

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" September 2024

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

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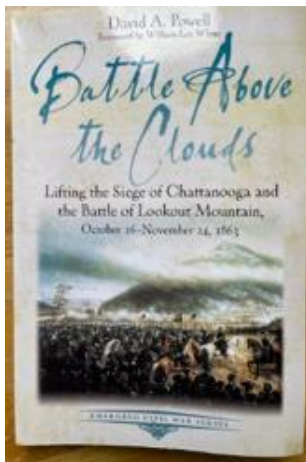
I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, event summaries & photos, stories, etc.) to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor

BOOK REVIEW: BATTLE ABOVE THE CLOUDS – LIFTING THE SIEGE OF CHATTANOOGA AND THE BATTLE OF LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - OCTOBER 16 – NOVEMBER 24, 1863

Emerging Civil War Series

Author – David A. Powell

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade



Paperback; 2017 Savas Beattie LLC; 155 pp.; 62 pictures, 6 maps, 25 pp driving tours, 3 Appendices, Order of Battle. \$16.95 from Amazon.

We continue reviewing David A. Powell's series of works on the Middle Tennessee area of 1863 actions. In the weeks following the Battle of Chickamauga, both armies settled into a siege with the Union Army of the Cumberland holding Chattanooga. Under reduced rations from a whisper of supply lines, Union General Rosecrans had become an exhausted (some say shocked by his defeat) and ineffective leader. Although heavily reinforced, Confederate General Bragg had supply problems of his own due to the dilapidated southern rail system and dwindling supplies across the nearby region. This logistical challenge limited Bragg's options to defeat/destroy Rosecrans' outnumbered Federals before over 60,000 reinforcements from Sherman, Hooker, and Burnside (all on their way from the west, north and northeast respectively) could break the siege. Bragg in early October sent a large cavalry raid north into Middle Tennessee that heavily damaged Union supply lines and at Anderson's Crossroads burnt a 400-800 wagon train heading to Chattanooga, taking hundreds of Yankee prisoners.

Bragg, unable to get along with nearly every senior commander, now got rid of Longstreet by sending him on an expedition northeast of Chattanooga to take Knoxville and re-open that vital east-west rail link to Richmond. This also put Longstreet's corps closer to an eventual reunion to Lee's Army of Northern Virginia while threatening Union supply bases west at Murfreesboro. With locomotives so underpowered that troops had to get off the train and walk so the engine could pull the (nearly empty) train up hills, Longstreet said his troops could have marched the same distance in half the time. Reducing his army by an additional 2 divisions to follow Longstreet, Bragg's timing did not realize that by the early November Grant had relieved Rosecrans, the cracker line was – after some fighting at Wauhatchie on October 29 - reopened at Brown's Ferry to the huge Federal depot at Bridgeport, AL. just as Hooker's two infantry corps was arriving.

Throughout this work, the author blends first-hand accounts at both command and at the enlisted man's level into clear and condensed battle overviews that do not let the excitement or battle conditions go unfelt. I do not want to discourage the readers of this review from enjoying this book by revealing too much ... pick it up and learn how: Union Generals Geary, Hooker, and others took advantage of clouds and fog; how they leveraged the veteran Union infantry from the Penna mountains who know how to hunt/traverse rough mountain sides; learn about Rebel mis-assumptions and inattentions; all resulted to outflank and surprise the Rebel Lookout Mountain defenders. This forced Bragg to retreat his left flank onto Missionary Ridge and await the next fate.

Powell includes three interesting Appendices, one entitled "The Myth of the Cracker Line" and another "Civil War Tourism: Lookout Mountain".

JAMES WILSON BARNETT DIARY -

THE 1862 DIARY OF JAMES WILSON BARNETT, 53RD PENNSYLVANIA INFANTRY

By William Griffing (Spared & Shared)

For more info, see <https://www.facebook.com/Griff.CWLetters>

(continued from the August edition of "The Sentinel")

Wednesday, October 1, 1862—The President looked jaded yesterday. McClellan was bright and full of smiles. This morning they reviewed the troops on Loudon Heights [near Harper's Ferry]. Everywhere they go they are greeted with great enthusiasm. The President exhibits great interest in the soldiers and they appreciate it. Today we drew new clothes. I took mine to the river, washed and changed from top to toe and having previously shaved and had my hair cut, I feel like a new man. I have got rid of all the "raiments" and I hope to keep clear of them. Our regiment looks much better and have higher spirits since getting the clothes.

Thursday, October 2, 1862—Did not drill any today. Are waiting for inspection. Our brigade has been furnished with new clothes and today are drawing canteens, haversacks, and knapsacks. We are anxiously looking for some of our friends to see us. Cy had a letter from Wallace which is in Washington sick. I believe that I never felt so anxious at any time since I left home to see some of my friends as I have been during the past week. It seems as though we were going away from home again.

Friday, October 3, 1862—A very warm day—quite sultry. I was very much surprised to see T. B. enter our tent accompanied by Robert Elder. I was indeed glad to see them and will enjoy a good long conversation with them. They were out in a militia company and being disbanded at Harrisburg, came down by way of the Antietam Battlefield to see us. It does one good to look on their familiar faces. It brings back past scenes to memory when we mingled together in the peaceful pleasure of good old Elder's Ridge.

Saturday, October 4, 1862—T. B., Robert, Cy, & I rambled about the forenoon and took a bath in the clear waters of the Shenandoah. I got dinner for them at the boarding house and then went down along to Harper's Ferry and saw them off on the cars for Harrisburg via Baltimore. I think they were well pleased with their visit. Harper's Ferry is assuming a more business aspect than it did when we came. Everyone seems anxious to make something off the soldiers and many little shops are starting.

Sabbath, October 5, 1862—This morning we were inspected by Col. Brooke, he having returned to the regiment of the Brigade by Col. Frank and he by Col. Zook. I have been at no preaching today and I do not know where there is any. As yet, we have no chaplain in our regiment and the officers do not seem to care whether we get one or not. Dr. [William B.] Wynne has been promoted to a Major Surgeon and we have got another in his place—a very young and seemingly inexperienced man [Charles William Spayd].

Monday, October 6, 1862—Nothing important transpiring today. It is very hot.

Tuesday, October 7, 1862—Weather continues warm. Men are engaged cutting down the timber on the surrounding heights. Was detailed for fatigue today at Gen. Hancock's Headquarters. Was engaged fixing up a pine dining arbor for him and putting a pine floor in his tents.

Wednesday, October 8, 1862—On fatigue today again. About 9 a.m. I saw two gentlemen walking along and recognized them immediately as my father and Mr. Altman.

Thursday, October 9, 1862—Went round with father a good deal yesterday showing him the sights. This afternoon I got a pass for myself and John Altman to go along with them as far as Sharpsburg as they expect to go home by way of Hagerstown and Chambersburg.

Friday, October 10, 1862—Left camp yesterday about 4 p.m., crossed the river on the pontoons, found the roads extremely dusty. Stopped for supper sometime after dark four miles from the Ferry. Got a good supper for 21 cents. After we were through eating, an ambulance came along and I got father in it with the baggage. The rest of us walked and came up with him at Sharpsburg. We proceeded to the battlefield last night and bivouacked in a corn field. This morning went to a farm house on the edge of the battlefield and got the girls to make us some coffee. After breakfast we started over the battlefield passing over it from where the left of our Corps fought till where the right of Hooker's Corps rested. After they had viewed the field of strife to their satisfaction, we started to hunt up some of our acquaintances, leaving their baggage at the toll gate. We went first to the 11th [Pennsylvania], Col. Richard Coulter, and found the boys well. Then to the Reserves and the 56th Pennsylvania and finally we went to the 133rd P. V. and there I found several of my old school mates. I was sorry to [hear] Sammy Gilson was very sick and in the hospital. Unless he is removed from that, he will stand but a poor chance of recovering. We left their camp between three and four, father and Mr. Altman going to Sharpsburg, there to take a hack for Hagerstown, and John and I taking the Harper's Ferry rod. The Heavens were overcast with clouds and gave abundant indications of rain.

Saturday, October 11, 1862—It commenced raining on us last night about the time we got on the towing path and soon became so dark that we could not see our way. We sat down by the foot of a tree and remained till midnight when we tried it again. We arrived at the pontoon bridge about daylight the preceding morning. We drilled in the afternoon. Today we got the news of the invasion of Pennsylvania and the rebels [JEB Stuart's Cavalry] being in Chambersburg. It is certainly very daring of them and yet it is more than likely that they will get away safely.

Sabbath, October 12, 1862—This morning I was detailed on picket. After we got out to the main reserve, I lay down and fell asleep. About noon I woke up and found D. Wineland and Joe Landis had come out to relieve John Atman and I. Our fathers had been turned back at Greencastle on account of the Rebel raid and had made their way back to camp. Mr. Altman intends remaining a day or two to take Murray home with him as he is getting his discharge. There was cannonading this forenoon in the direction of Edwards Ferry and the probability is that the Rebels are attempting to effect a crossing back into Virginia.

Monday, October 13, 1862—Father left on the two p.m. train today. I hope he may have a speedy journey home. Nothing of interest transpiring today. [Alexander] Douglass and McAuley were taken up in Bolivar by the Provost Guard. They were taken to Harper's Ferry and incarcerated. Capt. [Henry S.] Dimm [of Co. I] released them this morning.

Tuesday, October 14, 1862—Am on picket today on the 3rd Relief. Will be on duty from 10 p.m. till 4 a.m. Picketing is quite easy duty the way it is managed now! Each sentinel has to stand guard only two hours in the twenty-four.

Wednesday, October 13, 1862—Nothing of special occurrence occurred today. Came off picket this morning.

Thursday, October 16, 1862—Last night received orders to be ready to march at daylight this morning in light trim with two days rations. Our regiment and the 1st Minnesota took the advance under the command of Col. Brooke. Our Division and a Brigade of Howard's with the requisite amount of artillery and cavalry followed all under the command of Gen. Hancock. The object was a reconnoissance to Charlestown [Va.] and beyond. About eight our advance cavalry and light artillery came up with the rebel outposts when soon after four pieces were opened on us which were promptly replied to. The artillery duel lasted nearly an hour when the infantry skirmishers from the advance regiments were thrown out and the column advanced slowly to the town encountering no further opposition. We halted outside the town and remained till night in that position. One man was wounded in Co. A. No firing was done by infantry but what was done by the skirmishers from our regiment. There were three regiments of the enemy—all cavalry and one battery.

Friday, October 17, 1862—[part of page left blank as if he intended to write something there later; then began...] At this point we captured a lot of prisoners & decided to parole them. I was detailed to go to the Provost Marshals offices in hotel opposite stone jail (Charlestown, Va.). I was left there without being notified. Became alarmed—looked out of door and saw all guards gone. Looking up street I saw convalescent soldiers & militias in command. I looked down street and saw the Rebel pickets coming. I jumped into street and took to my heels & as I passed a ten or eleven year-old boy pulled off [] straw hat, swung it around his head and yelled, "Go it blue belly." He commenced [] and crowded in street behind. I ran until I reached the top of the hill to the tree where John Brown was hung. My regiment was camped on opposite hill. I got to them as soon as possible & found them eating supper. On my way I met Maj. Bull on his way back for me. I avoided the command closing in on me, a safety guard, and gave me courage.

[There are no entries again until October 29, 1862]



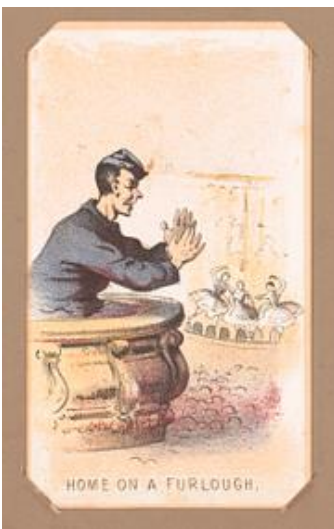
The needlepoint cover of Barnett's "housewife" carried with him in the service.

Wednesday, October 29, 1862—We were not relieved on picket till five o'clock. Marched rapidly into camp and found our Division engaged pulling down tents and packing up, having just received orders to be ready to march in an hour. I was glad to find Cy's father in camp, he having come at noon and brought some things for Cy & Foster & I. Did not have much chance of talking to him. He brought Cy a pair of boots but they were rather small. I got a can of peaches from sister Martha P. We also got some butter and apple butter.

Thursday, October 30, 1862—Marched last night at eight. Crossed the Shenandoah on a pontoon bridge and proceeded around the base of Loudon Heights and halted for the night two miles from the Potomac & four miles from Harper's Ferry. This morning we again marched and made about six miles. Camped and pitched our tents.

Friday, October 31, 1862—Our regiment was ordered out on a reconnoissance. Just as the regiment was starting, the Captain directed me to stay and make out a muster roll. They got back by three p.m. without meeting the enemy. I worked busily all day and had the roll ready for mustering by eve.

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 "Home On A Furlough".

REMEMBERING THE SULTANA

Gene Saleker and John Fogleman, May 17, 2024, blueandgrayeducation.org



An artist's rendition of the ill-fated *Sultana* | *public domain*

The *Sultana* is a story of needless tragedy and the greed and corruption that led to it. But it's also a story of bravery and sacrifice. The *Sultana* is the deadliest maritime disaster in American history, yet many Americans have never heard of it.

The *Sultana* was a Civil War-era Mississippi River sidewheel steamboat that exploded and burned at two in the morning on April 27, 1865, when the boat was 7 miles upriver from Memphis, Tennessee. Licensed to carry only 376

passengers, the *Sultana* had been loaded with over 2,100 people at Vicksburg, Mississippi. Most of the load were Union soldiers recently released from two Southern prison camps in Cahaba, Alabama, and Andersonville, Georgia.

Bribery and corruption traced to the captain of the *Sultana* and Union captain Reuben Hatch, the chief quartermaster at Vicksburg, led to the overcrowding. Captain Hatch had a sordid history, and his military advancement was aided at many times by his connection to President Abraham Lincoln. Glad to have survived the deadly prison pens, and joyful to finally be returning home to their loved ones, the men endured the overcrowding for two days as the *Sultana* steamed upriver toward "God's country."

The explosion occurred in the dark of night. Shocked to wakefulness, the passengers sought safety in the swirling waters of the Mississippi. The soldiers went down in groups. Half of the people on the *Sultana* died, either from the initial explosion or drowning. But the story of the *Sultana* is far more than the story of a lot of people dying at the end of the Civil War. The rescue itself has many fascinating stories, including a Confederate soldier rescuing many drowning Union soldiers and Union pickets unwittingly firing on boats attempting to save the drowning.

Currently, the story of the *Sultana* is being told through a small, thousand-square-foot museum in Marion, Arkansas (15 minutes from downtown Memphis, Tennessee), near where the *Sultana* sank. The museum has had visitors from all 50 states and 14 foreign countries. However, the entire story of the *Sultana*, from her construction in Cincinnati in 1863, to her demise on April 27, 1865, will be told on a much greater level when a new, 21,000-square-foot museum opens in Spring 2025. Utilizing the talents of Haizlip Studio of Memphis, Tennessee, a team of architects, planners, and exhibit designers are working on state-of-the-art concepts to be presented in the new museum. The Sultana Historical Preservation Society started a capital campaign in 2020 to raise the necessary funds to build the new museum with a total goal of \$14 million. A total of \$10,395,777 has been raised to date. Construction has begun and is expected to open in summer 2025.



Rendition of the new Sultana Disaster Museum | courtesy of the author

ANNAPOLIS EVENT SUMMARY

On 10 August, myself and Mike Espenshade assisted in the 1st MD's recruitment event in Annapolis, MD as part of an Historic Annapolis program highlighting their Hogshead, Shiplap lot and the Waterfront Warehouse buildings. We had 10 in attendance from the 1st MD, 3rd MD, and 53rd PVI and set up camp on the Shiplap lot on Pinkney St. a few short blocks from the Annapolis Dock. Captain Carlson was setup at the Hogshead House to enlist people. We were right adjacent to the US Naval Academy which was also having its parents weekend. We saw lots of new Navy Plebes (1st year Naval academy students) around town and had several stop by, along with lots of non-Navy personnel as well, to see our display at our various locations. The coordinator said nearly 100 people stopped by our program during the live 10am~4pm hours. We were portraying the 1st MD after they had been released from Port Royal before they were paroled and exchanged. Afterwards, we had a nice dinner with our ELF pads around the corner at a restaurant. The 1st MD appreciated the 53rd PVI supporting them since they support many of our events. The 1st MD plans on doing the event again next year.







UPCOMING EVENTS

14~15 Sept. – 53rd PVI Gettysburg Living History (PA Memorial) - 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 NPS Gettysburg LH coordinator (Matt Atkinson) heard good things about the 53rd from Tom Holbrooke so let's not let them down. We have also invited our fellow ELF and NR parads. There are 3 demos scheduled for Sat. and 2 for Sunday. We typically fire 7 rounds per demo although we may incorporate skirmish drill into a few of these demos so bring extra rounds for the weekend. Parking is along Hanock Avenue (not along Pleasanton Ave. as in prior years). Arrive by 8:30am Saturday as I will begin roll at 9am. We also plan on doing a mail call as well as camp inspection/pay. Also, the unit has purchased some additional items from the Troutman estate so I'll be bringing our quartermaster inventory to sell what we may be able to sell. We may start setting up after 3pm on Friday. **53rd PVI MAX EFFORT event!**

16 November – National Regiment Annual Meeting and Remembrance Day Parade – Private meeting of NR BOD and members in Gettysburg followed by dress parade and the annual Remembrance Day Parade through Gettysburg ending near The Angle and Bryan Farm. Please let Eric know asap if you plan on marching in the parade. After the parade, we head over to the 53rd PVI monument to honor the men and take a few photos.

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 cchildren		\$1.00
Accountrements			
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 Court House, VA*
- 4 May - POSA Living History - Robesonia, PA
- 18 May - Lancaster Cemetery Flag-in event
- 27 May - Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade **53rd MAX EFFORT**
- 20~21 July - Landis Valley Civil War Days **53rd MAX EFFORT**
- 14~15 Sept. - Gettysburg Living History - PA Monument **53rd MAX EFFORT**
- 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)

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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>

