

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

## Company C

"The Sentinel" February 2020

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

### This Month:

1. 2020 Annual Holiday Party and Election Results
2. "1860s Eats"
3. Honoring the Original 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI
4. Levi Fritz Letter
5. A Word From The President
6. 2020 Unit Dues
7. Upcoming Events
8. Civil War Merchant
9. Event Schedule
10. 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Contact Info



*I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, event summaries/photos, stories, etc. to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor*

## 2020 ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

On Saturday January 11<sup>th</sup>, the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI held its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary holiday dinner/party at Dobbin House in Gettysburg. We had over 30 attendees to this annual gathering. VP Pete Zinkus organized a fine gathering where everyone had a good time and a good meal. The results of the election were also announced (listed below). After dinner and evening entertainment, we moved down to the Dobbin House's Springhouse Tavern to continue the evening. The below photos were provided by Eric Ford and your editor, Matt Steger:

A shot from the after-party party down in → the SpringHouse Tavern.





Group photo of the men of the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI and some alumni. Included are: Ford, Mitchell, Williard, Dillon, Fink, Fasnacht, Zinkus, Espenshade, Steger, Bohnenblust, Heiser, Kemmerer, Kramer, Kunkle, Petersen, VanBomel, Volpe, Raab, Kemmerer, Breitegan. Shick (not pictured) also stopped by early but had another commitment at ITG to attend as well.



Alec and Liz



Me and my wife



Croce and Mark



Pete and Eric



Travis with Dave and myself



Mike and Carol

The “entertainment” for the evening included Mike Espenshade, Adam Mitchell, and myself playing some Civil War songs: Lorena, Battle Hymn Of The Republic, and Battle Cry Of Freedom, to name a few.





A group photo of the wives and better halves.

The election results were announced at the party and included:

**President** – Eric Ford

**Sgts.**– 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. - Mark Fasnacht. Sgt. Marc Benedict

**Corporals** – Mike Espenshade and Matthew Steger

### **1860s Eats**

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

*"Did people eat tomatoes raw or just cooked at the time of the Civil War?" Michael Shaffner found the answer:*

From the "American Agriculturalist" in 1877: "All who eat raw tomatoes, (and few do not), should raise their own, as they can then have them perfectly matured upon the plant. When so ripened, the skin will peel off readily, and without any scalding, a process which should be avoided for those to be eaten raw. The usual way is to serve sliced, and let each season to the taste, as the manner of dressing varies 60 greatly. Some use salt, pepper, and vinegar; others salt, vinegar, and oil; sometimes a regular salad dressing is made; to some they are only acceptable when eaten with sugar and vinegar, and we have seen persons treat them, like peaches, with sugar and cream. At the recommendation of a friend, who knows what is good, we have tried this way: Peel the tomato, cut it cross-wise in halves, placing the cut surface up; If very solid, gash the central portions with the knife, and put on salt, oil, and "Harvey Sauce," (an English sauce somewhat like Worcester, but milder), and in eating, cut the halves down in solid "junks" instead of slices. Good bread and butter, and a perfect Trophy tomato thus treated, make a breakfast to be thankful for."

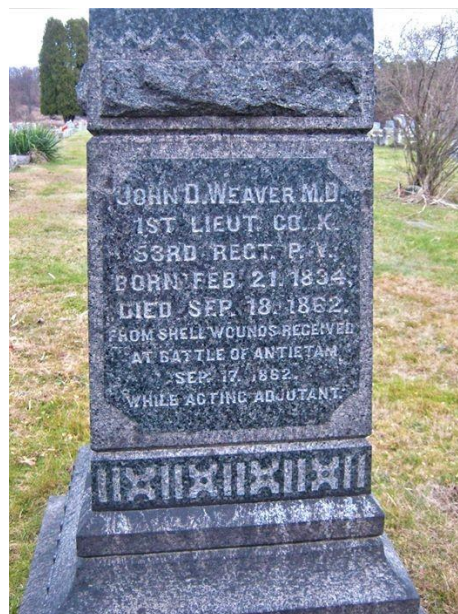
*And, still earlier, also from Michael Shaffner:*

From the 1839 "Kentucky Housewife" we have spare ribs, with raw tomatoes as an accompaniment: "Saw the ribs across in several places, for the convenience of carving. Roast it before a clear brisk fire, but be careful not to roast it too brown and hard. Make a rich gravy for the rib, of scraps or trimmings of the fresh meat, butter, flour, parsley, pepper, cream and any kind of catchup you choose. Serve with it apple jelly, a dish of baked sweet potatoes, and one of raw tomatoes, which have been peeled, sliced, and highly seasoned with salt pepper and vinegar."

## **HONORING OUR FALLEN DEAD – THE MEN OF THE ORIGINAL 53<sup>RD</sup> PVI**

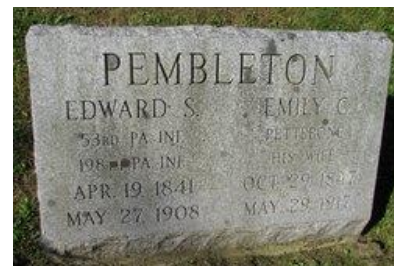
Thanks to Marc Benedict for sharing:

**1st Lt. John Daugherty Weaver M.D.** (1834-1862) from Indiana County, Pennsylvania, was mustered into Co. K of the 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment on September 9, 1861. At Antietam, the 53rd PA was part of Brooke's 3rd Brigade (1st Division, 2nd Corps) that charged the Sunken Road: "It occupied the extreme right of the division. In front was the "sunken road" occupied by the enemy...It was important to drive the enemy from this position, and the Fifty-third was chosen for the charge...in a short but desperate contest it drove him from his well-chosen ground. The regiment was subsequently engaged in the hottest of the fight and shared the varying fortunes of the day. The position gained was of great importance, and was held with tenacity until the regiment was ordered to the support of a battery. Lieutenant Weaver, of Company K, a brave young officer, was mortally wounded. The loss in killed and wounded was twenty-eight." (from History of Montgomery County Pennsylvania, Theodore W. Bean, editor, 1884). Lt. John Weaver died the next day, September 18, 1862. He is buried in Edgewood Cemetery in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania.



**Henry W. Pembleton** - at the age of 35, was enrolled on Sept. 10, 1861 in Franklin, PA. He mustered in on Oct. 12, 1861 as a private in Co. F, 53rd PVI for 3 years in Harrisburg, PA. He died in Washington, D. C. on Nov. 10, 1864 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA.

**Edward Simeon Pembleton** - born on April 19, 1841. He mustered in on Oct. 12, 1861 in Harrisburg, PA for 3 years in Co. F, 53rd PVI at the age of 21. At the termination of his enlistment, he mustered in for one year in Co. H, 198th PVI on Sept. 5, 1864 and mustered out on June 4, 1865. He died on May 27, 1908 and is buried in Cedar Crest Cemetery, Trucksville, PA.



**Lewis Evins Rapp** - born on Jan. 13, 1840 in Juniata Co., PA. At 22, he enrolled on Sept. 19, 1861 in Perryville, PA. He mustered in for 3 years on Oct. 10, 1861 as a private in Co. I, 53rd PVI in Harrisburg, PA. He died on August 16, 1907 and is buried in Locust Run Cemetery, Thompsontown, PA.



1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Lester Race - born in Luzerne Co., PA on March 18, 1843. He resided in Dallas, PA when at the age of 23 he enlisted as a private on Oct. 21, 1861. He mustered in for 3 years in Co. F, 53rd PVI in Harrisburg, PA. He was promoted to Corporal, then Sergeant on March 16, 1864, 1st Sergt. on Nov. 2, 1864 and 1st Lieut. on April 16, 1865. He mustered out on June 30, 1865 in Washington, DC. He died on Sept. 29, 1923 and is buried in Fitch Cemetery, Falls, PA.

## **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 Regiment, P. V.,  
Camp at Harrison Landing, Va.  
Tuesday, July, 1862.

Messers. Editors:— All quiet along the James. The same old “heading” with a different ending, that all last fall and winter was “standing matter” in the columns of the “dailies.” How long this quietus will last, we, of course, cannot say, but Micawberlike, we are anxiously looking for something to turn up, hoping, like Jacob Faithful, that we may have better luck next time. In the meantime we are taking advantage of the lull of the storm, the temporary cessation of hostilities, to make our present advantageous position still stronger by the active and unceasing use of pick and shovel in the scientific upturning of mother earth. This labor is done uninterruptedly, at least by the enemy, for it appears that his most advanced picket line is five miles beyond ours. The works are, therefore, not constructed under an uncomfortable artillery and sharpshooter fire, as were the extensive fortifications before Yorktown, and on our recent “old line of offence.” They will be, or rather, are much stronger and consequently, more durable than any yet built: their object will be as the stirring events of the future unfold themselves.

This morning there was a grand Review of Gen. Sumner’s corps de armee, consisting of the divisions of Richardson and Sedgwick, some twenty-six regiments in all. The troops were reviewed by Maj. Gen. McClellan, and Maj. Gen. Sumner. The affair passed off as such things generally do—numerous bands enlivened the occasion, flags gaily floated in the air, officers galloped hither and thither, soldiers marched well, &c., &c.

The regiment is in one of the pleasantest camps we have been in since we have been campaigning. The woods in which we are encamped were at first filled with a dense undergrowth that prevented a free circulation of the air, but in course of a few weeks this was all cut out, leaving nothing but the tall heavy topped pines. Several wells have been sunk, in order to supply a sufficiency of water. Until these were dug, all the water for cooking and washing purposes was brought from the springs on the banks of the James river—a distance of more than a mile. Strong detachments from our regiment have been for some time past working on the entrenchments.

On Saturday last, a squadron of the 3d Penna. Cavalry went out on a reconnoissance. They proceeded as far as Savage Station, driving in the enemy’s pickets, and taking one rebel lieutenant and five privates prisoners, and capturing four horses.

On Sunday last, just after sunset, died in the regimental hospital, Cornelius Stiles, of Dallas, Luzerne Co., and a member of Co. F. He was buried near the camp.

Surgeon McKinnon, who has been in ill health for a month passed, has gone home on a furlough. Dr. Wynne, our excellent Assistant Surgeon, has chief control of the regimental hospital department. From the time we left camp at Harrisburg the Doctor has been always at his post, never tiring at the performance of his heavy duty—(heavy, because attending to the various wants of a hundred soldiers every morning on the “sick list” are not by any means light.)

The other day while passing through the woods to the river, a queer, unmusical noise broke upon our ear; we listened attentively, we thought we were mistaken, but it really seemed as if we heard that sound before. Yes it was—it was—be sure it was the crying of a baby. What a strange sound to be heard in the camp of a soldier—we have not listened to its like for months. The baby was evidently a member of the Irish Brigade, where some of the soldiers have their wives with them; it belonged to the *Infantry* at least. We do not understand

enough about such matters to tell by the tender ferocity of the crying, whether the infant was a "Daughter of the Regiment" or a gay soldier boy.

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

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

Pards,

First, I want to say thank you to all who attended our 40th anniversary celebration last month. As always, we had a great time and it was good to see some of our "retired" members. Thanks to Pete Zinkus for his efforts in planning the event! I want to congratulate Mark Fasnacht, Marc Benedict, Mike Espenshade and Matt Steger for their reelection as our NCO's for the next two years. We're in good hands whenever we take the field!

As we move into February, we're starting to see events on the schedule. Winter drill is at Landis Valley on February 1st and the NR's School of Instruction is February 29-March 1 in Gettysburg. I strongly encourage all of you to attend this event. It's a great weekend of learning and will be capped off with a battlefield walk guided by our very own John Heiser. Rooms are available at a discounted rate at the Days Inn. If you make a reservation, tell them you're with the NR. Please take a look at the schedule moving forward and please make arrangements to attend all of our max effort events as well as the NR max effort events.

I want to also congratulate Michael Fedorshak on his recent graduation. Michael is now a United States Navy Corpsman. We wish you the best of luck as you move to your next phase of training.

On a personal note, I want to say thank you to our membership for your confidence in me and for electing me as your President for another term. More than half of my 17 years in this unit have been in a position of leadership. It's a responsibility that I take seriously and I do my very best to represent the 53rd in a professional manner. I'm very happy that we've been able to grow in the past few years and to see that we still have the drive and passion to keep moving forward. I consider all of you a friend and it's my honor to represent you.

Eric

### **IMPORTANT!!!! 2020 Dues –**

If you have not paid your 2020 dues, please mail them to me ASAP or bring them to the Winter Drill (1-2 Feb.) at Landis Valley. **Dues must be paid before falling in with the unit** since part of the cost includes the \$10 per man fee for our liability insurance policy with the NR. 2020 dues are \$40 and are made payable to **53<sup>rd</sup> PVI**. The unit will be paying our unit fee and insurance fee to the NR at the National Regiment's School of Instruction in late February which is why we need 53<sup>rd</sup> unit dues paid now so we know our official 2020 roster by the Winter Drill for a correct payment to the NR.

### *Upcoming events –*

#### **1-2 February – Winter Drill – Landis Valley (Lancaster) (rain/snow date 8-9 Feb)**

Annual drill to help get the rust off and help get us all ready for the 2020 season. The site will be open at 9AM. We generally work on the basics of drill, manual of arms, etc. and may add in some extra items. We will also likely practice guard mount again. Should you have a specific topic(s) that you would like covered by the NCOs or if you'd like to present a topic, please contact 1st Sgt. Fasnacht ASAP. Please dress appropriately based upon the weather. Sack or frock coats are OK as well as overcoats. No rounds or caps are needed. For those planning on staying overnight Saturday, please let Eric know ASAP. Also, the heat won't be working in the cabin so please bring proper clothing so you stay warm overnight Saturday.

Please bring your mess gear (pots and pans) for cooking and eating. Please bring your own food for Sat. and Sunday. Based upon what we have amongst us Sat. evening, we may either simply cook individually or may be able to assemble a company mess, based upon what we have to put together. We will have a camp fire going near the red building bathrooms.

Any pertinent updates will be forthcoming as we get closer to the event so please check your email and the group Facebook page. Should weather cause a cancellation, our rain/snow date is 8~9 Feb. (We will send out a notice ASAP, if warranted, due to weather cancellation.)

## 29 Feb – 1 March – National Regiment’s School of Instruction -

Each year, the NR puts on this training exercise for NCOs and officers. Many topics are generally covered. In the past years, presentations on clothing, sewing/period clothing repair, period food, how to properly pack your knapsack, gum blankets/ponchos, weapon care, tentage, etc. were given. We won’t know the actual 2020 list of topics until we get closer to the event. We also normally cover various topics related to drill in an effort to get the rust off plus help each rank become familiar with the rank(s) above them in case you need to fill in out in the field. It is crucial that all NCOs and officers know the responsibilities of the rank above them for this reason. Privates are also invited to attend, especially if they have an interest in moving up the ranks in the future. A lot of what we learn at the School (drill-wise) will be put into practice at the NR Camp of Instruction in May at Gruber Wagon Works.

## 14 March – Cartridge Rolling Party – 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Fasnacht’s Home (Kleinfeltersville)

Time to make rounds for the 2020 campaign. We normally start around 10AM making rounds and cap packs. Please bring something to share for lunch as well as any round-making tools you may have. Scissors, glue sticks, etc. are also needed. Let Mark know ahead of time what you plan on bringing (food-wise) so we aren’t all bringing the same thing to eat. Additional info will be provided as we get closer to mid-March.

## *The Civil War Merchant -*

*(if you have something for sale or are looking for something, email me to include it in a future edition of “The Sentinel”)*

## For Sale –

Listed by Rick Kramer for a friend. All items in good shape unless noted otherwise. Contact Rick directly for any inquiries/questions - [auktion8@comcast.net](mailto:auktion8@comcast.net)

Unlined Sack Coat (approx. XL)	30.00	CD Jarnigan Great Coat (approx. XL)	100.00
Keune McDowell Kepi some brim cracking	20.00	Grey Blanket with black stripe	50.00

*If you have not submitted your “Get To Know 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.*

## 2020 Calendar of Events -

- 11 Jan. – Annual Holiday Party – Dobbin House (Gettysburg)
- 1-2 Feb – Winter Drill (Landis Valley) [rain/snow date is 8-9 Feb]
- 29 Feb – 1 March – National Regiment School of Instruction (Gettysburg)
- 14 March – Cartridge Rolling Party (Sgt. Fasnacht’s home)
- 4 April – Adopt-A-Position – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Spring Monument Cleanup (Gettysburg)
- 2-3 May - National Regiment Camp of Instruction (Gruber Wagon Works) **53<sup>rd</sup> PVI MAX Effort**
- 16-17 May - USAHEC Event – **53<sup>rd</sup> PVI MAX Effort** (paid event) (Carlisle)
- 25 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade
- 18-19 July – Landis Valley “Civil War Days” (Lancaster) **53<sup>rd</sup> PVI MAX Effort**
- 29-30 Aug – Gettysburg Living History (Spangler Spring – Gettysburg NMP) **53<sup>rd</sup> PVI MAX Effort**
- 12-13 Sept. – Burkittsville Re-Enactment (Burkittsville, MD) – **53<sup>rd</sup>/NR Max Effort**
- 17-18 Oct. – Cedar Creek Re-Enactment (Middletown, Virginia) **53<sup>rd</sup>/NR Max Effort**
- 7 Nov. - Adopt-A-Position – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Fall Monument Cleanup (Gettysburg)
- 21 Nov. – Remembrance Day Parade (Gettysburg)
- 5 Dec. – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Annual Meeting (Sgt. Fasnacht’s home)

## Secondary Events -

- 3-5 April – Lee’s Last Stand Re-Enactment (**CANCELLED**)
- 8-9 August – Cedar Mountain Re-Enactment (1<sup>st</sup> MN)
- 5-6 Sept. – Bedford Village (1<sup>st</sup> MN)



### 53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford ([reenactor53@gmail.com](mailto:reenactor53@gmail.com))

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Newsletter Editor: Matthew Steger ([n3ntj@comcast.net](mailto:n3ntj@comcast.net))

Webmasters: Steve Dillon ([steve@gofoxpro.com](mailto:steve@gofoxpro.com)) and Matthew Steger ([n3ntj@comcast.net](mailto:n3ntj@comcast.net))

Website: <http://www.53rdpvi.org>

Sergeants: Mark Fasnacht and Marc Benedict

Corporals: Mike Espenshade and Matthew Steger

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>

