

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" February 2023

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

2023 DUES ARE DUE!

Your 2023 53rd PVI annual dues are due by 31 January, per the 53rd PVI Bylaws. They remain at \$40/man per year. This includes our \$10/man NR liability insurance. If you plan on attending the winter drill this coming weekend, please bring your dues check with you! **You must have insurance to participate in 53rd events.** Payment is to "53rd PVI". Thanks!

WHISTLER'S MOTHER AND HER CONNECTIONS TO THE CIVIL WAR

By Norman Dasinger, Jr., June 3, 2022
blueandgrayeducation.org



"Whistler's Mother" by James Whistler | Musée d'Orsay

In 1871, in London, Anna McNeill Whistler sat for the creation of what would become a very famous painting. The artist was her son, James, and the artwork has been described as "an American icon and a Victorian Mona Lisa."

Anna was born in 1804 in Wilmington, North Carolina. Her uncle was Zephania Kingsley. He was a prolific slave trader who married an African princess and lived near Jacksonville, Florida. In 1831, Anna McNeill married George Whistler, a former U.S. Army officer. Anna gave birth to two sons, James and William. In 1842, her husband moved the family to Russia where, on the

request of Czar Nicholas I, George became a railroad engineer. He died in 1849 and Anna returned to the United States and settled in Connecticut. In 1863, Anna moved to England to be closer to her son, James.

James Whistler

The now-famous James Whistler has an interesting record. He was born in Massachusetts and, while the family lived in Russia, he took private art lessons. At the age of 11, he enrolled in the Imperial Academy of Art located in St. Petersburg, Russia. He was seldom seen without his sketchbook, but once his widowed mother moved back to the U.S., she was convinced that James needed some direction. So, he applied to the United States Military Academy at West Point, where his father had graduated and once taught. He was admitted in 1851. While there, he was known as “curly” for his hair length. He also racked up demerits because he was considered to shun authority. Col. Robert E. Lee was the superintendent, and he dismissed James after a sarcastic comment made during a chemistry class. Now, he could focus on his art.



Self-portrait of James Whistler | public domain

William Whistler

William (Willie) Whistler was his little brother, born in 1836. In 1860, William graduated as a doctor from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1862, swayed by his strong Southern family roots and his wife being from the powerful King family of Georgia, Dr. Whistler joined the Confederate Army. Appointed an assistant surgeon operating in Richmond, he was charged with visiting the sick at places like Libby Prison. In 1864, he was assigned to the 1st South Carolina Rifles as a surgeon.

He was known to be fearless in performing his duties and made a favorable impression on his new compatriots. In a November 2011 article, Ron Coddington wrote, “During a raid outside Petersburg in December 1864, the roads were covered with snow and ice, and the suffering of the men was great, for many were without shoes, and the broken ice lacerated their feet most painfully. Dr. Whistler gave up his horse to one of these wretched men, and marched on foot with the line.”

In February 1865, he was given leave to visit his family in England. A week after his arrival, he learned of Lee’s Appomattox surrender. William never returned to the United States. He continued his medical career, becoming the senior physician at the London Throat Hospital. He died in 1900 and is buried at Hastings Cemetery, East Sussex, England.

The house in which James and his brother were born in Lowell, Massachusetts, is preserved as the Whistler House Museum of Art.



Whistler House Museum of Art | CC

THE DIARY OF BENJAMIN JAY CUSHING (53RD PVI, CO. G) -

Transcribed and provided to me by Thomas Kear, a direct descendent of the Cushing brothers. Any typos or grammatical errors were left in place.

1863 (note - Both Benjamin and his brother Leavitt were both wounded at Fredericksburg in December 1862)

Mar. 1 – Write to Ulysses in the morning. Hear a short sermon from the Chaplain of the 2nd Delaware. Find it quite pleasant to be in a cabin once more, have a quiet Sabbath day.

Mar. 2 – Go on picket this morning, have a fine pleasant day of it, Pleasant in the forepart of the night but rained toward morning.

Mar. 3 – Go on post at 5 o'clock A.M. are not relieved at 2 o'clock. Have some traffic going on between our pickets and the Rebs get back to camp at 4 o'clock.

Mar. 4 – Busy in the forenoon washing, and writing in the afternoon. Find camp much better than it used to be by the addition of soft bread in place of hard crackers.

Mar. 5 – The troop of the Corps are reviewed by General Hooker. The Review passed off well and was a fine sight to behold.

Mar. 6 – Busy fixing my gun and fixing up things generally. All of us are together in the tent George Freeman, Doc Blakesler, Myself and Wilson are in one cabin which is rather a smoky one.

Mar. 7 – Making rings seems to be the order of the day. We are having quite easy times at present, except occasionally doing picket duty.

Mar. 8 – None of us on duty today. All in the cabin. Busy reading, writing, talking or singing. Write one letter to M.

Mar. 9 – Washing in the forenoon. Receive a letter from C. and answer it. It is a warm and pleasant morning.

Mar. 10 – Not on duty today. Cold and snowy. Remain in our cabin all day, Answer Chloe's letter.

Mar. 11 – In camp again today. Drill in the afternoon, reading, making rings, and singing to pass away the time. All are afraid these pleasant days of ease and pleasure will not last long.

Mar. 12 – Getting ready for inspection which comes off at 2 o'clock P.M. Cold wind blowing all day like March in Old Potter. Write one letter to Ulysses.

Mar. 13 – Cold squally weather continues. Have inspection of quarters in the morning. Write to C.G. Hudel, one year ago today I reached Camp California.

Mar. 14 – In camp cleaning up around our quarters and C. Out on Brigade Drill in the afternoon. Rec. one letter from M. Dress parade as usual at 5 P.M.

Mar. 15 – Sunday morning inspection at 9 o'clock A.M. after which nothing has to be done on Sunday til dress parade. Busy reading and writing. Rec. a visit from Walter Scott who joined the Cavalry.

Mar. 16 – Washing in the forenoon. Rec. two letters from Ulysses and also two copies of the Ex for which I subscribed a short time ago.

Mar. 17 – On guard at the Brigade Commisary. Great horse race came off today, And although a Great many officers were out it did not seem to amount to much. Write to Chloe, some firing heard up the river.

Mar. 18 – Heard that the rebs crossed the river above here yesterday and were driven back. Mail one letter to M, doing nothing particular today.

Mar. 19 – Wrote to Chancy –Have Brigade Drill in the afternoon.

Mar. 20 – On picket, commenced snowing in the morning. Snow 2 inches deep by night. Go on support at 5 o'clock and on post at 11 o'clock. Snowing during the latter part of the night.

Mar. 21 – Come off post at 5 o'clock in the morning, are relieved about noon and get in camp at 2 o'clock P.M. Raining in the afternoon. Rather weary after being up most of the night & ten traveling 6 miles through the snow and watter.

Mar. 22 – No inspection this morning. Rec. the Examiner and also a rect. for the pay. Hear a sermon preached by the Chaplain of the 2nd Delaware Regt. Isah. Chapt 53 V. 5 It is warm and pleasant and the snow is gone.

Mar. 23 – Washing in the morning – Drill in Skirmish Drill or the Bayonet exercise. Write to M in the afternoon.

Mar. 24 – Go to the woods in charge of a squad of wood cutters, get back about 2 P.M. Write to Mother in the afternoon.

Mar. 25 – In camp all day. Drill in the Bayonet Exercise in forenoon Skirmish drill in the afternoon. John Wykoff started home on furlough of 10 days.

Mar. 26 – In camp & off duty, Except drill in the Bayonet exercise in the fore and afternoon.

Mar. 27 – Get ready for general inspection in the afternoon at 3 o'clock rec. one letter from M.

Mar. 28 – In camp raining most all day.

Mar. 29 – Sunday morning inspection as usual. Writing to M in the forenoon, reading, singing etc. in the afternoon and evening.

Mar. 30 – Wash in the morning, drill in bayonet exercise in forenoon. Go out on review at 12 o'clock. Get back at 2 o'clock rec. a letter from home. Very bright pleasant day. Write home in the evening.

Mar. 31 – In camp all day, about 2 inches of snow fall in the night raining during the forenoon.

ANNUAL PARTY SUMMARY

Submitted by Mike Espenshade

Our annual Holiday Party was held on Saturday evening, January 14th, 2023 at Gettysburg's Dobbin House. The weather was mild and dry for this time of year, so no travel issues were noted by anyone.

Everyone had a very nice time due to the excellent meal, unique and interesting entertainment, the kind and generous preparations by Pete and Michele Zinkus, and memorable comradery!

After the meal was enjoyed, valuable words of reflection and perspective were shared by Eric and Pete. The election results were announced that Pete Zinkus and Matt Steger unanimously won re-election as Vice-President and Treasurer, respectively. Thank you, Gentlemen, for all you for us all.

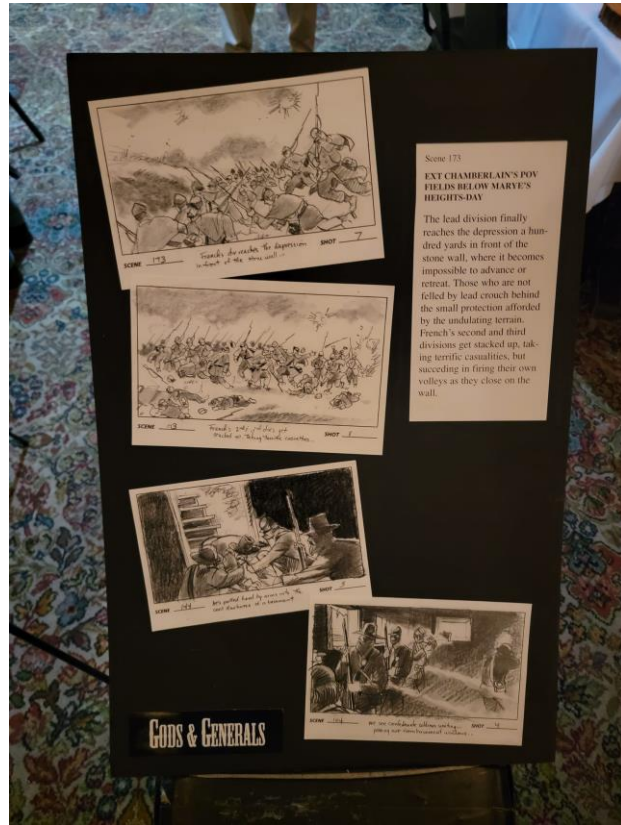
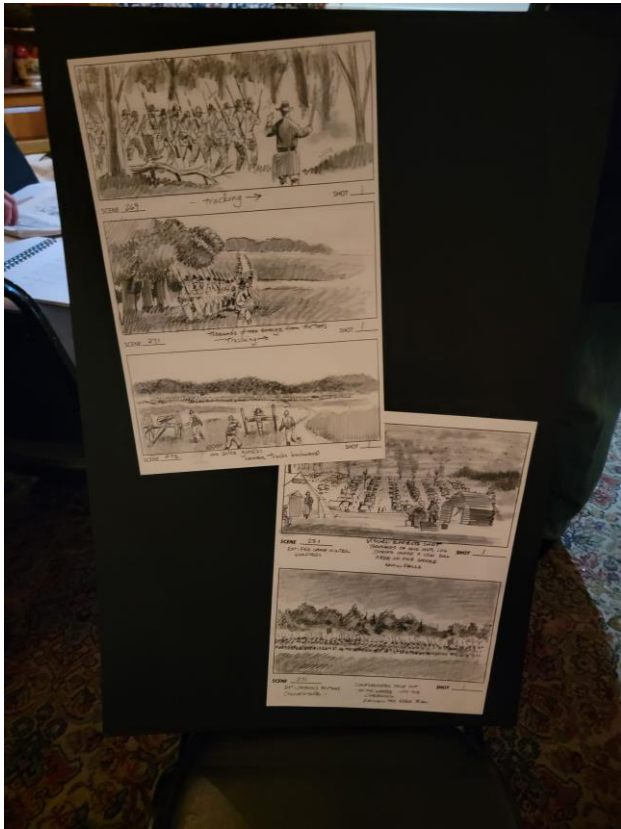
Then we next received a special treat from Bot Roda, - former member in the ranks of the 53rd PA back in the 1980's. Bot's engaging and friendly manner added greatly to his story. His story about how his reenacting experiences equipped him to apply his historically accurate and detailed drawing skills as the storyboard artist for movies including Gettysburg, Gods and Generals, and many more! Several dozen examples of his storyboard submittals to the movie producers/directors were on display for our enlightenment.

The tremendous efforts by Michele and Pete were appreciated by everyone: hand-crafted 12" ash-wood trivets - adorned with a prominent red trefoil and glossed for preservation; hand-drawn votive candles; and lovingly filled jarred candy favors. What an exceptional effort!! Thank you for these keepsakes, Michele.

The 30 attendees included President and Mrs Traci Ford, Vice-President and Mrs Michele Zinkus, 1Sgt Fasnacht, Corporal Espenshade and wife Carol, Private Schick and wife Claudia, Private Raab and wife Darlene, Privates Rusty and Jacob Dicks, Private Fink and wife Kim, Private Fedorshak and both parents, 3 members from ELF Ken Derrenbacher, and Dan Seibert, and Jimmy Thomas as well as Jimmy's guest Caroline, Drummer Braden Thomas and his wonderful mother Amber, John Heiser and wife Carmen, Stu Richards, Brent Miller and friend Rachel, and guest speaker Bot Roda.



Photos are courtesy of Eric Ford.



53RD PVI WINTER DRILL

This Saturday (2/4) will be our annual winter drill at Landis Valley. Please arrive by 8:45AM. We should be wrapped up by around 4pm. Bring a lunch and dress appropriately. Bring your full kit, minus tentage. If you plan on attending the drill and/or staying overnight to Sunday morning in the cabin, please let Eric know ASAP as we are planning Sat. dinner and Sunday breakfast. We will be joined by some of our friends from ELF and Sykes Regulars for the drill as well as some potential new recruits.

2023 ANNUAL MEETING INFO

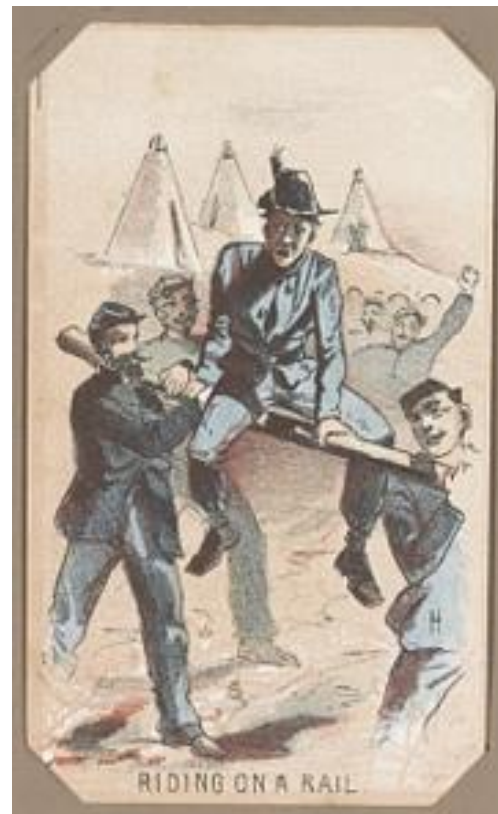
On 7 January, our annual meeting was held at Sgt. Fasnacht's home in Kleinfeltersville. Present were: Ford, Zinkus, Steger, Espenshade, Dicks (Rusty), Raab, Brumbaugh, Benedict, Parvis, and Fasnacht.

Various topics were discussed including our 2023 schedule, update from the annual NR meeting, website/social media, recruitment, rounds and cartridge rolling party, treasury report, winter drill, annual party, etc. Please see our 2023 calendar events near the end of this newsletter.

The minutes have been submitted to Eric and he will be sending them out to the membership shortly.

WINSLOW HOMER SOUVENIR CARD

Noted American artist Winslow Homer (1836 ~ 1910) created a series of drawings entitled "Life In Camp" originally published circa 1864 by L. Prang & Co. The series was exhibited in "The Civil War in America" at the Library of Congress in 2013. This image is entitled "Riding On A Rail".



BOOK REVIEW – HARD MARCHING EVERY DAY

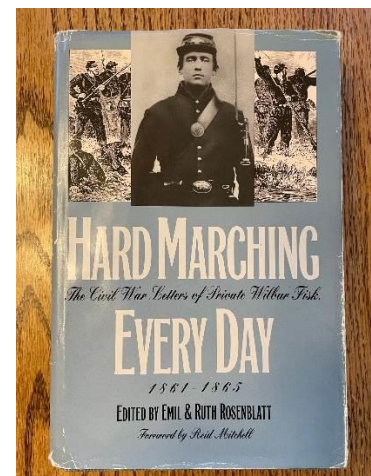
Submitted by Mike Espenshade

Author: Wilbur Fisk - Pvt Co E 2nd Vermont Vol Inf, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Div, 6th Corps.

Hard cover; 1992; University Press of Kansas; 368 pp.; in addition: 0 pages of pictures (sorry, Doug Raab, maybe Sgt Steger can read this to you), 7 pp notes, 9 pp index. \$2 bought from Marc Benedict.

As a war correspondent, Pvt Wilbur Fisk was an amateur, yet his letters to the *Montpelier Green Mountain Freeman* comprise one of the finest collections of Civil War letters in existence.

Fisk was a rural school teacher from Vermont who enlisted in the Union Army simply because he felt that he would regret it later if he did not. He had no access to rank or headquarters, so he wrote as the foot soldier he was who slept in the mud, performed endless guard duty and obeyed orders no matter how incomprehensible. Between December 11, 1861 and July 26, 1865, Fisk wrote nearly 100 letters to the *Freeman*.



He wrote as eloquently about the moral and political issues behind the war as he did on the everyday hardships of life in the army. His self-admitted ability to verbosely “preach” to his readers in his many-paged letters shows through, which helps explain his becoming a preacher after the war.

Aug 14, 1864 during the Valley chasings of Early’s forces: “Whoever may have been the first to propose the theory of perpetual motion, I believe the Sixth Corps have been the first to demonstrate its possibility by actual practice. Ever since we commenced our Maryland campaign [over 4 weeks ago], marching has been the order of the day and most nights. A day of rest is a practice that has fast come to disuse.... if the rebels are dogged out of one place forthwith they appear in another, and if we drive them away from there, behold they turnup somewhere else! ... and can appear in half a dozen places at once... in the heat and dust we were hurrying to intercept them over the road from Frederick to Harper’s Ferry ... just one week later, we were hurrying over the same road in the same direction for the same purpose.... It was found that some rebel movement on the great chessboard had made a corresponding movement on our part necessary. So, to prevent becoming check-mated, we picked up post haste, and the next twenty-four hours found the troops transporting their knapsacks through the dust and heat back again towards the city of Frederick. ... [One week later] ... I wish to record the important fact that we are back again in our old camp here in Bolivar Heights. You know it was a little over a week ago that we were here before.... Our trips through ... Harper’s Ferry, Frederick and other ... are generally regular. “Harper’s Weekly” is the General’s motto... and when we have added a little more experience to our system we expect to give perfect satisfaction all around.”

Having built winter quarters in multiple locations that fall of 1864 in the Valley, that the rebels were sure to use once the Union men had to “move on”, the soldiers started leaving notes on their bunks: “To the first Johnnie that dares step into my Sanctum: You will please burn this hut in retaliation for the wheat stock, Ed and I burned, near New Market. Get as mad as you can, then apply the torch.”

I highly recommend this is a “must read” volume especially for the Living Historian. Fisk’s detailed descriptions of his experiences (and feelings) of guard mount, marching campaigns, hospital stays/assignments, winter quarters construction, and day-to-day survival add much more to our understanding than most other first person accounts.

53RD PVI SOLDIER ON DISPLAY

On a recent visit to the Gettysburg Visitors Center, I noticed a photo in one of the display cases of an original member of the 53rd PVI, Corporal Andrew Sarber. He was in Andersonville Prison and, according to the display, he starved to death after being released when was on his way home.



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.) Dave Townsen, a fellow pard of mine in the old 83rd PVI, is selling off most of his CW gear. You can contact him directly at: grumpydave58@comcast.net with any inquiries about items, pricing, etc. He lives in Mechanicsburg and he has quality gear.

(2.) Kerry Williard is handling the selling of Dave Swigert items for Dave's wife. Marc and I met a few years ago to look over 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 31 Dec. 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 |

2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

- 15 January - Holiday Party - Gettysburg (private)
- 4 February - Winter Drill - Landis Valley (our NR parads are invited)
- 18-19 February - NR School of Instruction (Gettysburg Fire Hall)
- 25 March - Cartridge Rolling Party (1st Sgt.'s Home)
- 15 April - Robesonia - Patriotic Order Sons of America (POSoFA) event
- 6 - 7 May - NR Camp Of Instruction (COI) - Gruber Wagon Works (Reading, PA)
- 29 May - Memorial Day Parade (Hummelstown) **[Max Effort]**
- 23 -25 June - Gettysburg 160 **[NR Max Effort]**
- 15-16 July - Landis Valley Civil War Days (Lancaster) **[Max Effort]**
- 12 August - Safe Harbor Cemetery - grave rededication
- 8-10 September - Thunder on the Gauley (Summersville, WV - Carnifax Ferry Battlefield **[NR MAX EFFORT]**)
- 14-15 October - USAHEC Army Heritage Days (Carlisle) **[Max Effort]**
- 18 November - Remembrance Day (Gettysburg) - NR Annual Meeting and Parade



Secondary schedule -

- 20 May - Lancaster Cemetery - grave decoration day
- 28-20 July - Receding Tide - Trenches of Williamsport
- 14-15 October - Cedar Creek re-enactment

For updated event info and other news, please check out the Facebook pages of the 53rd PVI and/or the National Regiment (links below) and keep an eye out in your email.

53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford (reenactor53@gmail.com)

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

Treasurer/Secretary: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@outlook.com)

Newsletter Editor: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@outlook.com)

Webmasters: Steve Dillon (steve@gofoxpro.com) and Matthew Steger (n3ntj@outlook.com)

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

2023 Field Officers - Sergeants: Mark Fasnacht (1st Sgt), Marc Benedict, Matthew Steger

Corporals: Mike Espenshade & Michael Brumbaugh

53rd PVI Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/53rdPVI>

National Regiment Phone line: 800-777-1861 (code 61)

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

National Regiment Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/842904089142263>

