

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" December 2018

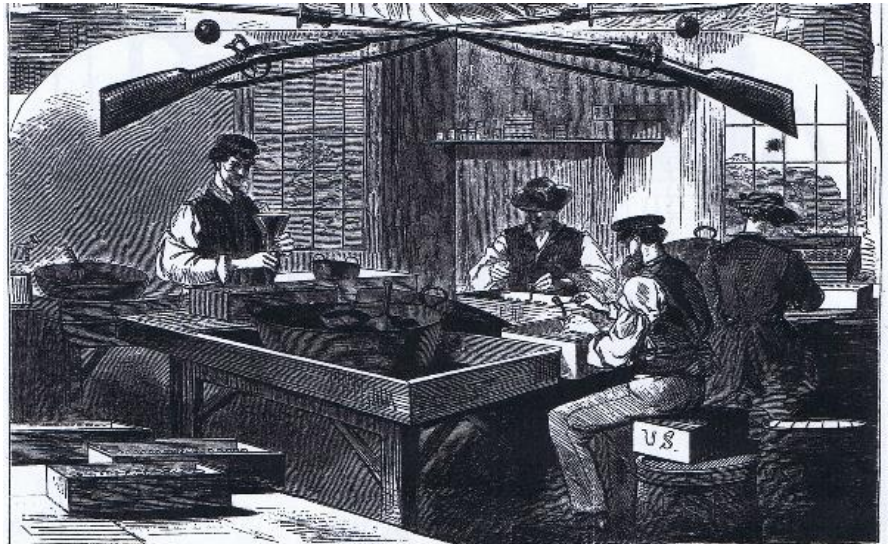
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

This Month:

1. "Outpost! Your Turn"
2. 2018 53rd Fall Monument Cleanup Summary/Photos
3. Levi Fritz Letter
4. Original 53rd PVI Veteran Headstones
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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! Your Turn

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)

This month we take the historical data from last month's article and suggest ways we can usefully make it happen today.

BASICS.

All the usual -organizers, land, permission, a reason for outposts, and a plan.



CONSIDERATIONS:

- Will it be just a demonstration of the nature of outposts, meaning you only need one side, or do you want to have opposing forces with interaction?
- If there is to be interaction, do you want it to be one side defensive and the other on the offense, or both sides defensive? Is the outpost the result of a “meeting” of opposing forces then settling down into tense outposts, or have they both been at the same spot for a month and there have been quiet agreements among the rank and file of both sides that the mission can be accomplished without gratuitous murder? In that case you get, occasionally, peaceful exchanges (tobacco/coffee/newspapers/local food) but usually without officers present. Even if they know, they want to say they didn’t know in case some martinet with a brass rod up his butt gets wind of what we now would call “fraternization.”



“An incident of the war,” sketch by Forbes. In case it isn’t obvious, these are soldiers from opposing outposts peacefully trading. But the two opposing sentinels retain their weapons. Forbes captured a lot of insightful details.



These guys do not look like they are interested in trading anything except lead. It is a wartime, staged photo, but clearly it’s intended to show a tense moment with active operations under way. The brush shelter is a quick solution to an outpost necessarily in an exposed position: It will not stop a bullet, but it will fuzz up a shooter’s target enough to perhaps make shooting not worthwhile. It also masks the strength of the position, which appears to be an outpost in support of a line of sentinels.

- Force limiting requirements. That is to say, you shape the nature of the event by sizing the opposing forces to meet your goals. Why? Because a veteran group will have a more interesting experience if it is a small force expected to “outpost” against a larger enemy; because if you want a stalemate then you need balanced forces; because if you want more depth, from sentinels and outposts to picket posts, you can have artillery, etc.
- Open or closed to the public?
- Limited operation, or overnight?

So let’s look at this in the context of the “rules” with which they opened the war for placing forces (this changed as the war progressed, as we’ll explore in the future).

- The outpost system is designed to screen you from your enemy, get you information about your enemy, and act as a defensive line capable of allowing your main line, up to a mile behind you, to form up, presumably out of bivouac. The system of sentinels, outposts, picket posts and grand guard posts is designed to get stronger as it falls back on itself.
- You need a site sized to your force, that is, one that’s workable for the force you have.
- You need avenues to move forward and back (“debouchements”). These have to be planned and troops instructed, because you don’t want your forward detachments blocking the fire of your larger groups in the rear. (Think “Missionary Ridge”.)

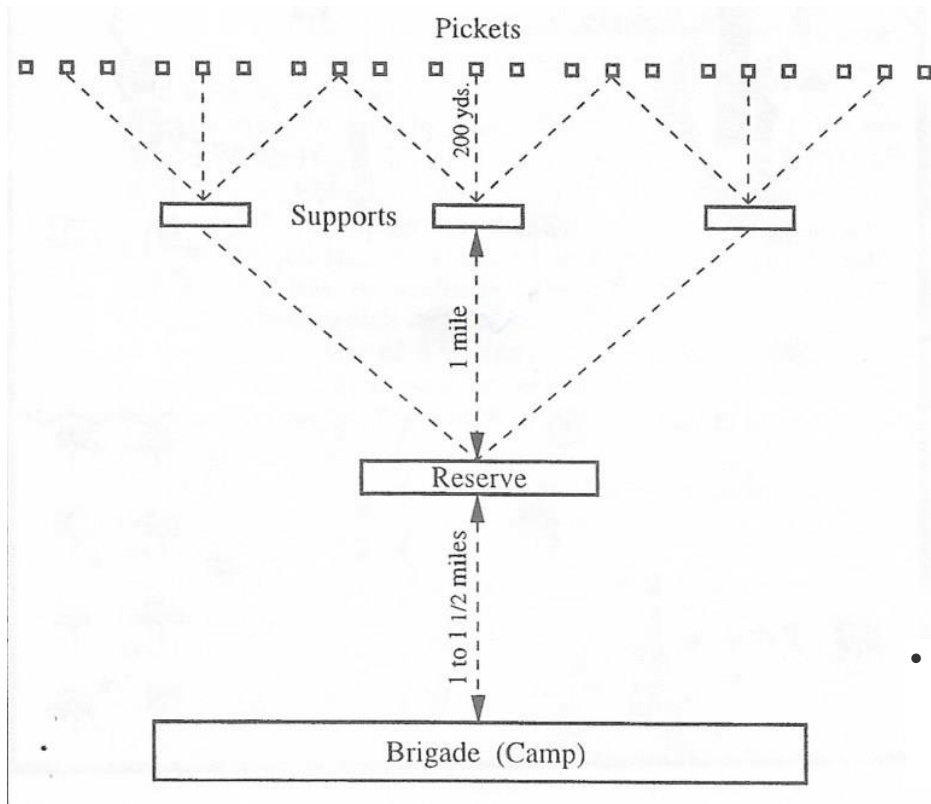
- Use terrain. The principles at the start of the war were that command and control were possible only with compact, dense formations. Thick woods, rocky terrain (Devil's Den), marshy ground – all prevented forces from “approaching in good order”.
- There must be no exploitable intervals in the line of outposts. You can't let an enemy force of significant size to get close to your main line undetected and unchallenged.

USEFUL THINGS TO HAVE.

- A site that has a dirt road lends itself to an outpost scenario, with the road the axis across which opposing outposts contend.
- A completely open site is not particularly good for this scenario. One that has broken terrain – gullies, hillocks, clumps of brush, old farm buildings, woodlots, woodlots with active recent logging, streams, etc. , with some fields or old fields in early second-growth regeneration. There should be a lot and a variety of approaches that need to be secured.

HOW??? AN EXAMPLE; A PROCESS

- Find a site. Nothing smaller than 10 acres will work. If it's a huge site, the “arena” of operations will have to be clearly delineated with non-period-correct stuff like magenta tape around trees. Nothing like a wanna-be commando who thinks he's clever by going outside the arena and coming in behind and, yes, I've seen it happen. So:
- Screen participants however you want, but make sure you do not allow the Teflon Cowboy into the event.
- Ahead of the event, devise a way for participants to work out for themselves how far away people actually are. I expect to tackle this in a future post, but for now just realize that the most screwed-up aspect of everything we do is because we refuse to adopt realistic distances. (That's one reason for the broken terrain requirement: There would be no condition except “if you're visible, your within range.”)
- Find several fellows who will commit to be “show runners,” doing nothing but making the action happen and gently nudging participants. They're the staff from which orders for both sides come down, so that everything is coordinated. They don't get to have the fun, but do get satisfaction from unleashing the hounds of hell or whatever. If you want they can also be tasked with evaluating performance, both in terms of the “period mission” and the reenactors' degree of plausibility of their operations. Gently, though, gently.
- “Orders” from the core staff would include directions on each force's military goals, which is its own challenge (and we'll have a post on that later, too). It would also include orders to advance, withdraw, probe, etc.



General order 69 schematic courtesy of Dom Dal Bellow, Army of the Pacific. Butterfield and Mahan might have used different labels – Pickets are sentinels, Supports are outposts, Reserve is the picket post, and Brigade is the grand guard. Distances, also, will have to be adjusted since the likelihood of us getting a site and enough people to have a depth of more than two miles are none and noner.

- An event like this has its own time frame different from that of run-of-the-mill reenacting. Assuming all are on site Friday night, the event begins Saturday morning at first light. Each force commander gets “orders”, which will necessitate the commander actually going to the area to be contested and figuring out where to put his line, his outposts, etc. He will be equipped with data on his available force – the math determines how many outposts, sentinels, etc., are available for deployment in various roles.
 - Simultaneously, each force commander’s staff is sorting out force structure and making last-minute adjustments to account for registration attrition – the process by which a registered force of 200 becomes an on-site force of 140 or whatever. There may or may not be rations to be issued.
 - The math exercise for staff continues. Assume 200 on each side. Divide it into two companies, because we are going to mess with reality to the extent that those in reserve for half the event, although not necessarily idle, will be in the sentinel/outpost role for the second half. More math: For every sentinel there are two more men in the closest outpost. So 20 sentinels means 40 men in the “supports”, representing the relief shifts. Theoretically a sentinel should be actually on duty for one hour, the assumed maximum amount of time someone can be truly alert. That still leaves 40 men in the “reserve” or “picket post” position, available to respond to alarms and mischief, launch patrols, cook up rations, etc.
 - Force commanders have an hour to get their instructions and two hours after that to reconnoiter the area and select locations for their line of sentinels, support posts, and reserve.
 - At 11 a.m. both sides deploy half their force as sentinels and support posts, and the reserve takes up a position substantially to the rear.
 - The first 12 hours of active operations begin at noon and run to midnight.
 - At midnight the reserve replaces the front-line units. (Good luck!)
 - At noon on Sunday, the event winds down.
- Force commanders may receive “orders” from “division” at any point. It’s your event. Make it work however you want.



On picket in the woods. Edwin Forbes



Pickets trading between the lines. Edwin Forbes

OUTCOMES

There’s much to be said just for the experience of trying to do this right. There’s also much to be learned for how well the scenario-specific goals were met. For instance:

- Did (Force A) screen and prevent penetration by Force B? (You will have to decide beforehand how you will determine this, perhaps by a diagram of a gun emplacement somewhere to the rear, etc.).
- Did reliefs get posted, and records kept? (It’s important, then and now, to know who is where and if they returned to duty or not. Captured, 1863, but today you’re looking for someone lost or ill.)
- How did the patrols fare? Etc. Take it away.



The volunteers of the 53rd PVI cleanup crew holding up a tree ...looks very similar to another famous photo that we are all familiar with..

In attendance: Heiser, Ford, Espenshade, Fasnacht, Zinkus, Shick.



Is that John Heiser trimming a sapling or have we finally got Bigfoot on camera??



Congratulations to our very own Travis Shick who was awarded his promotion to Lt. Colonel!

From John Heiser: "The ceremony took place at the 52nd New York Infantry Monument, the site where his ancestors fought in the Battle of Gettysburg. His friends in the 53rd PVI could not be more happy for this officer, a promotion so richly deserved!"

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.
Friday, Feb. 28th 1862.

Messers. Editors:--Allow us to make in last week's epistle the following errata: For "we had *bravely* arrived at Washington," read "we had *hardly* arrived, &c." For "among the band were some who *even* did their duty," read "*ever* did their duty." There were other provoking blunders caused by our pen or the types, but we shall let them pass.

The 22d, the anniversary of the birth of the "Father of His Country," was celebrated in all the camps of the Army of the Potomac. About 9 o'clock in the morning, Forts, Lyon, Worth and Ellsworth, all near us, commenced firing salutes with heavy pieces. Boom after boom followed each other in quick succession, sometimes it would be the sudden, continuous and swelling noise of the smooth bore sixty four pounder, followed by the sharp, hasty, hizzing of the rifled field piece. At all points along the lines the heavy smoke arising from constantly discharged arms, hung over the forts. While the sharp crack of musketry--of the regiments firing by battalion and by file, seemed to beautifully harmonize with the cannons' roar on the fortified hill tops. The noise of this rolling thunder--the trembling of the earth, the echoing and re-echoing of thousands of muskets, up the valleys and over the hills--seemed to give us an idea of battle. The firing of salutes lasted for several hours. In the afternoon the whole brigade was drawn up in line and Washington's immortal Farewell Address read. In this manner was the anniversary celebrated throughout the entire Army of the Potomac.

Last Monday we passed through one of the severest storms that we have yet experienced. It came up suddenly about 9 o'clock in the morning, commencing with hail. It soon made a scatteration in camp. Tents were lifted up and carried away bodily, while others were squashed down. Everybody was out doors with axe and rope to secure their tents, here an additional pin was driven in, there a rope strengthened. Some poor fellows whose "shanty" had partly given way before the attack of the persisting wind, were holding on to a rope or pole with might and main. We noticed a person holding for dear life to a pole of his tent that had given way,--a gust of wind took off his cap, which

commenced to make a Floyd march ahead of the wind. The poor fellow was in a quandry. Should he lose his cap and save his tent, or save his cap and lose his tent--that was the identical question to be solved. He looked at his retreating cap, then looked at his crippled tent, and like Alexander at the feast, "sighed and looked, and looked and sighed and looked again." By the time the cap had disappeared, he came to the sage conclusion that it was better to stand by something that would cover his whole body all night than have a goose chase after a piece of cloth that would cover only his head. Camp tables, stools, papers, blankets, &c. were scattered about in every direction. Though it was very cold, and per necessity there was no fire in any of the tents, yet it was amusing as well as provoking, to see how easily the high old wind can in such a promiscuous manner break up a soldier's house keeping arrangements. In Company A there were six tents and one of the officers' marquees blown down; the rest of the regiment suffered nearly in proportion. In the 66th N.Y. most of the tents were down and all the officers' quarters overturned. In this regiment (66th) the sutlers' large tent was blown away, of course the boys helped him to secure his things; the commissary tent was also moved without the Quartermaster's desire. Some of the soldiers seem to think this was a *rational* proceeding. In the 88th N.Y. it blew over the hospital, and the sick for awhile suffered a fearful exposure. In the 69th N.Y. of Gen. Meagher's Irish Brigade, which joins us on the right, every tent of the regiment collapsed--this regiment have all Sibley or round French tents. Brigadier General French's quarters also suffered severely. Most of the tents occupied by Major Gen. Sumner and staff gave way before the storm, for it appears that the storm King is no respecter of persons, but levels to mother earth the tent of the General and the tent of the private. As if to make the matter worse, about three o'clock P.M. and while the storm was raging in all its fury, here comes orders for the regiment to march immediately, with one days' rations. The boys like good fellows didn't say anything, but there was a deal of thinking going on. All preparations having been hastily made for the march, the regiment in quick time proceeded out of camp. When they got to the parade ground, our Brigadier, who blinks with both eyes frequently if not more so, put the brigade through the knapsack drill. This, in the fierce storm blowing, was about as pleasant as riding on a rail. When the regiment came into camp it was dark. The occupants of the overturned tents were accommodated for the night, one of the coldest we have felt, in those tents standing. In some of the tents the inmates took turn about in holding up the "shebang." The storm continued with unabated vigor until long after midnight, and though the ropes jerked and strained, the canvas flaped and the cold night blast hissed and howled around us, yet no tents collapsed during the night. The following morning was calm and the boys were busily engaged in repairing damages.

Yesterday after noon just as it commenced raining, orders came from brigade headquarters to be ready to march with two days' rations, and have everything prepared for a fight, privates to have their knapsacks on and blanket strapped over the shoulders, officers to carry no baggage with them but a valise. The boys were joyful for they felt certain of having an engagement with the enemy. Commissary wagons were loaded with stores. The ambulances and surgeons transport carts were made ready to move. The surgeons fixed up packages of bandages, and examined saws and knives, and had every thing ready to cut off wounded legs and shattered arms, bind up broken heads, &c. The regiment marched out and, as usual, it ended in nothing more than brigade drill. Gen. French appears to delight in these kind of things. One thing is certain when we do move forward, the boys will look exceedingly dubious, until they get passed the brigade drill ground. Orders have come from division headquarters to keep on hand in the commissaries two days provisions and be ready to march at any moment.

For the last few weeks the whole army of the Potomac by general orders, have been drilling the bayonet exercise. This looks as if cold steel is to enter largely in the work to be done by our numerous battalions.

All letters intended for the 53d should be directed to Alexandria, Va.

L.J.F.

[Ledger, March 4, 1862]

Original 53rd PVI Veteran headstones – (submitted by Marc Benedict)



Pvt. Jacob Stormfeltz, Co. H

No military designation on headstone *but* most likely our Jacob Stormeltz. His father, age 37, was in Co. H, 203rd PVI (1 yr. unit) so the family was living in PA and the father survived. This is his son, age 20, and may be the "Bates" Stormeltz in the 53rd PVI, Co. D. He was mustered in in 1864 also. Both are buried in Ohio. So apparently the family moved after the war. Jacob E. is buried in the North Canton Cemetery, North Canton, OH.

Pvt. James Swan, Co. B



Born 1844. Died 1925. Buried in Lakeland Cem., Lakeland, PA. Gravesite detail mentions 53rd PVI service.

Pvt. Jone Suders, Co. K



Born July 12, 1826. Died Apr. 10, 1898. Buried in Union Cemetery, McConnellsburg, PA.

A word from our president.....

Hello Gentlemen,

We wrapped up the year this past weekend with the annual business meeting. Thanks again to Mark Fasnacht for his willingness to open his home and host the meeting. Matt will be sending the minutes to the paid members in a separate email and you should have also received his copy of the current financial report. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Matt or I.

The 2019 event schedule is set and should be posted on the website by the time this newsletter is published. Please make an effort and plan to support the max effort events. The NR has only two on the schedule in April and October. Also, the NR is hosting a School of the Soldier in March. This event has been open to all members, not just Officer's and NCO's, for a few years now. The 53rd will cover your registration. We also voted in favor of the unit offsetting the lodging expense for this event with the hope that we might get a few more folks willing to attend. Please contact me if you're interested and I'll explain further.

The office of Vice President was the only open position on this year's ballot. With only one position and one nominee, a motion was raised and accepted to forgo the official ballot voting process and to move forward accepting Pete Zinkus as the unit's VP for the standard two year term. Croce will be officially passing the torch at the Holiday Party next month. I would like to publicly extend my personal thank you to Croce for a job well done. It's been a pleasure working with you!

Finally, Traci and I want to wish all of you a Merry Christmas. We hope to see all of you at the holiday party next month. Eric

(Please see the party invite on the next page – editor)



53rd
 Pennsylvania
 Volunteer Infantry
 Company "C"
 Inc.



ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

Saturday, January 12th, 2019

Reception and Cocktails at 5:30pm

Dinner at 6:30pm

AT THE DOBBIN HOUSE

89 Steinwehr Avenue, Gettysburg, PA 17325



COST - \$27.00 per person

GUEST SPEAKER

Tim Hodge as:

Major Martin Robinson Delany



RSVP

by Monday, December 31

to Croce Volpe

vafomedic@aol.com 215.852.0668

or Eric Ford

reenactor53@gmail.com 717.917.7734

Upcoming events –

12 January 2019 – 53rd PVI Christmas Party (Invite above)

Our annual get-together at the Dobbin House in Gettysburg. Bar opens at 5:30pm with dinner served at 6:15PM. If you did not provide payment at the annual meeting, please get your payment for the party to me by 31 December. **Checks are payable to: 53rd PVI.** You can also include your 2019 dues (\$40) in the same check to me if you'd like.

For Sale -

All items in good shape unless noted otherwise. Listed by Rick Kramer for a friend; contact Rick directly for any inquiries/questions - auction8@comcast.net

Unlined Sack Coat (approx. xlarge)	30.00
CnD Jarnigan Great Coat (approx. Exlarge)	100.00
Keune McDowell Kepi some brim cracking	20.00
Grey Blanket with black stripe	50.00
Rubber Poncho	20.00
Older shelter half with brass grommets	5.00
Euroarms 1855 Enfield	500.00

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!

2019 Calendar of Events -

2 Feb. - Winter Drill – Landis Valley (weather back-up date is 16 Feb)
16 Feb. – Cartridge Rolling Party – Mark Fasnacht’s home (9 March back-up date)
2-3 March – NR School of Instruction – Gettysburg Fire Hall
5 April – Ephrata Middle School – Civil War Day event with Michael Fedorshak
6 April – Spring Adopt-A-Position
13-14 April – NR Camp Of Instruction – Ft. McHenry **NR MAX EFFORT**
18-19 May – USAHEC (Carlisle, PA) – PAID Event **53rd MAX EFFORT**
27 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade
22-23 June – 53rd Gettysburg Living History – Spangler Spring **53rd MAX EFFORT**
5- 7 July – Gettysburg GAC - 2ndary Event
20-21 July – Landis Valley Civil War Days - **53rd MAX EFFORT**
28 July - Gruber Wagon Works (Reading, PA) **53rd MAX EFFORT**
14-15 Sept. – C&O Canal (ELF event)
4-6 Oct. – Shenandoah 1864 (Lovettsville, VA) **NR MAX EFFORT**
19-20 Oct. – Cedar Creek (Middletown, VA) - 2ndary Event
2 Nov. - Autumn Adopt-A-Position – spring cleanup at the 53rd PVI Monument
16 Nov. – Remembrance Day Parade – Gettysburg
7 Dec. – 53rd PVI Annual Meeting (Mark Fasnacht’s home)



53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford (reenactor53@gmail.com)
Vice President: Croce Volpe (vafomedic@aol.com)
Treasurer/Secretary: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@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>

