

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" May 2018

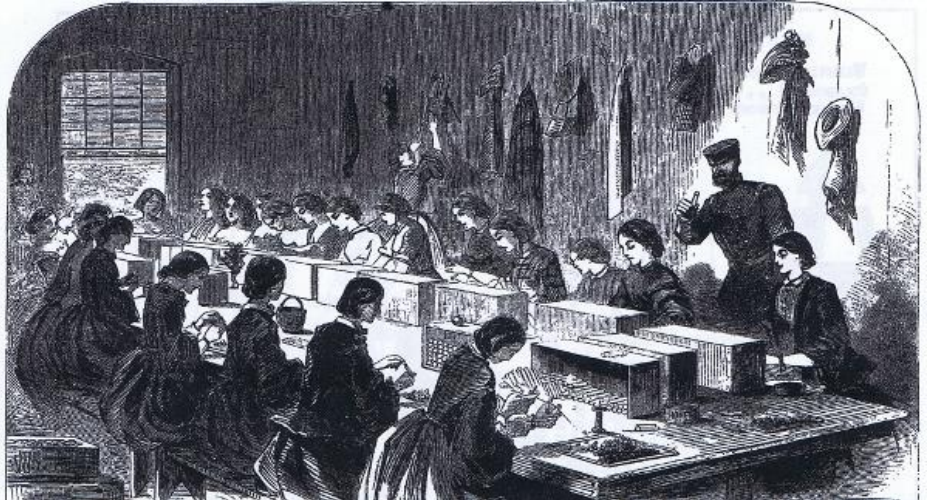
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

This Month:

1. Civil War Tentage
2. Civil War Letters (Levi Fritz)
3. What Is An Officer?
4. Monument Cleanup
5. A word from our president
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(etching of a period cartridge rolling factory.. not quite the 53rd 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

Civil War Tentage

At the National Regiment's 2018 School Of Instruction, Capt. Parvis gave a presentation on Civil War tentage. He discussed the type 2 and type 3 tents. The terms 'type 2' and 'type 3' is modern and weren't used in that era. Below are some images from his presentation. Type 2 was 3 pieces sewn together (generally always completely hand sewn) and type 3 was 2 pieces sewn together (which sometimes was machine sewn, except for the bottom holes which were hand sewn). They were made of cotton drill and canvas. One gov't contractor did provide some tentage that had a waterproofing applied.



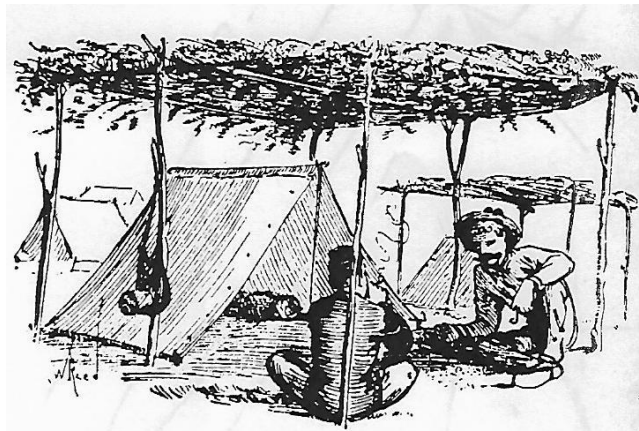
THE DOG OR SHELTER TENT.



SHELTERS AS SOMETIMES PITCHED IN SUMMER.



THE "PUP" TENT.



SHADED SHELTERS.

Figs. 97, 98, 99 and 100. Four illustrations of shelter tents that accompanied popular accounts of soldier life. The one at upper left was drawn by George Coffin and published in *Hinman's Si Klegg*, 580. The three above were drawn by Charles Reed and included in *Billing's Hardtack and Coffee* (reprinted 1970), 52, 53, 54. In two cases the artists have shown muskets serving as poles, although forked saplings are also well represented.

The verbiage below the right side image above provides descriptions of the 4 above images. Capt. Parvis also discussed tent stakes or pins. Also, sometimes we see the end flaps on tents (covering an opening), but according to records, these were not yet around until the 1870s.



Fig. 101. Tent pins for the French tente d'abri, taken from Fig. 21. Rather than conforming to a pattern, these pins appear almost handmade.

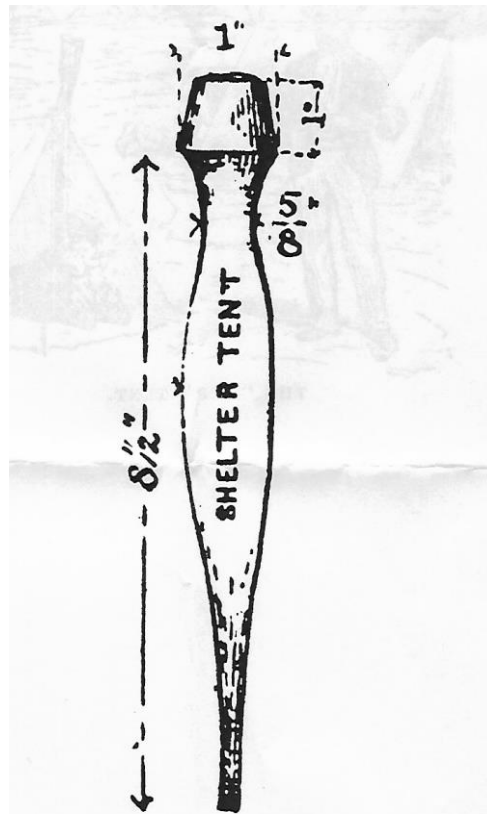
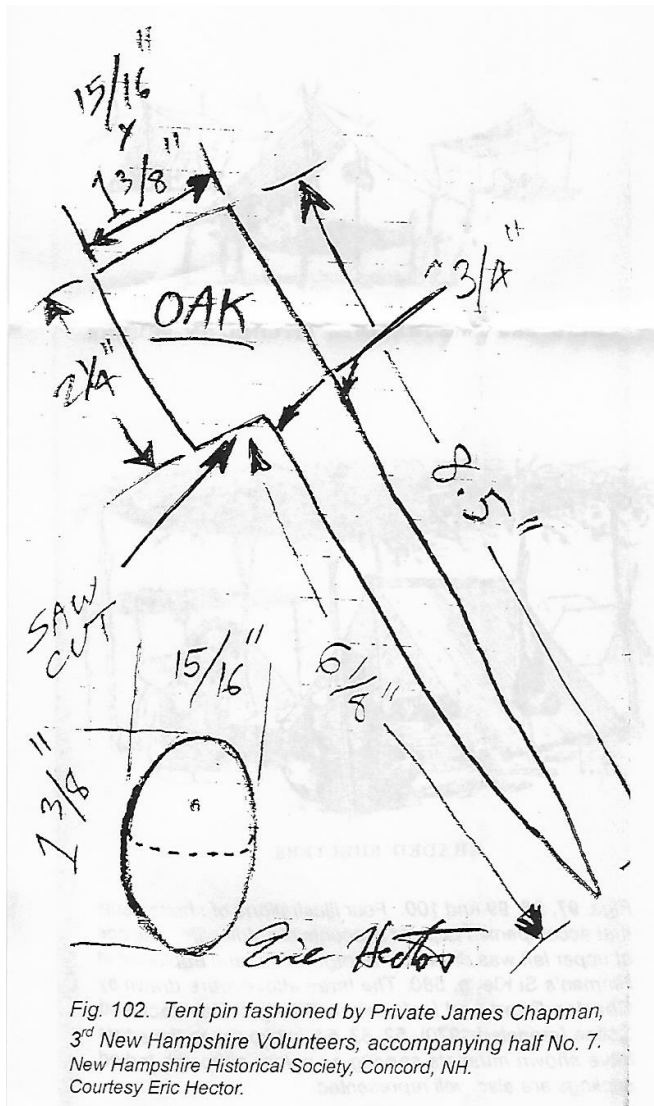


Fig. 103. Although it is doubtful that an official style was ever approved, tent pins for Civil War shelter tents may have been procured through open market purchases and been similar to that illustrated here. Similar pins were procured by the U.S. Army as long as wooden pegs were issued with those tents. 1889 Specifications, 230-31.



Capt. Parvis also provide info about tin pins (or stakes). The image to the left shows dimensions should you want to make period-correct tent pins. They were generally made of oak. Metal pins were not common at the time.

Fig. 102. Tent pin fashioned by Private James Chapman, 3rd New Hampshire Volunteers, accompanying half No. 7. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH. Courtesy Eric Hector.

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.

53d Regt.P.V.

Camp California, Va.,
Saturday, Dec. 21st, 1861.

Messrs Editors:--We are requested by the members of Company A and the regimental band to publicly acknowledge the reception of an excellent article of gloves and mittens for their use. They came just in the nick of time to be useful for the winter term. The fair donors may feel assured that their watchfulness of our comfort is duly appreciated. Some months ago the company was the recipients of a complement of good woolen socks, from, if we are not mistaken, the same lady friends at home. I am sorry to say that many pairs of these stockings by dint of long

usage have become like many of our pseudo friends at Pottstown who have circulated a contemptible sock selling story, that is they are soleless and only good about the calves.

It is now pretty certain that our regiment will lay in winter quarters in our present camp, and as a matter of course the boys are making or have made preparations for it. As we will have no other covering but the canvass of our tents it is desirable to have them as tight and comfortable as possible, and various contrivances are resorted to to accomplish this desired object. Some have cellars dug in their tents about two and a half feet deep, and by this manner of means succeed in making the tent more roomy and warmer. Another plan is to construct a frame of boards or split logs, two or three feet high, and large enough square for the bottom of the tent to fit over tightly. If the building is of logs the openings between the layers are filled in with clay; the tent is thus made much larger, and more comfortable. Underground furnaces are in many of the tents while not a few have small sheet iron stoves.

Our program is as follows: reveille at half an hour before sunrise, and by the time the roll of the drums has died away the whole regiment is up and fully equipped formed in line of battle on the parade. The roll is then called by the Orderlies, the whole being superintended by the field staff, and company officers. Breakfast is served, or rather you serve yourself, at 7 o'clock; sick call and brigade guard mounting takes place at 7 1/2. From 9 to 12, regimental drill. Dinner at 12. Brigade drill from 2 to 4. Dress parade half an hour before sunset and supper immediately after. The tattoo is played by the band at 8 1/2, at 9 the taps are beaten, and out goes the lights and under the blankets goes the head, and "we'll see you in the morning."

Last Tuesday night just after the taps had sounded and while we were making arrangements to bunk in for the night, the long roll commenced on the right and regiment after regiment hastily took it up along the line.--Fall in was the word, and fall in we did instantler. Although the alarm was entirely unexpected, yet in three minutes from the time the order was given, the whole regiment was in line of battle. We were immediately marched out of camp and, preceded by the 57th N.Y., proceeded out the Fairfax road. It was a splendid night, and pale moon and beaming stars turned the night into an embryo day. The marching kept us warm, and the serene and moonlit night, as well as the prospect of a brush with the enemy made our boys feel in excellent spirits. Following our regiment in the line of march was the 7th Rhode Island battery and a squadron of the 8th Ill. Cavalry. Gen. French was in command. After passing Cloud's upper mill, a large brick building, that will live in story, we left the main road, and took one leading to the left, one not so much traveled and somewhat hilly and rugged. To see the long black looking line as it filed through wood, around hills, through gloomy ravines; advancing steadily yet silently on, was an unique and weirdlike scene. Onward in quick time we go--here our path is lighted by Luna's welcome rays and a legion of stars--the star spangled banner on Heaven's outer walls--here we dashed into the night gloom of the old woods, where perchance may crouch the rebel foe. Forward--scarce a word is heard. Officers gave their commands, which were instantly obeyed, in a low tone, in what, comparatively speaking and using if we may be permitted, a new term, might be called a military whisper. About 10 1/4 o'clock we reached a place called Edward's Hill, some four miles west of our camps, where we halted and stacked arms. Here was a regiment on picket duty. The battery was put in position in our line of battle and between the right and left wing of the regiment. Immediately on our arrival Company B and C of the 53rd under the command of Capt. Bull who, (on account of the indisposition of Maj. Yeager) was the acting Major, were ordered up the railroad about two mles in advance of us on picket duty. When we left camp many thought that our movement was for the purpose of foraging, others presumed that it was a reconnoissance in force, while still others of more mature judgment expressed a decided opinion that "something was up."

As far as we are able to learn the hasty march was caused by the rebels threatening to move on Heintzelman's division in force, and we were thrown out for the purpose of protecting his right wing. Although the boys were warm and many of them completely sweated at the end of their march, yet it did not take long for the "cold chilly winds of December" to sensibly change this feeling. We had no blankets with us, nothing but our overcoats, and we got cold, very cold. Some of the boys brought a lot of corn fodder from a barn near by to lie on, but as the owner said he was

a Unionist, Gen. French ordered it all back. By the bye, what husband and wife, with four unprotected squaws (colored) would not be Union, when surrounded by three thousand of Uncle Samuel's pet lambs? By constantly walking or huddling together, we managed to stand the weather until two o'clock when we were allowed to make fire. We arrived in camp about 7 o'clock, on Wednesday morning--hungry, tired and sleepy, but nevertheless perfectly satisfied with the night's march and bivouac.

Ere many of your readers peruse these lines the holidays will have arrived, and friend will express to friend the kind wishes of a happy Christmas. Many a chair at the family fireside will be vacant, and the kind greetings and cheering tones of that festival day will no doubt be sadder than was their wont. Boat loads of holiday gifts are daily being brought by the express for the soldiers around here. But as it takes about ten days or more for boxes to reach here from the North, a great many of the boys will be disappointed by not getting them in time. We shall enjoy ourselves to the best of our ability, and hoping our kind readers will have a happy Christmas, we close for the week.

L.J.F.

[Ledger, December 24, 1861]

What Is An Officer? (presented by Mike Kraus)

At the 2018 NR School of Instruction, Mike Kraus gave a presentation called 'What is an officer?'. Below is a brief rundown.

An officer of a country's armed forces is one who's rank is confirmed by a government document (a commission). In the US, officers are commissioned by the President. At the time of the Civil War, officers could be commissioned into state militias or state troops by the state's Governor. Civil War commissions were awarded in 2 categories: US Volunteers and Army of the US (Regulars). With the increase in size of the Army during the Civil War period, many officers held 2 distinct ranks, one in the Volunteers and one in the regular US Army. Brevet ranks were temporary ranks given to officers who held commands above their official rank, often awarded for merit or valor.

According to Kautz, an officer has certain characteristics including being brave, intelligent, and courteous. An officer must be an example to his men at all times.

Officers in the Civil War has many ways to earn commission. They could have attended the US Military Academy (West Point), received a commission through a number of other military academies, raised their own company or regiment, be appointed to the post by the President or state governor, be elected to the position after enlisting in a regiment or receive battlefield commission or promotion due to gallantry or attrition.

In re-enacting, officers are most often selected in a number of ways. Some are elected by their units, some are appointed by their battalions or staff, and some are self-appointed.

Officers are the senior members of the armed forces whose duty it is to help ensure that the army is prepared to fight the country's wars. This means ensuring that the army is fed, clothed, and trained to fight. There are 2 types of officers: line and staff. The line officers are the combat officers (2nd Lt. up to General). They command armies, corps, divisions, brigades, regiments, companies, and battalions. Staff officers support the line by making sure that they have all their need to defeat the enemy. But most importantly, Officers LEAD!

Regimental headquarters consisted of a colonel, Lt. colonel, major, adjutant, quartermaster, surgeon (major), two assistant surgeons, and a chaplain. Regimental headquarters NCOs are the sergeant major, quartermaster sergeant, commissary sergeant, hospital steward, and 2 principle musicians.

In the Union Army, an infantry company had a maximum authorized strength of 101 officers and men. Other company positions were fixed as followed: 1 captain (Capt), 1 first lieutenant (1st Lt.), and 1 second lieutenant (2nd Lt.)

Lieutenants (1st and 2nd) – (1) position of probation and instruction. (2.) assist the captain in all duties including commanding the company in the absence of the captain, is present in camp, musters, and other company formations, serves as officer of the guard, and may serve on regimental staff.

Captain - Company Commander

“There is no position in the army that will give as much satisfaction in return for an honest capable and conscientious of his duty as that of a captain or company commander” (Kautz)

40 pages in Kautz are dedicated to the duties of the company commander. The infantry is built around the Company which the captain as its head. The regimental captains serve as officer of the day of the regiment. The captain had 2 different types of duty: government and administration.

1. Government is training in drill, tactics, discipline, etc.
2. Administration is bookkeeping including muster rolls, records of the sick and dead, company accounts as well as war materials.

Major -

1. Serves as the assistant to the Colonel as the 2nd Lt. is to the Captain.
2. May be assigned to detached command of smaller units.
3. Must know all of the roles of subordinate and immediate superior officers
4. Perform administrative duties as assigned including taking charge of the personal effects of deceased officers of his regiment.

Lt. Colonel –

1. Commands the reg't in the absence of the Colonel
2. Assists the Colonel in the daily gov't and administration of the regiment.
3. May act as Field Officer of the Day
4. Perform other duties as directed by the Colonel

Colonel – Regimental Commander

1. As senior officer, Kautz calls him the most important man in the regiment
2. Like the Captain, he has to govern and administer his regiment
3. The capacity to command is peculiar and exceptional
4. It brings out the weakness or strength of a man's character
5. The reg't takes its character from him
6. Commanding a reg't demands a distinct talent to include knowledge, independent thought, and the capacity to exercise it.
7. The Colonel has to think about things that give him no rest while his regiment is quietly slumbering
8. Kautz dedicates 57 pages to the Commanding Officer of a Regiment

Event Info from James Owens:

I saw where the 53rd is doing Wilson's Wharf in June. Some of us were just down that way last month, and did 7.7 miles on the Virginia Capitol Trail that runs alongside Route 5. We marched from Charles City Courthouse to a friend's farm on Sturgeon Point Road, stopping for lunch at Sherwood Forest.

The farm mentioned above is owned by Steve & Joyce Henry. Joyce is a former cavalry reenactor, jockey and horse trainer. She recently retired as head coachman for Colonial Williamsburg. Both her and Steve's family's for back to the 18th century in Virginia. However, one of Joyce ancestors was Sergeant Major of the 57th PA and was killed on July 2 at Gettysburg.

(continued)

The 1st MN has an open invitation to host an event at the Henry's farm and we are looking at trying to set something up for 2019. Joyce also knows the owners of Westover and Berkeley Plantations along with most of the other property owners surrounding her 55 acres. So if the 53rd is interested in doing a quality event in that part of the world, let me know and I will keep you in the loop.

While you are in that part of the world, be sure and stop and see Malvern Hill and Glendale Battlefields, both are just couple of miles off of Route 5. You might also want to check out the Courthouse Grill in Charles City Courthouse for some good eats! Lastly, you should consider a can of bug fogger. I did the NPS Malvern Hill living history last July and we got kept up all Friday night by bugs. We hit back on Saturday with the fogger and got a good night's sleep.

Regards,
James

Monument Cleanup



The NPS performed a burn of the battlefield on the 13th/14th of April just south of the 53rd PVI monument to help clear overgrown brush, etc. There were 4 attendees to the spring cleanup: Eric Ford, Alec Bohnenblust, Kerry Williard, and Croce Volpe. Photo submitted by Eric Ford.

Cartridge Rolling Party – Attendees:

Mark Fasnacht, Marc Benedict, Matthew Steger, Alec Bohnenblust, Joseph and Jeff Marks, Pete Zinkus, Mike Espenshade, Michael Fedorshack, Rick Kramer.

"Get To Know Your Pard" –

I have run this segment in the past, but am long out of summited profiles. Many 53rd 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 come 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 53rd 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.....

Gentlemen,

We're going into the month of May and our schedule is about to get very busy. We have three events coming at us in the next month. AHEC is coming up first. This is our paid event that we opted to do in an effort to offset the NR's insurance cost for 2018. We need to have a minimum of six attendees for Saturday in order to get paid. We scheduled this as a two day event in order to "max out" the payment being offered. We'll need six on Sunday as well. I asked Matt Steger to take the point on this one since he's had the most experience with the event and site. I'll ask that each of you contact Matt whether you plan to attend OR not. The Hummelstown Memorial Day parade is scheduled for May 28th. More details on this one will be coming in a few weeks. Finally, we have Wilson's Warf scheduled for June 2-3. We're supporting ELF Co at this event. Registration is open and I'm advocating that we have Pat register us as a unit. The registration fee is \$10 per man until May 25th. I'll ask Pat to send our group registration on May 18th. Please let Pat and I know if you are going and send your Payment to Pat immediately. Carpooling will be beneficial since this is one of the longest trips we've made in a while. Start communicating if you're willing to provide transportation or if you need transportation to this event. I'll be in touch with Tom Carlson soon to get the event schedule. Once I have those details I'll pass them along.

Bob Moore (former 53rd member) stopped by the recent living history at Gettysburg and donated his entire kit (minus rifle) to the unit. Mike Espenshade has provided detailed inventory to me and delivered the contents to our Quartermaster. In Mike's words, this is "quite a kit". Between the items that we got from John Lowry, the kit we purchased last year and now Bob's kit we need to make some decisions about how to handle the inventory. Mike has offered some good suggestions and I have some thoughts on the matter myself. I feel it's best to discuss this in person. I'm expecting that we'll have a strong turnout at AHEC so I'll hold a short meeting Saturday evening after the event closes. If you're only going for the day, please allow some extra time in the evening to take part in the discussion.

Finally, with the heavy schedule we have coming up and any normal unit business that I need to convey, I will do my best (as I always try to do) to keep the emails short and to the point. In an effort to keep the Officer's with the NR, ELF and our own NCO's up to date I'm asking all of you to reply with your intentions to either attend or not attend any event. I will not be "that guy" who is constantly riding you to get your response. However, I don't take a non-response as a "no" or "I'm not going to make it". If I don't hear from you I start to wonder if you got the info in the first place. I'm human and from time to time will make a mistake. Maybe you're having tech issues and I'm unaware. I don't want anyone to ever be missed on any communication and not have a say on something important or something they wish to be a part of. I'll continue to place a reminder of important emails on our FB page for those of you who don't regularly check email. So please, take a few seconds and simply reply.

I'm looking forward to seeing y'all soon.

Eric

Upcoming events – (see Eric’s notes above about these 3 events)

19 – 20 May – USAHEC – Carlisle, PA – Be at the Civil War huts by 8:30AM Sat. I will sign the unit it at the ‘sign in’ tent.

28 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade – Meet at the NW corner of Olde Factory Antiques by 9:30AM. You can park in the Rita’s/Olde Factory parking lot. Then picnic lunch at the Legion and a debriefing at Mike Espenshade’s hut.

2 – 3 June – Wilson’s Wharf – Ft. Pocahontas Charles City, VA (ELF) (Max Effort)

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)

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

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

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

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

