

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

## Company C

"The Sentinel" November 2018

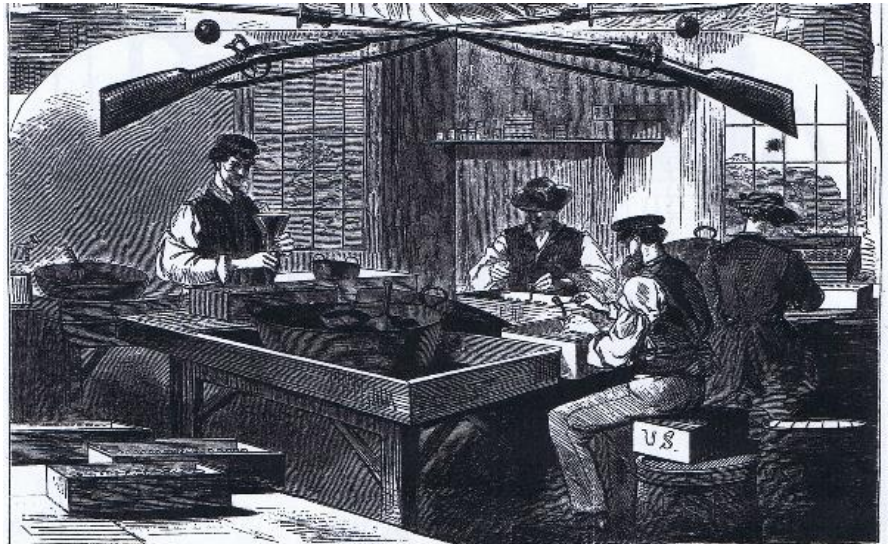
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

### This Month:

1. "Outpost! A Perfect Choice To Re-Enact."
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FILLING CARTRIDGES AT THE UNITED STATES ARSENAL, AT WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS.—[SEE NEXT PAGE.]

*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*

## **Outpost! A PERFECT CHOICE TO REENACT.**

by [The Jersey Gallinipper](#) (reprinted with permission)

*(editor – this is a continuation of the guard duty topic started a few months ago in the newsletter)*

You don't need to muster several thousand folks to put on wool and a show. You could stage a weekend of outpost duty to get very much down to the nuts and bolts of Civil War tactics with a smaller group, perhaps 100 on each side.

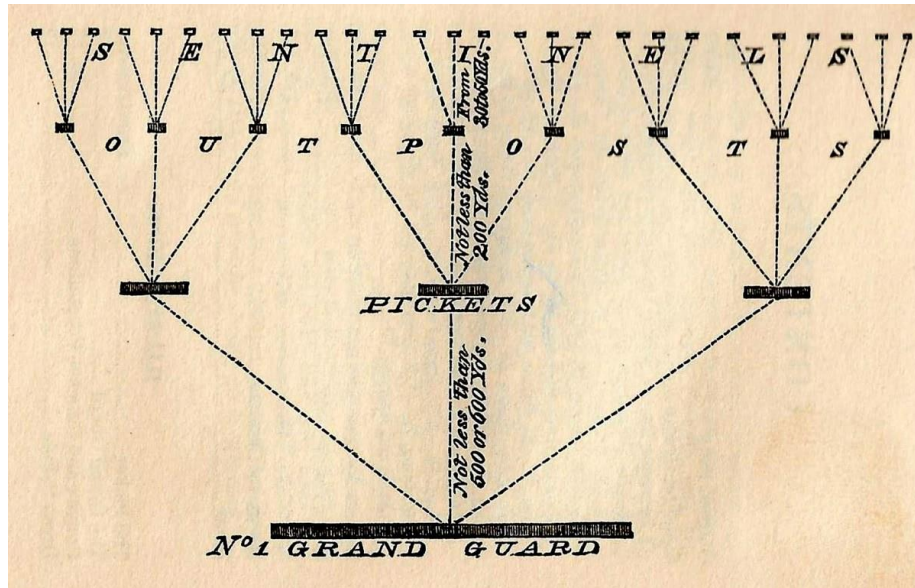
It does, however, require knowledge, skill and an agreement between opposing forces that the arena is limited and there is no place for those who ignore the realities of Civil War weaponry, tactics and doctrine. In other words, no yahoos need apply. Otherwise you aren't really *showing or learning about or experiencing or understanding Civil War stuff*, you're just playing cowboys and Indians like you did when you were 12. Not that there's anything wrong



with that. But we aren't going there today. Or ever, probably. An outpost scenario is perfect for guided spectator tours and even more perfect for nighttime lantern tours. In both cases, knowledgeable guides are needed.

This time we'll talk about outposts, including what they were seeking to achieve 1861-1865 and how they did it. Next week we'll lay out what we must have and what we might need to have a weekend version of this. The context here is that the primary purpose of the outpost function is to both screen your own main force from inquisitive information seekers in the other uniform, and to get as much information as you can about who is facing you.

A second consideration is to provide the initial resistance against a serious enemy push toward your army's position. They had a plan for that, and took it into consideration any time they deployed in front of a main position.



*Daniel Butterfield's schematic for outposts in depth. Note that it's a schematic; where the various components get placed in the real world depends on terrain, visibility, time of day, and whether stealth is a major priority. (Just in case anyone thought this meant it was all straight lines out on the bleeding edge.)*

Right away there's an obvious difference between a camp guard and outpost: Camp guard sentinels go around the camp; an outpost goes between your camp and the enemy. There are different schemes for setting up a line of sentinels and lines of support posts behind them. We're going to go with one of the simplest, and then shrink it, because our manpower reserves are certainly more limited.

So, it's **Daniel Butterfield's "Camp and Outpost Duty 1862"**

([https://ia802308.us.archive.org/33/items/anelementarytre00mahagoog/anelementarytre00mahagoog\\_djvu.txt](https://ia802308.us.archive.org/33/items/anelementarytre00mahagoog/anelementarytre00mahagoog_djvu.txt))

for starters. And **D.H. Mahan's "Outpost."** If you visit "Outpost," be advised he starts with the ancient Greek army of hoplites and archers; for the sake of your patience, start at Page 32! Read those first pages some night when you can't sleep.

To understand how an outpost is supposed to function, it's good to know military doctrine of the era. Remember, the strength of infantry is its ability to deliver massive volleys, which requires straight firing lines and a great deal of order and structure, for command and control. And order-giving is limited to the human voice and the bugle.

We will consider a position chosen for defense. Speaking very, very generally of your total force:

1. You need a site sized to your force, that is, one that's workable for the force you have.
2. You need avenues to move forward and back ("debouchements"). You also need a way – open space – to quickly move laterally behind your main line, to move units to shore up a key weak point or exploit an enemy weakness.
3. Use terrain to protect your flanks, if possible – a ravine, a swamp, anchor it to a hill. It does not have to block an enemy completely; it need only disrupt the orderliness and command control so that a relatively small force can defend the flank.
4. A "broken" expanse in your front, terrain that "prevents the enemy from approaching in good order," according to Butterfield. Good example: The sturdy rail fence along the Emmittsburg Road at Gettysburg, which disrupted the Confederate assault units on Gettysburg's 3rd day that had to climb it and reform, subjecting them to even more fire.
5. There must be no exploitable intervals in the main line of infantry.
6. The artillery must be positioned where it has a long view of front, flank, or both, is not blocked by your own troops, and can be supported by infantry. Infantry need not be stationed among the guns for this; they must simply be positioned where they can sweep the approaches to the guns with musketry.
7. The cavalry is posted behind the infantry in positions where it can charge to support pressed infantry or exploit enemy mistakes or duress.

Those are the considerations for the main force.

Now, the advance posts: Think of it as a system of defense that gets stiffer as the components compress back to the main body. That forces the enemy to reveal his intentions, by revealing where his troops are most numerous and where he is making the most effort to advance. It also keeps him uncertain and cautious, always a good thing. He's afraid the stiffening resistance masks some move on your part. The delay, in any event, allows your main force commanders to rearrange units to meet the threat.



← *Returning from outpost duty. Edwin Forbes.*

That's why the distances in the sketch above seem quite long to reenactors. We really have no concept, with our small battalions, of how long it took to move units and shake them into line. Anyone who has been in the last two companies for "forward into line" and watched the rest of the battalion hare off at a trot while you aren't even up to the line knows exactly how unfamiliar with "time needed for deployment" many of our battalion commanders are. So, how do you delay?

*"226. Our purpose, in all cases, should be to keep the enemy in a state of uncertainty as to our actual force, and movements; and this can be effected only by keeping constantly between him and our main-body a force of sufficient strength to offer an obstinate resistance, if necessary, to every attempt he may openly make to gain information; and even to act offensively against him, when occasion offers, so as to keep him in doubt as to the actual character and number of the troops before him..." –Mahan*

This doesn't mean the advance line of sentinels is expected to do more than alert, by messenger or gunfire, their immediate support posts. It is from those posts that the initial resistance is organized.



Illustration by Adolphus Metzner, showing an outpost jumping to arms as the sentinels over the ridge sound an alert.



← Sherman watching troops exceed their orders and not stop at the first line of rifle pits at the base of Missionary Ridge.

What happens is the sentinels fall back, slowly, and if possible coming together to work in fire teams, as they follow a PRESELECTED path that will allow them to move toward their support posts, but NOT IN FRONT OF THEM. Blocking their fire is counterproductive. The best example of all that can go wrong when your advance force blocks the fire of your supporting lines is Missionary Ridge. It was one of the factors that broke the Confederate position – federal infantry drove the advance line out of their holes at the base of the ridge, looked up and saw that they were completely exposed, and immediately headed up the ridge right behind the first-line Confederates who were desperate to get up there. They all arrived at the same time. Note that it was not a planned move

– Sherman, in fact, was quite concerned that the men had advanced without orders, and feared disaster. Experience told those boys what to do, and they did it without orders. In effect, retreating Confederates acted as defilade for advancing Federals.

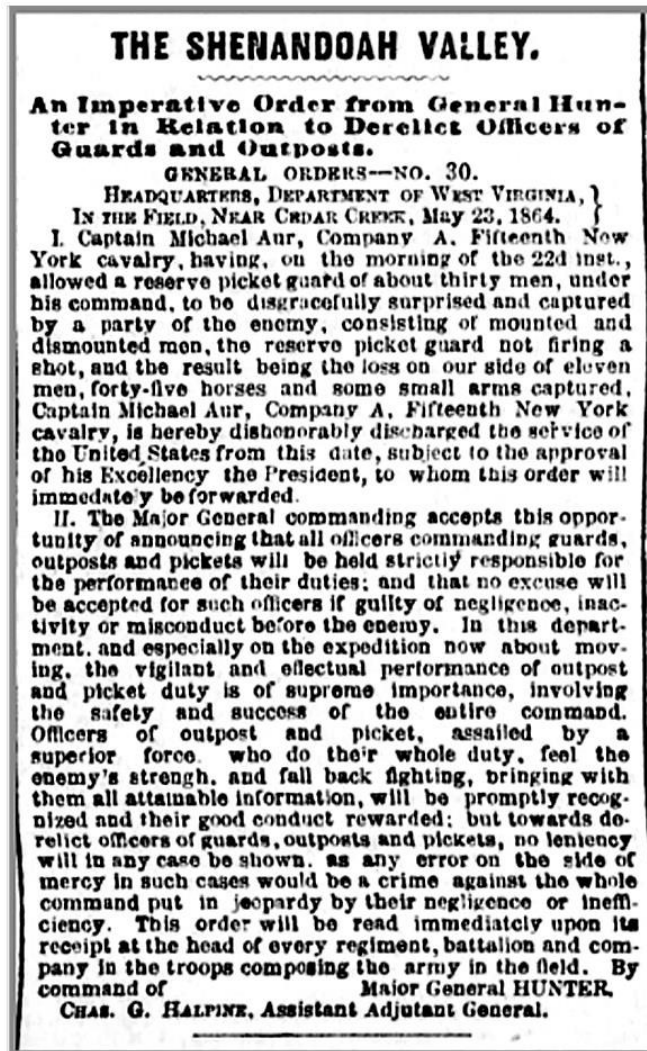
The principle continues: The sentinels' support posts, manned by the relief shifts for the sentinel duty, should have prepared their positions in order to put up a somewhat stiffer defense. And when they do retire, again, they must not block the fire of their own forces in the rear.

Now, refer again to Mahan's schematic. Sentinels, outposts, pickets, grand guard. Each one an order of magnitude higher: One to three-man posts on the sentinel line, six or more men at an outpost, 30 to 90 at the picket post. The grand guard could be a mixed arms force of cavalry, artillery and infantry, several hundred men and a slew of horses. Imagine having that retire, fighting, in such a way that the main force is not blocked. Clearly a lot of thought had to go into all of this, from picking spots for the line of sentinels

where they could see but not be easily seen, all the way back to identifying, and sharing, the paths for withdrawal with not just the outpost personnel, but the main force. Because you don't want them shooting up your own men, especially at night. Superimpose on that the need for your own defensive patrols to cover areas where visibility is limited, the subsequent need for countersigns, and the overriding need for a parole so top brass can check to see all the components of the machinery are aligned and functioning.

And you've got a busy weekend for reenactors.

*Next time: How we can do this, if we want.*



### Event Summary – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Gettysburg Living History Event

A tale of 2 days.. a cloudy Saturday in the 60s and a sunny Sunday in the 80s. Both days were dry and a good time was had by the 53<sup>rd</sup> members in attendance: Fasnacht, Steger, Benedict, Fedorshak, Zinkus, Porterfield, as well as Zach Porterfield's brother Travis. We had two (2) firing demos Sat. and one on Sunday. A few ghost hunters, a good number of park visitors, an odd confrontation with a pregnant lady while I was in the bathroom early Sunday morning filling canteens... (all photos below are by the editor)



The view from my tent looking over at Private Zinkus' tent while he's catching a few winks..

A Boy Scout troop from Long Island, NY showed up Sunday afternoon just before we were packing up camp. Private Fedorshak gave them a short program on the Civil War soldier.



## 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.

Camp California, Va.

Friday, Feb. 21st, 1862.

Messrs. Editors:--We should have written you last week, but we thought that the glorious victories of the Federal arms would engross all the attention of your readers. Surely, the sky so long clouded is once more brighting. who can doubt that this wicked rebellion will soon receive a fearful quietus. Port Royal, Drainesville, Roanoke, Mill Springs, Fort Henry and Donelson, most glorious of all; the rebels driven out of Missouri, and as we have reason to believe, the fall of Savannah. Let us be joyful and at the same time thankful that the Omnipotent has caused victory to perch upon our banners, and consternation and defeat to the ranks of the rebels. While the western armies of the Republic have been reaping for themselves immortal honors, we have been keeping quiet, as usual, in our camps along the Potomac. For months passed and now, we are the grand army of "masterly inactivity." This immense and excellently disciplined corps de armee is held in reserve for a noble purpose. If the tide of success flows on for a few weeks yet, the Army of the Potomac will move. When the rebel strategy is completely unfolded and broken, when the railroad communications of Virginia in Tennessee and Carolina are severed, then we will "on to Richmond." It will be ours to give the last turn of the vice--the most potent squeeze of the "great anaconda," and crush out secession as we hope, forever--Manassas will be ours without a blow. Buell and Grant, in Tennessee and Burnside in North Carolina, will isolate the rebel base of operations at Manassas, and compel them to fall back on Richmond. Preparations for the grand advance are actively going on. The numerous hospitals in Alexandria are being vacated, and the sick sent to Philadelphia in order to make room for the wounded soldiers. Orders have been issued from headquarters to discharge at once all soldiers not fit for duty in the regimental hospitals. The numerous and rigid inspections of the troops all betoken an early demonstration.

So far as the 53d is concerned nothing of unusual importance is transpiring. The weather, which was during last week and part of this, disagreeable in the widest sense of the word, has made a great change for the better, and if it only lasts, will be nice travelling in a few days.

Last Tuesday, by a special order from the War Department, our Regimental Band was discharged. This was in accordance with their own request. From the time the regiment left Camp Curtin the band was peculiarly unfortunate. At Harrisburg it was considered the best band in camp, and though only in its infancy, it promised soon to be a ne plus ultra musical association. Some weeks before leaving Camp Curtin sickness came in their ranks, and two important members were thus forced to go home; while a third left for home on a cabbage furlough. We had bravely arrived at Washington, ere death laid his cold hands on two other members, Edwin Royer and Henry Albright. At Camp Brooke, others became sick, among them M. S. Weand, next to the Leader, the most important member of the band. (It affords us pleasure to hear that our friend Milton is rapidly recovering.) Thus was the band deprived of the services of many of its most efficient members, which, in a measure, greatly destroyed the excellency of the organization. Things looked gloomy.--This sad state of things dragged its "slow length" along until the last general payment, when some of the Company officers of the regiment, refused to give the amount agreed upon to make the pay of the band thirty dollars per month. This refusal on the part of some of the officers of our regiment to liquidate an honorable obligation, was decidedly wrong. True, misfortune crippled the band, yet a majority of the members were willing on all occasions, nay, anxious to do all that was required of them, and all the officers were as men--honorable men--bound according to a written agreement to pay them. The band unwilling to be thus treated, got up a written request, signed by all the members, asking to be discharged from the service.--Their request for a discharge was forwarded to the Secretary of War, and granted, but for some reason, was not acted upon until Tuesday last. Among the band were some who even did their duty and from whom we are sorry to part; such men as Messrs. Hendrix, Wirt and Harner, of Birdsboro, Messrs. Meixall, Peterman and Longan of Milton, and the Cole brothers of Troy, Bradford co. They were excellent associates and good musicians and never had a touch of home sickness. They carry with them the esteem and well wishes of the regiment.

L.J.F.

[*Ledger*, February 25, 1862]

*Original 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Veteran headstones* – (submitted by Marc Benedict)



*Pvt. James C. Sellers, Co. B*

Unknown birth and death date. Transferred from Co. G, 148th PVI. Buried in Colorado State Veterans Cemetery, Monte Vista, Colorado

*Pvt. David C. Secor, Co. H*



Unknown birth date. Died March 17, 1884. Buried at Knowlton Cemetery (aka Elk Run Cem.), Gaines Township, Tioga Co., PA

*Pvt. James N. Scovell, Co. F*

Born 1845. Died Nov. 15, 1864 while a prisoner at Salisbury Prison, Salisbury, NC. Buried at Salisbury National Cemetery, NC in burial trench.



*Site of Union Soldier burial trenches.*

Lewis Millard was taken a political prisoner during the Civil War. He was arrested by Confederate soldiers on November 1, 1862. The men with Lewis Millard that day were Lark Cross and a man by the name of Vanover. The three men were taken into custody at Buffalo Creek in Scott County, Tennessee. They were charged with disloyalty and tried at a summary court martial. Many say that Cross and Vanover were hanged on an apple tree. On

that same day in Campbell County, Tennessee, two other men were arrested. They were Alfred Rowe and Thomas Smith. These men were also charged with disloyalty and were imprisoned in Confederate prisons. While Lewis Millard eventually ended up in

Salisbury Prison, located at Salisbury, North Carolina, he first was imprisoned at the Confederate Military Prison Castle Thunder, in Virginia. Based on the date of his arrest and an article appearing in a

Nashville newspaper, he spent at least one year in Castle Thunder Prison. When and why he was transported from Castle Thunder to Salisbury Prison is not known. It is known that in addition to the many thousands of military prisoners incarcerated at Salisbury there were 131 political prisoners. Eight were from Campbell County, Tennessee.

Lewis Millard did not survive his incarceration at Salisbury. Records of the prison detail his death on May 11, 1864. The history of the prison indicates that many who died during that period of time were not buried in individual graves. Many individuals were buried in common graves. Records of the National Cemetery at Salisbury indicate 11, 700 individuals were buried in 18 trenches, each 240 feet long, dug in an abandoned cornfield outside the Confederate Prison stockade. Lewis Millard was buried in one of these common graves. Seventy-nine of the 131 civilian prisoners at Salisbury died during incarceration. Alfred Rowe and Thomas Smith were not among those who died in prison.

Lewis Millard was eleven days short of his sixty-ninth birthday when he died in prison. And it is reported he had been hospitalized in April of 1864 and enlisted the aid of one of his fellow prisoners to write a letter to his family.

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

Pards,

With our season coming to the end we still have a few things on the schedule.

1. **Our Fall Adopt a Position** day is scheduled for November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Plan on being at the monument site by 10:00am. John Heiser will gracing us with his presence this year and has offered to lead us on one of his infamous battlefield walks following the clean-up. Bring the usual rakes and cutters along.
2. **Armistice Ceremony** at the Weiser Homestead is set for November 11<sup>th</sup> at 2:00. We were asked to be there by 1:15. We'll be firing a three round salute.
3. **Remembrance Day** is November 17<sup>th</sup>. I don't expect any unusual instructions this year but I will wait to provide details until I hear from Col. Downes closer to the event.
4. **Annual Business Meeting** is December 1<sup>st</sup>. 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Fasnacht will be graciously hosting the meeting again this year. I'm confident that everyone knows where Mark lives by now but if you're not sure, contact me or reference the roster for his address. We'll be planning the 2019 event schedule, reviewing my notes from the NR meeting, discussing this year's Holiday Party and voting for the office of Vice President. If you have any suggestions for events please send me the info so I can add it to the agenda. Following the meeting we'll have lunch. Please bring a covered dish. (Remember, Joe Marks will be there. BRING PLENTY) If possible, please come prepared to pay your annual dues as well as the cost for the Holiday Party. *The meeting will start promptly at 9:00am.*

### **Election**

Nominee for Vice President: Pete Zinkus

If you failed to submit a different nomination, please contact me ASAP so I can update the membership in the event someone will not be at the meeting.

**Treasurer/Secretary:** In the October newsletter I announced that Pat Rose would be stepping down from this position and I asked for volunteers to fulfill Pat's term which runs through 2019. More than one volunteer would result in the need for a special election. To this date, Matt Steger is the only one who volunteered. Given the fact that there needs to be a timely transfer of the account, Matt will move into this position effective immediately. Please forward all payments for dues, party, registrations, QM purchases etc. to Matt Steger. His mailing address can be found on the current roster.

I want to publicly thank Pat for his contribution to the unit as our Treasurer. He also stepped up to fill an unexpected void when Croce got sick a number of years ago. As we all know, this position is one that always seems to be hardest to fill for the obvious reasons. Pat has done an excellent job and deserves to be recognized for it.

See y'all in Gettysburg on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.  
Eric

## Upcoming events –

3 November – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Monument Cleanup – Gettysburg NMP

Our bi-annual monument cleanup. Please arrive by 10AM and bring loupers, rakes, pruners, etc. to help clear growth and remove leaves on either side of the road near the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI monument. Assuming we get a good turnout, we are normally done in 2 hours or less. John Heiser will lead the group in a tour/talk after the work is complete.

11 November – Armistice Day event – Conrad Weiser Homestead

An event that we have been invited to in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of The Great War. Bring caps/rounds as we will be firing a few volleys. Arrive by 1:15pm.

17 November – Remembrance Day Parade – Gettysburg

The National Regiment will form up on the NW corner hill behind the elementary school. Normal uniform (sack coat or frock coat are OK) is fine including parade gloves. No caps and no rounds. Stay tuned to the 53<sup>rd</sup> or NR Facebook pages or emails from Eric for updates.

1 December – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Annual Meeting – Kleinfeltersville (Sgt. Fasnacht's Home)

Our annual membership meeting to discuss the 2018 campaign and the upcoming 2019 schedule, review various topics important to the unit, etc. Bring topics, events, gripes, etc. you'd like the unit to discuss. Also, please bring something to share for lunch. Please email Sgt. Fasnacht ahead of time to let him know what you'll be bringing so we don't have 9 people showing up with brownies.

*If you have not submitted your "Get To Know Your Pard" profile yet, please send it to the editor ASAP for inclusion in a future newsletter!*

## 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

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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>

