

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

## Company C

"The Sentinel" April 2018

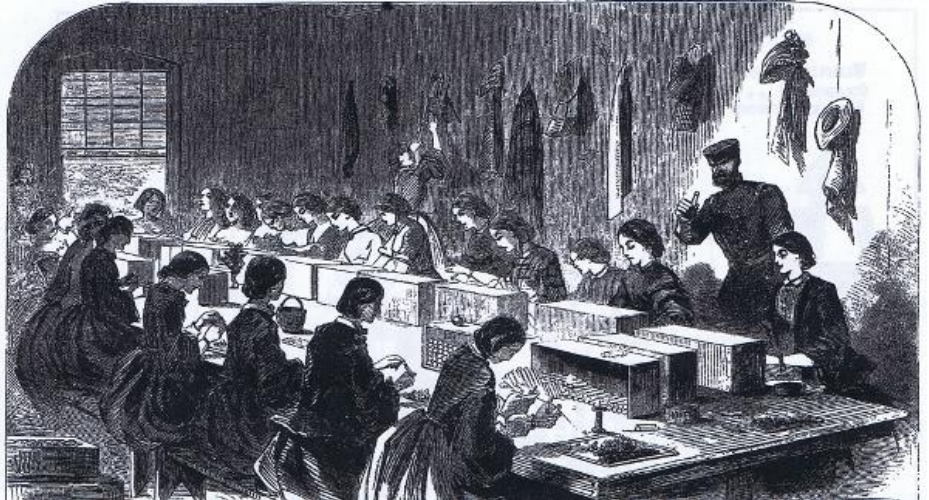
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

### This Month:

1. New Info about 2 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Veterans
2. Civil War Letters (Levi Fritz)
3. The Current State of Civil War Re-enacting
5. A word from our president
6. Upcoming Events
7. 2018 Calendar of Events
7. 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Contact Info

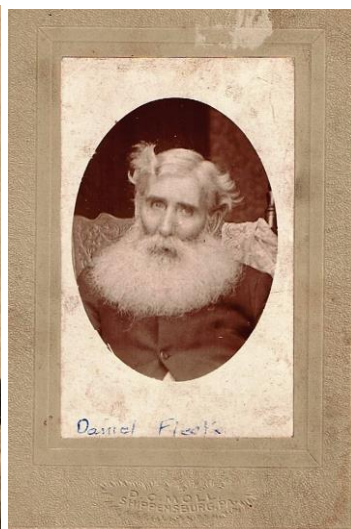


(etching of a period cartridge rolling factory.. not quite the 53<sup>rd</sup> cartridge rolling party)

I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, photos, stories, etc. and your "Get To Know Your Pard" profile (if you have not done so already) to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor

### New Info About Two 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Company C Veterans

I was recently contacted by a descendant of two veterans of the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Company C. They were brothers named Andrew and Daniel Fleck.



One photo shows Andrew Fleck and his wife Ellen. The right photo shows Daniel. Their modern descendant (Dr. Rocco R. Cerchiara III) forwarded me these photos as well as some info of their background.

Andrew was born on 22 February 1840 somewhere in PA and died at home on 31 August 1927 in Three Springs (Huntingdon County), PA. According to census records, he spent most of his life in Huntingdon County. He is listed in 1860 as a “laborer”, in 1870 as a coal miner, and in 1900 as a stone mason. Andrew and Ellen married in 1866.

He enlisted a private and is listed as a Lieutenant at some point in his service in Company C but most of his service showed time as an NCO. At the time of his death, he left his wife Ellen and 3 adult children. He is buried in the Three Springs Cemetery and was given a military funeral.

Records show that Andrew mustered into the 53<sup>rd</sup>, Company C on 17 Oct. 1861 om Harrisburg for 3 years of service. It shows a promotion from “1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. To Corporal” on 10 May 1864. I assume this is backwards since that would have been a demotion, of course. It shows promotion to “Sgt” on 2 Nov. 1864, and to “1<sup>st</sup> Sgt” on 2 May 1865. Some of these records appear to be inaccurate, however. This portion of the records don’t show his promotion to 1<sup>st</sup> LT since he wasn’t even promoted back to 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. until May 1865 but may have been appointed temporary 1<sup>st</sup> LT sometime during the middle of his service.

According to Rocco, “Our family history is that Andrew Grub carried a miniball in his arm until the day of his passing. He used to allow his grandchildren to sit on his lap and feel it under the skin.”

Records show that Daniel was discharged as a private because of “disability” on 28 Dec. 1862 near Alexandria, VA. “Disease of the liver” is listed under remarks on his discharge papers. His occupation at the time of enlistment was blacksmith. Documents show he was sick in the hospital in July/August 1862 in Newport News, VA and back in the hospital on 10 November 1862 in Alexandria, VA. Copies of his discharge papers were forwarded to me. He died in Huntingdon County in 1900. The photo below may be of the hospital in Alexandria, VA where Daniel spent time.



## The Civil War Letters of Levi J. Fritz

(thank you to Rich Sauers for providing this series)

[Note – any grammatical and typographical errors were kept intact as they are original to the letter - editor]

Levi J. Fritz served in Company A, 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. He enlisted in 1861 and was mustered out with the regiment in July 1865. During the course of the first three years of the conflict, Fritz wrote a number of lengthy missives to the *Montgomery Ledger*, a Pottstown newspaper.

Headquarters, 53d Regt.P.V.  
Camp California, Va.  
Thursday, Dec. 5th 1861.

Messrs. Editors:--The prevailing color this season for gentlemen's apparel is blue. In this region it is all the go; it is seen everywhere on the street, in the houses, in the fields, on the hills--everywhere. These blue clad mortals are termed soldiers, and they are the sworn enemies of treason in its every form; and have gathered from the east, and the north, and the west--have left loved ones by happy warm firesides--have left kindred, friends and peaceful pursuits, at the bugle call of their country, and proudly rallying beneath the flag that floated triumphant and unsullied through three wars, have taken their martial stand in McClellan's mighty phalanx. They have congregated here from all the "regions in and about Jericho," and have nobly resolved to emulate their worthy lives of yore and gloriously "do" or bravely "die."

Our Regiment is in camp along the line of the Alexandria and Orange Railroad, immediately opposite Cloud's Mill. It is an advanced position, there being no regiment outside of ours in this direction. We are also at present the extreme left of Gen. Sumner's division, but we cannot say whether it will be our permanent position. We have not yet had an opportunity of seeing our Brigadier General French. Gen. Sumner, the commander of the division, has been frequently in our camp, and appears to be a very unassuming and gentlemanly kind of a man. He is generally regarded as a brave officer, and impartial and upright commander. He is an officer of the regular army, and when this war broke out of the rank of Colonel. This is a new division, and is not yet filled up with its full complement of regiments. Last Monday night an attack was anticipated--on this part of our lines, and more than usual caution was observed--forty rounds of cartridges were served out, and everything prepared to fall in and be ready for a fight at a moment's notice. The night passed, however, without an alarm. Some forty thousand rebels were expected to come dashing down this valley, and scatter men and things generally--but they did not come. Perhaps they heard the rumbling noise of a long train of our artillery, as it galloped to the front and took a commanding position on the hills. We are now so situated that we may be called upon to march at any moment, and where the long roll may frequently call us to hastily fall in. The position of our camp may be deemed a strong one. On our left is Fort Lyons, mounting more than an hundred guns; on the right is Fort Albany. The guns of these works completely control the neighboring hills, and would give an advancing foe a fiery and disastrous welcome. Fort Ellsworth, on Shooter's Hill, near Alexandria, and by which we lay in camp in the three month's service, has been greatly improved, and a great many more guns put in position. A new battery has recently been thrown up on this hill. The woods for miles around have been levelled, and abundant fire wood is thus furnished for the numerous camps.

We have now been in Camp California a week, and things begin to seem like a soldier's home. We have in fact two Camps. Three companies of the left wing are separated from the main body by a mill race, a small stream and neck of woodland. It was necessary to have the camps divided so in order to preserve the line of battle of the division. The portions of the regiments have means of intercourse with each other by means of bridges, thrown over the race and stream.

A few days ago, while passing over the Long Bridge to Washington, we noticed a train of army wagons, loaded with hay, numbering one hundred and seventy-five mule teams, and stretching more than two miles. It is astonishing what an immense amount of traveling there is over this bridge. It does not over reach the truth to say that fifty miles of vehicles pass over this

bridge every day. The army of wagons carries supplies to the various regiments. Taking into account the vast amount of provisions and forage that passes into Virginia by way of the Chain Bridge, and by means of boats, it would be safe to assert that to furnish the troops on this side of the river with what is positively needed by them, would require the daily use of a train of wagons stretching seventy-five miles in length.

The weather is cold, the ground is well frozen and from the snowclad hills sweep the biting blasts of stern winter. Yesterday morning was the coldest we have yet experienced. At six and a half in the morning a basin half full of water froze over in two minutes. Last summer the thought of wintering under canvass made us shiver, but it is not so much a hardship as people who live within brick walls, and hug a red hot stove, imagine it to be. In the evenings, while sitting on our camp stool in close proximity to our indispensable "Californy stove," carelessly puffing our equally indispensable pipe, we feel as comfortable and contented as folks have any business to feel in this valley of each one for himself. Some complain, we know, but we honestly believe there is much more content among the soldiers than there is among the people at home. At home or in the army, there are always some who will complain of real or fancied ills. We know soldier boys in our ranks who delight to manufacture ferocious bug-bears, to scare our peaceful friends at home out of their wits, if possible.

The mail is just going out, and I therefore must close for this week.

Yours, &c., L.J.F.

[Ledger, December 10, 1861]

*(The below editorial was borrowed from the Authentic Campaigner site)*

## **THE CURRENT STATE OF AUTHENTIC CIVIL WAR LIVING HISTORY**

By Eric Tipton

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about "The Death of Civil War Reenacting", especially since the conclusion of the 150th events. The narrative goes something like this: "With the retirements of aging Baby Boomers, recent press about taking down Civil War monuments and lack of new Civil War pop culture, we are losing more people than we are gaining". I am happy to report that on the authentic living history side of the ledger, this is decidedly not the case. In fact, we are growing and getting stronger. Allow me to elaborate.

### **THE 150TH EFFECT**

In hindsight, the 150th Anniversary events did not help authentic living history. In my opinion, those events, in which we raised adjuncts, hurt us. For five years, the "mega" events monopolized our schedule. There were some obviously successful efforts, such as the 15th Iowa at Shiloh in 2012, Murray's Brigade at Gettysburg in 2013 and 40 Rounds at Bentonville in 2015. While these adjuncts were excellent for us, the benefits went to the organizers and not to us. Now, I am not saying that we shouldn't have done the adjuncts. We had to do them and did so with our usual zeal. For many of us, these events were some of our best memories in recent years. But you can see where I am going with this. There is a reason we call our circuit "Events By Us, For Us". The 150th Events were neither and they left us with some unfortunate side effects.

It is my observation that one of the negative "by-products" of the 150th efforts was the desire to raise brigades instead of battalions. The thinking was that coming out of the 150ths, we would raise larger numbers to justify this arrangement even though prior to the 150ths, as a community, we were successful using a "battalion vs. battalion" model. In essence, we adopted a mainstream mentality where commanders took precedence over men. Instead of planning from the bottom-up, we started looking at things from the top-down. Going forward, I strongly believe this is a mistake. I will elaborate on this point a little later, so hold that thought.

### **GROWTH IN AUTHENTIC LIVING HISTORY**

If you look at our overall numbers today vs. ten years ago, we are not shrinking. Quite the contrary. We are growing - both in the number of events and in the number of men. What

is missing compared to years past is cohesion. This cohesion is created by individuals within our hobby thinking big and putting together "national" efforts. This year, there are twelve different EBUFU events plus two adjuncts. We are beginning to see event-planning occurring 2-3 years into the future again. These things are important and a testament to our growth.

After the 150th "hangover" the number of EBUFU events dwindled, for the reasons I have already stated, but today we have fully-recovered. There are younger living historians who are actively stepping up to organize events. The 150ths were a "Swan-Song" for many older reenactors. This was their final bucket list. They had been through the 130th, 135th, 140th and 145th anniversary events and some for even longer. The 150ths represented their final cycle. That is natural. That is fine, but the worry was that there weren't enough people coming into the hobby to replace them. Well, look around. We have a full slate of events to choose from, all over the country. But will small living histories fit-the-bill? Will these events fuel future growth? Yes and no.

As many have pointed out, these regional living histories will always be a strong foundation for what we do. These, in my opinion, have replaced the people we used to draw out of the mainstream adjuncts. For years, we went to large mainstream events and this was our chance to shine. I can't count how many times I have been a part of a large battalion that proudly stepped out onto the field of a "mega event". I can also vividly remember being a part of a mainstream battalion in 2002 when the 105th Ohio streaked across the field at Perryville. "Wow", I thought. "THAT is what I want to do." What a great recruiting tool it was for the authentic living history community. It was the best way to "lead by example". Show them. Don't tell them. Back in those days, this model worked very well for us. In 2018, not so much. The current slate of living histories are a fantastic way to grow authentic living history in each region. They are the building blocks for our current schedule.

## **AUTHENTIC VS. MAINSTREAM - "WELCOME TO THE SOCIAL MEDIA AGE"**

While the EBUFU events continue to attract younger people and those younger people step up to organize events, I am not seeing the same thing happen on the mainstream end of the spectrum. Many times over the last few years, I have asked myself "why is that?" "Why are mega events decreasing in size so dramatically?" Can anyone disagree that they aren't? When I interviewed the Mudsills in July of last year, I was truly awed to hear about 20,000 - 30,000 people at mega-events. Concurrently, the Mudsills were consistently putting large battalions in the field. If you watched my interview with them, you will notice that I was intrigued about this dynamic just as much as they were interested to hear about the EBUFU events that go on today. Things have certainly changed. Back in the day, we could count on the mainstream to generate large numbers. Out of those numbers, we were born. Today, this is not how it works, because the mainstream is dying. I don't think this can be contested. But why?

I think that the outside factors affecting interest in the Civil War are directly affecting mainstream reenacting. These factors include, but are not limited to the following, now-familiar narrative: What is taught about the Civil War in schools, the monument controversy, aging baby boomers, modern redefinition of the war and last and most importantly, SOCIAL MEDIA. Correct me if you think I am wrong, but authentic living historians made a seamless transition into the world of social media that I haven't seen from the mainstream. Almost overnight, authentic events started Facebook groups. Recruiting efforts spread rapidly through our social media network. Debates left the forums and went to social media. This is why I felt it was so imperative that The Authentic Campaigner capitalize on this new trend. This is why it was a primary focus of the revitalized AC to have a large presence on Facebook. We needed to be there because that is where everyone is. Right? How did you arrive at this post? I'll bet it was social media.

While we took this leap into social media, I further recognized the absolute need to centralize information for the authentic hobby. While social media is an outstanding and indispensable platform, it also encourages a fragmentation of information. This is why you have seen so much emphasis on the event schedule for 2018 at the AC. Have you seen a central gathering place for information on mainstream events? What replaced Camp Chase? Does mainstream reenacting still rely on print media? Isn't

that medium dying on its own?

## CONTINUING GROWTH OF OUR HOBBY GOING FORWARD

When I see new blood at events, more event offerings and savvy social media marketing, I see a hobby that is not only not dying, but continuing to adapt and grow. I see a strong foundation for the future. I see a community that is no longer dependent on it's larger sibling - the mainstream reenacting community to attract recruits. I'm going to come right out and say what I have been telling many people privately for the last couple of years. With social media, the authentic living history community can go straight to our market without having to rely on the mainstream to generate interest. If there is any one reason why authentic civil war living history is growing, it is this. The model used by the Mudsills and Cleburnes and other organizations for years no longer applies. In other words, we don't necessarily *need* to rely on the mainstream any more. In many ways, we have accomplished our goal to become more self-sufficient. This is a great thing.

As a community, I only see one further step that needs to occur, which was more pronounced ten - fifteen years ago. We need to make an effort as a community to coalesce around our own larger efforts, otherwise known as "National" events. In the past and for years, The Western Independent Grays (WIG) provided this leadership for larger events. The WIG usually had 2-3 "max effort events each year" and each year, an opposition, mainly from the Midwest, was ready to oppose them - much like the days when Cleburnes opposed the Mudsills.

A caveat to this is what I mentioned earlier. For the time-being, we are much better-off doing battalion vs. battalion events. It is where our numbers are right now. We have not the ability to raise two solid battalions just like we always have. Hopefully, the time will come where the need for brigades will be obvious. I am confident that this will happen, but it should be on our own terms and not because it was something that we did as a result of the 150ths. I believe the time for brigades will come when we can attract 800 folks to an EBUFU event.

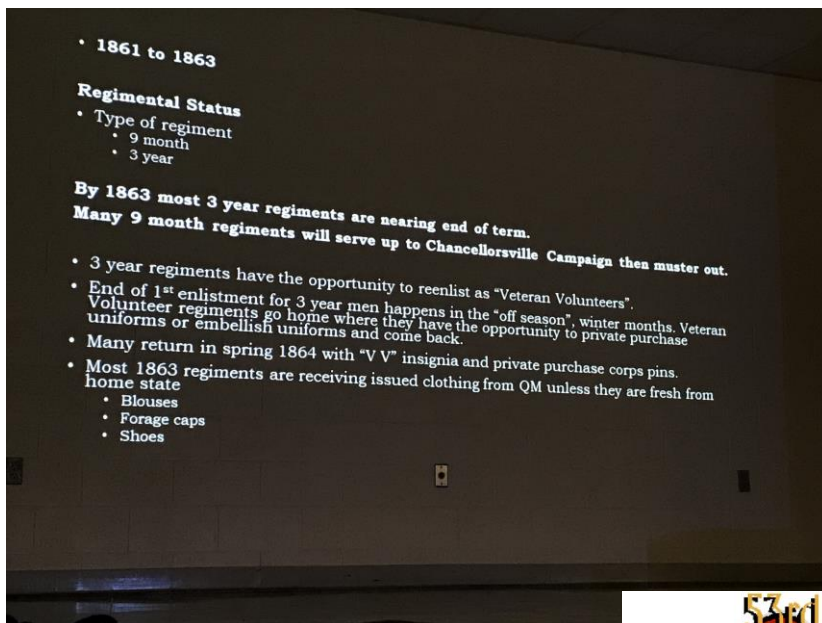
So, how are we doing as a community? The state of Authentic Civil War Living History is strong and will only become stronger if we can focus on working together to continue to build our OWN larger events. Keep doing what you are doing folks. Utilize social media. Use it to be a missionary for our cause. The AC will be here to trumpet and magnify your efforts. You can be well-assured of that.

### **1863 Uniforms and General Impressions (presented by Mike Kraus)**

At the 2018 NR School of Instruction, Mike Kraus gave a presentation on uniforms from the 1863 period. I have included some photos taken from his presentation.

I was sitting to the side during the presentation, so please forgive the angle of the text in the slides.

The clothing in the photos below were also supplied by Mike Kraus for his presentation. He also provided samples of various medals, etc. but I didn't get a chance to take photos before they were packed back up.



**March 1863 general orders are given for corps badges. Issue types were cloth (felt) and were very specific sizes.**

- Corps Badges
  - March 1863 Circular
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps issued between April 10-20, 1863 to be attached to center of cap
  - Company pins

• Vendors take the opportunity to supply the market. Sutlers, Frank Leslie's Illustrated and Harpers Weekly feed demand.

**SOLDIERS NATIONAL CEMETERY GETTYSBURG**

Report of Samuel Weaver burials of Federal dead.  
List of Articles taken from bodies. Many personal items;

- Regimental letters
- Breast pin
- Watch
- McClellan pin
- Ring
- Wiper
- Gun tool
- Corps badge

**Weapons**

- Smoothbore 69, plus accompanying accoutrements
- M1861 Springfield, plus accompanying accoutrements
- Enfield plus accompanying accoutrements
- Some Austrian muskets or other
- M1863 Springfield doesn't come into general use until spring of 1864
  - Some differences from M1861



The photo to the left shows an original officers frock coat (private purchase) and hat (including an original corps badge). The coat's color is well faded with age and sunlight. The hat insignia (23) shown below it is original.

The below officers frock (private purchase) is also original and has held up surprisingly well for 150 years. Its cloth material is a very fine that felt almost like cotton to the touch. Considerably different than what most re-enactors are used to. The wool used for this private purchase coat was heavily processed (and very expensive) to give it its soft feel.



## **"Get To Know Your Pard" –**

I have run this segment in the past, but am long out of summited profiles. Many 53<sup>rd</sup> members have yet to forward their profiles to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". Please take some time to answer the below questions (or some up with some of your own) and forward your info to me. We're not trying to pry into your lives, but simply learn a little more about each 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI member. This also helps some of the newer members learn about our more seasoned members. If you have not done so yet, please take a few minutes to copy and paste the below questions into a separate email and respond to me with your answers, or if you have your own preferred questions, feel free to use those. The bottom questions are mere suggestions.

### **10 Questions:**

1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you been re-enacting?
3. What is your favorite part of the hobby?
4. What was the first Civil War-related kit item that you bought?
5. Have you ever taken part of a Civil War movie , TV, or other production?
6. Do you have a favorite or most memorable CW event?
7. Do you have any other non-Civil War hobbies?
8. Do you have a Civil War photo (wet-plate or tin-type image) to share?
9. What do you do (or did you do, if retired) for a living?
10. Favorite Saying?

### **A word from our president.....**

First, I want to thank everyone who reached out to me recently to offer your condolences and encouragement. I lost both of my grandparents within two weeks of each other. They were wonderful people who meant the world to Traci and I.

We have a busy schedule coming up. All of the events coming up in the next two months were voted as max effort so let's turnout strong attendance. The first event is our adopt a position (monument clean-up) scheduled for April 7. Plan to be at the site and ready to start at 10:00am. At the meeting, we discussed having a group picnic style lunch at the monument site following the work detail. I'll leave it up to you all to let me know if this is still the plan. Let me know by Tuesday (April 3) so I can spread the word. My suggestion would be for each of us to provide our own lunch rather than doing a pot luck just in case we only have a few people there. Second, we have our first living history of the year April 21-22 at the PA Monument. We'll be there supporting ELF so there should be a decent turnout. Capt. Carlson will be leading us through a weekend of drill and demos. I'm looking for numbers so let me know if you'll be attending so I can pass along the info to Tom. Third, AHEC is coming up in May. Matt Steger will be coordinating our registration. This is a paid event and we'll be using the funds to offset our NR insurance premiums. Finally, Wilson's Warf is going to be here before we know it. The event is scheduled for June 2-3. Again, we'll be supporting ELF. Due to the distance for this one I'm encouraging us to start the carpooling discussions. If you're willing to provide transportation or need transportation let us know.

As always, let me know if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions.

Eric

### **Upcoming events -**

#### **"Adopt A Position" Monument Cleanup –**

7 April 2018 – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Monument (Gettysburg NPS)

Bring your rakes, loupers, gloves, etc. for our bi-annual cleanup of our monument on Brooks Ave. Please arrive before 10AM. If we get sufficient help, detail should be complete by noon.

## Gettysburg Living History –

21 – 22 April – PA Monument (Gettysburg NPS)

Living history event with our ELF friends at the PA Monument. Bring your normal kit, rounds, tentage, food, etc. and items to show the public. Arrive by 8AM on Sat. Updates on the event schedule will be forthcoming as we get closer to the event.

### 2018 Calendar of Events -

~~13 January – Holiday Party – Gettysburg~~  
~~3 February – Winter Drill (Landis Valley) – Lancaster~~  
~~17 – 18 February – National Regiment “School Of The Soldier” – Gettysburg~~  
~~3 March – Cartridge Rolling Party – Kleinfeltersville~~  
7 April – Spring Adopt-A-Position (Monument Cleanup) – Gettysburg NMP  
21 – 22 April – Living History – Gettysburg NMP  
19 – 20 May – USAHEC – Carlisle, PA (Paid Event)  
19 – 20 May – New Market Re-enactment – NR Max Effort  
28 May – Memorial Day Parade – Hummelstown  
2 – 3 June – Wilson’s Wharf – Ft. Pocahontas Charles City, VA (ELF)  
5 – 8 July – 155th Gettysburg Re-enactment – Gettysburg NMP  
22 July – Gruber Wagon Works – Reading  
28 – 29 July – Landis Valley – Lancaster  
11 – 12 August – Cedar Mountain LH (1st MN)  
7 – 9 September – 155th South Mountain – Burkittsville, MD (NR Max Effort)  
6 – 7 October – Living History – Gettysburg NMP  
3 November – Fall Adopt-A-Position (Monument Cleanup) – Gettysburg NMP  
17 November – Remembrance Day Parade – Gettysburg  
1 December – Annual Meeting



### 53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford ([reenactor53@gmail.com](mailto:reenactor53@gmail.com))

Vice President: Croce Volpe ([vafomedic@aol.com](mailto:vafomedic@aol.com))

Secretary/Treasurer: Pat Rose ([p.m.rose@comcast.net](mailto:p.m.rose@comcast.net))

Newsletter Editor: Matthew Steger ([n3ntj@comcast.net](mailto:n3ntj@comcast.net))

Webmasters: Steve Dillon ([steve@gofoxpro.com](mailto:steve@gofoxpro.com)) and Matthew Steger ([n3ntj@comcast.net](mailto:n3ntj@comcast.net))

Website: <http://www.53rdpvi.org>

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

National Regiment Phone line: 800-777-1861 (code 61)

National Regiment Website: <http://nationalregiment.com>

**Treasurer’s Address:** Pat Rose, 919 North 26th St., Reading, PA 19606

