

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

## Company C

"The Sentinel" January 2019

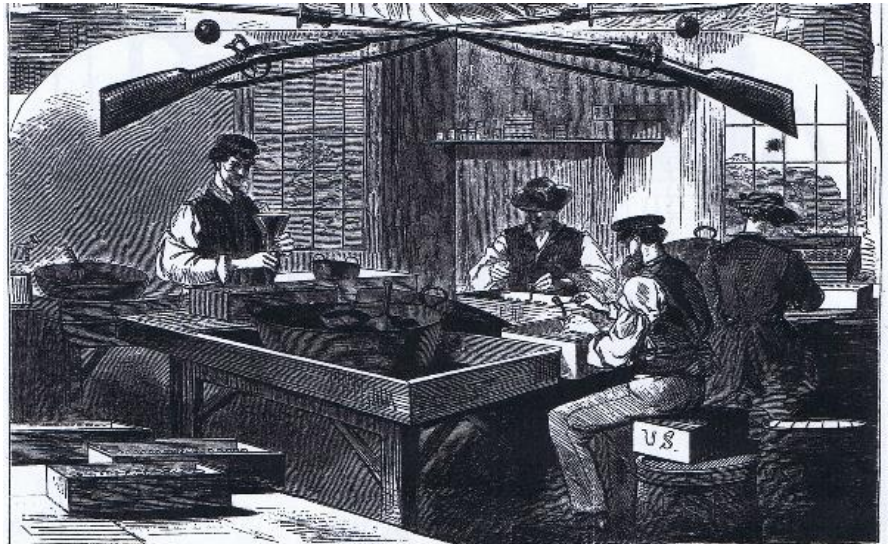
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

### This Month:

1. "Target Practice – Part 1"
2. National Portrait Gallery's Civil War Display
3. Levi Fritz Letter
4. Original 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Veteran Headstones
5. Word From Our President
6. For Sale items
7. 2019 Event Schedule
7. 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Contact Info



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*

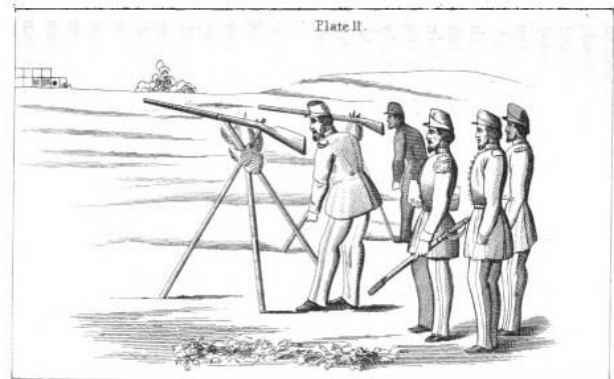
## Target Practice – Part 1

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

### **WAIT – YOU MEAN THEY ACTUALLY PRACTICED SHOOTING?**

Yes, they did. Many of them, at least.

We all seem to know the storyline that says target practice was limited because the fellows wearing stars didn't want to "waste" ammunition. At least, most of us have "known" that, although there are a few units that have impressions based on units trained or selected for marksmanship and "light infantry" tactics, which we'll cover in the future. Much less known is the training that



actually took place – that had to take place – as early war smoothbores were replaced by the technologically advanced rifle-musket.

Everyone knows muskets are accurate only to about 100 yards. Everyone “knows” rifle-muskets can shoot three or four times that far, accurately. What many don’t know, because they’ve never had it explained, is that a rifle-musket is accurate at those distances only if the shooter is trained in estimating range and making sure the weapon is sighted for the correct range. Plus, just the knowledge of the training and how it was done gives us yet another activity for reenacting and living history, even without live rounds.

Everyone “knows” point blank range today means “really close.” Not everyone knows that’s not what it meant in marksmanship training in the 1860s. “Point blank,” or rather “point blanc,” is the point at which the bullet crosses the line of sight the second time. Makes no sense? OK. The Minie ball’s trajectory is not flat, it is a quite pronounced arc. I use the example of a slow-pitch softball pitch, although that is an exaggeration. It is much more pronounced than the arc of a modern weapon, though, which contributes to our collective misconceptions.

The bullet crosses the line of sight once, on the way up, and again, on the way down. If you have gotten the range set properly, the “pointe blanc” where the bullet and your line of site intersect is the target. If you do not get it right, you will miss, with the bullet either going over the target or landing in front of it. There is surprisingly (to me, at any rate, when I studied this stuff) little room for error.

Why “point blanc”? It gets interesting. Like much in our military world in 186x, it’s French. But it’s the French translation of “white mark,” or “white target,” which is apparently (I wasn’t there) taken from English longbow practice where the target was often a steer’s skull, white and standing out in that green and pleasant land. And a “bullseye?” You figure it out.

So, here’s a picture. “V” marks “point blank”. AR is the line of sight and the curved line is the trajectory of the bullet, fired out of that very schematic weapon on the left.



OK. It’s not as simple as we wished it was. So early war, if you got a musket, nobody much bothered with trajectory training. You lined up, sent about 55 pounds of lead downrange with each volley of your full-strength regiment,

and that was that. You fired on command, when your officers at least theoretically knew the enemy was in range.

Sometime in 1862 or 1863 you exchanged that smoothbore for a Springfield or Enfield rifle musket. If you didn’t get trained in what they called “the scientific method” of shooting, you wasted a lot of lead because it hit either ahead of or behind that advancing double line of infantry. If you did get trained, and increasing numbers of units went through the rigors of training, on both sides, then you started killing people at 400 yards or more.

And if you were really, really good, you started killing your enemy at a thousand yards. It turns out those rear sights that go up to 1,000 yards were not merely clever marketing by the Enfield manufacturers.

SYSTEM  
OF  
TARGET PRACTICE.

FOR THE USE OF TROOPS

WHEN ARMED WITH THE MUSKET, RIFLE-MUSKET,  
RIFLE, OR CARBINE.

PREPARED PRINCIPALLY FROM THE FRENCH.

BY HENRY HETH,  
Captain Tenth Regiment U. S. Infantry.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT.

NEW YORK:  
D. VAN NOSTRAND, 192 BROADWAY.  
1862.

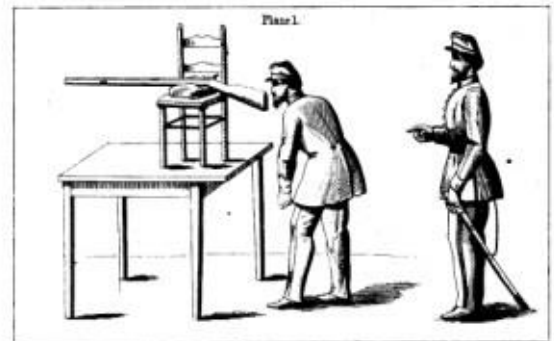
← *Heth's manual was published in 1858. Note that this version was published in 1862, by orders of the War Department, and it still credits Heth with his pre-war rank, captain in the Tenth U.S.*

**This** was all known well before the war. Our War Department sent Capt. Henry Heth (yes, before he was a Confederate general) to France. He came back with yet another French manual, suitably altered for our situation in the States, "***A System of Target Practice for the use of troops when armed with the musket, rifle-musket, rifle, or carbine***".

Much of what I'll present comes from the 1862 edition used by the United States Army during the war; the link will take you to the 1858 edition. At the time it was written, our military was concerned over the lack of weapon skill on the part of new recruits. Again, contrary to our popular wisdom, Americans in the 1800s were not

universally gifted in marksmanship. Many were complete duffers. Heth, in his preface, includes an anecdote that an officer taking 200 recruits on a journey into the West found that 100 of them were so unfamiliar with firearms that they loaded their muskets with the bullet first, then the powder. That kind of ignorance was to be addressed with the "Target Practice" manual.

The training is in distinct parts. The first is simply lining up the front and rear sights. An instructor sets a musket on a table at eye level and aims it at a target. Each trainee must tell the instructor, without touching the weapon but simply standing behind it and sighting along it, whether the sites are aligned on the target or to the left, right, up or down. That apparently was done in barracks, and they allotted two two-hour sessions to it.



### 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. P. G. T. Beauregard*



*A private southern citizen's book of collected CDVs of Confederate Generals*



*Gen. George B. McClellan*



*CDV of Thomas Nast.. not a Civil War general but an illustrator for Harper's Weekly (and other publications of the era) and likely most famous for his illustrations of Santa Claus that we all know today.*

*Currier & Ives etching of Pres. Lincoln's deathbed scene.*





**Assassination of President Lincoln**

On the night of April 14, 1865, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) was attending the play *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre, accompanied by his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln (1818-1882), and their guests, Major Henry B. Rathbone (1817-1871) and his fiancée, Clara Harris (1824-1893). That evening, the assassin John Wilkes Booth (1839-1865) was assigned to the president's box through a side passage. John Wilkes Booth (1839-1865), to enter Lincoln's box.

After Booth fired the shot, he leapt from the box and landed on the stage, about twenty feet below. While he reportedly caught the spur of his boot on a flag and broke his leg when he hit the ground, the newsboy escaped on his hands. It took twelve days for Lincoln's condition to decline further when they arrived in a barn in Caroline County, Virginia. Booth, an actor who had taken part in the conspiracy, died of a bullet wound.

Currier & Ives Lithography Company  
New York, 1865-1867  
Hand-colored lithograph, 1865

Currier & Ives colorized etching of the assassination of Pres. Lincoln



**Study for Grant and his Generals**

As an oil study for the painting 'Grant and his Generals' (1865), the artist depicts the scene of the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on July 3, 1863. The painting shows the Union Army's 'Pickett's Charge' against the Confederate forces. The scene is set in a hazy, outdoor environment, with the Union Army's red flag with a white cross and the American flag visible. The painting is a study for the larger work, 'Grant and his Generals' (1865), which is a large-scale oil painting depicting the same scene.

**On the March of Grant and his Generals**

The painting 'On the March of Grant and his Generals' (1865) depicts the Union Army's march towards Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on July 3, 1863. The scene is set in a hazy, outdoor environment, with the Union Army's red flag with a white cross and the American flag visible. The painting is a study for the larger work, 'Grant and his Generals' (1865), which is a large-scale oil painting depicting the same scene.

“Study for Grant and his Generals” - A small version of the Federal Generals painting. A march larger (approx.. 10' x 25') version exists nearby in the staircase landing to the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of the museum. A list of all of the included generals is listed on the tag to the painting's left. It is literally a 'who's who' in the Union Army.





*General U.S. Grant*

*Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson*



*Adm. David G. Farragut*



## 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, March 6th, 1862.

Messrs. Editors:--We are aware of the great desire of people at home to hear of the Army of the Potomac being on the onward march, yet this desire is not stronger than that of our soldiers here. The late glorious victories won by our comrades in battle in the West and on the southern coasts have stirred up the patriotism of the army around the Capital to the highest pitch, and they are anxiously waiting for the welcome command "forward," to show to the nation that their valor is equal to the task before them--to win for themselves immortal glory. But it must be remembered that when McClellan advances at the head of his well drilled legions, that, it may be said, he carries with him the fate of the Union. Another repulse of the Army of the Potomac would be followed by the most disastrous consequences. It is generally understood that this army is to fight the decisive battle. If we win it, the contest is virtually ended--secession will be laid harmless on its back, and the Union will be triumphant. But if we lose this important battle, (victory is never certain until won), what a gloomy effect would it have upon our people and our soldiers; and what would be the effect abroad? England and France, believing the war would last for years, and yielding to the demands of the manufacturing interests, would break the blockade and recognize the Davis government. When we move, we have every reason to believe, we will march on to victory. But we will not "forward" until the proper time arrives, be it sooner or later. At this time of all others, no premature movement should be made.

It affords us much pleasure to state that Lieut. John T. Potts, of Company A, has again returned to the regiment with his health completely restored, and looking as pleasant as ever. Lieut. Potts just previous to his late severe illness was detailed from the regiment to go into the Signal service. Although, while on this extra duty he ranked and drew the pay of a Captain of cavalry, yet being anxious to be with his company in any forward move that may be made, he resigned his position in the Signal Corps, and is again in Capt. Bull's company. The boys of the company greeted him with three rousing cheers on his entering our camp.

On Saturday last there was a fall of about two inches of snow, followed by a rain of some twenty-four hours duration. This put the roads in their usual beautiful condition for several days. Most of the drilling lately consists in firing blank cartridges. The regiment in line of battle fires by battalion, by wings, by divisions, by companies, by files. Almost every day there is what is termed an ambulance drill. Men with stretchers, &c., go through the motions of picking up the wounded, sliding them in the ambulances, where they are conveyed at a full gallop to where the green sash, or red flag, shows that the surgeons have made their quarters. The drill would be quite amusing if the farce did not forshadow the painful tragedy.

Yours &c.,

L.J.F.

[*Ledger*, March 11, 1862]

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



Corp. Cornelius Tall, Co. K

Died Jan. 10, 1910. Buried in St. Mary's Cemetery, Latrobe, PA. Bates claims a Corporal's rank but headstone lists Private. Enlisted 3 Feb 1864. Promoted to Corporal on 1 Jun 1865. Mustered out on 30 Jun 1865 at Washington, DC.

Pvt. Calvin S. Towner, Co. F

Born April 2, 1844. Died Sept. 8, 1916. Buried at McKune Cemetery, Oakland, PA. Son of Hezekiah and Sally Bailey Towner. Husband of Anna Jacobs. Father of Floy D. & Ferdinand Towner.



Pvt. Edward W. Warley, Co. A



Marker does not list military service but obit mentioned 3 yrs. service (no reg't.) which matches Bates. Born Feb. 18, 1825. Died Aug. 11, 1920. Buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery, Pottstown, PA

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

Gentlemen,

I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year. As we move into January we have a couple of things coming up to look forward to and help get us through winter. The annual holiday party is fast approaching and by the time this newsletter finds you we will be close to the cutoff for RSVP's. **If you plan to attend and have not already contacted Croce, Matt or I, please do so ASAP. Croce must give the final count to the Dobbin House on Friday (January 4).**

Our winter drill at Landis Valley is scheduled for February 2 starting at 9:00am. If you have a specific topic that you would like us to address, please reach out to Mark Fasnacht and/or myself so we can prepare in advance. As always, plan to spend time outside. We'll have use of one of their heated buildings for classroom discussion and to do as much indoors as we can. Plan to do lunch over the fire.

The NR's School of the Soldier is scheduled for March 2-3 in Gettysburg. The School is open to all ranks and everyone is encouraged to attend. Hotel rooms are available at the Days Inn. In order to promote attendance, we elected to cover the cost of one room for one night from the Treasury. If anyone plans to take advantage of this benefit, please contact me so I can keep of list for the room as well as notify the NR of our attendance. The NR has opened up the school to other organizations so please don't wait to make your hotel reservation. The rooms are limited.

Eric

The poster features a central logo for the 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Company "C" with a red silhouette of a minuteman. Flanking the logo are two decorative banners: "Merry Christmas" on the left and "Happy New Year" on the right. The main text is centered and reads: "ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY", "Saturday, January 12th, 2019", "Reception and Cocktails at 5:30pm", "Dinner at 6:30pm", "AT THE DOBBIN HOUSE", and "89 Steinwehr Avenue, Gettysburg, PA 17325". There are two holly berry illustrations on either side of the address. At the bottom, there are three sections: "COST - \$27.00 per person", "GUEST SPEAKER Tim Hodge as: Major Martin Robinson Delany", and "RSVP by Monday, December 31 to Croce Volpe vafomedic@aol.com 215.852.0668 or Eric Ford reenactor53@gmail.com 717-917-7734". A small American flag is positioned between the cost and RSVP sections.

**Merry Christmas**

**53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Company "C"**

**Happy New Year**

**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 – 53<sup>rd</sup> 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. All party reservations and payment are due 31 December.

### 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 **53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT**  
27 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade  
22-23 June – 53<sup>rd</sup> Gettysburg Living History – Spangler Spring **53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT**  
5- 7 July – Gettysburg GAC - 2ndary Event  
20-21 July – Landis Valley Civil War Days - **53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT**  
28 July - Gruber Wagon Works (Reading, PA) **53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT**  
24-25 Aug. – 53<sup>rd</sup> Gettysburg Living History – Spangler Spring **53<sup>rd</sup> 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 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Monument  
16 Nov. – Remembrance Day Parade – Gettysburg  
7 Dec. – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Annual Meeting (Mark Fasnacht's home)



### 53rd PVI Contacts

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