

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Company C

"The Sentinel" December 2020

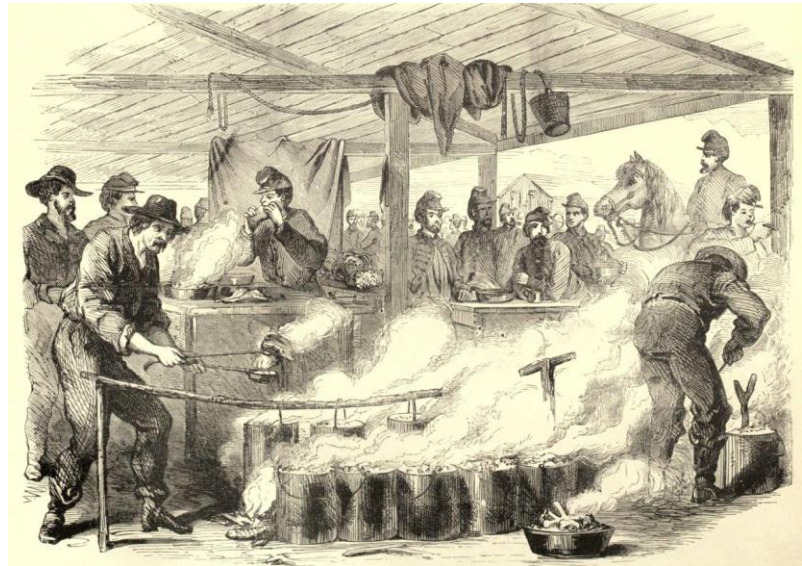
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

## This Month:

1. Fighting Disease With Smell:  
"Disinfection during the Civil War"
2. 2020 NR Annual Meeting  
Summary
3. Levi Fritz Letter
4. "Beyond Consciousness and Pain"  
- Dr. Morton and Anesthesia at  
The Battle of the Spotsylvania
5. Battle Of Carlisle
6. Happy Thanksgiving
7. From The Desk Of The President
8. Upcoming Events
9. The Civil War Merchant
10. Event Schedule
11. 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 of 53rd events from long ago, 53<sup>rd</sup> memories, etc. to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". Matthew Steger, editor*

## FIGHTING DISEASE WITH SMELL: "DISINFECTION" DURING THE CIVIL WAR

**Posted on:** October 1st, 2019 on the website of The National Museum of Civil War Medicine

**Author:** Melanie Kiechle

Poet Walt Whitman never forgot the smells of Civil War hospitals where he had nursed wounded soldiers: "The hospitals, with their festering sores, putrid wounds, were enough to fix certain odors forever." The sharp scent of varnish, which prompted this reminiscence three decades after the war, did not bother Whitman; he had smelled far worse: "...there was a smell that I took for cadavers—it was a terrific odor, extremely disagreeable to me—made me sick in fact." With time, Whitman learned that the smell was not decomposing bodies, but the carbolic acid that doctors used as a disinfectant. And yet, despite knowing that the "terrific odor" was harmless, Whitman forever associated it with illness and death.[\[1\]](#)

Exposure to chemical disinfectants, and fearful recoil from their strong smells, was a common Civil War experience. As they navigated the spaces of war, soldiers, physicians, and nurses eventually learned to identify the odors of disinfectants, and not to fear their strong smells. This was a dramatic change from life before the war, when Americans focused on fighting foul odors because they believed that those miasmas caused disease. Instead of chemicals, they used fresh air as a disinfectant, throwing open their windows to air rooms, and grew fragrant plants around their homes to "purify" the air with good smells. In spaces where odors might accumulate, like the kitchen, cellar, and outhouse, women used lime—the key ingredient in whitewash—because lime halted decomposition and absorbed odors.

"The Sentinel" The newsletter of the 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

53<sup>rd</sup>  
Pennsylvania  
Volunteer Infantry  
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When they could, physicians and nurses used the same methods in Civil War hospitals. They had learned from the British experience in the Crimean War—particularly British nurse Florence Nightingale’s devastating accounts of hospital deaths—that fresh air and good ventilation improved patients’ chances of recovery. Nightingale shared Whitman’s dislike of chemical disinfectants, writing that one should never “depend upon fumigations, ‘disinfectants’ and the like, for purifying the air.” In her *Notes on Hospitals*, Nightingale insisted that hospitals must be built in a way that enabled the admission and circulation of fresh air.<sup>[2]</sup>



*Walt Whitman remarked on the foul orders in Civil War hospitals.*

Harewood Hospital near Washington, → note the open windows. *Courtesy of the National Archives*



In principle, American physicians agreed with Nightingale, and they tried to create well-ventilated hospitals. The United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) consulted with ventilation experts and published circulars about disinfectants that stipulated

“there can be no substitute for *fresh air* to meet the physiological requirements of respiration and health.” It was easy to admit fresh air into pavilion hospitals and hospital tents, but many hospitals did not meet ventilation requirements. Physician Robert Ware reported to the USSC in 1862 about an unventilated hospital: “These rooms are very small and low, and no measures have been taken to open the windows at the top.” Ware observed high rates of typhoid fever and concluded “the atmosphere of the fever ward may be the cause.”<sup>[3]</sup>

Soldiers and nurses also believed that hospital air would make them sick. When drummer-boy Marcus Woodcock came down with the measles, he worried that he would never recover in the foul-smelling, overcrowded hospital of Columbia, South Carolina: “The stench was horrible from the fact that the beds were simply a continuation of the straw pile[d] around the room...” In the short time that Louisa May Alcott volunteered as a hospital nurse, smells made a strong impression on her: “The first thing I met was a regiment of the vilest odors that ever assaulted the human nose, and took it by storm...and the worst of this affliction was, every one has assured me that it was a chronic weakness of all hospitals, and I must bear it.” Alcott bore it by sprinkling herself with lavender water, thinking that she would not get ill if she inhaled the sweet scent of lavender rather than hospital air.<sup>[4]</sup>

Lavender water was not strong enough to overpower the smells of illness and death, so physicians turned to stronger chemical disinfectants. Where fresh air was unavailable, because a hospital was poorly ventilated or its windows admitted battlefield stench, the United States Sanitary Commission recommended alternatives that would eliminate foul odors and thus the dangers of miasma. Guidelines categorized these disinfectants by how they acted on odors. Some, like nitrate of lead and chloride of zinc, arrested decomposition and thereby halted odor production. Charcoal and sulfate of lime were useful because they directly absorbed noxious effluvia. But carbolic acid, the disinfectant that turned Whitman’s stomach, was preferable

because it was so effective. As the Sanitary Commission noted, carbolic acid was “antiseptic and deodorant; capable of a great variety, extent and economy of applications, and act[s] with considerable agency and permanency.”[5]

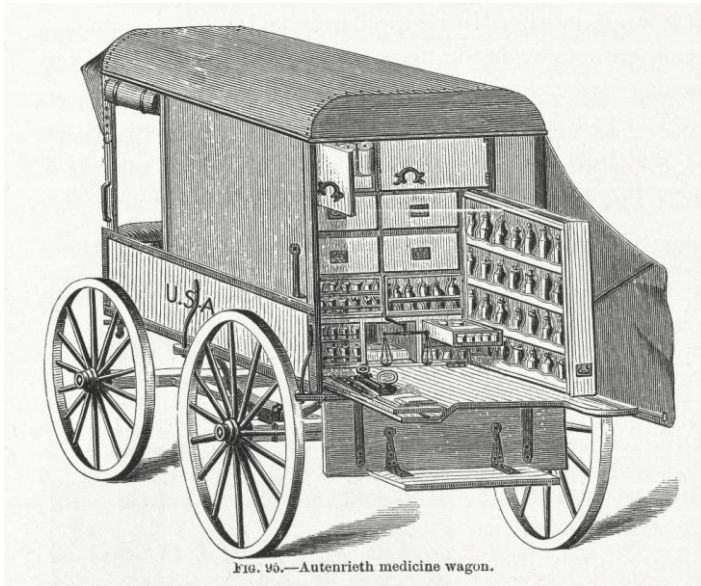


FIG. 95.—Autenrieth medicine wagon.

*Medicines like Chloride of Zinc were standard issue on Autenrieth medicine wagons like this. Courtesy of Wiki Commons*

Because Americans did not know about germs and thought the air conveyed illness, they used disinfectants in very different ways from those we employ today. Civil War doctors did not sterilize surgical instruments or wounds, as physicians would later learn to do, but sprinkled disinfectant substances throughout hospital spaces to purify the air. As a result, the smells of disinfectants dominated the air of hospitals, making these strong odors synonymous with ill health and the danger of death. When Americans returned to their homes and civil life from wartime hospitals, they carried with them new knowledge about disinfectants and a renewed appreciation for fresh air.

### Endnotes

- [1] Walt Whitman qtd. In Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 7:168-69, <https://whitmanarchive.org/criticism/disciples/traubel/WWWiC/7/med.00007.90.html>
- [2] Florence Nightingale, *Notes on Nursing: What It Is, and What It Is Not* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1860), 23.
- [3] Elisha Harris, “Sanitary Hints: Special Disinfectants and Their Applications,” *The Sanitary Commission Bulletin* (New York, 1866), 1:59-60; Dr. Robert Ware to USSC, March 9, 1862, Box 15, Folder 17, Item no. 545, US Sanitary Commission Records, Washington, DC, Archives (MssCol 22261), Manuscript and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
- [4] Kenneth W. Noe, ed., *A Southern Boy in Blue: The Memoir of Marcus Woodcock, 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Infantry (U.S.A.)* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 37-38; Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches: An Army Nurse’s True Account of Her Experiences during the Civil War* (1863; repr., Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1991), 27.
- [5] Harris, “Sanitary Hints,” 60.

## **SUMMARY OF THE NR’S 2020 ANNUAL MEETING**

On 21 November, the NR held its annual meeting virtually via Zoom and YouTube to review the year 2020, plan 2021, etc. The meeting was called to order at 10AM by our very own Eric Ford, one of the NR’s 3 board members. A unit roll call was taken. The year 2020 in review was discussed and was obviously disappointing due to covid cancelling most events. Numerous events were discussed to potentially add to the 2021 calendar. School of the Solider is scheduled to be held in late March. School of Instruction is planned for Gruber Wagon Works, as was the 2020 version planned before being cancelled. The 2021 Bedford event was also discussed amongst others. The list of events will go back to the individual units to discuss with their membership and then be reported back to the NR. The NR’s budget report was given and discussed. The “Soldier of the Year” award went to Mike Kraus (116<sup>th</sup> PVI). Tim App’s board term was ending; Jimmy Thomas was nominated and voted in to replace the vacant board seat. Also, due to the year’s cancelling of most events, the NR decided to waive unit dues for 2021. Our \$10/man insurance fee will remain in effect, however. Purchasing an extra layer of liability insurance for NCOs and officers was also discussed and passed by those present. The meeting was concluded at 12:03PM.

The NR meeting will also be discussed at our annual meeting coming up on Dec 5<sup>th</sup>.

## **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.

Falmouth, Opposite Fredericksburg,  
Va., Sunday, Nov. 3d, 1862.

Messers. Editors:—Major-Gen. Sumner's command, forming the Right Grand Division of the Army of the Potomac, remained in camp at Warrenton six days. Nothing of more than passing importance transpired during our stay. Our last letter to the *Ledger* we wrote at the above place, but owing to the uncertainty of the mail for the last few weeks, we feel somewhat doubtful of your receiving it. According to orders, we broke camp at Warrenton early on Saturday morning, the 15th inst. We were supplied with three days rations. At seven o'clock, A.M., the column began to move off. Bringing up the rear of our division we passed through Warrenton at 9 o'clock, by Court House time. Just beyond the town we were halted half an hour. The troops moved in three columns—infantry on the right and left and the artillery and teams in the road. Our regiment was the rear guard to four batteries. We marched towards Warrenton Junction following the line of railroad. The weather was favorable. The general appearance of the country through which we passed was cheerful; although there was but few houses, none of which were beautiful, several deserted, and most of them much delapidated. We reached the Orange & Alexandria railroad, and bivouacked immediately beyond; about a mile below the Junction (Warrenton). This day we marched ten miles.

The next morning (Sunday), the revellie was sounded at 4 o'clock, and roll called as usual. Knapsacks were re-packed, breakfast cooked and eaten. At seven we commenced moving. Our division moved on the right of the road; the Irish Brigade in the advance, ours in the centre, and Caldwell's in the rear. By noon we had marched about ten miles when we were halted half an hour, to swallow a bite of dinner. This was at a place where there were two houses, and was no doubt dignified by being called a town or ville, but what was its name we did not ascertain. The country was not so fine as that through which we passed yesterday. At dusk we went into bivouac in a woods near Acquia Creek, having marched eighteen miles during the day. As a matter of course the boys were fatigued, but if you had seen them running races for rails, and chasing up rabbits, you would not have thought so—the scene bore more resemblance to boys just let loose from school, than that of soldiers, that had just accomplished a day of weary marching. To the soldier rails are a glorious institution. A good fence and plenty of it is a grand desideratum. When the day's tramp is about ending, and the soldier is about "tying up" for the night, he keeps a sharp eye to the fences. And if it is his good fortune to be quartered for the night, within a reasonable distance of the article in question he considers himself lucky. How quickly they make a cheering blaze, and how it saves labor in cutting wood. According to orders, while on the march, each company commander must hand in a report of the number of rails burned by his command; but as a rail by any other name will burn as well, you may well believe that according to official report but few rails are destroyed.

The next day (Monday) found us up at early dawn—packed up and ready to march before sunrise. This day our division, which had the advance of the column moved as follows: Our Brigade in front, Caldwell's in the centre and the Irish Brigade in the rear. The 53d Pa. and the 57th N.Y., under the command of Col. Brooke was sent a head as the advance guard. We had made about five miles when the Colonel was informed that the cavalry pickets of the rebels, were about a mile in our front. The command was halted and the boys loaded their muskets. Here a squad of cavalry galloped up and passed to the front. Half an hour after cannonading was heard in the front, and a short time after the dragoons came back. They stated that they came up with the enemy's cavalry, and drove them across the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg. We went on until we arrived near Falmouth.

The 53d formed line of battle on the left of the road and the 67th N.Y. on right. Company I, of our regiment, was advanced as skirmishers. We remained in this position but a short time when Gen. Sumner and Gen. Hancock and staffs came up and "surveyed the vantage of the ground." We advanced several hundred yards further on and took position on the right of the road. Here we waited for several hours—in the interim the artillery came up and was put in position. Our regiment moved to the left to the support of a battery, A and I remaining as pickets and skirmishers on the road. The enemy had a battery of four guns on the other side of the river near Fredericksburg. Our guns on this side opened upon them at 4 o'clock, P.M. A brisk fusillade was kept up for half an hour. So well directed were the shells from our pieces that the rebels were several times driven away from their guns. From a tree, we could plainly discern the rebel battery, and the explosion an effect of Pettit's well directed shells. Our regiment was under the artillery fire, but there were no casualties. About 10 o'clock, at night, A and I Companies were moved down the road and put on picket along the river at Falmouth. We were along with Company A. The night was dark and cloudy. The rebel pickets were along the river shore on the other side. We could hear them talk and even

spit. Occasionally we heard the rumbling of moving artillery and the clashing of cavalry sabres. Before daybreak the picket line was drawn in. At daybreak we could discern the rebels plainly on the opposite side of the river, but as they did not fire on us we did not fire on them. The regiment had been on picket further down the river, was moved back of a knoll and went into camp. The following day it was ordered into Falmouth to act as provost Guard. The companies are quartered in houses. Three companies (A, F and B,) are in an old Lutheran Church, standing on a high bank, near the river and not more than 150 yards from the rebel picket line. The rebels have strongly fortified the hills near Fredericksburg, and their camp fires show that they must be there in force. One battery of seven guns we can plainly see. Yesterday it was expected that we would open our batteries on them, but for some reason or other, the affair failed to come off—the ball, however, may be expected to open every moment. They have a heavy picket line along the Rappahannock and so have we; at some points the lines are only fifty yards apart, and our boys and the rebs kept up quite an interesting conversation, until holding communication with the enemy was prohibited. Yesterday afternoon we were at the river where some twenty of the rebels were on the other side. One reb desired to know why we did not come over the river. Our boys answered that they would as soon as we were ready. An officer of ours had a New York paper which he wished to exchange for a Richmond one. A rebel holloed over, “What regiment do you belong to?” The officer not understanding him and thinking that he wished to know the name of the paper that he wished to exchange, answered “New York Herald.”

The majority of the people of Falmouth were glad to see our army here again, as it would once more in a measure open the place to Northern trade. When we arrived here the necessaries of life were selling at ruinous prices. Shoes, \$10 per pair, coffee, \$3.00 per pound, sugar, \$1.00 per pound, butter, \$1.00 per pound, tea, \$10.00 per pound, eggs, 30 cts. Per dozen. Salt, there was none in market. A box of matches cost 25 cents.

Capt. Mintzer of the Pottstown Company, who had been absent for several weeks on official business, returned yesterday. The boys welcomed his return by three rousing cheers. They were good boys while he was away, for, coming back he found them all in church. During his absence the company was under the command of 1st Lieut. Potts.

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

[Ledger, December 2, 1862]

## **“BEYOND CONSCIOUSNESS AND PAIN” – DR. MORTON AND ANESTHESIA AT THE BATTLE OF SPOTSYLVANIA**

*Posted on:* May 10th, 2018. *Author:* Jake Wynn (Director of Interpretation at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine.)

On a landscape scarred by the shot and shell of battle, a renowned surgeon from Massachusetts went to work surrounded by blood and gore. The Battle of Spotsylvania Court House raged with ferocity seldom seen, even when matched against other bloody contests of the Civil War. In this hellish landscape, Dr. William T.G. Morton provided mercy to those torn apart by bullets and shells, utilizing ether as an anesthetic, a revolutionary technique that Morton himself had devised in 1846, ushering in the birth of modern surgery.

*Post-war drawing of the Battle of Spotsylvania, courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Now in a makeshift field hospital in central Virginia, he used his experience as the original anesthetist to care for dozens of soldiers requiring capital operations – amputations.

Morton’s innovative use of ether as an anesthetic in the 1840s allowed the advent of modern surgical techniques. Gone were the days of speed as an integral part of the surgeon’s job description. Careful, precise surgical operations became the norm as anesthetic was adapted by doctor’s around the world in the 1850s. By the time of the Civil War, the use of ether and chloroform in surgery by American doctors was nearly universal. During the conflict, more than 95% of surgeries completed were done so under the use of anesthesia.



*(editor’s note – due to the flammability of ether, chloroform was generally always used for night-time surgeries)*

Page 5 of 12

**“The Sentinel” The newsletter of the 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry**

**53rd  
Pennsylvania  
Volunteer Infantry  
Company “C”  
INC.**

The founder of the anesthetic revolution went to the battlefield himself alongside other volunteer surgeons in May 1864, assisting military surgeons during the Battle of the Wilderness. When the armies moved south through burning woods toward a crossroads hamlet known as Spotsylvania Court House, the volunteers followed.

Known as [the Overland Campaign](#), this continual fight started on May 5, 1864 and did not abate until the armies went into fortifications near Petersburg, Virginia in the middle of June. All the while, Union and Confederate forces faced off in a series of brutal battles, fought amid earthworks and field fortifications, swamps and woodlots.

Over the course of six weeks of combat, more than 80,000 men were killed, wounded, captured, or went missing. The startling toll in wounded left Union military medical professionals desperate for assistance, even though they were well-prepared with supplies and a well-functioning ambulance system, with a hospital system organized in nearby Fredericksburg.

#### *A field hospital at the Battle of Spotsylvania, courtesy the Library of Congress.*

Dr. Morton's involvement at Spotsylvania is incredible. The innovator who first utilized ether as an anesthetic more 15 years earlier, brought his techniques personally to wounded soldiers on the battlefield. He quickly found work in the hospitals near Spotsylvania Court House as fighting there raged between May 8 and May 21. The battle concentrated on a string of Confederate earthworks atop a low ridge, known to history as the "[Muleshoe Salient](#)." Every inch of ground saw men tumble, with bodies penetrated by Minie balls or shell fragments. Others were clubbed to death, bayoneted, or blown apart in combat at close quarters. Surgeons were left to attempt to put the pieces back together as best they could. Dr. Morton found his place at the head of the operating table, administering anesthesia to the wounded before surgery began.

A reporter for the Associated Press filed a story in late May that depicted Dr. Morton's work in the field hospitals near Spotsylvania, shortly after ambulances carrying wounded Confederates arrived at the field hospital. The account provides valuable evidence, demonstrating the near universal use of anesthetic on the battlefields of the Civil War:

*Dr. Morton, of Boston, one of the first discoverers, if not indeed the first discoverer of the anaesthetic properties of ether, has been with the army the last week, working and observing in his capacity, with all his might. During this time he has, with his own hands, administered ether in over 2,000 cases. The medical director, when asked yesterday in what operations he required ether to be used, replied, "In every case." Day before yesterday some 300 rebels wounded fell into our hands. Of these, twenty-one require capital operations. They were placed in a row, a slip of paper pinned to each man's coat collar telling the nature of the operation that had been decided upon. Dr. Morton passes along, and with a towel saturated with ether puts every man beyond consciousness and pain. The operating surgeon follows and rapidly and skillfully amputates a leg or an arm, as the case may be, till the twenty-one have been subjected to the knife and saw without one twinge of pain. A second surgeon ties up the arteries; a third dresses the wounds. The men are taken to tents nearby, and wake to find themselves cut in two without torture, while a winnow of lopped off members attest the work. The last man had been operated upon before the first awakened. Nothing could be more dramatic, and nothing could more perfectly demonstrate the value of anaesthetics. Besides, men fight better when they know that torture does not follow a wound, and numberless lives are saved that the shock of the knife would lose to their friends and the country.*

Morton himself wrote to a friend to describe his experiences near the battlefield in May 1864. His highly descriptive letter includes numerous aspects of his visit, including his use of anesthesia, the good work of the ambulance corps, the nature of combat during the Overland Campaign, and the sight of black refugees fleeing north toward Union-controlled territory. The letter was found in the *Physicians and Surgeons of America*, published in 1896.

*HEADQUARTERS, May 19, 1864. My Dear :—Soon after leaving Fredericksburg to come out here, we passed some four or five army wagons parked, each one with its four or six horses or mules, ready for service, yet near the supplies of forage. There were also large droves of cattle, brought from the western states for the use of the army, and killed as they are needed. The road, if road it may be called, was wretched indeed, the horses often sinking in mud-holes to the saddle-girths. Through this, ambulances and wagons were floundering along, carrying the wounded to Fredericksburg, while others, only slightly injured, plodded along on foot. Occasionally we passed an impromptu camp, where these slightly wounded men had stopped to rest, and several newly made graves showed where some poor fellows had made their last halt. The last five miles of our journey was over a new road cut through the woods, as the guerrillas had possession of the turnpike near Spotsylvania Court house. Indeed, they have occasionally swooped in upon the road over which we went, carrying off horses and robbing the wounded.*

*On reaching the top of an eminence, I at last saw our line, in the shape of a horseshoe, somewhat straightened out, with troops*

*all around, in readiness for instant attack, while beyond them, crouched in rifle-pits, were our pickets. Riding through regiments and batteries I reached a house which had been pointed out to me as Gen. Grant's headquarters, but found on my arrival that he had moved, that the building might be used as a hospital. Just then, several wounded rebels were brought up on stretchers, and the surgeon in charge, who had known me after Burnside's attack upon Chancellorsville, invited me to administer anaesthetics, which I did. All of them had limbs amputated, and seemed very grateful afterwards for the kind treatment which they received, but they were bitterly secesh when the war was alluded to.*

*When these wounded rebels had been attended to, the surgeon sent an orderly with me to the headquarters of the medical director of the Army of the Potomac, to whom I reported for duty, and then, as there was no need for my services, I went on until I reached the headquarters of the army. These occupied a group of about twenty tents, pitched along the border of a piece of woodland. In front of one of these tents, the fly of which was converted into an awning, sat the lieutenant general, with several officers and Mr. Dana, the assistant secretary of war.*

*While Gen. Grant was in Washington, I had been introduced to him, and he now remembered me and kindly welcomed me. He conversed very frankly upon military matters, declaring that he intended to give the rebels all the fighting they wanted. It would not be proper, I suppose, to write you the general's remarks on the campaign, but I must tell you that in answer to my question—"How long is this deadly conflict to last?" he replied, in his cool, unassuming way, "Perhaps until the Fourth of July, and we shall have all the time supplies and reinforcements, which they can't get."*

*The general assigned me a tent and an orderly, and invited me to share his camp fare. On previous visits to camps, I had found that the generals lived far better than do the boarders at the Washington hotels, but our supper that night was simply coffee and bread and butter. The butter (the general said) was made on the field of battle.*

*Since I have been here there has been a succession of skirmishes and picket firings. The pickets lie crouched in rifle-pits, in which when it rains, there is often a foot or eighteen inches of water, and between them is what is called the disputed ground. When there is any heavy firing heard the ambulance corps, with its attendants, stationed nearest to the scene of action, starts for the wounded. The ambulances are halted nearby, and the attendants go in with stretchers, to bring out the wounded. The rebels do not generally fire upon those wearing the ambulance badges.*

*Upon the arrival of a train of ambulances at a field hospital, the wounds are hastily examined, and those who can bear the journey are sent at once to Fredericksburg. The nature of the operations to be performed upon the others is then decided upon, and noted on a bit of paper pinned to the pillow or roll of blanket under each patient's head. When this had been done, I prepared the patients for the knife, producing perfect anaesthesia in an average time of three minutes, and the operators followed, performing their operations with dexterous skill, while the dressers in their turn bound up the stumps. It is surprising to see with what dexterity and rapidity surgical operations are performed by scores in about the same time really taken up with one case in peaceful regions.*

*The medical department deserves great credit for the abundant supplies sent to the wounded, while the members of the Christian and sanitary commissions furnish many additional comforts. The number of wounded has been greatly exaggerated, and will not today amount to twenty thousand. Of this number, a large proportion are so slightly wounded that in thirty days they will be ready for duty again.*

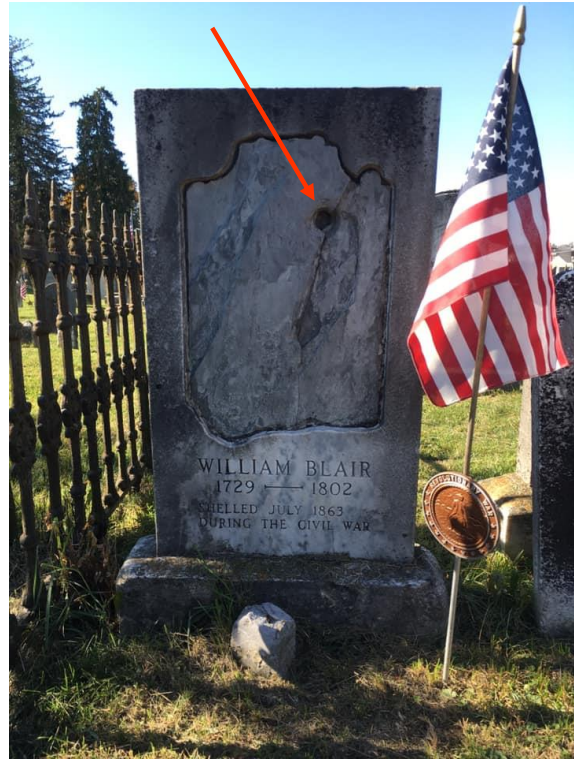
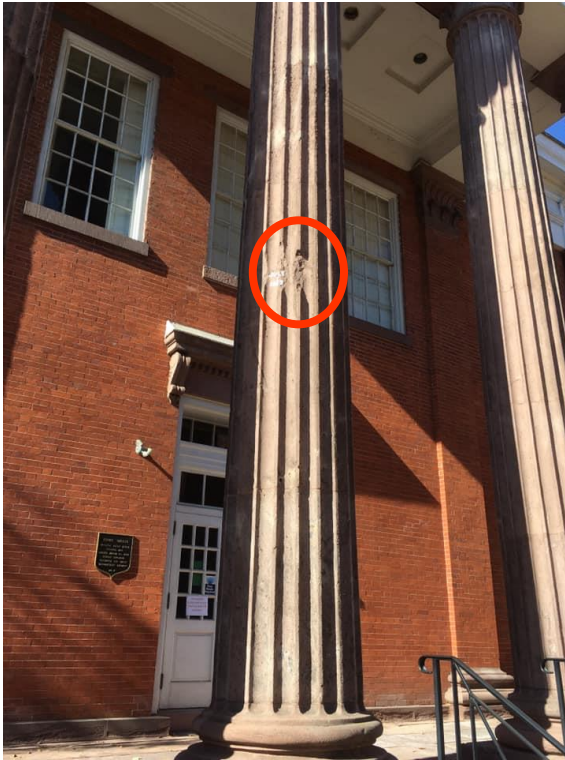
*The dead are buried where they fall, or near the hospitals in which they die. Their names are carefully written on wooden head boards, and entered into registers. It is, however, useless for friends to come here for their remains, as there is no way of transporting them to Washington except in government wagons, and the army needs all its transportation.*

*What houses remain standing are used as hospitals, the female occupants being permitted to retain one room. Often a stack of chimneys show where a dwelling has been burned. The colored people are leaving for the North, carrying their effects in small wagons or carts, often drawn by an ox working in shafts. It has rained nearly every day since I have been here, but the soldiers manage to keep themselves comfortable under shelter tents or bowers. Artillerymen sleep under their cannon, which are covered by tarpaulins.*

*Very truly yours, W. T. G. MORTON.*

## **BATTLE OF CARLISLE**

On 8 November, my wife and I took a short daytrip to Carlisle to look at the waysides and some other historical items around town. As you likely know, Carlisle was the location of a small battle ('a skirmish' really) during the early part of the Battle of Gettysburg. On 27 June, Gen. Ewell's men stopped in town to requisition supplies on their way to try to capture Harrisburg. By the late afternoon of July 1<sup>st</sup>, Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's men had arrived to also get supplies after Gen. Ewell had been redirected to Gettysburg by Gen. Lee. Not finding Ewell, Stuart's men briefly fought a few PA and NY militias in town by bombarding the town for about an hour and set fire to the Carlisle Barracks before heading to the main fighting in Gettysburg. This delay in Carlisle may have partially helped the Federal cause in Gettysburg.



The first photo above shows battle damage where a Confederate artillery shell struck one of the pillars of the Cumberland County Court House on 1 July 1863. An indication was painted on the shot with the date in an effort to prevent the damage from being repaired. Most of the other damage to the building was later repaired. The 2<sup>nd</sup> photo shows a headstone in the old Carlisle Cemetery (where Molly Pitcher is buried, amongst many others of historical significance) that was hit by a Confederate artillery shell. I am surprised more damage wasn't done. I stuck my finger in the hole.. it's about 1.5" deep. The 3<sup>rd</sup> photo shows me pointing out the location where another Confederate artillery shell struck a window sill of one of the main level windows of the Cumberland County Court House on 1 July 1863. Right below the mark is evidence of masonry repair and the date "1 July 1863" is etched in the brickwork.

## Mr. Dunn Browne's [Samuel Fiske], *Experiences in the Army*, Boston: Nichols and Noyes, 1866, transcribed from original book by pbp, Nov. 23, 2020

Thanksgiving in Camp, 14<sup>th</sup> Connecticut  
Belle Plain near Aquia Creek, Nov. 21, 1862

I wished you a happy Thanksgiving in my last epistle, and doubt not you, with equal heartiness, wished us the same here. I am going to tell you how happy a Thanksgiving we did have in that part of old Connecticut comprised within the limits of the camp of the 14<sup>th</sup>. We held with great reason that Gov. Buckingham's proclamation extended so far into Virginia at least as this; and rejoiced in thinking, with the good governor, that we have still some things to be thankful for; and attempted to observe his recommendation to the best of our ability under existing circumstances. The line officers, in general assembly convened on Wednesday eve, resolved with great enthusiasm to add tent to tent to obtain a sufficiently spacious dining room, to purchase three pounds of candles (regardless of expense), to light it up, to borrow a score or two of cracker-boxes of the commissary department to pile up for tables, and inviting in the field and staff, to close up the exercises on a scale of magnificence not to be surpassed (it being stipulated in the postscript to each invitation that every guest should bring his own knife, fork, cup, spoon, and plate with him). A committee of four captains was appointed to procure the needful supplies of fish, flesh, and fowl. And as there has been nothing in the shape of money in the old 14<sup>th</sup> for some weeks, save a few specimens of secesh shinplasters, they were instructed to "run their face" at the commissary's for a large amount of coffee, salt, soap, &c., to barter away with the inhabitants of the surrounding country, on the same principle upon which trades is carried on with other barbarous tribes. Armed and equipped in this engaging style, and attended by a guard of faithful men to see that they came to no detriment, our valorous commanders were to sally forth at early dawn, take shipping, and proceed to the other side of the Potomac Creek (on which our camp lies) on a voyage of discovery, or, to apply in slightly varied circumstances the Scripture phrase, to "go up and down, seeking what *we* might devour."

Having thus satisfactorily arranged this indispensable matter, we proceeded, arising betimes the next morning to carry out the other needful preparations. Evergreens were brought to adorn the tents withal; a beautiful arch was erected in front of the colonel's tent, with the flags crossed in the background; the tents were put together, according to the program, for our dining-hall; the tables were arranged and adorned; crackers had holes whittled in them for candlesticks; and other ingenious devices were resorted to supply every possible requirements of the occasion. The music was selected and rehearsed; our fine regimental band furbished up their instruments, and prepared to discourse to us in sweetest harmonies; the old big drum bottled up his heaviest thunders; the bugles lubricated their silver throats in readiness to pour forth their wild, enchanting strains; and the solemn trombones lengthened, if possible, their tremendous gullets, and strained wider open, if possible, their gaping mouths. The speakers (for who ever heard of an American celebration or assembly or occasion of any kind without an abundance of speech-making?) turned over in their minds what they should say; and so went on harmoniously and busily and pleasantly the whole array of varied preparation, physical, mental, and spiritual. Our thoughts reverted to the far-off home scenes: our wishes, desires, affections, prayers, were hovering over the New-England firesides left behind. The only interest we could get up in our rude preparations arose from their associations with the keeping of the day at home. Deceiving ourselves as pleasantly as might be, then, in our mock preparations, the forenoon passed away: one, two, three o'clock came; and we looked anxiously for the return of our supply committee, who had promised to be back by ten or eleven, A.M., at the latest. The hour for the public exercises arrived, and they were postponed; for we wished their participation. One or two of the expected speakers, indeed, were of their number. As the day wanted, we began to fear lest they had been captured by some prowling band of rebels; lest, seeking a mouthful for us, they had become themselves a mouthful for a squad of Stuart's cavalry.

Finally, the services could no longer be postponed; and, as the brightness of the beautiful day began to decline, the companies filed in, under the conduct of their orderlies, to the open space in front of the colonel's tent; and our public exercises of prayer and praise and patriotism took place. We thanked the Lord, I trust with some true devotion and sincerity, for the privilege we have enjoyed of laying our individual sacrifices upon the altar of our country; of passing through privations, hardships, and perils in her defense. We praised him for his goodness to ourselves and our families. We prayed him to bless and keep us and ours through the weeks to come, and to cause our cause triumphantly through this present crisis of our

destiny. We encouraged each other's hearts in the speeches of our surgeon, our chaplain, and others. We had a right good and pleasant hour of it, with our sweet music, and our friendly talk, and thoughts of home and friends, our (Lieut.) Col. Perkins presiding; and then separated, to get what sort of a Thanksgiving dinner we might, mostly, alas! of the inevitable "hard-tack and salt junk," washed down with bean-coffee. Our officers' banquet was a garlanded hall and empty table. We, or course, voted to extend Thanksgiving over until Friday night, and sought information of our strayed officers. Received tidings, just at night, of their being aground, in a big barge, on the other side of the inlet. Couldn't send them any help that night, and so went to be rejoicing that they were not captured, and resolved to have a good laugh at and with the poor fellows, whenever they did come, over their Thanksgiving spent in cold and wet, making frantic efforts to push a heavy old barge off a sand-bar.



Capt. Dunn Browne

And a good laugh we did have, and a not bad dinner into the bargain, by waiting a day for it. Our committee brought us in a fair supply of poultry, and four good-sized quarters of beef,--enough for ourselves, and to present a soup to a good part of the regiment. And such roasting, boiling, stuffing, baking, and stewing, under difficult circumstances, with few condiments, spices, and sauces to do *with*, and scarcely any pans and dishes to do *in*, perhaps you may have seen in your varied experience, "Republican;" but I never did before. However, Yankee ingenuity, and a sutler's big tin oven that we took almost forcible possession of, carried us triumphantly through. Our banquet was a success. **Turkeys, chickens, partridges, and roast beef, disappeared like ghosts at break of day, even though we had no bread save hard crackers, and no spices of any kind (not even pepper, save Cayenne),** nor sauces and catsups for relish. The songs and speeches need no spices to make them relish. No small amount of fun was produced by the recital of the sufferings, adventures, achievements, and perils of the committee in their sea and land excursion. Stories were told, our regimental affairs talked over, war prospects discussed, home friends remembered, wives and sweethearts toasted, &c., till Friday changed into Saturday, when we separated very well satisfied with our two-days' Thanksgiving celebration and relieve in conscience as to any failure of compliance with the recommendation of our worthy governor.

doubtless, what can be the meaning of this sudden and long stoppage of the great movement upon the enemy at this critical, last moment, as it were, of the year too.

And now, having given you this long narrative, you will not expect me to enter upon any other topic. We are all wondering here, as you are there,

A whole fall campaign with a million men wasted, as it looks now! If I ever go out to another war without going as commander-in-chief with unlimited powers, then my name is not Dunn Brown.

Happy Thanksgiving!  
Capt. Parvis, 5<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire Volunteers

## **FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT –**

Gentlemen,

I hope you all had a great Thanksgiving. It should go without saying that I'm extremely disappointed with the fact that we haven't been able to come together since our winter drill in February. This is certainly not the way any of us would have predicted the year to play out. However, I'll remain optimistic that we'll be back in the field by next Spring.

In an effort to provide the safest possible solutions to the current situation I feel that it's necessary to make some changes to the meeting and other business matters. Please read this in its entirety.

My priority is to make sure that we conduct our business in the safest manner possible for ALL members and to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to attend. I believe that it's in our best interest to **POSTPONE** the meeting until January. I'm working on an option to move the meeting to a different location where we have the ability to spread out a little more. If that option is not available I plan to move the meeting to a virtual platform (Zoom). I recently conducted the NR's annual meeting in this manner with great success. Our numbers are much less than the NR's so I'm hopeful that an in-person meeting in a larger room will still be something that's comfortable for all of us. All unit business including the election for Vice President will be conducted at this time. I'll report back as soon as I have a date confirmed.

*Unit dues will be waived for anyone who paid dues in 2020. This will also include the NR's insurance. We'll be paying everyone's insurance through the Treasury.*

After speaking with Pete and Matt, we also had to make the very difficult decision to also POSTPONE this year's annual Holiday Party. Pete spoke with The Dobbin House and the restrictions that they **currently** have will not allow us to enjoy the same experience that we're accustomed to. It's also expected that The Dobbin House will be forced to cancel the event without our say if the Covid restrictions are tightened. Before we start taking payments and submitting deposits, we're going to go ahead with "plan B". It looks like the month of June will be an event free month so our plan is to host a 53rd picnic that will be open to members, alumni and their families. Pete will be making an announcement and providing details in the near future.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Eric

## **UPCOMING EVENTS –**

### **5 December – Annual Meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Fasnacht's Home (Kleinfeltersville)**

Postponed – see Eric's remarks above for more info.

## **THE CIVIL WAR MERCHANT -**

*(if you have something for sale or are looking for something, submit it for inclusion 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 - [auction8@comcast.net](mailto:auction8@comcast.net)

Grey Blanket with black stripe	50.00
Keune McDowell Kepi some brim cracking	20.00

### **Wanted –**

Rusty Dicks is looking for a rifle (Springfield or Enfield) for his son Jacob who plans on joining the 53<sup>rd</sup>. You can contact Rusty directly at: [jeepfreak@ptd.net](mailto:jeepfreak@ptd.net).

## 2020 CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

- 11 Jan. Annual Holiday Party—Dobbin House (Gettysburg)  
1-2 Feb—Winter Drill (Landis Valley)  
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) (**CANCELLED**)  
2-3 May—National Regiment Camp of Instruction (Gruber Wagon Works) (**CANCELLED**)  
16-17 May—USAHEC Event—**53<sup>rd</sup> PVI MAX Effort** (**CANCELLED**)  
25 May—Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade (**CANCELLED**)  
29-30 Aug—Gettysburg Living History (Spangler Spring—Gettysburg NMP) (**CANCELLED**)  
12-13 Sept.—Landis Valley “Civil War Days” (Lancaster) **53<sup>rd</sup> PVI MAX Effort**  
12-13 Sept.—Burkittsville Re-Enactment (Burkittsville, MD) (**CANCELLED**)  
17-18 Oct.—Cedar Creek Re-Enactment (Middletown, Virginia) **53<sup>rd</sup>/NR Max Effort** (**CANCELLED**)  
17-18 Oct.—53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Fall Drill (Lancaster) **CANCELLED**  
7 Nov.—Adopt A Position—53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Fall Monument Cleanup (Gettysburg)  
21 Nov.—Remembrance Day (Gettysburg) (parade and NR formation were cancelled, however the NR annual meeting to be held virtually)  
5 Dec. – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Annual Meeting (Sgt. Fasnacht's home) - POSTPONED



### Secondary Events -

- 3-5 April—Lee's Last Stand Re-Enactment (**CANCELLED**)  
18-19 April—Spring Drill at Ft. McHenry (ELF) (**CANCELLED**)  
8-9 August—Cedar Mountain Re-Enactment (1st MN)  
5-6 Sept.—Bedford Village (1st MN)

### 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Contacts

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Sergeants: Mark Fasnacht and Marc Benedict  
Corporals: Mike Espenshade and Matthew Steger  
53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Member Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/53rdPVI>  
National Regiment Phone line: 800-777-1861 (code 61)  
National Regiment Website: <http://nationalregiment.com>

