

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" February 2022

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

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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

BOOK REVIEW – THE WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN

Author: Gary W. Gallagher

Reviewed and Submitted by Mike Espenshade

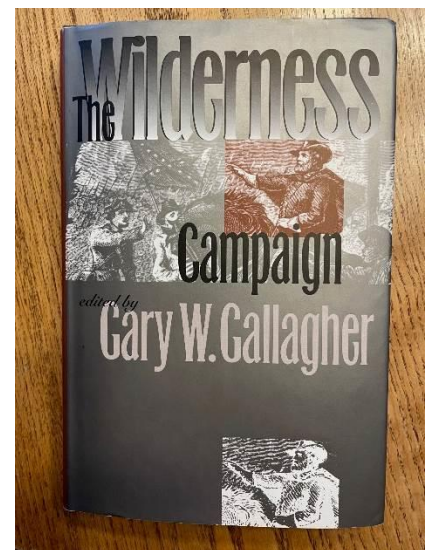
Hardback; 1997; Chapel Hill; 270 pp.; excellent notes at end of each essay; 13 crude maps, 22 pictures; an additional 14 pp of glossary and index,. \$20.00 new in 1997, found for \$3.00 in used book sale.

The Wilderness Campaign is a well-edited compilation of 8 essays, each by a different and prominent historian. These short works cover various elements, combining some broad and some specific approaches of the campaign.

The 8 essays are, in order: *Expectations of the North of Grant and Army of the Potomac*; *Condition of the Army of Northern Virginia*; *Army of the Potomac prepares*; *Union Cavalry in the Wilderness*; *Ewell and A.P. Hill at the Wilderness*; *"Lee to the Rear"*; *The Vermont Brigade*; *Longstreet's Flank Attack, May 6, 1864*.

Taken individually, each essay covers it's intended subject matter well and is very informative. I especially enjoyed the essay addressing the often-overlooked performance of the Vermont Brigade, whose hard fighting and location caused them to suffer more casualties than any other Union brigade - or DIVISION!

The essay collection, I believe, was intended to be one of several volumes to comprehensively address The Wilderness campaign. The editor, Gary Gallagher, does provide an explanation and provides a list of other works and recommendations on the Wilderness Battle.



That said, this book does not, nor was it intended to, provide a complete and flowing set of events, even at a high level, on the campaign. The essays are missing, in my view, key pieces of data such as Orders of Battle, a decent description of Confederate Cavalry operations, Lee's strategy during and after the fighting, casualty figures for all major units, makeup of Ewell's and A.P. Hill's corps, makeup of all Union units except Getty's division.

This is a good read. However, it is seriously incomplete if you are wanting to learn, from a single cover, about all the significant combat and participant units that happened during the Wilderness Campaign.

HOLIDAY PARTY 2022 -

The 53rd PVI once again held our annual holiday party at Dobbin House in Gettysburg on 15 January. It was well-attended by 53rd members active and retired as well as one of our ELF friends (Tom Carlson). VP Pete Zinkus again did a fine job putting together the gathering after we had to miss the 2021 version due to covid.



To the left, John Heiser and Eric Ford are holding commemorative knives that were given to them from the 53rd PVI for their service to the NPS and the 53rd (John) and to the National Regiment and the 53rd (Eric).

FOR A WANT OF A VIRUS: PENSACOLA IN 1861

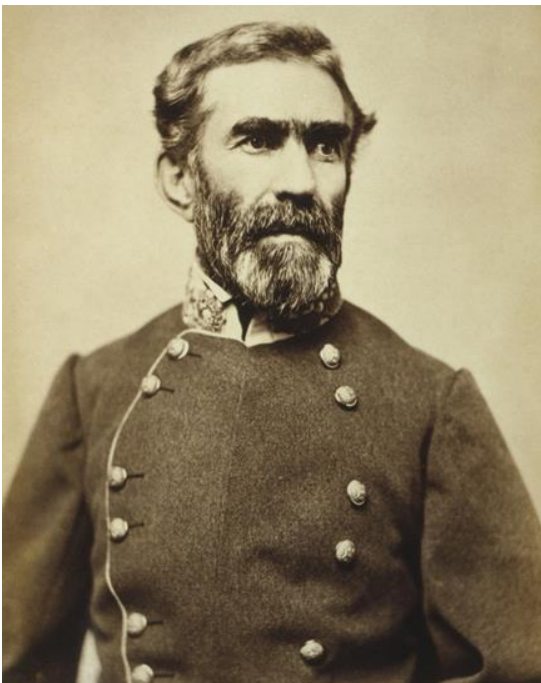
By Chris McIlwain, January 10, 2022 (originally published May 1, 2020 in the Blue And Grey Dispatch)
blueandgrayeducation.org



*Ft. Pickens 1861
Harpers Weekly*

We all know that Union-held Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor was forced to surrender in April 1861 following a huge Confederate bombardment. Why not Pensacola Harbor, which remained in Union hands throughout the war and thereby denied the Confederates the use of one of the best harbors in the South? It wasn't for lack of trying.

Gen. Braxton Bragg, who was in command of the Confederate siege troops in the Pensacola area in 1861, was determined to take the Union-held Fort Pickens, but unlike the situation in Charleston, there were an insufficient number of siege guns available. So he planned a nighttime attack by a select number of men to row across the bay, climb the walls of the fort, and overwhelm the Union forces inside. This plan was to be executed on the night before the bombardment of Fort Sumter. As fate would have it, a reporter for the local Pensacola newspaper revealed the plot, and the Union forces inside the fort were augmented from nearby ships and the attack was called off. (Yes, Bragg had the reporter thrown into jail.)



Gen. Braxton Bragg | Library of Congress

To successfully take the fort would now require many more troops than Bragg had. But this was a period in which the Confederate high command was focused on defending Virginia as preparations were being made to move the capital to Richmond. Rather than gaining new troops, Bragg actually lost a portion of his own men when they were transferred to Virginia. Bragg complained to President Jefferson Davis but to no avail.

The President had a different idea. On May 23, 1861, he wrote to Bragg of his belief that the Union forces at Fort Pickens would surrender during the upcoming summer due to fears of a deadly virus for which there was no cure at that time: yellow fever. As Davis knew, the Gulf Coast was struck on an annual basis by this merciless killer. He had no doubt recalled the thousands of deaths that had occurred in 1853 during an epidemic known as the "Harvest of Death." In his letter to Bragg, Davis predicted that "panic may

seize on the garrison” if yellow fever appeared. Bragg’s response to this unorthodox strategy is unknown, but we do know it did not work.



Yellow Fever Mosquito – CDC

There was no significant yellow fever epidemic that summer, and Bragg eventually was transferred with a large portion of his men to Corinth, Mississippi, in preparation for the expected invasion of Union troops under Gen. U.S. Grant from Tennessee. Ultimately, the Confederates abandoned Pensacola in 1862, and it was eventually used as a major staging area by Union forces for the final invasion of Alabama in 1865.



Ft. Pickens today (NPS)

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 Near Morrisville, Va.
Wednesday, Aug. 20th, 1863.

Messrs. Editors:—During the absence of Major Bull on special duty in Pennsylvania, Capt. Mintzer has been announced as the Acting Provost Marshal of the 2d Corps. This is an important position, and one that the Capt. fills with ability and credit. Yesterday Major General Warren relieved Brig.-Gen. Hays of the command of the 2d Corps.

Official notification has been received of the honorable discharge from the service of Lieut. John F. Potts, caused by disability produced by a severe wound received at the Battle of Fredericksburg. The 53d is deeply sorry to part with him. An excellent officer, a genial companion, and blessed with a heart in which selfishness is a stranger; he was the life of the regiment. Brave in action his sword ever flashed in the front line of battle. Ardently loving his country—intensely hating treason in all its forms—he twice shed his blood for the holy cause of Freedom and Union. Not while the 53d has one man left to shoulder a musket will he be forgotten, and well we know that he will ever cherish as the noblest period of his life, the two years of gallant service ‘neath the loved old battle torn flag of the 53d.

One of the coolest and most cleanly and comfortable camps in this transient city of canvas is that of the Provost Guard of this Corps (Companies A, B, and K). The camp is in an airy position, and is formed of some fifty shelter tents, ranged in regular order on each side of a wide avenue, or company

parade ground. The entire camp is covered with an arbor, the top of which is thickly strewn with pine poughs. This arbor is eighty feet front by one hundred and twenty feet deep; on the sides are hung a number of green twigs with the "leafy branches drooping downwards." It is one of the coolest places we have been able to find here during the "heated term." In Company A, the following promotions have been made: Serg't. Charles Geiger, to be 1st Sergeant, vice Clark, Corpl. Wm. H. Graham, to be Sergeant, vice Geiger, promoted. Capt. Theo. Hatfield, and Lieuts. Whitaker and Mann, that were slightly wounded at Gettysburg, have recently rejoined the regiment. Their wounds, though not exactly all right yet, permit them to resume their duties. All of our wounded men seem to be getting along very well. Lieut. George D. Pifer, of Bellefonte, Pa., was badly wounded in the face; lately we have received the very best evidence in the world that he is getting along splendidly—a notice of his marriage. This is no doubt a very agreeable way to cure wounds, but, we believe, it is not recognized by the Medical faculty. However if she is willing and he is willing it is no body's business; the Union must be preserved at Bellefonte as well as in Dixie. When we consider that his wound is in the cheek the question arises—how can he put a good face on the matter. Lieut. Thomas Raifsnnyder has been discharged on Surgeon's certificate of disability.

Ever since our arrival in the present camp, quite an extensive trade has been carried on between soldiers and officers of the army and families living in juxtaposition to our camps. Coffee, sugar, and salt, are the principle articles of trade, as the Geography says, the rebel families preferring it to money, for obvious reasons. Most of this contraband trade, for it was nothing else, went to supply the tables at the various headquarters with vegetables, &c. So much coffee, &c., was sold by commissaries to supply this trade that in some cases the troops suffered for the want of them, especially in the article of salt. Some of the families near our lines have accumulated a heavy weight of coffee, salt and sugar, for the purpose of turning over to the rebel army as soon as it can be done. General Meade has now peremptorily forbidden these means of giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

The drafted militia are coming in pretty freely. A few days ago eight hundred arrived at Corps Headquarters to be assigned to the 19th Maine regiment. They were all substitutes except eighty odd. Last night another installment of two hundred arrived for a Massachusetts regiment. Physically they are fine men.

On Saturday last three of the veteran regiments of the army left for home on a sixty day furlough. The 1st Minnesota, 7th Michigan and 4th Ohio. These regiments have done much and noble service for their country. The 1st Minnesota was in the first Bull Run battle. They came out with twelve hundred men—they go home with eighty-four; need we say any thing further. The whole Division was drawn up in line, and as the heroes of many battles marched pass on their way to the railroad station, the troops, the colors saluted, and the entire line presented arms. The bands, all the time they were passing the line of the Division playing "Bully for them." The boys altering the words of the song as follows:

"The 7th Michigan's going home,
Bully for them, bully for them,
The 1st Minnesota is coming on,
Bully for them, bully for them,
The 4th Ohio will come along,
Bully for them—for them—for them."

This is about all of the current events—of course, we may more sooner or later; but it depends on circumstances, like nearly everything else. When the move does come off, we can assure you that we heard from a "reliable source" as the reporters say, that we will either move forward, to the rear or on the flanks.—This can be relied on.

We anticipate the promulgation of the following order "what is an order," by giving it publicity at the present writing.

Headquarters 759th Corps de Armfull
Near Three Cornered Square, China,
August 47th, 7042, B. C.

Special Order, A , No. 1

1. The Corporal commanding again calls the attention of intermediate commanders to the enormous quantity of whiskey drank in this Corps. Hereafter too much whiskey will be severely "smiled" at. See Revised Army Regulations, Par. 42 721. The following is promulgated of all concerned:

Number of Drunks Allowed Officers and Men.

- A Major-General, can be drunk all the time.
- A Brig.-General, six days in the week.
- A Colonel (Regular), five days in a week.
- A Colonel (Volunteer), four days in a week.
- A Lieut.-Col., three and a half days per week.
- A Captain, two days in a week.
- A 1st Lieut., one day in a week.
- A 2d Lieut., two-thirds drunk every Saturday.
- A Non-commissioned officer, an occasional smell.
- A private, 0, 0, 0.

The strength of the ardent will depend on the rank of the officer. Extra drinks permitted when about to meet the enemy. Only officers of the regular army permitted to commence the day's drunk before breakfast.

2. As the Southern heart has already been too much "fired" by bad whiskey and gunpowder, it is ordered that in future the rebels receive nothing but *mead*; doses of which will be carefully administered at every favorable opportunity.

3. During the summer season, in order to promote the health and stamina of the troops, it is ordered that all officers and men *keep cool*. Any infringement of this order will be forthwith reported to the nearest ice cream saloon.

4. To expedite the movements of troops on the march, hereafter, every officer and enlisted man will be furnished with a through ticket on some well-regulated railroad. Exchange tickets of city passenger Railways will not be recognized. Change of cars only permitted when there is a change of base. Baggage *checked* before it goes through.

5. Soldiers will not be permitted after this date to dry their "washing" on the picket line.

By order of
Corporal Star,
Commanding Corps.

Spangled Banner, A. A. Gen.

[*Montgomery Ledger*, August 25, 1863]

EXPERIENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR (PART 5)

By Leavitt W. Cushing (a member of the original 53rd PVI, Co. G)

(supplied by Tom Kear, a decedent of Cushing)

[*Note – any grammatical and typographical errors were kept intact as they are original to the letter - editor*]

Harrisons Landing Aug. 10th 1862

Dear Mother, Brother & Sister

I recd. Yours of the 3rd mailed the 5th yesterday and was very glad to hear from you again, and that you were getting along with the work so fast I should think faster than when I was at home We have been having some quite warm days lately but have a little cool breeze once and a while which takes off the heat a little, Last Wednesday we had Division just at night and after we got into camp were ordered out and marched about six miles up the river and laid down and slept an hour and then came back 2 miles and laid down and took another short nap before daylight, We were supporting a battery it was feared the rebs were going to attack our troops at Malvern Hills and we were to cover their retreat if or support them if necessary but we did not hear a gun fired, and came into camp Friday afternoon There has three of our men that were taken prisoners came into camp Friday that were landed with about 3000 down here, They did not have such a very nice time but were as well treated as the means of the rebels would permit, they were those that were unwell at the time we started and came along with the trains but did not keep with them, Nelson Crowell was at Richmond with the rest but was not well enough to walk down the river as some did while those who didn't think they could were put on the boats, it is not thought that he will stop here as he was not very well besides his hand I was glad to hear that the money we sent arrived safe at C – [Coudersport] and hope the rest will. I recd- a letter from Henry this morning, One or two of the boys have been looking for boxes but have not got them although there is a boat which has not been unloaded yet that will perhaps have some of them I shall not look for my things under a week or more

The Qt [Quarter] Master will here after see to bringing the Express goods to the Regt. I staid with the Judge last night til one or two oc [o'clock], It was expected that the Division inspecting Dr.-. would be around Yesterday and that he would be sent off with some others but he did not come, and here he is yet, as he is disappointed which has a bad effect on a sick Soldier, But the Doctor thinks his symptoms better this morning and I am in hopes the Inspector will be around today and that he will be sent of as I think a change will be beneficial to him, Our boys say the rebel soldiers do not talk about invading the north as much as their leaders do, "They say all weems want is for you to stay away and let us alone" perhaps they have had their eyes opened a little as to what they might expect if they should get to far from their works especially if we should raise a few hundred thousand more troops, They still cling to the idea of England helping them, We have drawn post of a loaf of bread twice which makes it seem like living again, we are getting so that we do not think as much of meat beans or coffee or vegetable soup and even cakes do not taste so very good.

I traveled considerable yesterday morning to find some saleratus or soda to mix with my cakes so as to make them lighter but could find none and had to eat them a little but they were quite light although I had nothing to put in them I am in hopes we shall not draw any more flour without it is baked in soft bread It is rather warm weather here for cooking at present, I went down yesterday morning to have my picture taken but was to early the first time and to late the next but will try it again tomorrow morning if nothing happens, I hardly know what to do about the matter as I have not taken the trouble to cut of that detestabl mustache sinc I came from home, I guess though that I will let you have one just as I am and if you do not like the looks will make any improvements which your good sense and judgement may dictate My health remains good as ever, I had a touch of that scourge of our army The Diarhea But stopped eating heavy cakes and drinking cold watter, with my meals, And took to crackers and coffee or toasted bread, which I found had a better effect on me than the Doctors doses did on many others, we have good cool weather now and it tastes better than anything else when eating warm meals but I found that it left me very thirsty between meals, and obligated to drink to much watter, while a cup of weak coffee could quench thirst so that I would scarcely want to drink once between meals, I have a good apetite but do not generaly eat only 2 meals a day or at least not cook more than twice Cheese has got down to 25 cts per lb but butter keeps just double that Chesse I do not care much about here and butter only once in a while as it melts down in the middle of the day and is not first rate after that they have cans of preserved fruits and bottles of jelly but for a person that

has always been in the habit of eating sauce as I have it would not amt. to much considering the price which is a dollar or 10 shillings for about a pint bottle full, I dare say if my appetite was poor I should get the mas the rest do, but as it is now I can eat enough for my health and perhaps more without any of the Sutlers aids, I have not had much time to read the papers lately and hardly know what is going on although there is not much of importance or others would speak of it

The drafting I imagine will create quite a stampede in the northern States But I think it was necessary to act with vigor in raising troops at least enough so to match the rebels, Well Wilson I would advise you not to be quite so worldly minded, But as our folks always thought that hunting was poor business I cannot blame you for staying at home and helping get the hay in, I suppose there will be some filing documents as to the health and unfitnes of many person in Potter on account of the Drafting but think that you will have none to make and suppose you will come if it fall to your lot, I do not know as I regret it although many may be obliged to come who would be excusable in staying at home while others may be left who might just as well come as not.

But all are are equally interested in the matter whether young or old married or single. Well Mary I am very much obliged to you for sending me something you picked but would hardly have wished you to stay out of School for that purpose You may tell all the kind folks in Ulysses that remembered me with little gifts that I thank them very much for their kindness and will ever feel grateful for the interest they take in my welfare, I will send you a little gift the same as Frank and you may use it, as I advised Frank to, or any other way you please or suits you best I shall not consider it as paying you for the trouble of getting some berries to send me, As any such thing is above price to me, I think you will have a fine time visiting with Mr. Worden and his daughter when they get to keeping house in Lewisville perhaps you cannot read this as I have not taken much pains with it. I have not generally wrote on such large sheets but find that I shall hardly wish to write on them every time as it takes one so long to write one letter write whenever you can as well as all the rest and I will always answer immediately if possibly With many wishes for your health and hapiness I remain your affectionate brother

to Mother Sister & Brother

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen,

First, I'd like to express my appreciation to VP Zinkus and 2nd Lady Michelle for their efforts on this year's Holiday Party. As always, it was a fantastic evening and it was great to see everyone!

If you were not at the business meeting last month, I need to know if you had any changes to your physical address, phone number or email address in the past year. If so, I need you to send me the current info no later than February 1st (Tuesday). The NR is changing insurance carriers and the new policy will go into effect soon. This info is required for all dues paying members.

Winter drill is scheduled for February 5 at Landis Valley. Please check your email for event information and respond timely.

Finally, I sent out information last week detailing the NR School in Gettysburg next month. Please take a minute and review the details and let me know if you're able to attend.

See y'all soon!
Eric

ELECTION RESULTS

From VP Pete Zinkus, here are the election results from this year's 53rd PVI elections as announced at the party:

President: Ford (unopposed)

Sergeant nominations:

Fasnacht and Benedict - Fasnacht won. He will be first sergeant.

Corporal nominations:

Steger and Espenshade - Espenshade won. He will be first corporal.

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

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 24 Jan. 2022. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: shamokin71@aol.com (see the updated list below)

Uniform Clothing	Item Description	Detailed Description	Price
1	Trouser - Steel Blue each with suspendors	34 min waist/27" inseam-avg. condx and a little dirt w/ braces no watch pck	\$25.00
1	Dk Blue Vest Size 42	3 pockets - light wear	\$20.00
1	Colored Pattern Shirt	blue plaid with white china buttons - sun faded - good condx	\$10.00
1	White muslin Shirt	19" at shoulder 14" neck - very short in body length	\$5.00
1	White muslin Shirt	20" at shoulder 16" neck - very short in body length - cuffs are stained	\$5.00
1 pair	Woolen Grey Gloves	modern - right hand is fingerless	\$2.00
1	Underpants - Night Pants - White	36" waist - knee stains - 25" inseam white muslin - rear repair	\$3.00
1	Lt Brown Scarf -Acrylic - Modern		\$1.00
1	Havelock - White - VG condx		\$2.00
3 pairs	Grey Wool Socks -Modern		\$2.00/pr
2	Hats - Union & Confederate for cchildren		\$1.00
Accoutrements			
1	Scabbord -Late war 7 Rivet		\$15.00
1	Gum Blanket	some cracking with oversized grommets	\$20.00
1	Shelter Tent - Both Halves - Heavy Canvas w/Loops w/Mildew		\$35.00
1	Bag of 7 wooden Tent Stakes w/Rope		\$3.00
1	Grey Smooth Face Canteen - Leather Sling Satinette Cover w/ Corded Stopper		\$20.00
1	Haversack - Tarred Black - Brittle Strap w/opwn seam		\$5.00
1	Haversack - Tarred Black w/Liner- Paint peeling Holes @ Strap Connection		\$10.00
1	Grey Smooth Face Canteen - Leather Sling Satinette Cover w/ Corded Stopper		\$20.00
Misc Items			
1 can	sno-seal (half full)		\$1.00
1	Wood Mirror - Haversack filler	sliding cover	\$3.00
1	Wood Comb - Haversack filler		\$1.00
1	Wooden button board		\$1.00
2	Coin Purses - Made from Tic Material		\$1.00/ea
1	Bag with Coffee	brown coffee	\$1.00/ea
1	shoe lace - undied		\$0.25/ea
2	Soap Bar		\$1.00/ea
6 1/2	Wax Candles		\$0.25/ea
1	pocket sharpenig stone	new	\$2.00
1	box rifle cleaning kit	pads, steel wool, rags, etc	\$5.00
3	match boxes w/ matches		\$0.25/ea
1 Pair	shoe tree		\$3.00
1	Green Army Duffle Bag		\$3.00
1	drawers for use as patches		\$1.00
Armaments			
1	1861 Springfield Rifle - Armi Sport		\$900.00

2022 CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

15 January - Holiday Party – Gettysburg
5 February - Winter Drill - Landis Valley (ELF and Sykes Regulars invited)
26~27 February - NR School of Instruction (Gettysburg)
12 March - Cartridge Rolling Party (Kleinfeltersville)
2 April - Adopt-A-Position (tentative)
23 April – Robesonia
21-22 May - Army Heritage Days (USAHEC Carlisle)
30 May - Memorial Day Parade (Hummelstown)
11-12 June - Gruber Wagon Works Living History (Reading)
16~17 July - Landis Valley Civil War Days (Lancaster) - NR Camp of Instruction
16~18 September - 160th Antietam Reenactment (NR)
8 October - Millersville Parade
15~16 October - Cedar Creek Reenactment (NR)
5 November - Adopt-A-Position (tentative)
19 November - Remembrance Day (Gettysburg) - NR Annual Meeting and Parade
3 December – Annual Meeting (Kleinfeltersville)



Secondary schedule -

1~3 April - Shiloh (as the 22nd LA)
21~22 May - Old Town, MD - ANV/USV
5~7 August - Slaughter on the Mountain (Culpepper, VA)

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2022 Field Officers - Sergeants: Mark Fasnacht & Marc Benedict. Corporals: Mike Espenshade & 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>

