

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Company C

"The Sentinel" December 2023

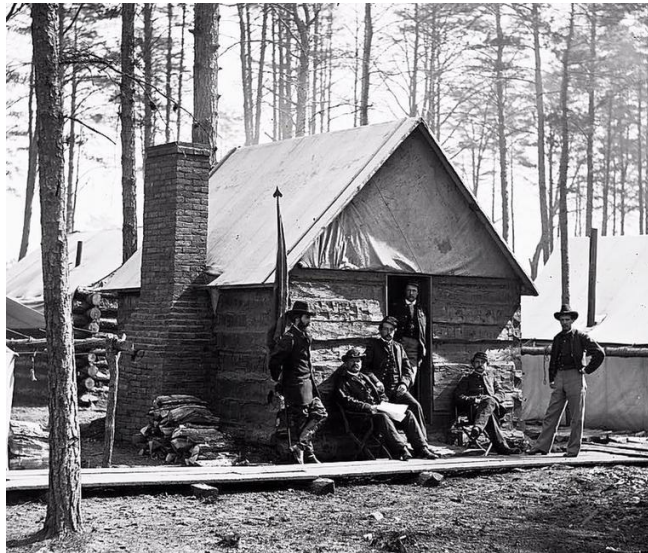
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

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I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, 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

WILSON'S RAID AND THE TOWN OF ELYTON

By Norman Dasinger, Jr., February 21, 2022
Blue and Gray Education Society

On March 30, 1865, Union Gen. James H. Wilson and his 13,000 cavalry were encamped in Elyton, Alabama. Soon after the Civil War, the fast-growing new city of Birmingham swallowed up the town.

Wilson and his men rested at the home of Judge William S. Mudd named "The Grove." From his headquarters, the Federal commander issued the following order:

"Brig. Gen E. M. McCook—

Detach one brigade of your division, to proceed rapidly by the most direct route to Tuscaloosa to destroy the bridge, factories, mills, university (military school) and whatever else may be of benefit to the rebel cause."

McCook picked Gen. John T. Croxton's brigade to fulfill the mission. Before he departed, Croxton received some valuable information. Judge Mudd, the man hosting Wilson and his men at his home, had just returned from Tuscaloosa and reported that only militia and reported that only militia and university cadets were present in the town. Croxton would burn the school, as ordered, but not return to Wilson's command until he arrived in Macon, Georgia, on May 1.



Portrait of Union Gen. James H. Wilson in 1865 | LOC

Wilson had arrived in Elyton seeking a place to rest his men and finalize his continued movement through the middle of Alabama aiming for Selma. Surgeon Frances Salter described Elyton as a “pretty village of 3,000 to 4,000 inhabitants.” General Wilson had a different observation. He wrote it was “poverty stricken and uninviting . . . a poor insignificant Southern village.”



Arlington Place | LOC

The house he chose for his headquarters, however, was not insignificant. The Grove—renamed Arlington in 1902—was built beginning in 1846 by Judge Mudd, one of the founders of the village of Elyton. A native of Kentucky, Mudd served in the Alabama state legislature between 1843 and 1848 and had a successful 23-year judicial career. He and his wife, Florence, raised nine children and, in 1860, Mudd reported 14 enslaved individuals also dwelling at The Grove. Among his business ventures were the building of Birmingham’s first hotel, operation of the Oxmoor Furnace, and the establishment of Citizen’s (now Regions) Bank. He died in 1884.

In 1953, Mudd’s home, after passing through several owners, was purchased by a citizens group and the city of Birmingham for \$53,000. (Mudd had bought the land and an old cottage that stood on it for \$600.)

Today, the city of Birmingham still owns Arlington and six acres. It serves as an interpretive site with a museum and includes a reception hall, plantation kitchen, and gardens. Tours are offered Tuesday through Sunday. Period antiques furnish the rooms, including relics once owned by President Jefferson Davis and his family.

Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, the house is believed to be the last surviving antebellum mansion in Birmingham, Alabama.

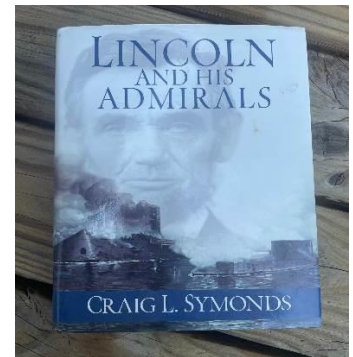
BOOK REVIEW: LINCOLN AND HIS ADMIRALS - ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE US NAVY AND THE CIVIL WAR

Author: Craig L. Symonds

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Hardback; 2008; Oxford University Press; 366 pp.; 22 pictures, 6 maps, 38 pages at back with clarifying footnot notes throughout, 16 pages of bibliography, 23 pp index. Free from a friend of Pete Zinkus.

Craig Symonds, in a meticulously researched effort, offers a gripping narrative that finally gives the Union Navy – and its commander in chief – the credit they deserve for the important part they played in winning the Civil War. With a compelling portrait of personalities, their relations to each other, the ensuing outcome, and a sharp analysis of strategy, the author gives us a superb account of Lincoln’s relationship with the Navy and the people who ran it.



Lincoln confessed knowing “little about ships” to his Secretary of Navy Gideon Wells in 1861, as evidenced by his mistakes at that time. But he progressed to patiently administer policy based on events, not as a proactive initiative – just as he did with army and political progress. He used events to clarify themselves as the war went on, before charting a course. The “Blockade”, the “Trent Affair”, the French invasion of Mexico, and the over eagerness of several Naval captains which produced international conflicts inviting war with Britain - all involved Lincoln and his administration towards disaster.

I really enjoyed this book as it was so engaging and well-flowing that it filled that void of the naval aspects – so important and vital to the Union Cause – that I did not know I missed!!

I would have appreciated more maps (the ones provided are very good) and better attention to dates of events within the text as the narrative not mentioning dates “ran away from the time line” – in my opinion. Read it!!! Symonds has (as of 2008), at least, 10 other publications out - that I now must pursue as I am now “a Fan”.

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ANNUAL MEETING INFO

Reminder that our annual meeting is scheduled for 9AM on Saturday December 2nd at Sgt. Fasnacht's home in Kleinfeltersville. Should you need directions, please let me know. On the agenda will be topics such as 2023 in review, our 2024 schedule, the NR's 2024 schedule, treasurer's report, membership, the election, the holiday party, and more. Please arrive by 8:45AM so we can start on time. Please also bring a food item to share for lunch with the group after the meeting and please let Mark know asap (1.) if you are attending the meeting and (2.) what food item you are bringing.

I will also be accepting checks for 2024 dues and the holiday party. More details about the holiday party will be provided at the meeting. Hope to see you all at our annual meeting.

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. – editor]

1863

Dec. 1- Nothing much going on in the forenoon. Get orders to build breastworks and work at them til night, all quiet til 9 o'clock in the evening, when we get orders to get ready to move at once. Start back on the Plank Road & find all the troops moving back. March all night & reach Elys Ford about 9 o'clock in the morning.

Dec. 2 – Halt about 10 o'clock & rest & get our breakfast and dinner. Start again about noon & go directly back to our old Camp, reach it just after dark & find Sally, the cook, and Lee M. Whitney there and the tents up and supper ready which is very agreeable to me as I am very hungry and tired. We cannot see what this move has amounted to but hope it has done some good.

Dec. 3 – Had a sound nights sleep last night & feel much better for it. Issue 3 days rations, So that the men have 4 days from this morning & 2 of meat. Rec'd no mail. Write home % also to M. Have to give up our tent & go in with the Q.M.

Dec. 4 – Got 3 mails today, which makes up for the long time we have been without it. Pleasant weather for this time of the year. Nothing particular going on in camp. Put in a requisition for five days rations. Rumor says we are to change camp tomorrow.

Dec. 5 – Get orders to be ready to move at 8:30 on the morning. Move about 3 miles to Stevensburg and pitch tents. Get orders to be ready to march at a moments notice. Put up our quarters for the night.

Dec. 6 – Clear but cold day. Busy reading or writing most of the day, draw rations in the afternoon. This is cold weather for soldiers to be moving around & especially for the Sick. The well & hearty men can stand it. But may God have mercy and help the sick for theirs is a hard lot in the field.

Dec. 7 – Orders this morning to be ready to move at half past 8 o'clock. Move about 1 or 2 miles and go into camp in the word & some think it will do to put up winter quarters. But we receive no order to that effect. Cool morning and evening & very cold night.

Dec. 8 – Busy drawing rations most of the day. Put in a new return for 10 days rations & get a due bill for the same. The men all busy building their quarters. Five Teams go after boards for the Officers quarters. Clear pleasant day but cold weather.

Dec. 9 – Draw one load of stone for chimney to our house, & cut a back up some logs for it. 13 convalescents returned to the Reg. Four for Co. G among the rest George Davidson whom I never expected to see back again.

Dec. 10 - Have to put in a special requisition for the 13 men that came last night. Busy nearly all day drawing rations, of almost all kinds of Government rations. Bring a few more poles for hut at night. Pleasant weather.

Dec. 11 – Draw beef & onions in the morning & then work all day laying up our Cabin & only just get the logs up for it. The Q.M. has built a very nice chimney of brick, draw soft bread once more.

Dec. 12 – Finish laying up the logs of our hut & lay most of the chimney to the fireplace, draw two days rations at night and give it out to the Co. Rec. letter from Charlott & also from H.J.O. Write to him in the evening.

Dec. 13 – Write to Sister Charlott in morning. Reading the President's Message & the Report of the Secretary of the Treasury. The Brig. meets together in the afternoon & a sermon is preached in commemoration of the Battle of Fredericksburg which was fought one year ago today.

Dec. 14 – Work all day at our log cabin and get it nearly done at night when a report comes that we are to move in a few days, and damps our ardor very much and we fix minds for losing the good of our labor.

Dec. 15 – Busy part of the forenoon drawing rations & then brush up for Inspection which comes off at 2 o'clock P.M. Do nothing towards finishing our cabin as the impression is that we will move in a day or two. Busy writing in the evening.

Dec. 16 – Commence work again on our house as we do not seem likely to move just yet. Write to Martha evening. Draw rations from Brig. Com. Good news from the Southwest still continues to come.

Dec. 17 – Raining very hard in the morning, raining nearly all the forenoon, do a little at our cabin in the afternoon, and draw two days ration from our Coms. Rec. a letter from Wilson & Geo. Freeman & ans. them, raining in the evening.

Dec. 18 – Busy reading in forenoon. In afternoon work on our house a little, ditch it and shovel some of the mud away from around it. Witness the execution of a deserter, in presence of the division & only about 300 yards from camp. It is a sad and mournful sight, especially while the band is playing the "Death March" and the prisoner slowly marching to his grave, leaning on the arm of the Chaplain.

Dec. 19 – Put in a requisition for the remainder of the month, and get a "due bill" from Capt. Burnham and drew three days rations in the afternoon. Rec. half a dozen letters at night. Write to Frank in the evening. Quite cold freezing weather. An order from the War Department relative to Re-Enlistment in the V-Vol. Corps.

Dec. 20 – Clear pleasant morning, doing nothing particular in the forenoon. Boyer Whipple came to see me in the afternoon, and have quite a good visit. Writing in the evening. It is a cold clear night.

Dec. 21 – Orders rec'd from Head Qts. that all those wishing to Re-Enlist shall put down their names in order to ascertain whether three fourths of the Reg. Will go or not, as that No. must be had to enable them to retain their Organization.

Dec. 22 – ReEnlisting in the Veterans is all that is talked of, and they all seem to think that a furlough is all the inducement that is worth noticing. Busy reading or discussing the veteran cause, 180 of the Regt. Have put down their names & it is thought that they will stick to it.

Dec. 23 – Busy nearly all day drawing & giving out rations. The Reg. are all out on fatigue, or picket, & the Mustering in, & out, has to be postponed. An order is rec. which enables me to go with the Reg. by declaring that I will reenlist as soon as I am eligible.

Dec. 24 – A clear pleasant morning, but does not thaw much, The Mustering Officer comes down in the afternoon and the Reg. are sworn in. An order received which excludes all that have over three months to serve to make them two years in the service. Which excludes several of Company G, & some others who would be glad to go with us if the Reg. goes home.

Dec. 25 – A clear pleasant Christmas morn. Doctors tent burnt down last night. Busy nearly all day laying floor and fixing a bed in Our tent, or hut. The Dr. will stay with the Q.M. and myself & Serg. Davis will stay in our tent for the first time.

Dec. 26 – Busy in the forenoon building a table & stool, and in the afternoon draw and give out rations. Busy reading in the evening. Have got our house finished & it is very comfortable indeed for an enlisted man to occupy.

Dec. 27 – The rest of the Brig. got orders to move, & left about 9 o'clock. The Paymaster came, and those that have reenlisted are receiving their bounties, and back pay, the whole amounting to upwards of \$200.00 dollars. A rainy day. Rec. notice at night that we are to leave tomorrow at eight o'clock and to report to Governor Curtin at Harrisburg.

Dec. 28 – Started at 5 o'clock A.M. for the Station & have a rainy, muddy walk. Wait there til 11 o'clock. Take the cars for Alexandria, reach there at 4 o'clock & get to Washington about 2 o'clock. March to the Barracks near the retreat & get supper & stay all night.

Dec. 29 – Went with two others & got breakfast down in the city. Have to wait for the cars til noon. Reach Baltimore about 4 o'clock. March through the City. Have to wait for Trans. Til 9 or 10 o'clock in the evening. Ride in the cars all night, and get into H - - g about 9 o'clock in the morning.

Dec. 30 – Take Breakfast at the Gov. Eating house, and then march through the City up to the Capitol. A few words are addressed to the men. Then three cheers given for Gov. Curtin. Then three for the Lieut. Colonel, & the Reg. breaks up. Each Co. Com. Taking charge of his own men and making out their furloughs. Spend the day making purchases & stay at the City Hotel at night.

Dec. 31 – We are waked at 2 o'clock to take the cars. Start at 3 o'clock & reach Williamsport at 10 & get Breakfast. Take the cars for Shippen or Emporium. Reach there at 2 o'clock take dinner & hire a conveyance to Coudersport. With Capt. Jones & Josiah Dent. Reach there at 9 o'clock in the evening and take them all by surprise. Stay with Uncle Lucas & visit the next forenoon of New Years Day Jan 1st 1864. Unc. L. takes Edwards Hors and Cutter & we start for Ulysses at ½ past 2 o'clock and reach home at half past 5 o'clock & find all well & myself safely at home once more.

Excerpts from Memoranda:

Sent to J.S. Backus of the A.B. Ms. Society to be applied on the "Freedmans Fund" \$5.00. With my best wishes and prayers that it may by the blessing of God be of some little use & aid in raising up the downtrodden race in this Country. Nov. 22, 1863

Camp near Warrenton - Oct. 26, 1863

Received a Certificate showing that I have been promoted to Sergeancy in Co. G 53rd Reg. Pa. To date from Sept. 1, 1863. Which unexpected favor is gratefully received, with hopes that I may never do anything unworthy of a Soldier.

Benjamin Jay Cushing

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 "Our Special".



REMEMBRANCE DAY SUMMARY & PHOTOS

Saturday 18 November was Remembrance Day which began with the National Regiment's annual meeting in Gettysburg. The annual meeting discussed the 2024 schedule, board of directors election, social media, financials, etc.

Afterwards, we formed up for Dress Parade at 11:30AM behind Lincoln Elementary which also included the formal change of command of the NR from Col. Downes to Col. Brennan. The parade stepped off at 1PM. After which, we stopped over to visit the 53rd PVI monument where we also met 3 parads from Company A, 53rd PVI. Photos are courtesy of Eric Ford, John Heiser, Tom Downes, and your editor, Matt Steger. From the 53rd, in attendance in the parade were: Sgt. Steger, Corporal Espenshade, Corporal Brumbaugh, Private Thomas, and Private Orris. Later that afternoon, we also attended a party held in honor of Col. Downes' retirement from commanding the NR. Thanks to the 53rd's own Eric and Traci Ford for organizing this party.







At the monument, we spent time discussing the actions and history of the 53rd PVI at Gettysburg. We were lucky to get a passerby to take a photo of us.



UPCOMING EVENTS

2 December 2023 - Our 53rd annual meeting will begin promptly at 9AM at Sgt. Fasnacht's home in Kleinfeltersville. Please arrive by 8:45AM. Should you need directions, please let me know. Agenda topics will include our 2024 schedule, treasurer's report, the election, holiday party, etc. and a nice surprise! Please bring a food item to share for lunch with the group after the meeting and please let Mark know ASAP (1.) if you are attending the meeting and (2.) what food item you are bringing. You can also pay for your 2024 dues and holiday party at the same time with a single check. All checks are payable to "53rd PVI". Please make it a priority to attend this important unit meeting.

13 January 2024 – Annual Holiday Party at Dobbin House in Gettysburg. Additional party info will be forthcoming at the annual meeting (see above). Pete will email out invitations and more information. Once the details are announced, please RSVP asap to Pete.

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 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.) 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

(3.) Kerry Williard is handling the sale of Dave Swigert items for Dave's wife. Marc and I assembled an inventory list with approximate values. Some items remain. The list is current as of July 2023. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: shamokin71@aol.com (see the updated list below)

Quantity	Item Description	Detailed Description	Selling Price
Armaments			
1	1861 Springfield Rifle - Armi Sport		\$900.00
Uniform Clothing			
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
Accoutrements			
1	Scabbord -Late war 7 Rivet		\$15.00
1	Gum Blanket	some cracking with oversized grommets	\$20.00
1	Haversack - Tarred Black - Brittle Strap w/opwn seam		\$5.00
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
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
2 December—Annual Meeting
13 January—Holiday Party



Secondary schedule -

20 May—Lancaster Cemetery—grave decoration day
28-20 July—Receding Tide—Trenches of Williamsport
21-22 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 check your email on a regular basis

53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford (reenactor53@gmail.com)
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Treasurer/Secretary: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@outlook.com)
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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>

