

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

## Company C

"The Sentinel" July 2023

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

### This Month:

1. Gettysburg 160 Summary/Photos
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*I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, CW-related movie or book reviews, event summaries/photos, stories, etc. to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor*

## **GETTYSBURG 160 SUMMARY & PHOTOS**

The Gettysburg 160 event was held just west of town from 23~25 June. In attendance were Sgts. Benedict and Steger, Corporals Espenshade and Brumbaugh, Private Shick, and Musician Thomas. For those who missed it, you missed a great event. The NR participated in 4 battles: 1<sup>st</sup> Day West Of Town, The Wheatfield, Culp's Hill, and Longstreet's Assault (aka Pickett's Charge). We also got to see our own John Heiser give a talk called "Unfit For Service – Unraveling The Story Of A Gettysburg Photograph". The battle scenarios were top notch. The weather was cloudy, foggy, and misty at times and hot and blazing sun at other times. We seemed to have everything but snow! Photos are courtesy of your editor (Matthew Steger), Jim Stiehl, Jeffrey Allen Smith, and Chip Smith. I've posted many more photos at the Gettysburg 160 event page on the unit website.



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## THE DIARY OF BENJAMIN JAY CUSHING (53<sup>RD</sup> 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. – editor]*

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

Aug. 1 – Lay quietly in camp today. Come off guard at noon, rec. letter from home. Busy reading and writing. Very warm weather now days.

Aug. 2 – Get orders to pack up at 8 o'clock & we move a short distance into the woods and go into camp in regular order. Go on picket at noon. March 3 mi. and go on post a 9 P.M. Hot weather.

Aug. 3 – We are having extremely hot weather. All are glad that we are not marching. Through some blunder in the Officer of the picket we are not relieved til 10 o'clock at night & get into camp at 12 o'clock at night.

Aug. 4 – Find myself very sleepy and tired this morning. Read, orders at 10 o'clock A.M. to pack up and be ready to march at a moments notice. March about 2 miles, and camp in a large field, very pleasant indeed.

Aug. 5 - Write to M. in the morning. Then busy myself in fixing up our tent, cleaning guns, and the various other duties of camp life. Cool pleasant day today. Rec'd. a letter from Charles at night.

Aug. 6 – Went back to the old camp after boards to make a table of. Nearly the whole Regt. Go on picket. I am on guard at night. Rec'd. a letter from Mrs. O.H. Lewis also an Ex. Let all unite in praising God for his blessing to us.

Aug. 7 – Released from guard at 10 o'clock A.M. Help build a table for Lieut. Roberts. Write to Brother Charles in afternoon. Have light showers in the afternoon, and a long heavy rain after dark.

Aug. 8 – Write to Ulysses in the morning. Received four months pay today. Busy reading a book entitled the “Iron Furnace” Being a sketch of life in the South. From the pen of a refugee.

Aug. 9 – Reading and writing all day have a very quiet pleasant Sabbath. The first one which we have enjoyed in camp in a long while. I have great reason for thankfulness for another such quiet Sabbath.

Aug. 10 – Write to Henry Olmstead in the morning. Give Lieut. Roberts \$20.00 twenty dollars to send by Express to H.J. Olmstead of Coudersport. Go on picket at noon 2 ½ miles from here.

Aug. 11 – Have a pleasant time on picket. Are relieved at 4 o'clock P.M. and get into camp at Sundown. The boys have built a brush shade in front of our tent, which will make it much cooler.

Aug. 12 – Washing in the morning, also on camp guard, which is not very hard duty as we have only one post & three men. Not very hard duty as I let them post themselves during the night.

Aug. 13 – Had heavy rain storm during the night, lay abed very late in the morning. Busy cooking, reading, and various other little camp duties.

Aug. 14 – Went this morning after a load of pine boughs to finish the awning over our Street, help build one in front of the Lieuts. Markee in the afternoon. Rec. an Ex. Tonight.

Aug. 15 – Cooking, reading and washing in the forenoon. Write to Ulysses in the afternoon. Rec. several letters tonight. Rec'd. marching orders in the morning to be ready to march at a moments notice.

Aug. 16 – A quiet and pleasant Sabbath morning. Write several letters during the day and busy myself reading the rest of the time. On guard today, recd. A letter from Sister Charlott at night and answer while sitting up at night to post the guard.

Aug. 17 – Busy washing and cooking and nothing else in particular except reading the papers, new and old, of which there are many in camp of all kinds from dailies to monthly magazine.

Aug. 18 – Fall in to go on picket at ½ past 6 A.M. Our Div. Relieves the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div. This morning. March toward the river and drop off the required number at each post. On post til after dark when we are drawn in and lay at the Crossroads at Morristown all night.

Aug. 19 – Are relieved in good season in the morning & get into camp about 9 o'clock having had a very pleasant time. Have orders to get ready for Brigade inspection but it does not take place. Write in the eve. To Chloe.

Aug. 20 – Inspection at 8 o'clock A.M. Rec. a visit from E. Howe of the 149<sup>th</sup> Regt. Rec. orders to pack up at 4 o'clock and just set our tents down when it is countermanded, put them up again. Rec. the Exam. At night.

Aug. 21 – Have to police our camps the first thing in the morning & are inspected by Gen Warren, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps Commander. Saw a deserter executed in the field in front of our camp. He belonged to the 71<sup>st</sup> Reg. P.V. The first I ever saw, and I hope it may be the last.

Aug. 22 – Busy cleaning up accoutrements in forenoon. Reading and lounging on the Soldier's Settee in the shade, quite a hot day with thunder showers in the distance passing around us. Another week has passed away & nothing of interest taken place in this department.

Aug. 23 – Have a very quiet pleasant day. Not on duty and busy myself nearly all day reading. Hear a sermon in the afternoon by the Chaplain of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Del. Rec. several letters at night. Write to M. My mind is led back to the dangers passed through during the last year of my sojourn in Va.

Aug. 24 – Wm. Brown and myself go down to the station and visit the boys in the 149<sup>th</sup> Regt. The country is nearly level and considerably cleared up. But only saw one field of any size under cultivation. Get back to camp about 6 o'clock. Have dress parade for the first time since we left Falmouth.

Aug. 25 – Busy washing in the forenoon. Doing nothing in particular in the afternoon, but reading and loitering in camp and discussing the news of the day wich is quite favorable for our cause, rainy in the afternoon and night. Also very cold for the season.

Aug. 26 – Cleaning gun nearly all the forenoon. Very cold and windy all day. Battalion drill in the afternoon. Receiv a short call from Germ. Barnaby.

Aug. 27 – Not on duty today and doing nothing in particular, received several letters at night. Write to M. in the evening.

Aug. 28 – Company drill in the morning. Write home in the forenoon. Regt'l. Drill in the afternoon. Another sad scene was enacted in the field in front of our camp. The shooting of two deserters.

Aug. 29 – Go on picket early in the morning, only go one nite and are on reserve all the time, cool and cloudy.

Aug. 30 – Relieved at 9 o'clock and reach camp at 10 o'clock. Rec. a call from J. Brown & A. Harvey. See 150 of the drafted men come in for our Brigade just at night. Write to M in the evening. It has been a beautiful day and is a pleasant moonlight evening.

Aug. 31 – Waked at 3 o'clock and ordered to be ready to march at 6 o'clock. March to Hartwood Church, and halt for dinner and rest. March from there to within one mile of Bank's Ford where we stay all night. Have a cool days march and good roads.

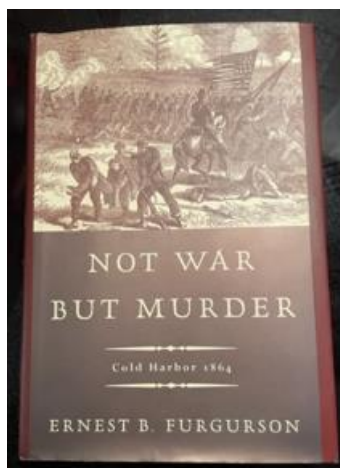
## WINSLOW HOMER SOUVENIR CARD

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 month's image is entitled "Tossing In A Blanket".



## BOOK REVIEW: NOT WAR BUT MURDER – COLD HARBOR 1864

Author: Ernest B. Furguson. Reviewed by Mike Espenshade



Hardbound; 2000; publisher = Alfred A. Knopf – division of Random House; 259 pp.; 32 pictures, 13 maps, 2 excellent appendices containing Order of Battle and Casualties; 14 pp notes, 17 pp bibliography, 13 pp index. Free from a friend of Pete Zinkus.

I highly recommend this book. It is an excellent high-level coverage of the Cold Harbor campaign eloquently showing the military personalities, their feelings, their actions – from the private soldier up to the General-in-Chief. Refreshingly, only the very top-level of the political atmosphere on both sides has been described. Author Ernest Fergusen, an ex-Marine Corps officer, descendent of Confederate Soldiers, and a career newspaper correspondent, is an experienced researcher and author whose previous works include [Ashes of Glory: Richmond at War](#) and [Chancellorsville 1863: The Souls of the Brave](#), and other works.

Bruce Catton described Cold Harbor “one of the hard and terrible names of the Civil War, perhaps the most terrible one of all”. At dawn, on June 3, 1864, Generals Grant and Meade brought their overland campaign against Richmond to its climax in an all-out assault on Lee’s entrenched soldiers/artillery. In 30 minutes, against a nearly 2-mile front of formation-breaking ravines, rolling knobs, thickets, and excellently placed/obscured Rebel entrenchments, over 20,000 Union Infantry tried courageously to breakthrough to Richmond, less than 10 miles away. Heavy cross-fire from masked Rebel gun emplacements and desperate infantry defense prevented Union success. The exception was a temporary breastworks breakthrough by Hancock’s II Corps Barlow’s Division front, which was repulsed by Lee’s only reserves. [Note: Brooke’s brigade, including the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI, supported this assault]. Why Birney’s Division (II Corps), 300 yards back, was held in-place during these critical moments remains a mystery. Losses = Union 7,000 and Confederate around 1,500.

Ferguson explores why the Grant-Meade relationship contributed to the poor reconnaissance of the Cold Harbor Rebel breastworks and fortifications. The ensuing Grant-Meade attack orders were issued - even Grant admitted he regrets ever ordering them. The author well-describes this campaign’s development and resulting impact on the troops’ attitudes – attitudes which later led to the grand lost-opportunity on June 15/16 of Smith-Hancock failure to take Petersburg from a Confederate force 1/5<sup>th</sup> their own size.

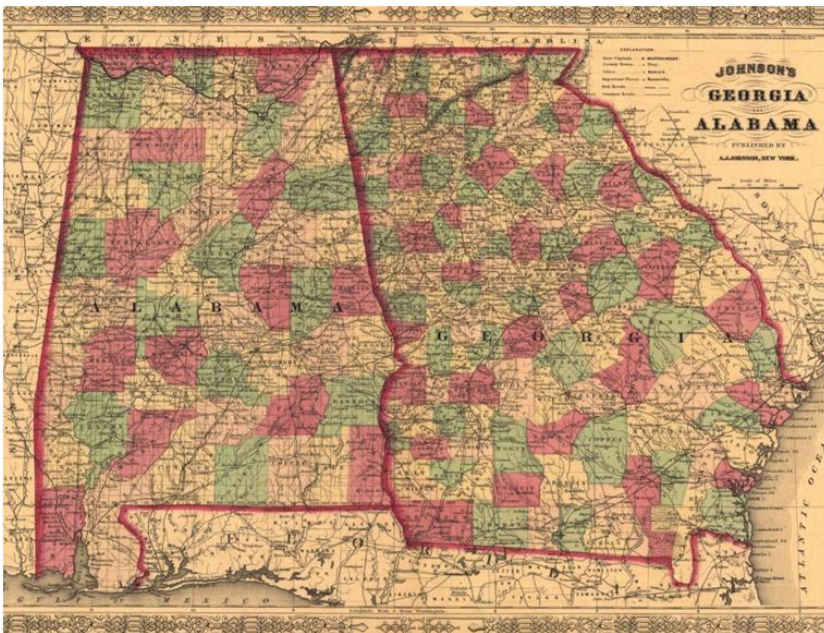
The “immersion factor”, for me as I read this book, was the continual reference to the physical sights, sounds, and the usually not-described/mundane in-the-field soldier activities being described perfectly in context of the moment. Not as a correspondent would write, but described in a way which reenactors or veterans themselves would describe them = on point, rich in detail, using the terminology of their times, etc.

Excerpt: Facing the thinly manned stretch between Warren’s V Corps and Smith’s assaulting XVIII Corps, Joseph W. Eggleston of Lamkin’s Virginia Battery considered himself “entirely free from danger”, when he stood on the works and “plainly counted fourteen columns” coming towards the Confederate lines further south. The Yankees surged forward with “great gallantry”, he said, “only to be slaughtered by thousands”. He watched “line after line melt away and the field was almost in a moment practically covered with dead and wounded ... the first line seemed to have come nearer than any subsequent one. Toward the last, the men begin to falter and mounted officers were seen plainly trying to drive them in hopeless attack, The lines seemed to wave like wheat in a breeze, then dissolve, with the men gathering in bunches and being shot down”.

Disgustingly, both Grant and Lee allowed wounded from both sides to be trapped between the lines and laid unattended for 4 ½ days. Union men found one of their comrades with an open bloody diary in his hands. The last entry read “June 3, Cold Harbor. I was killed.”

## **THE CIVIL WAR MAPS OF HENRY DELAMAR CLAYTON**

Robert S. Davis, April 28, 2023, [blueandgrayeducation.org](http://blueandgrayeducation.org)



Alvin Jewett Johnson's map of Georgia and Alabama from 1863 | [alabamamaps.us.edu](http://alabamamaps.us.edu)

On the eve of the Civil War, despite two centuries of European settlement, the United States was little mapped beyond the roads used as postal routes and railroad lines. During the war’s early months, even armies on their own ground lacked credible information on where they were and both armies, sometimes, marched blindly through uncultivated wildernesses using uncharted wagon paths to collide at obscure creeks, isolated communities, and rural churches.

The conflict of 1861-1865 radically changed that situation. Engineers of the Union and Confederate armies compiled detailed maps to include almost every named locality, no matter how obscure, to the level of gold mines, Indian ruins, and hundreds of owners of individual

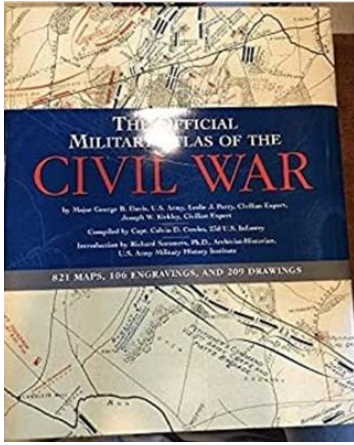
farms.

The most comprehensive collection of this information from the war became George B. Davis, et al., *The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War (1891-1895)*. This work, however, sometimes identifies farms and other places not at those locations until after the war.

Largely settled only after 1838, northwest Georgia was left with relatively few people thanks to lack of adequate transportation and the ownership of vast tracts of the local land by absentee land speculators. Without detailed maps, information obtained from locals, some of whom opposed the Confederacy, proved misleading or nearly useless. Confederate general Joseph Wheeler’s Cavalry Corps prepared some maps of northwest Georgia between May and July 1864 with the final cartography carried out chiefly by assistant engineers John M. Stewart and John Stuart Tyner. Maps by Wheeler’s Engineer’s Office had the reputation of being the best produced in the Confederacy, but in fact they often lacked important details.

Bob Bradley, curator of artifacts at the Alabama Department of Archives and History, located some mostly forgotten Confederate maps of northwest Georgia and neighboring Tennessee. While preparing a Civil War exhibit, he found maps bundled in a leather belt pouch that had belonged to Confederate general Henry DeLamar Clayton of Barbour County, Alabama.

The Clayton maps show the terrain of the Atlanta Campaign as the Confederate command knew it. Today, this information gives researchers a view of communities in Georgia and parts of Tennessee



The Clayton maps are today in the Civil War maps of Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee, [ca.1862]-[ca.1864], D-624 through D-628, CB-75, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery. These maps are accessed online from Alabama Historical Map Archive: <http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/>.

Originals of the Clayton maps have survived in the National Archives and Records Administration and digitized in limited image quality on the website Civil War Maps, American Memory, Library of Congress: [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil\\_war\\_maps/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil_war_maps/).

## **UPCOMING EVENT –**

Landis Valley “Civil War Days” is coming up on 15~16 July in Lancaster. Arrive by 8AM Sat.; vehicles out of camp by 8:30AM. You can drive into the site and unload and return your wagon to the parking area. Normal kit with tent. Saturday dinner and Sunday breakfast will be provided at the hotel thanks to Tony Albright. Bring sufficient rounds/caps; plan for 3 firing demos on Saturday and 2 on Sunday (at least 7 rounds per demo plus extra caps). Any questions, please forward them to Eric.

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

Gentlemen,

### **LANDIS VALLEY, LANDIS VALLEY, LANDIS VALLEY!**

We're about two weeks away from Landis Valley. I don't need to go into chapter and verse on the event. I will say that we'll be back to our traditional Saturday supper and Sunday breakfast courtesy of Tony Albright. Having said that, I need to provide Tony with a number of mouths to feed so he can plan his menu and submit to me his budget. I've already sent our friends in ELF and beyond a request for their expected turnout. I need the same thing from each of you. Let me know by, or before this weekend if you'll be participating.

As you all know, this past week's 160th Gettysburg was Tom's final event as the NR Colonel. Please read below for his message to the NR as well as his final General Order.

See y'all at LV!  
Eric

HEADQUARTERS  
NATIONAL REGIMENT  
ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

General Order: 23-001

Subject: CHANGE OF COMMAND: NATIONAL REGIMENT

- 1.) Effective July 1, 2023, Colonel T. M. F. Downes is relieved of command of the National Regiment. He will report to his home for assignment to the Roster of Retired Officers.
- 2.) Effective July 1, 2023, Colonel P.T. Brennen is assigned command of the National Regiment.
- 3.) Although the change of command will take effect on July 1, 2023, the Transfer of Command Ceremony will take place on November 18, 2023 at the Dress Parade prior to the Memorial Parade. All personnel are required to attend.

By order of T. Downes, Colonel, Commanding.

NATIONAL REGIMENT  
ARMY OF THE POTOMAC  
Headquarters,

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National Regiment

Cleveland, Ohio, June 26, 2023

Special Order: 1-023

To: All Personnel, National Regiment

Subject: Gettysburg 160 June 23-25, 2023

I would like to thank all members of the National Regiment who participated in the recent action near Gettysburg, Penna 23-25 June, 2023.

Although small in numbers, the quality of performance of the NR was in no way diminished. Over the course of the action we were, by necessity, forced to rearrange the command structure of the organization, shifting both battalion and company level officers with absolutely no diminution of tactical efficiency at any point.

This is a testament of the level of expertise and depth of knowledge among not only the officer corps but to the rank and file members who can operate at top level among difficult circumstances.

I wish to thank my Staff, Lt. Colonel Mark Adler, Lt. Ross McNeerney, and Sgt. Major Matty Cronin. I also wish to thank all those who served as company level officers. Commanding the NR is a breeze with men such as these carrying out my orders. As this was my last action in official field command of the National Regiment, I could not conceive a better one to go out on. The weather, while challenging at times, was for the most part tolerable.

I was pleased to be able to participate in the last action of the weekend and am eternally grateful to those responsible for assigning us the portrayal of the 8th Ohio for the last fight under my command. It was an unexpected, and deeply personal moment for me and will remain in my memory so long as I have one.

To quell any rumors, and to the chagrin of some, I am not retiring from the hobby, I am merely stepping down from active field command so I can continue to participate at my own speed. I will remain as a senior advisor to whomever wishes to hear my drivel.

I thank all those who mentored me over my career over the last 37 years in the NR, they are too many to name individually but I know who they are and I give them my thanks.

I especially want to thank the literally hundreds if not thousands of men in the ranks of the NR who allowed me to be their officer and put up with my mistakes as I learned my trade.

These last ten years that I was permitted to command the NR as your Colonel have been some of the most fulfilling of my life, and you have my most sincere gratitude.

Looking forward to seeing you all again in the field, I remain,

Y'r. Ob't. Serv't.,  
T. M. F. Downes  
Colonel (Ret.)  
National Regiment

## **THE CIVIL WAR MERCHANT**

*(if you have something for sale or are looking for something to add to your kit, email me your ad or want for a future edition of "The Sentinel")*

### **For Sale –**

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

(2.) I have a C&D Jarnagin size 46 federal enlisted frock coat for sale. Still in great condition. Email me with any questions/inquiries: [n3ntj@outlook.com](mailto:n3ntj@outlook.com)

(3.) Kerry Williard is handling the sale of Dave Swigert items for Dave's wife. Marc and I met a few years ago to look over the items and give them descriptions and approx. values. Several of the items have been sold yet some remain. The list is current as of 9 May 2023. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: [shamokin71@aol.com](mailto:shamokin71@aol.com) (see the updated list below)

Quantity	Item Description	Detailed Description	Selling
<b>Armaments</b>			
1	1861 Springfield Rifle - Armi Sport		\$900.00
<b>Uniform Clothing</b>			
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	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
1 pairs	Grey Wool Socks -Modern		\$2.00/pr
2	Hats - Union & Confederate for cchildren		\$1.00
<b>Accountrements</b>			
1	Scabbord -Late war 7 Rivet		\$15.00
1	Gum Blanket	some cracking with oversized grommets	\$20.00
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
<b>Misc Items</b>			
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
2	Soap Bar		\$1.00/ea
1	box rifle cleaning kit	pads, steel wool, rags, etc	\$5.00
1 Pair	shoe tree		\$3.00
1	Green Army Duffle Bag		\$3.00
1	drawers for use as patches		\$1.00

## 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)~~  
~~1 April - ELF Drill at Ft. McHenry~~  
~~15 April - Patriotic Order Sons of America (POSoA) event (Robesonia)~~  
~~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 [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 (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 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI and/or the National Regiment (links below) and check your email on a regular basis

### 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@outlook.com](mailto:n3ntj@outlook.com))

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

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

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

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

Corporals: Mike Espenshade & Michael Brumbaugh

53<sup>rd</sup> 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>

