

Company C 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

"The Sentinel" February 2019

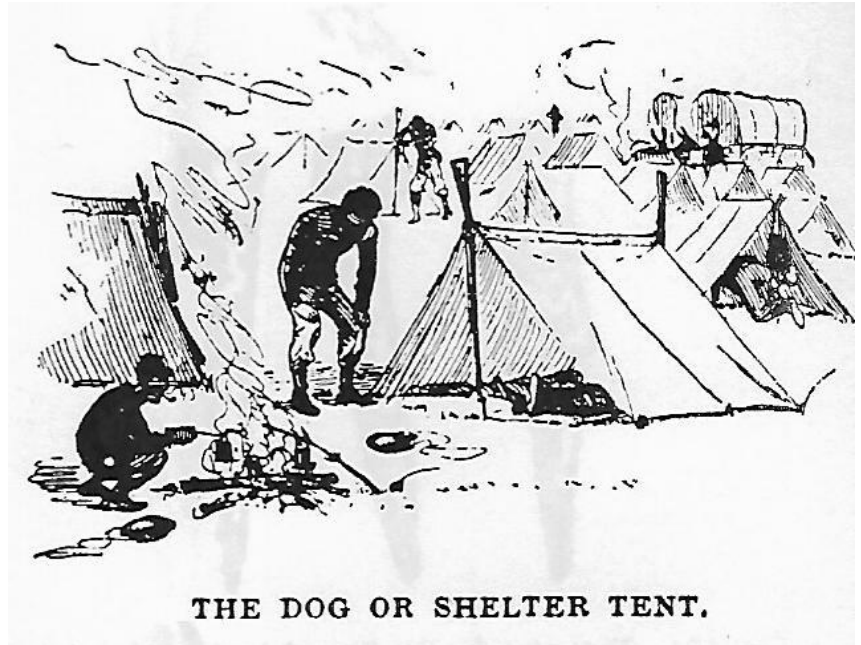
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

This Month:

1. "Commands We Often Get Wrong"
2. QuarterMaster News – we have an 'official' poem
3. National Portrait Gallery's Civil War Display
4. Annual Party Summary
5. Levi Fritz Letter
6. A Word From Our President
7. Event Schedule
8. 53rd PVI Contact Info



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

2019 New Year Resolutions – Commands We Often Get Wrong

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

Here's a mishmash of reenactorisms that, in a quest for world peace, don't amount to much. But this is an activity we heavily invest in, and it's worth doing right. It's also an easy list for a New Year resolution: No physical effort, no financial output, just a string around your finger when you take to the field to remind yourself what to stop saying and doing. Or multiple strings

"By files, left (right), MARCH" NO. Think about it. This command directs all files to turn simultaneously to the left, which, in a march by the flank, will produce a mob within seconds. The correct command is "By file, left (right), MARCH." Each file, singular, one after the other. Consecutively. Sequentially. Not simultaneously.

Related **Echoing “By file, left (right), MARCH”** by each company commander in a battalion marching by the flank and changing direction. NO. We drill just by companies so much that a company commander can be forgiven for “muscle memory” compelling him to issue an order even when none is necessary, which, in this case, it is not. In the case of every order given in a battalion formation by a battalion commander, all you need is the battalion commander’s order, whether it is this or forward march or fire or anything else. The only time the company commander needs to “echo” a command is when it is clear the men in his company did not hear it the first time. In the case of a “by file” command, each company simply follows the one ahead of it, no order necessary.

Not stepping off when the battalion commander orders “Forward, MARCH.” A big problem, not because it’s annoying, but because waiting for each company commander to repeat the command, and company commanders deliberately waiting for the company ahead to move, automatically means the entire battalion is out of whack for distances. That greatly affects speed of maneuver, and is directly responsible for the big scenes of confusion and woe when the next command is “halt” followed by “front.” There will be big gaps between companies and the battalion will look like an accordion squeezed by a maniac on acid as people move right, then left, then right again because nobody knew which way to “dress.” Keep the right intervals, between companies and between each file of four, and reforming a battalion front is a matter of mere seconds and has everyone ready for whatever comes next. When the battalion commander says “march,” every left foot in the battalion should instantly move.

Ideally, the battalion commander can say “halt” and then “front” within two seconds, because everyone is already exactly where they need to be to front into a fully dressed line. And a fully dressed line is a stylish line.

“To the rear in open order, MARCH.” No. This actually orders a battalion to march to the rear in open order which, if you are in a battlefront to begin with, is clearly impossible. The correct command, heard much more often these days as folks actually READ THE MANUAL, is **“to the rear, open order (pause for the sergeants to post the rear rank’s line) ... MARCH.”**

“All present and accounted for, sir.” NO, no, no. To be sure, if every man on the roll was present, all would be accounted for, but this is a rare thing indeed. And your report to the adjutant on the parade ground would simply be “all present.” What you have, first sergeants, is **“All present OR accounted for,”** that is, you have two classes of men, some in attendance and others absent but the reason for the absence known and recorded, ie., “accounted for” : absent due to sickness, special duty, detached service, wife’s weekend to pick the family outing, etc.

Not egregious but useful to know: Route step is the best way to go more than a couple of hundred feet. There’s no need to keep men to the step through tall grass, rocks, swamp and ground hog warrens. There is, however, a corresponding need to go back “to the step” when the battalion needs to maneuver. The call **“to the step”** should see a return to correct distances, feet moving in step, and, very importantly, silence in the ranks. And a drum is a wonderful tool, even if you have to bring one along and just order someone to whang away on it for the purposes of setting “the step.” A drum will help every maneuver you make go more smoothly.

53rd PVI Quartermaster News -

The “Official Poem” 53rd PVI Quartermaster – as written by Mike Espenshade (in response to Rick Kramer making a purchase)

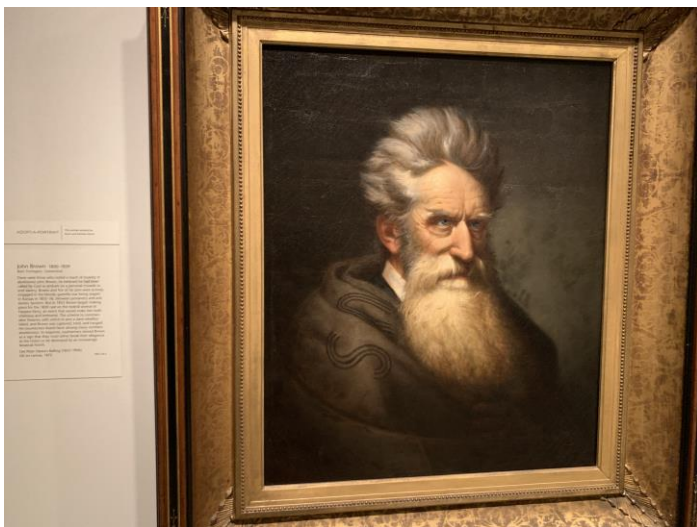
*Keep on buying stuff Rick!
Let's not make Steve sick!
There is so much more
That We wish not to store
So, please pick
every knack 'n knick!*

Civil War Related Portraits - National Portrait Gallery

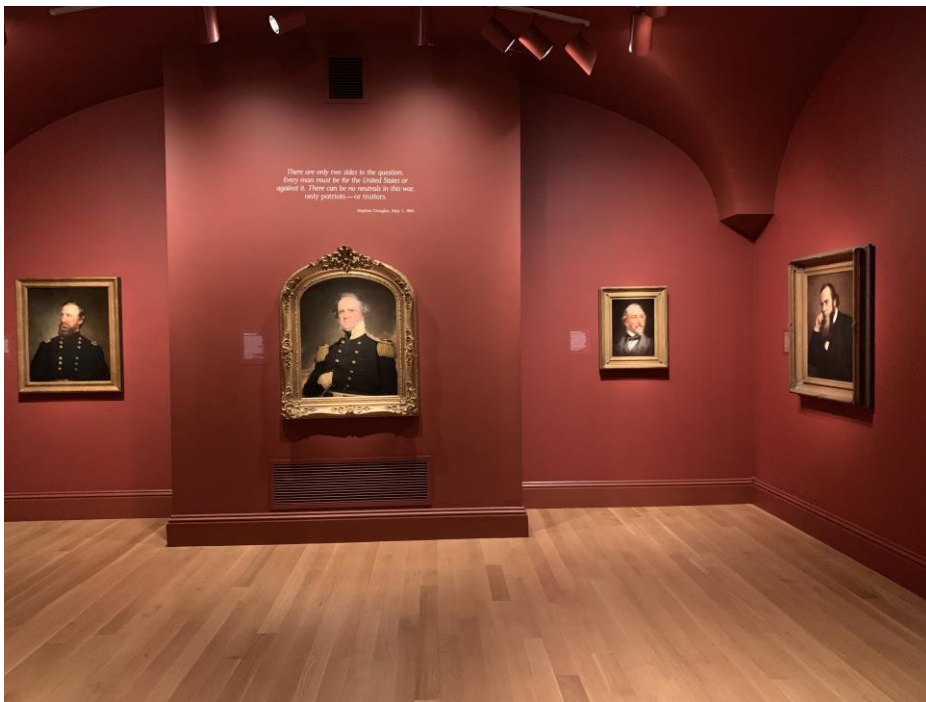
I recently visited Washington D.C. and stopped by the National Portrait Gallery. They have a rather large display of Civil War-era paintings, etchings, and artifacts on display. I will share photos this month and in coming editions of “*The Sentinel*”. Below are just some of the examples that I saw and photographed (I will include more in future newsletters):



Gen. Sherman and the 2nd image shows the wall with Gen. Sherman’s painting with few other smaller paintings (including Gen. Jackson).



John Brown



One wall shows Gen. Rosencrans, Gen. Scott, Gen. Lee, and Sec. Edwin Stanton.



Full size “Study for Grant and his Generals” – measures approx. 10’ x 25’. A list of all of the included generals is listed on the tag to the painting’s right. It is literally a ‘who’s who’ in the Union Army. The much smaller version of this painting was included in the Jan. newsletter and is included in a different nearby room at the museum.



Pres. George Washington and Pres. Abraham Lincoln

Party Summary

On 12 January, the 53rd PVI held our annual party/dinner at Dobbin House in Gettysburg. We had a nice turnout of over 30 people plus door prizes, sharing good times with our pards and their guests, and, of course, dinner. Our after-dinner speaker was Tim Hodge who portrays Major Martin Delaney. Tim gave us a 1st person account of the Major's life and service as the first black officer in the Federal Army. The party also marked the end of VP Croce Volpe's term. Thanks for your service to the unit, Croce, as well as organizing yet another nice dinner party.



Group photo of the men of the 53rd PVI and our guest speaker.



Ladies photo

The most popular dessert at dinner was the chocolate cake.



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 at Shipping Point,
York Co., Va.
Friday, April 11th, 1862.

Messers. Editors:--Since our last letter we have made many removals, and marched many miles, and I presume our friend and the readers of the *Ledger* generally are anxious to know where we are and what we have been doing during the last four or five weeks.

At six o'clock on Monday morning, the 10th of March, in accordance with previously issued orders, we marched out of Camp California. We waited more than an hour on the road to fall in our proper position in the line of march. The division under the command of General Richardson, proceeded as follows: General Howard's Brigade composed of the 81st P.V., 61st N.Y., 64th N.Y., 5th N.H., Battery G, 1st N.Y. Artillery. General French's command, consisting of the 52d N.Y., 57th N.Y., 66th N.Y., 53rd Penna., Battery B, 1st N.Y. Artillery. General Meagher's (Irish Brigade), 69th N.Y., 88th N.Y., 63d N.Y., Battery B, 1st U.S. Artillery, and the 8th Ill. Cavalry. We proceeded a short distance up the Orange & Alexandria Railroad and deploying across the fields some two or three miles, we came upon the road, marched over by

General (then Colonel) Heintzelman's command in the memorable advance made July last. The day was not auspicious, rain commencing to fall early in the morning, and continuing

during the entire day. The roads were in a miserable, almost impassable, condition, and the fatigues of this first day's march were by no means light, but we bore up bravely, cheered by the hope of winning laurels of glory in the battles in which we believed we were soon to fight and win. What a gloomy contrast between the march we made over this road in July last and the recent one; then the dust and heat was very oppressive, then the woods through which the roadway courses were green with the natural luxuriance of summer; this march is made under clouded skies, mud and water and long lines of barren interminable pines surrounding us. At 2 o'clock we passed the Acotink, and three miles further on the pickets of the 2d N.J., who had been advanced the day previous. At 7 o'clock the division bivouacked for the night on the heights of Limestone Hill, a point about two miles south of Fairfax Station, on the Orange & Alexandria R.R. The men rested as best they could during the night. The line of march was taken up the next morning (the 11th) at 8 o'clock.

During the night it had cleared off, and the morning sun rose upon a bright and glorious day. After an easy march of several hours we come in sight of Sangster's Station on the railroad mentioned above. Here an aid-de-camp of Gen. Sumner communicated to us the fact that the rebels had completely evacuated Manassas. Your readers will perhaps remember that we predicted in this correspondence that this stronghold of rebeldom would be ours without a blow. Early in the afternoon we reached the station, and after, apparently an unnecessary evolutionizing we were quartered in the pine wood. Ere long the cheerful camp fires of the soldiery were blazing for miles around, and as night drew on and the boys had somewhat rested themselves, the merry song and the freehearted laugh echoed from many a hill, and as the hour for reveille approached, the old woods were livened by the roll of drums, the sweet music of the bands and the shrill blasts of the bugle. At 9 o'clock, Wednesday morning (the 12th of March), the assembly was beaten and the troops equipped themselves for the march. The bugle sounded the forward, and we moved up the line of the Orange & Alexandria R.R. The cavalry and artillery taking another road. The bridges on the road were all burned and the rails taken up and carried away. In an hour's march we reached Union Mills, the commencement of the fortifications of Manassas. At this place we left the railroad and filing left, we surmounted a high hill, which gave us an extended view of this now world renowned military stronghold of the traitors. We rested beside our arms for half an hour, the bands filling the pure air of the lofty hills, for, perhaps, the first time with the heart cheering, old and revered national airs. We thought the star spangled banner never sounded so grandly, and yankee doodle appeared to have a musical charm that we never felt before. Here, perhaps, not forty-eight hours back sounded the strains of the Southern Marseilles and Dixie Doodle. In every direction we could see the deserted huts of the rebels, while on almost every hill was a fort or earthwork of some kind. Works occupying strong positions, from behind which boasting rebels intended to hurl upon our attacking armies death, destruction, disastrous and overwhelming defeat. Nature has not anywhere thrown up better means of defense, than these steep hills of Manassas, where brave men, acting on the defensive, could hold their position against heavy odds. These splendid heights are all ingloriously vacated, and we are allowed to take quiet possession of these fortified mounds, and dangerous defiles, concealing well planted batteries, that were intended to work victorious wonders for the rebel stars and bars.

Another mile's march brought us to the banks of the famous Bull Run, at a point some nine miles below the scene of the sanguinary conflict of the 21st of July. We crossed over on a bridge partly burned by the retreating rebels, and about a mile beyond we went into bivouac for the night. Our three days were pretty well "played out," and as the teams had not come up, it was necessary to forage for supplies. A squad of men from the regiment, under command of Lieut.-Colonel McMichael, was sent out to reconnoitre and bring in such supplies as they could find. They returned about twilight with a sufficiency for several days of flour, bread, crackers, hams, bacon, peas, &c., that the rebels had left in their deserted log cabins. The next day, the 13th, at 1 o'clock the line of march was taken up, and coming upon the line of the Alex. & Orange R.R., we followed it up for several hours when we reached Manassas Junction, being the first Brigade of Infantry that arrived at and held regular military possession of this world renowned, and well fortified stronghold of rebeldom. The first troops at the Junction were a detachment of Colonel Averill's Pennsylvania cavalry. Any one who is at all acquainted with the arrangements of an army on the march, cannot fail to see that claims of a New Jersey regiment on the honor of first raising the Union flag at the Junction, must be necessarily false. Cavalry always proceeds the advance of an army to see that the road is clear, &c., and the idea that any of our Generals would permit an Infantry regiment to enter such a place as Manassas without previously reconnoitering with Cavalry is simply preposterous. Long before we entered the Junction, evidences of the complete flight of the rebels surrounded us on every side; buildings containing stores were burned to the ground and yet smoking; tents, stoves, clothing, mess chests, in fact all the paraphernalia of a camp were scattered promiscuously around.

But at the Junction was the complete wreck of all: here were the store houses of the whole army, and as they had no transportation to take it away it was given to the flames. For

half a mile we marched through a sorrowful field of destruction. Goods that were not burned were strewn about in every direction.

We went into camp just beyond the Junction, the greater part of the brigade occupying the rebel huts that were once occupied by "Extra Nilly Smith's" command. Our regiment bivouac'd in the woods, but by means of rebel tents and stoves brought from the Junction we soon made a very comfortable camp. Our brigade held the extreme right of Sumner's command, the left resting at Union Mills. During the night our position was constantly menaced by a strong force of rebel cavalry. In the morning of the 14th, we were ordered back to the plains of Manassas. This was done, we presume, in order to see whether the rebels meant fight. The infantry marched back by way of the railroad. Capt. Bull's company, (the Sumner Rifles) was detailed as rear guard, the position of honor. The wagons, ambulances, &c., followed by the battery and Capt. Bull's Rifles, took the Centreville Road. Capt. Bull deployed his company as skirmishers, the right under Lieut. Potts and the left under Lieut. Mintzer. We proceeded undisturbed until we came to Bull Run, and Blackburn's Ford. The recent rains had flooded the stream so that it was impossible to cross. After waiting half an hour, we marched back to the brigade on the plains of Manassas. Here we took quarters for the night, and in the morning marched back to the Junction again.

We remained at the Junction with nothing unusual occurring until Tuesday, March 21st. In the afternoon, about 4 o'clock our regiment received orders to march immediately. Following a roundabout way to the left of the Railroad, we made a forced march through fields and streams and dense pines, coming out a Bristol station, on the Orange & Alex. R.R., four miles below the Junction. It seems that a body of Secesh cavalry had come to Bristol and fired on our pickets; it was also rumored that the rebels were endeavoring to rebuild the railroad bridge that here crosses Broad Run (a stream that reminds us strongly of our own Manatawny). The regiment was divided and placed in advantageous positions, pickets posted, &c. At 10 o'clock orders came for us to return. The night was damp, disagreeable and dark as "pitch." We proceeded up the railroad; stepping upon uncertain sills, and tenderly picking our steps over equally uncertain "cow catchers" every now and then some unfortunate one would get a miscellaneous tumble, followed by an unusual and vociferous violation of a certain commandment. Coming to a bridge that the rebels had of course burned, we filed down steep and muddy embankments, forded the stream, and made our way to the railroad again, traveling through the thickest kind of mud to do so. We reached camp at 7 o'clock, having made the most disagreeable march imaginable.

On Monday, March 24th, several companies of our regiment, and a detachment of the Illinois cavalry, under command of Lieut. Col. McMichael, were sent on a reconnoitering excursion. They proceeded up the railroad to Broad Run, crossing which, they went down the stream as far as Brentsville, the county seat of Prince William county, without seeing the enemy in any force. At Brentsville Col. McMichael raised the national colors of the 53d over the Court House amid the cheers of the men. On the morning of Tuesday March 25th, the fresh and invigorating air brought to our ears martial notes, and soon there appeared in the direction of Centreville the advance of a truly long line of soldiers. As thousands following thousands marched by us over the broad plains of Manassas, with excellent bands gaily playing and the proud Union colors floating in the cheering breeze, it was well calculated to awaken the patriotism of even the most philosophic of soldiers. In our memories we shall long cherish this as a bright, grand, ennobling scene. We were not long before "lookers on in Venice." The shrill call of the bugle soon put us under arms and in ranks. We were marched to Headquarters and then, like a certain king, marched back again. In the evening we marched to the head of the column, and bivouacked for the night on the banks of Broad Run. The moving column was part of Gen. Sumner's Corps d'armee, consisting of the divisions of Generals Blenker and Richardson, and about 25,000 strong. In the morning at sunrise, the line of march was taken up, and crossing over Broad Run we proceeded southward. There was a strong body of rebel cavalry constantly playing in our front, and it was uncertain when we might have a fight with the enemy, we could make but little headway. Whenever the ground would permit we marched in divisions closed in mass. We forded Cedar Creek about sundown on the other side of which we quartered for the night, our regiment being in a corn field. We made fires, and when the teams came up, cooked coffee, which together with pork and crackers, made our supper. After drying our stockings, pants, &c., at the fire, we bunked on the ground till morning. The 65th N.Y. regiment had a sergeant and two men captured during the night. The next day we marched into Warrenton Junction, the rebels had as usual just left, as squads of rebel cavalry were observed a distance down the railroad. A rifled cannon and several shots were thrown, killing, as we afterwards learned, six of them, and wounding as many more. Warrenton Junction is on the line of the Orange and Alexandria railroad, fifteen miles below Manassas. The following day, the 28th of March, a reconnoitering party consisting of Gen. Howard's brigade, a battery and the Illinois cavalry, proceeded in the direction of the Rappahannock river, distant twelve miles from Warrenton Junction. The rebel force consisting of two brigades of infantry with a proportionate amount of artillery and cavalry retreated across the river, destroying the bridge afterwards. They shelled Gen. Howard from their entrenchments on the other side of the river, but did no execution. Our troops got their

battery in position and soon shelled the rebels from their entrenchments. The party returned on the 29th bringing in some five hundred head of cattle that the rebels had endeavored to drive across the river.

At 8 o'clock on the morning of April 1st we received orders to march back to Alexandria. We marched to Broad Run, where we camped during the night. The next morning we marched to Manassas, where a train of altogether some ninety cars were waiting to convey us to Alexandria. After a great deal of maneuvering we finally were shipped. But there was not cars enough to convey all of us, and only two companies of our regiment (A and F) were put on board. After a long stoppage at Burke station to water, we reached old Camp California about 9 o'clock at night. The following day almost before we had time to wash ourselves and change our clothing, marching orders were received. We proceeded to Alexandria in the afternoon, and two companies of our regiment and the 52d N.Y. (Col. Frank) were shipped on board the steamboat Daniel Webster. The major part of our regiment, with Col. Brooke and staff, were shipped aboard the steamboat Robert Morris. Friday afternoon, April 3d we steamed down the river. About 3 o'clock we passed Fort Washington and soon after, Mount Vernon, further down we could see the deserted rebel blockading batteries, we anchored in the river over night, early on the morning of the 4th we made the Chesapeake Bay. The weather during the day was somewhat stormy. At dark we entered Hampton Roads where we anchored for the night. Early in the morning we ran down to Fortress Monroe, and anchored near the landing, and about five hundred yards from the celebrated Monitor, that the fight with the Merrimac has given a world wide reputation. The best description we can give you of it, is to let you imagine one of the old scows on the Schuylkill Canal half sunk, with a large round water tank on it, and you will have a good idea of the appearance of the Monitor. It is the most unpretending and harmless looking thing in the shape of a war vessel we have yet seen. It seems as if a little schooner could run into her and sink her. We were not landed at Fortress Monroe, but got orders to go somewhere else. The steamer turned round and proceeded up the bay about fifteen miles, entered the mouth of the York river and landed us at Shipping Point, about ten miles from Yorktown, where we now are. Farther it is not prudent to write. The boys are well and in excellent spirits.

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

[Ledger, April 15, 1862]

A word from our president.....

Pards,

Thank you to everyone who made the trip to Gettysburg for our annual holiday party. It was great to see everyone! I'm sure Matt will be feature a nice recap of the evening in this edition so I won't spend much time on it here. I know that we're a year out but I'm going to start the conversation for next year's party right now. We'll be celebrating our **40th** anniversary and I would love to see us fill the room. If you have ever spent any period of time in the 53rd we want to see you there. Pete and I will be working hard to make this a very special event.

We'll be heading to Landis Valley for the winter drill on February 2nd. Plan to be there and ready to go by 9:00am. I'm not sure if we'll be in the fire house or the yellow barn but I'll communicate that a couple of days in advance. Plan to spend periods of time outdoors. We'll cover what we can inside but obviously we'll be putting things into practice so be prepared. Each man is responsible for their own lunch which we can cook over the fire. We will NOT be firing so rounds are not needed. Is there a specific topic that anyone wishes to cover and/or present? If so, contact Sgt Fasnacht so he can prepare. Please don't wait until the day before.

The NR's School of Instruction is March 2-3. Who's going? If a hotel room is required, we need to make the reservation ASAP in order to make sure that we get the room discount. Remember, the unit is reimbursing for the room this year and the cost for the school is also covered. All ranks are encouraged to attend. Let me know if you're going so I can keep the Colonel and his staff up to date with numbers. If anyone going is interested in presenting a topic for the group, please contact me ASAP so I can pass it along.

It looks like almost everyone has settled up with their dues for the year but we still have a few outstanding. Please submit your check to Matt by the end of January or bring it to Landis Valley. Dues are \$40.00 this year. The increase (\$10) covers the individual cost for the NR's insurance which we are all required to have in order to participate in any event whether or not it's an NR event. I also need to know if you had any change in your contact info (address, phone and email). If so, please email me the updated info so I can provide accurate records to the NR for the insurance policy.

Eric

Upcoming events –

2 Feb – Winter Drill (Landis Valley Museum – Lancaster)

Be onsite by 9AM and bring food for lunch (we will have a fire for cooking). No rounds needed. We will have inside instruction and outside drill so prepare accordingly. Should you have any topics you'd like discussed/reviewed or would like to present a topic, please let Eric or the Sgt. Fasnacht know ASAP.

16 Feb. - Cartridge Rolling Party (Mark Fasnacht's home in Klinefeltersville)

We will meet once again to make cartridges for the 2019 season. Please bring whatever tools you may have to help get the job done. Also, please bring something to share for lunch and let the 1st Sgt. know ahead of time what you are bringing in case 3 people are planning on bringing the same item.

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 -

12 Jan. — Annual Holiday Party — Dobbin House (Reservations/Payment due by 31 Dec.)

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

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**

24-25 Aug. – 53rd Gettysburg Living History – Spangler Spring **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-elect: Pete Zinkus (zinkusp@gmail.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) NR Website: <http://nationalregiment.com>