

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Company C

"The Sentinel" June 2024

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

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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 SUMMARY

The Wilderness 160 event was held near Chancellorsville, VA on 4~5 May. The 53rd PVI served with the rest of our ELF parades in company D. Attending from the 53rd PVI were: Steger, Benedict, Brumbaugh, Espenshade, Thomas, Bohnenblust, Fedorshak, Orris, and Dicks (Jacob). The scenarios were top notch and many of them were intense with a lot of action and movement which put you right into the action to try to give you an idea of what the men of the AoP actually experienced. Included in this was the weather. Overnight from Friday night into Saturday morning was somewhat misty at times with a little light rain. Much of Saturday was cloudy and Saturday night into Sunday morning was wetter with some varying intensities of rain. Sunday morning had a little bit of light mist. Daytime temperatures were nice, though.

We fought in the trenches and woods through most of the scenarios, including building some trenches and earthworks. Some apparent original trenches were also nearby for us to visit. We also did Grand Guard Saturday evening where we saw action from some johnnies trying to get into camp, some brief fire-fights, and we took a prisoner.

Due to limited space, companies were set up in a somewhat tight area but we managed. Our company officers were Carlson, Thomas, and Fedorshak and each did a fine job. I served as D Company's 1st Sgt. We had 23 men in our company.

As a special quick stop on the way to the site on Friday afternoon, Marc, Jacob, and I stopped at a spot along the Plank Road where the 53rd PVI saw action (see photo below).



The intersection of Plank Road and Montpelier Drive near Chancellorsville looking west. The 53rd PVI was positioned at this intersection on 1 May 1863 during the Battle Of Chancellorsville. The 145th PVI fought nearby (to the right rear of this spot).

Some other photos showing some of the action from Wilderness 160:













Not the easiest to see, but the original trenches were visible (partially buried under leaves) at the site the event.

Company D – ELF (53rd PVI, 1st MD, 3rd MD, and 7th PA Res) (photo courtesy of Ira Siedel. Converted to tintype using an app by your editor)

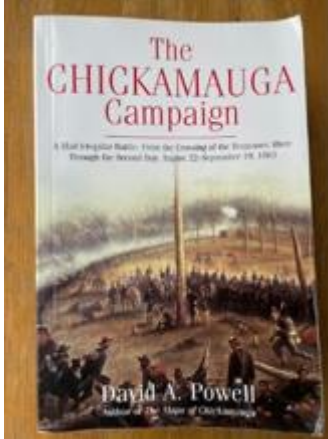


BOOK REVIEW: THE CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN – GLORY OR THE GRAVE – THE BREAKTHROUGH, THE UNION COLLAPSE, AND THE DEFENSE OF HORSESHOE RIDGE”

September 20, 1863 [Volume Two of 3-Volume Series]

Author – David A. Powell

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade



Paperback; 2015/2017 Savas Beattie LLC; 708 story pp.; 31 pictures, 28 maps, notes on every page, 17 pp Index. \$8.95 pre-owned copy from Amazon.

Continuing in my reviews of Powell’s research on this huge battle for control of Chattanooga, I include this masterful work (Vol 2, covering the third and last day of significant battle).

Powell’s narrative is completely engaging and immersive, always balancing the overall picture with enough first-hand accounts and descriptions to place the reader “on the scene”. I will not be reviewing Powell’s third volume in this series which covers the post-battle weeks of maneuver by both armies and detailed casualty charts for the engaged units.

Battle of September 20, 1863 overly simplistic: the Union forces hold their well-built defensive line along the western side of Chickamauga Creek as they defend against Bragg’s often frontal and uncoordinated infantry assaults. Believing that the arrival of Longstreet’s Corps, forces from the southeast region, and forces from the Vicksburg (Johnston’s army) now quite outnumber his own forces, Rosecrans has already planned to carefully leapfrog his forces back

(north) towards his base in Chattanooga. Botched withdrawal coordination with several of his division commanders create a hole near the center of his line just at the moment overwhelming numbers of fresh Rebel divisions assault this area. The ensuing domino effect divides the Union line into two sections as small-sized units of the only-available Federals are desperately thrown into the fray to unsuccessfully try to contain the disaster.

Negley’s Federal reserve infantry division, with most of the Federal ammunition/supply wagons, incredibly withdraws miles rearward from the support area without orders – removing Thomas’ best chance to hold their defensive line on Horseshoe Ridge. Hard fighting, with good decisions made by most (not all) corps and division commanders on both sides, only stopped at evening’s darkness. Note: most of the Federals were out of ammunition and water. Federal units at times ran away too soon, and several other units dutifully stayed too long ... as nearly 5,000 Union prisoners attests. The Army of the Cumberland retreated overnight to Chattanooga in a generally hasty and broken order.

The opportunity to render criticism against nearly all top commanders on both sides abounds. Example: Confederate General D.H. Hill comes away with a well-deserved damaged reputation of arguing with his commander and peers rather than fighting the Yankees, this keeping his large command out of the action until late in the day. The most-accepted (killed/wounded/missing) casualty figures are Federal 1,644/9,262/4,945 = **16,351 total Federal** and 2,312/14,674/1,468 = **18,454 total Confederate**.

My book reviews forthcoming include Powell’s expert telling of the siege of Chattanooga and the battles of Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, and Ringgold.

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 “Teamster”.



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]

1864

(note - there were apparently no April entries before the 11th)

- Apr. 11 -- Put in a requisition in the morning, and draw and give out rations in the afternoon. Which is getting to be quite a job as we have 567 men at present. Most of the new recruits were put into Co. D & H much to the dissatisfaction of some of them.
- Apr. 12 - Doing nothing in particular which I hope may not be the case very soon again. I must have some purpose and aim or I shall become very shiftless and wasteful of my time, as I am not busy much more than half of the time in my department.
- Apr. 13 - Draw and give out rations in the forenoon. Busy writing, reading, singing, or visiting with the boys from Ulysses. The days pass quickly, Faster than ever before, and we shall no doubt soon leave here.
- Apr. 14 - Went out with the boys in Co. G to practice target shooting. Give out rations in the afternoon. The new recruits are all being examined again. The boys rallied on the beer shop and tore it down.
- Apr. 15 - The Brigade was reviewed by Gen. Barlow Div. Commander. Went to the Park and had the Tailor make me a pair of Chevrons. Rec.d a letter from Emma in the evening and ans. it.
- Apr. 16 - Put in a special return in the morning and draw rations in the afternoon. A rainy day so that the review is postponed. Drew two days soft bread of which the boys were very glad, as they only get soft bread half of the time, and several days have passed since we had any.
- Apr. 17 - Busy reading nearly all (9-ay, draw and give out rations in the Sunday afternoon. Rec. a letter from E- ~OO~~ in the evenincz and write a little in ans. to it. Did not get to Church today as I was busy drawing rations.
- Apr. 18 - Finish writing to Emma in the morning. Got a pair of "Boxing Gloves" and had a few rounds with several of the boys. Got my head pounded with the soft things til it felt a little sore. Also my wrists sore from warding off the blows. Drew two days beef and gave it out.
- Apr. 19 - A boy by the name of Graham died last night in the Hospt. a recruit from Potter. His Corpse will be sent home. There was a review of the Division today, did not go myself. Some of they boys stood their first march well, and others could hardly stand it and were obliged to fall out. I dread the commencement of the campaign. There are so many unused to -the hardships who will fail.
- Apr. 20 - Busy most of the forenoon selling Cakes and Butter which the Sutler left for me to dispose of. Nearly sold out. Drew rations in the afternoon and give them out. The sick are to be sent off in the morning. Rec. a Potter Journal al night.
- Apr. 21 - Twenty-nine sick were sent off this morning. Most of them have been sick with the measles. Recd. a, letter from Mother & also one from Emma in the evening.
- Apr. 22 - Get ready for a grand review of the Corps. Went beyond Stevensburg, Saw Gen. Grant for the first time. Got home about 3 oc and was quite tired. Wilson came after dark with a squad of convalescence.
- Apr. 23 -- Put in a return to the end_ of the month, drew to the end of the month and gave out 3 days. Everything looks like moving if everything continues favorable. Recd. a letter from Emma in the evening. Also an express box containing sugar and berries.
- Apr. 24 - Take a bath in the morning in the little brook below here. Warm Sunday weather has come at last. Peach and. Cherry trees are blossoming. Writing in the forenoon to Emma. L. Merrill came to see the boys from Ulysses, he & Wilson took dinner with me. Reading or visiting in the afternoon.
- Apr. 25 - Doing various little chores so as to be ready to march. Write to Martha in the afternoon. Put in a provision return for six days commencing May 1st. Draw three days soft bread and two days Fresh beef & give it out. Get through at a lark and feel a little tired. Mending clothes in the evening.
- Apr. 26 - Out with the Company in the forenoon "Target Shooting! Went over to the Brig. Commissary in the afternoon #o draw rations but found that we were not to keep up our six days rations and

did not draw any. Gave out the Reg. what I had on hand. Singing in the evening til roll call. Then write to Emma.

Apr. 27 - Finish writing to Emma and mail it. Doing nothing particular during the rest of the day, I am truly getting ashamed of this record as I have some leisure hours and should devote them to some good use. Time drags slowly when I am not engaged in some' duty or useful labor.

Apr. 28 - Adelbert Eggie & brother came over from the 149th Reg. visited with them part of the day. Draw one days ration in the afternoon.

Apr. 29 - Reading Tactics a little in the forenoon. Draw and give out rations in the afternoon. Reading or singing in the evening. get a letter from My Wife and one from Martha.

Apr. 30 - Get ready for Inspection and to be mustered for pay at 9 oc AM. Write to Emma after it. Put in a Provision return & get orders to draw rations enough to have the men have six days on hand. The sick were sent away this morning. Write to Martha in the evening. Get a letter from Emma & rec. my Chester Co. Bond in it.

HUMMELSTOWN MEMORIAL DAY PARADE SUMMARY

Hummelstown cancelled their Memorial Day Parade yet we were not notified until we were already onsite. The normal cemetery ceremony was moved to the American Legion so we relocated there for the program to participate. Afterwards, we moved to Corp. Espenshade's hut for the annual debriefing. Attending were: Sgts. Steger and Benedict, Corp. Espenshade (Mike), Privates Ford, Dicks (Jacob), Orris, Espenshade (Troy), and Lt. Fedorshak. Private Greg Hale also participated. At the hut, we also posed for some photos, including the photo on the next page converted to tintype format via an iPhone app.





MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY LANCASTER CEMETERY



On 30 May (actual Memorial Day), several of us participated for the 2nd straight year as a Color Guard at Lancaster Cemetery for the Son's of Union Veterans (SUV) Memorial Day ceremony. Participating were: Sgt. Steger and Privates Ford, Dicks (Rusty) and Dicks (Jacob).

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Members of the 53rd,

With a few events coming up over the summer, I want to ask each of you to put these on your calendars and do your best to attend:

- Landis Valley: July 20-21 **MAX EFFORT**
- Annapolis, MD Living History: (Supporting the 1st MD), August 10
- Gettysburg Living History: September 14-15, 53rd PVI/ELF with invites to all NR units.

I'm putting a lot of emphasis on Landis Valley this year. I've been working with John Andy (Cavalry) to build participation across the entire event this year. He's optimistic that he'll have 6-10 horses this year. We've spoken to two other infantry units who have committed. The camps will be divided but they will drill and do the demos with us, under our command. If we have our average turnout, we could see 40+ rifles in the demos. It also appears that we'll have some other civilian camps across the village as well. Let's do our part to build this event back up to what it was not too long ago. **Additionally, we have a new recruit who will be spending the day with us. He's about to start building his kit but may need some assistance. Let me know if anyone has any gear that you wish to part with that isn't already listed on the QM inventory.**

Annapolis is an easy single day living history on a nice historic street by the water. We have access to a period house should weather be a concern. Lots of visitors come through all day. No drill or firing. Just speaking with visitors. Let's do what we can to support the 1st MD as they have done for us at Landis Valley. Stay tuned for more details.

This will be the first opportunity to hold an event at Gettysburg since 2019. We set this up as an ELF event but the invitation is open for all NR members who wish to attend. We'll be at the PA Monument.

Finally, Registration for Cedar Creek is open and this is a NR max effort event. See Col. Brennan's message below;

Gentlemen of the Regiment:

I hope the late Spring and early Summer are going well for you. Our next NR event is Cedar Creek. Go on the CCBF Website to register.

Our Impression according to Colonel Buffington is:

Army of WV Harris' Brigade

Mollineauxs Brigade

Bidwell's Brigade.

This means Federal '64 standard (sack coat, sky blue trousers, forage cap or kepi, slouch hats). All other impressions are authorized for off-duty hours or for specific ceremonies at monuments ONLY.

Since the 6th corps carried their knapsacks during the battle, we will do the same for Sunday's fight.

I hope everyone has a great Summer! See y'all at Landis Valley.

Eric

UPCOMING EVENTS

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. Please plan on 3 firing demos Saturday and 2 on Sunday and bring sufficient rounds/caps. Normal full kit. More info to come as we get closer to the event. This is a **53rd PVI MAX EFFORT event!**

14~15 Sept. – 53rd PVI Gettysburg Living History (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. **53rd PVI MAX EFFORT event!**

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

(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 (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 children		\$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

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 - 160th Wilderness: Spotsylvania, VA*
- 4 May - POSA Living History - Robesonia, 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. - 160th 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 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)

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

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

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

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

2024 Field Officers - Sergeants: Matthew Steger (1st) & Marc Benedict.

Corporals: Mike Espenshade (1st) & 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>

