



# Company C 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

"The Sentinel" May 2024

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

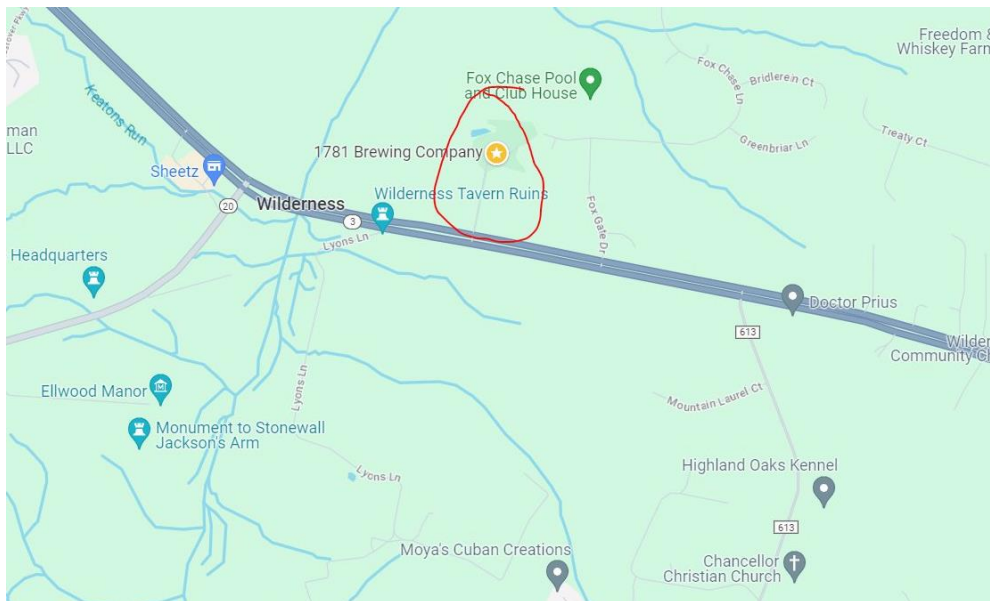
This Month:

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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*

## WILDERNESS 160 EVENT INFO



We're only a few days away from the Wilderness 160 event in VA.

The site address is: 11109 Plank Rd, Spotsylvania Courthouse, VA 22553.

For some additional event info, please see the email that I sent on 30 April 2024 to those registered for the event. Also, keep an eye out on the NR FB page for any updates. Weather may include some rain so prepare accordingly.

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **The Chickamauga Campaign – “A Mad Irregular Battle”**

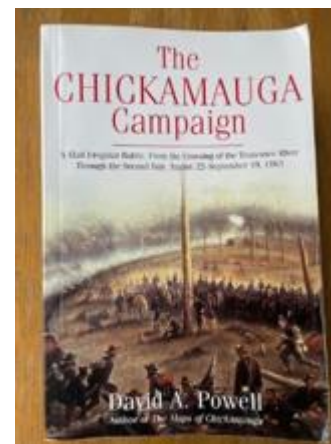
August 22 – September 19, 1863 [Volume One of a 3-Volume Series]

Author – David A. Powell

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Paperback; 2016 Savas Beattie LLC; 631 story pp.; 29 pictures, 21 maps, notes on every page, Appendix 1 22 pp Order of Battle including strength/casualty counts, Bibliography 10 pp, 20 pp Index. \$8.95 pre-owned copy from Amazon.

Chickamauga, the second largest battle of the Civil War, produced 35,000 casualties in largely confused combat on 19-20 September, 1863. It was one of the last clear-cut Confederate victories, reinvigorated hope for Southern Independence, and embattled the important city of Chattanooga.



Continuing in my reviews of Powell’s research on this 1863 Middle Tennessee period, I include this masterful work (Vol 1, covering the opening campaign and battles of September 19, 1863) which is the first of three volumes spanning the entire campaign. It is based upon fifteen years of intensive study and nearly 2,000 primary sources. His prose is clear and elegant as it is authoritative and definitive. Highly acclaimed by the most-respected authors of the subject, this work is rich in analysis brimming with heretofore untold stories and witnesses. Indeed, it is already a classic. Powell has become one of my favorite authors.

Battle of September 19, 1863 overly simplistic: the Union forces consolidate their defensive line along the western side of Chickamauga Creek as they defend against Bragg’s attacks to cutoff Rosecrans from Chattanooga. Bragg was newly reinforced by the arrival of Longstreet’s Corps from the Army of Northern Virginia to now tip the balance of numbers in his favor, reversing the Federal momentum of “securing Chattanooga by occupying the main road/rail (southern) approaches” enjoyed prior to this time.

Expertly foot-noted with hundreds of primary witness sources, Powell’s work is very impressive and composed for very enjoyable reading. While I would have appreciated more maps and illustrations to aid in my understanding of events, perhaps the author wanted my confusion to match the brigade and division commanders’ confusion (both Federal and Confederate) that reigned dominant on September 19th in the thick woods, hills, and (sometimes) fields of northern Georgia.

For those of us as reenactors: we can only poorly imagine, as a brigade commander, the command difficulties of arranging our formations without, in most cases, a higher direction than “go to the sounds of the battle”. Who do we align with? Which direction is the enemy? Who will be supporting us? Who is in front of us? What is our objective? There are almost no roads to take. With extremely limited visibility in the September woods through the hanging smoke and challenged by the uneven terrain, both sides groped along until they sometimes stumbled upon a field opening that revealed only surprises – sometimes good and sometimes bad ..... and so this history book is entitled “**A Mad Irregular Battle**” = as described by a veteran Union Brigade commander John B. Turchin.



As expressed before in my last review, there are more history books written about **Gettysburg** than all of the Western Theater combined. My reviews are forthcoming including Volume 2 (September 20, 1863) of Powell’s detailed trilogy of **The Chickamauga Campaign** - and his books on the siege of Chattanooga and the battles of Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, and Ringgold.

Look for my book reviews on many of these fine pieces of easy-to-read and richly-detailed histories. I know you will enjoy reading David A. Powell as much as I do. Enjoy!!

### **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 “The Girl He Left Behind Him”.

## **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]*

**1864**

- Mar. 1 - Very wet and rainy all day. Draw rations in the afternoon. Very muddy and bad getting around. Report says that Kilpatrick is in Richmond, but not to be credited.
- Mar. 2 - Fair and pleasant day, finish drawing rations in the forenoon and give them out. Reading and writing in the afternoon, visit in the evening with Lieut. Roberts til quite late.
- Mar. 3 - Put in a return for 6 days in the forenoon. Several old acquaintances came to see me in the forenoon, draw and give out two days rations in the afternoon. Rec. a letter from E-a in the evening and ans. it.
- Mar. 4 - Rec-d 14 recruits and have to put in a special requisition for them. Visiting with Geo. Davidson in the forenoon, Went over to Commissary and got the Adjts. monthly allowance of candles. Rec-d the Exa. and also Fowlers & Wellses Phrenological Journal.
- Mar. 5 - Reading in the forenoon. Draw rations and give them out, Get favorable news concerning Kilpatricks Cavalry expedition, Receive a letter from home in the evening also one from E-a. Sent to J. H. Winslow for a pen. Rec-d an express box from home which was sent in December.
- Mar. 6 - Busy in the forenoon brushing up etc. Reading and writing the Sunday rest of the day. Write to Mother in the evening. Pleasant weather but rather cooler than common. Two years today(or the 6th of the month) since I first left home to join the Reg. or Army. For God's goodness and care in sparing my life I have great reason to be thankful, and should love and obey him.
- Mar. 7 - A rainy forenoon. Get the "Revised Army Regulations" and read nearly all day. Draw and give out rations in the afternoon.
- Mar. 8 - Reading, Army Regulations again during the forenoon. Draw bread in the afternoon. Nothing particular going on in camp worthy of mention, and it is about the same every day in camp. Rec, a letter from Sister C. Pratt.
- Mar. 9 - Put in a return for 6 days and carry it over to Brig. Corns. Reading a little in the regulations, writing etc. Reading in the evening a small work by Dr. Leacroix of Albany.
- Mar. 10 - Reading the Regulations in the forenoon. Also write to Sister C. Pratt and husband. Rec. 5 recruits & put in a special return. Raining very hard all day. Visit an hour or two with J. Wykoff who is in the hospital. Rec. a letter from Boma and ans. it in the evening.
- Mar. 11 - Busy all the forenoon drawing and giving out rations. Finish writing to Emma and \_mail it. Reading most of time during, the afternoon. Have several thundershowers in the afternoon and evening. Dark and rainy night.
- Mar. 12 -- Reading a little in. the morning. Draw rations and give them out, which takes til nearly night. Reading Casey's Tactics a little in the evening and the Chronicle. Went to bed rather early.
- Mar. 13 - Take a wash and clean up generally in the morning. Busy all day Sunday reading or traveling a little to see the country and for exercise. Got a letter from Frank at night and ans. it. Reading and singing a little in the evening. Retire early.
- Mar. 14 - Busy myself most off the forenoon reading "Casey's Tactics". And find them quite an extensive work even on the first principles of Military Discipline. Draw rations in the afternoon of beef and give it out. Read Casey's works a little also. Rec-d a letter from 'My Wife' in the evening and answer it. Capt. Shields discharged and left the Army this morning.
- Mar. 15 - Reading Tactics when not busy at drawing and giving out rations. Cold windy day, draw two days soft bread.
- Mar. 16 - Draw rations the first thing in the morning. Have a general inspection at 10 oc. Reading tactics most of the afternoon, and. some in the evening.

- Mar. 17 - Reading C-ys Tactics in the forenoon and some in the afternoon. Playing ball two or three hours in the day. Fine pleasant day today. Recd letter from Emma and also one from Eugene. Writing in the evening.
- Mar. 18 - Nothing particularly going on except a search for the Sutlers accounts books which were stolen last night. I found three of his books under a bridge. Draw and give out rations in the afternoon. Write to Eugene in the evening. Rec. 25 recruits in the night for the Reg. Fall in and stack arms just at night but it amounts to nothing.
- Mar. 19 - Put in a special return for 25 recruits who came last night. Draw and give out rations in the forenoon. Play ball a little in the afternoon. Draw rations again for 17 recruits recd. today. Recd. a letter from Emma and write in the evening.
- Mar. 20 - Busy clearing up in the morning. Finish writing to Emma. Reading most of the time, or walking for exercise. Have a little singing in the evening, and don't make it go off very well as I have a bad cold & we are all poor singers.
- Mar. 21 - Washing in the forenoon. Visiting with some of the boys from Corps. Hed. Qts. in the afternoon. Playing ball some. Drew rations at night and. gave them out.
- Mar. 22 - Very cold windy morning. Write to Geo. C.M. Eicholtz. Put in a return for the remainder of the month. Visit some with Geo. Davidson. Draw bread in the afternoon. The Paymaster pays off the Reg, but I get nothing this time. Write to Emma in the ev-g.
- Mar. 23 - Found the snow 10 inches deep in the morning. Forty-five recruits for Co. G. All from Potter & quite a number from Ulysses. Among the rest Ch. Barnaby & p two brother-in-laws, I am. S Dos end Edwin, Bassett. Spent most of the day with them getting stuff 'for cabins.
- Mar. 24 - With the boys most of the time, helping a little about putting up their quarters & visiting with them. Rec. a letter from Emma in the evening. Spend the evening with. the boys, as old friends always do. Talking, laughing & singing.
- Mar. 25 - Help the boys a little in the forenoon. Rec. 13 more men & put in a special Req. for them. Finish writing Emma in the afternoon. Commences raining in afternoon and rains very hard all the evening.

## **2024 NR CAMP OF INSTRUCTION SUMMARY**

On 6~7 April, the NR held its Camp Of Instruction (COI) at Gruber Wagon Works. On Sat., we drilled on some of the basics as we had several fresh-fish in the ranks, including manual of arms, facings, drill including wheels, etc. as well as a firing demo for the public. On Sunday, we covered battalion drill including skirmish drill and a presentation on grand guard. We'll be using many of these items at the Wilderness 160 event next month. We also got a private tour of the wagon works building. Below are various photos taken by Eric Ford and Tom Carlson.











## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

4~5 May – 160th Wilderness – Spotsylvania, VA – The NR will be portraying the 44<sup>th</sup> NY (one of the Butterfield Twins alongside the 83<sup>rd</sup> PVI). Stay tuned to the NR Facebook group and email for updates.

18 May – Lancaster Cemetery Flag-in Event – We will be installing US flags and holders at the graves of veterans in the Lancaster Cemetery for Memorial Day. There are lots of Civil War veterans buried here, including Gen. Reynolds. Meet at the gatehouse just inside the E. Lemon Street entrance at 9AM sharp. In some cases, we will also take photos to help document graves for Find-A-Grave. If you have a 4-wheeled wagon, bring it along to help carry boxes for flags and holders as we work. Should be completed around lunch time. We will plan on going to lunch afterwards if so interested. You can park inside the cemetery or on E. Lemon St. alongside the cemetery fencing if you'd like.

27 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade – Meet by 9:30am at the NW corner of Olde Factory Antiques. Do not park in the spots in the south side parking lot of the building marked for Rita's Ice.

Bring 3 rounds and sufficient caps. Wear frocks if you have them. Shine your brass. Afterwards, we are invited to the picnic held by Hummelstown and then a debriefing at Corp. Espenshade's hut.

20~21 July – Landis Valley “Civil War Days” – our annual event at Landis Valley. Some of our NR pards will be attending as our guests. More info to come as we get closer to the event.

14~15 Sept. – 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI's Gettysburg Living History at the PA Monument. More info will come as we get closer to the event but the current program as provided to me by NPS includes the normal 3 firing demos Sat. and 2 on Sunday. This is our first Gettysburg living history since 2019. Please make it a priority to attend as we need a good turnout in order to be invited back by NPS next year. The new LH coordinator heard good things about the 53rd from Tom Holbrooke so let's not let them down.

## **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.) 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)

(2.) 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 21 July 2023. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: [shamokin71@aol.com](mailto:shamokin71@aol.com) (see the updated list below)

<b>Uniform Clothing</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Detailed Description</b>	<b>Price</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 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
<b>Accoutrements</b>			
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
<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
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
<b>Armaments</b>			
1	1861 Springfield Rifle - Armi Sport		\$900.00

## **2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

13 January - Holiday Party - Dobbin House  
10 February - Winter Drill - Landis Valley (note the new date!!)  
2~3 March – NR School Of Instruction - Gettysburg  
6~7 April - NR Camp of Instruction - Gruber Wagon Works (Federal Alliance)\*  
4~5 May - 160<sup>th</sup> Wilderness: Spotsylvania, VA\*  
4 May - POSA Living History - Robeson, PA  
18 May - Lancaster Cemetery Flag-in event  
27 May - Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade  
20~21 July - Landis Valley  
14~15 Sept. - Gettysburg Living History - PA Monument  
19~20 Oct. - 160<sup>th</sup> Cedar Creek - Middletown, VA\*  
16 Nov. - Remembrance Day – Gettysburg, PA



*\*NR max effort events*

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))  
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53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Website: <http://www.53rdpvi.org>  
2024 Field Officers - Sergeants: Matthew Steger (1<sup>st</sup>) & Marc Benedict.  
Corporals: Mike Espenshade (1<sup>st</sup>) & Michael Brumbaugh  
53rd PVI Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/53rdPVI>  
National Regiment Phone line: 800-777-1861 (code 61)  
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National Regiment Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/842904089142263>

