

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" September 2021

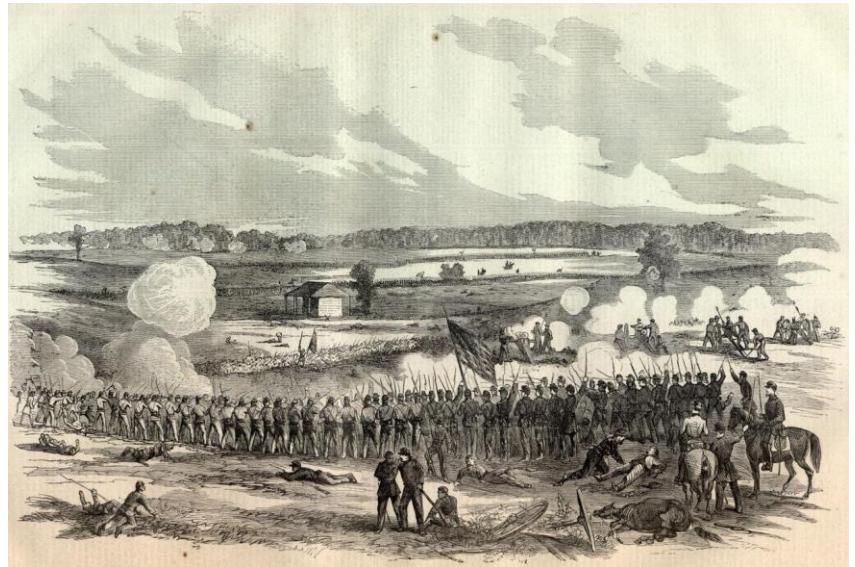
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

1. 53rd PVI Summer Picnic
2. Honoring The Original 53rd PVI
3. Slaughter On The Mountain - event update
4. Remembrances Of Old
5. Ben Wade At Bull Run
6. Book Review: A Campaign of Giants - the Battle for Petersburg, Vol. 1
7. John Heiser Honored by NPS
8. Levi Fritz Letter
9. Patriots Day Event - Robesonia
10. The Civil War Merchant
11. Calendar of Events
12. 53rd 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

53RD PVI SUMMER PICNIC

We held our unit summer picnic at Denver Community Park on 31 July 2021. Lots of good food was to be had and turnout was great. Pete even had Joe Zaiss run us through a little drill. Thanks to Eric and Pete for putting this picnic together!





HONORING THE ORIGINAL 53RD PVI

We recently were contacted by a descendant of an original 53rd PVI member, Private James Strong, via the unit website. The descendant, Jim Strong, emailed me an updated and cleaned-up photo of his great-grandfather, which I have added to the 53rd PVI website with the other historical photos of the men of the original 53rd. Along with the photo, Jim added "You have an outstanding organization. Appreciate what all you do to educate the general public and especially the younger children on the history of the Civil War and the everyday life of the soldier during that time. All the best to everyone." On behalf of the 53rd, I thanked Jim for his kind words as well as for the updated photo.



Surgeon Charles W. Spayd - born on March 3, 1840 in Philadelphia, PA. He mustered in as an Asst. Surgeon for 3 years in the 53rd PVI on Oct. 1, 1862. He was promoted to Surgeon at his re-mustering in on Aug. 29, 1864 while in Petersburg, VA. He mustered out on June 30, 1865. He died on Sept. 29, 1911 and is buried in the Hollenback Cemetery in Wilkes-Barre, PA.



SLAUGHTER ON THE MOUNTAIN – UPDATE!

Slaughter on the Mountain in August 2022 is being run by the Friends of Cedar Mountain Battlefield. Rear Rank productions is not involved except for Chris Anders commanding the Confederates. James Owens is on the planning committee for the event, so please direct any questions to James Owens. Registration opens on November 1, 2021 and can be done online at <https://friendsofcedarmountain.org/category/events/>. There will be no walk-on registration.

REMEMBRANCES OF OLD

Marc recently ran across this photo of Dave and Helen Seguin. A check with John Heiser puts the photo around the mid-1980s. Dave became the company officer after Joe Zaiss.



BEN WADE AT BULL RUN

By Fergus M. Bordewich, April 24, 2020. Adapted from his new book, *Congress at War: How Republican Reformers Fought the Civil War, Defied Lincoln, Ended Slavery, and Remade America*. blueandgrayeducation.org

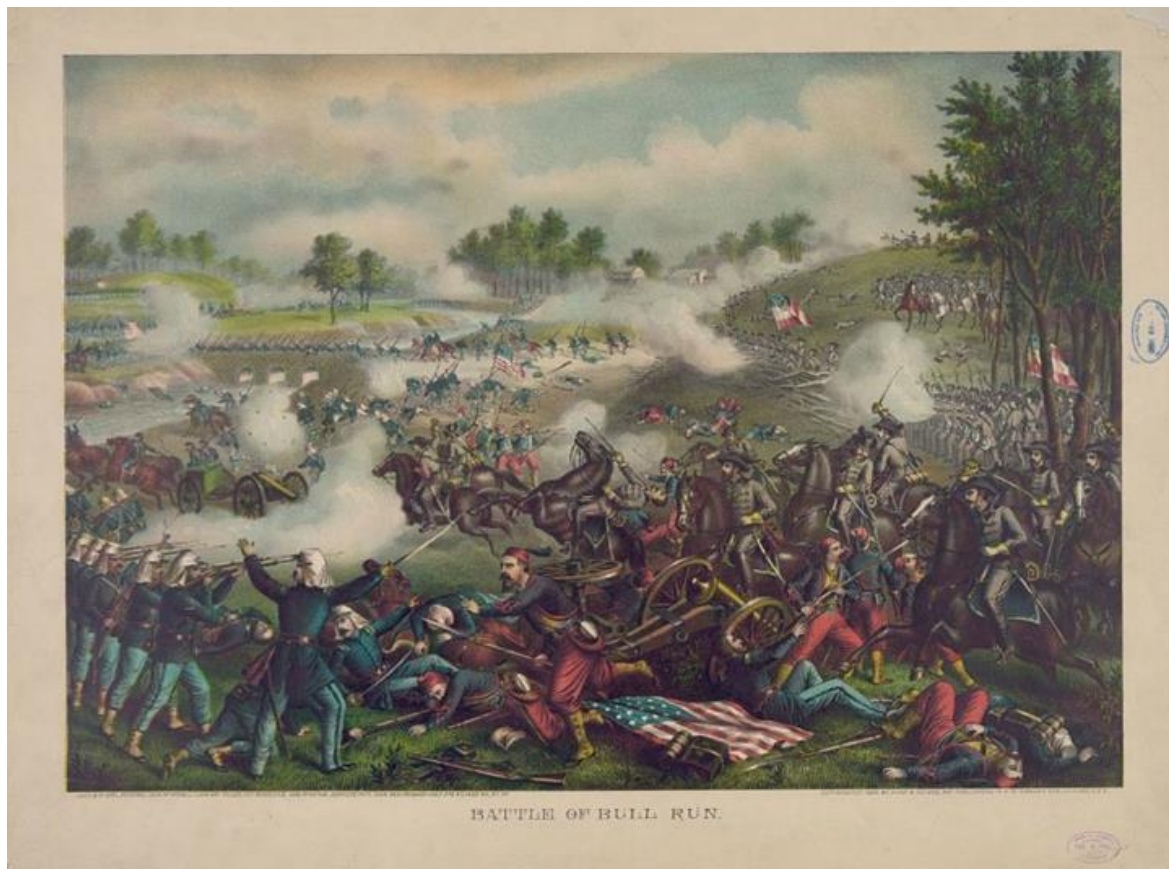


Senator Ben Wade | Library Of Congress

After the fall of Fort Sumter, many of the North's political men dithered between resistance and conciliation toward the breakaway South. Sen. Ben Wade of Ohio's Western Reserve was not one of them. A tall, angular man with sharp bright eyes, bristling iron-gray hair, booming voice, bulldog stubbornness, and an unyielding hatred of slavery, the 60-year-old Wade declared to a roaring audience in Cleveland, "The time for argument has passed and the time for action has come. They wish to meet you hand to hand, and foot to foot. Old as I am, I'll go with a musket on my shoulder." In the weeks that followed, the northern public and its political leadership gradually caught up to Wade.

Demand for a decisive battle to crush the rebels steadily swelled. Reflecting later on the mood of the time, Rep. Albert Riddle, Wade's fellow Ohio Radical, wrote, "The average man then supposed war meant to march upon the enemy by the shortest route, assail, hang to him, and lick him in the shortest possible time." The *New York Tribune*, the most influential Republican newspaper in the country, hammered the

(below) *Battle of Bull Run | Library Of Congress*



The army faced another unforgiving source of pressure. Nearly all the troops under arms had been called up for just 90 days—the maximum allowable under the Militia Act of 1793—and their term of service was about to expire. The army’s newly appointed field commander, General Irvin McDowell, knew they weren’t ready for battle. But he also knew that if he didn’t use the men he had, he’d soon lose them. By mid-July, some regiments were already starting for home.

On July 16, the first regiments began marching out of their bivouacs on the Potomac River toward the rebel encampment at Manassas Junction, 30 miles southwest of the capital. Five days later, they collided with an army commanded by Gen. Pierre G.T. Beauregard, the Confederate hero of Fort Sumter, at a meandering stream called Bull Run. An army of civilian tourists, including many members of Congress, followed the army in carriages freighted with picnic baskets and bottles of wine, and in, at least, some cases armed with guns with which they hoped to take pot shots at the rebels. Among them were Sen. Ben Wade and his friend Sen. Zachariah Chandler, a giant of a man who, like Wade, was partial to explosive profanity that could stop men in their tracks. They were accompanied in a second carriage by the Senate’s Sergeant-at-Arms and several others, all of them armed and confident that the rebels would be captured to a man.

Wade’s party drove past deserted farms and ripening cornfields, past the expectant eyes of enslaved people, and their sullen masters. Carriages by the hundreds pulled up on the hills overlooking the rolling countryside where the battle was underway. A well-dressed lady watching the fight through opera glasses was heard to say, “Oh, my! Is not that first-rate! I guess we will be in Richmond this time tomorrow.” The first messengers dispatched back to Washington reported a great victory.



Sen. Zachariah Chandler | Library of Congress and P. G. T. Beauregard | National Archives

Then it all began to come apart. The Confederates overran the Federal batteries on Henry House hill. Civilian wagon drivers panicked. First in twos and threes, then by the score, then in the hundreds, demoralized Federal troops began drifting back up the Centerville Road. Soon they were no longer walking but running, throwing away their rifles, canteens, cartridge

boxes, haversacks, bed rolls, hats, and coats. Artillerymen abandoned their cannon and caissons. Officers disappeared. Drivers lashed maddened horses. Fleeing men's faces gaped like gargoyles, blackened from the powder from the cartridges they'd bitten off in battle, their eyes bulging with fear. There was Gen. David Hunter in the back of a wagon, blood pouring from his head. And, there, Col. Ambrose Burnside, whose Rhode Islanders had seemed on the brink of victory a few hours before, now hatless, galloping past on a horse. And there, Sen. Henry Wilson heading away from the battle on a mule. The army that had marched off so proudly the night before was no longer an army but a mob, commandeering ambulances, carts, caissons, any kind of conveyance that rolled. With the explosion of every Confederate shell, the vast straining mass of men, animals, and wagons was seized as if by an electric convulsion.



Ruins of the Henry House | Medford Museum & Society

[Note – due to heavy shelling, only remnants of the chimney were left after the 1st Battle of Bull Run. A freed-black woman hid in the fireplace/chimney during the battle, but ended up deaf afterwards due to all of the noise - Editor]

Wade and his friends were swept along against their will in the rout. Shame at what he saw metamorphosed into a towering rage as the mob drove them on pell-mell over a road that was literally paved with discarded guns and gear. Just short of Fairfax Court House, 10 miles north of Bull Run, Wade convinced his friends to pull their carriages sideways across the road where it passed between a fenced-in farm and a dense wood. "Boys, we'll stop this damned runaway!" he shouted. He pushed his hat back on his head, levered a cartridge into the chamber of his new Maynard carbine, and cocked it. Chandler drew a heavy navy revolver. Their friends did likewise. They pointed their weapons at the boiling mass of men who jostled against their carriages. Wade boomed that if they attempted to run any further, he'd blow their brains out. Wade's stand lasted only about 20 minutes, but it was enough to stem the tide until the arrival of the still-intact Second New York Volunteers, which brought some semblance of order to the fleeing multitude. Wade's fame spread because of his sensational bravery.

"Whatever credit there was in stopping that rout is due wholly to senators Wade and Chandler," wrote the *National Intelligencer*, with some exaggeration.

But the statesmen had shown extraordinary courage at a time when many had not.

BOOK REVIEW: A Campaign of Giants – The Battle for Petersburg - Volume One From the Crossing of the James to the Crater. Author - A. Wilson Greene

Review By Mike Espenshade

Hardback; 2018; The University of North Carolina Press; 519 pp.; an additional 193 pages of notes, bibliography, index, etc. (sorry, Doug Raab, but no pictures) \$29.95 new on Amazon.

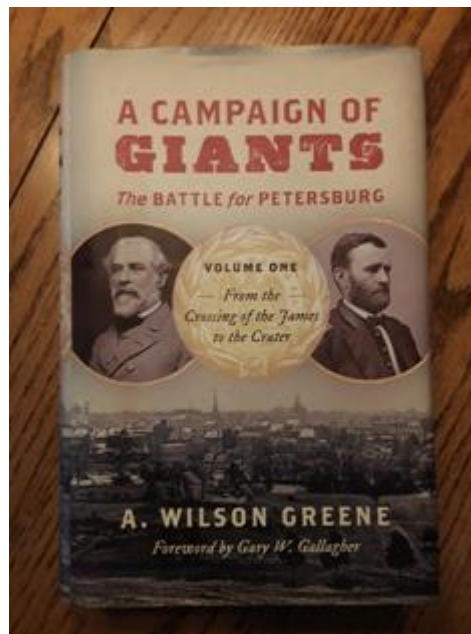
Grinding, bloody, and ultimately decisive, the Petersburg Campaign was the Civil War's longest and among the most complex. Featuring some of the war's most notorious battles, and much fierce fighting not as well-known to most, the campaign lasted 10 months. It again confirmed Grant's dogged combination in strategy to cut supply lines/communications, exploit the enemy's weak areas, and not fall into the Army of the Potomac's demoralizing pattern of fight and retreat. The campaign played out against a backdrop of political drama and crucial fighting elsewhere, with massive costs for soldiers and civilians alike.

This is the first of three volumes by A. Wilson Greene on the campaign. This series will be the definitive masterwork on the Petersburg Campaign, written by the most knowledgeable living person on the subject. Mr. Greene is the former president of the Pamplin Historical Park (the producer of the 2004 movie [Soldiers All](#) (starring John Lowry, Rusty Dicks, and Mike Espenshade), and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier. He is also the author of a separate work = [The Final Battles of the Petersburg Campaign](#).

The author provides an engaging and compelling writing style that expertly combines the overall war/political picture with the thoughts and writings of all levels of participants who performed the drama from Lincoln/Davis down to the private soldier and civilian. This research is a gem to enjoy and I recommend it to anyone who wants to know much more about this long struggle.

This imperfect work, however, leaves some wants. I wished the author would have provided a Union and Confederate Unit Order of Battle (preferably for each key battle), a graph/timeline of the key events, better maps of the larger Petersburg landscape, pictures, a more detailed and complete mention of the regiments involved in each action, and better time/date details shown on the maps provided. For example, there are dozens of regiments on both sides never mentioned in this work, who spilled lots of blood.

Volumes 2 and 3 of this series have not yet, to my knowledge, been published.



JOHN HEISER HONORED BY NPS

Our very own John Heiser was recently honored by the National Park Service upon his retirement. He received a Citation For Government Service for 40 years of service. He also received a separate plaque for Outstanding Service from Gettysburg NMP and Eisenhower NHS. Well done John!!!



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. 28th, 1862.

Messrs. Editors:—Again our army has been defeated—this time by the elements and not by the enemy. Last Wednesday if the weather would have continued favorable another attempt would have been made to advance on the road to Richmond. On the evening of the 20th all the preparatory arrangements were completed. Hooker's and Franklin's commands had broken camps and marching some ten miles took up a position along the river about seven miles above Falmouth. But the adage says truly, that 'man proposes and God disposes.' Up to the night of the 20th, pleasant weather and fair sky seemed to mark an auspicious commencement of the movement. On the night of Tuesday the 20th, a severe rainstorm set in, the floodgates of the heavens opened and a perfect deluge poured down upon our unprotected soldiery. The storm continued with unabated fury the whole of the following day, and the consequence was that the Rappahannock became too much swollen to construct a pontoon bridge across it, and the roads were in a condition almost impassable for infantry, and as to moving artillery it was out of the question. For three days and nights the troops were kept waiting for "something to turn up." With no protection from the pouring rain but their blankets and scarcely any fires, the exposure was indeed fearful. A few days ago the whole Army was ordered back into their old quarters. Fortunately our Grand Division had not been ordered out. Thus disastrously ended Burnside's second attempt to advance—true there was no battle fought, but a

defeat itself could scarcely have put the army in worse spirits. As a matter of course, Gen. Burnside has been removed—and Sumner and Franklin have resigned, and Gen. Hooker is now in command of the Army of the Potomac. Well, we shall see what we shall see!

It our last we were cheerfully rubbing our hands and congratulating ourselves on being possessed of such comfortable quarters in the village of Falmouth. Alas, for the fallacy of human understanding! Perhaps at the very moment we were writing to you how nicely we toasted our feet at the blazing hearth, the old Bull Sumner was callously getting up an order for our removal. On Sunday morning last we received orders to move. About noon we moved out of town. Col. Brooke's brigade relieved us and will henceforth do provost duty in Falmouth. Col. Brooke is military Governor. Our regiment moved to a pine woods in the rear of Gen. Hancock's Headquarters, where we are now bivouacking. Our boys are busily engaged in constructing log huts, they will be finished I presume by tomorrow, when we will go into regular camp.

Yesterday our excellent Surgeon, Dr. M. J. McKinnon, of York, Pa., was, at his own request, honorably discharged from the service of the United States. The Doctor has been with us through all our campaigns, and has been ever at his post of duty. Though his ill health necessitates him to leave the service, yet we feel sorry to part with him, as he was an honest, open hearted man, as well as a most skillful physician. May he be blessed with long life and fair health.

It affords us pleasure to chronicle the promotion of Sergt. Major Thomas Raifsnyder of Pottstown, to the First Lieutenancy of Company D. This promotion has been won by gallantry at the Battle of Fredericksburg.

S. H. Rutter of Company A, has been made Sergeant Major of the regiment to fill the vacancy occasioned by the promotion of Lieut. Raifsnyder.

Lewis Bland, 2d Lieut. of Company B has resigned, but there has been a promotion to fill the vacancy. Sergt. Howell, of Company F, is acting Quarter Master Sergt. during the absence of Quarter Master Sergt, Ludwig, at home on sick leave.

Capt. Wm. Mintzer, the excellent Provost Marshal of this Division, left for Pottstown, this morning on a short leave of absence.

Yours &c.

L. J. F.

[*Montgomery Ledger*, February 3, 1863]

PATRIOTS DAY EVENT

Marc, Croce, and I participated in the inaugural Patriots Day event in Robesonia on 28 August. The program was part of what is planned to be an annual event at the Robesonia Furnace Paymaster's House site put on by the Patriotic Order Sons of America (POS of A). A flag-retirement ceremony and tours of the paymaster's house were the highlights of the event. Planning is already underway for the 2022 version of the event which should be larger. We set up our CW displays to talk to the public about the life of the federal soldier, Civil War medical care, etc. A large field is on the property which allows more activities in 2022 including possibly some drill, townball, etc. if so inclined. The organizers said they'd be in contact with Eric over the next few months as they plan for 2022 and hope the 53rd will be part of future events there.

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 - auction8@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 (see the updated list below)

Uniform Clothing			Misc Items				
Quantity	Item	Item Description	approx. value	Quantity	Item	Item Description	approx. value
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 suspenders	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 suspenders	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	Light 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
Accoutrements				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	3	box rifle cleaning kit	pads, steel wool, rags, etc	5
1	Scabbord	late war 7 rivet	15	1 Pair	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	shoe tree		3
1	Haversack - tarred Black	brittle strap, open seam	5	1	Green Army Duffle Bag		3
1	Shelter Tent - Both Halves	heavy canvas with loops w/ mildew	35	1	drawers for use as patches		1
1	Bag of 7 wooden Tent Stakes	with rope	3	1	large shite cotton sheeting		1
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 (8th 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 (1st MN) for more info.
- ~~28-29 August~~ 53rd 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 1st MN) **CANCELLED**
- ~~10-11 July~~ 1st MN's Living History @ PA Monument (the 53rd PVI is invited) **CANCELLED**

53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford (reenactor53@gmail.com)
 Vice President: Pete Zinkus (zinkusp@gmail.com)
 Treasurer/Secretary: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@comcast.net)
 Newsletter Editor: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@comcast.net)
 Webmasters: Steve Dillon (steve@gofoxpro.com) and Matthew Steger (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>

