

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

## Company C

"The Sentinel" August 2021

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

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*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*

## **GRUBER WAGON WORKS EVENT SUMMARY –**

On 17~18 July, we finally got to do an event again. We held a drill at Gruber Wagon Works along with some of our ELF friends. It was nice to get back out in uniform and hang out with our pards again. Saturday was hot and humid. Early Saturday evening, we had some rain so we camped out in the bridge overnight. Sunday was a bit cooler and less humid. We drill some drill including guard mount and skirmish drill as well as 3 firing demos for the crowd. In attendance from the 53<sup>rd</sup> were: Sgts. Fasnacht and Benedict. Corporals Espenshade and Steger. Privates Ford, Zinkus, Bohlenblust, Dicks R., Dicks J., and Brumbaugh. Kerry Willard set up his hospital display. Photos are courtesy of Eric Ford.



The company in the process of loading their muskets.



## GETTYSBURG 158<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SUMMARY -

My wife and I spent the Gettysburg 158 anniversary weekend in town as we knew quite a few special events and programs were scheduled. Contrary to what we expected, traffic wasn't much different than most other summer weekends.

Among the busy schedule, several period buildings were open for 1 day over the course of the weekend: McPherson Barn, Warfield House, Lee's HQs, Leister House, and the Bryant House. We went and saw the first two: (see photos below)

McPherson Barn -



The Warfield House:





**Gettysburg Heritage Center – book programs:**

The center did 5 programs where authors came and discussed the new books including Jim Hessler (“Sickles, Meade, and the Gettysburg Peach Orchard”), Kent Masterson Brown (“Meade At Gettysburg”), Eric Dorr and Jared Frederick (“Hang Tough” about Maj. Dick Winters), and Tom McMillan (“Armistead and Hancock: Behind the Gettysburg Legend”). Each talk was interesting and educational. Each was recorded by C-SPAN and will air at some point in the future.



Tom McMillan (“Armistead and Hancock: Behind the Gettysburg Legend”) Eric Dorr and Jared Frederick (“Hang Tough”)



Jim Hessler (“Sickles, Meade, and the Gettysburg Peach Orchard”)

Kent Masterson Brown (“Meade At Gettysburg”)

The **Gettysburg Foundation** did special talks each night (1-3 July) on various topics. Each sold out in about 4 minutes from when the ticket sales went live a few weeks ago. I was able to get tickets to each night’s special event and each was superb.

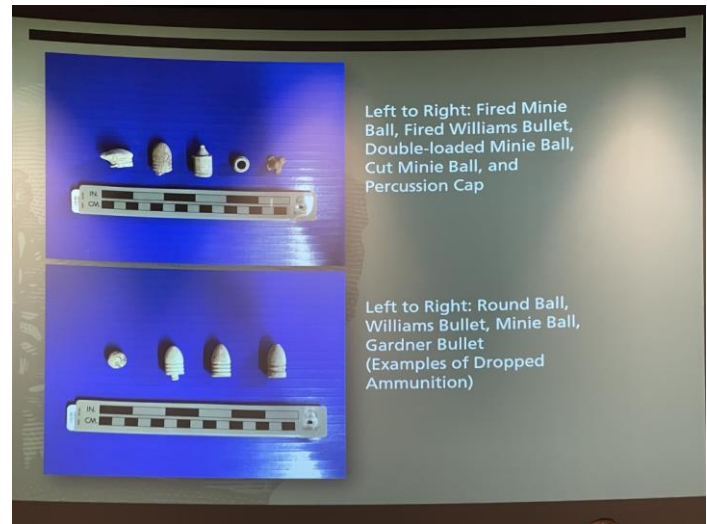
1<sup>st</sup> Night – Stephen Lang - performance of “The Wheatfield”, the story of a Union Soldier and Medal of Honor awardee, James Jackson Purman, as he vividly recalls the Battle of Gettysburg and his fateful encounters with friends and foe. Afterwards, Lang did a Q&A with the crowd and read some of his humorous poetry about various CW figures.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/GettysburgNPS/videos/520537386066327/>



2<sup>nd</sup> Night – “Culp’s Hill Rediscovered: Battle, Memory, and Rehabilitation on Gettysburg’s Forgotten Hill” - NPS Ranger Troy Harman, NPS Archeologists Erik Kreuzsch and Tara Noel, along with historians Sue Boardman and Charlie Fennell and MC’d by Park Ranger Chris Gwinn.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/GettysburgNPS/videos/195010882560650/>



Left to Right: Fired Minié Ball, Fired Williams Bullet, Double-loaded Minié Ball, Cut Minié Ball, and Percussion Cap

Left to Right: Round Ball, Williams Bullet, Minié Ball, Gardner Bullet (Examples of Dropped Ammunition)

The first photo shows the guest panel talking about the recent work on Culp's Hill. The 2<sup>nd</sup> photo I included was a slide showing some of the items that they've found while doing the Culp's Hill work. My question to the panel pertained to whether the percussion caps (unused or spent) that they found were brass or copper or a mixture of each. They said they found only unused and spent brass caps.

3<sup>rd</sup> Night – Wayne Motts: Shot and Shell: The U.S. Regular Army Artillery During Pickett's Charge July 3, 1863. This program discussed the actions and locations of the US Regular Artillery during Pickett's Charge.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/GettysburgNPS/videos/792815964767609/>.



## **FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT - LANDIS VALLEY IS BACK!**

From Eric:

Things at Landis Valley took a turn in the right direction a few weeks ago. **We WILL be holding the CW weekend event at Landis Valley November 6-7.** All I know at this time is that we'll be there along with some folks in ELF. Tom Carlson committed the 1st MD over the weekend so I expect the 7th PA and 3rd MD to fall in as well. Tim is working with the other organizations from year's past to make the event as close to the scale that we're used to seeing there but I have no additional info on those folks at this time. I'll be posting this update on our social media platforms but I ask for everyone to help spread the word. By the time this event rolls around it will have been 27 months since we were at Landis Valley. I'm hoping that everyone will make the commitment to attend this event. I believe that we're incredibly fortunate to have Landis Valley basically at our disposal and it's not much short of a miracle that they survived the past year and a half. The CW event is always a huge draw for LV so let's help them as much as possible with their recovery. The Berks Co Heritage Center shared with me before I left on Sunday that even with a short time to promote our presence it proved to have a positive impact on visitation for the weekend. Several visitors shared with them that it was their first time at the site and they were motivated to come out because Civil War reenactors would be there. We can and DO make a difference!

If we're lucky, The Hotel Jasper will be operating again this year! Stay Tuned!

## 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.,  
Falmouth, Virginia,  
Wednesday, Jan. 21st, 1863.

Messers. Editors:—For the last few weeks, rumors of moving and orders to move have been all the rage. We received orders to be ready to move “to-morrow morning” with so many days rations and so much ammunition. Almost before the ink is dry on the mandate, up gallops an orderly and we are informed that the order is countermanded until “further orders.” And so we spend the time se-sawing between let-us-go and let-us-stay. But we feel confident that another great battle will be fought ere long—we may say that the movement has already commenced. Before your readers see this letter another blow will be struck at this hydra headed rebellion.—Heaven grant that it may be a victorious one. The army is gradually recovering from the depression of spirits caused by the repulse at Fredericksburg, and we have a buoyant belief that this winter campaign will be closed with victory to the Federal arms. A bad general may sometimes make a *correct mistake*, and manage to get the rebels “on the hips”—a consummation devoutly to be wished. The following order has been read to the troops:

“Headquarters Army of the Potomac,  
Camp Near Falmouth, Va.,  
January 20th, 1863.”

General Orders No. 7.

“The commanding General announces to the Army of the Potomac that they are about to meet the enemy once more.

“The late brilliant actions in North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas have divided and weakened the enemy on the Rappahannock, and the auspicious moment seems to have arrived to strike a great and mortal blow at the rebellion and to gain that decisive victory which is due to the country.

“Let the gallant soldiers of so many brilliant battle-fields accomplish this achievement and a fame most glorious awaits them.

“The Commanding General calls for the firm support of officers and men, and under the Providence of God, the Army of the Potomac will have taken a great step towards restoring peace to the country and the Government in its rightful authority.

“By command of Maj. Gen. Burnside.

(signed) Lewis Richmond,

Asst. Adj. Gen.”

The rebels have for the last week been strengthening their earthworks along the river, immediately opposite this place. They have also constructed three one-gun batteries—apparently commanding the streets of this town. Heretofore their working parties have been down from their main camps without any arms, but yesterday they marched down with their arms, and stacked their muskets a few yards back of their trenches. Although these offensive rebel works are almost within a stone throw of our picket line, yet our batteries have the present time of writing remained silent.—Occasionally an officer points a big field glass at them—for the purpose, I presume, of seeing whether the sub-soil thrown up by the busy “butternuts” is rich enough to grow Irish potatoes. Capt. Pettit who has command of our batteries on this part of the line is anxious to open on these rebel earthworks, but he is not permitted to do so, and consequently the Captain smokes his leviathan meerschaum with a disconsolate air. General Lee’s policy heretofore has been to make a heavy show on his front when he is in fact evacuating his position. If such is now his policy, and we have reason to believe that it is, than his liveliness along his front argues a change of position, or a great weakness, in the rebel army of the Rappahannock.

Yesterday the regiment was paid four months pay by Major Potter, our paymaster. This leaves nearly three months pay still due us. Company A, boys are all well, I believe. Col. Brooke is still commanding Dana’s Brigade—his command consists of the 127 Pa. Vols. 59th N. Y. 42d N. Y. The gallant 7th Mich. 19th Mass. And 20th Mass.

The regimental organization of the 116th P. V. has, according to orders from Corps Head Quarters, been broken up, and immediately reorganized as a battalion, consisting of four companies. Of course this action, puts nearly two-thirds of the commissioned officers out of service. Col. Dennis Heenan and the Lt. Col. Will be discharged from the service—Major Barnwell is retained. We are pleased to see that our friends Capt. Teed, Lt. W. M. Hobart (Asst. Provost Marshal on Gen. Hancock’s staff,) Lieut. Willauer, Lieut. Parker and Pieut. Price, all of near our borough, are retained in the new organization. In keeping these gallant officers in the service, Gen. Hancock, our “superb” division commander, has exercised his usual good judgment, notwithstanding the fact that “he once had a sweetheart in Pottstown, and must do something for that place.”

It is with feelings of deep regret that we notice the death of Sergeant Joseph B. Davis of Company A, who died at home, on the morning of January 14th. Sergeant Davis was one of the first to take a stand beneath the unfurled battle flag of his country. He answered the first call of the President for troops, by enlisting in the 1st Delaware Regiment of three month's men. He served faithfully during the period of his enlistment, and on its expiration he immediately re-enlisted for the war in the Pottstown company of Col. Brooke's Regiment. During the march to Warrenton last March he was taken sick; on our return to Alexandria, he was left in General Hospital at that place, while we embarked for the peninsula. For months he was prostrated by a severe illness. He rejoined the regiment at Fair Oaks. He fought with great gallantry at the severe engagements of Peach Orchard, Savage's Station, White Oak Swamp and Malvern Hill. The privations and excitements of that horrible week of battles was too much for his frame, yet feeble from disease, and on our arrival at Harrison's Landing, he was again prostrated by a severe indisposition, and shipped to a northern hospital. He is now numbered with the dead—another victim of this accursed rebellion. His numerous friends in his company and regiment lament his loss as a heavy affliction.

Yours &c.,

L. J. F.

*Montgomery Ledger*, January 27, 1863.

## **HONORING THE ORIGINAL 53<sup>RD</sup> PVI -**

(provided by Marc Benedict)

**Private Amos Abbott** - born July 17, 1819. He mustered in on Oct. 17, 1861 for three years as a private in Co. C, 53rd PVI. He was 5' 9 1/2" with dark hair, brown eyes and a fair complexion. He resided in Marklesburg and is listed as a laborer. His age is in dispute. He stated he was 32 but if born in 1819, he would have been 42. He appears to have reenlisted on Dec. 24, 1863 in Stevensburg, VA. He mustered out on June 30, 1865. He died on Jan. 6, 1880 and is buried in the Old Stone Church cemetery, Marklesburg, PA.



## **REAR RANK PRODUCTIONS - UPDATE!**

I just received this notice from Chris Anders of Rear Rank Productions...

Fellow Historians, 2020-2021 was a mess. Many events cancelled or postponed and left us with little to do....but here comes 2022! **And Rear Rank Productions have two events in 2022.**

- **April 22-24, 2022- Terrible, Swift Sword, Virginia 1862.- Along the lines of events such as Shenandoah '64, Maryland, My Maryland and On to Richmond. Larger scale battle scenarios and even- handed rule enforcement.**
- **August 5-7, 2022- Slaughter on the Mountain, the Battle of Cedar Mountain on the actual ground. This will be a smaller scale event with more details coming.**

I have a site visit for TSS next week and a meeting in August at Cedar Mountain. I will keep you all informed as things progress, but I wanted to get the information out as soon as possible so you can mark your calendars.

Watch for updates soon!

PS- We are also planting the flag for a Chancellorsville event in 2023....stay tuned.

## **CEDAR MOUNTAIN EVENT INFO -**

The following info for Cedar Mountain was provided by James Owens. Contact James Owens if you are interested in going or have any questions: JDO@npmhu.org

Cedar Mountain Battlefield, Battle Anniversary Living History Program, August 6-8, 2021

### **Check-in Hours**

Friday, August 6 - 1:00 PM- 10:00 PM

Saturday, August 7 - 6:00 AM- 9:00 AM

*Everyone must sign a waiver to participate.* Upon arrival, go to the park office (Stop #1 on the park tour map) and sign the waiver or hand it in if completed in advance. If you arrive after the start of the program, go directly to the information table at the Crittenden Gate to sign a waiver.

**Public Hours** - Saturday, August 7: 9:00 AM- 5:00 PM, Sunday, August 8: 9:00 AM- 1:00 PM

**Parking** - All parking will be on the battlefield near the corner of Route 15 and General Winder Road. Park only in areas designated by the parking attendants.

**Cars in Camp Areas** - All cars must be removed from camp areas by 8:00 AM on Saturday. Unless otherwise permitted by site staff, no cars are allowed in the camp areas until 1:00 PM Sunday.

**Camping** - US Infantry- in field at pear tree on top of ridge.

### Some Basic Rules

- No digging of any kind
- Fires cannot be left unattended
- No cutting without prior approval
- Avoid using cell phones around visitors and other participants
- No consumption of alcohol during public hours

If you have not done so, you may wish to read over a copy of On Campaign in the Summer of 62: Guidelines for Camping during Living History Programs at Cedar Mountain Battlefield, available from the Friends of Cedar Mountain Battlefield. While aimed mainly at new units coming to the battlefield for the first time, it has some useful first-person accounts and an extensive bibliography.

**Bob Szabo** will be present taking images.

### **Schedule of Activities**

#### Saturday, August 7

9:00 AM	Site opens to the public
10:00 AM	Battlefield tour
11:00 AM	Combined arms demonstration
12:00 PM	School of the soldier
3:00 PM	Combined arms demonstration
5:00 PM	Site closes to the public

#### Sunday, August 8

9:00 AM	Site opens to the public
9:30 AM	Memorial ceremony
10:00 AM	Battlefield tour
11:00 AM	Combined arms demonstration
12:00 PM	School of the soldier
1:00 PM	Program ends

## 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 –

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

Keune McDowell Kepi - some brim cracking \$20.00

Grey Blanket with black stripe \$35.00

(2.) Kerry Williard is handling the selling of Dave Swigert items for Dave's wife. Marc and I met several months ago to look at the items, give them descriptions, and give approx. values. Several of the items have been sold yet some remain. The list is current as of 6 July 2021. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: [shamokin71@aol.com](mailto:shamokin71@aol.com) (see the updated list below)

Uniform Clothing			approx. value	Misc Items			approx. value
Quantity	Item	Item Description		Quantity	Item	Item Description	
1	Sack Coats - Assume Size 42 Dk Blue Wool	unlined faded course wool	20	1	Tin Cup	sturdy	5
1	Trouser - Steel Blue each with suspendors	34 min waist/27" inseam - avg. condx and a little dirt w/ braces no watch pockets	25	1 can	sno-seal (half full)		1
1	Trouser - Steel Blue each with suspendors	36 min waist/27" inseam - avg. condx and a little dirt w/ braces no watch pockets	25	1	Wood Mirror - Haversack filler	sliding cover	3
1	Dk Blue Vest Size 42	3 pockets - light wear	20	1	Wood Comb - Haversack filler		1
3 pairs	Grey Wool Socks	modern	2/pair	1	Wooden button board		1
2	Hats - Union & Confederte for children		1	2	Coin Purses - Made from Tic Material		1/each
1	Lt Brown Scarf	acrylic - for modern use	1	1	Cloth ditty Bag	used (1 left, 7 sold)	1/each
1	Havelock - White - VG condx		2	1	Bag with Coffee	brown coffee	1/each
1	Underpants - Night Pants - White	36" waist - knee stains - 25" inseam white muslin - rear repair	3	1	shoe lace - undied		.25/each
1 pair	Woolen Grey Gloves	modern - right hand is fingerless	2	2	Soap Bar		1/each
<b>Accoutrements</b>				6 1/2	Wax Candles		0.5
1	Cap Box with Caps w/ pick		20	1	pocket sharpenig stone	new	2
1	Haversack - tarred Black	w/ liner - paint beginning to flake. holes at strap connections.	10	1	box rifle cleaning kit	pads, steel wool, rags, etc	5
1	Scabbord	late war 7 rivet	15	3	match boxes w/ matches		0.25/each
1	Cartridge Box with Tin Inserts	w/ sling and brass and late war plate - tools, cone, etc.	35	1 Pair	shoe tree		3
1	Gum Blanket	some cracking with oversized grommets	20	1	Green Army Duffle Bag		3
1	Haversack - tarred Black	brittle strap, open seam	5	1	drawers for use as patches		1
1	Shelter Tent - Both Halves	heavy canvas with loops w/ mildew	35	1	large shite cotton sheeting		1
1	Bag of 7 wooden Tent Stakes	with rope	3				
1	Blue Cloth Bulls-Eye Canteen	w/ chain stopper needs new sling	20				
1	Grey Smooth Face Canteen	leather sling satinette cover w/ corded stopper with light wear	20				

## 2021 CALENDAR OF EVENTS - due to covid, all events are tentative as of right now.

~~27-28 March - NR School of Instruction - Virtual~~

~~1-2 May - Camp of Instruction - Gruber Wagon Works (Reading) - POSTPONED~~

~~15-16 May - USAHEC Event - cancelled~~

~~31 May - Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade - CANCELLED~~

~~12-13 June - Fenian Raid (8<sup>th</sup> OH) - Fort Erie, Canada - contact Tom Downes for more info.~~

~~19-20 June - Ft. Mifflin (Philadelphia)~~

~~17-18 July - Drill at Gruber Wagon Works (with ELF and NR)~~

31 July - Company Picnic - Denver Park

7-8 Aug. - Cedar Mountain Re-enactment - contact James Owens (1<sup>st</sup> MN) for more info.

~~28-29 August - 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Living History w/ ELF - Spangler's Spring - Gettysburg NMP - CANCELLED~~

16-17 Oct - Cedar Creek Re-enactment (NR)

6-7 November - Civil War Days at Landis Valley - Lancaster

20 November - Remembrance Day Parade/NR Meeting - Gettysburg

4 December - Annual business meeting

Other events -

~~12 - Newville (with 1<sup>st</sup> MN) - CANCELLED~~

~~10-11 July 1<sup>st</sup> MN's Living History @ PA Monument (the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI is invited) - CANCELLED~~



### 53rd PVI Contacts

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

Vice President: Pete Zinkus ([zinkusp@gmail.com](mailto:zinkusp@gmail.com))

Treasurer/Secretary: Matthew Steger ([n3ntj@comcast.net](mailto:n3ntj@comcast.net))

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([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)

New National Regiment Website: <https://www.thenationalregiment.com>

