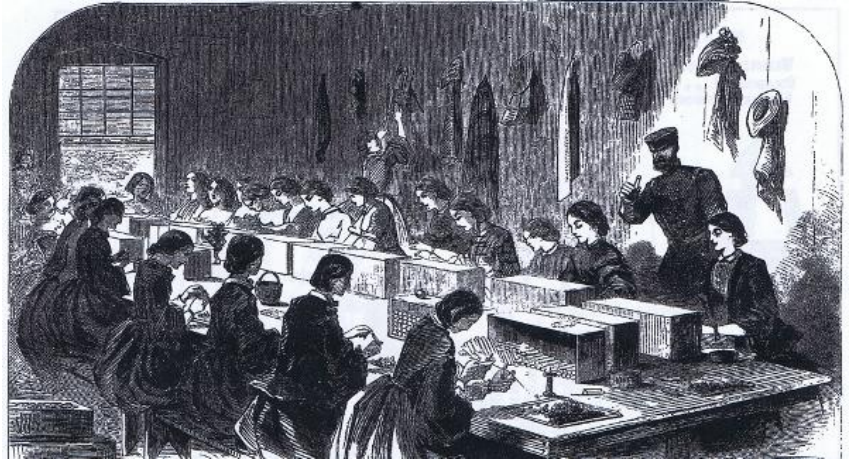
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

1. Clara Barton & the Battle of Fredericksburg
2. Dawn of Victory Breakthrough at Petersburg – March 25 – April 2, 1865
3. Proposed Bylaws Changes
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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

CLARA BARTON & THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

December 1, 2025

by Robert C. Plumb, blueandgrayeducation.org

On December 13, 1862, as Union infantry streamed across a newly completed pontoon bridge and Federal artillery opened fire on Confederate positions at Fredericksburg, Virginia, Clara Barton insisted on crossing the Rappahannock River to support the medical teams deployed in the city. While making the crossing, an artillery round tore away part of her skirt—yet she pressed on. Throughout the day, and long after the guns fell silent, Barton continued to serve.

Entering the besieged city, she joined Surgeon J. Calvin Cutter of the Twenty-First Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. Barton and her assistant, Cornelius Welles, worked continuously—setting up a soup kitchen, aiding surgeons as they treated the wounded, and offering words of comfort to soldiers awaiting care.

That afternoon, the fight shifted to Marye's Heights, a slope just outside the city. One Union brigade after another advanced across open ground toward a narrow sunken road bordered by a stone wall, behind which Confederate riflemen delivered a relentless fire. By day's end, 900 Union soldiers were dead and 7,000 wounded. Realizing further assistance was futile, Federal commanders pulled their troops back into Fredericksburg. After dark, survivors and ambulances filled with the injured recrossed the pontoon bridge under a cold, pitiless rain.

Clara Barton on the battlefield | public domain

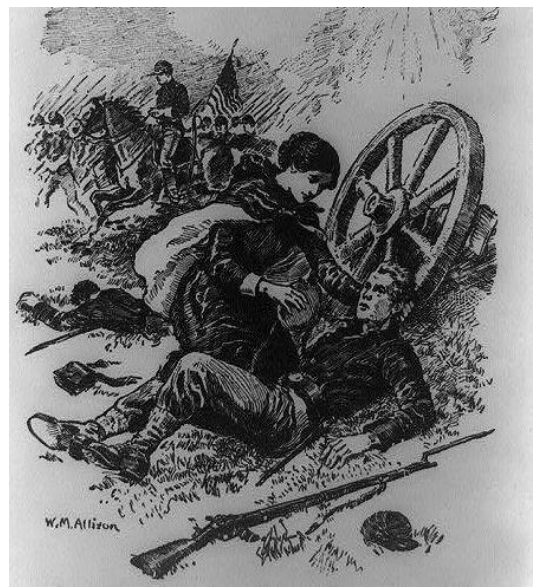
Barton's proximity to danger persisted until battle's end. Late that evening, Confederate artillerymen reportedly consulted J. Horace Lacy—former owner of the Lacy House, now a Union headquarters—about firing on two women standing on the veranda of his old home. The “unbidden guests,” as Lacy called them, were Clara Barton and a “Miss G.” Although Lacy supported firing on the house, Gen. Robert E. Lee refused, seeing no reason for “unnecessary effusion of blood.” In that moment, Clara Barton owed her life to Lee's restraint.

As wounded continued to arrive on the Union side of the river through the night and into the next morning, Barton returned to the Lacy House (also known as Chatham Manor), then serving as the field hospital for the Union II Corps. There she encountered scenes of profound suffering—dozens of gravely injured men and piles of amputated limbs. Poet and nurse Walt Whitman, also present at Fredericksburg, later described “at the foot of a tree, immediately in front, a heap of feet, legs, arms and human fragments cut, bloody, black and blue, swelled and sickening.”

Clara Barton around 1865, photographed by Mathew Brady | NPS

Barton moved tirelessly through these grim spaces, feeding the wounded, distributing pillows for amputees, and ladling soup outdoors. The floors inside were so slick with blood she struggled to keep her footing; later she recalled wringing blood from the hem of her dress because it had become so heavy. The work was not for the faint of heart.

Clara Barton continued as a hospital nurse until the Civil War's end, earning the title "Angel of the Battlefield." In 1881, she founded the American Red Cross—extending her service from the war's front lines to humanitarian missions around the world. Today, the Lacy House/Chatham Manor remains key stop for visitors to Fredericksburg battlefield, allowing visitors to stand where Barton served and understand the price paid there (currently closed for maintenance).

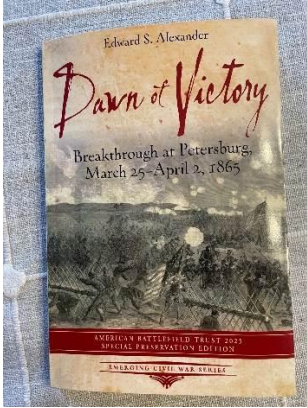


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Lacy House, also known as Chatham Manor | NPS

BOOK REVIEW: DAWN OF VICTORY BREAKTHROUGH AT PETERSBURG – MARCH 25 – APRIL 2, 1865



Author – Edward S. Alexander
Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Paperback; 2025; Savas Beatie; 141 pp text; 40 pictures; 7 maps, 2 Appendices, Order of Battle. It was a gift from The Civil War Trust.

This book excites the reader with scores of 1st hand accounts from both Union and Confederate participants as they bitterly fought, often hand-to-hand, during the Union VI Corps breakthrough of Rebel defenses south of Petersburg on April 2, 1865. The author aptly describes the campaign development to set the stage for this pre-dawn April 2 assault of 14,000 Union infantry, in an eight-brigade front (3-5 regiments deep). The Federals attacked with unprimed rifles for stealth. The bayonet and rifle butt decided things at the ramparts in the disappearing darkness. Hard fighting during the breakthrough included the Union assaults and capture of four desperately defended forts along this 3 mile section of well-built breastworks.

Example: During his retreat from the breastworks back through their winter cabins, Mississippi Sgt. Manson noticed that a Union soldier “brought his gun to bear on his face at a point-blank range of forty steps. I ducked behind the corner of a hut as the bark spattered in my face as his ball grazed the log. I immediately aimed my rifle at the Union soldier’s breast and at the crack of the gun he fell from the earthworks.” Manson was wounded in the leg a few minutes later and captured. He, along with many from his brigade, found themselves at a Union hospital where Manson’s leg was amputated. While recovering, he was surprised to see the man who he had shot at the works. Wounded in the shoulder, the Pennsylvanian told Manson his side of the story and they became friends. Manson claimed the two soldiers waited on each other for three days, “but that was long enough for God to teach us two erring mortals that brave men bore no malice, and as they grasped each other’s hand for a final separation, they each breathed a sigh of thankfulness that “I didn’t kill you”.

With excellent maps and dozens of photographs of the grounds and the participants, this story is detailed with action-packed accounts by the eyewitnesses. Well-rounded coverage of the command structure and leaders, from junior Field Officers all the way up to Grant and Lee, keeps the reader apprised of how the troops received their orders. On-site pictures and explanations of what happened there regularly augment the text.

This excellent work, part of the American Battlefield Trusts’ “Emerging Civil War Series”, is author Edward S. Alexander’s first publication. The 14 books (and growing) in this series of modest-length works provide the reader with a meaningful and pictorial history to also assist as a battlefield visitor’s guide.

BYLAWS CHANGE PROPOSAL

I recently proposed some bylaws changes, many are based upon discussions related to the recent election, and forwarded them to our President (Alec). He had no objections to them, therefore, I am presenting them to the membership. Proposed changes are in **RED**. The original text to be replaced and removed is in **RED and is Crossed Out**. I have added a brief rationale in **GREEN** after each to explain why I thought the change was necessary:

Section II: Dues

4. Members not paying dues in full for the calendar year in which they are due, shall be notified by ~~a civil officer by December 1st~~ **by January 31st** of their impending dismissal. If no response is received, they will be removed from the active membership roster as of ~~January 1st~~ **February 10th**. At which point they must reapply for membership. Serving a probationary period or reinstatement to full active status will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Rationale: Current bylaws state that a civil officer will notify someone that they haven’t paid their dues by December 1st. We have our annual meeting right after this plus our annual dues are due on December 31st so the Dec. 1st date made no sense due to these other facts. Giving someone a month after the dues are actually due to pay their dues before potentially being dismissed is logical. A full extra month leeway is fair instead of the Secretary-Treasurer needing to chase them around to try to collect their dues.

Section V: Elected and Appointed Officers

2. The civil officers will be President, Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer. Civil officers shall be elected to a two-year term that shall be begin ~~January 1 and end December 31~~ **at the annual holiday party. If no party is held, the term begins on the following January 20th**. Field officers

will not be eligible to hold a civil officer position. **Non-Commissioned Officers' (NCOs) terms shall also begin at the annual party (or January 20th, if no party is held that year).**

Rationale: Since our officer/NCO and civil officer elections aren't officially over until the annual party, at which time the election committee opens the ballot envelope(s), counts, and announces the election winners, having the terms begin on January 1st make no logical sense. An election has to be over before a term related to that election can possibly begin. The original dates made no logical sense. Also, no term begin/end dates for NCOs are spelled out in the current bylaws; this adds them.

3. The unit shall have its money deposited in a bank account administered by the Treasurer. The President shall be listed as an additional signer on the bank account. If there is a vacancy in the position of Treasurer, the President shall assign the Vice-President as the additional signer. If there is a vacancy in the position of President, the Treasurer shall assign the Vice-President as the additional signer.

Rationale: Currently, there is nothing in the bylaws to ensure that more than one civil officer (currently only the Treasurer-Secretary) has access to the unit's bank account and is listed as an additional signer on the account. This change would ensure that there is a secondary signer who can access the bank account if something were to happen to the Treasurer-Secretary. This proposal is meant to protect the membership. Eric and I discussed this a few years ago and I had him added to our bank account at that time; we made this policy change a few years ago but just never made it officially part of the bylaws. This proposal would make this policy official.

4. All nominations for the elected office shall be submitted by October 15th for publication in the unit's November newsletter ("The Sentinel"). Nominations must be accepted or declined in writing/email by October 31st. An election committee will be formed at the business meeting of three members who are not on any ballot. ~~Ballots will be submitted to a committee member in writing or email.~~ No phone or verbal votes will be counted. Ballots will be opened and counted by all three members and the results will be given at the annual holiday party.

Rationale: One simple line removal which is addressed in the proposed change in Section IV: Meetings (see next item below).

Section IV: Meetings

5. Absentee voting for elected positions (civil officers, field officers, and NCOs) will be permitted for members unable to attend the annual meeting. The head of the election committee shall mail or email the number of ballots allotted to the absentee-voting member(s). Once completed, the absentee ballots shall be returned to the head of the election committee via mail or brought to the annual party where the still-sealed envelope(s) containing the absentee ballot(s) will be opened and counted along with the rest of the election ballots and winners announced.

Rationale: The issue of absentee voting was not really addressed nor explained in the current bylaws. This relates to a full member not able to attend the annual meeting but still ensures that they have the right to vote in officer/NCO and civil officer elections which begin at the annual meeting and end at the annual party.

6. ~~Any revision to the bylaws must be submitted to the President in writing and will be published to the membership, at least, three (3) months prior to the meeting at which the revision will be considered.~~ Any revision to the bylaws must be submitted to the President in writing and will be published to the membership in *The Sentinel* for, at least, 2 consecutive months prior to being voted on by the membership. At the President's discretion, the proposed bylaws change(s) may be voted on by the membership at the annual meeting, at another in-person meeting, or via email. If done via email, the returned vote emails to the President shall be also shared with the Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer.

Rationale: The current bylaws indicates that proposed bylaws changes can only done in the autumn (the months before the annual meeting) and then voted on by the membership at the annual meeting. This proposal modifies this process to allow bylaws changes to occur at any time of the year, including at the annual meeting. Beyond that, the same bylaw change proposal process still occurs and the membership can still submit questions or have sufficient time to discuss a proposal(s) before any actual binding vote occurs.

7. At any unit meeting where a binding vote will occur, a quorum must be present. A quorum is defined as a majority of the paid membership. If voting will occur via email, the number of returned votes must constitute a quorum.

Rationale: This proposal is being made to ensure that a sufficient number of members are present when any binding vote takes place. Otherwise, currently, for example, at an event where only 5 members are present, a binding vote could occur without the input or say-so from a majority of the membership.

This is the 3rd consecutive month that these proposed changes have been presented to the membership via *The Sentinel*. If you have any questions, concerns, ideas, etc. about any of the above proposals,

please contact Alec or I. Our President (Alec) will decide upon the method for a vote can be taken by the membership to approve or disapprove of these proposed changes.

NEW EVENT

We have a few new potential events to consider for this year -

1. This one came to us through Rusty pertaining to the original 53rd. This event is a living history at the Baker Mansion in Altoona. Part of the original 53rd PA, Company C was recruited in that area. It is scheduled for Aug. 28~29. We need to have approximate numbers of who is interested in attending. Please respond to the email delivering this newsletter or let Alec know ASAP. We'd like to add this event to our official schedule but need to know if there is interest in the unit attending before we do so.

Info from Rusty:

Last year, Jacob and I participated in a one day living history event in Altoona at the Baker Mansion. It was a great venue, lots of shade, and it drew quite a few people for their event. The premise was the invasion of the north, and how local militia troops gathered to defend Pennsylvania.

The staff at the mansion have decided to do a weekend event this year. The staff and an associate professor at Penn State Altoona, Jared Frederick, reached out to Jacob and I to see if the 53rd would be willing to participate in this year's coming event. Company C of the 53rd actually was partially recruited in Blair County in the area of Altoona. Jared felt having the 53rd as part of the weekend would be a perfect match since some of the regiment was recruited in that area. Since this would be militia as well, those of us that have some 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.

For those of you who don't know Jared Frederick, he is in an associate professor at Penn State Altoona with a vast knowledge of history of the Civil War, World War II and local Altoona history. He actually falls in with the 5th New York in the NR. Jared would be willing to provide for all of us a free local Civil War history, walking tour of Altoona for our willingness to participate. Jared also had an ancestor in the 53rd. There are several original 53rd vets buried in the nearby cemetery that we'd plan on visiting.

I know Jacob and I will be there for certain as I will be bringing my surgical display that weekend. But I would like to propose adding this to the schedule if at all possible. In addition, there are 3 members of the 53rd buried in the local cemetery in Altoona. Jacob had found one of them but we could plan to visit the cemetery to honor the original 53rd as part of the weekend.

2. Another event - Jared Frederick has invited the 53rd to an event at the PA Military Museum in Boalsburg on May 23~24. He needs CW guys to help make this event successful. Link with some more info: <https://www.pamilmuseum.org/events/battle-cry-of-freedom>. The 53rd helping with this event could help us get our foot in the door at this site for future events. Please contact Jacob (jdwarrior@yahoo.com) if you are interested in helping out with this event.

CARTRIDGE ROLLING PARTY SUMMARY

On Saturday March 14th, the unit met at Mark Fasnacht's home to make rounds. We ran for about 6 hours (which included a lunch break) and made 25 packs. We also had quite the good spread of options for lunch. Thanks once to Mark Fasnacht for hosting this event once again. Attending were: Steger, Benedict, Fasnacht, Espenshade, Thomas, Bohnenblust, Klee, Orris, and Hinceman (Ben). Former member, Jeff Marks also attended. Photos courtesy of Ben Hinceman.





UPCOMING EVENTS

17~19 April – This year's *NR Camp of Instruction* will be at Ft. McHenry. The Pratt Street Riots will also be included in this event; more details will be coming out as we get closer (stay tuned to the NR FB 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. Normal kit with tentage; do not bring rounds/caps as we will not be firing. We can arrive after 5pm Friday night but you must be in camp before 8am Saturday. Ted says that we will have guards posted at the Ft. McHenry parking lot gate to ensure guys can get in early Friday night. If you're attending, please let Alec know ASAP as we need to get our attendance numbers into Ted by April 1st so he can put the OOB together.

15~17 May – *165 Bull Run Re-Enactment* at Brandy Station, VA. The NR will be portraying the 11th NY Fire Zouaves. Uniform is red, grey, or civilian checkered civilian shirt, preferred trousers are dark blue infantry, however, sky blue trousers are acceptable. Head gear will be fez, red kepi, or standard forage cap with a havelock (no bare forage caps!). Rifle and accoutrement are standard issue. If you have a 95th PA jacket, bring it as we may be able to wear them. Event registration and authenticity standards can be found here: <http://www.165th.org/>. Many of us in the 53rd PA have already registered. Registration is currently \$35 and goes up to \$45 on May 1st. If you are interested in ordering a havelock, Rick Betley of the 8th OH is making them; contact Rick immediately if you are interested. His email is: rbetley@yahoo.com. Also, no cartridge box slings.. your cartridge box must be on your waist belt. **Note** - please do not get this May re-enactment event confused with the July Bull Run living history which is not an NR or 53rd event, although some from the NR are attending both.

25 May – *Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade* – annual parade that the 53rd has done for decades. Meet at the Herbert Shaffner Memorial Park pavilion on Park Side Avenue by 9:15AM. Frocks are strongly preferred if you have one. Make sure that your brass and rifle are clean. Bring, at least, 3 rounds and 6 caps. We'll form up shortly thereafter at the parade's start point for weapons inspection. Parade begins promptly at 10AM with our normal volley in the Square. The parade ends in the Hummelstown Cemetery where we will fire a volley as well. Afterwards, a quick lunch at the American Legion and then a debriefing at Corp. Espenshade's hut.

14 June – *Hummelstown America 250 Event*. Hummelstown Area Historical Society located at 20 North Rosanna St. 2:00 - 5:00 pm Sunday. All members are encouraged to attend this important celebration - especially if guys wish to sleep overnight (the night before) in a VERY old (1762-1840) graveyard. **Note** – this is NOT same cemetery that we are in as part of the Memorial Day parade. This older cemetery contains 16 Rev War and 24 War of 1812 vets. If sleeping overnight, arrive after 5pm on Saturday June 13th.

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. 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 Duffel 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 – 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 – America 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)
- TBD December – 53rd PVI Annual Meeting



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: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@outlook.com) and Steve Dillon (steve@gofoxpro.com)

53rd PVI Website: <https://www.53rdpvi.org>

2026 Field Officers: Sergeants: Matthew Steger (1st Sgt.) & Marc Benedict

Corporals: Mike Espenshade & Mike Brumbaugh

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

53rd PVI Public Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61586734625435>

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

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

