



Company C 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

"The Sentinel" May 2019

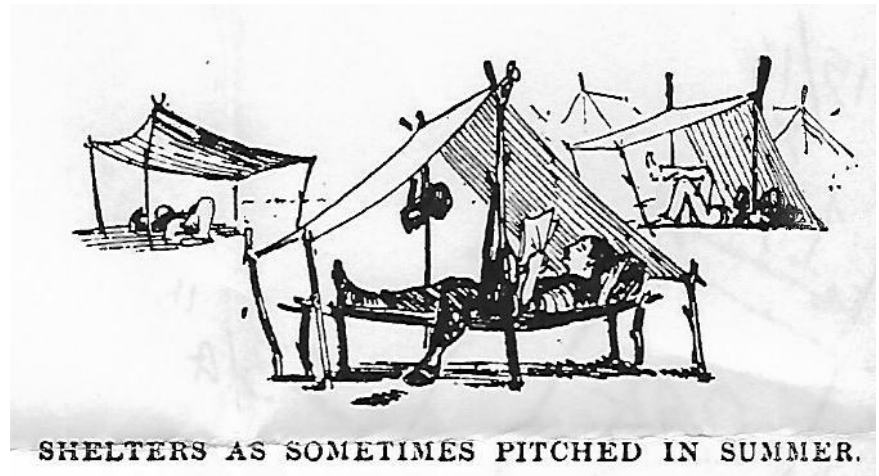
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

This Month:

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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

National Regiment Camp Of Instruction

The weekend of April 13~14, the National Regiment held its Camp of Instruction at Ft. McHenry. We practiced and reviewed various aspects and topics that we need to know out in the field including manual of arms, guard mount, pack inspection, maneuvers, etc. These topics were also covered at the NR's School of Instruction in early March. The Camp of Instruction let us practice these topics out in the field.

The camp was essentially designed for the company commanders to refine their craft by training their men Sat. morning. Then, Saturday afternoon, the company commanders were put into various scenarios where they had to command their men in front of the Colonel based upon what they taught their companies earlier that day.

We also participated in the Fort's 4pm flag changing ceremony where the men of the NR marched into the fort for the event. The NR's Tim Ertel narrated to the crown of civilians some basics about the Fort and the ceremony of what was about to happen. Dress parade was held back in camp afterwards. On Sunday, pack inspection occurred.

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Below is a photo of the NR in the Fort for the 4pm Sat. flag changing ceremony. It was taken by Jack Foley. The men of the 53rd can be seen at the photos' left side. In attendance from the 53rd PVI were: Fasnacht, Steger, Ford, Bohnenblust, Adam Mitchell, and the Porterfields (Zach and Travis).



Below are some photos of camp during set up on Saturday morning. (photos supplied by myself)



Ephrata Middle School – Civil War Day

On April 5th, Michael Fedorshack, one of Michael's friends Greg, and Myself participated in a school event at Ephrata Middle School in which we presented all day on various Civil War topics. We set up our kits on tables and then we discussed the Civil War for classes of middle schoolers. We included topics such as clothing, manual of arms, weapons, food, camp life, bayonet drill, etc. I provided the following photos of our setup.



The Civil War Letters of Levi J. Fritz

(thank you to Rich Sauer 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.

Bivouac Near Kent County C. H.,
Saturday, May 17th, 1862.

At midnight of the 14th inst., and ere we had time to finish our letter, marching orders were received. It was raining as usual on such occasions. At early dawn the line of march was taken up. Following in rear of Gen. Howard's Brigade, we proceeded forward on the road to Richmond. The roads in this section of Virginia are far superior to those we were used to travelling on in the peninsula. The land is better and somewhat improved, yet a wild forest covers the greater part of this region; there is more chestnut and oak timber than we have seen in other parts of the State we have been in. The land lays high and water appears to be scarce. The houses, on even what are apparently large plantations, are old fashioned and uninviting. They are mostly constructed of wood with large stone or brick chimneys built on the outside at each gable end. There is, apparently, a total lack of that spirit of enterprise and improvement that is presented to the eye in almost every section of the north. The fact is the people here do not appear to live, but merely stay. The homes of the few northern men can be easily distinguished. Still more will this difference be noted in cases where the northern settler does not keep slaves, but depends on the labor of free hands under his own supervision. Where the "yankee farmer" has his work done by slaves, the same lazy, careless, and thriftless air surrounds his place, to a certain extent, that appears so marked in the home of the native planter. In fact this appears to be a God-forsaken country, whose people are "fit for treason, strategy and spoil," and we would almost consider it imprisonment to be compelled to live here; to us "there is not in this wide world a valley so sweet," as that watered by our clear, sparkling beloved Schuylkill.

Our readers must forgive this digression. We left our regiment on the march. We proceeded forward at a quick pace, for though it was raining, yet not sufficiently hard to incommode us much, and it also answered a good purpose in settling the dust. A march of eight miles brought us to Cumberland, a place composed of six houses, one store and a well. Here Gen. Sumner, staff and body guard passed us. The rain commenced falling faster, and by the time we were two miles beyond Cumberland, the roads began to be in a wretched condition. About noon we were run into the woods, where it was so dense that a man with difficulty could get through. What was our surprise when we discovered that here we were to bivouac among the snakes, lizards, mosquitoes and wood ticks—gay, was it not? If the famous poet who sighed for "a lodge in some vast wilderness," was yet living he would be amply accommodated down here. By the aid of axe, shovel and picks we soon cleared space enough to pitch our shelter tents, and now we are getting along first rate. At every house that was not evacuated along the line of march, from our recent camp, near the river, the white flag of peace and friendship was displayed. The fact is the people here feel that the rebellion is crushed, and that the wild scheme of a Southern Confederacy is virtually dead. A battle is imminent, and it may take place ere you receive this. We believe that the rebels now are so situated that they must fight us a decisive battle or surrender. McClellan has his troops so placed that when they "shun Scylla they will be lost in Charybdis." The rebels have a peculiar tact in retreating, and if there is the least opening for them to get through and escape they will no doubt find it. The indications now are that they will stand. Our Generals are working night and day in perfecting arrangements for the engagement which McClellan says "is close at hand." The army is buoyant with the hope that the rebellion is fast approaching an ultimatum—that this direful war, will, ere many months pass over, and peace, bright, smiling, joyous, heavenly peace will once more gladden the hearts of our people. Surely we may be permitted to look forward to the happy period, when military despotism will be no more, and we can forever bid farewell to the gloomy land of Dixie. Proudly conscious of having done our duty, disagreeable as it may have been, the time will be hailed with pleasure when we take up the march for home, sweet home.

Yours, &c.,

L.J.F.

[*Ledger*, June 3, 1862]

A word from our president.....

Hello All,

We're only two weeks away from the AHEC event. If you have not done so already, please respond to Matt ASAP to let him know if you **will** or **will not** be attending. Remember, this is a paid event and attendance determines how much the unit will receive. We have been able to offset our annual holiday expense for the past two years with this money. Please make every effort to attend. Following that, the Memorial Day parade in Hummelstown is our only other event until Landis Valley. With an unusually light schedule for the spring, I hope we can maximize our turnout for both of these events. Both are easy and somewhat close to home.

Looking deeper into the schedule, I hope everyone is making plans to attend Landis Valley. I was speaking with members of ELF at Ft McHenry a couple of weeks ago and they're on board and excited for the event. It's become one of their more anticipated events. We're also going to get support from Sykes. I should have their numbers in a few weeks. It's looking like we might have stronger numbers than we've seen there in a long time. If you haven't already registered for the only reenactment on our schedule, I encourage you to do so. It's the only other NR event in 2019. Please be looking for more info related to this event in the coming days.

I will continue the request for alumni contact info. If you know anyone who's ever served in the 53rd, we need their contact info. The upcoming annual Holiday Party will be the 40th anniversary celebration of our unit. Please pass anything you have along to Pete Zinkus, Matt Steger or myself. Over the years that I've served in this capacity, I have seen fewer responses from our past members and the number of invalid email addresses has increased as some folks have changed their address and not stayed in contact. If you have the opportunity to touch base with anyone, please ask for their info and let them know we'll make sure they are on the list as the time gets closer and the party details are shared. Also, Matt would like to include them on the newsletter list.

I want to take this opportunity to let you know that we have a new probationary member. Travis Porterfield (Zach's brother) fell in with us at Ft McHenry which was his second event. He previously attended last October's living history in Gettysburg. On Sunday at Ft McHenry, the member's in attendance voted in favor of his membership status. Travis has a lot to offer the 53rd and fits in like he's been around for years. I'm personally glad he found a home with us.

Eric

Honoring the men of the Original 53rd PVI –

Corporal Isaiah Mechling Hines - born on March 8, 1845 in Westmoreland Co. He enlisted in Co. K, 53rd PVI on Jan. 28, 1864 and was promoted to Corporal on June 1, 1865. Died Dec. 23, 1926. Buried in the Methodist Church Cemetery in Stahlstown, PA



Pvt. Thomas J. Hoffman - born on April 3, 1838. He enlisted as a substitute in Co. K. 148th PVI on Oct. 27, 1863 and was transferred to Co. K, 53rd PVI. He died in Philadelphia on Feb. 11, 1908 and was buried in Riverside Cemetery, Norristown, PA.

Private George W. Hoover - born in Pittston, Pa on Dec. 13, 1847. He enlisted as a Private in Co. F on May 1, 1864 at the age of 17. He died on Feb. 26, 1915 and is buried in Beaver Creek United Methodist Church Cemetery near West Auburn, PA.



Captain Walter Leslie Hopkins - born in Joliet ,IL on Nov. 24, 1843. He mustered in as a 1st Lieut. on Oct. 12, 1861. Promoted to Capt. on Sept. 17, 1862 and discharged on Jan. 1, 1863. He died on his 36th birthday (Nov. 24, 1879) and is buried in Peoples Cemetery, San Andreas, California.

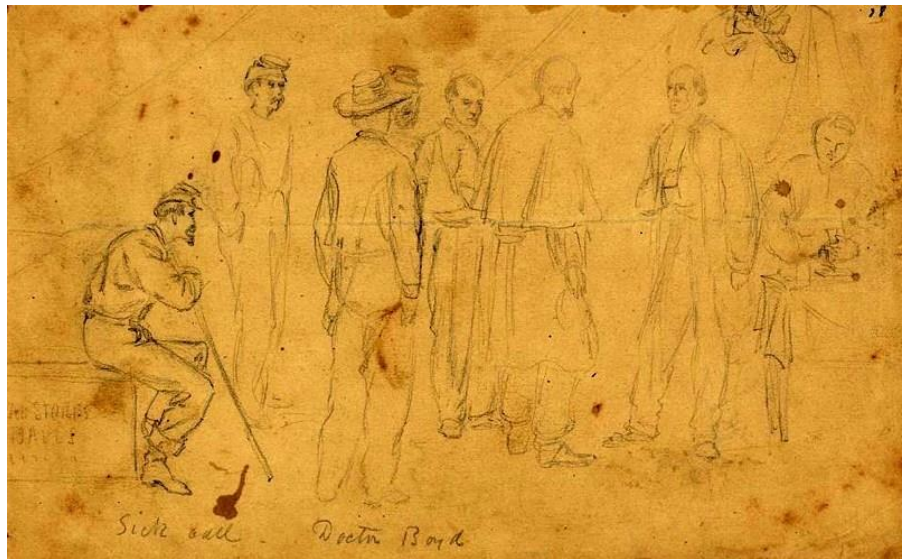
Healthy Soldiers?

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

Well, most losses were from disease, not fighting.

So how healthy could they have been?

The ratio, according to the **American Battlefield Trust**, is five deaths from disease to every three deaths from battle.

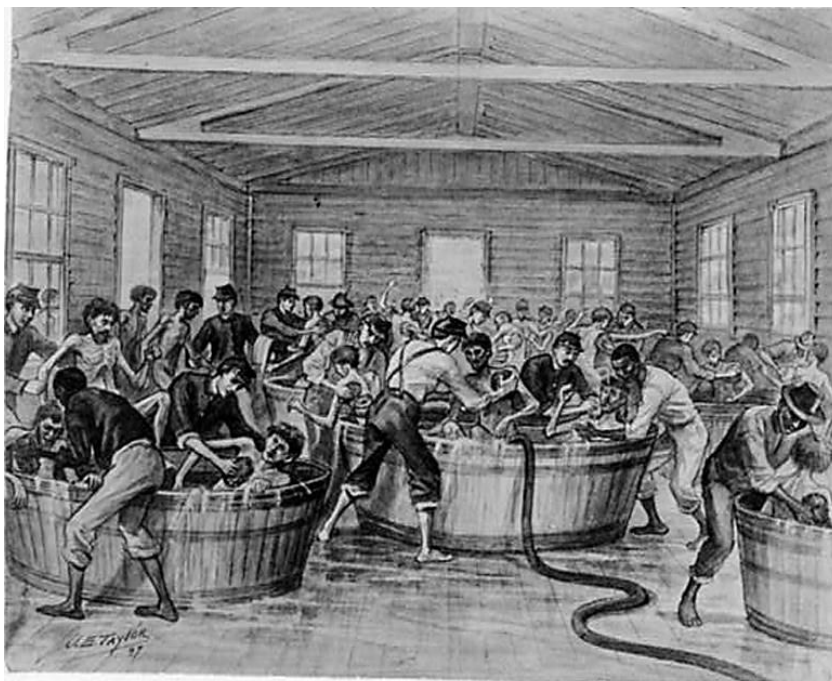


One of my themes has always been finding the surprises that hide within the assumptions and the passed-down stereotypes beneath which we labor. So today it's going to be just a couple of popular myths and erroneous assumptions, complete with advice from our old friend of **"Camp and Outpost Duty,"** Daniel Butterfield.

It turns out he had the efficient officer's impatience with anything that could take men out of the ranks,

including disease and stupidity. His book of guidance for wanna-be soldiers includes a chapter on health.

Myth #1: Our ancestors were dirty because they didn't know any better.

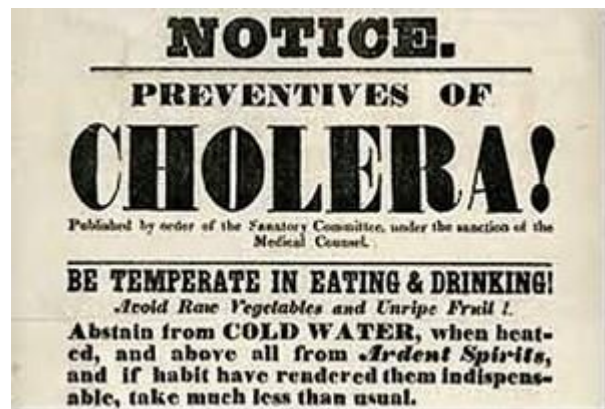


Florence Military Prison Series.

"Washing up."

Here's an eye-opener: This is a Library of Congress drawing of the 1864-65 Confederate prison in Florence, S.C., and these are Yankee prisoners getting bathed. If they look a bit the worse for wear, it's because most of the Florence prisoners were shipped in from the hell at Andersonville. When resources were available and knowledge prevailed, the goal of cleanliness to prevent disease was met even for enemies. (My great grandfather went through Florence prison, so this week's research has been especially pertinent for me. One of the side benefits of blogging!) Florence was generally better organized than Andersonville, btw, even though the stockade had not been finished when the first prisoners arrived. [An organization originally spearheaded by the 8th South Carolina maintains the site of the Florence stockade.](#)

Nope. Butterfield, Page 106: "Whenever possible, take a plunge into any lake or running stream every morning, as soon as you get up; if none at hand, endeavor to wash the body as soon as you leave your bed, for personal cleanliness acts like a charm against all diseases, always either warding them off altogether or greatly mitigating their severity and shortening their duration." Additionally, one of the popular sayings of this and previous times was, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." So it was important.



Some effective advice here, even if the full mechanism of disease wasn't understood. Cold water comes direct from a well; contaminated communal wells were eventually identified as one source of cholera. Uncooked vegetables are contaminated if washed in that same water.

This seems to be generally unknown, based just on the inevitable depiction of "old timey" people in movies and television as dirty, one of my pet peeves. We don't need to

spread the ignorance; the truth is cleanliness was valued, just not always attainable under the circumstances of soldiering.

Myth #2: Long hair was common.

Maybe, but not recommended. Butterfield: “Keep the hair closely cut, say within an inch and a half... repeated on the first of each month, and wash the whole scalp plentifully in cold water every morning.” Cleanliness. Mention this to the next long-hair you see on the field? You could even note that you’re moving away from him because he undoubtedly has head lice.

Myth #3 Our ancestors were complete idiots about the causes of disease.

Well, no. That’s too harsh. They had clues, and often acted on them as best they could. They knew the dreaded yellow fever had something to do with swamps, although they suspected “bad air”, possibly caused by rotting vegetation, rather than mosquitoes as the vector. (For YOUR information, yellow fever, for which there is still no actual treatment, is caused by a virus that is transmitted through the bite of the mosquito. There has been an effective vaccine, though, for 80 years.) Yellow fever was a terrible scourge during our chosen time. The solution was draining swamps in populated areas.



Benjamin Butler, “Beast”

The horrible monster Benjamin Butler, while in charge of the Yankee occupation of New Orleans, set vast forces to work draining swamps, cutting back the incidence of yellow fever dramatically. Alas, the return of New Orleans to local rule saw the effort abandoned, with one historically noted result being the death of John Bell Hood, his wife, and his oldest child in the winter of 1878-79 due to yellow fever.

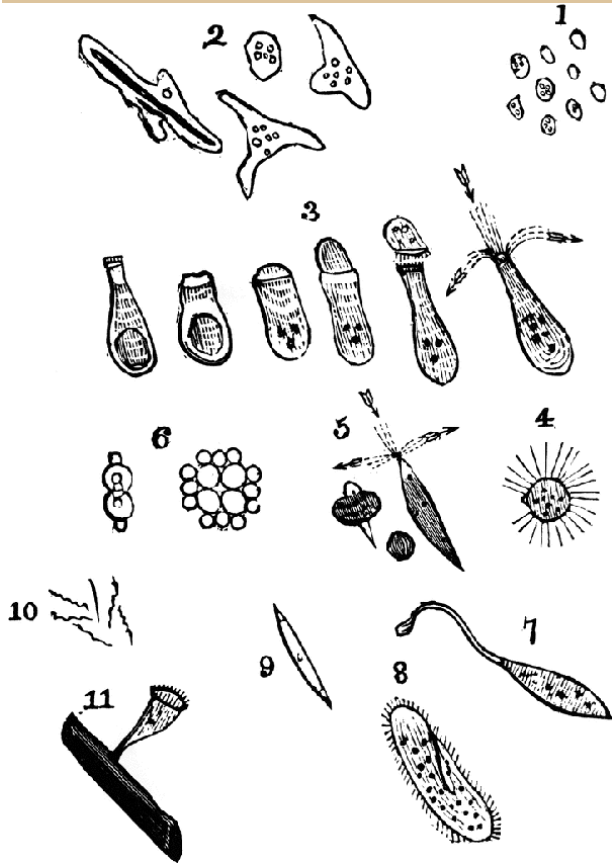


←Dennis Franz

By the way, does anyone think Dennis Franz (Norman Buntz, Hill Street Blues) would have been perfect for portraying Butler?

The idea of bad water/bad air permeates Butterfield’s advice. He advises boiling water, and, with real insight but unreal expectations, says if you can’t boil it, at least filter it

through cheesecloth or your clothing. So our ancestors were aware that some kind of contamination in water caused disease, and that it was removable. And an alternative they took very, very seriously was to simply avoid water. “Experience teaches old soldiers that the less they drink on a march, the better, and that they suffer less in the end by controlling the desire to drink, however urgent,” Butterfield wrote. Think about even a small army on the march, but in your imagination add the thousands of horses and some cattle for fresh meat, all enriching the soil and streams with the products of digestion. At the very least, you’re going to get the trots from drinking water where herds have passed.



If you know history – and we claim we do, right? – then you know humanity became aware of miniscule living things in the water in the mid 1600s, courtesy of research using 200 to 500 power microscopes by Anton von Leeuwenhoek in the Netherlands. Leeuwenhoek started with magnifying glasses initially used by textile merchants to examine fabric, got interested in grinding better and better lenses, and started analyzing what he saw. He started with protozoa in water, moved on to bacteria within saliva, and got so far as to identify parasites within fleas – knowledge all precursor to figuring out the causes of disease. And all that was before 1680. So are we really surprised that in the 1860s we find recommendations to keep clean and boil water?

← Leeuwenhoek’s sketch of microbes

OK, if they weren’t utterly ignorant, why is it five deaths from disease for every three from battle? Some possibilities.

1. They weren’t utterly ignorant, but there was still a lot to discover, and what they didn’t know did hurt them.
2. They were overwhelmed by need. Get thirsty enough, and you will drink that water even though you know you weren’t intended to drink horse droppings. Then, when you get the runs, you may find yourself what they used to call “caught short.” Caught short of the sinks, in other words, and letting go on a company street, which you probably would try to not draw attention to, thus spreading disease. In field hospitals, every person on staff might know cleanliness is really important, but faced with hundreds of wounded urgently needing attention, cleanliness fell down the list of priorities and infection resulted.
3. They were vulnerable – in the sense that many communities were isolated, had not been exposed to diseases like measles until tens of thousands of men were packed into camps.
4. Some leaders were more ignorant than others, and the health of their units reflected this. A colonel who insisted on strict cleanliness in camps and cooking, who enforced strictures about liming the sinks and draining off rainwater, probably had a healthier regiment than a colonel who allowed slovenliness.

One of these days we're going to talk about ice. If anyone can point me at sources, please do!
Thanks!

Here's an odd thing I stumbled upon which you may or may not wish to use to enrich your third person presentations:

"Gleet: *noun*. A watery discharge from the urethra caused by gonorrheal infection."

Some period newsclippings pertinent to this topic:

WASHINGTON LOCK HOSPITAL.
DR. SHUMAN has, after an experience of ten years, established the above refuge from quackery, self-labeled Indian or German doctors, and pretenders of witchcraft and impostors in general.

This is the only place where a sure and speedy cure can be obtained in the world for all improper and evil habits, gonorrhoe, gleet, seminal weakness, syphilis, primary, secondary, and tertiary, organic weakness, pains in the loins, strictures, general debility, prostration, nervousness, restless nights, palpitation of the heart, ringing in the ears, loss of memory, confusion, melancholy, affections of the head, throat, nose, and skin, and all those peculiar disorders arising from the indiscretion of youth, rendering them unfit for either business, study, society, or marriage.

Dr. S. has the greatest remedies in the known world for diseases of the blood, gonorrhoe, gleet, strictures, syphilis, seminal weakness, self-abuse, &c. There is no case in which they fail to cure in from 3 to 6 days.

Victims of these horrible complaints, who would wish to be valuable men and ornaments to society, should embrace the earliest opportunity for relief.

Dr. Shuman has made the most complete arrangements for the comfort of his patients who come from a distance. They will be furnished with the most pleasant and agreeable quarters, necessary diet, and made as comfortable as they would be at a first-class hotel at less than half the cost.

Do not forget the name and number. Dr. Shuman's office is on the corner of Sixth street and Pennsylvania avenue, Clarendon Hotel, opposite the National Hotel, Washington, D. C.

Persons at a distance should enclose stamp for return postage. Office hours, 9 A. M. to 10 P. M.

Various parties have been enticed from my institution by certain swindlers on back streets in this city, who will rue it till the day of their death. A word to the wise is sufficient. ap 9 1 v

Military Hospitals at Richmond.

The *Enquirer* has an interesting article on the military hospitals in Richmond, where only male nurses are employed. Five hundred prisoners have been treated at the hospital on Main street, under charge of Dr. Higginbotham, from June 28 to September 27. Of these, three hundred wounded experienced a mortality of .096, and two hundred sick, not wounded, lost a per centage of .06, the two categories together .082; being forty-one deaths, of which twelve were from sickness without wounds. Here Dr. Higginbotham has enforced personal cleanliness and discipline. It is the only one of the large hospitals of its class which has been furnished with bath tubs. The sick prisoners, when refractory, are compelled to make use of them, and such as engender vermin are made decent in spite of themselves. One of their own number is made to keep watch over each bath tub, to prevent the rest from abusing it.

The Byrd Island Hospital, at Gilham's factory, which, as well as the almshouse, is beautifully situated, airy and capacious, states on its books a mortality of only three per cent., or 15 deaths to 500 patients between August 15 and September 20, or rather to 400 patients, as about 100 were sent away during their illness, increasing the per centage of deaths to .0375.

The Almshouse Hospital book has 240 entries for the month of August, and 39 deaths recorded—making a per centage of .0946, on 373, the whole number of patients treated. By reports rendered to Surgeon General Moore, however, the aggregate of Confederate soldiers treated in August was 269, and that of Federal prisoners 271—together 540—which, after subtraction of those sent away to other hospitals, &c., leaves still nearly 500, and reduces the percentage of mortality to .078.

Bellevue, Dr. James Bolton's hospital, treated, from May 4 to September 25, 127 soldiers; had returned 78 to duty, retained 37, and had buried 12.

The Medical College Hospital, the property of a corporation which boards a large number of Confederate patients, shows entries for the months of July, August, and September, of 486, and deaths 38, or .078 per cent. The actual number of patients at one time lately was one hundred. The relative mortality is due, in part, to the number of almost dying men brought in from the camp-ground of the tenth Louisiana regiment. This is only a particular instance of a neglect excessively frequent, and to which thousands of precious lives have been sacrificed.

The average mortality of the large hospitals cited, is more than double that of the ladies' private hospitals.

Upcoming events –

18-19 May – USAHEC Army Heritage Days –Carlisle, PA

Annual event at the US Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle. This is a 53rd MAX EFFORT event meaning all 53rd PVI active members should plan on attending. We get paid for our attendance so it is imperative that our turnout is high. This event payment helps offset our insurance costs. You may opt to attend either or both days, but the unit gets paid more if we have a good attendance both days. I registered the 53rd PVI in March and am awaiting the schedule for this event. In past years, the schedule is often not released until about 7 days before the event, so stay tuned to the group Facebook page (non-public) and your email for more info. Your normal uniform/weapon is all you need (no tentage is needed) and we normally have access to one of the cabins to stow our stuff. There is lots to see and lots of free time to visit the field of the full range of pre-Colonial, Colonial, and US Army scenarios. Lunch can be purchased from modern vendors or you can bring your own. Please let me know ASAP if you plan on attending either day (unless you've already emailed me about this).

27 May - Memorial Day Parade – Hummelstown, PA

Annual parade in Hummelstown for Memorial Day. Meet at the north side of the Old Factory Antique Shop @ 9:30AM for weapon inspection and any special instructions from Corp. Espenshade. We can normally park in the lot at the shop's north side. Parade kicks off at 10AM. A picnic lunch will follow the parade and then our debriefing at Corp. Espenshade's cabin. Please let Mike know asap if you are attending so that he can plan accordingly.

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

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! We still have quite a few members who have yet to share theirs with their pards. This isn't meant to pry into your private life, but simply a fun way of letting your pards get to know you more.

A sampling of 10 questions you can answer as part of your 'Get To Know Your Pard' profile (you may substitute your own questions if you'd like):

1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you been re-enacting?
3. What is your favorite part of the hobby?
4. What was the first Civil War-related kit item that you bought?
5. Have you ever taken part of a Civil War movie , TV, or other production?
6. Do you have a favorite or most memorable CW event?
7. Do you have any other non-Civil War hobbies?
8. Do you have a Civil War photo (wet-plate or tin-type image) to share?
9. What do you do (or did you do, if retired) for a living?
10. Favorite Saying?

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)



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